

22 August 2025

240184- Forbes Solar Farm Historical Heritage Memo

This specialist memo style assessment was prepared by NGH with regards to the consideration of historic heritage within the Project Site for the Forbes Solar Farm. As required by the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), the Project must assess the impact to historic heritage having regard to the *NSW Heritage Manual*. The assessment uses a primarily desktop-based approach and was completed by Senior Heritage Consultant Cassandra Venn a qualified NGH archaeologist.

Assessment Approach

This section considers the following information in its assessment of non-Aboriginal/historical heritage impacts for the proposed Forbes Solar Farm:

- Searches of national and state heritage databases. This includes the Australian Heritage Database (World, National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists), and the Heritage NSW State Heritage Inventory (State Heritage List, Section 170 registers and local heritage lists).
- Search of the Forbes Shire Council Local Environmental Plan 2013.
- Review of relevant literature.
- Visual inspection of the Project Site which was undertaken by an archaeologist concurrently during the survey for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) for the Project.

Heritage register searches

Searches of heritage databases were undertaken to identify any items or places in proximity to the Project Site, with a focus on the immediate area and its surrounding landscape. Desktop searches were undertaken on 09 April 2025 of the heritage registers.

The results of the Australian Heritage Database search indicated that:

- There are 27 heritage sites listed on the Australian Heritage Database within the Forbes LGA. No items are located within or adjacent to the Project site.
- None of these sites within the Forbes LGA are on the World Heritage List or National Heritage List.
- One of these sites within the Forbes LGA is on the Commonwealth Heritage List (Forbes Post Office), which is not located within or adjacent to the Project site.
- There are 26 sites within the Forbes LGA on the Register of National Estate (a non-statutory archive). No items are located within or adjacent to the Project site.

The results of the NSW State Heritage Inventory (SHI) database search indicated that:

- There are five previously recorded heritage sites listed on the State Heritage Register within the Forbes LGA. None are located within or adjacent to the Project site.
- There are 184 previously recorded heritage sites listed on the Forbes Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 and by State government agencies under s.170 of the Heritage Act. None are located within or adjacent to the Project site.

The closest known historic heritage site is Mary's Dream Mine Shaft (LEP#115) which is listed on the Forbes LEP 2012, located approximately 4km west of the Project Site.

No other known previously recorded heritage sites are located within or adjacent to the Project Site.

Local historical context

The first Europeans recorded as passing through the Forbes area was the Surveyor General John Oxley and his party, including Surveyor George William Evans, who camped in Forbes in 1817 and named it Camp Hill (Local History Book Committee 1997). Oxley was unimpressed with the landscape around the Lachlan River in the area stating that “It is impossible to fancy a worse country than the one we were now travelling over...” (Oxley 1817). Oxley’s reports did not encourage settlers, but Thomas Mitchell travelled to the area in 1836 and gave a more favourable report (Local History Book Committee 1997).

During Mitchell’s expedition he encountered “colonists” looking for cattle runs around Mount Amyot. It is said that large areas were “privately explored” or played host to squatters following Evans and Oxley’s expeditions. This was almost certainly also the situation around the Lachlan River area. In 1847 the NSW Government granted a number of 14-year leases which were taken up by squatters in the area (Local History Book Committee 1997). As a result, the earliest pasturage licence in the District of Forbes was Thomas Pye, Yengoura in 1939.

Early pastoral stations within the District of Forbes were Bugabagil and Drowbalgie whose common boundary was located approximately where the town of Forbes is today (Local History Book Committee 1997). The town of Forbes was established in 1861 when gold was discovered on these runs. Gold was apparently first found at a site approximately 60 yards “above” the current Commercial Hotel. Following this discovery miners from the Kiandra and Lambing Flat goldfields travelled to the area but gave up in two to three months. However, Harry Stephen persisted with his shaft which eventually bottomed out onto gold bearing gravel (Local History Book Committee 1997). A cairn near Lawler Street now marks this spot. A second gold rush followed this discovery and within months there were between 30,000 to 40,000 people in the area which included miners, speculators, traders and mechanics. The main problem encountered by miners was that water poured into the deeper mine shafts. Miners lived in either canvas tents or log huts with a bark roof. The actual town developed very quickly with the influx of people taking advantage of the goldfields (Local History Book Committee 1997).

The goldrush and the results of it also attracted a number of bushrangers to the area, the first of which was Frank Gardiner. Gardiner started his bushranging career at Lambing Flat (Young) in 1860 and later joined forces with Forbes local John O’Meally whose family owned a station near the Wedding Mountains (Local History Book Committee 1997). In 1862 Ben Hall joined the Gardiner gang. In 1865 the Gardiner Gang which included eight members by this time held up the gold escort at Eugowra where they stole 14 thousand pounds and fled to the Mt Wheogo hideout. Gardiner fled to Queensland and eventually died in San Francisco in 1890. Hall took control of the gang in 1864 when Gilbert went to Victoria to visit relatives. In 1865 the Hall trio (including Gilbert and John Dunn) held up a shop in Forbes for the first time. The trio later raided Yamma Station but only left with some port, brandy, a revolver and three horses. In May 1865 Ben Hall was ambushed near Billabong Creek after a tip off from a friend and was shot dead (Local History Book Committee 1997).

There are reports that the town was also known as the Lachlan Gold diggings or Lachlan Gold Fields and then briefly as Black Ridge. The name of Forbes was reportedly meant for another town (Hill End), but some communication was sent with the name Forbes by accident and before the mistake could be rectified the proclamation was gazetted. It is said that the name was in honour of Sir Francis Forbes who was the first Chief Justice of NSW (Local History Book Committee 1997).

By the end of the 1860’s gold had become secondary to the pastoral and developing agricultural enterprises of the district which transformed the area into the rural community it is today.

Historical landholdings and land use history

It is likely that the Project Site was occupied by squatters prior to the purchase of the land. There are various spellings of Daroualgie early pastoral stations and it appears as though the earliest spelling was Daroobalgie. There is a Thomas Arkell who is recorded as having obtained a licence to “depasture stock beyond the limits of location for the year ending 30th June, 1848” for Daroobalgie (NSW Government Gazette). It is probable that that this area included Back Daroualgie. The Back Daroualgie Station tender for a run was accepted on 9th March 1855 for which the recorded name of the tenderer was Samuel Smith (NSW Government Gazette 1855). The list of conversions of leases of runs on crown lands published in the NSW Government Gazette in 1865 lists James Twaddell as holding the lease of Daroobalgie (NSW Government Gazette 1865).

By 1861 Daroualgie run had been taken over by gold miners and a muster of cattle was undertaken in January of the same year (Sydney Morning Herald 1875). At this time both Daroualgie and Back Daroualgie were owned by James Twaddell and it is likely that references to Daroualgie in this matter referred to both runs. In 1875 James Twaddell was recorded as taking the government to court over the loss of cattle following the influx of gold miners to the area of Forbes (and its neighbourhood) (Sydney Morning Herald 1875). In the meantime, a proclamation was published in the NSW Government Gazette announcing the establishment of “The Billabong Creek Goldfields” located between the confluence of Mugincoble or Bartlett’s Creek and Goobang Creek (NSW Government Gazette 1864). In later newspaper correspondence the name of the gold fields changed to the “Billabong Goldfields”. Reports from the Billabong Goldfields continued into the mid to late 1880s and included news, weather and yields.

In December 1892 a portion of the Project Site was reserved from sale for travelling stock (NSW Government Gazette 1892) – T.S.R. 16839. It is possible that some informal structures were erected within the Project Site both during the Billabong Goldfields era and along the travelling stock route as temporary camp sites may have been in use during this time however, the review of relevant literature and parish maps undertaken by an NGH archaeologist do not show any indication or formal camp locations or historical structures within the Project Site. In 1892 a portion of crown land was set apart as a “Special Area”. This became Special Area No. 16706 and its purpose was to limit the land size that could be purchased in one sale. It was declared that Special Area No. 16706 “within which it shall not be lawful to conditionally purchase more than 640 acres no less than 40 acres...” this included Portion 75 of land which is within the Project Site (NSW Government 1892). Portion 75 was purchased by Daniel Kenny (see Figure 1).

By 1903 the land reserved from sale for travelling stock had been reduced and a portion (29) of it had been sold to Alexander Anderson (see Figure 2). The southeastern corner of the Project Site was still included within the travelling stock route but it was noted as being Travelling Stock Route (T.S.R.) 21033. By 1920 portion 75 had become portion 94 (owned by Forbes G White) known as “Pine Vale” and Portion 95 (owned by L.T. Hooper) is listed as a “settlement purchase area”. While unclear, it seems as though Portion 29 is incorporated by these two new portions. The T.S.R. in the southeastern corner of the Project Site is no longer a travelling stock route and is now portion 99 owned by Thomas Doyle (see Figure 3). Although the 1930 parish map shows this corner as portion 29 and it is not clear who the owner is at this stage (see Figure 4).

Parish maps over the Project Site from 1893 to 1930 are shown in Figure 1 to Figure 4.

It appears through review of historical aerial images that the Project Site was used for agricultural purposes since at least 1965 with plough lines visible (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). The 1965 historical aerial image appears to be the earliest aerial mapping available over the Project Site, and by this time it had already been cleared of the majority of its vegetation and was being used for agricultural and farming purposes.

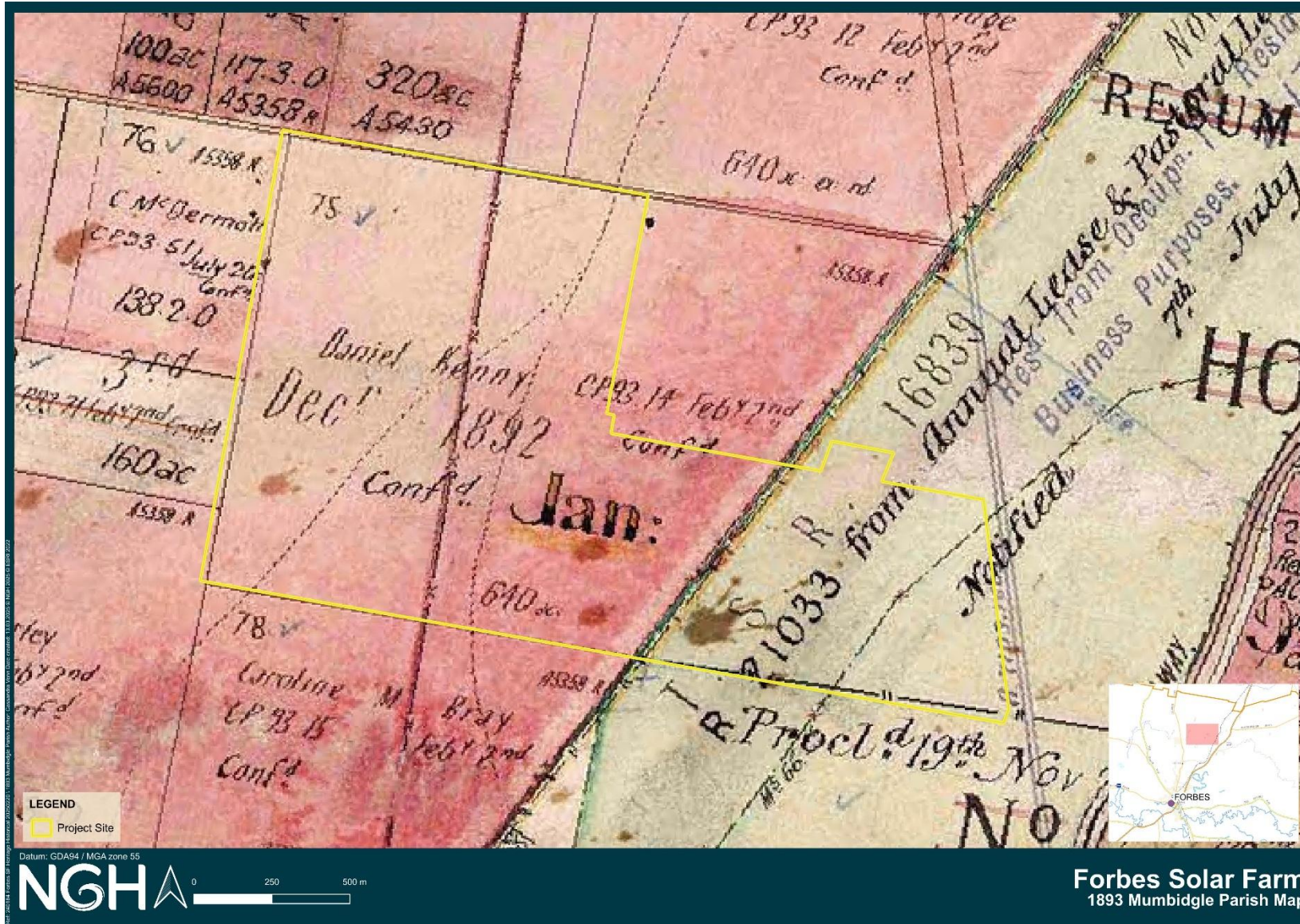


Figure 1. Location of the Project Site in relation to the 1893 Mumbidgle Parish map.

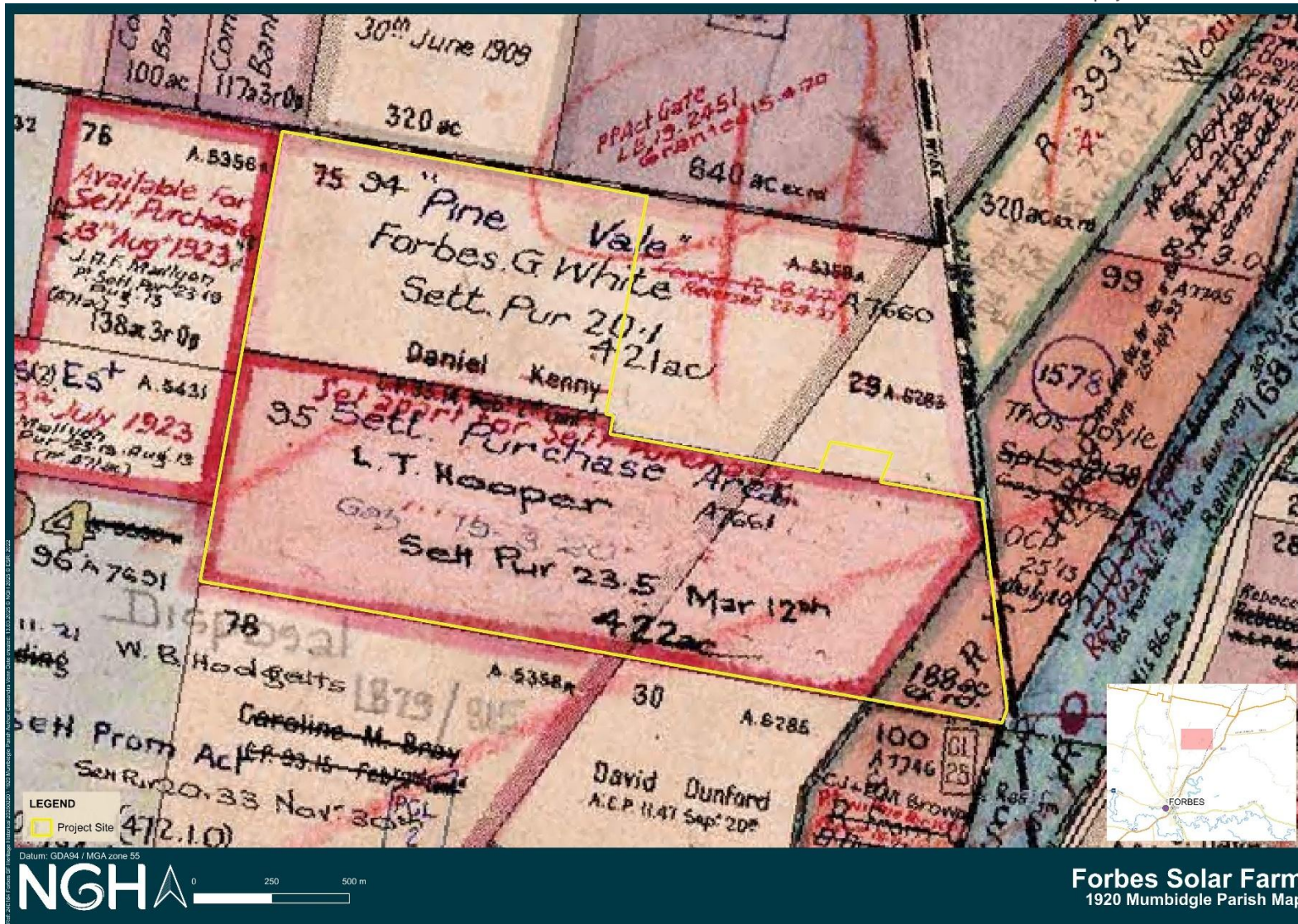


Figure 3. Location of the Project Site over the 1920 Mumbidgle parish map.

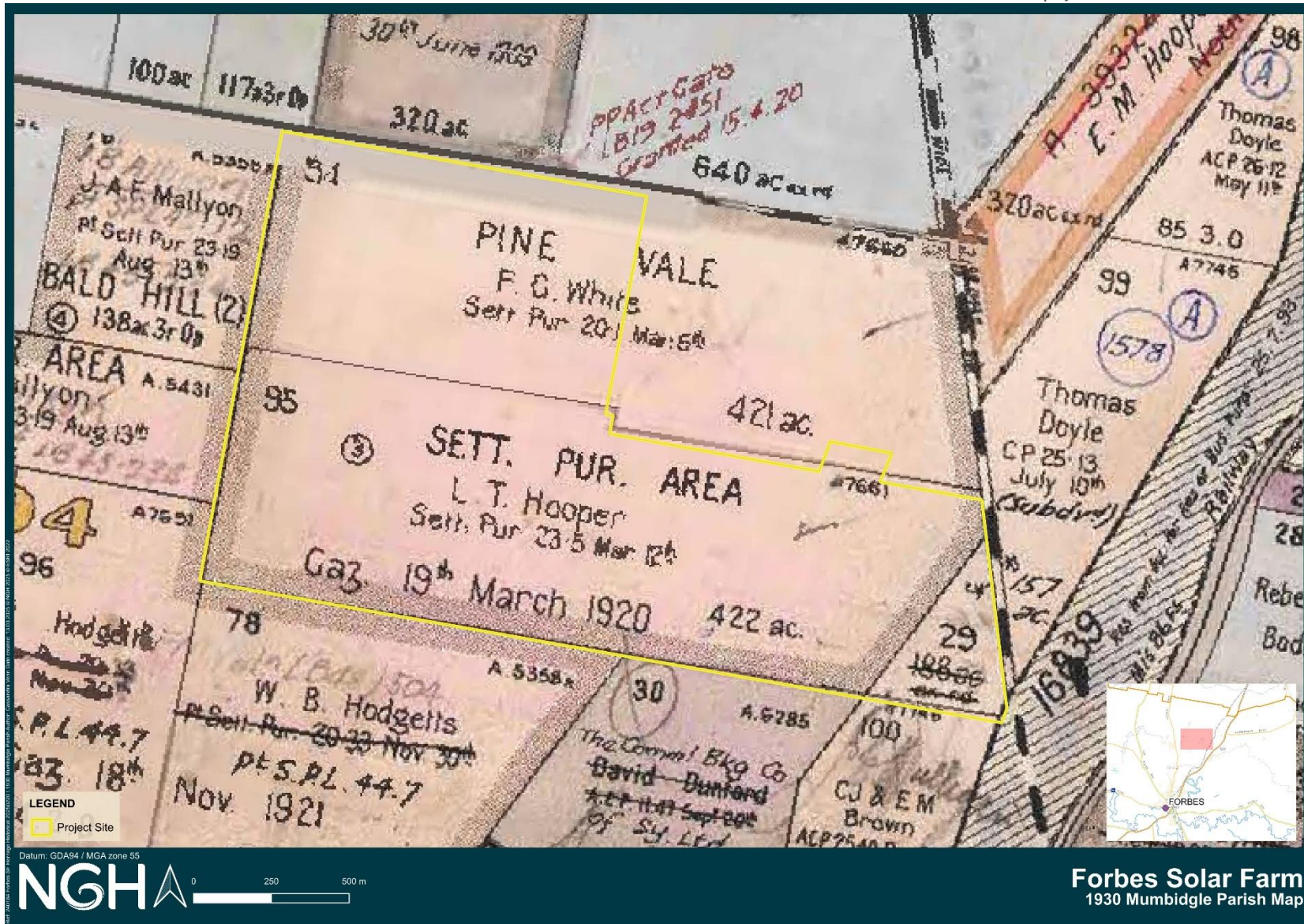


Figure 4. Location of the Project Site over the 1930 Mumbidgle parish map.

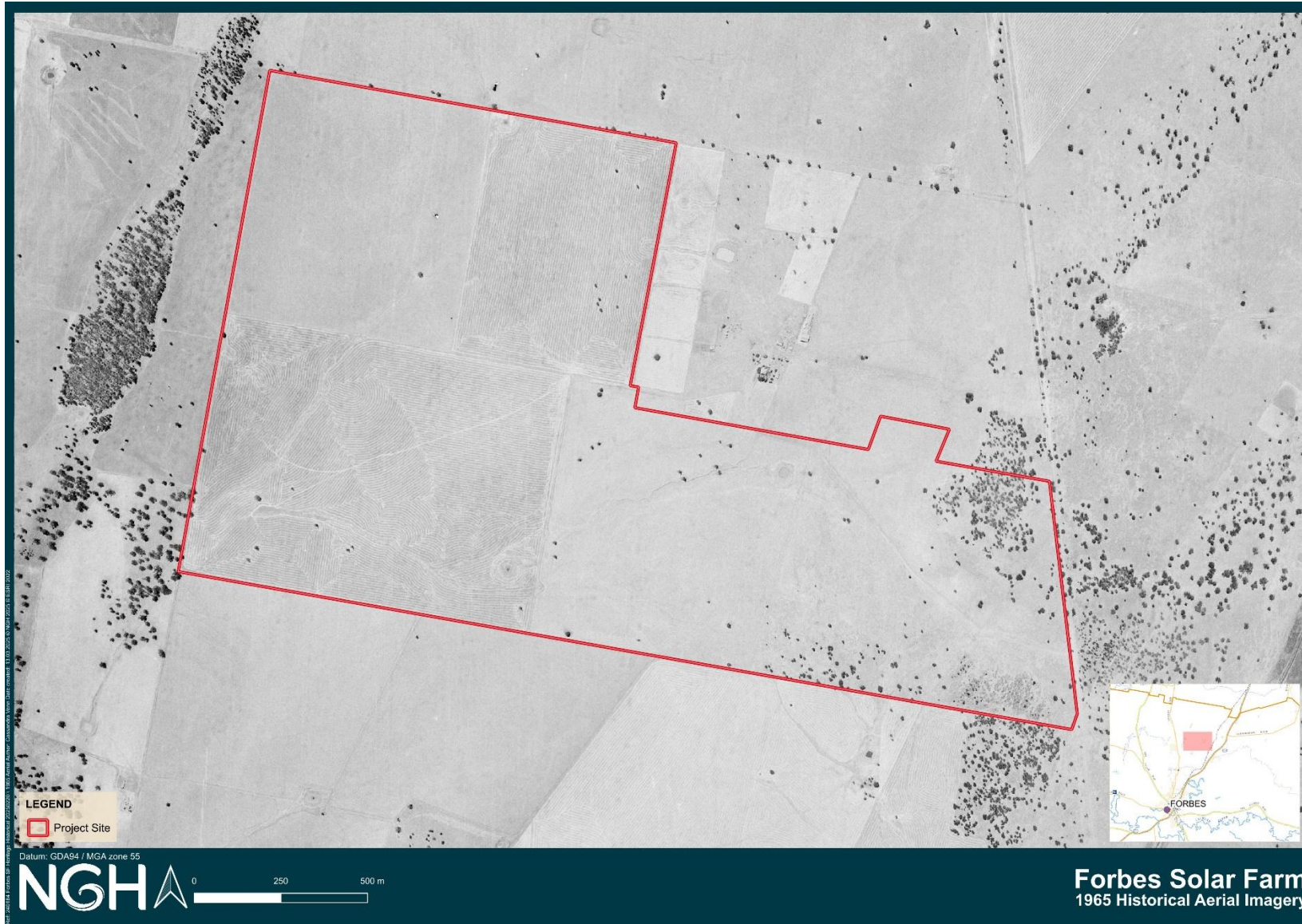


Figure 5. Location of the Project Site over the 1965 aerial imagery.



Figure 6. Location of the Project Site over the 1989 aerial imagery

Site survey results

A site visit was conducted by an NGH archaeologist in October 2024 to assess the Project Site, this was concurrent with the survey for the ACHA. A dump site including old vehicles, tanks and other farming equipment was identified within a drainage line between two of the dams (Plate 1 to Plate 4). The moveable heritage items at the dump site included old water tanks, cars, wire of various origins, fuel drums, tyres, corrugated iron and other farm and household items such as sinks. None of these items were considered to have historic heritage significance.

No historical structures were recorded within the Project Site. There was no evidence for the presence of historic archaeological features within the Project Site. This is in line with the desktop assessment which did not identify any potential for historic archaeological features to occur within the Project Site.



Plate 1. Farm dump site facing northeast.



Plate 2. Farm dump site facing southwest.



Plate 3. Farm dumpsite facing southwest.



Plate 4. Farm dump site facing southwest.

Significance Assessment

As no historic heritage items or potential for historic heritage items were identified during the site visit or during the desktop assessment it is not necessary to undertake an assessment of significance for historic heritage.

Potential impacts

The potential for the Project to impact historic heritage values is most relevant to the construction stage when features may be destroyed or degraded by excavation or haulage activities. It can also be relevant to operation, where the curtilage of historic locations can be affected by changes to the local vistas.

The Project Site is not listed on any heritage register at a State or Local level and no items or structures of historical significance were encountered during the site visit or identified as likely to occur during the desktop assessment. Additionally, there is no evidence of any historical activity including structures noted on the parish maps or within any of the literature researched for this project.

No known heritage places or items were located during the desktop assessment or during field inspection of the Project Site. No historic heritage impacts area anticipated by the proposed development.

Potential for unexpected finds

Although there were no objects of historical significance encountered during the site visit or identified during the background research and desktop assessment for the Project Site, unexpected finds cannot be ruled out. It is however considered unlikely that historical objects will be encountered during construction for the Project. In the unlikely event that unexpected historical objects are identified during works an unexpected finds procedure should be implemented and followed.

Mitigation measures

Due to the lack of recorded or known historical items or structures within the Project Site no specific mitigation measures are required. However, some measures should be put in place to manage any unexpected finds and these are outlined below.

Table 1. Management measures for historic heritage.

Management Number	Management Measure	Project Stage
HH1	An unexpected finds procedure for historical items should be included within the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). The procedure should include how an item of historic heritage will be managed and include contacting Heritage NSW.	Construction Operation Decommissioning

References

- 1855, March 9 "Accepted Tender for Runs" *New South Wales Government Gazette* No. 40, page 649.
- 1863, March 12 "Sale of Leases of Runs" *Golden Age* page 3.
- 1864, November 18 "Proclamation" *New South Wales Government Gazette* No. 222, page 2606.
- 1866, October 4 "Sale of Leases of Runs" *New South Wales Government Gazette*.
- 1868, February 21 "Transfer of Ownership" *New South Wales Government Gazette*.
- 1875, April 29 "Legislative Assembly" *Sydney Morning Herald* page 2.
- 1892, December 3 "Reserves from Sale for Travelling Stock" *New South Wales Government Gazette*.
- 1892, December 3 "Central Division: Land District of Forbes" *New South Wales Government Gazette*.
- 1929, December 20 "Revocation of areas set apart for Crown Leases" *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*.
- Local History Book Committee 1997 *History of Forbes, New South Wales, Australia* Pirie Printers, Canberra
- Oxley, J. 1817 Notebook and Letters 1815-1823, 1888, 1895.