

Bent Street Stand Redevelopment—Moore Park Showground Heritage Report, November 2012

Background/Purpose of this Report

This report has been prepared by Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd (GML), to accompany an application requesting Director General's Requirements (DGRs) for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be prepared as part of the proposed redevelopment of the Bent Street Stand. GML has been commissioned by Fox Studios Australia to identify heritage considerations and provide iterative heritage advice through the initial design stage.

The existing Bent Street Stand has been previously assessed as being of little heritage value, however it incorporates a vertical shaft of the highly significant Busby's Bore. The horizontal tunnel of the Bore also passes through below ground areas of the development site.

GML has been providing heritage advice to the project architects, Octavius during the schematic design phase. GML has also prepared Heritage Principles to guide redevelopment of the Bent Street Stand site and these will be used as the basis for determining the form and character of the redevelopment scheme.

This report identifies the heritage values of the redevelopment site, the above-mentioned Heritage Principles and considerations to achieve appropriate heritage outcomes on the site and identifies the relevant heritage assessments that should be undertaken and submitted when a specific development application is finalised. The latter would be appropriate for adoption as components of the EIS.

This report is based on the assessment of significance contained in the *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995*, prepared by GML¹.

History of the Former Moore Park Showground

In October 1811, Governor Macquarie proclaimed Sydney's second common, an area of scrub of 1000 acres, encompassing the present Showground site. Its intended use was for the grazing of animals. Nine years later Macquarie set aside a large swamp, half of which lay within the boundaries of the common, as a water reserve. A tunnel to transfer water from the swamp to the centre of Sydney was constructed between the years 1827–1837. Now known as Busby's Bore, and included on the State Heritage Register, it became Sydney's first regular water supply.

In the 1830s an area of 219 acres adjoining the common was set aside for a racecourse (now Randwick Racecourse). Also during this period, Victoria Barracks was established along with its associated developments, the Military and volunteer Rifle Ranges, Military Garden and Cricket Ground (later the Sydney Cricket Ground). During the mid-nineteenth century, further alienation of sections of the public common originally proclaimed by Macquarie in 1811 occurred through the

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subdivision into residential properties of land in Paddington. The boundaries of all these developments were to ultimately influence the Showground's development.

In the 1840s, Randwick Road was established (now Anzac Parade). The journey along that road was described, at the time, as intolerable due to the sandy nature of the country. To combat this, couch grass was planted. This thrived, eventually leading to a change in the landscape character of the common from a scrubland into parkland.

In 1866, Moore Park was dedicated and Randwick Road was realigned whilst in 1878, Cleveland Street was extended through Moore Park. During this time extensive planting of trees along roads occurred under the direction of Charles Moore of the Botanic Gardens. Also during this time, 490 acres of the Sydney Common were vested in the Municipal Council of Sydney and were the focus for new road alignments, tree planting and grassing. This in turn led to a new focus on recreation and leisure facilities.

In 1882, the Agricultural Society established its grounds within Moore Park. Ten hectares were acquired in 1881 and the first exhibition was held in 1882. The initial area was bounded by the Rifle Range, the Cricket Ground and the City Corporation's eastern boundary of Moore Park. Plantings and development occurred throughout the period from 1882 to 1901. By this time, the general layout that was to continue throughout subsequent expansion of the site had been established, the central focus being the grassed Parade Ring. In 1891 the prefix 'Royal' was granted to the Agricultural Society of NSW.

The period from 1902 to 1919 saw expansion of the grounds to the south, in alignment with the Grand Drive entrance into Centennial Park, and to the east recovering part of the southeastern end of the Rifle Ranges. During this time the formation of Cook and Lang Roads provided alternative public access. The building program of 1912 resulted in the removal of the Main Pavilion and the erection of the Royal Agricultural Hall. This program altered the site character from a rural to a more urban setting.

From 1920 to 1937 the Showground expanded to the north and within this area new squares and judging rings were created. The dominant visual elements of the complex by this time were the peripheral walls, the Members Grandstand clocktower and the tower of the Anthony Hordern building (now the Byron Kennedy Hall).

The Sesqui-centenary celebrations of 1938 led to a further building program at the Showground, with the addition of the Manufacturer's Hall (Government Pavilion) and the Commemorative Pavilion, these buildings changing the scale of the built form.

In October 1939, following the outbreak of World War II, the Showground was commandeered by the military, for the purposes of billeting troops and administration.ⁱⁱ Aside from the military's construction of a new entrance road from Park Road, development of the Showground was brought to a standstill. The military occupation lasted until 1946, and little further development was to occur until the late 1950s that involved improvements to facilities, access and increasing the overall capacity of the Showground. Expansion continued into the mid-1960s. From the 1970s a new direction was taken in the development of the Showground, focusing on diversification and the provision of multi-purpose, year round facilities.

Planning for the relocation of The Royal Agricultural Society had been underway since 1988. When Fox Studios assumed the lease of the former Moore Park Showgrounds in 1996, the form of the showground was modified with the removal of a number of existing structures and the construction of a significant number of buildings. Modifications to the road pattern also occurred, including the creation of the new

entry at Errol Flynn Boulevard, and the extension of Chelmsford Avenue from its intersection with Park Road to Suttor Avenue.

The Fox Studios Australia redevelopment of the site was managed in two components: a Working Studio Precinct that included a Back Lot Tour experience, and a Family Entertainment Precinct containing retail facilities. After the closure of the Back Lot, a formal subdivision between the two precincts occurred with Bovis Lend Lease acquiring the Family Entertainment Precinct.

Significance

The following Summary Statement of Significance is taken from the *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995*:

The Moore Park Showground is one of the finest agricultural showgrounds in Australia. Built as an expression of national pride in Australian produce and industry, the Showground has been the focus of a major social and cultural tradition for more than a century. It is a place held in high esteem and valued as a community resource and venue for both historic and contemporary events. Cut off from the outside by high perimeter walls, the Showground site is an enclosed cultural landscape, in which the overall structure, roads, buildings and plantings combine to create a special place. Built elements in their location, form, style and naming attest to the changing uses and development of the Showground and to its historical associations with major people, process and events. The Showground as an entity has value beyond the sum of its parts and is a place of outstanding cultural significance.

The significance of the former showground is embodied in many individual components comprising landscape elements, built elements, roads, street furniture, walls and entries. The heritage items and relevant heritage issues to this development are identified below.

Heritage Considerations

Identification of Heritage Items

The subject site is located on the western boundary of the Fox Studios Australia Precinct. The site is located on the northeast boundary of the Parade Ring and is currently occupied by commercial tenants within the substantially altered Bent Street Stand, constructed c1938. The *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995* concluded that the Bent Street Stand (Figure 1.1) was of low significance. However the landscape area (Figure 1.2) which existed between the ring area and the Bent Street Stand which also falls within the subject site was identified as being of considerable heritage significance.

Since that time, the former Showground has undergone extensive change and adaptive re-use. Many new buildings and additions/alterations have been constructed and landscape areas modified. The character of the grassed area to the rear of the former Bent Street Stand has been substantially modified. The Stand itself has undergone major change with the creation of a film set façade fronting Bent Street, the blank rear elevation which now presents to the Parade Ring. Both the Stand and the current grassed area are now considered to be of little heritage significance.



Figure 1.1 Bent Street Stand as viewed from western side of Bent Street. (Source: GML 2012)



Figure 1.2 Grassed area within the development site that fronts the Parade Ring (Source: GML 2012)

There are a number of important heritage items remaining in the vicinity of the development site that the *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995* classified as being of exceptional or considerable significance. These include the Suttor Stand, the Commemorative Pavilion, the Members Grandstand (now modified) and Bent Street (the curved road alignment) which are all considered to be of exceptional significance.

Archaeological Significance

The historical archaeological potential of the Moore Park Showground is identified in the *Moore Park Showground Fox Studios Development Archaeological Assessment 1996*, prepared by GML.

In summary, the assessment defines three zones of archaeological potential (Zone 1—Busby's Bore, Zone 2—Fill and Occupation, Zone 3—Cuttings). These zones are shown on Appendix A taken from the 1996 Archaeological Assessment. This assessment places the development site within Zone 1 and Zone 2.

Zone 1—Busby's Bore

Busby's Bore is an archaeological relic listed on the State Heritage Register. It is a gravity-fed tunnel which linked Centennial Park and Hyde Park, constructed by convict labour between 1827 and 1837 in order to provide Sydney's second water supply. Busby's Bore has been the subject of detailed survey and archaeological investigation, including excavation undertaken by Godden Mackay Logan. The latter resulted in a report entitled *Busby's Bore—Moore Park Showground Archaeological Excavation Report*, produced in June 2001. The bore's physical attributes and location are now well understood.

Busby's Bore Shaft 19 and a considerable length of the shaft run through the proposed subject site. The site of Shaft 19 has already been dealt with in previous developments as outlined in the *Busby's Bore, Moore Park Showground – Archaeological Excavation Report, June 2001* prepared by GML where interpretation works have been carried out. Any disturbance within the curtilage of the Bore (a 3-metre radius from the outside face of the shaft and tunnel) requires approval under Section 60 of the Heritage Act.



Figure 1.3 Shaft 19 of Busby's Bore which has been the subject of previous management and interpretation plans (Source: GML 2012).

Zone 2—Fill and Occupation

Zone 2 is an area characterised archaeologically by fill and occupation deposits and features. The 1996 Archaeological Assessment identifies this zone as covering most of the former Showground, and is an area where deposits have not obviously been removed by excavation for current structures. It is identified as having potential to contain evidence of Showground Occupation, Pre-Showground/Post-Contact Occupation Deposits, and potentially Aboriginal Occupation and Land Management/Pre-European Environment (depending on subsequent activities in specific areas).

An initial archaeological assessment should be carried out to determine the level of significance of the site. Based on the initial assessment the action required can then be determined but will range from, monitoring, monitoring and sampling or archaeological excavation in accordance with the proposed methodology of the 1996 Archaeological Assessment.

A copy of the Archaeological Zoning Plan from the 1996 Archaeological Assessment by GML is attached as Appendix A.

Consideration of Heritage Issues/Heritage Principles

GML has developed a set of Heritage Principles which have formed the basis of the iterative heritage advice that has been provided throughout the initial schematic design phase. Considerations such as the retention of views from the Parade Ring and the form and character of the surviving (and former) structures and the Ring informed the preparation of the Principles. Other considerations include analysis of appropriate development forms and siting to achieve appropriate relationships between the new development and nearby and adjacent heritage buildings. This process has resulted in the formulation of the following Heritage Principles for the redevelopment site:

- Maximise the retention of views of the Commemorative Pavilion from within the Parade Ring, in particular the roof and upper wall areas;
- The alignment of the building(s) form should follow the curved alignments of the Parade Ring and Bent Street;
- Each building should have a symmetrical presentation to the Parade Ring;
- The new building(s) should be planned/sited with a focal point on the centre of the Parade Ring;
- The form of the building(s) should acknowledge the setback alignment of the Members Grandstand and Suttor Stand;
- The height of the building(s) should respond to and/or mediate between the Suttor Stand and Members Grandstand and not dominate those buildings;
- New building(s) should not be the most visually dominant building(s) when viewed from the Parade Ring;
- New building(s) should step back from the Parade Ring at the upper levels to respond to the stepping back of the roof forms of existing buildings and to avoid over- scaling the Parade Ring i.e. the highest part of the building(s) should not be immediately adjacent to the Parade Ring;
- New building(s) should be contemporary in character with a richness of materiality responding to the façade break-up, solid to void ratios and modulation of adjacent historic buildings;
- Busby's Bore requires protection during construction and enhancement of access to Busby's Bore interpretation within the new building(s); and
- Maximise interpretation of the former Showground including the Parade Ring and the Bent St Stand (to be demolished). Consider expanding the Busby's Bore interpretation area to include interpretation of other aspects of the site's history.

Conclusion

Schematic designs for the redevelopment are still in the process of preparation based on the above Heritage Principles and further iterative heritage advice. It is intended that the redevelopment will have a high degree of compliance with these Principles. If this is achieved the redevelopment would have no adverse impact on the heritage significance of Busby's Bore, adjacent heritage items or the heritage significance of the former Showground site as a whole.

Recommendations

It is proposed that the following assessments be undertaken and submitted with any Development Application for the redevelopment of the Bent Street Stand:

Heritage Impact Statement

Given the heritage significance of the former Showground and the immediate context of the redevelopment site, it is important that detailed heritage impact assessment is undertaken once the final form and character of the development are finalised. A Heritage Impact Statement should be prepared and submitted with any Development Application (DA).

Archaeological Assessment

The *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995* states that “no disturbance of sub-surface features should occur prior to the completion of an archaeological assessment”. This policy, and the location of the development site above Busby’s Bore and incorporating one of its shafts, means that an Archaeological Assessment should be prepared.

The Archaeological Assessment will also be needed to identify the archaeological potential of all parts of the redevelopment site that will be disturbed and to ensure that sufficient archaeological management measures are put in place to protect Busby’s Bore.

Interpretation Plan

Consistent with policies regarding Public Access and Interpretation contained in the *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995*, opportunities should be examined to enhance interpretation of, and public access to, the Busby’s Bore shaft, particularly in view of the likely removal of the existing interpretation area around the shaft. Opportunities to interpret the former Showground should also be assessed. These matters could be addressed in an Interpretation Plan for the redevelopment site and submitted with any DA.

Archival Recording (prior to demolition)

The *Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy 1995* stated that “No demolition or removal of significant items will occur prior to the completion of archival recording”. Notwithstanding the relatively low level of heritage significance that is ascribed to the existing Bent Street Stand, it would nevertheless be appropriate that the Stand, landscape area and the Busby’s Bore shaft and interpretation area be archivally photographed prior to their demolition in accordance with the NSW Heritage Office Publication *How to Prepare Archival Records of Heritage Items*, June 1998.

Should you require further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact either David Logan or Steven Barry of this office.

Yours sincerely

Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd



David Logan
Partner

Appendices:**Appendix A—Archaeological Zoning Plan from Moore Park Showground Fox Studios Development—Archaeological Assessment, October 1996**

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- ⁱ Godden Mackay Pty Ltd, December 1995, Moore Park Showground Conservation Strategy, Section 8.5.
 - ⁱⁱ Fletcher, Brian H, The Grand Parade: A History of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales, The Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales, Paddington, 1998, p 212.

Appendix A

Archaeological Zoning Plan from Moore Park Showground Fox Studios Development—
Archaeological Assessment, October 1996

