



View north-east across the cultural landscape study area from the Bodalla Hotel.
Photo PG 2012

Bodalla Cultural Landscape Heritage assessment

Prepared by Pip Giovanelli and Laurelle Pacey
for Eurobodalla Shire Council

April 2012

Bodalla Cultural Landscape

1 Overview

1.1 Definition.

For the purpose of this study, a ‘cultural landscape’ is considered to be one that has been shaped by post-colonial occupation and has heritage significance that remains enduring and legible within the landscape

1.2 Background

The significance of Bodalla’s cultural landscape has been recognised by members of the local community, Eurobodalla Shire’s Heritage Advisory Committee and by Council with the inclusion of *Bodalla Cultural Landscape* in the Draft LEP heritage schedule (2011/12). An indicative boundary for the area was prepared and is shown in the aerial photo below. However, resources at the time did not allow a full assessment of the area’s cultural landscape values and that task is now undertaken in this study.



Bodalla Cultural Landscape area outlined in white, as included in the Draft ESC LEP 2011/12

1.3 Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to clarify the heritage values of the Bodalla Cultural Landscape and to make recommendations if appropriate, eg adjustment to the boundary or further study. It is not the purpose of this report to make recommendations regarding the manner in which the area’s values should or should not be managed.

1.4 Methodology

The proposed methodology is set out below:

- Review secondary, and if relevant, primary historic sources to gain a useful understanding of the place's history, especially regarding land-use and modifications to landscape, including for example land clearing, cropping, fencing, road patterns, built infrastructure, drainage patterns, land tenure, subdivision etc.
- Use historical accounts to gain an understanding of the way in which former land management practice was undertaken and valued at the time.
- Assess the cultural landscape area against standard heritage criteria: Historic, aesthetic, scientific, social, associational, rarity and representativeness.
- Prepare a statement of significance for the Bodalla Cultural Landscape Area.
- Make recommendations as appropriate arising from the study.

The report will draw on historic maps and images to illustrate the manner and degree of change that has occurred over time.

1.5 Authorship

The study has been undertaken by Pip Giovanelli and Laurelle Pacey.



Dairy cattle grazing on cultivated land beside the Tuross River

2 History

2.1 First European occupation

The first European occupation of the land in the Bodalla cultural landscape area was in the spring of 1835 (note that Bodalla was variously known as Bodally and Boat Alley). ¹ John Hawdon, who had a land grant at Kiora, near Moruya, took up about 13,000 acres of well grassed and watered land for his cattle on the advice of Aboriginal friends from Moruya. Hawdon's first supervisor was Alexander Weatherhead who also established a small dairy somewhere on the river flats.

About 5,000 acres of the station were alluvial flats either side of the Tuross River, with low dense scrub behind and large areas of heavily timbered country with spotted gum, bloodwood, box, iron bark and blackbutt. By 1839, some 40 acres of the river flats had been ploughed and planted with barley, corn and potatoes; Hawdon's main interest was in the extensive running of about 1,000 head of cattle on the property. Eleven Europeans were living there and improvements included three bark huts, a bark dairy, and stockyards. About 40 cwt of butter was produced a year, possibly just for their own use or for the local Hawdon properties.

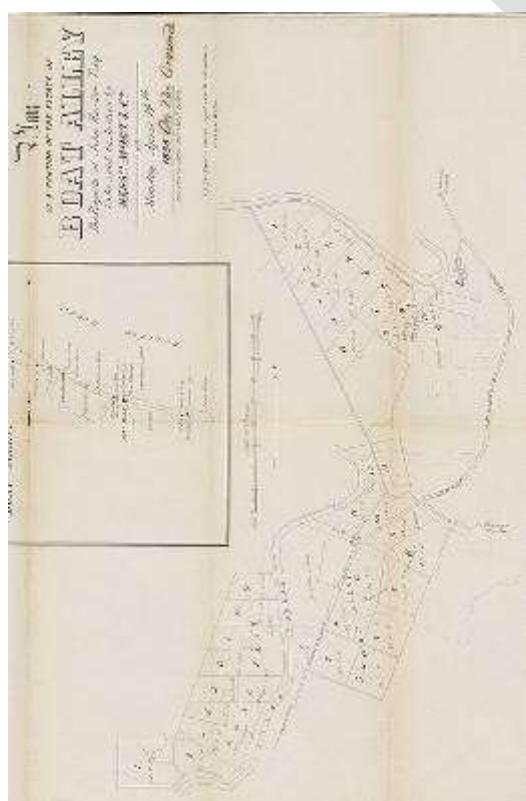


Under Thomas Forster's supervision dairy production increased significantly but the focus was still on extensive beef cattle production. However, by 1847, 1400 cwt butter and 200 cwt cheese were being produced each year. Only 22 acres of river flats were cultivated and 19 people lived on the run. A small cheese factory was erected at or near Comerang probably by 1850.

A traveller through the area in the early to mid 1850s with local Aboriginal guide Kian noted little had been done up until then to improve Bodalla, presumably meaning there had been little discernible change to the landscape..

In 1855 Hawdon approached Thomas Sutcliffe Mort to finance his purchase of his 12,998 acre run 'Botally' using the pre-emptive clause in his lease. Mort agreed, but took half the property including the area known as Comerang, as his country estate and a retreat from the 'busyness' of his commercial life in Sydney. He possibly also had in mind the future enjoyment of his growing family.

Soon after securing title to the land, John Hawdon had 1,000 acres of his part of the property surveyed for subdivision into 32 lots across three areas of the Estate – Wedget, Boat Alley and Long Flat.² They were offered at auction on site in April 1856 by Messrs Mort & Co. The subdivision plan shows large areas of it were cleared alluvial land. *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated: "No cultivating ground can surpass this in the whole colony for the richness of its soil."³ While seemingly a successful auction sale at the time, interest did not translate into sales.



1856 subdivision on left with north to the top of the page. 1970s topographic map on right with similar alignment. Little if any of the proposed subdivision pattern of 1856 has survived in the present (2009) property boundaries. However part of the road south to Bega has remained largely in its 1856 alignment.

² Pacey, loc. cit., pp.9-10

³ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1856, p. 8

Mort visited the Estate in early December 1856, prior to his departure for England the following March. This was probably when he organised either the building of or extensions to his house at Comerang, as well as possibly giving some thought to the future of his recently acquired Boat Alley acres. At this stage, there were a few buildings on the river flats at Widget on the main track between Moruya and Bega. They were a log house, hotel and store which included the post office opened in 1856. There was also a racecourse close by, partly on John Stephen's clover paddock. Tenants farmed the Estate.

2.2 Thomas Mort

Thomas Sutcliffe Mort was one of the great figures of trade and industry in Australia in the nineteenth century, a man of vision and big ideas. He believed passionately that New South Wales should develop its own agriculture and manufacturing industries and not depend on imports. His enterprises ranged from regular and specialised wool auctions, the auction and financing of pastoral properties, building ships and railway locomotives at Morts Dock & Engineering, to gold mining and shipping. He is also regarded as the father of refrigeration and Australia's export trade in perishable produce.

Thomas and Theresa's Sydney property 'Greenoakes' occupied 13 acres (5.3 ha) at Darling Point. Mort, with noted landscape gardener Michael Guilfoyle carefully planned the lawns, flowerbeds and small groves of trees across the property. Guilfoyle with a team of gardeners developed and landscaped the grounds of Greenoakes which became famous throughout the Colony.⁴ Mort himself was also a keen gardener and greatly admired Guilfoyle. Many artists in the 1850s and 1860s visited Greenoakes and painted there, including Conrad Martens.

2.3 Mort's hand on the Bodalla landscape

In 1860, Mort acquired title to the entire 12,998 acre Estate unencumbered with Hawdon's mortgage.⁵ The Estate continued in Mort family ownership until 1987, a period of 127 years, although the family's involvement became quite remote in its last 70 years or so.

No evidence has so far been found that suggests Guilfoyle ever visited Bodalla in the late 1850s or 1860s. However, Guilfoyle's influence would have guided Mort's approach to clearing and developing the Bodalla Estate.

It is interesting to also note Mort and Guilfoyle were members of the Acclimatisation Society of NSW certainly in the early 1860s.⁶ The aims of this Society were to introduce, acclimatise and domesticate a whole range of grasses, animals, birds, fish, insects and vegetables that could have economic potential in the Colony. Mort offered the Bodalla Estate to the Society to try out various animals. Perhaps that was the reason for 52 Zebu cattle being on the Estate in 1874, 19 of them bulls.⁷ That thinking was probably also behind Mort's introduction of trout ova into the Tuross River in 1877.⁸

By early 1861, Bodalla had become more than a retreat for Mort; it had become a project and the landscape started to be modified accordingly. His

⁴ Guilfoyle introduced the Brazilian jacaranda and camellias to Australian gardens. He bred the 'Mrs Mort' camellia and the pure white Azalea mortei, Buckland, op. cit., p.117.

⁵ Pacey, op.cit., p.13.

⁶ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1862, p. 2

⁷ Pacey, loc. cit. p. 31.

⁸ Town and Country Journal, 22 September 1877, p. 10.

approach at Bodalla - innovative, large scale and the pursuit of efficiency and productivity - mirrored his business endeavours elsewhere.

Mort set about making all available land on the Estate into one very large dairy farm, his aim being to produce cheese of sufficient quality to replace English imports in the Sydney market. He believed the land and climate at Bodalla was well suited to dairy farming, but settlers on the Moruya and Bega river flats saw it more as a “dismal swamp”, with “lank reeds, and great tussocks” and “...gravely shook their heads as they saw hundreds of men engaged in converting the scrubs and flats into park-like paddocks and sowing useful grasses to take the place of ferns”.⁹

Mort spent considerable funds through the 1860s progressively draining the swamps on the river flats using box culverts (constructed by hand and some over 10ft deep), laying out farms, clearing and fencing the first class arable land and bringing it under cultivation, making roads, and building houses and farm buildings including milking sheds.¹⁰ A sawmill was established at Bodalla in the early 1860s. Drains in the landscape area are clearly visible in aerial photographs from 1941 and 2012. They are also marked on the topographic maps.

He imported grass seed from England in 1864 to develop permanent pasture and bind the soil to prevent it washing away in flood.¹¹ Bodalla is attributed with the first extensive sowings of improved pastures in NSW.

Much was made of Mort's approach to land clearing. It was done under contract and mostly by the Chinese in the first 20-30 years of the Estate.¹² Big timber was cut level with the surface: “This innovation, while it left no unsightly dangerous stumps, did not cost much more than ordinary clearing”.¹³ Ringbarking was only used only on the hills.

Observers were impressed with the results, saying Mort ‘knew what to leave as well as what to remove and the result is a park in which all the natural advantages have been skilfully availed of and improved’.

A gushing report in 1876 ridiculed the normal practice of ringbarking and the hideous stumps it left behind.¹⁴ Whereas at Bodalla ‘there is the sylvan beauty of England's parks, and the unbroken sweep of English meadows’. The correspondent said that unlike in England where these have been ‘the growth of ages’, the results at Bodalla were ‘moulded in the brain and farmed by the hand of one man’.

*...capital and intelligence, taste and judgment, were applied and the face of Nature was changed. The swamps were drained; ... tussocks were up-rooted and burnt; the land was ploughed, cultivated, and sown with clover and English grasses; the plains were covered with spotted herds, knee deep in pasturage, a great industry was established, and skilful enterprise proclaimed its presence in a number of ways; here and there piles of buildings sprang aloft, and pretty cottages graced the slopes; busy bands trooped about; ..the river may be clearly traced now, dark with fringing oaks or glistening in the sun, by the curving lines, or long "reaches," that seem to carry it to the very base of the broad mountains that cleave the western sky.*¹⁵

⁹ Town and Country Journal, 23 December 1876, p. 14; Sydney Mail, 21 March 1891, p. 626. The ‘ferns’ would be burrawangs.

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ Pacey,

¹² The Chinese originally came to the Dromedary-Nerrigundah area to mine gold.

¹³ Sydney Mail, 21 March 1891, p. 626. The ‘ferns’ would be burrawangs.

¹⁴ Town and Country Journal, 23 December 1876, p.14.

¹⁵ Sydney Mail 13 Feb 1875 p196.

Mort spent considerable energy and capital turning dairying at Bodalla from a cottage industry into a factory system where milk from Comerang cows and that of his tenants' cows on surrounding farms was combined and manipulated at one central factory to produce cheese of uniform quality that did rival English cheese imports. It was 'the closest to the factory system of cheese-making the colonies had seen so far'. Ideas developed at Bodalla were taken up by dairy farmers elsewhere, including in New Zealand and South Africa. Bodalla was regarded as 'one of the few showplaces of the industrial progress and enterprise of the Colony' and at the time as 'the largest and most perfect by far of the dairying establishments of the Colony'.

2.4 Comerang and its approach

Mort, again no doubt greatly influenced by Guilfoyle, carefully planned the approach to his country house Comerang.

*The gate which led to Comerang from the Moruya Road stood conspicuously prominent at the top of the hill. The well made road down to the house was shaded on both sides by sturdy trees and the absence of all undergrowth, deadwood or unsightly stumps – the prairie grasses green and velvet-like all proclaim how nature may be assisted by the artful hands of men.*¹⁶



The house was half a mile down this avenue, picturesquely placed on the point of a sloping well-grassed rise dipping into the Tuross River, its steeply pitched gables, white washed walls and wide verandahs 'nestling in a garden such as one seldom sees on this side of the globe & all buried in climbing roses, camellias, & virginia creeper... The garden was very tastefully laid out with little gravelled paths running between the beds and tiled gutters.'¹⁷ It also had a productive kitchen and orchard.

The Estate's cheese-making operations were concentrated during Mort's time below the house at Comerang - the large shed with 80 milking bails (1864) along with a dairy, piggery and calf shelter and the three-storey cheese room in 1874.

¹⁶ Pacey

¹⁷ Town and Country Journal, 28 October 1871, pp. 554-555.

In the 1860s, Mort farmed 500 acres at Comerang but the rest of the 14,000 acres were let to tenants, each of whom had a cottage, yards, milking bails and cows.¹⁸ He continued to experiment with crops including corn and barley and asked his agricultural superintendent to try using phosphate guano as a fertiliser on cereals and grasses.

In 1870, Mort terminated those tenancies and subdivided Bodalla Estate into separate farms to be run as an integrated whole. The 14,000 acres of the original Estate were divided into four farms concentrating all milking at Comerang, with Bodalla, Trunkatabella and Widgett (where store, inn, and post office were located) allocated other roles.

2.5 Floods

Floods were a regular occurrence and caused considerable damage to the Estate's most productive land. Mort's system of drainage and culverts seemed initially to hold out in the March and April floods of 1870.

*...the splendid estate of T. S. Mort, Esq., at Comerang, ... has not suffered so much as it did in previous floods, when it was cultivated as arable land; and its comparative immunity may in a great measure be attributed to the admirable system of under-draining, recently introduced on the estate. This is the first trial of the system since the construction of the drains, and I am bound to say they far exceed all my expectations. ... the exotic grasses now flourish luxuriantly, and the ground is dry and firm.*¹⁹

But the bigger flood in May took its toll.

*...the drains are damaged or filled in [by the flood]; the fences were partially swept away; the grass is much replaced with weeds, which, in certain places, will have to be left to seed now and grow again before they can be destroyed and the land resown. All this is very disheartening; it must have been especially so, when just on the point of converting a highly expensive and laborious undertaking into one of a steady and remunerative kind.*²⁰

Before the floods, 280 cows were being milked at Comerang, which at that stage was where all milking was concentrated. After the floods, only nine cows were milked although by November that had picked up to 120.

The 1870 floods were defining events for Bodalla. It led to another major change in the way the Estate was managed and a change of manager. It also led to the village being established in the mid 1870s on the ridge above the flood plain, instead of developing around the earlier buildings at Wedget, that appear to have been abandoned.

Management changes included decentralising milking again, with the old bails at Old Bodalla brought back on line and more central bails constructed on an elevated ridge. It also resulted in a rethink of managing floods.²¹ Mort and his manager Evans decided to abandon the elaborate drainage system installed in the 1860s; they concentrated on consolidating the land with permanent pasture and looked at maximising the floods' fertilising effect through mowing and mulching the crop of weeds that inevitably followed a flood. Corn and potatoes were grown on the flats to condition the land prior to sowing with permanent grass. As the ridges were scrubbed they were seeded and harrowed and cow manure spread as fertiliser.

¹⁸ Pacey, op. cit., p.15

¹⁹ Town and Country Journal, 23 April 1970, p.7.

²⁰ Town and Country Journal, loc. cit.

²¹ Pacey, op. cit., p.32.

By 1875, the Estate comprised about 15,000 acres freehold and 35,000 acres leased (pre-emptive right of purchase) and employed about 230 people. It was sending 20 tons of bacon to Sydney each year.

The first known building in the new village (present site) was the store, initially also housing the post office, opened in April 1876. The hotel and school soon followed. It was a short while later that the main Moruya to Bega road was re-routed through the new village.

2.6 Morts Death

Mort died at Bodalla in 1878 and was buried at the local cemetery. Such was Mort's standing and reputation he was mourned across Australia, as well as in Bodalla and Sydney. The family built All Saints Anglican Church at Bodalla as a memorial to Mort and his wife Therese and the impressive west window of three lights was funded by the people of the district in their memory. In Sydney, a bronze statue of Mort was erected in Macquarie Place as a more national monument and paid for by public subscription. It was unveiled 9 June 1883 by the Governor in front of several thousand people, including 1,000 workers from Morts Dock & Engineering Company.



Following Mort's death, the Bodalla Estate continued to be run along the same lines as laid down by Mort with the same manager James Evans, but under four trustees.²² The landscape by then was well established. They continued Mort's emphasis on forage conservation and bringing more land into production. Clearing continued, much of it by Chinese workers who camped on the western side of the river by what became known as Ah Lock's swamp.

Mort wanted Bodalla Estate kept in the family until his youngest son was of age, which would be in 1898, and worked under a general manager as one property for the equal benefit of all concerned.²³ However the Trustees lacked Mort's access to funds to finance improvements and so borrowed what was needed to fund improvements and land purchases on top of what the Estate could raise. They extended the property supposedly to protect against any incursion, but most of the land they purchased was relatively unproductive.

²² Pacey, op. cit., pp 43-44

²³ Loc.cit., p.60.

By 1886, the Estate was producing 300 tons of cheese each year from 1200 cows on six large dairy farms. By this stage, a total of 4,000 acres had been cleared. Towards the end of the 1880s 400 – 500 people lived in 52 cottages either in the village of Bodalla, which had become well established, or near the six large dairying establishments.

2.7 Bodalla Company formed

The Bodalla Company was formed in 1887 to relieve the Trustees of the burden of managing the Estate until Mort's wishes could be carried out, viz. 1898. The Company, set up under an Act of Parliament, had 10 shareholders all members of Mort's family

The Bodalla Company employed Thomas Grierson as manager in 1889, one of the most highly regarded stockbreeders and agriculturists in the colonies at that time.²⁴

He reinvigorated the Estate and integrated its operations. He stopped clearing any more land, upgraded fencing, re-established the old drainage system on the river flats, and purchased new machinery. He imported the first milking machine into Australia and tried it successfully at Bodalla. He culled the old and less productive cows, introduced new dairy breeds (including the first Holsteins in NSW) and better quality stock in order to lift production, and instigated a trial to work out the best breed or cross-breed across the Estate.

In 1891, Bodalla took out a swag of NSW Government Awards - Best Mixed Farm Over 100 Acres, Best Dairy With Regard To Buildings And Appliances, and Best System For Conserving Fodder For Stock. The following year it won the national prize for Best Kept Poultry Yard and first and champion prizes for Best Mixed Farm over 2,000 Acres. Grierson was ensuring Bodalla was still recognised as one of the most progressive dairy farms in Australia.

Grierson was also good at promoting the Bodalla brand, entering into Christmas promotions with Sydney grocer James Kidman in 1891 and 1892 with the largest cheeses ever made in Australia, culminating in two two-ton cheeses.

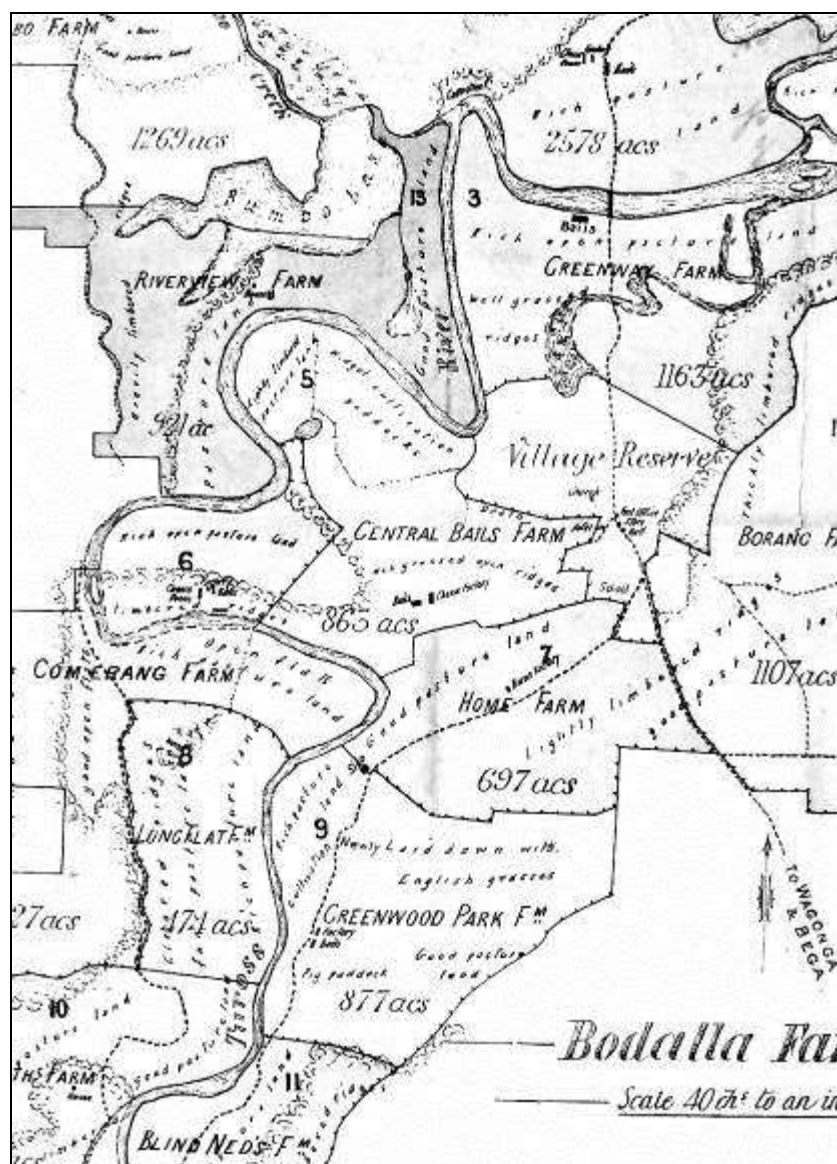
Unfortunately Grierson's improvements which required considerable investment coincided with the widespread financial crisis of 1891-1893, and a flood in 1891 that meant alternative transport arrangements were needed to get produce to Sydney. By early 1894, surplus cheese was flooding the market and there was increased competition particularly from other south coast manufacturers. Company directors decided that maybe an integrated Estate was no longer appropriate.

2.8 Return to leasing

In 1893 the Company directors decided to return the Estate to leasing. It had the best lands surveyed and then subdivided into 13 Farms to be leased to tenant farmers by tender for seven years.

The Company kept the cheese and bacon factories and guaranteed to purchase produce from the tenants at *highly remunerative prices*. At that time, there were cheese factories at Comerang, Greenwood Park (Old Bodalla), Central Bails and Trunkatabella, and the bacon factory on Home Farm. Cheese was stored at Comerang and Trunkatabella.

²⁴ Pacey, op. cit., pp.62-65.



1893 subdivision into 13 farms for lease to tenant farmers. Part of image held in the Noel Butlin Archive Centre.

But the leasing system again proved less than satisfactory. Tenants complained of high rents and low returns, and this coincided with another drought period. By the end of the century most of the farms were back in the hands of the Bodalla Company, with the exception of Comerang, Greenwood Park (Old Bodalla) and Central Bails. Notwithstanding this, Bodalla was still a significant player in the cheese industry producing 13.3% of all cheese in NSW and supplying 3.6% of Australia's total cheese consumption as the journals of the day reported.

The village was an integral part of the Estate and privately owned. It boasted a good general store, hotel, butcher, baker and blacksmith's shops, Post and Telegraph Office, two churches, a school and a resident doctor. The development of the Bodalla Estate had lead directly to the establishment of a relatively large and permanent population living in the village and surrounding farms. This settlement pattern continues to the present day.

The sports ground and racecourse was located on the river flats behind where the old Bodalla Inn once was, on what later became the Wiltshire farm. Events including the Boxing Day race were held there regularly and visitors would come from far and wide.



Bodalla Racecourse 1908. Note the lightly timbered slopes with much of their undergrowth removed. Photo by Rev Ernest Mort, Mort family connection.

In 1905, the Bodalla Estate was said to cover 20,000 acres with about 8,000 acres of rich river flats and the rest *rough and useless* with a large area of scrub and rocky hill land. There were 10 separate dairy farms and four cheese factories, plus the bacon factory and areas cultivated with maize, sorghum, oats and lucerne. Bodalla Cheese continued its outstanding performance at the Royal Agricultural Show, being awarded all the first prizes in 1908. This was not an isolated achievement as it received three firsts out of four prizes in 1909 and in 1910 all of the first prizes.

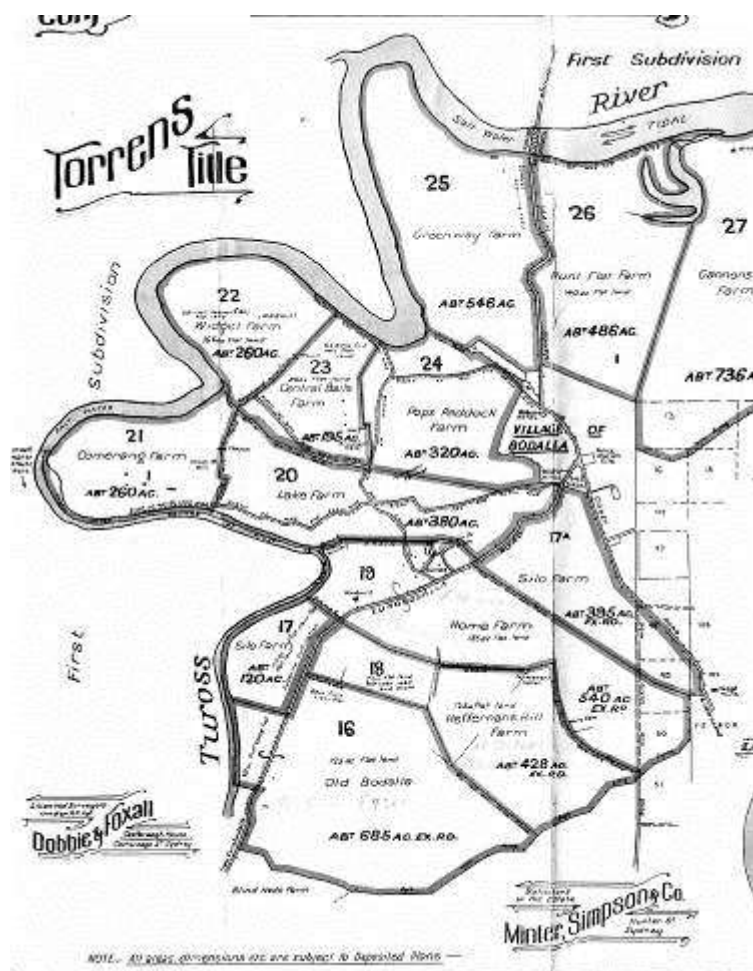
Unlike his predecessors, Hutchison did not conserve fodder for more difficult times. His way of coping with drought was just to reduce the number of cattle carried on the property. While individual yields may have been almost maintained, overall production suffered. Added to these woes, competition from other south coast dairies was increasing as the quality of their produce continued to improve. Furthermore, under Hutchison's management the Company failed to invest capital back into the business, which resulted in the Estate being undercapitalised and with ageing infrastructure and equipment.

By the time of the First World War the share holders, namely TS Mort's descendents, were interested in selling. They were of advancing age, some lived in England, and the returns from the estate had been diminishing. In 1921 the then manager, Hutchison, told the Carruthers Inquiry into Agriculture that Bodalla was a private township and everything on the estate, except the post office and school was under him. The Morts were by then quite remote from the Estate's operations, hence Hutchison's description of them as 'patrons'.

2.9 The Estate is sold

In preparing the Estate for sale, Company advisors found that existing fences were already on the most suitable lines for subdivision. The improved areas of the Estate were subdivided into 26 small farms, with

most farms fronting the river. The properties were sold in two tranches, one in 1923 and the second in 1924.



1924 subdivision plan

The sales were seen as the end of the famous Bodalla Estate under the one ownership, and the disintegration of many old associations and the self-contained community. The Bodalla Company retained the factories, but the new owners were not happy at the prices being offered for milk. Twelve farmers formed the Bodalla Co-operative Cheese Company. Old Bodalla factory was closed but Trunkatabella and Home Farm continued with the Cooperative taking over those two factories in 1925.

Some farmers defaulted on their loans and ultimately many of the farms returning to the Company.

Quite a number of the village blocks were sold in 1926. The Bodalla Arms Hotel sold in 1929/30, but no provision was made to keep the village park in front of the Bodalla Hotel. The Bodalla Company had resolved to wind up its business interests at about this time, however liquidating all assets proved to be a drawn-out process.

By 1933, Mort's house at Comerang was in ruins, 'almost hidden by trees and shrubbery, a giant bunya pine towers above an old world garden full of English holly and wall flowers, white iris and violets and red flowering soursofs'. Mort's descendants in England had wanted the house demolished in 1919 and a memorial plaque installed. Demolition finally happened in the early 1940s and a memorial plaque erected in 1978.

Long time Estate manager Hutchison died in 1931 and was replaced by John Brown who sought to increase milk production on those farms still in Company ownership. He erected concrete silos and up-to-date feeding stalls at five of the Company's farms. Land that had become infested with bracken and other weeds was cleaned up and cultivated. The great depression resulted in more farms ending up in the Company's control.

Some farmers who bought farms at the sale did well. One was Abraham Emmott, who had bought Home Farm, subdivided it from 9 into 22 paddocks of about 5 acres each and used an intensified rotational grazing system on improved pasture. He won Best Managed Dairy Farm in NSW in 1932 against 111 other dairy farmers. His neighbours later won Fodder Conservation and Master Farmer Competition awards. *The Agricultural Gazette of NSW* wrote of Bodalla that 'No other district in NSW has done as much in pasture improvement, fodder conservation and general farm management', but it was mainly referring to enterprising farmers like Emmott than the Company's farms at that stage.

Floods continued to cause problems. There were three in 1934, one was the highest ever recorded following 17 inches of rain in two days. It caused considerable damage. The 1930s were difficult times with floods, the Depression, poor prices and then the War and the subsequent labour shortages. The Bodalla Estate became more run down.

When new manager Arthur Tarlinton Stiles took over in 1942, he instituted much need reforms on the Company's farms including more hygienic and efficient dairies (including new bails at Comerang to replace those built in 1864), the long overdue milking machines on all farms, bean production (following the example of Eurobodalla farmers), herd improvement and the Guernsey stud.²⁵

2.10 Street's factory

Cheese production at Bodalla ceased in late 1951 for a few years. That was when the Bodalla Cooperative Cheese society entered into a three year contract to send all its milk to Street's new factory in Moruya. Bodalla's Home Farm and Trunkatabella factories had become run down, particularly Trunkatabella, and the Street's opportunity delayed having to build a new factory. Farmers disposed of their pigs because they no longer had any supply of whey.

When Streets prematurely ceased operating their Moruya plant after a year, the Bodalla Cheese Cooperative Society and the Bodalla Company had to build a new factory. Meanwhile the Bodalla Bridge collapsed a few months before the new factory was completed. The new factory opened in 1954 and was said to be the most modern cheese-making factory in NSW.

The new bridge over the Tuross River was completed in 1957, slightly upstream of the old bridge, and the Princes Highway re-routed west of All Saints Church.

In 1960 the Bodalla Company returned its highest profit ever due largely to improved prices and increased production. In spite of improved profitability this Mort's descendants in England continued to look for ways of divesting themselves of the Company, either by sale of the Company's assets or by sale of their own shares.

In Australia however, Company directors Charles and Tom Mort were proud of their family's long association with the Bodalla Estate and the fact that the farms were 'still tenanted and run on English Estate lines'.

²⁵ Pacey, op. cit., pp.121-122.

From the late 1970s, an increasing amount of Bodalla's milk was going to the Sydney whole milk market (quota milk) leaving a reduced amount available for cheese production. In the early 1980s, the supermarkets were also demanding bigger discounts to place product on their shelves, and cheaper milk was coming in from Victoria. Cheaper cheese imports also took their toll. The Bodalla Cooperative Cheese Society entered into a contractual arrangement with its distributor PDS rural products who effectively gained ownership of the Bodalla brand.

The Cooperative looked to increase the more profitable local sales by building The Big Cheese as a tourist centre in the mid 1980s. However by 1987 there was insufficient surplus milk after quota to operate the cheese factory economically and it was subsequently closed. This was the same year the Bodalla Company celebrated its centenary. It was then reputedly the oldest private company in Australia and the third largest milk producer in NSW.

2.11 Panfida

In 1987 an independent company Panfida Foods negotiated with members of the Mort family and eventually bought all the family's shares in the Bodalla Company. Panfida wanted to use the Bodalla Company's shares in the Dairy Farmers Cooperative to gain control of the Sydney milk market. The Bodalla Company under Panfida continued with the existing sharefarmers. However, when the Dairy Farmers bid failed, Panfida no longer had any use for the Company. When no one was interested in buying the entire Estate on a walk-in walk-out basis, the Estate was broken down into individual farms.

The auction in November 1989 was described as the single biggest rural auction ever held in NSW. It was an emotional time for many because it signified a substantial upheaval to a farming and village tradition that had operated for over a century. Today the river flats are managed as several privately operated dairy farms.

3 Assessment against heritage criteria

The Bodalla Cultural Landscape area is assessed below using the criteria adopted by the NSW Heritage Council for the assessment of places of both local and State significance.

Criterion (a)

An item is important in the course, or pattern, of Eurobodalla Shire's cultural or natural history;

Dairying had commenced with the initial settlement in the area in about 1835 with up to 40 cwt of butter being produced in 1840. Dairying continues as a major agricultural activity still in 2012. Mort undertook substantial clearing and draining activity from 1860 and created a landscape that remains surprising similar to the one seen today of rich green river flats, occasional cultivation paddocks, a number of key homesteads associated with dairy buildings, and herds of dairy cattle grazing in their paddocks or moving to the milking sheds.

The village of Bodalla was established by Mort specifically to serve the community and his dairying interests and to a large extent continues to fulfill the same function. Thus a landscape settlement pattern that was laid down in the mid to late 1800s remains clearly visible and continues to function in much the same way as it has for the last 150 years.



Dairy cattle continue to graze by the oak fringed river banks.



Criterion (b)

An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's and Eurobodalla Shire's cultural or natural history,

The Bodalla Estate and the village are inextricably linked to Thomas Sutcliffe Mort who played a prominent role in the commercial development of the colony of NSW in the middle part of the 19th century. He was actively engaged in a wide range of activities including wool growing and marketing, supply of dairy products and meat in the city of Sydney, export, shipping, and in particular construction of one of the largest dry docks in the southern hemisphere at the time, in engineering and railways. He is possibly best remembered however as the "Father of Refrigeration" in Australia, funding and encouraging the development of refrigerated transport to enable the export of perishable Australian produce to the rest of the world.

In spite of his active involvement in the above activities, he spent much of his time at Bodalla and took a very active interest in its day to day management, and in the welfare of its community. It would appear that Mort applied an engineering approach to the problems he encountered, for example swamps were drained with boxed culverts up to 10 feet deep, barns and bails were on an industrial scale with cattle managed accordingly. He later adopted a system of under-draining so that flooded areas would de-water rapidly and so avoid damage to crops.

In tandem with his engineering focus, Mort appears to have had a finely developed aesthetic, where he had the Bodalla Estate developed in the “Picturesque” mode. Historical texts repeatedly refer to the “park like” characteristics of the landscape, and how he paid extra to remove trees to ground level so the “unsightly” stumps were not left visible in the landscape. He apparently knew “what to take and what to leave” when clearing timber, and his house at Comerang was picturesque with a beautiful garden.

Mort died at Bodalla and his funeral there was widely attended. However he was so greatly admired in Sydney that a bronze statue of him was cast and erected in Macquarie place, with several thousand people gathering for the unveiling of what The Town and Country Journal said “was a reminder of the patriotic career of one of Australia’s noblest colonists”.

Because of his financial resources derived from business interests elsewhere, Mort had been able to develop the Estate and the village in his ideal model. After Mort’s death, the Bodalla Company had to work within the income stream derived from the Estate and so maintained the place for the next 100 years very much as established by Mort.



Mort’s house at Comerang. Although no longer standing it demonstrates the picturesque qualities pursued across the estate. There was a unity of form in the buildings and landscape throughout the Estate.

Criterion (c)

An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area);

Aesthetic values.

There are numerous historic references to the visual beauty of the Bodalla Estate, its sylvan qualities, the oak fringed river, the picturesque cottages and their gardens and the rugged mountains beyond, and in many respects the same qualities still prevail. One of the most impressive views is from the church looking to the west and north-west, across the former Bodalla Estate and beyond the river to the distant natural bush-clad mountains. The view comprises a wide vista, with rolling hills in the foreground dotted with occasional remnant specimen trees, beyond which are the rich green of the river flats. The darker grey green (or sometimes blue) of the mountains provides a strong visual contrast.

The village itself has its own aesthetic value that is not included here as it is being individually listed as a conservation area in Eurobodalla Shire Council's LEP.

Aesthetic values also pertain to the spotted-gum forest to the west of the village, around the former school and across to the Eurobodalla Road. The stand of tall timber is of exceptional visual beauty and provides a dramatic contrast between its mass and density and the cleared grazing land immediately to its west. From a number of vantage points the trees frame views of the landscape area, or provide very attractive glimpses through and between the tall timbers.

Down by the river the views are more intimate but equally attractive, with lush green pasture rolling down to the fringing river oaks along the river.



View across the cultural landscape area from All Saints Church tower. The photo was taken in 2012 after a period of exceptionally heavy rain and shows sheets of water draining towards the river.

Creative and technical achievement

Bodalla Estate was at the forefront of dairy practice and land management in NSW if not Australia for much of its existence. Mort drained swamps, introduced a system of under drains to flood prone land and converted rough country into park-like paddocks. He imported seed from England and is attributed with the first extensive sowings of improved pastures in NSW. He applied an industrial approach to farming creating a small tram to convey the milk pails to the dairy. In 1867 one commentator calling it *the closest to the factory system of cheese making the colonies had seen so far*. He experimented with crops including corn and barley and asked his agricultural superintendent to try using phosphate guano as a fertiliser on cereals and grasses. In the 1870s Bodalla was regarded as the model dairy farm in NSW.

In the 1891 NSW Dept of Agriculture show Bodalla won Best Mixed Farm Over 100 Acres, Best Dairy With Regard To Buildings And Appliances and Best System For Conserving Fodder For Stock. The following year it won the national prize for Best Kept Poultry Yard and first and champion prizes for Best Mixed Farm Over 2,000 Acres. In 1892 the Estate made the two largest cheeses ever made in Australia: one 4,000 pounds and the other 3,000 pounds, as a promotion for the Sydney grocer James Kidman. In 1891 the estate killed 4500 pigs making 225 tons of bacon. In 1892 the first milking machine in Australia was utilised at Bodalla. By almost any measure Bodalla was one of the pre-eminent dairy farms in Australia. By 1900 it produced 13.3% all the cheese in NSW and it was noted at the time that *Among the estates on which dairying on the farm labour system has been successful Bodalla stands out prominently*. It won all the first prizes at the Royal Agricultural Show in 1908. This was not an isolated achievement as it received three firsts out of four prizes in 1909, and in 1910 all of the first prizes. The Company registered the word "Bodalla" as its trade mark throughout the Commonwealth.

In 1921 the Carruthers Inquiry into Agriculture considered that the annual production returns for the 14 herds (one for each of the 14 Farms) kept by the manager were *probably the most valuable record of its kind in the world because it compared various breeds kept on almost identical land*.

Excellence was not confined to the Bodalla Estate. Abraham Emmott, who had bought Home Farm from the Estate, used an intensified rotational grazing system and won Best Managed Dairy Farm in NSW in 1932 against 111 others. *The Agricultural Gazette of NSW* wrote of Bodalla that 'No other district in NSW has done as much in pasture improvement, fodder conservation and general farm management'.

In 1987 the Bodalla Company was 100 years old and was reputedly the oldest private company in Australia and the third largest milk producer in NSW.

The managers of the lands of the former Bodalla Estate have demonstrated remarkable creative and technical efforts in the fields of land management, cattle husbandry and dairy practice since the 1860s.

Criterion (d)

An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

The dairying community and village community at Bodalla are very close knit. Many of them have forebears who were directly involved in dairying or in an associated support role, whether it be education, transport or commerce. As a consequence they have a strong association with the village, the surrounding area and its history. This commitment was demonstrated in 2010 with a series of activities to commemorate Mort's acquisition of the land 150 years ago. Two substantial books on the history of Mort and the Bodalla Estate were launched, and celebratory activities were held throughout the year.

The sense of Bodalla village and its surrounding dairy area as a special place also seems to be held by people who live beyond the immediate area, but nevertheless feel a connection to the place.

Criterion (e)

An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);

The nature of dairy farming practice has changed considerably over the last 100 years, not only in Bodalla but across Australia. There remain some very good records of the Bodalla Estate and the Bodalla Company, and in addition, a number of the former buildings remain in their historic location. Some of the buildings have been adapted, and others are aged and left much as they were.

There is considerable potential to undertake greater study of the Bodalla's dairying practice and to track the changed practice, using the record that remains embodied in the landscape: including the former and current buildings and structures, paddock layout, soil fertility, pasture improvement etc etc.



Period cottages and rural infrastructure evoke a strong sense of the area's dairying history



'Old Bodalla' and the Eurobodalla Road as approached from the north. Undated but presumed to be from the 19th century



The same view as above in 2012. The vehicle road now follows higher ground to the west, but cattle continue to use the historic surveyed alignment



Home Farm Cheese factory late 1940s. The building survives and has been adapted for residential use.

Criterion (f)

An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);

Three other major former dairying areas have a notable place in the dairy history of Southern NSW.

The Tilba area retains a former dairy (ABC Cheese) in the village of Central Tilba, which sits within a landscape of high aesthetic value and historic integrity. It has a strong historic association with the Bates family who were early and important settlers in the district. The former dairy landscape is listed under the ESC LEP and managed for its cultural landscape values. It has exceptional aesthetic values and is particularly significant for its Indigenous heritage. However the historic, creative and technical values of the Tilba Conservation Area are arguably not as strong as those of the Bodalla Cultural Landscape.

Ayredale is a small former dairy south west of Bega that retained a remarkably intact set of late 19th and early 20th century dairy buildings of exceptional integrity. In many respects the connection to the wider landscape has become eroded, and unfortunately a large Waste Transfer Station is being built by Bega Valley Shire Council in close proximity to the significant buildings. In spite of its importance to an understanding of the south coast's dairy practice, Ayredale does not encompass the same breadth of history and lacks strong connection to a man of Mort's stature.

Kameruka was a dairy located a little further south west of Bega than Ayredale, and very close to Candelo. It was strongly associated with Sir Robert Lucas-Tooth c 1850 and remained with Tooth's descendants until sold in 2007. There are a number of historic parallels with Bodalla, and a particularly fine set of surviving buildings, however the new owners are upgrading the property and converting it to beef cattle as the Bega Valley continues to become a drier landscape. Unlike Bodalla, Kameruka has lost its on-going and continuing use as a dairy farm.

In comparison with other key dairy farms on the South coast it can be seen that Bodalla is rare in that it has an exceptionally strong historical legacy, a landscape that remains relatively intact and is continuing to be used for dairy farming and the production of milk.

Criterion (g)

An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of ESC's

- *cultural or natural places; or*
- *cultural or natural environments.*

Many dairy farms still operate on the South Coast. What makes the Bodalla area so interesting is that the dairy farms in the Bodalla cultural landscape area continue to be actively managed for milk production on the same land that has been used for this purpose since almost the first Europeans moved into the area. The evidence of the former layers of dairy farming practice are still evident in the surviving historic rural and village structures, roads, modified vegetation and drainage patterns. Collectively they are able to demonstrate large-scale dairying practice that relied upon a variety of

labour and ownership models including share farming, tenant farming and, later, private landownership.



1944 aerial photograph of the Bodalla Estate. Many of the landscape features established in the 19th century remain evident in the landscape today. (Source NLA)

4 Statement of significance

The Bodalla Cultural landscape area is significant for its long and enduring use for dairy practice from the 1830s through to the present day. It is especially significant for its association with Thomas Sutcliffe Mort who invested considerable funds in land improvement and initiated numerous technical innovations. He introduced an industrial approach to production, while creating a landscape that was considered in its day to be very attractive and picturesque in the English style. The Estate employed many people, sometimes as tenants and at other times as share farmers, and the scale of the enterprise led directly to the establishment of the village of Bodalla and fostered growth in the wider locality. The Bodalla Estate was possibly the longest operating dairy enterprise (first under Mort and then under the Bodalla Company) in NSW at the end of the 20th century.

The Bodalla Company finally closed in 1987 and many of the current dairy framers, plus other members of the local and wider community continue to have strong feelings for the area's historic past. These social values were demonstrated in 2010 in celebrations marking 150 years since Mort's purchase of the Bodalla Estate. The landscape is particularly attractive with special views to be had from the vicinity of the Bodalla Hotel and All Saints Church, through the spotted gum forest on the west side of the village, and from along Eurobodalla Road down on the Tuross River flats.

While many dairy farms operate across NSW, there are not many with the depth of history and associations as the Bodalla Cultural Landscape area that have not succumbed to urban or rural subdivision, or changed farming practice. To this extent Bodalla is rare, and a detailed study of its landscape in the context of the historic record is yet to be undertaken. It follows that there is considerable potential for the area to yield a greater understanding of its history and its evolution.

5 Recommendations

5.1 LEP listing

The Bodalla Cultural landscape area meets the threshold for listing in the Eurobodalla Shire Heritage Schedule.

5.2 Boundary

The Bodalla Cultural Landscape Area (BCLA) should adjoin the western boundary of the Bodalla Conservation Area (BCA) between the church and Eurobodalla Road so that the conservation area of the village and its landscape are continuous. If for any reason All Saints Church is not included in the BCA, then it should be included in the BCLA.

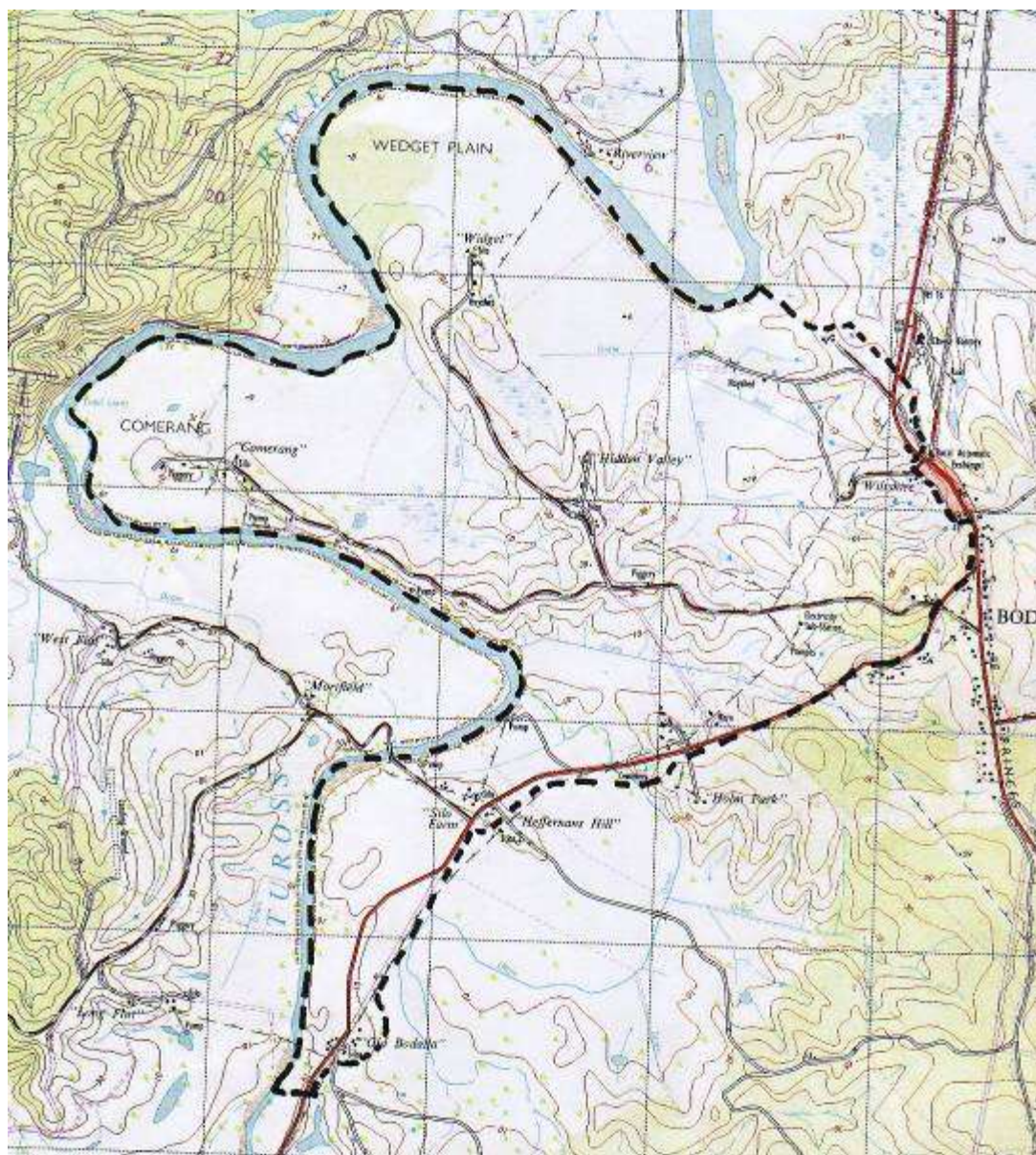
The boundary needs to include the old Bodalla Cemetery, and Mort's grave, in recognition of his significant association with the area and for the social, community and historic values that the cemetery represents.

The Landscape Area should also include Heffernan's Hill and Old Bodalla as both places contain historic fabric that dates to the earlier phase of the area's occupancy. Old Bodalla features strongly in the historical literature and was an important component of the Bodalla Estate. The homestead appears in an early photograph and is obviously the same house that exists today. It is physically associated with several cottages that also evoke the earlier historic period and together they convey the sense of the traditional homestead that comprised of multiple buildings and large workforces. The present road has been realigned to follow higher ground, however the historic alignment remains and is now used as a cow path.

The extension of the boundary to the south would also encompass important examples of cleared and farmed landscapes that were noted in the 1856 survey as being 'In Cultivation' and are still in use today. The river flats lying between the Eurobodalla Road and the Tuross River also have high aesthetic values and represent a sequential pattern of river flats that continue to the south.

The section of the Eurobodalla Road south from the cemetery is very close to the earliest surveyed alignment of the road from Moruya to Bega and Eden. It is interesting that the road deviated slightly to higher ground on the approach to Old Bodalla from Heffernan's Hill.

Some of the former Bodalla Estate farms that are located outside the proposed boundary continue to hold their cultural landscape value. These areas include the land basin to the east of Heffernan's Hill and Old Bodalla, as well as Elizabeth Farm, Long Flat, Mortfield and Riverview, and possibly areas further to the north. However the proposed boundary encapsulates the key cultural heritage values associated with this important landscape and extension to define a much larger area is not considered to be necessary.



Proposed boundary of the Bodalla Cultural Landscape Area shown as a heavy black dotted line, drawn over 1973 CMA topographic map.

5.3 Prepare a set of management guidelines

To manage the landscape's historic values in a manner that does not impede or constrain current farming use, it is recommended that a set of management guidelines be developed following a series of one to one discussions with the individual owners.

It may be appropriate to model these guidelines on the Tilba Conservation Area guidelines, although tailored to suite the particular characteristics of the Bodalla area.