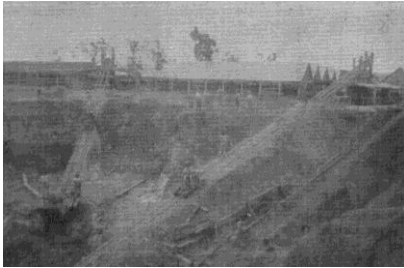


Site of Palmer's Brickworks and Armidale Steam and Pottery Works – A021

Type of Site:	Archaeological
Group:	Exploration, Survey and Events
Category:	Kiln Brick/brickworks
Local Govt. Area:	Armidale Dumaresq
Location	Armidale
Address/Location:	13-23 Bundarra Road
LDPNo:	Lot 41 DP 879127



Brickpit1885-UNEHC-P99-6175

The Brick pit in 1885 (UNEHC_P99-6175)



PalmersBrickworks-c1930.jpg

A view of the brick workers beside one of the kilns. (Supplied by Robin May, Cady collection - Cady-ALE05, UNEHC).

Description:

Originally on an area of 25 acres, one acre of surface was broken into and excavated. Clay existed to a depth of 40 ft, then a layer of sand, and then clay again. Clay was lifted from 30ft by a wire rope and machinery which deposited it into a hopper to be fed with a Fawcett Machine with massive 14 ton rollers. The clay was then moulded and pressed and sent to the kilns. There were four brick kilns, each firing 80,000 bricks and other ceramic items. There was an acre of drying sheds, a pottery kiln, a steam boiler, two underground water storage tanks, and a saw bench for the necessary firewood (Armidale Express, 22 June 1894, p.4). Palmer's extended family lived in blue brick houses around the area; his own 'Brick Villa' was demolished around 1980 to construct Richardson's Hardware Store on the site at the corner of Bundarra Road and Miller Street (Wilson 1991: 92).

In 1901-2, George Nott (the new owner) constructed a large chimney stack and three new kilns each capable of taking 85,000 bricks. In 1913 'The Armidale Steam Brick and Pottery Works' was described as being replete with powerful and modern machinery, and about to install a machine which was the last word in pottery manufacture, capable of making pipes up to 2 ft in diameter. The bricks were so renowned that the Government was the amongst the biggest customers of the Works, taking Armidale bricks all along the North and especially for government jobs at Newcastle. All the brickwork of St Mary's Cathedral was the product of the Works (Armidale Jubilee 1863-1913: 78).

The 1943 aerial shows the brick pit with the four kilns on the mid-western side of the block, with a structure on an angle to the east of them, adjacent to the pit. Another large structure lies to the central north of the pit. Palmer's house is visible south west of the pit area.

History:

William Palmer was brought from Nundle by Henry Arding Thomas in 1860 to make the bricks and build the extensions to his slab homestead at Saumarez. On a visit to Armidale, Palmer's wagon became bogged in the vicinity of the present brickworks. He recognized the suitable clay as he dug the wagon out. He acquired some 60 acres of land and established himself as a successful brick-maker. His fine dark blue bricks, proudly bearing the "WP" imprint, were used from Murrurundi to Deepwater (Wilson 1991: 92). In 1875 the large scale brickworks began production. He had been manufacturing bricks in Armidale since 1867. Three large kilns were operating as part of the works by 1884. He was later to produce face bricks, including cream bricks, garden tiles, oven and flooring tiles, and drain pipes (New England Free Press, 29/5/1884; Gilbert:38; Kass: 16).

Palmer sold out to George Nott in 1901 for 4000 pounds. Nott expanded and modernised what was now called the Armidale Steam and Pottery Works throughout the next decades.

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Significance:

Local. The site has historic significance as the location of a premier industry for Armidale, the source of a distinctive product, Armidale 'blue bricks', that has created the distinctive character of its major public and private buildings for which the town is renowned. Their quality was such that they were used and valued state-wide in the building industry (Criterion A). The successive owners, William Palmer, followed by George Nott, were not only successful businessmen but were prominently engaged in the civic and public life of the town (Criterion B). The undeveloped areas around the brick pit may contain archaeological information useful for understanding the layout and technology of the facility (Criterion E). As the principal brick works for Armidale, the site is rare (Criterion F).

Condition:

The site of the brick pit is now filled with water, creating a deep lake. The edges of the pit have been let grow wild with grass and scrub. The eastern end of the block which had contained Palmer's house, is covered by Richardsons Hardware and carparking, opening onto Miller Street. The area of the kilns (mid-west side) is now covered by a large industrial shed, while the area of the northern building has three different sheds on three subdivided lots.

Archaeological Potential:

Low. Remnants of the structure east of the kilns may survive between the current shed and the pit, and there may be other remains to the rear of the northern allotments fronting Mann Street.

Recommendation:

Schedule for listing

Investigations Required:

Archaeological assessment and monitoring of subsurface works in those defined areas.

REFERENCES AND RELATED RECORDS:

Local Government Area:

Armidale Dumaresq

Images:

1943 Aerial of Armidale

Palmer's Brickworks

Maps:

Location layer on AMPA GIS

People:

N/A

Theme(s):

Local: Early brickworks

Industry

Publications, Theses, Reports:

Armidale Municipal Council, Armidale Municipal Jubilee 1863-1913, Official Souvenir

Gilbert, Lionel, An Armidale Album. Glimpses of Armidale's History and Development In Word, Sketch and Photograph. New England Art Museum Association, Armidale, 1982.

Kass, Terry, Thematic History of Armidale. Report prepared for Perumal Murphy Pty Ltd on behalf of Armidale City Council, 1991

Wilson, Graham, and Jean Cooper, From Jessie Street West. Armidale and District Historical Society Journal 34: 85-100., 1991.