

PART 5 Cultural landscape and built environment

5.1 Generally

For Wiradjuri people - the traditional owners - the area currently known as Temora Shire was but a small part of Wiradjuri country - a vast territory extending westwards from the foothills of the Great Divide as far as Ivanhoe and from the Murray to Dubbo. For millennia this Country was cared for and used by the many interacting groups who lived in their chosen environments and shared the common language of Wiradjuri, but who also developed differing customs and ceremonials which varied according to the river community to which each belonged.

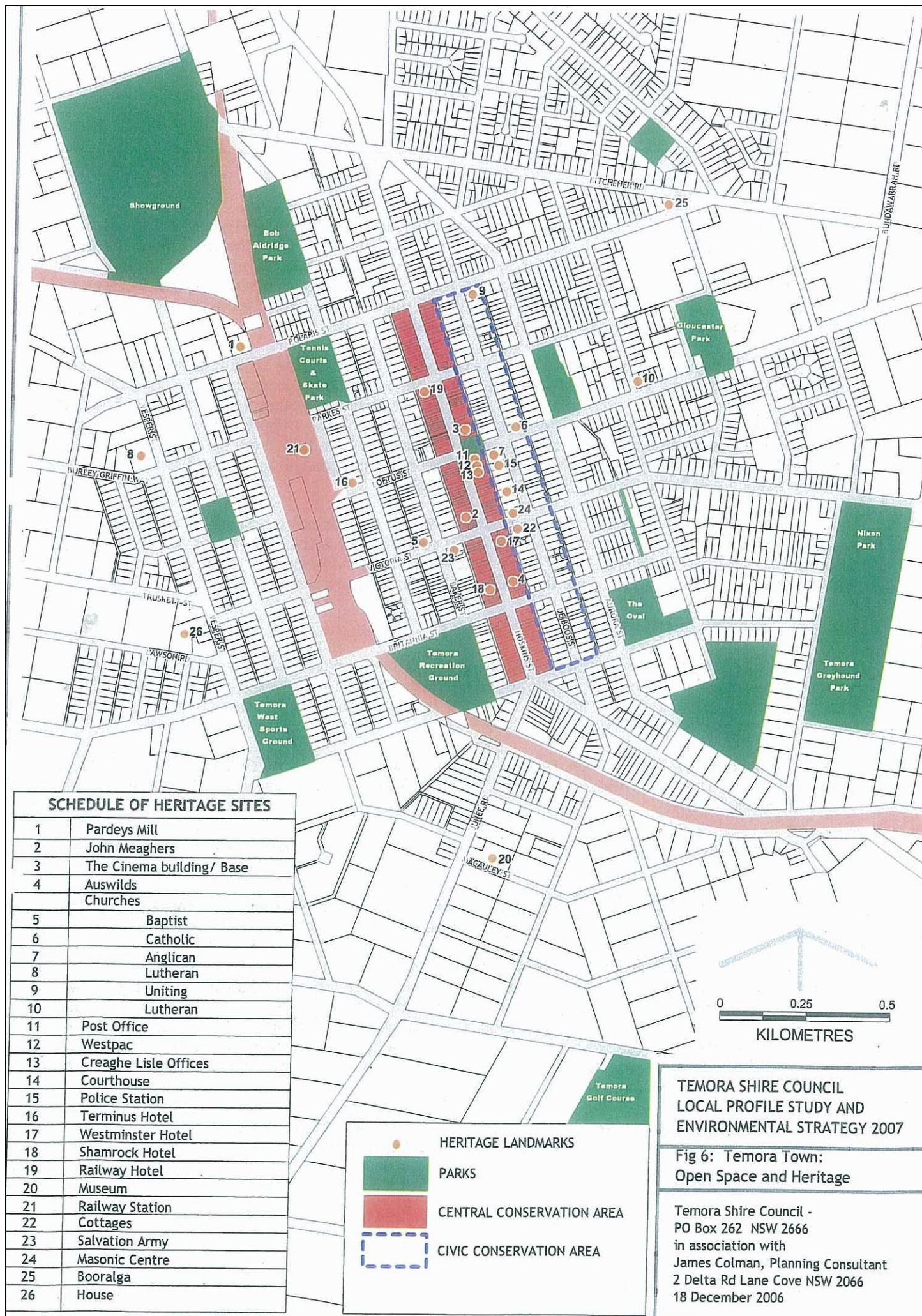
In the 1790s, Wiradjuri life and customs were exposed for the first time to European ways, as their country was progressively taken for pastoral use by the early colonists. Later came the gold-diggers and selectors. At the peak of the gold rush in the 1880s Temora had a population of 20,000 - with miners trying their luck at Reefton, Springdale, Combaning, Sebastopol and Gidginbung. The railway from Cootamundra to Temora was opened in 1893 - rural expansion followed. Temora town site was selected in May 1880 and surveyed in June of the same year. The municipal council sat for the first time in 1890; the Shire Council met formally for the first time in 1906.

The past 230 years have seen the gradual transformation of the cultural landscape of the Shire, being part of - and remaining part of - the wider Wiradjuri country. This is the context for today's efforts at ensuring that heritage in its widest and most inclusive sense is addressed in the new Shire Plan, and whose conservation is recognised from this point onwards as an integral part of Shire business.

5.2 Indigenous heritage

The Council's 2003 history and heritage study has chapters on Wiradjuri life and culture which should be read in conjunction with the earlier Wiradjuri Heritage Study (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2002). Amongst numerous items of relevance to an understanding of how the landscape of contemporary Temora evolved are the following:

- Throughout pre-history, the Temora area was known as *Gidgin Gidginbung* by the local Wiradjuri. The modern name of Temora is taken from that of an early pastoral run which was taken up in 1849.
- The Wiradjuri have been described as the people of the three rivers - Lachlan, Macquarie and Murrumbidgee.
- Estimated pre-contact Wiradjuri population was 12,000. It is clear that the Temora district had plenty of natural resources to sustain a permanent population living in traditional ways.
- There is some evidence that amongst the Wiradjuri there was a social and geographical division between east and west. In support of this proposition are the ethnographic references to two communities in the district - each associated with either the Murrumbidgee or the Lachlan River. In further support is the notion that drainage catchments or basins are territorial determinants. It is therefore thought that two Wiradjuri groups lived in the Temora district, with the area divided naturally in terms of geology and drainage systems as well as socially through technology and clan affiliations.
- The Wiradjuri used fire as a land management tool to shape the environment to their needs, as well as to ensure the survival and constant availability of important resources.



The arrival of Europeans in the 1840s proved fatal to the Indigenous peoples: from an estimated 700-800 Wiradjuri in the immediate Temora district in 1842, the population went into steady and continuous decline. From the time of initial European settlement, Indigenous culture was clearly at risk. Some effects of "contact" were benign. Most were negative. Government policies of protection, assimilation and integration tended to carry on the negative effects of contact up until 1967 at least, when a Commonwealth referendum gave equal rights to Indigenous people.

- Today, census figures show only a handful remaining throughout the once populous Wiradjuri country.

Aboriginal heritage items are protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, administered by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). The Department has a database AHIMS (Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System) which has recorded 13 known Aboriginal sites within Temora Shire. The number of recorded sites on this database is primarily a factor of past surveys in the area: more sites may exist than have yet been recorded. Within Temora Shire, the Young Local Aboriginal Land Council covers the eastern sector, whilst the Narrandera LALC covers the west.

5.3 Thematic history of the Shire

In 2003 the Shire Council commissioned a detailed history and heritage study which provides a valuable historical context for today's local planning. The document, released in final form late in 2005, comprises a valuable resource of stories about the history and cultural development of the Shire community and will be invaluable in assessing the heritage significance of sites, places, items and developments in the future. It will also provide a foundation for future interpretive projects.

Themes and topics covered in the study (London et al, 2005) include prehistory; Aboriginal occupation; land tenure; mining; townships and settlements; migration; agriculture; industry; commerce; rural services; transport; law and order; utilities; education; health; religion; recreation; wartime influences; and bushranging. In addition, almost 400 places, buildings and other items have been identified as part of a survey of heritage items, and from this list will be developed a schedule for inclusion in the draft local plan when it is exhibited.

5.4 Environmental heritage in Temora (Figure 6)

Apart from the Temora Railway Station Group there are no recorded sites of State significance within the Shire. As of 15 November 2005 there were 30 items listed by local government and State agencies. Two sites are registered and 2 sites are listed as indicative places on the Australian Heritage Council's Register of the National Estate. These are:

- Boginderra Hills Nature Reserve, registered on NER in 1991. This site's significance is in its unique vegetation community, regionally uncommon plant species and supporting important bird habitats. The Reserve (of about 554ha) is located 5km east-north-east of Trungley Hall.
- Ingalba Nature Reserve (1977 boundary) - 3455 ha, 8km west of Temora; registered on the NER in 1978. It is a significant remnant of the vegetation of the south-west slopes of New South Wales, containing woodland dominated by ironbark-cypress pine associations which have been extensively cleared for agriculture. It provides an important habitat for local fauna, of which there is a high species diversity.
- The Ingalba and Narraburra Hills Ornithological Areas are listed as indicative places (not yet registered on the NER). The areas of 640ha and 1440ha at Temora (Ariah Park Road and Trungley Morangarell Road respectively) provide important habitat for threatened bird species.

Schedule 1 of the current Temora LEP 1987 contains 19 buildings or sites of local significance. Submissions to the community consultation program revealed a strongly held view that heritage is potentially a major economic resource for the Shire, and the Schedule will be expanded in the new LEP to include items on the NSW Heritage list and those more recently identified. Heritage is a reminder, in part, of the role played by German settlers in the early days of the town and shire. Today, German names and the ancestors of the first German pioneers maintain a presence in every aspect of Temora's

life. This heritage differentiates Temora from other towns in the region and provides a unique and deep-rooted community of interest.

However, despite the recorded community view that heritage is important, Council's Heritage Advisor David Scobie reported in 2001 that there was a reluctance on the part of some building owners to retain or conserve heritage fabric or to accept expert advice on using materials and colours to retain heritage integrity. This may point to the need for more persuasive effort on the part of the Council in future, and for the inclusion of appropriate controls in the new local plan.

On the other hand, evidence of positive concern for heritage and social history in Temora can be seen through the activities of the Shire Council Heritage Committee and the appointment of the heritage advisor; the Temora Rural Museum; the Friends of the Cemeteries (Temora, Aria Park and Trungley Hall); the Aria Park Heritage Committee; the Family History Group; the Temora Aviation Museum; and the memorabilia collections of the services clubs. For Aria Park, 32 km west of Temora, the 1916 bulk wheat loading at its railway siding - the first event of its kind in rural Australia - remains a significant local heritage event.

Heritage will also be identified as a major resource in the regional tourism plan and strategy currently (2005) under way through the Department of State and Regional Development. In Temora, Heritage Advisor David Scobie reported to Council in 2001 that within the town conservation area, over 100 properties have been photographed and incorporated into the NSW Heritage Office database, whilst 35 individual buildings were recommended for listing (in the LEP).

5.5 Culture and cultural facilities in Temora

Within the Shire and surrounding districts there are more than 145 community-based organisations which together have achieved a strong social matrix which is largely self-funded and self-supported. This grass-roots matrix makes a valued contribution to the Shire's rich social heritage.

In the field of the built environment, the record shows that there was a significant investment in fine buildings - churches, banks, hotels, civic buildings - during the late 1800s and early 1900s and extending into the first half of the last century. At one point the town supported 6 theatres of various sizes.

From that high-point, there has been a notable decline to the situation today in which the Shire's community enjoys only minimal exposure to the visual, fine and performing arts. Architectural quality is also lacking, with recent commercial developments in particular reflecting an almost complete indifference to townscape quality and design excellence. This situation stands in strong contrast to the efforts of earlier generations as reflected in the distinguished civic, religious, and railway station buildings which adorn some of the key sites in town.

Today, the Shire has no identified gallery or performance space - no cultural precinct as such. This is in spite of the fact that the Shire is home to several well-established painters and to a vigorous community of artist-craft persons such as quilters, potters, paper-makers and poets. The efforts of these creative people - together with those of individual teachers of dance and music and private gallery owners - are evidenced in the various annual and bi-annual art shows, craft displays and school performances - supported by occasional light entertainment programs sponsored by service and sports clubs.

The statistical evidence suggests that there is a marked imbalance between public expenditure on sporting events and facilities on the one hand, and on the arts and cultural enterprises on the other. This imbalance has the potential to have an adverse impact on the Shire's overall image as a good place to live and invest. Perhaps the advent of a new local plan will provide the opportunity for this imbalance to be redressed, on the basis that the good work that the Council is currently doing in the drive for more economic development will be enhanced by ensuring that future residents will in due course have access to a much wider range of cultural assets than currently exists.

Note: The 2005 Council decision to undertake the current up-grade of the town hall will go some way towards redressing the imbalance noted above.

5.6 Temora Town Centre and Main Street

A Main Street Study was conducted in 2001 by consultant David Scobie. Its findings pointed to the need for a program of works and civic improvements to achieve the following objectives - all of which remain current at the time of writing.

- Reduce traffic conflict between pedestrians, vehicles (including heavy freight transports), and cyclists.
- Increase the safety of all road and pavement users.
- Improve the quality and amenity of the central section of the main street (Hoskins Street) for all users.
- Enhance the economic performance of the commercial functions within the main street.
- Consistent with the above, maintain the traffic and parking with the central area.
- Develop and implement an integrated plan which offers an acceptable balance between benefits and costs, whilst being acceptable and affordable to the community.

The 2001 study confirmed that the general environmental quality of the main street was declining. Pedestrians continued to take second place to drivers and vehicular traffic - indicating an unacceptable priority for the very area in which pedestrian needs should come first. Pavements were not attractive; landscaping and street furniture tended to be poorly designed; noise and vehicle emissions were excessive for what should be a priority pedestrian space. Council has since responded to the findings of the 2001 study by commissioning a major re-design and upgrade of the shopfront pavements in the core retail area of Hoskins Street, between the two roundabouts: work on this project is approaching completion at the time of writing.

Likewise, there has been effort on repainting and repair of several main street heritage facades had been suffering poor maintenance. However, the occasional street tree seems to struggle for survival, and despite recent efforts more needs to be done to create a truly memorable landscape experience in Hoskins Street. The wide road pavement remains the dominant visual element - reinforcing the perception that the town centre exists to serve vehicles rather than people.

As noted elsewhere in this document, the future of the town centre - seen as the principal civic space and symbol of the modern Temora - is inextricably linked to the wider strategic planning issue of an alternative route for heavy vehicular traffic as well as to the long term need for a major town by-pass. Any consideration of alternative route options will have implications for the main street in particular and for the future shape of the urban area in general. The two issues go hand in hand.

If the experience in other places is any guide, it would seem clear that the convenience benefits of an alternative route or by-pass from the point of view of the heavy freight industry are paralleled by the civic benefits which can follow the removal of noise, pollution, danger and disturbance from the main street environment. If Temora's town centre is to 'hold its head high' as an attractive and civilised place in which to socialise and do business in the future, the heavy trucks and through traffic must be re-routed - thereby paving the way for the much-needed main-street transformation which is today seen as a top civic priority (as confirmed in responses to the 2004 Discussion Paper). In this context, there is a strong case for the early creation of at least one small traffic-free pedestrian zone within the central area. Evidence world-wide shows that every town needs such a space. If community sentiment as recently revealed by the Discussion paper and the Main Street Study is to be taken seriously, it is time for Temora to take the appropriate action and designate such a space - even if only on a trial basis.

5.7 Ariaiah Park

The historic village centre and main street in Ariaiah Park have recently seen a significant up-grade and more improvements are foreshadowed. As an example of a small rural township with a rich heritage, Ariaiah Park provides an interesting and attractive contrast to the much larger town of Temora. A vigorous community has produced a draft development plan and strategy for strengthening the village's future role and for exploiting the opportunities for growth which are offering.

An element of the Ariaiah Park strategy covers the needs of people who may be seeking opportunities for living on small acreages close to the township. The community generally is supportive of a proposal to expand the current Village zoning on the outskirts, especially in the area between the Barmedman and Cemetery Roads.

Other projects which are being promoted within the Ariaiah Park Strategy include improvements in Davey Park, shop-front up-grades in Coolamon Street, enhancement and expansion of the caravan park, improved signage and roadside information bays, and a rolling program of local events and attractions. A central aim of the strategy is to exploit tourism for the long term commercial and social benefit of the community.

5.8 Springdale village

The small hamlet of Springdale lies on the road to Cootamundra about 15 minutes drive east from Temora. Currently it is home to about 80 people - with another 40 or so in the adjoining rural area. Services are minimal, due in the main to Springdale's proximity to Temora. Its future is uncertain, although there is potential to attract new settlers if a supply of land for small-lot farm lets and rural residential development could be opened up by releasing an earlier 'paper' subdivision which was never developed. The village hall gets regular use, and the picnic ground and public toilets are valued by travellers. Mains water is a major asset, especially if further urban development is to be considered.

5.9 Reefton

Like Springdale, the remnant mining settlement of Reefton, some 25k north of Temora town, has an uncertain future. The hamlet is unlikely to survive unless there is a combined effort by the remaining property owners, the Shire Council and the Department of Lands (Crown Lands) to develop a plan for its rehabilitation and renewal.

5.10 Other localities

Reminders of earlier historic events, noted settlers, and places of importance to the traditional owners can be found in the names of localities on the Shire map: Combaning, Trungley Hall, Pucawan, Narraburra, Sebastopol, Mimosa, and Bectric. All these names contribute to the overall richness of the Shire's heritage and can be recognised as small yet valuable elements in Temora's cultural landscape.
