SHI number 1540283
Study number

Item name: Gam's Sawmill

Location: 838 868 Main Creek Road Dungog 2420 Dungog

Address: 838 868 Main Creek Road Planning: Hunter & Central Coast

Suburb/nearest town: Dungog 2420

Local govt area: Dungog Parish:

State: NSW County:

Other/former names:

Area/group/complex: Group ID:

Aboriginal area:

**Curtilage/boundary:** 

 Item type:
 Archaeological-Terrestrial
 Group:
 Category:
 Sawmill

Owner:

Admin codes: Code 2: Code 3:

**Current use:** 

Former uses:

Assessed significance: Local Endorsed significance:

**Statement of** The study site contains the potential for archaeological remains pertaining to an early 20th century timber **significance**: sawmill, which is considered to be of potential local (or less) archaeological significance. The site represents the

continuing popularity and prosperity of the timber industry to the greater Dungog area.

The position of a timber sawmill directly adjacent to a forestry plantation would have benefited the local residents of Main Creek by providing work opportunities and a stable economic return for the local area. Sawmills enabled timber to be processed and milled on site and subsequently sold locally or exported to other areas for use, thus expanding the economic opportunities of the business. In noting the site's recent closure within the last 40 years, it's establishment date and the style of the site; many of the structural components having been ephemeral in nature (timber structure with open walls), it can be suggested that while the site area has remained largely undeveloped the site may be considered as holding limited amounts of archaeological significance.

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As soon as permanent settlements were established around the greater area of Dungog and the Williams River of provenance: area, timber felling dominated the working industry of the 19th and 20th centuries (Carste Studios (2012), p. 63.). Many of the local residents worked either felling timber in the forests, transportation or employed in the surrounding sawmills. Most of the sawmills were positioned on the outskirts of forestry land which primarily reduced the length of transportation of the raw goods.

> A prominent long term working sawmill established by John Gam, is known to have existed in around 1909 at Main Creek. Main Creek is located to the north of Fosterton and Dungog and is surrounded by dense forest land, deeming it an ideal place for timber production. John was born in Wollongong in 1872 to Thomas Gam and Barbara Lechleiter ("John Samuel Gam", Ancestry, online resource- accessed 25th April 2013). John married Annie Maude Rickler in 1902 at Wallsend, Newcastle (NSW BDM, Reference Number 5234/1902). Together they had three children; Vinie Lourine, Keith Athol and Delta (NSW BDM, Reference Number 16980/1903; 18480/1905; 46752/1911).

> It is not exactly known when John relocated to Main Creek from Newcastle, however parish maps infer that John purchased the land which contained the sawmill site sometime between 1910 and 1917 from William James Wade (IMAGE D023.1.jpg). If the mill is believed to have been erected in 1909, it is likely that either Gam was leasing space for his sawmill site from Wade, or that he purchased an already constructed sawmill from Wade prior to actually purchasing the land (Carste Studio (2012), p. 66). A single photograph provides visual evidence of the sawmill however the date is unknown; therefore the date could range from c1909 up until the 1970s when the mill was permanently shut down. The photograph shows a large timber and galvanised iron structure with open walls. The angled galvanised roof is suspended by large timber beams running both horizontally along the roof and as vertical columns positioned into the ground surface. A large brick chimney is in the centre of the main part of the structure, while to the rear is what appears to be the machinery utilised to control the electric sawmill.

> John Gam was killed in an accident at the sawmill in 1922, where it is believed that he was run over and crushed by a passing buggy or wagon (Carste Studio (2012), p. 63). Following his death it appears that John's son Keith Athol took over the family business as he was noted as the owner of Gam's Mill in 1926 (Singleton Argus, 6th July 1926: 4). Keith married his wife Marjorie Jean Webb in 1928 and continued to run the family business. It is not known if the timber sawmill, at the time of sale, was still in the hands of the Gam family or if it had been sold prior.

Themes:	National theme	State theme	Local theme
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3. Economy Agriculture 3. Economy Industry 3. Economy Forestry

Designer:

**Builder:** 

Year started: Year completed: Circa: Yes

Physical description: Access to the site through an inspection could not be obtained. Personal communication with a neighbour of the study site noted that remnants of a brick chimney are still present on the site (Personal communication with Marion Stuart, 22nd April 2013).

> One photograph has been found to show part of the main sawmill site, although the date of the photograph remains unknown. The photograph shows a large timber and galvanised iron structure with open walls. The angled galvanised roof is suspended by large timber beams running both horizontally along the roof and as vertical columns positioned into the ground surface. A large brick chimney is in the centre of the main part of the structure, while to the rear is what appears to be the machinery utilised to control the electric sawmill.

Physical condition

level:

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Physical condition: Based on the limited documentary evidence available and not having been able to access the site for an assessment, it can be suggested that the site holds an unknown potential for archaeological remains pertaining to the occupation and early 20th century use of the site as a timber sawmill. Archaeological evidence may be found in the form of postholes from timber columns, deposits relating to the industrial use of the site and rubbish pits.

Archaeological potential level:

Archaeological potential Detail:

Modification dates: No documentary or visual evidence could be found to indicate any modifications to the timber sawmill site as only one photograph has been sourced for the site.

**Recommended** A title search and site inspection is suggested as a means to identify the absolute location of Gam's sawmill and management: identify whether sites of this type existed earlier than c1909 on the property. Following this, prior to the approval of any development of the study location an archaeological assessment and, if appropriate, relevant endorsements from the Heritage Branch should be sought where archaeological remains may be affected. Assessment of the site should be made prior to impact or disturbance being made to the current ground level

surface.

**Management:** Management category

Management name

#### **Further comments:**

Criteria a): [Historical significance] The early 20th century timber sawmill, opened by John Samuel Gam in approximately c1909, can be considered to be of potential local historical significance to the community of Main Creek. The sawmill site, having been in operation for more than 60 years, can be suggested to have been one of the most important economic businesses to Main Creek during the 20th century. Its immediate position alongside what is now known as the Black Bulga State Conservation area would have provided many local residents with working opportunities for a prolonged

Criteria b):

Associated ith John Samuel Gam since c 1909.

[Historical association

significance|

Criteria c): [Aesthetic/ **Technical** significance|

Criteria d): [Social/Cultural significance]

> Criteria e): [Research significance]

Criteria f): [Rarity]

The study site containing Gam's mill at Main Creek is not considered to be rare or uncommon according to this significance. Many timber sawmills were present around the greater Dungog region as many forest plantations are located in this area and it was a prominent economic industry during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Criteria g): [Representative] The study site, to a certain extent, can be suggested to be of potential local significance to this criterion. The presence of a timber sawmill on the study site is representative of one of the essential industries to the economic stability of Main Creek and the greater Dungog region during the 19th and 20th centuries. Its late construction date of approximately c1909 demonstrates the continued success felt by the timber industry and affirms that resources were still widely available for felling and exporting at this point in time.

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Intactness/Integrity: The extent and integrity of any archaeological remains pertaining to the use of a timber sawmill is unknown. No

site inspection could be made, however personal communication with a neighbour led to the belief that part of the brick chimney still is still standing. The site's late closure date likely resulted in the sawmill having been deconstructed and the majority of materials taken to another site. Therefore it can be suggested that the site

potentially contains archaeological remains of low integrity.

References: Author Title Year

Ancestry "John Samuel Gam" Last updated 2013

NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages Reference Numbers: 5234/1902; 16980/1903; 18480/1905; 467

Singleton Argus 6th July 1926 1926

Studies: Author Title Number Year

Carste Studio Dungog Heritage Study Review 23 2013

Parcels: Parcel code Lot number Section number Plan code Plan number

LOT 31 DP 635161 LOT 81 DP 559524

Latitude: Longitude:

Location validity: Spatial accuracy:

Map name: Map scale:

AMG zone: Easting: Northing:

Listing: Name Title Number ListingDate

Heritage study

**Data entry:** Data first entered: 26/04/2013 Data updated: 11/07/2013 Status: Partial

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