

# Technical Report 5

## RYDE URBAN VILLAGES STUDY:

Cultural Heritage of Ryde

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

*" . . . heritage embodies a selected cluster of approved habits, beliefs and relics. . . Heritage in short, has quasi-religious status. It is unassailable on two counts: as essential to a group's identity and hence welfare; and as by definition desirable."<sup>1</sup>*

This report identifies elements of Ryde's cultural heritage landscape. Identifying Ryde's cultural heritage landscape will enable a sense of identity and a sense of place to be developed and fostered.

The report contains:

- Outline of the concept of cultural identity and the impact of cultural heritage on the urban fabric and the community..
- Ryde's cultural heritage.
- Implications for Ryde.

## 2.0 CULTURAL IDENTITY & CULTURAL HERITAGE

### 2.1 Cultural Identity

Cultural heritage provides a means by which a community can maintain and develop an identity and sense of place. It provides a controlling mechanism and also provides meaning to particular tangible, and subsequently intangible, aspects of a place. A sense of identity and place is therefore not only derived from the physical environment, but also from the meanings that are attached to components of the physical environment and the social relations that construct them.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural identity is:

- Determined by the social and institutional linkages that connect people to one place and dictate how they should behave and lead their lives.
- Concerned with where one stays and one's roots are, and consequently where long standing social traditions can develop.
- Based on the limitations on technology and options to effect changes to the environment, or on the ability to move freely from one place to another. As long as the need to work within the limits of the environment and society exists, the sense of cultural identity is maintained.

Such traditions, identified by cultural heritage, provide the best opportunities for an investment in one's own place, in the community and the land.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Impact of Cultural Heritage on Urban Fabric

- Links past and present, both physically and experientially, enhancing a sense of place and identity.
- Cultural heritage provides essential reference points in a community's identity, providing a spiritual or traditional connection between the past and present. Such reference points include civic buildings and spaces which through accessibility develop associations and values within the community.
- Adverse development of cultural heritage can lead to community outcry and promote an awareness to the social value of their heritage, and towards the conservation of it.
- Urban development should be related to the cultural context of the patterns of settlement and development. The process and continuity in the cultural fabric of the urban environment, promote and propagate a sense of identity and sense of place.
- Urban design concepts which foster cultural identity and sense of place are imageability, community focus, variety and legibility.

## 3.0 RYDE'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Ryde's cultural heritage has been subject to two major studies, *Ryde Heritage Study* 1988 and *Focus on Ryde* 1992, which provide surveys and a heritage inventory, and a thematic history of the area. In addition, a policy for the conservation of the cultural heritage of Ryde was developed. Therefore, how the cultural heritage reflects the development and evolution of the community and landscape, that is, how cultural heritage impacts on the urban morphology and the relationship between the functional and physical aspects of Ryde, will be illustrated. Also, Ryde's cultural heritage demonstrates the interaction between man and the natural environment in creating a cultural identity, with the shaping of the inherent natural landscape into a cultural landscape by human activity over time.

The previous studies on Ryde's cultural heritage have identified key themes in the historical development of Ryde which will be used in this discussion. The studies also provide the major sources for this report. The key themes are as follows:

- Natural Landscape
- Aboriginal Ryde
- European Discovery and Settlement
- Nineteenth Century Settlement

- Transport and Communication
- Suburban Development
- Farming, Industry and Commerce
- Community Development

### 3.1 Natural Landscape

*"The history of Ryde in terms of landscape parallels the history of the development of the colony - development which altered the whole Municipality almost completely from the natural environment presented to the first explorers and settlers."*<sup>4</sup>

Some of the natural landscape features of the Ryde area which are inherent in the shaping of the cultural heritage landscape are identified as follows:

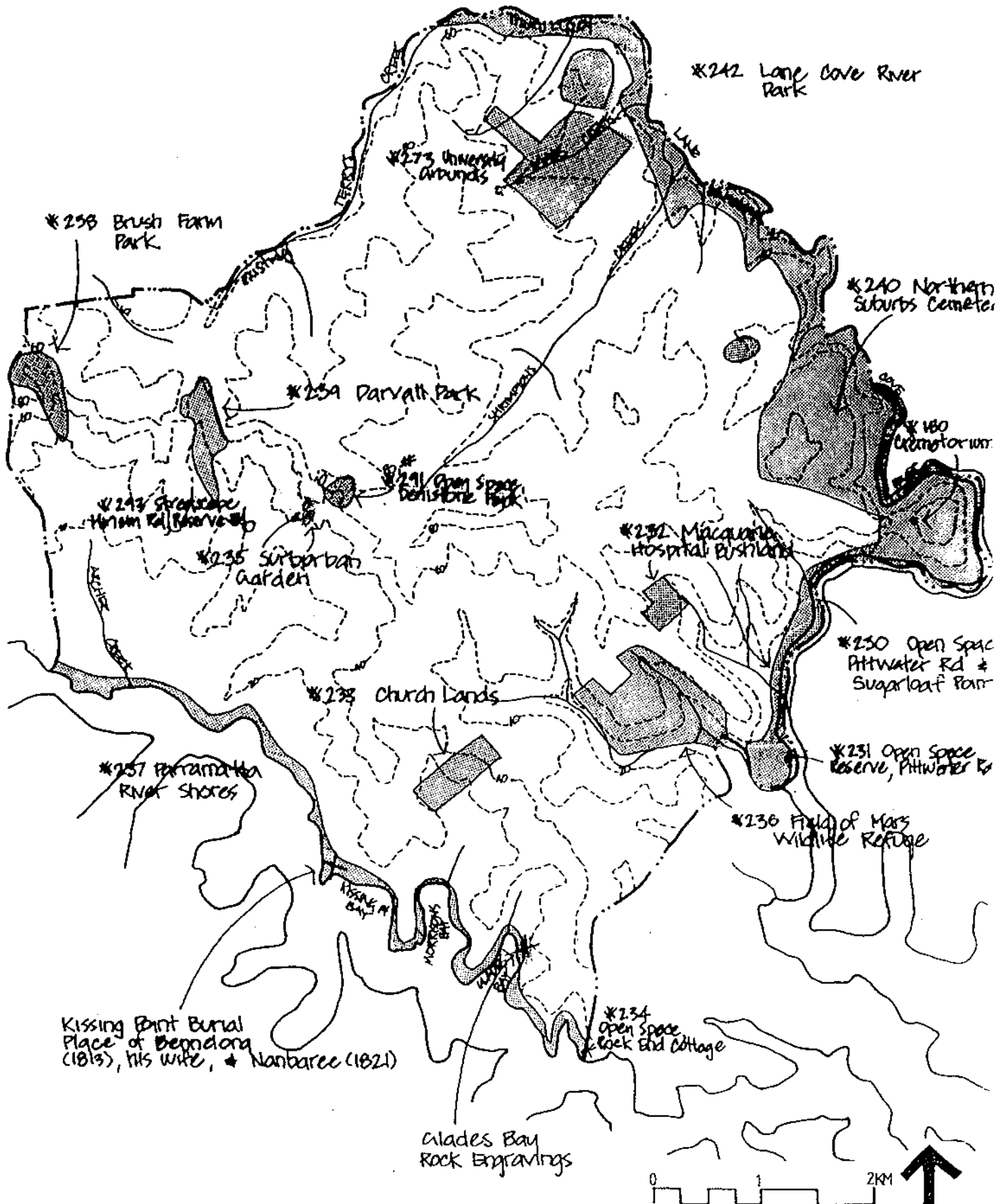
- Topography ranges in height from sea level to almost 100 metres encompassing large areas of undulating ground. The area is bounded on the south by Parramatta River, and on the north and north east by Lane Cove River. The land between the rivers is a plateau, dominated by ridges of high ground running east/west and falling away toward Lane Cove River. The area was drained by a number of streams.
- Valleys open up vistas along corridors and their relatively infertile soils and their steepness prevented development, with the result that they no remain as recreation reserves or drainage corridors.
- The steepness of the margins facing the rivers permit many areas of Ryde to offer extensive, attractive views across large areas of Sydney. The more elevated sections of the ridge offer splendid and extensive views of the most of the County of Cumberland.
- It is assumed that the area would have contained substantial forests prior to European settlement. In addition the area was rich in food sources.

### 3.2 Aboriginal Ryde

- Original inhabitants of Ryde were the Walumeda people who occupied the fertile northern side of the Parramatta River from Lane Cove to Parramatta.
- Some of their rock engravings survive along the river at the end of Linsley Street, near Glade's Bay (see Map 1).
- Aboriginal responses to European occupation ranged from curiosity and accommodation to fear and resistance. Europeans exploited the Aboriginal people's knowledge of the land, plants and animals from initial contact.

Map 1. Known Aboriginal Sites & Natural Areas

(Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., Ryde Heritage Study, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988.)



### 3.3 European Discovery and Settlement

- Farming needs of the new colony led to settlement in the area in 1792, the third region to be settled in the colony. They were situated on the Parramatta River midway between Sydney and Parramatta (see Map 2).
- These farms were known as the 'Field of Mars', occupied by soldiers, and the 'Eastern Farms', settled by ex-convict men and women.
- Initial crops to be cultivated included wheat and maize. Subsequent land grants saw the grazing of livestock and the planting of orchards in Meadowbank, North Ryde and Epping.
- By 1804 the pattern of occupation of Ryde was clear. Settlement was based along Parramatta River and the overlooking ridges while the northern half and the Lane Cove River frontage remained unoccupied for most of the nineteenth century.

### 3.4 Nineteenth Century Settlement

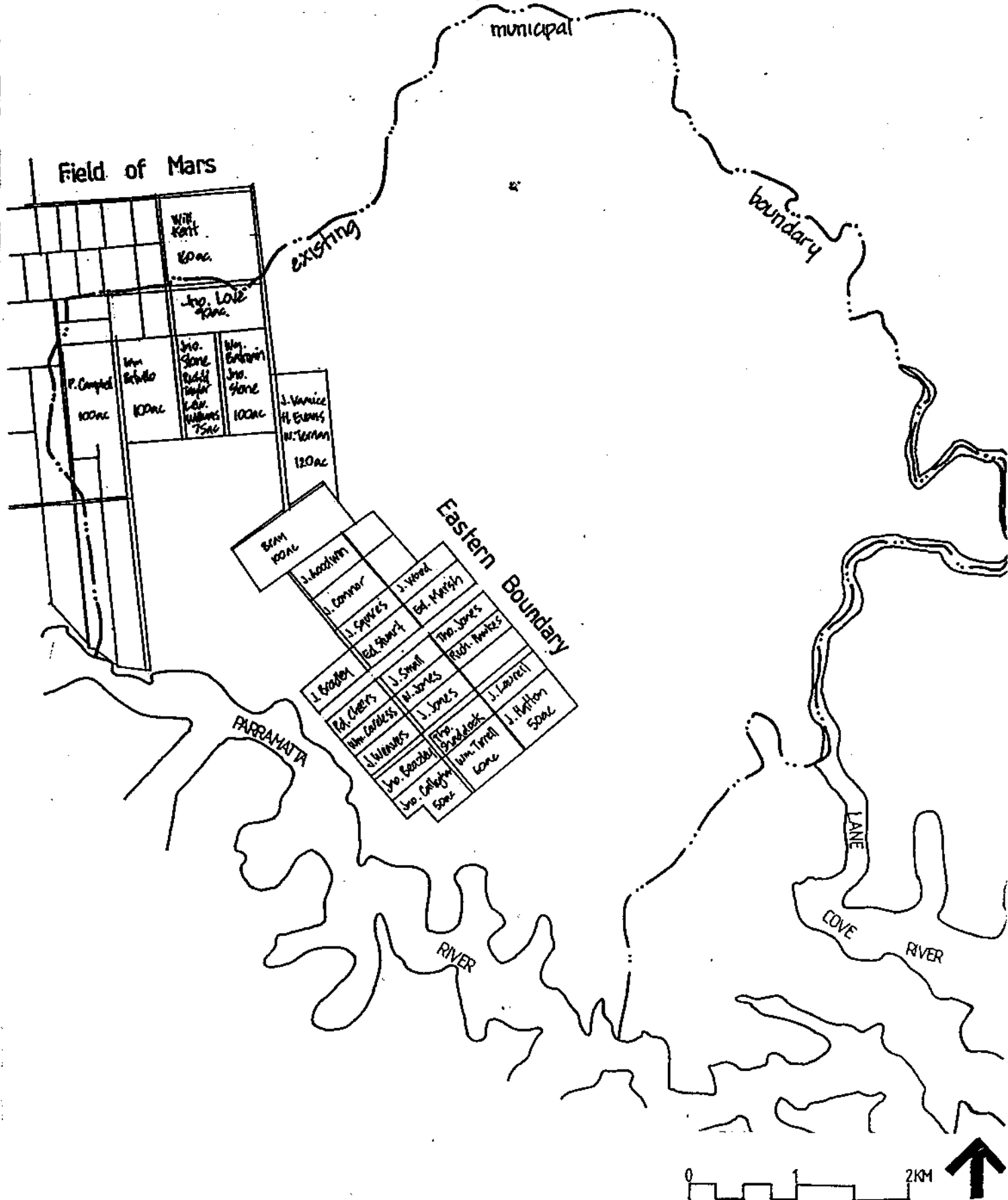
- Farms were developed by free settlers and emancipists. These settlement patterns maintained the original social and geographic segregation that had been made between the grants to free men in the west, closer to Parramatta, and the more isolated grants to ex-convicts in the east (see Maps 3. & 4).
- The oldest surviving homes of these settlers and their descendants are Brush Farm (c. 1820), Addington (c. 1830), Willandra (1840-41), Eastwood House (1840) and the Hermitage (1841). Some of these are located at the most elevated sections of the topography, offering spectacular views of the environs, and underlining the social importance and status of the occupants.
- Some of the occupants are of local and national significance. James Squire of Kissing Point was the first colonist to successfully brew from hops and Gregory Blaxland of Brush Farms sent the first colonial wine to England. William Forster of Brush Farm and James Farnell of Squireville were premiers of New South Wales.
- Orchard continued to be the predominant land use.

### 3.5 Transport and Communication

- Ryde provided the essential link to the communication life line, between Sydney and Parramatta from early settlement. The semaphore flag system operated from the early settlement until the 1830s.

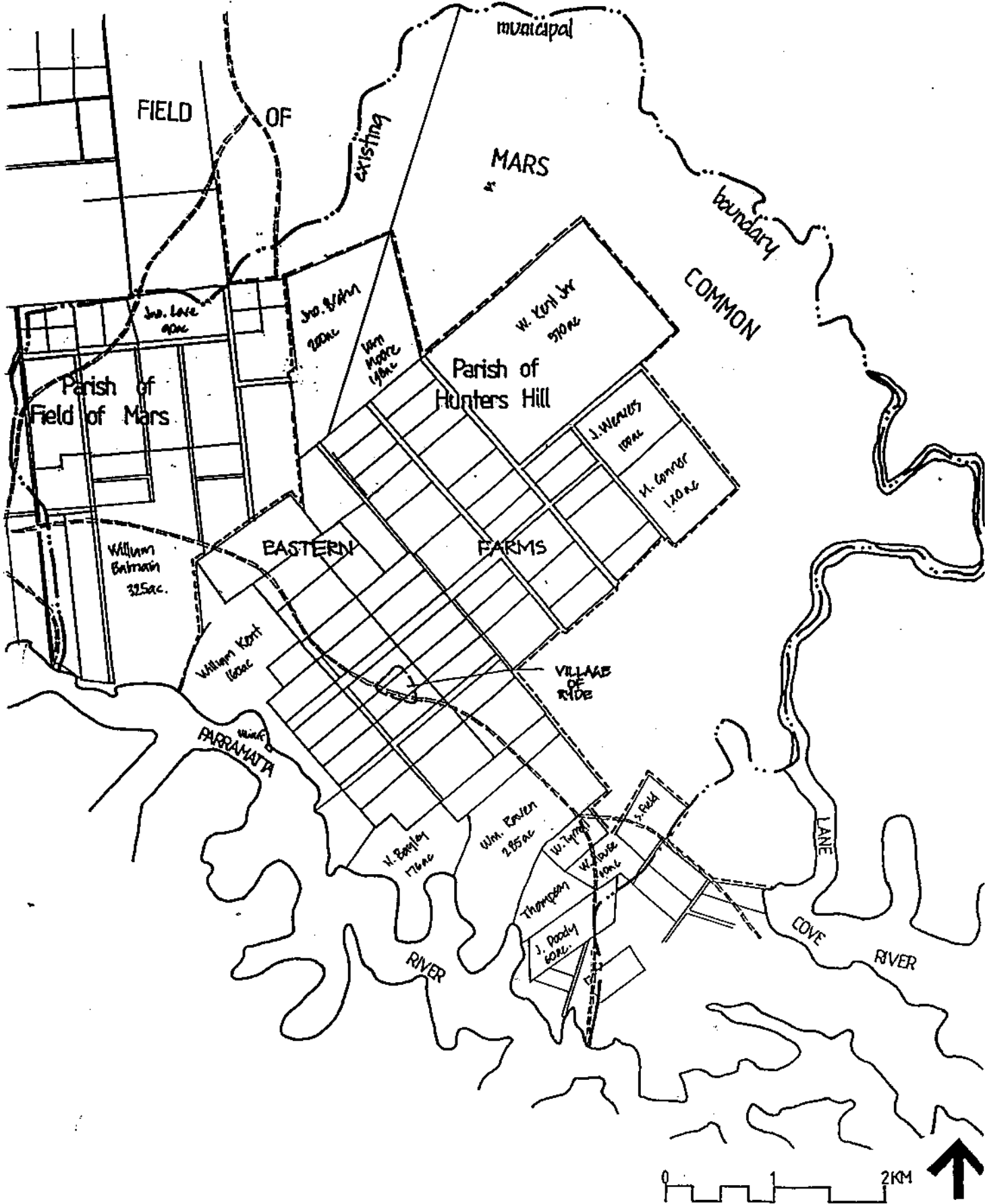
**Map 2. Early Land Grants 1796**

(Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., *Ryde Heritage Study*, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988.)



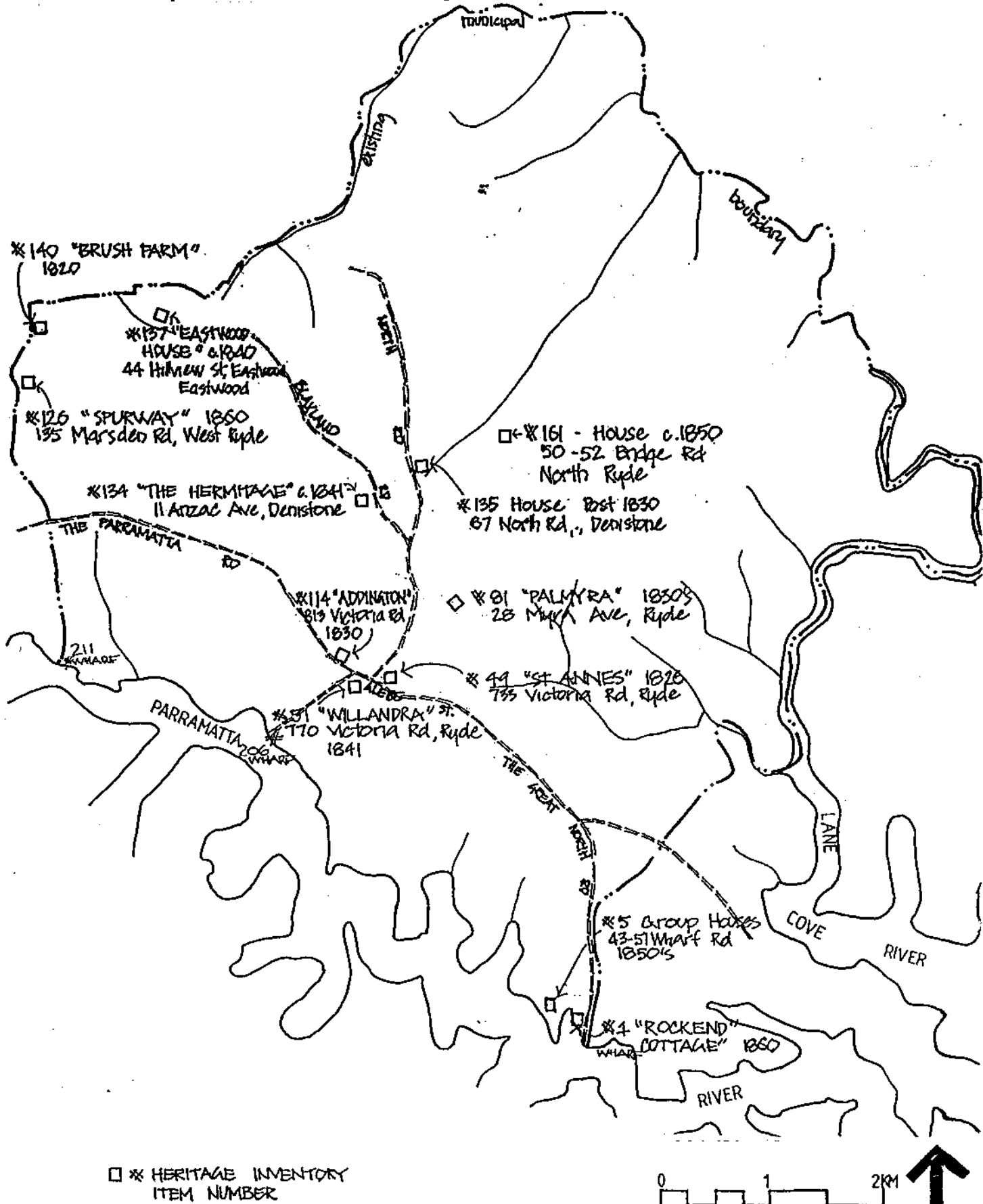
Map 3. Subdivision of Ryde 1862

(Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., Ryde Heritage Study, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988.)



**Map 4. Mid-Nineteenth Century Estates**

(Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., Ryde Heritage Study, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988.)



- The continuing development of Ryde was strongly influenced by its transport facilities.
- The rivers provided the only initial link between Sydney and Parramatta, transporting the Ryde citizens and their produce. Ferries were plying the rivers from 1794. The rivers also isolated Ryde from the development of Sydney.
- Substantial development of the area came with the construction of the Gladesville Bridge in 1881 and the Iron Cove Bridge in 1882, providing direct land access to Sydney. Later Ryde Bridge (1936) and Epping Road (1940) also provided new direct transport routes.
- More intensive settlement came with fast, economical transport provided by the Main Northern Railway (1886) through the western sector of the municipality. It also created new centres at Eastwood and West Ryde.
- In 1910-11 the long demanded tram from the city over the Gladesville Bridge arrived. The introduction of the tram led to a most dramatic increase in population.

### **3.6 Suburban Development**

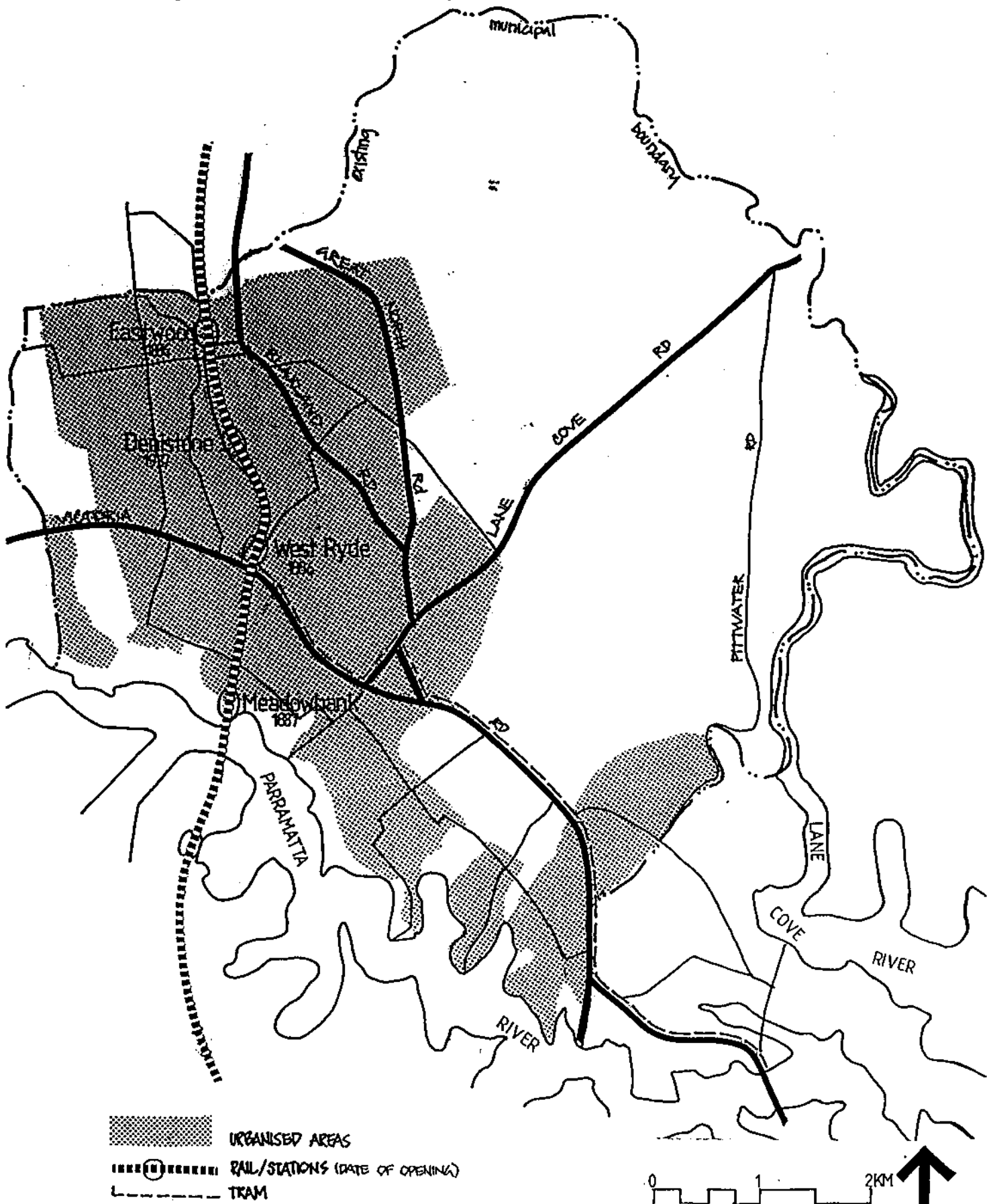
- Better transport and therefore better accessibility led to the profitability and feasibility of real estate subdivisions. These subdivisions followed the patterns of the transport routes along the main roads and close to the railways (see Map 5).
- Rapid suburban growth occurred after the World War II, encouraged by Ryde Council with its own housing scheme.
- Suburban development brought about the demise of rural Ryde.
- Current dwellings in the suburban fabric still maintain the original sense of social segregation. For example, Denistone exudes affluence situated at the top of the hill over looking the flats (in all meanings of the word) of West Ryde.

### **3.7 Farming, Industry and Commerce**

- Ryde was essentially rural area until 1880s, and semi-rural until post-1945. Timber was cut in the north. Intensive agricultural development occurred in the well-drained slopes of the area near the Parramatta River. Orchards were integral components of rural Ryde, and the area is associated with the development of Granny Smith apples, amongst other things.
- Industrial achievements include Squire's brewery, Meadowbank

### Map 5. Early Urbanisation

(Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., *Ryde Heritage Study*, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988.)



Manufacturing Works producing agricultural machinery until 1937, and the current light industrial area of North Ryde, where development was advantageous with easy topography, low density current land use, access to transport links and ease of service installations. Other industries included slaughtering and offal, dairies, quarries and boat building.

- Initial commercial development centred on the hillside around St. Anne's Church. The development of the roads and railway saw commercial activity around Gladesville, Eastwood and West Ryde. Most recently the Macquarie shopping centre services North Ryde.

### **3.8 Community Development**

- Predictably, church life has dominated community activities since settlement. St. Anne's (1826), on the hill, dominates the urban fabric physically and spiritually. The Methodist and Catholic churches also played a prominent role.
- Educational facilities have played a continuous, and increasingly predominant and integral role in Ryde's community, particularly with the development of facilities like Macquarie University, the Australian Film and Television School and Meadowbank Technical College.
- Health facilities were developed with the attraction of the high altitudes and the rural environment, synonymous with health in the nineteenth century. Both specialised and general health care were and are provided.
- The municipal government was established in 1871, encouraging development. This role continues today from the council chambers perched on top of the hill, dominating the surrounding landscape.
- Recreational activities were strongly influenced by the water and included swimming and sculling, with world class sculling events held in the area, as well as world class champions coming from Ryde. Picture theatres were established in the early 1900s, and dances were the only indoor recreation until 1945. Shopping malls, inadequately, provide community focal points today.

### **4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR RYDE**

- Ryde's cultural heritage demonstrates the natural and cultural forces that make it a distinct urban environment. Cultural heritage of Ryde is significant at a local level as it reflects the development of the community and its cultural landscape. It is associated with significant persons and achievements in the evolution of Australia since

settlement. It demonstrates and typifies the cultural process of development which has shaped urban Australia.

- Ryde's cultural heritage provides a means to overcome the social and physical fragmentation of the area through its conservation, enhancement and development.
- The thematic history of the development of the cultural heritage of Ryde should be translated and incorporated in to the development of the urban fabric, both physically and experientially. This should be done in conjunction with the widespread community, who must firstly be informed and educated in the cultural significance of their area, and how it is pivotal in the development of a sense of identity and place.
- Though urban development means the continuous modification and addition to the fabric at a hardware level, it also involves the continuum and cultivation of a sense of identity and a sense of place on the software level. It is cultural heritage that provides the basis for the software.

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- 1 David Lowenthal, *Heritage - unique and universal*, Paper presented to Heritage and Memory Conference, Human Research Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1991, p. 13.
  - 2 S. Watson, 'Contested spaces: cross-cultural issues in planning', *Culture & Policy*, vol. 4, 1992, p. 20.
  - 3 M. Hough, *Out of Place. Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape*, Halliday Lithograph, USA, 1990, pp. 34 & 58.
  - 4 Jonathan Falk Planning Consultants Pty. Ltd., *Ryde Heritage Study*, Prepared for Ryde Municipal Council and Department of Environment and Planning, NSW, 1988, p. 14.

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