

found in bushland

can confirm if the ruins he has located are of Georgian homestead Sophienburg



Glen op den Brouw stands among the ruins. Picture: Melvyn Knipe. Inset: A typical Georgian 10-room mansion.

LIVERPOOL

SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON SOPHIENBURG

IF SOPHIENBURG had endured, it would have been the pearl of Liverpool's colonial history. "It's funny because everyone sort of bows to Collingwood (House) but that's only because it's a survivor," City of Liverpool and District Historical Society's Glen op den Brouw said. "If this had survived, it would be the grand estate of Liverpool and it didn't survive." "That's the tragedy. If it had survived, forget Collingwood, we've got Sophienburg. It was as good as whatever was around at the time."

The discovery of the ruins has even piqued the interest of former Liverpool mayor Ned Mannoun, who rang Mr op den Brouw about it. During their discussion, Mr Mannoun suggested the society get in touch with the council to help them find an archaeologist to study the site. The former mayor said he was a strong supporter of preserving the area's history. "In order to know where you want to go, you have to know where you came from," he said.

Liverpool Leader/30 Nov 2016 by Cindy Ngo

Casula Lost Estate

Historical society chief hopes an archaeologist

Runes of a long-lost Georgian estate once owned by prominent figures from Liverpool's history have been discovered but an archaeologist is needed to uncover the story behind the enigmatic site.

The remnants of Sophienburg estate were found last by the City of Liverpool and District Historical Society's president Glen op den Brouw.

Working on a bunch about where the estate would have lain, the Liverpool resident was walking through dense bushland in Casula when he stumbled upon several stone pieces.

The ruins were buried beneath thick layers of wandering fern, making it difficult to ascertain the scale of the rubble. But further investigation revealed bricks strewn all over the site. Heart indentations on one side of some of the bricks, indicated they were convict bricks predating the 1840s.

This added weight to Mr. op den Brouw's hypothesis the ruins were that of the long lost Sophienburg estate.

However, to grasp the scale and significance of the find, Mr. op den Brouw says an archaeologist is needed to study the ruins.

"We need the advice of a professional to see actually what's there and to do a bit of digging." Mr. op den Brouw said.

He said that historical society did not have the funds to recruit an expert, but Liverpool Council could play a role.

“If the council asks for (a heritage grant), the estate would arguably have been the most revered colonial historical asset in Liverpool today.

Set on 300 acres(121ha) of land, the house has 10 rooms and several outbuildings including a kitchen, coach house, servants’ room, stables, dairy, barn and a number of farm homesteads.

Nobody knows when or who built the estate, but records show it was owned by George Muckle in 1832 and named Narrawa. Mr. Muckle built a windmill on the site but overextended his finances, becoming insolvent in 1843. That year, ownership of the estate passed to Thomas Holt, who named it Sophienburg after his German-born wife Sophia.

The Australian pastoralist, company director and politician was the first colonial treasurer in NSW. He was also the co-founder of the Australian Mutual Provident Society, which held its first meeting at Sophienburg.

In 1853, the estate was sold to famous Liverpool entrepreneur and wool merchant James Atkenson, who developed it by setting up an irrigation system, a railwayline, piggery, abattoir and terrace cottages for workers under his employ.

Mr. Atkinson, who also experimented with breeding alpacas at the estate, was forced to sell it after becoming insolvent in 1863.

An 1865 ad by real estate agency Richardson and Wrench described it as a “delightfully situated gentleman’s country seat”.

“The position is very beautiful, elevated, and healthy, commanding one of the most extensive panoramic views in the country of Cumberland.” the ad stated.

From the 1860s, it passed through the hands of NSW MP Saul Samuel and former Liverpool mayor Ted Ashcroft, who bought Sophienburg in 1910.

It was later sold in the 1930s, but little is known about the once grand estate thereafter.