

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

Corner of George & Charles Streets, Parramatta

Archaeological work is being undertaken on the corner of George & Charles Streets in Parramatta because it was previously occupied by the colonial British from the late eighteenth century. The focus of the work by Casey & Lowe and a team of archaeologists and volunteers is to excavate and record the remains of the post-1788 occupation. This work is being funded by Meriton Apartments as part of the redevelopment of the site. The NSW Heritage Council has given approval for this work to be undertaken.

Aboriginal History

Parramatta was occupied by the Darug Aboriginal people prior to the arrival of the British in 1788. It is part of their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. Being near the river it would have been an important area for camping and fishing for 10,000 or more years. Fish were an important part of the diet of people living in the Sydney region in pre-colonial times. Aboriginal occupation of Parramatta was documented by the British who set out from Sydney Cove to explore the Parramatta River and locate fertile land to grow the crops needed to sustain the new arrivals.

Colonial History

1788 to 1822

Governor Phillip sent out exploring parties to survey Sydney Harbour and the river at the head of the harbour shortly after landing at Sydney Cove. On Sunday 2 November 1788 Governor Phillip and others, including marines, established a military redoubt at Rose Hill. Convicts were sent to Rose Hill to commence farming.

With the success of farming at Rose Hill, Phillip decided to expand the settlement. In 1790 Governor Phillip and Surveyor Augustus Alt laid out a town plan with High Street (George Street) running between the planned site of Government House and the Landing Place to the east of this site. As set out, George Street was 205 feet (63 m) wide and a mile (1.6 km) long. On either side of the street huts were to be

erected, each capable of containing 10 persons, and at a distance of 60 feet (18.5 m) from each other, with a garden area allotted at the rear of each hut. The huts were to be built of wattle and daub and the roof thatched and were to be 12 by 24 feet (4 by 8 m). The new street and the huts were built by the convicts from July 1790. By September 1790 bricks were being fired for a barracks and store house, a wharf was built just to the east of this site and 27 huts were being built along High Street (George Street).

The archaeological remains of three convict huts aligned along George Street should survive within the study area. These three huts and three other early buildings along Charles Street were still standing in 1822 (see Plan).



Convict huts in George Street, 1793.

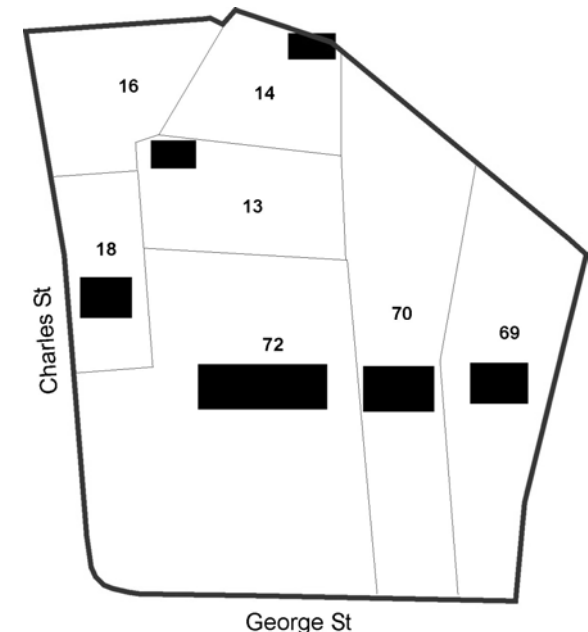
1823-1900

In June 1823 Governor Brisbane formally made leases of land in Parramatta. The householders residing on a property they had previously acquired unofficially could now apply for an official title. It is presumed that the people who applied for the seven grants within the study area were the then occupants. These were:

Lot 72 - Joseph Grose	Lot 18 - John Ellison
Lot 70 - Walter Lawry	Lot 14 - Hugh Owens
Lot 69 - Richard Hunt	Lot 13 - Walter Lawry

In the late 1830s James and William Byrnes acquired most of the land within the study area. William Byrnes purchased Lot 69 in 1853. The two brothers were pioneers of steam ferry transport on the Parramatta

River and in 1840-41 established a steam flour mill near the wharf. In 1844-46 they built a textile mill on the adjoining property. The brothers appear to have operated a brewery on Charles Street which they acquired from Joseph Grose. Grose may have operated Burton's brewery between 1822 and 1835 before selling it to the Byrnes brothers.



The site in 1822 indicating buildings and Lot numbers.

William Byrnes' father was a soldier from Northern Ireland who volunteered to come out to New South Wales and arrived in July 1808 with his family on the *Recovery*. He was attached to the NSW Corps and later to the 73rd Regiment which came out with Governor Macquarie. It was claimed many years later by his daughter Emmeline that William Byrnes was born c. 1809 in Parramatta in a cottage behind the house where his main residence was later built [ie

behind Lot 72]. In 1828 he was an apprentice to Richard Hunt, a saddler who leased Lot 69.

William Byrnes married Anne Oakes, the daughter of a prominent local resident. They built a large two-storey house with various outbuildings on George Street. They resided there for the rest of Byrnes' life (1899). His two unmarried daughters continued to reside in the house until their deaths in the 1920s. Living with William Byrnes in 1841 were 13 males and 8 females. This includes four domestic servants as well as his family.

Twentieth century

Emmeline and Marion Byrnes continued to live in the Byrnes' house. In 1921 it was described as a two-storey brick house, roofed with slate, with 14 rooms, plus detached stables, coach house, kitchen, laundry, man's room, store-room, fuel shed and pump house.

About 1903, a small weatherboard shop and residence were erected on the eastern part of the land (Lot 69), which was subsequently let to Chinese tenants. Lots 18, 13, 14 and parts of Lot 70 were leased for market gardens. In 1921 Lot 69 had a weatherboard cottage of three rooms lined with wood and roofed with iron which was let to Ah Chee, as was all of the market garden on the various lots. In the 1960s warehouses were built on the site. These were recently demolished.

Research Questions

The archaeological evidence recorded from the site is expected to help us answer research questions which further our knowledge of early colonial history. Among these questions are the following:

Material Culture of Convict Life

This explores how archaeological artefacts reveal the nature of convict life:

- Did the deprivations of a frontier life alter the way in which convicts and free people lived in early colonial Parramatta?

- Is there evidence of resistance by convicts to the way in which their life was ordered and structured by military control?
- Nature of early agricultural practices, evidence for dairying etc.
- Evidence for the construction of gender roles.
- Further our knowledge about early pottery manufacture and use in Parramatta.

Free Life in Colonial Parramatta

- What does the archaeological evidence tell us about cultural and social practices in colonial Parramatta, relating to how people lived and ate, the clothes they wore and the goods they bought?

Landscape of Colonial Parramatta

The Landscape of Colonial Parramatta was a remaking of the Aboriginal landscape. These questions seek to explore the social, cultural and political context and how it was manifest in this colonial landscape.

- Order and amenity - do the layout of houses and other structures reveal specific details of cultural and social practices? What was the role of these practices in changing the landscape and modifying people's behaviour?
- This site with its six convict-period buildings offers an exciting opportunity to explore the nature of the landscape of control. Among the themes to be considered is how convicts resisted the way in which control expressed itself in the landscape and in daily life.
- Nature and effect of modification of the pre-European landscape and evidence for the pre-European landscape.

Life in the Byrnes' Household

- The nature of life in this relatively affluent household which was built and lived in by William Byrnes and his family and later by his two unmarried daughters.
- Evidence for the nature of childhood and the way in which gender roles were constructed.

- The nature of the material culture and consumption patterns of the Byrnes' family and their servants over a period of about 80 years and how these remains related to the transformation of their environment through frontier town, rural town and urbanisation.
- The way in which servants lived in this household.
- Layout of the house and outbuildings and how this structured life in the Byrnes' household.

Chinese Occupation

- Lifeways of the Chinese residents, tradition and variation and evidence for cross-cultural relations.

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Acknowledgements

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