

LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AREA

DENMAN	MUSWELLBROOK-JERRYS PLAINS	HUNTER
Location	Name or identification of listing	Region
Proposer A.M. WARD R.MCDOUGALL	Crown land X Freehold X	Map reference Singleton 1 : 250 000
Date of Proposal 16.8.84	Local Govt Area/s	Owner/s
Suggested Listing Category CLASSIFIED	MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE	PRIVATE/VARIOUS
Committee (Trust use) LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION		
Council (Trust use) 21.1.85		

Reasons for Listing

- Aesthetic:** The lush cultivated alluvial flats of the central Hunter and lower Goulburn Rivers present a magnificent view, with the wide valley floor of majestic scale bounded by low hills to the east and west and the rugged escarpment of Wollemi National Park to the south (Appendix A).
- Social:** This area contains many of the high quality properties and large pastoral estates which contribute to the great rural wealth of the Hunter Valley (Appendix B).

Description

The area begins along the Hunter River a short distance below Muswellbrook and comprises the long sweep of valley floor extending south-westerly some 25 km to the junction of the Goulburn River at Denman. The section of the Goulburn River Valley below Sandy Hollow is included. The area then extends some 25 km south-easterly down the Hunter Valley to Jerrys Plains Ridge. In this lower section, the valley widens and embraces several major tributaries. The escarpment of Wollemi National Park comprises the southern boundary of the area.

Geology and Landform - (Appendix C)

Recommendations

The high scenic and cultural qualities of the listed area should be protected through appropriate Environmental Protection zonings under a Local Environmental Plan.

Open cut mining of the alluvial river flats should not be permitted. Should it be necessary for open-cut mining of the non-alluvial lands, the aesthetic and social values of the Classified area should be recognised in the mining operation and the rehabilitation programme.

Bibliography

- W. Allan Wood : Dawn in the Valley : Wentworth Books 1972
C.S.I.R.O. : General Report on the Lands of the Hunter Valley 1963

MUSWELLBROOK-JERRYS PLAINS

APPENDIX A

Scenic Values

The upper section of the area comprises a flat alluvial flood plain contained on each side by low rolling hills. The land has been cleared for intensive farming - crops, dairy farming and vineyards - on the floodplain and grazing on the foothills.

The area has an air of rural prosperity, many large holdings with magnificent historic homesteads contributing to this atmosphere.

The lower Goulburn River Valley also comprises flat valley floor, much narrower than the Hunter, and contained between the foothills. Mount Dangar stands dominant over the western end of the area, marking the eastern end of the Goulburn River National Park.

Below the Goulburn River junction, the Hunter flows south-easterly. The valley floor widens and the listed area embraces several major tributaries. The valleys of the creeks which enter from the north are wide and mostly cleared; those entering from the south are narrower and more rugged, with rough sandstone escarpments.

Throughout the whole area there are extensive views of the river flats, the enclosing hills and distant ranges. The colourful bluffs of Wollemi National Park dominate to the south, contrasting with the rolling hills which form the other boundaries. Overall the area provides continuous vistas of pleasant landscapes, with no intrusive elements.

APPENDIX BHistorical and Social Values

John Howe, Chief Constable of Windsor, was the first white man to see the Upper Hunter, when he led a small party to the crest of the Hunter Range and looked down over the Hunter Valley at what is now Jerrys Plains, but which he called Coomery Roy, in November, 1819. He travelled down Doyles Creek to reach the Hunter and was greatly impressed with the quality of the country. He remarked, "It is the finest sheep land I have seen since I left England and will grow as good a swath"

Five years later Henry Dangar completed the discovery of the Upper Hunter. In August, 1824, he proceeded westward from Foy Brook, crossed the watershed between Saltwater Creek and Muscle Brook, and entered the valley of the Upper Hunter - the first white man to do so.

In October of the same year he left Jerrys Plains, (then the limit of settlement) and proceeded westward up the unexplored section of the Hunter River beyond the limit discovered by John Howe five years earlier. Reaching the junction of the Goulburn and Hunter Rivers, he decided to follow up the latter, and eventually came to the area he had found earlier near Muscle Brook.

Dangar named the alluvial flats of the Hunter upstream from the junction of the Goulburn "Twickenham Meadows". Surgeon Peter Cunningham (brother of the explorer, Allen) described these meadows thus : "One of the finest natural prospects that can be witnessed The flat alluvial lands spread out before you are matted with luxuriant herbage. Branching evergreens are scattered singly or in clumps, with the river winding through the midst; its steep and grassy banks bordered with a deep green fringe of dark-foliaged swamp oaks. The gently rising hills beyond, thinly clothed with wide-spreading forest trees, extend in diversified magnificence as far as the eye can reach."

Following Dangar's expedition, there was a scramble for land in the area and all river frontages were soon taken. The beginnings of large pastoral estates were strung along the river upstream from Merton, the original village of the town of Denman.

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Many of the grants were made to Civil Servants and retired Navy and Army Officers. Two people who came to the colony on the same ship in 1825 applied for grants adjoining each other on the Upper Hunter. Surgeon Peter Cunningham located his grant at the confluence of the Hunter and Goulburn Rivers, and named his farm "Dalswinton" after his family's estate in Dumfriesshire. William Ogilvie, Lieut. R.N., selected the land immediately upstream on the Junter and named his farm "Merton" after a village in Surrey. The village of Merton developed in this area and soon became the regional centre of administration, and the mother village of the town of Denman.

"Piercefield" was originally a grant of 2,030 acres, in 1824, to William Carter, Master in Chancery in the Colony. The area of the property was increased to 9,000 acres in a few years, but Carter became disasterously involved in land and stock deals and mortgages, and his estate passed into the hands of James Bettington.

Captain John Pike of 73rd Regiment secured a grant of 2,000 acres and purchased a further 4,000 acres, to establish "Pickering" in 1825. He was the first man to take a dray to that part of the country, and his track, which others followed, became known as Captain Pike's Road. His wife Justine and daughter Mary Elizabeth were the first white women to go to the Upper Hunter.

Two of the most prominent properties in the area were those of the Hon. Francis Forbes, Chief Justice, and his brother, George. The former named his estate "Skellator" after a Forbes Estate near Aberdeen, Scotland, and the latter, "Edinglassie" after the ancestral home in Aberdeenshire.

Most of the large estates established in this era played a leading part in the development of the substantial rural wealth of the Hunter Valley.

MUSWELLBROOK-JERRYS PLAINS

APPENDIX C

Geology and Land Form

The area includes a large part of the floodplain surrounding the Goulburn and Hunter Rivers and as such it consists mainly of sandy alluvial terraces (Quaternary age) within which the River follows a meandering course. A wide range of fertile soils occur and are extensively cultivated. The system of alluvial terraces is well developed with local relief up to 10 m.

On either side of the floodplain, rocks of the Singleton Coal Measures (Permian age) occur. These include sandstone, shale, conglomerate and coal seams and give rise to the gently undulating land surface which adjoins the flat alluvial plain.

Landscape Conservation Area
MUSWELLBROOK - JERRYS PLAINS

Scale 1 : 250 000

