

Hunter Water S170 Register

SHI No.: *Name:*
3630109 Irrawang Pottery Site (archaeological site)

Location No address NSW

Other ID nos IW ID: 127.



Description:

The Irrawang Pottery site consists of an area of open field within the Grahamstown Dam operational area. No structural remains are visible above ground but there are a variety of remnant cultural plantings associated with the former pottery works and two large pits which mark the outline of archaeological works undertaken on the site in the 1960s and 1970s.

Significance:

The Irrawang Pottery Site is the location of the earliest known pottery works in the Hunter Valley, established by colonial entrepreneur James King in 1835. Operating from the 1830s to the 1850s, the pottery works produced domestic pottery and building materials sold throughout the colony. King also established a vineyard on the site. The site has been the subject of some archaeological investigation in the 1960s and 1970s but further archaeological research significance remains at the site. Significant collections of Irrawang pottery materials exist in public collections including the Newcastle Regional Museum and the University of Sydney.

Assessed Significance: Local

Endorsed Significance: Local

Historical Notes:

Irrawang is the site of one of the earliest potteries in Australia, and was established by James King, an early entrepreneur in Australian colonial times. Operating from 1833 to the sale of the land in 1956 Irrawang Pottery Site has already been partly investigated by archaeological excavations from 1967-76. During these investigations, the types and shapes of ceramics made at the pottery, and much about the layout of the Irrawang estate itself was revealed.

James King arrived as a settler to New South Wales in 1827. In 1828 he received a land grant of 1 920 acres in the Hunter Valley, about five miles north of Raymond Terrace. On this property, which he named Irrawang, King initially farmed this land, raising cattle and growing grains. King however, was constantly devising various schemes to make money throughout his life, as evidenced by the numerous letters he wrote to the government seeking permission to carry out his plans. With no prior connections with pottery, King decided to set up a pottery for the manufacture of cheap, good domestic earthenware at Irrawang. The site of the pottery however, was subject to extremes of flood and drought, and as such he battled extensively with drainage problems, constructing hard-packed causeways and platforms and a series of brick drains that traversed the site, visible at the time of excavations from the late 1960s. Another major disadvantage of the pottery being established at Irrawang was its distance from suitable clay sources.

Nonetheless, King's Pottery was quite successful, partly due to King's talent for publicity, and was known in the day as a major colonial experimental enterprise.

In both the ground plan and the type of pottery manufactured, King's pottery was characteristic of nineteenth century country potteries throughout Britain and the colonies. On the site there was washmill and an edge-mill, a central clay pit, an earthenware bottle kiln, an earthenware pottery shed with drying floor, another kiln and pottery shed, and spoil dump for his salt-glazed stonewares. The pottery was dependent on imported skills and labour, and thus lost most of its labour force in the 1851 goldrushes, forcing its closure. The pottery was subsequently sold in 1855, and King died in 1856.

Thanks to King's passion for advertising, some idea of his stock and marketing arrangements have been determined from a combination of these advertisements as well as the shards unearthed on the site. Selling a wide variety of potted goods throughout the history of operations at the site, King concentrated on the domestic market almost exclusively in the beginning, manufacturing good, cheap vessels in black and brown lead-glazed earthenware, as well as fine yellow wares. King sold his products both locally and further afield in Sydney, where they were sold through an agent. Later on, King added salt-glazed stonewares to his range. Ginger beers and the fine Irrawang wine jars, in which King sold his own Irrawang wine, made from grapes grown on the property, were also advertised in the later years of the pottery.

Current Use:

Former Uses:

Hunter Water S170 Register

Physical Condition:

Recommended Management:

- This item contributes to local character and should be conserved.
- Original details should be maintained including doors, windows and original signage.
- New materials should be sympathetic to the nature and character of the original building.
- In the event of major proposed changes, prepare a Conservation Management Strategy and undertake an archival recording.
- Wherever possible, changes should be restricted to the interior of the building.
- Routine maintenance of existing fabric is essential.

Specific Recommendations:

- 1 *Recommended Mana* Produce an Archaeological Management Plan (AMP)
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References:

- Anne Bickford 1971, James King of Irrawang: A Colonial Entrepreneur. Publisher: Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society Vol. 57 Pt. 1. Pages: 40-53.
- Anne Bickford 1993, Irrawang Pottery Site Assessment of Cultural Significance (Final Report October 1993).
- Clem Lloyd, Patrick Troy and Shelley Schreiner 1992, For the Public Health. The Hunter District Water Board 1892-1992. Publisher: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd, Melbourne.
- Department of Public Works , Annual Reports, 1888 to 1892 and 1893-94 to 1960-61.
- Glennie Jones 1967, The Movement for Newcastle's First Water Supply 1875-1885, Newcastle History Monographs No. 2. Publisher: The Council of the City of Newcastle, Newcastle.
- Hunter District Water Board , Annual Reports, 1938-39 to 1987-88.
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- Hunter Water Board , Annual Reports, 1988-89 to 1990-91.
- Hunter Water Corporation , Annual Reports, 1991-92 to 2008-09.
- John W Armstrong 1967, Pipelines and People. The History of the Hunter District Water Board Newcastle, New South Wales. Publisher: The Hunter District Water Board, Newcastle.
- Mal Hindley 1983, 'From Weirs, Dams and Sand', in Shaping the Hunter. Publisher: The Newcastle Division of the Institute of Engineers Australia, Newcastle.
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Studies:

- 1 Futurepast Heritage Consulting Pty Ltd 2010, 'Hunter Water Conservation and Heritage Register Study'. Reference: .
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Listings:

- 1 *Heritage Act - s.170 NSW State agency heritage register:*
Listing date: . Reference Number:
 - 2 *Local Environmental Plan: Irrawang Pottery Site*
Listing date: 7/04/2005. Reference Number:
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Data Entry: *Date First Entered:* 26/Apr/2010 *Date Updated:* 10/Sep/2010 *Status:* Partial

Hunter Water S170 Register

Images



**Irrawang Pottery Site
(archaeological site)**

File: Irrawang.jpg

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Image by: Futurepast Heritage
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Hunter Water S170 Register



**Irrawang Pottery Site
(archaeological site) location
(Courtesy of Google Earth)**

File: irrawang pottery site
GE.jpg

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Date:

Thumbnail: t_irrawang pottery
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