

OPEN DAY – 10 JUNE 2006.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXCAVATION.
PROPOSED ARTS,
ENTERTAINMENT &
CONFERENCE CENTRE,
CLARENCE STREET, PORT
MACQUARIE.**

Brochure No. 2.
For historical background, see Brochure No. 1.

The excavation is now in its final stages after four weeks of work. So, what have we found? The principal features of the site can be seen on the sketch plan opposite.

The Overseer's Cottages, c.1824.

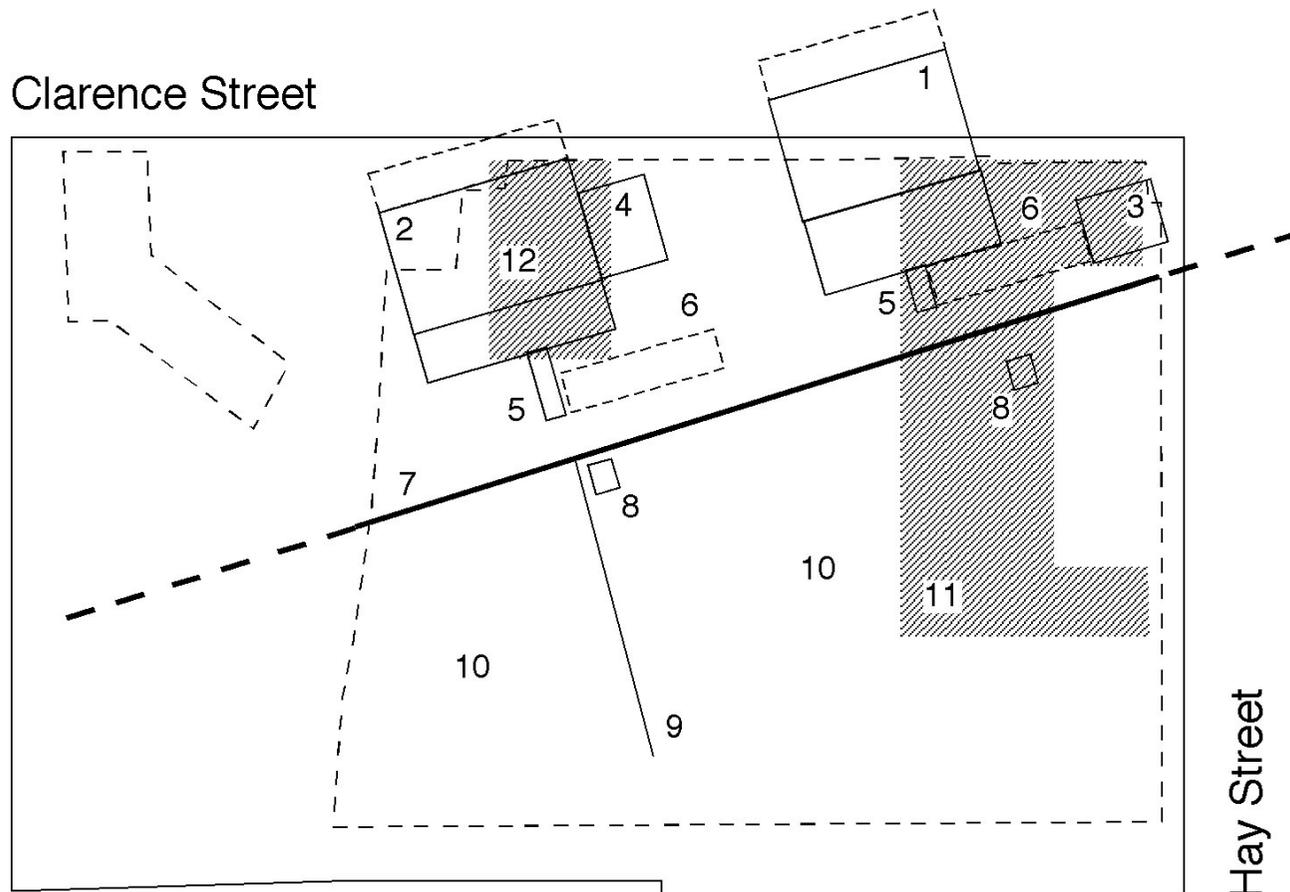
Parts of two of the Overseer's Cottages are located on the site. They were built by 1824.

The houses originally had brick footings – only short sections of brickwork now survive. When the houses were demolished, most of the brick was salvaged for use elsewhere around the town. We have dug out the footing trenches and recovered the occupation materials from within each room. We can see that the houses had a central hallway, flanked on each side by two rooms.

Each house is different. Cottage 3 had larger rooms than Cottage 2, but Cottage 2 had a larger lean-to addition at the rear. The houses fronted onto Henrietta Street, which was replaced by Clarence Street in 1830, hence the houses are at a slight diagonal.

Behind is a brick pathway, leading to the kitchen garden allotments for each house. We have also found evidence of outbuildings.

Clarence Street



Hay Street

Key.

1. Free Overseer's Cottage No. 2, and
2. Free Overseer's Cottage No. 3, both with front verandahs and back skillions (lean-to structures).
3. Post-built structures (bark huts?).
4. Extension to Cottage No. 3.
5. Brick paved pathway.
6. Site of outbuildings.
7. Brick barrel drain.
8. Timber lined pit.
9. Fenceline in Kitchen Garden Allotments.
10. Kitchen Garden Allotments.
11. School of Arts (1884), shaded.
12. Town Hall (1892), shaded.

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The brick barrel drain.

Running between the houses and the kitchen garden allotments we have found an intact brick barrel drain. Drains like this have been found elsewhere in Port Macquarie, but this is the first time we have seen how they relate to the houses, allotments and former street pattern.

Beside the pathways leading from the back of the two cottages, there are shallow dish drains, constructed in brick. These feed into the brick barrel drain and the whole system provided stormwater drainage on the low lying area of the town.

Brick barrel drains are known elsewhere in New South Wales, but are rare. The preservation of this length of drain is very unusual.

The timber lined cess-pits.

It is unlikely that the brick barrel drain was used as a sewer, since we have found a well-preserved timber lined cess-pit for an outdoor toilet behind each cottage.

The timber lining appears to be re-used wooden slabs from former buildings. We have found a large quantity of artifacts in the backfill of the cess-pit to Cottage 3, probably dating to the 1870s, by which time the cottage is likely to have been demolished.

It is extremely unusual for timber to survive so well underground. The surviving timbers reveal the construction of the pits, but may also tell us about the structures from which they were salvaged.

Post-built structures.

We have been surprised by the discovery of a series of post-built structures at the north-east corner of the site. Among the post-holes, there appears to be a large four post structure, as

well as a hut. The latter may be one of the bark huts erected between 1821 and 1824.

This is the first time that the site of a bark hut has been excavated in Port Macquarie. It is similar to the 'convict huts', built from the 1790s in Parramatta and other early penal settlements.



The School of Arts, 1884.

The timber stumps of the School of Arts form a prominent feature on the eastern part of the site. The stumps supported the timber frame of the building, erected in 1884, but demolished in the early 1970s.

The first Town Hall in Port Macquarie, 1892.

While the first meeting of the Municipal Council was held in 1877, it was not until 1892 that the Town Hall was completed. After new council chambers were erected in 1968, the old Town Hall was demolished in 1972.

Only a small section of the brick footings of the Town Hall survive, overlying the earlier footprint of Overseer's Cottage No. 3.

The town hall site demonstrates the continuation of government ownership of this property from 1821 onwards, over 180 years.

Artifacts.

A selection of the finds from the dig can be seen during the Open Day.

After the excavation is completed, the study of the artifacts continues off site. They will help us date the archaeological remains, and will also reveal the lives of the people who have lived or worked here.

The future of our past.

A selection of archaeological remains and artifacts will be conserved for later incorporation in displays in the finished building.

The excavation team.

The staff of the dig would like to thank the volunteers from the local community, who have given so generously of their time to help complete the excavation.

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