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Heritage Consultants

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Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd (ACN 001 179 362) 78 George Street Redfern Sydney Australia 2016. Ph +61 2 9319 4811



**Beecroft Commercial
Centre Masterplan
Heritage Assessment and
Conservation Principles Analysis**

Report prepared for Hornsby Shire Council

October 2004

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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 Conservation Area, Godden Mackay Logan was engaged in 2003 to review the delineation and management of the Conservation Area. A draft report was provided to Council in May 2003.

The review examined the history of the area, the existing statutory management tools used by 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.

It was clear that a more detailed heritage assessment of the Beecroft commercial centre was needed, and Council commissioned this study in June 2003.

1.2 Beecroft/Cheltenham Conservation Area Context

The Beecroft/Cheltenham conservation area covers the former 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 LEP, 1994, with the then standard conservation provisions. Subsequently the Hornsby Shire Development Control Plan 1995 has provided additional guidelines for heritage related development in the shire.

In the mid-1990s, the significance of the conservation area was identified as focused on the Federation character of prominent development, which is in fact but one aspect of the heritage significance of the Beecroft/Cheltenham 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/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 areas such as the Beecroft commercial centre.

1.3 Purpose of this Study

In 2003 Council initiated a masterplanning process for the Shire's commercial areas, which has been undertaken by Cox Richardson Pty Ltd. This heritage assessment and identification of conservation principles for the Beecroft commercial centre has therefore been able to feed directly into the masterplan process as well as the Beecroft/Cheltenham Conservation Area review.

1.4 Methodology

The heritage significance of the Beecroft commercial centre was investigated having regard to the assessment methods and criteria set out in the *Heritage Manual* of the 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 or assessment of natural heritage aspects. The limited study time (three weeks to draft report) of necessity focused the research on readily available resources. Further historic research will be needed to flesh out the detail of this overview.

1.6 Authorship

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

1.7 Acknowledgements

The study team wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by Lisa Trueman, Michael Chan and James Farrington of Hornsby Council, Helen Barker and the Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group and Ian Connolly of Cox Richardson Pty Ltd. Valuable assistance was also provided by Neil Chippendale, Local Studies Librarian at the Hornsby Council Library.

2.0 Historical Overview

2.1 Early Beecroft Development

The Beecroft Commercial Centre developed to service the growing residential population of Beecroft following the subdivision of the Field of Mars Common and the sale of suburban blocks for the Beecroft village from 1886.¹ However, the creation of the suburb of Beecroft had in some ways been an afterthought to the resumption and sale of the Field of Mars Common.

Pressure to break up the Common for sale had been coupled with growing agitation for the extension of the railway network to connect Sydney to the growing population and markets of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. The course of the proposed railway would take it through the Common north to the Hawkesbury River and while it was primarily envisaged as a freight line, suburban passenger platforms were included to attract interest to the government's Common subdivisions, which provided the financial underpinning for the project.

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 upon 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 into 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. It was Copeland who chose the name Beecroft for the station and the subsequent village that developed (see Figure 2.1).²

2.2 Subdivision of Beecroft Village

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 (including those within what would become the commercial area) 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 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 itself. 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 Figures 2.1–2.2.³

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 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. 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 residential blocks. 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).⁴ The 1891 census also listed 205 people as residing in Beecroft, with 48 houses occupied. Some land titles included covenants precluding shops, such as the later Mount Pleasant estate at Cheltenham.

The planting of specimen trees in the Village Green area beside the railway by the Royal Botanic Gardens, provided an initial exotic landscape focus among the towering forest.

While the focus of early land sales was on residential blocks, Figure 2.2 shows a number of allotments in the first sale as being within what would become the commercial centre. However, it was not until the residential population began to grow that the first businesses appeared.

2.3 Beecroft Commercial Centre Emerges

In September 1893 the first general store was opened in Beecroft, signalling the genesis of the Beecroft Commercial Centre. The store was opened by Thomas Stobo on Railway Parade (now Wongala Crescent within the study area) opposite the railway platform, which had been recently relocated to its current position. Figure 2.1 illustrates the platform's original position to the south of its current location.

Thomas Stobo had lost his job as an insurance clerk during the economic downturn of 1892 and in 1893 had leased a block of land in Beecroft to build his shop. The change of career from finance to retail had involved the relocation of his family from Redfern and the construction of a small weatherboard shop and residence on the leased property. Stobo's store, opposite the station, served not only as the only retail outlet in the new suburb but also doubled as a venue for community meetings including the fortnightly gathering of the local progress association. Stobo's general store stocked a range of items from groceries to saddlery, hay and fodder.⁵ From 1895 Stobo also

operated as the local postmaster running the post office from his shop for which he was paid an allowance of £20 per year by the Postmaster General's department.⁶

By 1896, with his business growing, Stobo was able to purchase the land on which he had built his shop and house and by 1898 he had renovated and extended his business, building a brick shop with galvanised iron roof at the station end of his premises (see Figure 2.6). Furthermore, in 1900 he purchased the block of land to the rear of his property facing Beecroft Parade (now Beecroft Road) where he kept his horses, carts and produce. He extended again in 1906 by which time the shop had doubled its original size⁷ (see Figure 2.6).

Until 1905 Thomas Stobo operated as the only retail outlet in Beecroft. In some respects his sole operation mirrors the residential development of the suburb to this period. Beecroft had developed gradually until the early years of the twentieth century when many of the original allotments were re-subdivided into smaller suburban lots. The growing population is reflected in census figures for Beecroft and Cheltenham for 1891, 1901 and 1911. During this period the population increased from 205 to 470 in 1901; and to 1,084 by 1911. And as the population grew, so to did the number and variety of service providers. Where there had been no retail traders in 1894, by 1913 there were fifteen recorded as living in the area.⁸

In 1905 a second general store, opened by Samuel Higgins on the corner of Beecroft Road and Railway Crescent (Wongala Crescent), began competing with Stobo. Higgins and his wife Grace Brasnett had moved to Beecroft in 1904 from Goulburn. They ran their first store from rented premises until 1907 when Grace's father purchased a block of land on the corner of Beecroft Road and Mary Street where they built a larger two-storey shop and residence. The store was advertised at the time as being one of the largest and most up-to-date premises in the northern suburbs and stocked a range of products including general groceries, patent medicines, drapery and produce, as well as being an agent for the Commonwealth Bank and the *Cumberland Argus* newspaper. Although beyond the boundary of the current study area, Higgins' shop demonstrates the growing commercial viability of the suburb.

As well as Higgins' general store, 1905 was also the year that Albert Boutcher opened Beecroft's first chemist on Beecroft Road between Hannah and Malton (now Chapman) Streets and when William Nicolle opened his land agents' office on the corner of Railway Crescent and Malton Street, taking advantage of the growing sale and rental markets in land and property in Beecroft. Both shops were within the subject area boundary. Boutcher operated his business from his shop on Beecroft Road close to the corner of Hannah Street until 1921 after which William Moore also ran a pharmacy until at least 1932.⁹

In 1910 CD Edmondson's butcher's shop and Gordon and Bellingham's bakery were both opened in Railway Crescent. Both businesses experienced a frequent change in management within their early years of operation but managed to survive. The butchery operated from the northern side of a two-storey brick building still standing in Wongala Crescent, between Hannah and Copeland Streets

known today as Treasure House.¹⁰ The bakery was to the north of the butcher's shop between Hannah and Malton (Chapman) Streets (see Figure 2.4). In Beecroft Road a haberdashery and millinery shop was operating by 1911, while boot repairer and leatherworker Bill Hall relocated his business from Thornleigh to the corner of Beecroft Road and Malton Streets around the same time.

From 1910 onwards the Beecroft Commercial Centre began to take shape with shops and businesses congregating initially along Railway Crescent (now Wongala Crescent) and Beecroft Road and after 1923 into Hannah Street. Businesses included the carriers John Lutherborrow and Sons in Railway Crescent between Hannah and Malton Streets (c1915–1933+), next door was Norman Buttsworth the baker, and towards Copeland Road there was Peter Thompson's general store. By 1910 the post office had relocated from Thomas Stobo's shop, Stobo having sold his business during the same year. (Stobo returned to Beecroft in 1911 and opened a real estate business on the corner of Hannah Street and Railway Crescent. Such a business still operates from this site.) The post office was relocated in its own building, rented from Stobo in Railway Crescent close by its original position, for £72 rent per annum. In 1924 it was relocated into a purpose-built post office building on the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road¹¹, when the Church of England Hall was relocated to the St John site.

From February 1923 the commercial area began to consolidate up the hill into Hannah Street following the subdivision and sale of the Lyndley Estate (former home of the Sargent family). The Sargent family's residence 'Lyndley', and fifteen building sites facing Hannah Street and Railway Crescent were offered as the only available business sites in Beecroft.¹² Further it was noted that Lots 11 and 12 were to be sold for lock-up shops only, indicating an expressed desire to encourage the development of commercial premises within the subdivision (see Figure 2.5). The Sands Directory records the appearance of commercial premises on these lots from 1924. Of particular note is the motor garage of G Beal in Railway Crescent close to the Hannah Street corner. Beal is the first motor garage listed within the study site and is representative of the growing importance and availability of the motor car in the early 1920s in Sydney. On the north side of Hannah Street from 1924, and within the former grounds of the Lyndley estate, there is listed a newsagent (operated first by R Jenkins, then George McCarthy and from 1926 by William Thornbury), Miss G Allansen's drapery and the dentist O Searl.

By 1933, the last year of publication for the Sands Directory, the Beecroft Commercial Centre included two chemists, a dentist (Searl) a medical practitioner, a newsagent, a ladies and a standard hairdresser, a baker, a butcher, a fruiterer, a confectioner, a bootmaker, a boot repairer, an estate agent, two motor garages, four grocers, a police station and fire station, a post office, the Bank of NSW and the Commonwealth Savings Bank.¹³

2.4 Commercial Consolidation and Diversity

Comparison of aerial photographs (see Figures 2.8–2.11) shows the changing structure of the commercial area between 1930 and 1978. The character and make up of the commercial area evolves from single commercial premises with an ongoing scatter of houses, focused on the railway station initially, then Beecroft Road with later consolidation into Hannah Street, until the mid-1960s when the first arcade was introduced. The arcade, facing Hannah and Railway Parade (nee Crescent and now Wongala Crescent) was built on the site of a large two-storey residence built by the Sargent family in the early 1900s. The house, Lyndley, had survived the 1923 subdivision as mentioned above. The arcade was designed to accommodate twenty-two shops including a supermarket, car parking and a mall between the shops. The development was the largest proposed for Beecroft to that time and was set to cost upwards of £100,000.¹⁴ A second grouping of shops was built during the mid-1970s. The stylish 'Module' centre further consolidated the shopping focus into Hannah Street and allowed an increase of capacity for retail businesses and service activities with offices (see Figures 2.10–2.11). In the following decades, the Century 21 and Beecroft Real Estate offices were located on the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road, and in 2003 a major new development surrounding the 1924 post office was approved by Council.

In addition to these major new clusters of shops the Beecroft Commercial Centre has also retained remnant small-scale individual commercial buildings as well as some early residences within its boundaries, providing linkages to its earliest phase of the suburb's historical development. In Wongala Crescent, formerly Railway Crescent, several property boundary setbacks from the street illustrate the earlier development patterns of the area, including the alignment of Stobo's first shop and residence, now partly car park.

The Village Green continued to develop as a focal point for village and community activity. Maidens' donated trees maturing into extraordinary specimens. The war memorials and a range of community celebrations and functions denote this as a place that the community values highly.

2.5 A Community Develops — the Beecroft School of Arts

The main community centre in Beecroft is the School of Arts, on the edge of the commercial centre in the Village Green.

In 1904 Beecroft School of Arts was opened after at least eight years of agitation on the part of the Beecroft Progress Association and civic-minded local residents. In 1902 a site for the building adjacent to the Village Green was secured from the government and a fundraising committee had been organised to build the School of Arts. By far the largest of the events held in that year was a fete on the Village Green in September 1903, which was attended by the Governor, Sir Harry Rawson, and over 2,000 people. The fete and accompanying concert raised upwards of £120 toward the building and enabled the trustees to proceed with plans for the erection of the building.¹⁵

In February 1903 the recently elected Building Committee decided to hold a design competition for the building, eventually choosing the design of Lindsay Thompson from ten finalists. Tenders were then invited for the construction and by mid-August the tender of Joshua Ismay for £600 was accepted. A further £400 was raised through the mortgage of the property.

The foundation stone was laid on 19 September 1904 and building continued apace for the official opening in December. In November the Department of Lands officially dedicated the site to be vested in the trustees. Then on 10 December 1904 the Governor returned to Beecroft for the official opening ceremony. An accompanying fair raised a further £100 towards the building (see Figure 2.7).

Soon the building began to function actively within the community. A library was opened in March with an initial collection of 100 books, mainly from donations. This number steadily increased to 515 by 1906 and 2300 by 1914. In June 1905 a billiards room was also in use by the Beecroft community.

By 1907 moves were underway to extend the hall. Additional land was secured from the Minister for Lands for the extension and a design competition had awarded the job to Hornsby-based architect Louis Spiers Robertson.

The extended building was opened on 19 March 1910 by the New South Wales Premier Charles Wade with the Newtown Brass Band playing and a village fair in the grounds.

The School of Arts was established to serve the Beecroft community both educationally and recreationally, through a series of practical classes such as first aid, photography, cookery, freehand and model drawing, through lectures and a debating society as well as the lending library and billiard rooms. The hall was used by local and visiting community bands and musicians for recitals, and by the Beecroft Musical and Dramatic Society for theatrical productions. Tournaments held in the billiards room were regularly well attended. Balls and dances were also a popular use for the hall.

The School of Arts building, situated on the corner of Copeland Road and Beecroft Road at the northern end of the Village Green, continues to be used by the Beecroft Community for social and community events. While some of the more popular pastimes of its opening years, such as billiards, are no longer practised there, others such as local theatrical performances and community classes remain a popular usage of the building.

Its landmark location provides a 'heritage gateway' theme to the entrance of Beecroft village.

2.6 Commuter Impacts

The dramatic increase in commuter parking has been a major urban design factor in Beecroft village since the 1960s, as the suburbanites of Sydney's northwest, poorly served by public transport, began

to use Beecroft as a convenient commuter hub. Perhaps associated with this trend as much as with the ageing demographic profile of the area, an influx of service businesses — accountants, physiotherapists, with an increasing emphasis on medical specialists and dental practitioners — occupied rear and upper levels of buildings within the commercial area. The initial cluster has attracted similar professional practices, which has led to pressure on surrounding residential buildings to be converted for use as professional consulting rooms, for example along Wongala Crescent, opposite the railway.

Today, the commercial centre retains a selection of heritage buildings, from the 1904–10 School of Arts to the 1970s Module shopping centre, some modest commercial development and a number of streetscape setback 'gaps' some of which reflect the historic pattern of growth of the village, others being the result of the alienation of retail or garden spaces to provide car parking facilities. The visual impact of cars, concern regarding traffic/pedestrian conflicts, the potential redevelopment of several building sites, combined with missed opportunities to reinforce and respect Beecroft's historic character, have led to the need to prepare specific conservation principles as input into the present masterplan study.

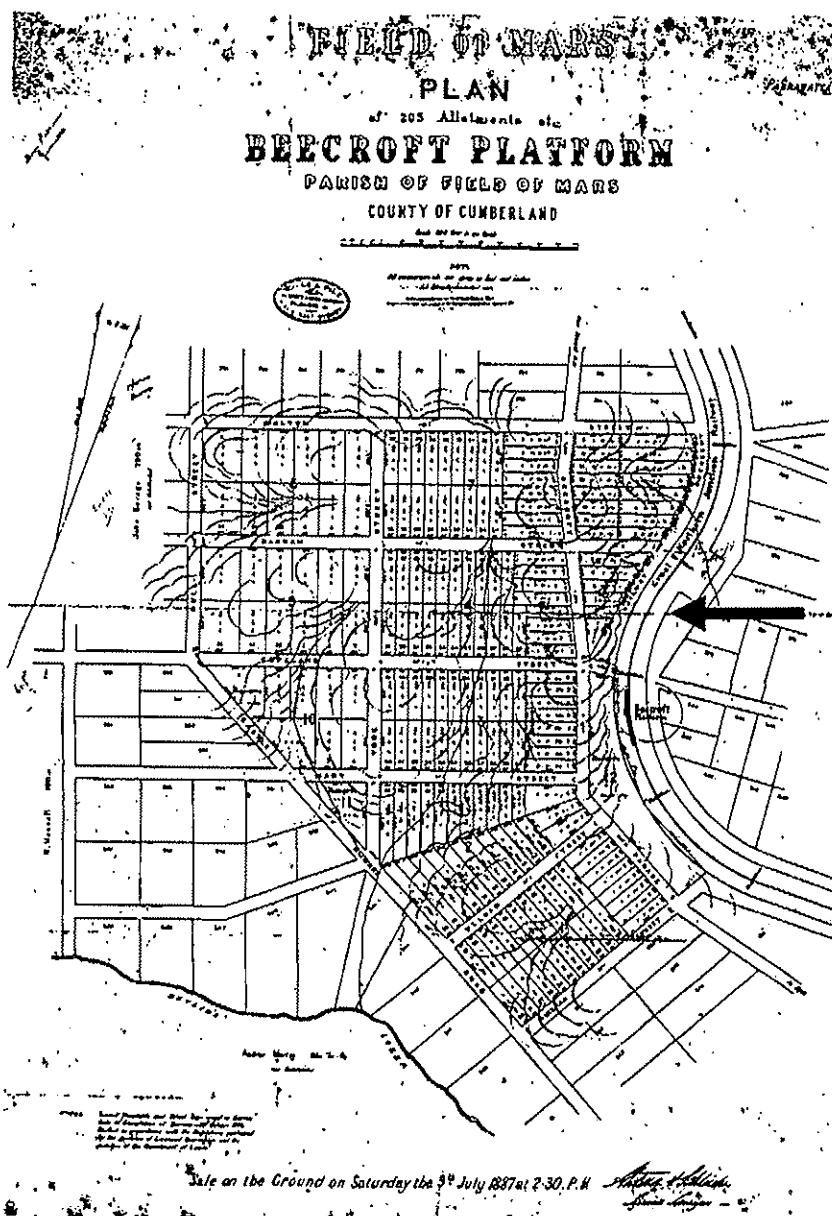


Figure 2.1 9 July 1887 sale notice for the first land sales of the recently resumed and subdivided Field of Mars Common for the new suburb of Beecroft. The commercial area lies within portions five and six of the sale allotments. Note the position of the railway station, which was later relocated to its current position. The arrow indicates the position of the current railway platform. (Source: Beecroft Subdivision Plans . Mitchell Library)

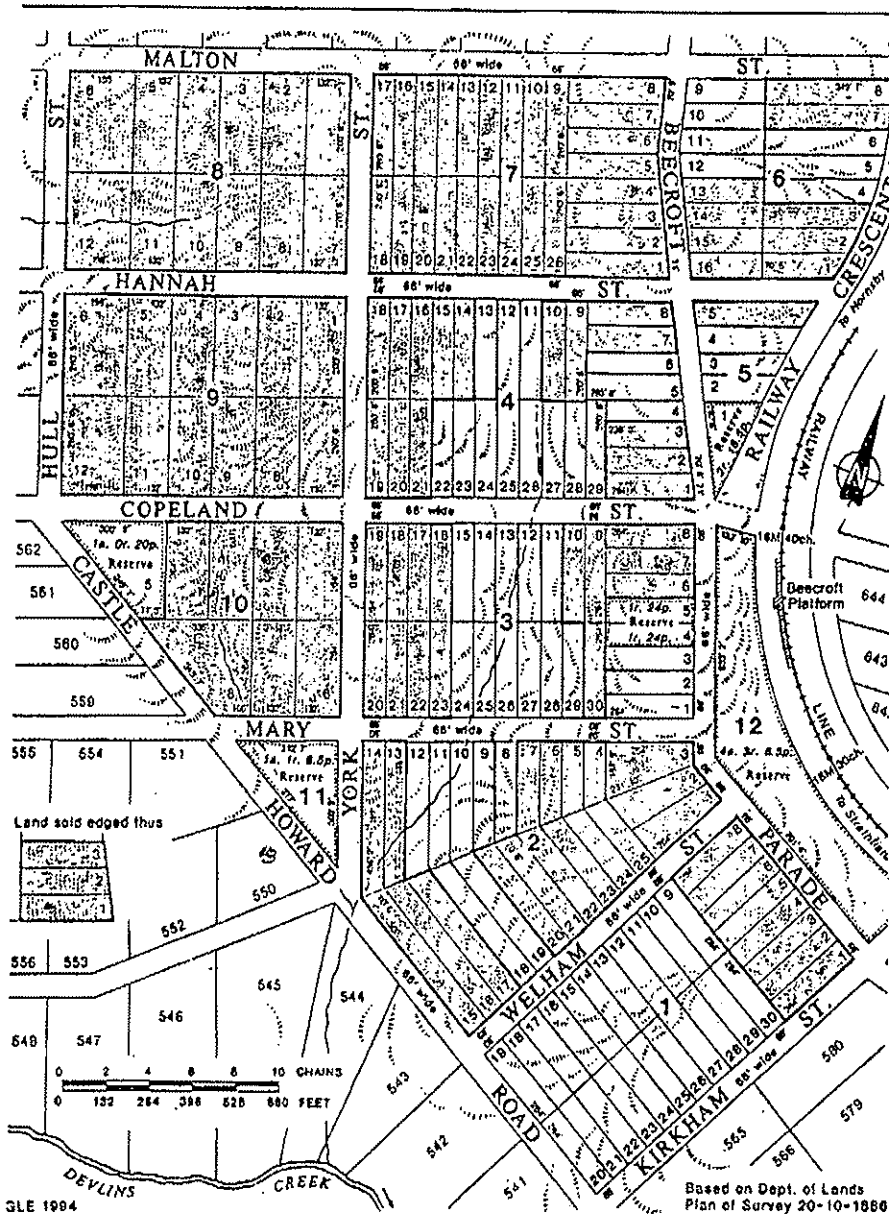


Figure 2.2 Plan showing allotments sold in the first land sales at Beecroft in 1887. The sales were mostly of larger villa allotments away from the railway line, with only half those offered within the study area being taken up in the first sale. Note the reserve north of Copeland Street where the fire station is now located. (Source: Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group, 1995, *Beecroft and Cheltenham: The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914*, Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group)



Figure 2.3 Sale notice Saturday 8 October 1904 with fifteen lots for sale within the study area. There are some buildings already within the commercial area; however, Thomas Stobo's first general store, arrowed, was the only commercial operation in the suburb at this time. In 1911 Stobo opened a real estate business on the corner of Hannah Street and Railway Crescent. Note the site for the School of the Arts building is indicated. (Source: Mitchell Library Beecroft Subdivision B11/37)

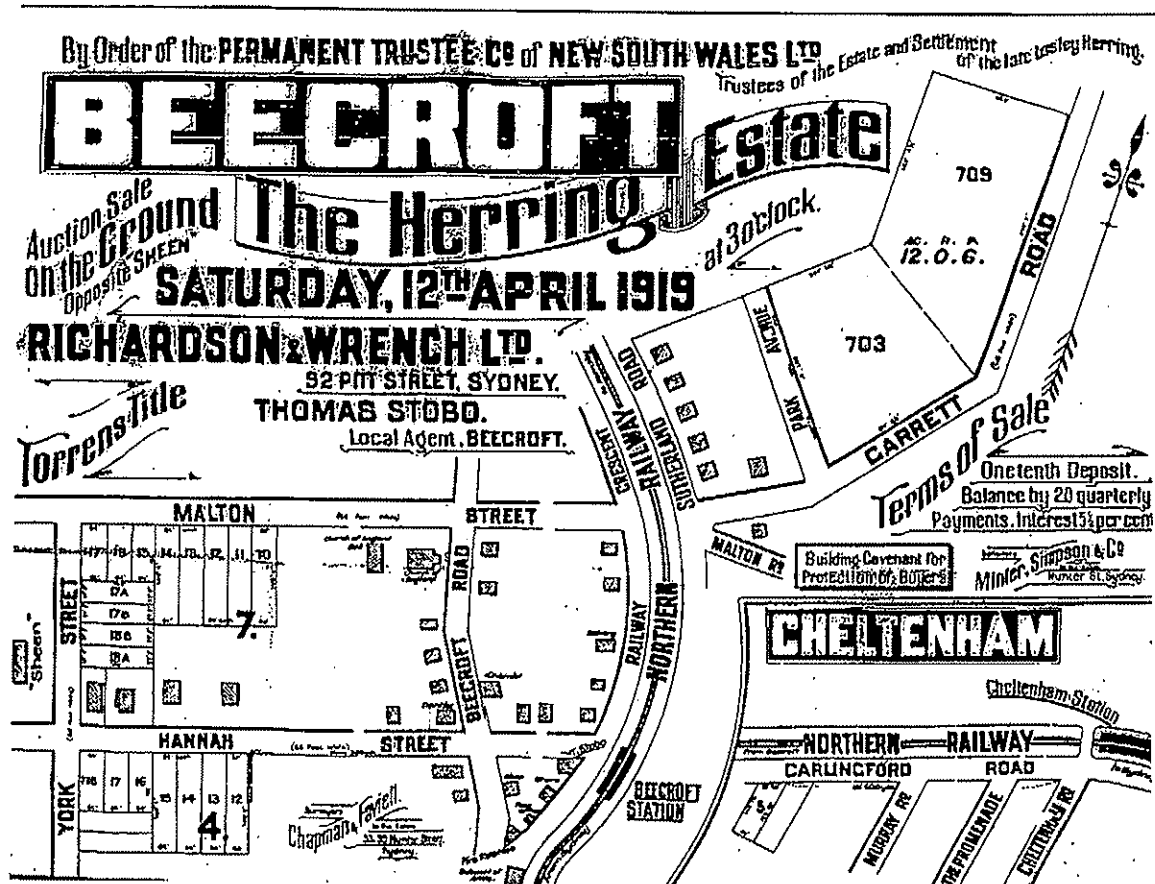


Figure 2.4 1919 Subdivision Plan of the Herring Estate to the west of the Beecroft Commercial Centre. The plan shows the embryonic form of the commercial area while at the same time illustrating the importance to the community of the shops. The location of individual services such as the bakery, chemist and post office (all within the study area) are indicated on the plan. Edmundson's butchery was between Stobo's and the post office. (Source: Hornsby Local Studies Library)

THE LYNDLEY ESTATE BEECROFT

The Residence "LYNDLEY" & 15 SPLENDID BUILDING SITES,
OPPOSITE THE ENTRANCE TO THE STATION.

THE ONLY AVAILABLE BUSINESS SITES.

for Auction Sale on the Ground at 3 p.m. on

SATURDAY 10TH FEBRUARY

RICHARDSON & WRENCH LTD. 1923.

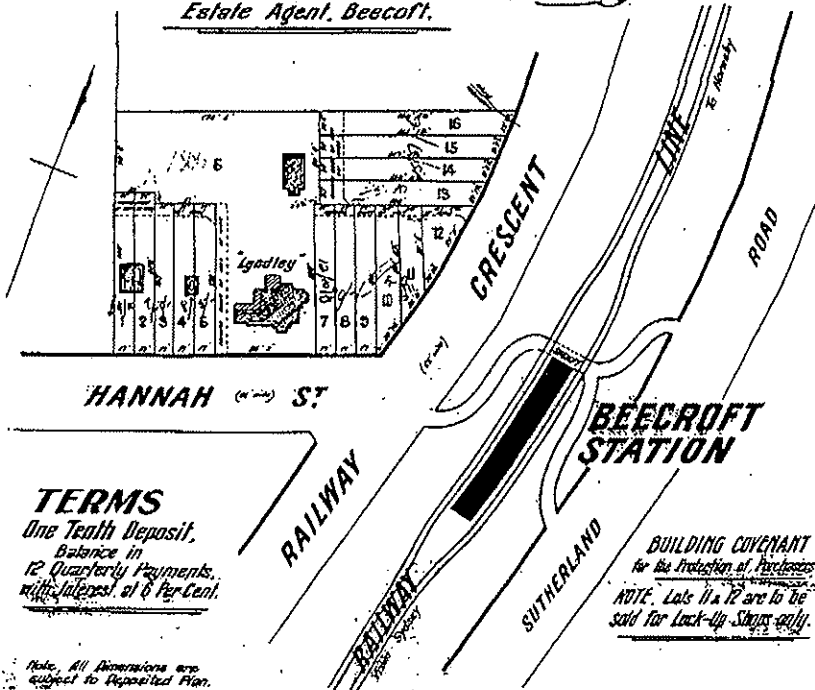
Auctioneers 32 Pitt Street, Sydney.

(In Conjunction with)

J. SYDENHAM.

Estate Agent, Beecroft.

TORRENS TITLE.



TERMS

One Tenth Deposit,
Balance in
12 Quarterly Payments,
with Interest at 6 Per Cent.

Note: All Dimensions are
subject to Deposited Plan.

Figure 2.5 1923 Subdivision Plan of the Lyndley Estate, including fifteen building sites all within the Beecroft Commercial Centre. Advertised as the last of the available business sites, this sale and subsequent development signified the consolidation of the commercial area focused around Hannah Street, Railway Crescent and Beecroft Road. (Source: Mitchell Library Beecroft Subdivision Plans B11/17)



Figure 2.6 c1905 Thomas Stobo's second general store with his residence and first shop adjacent to the left. Stobo was Beecroft's first retailer, opening his business from his house in 1893. Stobo still acted as the post office at this stage and the advertisement for mail can be seen on his shop hoarding. (Source: Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group, 1995, *Beecroft and Cheltenham: The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914*, Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group)

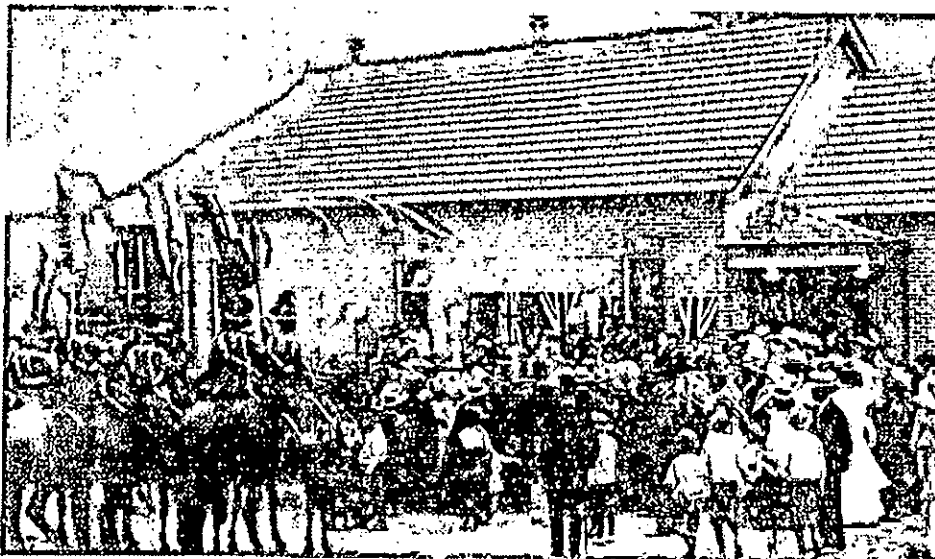


Figure 2.7 The opening of the Beecroft School of Arts building by the Governor Sir Harry Rawson, 10 December 1904. (Source: Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group, 1995, *Beecroft and Cheltenham: The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914*, Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group)

Figure 2.8
1930 aerial photograph
of the Beecroft
Commercial Centre.
Although well
established, the
commercial area is still
on a small scale with
individual shop
buildings interspersed
with earlier residential
developments. The
School of Arts building
is on the corner at the
bottom of the
photograph. (Source:
LPI)



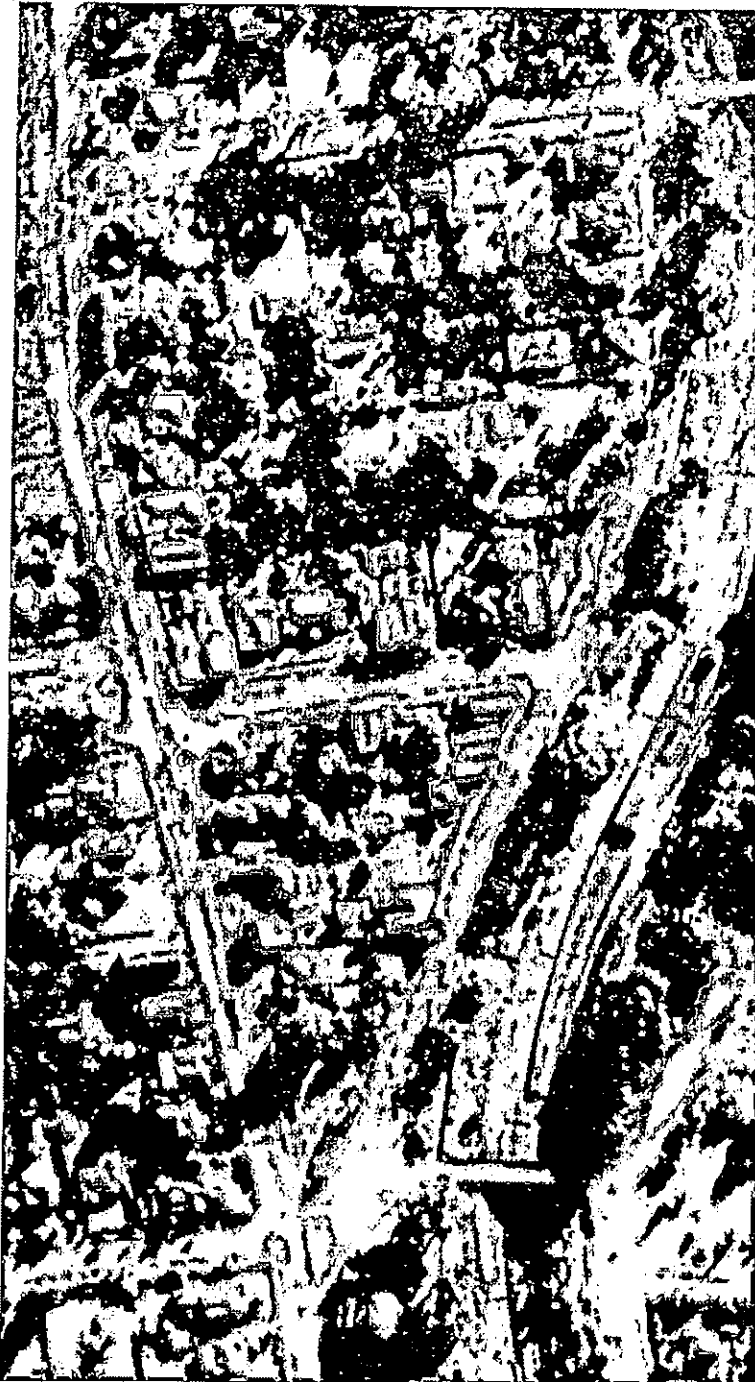


Figure 2.9
1961 aerial photograph of the Beecroft Commercial Centre. While most of the commercial area has been developed by the 1960s the scale of development remains much as it was during the 1930s. That being small scale individual shops with some houses still mixed among the commercial buildings. (Source: LPI)

Figure 2.10
1970 aerial photograph of
Beecroft Commercial
Centre. Comparison to
Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show
some dramatic changes
in the nature of the area.
The development of the
Beecroft Village arcade is
evident off Hannah
Street, while some of the
older shops have been
replaced by larger scale
commercial and office
premises. However, in
Railway Crescent the
setback of earlier
allotments such as
Stobo's is still evident.
(Source: LPI)

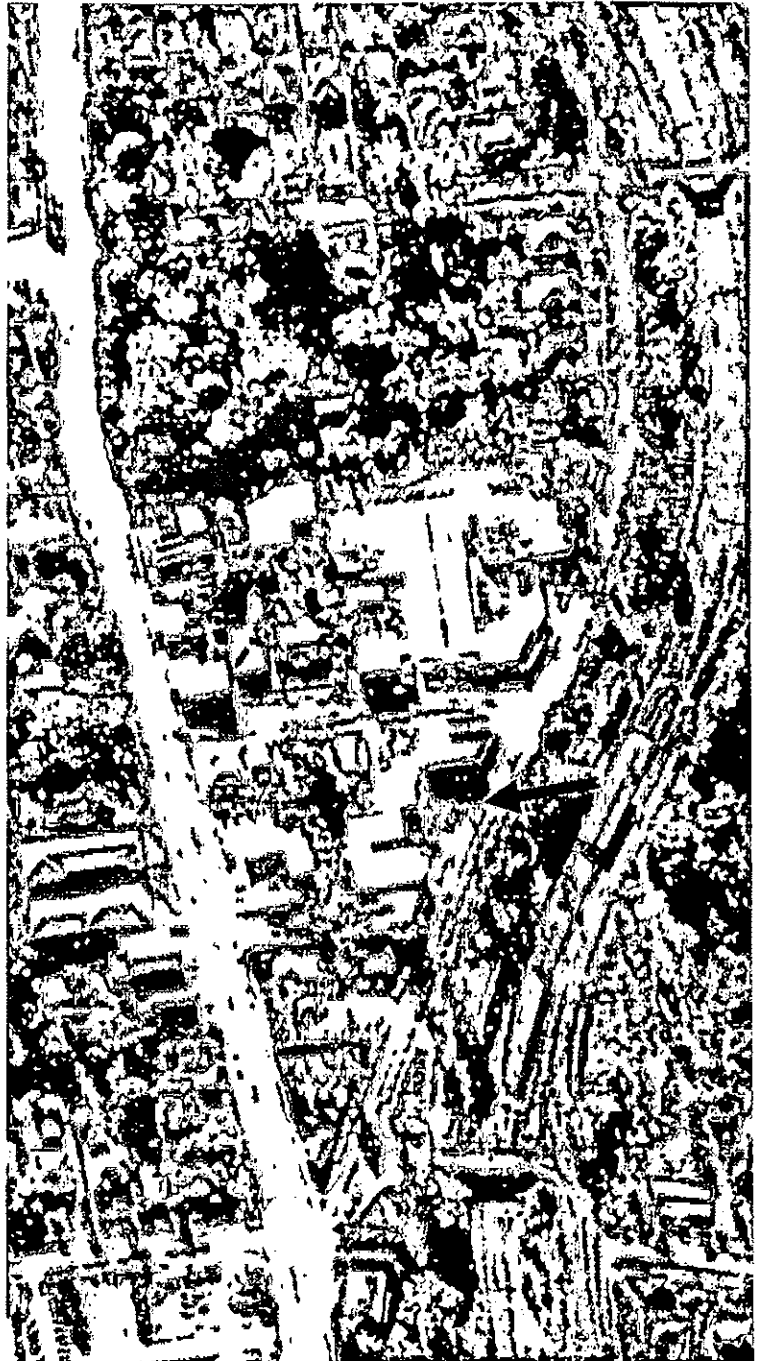




Figure 2.11
Aerial photograph of the Beecroft Commercial Centre 1978. The commercial area is now dominated by two shopping centres facing Hannah Street with some larger commercial development also evident in the adjacent streets. However, surviving individual commercial buildings from the earliest phase of development in the streets remain. (Source: LPI)

2.7 Endnotes

- ¹ Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group 1995, *Beecroft and Cheltenham: The Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914*, Beecroft/Cheltenham History Group, p 43.
- ² Beecroft/Cheltenham Historical Society op cit, p 74.
- ³ *ibid*, p 81.
- ⁴ Beecroft/Cheltenham Historical Society, op cit, p 86.
- ⁵ *ibid*, p 178.
- ⁶ *ibid*, p 113.
- ⁷ *ibid*, p 178.
- ⁸ *ibid*, p 169.
- ⁹ Sydney and Sands Directory 1914–1933. 1915 is the earliest date that Beecroft appears in the Directory.
- ¹⁰ Beecroft/Cheltenham Historical Society, op cit, p 180.
- ¹¹ Sydney and Sands Directory 1914–1933.
- ¹² Beecroft Subdivision Plans as held by Mitchell Library.
- ¹³ Sydney and Sands Directory 1914–1933.
- ¹⁴ 'Old buildings make way for shops' Beecroft Shops Vertical File Hornsby Local Studies Collection, Hornsby Shire Council Library.
- ¹⁵ Beecroft/Cheltenham Historical Society, op cit, p 197.

3.0 Assessment of Heritage Significance

The assessment of the heritage significance of Beecroft Commercial Centre and its environs is a vital step in making the best decisions about planning for its future.

In considering proposals for change in the village, all aspects of the centre's heritage significance must be identified and assessed so that the effects of a proposal may be tested.

Tracing the history of subdivision of the area, its historical association with various families, traders and events has provided a context within which the analysis of proposals for change can take place.

3.1 Beecroft Commercial Centre

The Beecroft Commercial Centre has heritage significance for demonstrating the following values, many held in common with the surrounding Beecroft/Cheltenham Conservation Area.

3.2 Historic Values

- A government subdivision for suburban/investment purposes released to raise money to fund an important state-wide railway project.
- Layers of its suburban subdivision, re-subdivision and commercial development from its first residences and shops in 1893 through to its 1960s arcades and 1970s multi-shop centres, to its current service centre expansion.

3.3 Aesthetic Values

- The Village Green represents a community landscape of local significance formed by the close relationship between landform, remnant native forests, the railway line and subsequent pattern of roads and buildings within that landscape.

3.4 Social and Associative Values

- Community buildings and facilities such as churches (St John's; Uniting), Beecroft Public School and Arden House School, the Beecroft School of Arts Building and the Beecroft War Memorial have endured as places of community value over a number of generations.
- The Village Green with its remnant forest and exotic plantings by the Botanic Gardens represents a landscape of demonstrable importance to the community via its ongoing function for community events, memorials, etc.
- Ongoing community engagement in the future planning and protection of the commercial centre via the activities of the Beecroft/Cheltenham Civic Trust in guiding future development.

3.5 Draft Statement of Significance of Beecroft Commercial Centre

The Beecroft Commercial Centre is significant because it demonstrates:

- the dominant impact on the railway route of the natural topography and its associated prominent native vegetation, which became closely integrated into the street patterns, commercial and residential allotments of the area;
- government subdivision for suburban/investment purposes to raise money to fund an important state-wide railway facility;
- government investment in landscaping and beautifying the railway and Village Green area through the work of the Botanic Gardens and CH Maiden;
- the multi-layered history of its suburban subdivision, re-subdivision and development from the initial village subdivision of 1887, with small family-run stores and residences to a complex local commercial service centre through the 1960s–1990s;
- a continuing focus in the Beecroft Village commercial centre for day-to-day shopping activity, as well as wider health services and community interaction; and
- through its many community buildings, structures and clubs, an enduring sense of community focus and cohesiveness within the commercial area.

4.0 Conservation Planning Principles

This section of the report proposes conservation principles as preliminary input to the masterplanning process of Cox Richardson Pty Ltd for the Beecroft Commercial Centre, with the Beecroft commercial community, residents and community groups.

4.1 Retain the Essence of a Railway Village

The masterplan should aim to retain and positively exploit the historic relationship of the railway and shopping centre, dealing pro-actively with the pressure of commuter parking and access which presently dominates the centre. The historical, visual and functional relationship of the railway to the village and its commercial activity has reduced over time due to the increasing dominance of cars and cumulative ad hoc design changes. The design of the public domain in the vicinity of the railway ramp, Hannah Street and Wongala Crescent (formerly Railway Crescent) intersection should be re-assessed in terms of reinforcing historic relationships and its heritage values and community functions.

Measures to achieve this include the following:

- **Retain the relationship of the village shops fronting directly onto streets leading to the railway** by designing new and/or planning for existing shops/commercial buildings and associated activities, to be seen and accessed directly from their street frontages.

The street frontages of the shops should be a major public 'face' for Beecroft with pedestrian links through to buildings, parking (etc) to the rear integrated into the overall design via existing rights of way and lanes. Off-street car parking should not be allowed to dominate the street frontage visually or physically any further. Reversing the orientation of shops to provide the main frontage to the rear is not appropriate to the historical significance of the village street layout.

- **Maintain the functional links to the railway station**, upgrading paths, landscaping, pedestrian safety and signage etc as necessary (see Figure 4.20).

4.2 Recognise the Heritage Gateway at Eastern Approach to Village

The strategic intersection location of the Beecroft School of Arts, the Beecroft Fire Station, the war memorials and imposing exotic specimen trees and remnant forest within the Village Green landscape all provide a remarkable Beecroft village gateway to travellers along Beecroft Road from the east and Copeland Road north and south. These elements contribute strongly to the visitors' impression that Beecroft will be a village of heritage character and fabric (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Measures to retain and enhance the values and significance of this eastern gateway area include:

-
- **Forward plan for the ongoing conservation of the Village Green** both for its landscape qualities (exotic plantings and natural remnant forest trees) and for its community values — its memorials, functions and activities. Significant features and fabric include the layout of the Village Green, its stone walls and trees, memorial plaques and the war memorials, playground space, railway station access, bike paths and of course, the School of Arts.
 - This important community heritage asset deserves its own **Landscape Masterplan** which assesses these values in detail and proposes maintenance regimes for council staff to budget and implement to ensure its long-term conservation and to allow meaningful interpretation of its significant values (see Figure 4.3). Planning for the eventual and staged replacement of mature trees is needed now. The Royal Botanic Gardens should be approached to re-engage its historic involvement.

4.3 Maintain Village Heritage Character and Fabric

The historic fabric of the commercial area of the village has never been a consistent streetscape of terraced shops. Rather, it has historically been a mixture of stores and residences that was established along Railway Crescent, Beecroft Road and later Hannah Street, redeveloped and replaced over the twentieth century, not always on similar or parallel alignments (see Figures 4.21, 4.22, 4.23 and 4.4).

Measures to conserve and enhance the heritage character and fabric of the village area include:

- **Retain, conserve and interpret the groupings of shops fronting Railway Crescent**, maintaining and investigating for listing as local heritage items such buildings as the fire station (with garden), Beecroft Treasure House, the Harvest Liquor Store and Beecroft Chiropractic as well as the residences and gardens of Nos. 23, 25 and 27 Wongala Crescent (see Figures 4.24, 4.5 and 4.12).
- **Retain, conserve and interpret the groupings of shops fronting Hannah Street**, maintaining and investigating for listing as local heritage items those buildings such as the Post Office, Boronia Cottage and St George (Nos. 1 and 3); the three Spanish mission shops — Positano, Sevardi and Beecroft Chicken (Nos. 12a, 12 and 14a respectively) (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7).
- **Maintain and record details such as early fences and paths** (see Figures 4.8 and 4.9) and original/early shopfronts, reinstating or reproducing where justified (see Figure 4.14).
- **Investigate and assess the heritage significance of the late twentieth century commercial buildings of the village** such as the former Masonic Temple, the Module shopping centre and Century 21 Building and Beecroft Real Estate for listing as local heritage items (see Figures 4.10, 4.11 and 4.15).

- **Retain and conserve the Village Green** as part of the setting for the 'gateway' to the village. This includes retaining and actively conserving the significant landscaping, major trees, informal layout and memorials as well as the functional community use of the spaces.
- **Interpretation** of the heritage values of the Village Green, and indeed the village itself, is needed to assist public understanding and appreciation of the heritage values of the area. An Interpretation Strategy to guide the introduction of historic information installations, in close collaboration with the Civic Trust is recommended. Such an installation should not be limited to signage.
- **Maintain and enhance secure pedestrian and bicycle through-routes** for example from the village to the school (see Figure 4.13).
- **Develop and implement a signage code for village** — advertising and public domain.
- The character of new infill/development may choose to model itself on, or reinterpret in a modern idiom, the simple Inter-War forms of the significant buildings in the existing shopping precinct. Whatever the design character, however, **the scale, massing, form and detailing, should be sympathetic to the existing heritage elements** to ensure a compatible integration of old and new development not historical pastiche. It is likely that more useful mechanisms than the crude tools of FSR will be needed. Refer to revised Heritage Office RAIA Infill Design Guidelines.
- The use of **suspended, traditional steel box-section shop awnings** over the footpaths is generally recommended as a visually and functionally appropriate element on shops fronting the street. These elements may be adapted/detailed to reflect modern design idioms and technologies.

4.4 Integrate the Fringes: Malton Road between Beecroft Road and Wongala Crescent

The western side of Malton Road between Beecroft Road and Wongala Crescent contains a fine collection of twentieth-century houses of eclectic design, set as single houses in mature landscaped gardens, with relatively little intrusion or unsympathetic alteration. Its significance would be affected by any changes of use or development which may be proposed to the eastern side of Malton Street.

The properties on the eastern side of Malton Road drop down to the car parks associated with the shopping area of the village. The houses are of similar scale and character: Nos. 11, 9, 7a and 7 being modest late twentieth-century two-storey face brick houses, set within mature landscaped gardens; and Nos. 1 and 3 being a pair of 1950s face brick houses worthy of retention and conservation. These allotments are relatively deep and some retain forest canopy trees, for example No. 5, as well as earlier garden remnants, for example No. 7.

Given traffic, streetscape, landform and amenity reasons, it is not considered appropriate to extend commercial activity or vehicular access from the village centre into Malton Road, though the lower portions of the rear of the properties on the eastern side might be appropriately subdivided for

commercial use. Nor is it considered appropriate to allow the extension of professional consulting rooms into the existing residences on Malton Road, due to the attendant pressure for car parking, full accessibility and incremental change which that entails in the streetscape (already visible in Wongala Crescent).

Measures to manage development pressure on the eastern side of Malton Road, recognising its role on the village fringe include:

- public acquisition on demand of rear/lower garden areas of houses fronting Malton Road on east side, with commercial centre car parking funds;
- no professional consulting rooms;
- any new development along this section of the village fringe should be of similar height, modulation, setback and scale to existing houses in Malton Road, with garages to rear;
- investigation for potential heritage listing of Nos. 1 and 3 Malton Road as local contributory buildings; and
- retention of tree canopy and mature gardens to be encouraged.

4.5 Manage Commercial Development along Beecroft Road

The Beecroft Road area of the village has undergone much change, with road widenings and more frequent redevelopment as pressures from car transportation have increased. It has also been the location of community buildings such as churches and the Masonic Temple, as well as several early houses, mostly heritage listed (Nos. 86, Uniting Church, Masonic Temple, Post Office, No. 83, 61 Beecroft Road and 5a Hannah Street).

Increasing traffic noise has instigated the construction of high masonry and brush fences in front of Beecroft Road residences, replacing the timber or wire and hedges look which characterised the road (see Figure 4.18).

The Caltex Service Station site appears ripe for redevelopment and is a key site which will impact on the lower village morphology. It warrants careful design guidelines by Council.

Measures to manage commercial development pressure and traffic intrusion problems in the Beecroft Road area on the village edge include:

- Further investigation for potential local heritage listing (Nos. 88, 84, 81 Beecroft Real Estate, Century 21, Masonic Temple, house to rear No. 60 Beecroft, facing into Malton Street) (see Figure 4.1).
- Encouraging construction of traditional low timber/wire and dense hedge fences with masonry fences within, rather than high brick walls alone.

-
- Guiding and integrating new development on the Caltex site with the lower village area.
 - The character of new infill/development may choose to model itself on, or reinterpret in a modern idiom, or on the forms of the significant buildings in the existing shopping precinct. Whatever the design character, however, the scale, massing, form and detailing should be sympathetic to the retained elements to ensure a compatible integration of old and new development, not historical pastiche.

4.6 Maintain and Conserve Village Landscaping

At present there is little consistency in public landscaping through the commercial area, other than the admirable retention of mature forest trees, and the spectacular backdrop of the enormous exotic pines planted in the Village Green. A landscape masterplan is needed.

- Landscaping along the streets and Village Green frontage should be of appropriate species and located so as not to block key views to and from the shopping precinct to the Village Green and railway area in particular.
- Reference to the species and planting layouts shown in early photographs is recommended. In particular, these early views show trees located away from the front of the shops and clustered in groups and to the side and rear of buildings, possibly remnants of initial residences, rather than formal rows of municipal plantings.

4.7 Assess the Set Back of Commercial Development from Street Frontages

Commercial development of the areas behind or above the current street-fronting shops is supported to complement the mix of service and retail functions in Beecroft.

- The present layout and size of the pedestrian and roadways through the area behind the Beecroft Village mall and the service complex west of the Treasure House should be reviewed to try to minimise visual and functional 'dissection' by the domination of cars.
- Accessible outdoor area(s) should be provided in north-facing developments and integrated with the conservation and adaptation of adjacent heritage buildings.
- Avoid car parks becoming major street fronting 'holes' in the street edge.

4.8 Manage Commuter Car Parking

Commuter car parking should not be allowed to proliferate in the commercial centre. Ideally it should be concentrated on the eastern side of the railway car park. Investigation of a stacking system (similar to Gordon) may be necessary. Policing of parking regulation appears to be needed to ensure separation of commuter and shopper parking use.

Investigation into SRA plans for the station area is a useful pre-requisite for the masterplanning exercise.

4.9 Sutherland Road Commuter Car Park

The Sutherland Road commuter car park contains remnant forest trees which are suffering from bitumen paving poured too close to their trunks. This must be removed to conserve the trees (see Figure 4.19).

The adjacent bush area to the north beside the railway requires ongoing bush regeneration management.

4.10 Critically Review Urban Improvement Installations

Lack of public lavatories in the commercial centre is a frequently mentioned problem. The integration of such facilities within a new development should be a priority.

Security and lighting are also identified as problems within the commercial area. It is suggested that soft floodlighting for selected heritage buildings be investigated for interpretative and security benefits (for example, the post office).

Caution and discretion should be exercised in considering the introduction of paving schemes or public street furniture programs in the Beecroft Commercial Centre.

There is no heritage tradition or reason, for example, to use brick paving in the footpaths of the commercial area.

Similarly, slick modern street furniture should be avoided in favour of a low-key, Beecroft Village approach.



Figure 4.1
Beecroft School of
Arts.



Figure 4.2
War Memorial, Village
Green.

Figure 4.3
Village Green.



Figure 4.4
Location of Stobo's
store, 2003.



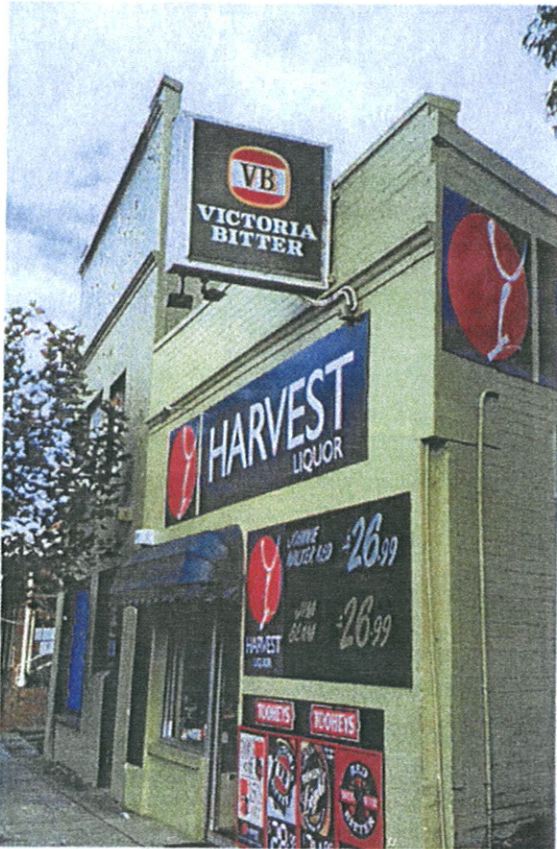


Figure 4.5
Harvest Liquor and
Beecroft Chiropractic,
early buildings
fronting Railway
Crescent.



Figure 4.6
Post Office corner of
Hannah Street and
Beecroft Road.

Figure 4.7
12-14 Hannah Street.



Figure 4.8
Remnant fence post
and Church Hall, St
Johns.





Figure 4.9
25 Wongala Crescent
(formerly Railway
Crescent) —
remnant/ reproduction
fence to Doctor's
surgery.



Figure 4.10
Century 21 Real
Estate and Module
Centre corner
Beecroft Road and
Hannah Street.

Figure 4.11
Module Shopping
Centre.



Figure 4.12
Fire station with
nature garden.





Figure 4.13 School bike route through Village Green.



Figure 4.14 Original shop front detailing, Boronia Cottage, Hannah Street.

Figure 4.15
Former Masonic
Temple, Beecroft Road.



Figure 4.16
1 and 3 Hannah
Street. Note mature
pines on Village
Green provide visual
backdrop to the
commercial centre.





Figure 4.17
Commuter parking,
northwest railway
reserve.

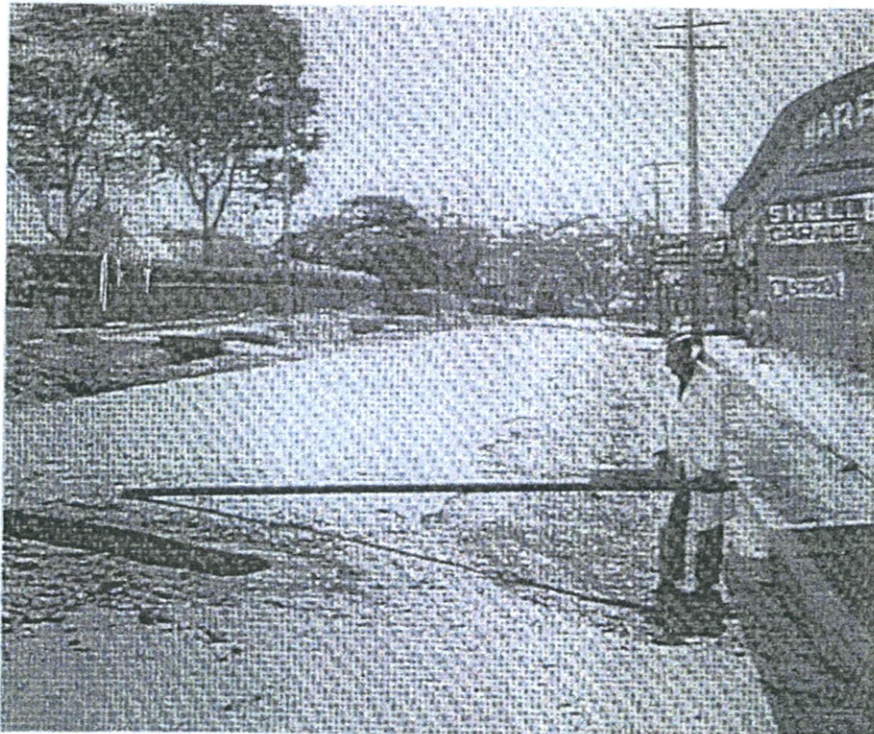


Figure 4.18
Beecroft Road East of
Hannah Street c1936.
Note timber fences
with hedges for
privacy.

Figure 4.19
Sutherland Road
carpark. Bitumen
affecting mature trees
adversely.



Figure 4.20
Hannah Street and
Wongala Crescent
intersection.



Old buildings make way for shops

Two of the oldest buildings near Beecroft railway station will be demolished for the erection of a modern shopping centre.

The demolition of the buildings commenced last week immediately the project had been endorsed in principle by the Hornsby Council.

One of the buildings now being demolished was erected by a member of the Sargent family approximately 60 years ago.

The new development will front Hannah Street and Railway Parade, Beecroft, immediately opposite the Beecroft railway station.

The development will cover about 2 acres of land and will comprise 22 shops, car parks, a Mall between the shops and many other amenities.

The development is by far the largest of its kind

ever contemplated for Beecroft and will front both Hannah Street and Railway Parade.

It is scheduled for completion in January, 1962.

• This 60-year-old home, originally erected by a member of the Sargent family, is being demolished to make way for £100,000 development at Beecroft.



Figure 4.21
Demolition of
Lyndley, 1961.
Formerly the home of
the Sergeant family in
Hannah Street.



Figure 4.22
Site of Lyndley,
Hannah Street, now
Beecroft Village
arcade.

Figure 4.23
Stobo's Store and
house, c1950.

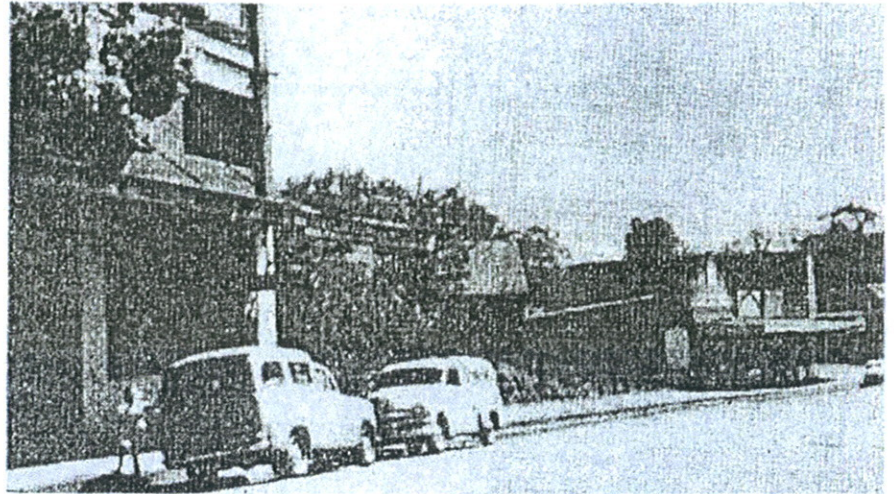


Figure 4.4
Beecroft Treasure
House on Railway
Crescent (now
Wongala Crescent).



5.0

Conclusions

Beecroft Commercial Centre has retained its village ambience and heritage image through the prominence of several heritage building 'anchors'. Later contributory buildings have been more varied in style and form, but successfully blended in terms of scale at street level. Beecroft Village is now at a development point when the balance of the mix of retail/services, new development and old buildings; pedestrian amenity and car/parking impacts will change significantly. The community has indicated its interest in retaining the heritage fabric of the commercial area, in tandem with sympathetic infill buildings. The principles outlined in this report will provide a framework for considering new development and for input to the Masterplan process.