

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION.

18-20 CLARENCE STREET, PORT MACQUARIE.

The purpose of the archaeological excavation is to recover evidence of the historical development of Port Macquarie from 1821 onwards. It is hoped that the most important remains and finds will be conserved within the new development.

Penal Establishment, 1821-1830.

Port Macquarie was founded as a penal establishment for the punishment of secondary offenders in 1821. The convicts were immediately put to work in constructing the necessary buildings

In July 1822, the former governor, Lachlan Macquarie listed the works that had been completed, including weatherboard buildings for the commandant, barracks and guardhouse, together with:

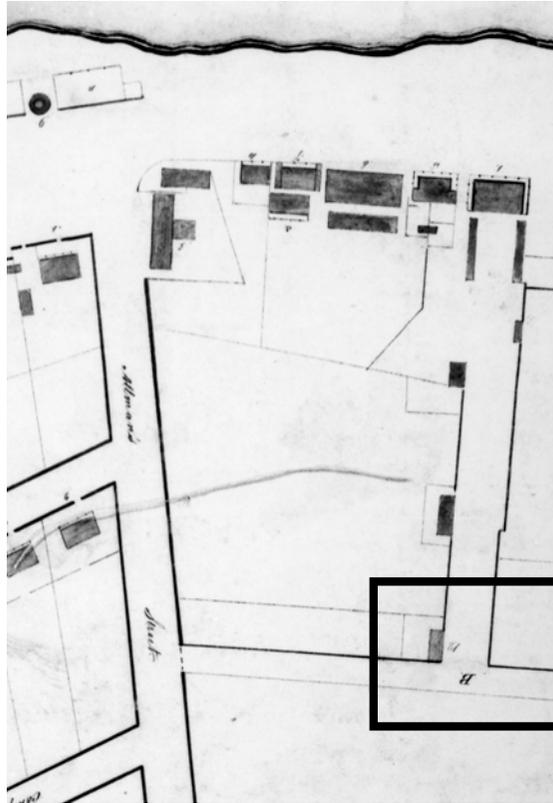
“A Weather-boarded Provision Store and Granary enclosed with a strong stockade.”

The convicts themselves were housed in:

“A Range of large well Constructed Temporary Bark Huts for the accommodation of 300 male Convicts with Kitchen Gardens attached thereto.”

The excavation site lies at the south end of the land occupied by the Commissariat Stores. A building was constructed on a separate allotment between 1824 and 1826 and was identified as the Post Office.

In the 1830s the Post Office moved to one of the former Overseer's Cottages (now part of the Glasshouse development).



1826 Map of Port Macquarie (Source: State Records, Map 75).

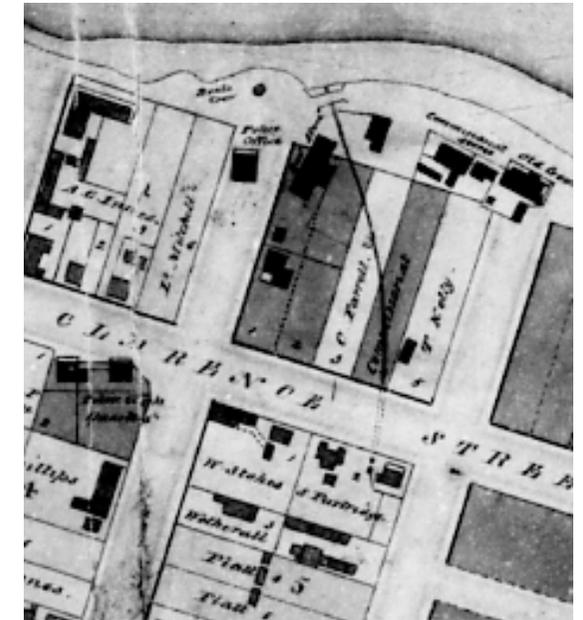
The rectangle marks the approximate location of the archaeological excavation.

Secondary punishment.

Most, if not all of the convicts in the penal colony of New South Wales had been sentenced to transportation for 7, 14 or 21 years (the latter considered a life sentence). If they were found guilty of further crimes in the colony, they could be sent to a place of secondary punishment.

A temporary settlement was founded at Newcastle in 1801 to mine coal. In 1804 it was re-established as a place of secondary punishment, largely in response to the rebellion at Castle Hill, which ended in the Battle of Vinegar Hill at Toongabbie.

With the spread of free settlement to the Hunter Valley in the 1820s, Newcastle was no longer an isolated place for punishment. Hence Port Macquarie took over this function for a short period from 1821 to 1830.



Port Macquarie, 1831, but with additions to 1835-6.

The plan shows the new town development on Clarence Street and also the lower course of the brick barrel drain, which crosses Clarence Street from the site.

Source: State Records Map 3673.

The Town of Port Macquarie, 1830 onwards.

With the closure of the penal establishment, the town was laid out by the surveyors with a new grid of streets and allotments.

The site became Allotment 2 of Section 5. It was promised to Edward Waterton on 21 August 1831. He sold his right to the property (together with other land) to Charles Farrell for £150 on 28 June 1834.

Charles Farrell ran the Settlers Arms, further west on Clarence Street and held the second licence in the town from 19 September 1830.

Charles Farrell and Stephen Partridge seem to

have exchanged properties, since the building Partridge held on Hay Street was more suitable for a public House.

This arrangement was formalised on 17 January 1837, with Partridge now owning Allotment 2. Partridge spent “several hundred pounds” improving the property. The land was granted to him on 30 May 1840.

Stephen Partridge had been Superintendent of Convicts from 1822 onwards, resigning to become the first publican in Port Macquarie in 1830. He became a police constable in 1835 and was reappointed Superintendent of Convicts in 1836, a post he held until most convict specials had left in 1846.



The significance of the site.

As one of only a small number of penal establishments for secondary punishment, this site is of state significance.

Other places of secondary punishment included Newcastle, Norfolk Island and Tasmania.

What do we hope to find?

The footings of each building are likely to survive beneath the soil.

Unlike today, there was no weekly garbage collection, so all domestic rubbish would have been thrown into pits or used as compost. Archaeologists can tell an amazing amount from the rubbish thrown out, including standard of living, working conditions, use of rooms, yards and houses. Each artifact will tell us something about daily life in the 19th century.

We hope to find out how long the Post Office building survived after the 1830s. Was it a timber or masonry structure? What was the standard of living for the occupants of the later houses? What happens to the brick barrel drain upstream from Clarence Street? These, and many more questions will be answered by the excavations.

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16 Clarence Street Pty Ltd.

Photo of the brick barrel drain under Clarence Street. The headwalls of this drain are located on the site. (E Higginbotham, 1995).