

SORELL HERITAGE SURVEY

Address: The Circle Sorell 7172		UPI: FMT43	PID: 5934814
Name: THE CIRCLE SITE OF DOWNARD'S WINDMILL			
Feature Type:	Structure Type	Dating:	1830 - 1890 1833
	Site Feature Type Road	Access Restrictions:	Unrestricted
		Inspection Date:	October 96 P Davies
		Style:	N/A
		Grid ref:	5426 545400 5262700
Indication of Significance: High probable significance		Theme: Processing Foods	
Material:		Listings: SMC Schedule 3	
Condition: Unexposed			
Integrity: Unexcavated potential archaeological site			
National Estate Criteria:		Photograph Index: 1:6	
Risk:	Excavation: ☒	Development: ☒	Maintenance: ☒ Vandalism: ☐

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The Circle is the road running around the boundary of Downard's windmill which still survives despite current construction work in the centre of the site and over the ruins of the windmill and associated structures. The formation appears on the 1830's town map as Downard's 3 acres and shows the road diverting around the site which was centred on Burnett St.

The road formation survives to the west as a public road and to the east as part of the church land, but the formation is still evident even though grassed over. The windmill was a landmark structure for many years in the town and the strange nature of the circular grant gave the town a feature of interest that should be retained in its entirety.

A barbeque area is contained within the space and this should interpret the site.

HISTORY:

Richard Downard established a flour mill on his Iron Creek grant in 1824. Concerned with the unreliable summer flow of Iron Creek, in 1826 he applied for a grant in Sorell on which to build a windmill to grind corn and a dwelling house. Although still without an official grant or location Downard had erected his mill by late 1831 and was proceeding to build a residence and granary. A three acre allotment was finally measured in 1833 but it did not leave enough room for the buildings on site. Following further requests the Surveyor-General, George Frankland ordered his office to,

Inform Mr Downard that I have directed Mr Halls to measure the Mill allotment so as to contain 3 acres, - in the figure of a Circle, the Mill forming the Centre.

Thus Sorell's colonial town planning feature turns out to be the result of bureaucratic inaction and bungling. The mill was still operating in 1860 when it contained 'one pair of stones, [a] dressing machine and other cleaning apparatus' and with its 100 bushel a day grinding capacity was drawing an annual rent of £100. This mill, for many years in a dilapidated state, became an icon for Sorell. For many years it has also been confused for Robert Nash's windmill which had been built on his nearby grant in 1815. The mill was in a state of near collapse by the turn of the century and appears to have totally collapsed some time around the First World War.

The site is currently being redeveloped with senior citizens' residences associated with the nearby Scots Church.

BOUNDARY:

The listing boundary is formed by the extremity of the circle road formation.

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COMMENTS:

The site has significance not only as the site of the windmill that once stood in the centre of the place, but for the unusual way in which the land grant was made forming the circle and influencing the pattern of development in the area.

It is recommended that the road formation be reinstated, even if not used as a public roadway, to recreate the spatial relationship of 'The Circle' to the township. It is noted that current development on the site has reduced significance and is poorly sited and laid out in relation to the high level of significance that the site has had to the town.

It meets Criteria A4, B2 and C2 for inclusion in the Register of the National Estate. It should continue to 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:

LSD 1/2, pp840-870

The Mercury 30 March 1860, p1

SORELL HERITAGE STUDY



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