

# The association between Tocal and Duninald



In 2022 the association between Duninald and Tocal will have been for 200 years, and we presume the association of the Aboriginal communities pre-dates this.

William Dun arrived in Sydney on 15th December 1821 and records show the granting of 1200 acres on 31 December 1821, although the site was yet to be chosen. This was the second formal land grant on the Paterson. James Webber arrived in Sydney on 11 January 1822.

Webber and Dun were given permission to travel to Newcastle and onwards to the Paterson River. They undertook the journey on 21 January 1822. They selected land opposite each other. On 1 March 1822 Surveyor Henry Dangar was instructed to survey the Lower Hunter prior to large scale settlement and to accommodate the land chosen by Dun and Webber.

Dun probably took up residence in late March 1822 and the property was occupied by the descendants of William Dun until 2005. Webber had received his clearance to travel two weeks earlier, it is conjectured that they travelled together. Both were foundation members of the Agricultural Association of NSW created in July 1822. Together they faced the issue of establishing farms, building accommodation, clearing land and feeding their assigned convicts.

They were involved in community service. In 1825 Dun was appointed as coroner for Paterson Plains and Webber was appointed Justice of the Peace (Honorary Magistrate). Webber ran sheep and cattle, grew tobacco and other crops and was recognised as a pioneer in the wine industry. In 1833 he became embroiled in a bitter dispute with Governor Bourke. This led to Webber selling Tocal to Caleb Wilson in 1834 and leaving the country in 1835.

Whilst Webber fell foul of the Governor, Dun also had his tribulations. His stores were destroyed by his convicts in 1825. For this and other reasons Dun's fortunes were mixed, eventually leading to his insolvency in 1843.

In the years 1840 to 1844 there was a severe drought and very low produce prices which affected all settlers regardless of their status. Duninald was mortgaged to Tocal's owner Felix Wilson, son of Caleb who died in 1838. Felix built the Tocal Homestead in 1841 and leased the property to Charles Reynolds in 1844.

In 1844 Charles Reynolds married Frances Dun, the eldest daughter of William Dun of Duninald. Frances lived at Tocal and her parents continued to live at Duninald.

In 1860, William Dun sold Duninald to Charles Reynolds. Tocal and Duninald were run together, with Charles moving his Devon cattle stud to Duninald and keeping his thoroughbred stud at Tocal. Later Duninald also bred horses. Charles and Frances had 5 children and when Charles was killed in 1871, the properties were continued to be run by Frances. Frances assisted the children into their own homes and properties. The eldest son Frank stayed at Tocal. The second son, Sidney moved into the original Duninald home (Old Duninald) and then into the new Duninald in 1877. Frances died in 1900. The property was then divided with Frank continuing at Tocal and Sidney at Duninald.

When Frank died in 1920 there was division in the family as to the course to take with family members wanting to divide the asset. In 1926 Tocal was sold by auction to Jean Alexander. She took up residence with her three siblings, including Charles. It was Charles, the last surviving Alexander, dying in 1947, whose Will ultimately saw the Presbyterian Church establish the agricultural college on Tocal.

Following Charles Alexander's death his nieces', Misses Curtis, continued to live at Tocal and employed Gordon Reynolds as Manager of the Tocal estate. Gordon, was a son of Sidney Reynolds. During this time Sidney M Reynolds of Old Duninald kept in contact with Tocal through his Uncle Gordon and neighbourly friendship with the Misses Curtis.

Upon the establishment of the College for a time the College dairy herd was milked at Duninald prior to the College's dairy being completed. Sidney M Reynolds through his pioneering work with Australian native plants was a mentor and supporter for Tocal staff who were charged with clothing the campus with only Australian native plants.

Chris and Julia Wokes bought Duninald in 2005 and found the courses run by Tocal invaluable in helping to run the property. There has also been ongoing mutual interest concerning cattle enterprises.

It is wonderful that Duninald and Tocal are working together in showcasing excellence in hospitality having previously shared excellence in cattle and horse breeding.