
APPENDIX E – EXTRACT FROM STATE HERITAGE REGISTRY REPORT

GORDON'S GAOL, MARIA RIVER , NEAR CRESCENT HEAD

June 2006



Kempsey Heritage Inventory

SHI Number
1850426

State Heritage Inventory

Item Name: **GORDON'S GAOL**

Location: **NEAR MARIA RIVER, CRESCENT HEAD [Kempsey]**

Address: NEAR MARIA RIVER
Suburb / Nearest Town: CRESCENT HEAD
Local Govt Area: Kempsey
State:
DUAP Region: Northern
Historic region: North Coast
Parish:
County:
Other/Former Names: Gordon's Hill, Yarra Station.
Area/Group/Complex: **Group ID:**

Aboriginal Area:

Curtilage/Boundary: At the foot of Gordon's Hill lot 1 DP 196559

Item Type: Built **Group:** Law Enforcement **Category:** Cell

Owner: Private - Individual

Admin Codes: 12909 **Code 2:** **Code 3:**

Current Use: Set aside as a heritage area.

Former Uses: A pastoral holding.

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: The ruins at Gordon's Hill are significant because they represent a time in convict history. The site and ruins are surviving physical evidence of holding cells for prisoners away from their barracks.

Historical Notes or Provenance: Captain James Gordon and his family came to Australia as a member of Sir George Gipps suite aboard the "Upton Castle" from Plymouth, via Cape of Good Hope, which arrived on 23rd February 1838. After remaining for a time in Sydney, Capt. Gordon went to Port Macquarie where he was appointed as a Magistrate. He is shown at living at Pipers Point, Port Macquarie. He was granted 1160 acres (406hectares) on the Maria River, 12 kilometres from Kempsey. This property was named Yarra and in the 1841 census showed a stone house and six servants. There are remains of stone shelters for convicts. These were beehive shaped. The ruins are the only convict habitation sites left undisturbed. They have fallen down through neglect. The shelters or cells are thought to have housed convicts when they rowed up from Port Macquarie. A homestead site has been identified as being in the area. Gordon established a vineyard and in 1994 it was still discernable by the terraces. Local people have told how cuttings were taken and propagated well into the twentieth century.

Themes:

Designer: James Gordon.

Maker / Builder:

Year Started: **Year Completed:** **Circa:** No

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Physical Description: The cells or shelters were described as corbelled constructions, built straight up and then stepped in half a width and the roof was domed.

Physical Condition:

Modification Dates:

**Recommended
Management:**

Management:

Further Comments: Professor Ian Jack, Heritage Archaeologist, advised that if cleared without the advice of an archaeologist, damage could be done inadvertently. The important thing is to know what is being sought. (1994)
John Appleton, Archaeological Surveys and Reports Pty. Ltd. July 2002 also advised caution. On page 54 of his report, he stated 'The developer has expressed the intention of setting aside the area of the ruins as a reserve, thereby excluding the area from development on Lot 1, DP 196559. As a consequence of this investigation it is recommended that the area be set aside as the Reserve is all that area contained within the co-ordinates AMG 56 488701E 6547800N AMG 56 488885E 6547800N AMG 56 488701E 6547705N AMG 56 488885E 6547705N
Tracks have been cleared along the riverbank to the west of the ruins and east to west along the northern end of the ridge to join the riverbank track. These tracks do not impact on the ruins and may be retained where they impinge into the proposed reserve for fire trails, but they should be retained in their present positions where they occur within the reserve without alteration. The whole report should be read before any clearing is done. IT IS COMMENDABLE THAT THE OWNER IS WILLING TO RESERVE THE SITE.

- Criteria a)** The site is assessed to be of local significance because of the association of the ruins with the early phase in the establishment of a route between Kempsey and Port Macquarie, via Maria River.
- Criteria b)** There is a historical association of the site with Captain James Gordon, a man with distinguished service record in the Royal Navy, Chief Magistrate, and pioneer grape grower. However it is the mystery, which surrounds the 'convict cells', which perpetuates his memory.
- Criteria c)** The site is 'unimproved' by additions or alterations the buildings represent a purpose built complex of the settlers of era of the 1840s and if and when its function is properly understood it may prove to be an unique example of its kind. It is unlikely that such a complex of buildings in such a unique context survive elsewhere.
- Criteria d)**
- Criteria e)** There is some potential for there to be archaeological evidence buried beneath the rubble. There is also the possibility that there are archaeological remains on the summit of the hill, which could establish the location of the homestead.
- Criteria f)**
- Criteria g)**

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Integrity / Intactness:

References:	Author	Title	Year
	John Appleton	Archaeological Surveys and Reports for Robert Dennis & Ass. on behalf of M.L. Corbett.	2002
	Professor Ian Jack	Interview on site during an excursion in 1994.	

Studies:

Parcels:

Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial Accuracy:

Map Name:

Map Scale:

AMG Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listings:	Name:	Title:	Number:	Date:
	Potential Heritage Item			

Custom Field One:

Custom Field Two:

Custom Field Three:

Custom Field Four:

Custom Field Five:

Custom Field Six:

Data Entry:	Date First Entered: 12/09/2005	Date Updated: 12/09/2005	Status: Basic
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