

**Godden Mackay Logan**

**Heritage Consultants**

Godden Mackay Logan is a leading provider of specialist advisory and research services in environmental heritage, planning and archaeology.

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## **Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area Review**

Report prepared for Hornsby Shire Council

**January 2004**

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**Godden Mackay Logan**

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Contents	Page
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area.....	1
1.3 Purpose of the Study .....	2
1.4 Methodology .....	2
1.5 Limitations.....	2
1.6 Authorship.....	2
1.7 Acknowledgements.....	3
<b>2.0 Historical Development</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 Field of Mars Common.....	5
2.2 Resumption and the Railway .....	6
2.3 Subdivision of Beecroft and Cheltenham.....	7
2.4 Later Sales and Suburban Development.....	9
2.5 Endnotes.....	26
<b>3.0 Defining the Conservation Area</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>4.0 Comparative Analysis</b> .....	<b>37</b>
4.1 Landform and Vegetation of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area .....	37
4.2 Residential Development — its History and Heritage Values.....	37
<b>5.0 Precincts: Key Characteristics</b> .....	<b>41</b>
5.1 The Beecroft Village Precinct.....	41
5.1.1 <i>Subdivision</i> .....	41
5.1.2 <i>Streetscape</i> .....	41
5.1.3 <i>Landscape</i> .....	42
5.1.4 <i>Built Form</i> .....	42
5.2 The Beecroft East, North and South Precincts and the Cheltenham Precinct.....	43
5.2.1 <i>Subdivision</i> .....	43
5.2.2 <i>Streetscape</i> .....	44
5.2.3 <i>Landscape</i> .....	44
5.2.4 <i>Built Form</i> .....	45
5.3 The Cheltenham Road/Norma Crescent Precinct.....	45
5.3.1 <i>Subdivision</i> .....	45
5.3.2 <i>Streetscape</i> .....	46
5.3.3 <i>Landscape</i> .....	46
5.3.4 <i>Built Form</i> .....	46
5.4 The Four Postwar ‘Close’ Resubdivisions .....	47
5.4.1 <i>Subdivision</i> .....	47
5.4.2 <i>Streetscape</i> .....	47
5.4.3 <i>Landscape</i> .....	47
5.4.4 <i>Built Form</i> .....	47
<b>6.0 Heritage Significance</b> .....	<b>49</b>
6.1 Historic Values .....	49
6.2 Aesthetic Values .....	49
6.3 Research and Rarity Values .....	49
6.4 Social and Associative Values .....	49

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6.5 Statement of Significance .....	50
<b>7.0 Pressures for Development.....</b>	<b>53</b>
7.1 Subdivision.....	53
7.2 Streetscape .....	53
7.3 Landscape.....	53
7.4 Built Form.....	53
<b>8.0 Assessment of Existing Planning Controls .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>9.0 Management Principles for the Precincts.....</b>	<b>57</b>
9.1 Management Principles for the Village Area Precinct, the Beecroft East, North and South and Cheltenham Precincts and the Cheltenham Road/Norma Crescent Precinct.....	57
9.2 Management Principles for the 'Closes' .....	59
9.3 Conservation Planning Principles for the Beecroft Commercial Centre.....	59
<b>10.0 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>61</b>

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

As part of Hornsby Shire Council's long-term strategic plan for the growth and environmental management of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area, Godden Mackay Logan was engaged in 2003 to review the delineation and management of the conservation area.

The review examined the history of the area, the existing statutory management tools used by Hornsby Shire Council in guiding development, and reviewed the boundaries of the conservation area. The work also involved assessing the major development pressures affecting the conservation area and recommendations for its future management and protection.

### 1.2 Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area

The Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area covers the Field of Mars Common in Hornsby Shire. It was identified in the 1993 Hornsby Shire Heritage Study by Perumal Murphy Wu Pty Ltd, and included in the Hornsby Local Environmental Plan (LEP), 1994, with the then standard conservation provisions. Subsequently Hornsby Shire Development Control Plan (DCP) 1995 has provided additional guidelines for heritage related development in the Shire.

The significance of the area was stated within a description of the heritage significance of Hornsby Shire in the DCP as being:

*Beecroft and Cheltenham are outstanding Federation suburbs. They were created out of the government subdivision of the old Field of Mars Common. The areas were closer to Sydney and unconstrained by existing private ownership. This resulted in relatively rapid suburban development and high concentrations of some of Sydney's grandest Federation homes. Many of these also retain original trees and garden features. Generally the degree of intactness is remarkable.*

This description focuses on the Federation character of prominent development, which is but one aspect of the significance of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area. Subsequent periods of development, notably the interwar and postwar periods, are also of significance. The review of the history of the development of Beecroft and Cheltenham and extensive fieldwork by Godden Mackay Logan has concluded that this conservation area would best be managed by defining general management principles for the conservation area as a whole, with more detailed precinct guidelines for four precinct types within the conservation area, reflecting their specific history and built evidence. Management guidelines are provided for each of these precincts to support the conservation of their character and heritage values.

The statement of significance for the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area has therefore been revised. The key characteristics for each of the four precinct types within it have been identified and described to support the preparation of clear management guidelines.

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The precincts are identified in Figure 1.1:

- Beecroft Village subdivision of July 1887 focused on Beecroft Station;
- Cheltenham, East Beecroft, North Beecroft and South Beecroft subdivisions of August 1887, March 1888 and June 1891;
- Norma Crescent/Cheltenham Road subdivisions; and
- four postwar closes (Parker Close, Redmill Close, Narena Close, Seale Close).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Council's brief for the study stated: The purpose of this study is to undertake a review of the Statement of Significance and the heritage and streetscape qualities of the individual precincts of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area. The revised statement of significance should address the overall heritage significance of the area and also the significance and contribution of the individual precinct within the area. The Statement of Significance should be complemented with character statements for each individual precinct. The purpose of the study is also to identify appropriate planning controls to protect the heritage and streetscape qualities of the area.

### **1.4 Methodology**

The heritage significance of the conservation area was confirmed having regard to the assessment methods and criteria set out in the *NSW Heritage Manual*, 1996 of the NSW Heritage Office and NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. The philosophical basis for the study was the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) and its guidelines.

### **1.5 Limitations**

The study brief did not include investigation of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Assessment of natural heritage aspects was drawn from the Environmental Study of Byles Creek Catchment, by Nexus Environmental Pty Ltd, 1995.

### **1.6 Authorship**

This report has been prepared by a specialist team assembled by Godden Mackay Logan. Sheridan Burke, Director, provided specialist input and was the project manager; Penelope Pike, heritage planner, undertook the fieldwork, analysis and drafted the written report. Mark Dunn, Historian, carried out historical research and prepared the outline history, with assistance from the Hornsby Shire Council Local Studies Librarian, Neil Chippendale. The final report has been reviewed by David Logan, Director.

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### **1.7 Acknowledgements**

The study team wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by Lisa Trueman and James Farrington of Hornsby Shire Council, Helen Barker and the Beecroft Cheltenham History Group. Valuable assistance was also provided by Neil Chippendale, Local Studies Librarian at the Hornsby Shire Council Library.



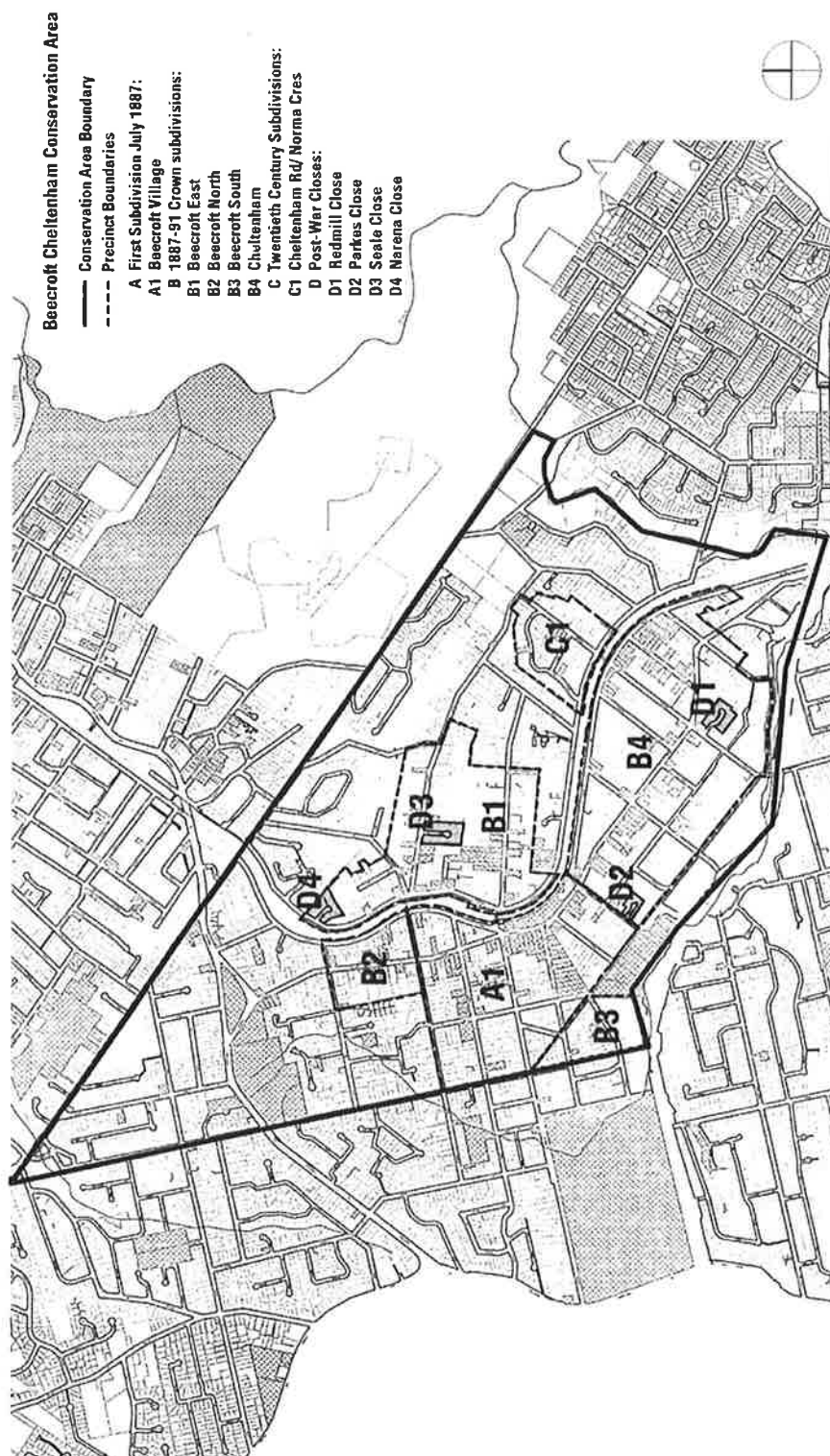


Figure 1.1 Beecroft/Cheltenham conservation areas.

## 2.0 Historical Development

### 2.1 Field of Mars Common

All of the current study area in Beecroft and Cheltenham lies within the boundary of the Field of Mars Common set aside for public use by Governor Gidley King in August 1804. The common was established to allow small-scale settlers access to additional land to graze their stock upon. In Sydney six commons were gazetted in its earliest years, each managed by a group of trustees who lived close by and held at least 100 acres privately. The trustees were nominated by other settlers and then approved by the governor.

The Field Of Mars Common was situated on the western bank of the Lane Cove River from the Hunters Hill peninsula to the Pennant Hills ridge, covering an area of approximately 5,050 acres. The governor appointed David Brown, Francis Oakes and James Squire as the first trustees. The Field of Mars Common was initially used for timber-getting to supply lumber for the colonial building program, with both private operators and government (convict) timber gangs operating throughout the common area. Later (from 1830s–40s), when the best timber for building had been removed, less useful timber was cut for use as fencing, firewood and charcoal.<sup>1</sup> The trustees also granted licences to private timber-getters to cut timber for posts, rails, palings and shingles throughout the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s.

As well as being useful for the collection of timber, the isolated and rugged nature of the common attracted less salubrious occupants. By the 1840s the area had a reputation as a hideaway for smugglers, sly-grog operators, squatters, runaway sailors and escaped convicts. The lack of a proper survey and accompanying maps made it a perfect hide-out close to the city.<sup>2</sup>

By 1847 the common equalled 6,235 acres, including the Eastern Farms Common to the west of the Field of Mars. At this time the government began to take a closer interest in the running of the common, first sending Surveyor Galloway to inspect in 1847 and then passing the Commons Regulation Act in the same year. The Act gave control of the common to trustees who were given perpetual succession and the power to regulate common land. The government's intentions were to ensure the ongoing availability of the common lands to the public and to tighten the administration of the common through the trustees. In 1849 a new deed of grant was issued to cover the common and was accompanied over the next ten years with new rules and regulations over the leasing of land and general usage of the common itself. In 1857 the trustees met at Ryde where a rental of five shillings per acre for those leasing common land and agreed no person could lease less than ten or more than thirty acres.<sup>3</sup>

As new regulations were being implemented, pressure was building to have the common resumed by the government and sold for private development. During the 1850s the discovery of gold, the subsequent influx of people to the colony and the building of the first railway line between Sydney and Parramatta aroused speculation among some over the effect these events would have on land

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prices and the city's development. New development and subdivisions occurred throughout this time, with the focus being to the west of the city along the railway. To the north Jules Joubert, a resident and landowner in Hunters Hill saw the same possibilities hampered through isolation and lack of access. He began to argue for the resumption and sale of the common and the provision of two bridges over arms of the harbour to ease access to the city. He saw that land values would rise if this access was created. Initially launched in 1853, Joubert's idea at first did not find the necessary support, but with the seed planted the idea to resume the common began to grow.

By 1861 two distinct sides had emerged in the debate over resumption, based largely on regional bias. The trustees who favoured retention of the common were settled around the north and northwestern portion of the common and the land-holders on the city-side of the area who favoured resumption and the subsequent land subdivision. A Select Committee to the Legislative Council was established to discuss the resumption and sale. Through the evidence of 31 witnesses the committee sought to understand the main questions: Did local residents derive an advantage from the common? Was access to Sydney a problem and would the proposed new road benefit local settlers? What use could be made of land in the common and what was its value?<sup>4</sup> The committee finally noted that due to the divisive nature of the debate, resumption was not recommended but instead the common could be divided into three sections in proportion to the rights of the commoners living at Hunters Hill, the Field of Mars and Pennant Hills, who could then sell or retain their portions as desired. Further, the committee decided that the building of bridges to the area could not be justified in view of the cost of construction and the likely collection of funds if the common was sold.<sup>5</sup>

## **2.2 Resumption and the Railway**

Despite the committee's decision to retain the common, those in favour of resumption continued to keep the pressure on government to do just that. In 1863 a petition organised by Jules Joubert and signed by 302 out of 378 residents claiming rights to the common was forwarded to the Secretary of Lands calling for resumption. Counter petitions were also organised, but the mood was turning towards resumption. Further, by 1870 the latest set of trustees were more accepting of the resumption process and pressure was also mounting from settlers and developers further north who foresaw that the building of bridges and opening of the common would in turn encourage development in the Hawkesbury and beyond.

In February 1873 the government made a move towards resumption, asking the estate agents Richardson & Wrench to value the Field of Mars Common. Robert Richardson valued the common at £30,000 or £45,000 if the two proposed bridges were completed. The government allowed £50,000 for the construction of the two bridges if the common was resumed, and asked the Public Works Department to prepare plans and specifications so there would be no delays if required.<sup>6</sup> And so it was, that despite a continuing local opposition, on 2 June 1874 the Colonial Treasurer George Lloyd introduced the Bill to authorise the resumption and sale of the Field of Mars Common. The Bill was duly debated but the issue had largely been decided and the Bill was approved 28 to 3 and

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received Royal Assent on 25 June 1874. The Act authorised the land to be surveyed with roads, streets, public thoroughfares and other reserves for public purposes to be marked out, along with subdivisions and allotments to be put up for sale by public auction.<sup>7</sup>

In anticipation, work began on the Gladesville and Iron Cove Bridges with their openings being in February 1881 and November 1882 respectively.

At the same time that the debate over resumption was raging, decisions on the extension of the New South Wales rail network were also being made. In the mid-1870s three main railway lines existed in New South Wales, one emanating from Sydney to the south, one to the west and the third extending through the Hunter Valley from Newcastle. The extension of the railways was seen by government and private developers as the key to future prosperity for the state and local areas. Part of the development plan was to join the Sydney network to the lines running out of Newcastle. This would not only open up new areas for development but also allow cheaper transport costs for agricultural goods and particularly for coal from Newcastle to Sydney. In 1881 the government introduced new plans for the railway network in New South Wales, proposing to double the mileage of lines in the state including the Northern Junction Railway which would link Sydney and Newcastle. The proposed route was from Homebush to Waratah taking it through the Field of Mars Common area. Survey work on the possible line had begun in 1878 with tenders for the construction of the first section, Homebush to the Hawksbury River, called and awarded to A & R Amos and Co. on 1 May 1883 with an estimated completion date of March 1886.<sup>8</sup>

The line was completed and opened between Strathfield and Hornsby on 17 September 1886. The stopping place and eventual station at Beecroft was not decided on and surveyed until June 1886. The delay in the selection of the Beecroft site was in part due to the steep climb from the Eastwood Station site to Hornsby. The surveyors reported that they could not recommend a decent stopping place that did not require considerable work and expense to make accessible. However without a station between Eastwood and Hornsby the value of the land to the government would be considerably reduced, with subdivision into suburban allotments of only five acres and upwards, rather than the smaller village allotments. The final decision to include a station at Beecroft was made by the Minister for Lands, Henry Copeland, just three months prior to the opening of the line. Further it was Copeland who chose the name Beecroft for the station and the subsequent village which developed.<sup>9</sup>

### **2.3 Subdivision of Beecroft and Cheltenham**

The decision to have a platform at Beecroft meant that the surveyors for the government, Atchinson and Schleicher, were required to re-survey for a township sale rather than for larger suburban lots. At Beecroft village allotments of between a quarter and half an acre were planned for near the railway, while larger lots of five acres or more were planned for sites further away. Land was also set aside for public use, including the area that would later be named the Village Green adjacent to the

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station. Although delayed, by December 1886 205 half-acre allotments at the Village of Beecroft and a further 304 portions in the surrounding area had been marked out. The first land sales had been planned for September 1886 but needed to be postponed due to the delay caused by the re-surveying. The first sales then were held on the site at 2.30pm 9 July 1887 by auctioneers Mills and Pile of Pitt Street, Sydney (see Figure 2.2).

To provide access to the sale the regular morning Redfern to Ryde train service was extended to Beecroft for the two weeks prior to the sale and a special train for potential buyers was laid on for the day of the sale. A total of 189 lots were offered, ranging in price from £16 to £53 and covering 97 acres between Malton Street (now Chapman Avenue) and Kirkham Street, and from Beecroft Parade (now Beecroft Road) west to Hull Road. A total of 122 lots were sold covering 70 per cent of the area with the most popular sections shown in Figure 2.3.<sup>10</sup>

One of the attractions that the auctioneers advertised to help their sales was the supposed health benefits of living in the area. The medical opinion of the time suggested that living in elevated climates was beneficial to health, through the supply of cool fresh air, particularly in the mountains. The opinion was easily argued when compared to the overcrowded and polluted nature of the inner-city industrial areas of Sydney towards the end of the nineteenth century. Playing on this, many of the land sales at Beecroft and Cheltenham from the initial government sales onwards advertised themselves as healthy alternatives with some claiming recommendations from Macquarie Street specialists.<sup>11</sup> Elevated district views were also an attraction.

The second land sale was held in August 1887. The auctioneers from the first sale, Mills and Pile, again held sales on site for 67 lots unsold from the first sale and 115 new portions to the north of the first sale area. The third land sale in March 1888 included the whole of the future suburb of Cheltenham from Murray Road to Devlin's Creek, west of the railway line, as well as land to the north of Pennant Hills Road bounded by Hull and Victoria Roads (see Figure 2.4).

The pattern of land sales every few months, with previously unsold lots being offered together with new sales, continued through the late 1880s and into the 1890s (see Figure 2.4). While many of the lots were sold, the purchasers were mainly speculative buyers looking to gain a foothold in a potentially rich market for subdivided blocks as the area became more settled in future years. However, some of the buyers were new residents as was evidenced by early petitions and school enrolments (24 Beecroft residents petitioned for a Post Office in December 1889, while 60 pupils were ready to attend the proposed public school by 1891).<sup>12</sup> The 1891 census also listed 205 people as residing in Beecroft, with 48 houses occupied.

From the outset the social composition of the new residents was also set through a combination of land value and access. As all the initial sales were by auction, as required by the Field of Mars Resumption Act, competitive bidding meant prices were dependent on demand, which was strong for the original sales. The setting of a reserve price by government also meant that lots held their price despite large numbers being released. Further, although the new suburb was spurred on by the

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expansion of the railway system, the fledgling timetable, the restrictive service that went with it and the relatively expensive cost of tickets excluded industrial workers from being able to use it to travel any great distance. Consequently, factory and industrial workers continued to reside in the inner-city suburbs, while the new railway suburbs such as Beecroft and Cheltenham were populated by the middle classes who could afford the lifestyle choice.

#### **2.4 Later Sales and Suburban Development**

As most of the buyers who bought land on which to live were of the upper-middle classes, the early style of house in the district was largely substantial villa-style dwellings set on large blocks. One of the first of these was called 'Ramona' and was built by George Robert Harrison facing Beecroft Road, northwest of Murray Road, in 1887–8. The house was complete with stables and coachhouse, adjacent paddocks for grazing the horses, kitchen garden, gardener's cottage and formal flower beds.<sup>13</sup> The early development in the area also attracted prominent architects to design the houses including the Sydney firm of Charles Slatyer and Nicholas Shiels or Charles and William Nixon (of Beecroft).

By the turn of the century Beecroft and Cheltenham were developing into suburbs characterised by good quality houses, set on large allotments, but with no covenants on size, material or proximity to boundaries. This freedom meant that some earlier houses would later be out of alignment with later suburban developments, set back from some streets and roads, particularly those houses constructed within the larger orchard and farm allotments. The pattern of roads and streets was largely defined by the topography, with much of the earliest development occurring on the western side of the railway within the original village boundary or along the ribbon-like Malton Road and Chapman Avenue extension to the east. Another feature was the retention of areas of native trees and bushland, with forested blocks remaining throughout the suburbs until after the Second World War. Stands of large trees and large tracts of remnant native bushland along street frontages, at the back of allotments and in steep gullies, are still a feature in the Beecroft and Cheltenham area.

From 1900 subdivision of the original land purchases was becoming more commonplace. Many of these had block sizes and covenants imposed on them. Covenants typically specified the building materials, most commonly being brick, stone or a combination of each, roofing material and sometimes minimum cost of construction. Each new subdivision usually had a covenant attached to it contributing to the overall character of the suburb.<sup>14</sup>

The suburbanisation of Beecroft and Cheltenham advanced in earnest from 1900 through until the mid-1930s, changing the district from semi-rural to a more conventional suburban form. A comparison of aerial photographs from 1930 illustrates this gradual change. Although the transformation was well underway by 1930, the early phases of suburban development was largely concentrated within the original 1887 village allotment areas and in the streets close to Beecroft and Cheltenham stations. Beyond the village centre, the streets and roads ran through rural plots,

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orchards to the west and remnant forest areas to the east of the railway. In the eastern areas particularly, the rugged topography restricted development to the ridge lines close to Beecroft Station in Malton Road and Copeland Road East. Comparison of the 1930 aerial photograph (see Figure 2.11) with Figure 2.5 illustrates the difference between the ambitions of the early land releases and the reality of actual development in this area. Few lots on the periphery had been cleared or developed by 1930.

This pattern remained dominant throughout the 1950s with any new development being the infill of lots previously undeveloped within the main Beecroft and Cheltenham areas. Particular development is evident through the Cheltenham area where substantial residential construction has occurred along Beecroft Road, Boronia Street and Castle Howard Road as well as the beginnings of development along Sutherland Road linking the eastern aspects of Beecroft and Cheltenham (see Figure 2.12). As late as the 1960s there were still substantial areas to the north of Chapman Avenue that remained undeveloped with one orchard of approximately 120 trees still discernible from aerial photos (see Figure 2.13).

It was between 1961 and 1970 that much of the consolidation of the suburban areas took place. New streets, particularly smaller cul-de-sacs and crescents are evident from aerial photographs as having been created within the suburb during this period. At the same time to the east of the railway, construction was beginning to advance from the ridge line and further down the previously undeveloped gullies. Streets such as Chorley Avenue and Norma Crescent in Cheltenham and Bangalow Avenue in Beecroft are examples (see Figures 2.14 and 2.15).

Land for the new avenues and cul-de-sacs most often became available during the 1960s and 1970s following the demolition of original houses from the first land sales, or from the break-up of orchard remnants and dairy farms. The large acreage blocks that many of the early homes had been built on and preserved were ideal for the creation of small streets that still allowed for substantial building allotments. Examples include the demolition of 'Oaklands' in c1960. Oaklands had been built in 1902 by the wine and spirit merchant Charles Tucker in Kirkham Street. The 1963 subdivision of the former Oaklands allowed for six blocks around the new Parker Close, named after local business man Badgerly Parker<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 2.16). Other developments from this period include Redmill Close 1963, Glenelg Place in 1968 and Seale Close from 1973.

Later new development in the 1980s–2003 has followed a similar pattern but on an increasingly diminishing scale as sustainable, accessible land becomes less easy to find.

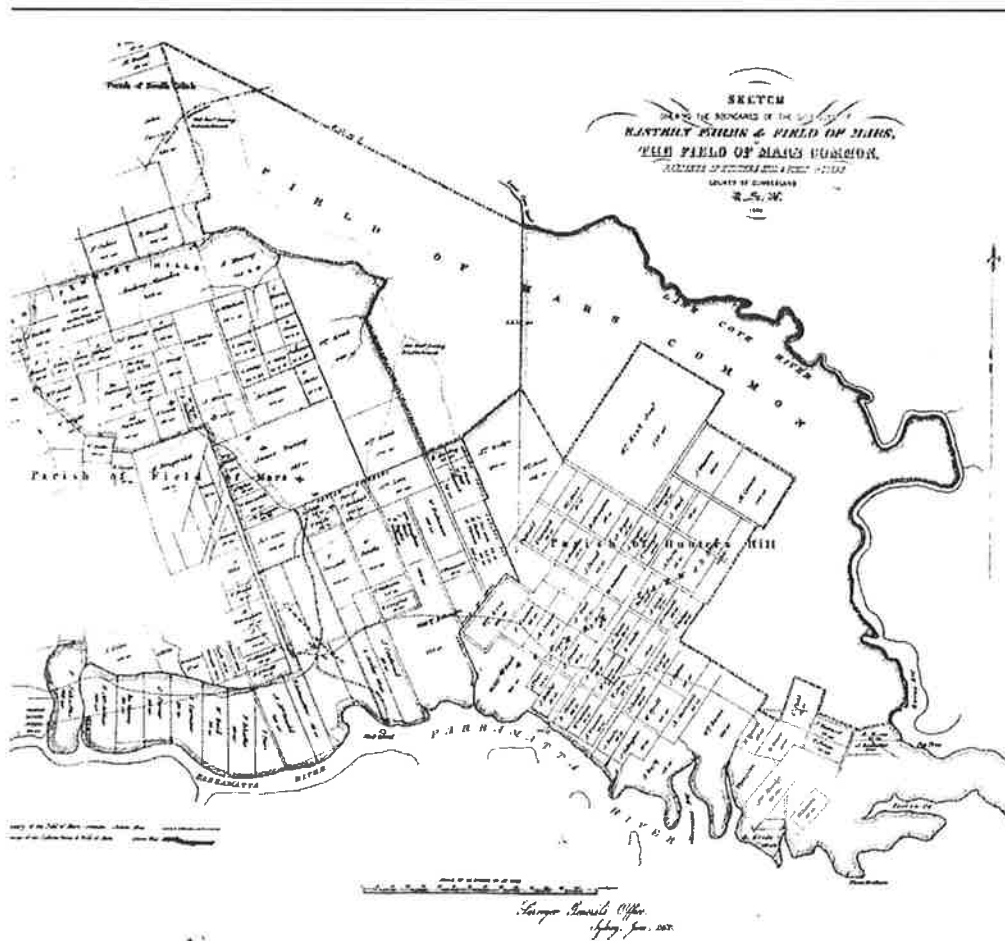


Figure 2.1 The Field of Mars Common with surrounding land grants as presented to the Select Committee in 1862.



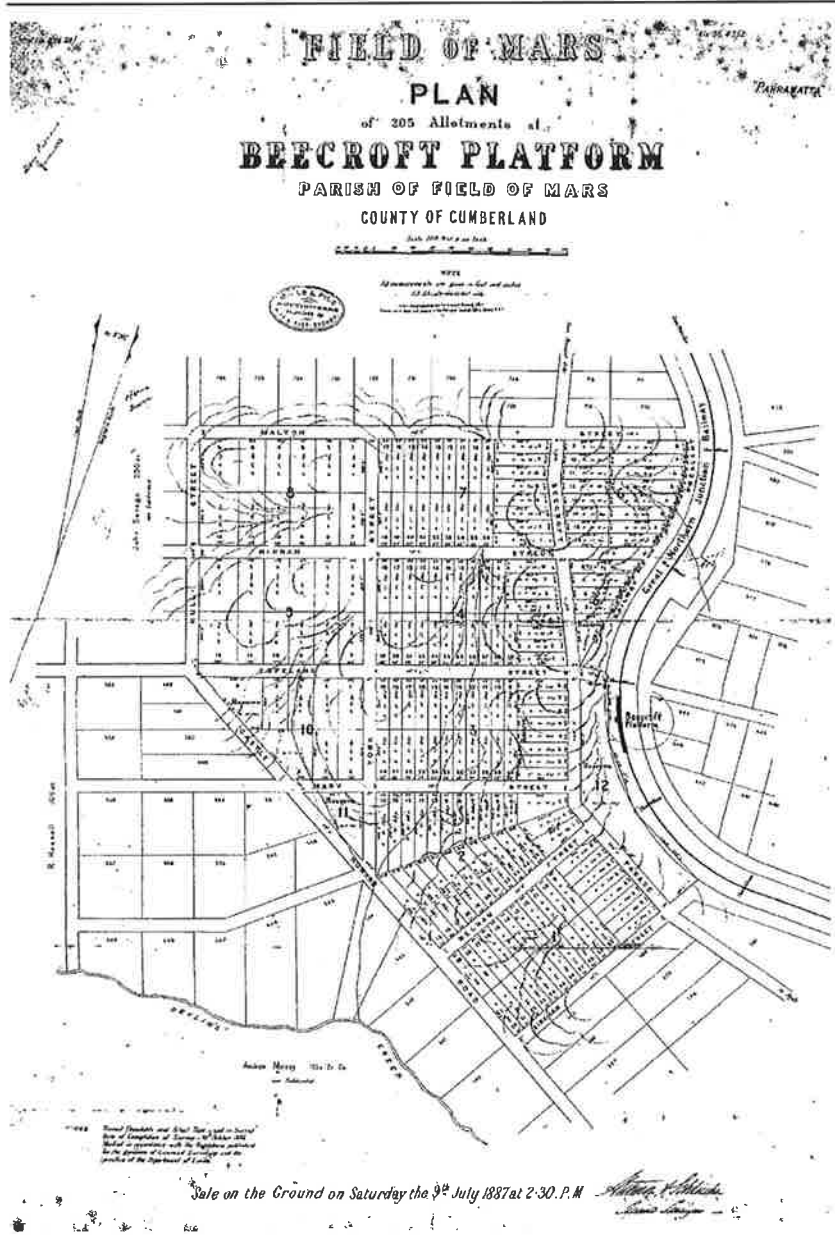
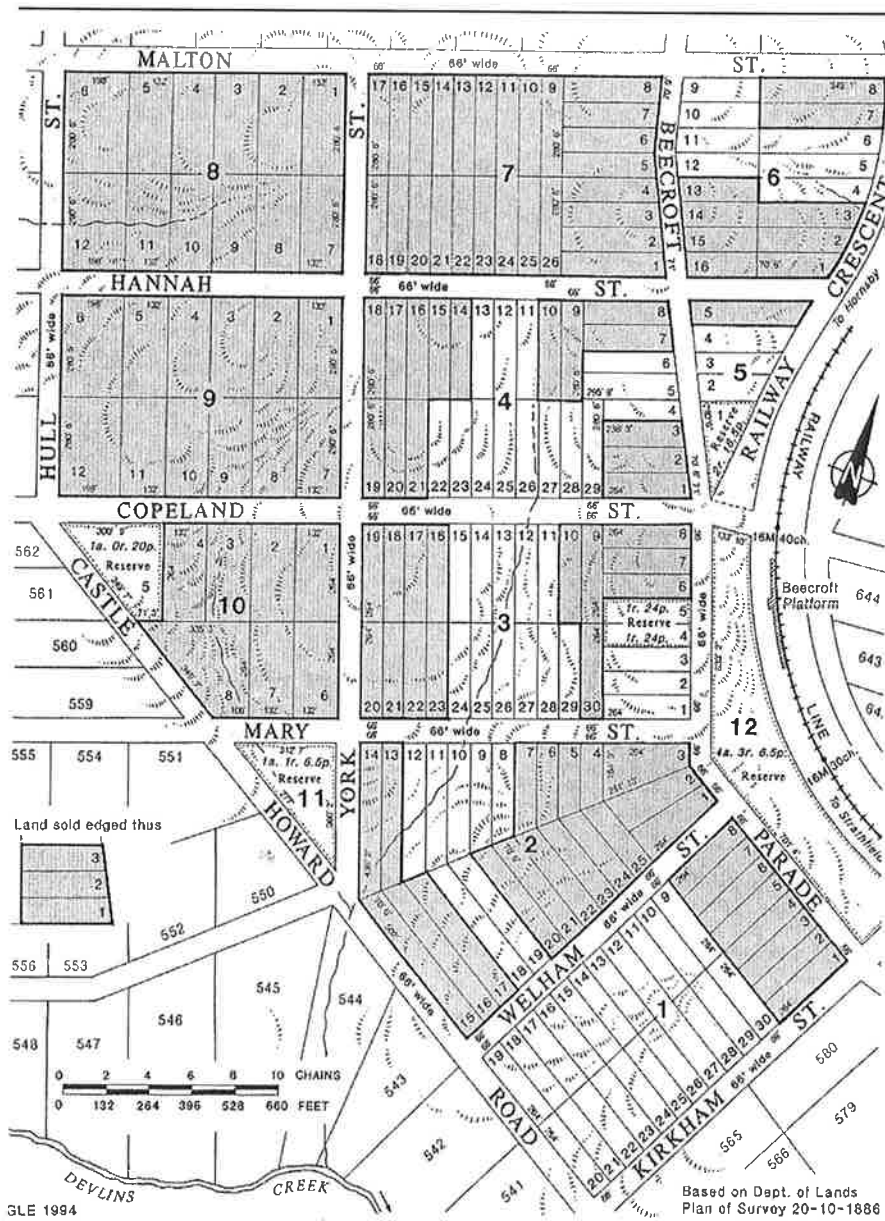


Figure 2.2 The Field of Mars Plan of 205 Allotments of Beecroft Platform, the first land sales at Beecroft. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)



**Figure 2.3** Plan showing land sold in the first subdivision sale. Many of these lots would be resold within fifteen years as the suburb developed.

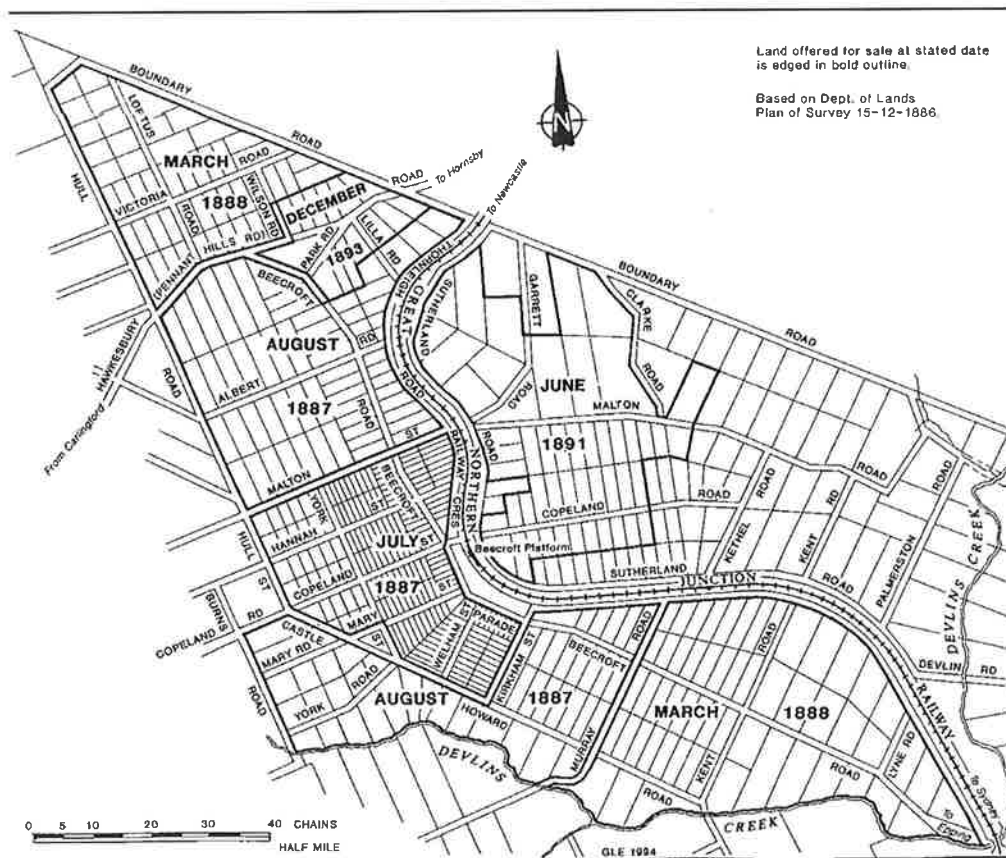


Figure 2.4 Plan showing the date of the first government sales of the Field of Mars Common and the boundaries that each land release covered.

COUNTRY LOTS

AUCTION SALE  
OF  
**CROWN LANDS**  
AT  
**BEECROFT**

on the GROUND on SATURDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 1894.  
at 2.30 o'clock p.m.

FIELD OF MARS  
PLAN OF  
Portions in the  
PARISH OF FIELD OF MARS  
COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND

UPSET PRICES

NOTE  
The lots for Sale are  
shown in RED.

TERMS  
25 per cent. (deposit), balance in three equal annual instalments  
with interest at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum.

Figure 2.5 1894 Crown Land sale. The darker lots to the west of the railway had already been sold at this time. Notice the contour lines to the east. The topography of the area would play a major role in determining which lots sold and when. Development tended to stick to the ridge lines until as late as the 1960s. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)

# BEECROFT

OPPOSITE THE RAILWAY STATION - 445 FT. ABOVE SEA LEVEL

## WANDEEN ESTATE

Including Wandeen Cottage and Grounds

**SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 1913 AT 3 p.m.**

Auction Sale on the Ground

**TERMS**

For the Cottage - One fourth Cash, balance in 3 years. Interest 5 per cent.  
For the Allotments - One fourth Cash, balance by quarterly payments extending over 5 years. Interest 5 per cent.

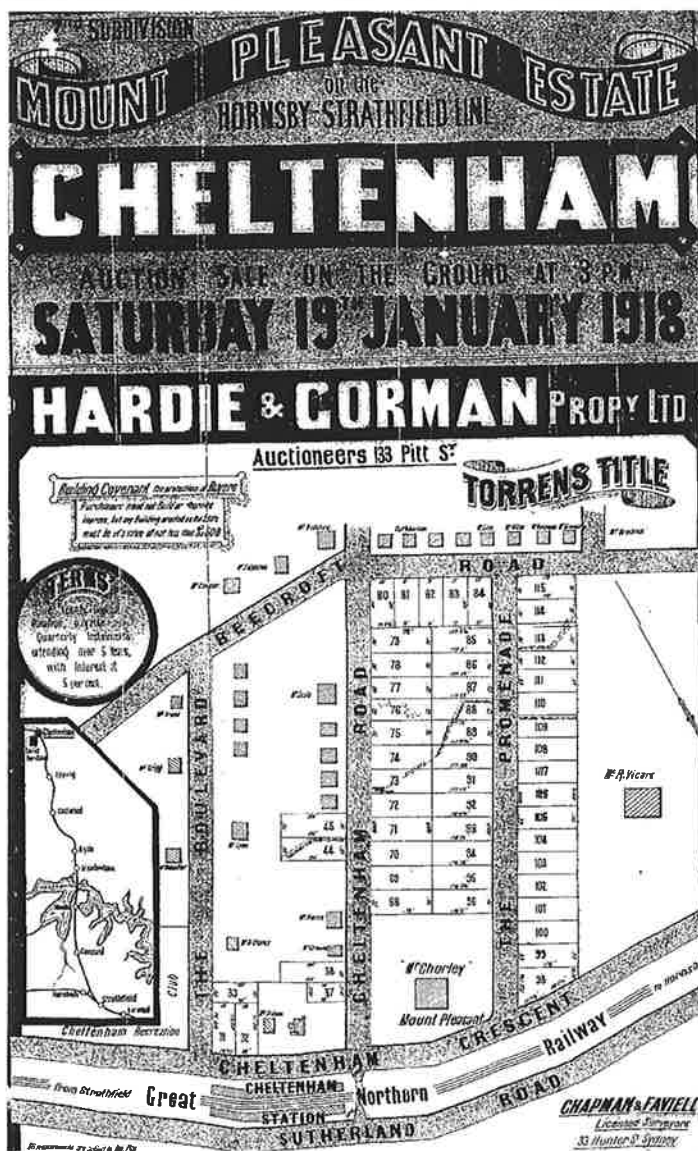
**RICHARDSON & WRENCH LTD.**  
Auctioneers 38 Pitt St Sydney.

*Thos. Stolo*  
Local Agent, Beecroft.

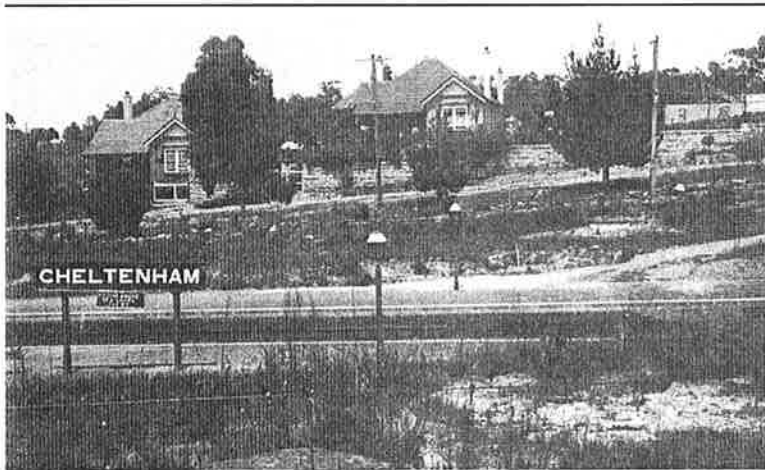
Figure 2.6 1913 sale of the Wandeen Estate. This sale is typical of the subdivision pattern in Beecroft and Cheltenham in the period up until the Second World War. Earlier cottages and homesteads were often the focus of new subdivision as their associated orchards or large allotments were split up to satisfy the increasing demand for suburban lots. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)



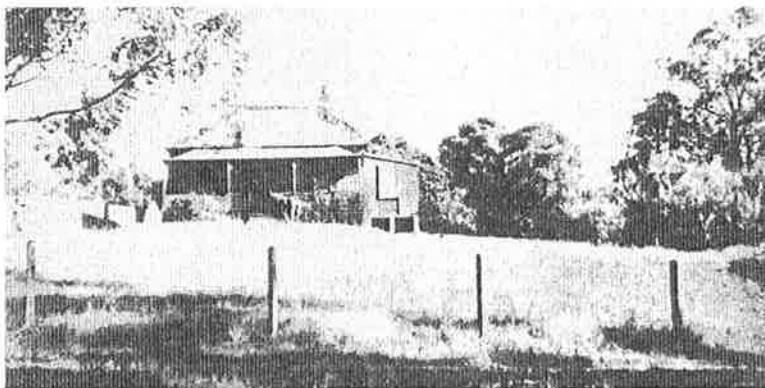
Figure 2.7 Wandeem Cottage for sale as part of the subdivision of the land shown in Figure 2.6. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)



**Figure 2.8** The first sale of the tailor William Chorley's land surrounding his house Mount Pleasant. Notice that the sale includes a building covenant setting the minimum value of any new building at £500. Covenants were common in the area as an attempt to maintain a certain standard of construction. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)

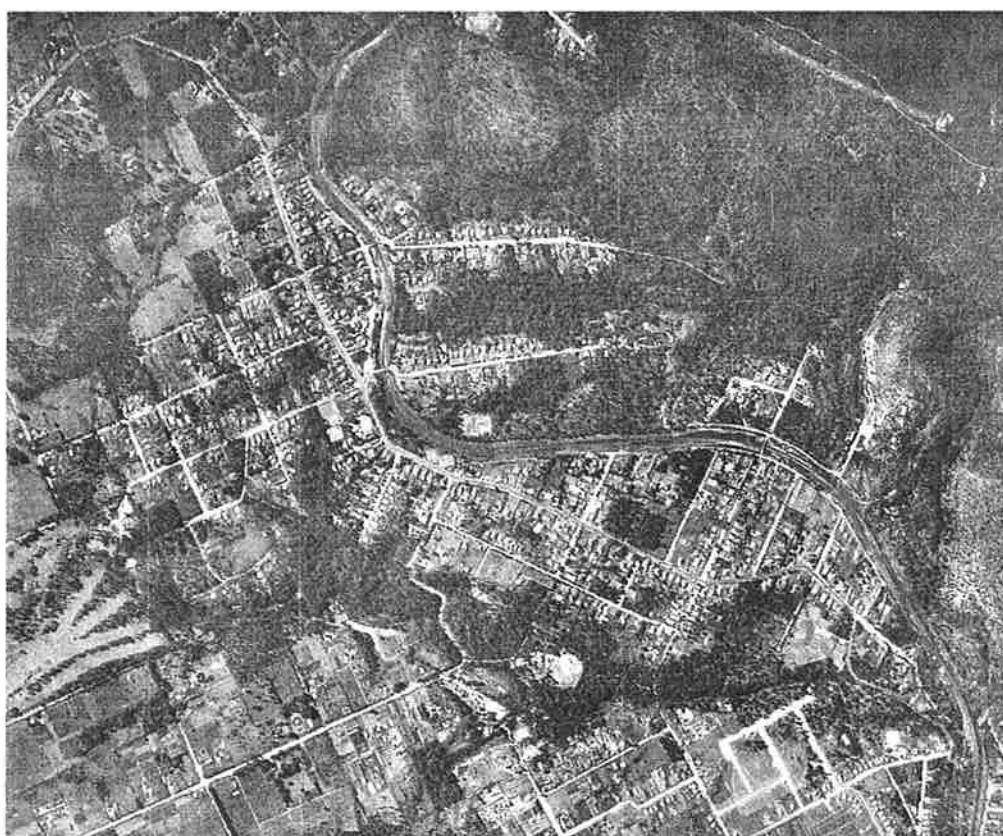


**Figure 2.9**  
These houses in The Crescent, Cheltenham, built by William Chorley in 1912, appear to be those shown in Figure 2.8 opposite Cheltenham Station.

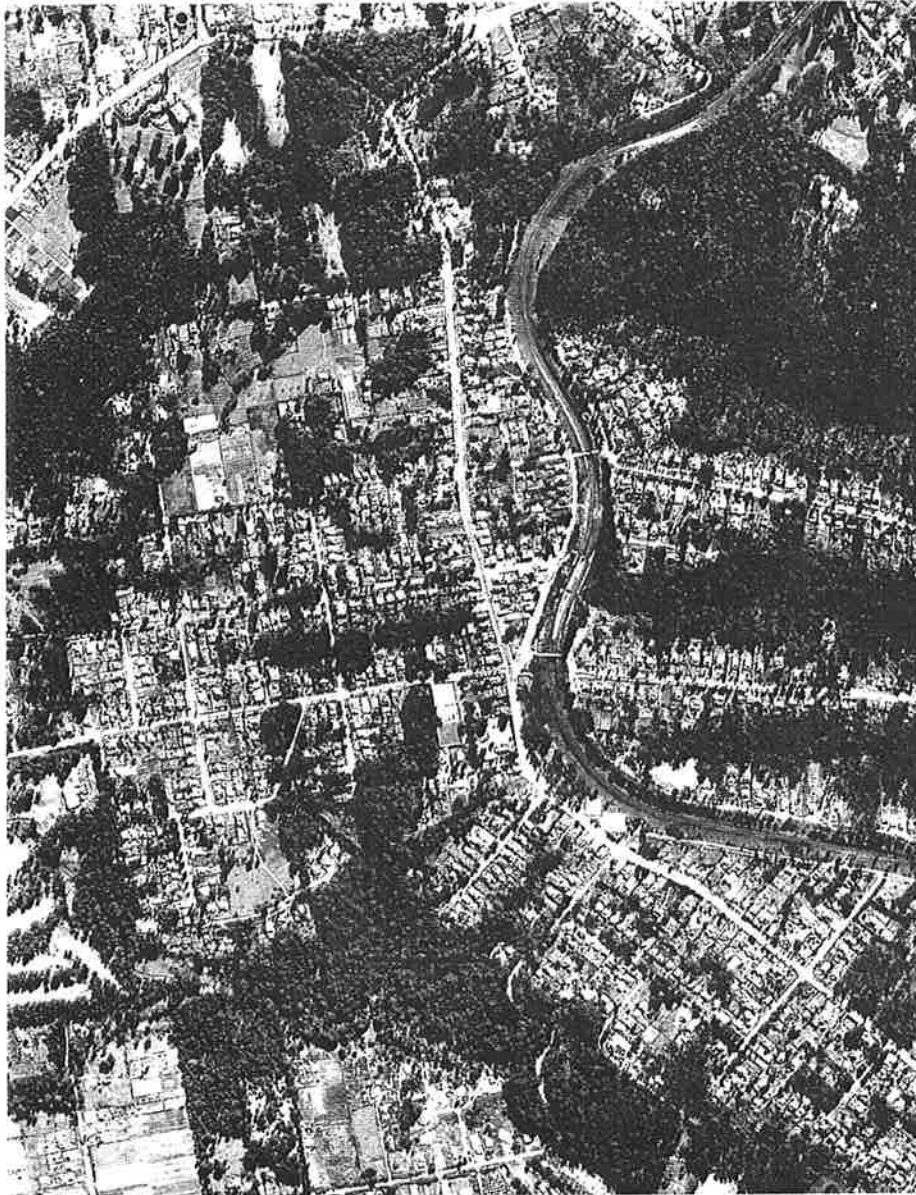


**Figure 2.10**  
A 1953 photo of a surviving weatherboard cottage on an orchard allotment. The demolition of such houses in the 1960s and 1970s allowed for the insertion of new cul-de-sacs and avenues.

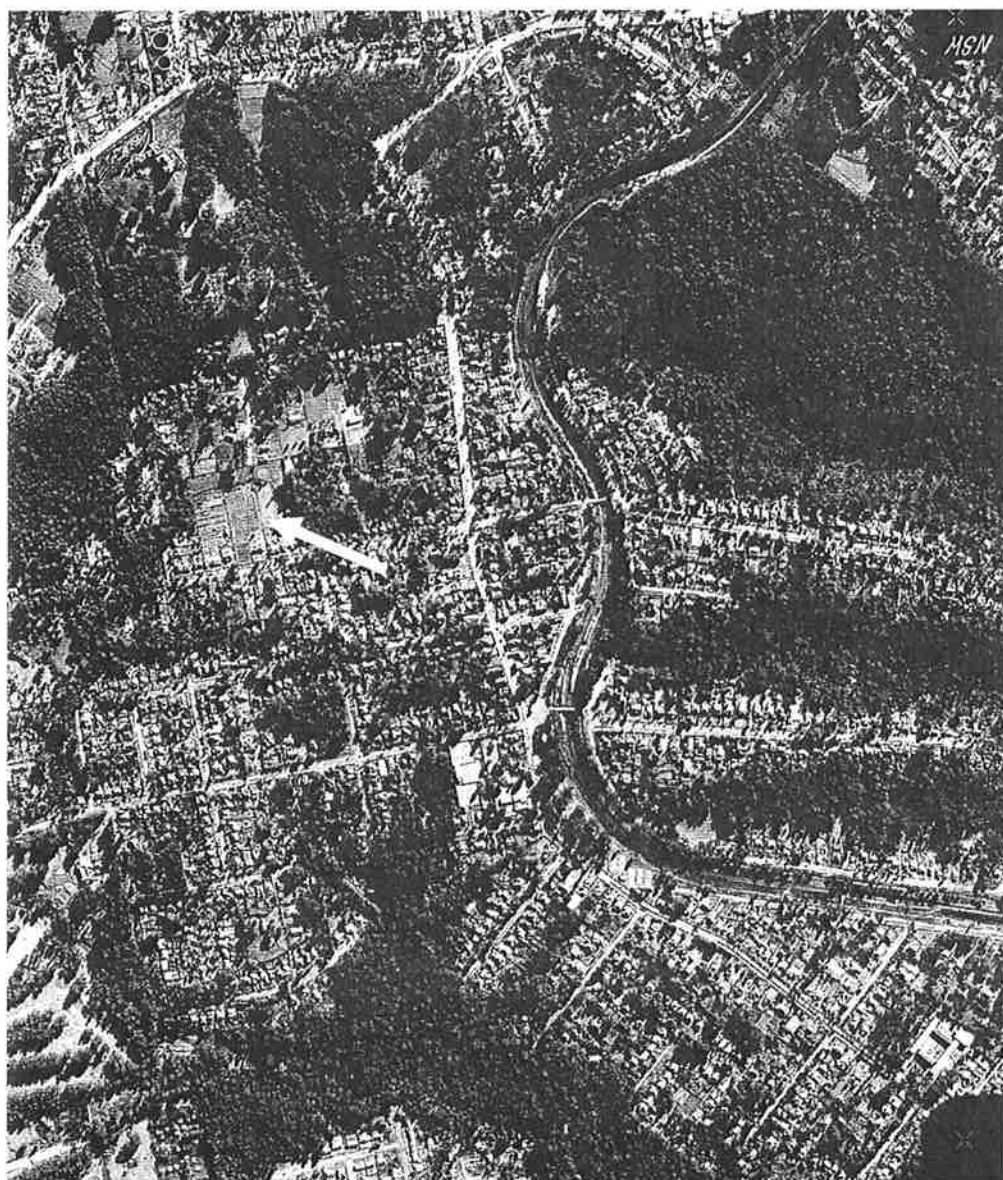




**Figure 2.11** 1930 aerial shot of Beecroft and Cheltenham. The semi-rural character of the area is still clearly evident at this period. Farmland and orchards to the north and many empty town lots provide ample space for future development. The original village land area around Beecroft Station is still clear in the photograph.



**Figure 2.12** 1951 aerial photograph of Beecroft. While there has been development to the south around Cheltenham, there are still a number of vacant blocks and farms to the north as yet undeveloped. (Source: Land and Property Information NSW [LPI])



**Figure 2.13** 1961 aerial photograph of Beecroft. Although the suburb has by this time become well established, at least one orchard area north of Chapman Avenue is still evident (arrowed). (Source: LPI)



**Figure 2.14** 1965 aerial photograph of Beecroft. The suburbanisation of the bush is all but complete. Few lots remain undeveloped. To the east of the railway line the streets have been extended along the ridge lines while in the main suburb area new streets are created via the break-up of the remaining large house lots into avenues and cul-de-sacs. (Source: LPI)



**Figure 2.15** 1970 aerial photograph of Beecroft. The character and density of the suburb as it appears today has largely been finalised by this time. However, small-scale redevelopment of early house blocks still continue to some extent.

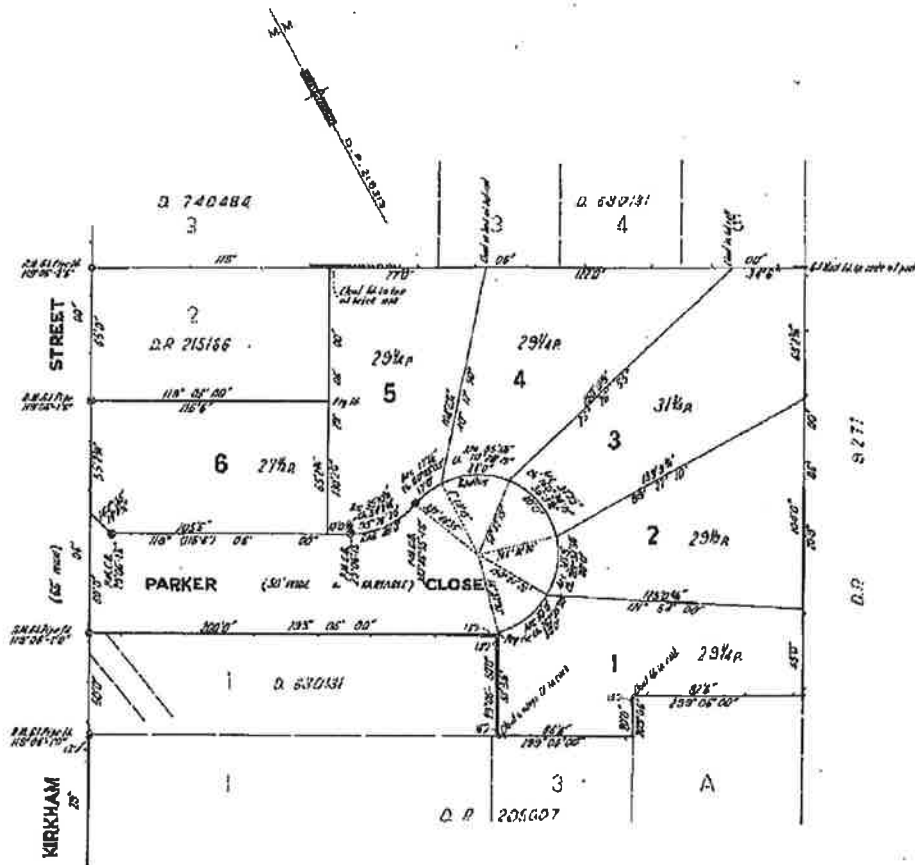


Figure 2.16 An example of a later subdivision on the site of an early house allotment. Parker Close was created in 1963 following the demolition of Charles Tuckers' Oakland House erected in 1902. (Source: NSW Land Titles Office [LTO])

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## 2.5 Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Beecroft Cheltenham History Group, 1995, *Beecroft and Cheltenham: The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914*, Beecroft Cheltenham History Group, p 43.
- <sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p 44.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p 45.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p 51.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p 53.
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p 55.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p 57.
- <sup>8</sup> Barker, H & M Iven 1989, *Houses of the Hornsby Shire: Volume 1 The Large Houses 1886–1926*, Hornsby Shire Historical Society, p 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Beecroft Cheltenham Historical Society *op cit*, p 74.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p 81.
- <sup>11</sup> Cheltenham Subdivision Plans, Hornsby Library, Local Studies Collection.
- <sup>12</sup> Beecroft Cheltenham Historical Society, p 86.
- <sup>13</sup> Barker, *op cit*, p 15.
- <sup>14</sup> Title covenants are often removed through later planning instrument provisions.
- <sup>15</sup> Pers Comm Helen Barker 22 May 2003, Hornsby Shire Historical Society. DP218319.

### **3.0 Defining the Conservation Area**

The Hornsby Heritage Study of 1993 recommended that the Beecroft/Cheltenham area comprising the Field of Mars Common, a Crown Land subdivision released over a number of years from 1887, be made a Conservation Area. It was gazetted with the Hornsby Local Environment Plan (LEP) of 1994.

As part of this study, Godden Mackay Logan were asked to review the boundaries of this extensive area.

Fieldwork and examination of the history show that the topography has been a dominant influence on how the area has developed and on what it looks like today: it determined the line of the railway, the road layout and thereby shaped the infrastructure skeleton around which the suburbs of Beecroft and Cheltenham have grown. It also determined which areas could not be developed, at least until very recent times. Today these deep gullies support original and regrowth forest communities of conservation value.

This study has observed that around the periphery there is little difference between the nature of development within the Conservation Area and that immediately adjacent to it outside the Conservation Area. The forests along the northern boundary of the Common are part of the large forest areas of Pennant Hills Park — all part of the Byles Creek catchment area. To the south across Devlins Creek and to the northwest beyond Boundary Road, postwar residential development, characterised by a pattern of one house, one lot, and by the extensive use of face brick in the construction of the buildings, surrounds the boundaries, similar to peripheral development inside the boundaries.

This study nevertheless concluded that it was important to keep the existing boundary for the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area because:

- It recognises the historic boundary of the 1804 Common in the Hornsby Shire and the extent of a Crown subdivision released to fund an important state railway project, which was developed over a long period of time from 1877–1970s/80s.
- It embraces a large part of original and regrowth forest communities and gives added weight to the conservation of the Blackbutt-Smooth Bark Apple-Turpentine Open Forest, particularly along its northern boundary where it stands within the catchment areas of Byles Creek. It recognises the forest's contribution to the heritage significance of this area.
- It defines an area within the Shire of Hornsby where a built character typical of many nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century railway suburbs (of one house, one lot, with buildings constructed of unplastered face brick) is still very evident, and which should be conserved as an exemplar of that long period of Sydney's suburban development.



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By contrast, the plateau areas in the central part of the Field of Mars Common, on either side of the Great Northern Railway, contain precincts of buildings from the earliest days of the release of the Common in 1877 right up to the 1960s, and less obviously up to the present day. These precincts were the first areas to be released and developed for suburban housing, and they remain as a 'diary' of evidence about the way these suburbs developed.

This central-plateau suburban area, clearly defined by the boundaries of the early release subdivisions which could be built on, by the historic fabric of its buildings and gardens and by the many listed heritage items within those subdivisions is recommended for detailed conservation measures: as ten precincts, falling into two main management groups. It includes four small cul-de-sac precincts which exemplify postwar residential development around short dead-end closes.

The study history (Section 2.0 of this report) provides details of the subdivision and development of these plateau areas through the major periods of growth from 1887–1960s. These layers of development are illustrated by a wealth of evidence on the ground, as follows:

- the area is characterised by the suburban ideal of one house, one lot, initiated by the coming of the railway and advanced via the great suburban boom of the 1880s and the garden suburb movement of the early twentieth century. It was a rejection of the 'unhealthy' urban terrace and continued as the Australian residential ideal beyond the urban consolidation policies of the 1980s;
- the standard government subdivision pattern within the first release, of 66ft-wide allotments, ensures a generous garden setting for each house, while later densities were absorbed within the exceptional length of most of the allotments through later re-subdivision;
- 70 per cent of the land was taken up at the first sale of the Beecroft Village Area in July 1877, often in multiple parcels;
- houses appeared from 1887, first locating near Beecroft Station and on plateau areas; many were large self-sufficient villas, used as a permanent family home, or for a rural retreat; others, often of timber, were built within larger acreages planted for orchards;
- the later nineteenth-century releases of land were further away from Beecroft Station or on the more deeply-gullied land on the eastern side of the railway line. Allotments were of two to five acres, again very deep and with 132 ft or more street frontages. By 1891 there were 48 houses occupied in Beecroft — Victorian villas, caretakers cottages and orchard cottages (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2);
- the development of modest and large domestic gardens has become a defining characteristic of the streetscapes of the area (see Figures 3.3, 3.8 and 3.9);
- development increased in the 1890s despite the Depression;

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- Beecroft Progress Association was formed in 1891 with the aim of progressing and protecting the area and it continues to reflect contemporary interests and consensus about development of the area;
  - there was a surge of post-Depression era development in the early 1900s with the first of the large holdings re-subdivided for building allotments built upon with Federation cottages. The first of the Building Covenants appeared, setting a certain quality/value for the new house. These included requirements such as one house, one lot, and the use of brick or stone construction. They often excluded factories, noxious industries, hotels and shops;
  - the National Brick Company opened at Thornleigh in 1903, and continued under later names until 1975. The proximity of such a resource suggests a close link between its output and the essential fabric of the suburb;
  - post-World War I the great suburban explosion came to Beecroft and Cheltenham, with brick cottages on the vacant allotments and a re-subdivision of the long back land where it adjoined a street, filling up the street frontages. The Great Depression years slowed this development almost to a halt;
  - there was a short surge of residential development again at the end of the Depression in the late-1930s (see Figure 3.4);
  - a long period of house building began post-1945. Good quality mostly single-storey brick houses of the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were built throughout Beecroft and Cheltenham (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7). Some late-nineteenth-century villas were demolished and large gardens were re-subdivided for cul-de-sac development;
  - since the 1960s the re-subdivision of the long back sections of allotments has absorbed much of the increasing residential densities, so that the earlier layers remain in the most obvious locations, along the street frontages; and
  - several precincts exemplify the type of consistent development created by postwar subdivisions (see Figures 3.10 and 3.11). The four closes and the Lutanda Manor retirement village display consistent style, scale, form and landscaping distinct from their surrounding development.

These layers of development all contribute to the developmental diary of the conservation area: their subdivision patterns, buildings, structures, and garden spaces are part of the heritage significance of the area. They are clearly shown in ten precincts within the overall conservation area and need to be actively conserved:

A First subdivision July 1877:

A1 Beecroft Village

B 1887–1891 Crown subdivisions

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- B1 the East Beecroft subdivision of June 1891
  - B2 the North Beecroft subdivision (part only) of August, 1877
  - B3 the South Beecroft subdivision of August, 1877
  - B4 the Cheltenham subdivision of March 1888
  - C Twentieth-century subdivisions:
    - C1 the Cheltenham Road/Norma Crescent subdivisions 1920s–1950s
  - D Four postwar cul-de-sac subdivisions:
    - D1 Redmill Close
    - D2 Parker Close
    - D3 Seale Close
    - D4 Narena Close



**Figure 3.1**  
Victorian brick villa  
and slate roof.



**Figure 3.2**  
Timber cottage with  
iron roof.

**Figure 3.3**  
Large two-storey  
Federation house  
c1907 with generous  
garden.



**Figure 3.4**  
Inter-War house,  
fence and garden  
setting.





**Figure 3.5**  
Architect-designed  
house, pre-1960.



**Figure 3.6**  
Post-War house,  
possibly architect  
designed.

**Figure 3.7**  
Good quality Post-War brick and tile single-storey house.



**Figure 3.8**  
Inter-War brick house with concrete 'log' garden structure.





**Figure 3.9**  
Garden and street  
plantings combine to  
form streetscape  
canopy.



**Figure 3.10**  
Post-War residential  
close.



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**Figure 3.11**  
Post-War residential  
close with forest  
backdrop.



## 4.0 Comparative Analysis

### 4.1 Landform and Vegetation of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area

The high ridges and steep incised gullies are very notable features in the landscape of the conservation area and remain influential on the pattern of its settlement. Landform is also a strong element in the ocean suburbs of Woollahra and Waverley; in the harbour foreshore areas of Balmain, Mosman, Lane Cove and Willoughby; in Pittwater and Sutherland; the Upper North Shore and the Blue Mountains. However, only on the North Shore and in Pittwater is the topography as steeply incised, or as penetrating into the suburban fabric as in Beecroft and Cheltenham. The sandstone canyons and cliff faces of the Blue Mountains constitute a different landform again, which, for its vegetation, has been recognised for World Heritage listing.

A study prepared for Hornsby Shire Council in October 1995 of the Byles Creek Catchment by Nexus Environmental Planning Pty Ltd identified the Blackbutt, Smooth-Barked Apple, Turpentine, Tall Open Forest communities as the major native vegetation in the area. They remain as forested backdrops to residential development along most streets, form remnant stands and deep gully reserves throughout the conservation area and are an integral part of a very particular suburban fabric (see Figure 4.1). The Byles Creek Catchment Study showed that these forest communities were well represented in State conservation reserves and are not considered to be threatened on a State basis.

The study, however, also found that this forest community is threatened within the Hornsby Shire and within the Ku-ring-gai National Park. It showed that the Open Forest communities along Byles Creek and its tributaries, which run between Malton and Copeland, and Copeland and Sutherland Streets were of conservation significance and needed to be protected through local planning measures. Stands of these communities on the edge of the conservation area along Devlins Creek could presumably fall into the same category.

The Byles Creek Study also noted that the Tall Open Forests contain two species, *Darwinia biflora* and *Tetratheca glandulosa*, listed on the national database of rare and threatened plants. The forests of the conservation area can and do provide a habitat for the powerful owl, the bent-wing bat and the masked owl, all endangered species listed in Schedule 12 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974* (NSW).

### 4.2 Residential Development — its History and Heritage Values

This study of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area has found that the area clearly demonstrates all its layers of suburban subdivision, re-subdivision and development from initial boom-period Victorian crown land subdivision of the Common to the 1960s, and less obviously through to the present day. A similar story is told in a number of Sydney suburbs: Hunters Hill, Mosman, Ku-ring-gai, Burwood, Strathfield and Ashfield. All however, have seen more demolition

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than Beecroft and Cheltenham — Ku-ring-gai over the last thirty years for residential flat development along the Pacific Highway; Hunters Hill in the 1960s for the freeway and for residential flat development; Mosman, Burwood, Strathfield and Ashfield for new larger houses and flats because of the pressure on high-value land readily accessible to the city centre. Beecroft and Cheltenham on the other hand appear to be under much less pressure — they are more distant from the city centre and new building allotments have continued to be made available by re-subdividing off steep rights of way from the ridge-top roads such as Copeland Road East and Malton Road. Like Ashfield, Burwood, Strathfield and the North Shore suburbs, Beecroft and Cheltenham were created by the railway. They remain as the most intact of all those nineteenth-century railway suburbs, with hardly any multi-storey, multi-unit buildings to obliterate the original story.

Beecroft Station was specifically constructed to ensure a good sale value for the Common land so that at least a major portion of the cost of this difficult railway construction could be recouped. In the same way the release of the Field of Mars Common around Boronia Park in Hunters Hill and Ryde was used to fund the construction of the first Figtree and Drummoyne Bridges.

The conservation area also retains evidence of the work of some acknowledged Sydney domestic architects (see Figure 4.2). George Sydney Jones is probably the most recognised well beyond the local area, for his innovative work at a time when the debate about architecture appropriate for Australian conditions was at its peak. Other Sydney architects practising in the area include Charles Slatyer, Nicholas Shiels and William Nixon. Shiels and Nixon were also residents of the area as were Joseph Seale (who practised and lived in Cheltenham) and Robert Brodrick (who lived in Cheltenham). As yet, the architectural attribution of many of the houses of Beecroft and Cheltenham remains unresearched, but many of the houses appear to be architect-designed, and are worthy of more detailed investigation to unravel their source. George McCredie was an architect/builder of Beecroft, and the area contains a notable degree of good quality work of the spec builder, particularly from 1920s–1960s. By comparison, the architectural heritage of the Upper North Shore suburbs of Ku-ring-gai, where many of the children of the original Beecroft settlers appear to have settled, has been the subject of considerable research and is now known to contain a wide and varied collection of quality, late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century, domestic architecture, designed by leading architects such as Sulman, Horbury Hunt, Joseland, Waterhouse, Hennessy, Hardy Wilson, Wilkinson, WB Griffin, Seidler and Murcutt.

The almost universal use of face brick over all their periods of development marks Beecroft and Cheltenham as notable suburbs. The connection between the National Brick Works at Thornleigh and the fabric of the domestic buildings within the Hornsby Shire, has not been proved, but it is noted that the re-subdivision of many large estates in the early 1900s, and the imposition of building covenants requiring new construction to be in brick or stone coincided with the opening of the brickworks in 1903. Similarly in Sydney's middle-western suburbs the output of the many brickworks around Ashfield, Burwood and Croydon is well displayed.



**Figure 4.1**  
Post-War bungalow  
amidst remnant forest  
stands, Beecroft.



**Figure 4.2**  
Inter-War period,  
former Doctors'  
surgery, Beecroft. An  
architect's hand?

**Godden Mackay Logan**



## **5.0 Precincts: Key Characteristics**

Detailed assessment of the key characteristics of the natural and built environment in the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area has defined the following precincts based on subdivision boundaries and the evidence of the historical development of each precinct. Refer to Figure 5.1.

Management principles for each precinct have also been identified. Council will determine appropriate statutory controls to guide development in the area based on these principles. An amending Local Environment Plan (LEP) and a new Development Control Plan (DCP) may be developed.

### **5.1 The Beecroft Village Precinct (Figure 5.1, Area A1)**

- The Beecroft Village precinct demonstrates the layers of all its periods of residential development (one house, one lot) including some of the earliest buildings in the conservation area and intact streetscape groupings of Federation and Inter-War houses and infill postwar housing, all of which collectively contribute to the heritage value of the precinct. Mature landscaping and remnant forests demonstrate the popularity of home gardening amidst the retention of pre-settlement vegetation. Community facilities established in and around the commercial area adjacent to the railway station demonstrate the ongoing commitment of the community to its progress and protection.

#### **5.1.1 Subdivision**

- Comprises all the first crown subdivision, released for auction in July 1887.
- It almost entirely consisted of quarter–half acre allotments, 66ft-wide, with a depth of more than 200ft: the pattern of the original 66ft-wide Village subdivision is still clearly discernible throughout most of the precinct, even though there has been some re-subdivision, particularly of the long rear land.
- It is close to Beecroft Station; roads are aligned down slopes off the main road/railway ridge, giving views to larger forested areas beyond.

#### **5.1.2 Streetscape**

- Streets are paved, with concrete kerbs and gutters, except for a section of York Street where shallow swales combined with the informal stands of remnant forest trees provide a very particular *rus in urbe* character.
- Snatches of street planting schemes can be seen throughout the area using Brush Box and Jacaranda.

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- Almost all houses are sited parallel to the street alignment.
  - There is an established side setback of generous spaces between most buildings.
  - Fences define the street/allotment boundary and often correspond in style to the age of construction of the house. They are generally low, or otherwise of a material which allows appreciation of the front garden from the public footpath/street. High brick acoustic walls are becoming a feature along Beecroft Road.
  - Garages are almost always sited to the back of the allotment. In some of the 1940s–1970s houses they are often incorporated into the same buildings as the house, but remain unobtrusive and rarely protrude forward of the front elevation of the house.
  - Driveways are generally of unobtrusive materials — gravel, brick wheel tracks, and blend with their garden surrounds

### **5.1.3 Landscape**

- Forest trees dominate the skyline behind the buildings — this is most obvious in the gully lands. They also dominate the streets beside the railway line and in the steeper gully lands around York/Chilworth and Fiona intersections and in Copeland, Hannah and Chapman where they are integrated with exotic garden plantings.

### **5.1.4 Built Form**

- 70 per cent of the Village precinct was purchased at the first auction, often in multiple parcels. The development of these parcels, and their later re-subdivision and development has created a streetscape consisting of a variety of construction periods and architectural styles. This means that the manner in which the Village grew, through infill upon infill, can be clearly 'read'.
- Includes some of the earliest development on the Common, particularly along Beecroft Road and Hannah Street. It includes many Federation houses, groups of 1920s–1930s cottages, a few in Spanish Mission style, as infill between the older buildings.
- A number of the large houses belong to the Federation period and these and their gardens are the most visually obvious. The image of hipped and gabled tiled roofs, tall chimneys and brick walls is a very strong element in the fabric of the precinct.
- Post-World War II houses appear as later infill along the street frontage and as groups particularly in Hannah Street south of York Street, and in the steeper lands towards Devlin Creek.
- The majority of the development is single-storey in mature landscaped gardens, without cut and fill.

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- Almost all houses are constructed of face brick. Early houses often have sandstone foundations, with terracotta tile roofs. Some also use render for decorative effect. There are some slate roofs and occasional iron roofs to timber cottages. In recent years some of these brick walls have been inappropriately plastered and painted.

The Beecroft Commercial Centre is currently the subject of a masterplanning exercise by Council. The Heritage Assessment and Conservation Principles Analysis prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, June 2003, provides a detailed analysis of the key characteristics of the precinct and conservation planning principles to guide future development (refer Section 9.3).

## **5.2 The Beecroft East, North and South Precincts and the Cheltenham Precinct (Refer Figure 5.1, Areas B1, B2, B3, B4)**

- The Beecroft East, North and South and Cheltenham precincts demonstrate a pattern of larger lots, with re-subdivision and subsequent infill development along plateaus and ridge-tops collectively providing a diary of the suburbs' growth. It contains remnant forest canopies and gullies of vegetation communities of scientific conservation value. Major Federation and Arts and Crafts houses in mature gardens demonstrate the aspirations of early residents and the area retains notable streetscapes such as along Malton, Copeland and Murray Roads.

### **5.2.1 Subdivision**

- The Field of Mars Crown subdivisions of August 1887, March 1888 and June 1891, where they occurred on the more readily accessible plateau lands.
- They include the land to the north and south of the Beecroft Village precinct, land on the eastern side of the railway at Beecroft and land on the south of the railway at Cheltenham.
- Between Malton, Copeland and Sutherland Roads steep gullies of Byles Creek catchment area contain vegetation communities of conservation significance. Remnants of the same communities occur along Devlins Creek.
- The pattern of the original two- to five-acre subdivision is still clearly discernible, even though there has been much re-subdivision along the roads and on the long rear land where one or two battleaxe allotments have been formed.
- Some roads, such as Murray Road, Lyne Road and Cheltenham Road South, are aligned down slopes off the main road/railway ridge; others such as Malton and Copeland Road East run along narrow ridge tops; both alignments give views to larger forested areas beyond. The streets on the main plateau, between Beecroft Road and the railway, provide few forest views.
- Since the 1970s the re-subdivision of the long back sections of allotments, particularly along the gully lands towards Devlins Creek and Byles Creek, have absorbed much of the increasing



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residential densities, so that the earlier layers of residual development remain in the most obvious locations, along the street frontages.

- Four cul-de-sac subdivisions, post-1963, have been made from the re-subdivision of large villa gardens or from orchards. These are dealt with as separate precincts at Section 5.4 (Parker, Redmill, Narena and Seale Closes).

### **5.2.2 Streetscape**

- Almost all buildings are sited parallel to the street alignment.
- Generous open garden spaces remain between most houses.
- Fences define the street/allotment boundary. There are a considerable number which are original to the house, built of the same materials (mostly brick); others may be reconstructions of former fences or built to correspond in style to the age of construction of the house. They are generally low, or otherwise of a material which allows appreciation of the front garden from the public footpath/street. High brick acoustic walls are becoming a negative feature along Beecroft Road.
- Garages are sited to the back of the allotment. In some of the 1940s–1970s houses they are often incorporated into the same building form as the house, but remain unobtrusive and do not protrude forward of the front elevation of the house.
- Driveways are generally of unobtrusive materials — gravel or cement/brick wheel tracks — and blend with their garden surrounds.

### **5.2.3 Landscape**

- All streets provide a sense of tree canopy, whether exotic or native, and the mixture of tree species and their canopies is carried into the private gardens.
- Except along The Boulevarde, The Promenade and Cheltenham Road (between Beecroft Road and the railway), forest trees provide a backdrop behind the buildings.
- Informal stands of forest trees remain as part of most streetscapes, and are particularly prominent in Boronia Street and Copeland Road East.
- Most streets are paved, with concrete curbs and gutters, informal swales and verges of grass and trees are particularly noticeable along the roads beside the railway.
- Notable Brush Box street planting schemes can be seen in Murray and Cheltenham Roads and in The Promenade and The Boulevarde. Small groupings of Brush Box and Jacaranda remain throughout the area.

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#### **5.2.4 Built Form**

- This precinct includes three Victorian brick single-storey villas along the eastern side of Beecroft Road and 'Ramona', among the earliest remaining buildings in Beecroft and Cheltenham.
- Later re-subdivision and development of the original allotments has left streetscapes with a variety of construction periods and architectural styles, including two-storey Victorian villas, a number of Arts and Crafts houses, many single-storeyed, Federation houses (of particular note is the ensemble of similar Federation houses along Copeland Street East), groups of single-storey Inter-War houses and cottages, and substantial 1950s and 1960s houses. All these buildings collectively demonstrate the manner in which these residential precincts grew, through infill upon infill within large established allotments.
- A number of the large houses belong to the Federation/Arts and Crafts period and these and their gardens are the most visually obvious. The image of hipped and gabled tiled roofs, tall chimneys and brick walls is a very strong element in the fabric of the precinct.
- The majority of the development in the precinct is single-storey, without cut and fill.
- Almost all houses are constructed of face brick, and early houses often have sandstone foundations, with terracotta tile roofs, occasionally slate. Some early houses use render for decorative effect. In recent years some of these brick walls have been inappropriately plastered and painted.

#### **5.3 The Cheltenham Road/Norma Crescent Precinct (Refer Figure 5.1, Area C1)**

- This precinct demonstrates a regular grid-based subdivision with Inter-War residential development, juxtaposed with a postwar contour related road and subdivision pattern. Norma Crescent typifies house and garden design principles from the postwar era.

##### **5.3.1 Subdivision**

- This precinct comprises later residential development of the crown subdivisions.
- Construction in this precinct appears to have commenced in the 1920s, and a few buildings can be seen on the aerial photograph of March, 1930.
- The precinct is close to Cheltenham Station. Cheltenham Road is aligned straight across the top of this small ridge, Chorley Avenue is at right angles, while Norma Crescent, a later, c1950 subdivision, follows the contour below the ridge.
- There is a regular pattern of subdivision on the Cheltenham/Chorley alignment, with frontages generally of 66ft width. In Norma Crescent the c1950 allotments vary in width to accommodate the curvature of the road and allotments are relatively shallow.

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### **5.3.2 Streetscape**

- The main streets — Cheltenham and Chorley — are notable for their informal swale edges and informal verge planting (there is a short line of Brush Box plantings in Cheltenham Road).
- Norma Crescent is paved, with concrete kerbs and gutters.
- In both Cheltenham and Chorley Roads most houses are sited parallel to the street alignment with very generous spaces between most buildings.
- Norma Crescent typifies postwar subdivision patterns — houses are sited in response to the contours of the land, and quite close to the road. They are also closer together, gardens are relatively small and dominated by shrubs and lawn.
- Fences mostly define the street/allotment boundary in Cheltenham Road and Chorley Avenue and often correspond in style to the age of construction of the house. They are generally low, or otherwise of a material which allows appreciation of the front garden from the public footpath/street. Garages are sited to the back of the allotment with driveways generally of unobtrusive materials that blend with their garden surrounds.
- In Norma Crescent there are no fences along the lower side of the road. Low brick retaining walls follow the street alignment on the upper side. Garages have generally been integrated with the house, with concrete driveways.

### **5.3.3 Landscape**

- Forest trees dominate the skyline behind Chorley Avenue and there are some splendid specimens in private gardens. Stands of forest trees provide canopies in parts of Chorley Avenue and Norma Crescent.
- There are elements of Brush Box street planting, and some Prunus.

### **5.3.4 Built Form**

- The precinct is dominated by a few large 1920s/30s single-storey houses with very large gardens. There are also some 1920s and 1930s cottages, some fine examples of 1940s two-storey plastered houses, other 1940s and 1950s buildings and Norma Crescent contain houses of the 1960s–1970s.
- The majority of the houses are single-storey. There has been little cut and fill.
- Almost all houses are constructed of face brick — colours vary with the age of construction — dark bricks in the 1920s and 1930s, often with sandstone foundations, pale or red brick in the 1960s/70s. A few notable 1940s buildings of plastered masonry. Roofs are of terracotta tiles, with concrete tiles on some of the houses in Norma Crescent.

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## **5.4 The Four Postwar 'Close' Re-subdivisions (Refer Figure 5.1, Areas D1, D2 D3, D4)**

- The four 'close' subdivisions demonstrate intact postwar cul-de-sac design concepts. Their open, unfenced front gardens and modest brick houses are closely sited and shallow allotments bring the houses closer to the road to create a cohesive neighbourhood group.

### **5.4.1 Subdivision**

- These precincts comprise re-subdivisions of Crown Land parcels, or of former gardens/orchards:
  - Parker Close, first subdivision, February 1963, from demolition of Tucker's house and orchard;
  - Redmill Close, first subdivision, October, 1963;
  - Seale Close, first subdivision, December 1973 from demolition of Seale's 'Boronia'; and
  - Narena Close, c1970.
- Small cul-de-sac precincts, typical of 1960s–1980s residential street layout, creating small neighbourly groups.

### **5.4.2 Streetscape**

- Dwellings are often sited not parallel to the alignment of the close.
- Houses relatively close to the street with small front gardens.
- Almost all without front fences. In Parker Close, low brick retaining walls define the street frontage; low stone retaining walls can also be found in other closes, where landform requires.
- Streets have recent concrete kerb and gutters.

### **5.4.3 Landscape**

- Few natives remain to the small front gardens; a number of fruit trees occur in Parker Close — perhaps remnants of Tucker's orchard.
- Forest trees are particularly noticeable as backdrops at the end of Narena Close and Seale Close.

### **5.4.4 Built Form**

- Mostly single-storey dwellings.
- With two exceptions, they are all constructed of unplastered unpainted face brick. Most are light coloured brick houses with a few of 1960s red brick.
- Terracotta or concrete roof tiles. Almost all without chimneys.

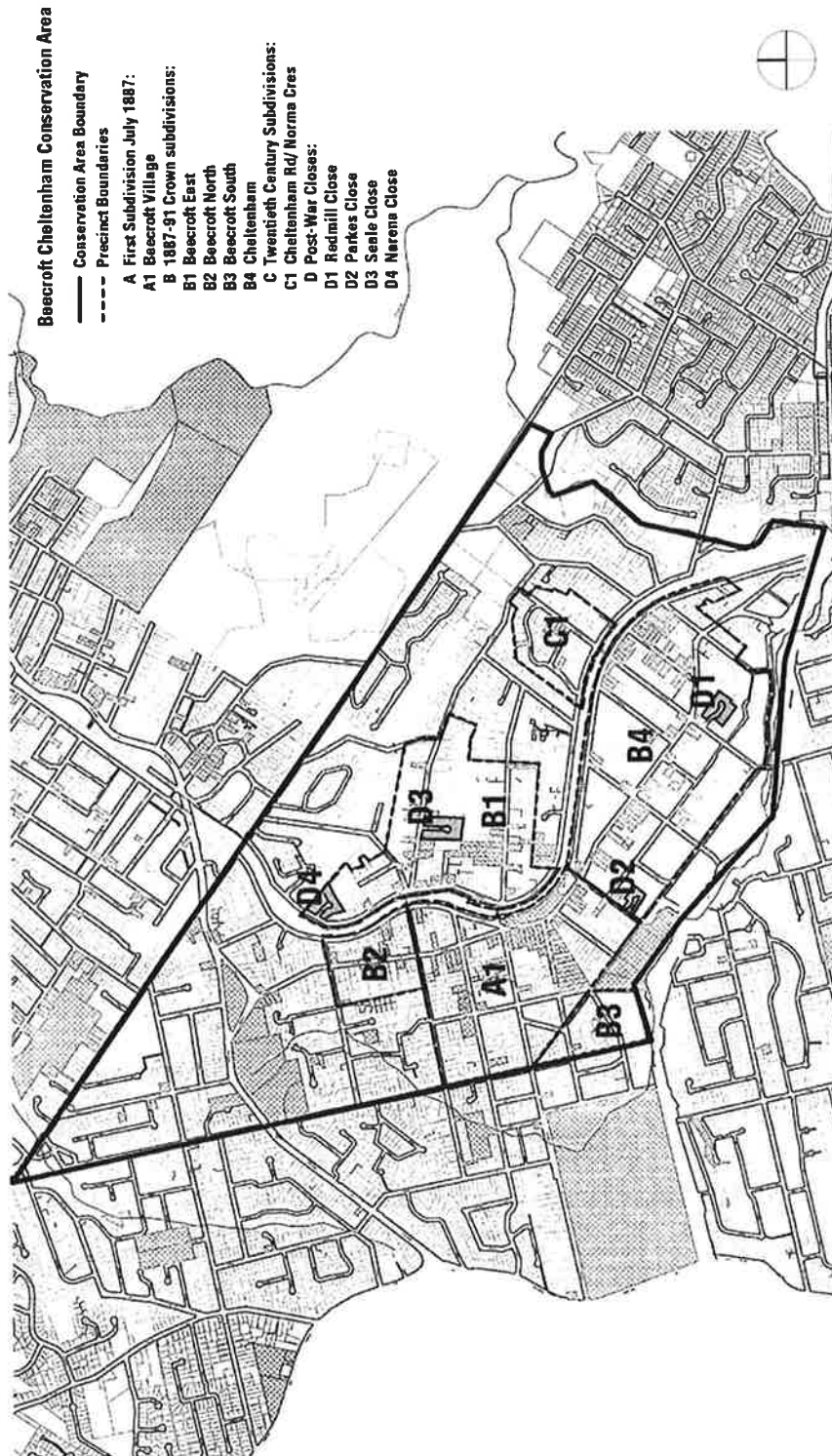


Figure 5.1 Beecroft Cheltenham Conservation Areas.

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## **6.0 Heritage Significance**

The Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area has heritage significance for the following values:

### **6.1 Historic Values**

- A government subdivision for suburban/investment purposes released to raise money to fund an important state-wide railway project.
- The layers of its suburban subdivision, re-subdivision and development from 1887 to the 1960s, and less noticeably into the present day.
- The socio-economic status of Sydney's railway suburbs in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries demonstrated through the substance and design of its buildings, retained to the present day.
- The Australian suburban ideal of one house, one lot, an ethic that dominated city/suburban expansion from the coming of the railways until the 1980s.
- The work of some well known Sydney architects, and the part they played in the history of Australian domestic architecture.

### **6.2 Aesthetic Values**

- Streetscapes of Local significance formed by the close relationship between landform, remnant native forests, the pattern of roads and buildings within that landscape and generous gardens.
- Fine collection of Inter-War and Post-War period housing.

### **6.3 Research and Rarity Values**

- Healthy gully communities of the Blackbutt, Smooth-Barked Apple, Turpentine, Tall Open Forest community and the research potential they afford.
- Rare and threatened species of *Darwinia biflora* and *Tetratheca glandulosa*.
- Habitat for the powerful owl, the bent-wing bat and the masked owl, all endangered species.

### **6.4 Social and Associative Values**

- Community buildings and facilities such as churches, schools, the Beecroft School of Arts Building, the Beecroft War Memorial, the Beecroft Tennis Club and Cheltenham Recreation Club which have endured as places of community value over a number of generations.

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- The trees and bushland reserves are of significance to the community, demonstrated through the number of resident actions in their defence.
  - Ongoing community engagement in the future planning, development and protection of the area via the activities of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust.

### **6.5 Statement of Significance**

The Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area is significant because it demonstrates:

- the dominant impact on the suburban fabric of the natural topography and its associated prominent native vegetation, closely integrated into the street patterns and residential allotments of the area;
- large remnant gully communities of the Blackbutt, Smooth-Barked Apple, Turpentine, Tall Open Forest, with associated vegetation and fauna;
- government subdivision for suburban/investment purposes to raise money to fund an important state-wide railway facility;
- the multi-layered history of its suburban subdivision, re-subdivision and development from the initial boom period of the Victorian crown land subdivision of 1887 to the 1960s and less noticeably into the present day;
- a fine collection of houses and cottages of the Victorian, Federation, Arts and Crafts, Inter-War and Post-War eras. There have been comparatively few demolitions to interrupt that developmental 'diary';
- an (almost exclusive) development pattern of one house, one lot, an Australian residential ideal until the urban consolidation policies of the 1980s brought multi-unit developments to many suburban areas;
- the considerable intactness of its early residential fabric and streetscapes. Through the constant re-subdivision of backland it has been able to accommodate increasing residential densities without much loss to the original built fabric along the major street frontages;
- the effect of building covenants on the fabric of both suburbs through its brick construction and its tile and slate roofs;
- the post-World War I wave of residential expansion as evidenced by the large collection of houses from the 1920s and 1930s;
- evidence of the work of acknowledged Sydney domestic architects, such as Charles Slatyer, Nicholas Sheils, and George Sydney Jones, part of the history of the Australian school of architecture in the early-twentieth century;

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- good quality residential buildings constructed by small-scale owner/spec builders, particularly from 1920–1960s;
  - intact precincts of residential cul-de-sac developments of the 1960–1980s;
  - a continuing focus in the Beecroft Village shopping centre for day-to-day activity and community interaction;
  - through its many community buildings, structures and clubs, an enduring sense of community cohesiveness; and
  - the ongoing commitment of residents to community progress and protection via community facilities and buildings and the activities of the civic trust and resident action groups.



**Godden Mackay Logan**



## **7.0 Pressures for Development**

### **7.1 Subdivision**

- Further re-subdivision to absorb increasing suburban densities: although re-subdivision has been part of the history of the area, a limit can be reached beyond which the other values of the precincts could be threatened and lost. For example, the loss of a backyard to another allotment can force a replacement garage to the front or side of a house, or decrease garden settings for which the area is justly recognised; loss of growing space can reduce the backdrop of forest trees and space for regrowth; increasing run-off and land disturbance can detrimentally affect forest communities in the gullies.

### **7.2 Streetscape**

- The demand for more floor space and the increase in car ownership per family also means that the space between houses is taken up with extensions or large garages to the detriment of garden settings, wide side boundary spaces and residential amenity.
- The increasing traffic along Beecroft Road and Pennant Hills Road decreases the amenity of the very important heritage listed items and other contributory buildings along its frontage. This could diminish the value of these buildings as places of residence and threaten their long term conservation. The construction of high brick noise abatement walls while necessary to ensure some abatement, reduces the presentation of these buildings and hides them from public view.
- Commuter parking, particularly on former roadside verges, is an increasing problem in the vicinity of the village, detrimentally affecting landscape and streetscape qualities.
- Poorly scaled redevelopment in shopping areas should be avoided through preparation of masterplanning directions for the village precinct, integrating heritage considerations.

### **7.3 Landscape**

- Increasing car ownership and its accommodation on the allotment can increase paved areas for access and standing spaces, reduce garden area and threaten the long-term retention of large canopy trees, a key characteristic of the conservation area.

### **7.4 Built Form**

- The increasing demand for large additions to create more floor space per dwelling results in houses of a larger footprint and a bigger scale, often restricting adjacent view corridors. This again reduces the garden character of the area by limiting the scale of trees, with planting increasingly changing from remnant mature canopy trees, which require space for health and

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safety reasons, to deciduous exotics, as well as bringing inappropriate changes to existing contributory buildings, such as second-storey extensions and gabled dormers.

- Demolition of modest-sized contributory buildings for replacement by larger houses or re-subdivision of their sites will cumulatively diminish the fabric of these suburbs and their heritage value.
- Replacement of more recent non-contributory houses with larger-scaled development will detract from the character of the area and the rhythm of its historic streetscapes.
- The impact of the freeway on noise levels in its vicinity is affecting built forms and, to an extent, use of outdoor spaces for leisure activities such as gardening.
- The lack of public recognition of the heritage value of postwar areas, such as the 'Closes', needs a concentrated public education effort by Council in anticipation of redevelopment pressures.

## **8.0 Assessment of Existing Planning Controls**

The Hornsby Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and amendments (December, 2002) and with its associated Development Controls Plans (DCP) provides relevant planning measures to protect most of the heritage values of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area.

The zoning of the LEP used in conjunction with the Byles Creek DCP contains the considerations necessary to protect and preserve the ecologically valuable urban bushlands of the Byles Creek catchment area, a large section of which falls within the Field of Mars Common. Smaller areas of the Blackbutt, Smooth-Barked Apple, Turpentine, Tall Open Forest community, and its fauna within the Devlins Creek catchment area on the southern side of Beecroft Road perhaps could benefit from the DCP's considerations of drainage, soil and water and general protection of the environment.

The LEP also provides adequate planning measures within its zoning constraints for Council to control demolition, and the development of multi-unit and group housing, all of which would detrimentally affect the heritage significance of the conservation area as outlined in this study.

Under the Special Provisions (Heritage) of the LEP Council has every opportunity to manage and retain the face brick fabric (Clause 1 (c), Special Provisions, Heritage) of the buildings — so much a distinctive part of the heritage and character of the area.

However, the process by which change to a heritage item can be assessed (Clause 6, Special Provisions, Heritage) does not include the assessment of a building or structure which is not a heritage item but which is a contributory part of the heritage of a conservation area, and this needs to be added.

The Heritage DCP and the Dwelling House DCP have not been able to provide the benchmarks (such as a statement of significance specific to the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area) by which the Council could assess what constitutes the heritage significance of this particular conservation area and therefore what effect any proposed change might have upon that significance.

The DCP does provide considerable assistance in guiding new development — a house or a structure, such as a garage, to fit in with the general character of a conservation area. However, more emphasis is needed on keeping the heritage of the original fabric, of keeping what is already there — generous gardens, side boundary setbacks, buildings, fences and garages. Solutions to the noise/pollution problem along Beecroft Road also need to be addressed.

Further, the Schedule of heritage items need to clarify that it refers to the whole property — lot and DP number — and not just the 'house', 'tree' or 'garden' referred to in the third column.

It is difficult for detailed provisions necessary to conserve a historic area to be given the weight of LEP controls. Consistent use of DCP controls and good public promotion and acceptance can overcome some of these difficulties.

**Godden Mackay Logan**



## **9.0 Management Principles for the Precincts**

### **9.1 Management Principles for the Village Area Precinct, the Beecroft East, North and South and Cheltenham Precincts and the Cheltenham Road/Norma Crescent Precinct**

- Because the significance of these precincts lies in their ability to demonstrate all layers of development from their first construction period to the 1960s and less obviously through to the present day, any building or structure built up until 1960, and any building constructed more recently which is listed as a heritage item, contributes to the evidence of these layers of suburban history and therefore needs to be conserved. Buildings of the 1960s are also part of that history and, in time, will be added to significant groupings, but at present there is little comparative analysis of that decade. The community too would have difficulty accepting that buildings of that era had heritage or contributory heritage significance.
- Changes proposed to pre-1960s buildings and structures could remove evidence of part of that layer of history and therefore require a Heritage Impact Statement, to enable Council to fully consider the heritage significance of the building or structure, its contribution to the heritage significance of the precinct, and the impact of the proposed development on the building, its setting and the precinct.
- Generous allotment sizes need to be retained in any new re-subdivision, so that the remnant large-scale forest trees and garden character of these precincts is kept.
- Subdivision or house extensions which push garaging to the front of a house should be discouraged.
- Development should continue the pattern of one house, one lot, maintaining the pattern of development which that has created.
- The 45 per cent soft landscape area per allotment specified in the Dwelling House DCP to maintain landscaped garden settings should be rigorously applied.
- Any new development needs to be carefully considered for its impact on views from the public domain, and for views between and across existing buildings.
- For any new re-subdivision in the Beecroft Village Precinct which involves allotments on a street frontage, retain a 66ft minimum frontage. Use single-driveway access via joint right-of-way for backlot re-subdivision.
- New development should maintain the established generous width of side boundaries setbacks.
- Mature and regenerating forest vegetation needs to continue to be retained.
- The maximum limit to cut and fill in the Dwelling House DCP should be rigorously applied to all residential development in the area.

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- The principles of the Byles Creek DCP need to be examined and extended where relevant to cover all remnant gully lands within the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area.
  - Consider prescribing a maximum paved area throughout the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area to reduce run-off into gully areas and forests, and retain garden areas.
  - Painting or plastering of any unpainted surfaces must be avoided
  - Any new development needs to be of unplastered, unpainted, non-hearted face brick.
  - Additions may be permitted to the rear of an existing house; second-storey additions should be avoided except when constructed over the rear of an existing house and when they do not adversely affect the streetscape appearance or views. Appropriate construction materials need to be prescribed/suggested. Often a lighter-weight material is less intrusive.
  - Gabled dormers need to be avoided except where part of a Victorian cottage or, on a contributory building, where they cannot be seen from the public domain. Flat, in-plane windows or low skillion dormers are more appropriate for Federation and post-Federation buildings.
  - As required already in Council's DCP, new development along the street frontage should continue with the building alignment common to the street. Except in the post-1960s area along Norma Crescent, new buildings should be sited parallel to the street.
  - As required already in Council's DCP, new garages to existing buildings should be sited to the rear of the property. Where this is impossible, consideration can be given to their siting at the side of the house, but well set back from the front wall. New double garages visible from the street should be avoided.
  - Designs for new garages need to ensure they are presented as utilitarian, ancillary buildings, rather than as competitors or copies of the house. Lighter-weight materials also need to be recommended in the DCP.
  - New buildings need to fit in with the character of the precinct as outlined above, through their scale and bulk, materials (face brick and tiles), front side and back setbacks, front unpaved garden areas. They should not be reproductions of earlier architectural styles, as this diminishes the significance of the early buildings and confuses the evidence. Flat or low-pitched roofs may be considered where they are part of the intrinsic design of the house.
  - Original fences need to be kept; reconstruction encouraged from evidence on the ground or in photographs; and 'period' fencing discouraged.
  - Ways of having acoustic walls along Beecroft Road, retaining early fences/hedges, and presenting an appropriate streetscape need to be explored.

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- Roofing materials are particularly prominent elements and the use of tile or slate should continue as appropriate to the precinct.

### **9.2 Management Principles for the 'Closes'**

- Allow discreet additions, preferably to the rear or within an existing roof form. They should be constructed in the same material or a lighter weight material such as timber.
- Retain existing building line for additions or additional garaging.
- Avoid plastering or painting of unpainted brick surfaces.
- Continue use of terracotta or concrete roof tiles in recessive colours.
- Retain landscape palette — lawns, remnant trees from forest.
- Avoid front fencing.
- Minimise hard surfaces to reduce run-off and protect forest particularly to Narena and Seale Closes.

### **9.3 Conservation Planning Principles for the Beecroft Commercial Centre**

The Beecroft Commercial Centre has recently been the subject of a detailed analysis in input to the development of a masterplan by Council. The Heritage Assessment and Conservation Principles Analysis prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, June 2003, identified the principles and concepts which have informed the ongoing development of the masterplan for the commercial area.



**Godden Mackay Logan**

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## 10.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Field of Mars Common boundary should remain the boundary for the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area wherein the major components to be conserved are:
  - the Blackbutt-Smooth-Bark-Apple-Turpentine Open Forest community, and its associated fauna;
  - all listed heritage items;
  - the developmental pattern of one house, one lot; and
  - the unplastered and unpainted, non-heated, face brick outer walls of all buildings except those in gully areas or in areas not visible from the public domain.
- Within the Beecroft/Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area four groupings of precincts should be defined in which their particular built character is conserved. These are:
  - the Beecroft Village Precinct — the first area subdivided and released for sale in July 1877;
  - the East, North and South Beecroft subdivisions and the Cheltenham subdivision of August 1887, March 1888 and June 1891, where they occur on the more readily accessible plateau areas;
  - the Norma Crescent/Cheltenham Road subdivisions of 1920s–1950s; and
  - the four postwar cul-de-sac re-subdivisions of Redmill Close, Parker Close, Seale Close and Narena Close.
- Because the significance of these precincts lies with the layers of subdivision, re-subdivision and building they demonstrate from first construction until at least 1960, any building, garden or structure made before 1960 contributes to the evidence of these layers of suburban history and therefore needs to be conserved.
- Because demolition of any pre-1960s building removes evidence of part of that layer of history it must be avoided except where a particular building or structure has been so altered that its role in that evidence is confusing or illegible. Council needs to require a Heritage Impact Statement for changes to any of these properties, and this needs to be added to Clause 6 of the Special Provisions (Heritage) of the Local Environment Plan (LEP).
- The almost exclusive development pattern of one house, one lot, needs to be retained throughout the conservation area, and most particularly in the defined precincts.
- A desktop survey be made of all allotments within the whole conservation area which are capable of being subdivided into two or more 600sq m building lots. Taking into account the

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other heritage and character values of the conservation area, it is recommended that particular parameters be added to the subdivisional requirements of the LEP and Development Control Plan (DCP) to conserve these elements and indicate constraints to subdivision before applications are put forward. For heritage items with heritage gardens, a curtilage assessment study should be undertaken by Council.

- The almost exclusive use of unplastered, unpainted, non-hearted face brick be continued as the construction material and surface finish of external walls.
- A DCP be prepared specific to the Beecroft/Cheltenham Conservation Precincts incorporating the management principles of Section 9.0 above, and detailing planning measures to conserve the heritage and character values outlined there.
- The principles of the Byles Creek DCP could be examined and adapted to apply to any new development in the upper Devlins Creek catchment area.
- Guideline principles be prepared to assist owners to make appropriate changes/additions to their houses without compromising the architectural integrity or stylistic character of the building. These would incorporate guidelines for rooms in the roof, second-storey additions, where appropriate, their siting and design, other rear additions, pools and tennis courts.
- DCP Guidelines be augmented to assist in the appropriate design and construction materials of garages, carports and their access ways.
- Guidelines and promotional material should be prepared to assist residents to retain original front fences, or where necessary, to research and reconstruct from evidence on site and in documents, rather than copy 'period' fencing. The guidelines would also need to consider ways in which original fences/hedges can be retained along Beecroft Road in conjunction with the need for acoustic walls.
- The schedule of heritage items in the Hornsby LEP be updated where necessary to ensure it includes, from the areas outside the precincts, all early properties (eg 8 Old Beecroft Road) and all properties of aesthetic/architectural significance (eg some houses on the northern side of Chapman).
- The schedule should be reviewed to confirm accuracy of the description of items to ensure settings and gardens for each property are adequately protected.
- A research project be initiated into the architects who practised in the Beecroft/Cheltenham area to identify their works.
- Council review the strategic planning of the Beecroft commercial area, to ensure that its heritage and social values are conserved.