

SORELL HERITAGE SURVEY

Address: Lewisham Scenic Forcett 7173		UPI: 2922884	PID: 7849461
Name: FORCETT HOUSE			
Feature Type: House Dairy	Structure Type	Site Feature Type	Dating: 1830 - 1890 1832
		Garden	Access Restrictions: Not available
		Driveway	Inspection Date: October 96 P Davies
		Mature trees	Style: Colonial Georgian
		Grid ref: 5426 549700 5260150	
Indication of Significance: High probable significance		Theme: Settlement Primary Production	
Material: Brick	Corrugated iron	Listings: SMC Schedule 3 National Trust AHC	
Condition: Good			
Integrity: Intact			
National Estate Criteria: A4 B2 C2 D2 E1		Photograph Index: 3:24-31	
Risk:	Excavation: ☐	Development: ☐	Maintenance: ☐ Vandalism: ☐

SITE DESCRIPTION:

A very fine Georgian style house set in a commanding location overlooking the valley and approached along a drive winding along the side of the hill ending in a circular driveway in front of the house. The house is brick on stone foundations with a basement under part, an impressive central clerestory and a two storey wing at the rear across a courtyard enclosed with two high brick walls sloping up to the second storey building.

The house is symmetrical in form with large 16 pane windows to the two major rooms overlooking the valley, the entry door with fanlight is of fine detail and there are two blind windows with fireplaces behind. These are similar to those in the Barracks building at Willow Court, New Norfolk in the Derwent Valley. Other windows are 8 paned and of fine proportion. The roof is topped with a large clerestory with windows to all sides providing light to what appears to be an upper level. the interior appears to be intact. There are two service wings to the courtyard with hipped form and the rear two storey servants and service wing also has a hipped roof.

The house is one of the finest in the district and is an excellent example of early country house construction

HISTORY:

Built by retired naval officer James Gordon in 1832 on his original 600 acre grant. The bricks and sandstone both came from the property. The clerestory was said to have been used to spy on convict servants and look for Aboriginal attacks. Gordon named the property after the Yorkshire village he came from. In turn the Gordon River in southwest Tasmania was named after Gordon who had lent explorer James Kelly his whaleboat.

Gordon, the local police magistrate, did not initially live on the land until 1818 for fear of attack by bushrangers. However by the mid 1820s Forcett was described as one of the most closely fenced parcels of land in Pitt Water and Gordon as a land owner who constantly tried to improve his stock and crops. He was unusual in the mainly grain growing district in that he concentrated on livestock. He also grew apples and produced cider on the estate and is 'credited' with having introduced Scotch thistle to the colony. Gordon is also credited with having constructed the first pisé building in the colony on Forcett Estate. He died on the property in 1842 when the property was described as being of stone and brick. At the time there were twenty-two people living on the property including sixteen convicts and ticket-of-leave holders.

Gordon willed the property to neighbour and relative by marriage, William Gunn, local member of Parliament in the 1860s and 1870s and son of the Lieut Gunn who had had his arm shot off in the famous raid on Sorell by Matthew Brady in 1825. At the time of Gordon's death it was noted that it was one of the best farms in the district,

indeed that in 'its completeness of its buildings and its fencing, it is decidedly the best'. This appraisal was still current in 1878 when the Tasmanian Mail noted that, 'it is considered, as doubtless it is, if not the finest, at least one of the finest farms in the district'.

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BOUNDARY:

The listing boundary is formed by the title boundary of the property.

COMMENTS:

Forcett House is one of the finest country houses in the Sorell district with unusual form, superb colonial detailing, the use of design features such as blind windows and the major raised skylight, the fortified courtyard designed to protect against native attack and its prominent siting overlooking the valley. The property has been one of the finest farms in the district and associated with major local and State figures including Gordon and Gunn.

It meets Criteria A4, B2, C2, D2, E1, F1 and H1 for inclusion in the Register of the National Estate. It should be included in Schedule 3 of the Sorell Planning Scheme and should be nominated for inclusion in the Tasmanian Heritage Register and the Register of the National Estate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY + PREVIOUS STUDIES:

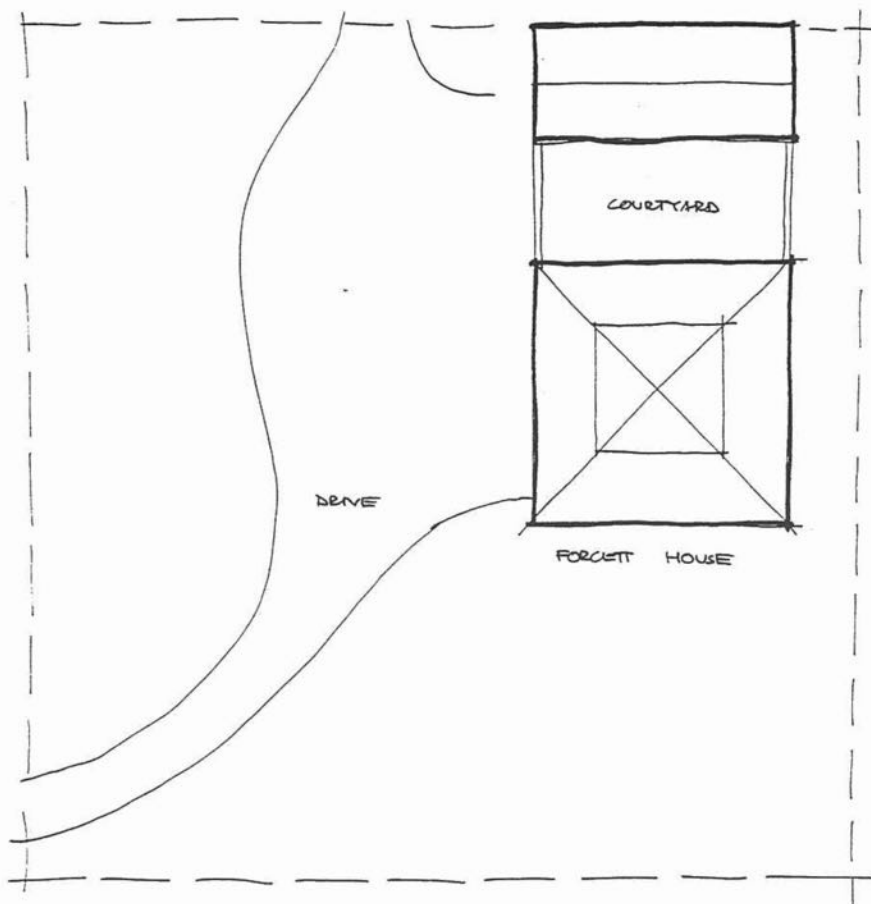
Auction notice, Webster's Real Estate for auction on Wednesday 21 March 1979.

HRA III 3

REID, Owen. 1979. The South East. Curriculum Centre, Education Department, Hobart

Tasmanian Mail 30 March 1878, p17

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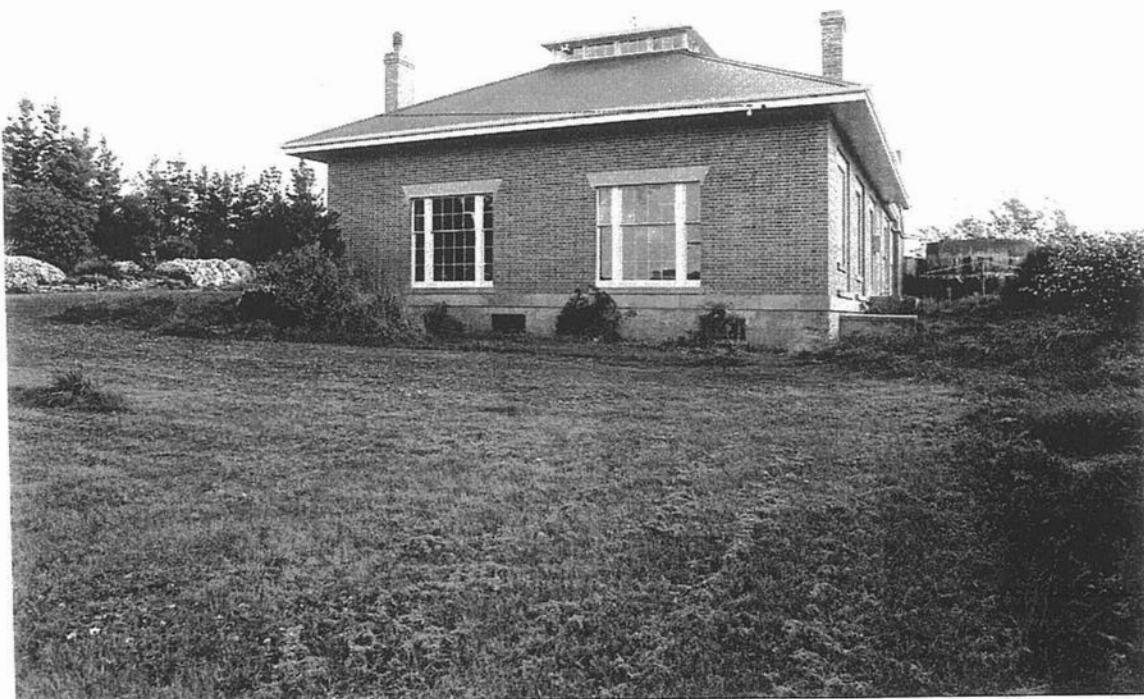
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