

Varro Ville Cemetery Presentation & Submission

By Owner of Varro Ville Homestead,
Peter Gibbs 25/3/ 2019 (revised
28/3/2019)

Unsuitability of Site

This site is monumentally unsuitable for this development. It has the potential to destroy a community who have chosen to live here because of its quietness, seclusion and semi-rural context. Whether sacred or secular, these principles remain the same. The Carmelite Community, the residents of St Davids Road, St James Road and St Andrews Road, chose to live here on the clear understanding from Campbelltown Council that the principles of quietness, seclusion and semi-rural ambiance would be maintained.

1) Instability.

The site is subject to severe land instability. This is never going to go away. In the early 1980s a severe landslide occurred and the whole side of Bunbury Curran Hill came away. This was documented by Arthur Jones who at 97 is one of many local residents who remembers this event. The following photograph was taken by him in May 1982.



The lack of Cumberland Plain species and subsequent African Olive regrowth attests to this. In fact, it is likely that the only thing currently holding the hillside together is the olive growth. If this is removed, the result could be disastrous. Why would anyone permit a cemetery here? It is simply asking for trouble.

2) Water and Climate.

Residents in and adjoining the Scenic Hills including those at Denham Court have found it difficult to extract ground water supplies. The water in the dams is finite. How then does the CMCT plan to provide enough water to sustain nearly 300 acres of bowling green grass, as shown in its Disneyland like brochure? Would they truck it in? The cost would be prohibitive. An offtake and pipe line from the Upper

Canal is unlikely to be supported. Historically 'offtakes' were provided for property owners who had their land directly bisected by the canal or fronting it, not located away from it. At any rate, this was for stock and domestic drinking water only. Not for 300 acres of grass. Such offtakes, bridges and cattle crossings have always been a management problem for Sydney Water and as progressive reduction in property sizes has occurred, they have maintained a policy of reduction of such services, not expansion. Further, the water issue will be compounded in times of water restrictions, when the watering of grass from any Sydney Water Supply will be prohibited.

The unsuitability of the site due to climate and water constraints seems to have been largely overlooked in this proposal. Those who have designed this development have probably done so from the comfort of an air conditioned office. If they've visited the site at all, it will have been fleetingly and not in all conditions. However, those who live here fully understand the harsh conditions of this area. It is subject to extremes of weather. Typically, there are periods of extreme summer heat, up to 47 degrees in the shade and severe drought conditions, followed by periods of torrential rain, which can be between 7-12 inches, sometimes two to three times. In the drought cycle such as the recent 2018, all the grass died. The area was completely brown and the dams have not been lower in the 13 years we've been here. If the wind came up, the dust was horrific. It is not possible to raise young trees in such conditions. Despite manual watering, they nearly always die. When the rain comes in huge quantities, the area becomes a quagmire and washaways occur everywhere. Every thuggish weed comes up where the grass was and you have to start again. The extreme summer cycle usually lasts about four months. You cannot go outside in such heat. How then, could a public cemetery, where outdoor exposure is a fundamental part, function effectively in such conditions? The elderly and the young will be keeling over. Similarly the torrential rain periods will be prohibitive. So, here is a proposal for a cemetery which will be unusable for about four months of the year and have to be revegetated for the remainder!

Apart from anything else, trying to micro-manicure a 288 acre Colonial Landscape so that it resembles a large suburban park, as shown in the glossy brochure, cannot be considered an adequate response to such a landscape.

3) Darkness.

The residents of this community enjoy at night, the blanket of darkness that the Scenic Hills provide. This is a very important part of the seclusion and sense of rural context. Darkness is also very important to the sustainability of the area for the other living creatures that inhabit it. For their sustainability, this darkness and natural, unspoilt or undeveloped landscape is vital. At the moment, we enjoy an area where the zoning objectives for the Scenic Hills ensure man-made change is not dominant. The proposed development will reverse this and the wildlife and ecosystem will suffer. At night, lights from this development will ruin the amenity of darkness that is part of the character we enjoy. In the view line from Varro Ville Homestead to Bunbury Curran Hill, there is not a single light at night. Under the security of darkness, all that can be heard is the occasional Murder Bird down on the dams, the lowing of cattle and the characteristic sounds of foxes talking...like a dog with a cold. A single human voice emanating from as far away as the base of Bunbury Curran Hill can be heard clearly at Varro Ville Homestead. This brings us to noise.

4) Noise.

The two most precious commodities on the planet are quietness and seclusion. Development brings traffic and traffic brings noise. This is an inescapable fact. Noise from construction and daily running of

this development will ruin the natural amenity of quietness and again, erode the rural context of the place. As stated above, this will have a detrimental effect on the site for both residents and wildlife.

The issue of St Andrews Road is especially worrying. Council and the people of this community have fought long and hard to keep St Andrews Road from being extended onto Camden Valley Way. This provides a natural barrier for both people and wildlife and is vital for the long term protection of this part of the Scenic Hills. As it stands, this proposed development would be landlocked and I simply do not believe, despite what they say, the proponent will not, in the future attempt to link it. We all know, from bitter experience what happens when developers get a foot in the door. (For example, the CMCT says that it does not intend a crematorium for this site. Why then has it registered several business names with Macarthur Memorial Crematorium in them?) If St Andrews Road is connected, it will be the end of this community. The ensuing traffic will bring unspeakable noise and congestion. The Catholic School and the Church will become a nightmare, endangering children and parishioners. The Nuns and Friars will simply not be able to function as intended, the Serbian School will be fatally compromised and the residents of St Andrews, St James and St Davids Roads will be stripped of quality of life. If this is what the CMCT is planning then shame on them. Even installing curbs and gutters will destroy the rural 'feel' of the road. The community wants certainty when it comes to the long term future of St Andrews Road and this development will not afford it.

Development Creep

NSW Upper House Member, David Shoebridge is seeking to establish a Royal Commission into the NSW Planning System. If he gets it up it will be the greatest expose since the Commission into child abuse or the banks. Developer led spot re-zonings are responsible for a great deal of instability in the system. Other political parties have promised to remove them. In the case of this application, the rezoning for a cemetery is a very destabilising influence on a community which has enjoyed environmental protection for decades. Spot re-zonings are socially divisive for communities as they engender a scramble for the dollar. Despite the 'cemeteries only' amendment, there is a perception in the wider community that any development is acceptable. This attracts any 'two bit' developer who wants to flog off a piece of land for a quick profit windfall. This is what we are already seeing with this application. They are already lining up at the door, cap in hand. This is the insidious side of spot rezonings. It puts continued pressure on those who are left as it is a manifest example of shifting the goal posts. Zoning should be fixed, and apply to all, no exceptions. The net result is that no-one can trust their 149 certificate. Council and the community have protected this land for decades. It is strongly considered to contribute to Campbelltown's sense of place with its maintenance of a rural back-drop.

In the case of the subject land, private property developers were told by the Council to go away. If a private cemetery developer was to have made this application, they too would have been told to go away. How is it then that an arm of the Catholic Church can achieve a spot rezoning and others can't?

The CMCT, as an entity of the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, appears to have concessions from the government that are unjustified by the way it operates. These concessions are apparently afforded to it on the basis of religion, yet the CMCT has shown by its shabby treatment of the Carmelite Nuns and Friars that it is clearly a secular developer and should be treated as such if there is to be any fairness in the system.

The particular problem with this development is that this land is monumentally unsuitable for a cemetery. It has serious constraints such as landslip, heritage and water availability and above all sensitive community concerns. Why was proper due diligence not done? Why was such a controversial site chosen? Any ordinary business person would have walked when they became aware of the constraints and looked for a more suitable location. Instead, we have been subjected to 6 years of what can only be described as a square peg in a round hole. If the CMCT had chosen suitable land with no major constraints, then it would have had its cemetery up and operating years ago. It's tantamount to standing out in the open and hitting yourself over the head with a four by two, almost an act of business masochism.

The only people who are in favour of this development are those who appear to gain financially from it: the CMCT and associated businesses such as funeral directors, an army of consultants, construction, not to mention the annoyance created by budding land speculators. Heritage and environmental protection systems are being overridden to facilitate development approvals. Unfortunately our society has degraded to the point where the only thing that matters is money. Council zoning protections, community concerns, cultural heritage and even religious observance are expected to be sacrificed in favour of the dollar. They have forgotten that we are a society, not just an economy.

The net result of this proposal on Campbelltown has been negative. At the point we find ourselves at the moment, this is a mess. The people of Campbelltown and the Council want certainty for the ongoing protection of the Scenic Hills, not further destabilisation that this proposal will engender. Without a doubt the spot rezoning is at the core of it. The government having created this, now needs to resolve it by finding the CMCT some land that is actually suitable for a cemetery and exchanging it for this land.

Proposed Structures

The proposed structures cannot in any form, be seriously considered as appropriate responses to an Australian Colonial Landscape. Instead, they make a mockery of it. The structures on the glossy plan are post-modernist trifles of confused lineage, struggling to find an identity, and are offensive in this context.

The wave form roof buildings would serve well as surf pavilions on some hipster Northern Beach setting.



The sculptures pictured below range from bizarre to sinister in the context of a cemetery. One is a copy of a Dyson fan. It's surprising the Dyson Company has not become upset. Maybe they see it as free advertising. The sculpture on the right resembles images from the ABC television series, *Glitch*, in which, the dead rise upward, through the earth, from their graves. Children would find it disturbing and nightmarish.



Urbis Heritage impact Statement (HIS) and Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

These documents are massively flawed. They contain poorly researched material resulting in statements that are false and misleading, thus appearing as box ticking exercises to favour the proponent and the proposal. These documents are often at odds with themselves and contradictory. Volume is not a substitute for content and, in the end, it only serves to trip itself up.

These documents are based on outdated assessment criteria with respect to;

- a) The buildings centric policy of heritage conservation which is now fifty years out of date and similarly,
- b) The relegating of 20th century history to little or no importance, therefore justifying removal and destruction.

With respect to point (a), we now know from bitter experience that destruction of historic context is the biggest single factor in triggering the long down-hill run for heritage sites. Buildings have for far too long been regarded as the core of conservation. Removal from the context ultimately devalues them from both a real estate and heritage point of view. When they are emasculated, they no longer attract the sort of owner who has the necessary emotional and financial wherewithal to sustain them for the long term. A property like Varro Ville is a Country House in a landscape. Remove or alter the colonial landscape and it is no longer a country house. It is just an old house surrounded by development. In short it has been massively devalued and may become unsaleable.

Countless previous disasters show that once the context of a heritage item is compromised, its overall value is eroded. A built item is indivisible from its setting. Otherwise it becomes a dispossessed architectural curio. Campbelltown Council admits to its shame that its Blair Athol development was a disaster and vowed 'never again'. Blair Athol House went from a desirable piece of heritage real estate to unsaleable in a couple of years.

With respect to preservation of the historic landscape context of Varro Ville, Urbis pays only lip service because, as it well knows, it is not preserving it.

With respect to point (b) we are now far enough away from 20th century history to realise its significance and its need for recording and retention in equal measure with what came before.

Few colonial houses had as magnificent a second flowering in the mid-20th century as Varro Ville. Yet the Urbis HIS advocates removal of important 20th century fabric and labels this period as having little to no importance. Nothing could be further from the truth. Cherry and Morris Jackaman were exceptionally fascinating people and their story is an important page in the cultural heritage of Australia. Here is a potted history from obituaries, newspaper articles, and personal time spent with Cherry Jackaman in her final years.

Cherry was one of the last Edwardian Grand Dames. She was born at Point Piper in 1910 into a life of wealth and privilege. Her father and uncle made a fortune from their company, AGC finance. Cherry was the only child in the whole family and eventually she inherited the lot. She was educated in England where she became life-long friends with the actors Vivien Leigh and Maureen O'Hara, who were in her class. In the 1933 she met a brilliant Cambridge educated aeronautical engineer, Morris Jackaman. Morris owned several aircraft and had just purchased a small privately owned aero club in Surrey for GBP 13,500. Its name was Gatwick. Morris had big plans and with Government approval he was soon operating public flights to Paris. Huge expansion followed. In 1935 he designed the famous Beehive building which has become an international aeronautical shrine, having influenced every passenger terminal, world-wide, constructed since. Built in the round, it utilised the first covered aeroplane access in the world, replacing the usual practice where passengers had to walk across the tarmac in any weather. By liaising with the Government, Morris suggested a fast train be constructed from London, making Gatwick the first airport to be linked with a train station by subway entrance. Passengers stayed under cover from the time they left Victoria Station until their aircraft reached its destination. The Beehive fulfilled all the necessary airport functions in a single structure and became the international template.

During WWII, Morris flew in the famous 601 'Millionaires Squadron'. The Air Ministry resumed Gatwick during the war. Morris had strong associations with it having been its civil aviation representative in East Africa in the 1930s. After the war, the Jackamans moved to Australia, settling at Double Bay. Ostensibly, Morris was sent to de-commission pilots.

Morris and Cherry were keen sailors, and they bought the yacht 'Rani' that had won the inaugural Sydney to Hobart race in 1945. In 1950 Gatwick was designated as London's second airport.

In late 1950, to experience life in town and country, they bought Varro Ville and poured their vast funds into the revitalisation of the place, the biggest since the second house was built in 1858. Vivian Leigh often stayed at Varro Ville – possibly in the early days with her husband Sir Laurence Olivier who she divorced in 1961- as did Princess Michael of Kent who went to school with one of Cherry's daughters. In 1977 Cherry became the first female president of the National Trust. Indefatigable, and with boundless energy, she was still flying to England and Bayreuth to hear her beloved Wagner at the age of 98. Cherry lived to 101, dying in 2011, with not a hint of dementia. Between 2007 and 2009, my wife, Jacqui Kirkby conducted several extensive interviews with Cherry who related *their* Varro Ville history and lent photos and documents for copying. Cherry was determined to keep some aspects of their intriguing life a mystery waving off questions with, 'that's a story for another day.' That day never came. Morris died in

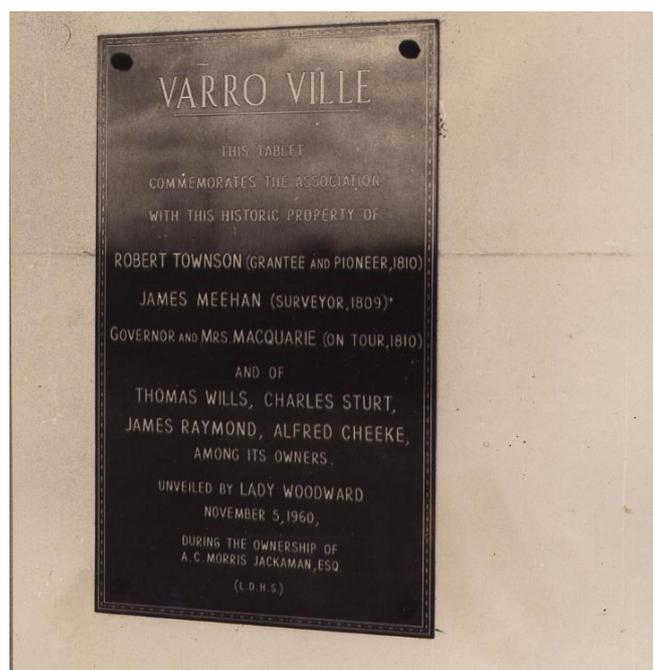
1980. Clive Lucas, who came out to Varro Ville as a young architect, once remarked to me that Morris Jackaman was the most sophisticated man he'd ever met. He is one of those people whom we occasionally encounter, who has greatness in them. Morris Jackaman's engineering thumbprint is all over Varro Ville. I encounter it every day. It's as if he was still there.

Despite what Urbis may imply, the Jackaman legacy, in all forms, is vital to the history of and significance of Varro Ville.



Dedication of tablet outside dining room at Varro Ville 1960.

The two Jackaman daughters are right, front. Behind them, moving left: Cherry Jackman, Lady Woodward, Sir Eric Woodward (Governor of NSW), Morris Jackaman (in front of tablet). Left of speaker is Gough Whitlam, (Deputy Leader of the Opposition).



Townson's Orchard and Kitchen Garden.

As part of self-sufficiency, all the great Colonial estates had orchards and kitchen gardens of huge scale. As development took place and the need for them disappeared, they vanished. Most of the city ones have been built over by growing suburbs. And in the country, they were no longer needed. Perhaps the only substantial one to survive in any form is Sir William Macarthur's Garden at Camden Park, which has been the subject of a massive and on-going restoration over about 20 years. All the written history of Varro Ville from the earliest time makes mention of Townson's garden which was one of the most lauded and envied in the Colony. The good Doctor was, after all, a horticulturist of the first rank. The discovery of the ghost of this garden was made by Geoffrey Britton, the lead consultant in the 2016 curtilage study by Orwell & Peter Phillips (OPP16), commissioned by us with a NSW Heritage Grant. Its discovery on the 1947 aerial is a major find and needs to be the subject of further study. It takes the form of a large orthogonal outline containing garden rooms that appears to be the template for surviving plans of those that have disappeared, Lyndhurst and Toxteth Park in Glebe and Kinross in the Hunter Valley (next page). Pleasure gardens, generally, are of serpentine form.

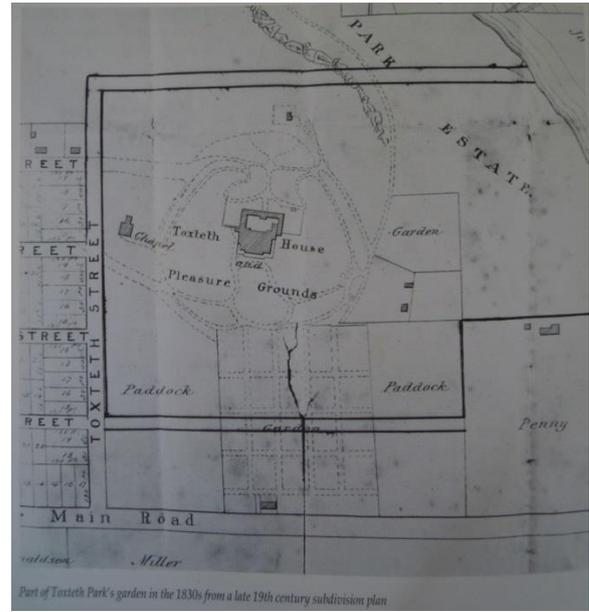
The Orchard appears in the study's statements of significance that were adopted by the NSW Heritage Council in its recommendation to list the land surrounding Varro Ville Homestead on the State Heritage Register. In the DA it will be destroyed in Stage One to make way for the burial room and roads at the rear of the Homestead.



Kitchen Garden and Orchard, left arrow.



Lyndhurst, Glebe, 1849.



Toxteth Park, Glebe, 1830's

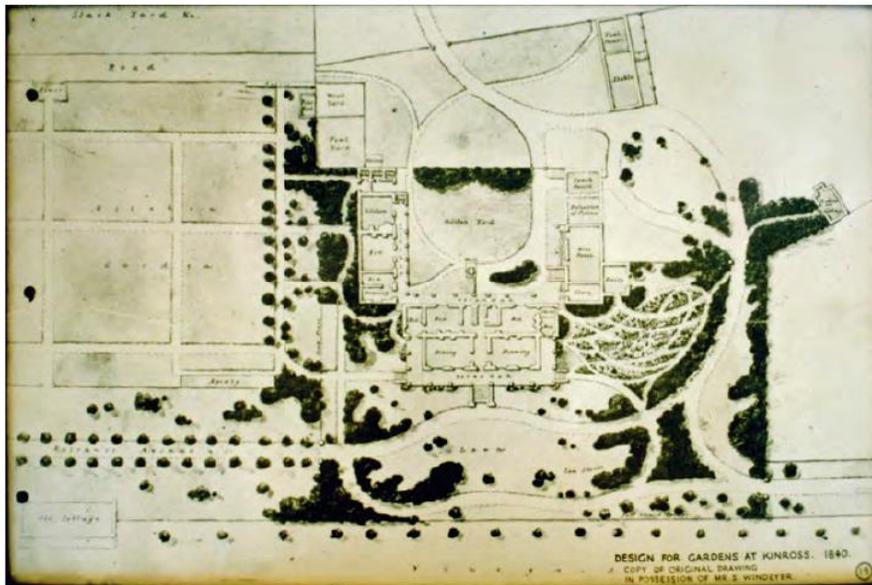


Figure 67

1840 plan of Kinross and its immediate grounds, with the kitchen garden to the left and part of its vineyard in front of the house.

Source: Peter Gibbs photograph of the original which remains in the Windeyer family collection.

Other Heritage Travesties.

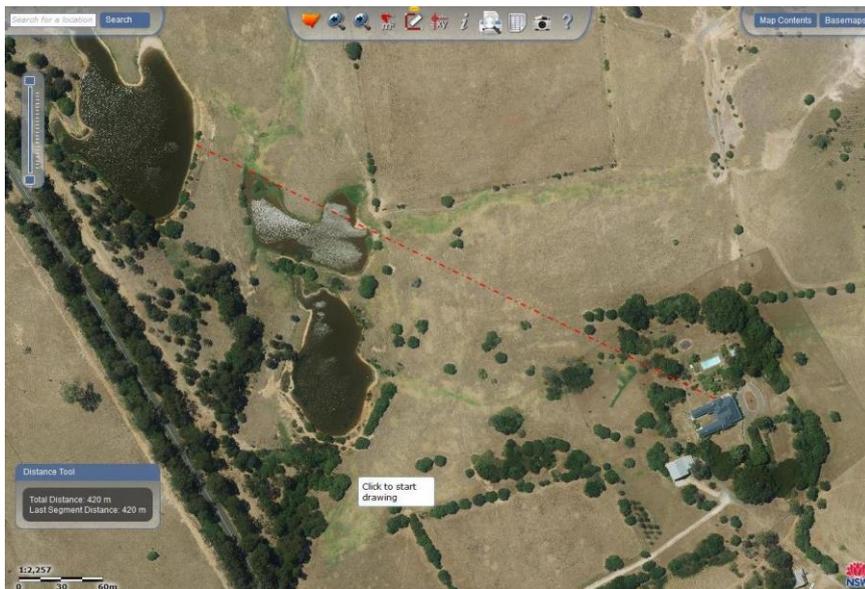
The CMCT landscape masterplan shows heritage travesties that are so brazen as to be beyond belief, reflecting the breathtaking arrogance and anti-intellectual tyrannies that have accompanied this proposal since it was launched in 2013.

These travesties are shown on the right hand side of the following plan, marked in bold red.



View line No.1

The first (arrow lower left on the map) shows a road placed directly in the centre of the major landscape view line to the northwest from Varro Ville Homestead. This is the principle and dominant view and can be appreciated from all the main rooms down the North-western side. Because the house is most elevated on this side, the view is focused down and across the dams. This is the view that heritage professionals, our friends, family and visitors, find utterly compelling. On well populated social occasions, there has been a line up to take a photograph. It is as if a huge watercolour was pasted to the outside of the glass. Having a road with cars going across between the house and the dams will ruin this view forever and is an act of wilful vandalism. It will significantly erode both the heritage and real estate value of the house. This view can have a dynamism of sound and light play. In heavy rain the dams cascade and the noise is so loud it can be heard from the house. This is a contrivance utilised in many English Landscape Parks. The CMCT plans to plant a line of trees (thick red line) around the dams which will obscure this view even further.



Sightline of N/Western dams from Varro Ville house.



This is the actual view from the library window of the house. The road is planned to run across, roughly where the cattle are pictured.



Dams cascading after heavy rain

From Ackermann, 1815.

Between 1809 and 1828, Rudolph Ackermann published his now famous, *Repository of Arts*. In it, were contained architectural designs by Papworth, furniture and interiors, garden design and ornament and picturesque landscape designs in accordance with the fashionable taste as practised by Humphry Repton. It is one of the principle resources for modern day architectural historians. We know that the *Repository* reached Australia. An 1818 volume is in the library of the Historic Houses Trust (now Sydney Living Museums) with the ownership inscription of Ann Piper, wife of Captain Piper of Henrietta Villa, one of the most fashionable residences in Sydney.

So, in the view below, we are looking through curtains of the time, through a window of the time, at a landscape view of the time. The similarity to the view from Varro Ville Homestead is more than striking and excites landscape historians who visit. But, there is more implied here. The scale of the window is massive.... engineered, so that the view is dominant inside the room. Architects picked up on this and it is obvious that William Weaver, architect of Varro Ville, placed the overly large windows in this room, to take in the landscape. The windows are so large, that it makes placement of furniture difficult.



From Ackermann.

Similarly, at his masterpiece, Aberglasslyn, near Maitland (below), John Verge used the same device for his windows in the main reception room.



The windows at Aberglasslyn are the largest ever placed in an Australian Colonial House. In a room with 15 foot ceilings, the paired windows are a massive 12 feet high. Shown here is half of one of them....just

the bottom sash of around 6 feet. The whole room is dominated by the landscape view, again, as if a huge watercolour had been pasted on the glass. The influence of Ackermann on the colony was considerable.

View line No.2

The second heritage travesty is on the opposite side of the Homestead (arrow lower right on the map). An important and engineered visual connection is extant between the house and the outbuildings and in reverse from the outbuildings to the house. This is part of a carefully contrived Processional Route. Again, in an act of wilful vandalism, the CMCT plans to place a road in the centre of this axis, ruining this feature and bringing cars in such close proximity as to destroy the amenity of the homestead, and the quality of life for those who live in it.



Photo above shows view from the verandah to the Coach House. Cars and road would run across the grassed area shown.

Photo below is the reverse of this.





View lines 3 & 4

The other two arrows towards the top of the masterplan show similar travesties related to roads with cars and car parking within view lines. These are seen from the front of the Homestead, its verandah and its garden. They are also the predominant views from the early outbuildings and part of their agricultural setting, along with the clearly visible agricultural trenching that wraps around the Varro Ville building group, extending far beyond the small hillside the DA plans to retain.

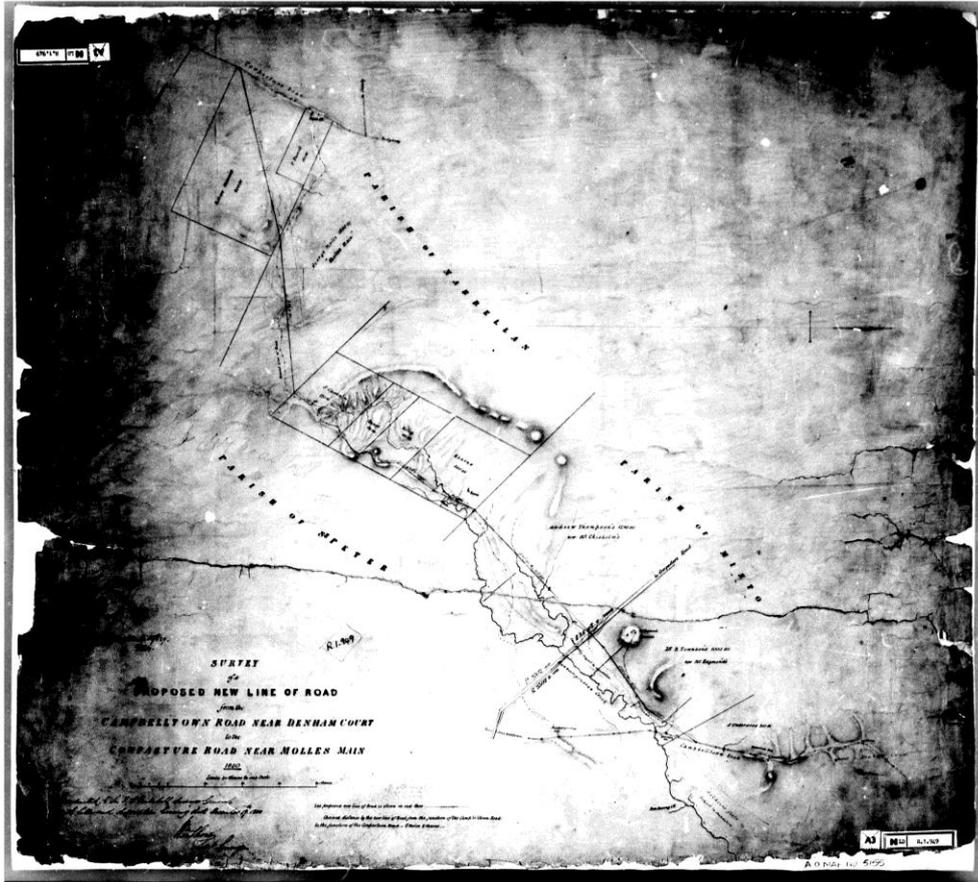
All these view lines (1-4) are critical to Varro Ville Homestead's landscape setting and included in the Statements of Significance (notably Criterion C: Aesthetic, but also Criterion B: Associational, Criterion F: Rarity, Criterion G: Representativeness) adopted by the NSW Heritage Council in its recommendation to expand the Homestead's curtilage on the State Heritage Register.

Removal of last 19th century Accessway

Finally, most importantly, and again with breathtaking arrogance, the CMCT plans to destroy the one remaining 19th century road on the estate, compromising forever, its interpretation.

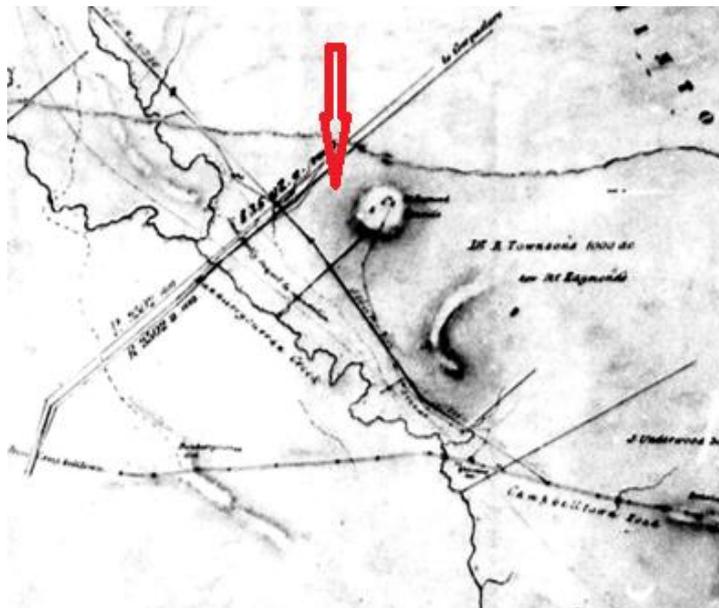
This act as advocated by Urbis is one of the biggest flaws in its documentation. It is based on false information that, at the very least, indicates a stunning lack of research.

On pages 13, 34, 35, 42, 96 and 98 of the HIS, Urbis states that the rear access road is of 1950's construction and will be removed. As previously argued, even if it was of Jackaman construction, it would be vitally significant, noting the extant engineering works. However the road was there in at least 1850 and is shown on both the William Shone map of 1850 and the 1947 aerial that pre-dates the Jackaman purchase of the land in December 1950. Rather than rely on reproductions of the Shone map, if Urbis's consultants had gone to the source, in high resolution, as Geoffrey Britton did for the OPP16 study, they would have detected information that was a revelation.



William Shone Plan for Proposed New Line of Road (St Andrews Road) 1850

St Andrews Road is clearly there and connected with The Cowpasture Road in 1850. The rear access road is shown as a very fine line, exactly in the position it is today, intersecting with St Andrews Road just before the deviation in the road alignment which was necessary to negotiate a creek crossing. This deviation is shown on all maps and aerials until it was corrected in modern times with the concrete bridge which is there today.



Close-up of Shone Plan

On the 1947 aerial the rear access road is clearly shown as a road in use, curving around to the right and intersecting with St Andrews Road at the alignment deviation.



1947 aerial. Right arrow shows rear access drive and intersection with St Andrews Road

Cherry Jackaman confirmed this in discussion with my wife, that when they first bought the property they could only access it from Camden Valley Way (formerly the Cowpasture Road) along St Andrews Road, not from the old drive on Campbelltown Road which had been alienated by the subdivision of Varro Ville in mid-1950s. At that stage the entrance from Campbelltown Road and the lower part of the drive was still owned by the Smith Brothers (dairymen). Later, it would become part of the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch before finally being expunged by the new motorway in 1971-72.

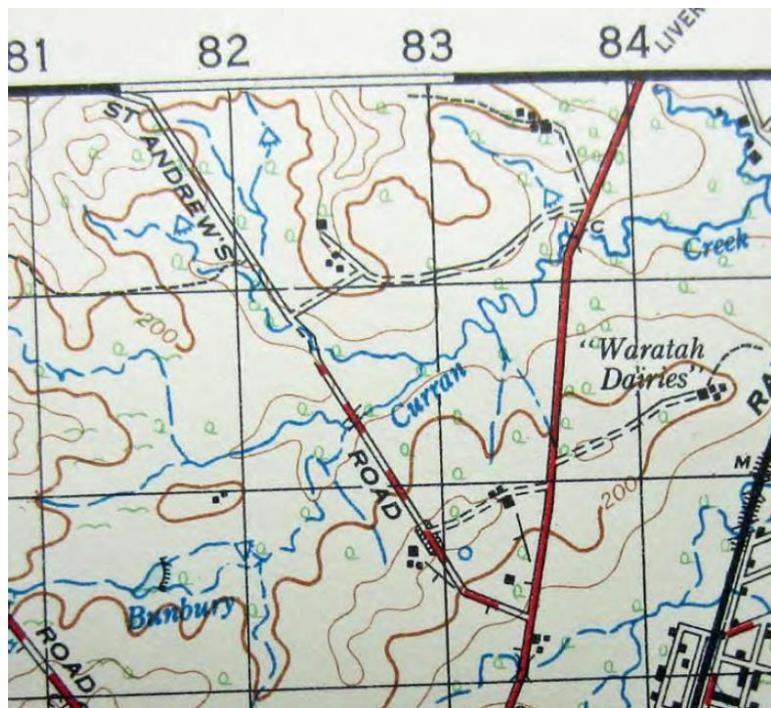


1956 Aerial, showing Jackaman formalisation of rear drive with Callitris planting.



Example of Upper Canal reinforced concrete overbridge 1917-1919

All major agricultural estates in the 19th century had more than one access road. If for no other reason, it was sheer practicality. If one way became blocked by washaways, fallen trees or other problems, these issues could not be dealt with quickly by the mechanical means available today, so a second road was mandatory. As well, stock, goods and a whole array of things had to be moved in and out of such an estate. At Maryland, near Bringelly, there are two entrances from The Northern Road alone and at Brownlow Hill, there are numerous roads from the Brownlow Hill Loop Road. Ditto, Camden Park. At Varro Ville, in the days of horse and cart, the back road was probably used to get into Campbelltown as it was a shorter route than the Campbelltown Road entrance. See 1954 topographic map below.



The most important point concerning the rear road is that it is part of a contrived processional route, where you pass the farm buildings and reach the house last. This unfolding drama was an indication of a serious concern. You don't see the corner of the house until you reach the top of the hill. Interestingly, the other drive from Campbelltown Road intersected at this point so you still passed the outbuildings

before you reached the second house, which was located where the tennis court is. The road platform is still there. So the net result is that the same processional route serviced both houses: a combination of farm practicality, security and unfolding visual drama.



Varro Ville Processional Route 1.



Varro Ville Processional route2. Visual drama unfolding before being finally resolved by the house.

The importance of the rear access drive cannot be overstated. Not only is it the last remaining 19th century road on the estate, it is a contrived processional route and is vital to the interpretation of Varro Ville as a whole. This research on the Upper Canal has added to the evidence discussed in the OPP16 study. This access road is included in the statements of significance adopted by the NSW Heritage Council in its recommendation to list the land surrounding Varro Ville Homestead on the State Heritage Register. In the DA it will be partly destroyed in Stage One by upgrade, and eventually removed to make way for the lawn cemetery.

In conclusion.

Despite multiple protestations from heritage organisations and a raft of others, the CMCT has never, (apart from two tiny token alterations), since the launch of this plan, changed or mitigated any of these destructive features to ensure a better heritage outcome.

The arrogant persistence of this confirms the former Chairman's now infamous words to us in our one and only meeting in August 2013, 'We don't want to put any money into heritage unless we're forced to.' From the inception of this proposal, it was purposely kept from us, the owners of Varro Ville Homestead, to whom it was intended to do the most damage. The Carmelite Friars were instructed not to tell us and on the day of the initial launch, we were the last to be informed. We were never consulted or asked what our future plans might be to pass the house on. The meeting was a bizarre exercise in bullying and after further unacceptable comments we walked out. We have not had any official contact with them for nearly six years having formed the opinion that we couldn't trust them. By behaving in this way, the CMCT has started a version of the Arab-Israeli war which will never have a resolution. The cemetery and Varro Ville Homestead will always be mutually incompatible. This proposal was hatched when Cardinal Pell was the Archbishop of Sydney. We feel that Pell engendered in the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese a culture of arrogance, entitlement and a singular lack of empathy.

Finally, I'll ask one question. "Find me another large public cemetery that has a privately owned, State Heritage Listed house, on battle axe block, marooned in the centre of it?"it's simply ludicrous.

Peter Gibbs

