

Statement of Heritage Impact

Proposed Demolition
Former St John's Church
now de-consecrated

Lot 10 DP1145202
34 Lostock School Road
Lostock, NSW

locally heritage listed item 95
Dungog Local Environmental Plan 2014



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Image 1: cover – heritage listed item, former church Lostock
All photos by Mark Fenwick unless otherwise acknowledged.

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1 The Heritage Item & Site

1.1 Introduction

Placemark Consultants have been engaged by the owners and custodians, to consider their proposed demolition of the deconsecrated and abandoned St John's Anglican Church Lostock, with respect to the current significance of this locally listed heritage item.

This report and Statement of Heritage Impact are required to accompany the owner's Development Approval application for demolition to Dungog Shire Council. The conclusions are provided as Section 4.

1.2 Country

Lostock is located on the western fringe of Worimi Country, where it meets Geawegal Country, generally around the Paterson River valley. These people are the traditional owners and original custodians of this place. Aboriginal people have been here for a least 40,000 years before the European invasion.¹ The colonial settlers arrived in earnest from 1821 onwards. This caused displacement and damaging cultural impact.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology adopted for the preparation of this report was to:

- Examine the site survey drawing describing the existing arrangement.
- Visit the site, note and photograph existing conditions.
- Note the qualities of the existing building.
- Note the context of the site in the cemetery.
- Undertake historical research to inform an understanding of the context of this place.
- Review the listing.
- Liaise with the owners' Town Planner.
- Prepare the Statement of Heritage Impact report.

1.4 Limitations

For the purposes of this report, the history presented in section 2 was derived from secondary sources and was not prepared as an academic history.

1.5 Heritage Item & Listing

'St John's Church and Cemetery' is listed in Schedule 5, Environmental Heritage of the Dungog Local Environmental Plan 2014, therefore Section 5.10 of the LEP requires the preparation and submission of a Statement of Heritage Impact. This requirement is a process intended to inform and assist with protecting heritage significance.

St John's Church and Cemetery
34 Lostock School Road, Lostock
Lot 10, DP 1145202 Local item 95

The LEP Clause 5.10 (1) lists the following objectives that relate to this assessment:

- To conserve the environmental heritage of the Dungog LGA.

¹ 'Dungog Shire Heritage Study-Thematic History' by Grace Karskens March 1986 p.10 by Margrit Koettig

- To conserve the heritage significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas, including associated fabric, settings and views.

The Local Environment Plan (LEP) provides the Heritage Map for the Dungog LGA. The following is from sheet 004A of the map showing the listed item 95:



Image 2: Subject site Listed item 95
Source: Dungog LEP 2014 Heritage Map sheet 004A 2016

1.6 Site Description

The site is isolated, located to the west and slightly above a bend in the river. There are fenced grass paddocks to the north and south. To the west, across Lostock School Road the topography rises steeply up to Paterson River Road. This allows views down to the church and cemetery when passing through the locality. It is not a busy road. History notes have suggested a Wesleyan Church may have once existed on the back Lot. The local school was located on the Lot to the south-east.

The site has a number of mature trees and established gardens, including a neighbourhood vegetable garden. One rose garden appears to be used as a Memorial Garden. The site of the church is also a cemetery. Graves are located close to the building.

The detailed survey shows the concrete path at the gate as RL132.84, the church threshold as 120mm higher, ground level behind the church as 560mm lower and at the back fence 2m lower. The site is not flat. Graves are located close to the church where it is flatter. The furthest grave, to the south-east is shown as nearly 1400mm lower than the gate path. The corner of the grave furthest to the east in the top group is shown as nearly 1800mm below. Beyond the back fence is a grassed bank dropping about 2.2m across 5m, into the back paddock.

The floor of the former church is not at all level, lifting and dropping across its diagonal, similar to the front porch but in the opposite direction. There are no obvious signs of termite damage or vandalism. The building is in good condition given it is about 132 years old. However, it is supported by stumps in-the-round, all very close to the ground on the north side and close at about 400mm from floor level to ground level on the south side.

1.7 Site Location & Context

Lostock is located in the Paterson River valley, south and below the Barrington Plateau.



Image 3: Lostock is circled here above. Note the locations of Dungog and Paterson.

Source: SIXMAPS accessed 09.12.2024

There is little obvious evidence that a village has existed at this locality.

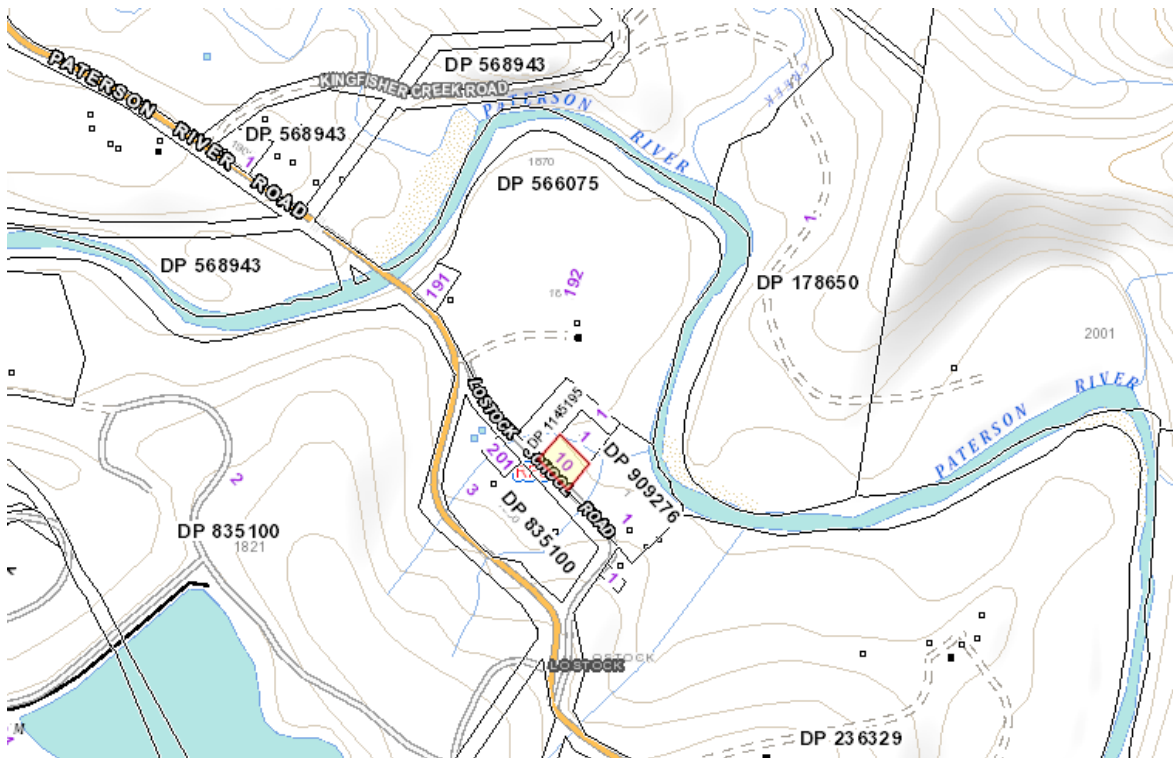


Image 4: Lot 10 is the site of the former church AND the Cemetery

Source: SIXMAPS accessed 09.12.2024



Image 5: Church and Cemetery site. Sparsely arranged buildings. No obvious village.
Source: SIXMAPS accessed 26.09.2024

1.8 Proposed Works Area

The site for the proposed demolition is a sensitive site. It is a historic and a contemporary cemetery. Aspects of the site are shown to be retained. The site features plantings that relate to the history of the place. The building will require careful dismantling not aggressive demolition in order to avoid damaging the site, the gate, path, gardens, trees, shrubs and graves.

1.9 Existing Conditions

Existing conditions are described by the following recent images:



Image 6: Looking N-W towards the church
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 7: looking N-E towards the church
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 8: Looking S-E towards the church
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 9: front wall and porch
Source: Placemark 20240927

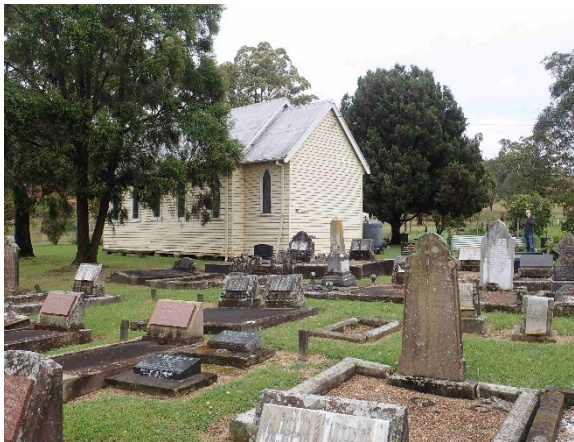


Image 10: Looking northwards
Source: Placemark 20240927

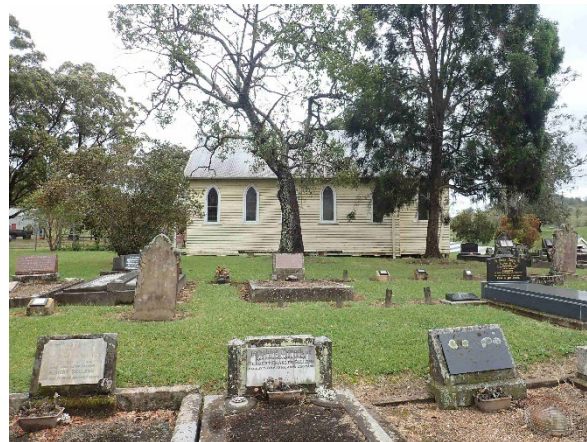


Image 11: Looking N-W
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 12: the west corner on the ground
Source: Placemark 20240927

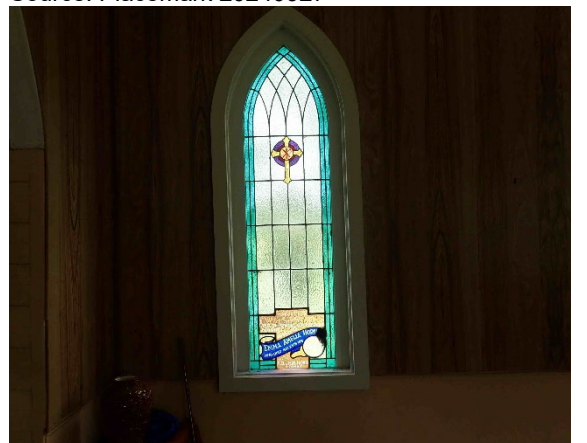


Image 13: the only memorial in glass
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 14: original coffered ceiling
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 15: Entry and plastic 'timber' lining
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 16: Masonite to sill dado line.
Source: Placemark 20240927



Image 17: original line of back wall (arch)
Source: Placemark 20240927

1.10 Lostock Population

The population of Lostock is falling.



62.9 sq km

2021 Census:

- population 65 people, median age was 42 years
- 26% affiliated with the Anglican church; 13% with the Catholic Church and 4.6% did not state an affiliation.

2016 Census:

- population 58 people, median age was 43 years.

2011 Census:

- population 217 people, median age was 46 years.

Image 18: Population – recent census figures

Source: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL12401>

1.11 Lostock History

Settlement on the Paterson River formally commenced with John Powell's 60acre grant in 1821. He named the place 'Orange Grove'. It was located on the east side of the Paterson River, below the future township of Paterson. Within a year William Dun received 1,300 acres, 'Duninald' further north. This was beginning of *'the extensive, gridded estates of the*

new, wealthy and influential settlers who arrived in the 1820s and 1830s, and who so rapidly altered forever the face of the river valleys.’² The Gresford district was quickly taken up between 1825 and 1827.

Lostock is located in the farming valley of the Paterson River within the foothills of the Barrington Plateau. Dams eventuated in the adjacent valleys. *The Chichester River Gravitational Scheme was approved in 1915 and work began on the damming of the Chichester and Wangat Rivers in 1918. After the 1965 drought, tenders were called in 1968 for the construction of Lostock Dam on the upper reaches of the Paterson River.*³ The Lostock dam was completed in 1971.

Timber was quickly exported or used locally during the 1820s and 1830s. Later the agriculture of the valley experienced setbacks, during the 1850’s and 1860s as wheat rust wiped out wheatfields along the Paterson River from Hinton to Lostock. Tobacco followed after with blue mould. A citrus industry was established as far up as Carrabolla, beyond Lostock. Dairy farming increased, particularly around Paterson.⁴

The Gresford settlement grew at crossroads. A Post office opened in 1841. Mail was bundled there and taken out to East Gresford, Allynbrook, Lostock and Mt. Rivers. The original St Anne’s church in Gresford followed in about 1843.⁵ East Gresford out-grew Gresford by the turn of the century.

Small, isolated villages followed the establishment of industries and the subdivision of large grants. Local schools, small churches, local halls were established in rural service villages. The Welsh settlers gathered in the Gresford area (Lostock, Eccleston and Allynbrook) and the Irish at Carrabolla and Mt Rivers. Other settlements were dominated by one or another religious group. Lostock was established in about 1840. Rev John Terry Smith reported on the slab church, St John’s after his arrival in 1839. It was a timber and dairying town. Mt Rivers had a Post Office in 1850. Carrabolla was established around 1880.⁶



Image 19: the small villages of the Dungog Shire

Source: 1927 NSW Motorists Road Guide p96 Thematic History, Grace Karskens

² ‘Dungog Shire Heritage Study-Thematic History’ by Grace Karskens March 1986 page 19

³ Ibid, page 20

⁴ Ibid, page 70.

⁵ Ibid, page 85.

⁶ ‘Dungog Shire Heritage Study-Thematic History’ by Grace Karskens March 1986 page 93

In 1839 Paterson received its first Anglican rector, Rev John Jennings Smith. Within a few months there were.... 'stone churches at Paterson, a slab church at Lostock and a stone shed, serving as a church at Gresford.'⁷ A boom time in the 1880s allowed the replacement of some old churches.

1.12 St John's Church⁸

The new church of St John was built by Harry Hailand and Bill Schmeerer. The timber was cut by Mr R Hands. The building is of wooden construction with 'iron roof, fibre plaster ceiling and was originally lit by kerosene lamps'. It was consecrated on the 10th June 1892. It is a very modest structure.

It was built on land privately granted by Mr H.H. Brown MLA. For over 60 years no formal deeds of the gift were registered, until Charles David Horn made a number of made representations to have 'the matter put in order'. Lostock parishioners were said to be 'most active and generous'. Examples include in 1924 donating to the Cathedral's 'warriors' window' and 1925 a donation to the Diocesan Register from the harvest sale ..'a tradition that is still existing today [1978]'. Services were held each Sunday and during the week.

During 1926 St John's Heralds-of-the-King raised money for the church. 'The Sunday School and Younger Set flourished'. The Younger Set gifted the roses and pine trees in 1930. The planting was carried out by Rev Hobart and Ivan Horn. Miss Doris Wilson donated an oak Hymn Board still in use today [1978].

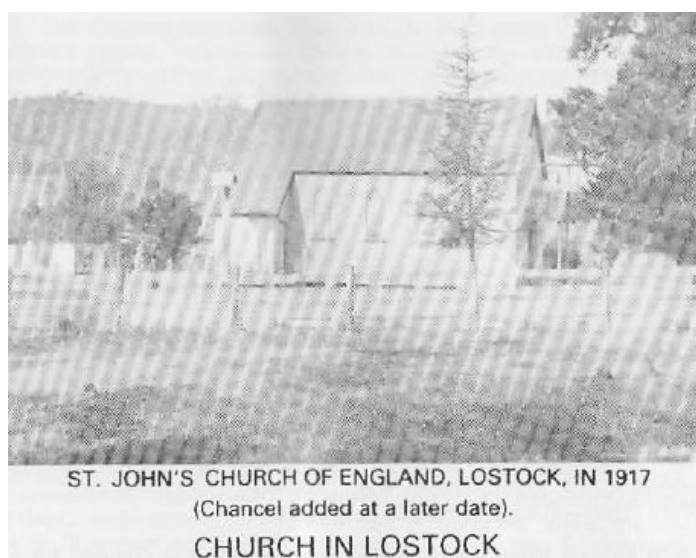
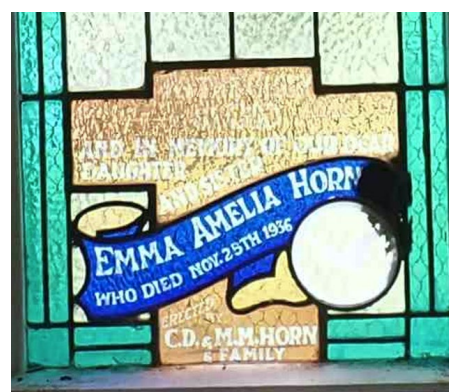


Image 20: St John's Church 1917 (shorter)
Source: School Centenary Booklet page 23



Emmie died in 1936, aged 21. She is buried close to the church, outside this window. Her mother Mabel was 50 years old. Mabel died in 1980. Her father Charles died in 1977. Both are buried in this cemetery. No other plaques are evident.

Image 21: one window east corner
Source: Placemark photo 20240927

1.13 The Cemetery

Although the church Lot had been considered the Lostock General Cemetery for decades, Lot 1 behind to the north-east and Lots to the north west were dedicated for use as a General Cemetery by government gazette, dated 22th August 1903. *This land is a reserve within the meaning of part 5 of the Crown Lands Act 1989 and there are restrictions on the transfer and other dealings in the land under the act*⁹ This Lot is identified in Certificate of

⁷ Ibid, page 124.

⁸ The booklet 'Lostock Public School 1878-1978

⁹ Identification Survey Report by Land Development Solutions 15.03.2019

Title Folio Identified 1/34913 in the Local Government Area of Dungog, Parish of St Julian, County of Durham.

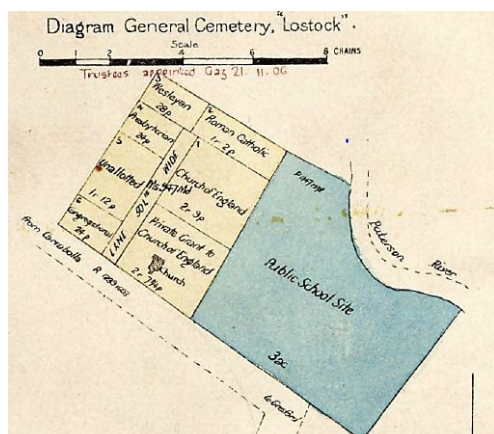


Image 22: Cemetery Diagram [map detail] County of Durham, Parish of St Julian, 1909.

Source: hlr.v.nswlrs.com.au

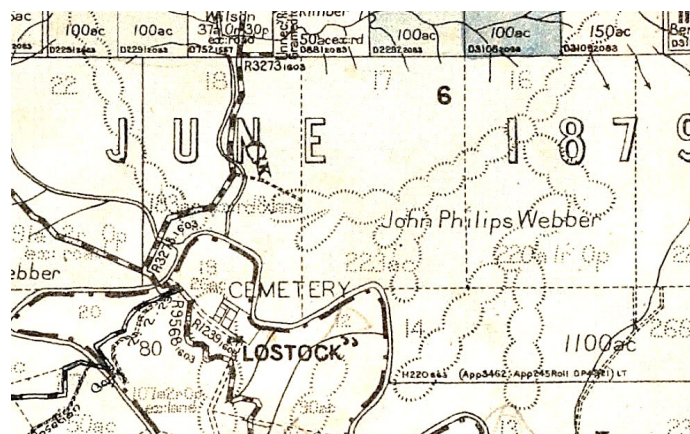


Image 23: Cemetery Parish of Holywell, County of Durham, Land District of Dungog Wallarobba Shire 1914

Source: hlr.v.nswlrs.com.au

The maps also note that the church site, now the site of the former church and cemetery as being a 'Private Grant to Church of England', 'Trustees appointed Gaz 21.11.06' and also notes, 'Public School Site 3a Resumed 21 March 1884'.

Many family names mentioned in the School Centenary Booklet are well represented in the cemetery. Records have been compiled of details provided by the head stones of the graves.¹⁰ Burials noted include John Turner 1889; Amner John Wilson 1890; Elizabeth Turner 1872; William Kelehear 1891 and Edward Leonard Soper is recorded as being 'buried near the fence'.. in 1874. These and others pre-date the church's consecration in 1892.

It is also noted that there are more recent burials including Trevor Lill 2012; Neville Lawrence 2010; Rodney Wilson 2009; Annette Roberts 2012 and others. A memorial to Ivan Horn 2003 is located within the rose garden. It appears that the cemetery is still considered to be in use.

2 Significance Assessment

2.1 Introduction

The NSW Heritage Inventory, a repository database of for local and state listings, provides no detail of any heritage assessment or Statement of Significance for this item. It likely to have been carried over from a Hunter Regional List.

2.2 Description

The former church is a small, modestly detailed timber framed church clad in hardwood timber weatherboards, with a corrugated metal roof, gothic proportioned and shaped windows (stained glass, mid C20th century, all windows the same except one with a memorial above the sill), wide hard wood floorboards and braced and ledged timber framed entry doors. A chancel was added after 1917. 'Office' partition linings have been added over

¹⁰ Rev Mary Horn shared those records with a site map of numbered grave sites.

horizontal, profiled boards. One step up to the sanctuary. A communion rail was removed after 1971. All liturgical content has been removed. No longer used as a church. It is vacant.

2.3 Assessment by Criteria

In the absence of any details being available regarding a previous assessment of heritage significance the following examines potential historical; aesthetic; scientific; and social significance by applying the NSW heritage assessment criteria, as follows:

Criteria: Local Listing	Details	ST John's Church, Lostock	Relevant
Criteria a) Historical Significance	Important in the course or pattern of cultural history of the local area	This church contributed by its existence and use to the cultural history of the local area.	Yes
Criteria b) Associative	Has a strong or special association with the life or works of a person or group of importance to the history of the local area.	No particular association with the life or works of a particular person or group.	No
Criteria c) Aesthetic Significance	Demonstrates aesthetic characteristics, high degree of creative or technical achievement in the local area.	The church does not demonstrate noteworthy aesthetic characteristics, materials or details.	No
Criteria d) Social Significance	Has a strong or special association with a particular local community or group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.	The church was the focal point for the local Anglican community. It was a place for prayer, weddings, baptisms and funerals. Social gatherings. It was also a place for arranging charitable and social assistance.	Yes
Criteria e) potential to inform cultural history of a local area.	Potential to yield archaeological or scientific or technical information.	The method of construction is basic and the place is unlikely to reveal new information.	No
Criteria f) Rarity	Possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of cultural or natural history of the local area.	The building is not rare in the Dungog Shire.	No
Criteria g) Representativeness	Important in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places of the local area.	The building is not important in representing small, timber county churches as a class of building or historical type.	No
Integrity or completeness	Complete and demonstrating original materials, details and arrangements.	The building demonstrates original external character but lacks internal integrity. It has always been modest and without intricate detailing. It is now deformed, not level or square but appears to be structurally sound. Refer to separate structural report.	No.

2.4 Statement of Significance

The former St John's Church Lostock is listed as a heritage item of local significance. Schedule 5 Environmental Heritage, of the Dungog Local Environmental Plan 2014 as item 95. The state heritage inventory does not record a 'Statement of Significance'. The following statement is provided after applying the standard assessment criteria:

St John's Lostock has contributed by its existence and use to the cultural history of the local area. The church was the focal point for the local Anglican community. It was place for prayer, weddings, baptisms and funerals. Social gatherings. It was also a place for arranging charitable and social assistance. It has historical and social significance.

3 Proposed Works or Changes

3.1 Proposed Works

In preparing this report the author referred to the following drawings.

The proposed demolition (ie, the development) prepared by Manns + Troup project 456 and the detailed site survey plan prepared by Land Development Solutions:

Dwg no.	Title	Scale	Date	Revision
SK01	Demolition Plan	1:200 @A3	09.12.2024	01
1	Detail survey of Lot 10 DP1145202 being 34 Lostock School Road, Lostock NSW	1:200 @ A1	14/10/2024	

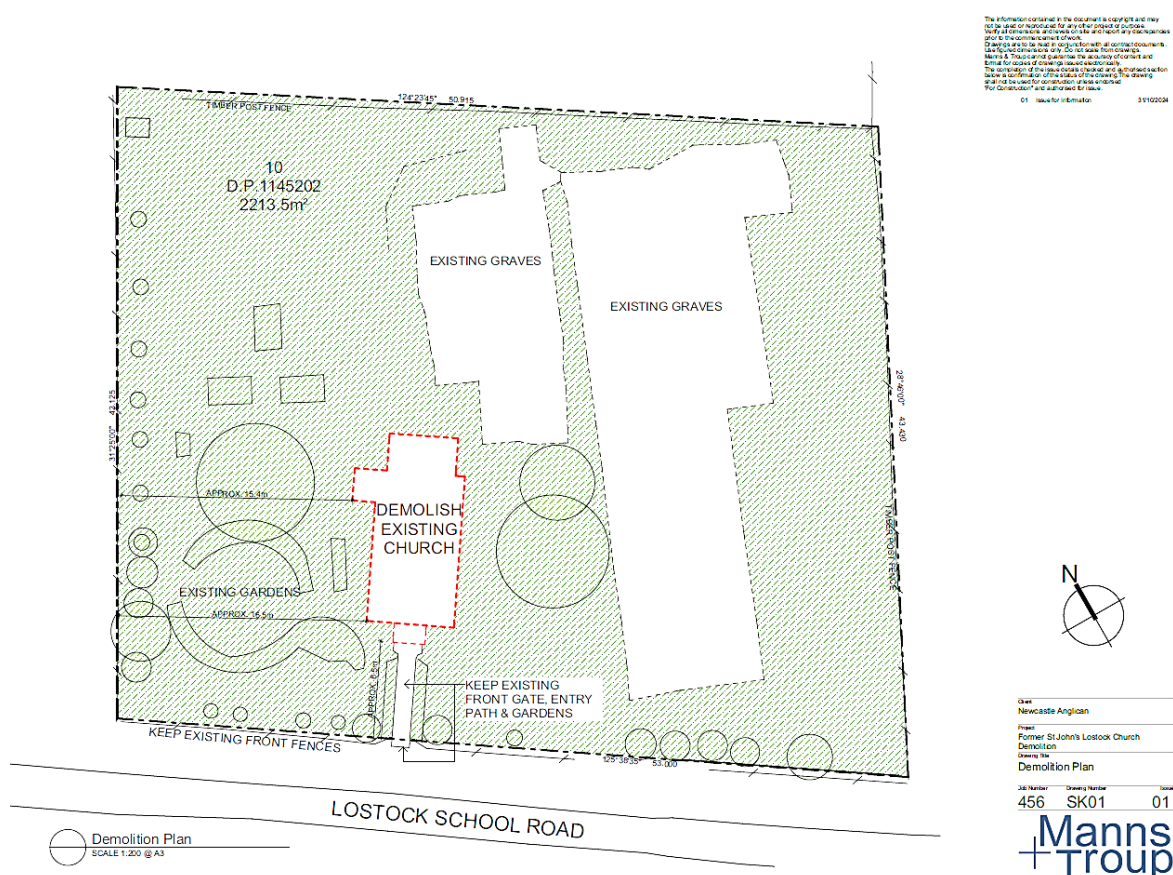


Image 24: Demolition Plan

Source: Manns+Troup project 456 drawing SK01 issue 01 received 9.12.2024

3.2 Previous Consultation

There was no prior Pre-DA meeting with Dungog Council.

4 Heritage Impact Assessment

4.1 Matters for Consideration

The following responds to relevant questions with regards to the proposed demolition. This will inform the preparation of the Statement of Heritage Impact.

Assessment Consideration	Assessment
Is the church building suitable for adaptive reuse as a residence?	No, even if viable rectification (clearance to the ground, ventilation, overland flow management, levelling and straightening, insulating, etc) was possible, it is located within a cemetery. Given the close location of graves and the site topography, even residential drainage would disturb and damage the cemetery.
Given the liturgical de-consecration and abandonment of the former church by the Parish and Diocese, if it were retained who would use and maintain the building?	No one. Significance is derived from the value a community places on an item. The village and the parish no longer exist to provide this building with a social or religious purpose or any ongoing maintenance. The building will deteriorate and will likely to be vandalised or burnt, all within the cemetery site.
Will removing the former church remove an item of aesthetic significance, rarity or importance for its contribution to the local area's development and history?	No. The contribution to the local area's development and history was made by the people. The population is now about 65 people or 0.96 person per km ² . It does have associated history with the cemetery.
Will removing the former church impact on its historical or social significance?	Yes. It will remove built evidence of its 132yr existence and use. However the architectural design, construction detail or fabric of the building are not of high significance. The existing form can be understood as ecclesiastical, if seen from the main road.

4.2 Recommendations

Assuming that the former church will be removed by the parish following the approval process, the following recommendations are provided to guide that process and the site's ongoing use as a cemetery:

- It is recommended that the building be dismantled, not demolished and then carefully removed. Its locally cut hardwood timbers should be purposefully recycled.
- Some of that timber be used to build bench seats to be placed in the garden, in the shade and overlooking the graves.
- Salvage the windows. Return the memorial window to the Horn Family.
- Salvage the doors, especially the gothic inspired carpentry Entry door.
- Protect all of the trees, shrubs and gardens. These should be retained, including the Memorial Garden.
- The fences and front gate be repaired and retained, including the RHS frame and cross located over the front gate.
- The front entry concrete path and the gardens both sides of that path should be retained.
- The 'footprint' of the former church should be defined and visible in the landscape.

4.3 Statement of Heritage Impact

This is the statement of heritage impact for the:

Proposed demolition works to remove a former church, as described by the drawing.

This statement will form part of the Development Approval application documentation for:

Proposed Demolition of St John's Anglican Church, Lostock to be submitted by the others.

Address and Property Description:

34 Lostock School Road Lot 10 DP1145202 Lostock NSW 2311

Local Government Area: within the Dungog Shire LGA, NSW.

Date: 11th December 2024

References: Refer to the whole of the report accompanying this statement, all of Sections 1, 2 and 3 inclusive.

Prepared by:

Mark Fenwick, Placemark Consultants

Architect and Heritage Consultant ARB (NSW) 7348

Statement:

The proposed works will remove a small, de-consecrated timber clad church from the cemetery site at Lostock. The building has no prospects for repair, meeting contemporary compliance, adaptive new uses, any ongoing maintenance or security. The building exhibits diminished integrity. The village and the parish that it served no longer exist. The loss of its original fabric is an inevitable outcome of social changes. Removal is therefore an acceptable outcome and impact on the heritage significance of the building.



MP Fenwick

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On Awabakal Country