



Colony's finest vineyard

Brush Farm at Eastwood once included the colony's finest vineyard. Originally about 450 acres in size, it is a rare remnant of a colonial farm.

The farm house was built by Gregory Blaxland from 1819 to 1820. Its later wings, stables, outbuildings, landscaped grounds and carriage loop demonstrated his position and status. Gregory and brother, John, were involved in a wide variety of agricultural pursuits and experimentation, one of which was the establishment of Australia's first commercial vineyard.

Gregory Blaxland, a founding member of the 1822 Agricultural Society of NSW, planted two vineyards at the farm. His efforts were rewarded when the Royal Society of Arts in London awarded his wine a silver medal in 1823 and a gold in 1828. Brush Farm's vineyards were considered the finest in NSW.

The farm remained in the family until 1881 when it was mortgaged to Lancelot Trekel and John Bennett, who subdivided and sold it. Bennet saw an opportunity in Brush Farm's proximity to the new Northern Railway Line. The subdivision left about 1000 square metres around the farm house. In 1894, this was leased to (later resumed by) the Crown and run as the Carpentarian Reformatory for Boys. From 1911 to 1921 it housed wayward girls, then mothers and babies and later intellectually disadvantaged children. It was transferred to the Department of Corrective Services (DOCS) in 1988 and used as a training academy – a use which continues on the site today.

In 1989, the farm house and its curtilage were listed on the State Heritage Register. Ryde Council acquired the house and core curtilage in 1990 and around the same time the Heritage Council provided a grant for a conservation plan and garden study.

In 2004, Council secured \$800,000 from DOCS to partly-fund adaptation works, dependent on DOCS' ongoing use of the house for training. In 2005, the Heritage Council approved its adaptation as a public arts and heritage facility, and works were undertaken to allow for start-up small businesses, public meetings, exhibitions and functions.

Council received another heritage grant in 2007 of \$69,000 for landscaping and interpretation and contributed \$1.2 million itself for works such as fencing,

Brush Farm House.
Photo by Stuart Read

footpaths, a reinstated pleasure garden, driveway and carriage loop, and the maintenance of exotic plantings and native flora. In the same year the house was reopened to the community.

Last year Council gained approval for more landscaping to enable the homestead and garden to host community events and activities.

The Heritage Council is pleased to have played a part in reviving such a highly prized community asset.

NSW Heritage Grants

The NSW Government provided \$5.458 million funding to the 2011-13 NSW Heritage Grants program and a further \$2 million for the Hunter Region Heritage Grants program.

Successful projects were announced in March 2011 and are posted on the Heritage website www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/funding

For further information visit the website or contact: Victoria Throp on telephone 02 9873 8577 or email: victoria.throp@planning.nsw.gov.au