

‘Tocal’

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Proceedings of:



TOCAL

INTRODUCTION

Tocal Property at Paterson in the lower Hunter Valley of New South Wales is a large property that has substantially not changed in size for 200 years. It retains a unique collection of 19th century farm buildings but has evolved as a farm which has explored and demonstrated best farming practices and land management over this period. In the 1960s it developed as an agricultural College which in itself has high heritage values because of its representation of Sydney School architecture style. Even with upgrading and expansion it has managed to retain its integrity.

Interspersed with these two distinct heritage areas is a multitude of other heritage values including indigenous, natural, educational particularly agricultural and histories including WW2. Although the college is part of New South Wales government infrastructure it has to maintain relevance and viability which has seen change and adaptive reuse to meet modern requirements.

This paper is a case study of Tocal and explains the importance of the place and some of the strategies put in place to conserve the complex site.

SITE

Tocal comprises a rural estate and collection of farm structures, equipment, and employee and employer residences that are remarkable for their extent and integrity over the whole period of European settlement at Tocal, from 1822 to the present day.

It is equally remarkable that the Tocal has never been subdivided since first settlement, nor has it been subject to any development dissonant with its essential character as a rural estate.

Management has consistently respected and nurtured Tocal since it was granted in 1822, resulting in a landscape whose distinctiveness and integrity is extremely rare and unparalleled in Australia's national heritage.

Furthermore, the history of Tocal as a commercial farm and of the people who lived and worked there has been well documented from the wide range of sources that are available because of the high public profile the estate has held for the most of its European history. (This profile initially arose from the initiatives and controversies of its first settler, then from the national reputation of its stud stock, and from 1965 as a well-known education institution and innovative farm.)

The heritage items of the Tocal Homestead and Tocal are of considerable representative significance, providing extensive evidence of the changing character of workplaces, work practices, lifestyles, farm and livestock operations, conservation and land care that have occurred in agriculture and pastoralism beginning in the convict era and continuing through to the 21st century.

Tocal constitutes a remarkable national exemplar of land care, conservation and land management initiatives, and of consistent, environmentally sensitive farm planning and management spanning 45 years.

In summary, Tocal demonstrates a strong association with the establishment of colonial agriculture and pastoralism outside the Cumberland Plain, and with the operation and transformation of agricultural and pastoral practices, processes, work places and lifestyles spanning three centuries. The integrity and distinctiveness of Tocal, its structures, equipment and landscape is rare and unique. It is therefore of considerable national significance.

INDIGENOUS

There is a strong and long association with the Wonnarua people and evidence of axe grinding grooves, scarred trees and artefacts. The area is also conducive for fish traps but these have yet to be confirmed. The word "Tocal" meaning “plenty” in Koori dialect. Tocal holds social, cultural and spiritual association for their descendants and is a potential archaeological site with an opportunity to learn more about them.

TOCAL HOMESTEAD

Tocal Homestead is an outstanding nineteenth century farm complex with a fine two storey Georgian homestead and a collection of stone, brick and timber outbuildings.

The group includes some of the most complete and innovative nineteenth century farm buildings including the Bull Barn and Blacket Barn. Other rare structures include the barracks, brick underground grain silos, pump house with horse circle and sand yard. Rare details include the power generation equipment and lift.

Tocal has also associational values with Blacket for his outstanding design of the Barn and the infamous Fred Ward the bushranger known as “Thunderbolt”. The supervisor's cottage, known as Thunderbolt's cottage, is of considerable significance due to its design, with the house, staff quarters and stables as part of the one building but with separate access. Also of considerable significance is the two storey townhouse type of accommodation known as the convict barracks. Both these types of accommodation for farm workers are very rare, if not unique.

The overlay of earlier evidence of a natural landscape of rainforest, wetlands and lagoons and aboriginal occupation of Koori grinding grooves is of aesthetic and historic importance. The rainforest contains an endangered plant community of remnant rainforest.

The cultural landscape has historical and aesthetic appeal as a collection of buildings on the hill, its pastoral setting which retains the original land grant in active agriculture.

The Homestead flanked by the fig trees presents a fine image of the property.

The collection of timber buildings is extensive and greater than most other nineteenth century historic farms. This provides insight into farming and construction techniques of the period.

The contribution of Tocal and its owners to agricultural development and education has continued throughout its entire life. This includes the work of Webber, Wilson, Charles and Frank Reynolds, Alexander and the current College. The contribution has extended to crops, equipment and agricultural societies and development and management of breeding stock.

COLLEGE

Tocal College - C.B. Alexander Campus represents the historical shift in institutional architecture from one dominated by international modernist trends to one that was more locally based in its ideology.

The architecture of Tocal College applies the design characteristics of the Late Twentieth Century Sydney Regional or Sydney School on an institutional scale. Expressive structural use of robust and enduring materials seamlessly integrated within its landscape setting was a ground-breaking approach to institutional design. The application of these design principles, previously only domestically applied, was to be influential in the history of Australian architecture. These principles established a new architectural approach which rivalled the prevailing institutional architecture which was based in international modernism. The locally

based approach through choice of vernacular materials and forms, (such as the language of the Tocal barn) and the environmentally sensitive response to location is credited with being a truly Australian architecture.

The architects of the College, Philip Cox and Ian Mackay, are highly regarded in the architectural profession and the College was an important accomplishment early in their respective careers.

In 1965 Tocal College received the Australian Institute of Architects highest honour, the Sulman Medal, and today is held in very high esteem by the architectural profession for its cultural value as a seminal work of architecture that played a significant role in the direction of Australian architectural practice in the latter half of the twentieth century. 'In 2014 the college won the Australian Institute of Architects national award for enduring architecture in recognition of its outstanding initial design and continued sympathetic development.

Tocal College is an outstanding example of the Sydney School style of architecture as applied on an institutional scale.

Tocal College is historically significant for its association with Tocal Homestead and Tocal Farm which is one of the oldest colonial properties in the Hunter Region and played a significant role in the history of agriculture in New South Wales. Tocal College - C.B. Alexander Campus continues to play a part in the agricultural history of the state by providing agricultural education.

The movable collection was designed to complement the design of the College and contributes to its integrity. The tapestry is a significant art work by renowned Australian textile artist Margaret Grafton and is integral to the aesthetic significance of the chapel interior.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There is a strong attachment to Tocal on the part of the contemporary community resulting from its continuing role over many decades as an important agricultural teaching and training resource within the State of NSW, its acclaim as a longstanding viable agricultural enterprise and it's widely acknowledged heritage significance as an early, intact centre of pastoralism in Australia.

Tocal is one of the few remaining institutes providing live in, practical, farm-based training in agriculture.

SOCIAL

Tocal contributes greatly to community life through the publicly available swimming pool and availability of its other facilities.

It is held in high regard by the local community for its land/farm management practices and by the rural community statewide through its students, ex-students and field days.

It maintains an international reputation with regular contact with overseas organisations and other visitors.

A CONSERVATION APPROACH

The conservation objectives established for Tocal are:

- a place of agricultural advancement in methodology, education, training and practice;
- a heritage listed Tocal Homestead open to the public;
- a heritage listed college;

- a viable asset of the NSW Government;
- a place that contributes to the rural community of the area and the state; and
- a place with cultural plantings and significant hard and soft landscape features.

THE LESSONS OF TOCAL

The success of conserving Tocal has been achieved by an overview that preservation of existing fabric at Tocal Homestead is of high importance, that critical elements of the College are preserved but otherwise there is flexibility to change and that the whole property remain as one overall business enterprise.

Implementation of these objectives commenced with a detailed and extensive Conservation Management Plan which has since been endorsed by NSW Heritage. This includes a series of detailed conservation policies to guide all facets of Tocal. The overarching policies are:

- Work to be undertaken with the best conservation practice implemented.
- Conserve the fabric of Tocal Homestead relating to all heritage values of the precinct.
- Conserve the essential design elements and details of the College buildings.
- Maintain Tocal buildings and landscape consistent with the heritage value.
- Retain the current Tocal boundaries and best practice, farm management.
- Retain a practically based agricultural College at Tocal.
- Change can occur to Tocal and the Campus to meet ongoing and operational needs but there are some controls required to protect the significant elements.
- Landscape management includes conserving remnant indigenous vegetation, and rare species.

- Retain principle views to/from and around Tocal including liaison with local government planning controls to respect those values.
- Complete the assessment of the Aboriginal sites and ensure all are registered on the AIHMS.
- Involve aboriginal people in the making of decisions affecting the ongoing management of their heritage place and values.
- Archaeologically sensitive sites need to be preserved and when opportunities arise further study is encouraged.
- Additional interpretation of the significance of the site should be actioned.
- Appropriate management of all aspects of the site needs to be maintained (existing is considered to work satisfactorily.)

In reality this custodian ship has been achieved by careful governance and a forward thinking management from the earliest beginnings of the property. It has been aided by not subdividing the property and has benefited by becoming an agricultural college and that best farm practices can be explored, developed and implemented which has been the case. This has not stopped change but enable change to occur with good sound consideration of all the issues and an aim for the best long term outcome.

Tocal Homestead is controlled by a foundation but has survived by a separate business venture that has provided much needed funds for ongoing conservation work. This has been supplemented by the adaptation of a hayshed to a function centre/wedding venue which is successful and is not only an example of good adaptation but it is also an income generator.

The overall site has many important aspects as detailed above and they are understood by Farm Managers. New initiatives of farm managing are practiced to maintain the College at the forefront of Agricultural Education and farm management in Australia. These are and can be done within a heritage property and context. Change is necessary and managed well will retain heritage values.

The lesson from the case study is that large complex places and rural properties can be conserved or adapted to meet changing needs and do have a future but good custodianship and guidance is essential.

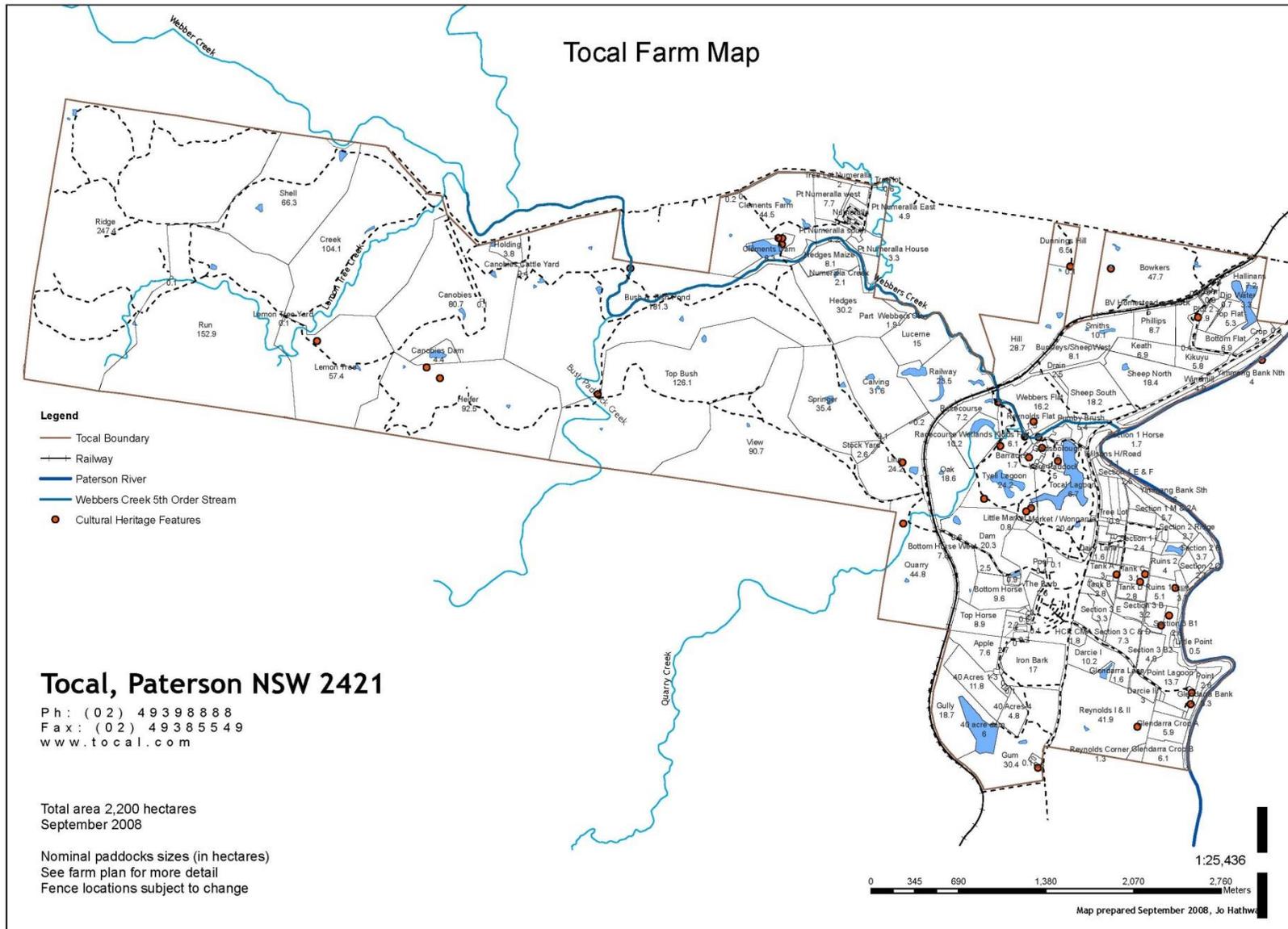


Figure 1: Tocal Map (<http://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/farms/map-of-the-tocal-property>)



Figure 2: Total landscape (*G Britton, EMA Tocal Homestead and Buildings Conservation Management Plan, 10 February 2014*)

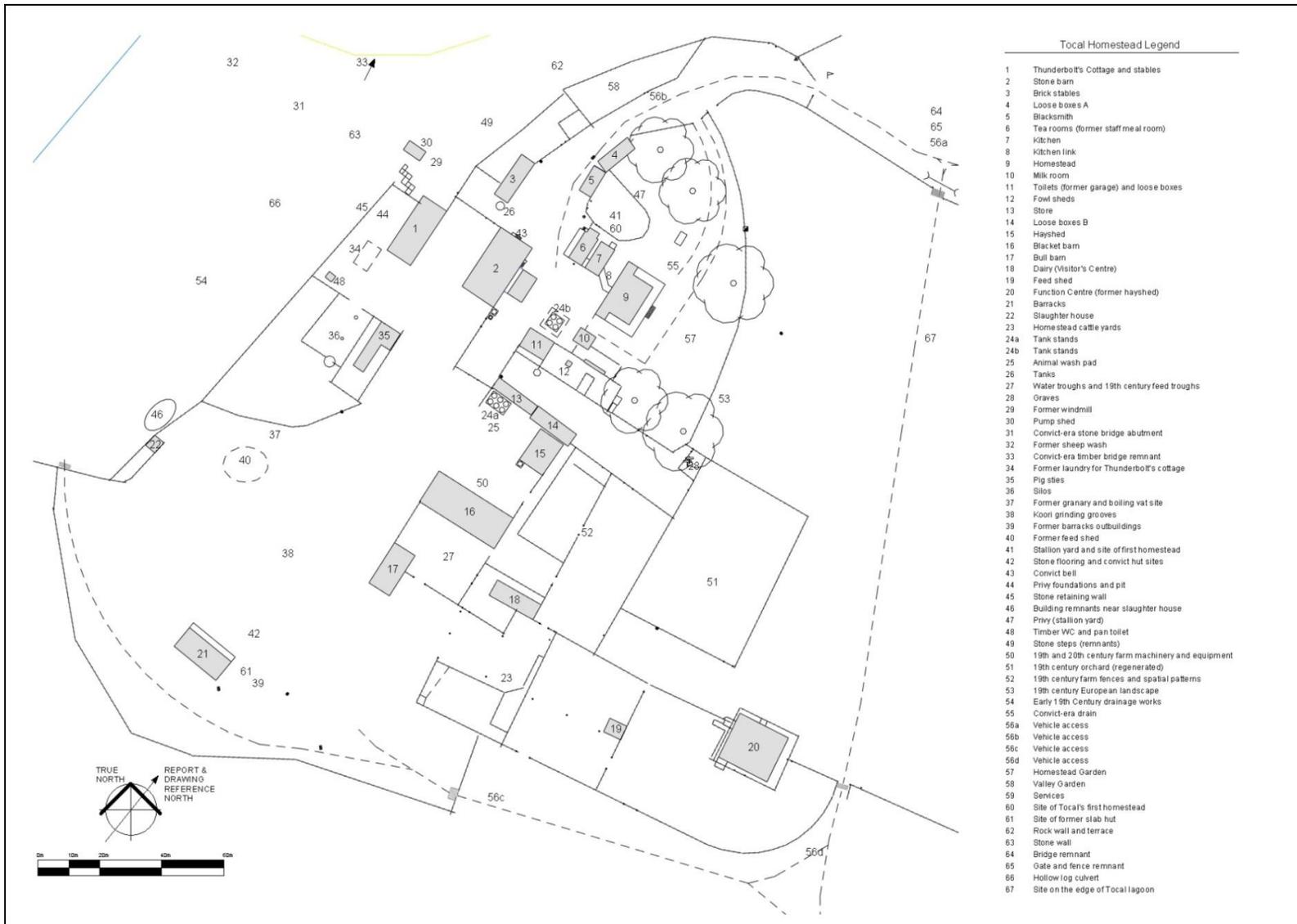


Figure 3: Location of Elements - Tocal Homestead (EMA 2011)



Figure 4: Total Homestead (*G Britton, EMA Total Homestead and Buildings Conservation Management Plan, 10 February 2014*)



Figure 5: Total Campus (EMA 2011)

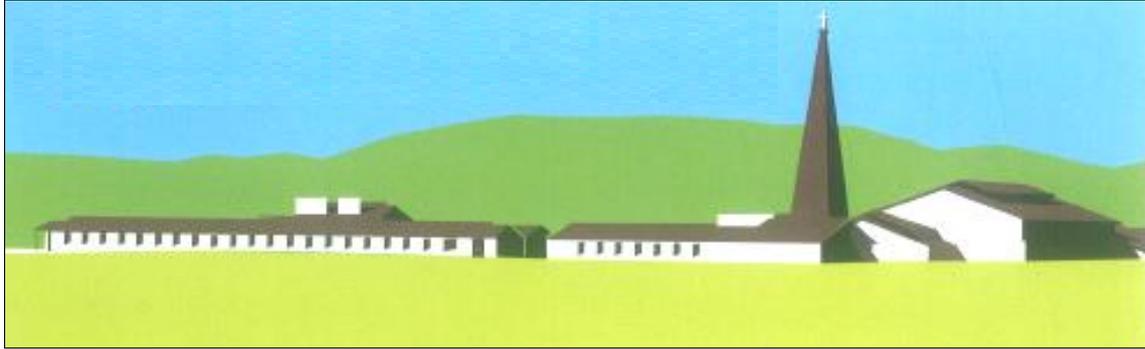


Figure 6: Tocal College (Cox Architecture)

REFERENCES

The major reference is:

Tocal Homestead and Buildings Conservation Management Plan, Final, Issue 5,
Volume 1, 10 February 2014, Eric Martin & Associates.

The following references are the principle documents which effectively form the base for the CMP and are relied on to provide the documentary evidence and supplementary information for the CMP.

1. *Captain Thunderbolt - horsebreaker to bushranger*
2. *Conservation of Timber Buildings*
3. *Tocal Visitor Centre - new use for an old shed*
4. *Guide to Tocal*
5. *The Soils of Tocal*
6. *Colonial Silo Mysteries*
7. *The Climate of Tocal*
8. *Aboriginal Land Use at Tocal - The Wonnarua Story*
9. *Tocal Code of Land Use Practice*

10. *At Home Amongst the Stock - The Kidds of Tocal*
 11. *Crimes of Passion on the Tocal Run*
 12. *An Eye for Excellence - The Reynolds of Tocal*
 13. *The Vegetation of Tocal*
 14. *Three Days in May*
 15. *Who was CB Alexander?*
 16. *An Introduction to Tocal Farms*
 17. *Voices from Tocal - Convict Life on a Rural Estate*
 18. *James Phillips Webber - The Man and the Mystery*
 19. *The Paterson at War*
 20. *The People of Tocal*
 21. *Women in the History of Tocal*
 22. *Tocal College CB Alexander Campus - its development and history*
- Tocal's First European Settler - James Phillips Webber*
- Tocal - The Changing Moods of a Rural Estate.*

All the above publications are on: <http://www.tocal.com/homestead/books/books.htm>

Tocal Conservation Management Plan, July 1999, Eric Martin & Associates

Tocal Landscape Master Plan Report, 1993, Environment Design Associates

The Development of the Tocal Campus Buildings

Tocal Property Plan.