

2.2 The Existing Building:

The building is constructed with a hardwood frame, splay timber hardwood weatherboards, Marseilles Pattern roof tiles, softwood flooring and timber mouldings with solid plaster to walls and ceilings on metal lath.

The remains of the Alison Homestead are interesting from technical aspect as the lath used on the walls and ceilings to allow the hard wall plaster to adhere, is expanded steel. This was available in the 1890's as it was used in the first floor additions to the Newcastle Police Station. Similarly, the roof to part of the building is clad in unglazed terracotta Marseilles Pattern tiles manufactured in France. The older section was galvanised iron which replaced earlier timber shingles.



Plate 9: The remains of metal lath used on walls.



Plate 10: An original roof tile stored beside a shed.

The well to the rear courtyard is abnormally large with most nineteenth century wells being nominally 1800mm to 2000mm in diameter. The well at the Alison Homestead may have only needed to be shallow to reach the water table, so therefore the diameter may have been expanded to provide a volume of water without requiring a great depth.



Plate 11: The large diameter well.



Plate 12: The well is located behind the formal rooms.

The Homestead layout is unusual as the complex is formed by a series of buildings linked as a consequence of the 1990 renovations to convert what was described as a derelict structure to form the Wyong Historical Society's base. In most nineteenth century houses it was usually the Kitchen that was separated from the formal rooms and Bedrooms however at the Alison Homestead it appears that the formal rooms were separated from the Bedrooms and Kitchen. This may have been a result of Charles Alison extending the building at the time of his marriage to the grand daughter of Blue Mountains explorer William Cox.

The fire has extensively damaged the building with only a couple of rooms that potentially could be saved. The following diagram is taken from the 1990 plans by Suters Architects Snell when the Homestead was refurbished as a base for the Wyong Historical Society

Some sections have burnt more extensively than others and this may be a reflection as to the amount of accelerant used, the flammable contents of the rooms or building materials.

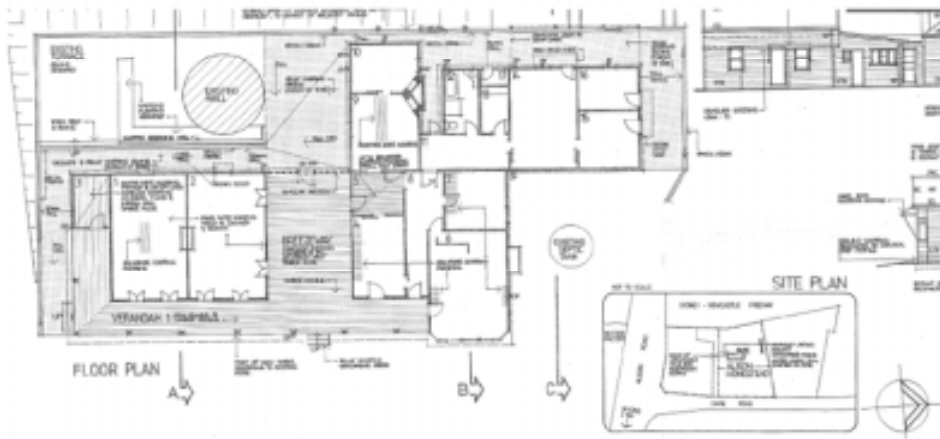


Plate 13: Part of the 1990 plans. (Suters Architects Snell)

Table of Estimated Room Damage

Room 1 - 10%	Room 2 - 90%	Room 3 - 5%	Room 4 - 100%
Room 5 - 100%	Room 6 - 100%	Room 7 - 80%	Room 8 - 100%
Room 9 - 70%	Room 10 - 60%	Room 11 - 100%	Room 12 - 60%
Room 13 - 90%	Room 14 - 70%	Room 15 - 50%	Room 16 - 10%
Room 17 - 20%			

The fire was most vigorous between and including rooms 2 to 7. The verandah deck survives on the eastern and southern sides of rooms 1 & 2. The hardwood wall, ceiling and roof frames have allowed the structure to remain standing where it has not completely burnt out.



Plate 14: Room 1 showing signs of damage to the ceiling and the fire mantle and box removed.



Plate 15: looking at the chimney above the ceiling line in Room 2



Plate 16: The extensive damage to Room 2, with hardwood framed walls still standing.



Plate 17: View across the deck towards Room 4



Plate 18: View back to Room 2. Note; hardwood weatherboards slowed the fire damage



Plate 19: The remains of the bay window to Room 6.



Plate 20: The remains of the decorative ceiling rose to Room 14.



Plate 21: Burnt out gable over Room 14.



Plate 22: Burnt northern wall to Room 3 from the west.

2.3 Options

The Wyong Shire Council resolved at its meeting on 9 May 2012 to re-build the Homestead building, with the following options to be examined:

- Option 1:** Rebuild to previous form using modern day building techniques;
- Option 2:** Rebuild to original condition using period building methods and materials;
- Option 3:** Redesign and rebuild;
- Option 4:** Demolition, clear site.

Terminology:

In heritage terms, the minor remains of the existing damaged building could be restored in part with the remainder of the building re-constructed to match. The terms *restore* and *restoration* mean to rejuvenate existing structure or materials. As the majority of this building has been severely damaged to the point of destruction, the correct term for the repair work is *re-construction*.

Option 1: Rebuilding of a replica is not the preferred option in heritage terms as can be seen by the work undertaken in the 1990 renovations. Today's modern tools, lack of quality material and skilled labour leaves obvious tell tale signs that the work is not of the original era.

Option 2: Rebuilding using period materials can be expensive assuming materials can be obtained and the skilled labour is available. Restoration work to the little that remains of the original building can be undertaken using salvaged materials and skilled joiners and solid plasterers.

Option 3: The redesign and rebuild would be the preferred option however the Council Minutes from 9 May, 2012 states that "new design or demolition and clearance does not meet with community sentiment and the historical significance would be lost". Consideration must be given to the background of this building constructed as it was in two separate parts. Unfortunately, both parts have suffered extensive damage, with the northern pavilion having been previously altered. The southern pavilion consisting of two rooms has retained the most character for a building of this period.

Option 4: Demolition and clearing of the site is also not a preferred option due to the remaining established buildings on the site and the esteem with which the Wyong Historical Society is held by both the community and visitors.

Recommended Solution: Rooms 1 and 3 are the most in tact following the fire and these together with Room 2 could be restored and reconstructed to form the basis of a new building by preserving some of the significant fabric. Due to the extent of reconstruction required to Room 2 the use of modern materials such as timber lining boards or plasterboard on the internal walls instead of solid wall plaster could be justified due to the preservation of Room 1 and the possible use that Room 2 may serve as part of the re-development of the site. A budget of \$50,000 should be allowed to restore Room 1 and reconstruct Room 2 using modern materials such as treated softwood frames and trusses with plasterboard or timber linings. Clad the external walls in salvaged weatherboards and tile the roof with salvaged and stored tiles. The design and construction of a new building to add to the required space needed by the Wyong Historical Society, should take the form of a modern design, drawn from but not copying the original Homestead. The benefit from this mixture of work is the survival of original fabric from the Homestead and the opportunity to construct a purpose designed building for the Wyong Historical Society to conduct their meetings and tours of the remaining Homestead, outbuildings and display the now extended story of the site.

2.4 Salvageable Items:

There are two important building elements to salvage from the damaged building:

- the terracotta roof tiles and
- the hardwood splay timber weatherboards.

Both of the above materials will be valuable assets in the reconstruction of Room 2 and the restoration of the roof covering to Rooms 1 & 2. Consideration should also be given to retaining the remaining chimney serving Rooms 8 & 9, possibly as a free standing element forming part of the landscaping.



Plate 23: Chimney to Rooms 8 & 9.



Plate 24: Salvage artefacts such as this Mangle.



Plate 25: Salvage tiles from roof for re-use.



Plate 26: Salvage weatherboards for re-use.

2.5 PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed works should begin with a survey of the corners of the building remains (if not already done) as the future development may incorporate an outline of the Homestead either in parts of the new building or in the landscaping around the building. The reason for this as it helps to describe the size of the Homestead building allowing visitors to appreciate where it sat on the site.

Salvage work should follow the survey as well as the final demolition work to clear the site for the new building. Demolition work associated with the portion of the building to remain should be left to the building stage. The building phase could be staged in two parts with the restoration and reconstruction stage occurring first followed by the new building stage. This could be undertaken in one contract if funds allow.

Risk & Safe Work Methods

A risk analysis and preparation of a Safe Work Method Statement must be prepared by experienced contractors who have dealt with fire damaged buildings constructed in hardwood framework. The salvage of tiles for example may be done with a combination of scaffold propping and tower crane removal of tiles from severely damaged areas. Weatherboard walls may be salvaged by removal of unstable framework around the walls combined with propping to allow the weatherboards to be carefully salvaged.

The Site

It is recommended that the construction site be based on the site of the demolished Homestead pavilion leaving a similar gap between the two structures. This gap can be infilled with a glass structure (with solid roof) should it be advantageous to link the buildings. This area is shown on the plan below outlined in a red dashed line.

The blue dashed line indicates an area for a glass linkway of any size, but no wider than the original building.

The green dashed line indicates an increase in the site area based on a preferred orientation of the building pavilion running east/west and possibly symmetrical to the original building.



Plate 27: View across proposed redevelopment site toward the retained pavilion.



Plate 28: View from the front of the retained pavilion toward the redevelopment site.



Plate 29: The southern elevation of the Homestead.



Plate 30: View south west toward the courtyard.



Plate 31: The proposed pavilion to be retained as part of the redevelopment of the site.



Plate 32: The slab hut display.



Plate 33: The Workshop display.



Plate 34: Storage shed for artefacts has a number of terracotta tiles from the roof for re-use.



Plate 35: Public facilities for the site.

Outbuildings

The site has a number of outbuildings that compliment and serve the site as a Heritage Centre. These appear to have been undamaged and remain to serve the site into the future. The re-building of the Heritage Centre will allow for the continued use of these resources. The design of the new building and landscaping should attempt to screen the Caretakers Van and Annexe from the Homestead site as its visual form detracts from the setting of the overall site.

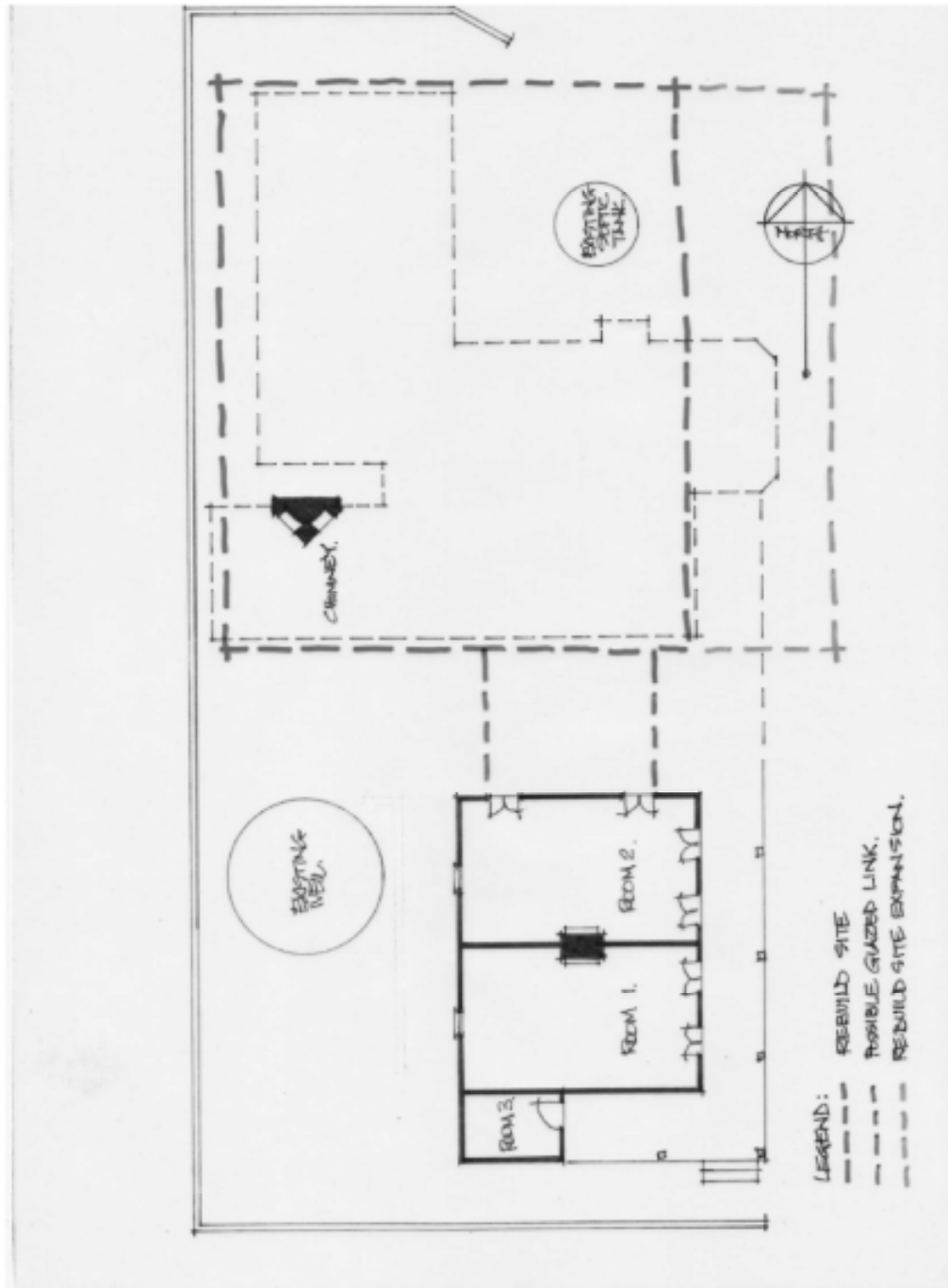


Plate 36: Possible site for the new development.

Note: Rooms 1 & 3 are to be restored and Room 2 reconstructed using salvaged materials.



Plate 37: Alison Homestead in the 1950's. (WDM&HS)

3.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The devastating fire at the Wyong District Museum & Historical Societies (WDM&HS) headquarters in December 2011 has caused extensive damage to both pavilions of the Alison Homestead which was originally constructed in stages over a 20 year period from 1875 to 1895. One of the pavilions contained the original 1875 cottage together with a number of additions, the other pavilion was a later construction, containing larger entertainment rooms.

Current best practise in heritage is not to create replicas of past heritage items, however in this instance the least damaged pavilion can benefit from materials salvaged from the most damaged areas for reconstruction of the severely damaged room. Due to the extent of damage, the reconstruction of the room may allow for it to be lined in timber lining boards to reflect the original early linings. Alternatively the room could be finished in set plasterboard with replica plaster cornices and ceiling roses to provide a finish similar to the surviving room.

The opportunity for a new stage in the history of the Alison Homestead can be created by the design and construction of a twenty first century pavilion to house the WDM&HS into the future while preserving the best of the remains of the old Homestead.

Recommendations:

- A survey of the outline of the original Homestead buildings be prepared and archived for possible future use in the new project. *Reason: to have an accurate record for possible plotting of the Homestead's outline in the hard landscaping around the new building and if appropriate, inside the new building.*
- Care be taken during the demolition works in the vicinity of the 1875 cottage. *Reason: to possibly record details of the early cottage plan and to salvage an example of the round floor bearers.*
- Salvage roof tiles, splay weatherboards, architraves and other artefacts such as the Mangle. *Reason: for a source of original building fabric and to salvage artefacts left in the rubble.*



John Carr
Heritage Architect
(Reg. No. 4128)

T 4959 1653
M 0411 550 303

Date: 12/12/12 E john.carr.heritage@hotmail.com

(End of Report)

9 May 2012
To the Ordinary Council Meeting

Director's Report
Corporate Services Department

4.1 Rebuild Alison Homestead at 1 Cape Road Wyong for Wyong District Museum and Historical Society

TRIM REFERENCE: F2004/07840 - D02940824

MANAGER: Brett Phillips; Manager

AUTHOR: Paul Forster; Services Coordinator Property Administration

SUMMARY

It is proposed to rebuild the Alison Homestead at Cape Road Wyong, recently destroyed by fire in an arson attack, for the lessee Wyong District Museum and Historical Society using funds from the building insurance held in respect of the leased premises.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 *The Council approve the re-construction of the previous building known as the Alison Homestead, 1 Cape Road Wyong, using current day building standards, materials and techniques.*
- 2 *That Council approve the work to be undertaken by a contractor, subject to the insurance claim on the fire damaged property being accepted by Council's insurer.*
- 3 *That Council receive tenders in accordance with s55 of the Local Government Act 1993.*

ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 9 MAY 2012

Councillor Best left the meeting at 6:14 pm during consideration of this item and as a result took no part in voting.

RESOLVED unanimously on the motion of Councillor GRAHAM and seconded by Councillor WEBSTER:

- 1 ***That Council direct the General Manager to prepare a comprehensive report regarding the options included in this report on the means of replacing the Alison Homestead.***
- 2 ***That Council require the report to include advice from a suitably qualified Heritage Consultant.***
- 3 ***That Council note that any redevelopment option will require the submission of a development application accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement as required by the relevant legislation.***
- 4 ***That Council approve the replacement of Alison Homestead subject to the issue of development consent.***

- 5 ***That Council approve the work to be undertaken by a Contractor, subject to the insurance claim on the fire damaged property being accepted by Council's Insurer.***
- 6 ***That Council receive tenders for the relevant contract in accordance with Section 55 of the Local Government Act, 1993.***
- 7 ***That Council approach the Local Member, Darren Webber MP in regard to his previous commitment to provide financial assistance for the replacement of Alison Homestead.***

FOR: COUNCILLORS EATON, GRAHAM, MATTHEWS, MCBRIDE, MCNAMARA, SYMINGTON, VINCENT, WEBSTER AND WYNN

AGAINST: NIL

BACKGROUND

The Wyong District Museum and Historical Society Inc leases Lot 51 DP 788246 at 1 Cape road Wyong from Council. The leased premises include the historic Alison Homestead and a number of outbuildings including a barn, a slab hut, workshop building, amenities building and on site mobile home used as storage.

The premises are operated by the lessee as a Wyong Shire local history museum and archives.

The historic Alison Homestead building was recently destroyed in an arson attack.

CURRENT STATUS

WSC carries the building insurance for the leased premises and is insured for the sum of \$586,000.00. On any claims against its insurer Council is required to pay the excess in the amount of \$10,000.00.

WSC's Building Maintenance Section, has undertaken an assessment of the cost to repair and rebuild a replica of the Alison Homestead based on the replacement of the structure that existed prior to the fire, built with today's materials and current methods of construction.

Site Security	\$ 3,850.00
Demolish Damage Structure	\$ 14,500.00
Rebuild	\$270,000.00

Total	\$288,350-00
--------------	---------------------

THE PROPOSAL

WSC proposes to advise its insurers that it wishes to rebuild the Alison Homestead based on the replacement of the structure that was existing prior to the fire, built with today's materials and modern construction methods.