

Past era exposed

A \$610,000 project to restore the 149-year-old Ravensworth homestead has seen the historic heritage home returned to its former glory days.

Repair rather than replace was the motto for the project with owners Xstrata Coal employing heritage architects and restoration experts to undertake maintenance work on the homestead.

Built in the 1860s, the homestead maintains cultural and historical significance to the Ravensworth area and people of Singleton for its role in the development of the local wool industry.

According to time lines, the property was the foundation of the Ravensworth Estate with Dr James Bowman applying for a grant of 11,000 acres in 1824.

Xstrata Coal purchased the Ravensworth homestead in 1997 as part of the acquisition of buffer land for the coal mining company's Glendell project.

Under Singleton Council's Local Environment Plan (LEP), Xstrata Coal is obligated to ensure the homestead is not subject to demolition, damage or destruction, including neglect.



A STEP BACK INTIME: Ben Clibborn, senior environmental and community coordinator, Xstrata Coal's Mt Owen mine with visitors to the Ravensworth homestead including Amanda Power, Alison Walkom, Alisa-Jane Evans, Sister Monica Sinclair, Carol Russell and Lyn MacBain.

In March last year, work began to restore the homestead, inside and out.

On Friday, owners Xstrata Coal welcomed a visit from members of the Hunter Heritage Network and Singleton's Heritage Council.

Roughly 30 people took the chance to compare before and after with Xstrata Coal's senior environment and community coordinator Ben Clibborn providing background information on the project while heritage archi-

tect Jason Condon from EJE and Chris Bart from Australian Network Restoration also spoke to the crowd before giving visitors a tour.

Lyn MacBain, a member of Singleton Council's Heritage Advisory Committee, said Singleton was a heritage destination and the Ravensworth homestead an invaluable piece of that history.

Mrs MacBain said it was an 'absolute delight' to see the homestead returned to what it once was and said she was

impressed with Xstrata Coal's commitment to the project.

The future use of the Ravensworth homestead is yet to be decided however ideas may include using it as a conference and training facility or setting it up as a regional museum or gallery.

Xstrata Coal welcomed other ideas and input from members of the Hunter Heritage Network during their visit as to its future.

Ravensworth homestead is located one kilometre west of Xstrata coal's Mt Owen operations.