

Item name: Willsons Downfall General Cemetery**Location:** off Mount Lindesay Road Liston 2372

Tenterfield

Address: off Mount Lindesay Road**Planning:** Northern**Suburb/nearest town:** Liston 2372**Local govt area:** Tenterfield**State:** NSW**Parish:****County:****Other/former names:****Area/group/complex:****Group ID:****Aboriginal area:****Curtilage/boundary:** The property boundaries**Item type:** Archaeological-Terrestrial**Group:** Cemeteries and Burial Sites**Category:** Cemetery/Graveyard/Burial Ground**Owner:** State Government**Admin codes:****Code 2:****Code 3:****Current use:** Historic Cemetery**Former uses:** Cemetery**Assessed significance:** Local**Endorsed significance:** Local

Statement of significance: This historic cemetery located near the original main road from Sydney to Brisbane is historically significant with a complex history of burials which date before and after the formal survey of a village cemetery on the site. It is significant as a part of a once thriving mining and timber area. 77 people, including 25 infants and children, were laid to rest in this cemetery between 1870 and 1934. 8 headstones exist but most people were buried in unmarked graves. Many were miners with no close family and it was difficult to preserve bodies and transport them back to their home towns. Depressions in the ground are the only evidence of the unmarked graves.. It demonstrates associative and aesthetic significance with early pioneer settler families, represented by a range of monumental styles, many of high artistic and technical accomplishment. The site has a serene natural bushland character and there are signs of care and it holds an ongoing relationship with the Liston and Stanthorpe Communities. Interpretive signage has been prepared in close consultation with local residents and family descendants to enhance the understanding of the place for future generations.

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Historical notes Local Historical Background

of provenance: A number of Aboriginal groups occupied the Tenterfield area at the time of European contact, including the Badjalong people (Bundjalung), from the headwaters of the Clarence and Richmond Rivers to Tabulam and Baryugil; Kitabal (Githabul, a dialect group of the Bundjalung) whose territory included Urbenville, Woodenbong and Tooloom, south to Tabulam and Drake; and the Ngarabal, people who traditionally occupied the land from Bolivia to Stonehenge. The Jukambal people were known for historic seasonal movement through the shire.

European exploration to the region started in the early 1800s dominated by major pastoralists with land controlled by Governor Macquarie. By 1836 the first squatting licences were issued and the 1862 Land Acts, then enabled the free selection of unalienated land by selectors. Early homesteads often included a complex of buildings with their own butchers, bakers and blacksmiths. Closer settlement occurred during the 19th century with the Returned Soldiers Settlement Act 1916 which allowed larger estates to be cut up for smaller family farms.

A network of crown villages and reserves was laid out by Government surveyors, although some never developed beyond early mining settlements. Evidence of the gold, silver, tin, silica and arsenic mining history of the region is evident in many locations. The completion of the railway line to Tenterfield in 1886 boosted the development of Tenterfield as a regional centre and the development of smaller villages on the route such as Bolivia and Sandy Flat.

Early industries were developed for processing of agricultural products for local use and economic gain. Meatworks, flour mills, and bakeries are still evident from these early days whilst other processes such as brickworks and timber mills may now yield only archaeological evidence.

The township of Tenterfield boomed between 1870s and 1930s, with the development of the School of Arts, several large hotels, banks and a majestic Post Office. A Victorian complex of police station, courthouse and gaol were added to the town. The town is well known for its association with Henry Parkes and the foundation of the Federation of Australia movement. The development of accommodation, commerce, education and health, religion, and leisure are all illustrated by a variety of original buildings and sites throughout the area. The impact of politics and economic tariffs by Queensland, triggered developments such as the tobacco industry from the 1930s.

Tenterfield has strong association with defence through early recruiting and cavalry training. During World War 11, Tenterfield was a location for large military encampments and evidence still exists of some significant structures such as the Tank Traps and several drill halls.

In terms of economy, traditional processing and local manufacturing has declined in recent decades due to centralisation. The Tenterfield area has developed an increasingly important economic role with more service industry, and as a tourist destination based on its high altitude location, abundant natural heritage in the varied national parks and reserves, and its appealing collection of well conserved historic buildings from the 19th and 20th centuries.

THIS ITEM

Willsons Downfall lies at a crossing point of traditional lands of Aboriginal Peoples including Ngarabal and Kambuwal to the west and Bundjalung to the east. The Bundjalung Nation extends from the northern side of the Clarence River to the Logan River in Queensland and west to the Great Dividing Range near Tenterfield and Stanthorpe. The Kambuwal People's territory straddles the border between Queensland and New South Wales and extends from Millmerran south to Bonshaw, with an eastern flank around Stanthorpe, Wallangarra to the western scarp of the Great Dividing Range. The Kambuwal boundary was originally marked by a scar tree located about 200m from the Willsons Downfall Post Office site.

Willsons Downfall was once a busy timber and mining area which originally formed part of the Lunatic Goldfield. A rush of miners followed the discovery of rich deposits of tin at Ruby Creek in 1872 and thriving settlements quickly grew. Willsons Downfall was a busy hub with a school, post office, court house, shops including a watchmaker and jeweller, dentist, boarding houses, hotel, Chinese market gardens, a town common, police station, gaol and the cemetery. The gaol built in 1876, is now located in the grounds of Stanthorpe Museum. Willsons Downfall was located on the main road from Tenterfield and Maryland to Warwick, along which there were hotels about every 10 miles, offering fresh horse changes, a rest for travellers and a drink for thirsty miners.

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Tenterfield

This historic locality was named after George Willson; (1826-1869). The gold mining era of the 1850s-60s, and tin mining decades of the 1870s to 1900s drew hundreds of people to this area. George Willson had a major general store in Tenterfield and did a roaring trade delivering regular supplies to mining camps all the way through 'Tenterfield Run' and as far as 'Maryland Run'. This subsequently became the old New England Highway leading to the north.

Much of the road was very rough, especially at the creek crossings. Wylie Creek crossing was particularly difficult to negotiate after heavy rain, and tin miners were as busy at work in the vicinity. George Willson on such an occasion lost control of his wagon in the creek, broke an axle and overturned. The wagon and its contents were all tossed into the drink. This event gave rise to the area being known as 'Willsons Downfall' and became the official name of the area, honouring George Willson, a respected Tenterfield storekeeper, who gave generously of his time and skills to civic matters in Tenterfield, and gave assistance to pioneer miners.

George Willson went on to become a prominent businessman and in partnership with Charles Sweetland, he owned or had mortgages over many town properties in Tenterfield. Unfortunately, his commercial ventures ended in insolvency and a financial downfall, but it was the physical event that gave the place Willsons Downfall its name. He was made a Justice of the Peace in 1864 and petitioned to annexe this area to the colony of Queensland, due to its remoteness of 500 miles (760km) from the Government of NSW. George Willson died in Tenterfield in 1869 aged 43.

In the early years, the spelling of Willsons Downfall was 'corrected' by the Lands Department to 'Wilsons' on government maps, and on the Cemetery plan, but the official spelling was later restored.

According to a 2008 newsarticle, 74 people were laid to rest in this cemetery between 1870 and 1920, including 25 children. Many were buried in unmarked graves. This may be because some were itinerant mining workers and had no close family ties. Only 6 headstones now remain and the depressions in the ground of the unmarked graves. The cemetery has an area of 3.2 hectares or 8 acres and was set aside with a General Cemetery, and dedicated sections for different denominations.

National Trust Register Listing information.

Original landowners are represented in the cemetery, eg Palmers, Dillons, and (indirectly) Kiernans, who were intermarried with the Lamonts.

The boundaries of the cemetery are quite unusual. The cemetery area as dedicated in 1884 is shown in the map in the report, but there are graves in the two areas shown adjacent to the cemetery— Graves Reserve [6] and Portion 17. Burials in the area marked [6], (which was not reserved for preservation of graves until 1895) predated the cemetery dedication. The later reservation was apparently a residual area of an earlier (1879?) reserve or Common which the locals had used for burials before the general cemetery was surveyed. It was reserved "for graves" when the status of the pre-existing reserve was changed. The Cook family graves on Lot 17 are another oddity. The dates on remaining headstones all post-date the cemetery dedication, but it may be that there had been earlier family graves on the plot, and later burials took place there for that reason. This would fit with the fact that the portion was auctioned to Thomas Cook after survey (1899).

Themes: National theme
9. Phases of Life**State theme**
Birth and Death**Local theme****Designer:****Builder:****Year started:** 1870**Year completed:** 1920**Circa:** No

Item name: Willsons Downfall General Cemetery**Location:** off Mount Lindesay Road Liston 2372

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Physical description: The cemetery has an area of 3.2 hectares or 8 acres and was set aside with a General Cemetery, and dedicated sections for different denominations. Although there are now about 20 marked graves in 8 plots, there are also about 10 fairly unambiguous grave depressions, and (reportedly) another 30 unmarked graves. According to a newspaper article in 2008, 74 people were laid to rest in this cemetery between 1870 and 1920, including 25 children.

The cemetery had become overgrown comprising regrowth with understorey of native grasses and some shrubs, surrounded by rolling, partly cleared grazing land. It is reached by a signposted track from the Mount Lindesay Road. The cemetery has three parts. The dedicated cemetery of 8 acres (3.2 ha) has an adjacent reserve R22149 (Ms555Ae) for preservation of graves on the southeast of about $\frac{3}{4}$ acre (0.3ha). There are a set of graves also on Lot 17, adjacent to the western boundary of the surveyed cemetery. The main cemetery area is bounded on the N, E and S sides by sound post and wire fencing, with none on the west. The graves reserve R22149 is separately fenced. Lot 17 is unfenced.

Extant monuments are widely scattered, probably in their denominational groups, though one Catholic monument appears to be in the central carriageway. Monuments are generally of good quality, somewhat damaged to varying degrees by roots and falling branches.

Two groups of grave sites show the remains of timber post and rail surrounds, at least one of which had palings. Other graves have stone kerbing, one with a surrounding footpath (Cook, Lot 17). Browne was noted, but no other masons. There is little sign of plantings, except one instance of flowers introduced recently just outside of a grave area.

The natural values of the site are appreciated and a plant survey was undertaken by Stanthorpe Wildflower Group in December 2020 and identified over 76 species of trees, flowering plants and ferns.

Physical condition level: Fair

Physical condition: The site is overgrown and in need of management. The headstones are in varying degrees of intactness.

Archaeological potential level: High

Archaeological potential Detail:

Modification dates:

Item name: Willsons Downfall General Cemetery

Location: off Mount Lindesay Road Liston 2372

Tenterfield

Recommended management: All work should be based on a thorough understanding of the place and its significance, and consistent with the conservation articles of the ICOMOS Burra Charter. Attention is directed to the NSW Heritage Act 1977 and the provisions of the Act in relation to the exposure of relics.

Physical works on site- Precautionary Approach All works must be based on the Precautionary Approach- Do as much as necessary but as little possible

Must observe caution for unknown sites and relics.

Works should also be in accordance with the National Trust Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation.

Clearing of weeds and vegetation

Use non-invasive methods. No whipper snipping should occur around base of stones, as it cuts into stone and opens up hard casing. Use weedkillers instead or careful hand method for weed/grass control.

Works to stabilise headstones

Stabilise or Prop

Fallen headstones should be angled to ensure water is draining off and not pooling on surface.

Improve drainage around sites to remove water and minimise rising damp.

Cleaning

No cleaning of headstones and related memorial fences.

Aim is to maintain the historic patina on headstones. It is not intended to clean it up or make it look new again!

Only biological growth can be removed with care subject to guidelines for memorial conservation. No abrasive methods, no wire wool, never use acid on stone, only PH neutral.

Inscriptions

There should be no re-engraving of lettering.

Plaques may be placed near graves with details of faded inscriptions.

Missing lead letters may be reinstated.

Lettering should not be repainted back in unless it is by an expert conservator as it can lead to poor results.

Management: Management category

Management name

Further comments: An interpretation sign has been prepared in consultation with the local community to highlight the significance of this site and promote better understanding of its history and future management.

Criteria a): Willsons Downfall General Cemetery is historically significant as evidence of a settlement based on a once busy timber and mining area which originally formed part of the Lunatic Goldfield and discovery of rich deposits of tin at Ruby Creek in 1872 . This cemetery site near the original main road from Sydney to Brisbane has a complex history of burials before and after the formal survey of a village cemetery on the site and includes a number of early pioneer settler families and itinerant miners.

Criteria b): The cemetery holds associative significance with early pioneer settler families to this area and those associated with early mining operations.

Criteria c): This cemetery demonstrates aesthetic significance for its setting and the range of monumental styles, many of high artistic and technical accomplishment and for its natural and peaceful landscaped setting.

Criteria d): The Cemetery holds immense significance to the local community and to descendants of the persons laid to rest.

Item name: Willsons Downfall General Cemetery

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Tenterfield

Criteria e): The Cemetery has value for future research of the families and persons associated with this settlement.
[Research significance]

Criteria f): The cemetery is rare locally.
[Rarity]

Criteria g): The cemetery is representative of a non operational rural historic cemetery.
[Representative]

Intactness/Integrity: Variable levels of intactness of monuments and burial sites.

References:	Author	Title	Year
	Halliday, K	Tenterfield Community Based Heritage Study	2005
	George Gibbons	National Trust Register Listing undated report	
	Clarence Heritage	Interpretation Material Willsons Downfall Historic Cemetery	2021

Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year

Parcels:	Parcel code	Lot number	Section number	Plan code	Plan number
	LOT	7008 and 7009		DP	1055391
	LOT	1		DP	161580
	LOT	1		DP	668360
	CROWN LAND	7003		DP	1032092

Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial accuracy:

Map name:

Map scale:

AMG zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listing: Name

Title

Number

ListingDate

Willsons Downfall General Cemete National Trust of Australia register

Data entry: Data first entered: 27/09/2020

Data updated: 27/04/2021

Status: Partial

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Tenterfield

Image:



Caption: Headstone Maria Rebora

Copy right:

Image by: D.Wray

Image date: 17/08/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/3451f9916620380456c8f8ee497754bcd38.JPG>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test3451f9916620380456c8f8ee497754bcd38.JPG

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Tenterfield



Caption: William Palmer headstone 1882 and Grandson, Roy Hosking

Copy right:

Image by: D.Wray

Image date: 17/08/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345c28df43c88c343bc9ac064c2f25eb4a2.JPG>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test345c28df43c88c343bc9ac064c2f25eb4a2.JPG

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Tenterfield



Caption: Patrick Gallagher headstone

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Image by: D.Wray

Image date: 17/08/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/34537581c9bd3da4fc38a56a9324c3336ff.JPG>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAP/P/Thumb_test34537581c9bd3da4fc38a56a9324c3336ff.JPG

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Tenterfield



Caption: General site context

Copy right:

Image by: D.Wray

Image date: 17/08/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/34550100e83d6a54fd6b6b74fc2351ef72a.JPG>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test34550100e83d6a54fd6b6b74fc2351ef72a.JPG

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Caption: Plaque insert removed

Copy right:

Image by: D.Wray

Image date: 17/08/2018

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345a173223c04474262b6eeaced9c738874.JPG>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test345a173223c04474262b6eeaced9c738874.JPG