

Item name: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory

Location: 221-229 Dowling Street Dungog 2420

Dungog

Address: 221-229 Dowling Street

Planning: Hunter & Central Coast

Suburb/nearest town: Dungog 2420

Local govt area: Dungog

Parish:

State: NSW

County:

Other/former names: Skillen and Walker Royal Exchange Stores/ Heather Bell Creamery

Area/group/complex:

Group ID:

Aboriginal area:

Curtilage/boundary:

Item type: Archaeological-Terrestrial

Group:

Category:

Owner:

Admin codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current use:

Former uses:

Assessed significance: Local

Endorsed significance:

Statement of significance: The study site contains the potential for archaeological remains pertaining to a late 19th century butter factory, which is considered to be of potential local archaeological significance. The site represents the development of the dairy industry within the city centre of Dungog.

The butter factory, sometimes known as the Heather Bell Creamery, can be considered to be representative of the developing popularity of the dairy industry in Dungog at the turn of the 20th century. Skillen and Walker; two prominent businessmen, demonstrated that dairy processing and production was a lucrative business whereby profit could be made. The first primitive version of a cooperatives' company was established at this factory, whereby at its prime, more than 180 farmers and suppliers held agreements with Skillen and Walker. These cooperatives' were a positive establishment for local farmers, as they could offload their milk locally and receive more regular payments than when selling crops.

The presence of butter factories asserted the shift of focus from tobacco and wheat production in the early -mid 19th century to dairy production in the late 19th-early 20th centuries.

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Location: 221-229 Dowling Street Dungog 2420

Dungog

Historical notes of provenance: By the second half of the 19th century, the greater area of Dungog experienced a significant shift concerning the main sources of income production for the community. Initially focused on tobacco production, wheat growing and sheep rearing during the first half of the 19th century, these agricultural exploits had predominantly dried up or relocated to more prominent and better suited inland areas.¹ As the community required more agricultural enterprises in order to sufficiently survive, a heavy shift in focus towards dairying and the production of milk by-products quickly became one of the largest and valued business enterprises to the Dungog region.

William Skillen and John Walker formed a lucrative partnership during the second half of the 19th century which resulted in the establishment of a general store. Also initially partnered with Lewis Cuesbury, by 1882, Skillen and Walker had severed ties with Cuesbury and erected a general store on Dowling Street in Dungog.² This original store burnt down shortly after commencing operation and was subsequently rebuilt on the same current site in 1896.³ In 1897, Skillen and Walker extended their business enterprise by constructing and operating a butter factory at the rear of the general store on Dowling Street.⁴ Limited descriptions exist of the factory itself, however remarks were made regarding production quantities and the process experienced by the farmers selling cream:

"They receive the bulk of the cream in the district and have six large vans employed in collecting it twice a week at the present time... The factory is fitted up with a plant that is capable of turning out 15 tons of butter a week... The factory premises are large and substantially built, and are located at the rear of the firm's general store, which is in the centre of town."⁵

The factory received cream rather than milk, as separating stations for milk were not purchased for the factory, thus resulting in Skillen and Walker's factory specialising in butter manufacturing rather than cream production. However, it can be suggested that perhaps the factory changed to produce both later as a 1900 directory lists the factory name as the 'Heather Bell Creamery'.⁶ Most likely due to its location, the factory appeared to be very popular, as in 1904 the factory had more than 180 suppliers listed on the records.⁷ The business movement into butter manufacturing would have been a very economically viable venture by Skillen and Walker as they could sell their own butter on the same site through their general store without having to transport the goods, while at the same time having the option to sell excess quantities to other places such as Newcastle and Sydney. Skillen and Walker's method of operation largely reflected the cooperatives model used by many dairy and butter factories at the turn of the 20th century. It is not known when the butter factory ceased operating or at what point during the 20th century in which it was demolished.

1 "Vacy Creamery", Paterson River History, online resource accessed 2nd March 2013
<http://www.patersonriver.com.au/places/vacycreamery.htm>

2 The Newcastle Herald (24th June 2010), p. 33.

3 Ibid.

4 Australian Town and Country Journal (29th June 1904), p. 28.

5 Ibid.

6 Yewen's Directory of the Landholder's of NSW (1900), p. 569.

7 Australian Town and Country Journal (29th June 1904), p. 28.

Themes: National theme

3. Economy

3. Economy

3. Economy

State theme

Agriculture

Industry

Commerce

Local theme

Designer:

Builder:

Year started:

Year completed: 1896

Circa: Yes

Physical description: The site currently contains a set of original two storey buildings constructed in 1896. The northern side and rear area of the property contains an asphalt carpark.

Physical condition level:

Item name: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory

Location: 221-229 Dowling Street Dungog 2420

Dungog

Physical condition: The original building/s constructed in 1896 is still standing. The presence of a carpark at the rear of the property may have been constructed over the areas in which a butter factory was believed to have been situated. It can be suggested that there remains moderate to high archaeological potential for features and evidence pertaining to the use of part of the site as a butter factory. However, at the same time, the condition, potential and extent of archaeological remains largely depends on the level and depth of excavation reached while removing the building containing the butter factory. Archaeological evidence may be found in the form of wall footings, occupation deposits pertaining to the industrial use of the site as a butter factory, and rubbish pits associated with discard and waste from industrial processes.

Archaeological potential level:

Archaeological potential Detail:

Modification dates:

Recommended management: 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
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Further comments:

Criteria a): The butter factory/ Heather Bell Creamery, established in approximately 1897, is representative of the economic shift and change in commercial and industrial sectors from the 19th to the early 20th century. While the rise of the dairy industry led to the establishment of small independent butter factories, Skillen and Walker's factory is one of the first examples of cooperatives within the dairy industry, having drafted agreements with more than 180 suppliers in 1904. This criterion can be considered to be of local historical significance to the study site.

Criteria b): The study site may hold some local significance to the residents of Dungog. This may include members of the Skillen and Walker families, descendants and workers of the factory.

[Historical association significance]

Criteria c): Archaeological: This criteria is not applicable to archaeological sites

[Aesthetic/ Technical significance]

Criteria d): The site may hold local significance to the members of the Dungog community, as the factory was once an important economic factor to many farmers of the Dungog township.

[Social/Cultural significance]

Criteria e): Archaeological: This site is not considered significant according to this criterion.

[Research significance]

Criteria f): It can be suggested that the presence of a butter factory on the study site is not considered rare or uncommon to this area. Many butter factories were operating around the Dungog region during this time as agricultural ventures were readily progressing in this direction. This subsequently resulted in many small scale butter and dairy factory sites opening and operating to keep up with the new production demands.

Item name: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory

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Dungog

Criteria g): Skillen and Walker's butter factory, also known as the Heather Bell Creamery, is representative of the growth and development of the dairy industry, alongside the direct decline and demise of tobacco and wheat growing prospects. This particular factory is also an early representation of one of the earliest examples of dairy cooperatives', which later became a huge economic model for dairy and butter factories in the Dungog region during the 20th century.

[Representative]

Intactness/Integrity: Archaeological: Extent of archaeological remains is unknown. No visual evidence has been located to suggest the extent of the factory prior to its removal.

References:	Author	Title	Year
	Australian Town and Country Journal	"The Dungog District"6th July 1904	1904
	The Newcastle Herald	"William Skillen and John Walker"24th June 2010	2010
	Walsh, Brian	"Vacy Creamery" in Paterson River HistoryLast updated Febru	2013

Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year
	Carste Studio	Dungog Heritage Study Review	21	2013

Parcels:	Parcel code	Lot number	Section number	Plan code	Plan number
		88		DP	1134837

Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial accuracy:

Map name:

Map scale:

AMG zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listing: Name

Title
Heritage study

Number

ListingDate

Data entry: Data first entered: 18/04/2013

Data updated: 19/11/2013

Status: Partial

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Location: 221-229 Dowling Street Dungog 2420

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Image:



Caption: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory- facing front of one storey extension next to original building

Copy right:

Image by: AMAC

Image date:

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345d301dc37e1414fc4bc1f2b25666e9eb1.jpg>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test345d301dc37e1414fc4bc1f2b25666e9eb1.jpg

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Image:



Caption: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory - original building containing the general store

Copy right:

Image by: AMAC

Image date:

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/3450adefbf7ea18454d96abf0d9b004da91.jpg>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test3450adefbf7ea18454d96abf0d9b004da91.jpg

Item name: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory

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Image:



Caption: Skillen and Walker Butter Factory - rear site containing another building and carpark

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Image by: AMAC

Image date:

Image number:

Image url: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/345955b6dbb9e274e048476657c840ffb54.jpg>

Thumbnail url: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/maritimeheritageapp/resources/Heritage/shi/WebAPP/Thumb_test345955b6dbb9e274e048476657c840ffb54.jpg

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