



## Australian Heritage Database

# Places for Decision

Class : Historic

## Identification

**List:** National Heritage List  
**Name of Place:** Woolmers Estate  
**Other Names:**  
**Place ID:** 105976  
**File No:** 6/03/071/0006

**Nomination Date:** 18/01/2007  
**Principal Group:** Farming and Grazing

## Status

**Legal Status:** 19/01/2007 - Nominated place  
**Admin Status:** 20/02/2007 - Included in FPAL - under assessment by AHC

## Assessment

**Recommendation:** Place meets one or more NHL criteria  
**Assessor's Comments:**  
**Other Assessments:** :

## Location

**Nearest Town:** Longford  
**Distance from town** 2  
**(km):**  
**Direction from town:** SE  
**Area (ha):** 82  
**Address:** Woolmers La, Longford, TAS, 7301  
**LGA:** Northern Midlands Municipality TAS

### Location/Boundaries:

About 82ha, 2km south east of Longford, Woolmers Lane, comprising the whole of Lots 1 and 3 Title Reference 135619.

### Assessor's Summary of Significance:

Established on a land grant in 1817, Woolmers Estate is significant for its history of property development using assigned convict labour. Convict labour was employed in exchange for food and clothing. The assignment system helped to develop the colonial infrastructure, reform convicts, assist settlers in establishing their estates, and in the case of Woolmers, develop the foundations of a successful pastoral property.

The homestead assemblage of Woolmers provides evidence of the use of an assigned

convict labour force in the extant convict workplaces such as the woolshed, blacksmith shop, stables, gardens and paddocks. The former chapel was built to assist convicts in their reformation. The layout and architecture of the estate demonstrate the strong distinction between master and servant and how that facilitated the assignment system.

Woolmers retains an outstanding range of extant buildings that comprises houses, formal gardens, outbuildings, workshops, cottages, plants that along with numerous artefacts provide a rare record of the scale and range of operations of a substantial pastoral estate owned by wealthy colonial pastoralists. Associated with the buildings are fittings, furnishings, associated collections of movable cultural heritage and extensive documentary and pictorial evidence, from the early 19th century □ assignment □ period to the late 20th century.

Woolmers is uncommon in its survival as a largely intact colonial homestead complex with an unbroken chain of family occupancy, allowing the survival of the range of significant buildings, interior features, and artefacts of every period of its history to the present.

Records associated with Woolmers from surviving musters, farm diaries, correspondence, and conduct reports identify the convict farm workers and enable a greater understanding of an important part of the working population of the property. The integrity of the assemblages and their inter-relationships makes Woolmers a rich source for future study. As no archaeological excavations have yet been undertaken, the place has the potential to yield nationally significant information on aspects of the living and working conditions of convicts during the assignment period.

#### **Draft Values:**

<b><i>Criterion</i></b>	<b><i>Values</i></b>	<b><i>Rating</i></b>
A Events, Processes	Woolmers Estate is a pre-eminent example of a property established on an 1817 land grant which exemplifies the use of convict labour in the assignment system to establish a large pastoral estate.	AT
	The assignment system was set up to provide convict labour to settlers in exchange for food and clothing, and the government saw the employment of convicts as a cost effective measure to develop colonial infrastructure and assist settlers in establishing rural and commercial enterprises, while at the same time reforming the convict through industry. The large country estate quickly became established as the archetypal symbol of the assignment system. Estate architecture was regarded as vital in achieving the aims of the system.	
	The development of Woolmers is nationally significant as the homestead group provides important evidence of the use of an assigned convict labour force in the evolution of a pastoral property based on wool production. The place contains	

convict workplaces such as the blacksmith shop, stables, gardens and paddocks, as well as the woolshed, which is one of the oldest in Australia. It contains the former chapel built for convicts to provide for their reformation. The layout and architecture of the estate makes a strong distinction between master and servant which the colonial authorities believed was an important aspect in the reformation of convicts.

Woolmers is outstanding for the longevity of ownership in one family and the retention of buildings, artefacts, and records which provide an important insight into the evolution of the estate as a pastoral property over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

#### B Rarity

Woolmers is rare as a surviving 19th century agricultural homestead group developed during the convict era, along lines to facilitate the convict 'assignment' system. Many large farming estates were established during the assignment period in NSW and Tasmania. However, Woolmers is uncommon for the degree of intactness, and range of buildings combined with the continuity of family ownership.

AT

Woolmers remains as an uncommon representative of an early 19th century colonial rural homestead group, comprising complexes with houses, formal gardens and outbuildings which demonstrate a high degree of integrity. The range of buildings still extant at Woolmers is outstanding. These extant outbuildings, workshops, cottages, plant and artefacts are a rare record of the scale and range of operations of a substantial colonial pastoral estate owned by wealthy colonial pastoralists.

Unlike many other colonial houses, Woolmers is also uncommon for the range of related movable cultural objects. It is uncommon in its survival as a largely intact colonial homestead with an unbroken chain of family occupancy, allowing the survival of a range of significant buildings, interior features, and artefacts of every period of its history to the present.

Woolmers is a pre-eminent and rare example of the large rural homestead groups which evolved during the assignment period and which retain a range of buildings which demonstrate the evolution of a highly successful agricultural and pastoral property based on a convict labour force during this period.

#### C Research

Woolmers contains an outstanding array of buildings, fittings, furnishings, associated collections of movable cultural heritage and extensive documentary and pictorial evidence,

AT

from the early 19th century □ assignment □ period to the late 20th century.

Records associated with Woolmers provide the opportunity to reconstruct life during successive periods at Woolmers. Many of the early 19th century farm workers at Woolmers were convicts and they can be identified from surviving musters, farm diaries, correspondence, and conduct records. This enables a reconstitution of a large and important part of the working population of the property. When combined with the high degree of integrity of the remaining built fabric and the large number of in situ artefacts, the integrity of the assemblages and their inter-relationships makes Woolmers a rich source for future study, and presents significant research opportunities.

The place also has a high degree of archaeological potential, as no archaeological excavations have yet been undertaken. This has the potential to yield nationally significant information on aspects of the living and working conditions of convicts during the assignment period.

**Historic Themes:**

**Group:** 02 Peopling Australia

**Themes:** 02.03 Coming to Australia as a punishment

**Sub-Themes:**

**Group:** 03 Developing local, regional and national economies

**Themes:** 03.05 Developing primary production

**Sub-Themes:** 03.05.02 Breeding animals

**Group:** 03 Developing local, regional and national economies

**Themes:** 03.05 Developing primary production

**Sub-Themes:** 03.05.03 Developing agricultural industries

**Group:** 03 Developing local, regional and national economies

**Themes:** 03.05 Developing primary production

**Sub-Themes:**

**Nominator's Summary of Significance:**

Woolmers was an important early pastoral property. The estate was amongst the first in Van Diemen's Land to import merinos and remained one of the largest privately owned properties in the colony. The house is unusual in that it provides outstanding evidence of the architectural evolution of a gentleman's rural residence over time. The original single storey house was built between 1819 and 1821 and is still largely extant. In 1845 a new two storey Italianate wing was added transforming the building into one of the finest, colonial estate houses in Tasmania. The 1840s modifications were designed by William Archer, a family member and the first architect born in Tasmania. The house and its associated villa, outbuildings and formal gardens has long been regarded as aesthetically significant.

The property is one of the most intact convict era estates in Australia. Established during the assignment period using convict labour to develop the estate, Woolmers contains some exceptionally early and important buildings including an early woolshed. It provides outstanding evidence of the way in which architecture and estate design was used to reinforce class and gender divisions. The property also provides important evidence of past water management practices in the form of successive forms of water pumping and distribution systems. Until the death of Thomas William Archer in 1994, Woolmers had remained in the hands of one family. As a result it has retained many of its original interior fittings, furniture and other artefacts. Although most of the agricultural land and pastoral runs associated with the property have been sold off, the house and its immediate surroundings are remarkably intact.

### **Description:**

The Woolmers estate is located close to Longford in the Northern Midlands of Tasmania. The house, gardens and associated outbuildings are located on a rise overlooking the Macquarie River with extensive views across alluvial plains including Brickendon Estate, Elkstone, Harwick Hill and the Great Western Tiers. The property covers a total of just over 82 hectares, which includes the 15.63 ha (34 acre) portion known as Homestead Area plus an additional 66.41 ha, both portions being part of a 2,905 acre grant to Thomas Archer. Bounded by the Macquarie River to the west, Woolmers Lane to the south and the driveway to Woolmers Cottage to the east, the homestead was formerly defined by hedges to the north. The estate comprises the house and formal garden, a second manor house known as Woolmers Cottage and an extensive collection of outbuildings, avenues of trees and hedges, specimen trees and archaeological remains. The principal components of the Woolmers Estate are listed below. In addition there is an immense collection of movable items or artefacts including furniture, soft furnishings, floor coverings, artwork, books, photograph albums, household items, journals, farm machinery and plant which date from the 1820s and are contained in the buildings and in many cases are integral to the buildings and/or spaces.

Four main precincts have been identified:

### **Woolmers Main House Precinct**

Woolmers Main House (original building): Constructed by convicts in 1819-21 it is a large brick-nog lined building with a hipped roof and flagged verandahs. The rooms have a high degree of integrity with original lathe and plaster ceilings and lining boards and original timber floors. Ceilings throughout the house generally are reinforced with 1890s battens. While all of the collections in the house relate to the Archer family's occupancy of the house from the 1820s on, the fittings and most of the furniture are original. The wallpapers and carpets in the bedrooms, dressing room and sitting room are from the 1930s. Beneath the house are four cellar rooms, three with brick lined wells and one with a large trapdoor in the ceiling providing access into the drawing room. Six attic bedrooms with original timber ceilings and lining boards papered with c1850s wall papers are accessed by narrow staircases at the northern and southern ends. Iron window bars are in situ on some of the attic windows.

Woolmers Main House (extension): Designed by William Archer and built in 1843 in part using convict labour, the extension comprised an Italianate addition with drawing

and dining rooms on either side of a large front hall, and Italianate porch below a small tower with a bedroom above. The kitchen and service wing was remodelled at the same time. Elaborate Italianate chimneys replaced earlier stacks, the large sash windows have plate glass while the brick walls are plastered as ashlar with rusticated quoins. It is a very early example of Victorian Italianate marked by a squat tower and a blind window (Apperly, Irving Reynolds 1989:71).

The front hall is a very intact early Victorian room with original oak furniture bearing the Archer crest. The drawing room has a Grecian chimney piece with carytids similar to one at the neighbouring property Panshanger, built by Thomas Archer's brother Joseph. The room survives very much as it was originally furnished; the suite of Brazilian rosewood furniture, the body and border carpet and the gilt cornice poles, the moiré valance and early Victorian crimson tabaret curtains with their bullion fringe are original. The papier mâché in the cornice was purchased in London at Jackson & Son in 1859. Only the wall paper, frieze and picture rail are Edwardian alterations and the lace under curtains are Edwardian replacements (Lucas and Joyce 1994:49).

In the dining room the wall opposite the windows is broken with three blind arches, two with matching mahogany sideboards. The end wall has a black marble Italianate chimney piece with arched recesses on either side housing fitted bookcases. The walls in the dining room, originally painted blue were papered with Victorian baroque flock wall paper which was purchased at Simpson's in London in 1859. Much of the dining room furniture and the china bear the Archer crest. Much of the furniture in the principal rooms was chosen by William Archer: the oak furniture in the hall, handsome rosewood furniture and curtains in the drawing room and mahogany furniture and red flock wall paper in the dining room. The carpet in the dining room is a Victorian replacement and the lathe and plaster ceiling has been battened for safety as well as taste. The plaster work in the house extension has fashionable papier mâché enrichments imported from CF Bielefeld in London (Lucas and Joyce 1994:48).

A service passage behind the dining room connects the extension to the kitchen wing and servants' quarters. A staircase leads to the tower room which abuts the attic bedrooms of the original house. Service rooms built in 1845 at the rear of the extension include a lavatory, potting shed, store room, dairy and still room and connect to the 1820s house forming a courtyard.

Kitchen Wing Building: Built as a small timber L-shaped building the kitchen and servants' quarters were extended in the 1840s to house servants separately rather than in the attics of the main house. The building was a place where assigned female convicts lived and worked. The kitchen was altered in the 1940s for use as a garage and workshop. The building was altered in the 1990s to accommodate a commercial kitchen and café.

Woolmer's Garden: Modelled in the Gardenesque style in the late 1840s the garden is enclosed by a wall and a pair of elaborate dowelled gates. Many original features survive including a garden pavilion, largely rebuilt probably in the 1930s (Lucas Stapleton 1996: vol 2, 55), a garden smoking room, a double thunderbox lavatory and a garden privy which are contemporary with the garden wall (1840s). The formal gardens contain rare examples of early technology including watering systems. A cast

iron fountain from Colebrookdale purchased in 1864 is centrally positioned within the carriage circle. An iron fence borders the garden to the south and south west.

Other buildings in the precinct are the kitchen wing shed and kitchen wing skillion shed.

### **Coach House and Orchard Precinct**

Stables and Coach House: Built in 1847 and located adjacent to the walled garden the two storeyed symmetrical stables and coach house with rough cast walls are constructed in the vernacular Georgian tradition. The coach house was one of a number of picturesque features designed to ornament the new approaches to the remodelled house. In later years it was used to house motor vehicles and Thomas Cathcart Archer's Wolseley is still kept there. The acetylene gas manufacturing equipment from Crossley Bros of Manchester which produced gas for the main house is stored in the loft. It was previously located in Jacob Mountgarrett's Cottage.

Coachman's Cottage: Built in the late 1840s around the same time as the Coach House the Cottage probably provided accommodation for two families. Alterations completed in the early 1980s by Robert Morris Nunn were awarded a Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Tasmanian Chapter) Merit Award in 1984. The cottage is currently used for accommodation.

Coachman's Cottage Shed: A small weatherboard shed with a skillion roof, not shown in the 1947 aerial photograph of Woolmers. The original use is unclear.

Garage: The weatherboard garage appears to date from the early 20th century. It is visible in a 1921 aerial photograph of the site and was probably built to house the family's collection of cars, a 1953 Dodge is still kept there.

Former Chapel: Built in the 1840s to provide religious instruction to convict workers in accordance with the reformatory philosophy of the time, it is a gabled building with a porch over the southern entrance. The Chapel was almost certainly unused when it was converted to house an apple grader for the orchard in the 1920s. During the conversion the west wall was extended and the roof pitch altered to accommodate the extension which is brick with pebbledash render. Two sets of double doors in the west wall provided access for loading and unloading fruit. An apple grader, manufactured by D Harvey of Box Hill, Victoria is still located in the building.

Jacob Mountgarrett's Cottage: Originally constructed for the colonial surgeon Jacob Mountgarret prior to 1826 and moved to Woolmers in 1830, the buildings is a simple weatherboard cottage with a brick chimney at one end. An open skillion weatherboard addition was added in the 1920s. Numerous layers of wall paper suggest that it was most likely constructed by convict labour and lived in for a long time. A 19th century saw bench and its mounting survive in the skillion.

Gardener's cottage: Constructed as part of the remodelling of the approach to the property when it was approached via Woolmers Cottage in the late 1840s. The house, designed in the Picturesque Gothic style, is more consciously a cottage ornée (Lucas and Joyce 1994:47).

Gardener's Cottage Shed: A small weatherboard shed probably built c1900.

Orchard Privy: A small weatherboard privy at the west end of the site of the former orchard, probably built for the use of orchard workers. The original thunderbox is in situ.

Ruins: West of Gardener's Cottage, now situated in the National Rose Garden, may be the remains of the glasshouse.

Site of Manager's House: A weatherboard house constructed in the 1850s in the south east corner of the orchard following the death of Thomas Archer. The house was relocated to Union Street, Longford, around 1900. The site of the Manager's House, its construction and removal, shows evidence of the changes in management at Woolmers Estate over time.

Site of early Drive: Following the construction of Woolmers Cottage and the aggrandisement of the main house, the house was approached along a drive which left Woolmers Lane opposite Panshanger Road leading directly to Woolmers Cottage and then turned to the main house. This formal entry to the main house was later replaced by the current drive through the outbuildings.

Site of Orchards: Orchardng appears to have commenced by 1832 at Woolmers and it was still in production in 1865. Three extensive orchards were planted in the early 20th century. By 1947 the largest orchard had been removed. In 1992 the National Rose Gardens was established which extends over part of the former orchards. The Gardens do not form part of this assessment.

### **Outbuildings Precinct**

Farm Stables: Built in the 1840s, a long gabled building of rendered masonry with central pilasters, it was constructed to house the estate's working livestock and farm equipment. The building is a vernacular version of the more elaborate coach house and still contains some of its original stall partitions and mangers. On the west side an open skillion houses an assortment of surviving farm machinery.

Woolshed: Constructed in the 1820s the Georgian vernacular woolshed is one of the earliest buildings in the complex and probably the oldest in Australia (Lucas and Joyce 1994:47). It was a place both built by and worked by assigned convicts.

Constructed from split weatherboards of local hardwood on a rubble foundation the shed contains an early timber framed manual wool press which may well have been constructed on the estate as the iron work is hand forged. Other machinery includes a Cooper shearing machine. Graffiti on the main beam is inscribed with 'England Expects Every Man Will Do his duty Admiral Nelson Duke of Bronte Trafalgar 1805'.

Cider Press: In the 1840s the orchards were sufficiently developed to warrant the construction of a cider press. The weatherboard building was built abutting the woolshed, originally with a shingled roof, now corrugated iron, to house a timber and stone cider apple mill which still is in situ. The cider pulp press is typical of the English eastern counties where, because a variety of fruits were pressed, a box was used in place of a press bed (Morris-Nunn 1986:21). The press was operated by a pole or lever.

Blacksmith's Shop: Probably built in 1822, most likely by convict workers, it is a rendered masonry one room building with a slate roof for fire protection, a central chimney breast, hearth and timber work bench. Some remnant blacksmithing equipment still survives. The Blacksmith's Shop provides evidence of the early development of Woolmers estate.

Workers' Cottages: Five two roomed semi-detached workers' cottages built in the 1840s remain of the six originally constructed. It was likely that these cottages accommodated free settler workers. They are all two-roomed cottages, one room upstairs and one on the ground floor with a fireplace in the main room. Built in pairs, they are simple gabled structures with corrugated iron roofs (probably originally shingled) and elaborate chimneys. The cottages are currently used for accommodation.

Bakehouse Cottages: Two of an original three cottages survive which were built in the 1840s. The third cottage was demolished in the 1920s. At the rear of the smaller building is the estate bread oven. The two simple vernacular cottages, similar in style and construction to most of the other outbuildings. Probably they were used to accommodate the bakers although the surviving one contains three fire places suggesting that it was also used as a baking or possibly a cookhouse. The design and siting indicates the importance and role of the bakehouse in the infrastructure of the estate. The cottage is currently used for accommodation.

Store: This two storey building with its integrated water tower completed by the time the land commissioners visited Woolmers in 1826 was built by convicts and was also a likely convict workplace. A pebble dash masonry building with a hipped roof topped by a decorative Italianate water tower and decorative recessed arches to the ground floor window and the water tower. The original lead-lined water tank and reticulation system is a rare surviving example of an early system of water supply and storage. The store's location close to the house shows its importance for easy access of goods, and for control and security.

Pump House: An early intact horse driven water pump probably built around 1840 as it is shown in an 1840's sketch by Mrs Nixon. As the building can be seen from the Longford approach road it was constructed as an octagonal building in the picturesque gothic style. The pump machinery was manufactured by Braithwaite, Milner & Co., London. Like many of the buildings at Woolmers, the Pump House was probably constructed by the estate's convict mechanics and stands testimony to their skills. It is a rare surviving example of a horse driven water pump remaining in situ.

Timber Windmill: Built between 1890-1921 the windmill replaced the horse driven pump in the Pump House. It was built in the American style with sails constructed from narrow boards radially arranged. The direct acting pump machinery survives. The windmill has been recently restored. It provides evidence of the elaborate and evolving system of water management.

Metal Windmill: The third in the series of constructions, it was used to supply water to the estate. The direct acting pump machinery survives but it has lost some of its sails.

Modern Pump House: The machinery is part of the sequence of water supply systems for the estate. It replaced the metal windmill and is still in use.

Sites including the sheep dip: The site of the sheep dip is located between the farm stables and the woolshed. Other sites include remnant footings east of the farm stables, and north of the blacksmith's shop. The sites of other buildings including the male convict barracks may exist.

Site of Puntman's Cottage: The construction date is not known but it is shown in an 1840's sketch of the property by Mrs Nixon. The sketch shows a picturesque gothic building similar in character and scale to the gardener's cottage. Some stone footings remain.

### **Woolmers Cottage Precinct**

Woolmers Cottage: Built in 1839. A good example of a Regency villa built using assigned convict labour overlooking the river and the neighbouring Archer estate at Brickendon, underscoring the close relationship that existed between the operation of the two estates which regularly shared farm equipment and labour. Four underfloor cellar rooms, with trapdoor access to the drawing room and containing three brick lined wells, and attic bedrooms are in the main house while small attic bedrooms for the domestic servants in the kitchen wing are accessed by a steep staircase from the

kitchen. The cottage also contains an early water pump linked to an underground cistern to hold roof water.

Woolmers Cottage Garden: There is evidence of an earlier planned garden, including the oval carriage way and brick borders of the garden beds. Mature pines form a windbreak from the north.

Woolmers house, gardens, cottage and associated outbuildings are remarkably intact. The integrity of the physical fabric is one of its outstanding features. While some structures, notably the chapel, have been converted to other uses, and parts of the original service wing were replaced in the 1840s, few original features have been lost. Some buildings which are documented have been demolished or removed.

Demolitions include the male convict quarters, the carpenter's shop, possibly a wheelwright/cooper's shop, (Morris-Nunn 1986:4), a Dutch barn and granary, the puntman's cottage and the third bakehouse cottage. The manager's cottage was relocated to Longford. Some surviving individual features are rare: the woolshed, cider press, store, the range of water pumps, smoking room and the chapel (now an apple sorting shed).

Woolmers also contains a large number of its original fittings, furniture, paintings, dinner services, glassware, cutlery, toys, motor vehicles, farm equipment and related movable cultural objects. Considerable archival correspondence relating to the property, the family and estate workers, much of it in the Archives Office of Tasmania, also survives. The property is actively managed and maintained by the Woolmers Foundation.

### **Analysis:**

*CRITERION (a)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's cultural history;***

Woolmers Estate is significant for its strong association with the assignment system of early convict administration.

Assignments to private masters was a favoured method of dealing with convicts, and the assignment system was set up to provide convict labour to settlers in exchange for food and clothing. In its ideal form, assignment was beneficial to all three parties: the government transferred the upkeep of the convict; the master gained cheap labour; and the convict gained reformation through industrious labour (Tuffin in Alexander 2005:30). The assignment system continued in NSW and Tasmania until the cessation of transportation to NSW in 1840 (Shaw 1971:272, Kercher 2003).

Pastoral estates became established as the most common use of convict labour during the assignment period. Estate architecture was regarded as vital in achieving the aims of the system, and clearly defined areas were established. The estates were places where many sections of colonial society interacted, and the architecture of the estate was deliberately designed to control this process. Following British practice, the front of the house was the place where the family resided and visitors of status were received, while the back was the area connected with work and service. Separate quarters were provided for assigned servants, quarters for the overseer, and detached

barrack-like accommodation for male workers. As well as being sites of work, they were also sites of reformation, and the former chapel (now the apple sorting shed), placed centrally in the estate, reflects the importance that colonial authorities placed on religion in the reformation of convicts.

Woolmers Estate is an outstanding example of an assignment era property. Although both Woolmers and Brickendon were owned by members of the same family and adjoin one another geographically, the properties developed in different ways. William Archer established a mixed farming property at Brickendon and the diversity of activities is reflected in the way in which the estate developed. The buildings indicate a clear intent to undertake mixed farming following customary English practice. Intensification of agriculture, crop, and wool production were all practiced at Brickendon, and these farming practices have been continued by successive generations of Archers.

At Woolmers, on the other hand, the emphasis was on wool production, and the 1820s Georgian vernacular woolshed is one of the earliest buildings in the complex and probably the oldest in Australia. The main house at Woolmers, redesigned by William Archer in 1843 reflects the estate's growing prosperity. Elaborate Italianate chimneys replaced earlier stacks, the large sash windows have plate glass while the brick walls are plastered as ashlar with rusticated quoins. It is a very early example of Victorian Italianate marked by a squat tower and a blind window (Apperly, Irving Reynolds 1989:71). Italianate style was particularly popular in England for the construction of smaller mansions for newly wealthy industrialists, and it spread through out the British Empire (Wikipedia). The remodelled gardens were used to reinforce the setting of the new house. Modelled in the Gardenesque style in the late 1840s the garden is enclosed by a wall and a pair of elaborate dowelled gates. Many original features survive including a garden pavilion, largely rebuilt probably in the 1930s (Lucas Stapleton 1996: vol 2, 55), a garden smoking room, a double thunderbox lavatory and a garden privy which are contemporary with the garden wall (1840s). The formal gardens contain rare examples of early technology including watering systems. A cast iron fountain from Colebrookdale purchased in 1864 is centrally positioned within the carriage circle. An iron fence borders the garden to the south and south west.

With an eventual combined convict population of over 100, Woolmers and Brickendon formed the second largest pool of convict labour in private hands in the colony, after the Van Diemen's Land Company. From the early 1820s onwards, the convict administration put much weight in the reformatory power of 'proper' master servant relations. Woolmers was one of the earliest estates established in Van Diemen's Land where the estate layout and architecture display these values. Because Thomas Archer arrived at a comparatively early date and was able to quickly establish himself as the most significant settler in the district, the original house and its associated buildings are unusual in terms of its early date and the scale on which it was built. In comparison, many of the original structures erected on other grants were small scale cabins or cottages, such as those still extant at Brickendon and Fonthill. The woolshed, constructed in the 1820s, is on a large scale - reflecting the importance of sheep and wool to the economic viability of the estate.

A significant feature of the 1840s remodelling of the Woolmers house was the way in

which it was used to reinforce the social organisation of the estate, by providing a clear division between formal and service areas as well as evidence of the hierarchy amongst the estate's convict labour force. Skilled workers, such as gardeners, coachmen and artisans were provided with their own cottage style accommodation, and these estate cottages together with the more elaborate Coachman's House and Gardener's cottage provide evidence of the hierarchy which the Archers attempted to establish amongst their workforce. Other agricultural workers were housed separately in simpler quarters. Buildings such as the chapel, the blacksmith's shop with its associated graffiti, the kitchens and other service quarters, provide a window into a 19th century world in which convicts and the assignment system played a significant role in shaping the landscape of colonial Australia. In many ways Woolmers acted as an exemplar for later estate formation.

Together with the extensive associated documentary records, Woolmers presents a rare opportunity to examine the organisation of a large 19th century rural property. It is possible to use musters and other classes of records to reconstitute the convict population of Woolmers, identifying the male and female prisoners who worked there, and charting their interactions with each other and the Archer family.

The cultural landscape of the estate demonstrates the success of Thomas Archer as a colonist and early settler in Northern Tasmania. This success was based on judiciously selected land grants on alluvial soils with water access along river frontages, and the developing agricultural and pastoral farming practices in the first half of the 19th century. The economic and social success of Archer in establishing his pre-eminent position in Tasmanian society came not only through his own skills and foresight, but also through the advantage of free land and cheap assignment labour. Woolmers with its extensive pastoral holdings specialised to a greater extent than Brickendon in wool production, and this is reflected in the scale of the woolshed which dominates the farm buildings. The woolshed appears to be the earliest documented purpose built woolshed in Australia.

Woolmers is outstanding in two particular respects. Firstly, as the nucleus of a large rural property with a remnant homestead, devoted to wool production using the resources of assigned convicts to develop the estate. Secondly, its length of ownership in one family. The place charts the fortunes of one estate from its pioneering convict based beginnings through six generations of the same family. In doing so, it provides an insight into the way in which changing economic and social priorities have shaped estate management and wool production on the Norfolk Plains over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. The development of Woolmers is nationally significant as the estate provides important evidence of the evolution of a large pastoral property, and the use of an assigned convict labour force in this evolution.

Woolmers Estate exemplifies an early 19th century assignment period estate and has outstanding value to the nation for criterion (a).

#### *CRITERION (b)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's cultural history***

***b.2 Processes, activities, beliefs, or other aspects of culture that are rare, threatened***

*or no longer practised*

Woolmers is rare as a surviving large 19th century agricultural estate developed during the convict era, to facilitate the convict ☐assignment☐ system.

Many large farming estates were established during the assignment period in NSW and Tasmania and of the surviving examples, the majority remain in private ownership.

The Camden Park Estate and Rouse Hill are similar to the Woolmers Estate as model rural estates of the early 19th century, being complexes with houses, formal gardens and outbuildings which demonstrate a high degree of integrity. They possess an extensive array of documentary and movable cultural heritage collections associated with the physical fabric of the cultural landscapes. Woolmers, Camden Park and Rouse Hill all remained in the ownership of descendants of the original family, albeit with greatly reduced landholdings, until the 1990s.

Other large estates from the assignment period include ;  
Brownlow Hill homestead and farm which continues to operate as a farming property;  
Glenlee estate, a surviving early 19th century pastoral holding in the Mount Annan/Menangle district of the Cow Pastures;  
Macquarie Fields House and its garden, a substantial mid-19th century homestead, prominently sited, with important remnant plantings, layout and archaeological features;  
Throsby Park Historic Site east of Moss Vale; Lansdowne homestead and surrounding precinct outside Goulburn; and  
Coombing Park, a pastoral property of some 3,000 ha which demonstrates the development of pastoralism in NSW from 1831.  
However none of these examples demonstrate the same degree of intactness, range of buildings, and continuity of family ownership as Woolmers and Brickendon Estates.

Camden Park House, planned by John MacArthur and designed by John Verge in 1831, was completed in 1835, and shows a high degree of technical and creative excellence being a rare, and still relatively intact, example of a model rural estate of the early 19th century. It continued to serve this function till the 1950's. It is of historic and aesthetic significance as one of the finest of the nation's early 19th century country homesteads. It is an exemplar of Australia's ☐Colonial Regency☐ style of architecture, and this significance is enhanced both by the quality of the design and craftsmanship, and the degree to which it has retained important original fabric and features. Its extensive grounds planted in the tradition of 19th century English landscapes holds a major botanical collection and its large, exceptional collection of rural buildings is especially significant because of both the quality and rarity of the group. The site also has significance through its historical associations with the Macarthur family. The Camden Park Estate's considerable social and historical significance is also due to its ability to demonstrate the way of life, tastes, customs and functions of a 19th-early 20th century rural establishment.

Rouse Hill House, built 1818-1820 by Richard Rouse, is one of the most significant and substantial houses of the Macquarie period. Rouse Hill House Estate is the largest and most complete publicly owned physical record, in the form of buildings,

furnishings, artefacts and landscape relationship, of the occupancy and culture of a European-Australian family, encompassing the tastes, fortunes, and endeavours of seven generations from the early 19th century to the late 20th century (Historic Houses Trust 1997:8). Rouse Hill remained in the ownership of the Rouse family descendants until 1978.

Woolmers, like Camden Park and Rouse Hill, remains as an outstandingly uncommon representative of early 19th century rural estates, comprising complexes with houses, formal gardens and outbuildings which demonstrate a high degree of integrity. The three estates are uncommon for their survival as largely intact estates with an unbroken family occupancy, allowing the survival of major interior elements of every period of its history to the present. At all three places the estate lands have been significantly reduced. Both Woolmers and Rouse Hill are now publicly accessible, while Camden Park continues to be lived in by descendants of the Macarthur family.

Of the three estates, however, Woolmers provides more evidence of an assignment era estate with its range of estate buildings which demonstrate the evolution of a highly successful agricultural and pastoral property. The former chapel and convict workplaces such as the woolshed, provide evidence of the labour force that underpins the wealth exemplified by the estate house and landscaped surrounds. In the colony of NSW, Camden Park was the exemplar of the early colonial era and a prototype for other 19th century estates. Woolmers provided a similar model for Tasmania. Camden Park and Woolmers estate provide many similarities and are rare examples of the establishment and evolution of large rural estates of the assignment era with high integrity. The house at Woolmers has been assessed as being the 'finest colonial gentry house in Tasmania' (Lucas Stapleton 1996: vol 2, 117). The range of estate buildings still extant at Woolmers is outstanding. As a set, they are certainly uncommon. These extant outbuildings, workshops, cottages, plant and artefacts are a unique record of the scale and range of operations of a substantial colonial pastoral estate owned by a colonial gentry family' (Lucas Stapleton 1996: vol 2, 117).

Unlike many other colonial houses, Woolmers is uncommon in that it also contains a large number of its original fittings, furniture, paintings, dinner services, glassware, cutlery, toys, motor vehicles, farm equipment and related movable cultural objects. It is uncommon in its survival as a largely intact estate with an unbroken chain of family occupancy, allowing the survival of a range of significant buildings and interior features of every period of its history to the present.

Woolmers and Camden Park are pre-eminent and rare examples of large rural estates which evolved during the assignment period and which retain a range of estate buildings which demonstrate the evolution of a highly successful agricultural and pastoral property based on a convict labour force during this period.

Woolmers **has** outstanding value to the nation for criterion (b).

*CRITERION (c)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's cultural history;***

Woolmers contains an outstanding array of buildings, fittings, furnishings, associated collections of movable cultural heritage and extensive documentary and pictorial evidence, from the early 19th century □ assignment □ period to the late 20th century. When combined with the high degree of integrity of the remaining built fabric and the large number of in situ artefacts, Woolmers presents significant research opportunities. This is particularly important given the crucial role of pastoral and agricultural estates in shaping the geographical, social, economic and political trajectory of colonial Australia. As many of the early 19th century farm workers at Woolmers were convicts they can be identified from surviving musters, farm diaries, correspondence and conduct records. This enables a reconstitution of a large and important part of the working population of the estate, particularly significant as similar records for comparable places such as Camden Park Estate and Rouse Hill are rare or no longer extant. Magistrates □ bench records can also be used to reconstruct the daily working patterns and labour management techniques employed on the property. Other classes of records, notably Archer family diaries, provide the opportunity to reconstruct life during later periods at Woolmers.

The layers of artefacts provide opportunities to study the development of a model rural estate in Australia from the early 19th century through to the late 20th century. Recording of the extensive movable cultural heritage collections is underway but further work remains to be undertaken to ascertain the extent and significance of the collections.

The place also has a high degree of archaeological potential, as no archaeological excavations have yet been undertaken. This has the potential to yield nationally significant information on aspects of the living and working conditions of convicts during the assignment period.

The place **has the** potential to contribute information of outstanding value to the nation for criterion (c).

*CRITERION (d)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place □s importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: a class of Australia □s cultural places; or a class of Australia □s cultural environments;***

Woolmers is significant for its outstanding ability to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a colonial estate house and its associated gardens and outbuildings established in the assignment period in the early 19th century. This class has a number of members, with more than a dozen examples of surviving colonial estates from the same era, including Camden Park Estate and Rouse Hill in NSW and Clarendon, Woolmers, Brickenden, and Panshanger in Tasmania.

The principal characteristics include:

1. a prominently sited impressive estate house and interior features, set in an extensive garden;
2. established on land grants with cheap convict labour;
3. well defined features include clear separation between the gentry housing and their assigned convicts;
4. an extensive evolving range of infrastructure demonstrating the expansion of the

agricultural and pastoral industries.

Woolmers exhibits these characteristics to a high degree:

1. Elevated above the Macquarie River and with a view over Norfolk Plains, Woolmers is perhaps the outstanding surviving example of a colonial estate house and its associated gardens and outbuildings. The buildings and historic landscape at Woolmers Estate is a fine example of an 1820s weatherboarded colonial bungalow, extended in the 1840s to demonstrate the wealth and social position Thomas Archer had achieved as the estate prospered. Woolmers Estate represents an architectural and aesthetical expression of the aspirations of the colonial landed elite. The evolution of the house and its associated buildings and agricultural and pastoral land provides evidence of the changing economic and social fortunes of this branch of the Archer Family.

2. Woolmers, like other large farming enterprises was labour intensive. Rural agricultural development was dependent on the availability of cheap labour. Since convicts and ex-convicts constituted 80 to 90 percent of the potential male labour force in the colonies between 1820-1835 (Butlin 1985:19), convicts were instrumental in the expansion of farming in the colonies. The large country estate quickly became established as the archetypal symbol of the assignment system. With a combined convict population of over 100, Brickendon and Woolmers formed the second largest pool of convict labour in private hands in the colony, after the Van Diemen's Land Company. The surviving musters show that between 1830 and 1835 from 41 to 51 male convicts were assigned to Woolmers annually and between 34 to 43 to Brickenden (Archives Office of Tasmania, AJCP, HO/10/47, 48, 49 and 50) William Archer's diary records on 16 October 1847 there were on the entire property 86 men, 15 women and 9 children. A total of 110 people including family members, although some may have been seasonal workers who had already arrived for the shearing

3. Estate architecture was thought to be vital in furthering the reformative aims of establishing good master/servant relationships. The Woolmers estate shows a clear separation of the various levels of society at the estate, the gentry, the house servants and the estate workers. The house interiors demonstrate the division of gentry and servants, including the family attic and the servants' attic. This separation is also clearly demonstrated at Woolmers Cottage. The garden with its enclosing wall and hedges demonstrates the private domain for the gentry in the house, separated from the working estate buildings and farm servants. The hierarchy of housing was further separated between skilled labour, the coachmen, gardener and puntsman, whose status was reflected in the designated cottages. Assigned male servants at Woolmers were housed in barrack accommodation, which has been demolished. The loss of the barrack building may be attributed to an attempt to remove the 'convict stain'.

4. The fine group of Colonial estate buildings similarly demonstrate the sequential development of the estate, commencing with the earliest buildings such as the woolshed, blacksmith's shop, store and bake houses built in the 1820s. Functional buildings such as that housing the cider press and the working horse stables were constructed as required. Additional buildings, built in the 1840s, the coach house and stables, the series of cottages for the coachmen, gardener and puntman and the ornate pump house were necessary for the operation of the large agricultural and pastoral property. Attributed to William Archer these outbuildings demonstrate significant

attention to siting and architectural detailing, ensuring that the entire Woolmers complex formed an aesthetically pleasing composition in the landscape. The 1840s chapel, while not essential to the operation of a farming property, allowed the estate to operate as a self sufficient village. A chapel was characteristic of the assignment period where the moral reform of assigned servants was considered redemptive. Other buildings characteristic of an assignment era rural estate demonstrate later attitudes to assignment: the adaptation of the chapel for use in apple grading and the site of the former barracks for housing male convicts.

However, a lack of comparative material on the characteristics of early colonial estates across Australia makes it difficult to assess the extent to which Woolmers maps on to the characteristics on which large scale rural estates were developed in the early 19th century in a way that is nationally significant.

Woolmers **does not have** outstanding value to the nation for criterion (d) as a significant example of a class of 19th century rural colonial estate established in the assignment era.

*CRITERION (e)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;***

Woolmers House and its associated cottage, service quarters, outbuildings and formal gardens were designed to form a prominent feature in the landscape. The house was deliberately located on high ground above the Macquarie River (then known as the Lake River). Situated in a picturesque position overlooking the river the house forms a landmark overlooking the river, surrounded by mature trees, and commanding expansive views across the Brickendon estate to the Great Western Tiers. It was always intended that Woolmers would dominate the landscape in line with the principles of English country estate architecture. Formal driveways were constructed to be both aesthetically pleasing and impressive, an effect that was achieved through planting avenues of trees and gardens and the construction of picturesque architectural elements. Outstanding examples of all of these features can be found at Woolmers. A significant aspect of the house and gardens is the way that they have developed over time. This process was particularly evident with the 1840s remodelling of the house that involved the design of a new formal approach and house front.

Amongst its admirers was Robin Boyd who praised Woolmers as an example of the modesty of pretensions in the 1820s: *“A water-mill dressed like a gazebo on a rise by the river at Woolmers, in Longford, Tasmania, is octagonal in plan and has a Gothic arch on each side, but all is done so plainly and ingenuously that the little folly remains in harmony with the functional farm buildings”* (Boyd 1972:152). While Tasmania is richly endowed with late Georgian and Regency style houses (Harrison and Bolt 1977:54) Robson considered that the homesteads the Archer family built on the basis of free land grants, free labour and shrewdness were amongst the finest in Van Diemen's Land (Robson 1983:364). Butler Stoney, writing about Woolmers in 1856 found it was well worthy of a visit *“on account of its beautiful and valuable collection of paintings and the very fine and extensive gardens”* (Morris-Nunn 1986:2).

The garden designs of the large estates added an ornamental approach to the utilitarian gardens of the initial colonists. The large gardens were established to emphasise the wealth and status of the land owners. The tree lined entrance drive was elaborated with large posts and gates and the sweeping carriage way reflected the capacity of the stables. Shrubberies and lawns were at the front and side while kitchen gardens and orchards were kept to the back of the house. The collection of exotic trees, like the interior furnishings and fittings of the house, revealed acquaintance with the latest ideas and fashions (Frazer Simons 1987:8). A very common feature of the medium to large size early colonial gardens was the circular carriage drive with open space at the front of the house (Frazer Simons 1987:8). These features are represented at Woolmers on a grand scale, although the trees lining the sequence of drives have mostly been lost.

Many references on architecture in Australia and Tasmania value Woolmers for its aesthetic qualities. In 1983 the garden and estate were considered as

*□the symmetrically planned, enclosed gardens are based on Reptonian principles. As a totality the estate and the structures on it are remarkably intact□. It remains today one of Tasmania□s most outstanding properties□* (Macmillan 1983:137).

Woolmers Estate represent an architectural and aesthetic expression of the aspirations of the colonial landed elite. The estate was designed as an expression of the wealth and power of Thomas Archer and his descendants. That this was recognised from its inception is clear from the list of distinguished visitors that generations of the Archer family have received at Woolmers, including Governor Macquarie, several Tasmanian Lieut Governors and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868.

Woolmers Estate has long been valued for aesthetic reasons by Tasmanians, however, while this may be significant at a State level it is insufficient to determine national significance. The Estate remains a popular tourism attraction, and has around 18,000 visitors annually. It is also difficult to ascertain whether these visitors are attracted to the site because of its aesthetic attraction, or its historical association. In any event visitor numbers of 18,000 are insufficient to establish that Australians value the aesthetics of the site in a way that is nationally significant.

The place **does not have** outstanding value to the nation for criterion (e).

#### *CRITERION (f)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place□s importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;***

The 1820s was a decade of consolidation in the colonies of New South Wales and Van Dieman□s Land, as society was changing from a military to civil establishment and pastoral wealth was being created. By the 1830s the colony had a confident, affluent society ready to distinguish itself through its houses and gardens (Aitken and Looker 2002:40). Leaders of society like the Macarthur and Archer families set high standards in design, taste and horticultural expertise which others tried to emulate. Broadbent judges that □Camden Park remains the finest (and largest) garden of the

1830s in NSW. The Archer family in Van Diemen's Land set a similar standard in horticulture and garden making (Aitken and Looker 2002:41).

Woolmers house and estate demonstrate in physical form an expression of the aspirations of the colonial landed elite. The estate was designed to express the wealth and power of Thomas Archer and his descendants. This is illustrated through the subsequent evolution of the main house and garden, plantings and the associated buildings. Designed by Thomas Archer's son William Archer, on his return to Tasmania from studying architecture in England where the Picturesque movement in architecture and landscape design, which had dominated 18th century European ideals, was being enlivened by an Italian landscape influence. Apperly, Irving and Reynolds state that the extension at Woolmers, designed by William Archer, is 'a very early example marked by a squat tower and a blind window' of the Victorian Italianate style (Apperly, Irving and Reynolds 1989:71). It predates any other examples of the style indicators by more than a decade.

Hubbard ascribes the first emergence of the colonial version of the Italianate villa to Tasmania. Examples include the remodelling of Woolmers (c1842) and William Archer's design for Rosedale (1846) at Ross, which Hubbard considers to be 'perhaps the grandest private example of an Italianate villa and its garden in Australia' (Aitken and Looker 2002:332). Archer's designs for Woolmers and Rosedale set high standards in design and fashion which were emulated elsewhere in the colony.

The design and layout of the pleasure garden designed by William Archer, with its symmetrically planned shrubbery with gravelled paths and echoes of an Italian garden embellished the front of the Italianate style house. At Woolmers the Renaissance concept of linking the house with the garden is most strongly expressed in the axis running east from the front door to the central east west axis of the Palladian style stables (Frazer Simons 1987:11). In 1987 the garden was assessed 'in its maturity is perhaps in Tasmania the most unaltered and retains the spirit of the first design. Its best exemplifies the aesthetic ideal of the 18th or early 19th 'Gardenesque' style' (Frazer Simons 1987:219).

While the Woolmers house and grounds demonstrate with a degree of creative achievement, it is doubtful that this degree is of national significance. Italianate style had been in use for some time in Europe, and when introduced into Australia resulted in notable examples which are of greater significance architecturally than Woolmers. Edward Archers house 'Northbury' built in 1862 at Longford is a more consistent application of the style to a domestic dwelling. Hubbard considers William Archer's design for Rosedale (1846) at Ross to be 'perhaps the grandest private example of an Italianate villa and its garden in Australia. On a grander scale, both 'Bontharambo' at Wangaratta (1858) and 'Ripon Lea' at Elsternwick (1868) are outstanding examples of the application of the style to Australian conditions, and perhaps the most outstanding example of the use of Italianate style in Australia is 'Government House' at South Yarra in Melbourne (1871).

Similarly, the design of the garden, while an expression of the 'Gardenesque' style, is not nationally significant. The design of landscaped grounds on 'Picturesque' principles to enhance the setting of the house predates the 1840 redevelopment of the

Woolmers property. Elizabeth Macquarie is known to have had a large part in the redesign of the grounds of Old Government House in Parramatta using Picturesque principles developed through her redesign of the grounds of her family home at Airds in Scotland. The European tradition of walled enclosures to secure land or protect young or sensitive plants was used from the start of colonial settlement at places such as the First Government House in Sydney. Grander mansions in Sydney such as Elizabeth Bay House, also had landscaped pleasure grounds that were contained by encircling brick walls (Aitken and Looker 2002:626).

Woolmers **does not meet** the threshold for outstanding value to the nation for criterion (f).

*CRITERION (g)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;***

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the place might have outstanding heritage values to the nation to be above threshold for criterion (g).

Woolmers **does not meet** the threshold for outstanding value to the nation for criterion (g).

*CRITERION (h)*

***The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's cultural history;***

Woolmers is associated with the Archer family, particularly Thomas Archer (1790-1850) and Thomas Archer's third son William (1820-74).

Thomas Archer was a major figure in Tasmania's colonial history as a landowner and in public affairs. He was in charge of the Commissariat at Port Dalrymple and Hobart at different times, and noted for his honesty and integrity. Later he was one of the first members of the nominated Legislative Council, serving a succession of Lieutenant Governors over a period of twenty years.

William Archer was also active in public affairs but is chiefly remembered as an architect and botanist. He is credited with being Tasmania's first native-born architect. Woolmers was his sometime home but also illustrates examples of his design work which remain, and his botanical collection.

The Archer family biographer, Neil Chick, judges William Archer, fellow of the Linnean Society, MLC, MHA, farmer, architect, engineer, eminent botanist and parliamentarian, as being "the most notable" of the family (Alexander 2005:23). William Archer is cited by Alex George as one of the five significant botanical collectors in Tasmania (Aitken and Looker 2002:53). Aitken considers that William Archer, George Bennett and Ronald Gunn were the earliest emigrants to establish private libraries reflecting interests in natural history, botany, horticulture and landscape gardening (Aitken and Looker 2002:368). As a local collector Archer

exchanged plants with the Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, through the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land.

Woolmers is significant for its historical association with Thomas Archer and William Archer at a state level. However there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Thomas Archer and William Archer are of outstanding importance to the nation for criterion (h).

Woolmers **does not meet** the threshold for outstanding value to the nation for criterion (f).

*CRITERION (i)*

***There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the place might have outstanding heritage values to the nation for criterion (i).***

Woolmers **does not meet** the threshold for outstanding value to the nation for criterion (i).

**History:**

The penal colony of Van Diemen's Land was established in 1803 with a small population of convicts, soldiers and some free settlers. From 1788-1830s free grants of land were distributed to settlers in the colony. A small but wealthy farming and trading community emerged (Petrow 2000:4). However, unlike NSW very few ex-convicts, known as emancipists, prospered and became prominent in public life (Petrow 2000:5). Through grants and purchases of land free settlers in Tasmania owned 'a very large proportion of all the property' and became very influential. The wealthier settlers in the north 'could build pastoral empires at the expense of their struggling neighbours' (Morgan 1992:34).

Brickendon and Woolmers Estates are located in the Norfolk Plains, a district that was well watered by the Macquarie and South Esk rivers. The agricultural and pastoral potential of the area meant that it was quickly exploited. Many early land grants were made in the area, the most significant being that awarded to Thomas Archer. Having arrived in Australia in 1811 aged 21 to take up a posting with Commissariat Department in Sydney, Thomas Archer was later transferred to Port Dalrymple in northern Tasmania where he was granted Woolmers in 1817. His brother William arrived in the colony in 1823 and settled on adjoining land, Brickendon which remains in Archer family ownership. In Tasmania the government purchased through the Commissariat Store items such as meat and wheat at fixed prices to provide food to newly arrived settlers and convicts. The Commissariat settled all business in cash or treasury bills and represented a secure market. Many who established themselves as a colonial elite in the pre-1820 era were either closely associated with the operation of the store, or were amongst its major suppliers. As the principal engine of the economy, sales to the Commissariat Store laid 'the foundation of many a Van Diemen's Land fortune' (Robson 2005:13).

In the 1820s, at a time when the Bigge Report was encouraging pastoralism as an economic base for the colony, the British woollen industry was expanding. Its promotion of colonial wool stimulated the industry in Australia. By 1817 there were

more sheep in Tasmania than NSW, and from the 1820s the Tasmanian Midlands became a major merino breeding centre. By 1821 Van Diemen's Land was depasturing more sheep than NSW and had taken the lead in improving the quality of merino wool (Pearson and Lennon, 2006:12).

Having arrived at an early date in 1817, Thomas Archer was able to quickly establish himself as the most significant settler in the district. By 1825 he had been granted a total of 5,545 acres and had purchased a further 2,142. In later years he acquired substantial other landholdings, notably the neighbouring properties of Fairfield and Cheshunt. He also extended the area covered by Woolmers estate which in 1855 consisted of a total of 12,271 acres. The estate remained one of the largest privately owned properties in the colony.

The construction of Woolmers house probably commenced in 1819. It appears to have been largely complete by the time Governor Macquarie stayed there in 1821 and is still largely extant. Woolmers was a significant early pastoral property. The Land Commissioners in 1826 described everything as being *on a most extensive scale. Carpenters, Sawyers, Bricklayers, Blacksmiths and a long list of Labourers not to mention the Hundred working Oxen. He also owned a numerous herd of cattle of the English breed, and I have as well a valuable stud of Horses and brood Mares, most of which have been imported at considerable expense from New South Wales* (Morris-Nunn 1986:2). The house was significantly extended in 1845 with the addition of a new Italianate wing transforming the building into one of the finest, colonial estate houses in Tasmania. The 1840s modifications were designed by William Archer, the third son of Thomas Archer and the first architect born in Tasmania. Significantly, much of the earlier house was incorporated into the extended building rather than being destroyed. The house is unusual in that it provides outstanding evidence of the architectural evolution of a gentleman's rural residence over time. The redevelopment of the property in the mid-1840s placed Woolmers in the first rank of colonial estates.

Thomas Archer was amongst the first settlers in Van Diemen's Land to *improve* his livestock in order to take advantage of the new opportunities in the fine wool export trade. Some of the stud merinos he acquired came from McArthur's flocks in New South Wales and others were imported from England. The Archer family were very successful with several properties established around Longford. Joseph Archer imported a flock of English merinos in 1821, William Archer imported 30 Merino ewes and 2 rams from England in 1824 for Brickendon forming the basis for the very successful stud he established, and on the adjacent Woolmers 50 Spanish Merinos from Ireland arrived in 1822-23 (Pearson and Lennon, 2006:12; Morgan 1992:61). In 1825 Thomas Archer had assessed that there were *upwards of Six Thousand Sheep* most of which have been very highly improved by an Importation of Pure Merinos from England, about five years ago. By 1836 he was described as having 25,000 sheep and *sending seventeen wagons of pressed wool to London every year at a value of £6,000* (Morris-Nunn 1986:15). The earliest documented woolsheds in Australia are probably those of Woolmers (1820s), Panshanger (1821) and Brickendon (1820s). Brickendon and Woolmers also retain wool washing sites.

The assignment system was set up to provide convict labour to settlers in exchange for food and clothing. The first convicts were assigned as farm servants and for

personal service to officer-farmers who had been authorised to receive land grants in 1793 (Shaw 1971:67). Reports of the Bigge Commission, established in 1819 to enquire into conditions in the colony, recommended tightening the assignment system and encouraging pastoralism by allocating large land grants to free immigrants with substantial capital. Assignments of convicts to private masters was very much the favoured method of dealing with convicts. The government saw reformatory employment as a cost effective measure to develop colonial infrastructure and assist settlers in establishing rural and commercial enterprises. □In its ideal form, assignment was beneficial to all three parties: the government transferred the upkeep of the convict, the master gained cheap labour, and the convict gained reformation through industrious labour□ (Tuffin in Alexander 2005:30). There were still over 23,000 assigned convicts in 1837 (Kercher 2003) and the system continued in NSW and Tasmania until the cessation of transportation to NSW in 1840 (Shaw 1971:272, Kercher 2003).

Sir George Arthur (1784-1854), the lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1824-1836, developed and administered the assignment system in Tasmania and rigorously insisted on the mutual good behaviour of both master and servant. He □recognised that the settler formed a very important □cog□ in a greater machine. In keeping with this, he governed the settler-master almost as stringently as he governed the convict□ (Tuffin in Alexander 2005:30). Colonists were expected to make transportation a feared punishment□ (Petrov 2005:4). Convict labour which was in high demand due to the shortage of free labourers and skilled artisans, could be withdrawn by Arthur for a range of offences. Servants were liable to summary punishment for misconduct, but they might be withdrawn if their masters broke any of the many other regulations.

The assignment system included incentives for convicts to reform. Convicts were entitled to tickets-of-leave if well behaved. This □indulgence□ allowed them to earn wages and live independently while they served out the remainder of their sentence. However as convicts they continued to be monitored and a ticket of leave could be withdrawn for bad behaviour. Conditional pardons (convicts had to remain in the colony) were given as inducements for special services, such as the capture of bushrangers or absconders or faithful service as police. Arthur personally scrutinised the records before granting these incentives. His administration of convicts increased the governor's patronage and aroused the bitter hostility of those whose servants were withdrawn (Shaw 1966). While Arthur set up an Assignment Board in 1832 he supervised it closely. He consistently insisted that under his regime transportation was a very severe punishment. Assigned convicts, he said, were slaves, except that their slavery was terminable. They were always subject to their masters' caprices and vaguely defined offences were liable to severe punishment (Shaw 1966).

Working on a large farming property became the most common assignment for convicts. In Tasmania, an average of 54 percent of male convicts were assigned to settlers during the period 1820-1835 (Maxwell-Stewart 2006a:3). The need to provide rations and shelter for convicts favoured larger enterprises, as small farmers were less able to support convicts on a consistent basis and would return them to the colonial authorities for reassignment.

Large farming enterprises were labour intensive. Their development was dependent

on the availability of cheap labour. Since convicts and ex-convicts constituted 80 to 90 percent of the potential male labour force in the colonies between 1820-1835 (Butlin 1985:19), convicts were instrumental in the expansion of farming in the colonies. The large country estate quickly became established as the archetypal symbol of the assignment system. As estates were generally managed along paternalistic lines it was thought that masters could instil convicts with habits of industry.

Estate architecture was regarded as vital in achieving these aims. Separate quarters for female assigned servants within the house, clearly defined service areas, service staircases, separate quarters for an overseer and detached barrack-like accommodation for male servants were all considered to be features of the well-ordered estate. Skilled workers, such as gardeners, coachmen and artisans were provided with their own cottage style accommodation whereas other agricultural workers were housed separately in simpler quarters. Ideally the estate complex should also include a chapel where the convict population could be mustered each Sunday (Maxwell-Stewart 2006a:7). The Brickendon and Woolmers Estates exemplify these features and are outstanding examples of assignment era properties. As one of the larger estates, many convicts worked at Brickendon and Woolmers in the period from the early 1820s to the 1850s.

In practice, the Archer families shared labour between the neighbouring properties, Woolmers and Brickendon. This was especially the case during harvest seasons when assigned servants were rotated between the two properties. With a combined convict population of over 100, Brickendon and Woolmers formed the second largest pool of convict labour in private hands in the colony, after the Van Diemen's Land Company. The surviving musters show that between 1830 and 1835 from 41 to 51 male convicts were assigned to Woolmers annually and between 34 to 43 to Brickendon (Archives Office of Tasmania, AJCP, HO/10/47, 48, 49 and 50). William Archer's diary records on 16 October 1847 there were on the entire property 86 men, 15 women and 9 children. A total of 110 people including family members, although some may have been seasonal workers who had already arrived for the shearing (Lucas Stapleton 1996, vol 3:13)..

Properties such as Brickendon and Woolmers are historically significant as they represent the typical convict experience. Unlike road parties, and other punishment regimes, assigned convicts were largely managed by the use of incentives, as opposed to punishment. The estates were places where a premium was placed on particular skills, especially those possessed by convict mechanics (blacksmiths, carpenters, tanners, bricklayers etc) and skilled agricultural hands (ploughman, shepherds, dairymaids etc), and many of these skills are exemplified in the surviving architecture and layout of the estate. They were also places where male and female convicts worked alongside each other unlike the public sector where, housed in barracks or female factories, they were generally kept apart. As well as being sites of work, they were also sites of leisure and recreation. They were places where many sections of colonial society interacted, a process which estate architecture was deliberately designed to control. Thus, following British practice, the front of the house was the place where the family resided and visitors of status were received, while the back was the area connected with work and service. All of these features are remarkably well preserved at Brickendon and Woolmers.

While the assignment system created opportunities for many convicts to start a new life, opposition to the transportation of convicts grew steadily, culminating in the 1838 Molesworth report. The assignment system was considered inconsistent, a lottery dependent too often on the character of the masters, rather than the nature of the crimes. It was also criticised for the perceived contradiction at the heart of the system □ that assignment to a well disposed master meant that transportation could often be a reward for evil-doing (Robson 1983:155).

Withdrawal of the assignment process commenced in Tasmania in 1839, to be replaced with the probation system which sought to punish systematically. In 1840 and 1841 there was a labour shortage as no convicts were assigned to private settlers. Due to the cessation of transportation in NSW the convict numbers increased dramatically from 1841 increasing the convict population by over 40% in four years (Shaw 1971:300). The probation system added to the convicts' misery as the severe depression from 1842 meant that convict pass-holders could not find work. From the settlers' perspective the numbers of convicts increased with no off-setting economic contribution, and they deeply resented the additional imposts levied on them to pay for more police and goals which they considered the responsibility of the British government. Meanwhile revenues fell significantly from falling land sales and a drop in exports (Townesley 1991:61). The failure of the probation system turned the majority of colonists into implacable opponents of transportation itself (Sprod 2005:290). Thomas Archer at Woolmers strongly supported the abolition of transportation (Stilwell 1966:26). Both Thomas Archer and William Archer of Brickendon with other family members signed a petition, published in 1850, for the immediate abolition of transportation (Chick 1991:11).

Following the death of Thomas Archer in 1850 the trustees decided in 1855 to lease the 11,000 acre property. However, no lease was eventually entered into and a manager was appointed. Descendents of the Archer family intermittently lived in the main house at Woolmers and during the second half of the 19th century frequently leased the house and farming estate, often to family or relatives. The land continued to be leased as sheep runs. In 1912 a total of 6,147 acres of the Woolmers estate was purchased by the Government for closer settlement. Most of the remaining area was either leased or turned over to orchards. Following the end of the Second World War a further 5,856 acres was compulsorily purchased by the Government in 1947 under the Closer Settlement Scheme. Only the homestead area of 15.63 ha (just over 34 acres) remained in the possession of Thomas Edward Cathcart Archer. In 1974 the property was inherited by Thomas William Archer who never married and died without issue in 1994. Since then Woolmers Homestead has been owned and managed by the Woolmers Foundation which operates as a tourism attraction.

The property is an example of an intact convict era estate in Australia and contains some exceptionally early and significant buildings including an early woolshed. It provides outstanding evidence of the way in which architecture and estate design was used to reinforce class and gender divisions during the convict assignment period. Until the death of Thomas William Archer in 1994, Woolmers had remained in the hands of one family. As a result it has retained many of its original interior fittings, furniture and other artefacts. Although almost all the agricultural land and pastoral runs associated with the property have been sold, the house and its estate buildings

form a cultural landscape which are remarkably intact.

**Condition:**

Woolmers house, gardens, villa and associated outbuildings are in remarkably good state of preservation. The integrity of the property is one of its outstanding features. While some structures, notably the chapel, have been converted to other uses, few original architectural features have been lost. Exceptions include the male convict quarters and parts of the original service wing replaced in the 1840s. Unlike many other colonial houses, Woolmers also contains a large number of its original fittings, furniture, paintings, dinner services, glassware, cutlery, toys, motor vehicles, farm equipment etc. Considerable archival correspondence relating to the property, the family and estate workers, much of it in the Archives Office of Tasmania, also survives. The property is actively managed and maintained by the Woolmers Foundation.

**Bibliographic References:**

Aitken, R and Looker, M (eds), 2002 *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, Australian Garden History Society, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.

Altenburg, K 1988, □Strathallan near Braidwood, New South Wales: an historical archaeological investigation□ MA thesis, University of Sydney.

Apperly, A, Irving, R, and Reynolds P, 1989, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Tasmania, Historical tables, Population Tasmania, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/>, accessed on 5 January 2007.

Australian Bureau of Statistics,  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1384.62002?OpenDocument>, accessed on 5 January 2007.

Alexander, A (ed) 2005, *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

Australian Broadcasting Commission 2006,  
<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/guide/netw/200401/highlights/221534.htm>, accessed 22 December 2006

Australian Council of National Trusts 1981, *Historic Buildings of Australia*, Volume 2, Cassell Australia, North Ryde.

Australian Museum on Line (AMOL), <http://amol.org.au/guide/instn.asp?ID=N157>, accessed 22 December 2006.

Boyd, Robin 1972, *The Australian Ugliness*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood.

Broadbent, J in Aitken, R and Looker, M (eds), 2002 *The Oxford Companion to*

*Australian Gardens*, Australian Garden History Society, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.

Butlin, N G, 1986, □Contours of the Australian Economy 1788-1860□, *Australian Economic. History Review*, Vol 26, No 2, September, 96-125.

Chick, Neil 1991, *The Archers of Van Diemens Land A History of Pioneer Pastoral Families*, Pedigree Press, Lenah Valley.

Clark, C M H, 1962, *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Clark, C M H, 1979, *A History of Australia 111, The Beginning of an Australian Civilization 1824-1851*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

English Heritage, [www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/Historic-Farmsteads-East-England-part2](http://www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/Historic-Farmsteads-East-England-part2), accessed 21 December 2006.

Forbes, C, 2003, □Coombing Park: A Case Study□ in *Out There?*, National Trust of Australia (NSW), 10 March, 45-52.

Frazer Simons, P, 1987, *Historic Tasmanian Gardens*, Mulini Press, Canberra.

Freeland J M, 1974, *Architecture in Australia A History*, Penguin Books Australia, Mentone, Victoria.

Gregg, A J, 2005, *Convict Labour at Brickendon: The Diary of William Archer Senior*, a thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History, School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania.

Harrison J N D and Bolt, F, 1977, *The National Trust in Tasmania*, Rigby, Adelaide.

Heritage Council of Victoria, 1997, *Warrock*.

Irving R (compiler), 1985 *The History and Design of the Australian House*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Kercher, Bruce 2003, *Law and History Review*, □Perish or Prosper: The Law and Convict Transportation in the British Empire, 1700□1850□, Vol 21, No 3, [http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/21.3/forum\\_kercher.html](http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/21.3/forum_kercher.html), accessed on 11 January 2007.

Kerr, J S, □A Brief Account of the Development of Fencing in Australia during the Nineteenth century□, in *Historic Houses Trust*, 1998, Bush Futures? Forum, Sydney.

Lucas, C and Joyce, R, 1994, *Australian Country Houses Homesteads, Farmsteads and Rural Retreats*, Lansdowne Publishing, Sydney.

Lucas, Stapleton & Partners 1996: *Woolmers Estate, Longford, Tasmania Conservation Plan*, (Volumes 1-4)

Macmillan Australia, 1983, *The Heritage of Tasmania The Illustrated Register of the National Estate*, Macmillan Australia in association with the Australian Heritage Commission.

Maxwell-Stewart, H, 2006a, □Short Term Consultancy for World Heritage Serial Nomination for Australian Convict Sites□, for the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

Maxwell-Stewart 2006b, □Woolmers, Brickendon□ for the Tasmanian Department of the Tourism, Arts and the Environment.

Morgan S, 1992, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, Victoria.

Morris-Nunn, M, Watson-Brown, E, Ascui, G, and Bartkevicious, M, 1986, *Woolmers Blacksmith shop; Woolshed; Ciderhouse; Pumping house; A Study*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston.

New South Wales Heritage Council,  
[http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07\\_subnav\\_01\\_2.cfm?itemid=2690002](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_01_2.cfm?itemid=2690002), accessed 21 December 2006.

Pearson M and Lennon J, 2006, □Draft Pastoralism and National Estate Values□.

Petrow, S, 2000, □Policing in a Penal Colony: Governor Arthur's Police System in Van Diemen's Land, 1826-1836□ in *Law and History Review*, Vol 18, No 2,  
<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/18.2/petrow.html>, accessed on 4 January 2007.

Roberts, S H, 1935, *The Squatting Age in Australia 1835-1847*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Robson L, 1983, *A History of Tasmania, Volume 1, Van Diemen's Land from the Earliest Times to 1855*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Shaw, A G L, 1966, 'Arthur, Sir George (1784 - 1854)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, Melbourne University Press, pp 32-38.

Sprod, D 2005, in *The Companion to Tasmania History*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania.

Stilwell, G T, 1966 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, □Archer Thomas (1790-1850)□, Volume 1, Melbourne University Press.

Townsley W A, 1991, *Tasmania From Colony to Statehood 1803-1945*, St David's Park Publishing, Hobart.

Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staddle\\_stones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staddle_stones), accessed 21 December 2006.