

Hornsby Archaeological Heritage Study 2021

Inventory Sheet

Site ID no.	A7		
Item name	Fretus Hotel Ruins		
Address	68 Calabash Point, Berowra Waters NSW 2082		
Geographical coordinates (GDA94)	Easting 325072, Northing 6281920		
Cadastral location	County: Cumberland Parish: North Colah Lot/Section/DP: Lot 3 DP 882783		
Statutory listings	Register	Listing title	Listing number
	State Heritage Register	-	-
	Hornsby LEP 2013 - Schedule 5	Fretus Hotel Ruins	A7
Non-statutory listings	National Trust Australia Register	-	-
	1993 Hornsby Heritage Study	Arcadia Fretus hotel ruins	001
Significance level	Local	Arch. potential	High

Physical description

The remains of a structure located on Calabash Point, surrounded by dense native forest. It is located at the high point of Calabash Point, at the end of a fire trail (HLEP Item A6). The external sandstone walls and internal divides of the main structure are largely still standing. In some places the plaster coating of the interior walls is still present and is marked with graffiti. The earliest graffiti dates to the 1930s.

To the south of the main building is a single room toilet block. The north of the building is bounded by a terraced garden or orchard with stone steps leading down to the water. To the west of the building there is a path leading to a stone bridge with an ornamental water feature. There is a small quarry located to the east of the building.

Aerial photographs demonstrate that the site has not been significantly developed or disturbed in recent years. The physical condition of the site, beyond what is visible through aerial photographs, is unknown.

Historical notes

Berowra Waters

Once known as Dust Hole Bay, the area around Berowra Waters was marked on Captain John Hunter's charts as early as 1789. In 1829 the entire length of Berowra Creek was mapped by assistant surveyor William Romaine Govett. In the 1820s early colonists who came to the area were predominantly lime burners. They gathered materials for lime burning from Aboriginal midden deposits. Later, after midden deposits were reduced, harvesting of Sydney Rock Oysters in the area led to the development of the commercial oyster farming industry. In 1884 the industry was regulated through the development of the Fisheries Oyster Farms Act. The area remained remote and inaccessible except by water throughout the nineteenth century until the Berowra Water Road was constructed on both sides of the Berowra Creek between 1900 and 1902 by unemployed labourers. Road access opened the region to further settlement and industry. To link both sides of the creek, the Berowra Waters Ferry was introduced. The cable ferry spanned 250m across the creek. It opened in 1902 and was run by Jack Smith. The ferry was electrified in 1931 by Rex Jones. The original stone quays have since been covered in concrete.

The opening of Berowra Waters Road led to an influx of visitors. To accommodate the influx, hotels and guesthouses sprang up in the area. Rex Jones owned a boat hire service in the area that operated from 1925 until his death in 1936. Jones was also responsible for the development of the public wharf, parking area and pool that now bears his name on the western side of the water.

Fretus 'Hotel'

The Frater family were hoteliers from Sans Souci. In 1900 John Frater was gifted 40 acres at Calabash Point by his mother-in-law, Sarah Dolan. Prior to Frater's ownership, no development had taken place on the allotment. Frater's plans to build a hotel may have been partially prompted by proposals to build a new road between Berowra Railway Station to Berowra Creek. The proposed road was never built however, as the route was deemed too expensive. Despite this, Frater and his wife did build a structure on the property, which is now known as the "Fretus Hotel Ruins". The precise date of construction is unclear. There is also no evidence that it was ever a licensed hotel, and is more likely to have been used as a second residence by the Frater family.

In 1912 Frater placed his Sans Souci hotel and the surrounding land up for sale, and in 1913 he and his wife packed their belongings and headed to the "Berowra Property" on a steamship. The Fraters' time at Calabash Point, however, appears to have been short lived. By 1917 John Frater was back in his hometown of Narrabri, once again working as grazier. The structure at Calabash Point is believed to have been used as private residence for a period, before being abandoned and falling into disrepair.

In 1929, the executors of the Estate of John Frater described the Calabash Point property as approximately "38 and a half acres" in an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. They stated that it was being sold together with "the stone cottage and other improvements thereon." This suggests that at this point the buildings were still habitable. The property appears to have fallen into disrepair over the following years, with the buildings suffering from vandalism and bushfires, as visible today through the lack of roof and extensive graffiti within the structure.

Summary of known and potential archaeological resources

Although seemingly occupied for only a short period of time, archaeological resources at the site have the potential to inform our knowledge of settlement, domestic life and business in this remote area of Berowra Waters in the early twentieth century. Potential archaeological resources may include sub-surface structures such as wells, cesspits and cisterns, underfloor deposits and rubbish pits, as well as the extant structural remains at the site.

NSW heritage criteria for assessing significance related to archaeological sites and relics

a) Archaeological research potential (current NSW Heritage Criterion E)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Associations with individuals, events or groups of historical importance (NSW Heritage Criteria A, B, and D)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Aesthetic or technical significance (NSW Heritage Criterion C)	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Ability to demonstrate the past through archaeological remains (NSW Heritage Criteria A, C, F, and G)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

NSW heritage criteria¹

Criterion (a) historical significance	The potential archaeological resource may have historical value through remains associated with the settlement, domestic life and business of the area in the early twentieth century.
Criterion (b) historical associative significance	The potential archaeological resource may have associative value because of its connection to hotelier and prominent local figure John Frater.
Criterion (c) aesthetic/technical significance	Based on the current assessment of the potential archaeological resource at this site, it is unlikely to meet the threshold under this criterion.
Criterion (d) social/cultural significance	Based on the current assessment of the potential archaeological resource at this site, it is unlikely to meet the threshold under this criterion.
Criterion (e) research potential	The potential archaeological resource is likely to have research value because of its potential to shed new light on the development of this remote area of Berowra Waters in the early twentieth century.

¹ This site has been assessed against the NSW Heritage Criteria for assessing significance related to archaeological sites and relics (prepared by the Heritage Branch, formerly Department of Planning NSW, now the Heritage Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet in December 2009) and therefore assessed with a focus on the criteria relevant for research potential. The other NSW Heritage criteria have been summarised for the purpose of entry into the State Heritage Inventory.

Criterion (f) rarity	Based on the current assessment of the potential archaeological resource at this site, it is unlikely to meet the threshold under this criterion.
Criterion (g) representative	The potential archaeological resource may have representative value through remains associated with the early development of the area.

Revised statement of archaeological significance

Existing statement of archaeological significance

Prominently sited landmark of high visual appeal which also has historic importance as record of early attempt at Tourism in area. Because it was abandoned early, the site has archaeological potential for studying deposits associated with leisure in the early 20th century.

Revised statement of archaeological significance

The potential archaeological resource at the site is assessed as being of local significance. Remains may have archaeological research value, and the potential to inform understanding of settlement, domestic life and business in this remote area of Berowra Waters in the early twentieth century. The site is also significant because of its association with the hotelier and prominent local figure John Frater, who attempted to establish a tourist base at Calabash Point only to be thwarted by the rerouting of what would become Berowra Waters and Bay Roads.

Management recommendations

- Retain Local Heritage Listing in HLEP.
- Prior to any development proposal that may disturb the ground surface, this item should be subject to an Archaeological Assessment to determine whether the archaeological resource may be impacted and what further archaeological assessment or management may be required.
- Management of this site should be undertaken in accordance with Heritage Act, EP & A Act, HLEP and HDCP.

Other recommendations and/or comments:

- This item should be renamed to reflect the updated historical information concerning Frater's ownership. "Frater's Ruins" is recommended for consideration as a new name.
- The address for this item has been updated. Update HLEP to reflect change.

Maps



Resources

Previous studies and references

Darby, G., 2014. *Baths and Boatsheds: The waterfront community at Sans Souci, 1895-1965*. Ramsgate NSW

GML Heritage. 2021. 'Hornsby Thematic History'. Unpublished report prepared by GML Heritage for Hornsby Shire Council Sydney: Hornsby Shire Council.

Higginbotham, E., 1993. 'Hornsby Shire Heritage Study, Volume 4: Archaeology Report'. Unpublished report prepared by E. Higginbotham for Perumal Murphy Wu. PDF file.

Kass, T. 1993. 'Hornsby Shire Heritage Study, Volume 1: Thematic History'. Unpublished report prepared by T. Kass for Perumal Murphy Wu. PDF file.

Heritage NSW. Fretus Hotel Ruins. Retrieved 14 May 2021. <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1780001>

Rowland, J. 2008. *Berowra Waters*. Dictionary of Sydney. Retrieved 13 May 2021, https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/berowra_waters

Joffe, M. 1987. *Yarns and Photos: Beautiful Old Berowra and Hornsby to the Hawkesbury*, Sandstone Press: Berowra Heights.

New South Wales Government Gazette, Tue 6 Feb 1900 [Issue No. 111], p. 1035 'Applications for Leases for Oyster Culture'

The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 23 Nov 1929, p. 27

Site images



Figure 1. External wall of the Frater's Ruins (Source: Hornsby Shire Council).



Figure 2. Internal corridor of the Frater's Ruins (Source: Hornsby Shire Council).



Figure 3. Remains of a fireplace in the Frater's Ruins (Source: Hornsby Shire Council).

Recorder's details

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