

Heritage Assessment & Statement of Significance

Prepared by Black Mountain Projects

May 2012

Wollondilly Shire Council Heritage Advisory Service

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25.05.12.

The General Manager, Wollondilly Shire Council
Attention: Robyn Cooper, Land Use Planning & Environment
Robyn.Cooper@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au

ADVICE SUBJECT: Menangle school heritage assessment.
CLIENT: Sophie Perry

Dear Sir

Thank you for requesting heritage advice. The requested heritage assessment is attached and may be further illustrated with photos and maps, plans, from the 2007 Heritage Impact Statement.

I trust that the above advice has been of assistance at this time.

Kind regards
Dr Peter Kabaila
Heritage Adviser

MENANGLE PUBLIC SCHOOL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Name of the item

Menangle Public School

Other or former names

None

Address (and legal property description if available, ie lot and dp number)

Lot 1 DP 420139 and Lot 1 DP 795181, 26 - 28 Station Street. Menangle

Current listings

Draft Local Heritage Item, WSC

Menangle Conservation Area, WSC LEP 1991

PHOTOS

For photos, historic maps and site plans refer to Heritage Impact Statement, Oct 2007, Margaret Fallon B Arch RAlA, Integrated Design Associates, 10 Asquith Avenue Wentworth Falls NSW 2782, Ph (02) 4757 1856.

DESCRIPTION

Designer

James Wigram (Schools Architect 1896 - 1908),

W.L. Vernon (1846 – 1914), NSW government Architect of the period 1890 - 1910

Builder/maker

Dept of Public Works

Year started

1906

Year finished

1926

Physical description including fabric (i.e. building materials)

Site

The site of the school grounds retains the original boundaries incorporating the school site of 1870, and the adjacent paddock purchased formally in 1960. The land falls gently toward Station Street. The original school lot is the most developed and includes the 1906 School Building, two toilets (which encroach on the adjacent paddock boundary) and a weather shed. Vegetation on this site includes remnant large Eucalypt species, and some seedlings, boundary plantings of Privett to the South and East Boundary, and eucalypt and pine / cypress species to the north boundary. An area of eucalypt seedlings and Silky Oak are loosely placed around a levelled play area that may have been a former tennis court.

There are various dirt driveways / car tracks evident including the main current drive to the school house from the 1960's opening in the front fence, another drive through the Silky Oaks and pin oak area toward the 1906 school bell, going past the levelled play area. This drive continues past the 1906 school building through to the rear of the property. Two significant sections of this drive are stone paved, being adjacent to the school bell, and for a significant section of the rear area. The rear section is also brick edged and may indicate the driveway to the upgraded 1870 residence in its 1906 configuration. There is also a substantial pile of sandstone paving stones adjacent to the school bell indicating that some areas of this drive had been removed previously.

A brick edged sandstone paved path leaves the drive in the rear section toward what would have been the location of the former residence front door.

Ornamental trees on the original school site are limited to some formally planted Italian Cypress which are likely to date from later gardens around the 1906 school, a Crepe Myrtle and one deciduous tree (unidentified) behind the school. The Crepe Myrtle and deciduous tree may relate to the older residential garden.

Other planted trees in the playground area may include two Silky Oaks around what may have been a tennis court terrace in front of the school. There is little evidence remaining of the proposed Arbor Day boundary planting of the 1890's, other than possibly two large Golden Cypress, some seedling Radiata, and a seedling Thuja. A dead Pinoak on the railway boundary may also date from the 1890's.

A grove has been created in the hedge area between the Italian Cypress and the hedge, possibly by trespassers since the school has closed. A BMX track formed in the adjacent dirt is also likely to be a similarly modern element.

There are no remains of the former 1870's residence on the site, or the out houses associated with it. Nor are any of the orchard trees remaining on site. The rear area has been cleared and levelled, and is predominantly grassed. There are the remains of timber fence posts set into concrete foundations that may have been a screening fence emanating from the rear of the school building.

There are a number of coal dumps in the Station Street frontage area of the original school yard.

There also remains on site a timber flagpole lying on the ground adjacent to the school bell. The flagpole base is located in the centre front of the concrete assembly area. There are paths connecting the assembly area to the toilets and weather shed, and a fence connecting the corner of the school to the residence fence.

The adjacent paddock site is predominantly open grassed space with a few individual large Eucalypts. The School residence built in the 1960's straddles the boundary of the paddock and the original school site. Septic tanks for the property are located at the Station Street frontage of this site.

The remains of an original timber post and wire fence are present at the Station Street frontage, and at the front of the Residence yard, that indicate the former paddock boundary fence.

An Asbestos Water pipe for supply possibly to the Rotolactor runs through both properties, and was added in 1933. The water from this is connected to the weather shed.

School Building

The School building is intact to its 1926 form and also contains the intact and identifiable remains of the 1906 building.

The school building is a single detached brick building containing two classrooms separated by a timber sliding partition wall. A verandah runs along the northern side of the building and contains one enclosed room and the western end is also enclosed.

The detail of the building is consistent to the 1906 design continuing the brick detail, window and door styling, heads and sills and the gable end detail from the first design, including the use of Flemish bond brickwork to the verandah side of the building and stretcher bond brickwork to the remainder of the building. Windows from the original building that were removed were relocated to new locations in 1926.

The 1906 building can be identified by the use of simple painted brick to the internal walls, and the change in floor boards.

A slight difference in the colour of the foundation bricks is also apparent in the 1906 section which is indicative of the higher level of detail observed by W.L. Vernon in his designs. (ie the main brick work is a red / blue brick, with the foundation walls being a red colour elements. The red brick was the only brick colour used in the 1926 additions.

The 1926 windows to the verandah display a new (1926) technique to allow opening and fly screening for ventilation. The windows are a combination sash and awning window. Roof ventilation shafts were also added in the 1926 additions. Also typical to the 1926 period are the new combustion stoves provided to replace the original chimney, and the timber sliding and glazed partition door. The locations of these stoves remains but the Stoves have been removed. Not all the additions included on the 1926 plans were carried out as is indicated by the retention of the two eastern windows.

The 1926 windows and openings can be identified by the use of concrete lintels on the internal face, (brick arches are retained to match on the outside), whereas the heads of the 1906 building are brick arches.

A Hat rack remains in the verandah room from the 1926 period.

Alterations that have occurred since 1926 include the removal of the chimney to the eastern room stove and the painting of the glazed sections of the partition wall. Metal soffit lining has been placed over the original timber soffits to the verandah, and some doors have been replaced with Modern solid core doors.

The building otherwise remains highly intact to the 1926 period including brickwork detail, timber boarding timber posts and fretwork timber floors exposed rafters and ceiling linings, windows and doors, Roof vents shafts and vent cowl.

The building has suffered from extensive vandalism. However this has not damaged the floor or the ceiling, but has been limited to graffiti and breaking of glass and door panels.

There is evidence of some structural movement at the north eastern corner with top to ground cracking in the brick work adjacent to the window. This window was a replacement of a door and the works to do this, and remove the chimney in 1926 may have been the cause of some of this movement. There is no corresponding cracking on the eastern wall, or the south eastern end that would indicate general footings movement. The cracking is likely to be resulting from foundation movement possibly aggravated by the open downpipe in the South east corner. The structural report noted that this was not likely to be an issue of ongoing structural degradation or safety.

The building is subject to termite damage throughout the ceiling linings, internal wall lining boards and the central dividing wall. Termite damage is also evident in the verandah beams which have also been subject to rotting. Timber substructure was not inspected by the termite inspectors but appears to be sound. Similarly the roof structure is also likely to be sound if constructed of hardwood, as there is no evidence of ceiling structure degradation other than the verandah beams. No live termites were found.

Outbuildings

Weather shed.

The current weather shed is not the original weather shed provided for the site in 1878. the 1878 weather shed was located at the rear of the property. This shed may have been moved in the 1906 works, as it is noted as " Old" near the current location in the 1926 plans.

The records of the school indicate that the weather shed from 1826 onwards was in trouble, and noted as derelict in 1930. As such it can be assumed that the current weather shed replaced this derelict shed some time after 1930.

The structure of the weather shed confirms an interwar construction which places its construction in the 1930's.

The weather shed is in generally sound condition, although is beginning to show signs of disrepair. It is interesting to note that children's mural paintings that line the walls of the shed, although completely exposed to vandalism, have not been graffitied or vandalised. This may indicate that the painting have personal meaning to the local community including those that might be otherwise vandalising the site.

There is some termite damage in all linings and structural timber in the weather shed. (Not live).

Residence.

The residence yard includes a face brick garage and house dating from the 1960's, with timber framed windows and tiled roofing. The site includes a clothes line some concrete paths and a septic tank. Garden plantings include callistemon, japonica and many shrub plantings and remnant eucalypts.

The 1960's brick residence has been highly vandalised internally with most major fittings removed. It is likely to contain a significant amount of asbestos related products dating from the 1960's in friable form and is in an exceptionally poor and dangerous condition.

Live termites were found at the residence – sp *Coptotermes*. Their presence indicates an on going termite danger to all structures on the property. Termite damage was evident throughout the residence.

Village / Rural Character

Menangle Village retains its essential character as a small tenant farming village centred around the village church of St James. Relationship with the Rotolactor remains highly visible and the rural landscape dominated by the Railway Bridge, link the village back to its heritage as a focal point for the trading activity of Camden Park Estate.

A number of intact buildings from the Camden Park tenant village era remain including the key buildings of the school (Federation), St James Church (Victorian), the Catholic Church (Victorian), the General Store (Interwar), and the remaining rows of cottages spanning the Victorian to Interwar periods, lining the main streets, being Menangle Road, Woodbridge Road, and Station Street.

Modern housing developments in a modern cul de sac style layout have been placed behind the main circulation routes.

Physical condition

School and weather shed dilapidated but in repairable state. Residence severely dilapidated, noted for demolition in the 2007 HIS.

Modifications/dates

1930s weather shed and 1960s residence.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Heritage Impact Statement, Oct 2007, Margaret Fallon B Arch RAIA, Integrated Design Associates, 10 Asquith Avenue Wentworth Falls NSW 2782, Ph (02) 4757 1856.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By 1858 when the Denominational Board visited Menangle, two schools were noted in the village - the protestant (Church of England) school, in a slab hut on the site of St James, and the bigger and more organised Catholic School, which was a weatherboard building, also used for a church. Menangle had a large population of Irish workers who made for a strong village identity.

The site for Menangle school was purchased from Sir William Macarthur, Amelia Macarthur, Arthur Alexander Walton Onslow and Elizabeth Onslow (Camden Park Estate) in 1870. This site was Lot 1 DP 795181. The second site remained an open paddock used by the school from at least 1894, but was not purchased formally from the Camden Park Estate until 1960. The sale was a gentleman's agreement of \$1 shared between the four Macarthur descendants.

The school on the site was first erected to the rear of the current school as a single room school with a residence attached in 1871. A weather shed was provided in 1878, located at the rear of the property, and additions were made to the residence (new Kitchen) in the 1890's.

The School in the 1890's period had significant laid out gardens with an orchard and agricultural test plots laid out adjacent to the school and the residence, and formal flower gardens laid out in the front of the school. Between these and Station Street was a large playground area bounded by boundary plantings of trees planted out for Arbor Day. The Children's agricultural plots were still present in the 1920's period.

There is little remaining evidence of these areas other than some large trees along the eastern and northern edge of the playground, including two Large Golden Cypress, and one now dead Pin Oak.

The current free standing school room was built in 1906 and the residence was extended to incorporate the old school room into the residence. The Dept. of Education Heritage Report (2007) for the school indicated that the 1906 school building was designed by James Wigram (Schools Architect 1896 - 1908), however the plans for the building carry the signature of W.L. Vernon (1846 - 1914), NSW government Architect of the period 1890 - 1910, and not that of Wigram. It may be the Wigram developed the prototype that Vernon used, or that Vernon signed off on the drawings in a supervisory capacity.

W.L. Vernon was a significant "federation free style" architect who during his tenure of office was responsible for several schools, post offices and other significant government buildings in NSW. Many of these buildings are recognised heritage items. W.L. Vernon is noted on the RAI A register of significant 20th century architects. Features within the school building that demonstrate the influence of W.L. Vernon are :

- Use of red brick,
- Brick header courses to windows,
- Two tones of brick to mark the floor level
- Stucco render to gable ends.
- Timber decorative fret work.

The 1906 school building was upgraded in 1926 to its current form including an addition built to match the detail of the 1906 design, with a timber sliding partition wall, to provide for two classrooms. The 1926 additions bear the signature of Architect RMS Wells.

The 1926 plans indicate an "old" weather shed and pre-existing toilets in the vicinity of the current toilets and weather shed, This would indicate that they may have dated from the 1906 building of the new distinct school room and the separation of the school area from the residential area. The detail of the toilet wing walls indicate a later date than 1906, and is more consistent with the later 1937 period.

The 1926 weather shed location is sufficiently different to the current location to indicate that the current weather shed is a later weather shed said to have been added in 1937.

The residence was demolished in 1959, and the current residence was built on the newly acquired adjacent land in 1960.

Menangle School Closed in 1976.

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

Historical

High local historical significance, both as an integral part of the Menangle Village Precinct and as a valued part of the history of the local community. Architecturally reflects the history of schooling in a small agricultural centre and the growth of new industries in the area.

Association

Connected to important government building designers of the Federation period: James Wigram (Schools Architect 1896 - 1908), W.L. Vernon (1846 – 1914), NSW government Architect of the period 1890 - 1910

Aesthetic

Moderate aesthetic significance as an old prototype weatherboard building, contributing to views in the Menangle Village Heritage Conservation Area.

Technical

Not significant under this criterion.

Social

Not significant under this criterion.

Research

Low technical significance for demonstrating construction technology of the Federation period.

Rarity

Moderate rarity as an unusually intact early example of a modern school prototype prevalent through the 1920s.

Representativeness

Good example of an early 20th century prototype school.

Intactness

School building substantially intact.

LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Very High

- 1906 - 1926 brick school building including all internal and external fabric and remaining detail.
- 1906 Bell Stand
- View line through the school grounds to St James church from the railway and Menangle Road approaches to the village.

High

- Remaining elements from the previous residence and school building (1871 - 1959) to the rear of the site including the remnant stone and brick edged drive and pathway.
- Any underground remains representing the footprint of the former residence, weather shed or other out buildings.
- Remaining tree plantings from the Arbor Day and boundary plantings including: Cypress / Pine plantings including Golden Cypress, Thuja, and Radiata, Eucalypts remaining from the indigenous species of the area, as their free standing grandeur within the grassland is a significant part of the rural Character of the Camden Park Estate.
- Children's paintings in the Weather shed.

Archaeological Potential

- Ground undulations, terraces and former circulation routes, fence post housings, and flag pole housings.

Moderate

- Toilets and Weather shed, concrete paving and modern circulation routes.
- Hedge planting around eastern and southern perimeter. (the plants themselves are a weed species and should be removed, however the form of boundary definition by hedge / dense trees or shrubs helps to define the perimeter.)
- The remaining timber flagpole, sandstone blocks and paving stones left as rubble on the site.

Neutral

- BMX track and Fireplace "grove".

Intrusive

- The 1960 Residence.
- Modern metal fencing.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Menangle Public School of the 1906 School is an unusually intact early example of a modern school prototype prevalent through the 1920s. This school type was initially developed by James Wigram in the late 1890's as a change from the Victorian Gothic styling of George Allen Mansfield, to a more functional style.

The site is of high local significance, both as an integral part of the Menangle Village Precinct and as a valued part of the history of the local community. Architecturally the existing school house and weather shed reflect the history of schooling in a small agricultural centre and the growth of new industries in the area.

At a regional level the links between the sites development and the Macarthur families Camden Park Estate contribute significance to the school site as a whole.

The condition and the integrity of the remaining School building has not diminished since its closure, other than the vandalism of repairable elements such as glazing and door panels, and possibly additional termite damage of replaceable elements. As such, the School Building will continue to be cons of local heritage significance, as a rare remaining intact example of the Federation period prototype government brick school building.

The School was built under the supervision of the NSW Government Architect Walter Liberty Vernon, and the design drawings bear his signature. The building is a small simple example of the work that was done by the NSW Architects Office in the federation period and bears simplified and basic versions of many of the Vernon features. Most remaining Vernon designed buildings are now listed as heritage items. Menangle Public School is not a grand example within the Vernon Buildings listed elsewhere. But it was a small building, so opportunities for displays of architectural detail were limited.

The visual contribution of the school building to the Menangle Conservation Area remains undiminished and should continue to be considered important as a core village building dating from the principal development period of the township.

The visibility of St James Church through the school site is significant as a view line into and within the Conservation Area.

Remaining outbuildings on the site including the toilet and weather shed are significant in contributing to an understanding of the layout of the school from at least 1926. However they are not significant buildings in their own right. The children's paintings on the interior of the weather shed are clearly significant to the local community, given the care with which they had been treated within an otherwise highly vandalised site.