Bimbowrie

Conservation Management Plan

Department for Environment & Heritage

Habitable Places Architects/Historical Research

June 2007

2 Historical Summary

Overview History

South Australia's early pastoral history proceeded in a series of distinct phases. For the first six years, graziers were required to buy their land freehold after a government survey. This proved far too slow, and by the early 1840s, grazing industry had only moved as far north as Clare. In 1842 the *Waste Lands Act* created a form of leasehold on an annual licence basis, but this short tenure provided no incentive for carrying out improvements for water supply, so grazing remained in the well-watered ranges, extending only as far north as Melrose and Orroroo by the end of the 1840s.

Finally in 1851 a further amendment to the *Waste Lands Act* replaced Occupational Licences with Pastoral Leases of fourteen years duration, the form of pastoral tenure which became standard throughout much of Australia until the twentieth century. This was the incentive needed to expand the grazing industry, by greatly improving the graziers' security of tenure, and reducing some of the risks of their enterprise. Encouraged by a run of good seasons, high wool prices, and the Victorian gold rush enabling generous credit from the banks, there was a second wave of pastoral expansion which extended sheep grazing out into the marginal lands to the east and north.

Early Settlement of Bimbowrie

The European settlement of the Bimbowrie district took place during this expansion of the 1850s, although the documentary records do not provide much detail on its early history. The earliest reference to a pastoral lease in the immediate vicinity of Bimbowrie was a block of ten square miles called Ethiadina on what later became Plumbago in 1854. It must have been short-lived. The Outalpa lease was taken up in 1855, and Boolcoomatta in 1857. Then in 1859 John William Tyler leased Bimbowrie and apparently gave it that name. (Manning 1990, pp. 41 & 234; Nobbs 2000, p. 17; Cockburn vol. 2 1927, p. 109)

Not long afterward, a block of 24 square miles at Triangle Hill in the immediate vicinity of Bimbowrie was taken up by John Taylor in the early 1860s. He put John Ross on the lease as manager. It is not quite clear whether this was an additional lease, or whether in fact Taylor had taken over Tyler's Bimbowrie lease, for Tyler and Taylor were close business associates, and Rodney Cockburn refers to Taylor taking over Tyler's holdings, although he is vague about placenames and dates. Taylor's tenure must have been short, for he died in England in 1865. Cockburn says Thomas Warnes took up the neighbouring Telechie run and also "had a piece of Bimbowrie", but does not mention any dates. (Cockburn vol. 1 1925, p. 157 & vol. 2 1927, pp. 106 & 109; Flinders Ranges Research website)

The combination of Taylor and Ross was a formidable one. Taylor was one of the group of Scottish pastoralists who established what later became the Elder Smith group. In his short career (he was only 42 when he died) he held grazing properties extended from the Oodnadatta Track to the Flinders Ranges and was a founding partner in the Wallaroo and Moonta mining companies. Ross was a highly respected manager, employed by graziers such as the Chambers and Hughes brothers on properties like Umberatana and Bundaleer, and a major contractor on the construction of the Overland Telegraph.

There are no firm dates known for any of the pastoral buildings on Bimbowrie, but it is reasonably certain that substantial homestead complexes would have been built at Old Boolcoomatta and Bimbowrie early in their development, with a big house for the manager, and smaller cottages, stables and other outbuildings. The old house (now the kitchen) at Bimbowrie and most of the buildings at Old Boolcoomatta probably date from the 1850s or 1860s.

After the death of John Taylor in 1865, Cockburn says that Bimbowrie was purchased by John Crozier for his sons Walter, Edwin and Elliot about 1867. (Cockburn vol. 2 1927, p. 51) He also says that Crozier purchased it from John Tyler. Whether the lease had reverted to Tyler, or he was acting as executor for Taylor's estate is as usual left unclear.

Consolidation and Development

In 1880, Bimbowrie was purchased by Alexander McCulloch. McCulloch was another of the legendary Scottish graziers who had pushed sheep grazing out into the saltbush country in the 1850s, eventually putting together a contiguous block of four runs -Eldoratrilla, Black Rock, Gottlieb's Well and Yongala - stretching nearly from Jamestown to Petersburg. He held Bimbowrie for nearly twenty years, and consolidated several leases under his ownership, probably including Plumbago to the west.

It was almost certainly McCulloch who built Antro woolshed at some time in the early 1880s. Its scale was in keeping with his consolidation of runs, and its central location reflects the size of his holding. The efficient pooling of resources, so that several runs shared one woolshed, was characteristic of his management of his older runs west of Petersburg.

The name Antro is intriguing. It is a Spanish word meaning "cavern", and is now a popular name for nightclubs in Europe. It is derived from the ancient Greek word antron, meaning a fissure in the rocks. Why McCulloch would use an obscure Spanish word to name his woolshed is a mystery, but he also called his first property in the northeast Eldoratrilla, apparently derived from the Spanish words el d'oratrilla, meaning a golden ornament. Some further linguistic research is called for.

During McCulloch's ownership there were dramatic changes in the Olary district, unconnected with the pastoral industry. From the late 1870s onward, there were discoveries of silver in the Barrier Ranges of Western New South Wales, at Thackeringa and other places. These culminated in the discovery of Umberumberka (later Silverton) in 1882 and the big prize, Broken Hill in 1883. The new mining towns were far too remote to be serviced from Sydney, and economically became part of South Australia, reached by a coach road that ran northeast from the railway terminus at Petersburg, after the railway arrived there in 1881. (Blainey 1968)

The road passed by the major homesteads on the route, including Bimbowrie, which for a time became a local transport node. A Post Office opened there in 1885, and an eating house with a blacksmith's shop to serve the needs of travellers was built about the same time. One structure which reflects the role of Bimbowrie in servicing transport to the mining fields is a stone explosives magazine. It is too small for storing bulky explosives, but was probably used to keep detonators secure during overnight stops.

This transport role was brief, for in 1887 South Australian Railways extended the Port Pirie to Petersburg railway to the New South Wales border at Cockburn, where it met the privately-owned Silverton Tramway to Broken Hill. The new railway passed through Olary 30 miles to the south, and traffic on the road through Bimbowrie would have dropped dramatically from that time. The eating house and magazine must date from the period between about 1882 when Silverton was discovered, and 1887 when the railway took away road traffic. This was probably about the same time that Antro woolshed was built further west, and interestingly the eating house and the woolshed share some similar treatment of details - squared slate paving and stop-chamfered internal posts - which suggest the same builder or tradespeople may have worked on both buildings.

The Twentieth Century

In 1899 the Bimbowrie leases were bought by Edwin Crozier, son of John Crozier who had apparently owned the land in the 1860s and 70s. It was probably Crozier who built the large new house at Bimbowrie early in the twentieth century. For the following sixty years the property was in the hands of three families, two of them related by marriage. In 1912 Bimbowrie was purchased by Robert Crawford. At that time it was probably at its maximum physical extent, but soon afterward Plumbago, Telechie and Kalabity were subdivided off, greatly reducing the property's area in the west and north.

Independently of these events, Douglas Mawson of the University of Adelaide initiated intensive geological research in the Olary district in the early twentieth century. He made Old Boolcoomatta homestead his field base, building a stone hut there in 1912.

In 1934, Bimbowrie was transferred to Ellen Crawford, and in 1947 it was purchased by Queenie Baxter. The property was subdivided yet again, but in 1962 the Bimbowrie leases were amalgamated with part of Boolcoomatta. The Old Boolcoomatta homestead now included in Bimbowrie had long been reduced to an outstation, with the name transferred to a new homestead further east. These decades saw the introduction of many modern facilities for power generation, vehicle shelter and maintenance and water supply, but these were mostly small scale, not involving substantial building works. The final private ownership came in 1965 when Bimbowrie was purchased by QLCAR Pty Ltd. (Yelland 2004)

In 2004 Bimbowrie was acquired by the South Australian National Parks Service to be managed as a Conservation Park.

Bimbowrie: Chronology of Events

1854	Ethiadina lease taken up (Plumbago)
1855	Outalpa lease taken up
1857	Boolcoomatta lease taken up
1859	Bimbowrie lease taken up by John Tyler
1860?	Bimbowrie lease purchased by John Taylor
1867	Bimbowrie lease purchased by John Crozier
1876	Silver discovered at Thackeringa
1880	Bimbowrie purchased by Alexander McCulloch
1881	Railway opened to Petersburg
1882	Silver discovered at Silverton (Umberumberka)
1883	Silver discovered at Broken Hill
1885	Bimbowrie Post Office opened
1887	Petersburg railway extended to NSW border
1896	Boolcoomatta purchased by Robert Salmon
1899	Bimbowrie purchased by Edwin Crozier
1912	Bimbowrie purchased by Robert Crawford
1914	Boolcoomatta purchased by Robert Crawford
	Plumbago, Telechie, Kalabity subdivided off
1934	Bimbowrie transferred to Ellen Crawford
1947	Bimbowrie purchased by Queenie Baxter
	Property subdivided again
1962	Bimbowrie leases amalgamated again
1965	Bimbowrie purchased by QLCAR Pty Ltd
2004	Bimbowrie acquired by National Parks Service

Stages of Construction

Bimbowrie Homestead Site - Early Settlement (1850 - 1879)

02 Bimbowrie Kitchen - Has been modified by successive generations of owners.

03 Shed/accommodation - Added to at various stages

Bimbowrie Homestead Site - Early 20th Century

01 Bimbowrie Homestead

04 Workshop

05 Fuel Shed

06 Generator Shed

10 Underground Tank

12 Stone Stables and associated yards

Gateposts between the Homestead and the Fuel Shed

Remnants of the Driveway

Antro Woolshed Site - Consolidation and Development 1880-1899

13 Shearers Quarters

14 Antro Woolshed

15 Three roomed cottage

Antro Woolshed Site - Early 20th Century

16 Generator/Toilets/Store

17 Laundry/Shower

18 Cook's Hut

19 Meat Safe

20 Underground Tank

Heritage Site - Early Settlement (1850 - 1879)

21 Post Office

Heritage Site - Consolidation and Development (1880-1899)

22 Cobb & Co

23 Blacksmiths Shop

24 Toilet

25 Magazine

Bullock Post

Old Boolcoomatta Outstation - Early Settlement (1850-1879)

26 Outstation Homestead

29 Blacksmiths Shop

30 Shearer's Quarters

34 Original toilet

35 Original shearing shed

36 Well and tank

Old Boolcoomatta Outstation - Early Twentieth Century

27 Workman's Quarters

28 Generator hut

31 Mawson's Hut

Old Boolcoomatta Outstation - Mid Twentieth Century

32 Crutching Shed

33 Toilet adjacent crutching shed