

GURUK TO PORT MACQUARIE



From The Dreamtime to 1830

Compiled by Norm Lilley 2023

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I live, the Birpai people and pay my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the Hastings area. I extend my respect to elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

Introduction:

This Brief History is designed to tell some of the early history of the land now identified as Port Macquarie. I have attempted to compile a history from Pre-European times up to 1830 from available hardcover books and what is now available on the internet. This is not a research project but a compilation of already sourced information. Our area has a wonderful history. I have included information about our Indigenous Custodians of the land and, the first Penal Settlement up to 1830. I have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible, however, should anyone notice any errors, omissions, or additions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I must stress that while I have made every effort to be accurate and complete with the collection of information, I am sure that I have missed some information. I may also be incorrect with some interpretations of the information gleaned. Other people may have additional information that could be included in this compilation. So rather than this presentation being the “final destination” of the collection, I encourage other people to use this as a basis for further fine tuning. If anyone would like to pursue this project further, I am more than happy to provide all of the notes and information I have accumulated as well as a digital copy of this booklet. Please contact me via email nalilley@bigpond.com

Measurements referred to in this research are all in Imperial Measurements, as were used at the time. For Conversion Information from Imperial to Metric, please see The Appendix.

I hope that you enjoy reading of “*Gurak to Port Macquarie. From the Dreamtime to 1830.*”

Chapter One: Pre-European Settlement:

Archaeological evidence suggest that Aboriginal clans occupied the coastal plain of New South Wales 40,000 years ago.

The Birpai people are the traditional custodians of our local country. The country was created during The Dreaming when the Ancestral Beings wandered, forming the rivers, mountains, plants, animals and other natural features. The Dreaming is a powerful life force that connects Aboriginal people to the land and to a complex system of spiritual beliefs and cultural practices. The Indigenous custodians of the Hastings Valley, prior to the arrival of the European settlers, were the Birpai People. The Birpai, extended from the Hastings River, westward to Rollands Plains and Yarrowitch and southwards to the Manning and Wallamba Rivers, covering 7,300 square kilometres.

Port Macquarie's traditional name is **Guruk**¹.

Relying on the land and waterways to sustain themselves, the Birpai people made temporary huts along the river and around the lakes allowing them to follow the seasonal food trail. The region's richly diverse landscapes together with the subtropical climate ensured that the community thrived in harmony with the environment for many thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans.

The shark, eagle, kangaroo, bass, stingray, porpoise and crab are examples of Birpai totems.

The Birpai were part of the Kattang language group with the Dhunghaqtii people to the north and the Worimi and Gringhai to the south and southwest.

The Birpai people, also spelt Birrbay, Biripi, Birippi and variant spellings.

The Gathang language (aka Gadjang or Worimi) is the speech of the Birpai centred in Port Macquarie. Birpai is spelt Biripi in southern areas, such as Taree. Gathang was a community language spoken by the six tribes of the Worimi when required to meet.

¹ Guruk – Tony Dawson “*James Ralfe and the Early Surveys at Port Macquarie*” Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society. Vol. 104, No. 1, June 2018. Pp 62 -82.



The Birpai people were hunter-gatherers who moved throughout the area following the natural food sources. There are no records of the number of Indigenous people living in the area at the time but the reported sightings by the early settlers was relatively small and the settlers would suggest the number of Indigenous people occupying the valley was possibly 800 to 1000 people. The time and direction of their migrations throughout the valley depended upon the availability of food supplies and on the clans social obligations for attendance at ceremonies and initiation. The Aborigines, a proud and independent people living in harmony with their environment, were relegated to the fringe of European culture with their own unique culture being gradually lost. The penetration of European settlement in the valley and the alienation of the land marked the end of the Aboriginal settlement which had existed in a balance with the environment since time immemorial. European settlement had no continuity with the existing Aboriginal culture – it simply replaced it.



Storytelling is used in a variety of ways. It is used to teach children how they should behave and why and pass on knowledge about everyday life such as how and when to find certain foods. Stories are also used to explain peoples' spirituality, heritage and laws. Dreaming stories pass on information to young people about creation, how the land was formed and populated, creation of plants, animals and humans, information about ancestral beings and places, the boundaries of peoples' tribal lands, how ancestors came to Australia, how people migrated across the country and arrived in a particular part of the country. Storytelling ensures that Aboriginal heritage is passed on to the younger people. This is how Dreaming stories have been passed down for thousands of years and continue to be passed on today. The Biripi generally slept in the open but if the camp was set up, gunyahs were erected by placing sheets of stringybark over a sapling supported by two forked sticks. Biripi men wore a sort of sash around their loins made of threads of possum fur, and a tassel of native cat strips, and often a finestring net on their forehead. Women's clothing generally consisted of a possum skin cloak fastened neatly across the chest by a currapah, a pademelon leg bone. Young children were carried in a knitted bag, slung over the women's backs.

They used a great variety of stone, bone, shell and wooden implements for shaping weapons, cutting up animals, blocks of wood and sheets of bark, digging holes and making rock engravings. The stone tools were heavy choppers, a variety of scrapers and knives (burins), and other specialised tools. Their bone implements included awls for piercing skins and points for spearheads; shells were also used as knives, scrapers, and water containers. The Birpai decreed their hunters could not kill a totemic animal. The birpai of the Hastings Region used smoke signals to communicate with scattered members of the tribe. By butning green leaves,

over which a sheet of bark or bushy branch was held, tghen suddenly removed, puffs of smoke rose in the air.

The Birpai, according to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, had no moieties,² but did divide their hordes into four intermarrying groups, 4 male phratries³:

- *Wombo*
- *Kurraboo*
- *Wirraw*
- *Murrong*

marrying into four female groups:

- *Gooran*
- *Karragan*
- *Wangan*
- *Wirragan*.³¹⁷

Traditions differ as to whether the Birpai alternated between the coast and the hinterland seasonally. According to one tradition, they were divided into two distinct groups: inland women being called *Winmurra* and those of the coast *Mari*. *The northern Birpai alternated between inland and coastal camps according to the seasons, heading to locations that would provide best food sources.*

The Birpai population at the time of the Port Macquarie settlement seems to have been quite large. When Oxley first looked down at the area from Mount Seaview he saw *"numerous smokes arising from natives' fires which announced a country well inhabited."* After his initial contact with them he wrote that they were both numerous and treacherous and described them as *"handsome, showing evident signs of good living."*

This good living was not confined to the plentiful supply of food. The tribes were much better accommodated than those living close to Sydney Cove. Lieutenant King, a surveyor who accompanied Oxley in 1819 remarked that the Aborigines lived in dome-roofed huts which could each hold eight to ten people.

Birpai oral histories tell of the massacre of about 300 men, women and children around 1826 at Blackmans Point. There is no single written account, but the diary of Henry Lewis Wilson, who oversaw convicts in the area, relates that after two convicts sent to work at Blackmans Point were killed by Indigenous men, a party of soldiers *"got round the blacks and shot a great many of them, captured a lot of women and used them for a immoral purpose and then shot them. The offending soldiers were sent to Sydney to be tried but managed to escape punishment."* Historian Lyndall Ryan, after finding further corroborating written accounts, thinks that the Blackmans Point event referred to by Wilson involved around 20 people, but other massacres in the area may have caused the deaths of up to 300 people.

The area south of Port Macquarie, around Taree, was first settled by a naval man, William Wynter, who took up a selection of 2,560 acres (1,040 ha) around the Manning River, now known as Taree, in 1831. Wynter appears to have had very amicable relations with the Birpai, something inferred by the fact that his son William, who grew up among the Birpai, was allowed to go hunting with them, and learnt their language. This is thought to bear witness to the peaceful character of the Indigenous peoples themselves.

Aboriginal tribes along the Hastings also had a God-spirit, known as Nabbe, which lived above, and was believed to appear in a mist or fog when communicating with the Aborigines⁴.

² Moieties defined as

³ Phratres defined as

⁴ McLachlan, laen. *Place of Banishment. Port Macquarie 1818-1832. P 89*

The first real antidoted evidence of Aboriginal occupation of the area came to light in 1913 when a railway superintendent from Orange, who devoted his leisure to historical exploration, found Indigenous artifacts south of the town of Port Macquarie. Reporting the find, the Port Macquarie News wrote: *"While pursuing his investigations in Port Macquarie, Mr. Milne discovered the existence of an extensive pre-historic camp of the Aborigines, belonging to the stone age period. It is situated on a stretch of beach between Tacking Point Light House and Cathie Creek, about six miles from Port Macquarie. The site practically continuous for about a mile and is a chain wide. "The whole of the area is literally covered with kitchen middens and relics of the stone age. With very few exceptions the articles found-are of chipped type. The site has apparently been exposed by portion of the sea dunes having been eroded by south-easterly gales and the sand drift inland. The beach where the discovery was made runs in an unbroken run for many miles south of the lighthouse and contains millions of "pippi ' in its sands. It was no doubt the fact of these shellfish being present in such large quantities that attracted the Aborigines to the place. It was a regular custom with the blacks, even within the memory of persons now living, visit the beaches at regular intervals with the object of varying their diet with a feast of the products of the sea".*

Chapter Two: European Arrival

Information in this section derived from “*A Town Called Port*” by John Moyes.

1770: European recognition of the Hastings Valley dates back to Captain Cook’s voyage along the east coast in 1770 when he named the mountain ranges to the north of Taree as South, Middle and North Brother mountains and continued to sail north past this section of the coast, as did Matthew Flinders in 1802. But long before Captain Cook named the Three Brothers, the Aborigines of the area knew the mountains as “The Three Birrooguns”.⁵ In 1818 John Oxley, Surveyor General, led an expedition from Bathurst to discover an “inland sea”. After turning his expedition eastward on September 23rd, they first saw the sea from where he named Mt Seaview. Upon their steep descent from Mt Seaview, the expedition encountered a river which Oxley named the Hastings River on 26th September 1818. He named the river after the Governor-General of India and, when he arrived at its estuary, he named the site Port Macquarie after the Governor of NSW, Lachlan Macquarie, who initiated the expedition.

Oxley noted that *‘the port abounds with fish, the sharks were larger and more numerous than I have ever before observed. The forest hills and rising grounds abounded with large kangaroos and the marshes afford shelter and support to innumerable wild fowl. Independent of the Hastings River, the area is generally well watered, there is a fine spring at the very entrance to the Port’.*

Following the report made by Oxley’s expedition, Governor Macquarie sent Oxley back to survey the port and surrounding countryside more closely in 1819, with a view to establishing a penal settlement. Oxley was accompanied by Phillip Parker King, an early Australian marine surveyor, the first Australian-born mariner to attain recognition outside the colony. Oxley and his crew arrived on the *Lady Nelson* on 11th May 1819 and on this occasion, they made a thorough survey of the entrance, the river and the countryside up river as far as north west of what is now known as Wauchope. After investigation of the bar, harbour and countryside, Oxley reported to the Governor on 12th June, 1819, “*The port is perfectly capable to receive vessels of the class usually employed on the coast of this territory.*” However, Oxley reported the “chief danger on entering the port being a sunken rock on the south side which had about three feet of water on it at low water.” For nine days the harbour and river were sounded, and the results meticulously recorded; the direction of the channel determined, the extent of the tides, the discovery of its chief danger, a sunken rock, and the knowledge that the bar was two hundred yards long with a sandy bottom.



Surveyor-General John Oxley.

Oxley’s report to the Governor stated:

I beg leave to report to YOUR EXCELLENCY, that I arrived off the entrance of the Harbour on the 11th May, in company with his Majesty’s Cutter “Mermaid”, commanded by Lieutenant King, who expressed his intention to forward, by the superior means possessed by his vessel, the views of YOUR EXCELLENCY relative to the harbour. Both vessels anchored off the Bar, and the day was spent in sounding the Bar and Channel, when we had the pleasure to find that we could enter with

⁵ The Dreamtime history of the Three Birrooguns can be found in “*Place of Punishment. Port Macquarie 1818-1832* by Iain McLachlan Pp22-23

safety. Accordingly the next morning they were warped into the Harbour, and moored alongside a natural wharf on the south side of the Port. The examination of the harbour and river falling therein, occupied us until the 21st, when having completed the service directed by YOUR EXCELLENCY, both vessels quitted the Port with perfect ease; the Mermaid pursuing her course to the Northward, on her ulterior destination.

Port Macquarie is situated in Latitude 31degrees 25 minutes 45 South and in Longitude 152 degrees 53 minutes 34 East. It is a bar harbour, on which however there is a low water spring tides, at least 9 feet; the tide rising from 3 to 4 feet – The channel is perfectly straight, and the tides set fine, so that no danger is to be apprehended from their operation. The chief danger to be avoided on entering, is a sunken rock on the south side, having about 3 feet on it at low water; and it will be necessary, should the port be settled, that this danger should be buoyed. The bar extends about 200 yards; the bottom a soft sand, when the water deepens to 2 ½ fathoms, and ultimately 3 fathoms, when secure anchorage will be found inside the Beacon Rock.....The Port should be entered at or near High Water, when, unless it blows very hard, it seldom breaks on the Bar. The tide of ebb runs with great rapidity, sometimes nearly four miles per hour, owing to the great quantity of fresh water in the Hastings River, and the narrowness of the channel. The flood tide seldom exceeds 1 ¾ miles per hour. The tides are, however, very irregular in their operation being considerably influenced by local circumstances. The port is perfectly capable to receive vessels of the class usually employed on the coasts of this Territory, and it is in my opinion far better and safer than many comparable Bar Harbours in Europe; and which are much frequented by vessels adapted to their navigation.

Within the port the water deepens to 5 and 6 fathoms, which depth continues for nearly 10 miles, when the rapids of the river render it impracticable for craft drawing more than 6 or 8 feet; which depth continues for 6 to 8 miles further, when the falls commence; it may, however, when the river is ordinarily full, be navigable for boats some little distance further.....Therewith respectfully submit to YOUR EXCELLENCY a plan of the entrance into the Port, with a sketch of part of Hastings' River, and for which I am principally indebted to the Assistance rendered me on all occasions by Lieutenant King, whom I am happy in reporting to YOUR EXCELLENCY fully coincides with me, to the advantages that may be expected to result from the knowledge that the Port has a navigable and safe entrance, thereby affording a communication with the fine country on both banks of the Hastings' River. I have the Honor to remain,

With great respect,

YOUR EXCELLENCY'S

Most obedient and humble servant,

JOHN OXLEY, Surveyor General To His Excellency Governor Macquarie.⁶

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser⁷ reported on Saturday 19th June 1819, the following report of Oxley's expedition:

GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL ORDERS.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SYDNEY.

Thursday, 17th June, 1819.

CIVIL DEPARTMENT.

It is with feelings of much gratification that his EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR is at length enabled to announce, thus publicly, that a safe capacious harbour has been discovered and now accurately described, situated to the N.E of Newcastle, from

⁶ The full transcript of the is article can be found at Trove Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW 1803-1842), Saturday 19 June 1819, Page 1.

⁷ Trove. Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW 1803-1842), Saturday 19 June 1819, Page 1.

whence it is distant about 140 miles, and consequently about 220 miles in the same direction from Port Jackson.

This Harbour, which was discovered by J. Oxley, Esq. Surveyor General, on his reaching the Coast last year from his Tour of Discovery in the Interior, then obtained from him the name of PORT MACQUARIE; and although, owing to his not having any boat or vessel at that time, he could not then ascertain the surroundings and practicability of the entrance into this Harbour, yet the general appearances were sufficiently favourable to induce him to form the opinion that it would prove safe; and from the circumstances of the surrounding country being well watered and fertile, and the large River Hastings discharging itself into the sea there, he concluded that a Port so happily situated would be a valuable acquisition to this colony. Impressed with this idea he did not fail to report his Opinion in regard to it to HIS EXCELLENCY, who was happy to provide Mr Oxley with a suitable vessel to enable him to make the necessary survey of the entrance and Harbour of Port Macquarie. The result of this survey having been as satisfactory as could have been expected, HIS EXCELLENCY is pleased to give publicity to Mr Oxley's own clear and circumstantial report on this valuable acquisition; and HIS EXCELLENCY desires to express his full and entire approbation of Mr Oxley's intelligent, zealous, and indefatigable exertions on the arduous occasion, which evince an earnest and well directed desire to promote the Public Service, and to advance the interests of the Colony. HIS EXCELLENCY is also happy to add the expression of his approbation of the liberal and judicious assistance rendered to Mr Oxley by Lieutenant King, Commander of His Majesty's Colonial Cutter "Mermaid", whose exertions are so justly appreciated by Mr Oxley in the following report and HIS EXCELLENCY desires both those gentlemen to accept thanks for the service thus rendered by their joint efforts to the colony,

*By His Excellency's Command,
J.T. Campbell, Secretary.*

On receipt of Oxley's second report, the Governor despatched to the Home Secretary an account of the fine country and port which had been added to the territory of the Colony. He was subsequently ordered by the Imperial Government to form a settlement at Port Macquarie.

A third visit was made by Oxley in 1820 when he was instructed by Governor Macquarie to survey that port and also to investigate two inlets north of Smokey Cape, now known as the Macleay and Nambucca Rivers. He was accompanied by Captain Francis Allman of the 48th Regiment. Allman was to become the settlements first Commandant. He was to choose a townsite and he selected the area upon which the CBD is now located.

In 1821 he submitted a plan of the entrance to the port and sketch of part of the Hastings River. Oxley emphasised the richness of the natural resources and the general suitability of the country for settlement.

An abstract from Oxley's diary reads" Tuesday, December 12 – "At half past three hauled into Port Macquarie, passed the bar and anchored in the channel. Friday 15 – Captain Allman and myself again examined on this side (south) of the river and fixed upon an eligible place for the first settlement, also the site of sundry public buildings which are designated on the map. Everything connected with the site has received the fullest consideration, the site in our opinion, offered such superior advantages that we had no hesitation in deciding that with the knowledge we had of the navigation of the river and country on the south bank, a more eligible and desirable spot could not be fixed on. We therefore determined to recommend the

site marked "A" on the map to the Government as the most proper place to form the proposed settlement."⁸

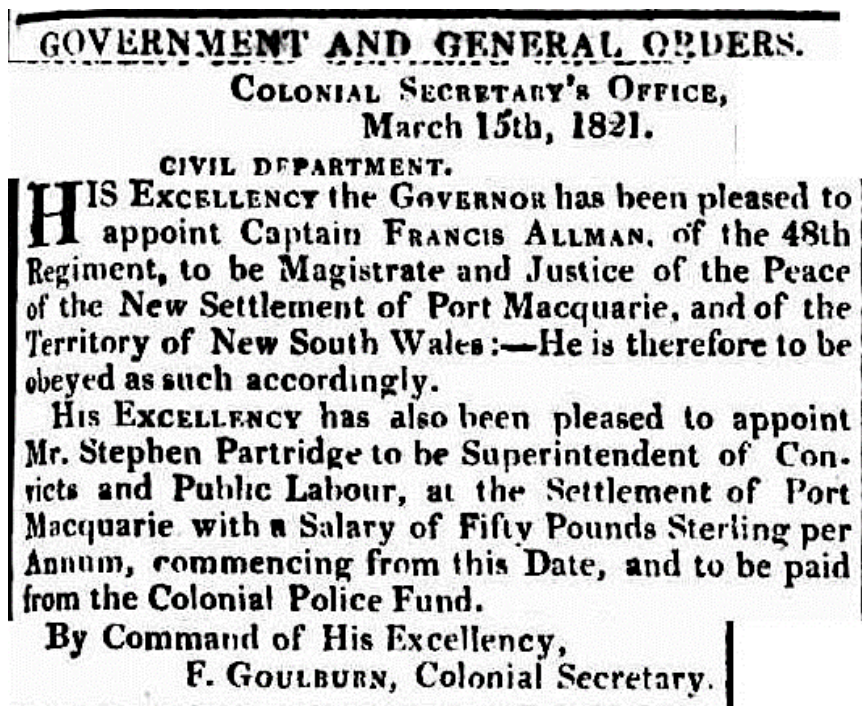
Oxley and Allman reported on the chosen site " This fertile land extended to the very edge of the port and immediately near the entrance a natural wharf provided facilities for loading and discharging vessels. Near this spot were numerous commanding positions from which operations, either on shore or afloat, could be watched."

At this time, pastoralists were moving into the Hunter Valley so the government was looking to close the penal settlement at Newcastle and move it to another spot beyond the expanding settlement. It was intended to hold the worst offenders and in particular, convicts who had reoffended upon arriving in New South Wales.

Oxley reported favourably on the port's capacity to receive coastal vessels, on the suitability of the area for the penal settlement and on the richness of its soil and natural resources.

The voyage to Port Macquarie, normally a three day sail, took the three ships twenty-eight days due to gale force winds which enforced a fourteen day lay-over in Port Stephens. Having left Sydney on the 21st March they arrived off Tacking Point on the 6th April. They were unable to cross the bar due to dangerous seas, so they sheltered in Trial Bay. Eleven days later they left for Port Macquarie arriving on 17th April 1821.

The penal settlement was under the command of Captain Francis Allman who landed on what is now the town green and hoisted the British flag on the rise now known as Allman Hill (at the top of Clarence St).



⁸ "The History of Port Macquarie" Hastings Historical Society. 1957. Pp 5 – 6.

CIVIL DEPARTMENT.

HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR and COMMANDER of the FORCES has been pleased to appoint Captain FRANCIS ALLMAN, of the 48th Regiment, to act as Commandant of the New Settlement about to be established at Port Macquarie, with a Salary of Seven Shillings and Six-pence per Diem, commencing on and from the 1st of the present Month of March, and to be paid from the Colonial Police Fund, until His Majesty's Pleasure shall have been received thereon.

HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR and COMMANDER of the FORCES has also been pleased to appoint Lieutenant WILLIAM WILSON, of the 48th Regiment, to act as Engineer and Inspector of Public Works, at the Settlement of Port Macquarie, with a Salary of Five Shillings per Diem, commencing on and from the 1st Instant, and to be paid from the Colonial Police Fund, until His Majesty's Pleasure shall have been made known thereon.

The consignment of convicts which arrived at Port Macquarie in April 1821, consisted of 60 convicts, along with 38 soldiers,

The *Lady Nelson* was the first to cross the bar and anchored safely. Next to try to enter was the *Prince Regent*, with Captain Allman and family on board. Unfortunately, she struck a submerged rock at 7:30pm, and sustained damage to her hull and rudder before joining the *Lady Nelson*. The *Mermaid* lay outside until the next day when she too encountered problems on the bar. Becoming stuck fast on the bar around midday, she was pummelled by the breakers and it seemed all was lost until she managed to float off at 8pm with a damaged stern plank and the rudder lost. Despite the, at times, treacherous conditions of entering the harbour across the bar, and although ships were wrecked and several thousand prisoners were transported in and out of Port Macquarie during the 1820's, not one life was lost from a convict vessel. Three men, however, drowned when rowboats overturned.

Chapter Three: The Soldiers

The Military personnel accompanying Allman were:

Engineer and inspector of Public Works:- Lieutenant William Wilson

Surgeon:- Abraham Fenton

Sergeants:- William Clayton and William Douglas

Corporals:- Thomas Bradburn and John Kelly

Drummer:- John Marshall

Privates:- James Barlow, William Bennington, John Bury, John Clarke, Robert Davison, Richard Evans, Thomas Green, William Haines, William Hair, John Hall, George Hargraves, John Harrison, Peter Hodgen, Charles Johnson, James Kennedy, William Liniston, Michael Martin, John Mather, William McClure, Daniel McGee, John Matham, John Odle, William Perkins, Peter Powell, William Reading, James Shaw, Henry Sheals, Henry Singleton, William Spence, Charles White, George Wood and John Wright.

Others:- Mrs Allman, Mrs Partridge and four children.

Stephen Partridge was appointed Superintendent of Convicts and Public Works attached to the penal settlement at Port Macquarie. 30 Nov 1821. Salary 50 pounds per year.

Arriving with his wife and two children, Thomas and Jane, on 21 April 1821; in the following seven months, he was able to report the construction of a residence for the Commandant, Captain Allman, four weatherboard barracks to house the Military Personnel and Officials attached to the settlement, large huts to accommodate three hundred convicts, a provision store, a granary, and a Guard-House.

In 1828, as a result of the Commissioner's Enquiry Report, his conduct came under their notice; particularly in regard to him being a considerable dealer on the settlement, trafficking with the prisoners and with imputations that he was feeding his stock with Government grain.

His resignation as Superintendent of Convicts preceded the closure of the penal settlement, and he was successful in obtaining the Landlordship of the "New Inn", the licence he held for three years. The "New Inn" was located in Allman St. (now Hay Street).

Following this, he obtained the position of an ordinary constable and held it until 1862.

He was originally granted 640 acres and had sold this to Major A.C. Innes. Today the area is known as Thrumster and situated on the Oxley Highway 10 kilometers from Port Macquarie.⁹

Cooke (a convict assistant to Abraham Fenton)

⁹ [Stephen Partridge 1793–1878 – Australian Royalty: Genealogy of the colony of New South Wales](#)

Chapter Four: The Convicts

Convicts who were chosen for their skills and good behaviour and encouraged with the possibility of conditional pardons or tickets-of-leave after 18 months. Two years later there were more than 1100 convicts, and by 1825 over 1500.

On 14th March 1821, Governor Macquarie set out the type of convict to be selected to go to Port Macquarie. The following is Macquarie's letter to the Chief Engineer¹⁰.

It being resolved upon in consequence of Orders from Home to establish a new Settlement forwith at Port Macquarie, as a secondary Place of Punishment for Convicts, and it being my intention that the Expedition for that station should sail as soon as the Govt. Brig Lady Nelson and Mermaid Cutter are ready for sea, I am to desire that you will, with the least possible delay, be so good as to select from the behaved convicts at present in the several gangs at Sydney under your orders the undermentioned number and description of Artificers and Labourers for Port Macquarie, namely:¹¹

3 Rough Carpenters, one of which must be a good Shingler

2 Sawyers

1 Blacksmith

1 Taylor

2 Shoemakers

1 Medical Man &

50 Strong, Healthy Labourers

As an encouragement to these men, they are to be informed that they are not sent to the New Settlement as a Punishment but on the contrary to set a good example to such Convicts as may hereafter be sent thither. They are also to be informed that in case of good steady conduct, works so essentially necessary at the first Establishment of the new Settlement, with cheerfulness and expedition and to the satisfaction of the Conditional Commandant, they shall receive either Tickets of Leave or Conditional Pardons according to their present length of original sentences and residence in the Colony, at the expiration of Eighteen months after their landing at Port Macquarie.

I am, Sir, your most obedt Servt.

¹⁰ Original in Macquarie's handwriting: NSWSA:NRS-897, 4/1748, p282-284.

¹¹

The following appear to be those who were selected as meeting the requirements:

Carpenters: Benjamin Chattaway, Frederick Heldreth, Evan Williams

Sawyers: William Elstone, John Price, Daniel Taile, George Weightman

Blacksmith: Thomas Hall

Tailor: Richard Fennessy

Shoemakers: Edward Butler, John Foley, John Kidwell

Medical man: George Cool (selected later)

Information for the following obtained from the following:

["Port Macquarie's First Convicts" by Clive Smith.](#)

Whilst no definitive list of the first convicts to arrive in Port Macquarie is available, the following is a list compiled from a close examination of various other documents.

Convict Volunteers, April 1821

The volunteers can be divided into 4 classes:

A – identified in the records of volunteers

John Baker, Mark Brown, William Elstone, John Foley, Michael Headon, Frederick Heldreth, John Hudson, John Hughes, Anthony Joseph, William Judd, John Maguire, John McCabe, James McMahon, James Ram, William Shean, Daniel Taile, Benjamin Warhurst, George Weightman.

B- recorded at Port Macquarie in 1821 or 1822, with a ticket of leave of the same date as those issued to identified volunteers

Thomas Baxter, Joseph Brookhouse, James Brown, William Brown, Edward Butler, Benjamin Chattaway, Charles John Clifford, William Plomer Daniel, John Davis, West Evans, Richard Fennessy, William Fowler, Joseph Glasspoole, William Hallson, John Harwood, Edward Holmes, Thomas King, James Martin, Joseph Martin, Peter MvLaughlin, James Molloy, William Muston, David Noonan, Patrick Reed, George Scarfe, George Sidnall, John Thompson, James Tofield, Thomas Wilcox, John Wilford, Evan Williams.

C- recorded at Port Macquarie in 1821 or 1822 and not recorded as being sent there for punishment:

Abraham Cliff, Thomas Hall, John Kidwell, Edward Mason, William Penny, John Price, John Pritchett, James Sage, William Tooley

D- not recorded at Port Macquarie in 1821 or 1822, but recommended for a Ticket-of-Leave by the Commandant

Thomas Chandler

A list of the names of the convicts in Port Macquarie from 1821 to 1832 can be found at the following web sites:

[Hastings-Convicts Part1 compressed.pdf](#)

[Hastings-Convicts Part2 compressed.pdf](#)

Listed below is a breakdown of Convicts' Sentences 1819 - 1824

1 year	11	}	54 'shorter sentences' (less than 7 years)
2 years	11		
3 years	22		
4 years	9		
5 years	1		
7 years	48		
14 years	21		
Life (outright)	41		
Life (commutation)	75		

These were all sentences issued between and September 1819 and February 1824. The figures exclude four women sentenced in this period who were not sent to Port Macquarie until February 1825. Included here are several Van Diemonian convicts sentenced during court sessions in Hobart in early 1823, although most of the men and women there convicted were sent to the new penal station at Macquarie Harbour.

Sources: Port Macquarie Population Book, SRNSW 4/3864; Reports of Prisoners Tried in the Court of Criminal Jurisdiction, 1820–1824, SRNSW X820; Returns of Trials, Van Diemen's Land, 1821–1823, SRNSW X726.

Chapter Five: THE SETTLEMENT BEGINS



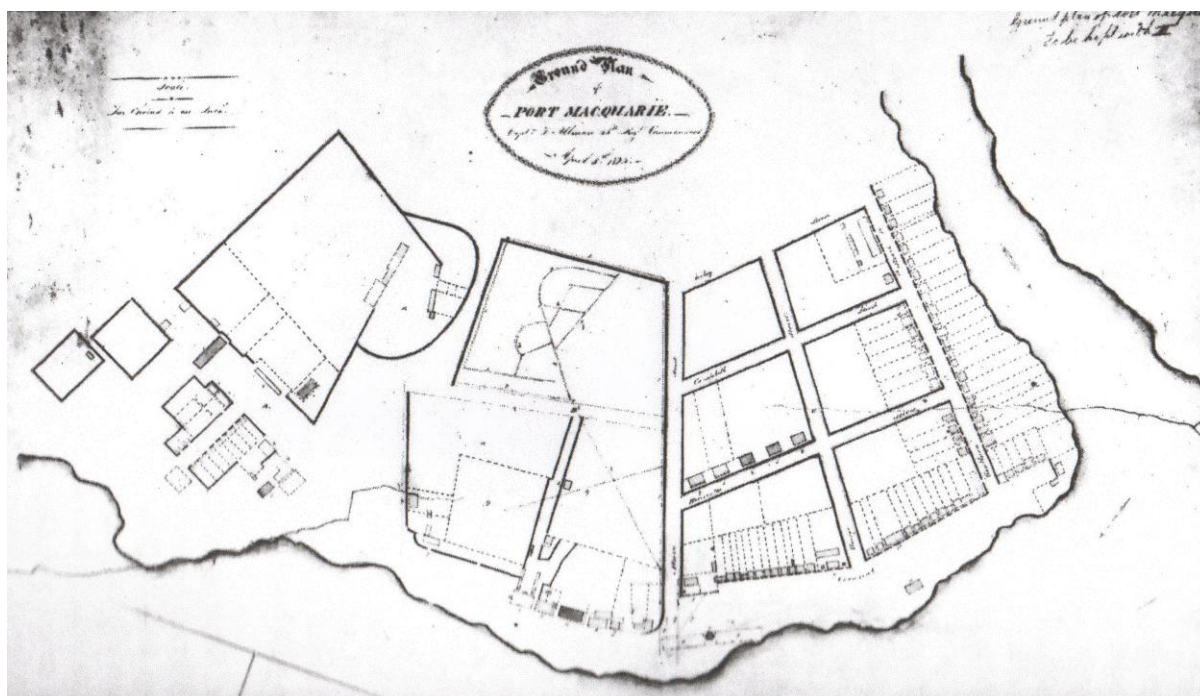
Captain Francis Allman (March 1821-April 1824)¹² 48th Regiment Born on 1st November 1780 in County Clare, Ireland, Allman enlisted in the army in 1794 and served through several campaigns including Holland, Egypt and the Iberian peninsular. He was wounded and captured at Albuera (1811) and was imprisoned until 1815. With his wife Sarah and three children he sailed with the 48th Regiment on the *Minerva*, arriving in Sydney on 30th April 1818. He was chosen by Governor Macquarie to lead the development of the Port Macquarie penal settlement and remained as Commandant and Magistrate until recalled in April 1824. He later held government positions in Newcastle, the Illawarra, Goulburn, Campbelltown and Berrima. Allman also tried his hand at farming without success. He retired to Yass in 1844 and died there on 24th October, 1860

The convicts were set to work clearing what is now the CBD of thick bush (mostly tea-tree and banksia) and substantial trees. They built a stockade for defence against prospective Aboriginal attacks, within which they erected quarters for officers and convicts, a cottage for the Commandant and gardens for the cultivation of produce. One of the first buildings - the Garrison Hospital - still stands. Port Macquarie was then the most northerly settlement in the colony. Among the first sixty convicts were three carpenters, two sawyers, one blacksmith, one tailor, two shoemakers, and a medical assistant, with the rest being labourers.

The first task of the new arrivals was to establish a temporary camp a short distance from where the permanent township was to be built. Bark huts were constructed for the convicts and tents were erected for the soldiers and civilians. Later huts were to be built for the military some 300 yards (270 metres) behind the huts for the convicts. Next on the list of required buildings were a provisions store, a guard-house and a gaol.

While many varieties of timber were eventually taken from the Hastings Valley, cedar was the most prized. This forest tree grew to a height of sixty feet and flourished in moist humid conditions. The cutting of cedar was high on Governor Macquarie's list of initial instructions to Commandant Allman. The cedar was transported back to Sydney in the ships which had carried new prisoners to the settlement.

¹² Information on Commandants copied from: [Commandants-3.pdf \(mnclibrary.org.au\)](http://mnclibrary.org.au/Commandants-3.pdf)



Ground Map of Port Macquarie by Captain Allman

The settlement brought with them six months provisions from Sydney to sustain them until they could become self sufficient in food production. To this end some tracts of land was set aside near the camp for the cultivation of wheat and maize. Convicts were also encouraged to cultivate their own gardens for the production of vegetables and other food crops.

The next task before Commandant Allman was to build more permanent structures to house the increasing number of new convict arrivals that would be transported to Port Macquarie over the next few years. The original camp, barely able to protect the population from the weather, was relocated to higher ground in August 1821.

By the end of winter, one prisoner, John McMahon had died after a long illness and a child had been born on 25th July at the settlement. By August the original camp was relocated on higher ground and several brickmakers, a bricklayer and a "good carpenter" had arrived, enabling more permanent buildings to be erected.

The arrival of more tradesman, namely brickmakers, a bricklayer and a carpenter, facilitated the construction of new, more permanent, buildings. By September the convict tradesman and labourers were building new barracks for the soldiers, and by October 1821 the settlement boasted weatherboard huts able to house 400 convicts and soldiers, a house for the Commandant¹³, barracks for the Convict Overseer and the Chief Constable, as well as provision store, a granary and a guard house.

¹³ **Port Macquarie Government House Site** is a heritage-listed archaeological site at 2 Clarence Street, Port Macquarie. It was built from 1824 to 1826 by convict labour. The property is owned by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. It was added to the [New South Wales State Heritage Register](#) on 3 August 2001

In the six months since the arrival of the first three ships a substantial settlement had been carved out of the wilderness, ready to accept the secondary offenders and worst behaved convicts of the colony.

By October 1821 there were 102 persons, excluding the military attachment at the settlement – 92 convicts, four free males, two free females, a female infant and three children.

As the settlement was a secondary place of punishment for the worst offenders – those convicted of crimes after their arrival in the colony – Allman was told to keep the convicts “ at constant hard labour and use every precaution to prevent their escape.” The first fifty “reoffenders” arrived in the *Lucy* on 12 December 1821. Port Macquarie was now an official centre for receiving those who had committed colonial crimes and from this modest beginning hundreds of prisoners were to serve their sentences in the settlement and many were to die here.¹⁴

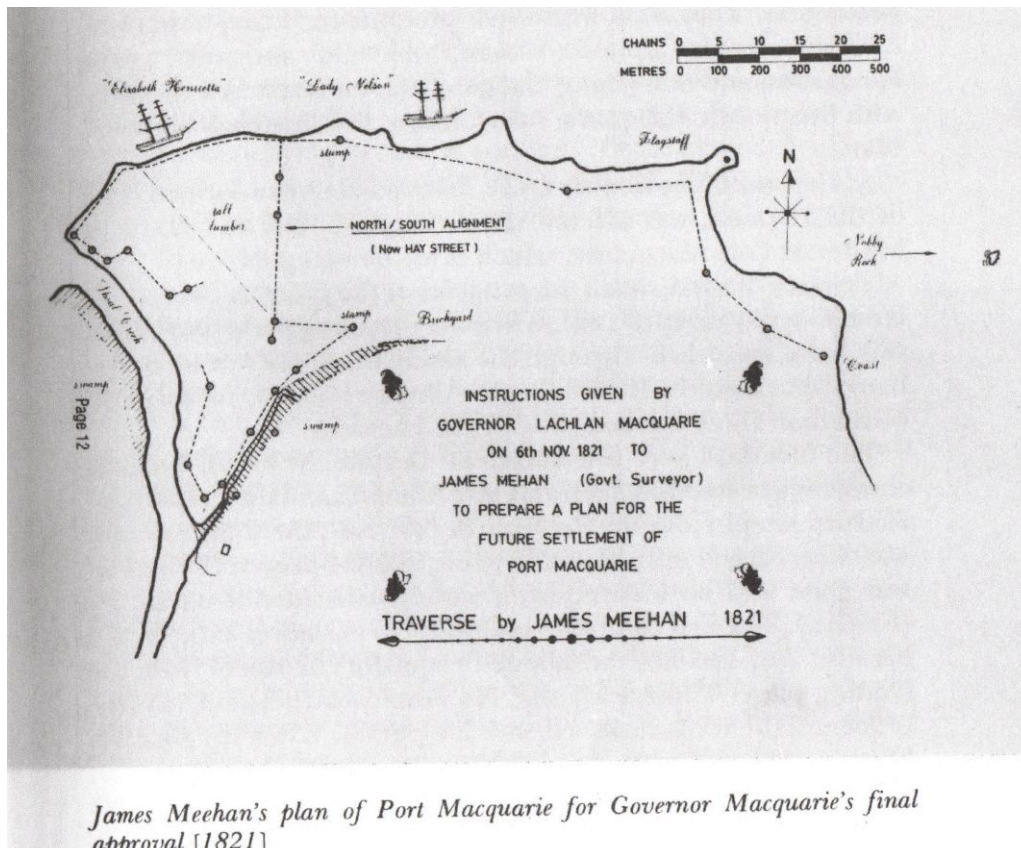
The first place of confinement behind the old wooden stockade, was primarily for the safety of the whole contingent in case of attack by the natives. As soon as possible after arrival, work commenced on permanent barracks for the prisoners and also a gaol for the punishment of offenders. The first gaol was built near the military barracks, partly what is now the grounds of the Presbyterian Church and partly in the Police Paddock. The prisoners’ barracks were situated parallel with present day Clarence Street and were overlooked by the military barracks up on the hill.

The following information from;

[Historical Australian Towns: Port Macquarie, NSW: A Town First Built by Convicts](#)

The first Government House in Port Macquarie was built for Commandant Francis Allman in 1821 was a weatherboard one-storey building. Other buildings were divided into Military Department, Civil Administration and Convict Accommodation. Allman remained at Port Macquarie until April 1824. His administration was quietly efficient. Steady progress was made in building, in farming and in sugar-cane culture which he pioneered in 1821. Discipline was regular but not in any sense oppressive

¹⁴ Gwendoline Griffin and Ronald Howell “Port Macquarie The Windingsheet”. Page 6.



Surveyor James Meehan originally laid out the settlement in 1821¹⁵

Governor Macquarie visited the settlement in 1821 and approved the site. He set out from Sydney Cove on board the brig *Elizabeth Henrietta* on November 1st. He was accompanied by Lieutenant John Oxley and Deputy Surveyor James Meehan. Macquarie directed where certain government buildings were to be constructed and Meehan drew a plan of Port Macquarie for the Governor's approval. Macquarie noted the abundance of timber, the 'verdant hills' to the 'rear of the town which afford excellent rich pasturage for cattle' and recorded that the indigenous inhabitants had '*lately manifested a very hostile spirit...by frequently throwing spears at the men employed in procuring rosewood and cedar, a very useful man was killed*'.

During his visit, Governor Macquarie viewed the site recommended by Oxley for the future town of Port Macquarie. Macquarie described the site as a "*most convenient one, being very close to the harbour and well supplied with fresh water from a stream nearly through the middle of it and falling into the harbour.....There is an abundance of excellent timber for building purposes growing close to the town and along the banks of the shoal. Fine verdant hills immediately to the rear of the town afford pasture for cattle. It is intended to reserve*

¹⁵ James Meehan, Surveyor. See [Biography - James Meehan - Australian Dictionary of Biography \(anu.edu.au\)](http://biography.anu.edu.au)

those hills for a Common, for the use of the town, after enclosing a certain proportion of them for Government Domain."

When Macquarie visited the settlement, he occupied Allman's cottage and found it very neat and comfortable, the barracks 'clean and commodious', the soldiers in good order, and ninety-four convicts 'healthy, well clothed and without any complaint whatever. Macquarie drew up a developmental programme, which amongst other things, provided for the construction of a church. Rev Thomas Hassall was the Anglican Chaplain. On December 8th, 1824, the foundation stone of the edifice was laid. It was finished and opened for worship on February 28th, 1828. The bricks used were made in Port Macquarie, the beautiful cedar wood was all found growing nearby and was pit-sawn to prepare for use. Nails, locks etc were forged by hand in the local blacksmith's shop. Lime used in making the mortar was made from oyster shells.

The *Sydney gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* on it's page 1 of Saturday 24 November 1821 reported the following:

His EXCELLENCY the Governor (Macquarie) having deemed it necessary, previous to his departure from the Colony, to visit the settlements at Newcastle and Port Macquarie, embarked for this purpose, on the 1st instant, and arrived in three days at the latter Settlement. His EXCELLENCY is happy in bearing Testimony to the correctness and accuracy of the Report formerly made to him by Mr Oxley, the Surveyor General, respecting the Harbour of Port Macquarie, the River Hastings, and the quality of the soil, and productions of the adjacent country, and thereby relieved from the necessity of making any observations at present on those several heads, or to remark further than that he considers the settlement of Port Macquarie, from local and other circumstances, particularly well selected and adapted for the purposes of its establishment; namely, as a Place of Transportation, or secondary Punishment for Delinquents, who shall be convicted in the colony.

In viewing the Measures hitherto proposed by Cappy ALLMAN, the Commandant of Port Macquarie, in the first establishment of that Settlement by his Excellency, he has much pleasure in expressing his entire approbation of them, both as they have reference to the works carried on, and to the humane and judicious treatment of the prisoners under his directions. His EXCELLENCY has also to express his entire satisfaction at the attention shewed by Captain ALLMAN towards the troops under his command, in providing them with good lodgings, and rendering them as comfortable as the circumstances of their local situation would admit. His EXCELLENCY is therefore happy in rendering this tribute to the zealous and judicious exertions of that officer.

Macquarie's idea was that the settlement would prove self-sustaining and, by 1824, convicts were employed in building, agriculture (mostly wheat, tobacco, cotton, vegetables and maize), boatbuilding, blacksmithing, teaching, baking and clerical duties etc. Poultry, pigs, cows and horses were also slowly amassed. St Thomas' Anglican Church was built between 1824 and 1828 and a Female Factory, where the women made nails and other items, was erected in 1825.

As timber was being rapidly decimated in the Newcastle area, the cedar and other timber near Port Macquarie was of particular interest to administrators. In 1821 Captain Allman also instructed a black prisoner from Antigua in the West Indies to commence the cultivation of the first sugarcane in Australia. The first sugar mill was established in 1824. However, the port was a little too southerly and the industry was abandoned in the 1860s.

By October 1821 there were 92 convicts at Port Macquarie. When Captain Rolland succeeded Allman in April 1824 there were 1100 convicts at Port Macquarie. Most convicts were employed in government activities divided between government projects or directly for officials under supposed government orders. Convict employment was grouped according to the level of skill and the severity of punishment. Those assigned to hard labour were part of chain gangs, or employed in agricultural work and public works construction. Rolland died in 1824 and was succeeded by Lieutenant Carmac, who was in turn replaced by Henry Gillman in January 1824. At this time there were 1300 convicts at Port Macquarie. By 1825 the number had increased to 1500.

The Aborigines of the Hastings Valley and the adjoining country north and south of Port Macquarie co-operated to a remarkable degree with the early Commandants of the penal settlement. Despite official reports of Aboriginal "treachery" and savagery, incidents of Aboriginal aggression were few during the first fourteen years of the settlement. The Aborigines were peaceful and tractable. The Commandants, at times, took advantage of their skills in bushcraft, employing them as "bush constables" to capture escapees and runaways.

The first cattle to be brought to the settlement with Captain Allman in 1821 were a bull and two mch cows. When Governor Macquarie visited in 1823 he added 4 cows and four calves. The first recorded horses was in 1828, when there were seven privately owned horses. Later bullocks were introduced for log hauling and for the transporting of wool from New England to Port Macquarie to be shipped to Sydney. Poultry and pigs were gradually acquired, and vegetables were grown.

By 1822 other than the weatherboard buildings for the Commandant, there were barracks, a guard house, provisions store and granary, hospital, bark huts for 300 male convicts and kitchen gardens. Where Port Macquarie Primary School now stands was once the Soldiers Brick Barracks.

Twelve months after the settlement was established an additional 200 convicts were accommodated at Port Macquarie. The first group of these second offender prisoners were organised into distinct gangs for agricultural labour, the cutting of cedar, and the making of lime (in place of mortar) for government use. The gangs had overseers, selected from the best behaved men among their ranks, who were responsible for the working and orderly conduct of gangs of thirty men. The worst and most belligerent convicts were formed into a Gaol gang working in irons and employed on the "most heavy and disagreeable labour and always to sleep in the gaol."

Sir Thomas Makdougall Brisbane succeeded Macquarie as Governor of New South Wales on 1 December 1821. He also influenced the development of Port Macquarie.

The first burial ground was situated on the Hill (Commandants Hill). Three headstones are still to be seen here at the top of Clarence Street, overlooking the Entrance to the river. These headstones remember:

John Smith, infant son of Mr Gilbert Smith, Commissariat Storekeeper, died 12 January, 1822, aged 16 days. Also his only surviving child, who after four days illness departed this life. 31st October 1823 aged 3 years.

Another headstone remembers James Vaughan Sacred to the Memory of James Vaughn, of Captain Allman's 48th Regt. Who died 24th November, 1823, of a gun shot wound, received while trying to capture escaped convicts, aged 23 years.

The third headstone is for Marie Flood: Sacred to the Memory of Marie, wife of Sergt. Flood, of H.M. 3 Reg. (Bufs) who departed this life on the 1st day of June, A.D. 1826. Aged 31 years.

With the dramatic rise in the population of Port Macquarie and consequent increase in deaths, required authorities to select a new burying ground to replace the first one on Allman Hill, overlooking the mouth of the Hastings River. The site chosen was a peninsula of ground south of the settlement, at the confluence of the present Wrights and Kooloonbung Creeks. The four acre site selected had been described by John Oxley in 1818 as being bushy, and hence must have been cleared for the purposes of a cemetery. The first burial, that of an infant, Elizabeth Murphy, took place towards the south end of the peninsula on 15 November, 1824. For information regarding this cemetery and those buried within, I recommend "*Port Macquarie The Windingsheet*" compiled by Gwendoline Griffin and Ronald Howell and produced by the Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc 1996.

By 1822, eighteen months after the establishment of the settlement, forty-nine of the "first fleet" convicts had completed their required eighteen months' service and were now entitled to tickets of leave, or conditional pardons, promised by Lachlan Macquarie. In September, 1822, the twenty one who had volunteered for service were returned to Sydney on the Lady Nelson. The remainder followed soon after.

With the arrival of more and more convicts, Allman was faced with the problem of increasing numbers of escapes. Food rationing and the shortage of tools were also pressing problems for the Commandant. Although Allman requested additional rations for the convicts from Governor Brisbane, the ration was not increased for some time.

Two years after the settlement was established, Governor Macquarie sent a survey party to assess what had been achieved. The report described the new settlement quite well. In part, the survey reported:

"Considering that the site on which the town stands was two years ago covered with immense forest trees and thick bush wood, it is quite incredible to what state of perfection the place had been brought by the indefatigable activity of the Commandant.

The Government House stands nearly in the middle of the town on a handsome esplanade open to the sea.

To the northward, on a rising ground which commands the whole town, are the military barracks, calculated to hold 150 men, each of the married men having a small cottage and garden.

On the right of the hill are two handsome cottages which are used as officers' quarters.

The remainder of the town, which is extremely clean, is entirely occupied by the prisoners, who are kept as distinct as possible from the military, and who have each a small but neat hut constructed of split wood lathed, plastered, and whitewashed, with a garden attached.

The sites of the streets intended to be built as the population of the town increases are regularly laid out and fenced. The spaces between them are at present occupied as gardens and plantations of maize, sugarcane etc, the latter of which appears to thrive remarkably well and will (I doubt not) at some future time, form a lucrative article of export from the establishment¹⁶."

The same report also made note of the local Indigenous people:

".....we walked down to the beach after dinner, (and) were highly amused by the dance among the natives.

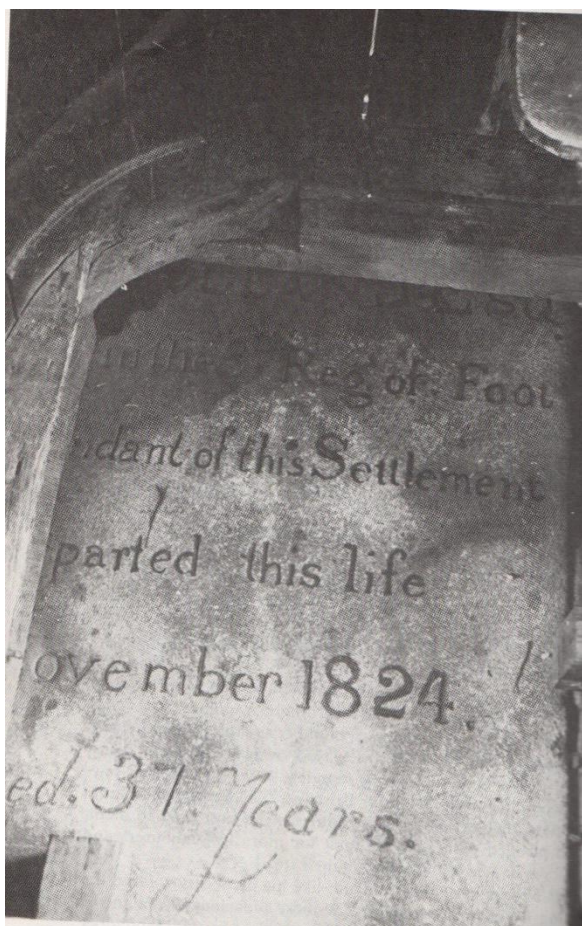
These people are a much finer race than those in the neighbourhood of Sydney, many of them being upwards of six feet high.

Their features are also more expressive of intellect and their limbs better formed than any I have seen before. Some of the more civilised are victualled from the King's store of the settlement, and in return perform some of the duties of constable in a more efficient manner than any European possibly could.

Whenever (as frequently happens), any of the prisoners attempt to escape into the woods they are instantly pursued by some of the black police, who possess a wonderful facility in tracking them, and being furnished with firearms they seldom fail to bring them back, alive or dead, for which they are rewarded with blankets, spirits etc, but should the runaways even escape the black police they are almost sure to perish by hunger or the hostility of the other Indians."

Captain John Rolland (April 1824 - 16 November 1824) 3rd Buffs Captain John Rolland was an officer in the "Buffs' East Kent Regiment, 3rd Foot. He was born on 4th April 1795 at Auchmithie, Scotland. He entered the army in 1814 as a Cornet with the 22nd Light Dragoons and saw service in India where he was made a Lieutenant. On returning to England he transferred to the 3rd East Kent Regiment, known as the 'Buffs'. Not long after, in July 1822, the Buffs were sent to Van Diemens land (Tasmania) on a number of vessels as convict guards. They were to assist with law and order problems in Van Diemens Land. Rolland had a reputation for treating his men and the convicts fairly. In 1824 Rolland was summoned to Sydney by Governor Macquarie and told that he would be replacing Francis Allman as Commandant at Port Macquarie with a promotion to captain. Rolland arrived in

¹⁶ Published in the "Port Macquarie News 100 Years of Publishing Integrity" souvenir publication 1982.



Port Macquarie in April 1824 together with a detachment of troops of the 3rd East Kent. Allman had problems with convicts escaping the penal settlement and Rolland faced similar difficulties. Another problem the Colonial Administration had with Port Macquarie was the rising cost of maintaining supplies. Rolland was instructed to make the colony more self-sustaining and he introduced a number of initiatives to this end, including improving conditions for the convicts to induce them to work more productively. Preparatory work for the construction of St Thomas' Church had begun when Rolland arrived and took great interest in its completion. Sadly, John Rolland never lived to see the opening of the church; he contracted an illness and died on 16th November 1824 aged 37, just three weeks before he was due to lay the foundation stone. Captain John Rolland was buried beneath the floor of St Thomas Church. He was buried by the Reverend Hassall with full military honours within the precincts of the church. St Thomas Anglican Church¹⁷ was built by convict labour between 1824 and 1828, with walls of one metre thick hand made bricks.

Tomb of Commandant John Rolland beneath the floor of St Thomas' Church.

A gaol was built about 1824.

Within thirty two months Port Macquarie had been transformed to a disciplined village of over one thousand people together with its two outstations, Settlement Farm and Sancroix.

Governor Brisbane's main concern in 1824 was the growing cost of maintaining the penal settlement. To improve efficiency, Commandant Rolland implemented a more rigid issue of stores and determined that the settlement should become self-sufficient. He assigned more prisoners for agricultural work, and making tools and iron work on settlement rather than requisition from Sydney.

Lieutenant George Richards Carmac (November 1824 - January 1825) 3rd Buffs George Richards Carmac arrived in New South Wales in 1822 as an Ensign aboard the ship Asia. In May 1824 Lieutenant William Wilson left the Port Macquarie settlement and Commandant Rolland recommended Lieutenant George Richards Carmac be appointed Acting Engineer and Inspector of Public Works for Port Macquarie. Rolland died in November 1824 and Lieut.

¹⁷ [St Thomas's Anglican Church](#) is a Georgian building designed by Francis Greenway and built, under the supervision of military engineer Lieutenant T. Owen, by convicts from 1824 to 1828.

Carmac became Acting Commandant. The Governor believed the position of Commandant should be held by a married man so he appointed Captain Henry Gillman of the 3rd Buffs to be the new Commandant. Gillman's wife and two children accompanied him to Port Macquarie. Carmac left the colony of New South Wales and sailed to Madras (India) where he married Henrietta Maling 19th February 1833. He died on the 2nd April 1838 after a short illness leaving his wife and two children.

Captain Henry Gillman (January 1825-February 1826) 3rd Buffs Henry Gillman was born in 1793 in the West Indies. He enlisted in the Army as a youth and was promoted from Ensign to Lieutenant in 1809. In 1815 he married Mary Elizabeth Winter in London. Gillman, his wife and two children, sailed to Australia in 1822 with the 3rd Regiment of Foot, East Kent regiment, and shortly after arrival was posted to Port Macquarie to replace Carmac. He took command in January 1825 and remained in-charge until February 1826. He and his family sailed on the ship 'Australia' for London in 1827 having been appointed a Brigade Major. In 1828 he was appointed as a Major in the 69th Regiment, and in 1832 to be Lieutenant Colonel in the 67th. He died at Tunbridge Wells (England) 25th June, 1833 aged 39. Gillman was a controversial figure in the colony with reports of misuse of Government resources, duelling, and over strict discipline of prisoners appearing in the newspapers and government notices. Prisoner violence, plundering by bushrangers, personal clashes with officers, characterised his command. His most bitter rows were with the Agricultural Superintendent Parker who he ordered off the settlement. Similarly, he suspended the Sugar Plantation Manager, Thomas A. Scott.

The first violence erupted in February 1825. In this incident, William Hodges, one of six escapees, was shot dead and one of his mates, William Davenport, was wounded. The first mention of "bushrangers", made up of escapees from the penal settlement, occurred early in the winter of 1825. A gang of thirty had seized the cutter *Eclipse*, in Newcastle and escaped. Commandant Gilman described them as "daring mutinous men, chiefly respites". He told Governor Brisbane "I have despatched several military parties in pursuit of them But in doing so have diminished the strength force on the settlement, as well as that for the defence of stations up the river, which these bushrangers very systematically take advantage of, by attacking the place from which the parties are withdrawn." Another gang of bushrangers broke into the house of the Sugar Plantation Manager Thomas Scott and stole some property. The soldiers caught four of the gang after seven days' search and chase through the bush.

By about 1825 almost 1,500 convicts were engaged in public works, timber getting and agriculture. Military personnel, public officials and convicts had separate housing at this time. A brick building adjacent to the military barracks received some alterations in this period and in 1826 became the new Government House. In February 1825, to accommodate the increasing number of female prisoners, the Female Factory was built to accommodate 70 females. Female prisoners had steadily been arriving in Port Macquarie since 1822.

The first marriage of two prisoners in the settlement was conducted in May 1826 by Rev Thomas Hassall, Port Macquarie's Chaplain. The marriage was of Benjamin Davidson and Ann Clifton.

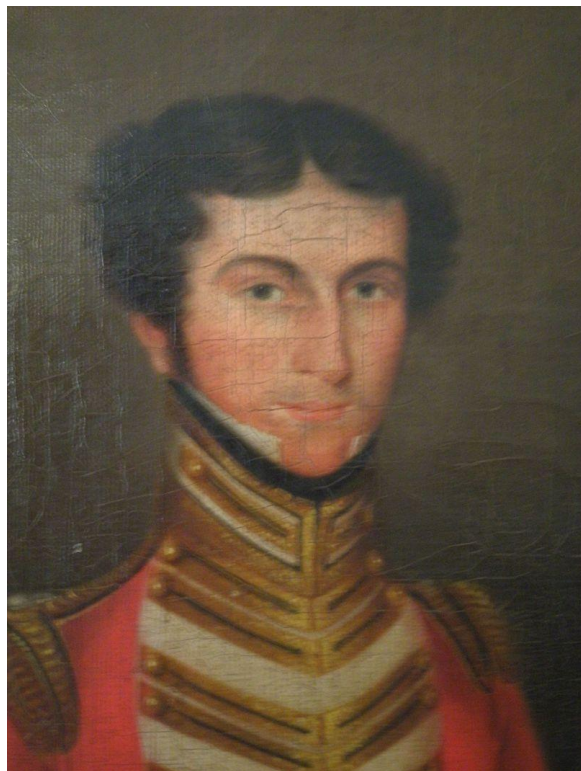
By 1825 Governor Brisbane felt that Port Macquarie was no longer suitable as a penal settlement due to the ease of escape from the establishment, and he also believed that the area was ready to be opened to free settlers. In a despatch on 21 May 1825 he wrote: "*Port*

Macquarie is now almost useless as a penal settlement due to the facilities afforded to the escape of prisoners by the extension of settlers along the Hunter River.....it is quite ready for the reception of free emigrants."

Major-General Ralph Darling, was the seventh Governor of the colony took up command on 19th December 1825, stepping up the exodus of prisoners from Port Macquarie. His objective was to close the penal station as soon as possible and open the town to free settlers. The Governor was also concerned at the costs of maintaining the Port Macquarie settlement. He referred to the constant drain on the public purse. Port Macquarie was the most expensive penal settlement in the colony, costing 1,600 pounds annually to maintain.

Captain Samuel Wright (February 1826-November 1826) 3rd Buffs Samuel Wright was born in County Cavan, Ireland around 1785. He enlisted in the 3rd East Kent Regiment (the Buffs) on 6th March 1808 as an Ensign with a purchased commission and was promoted to Lieutenant by 1810. He fought in the Peninsular Wars and was wounded at Albuera and in 1813 at Bayonne in 1813. His last campaign with the Buffs in the Peninsular Wars was at Toulouse in April 1814. Three months later they were campaigning in Canada against the North American colonies seeking independence. He returned with the Regiment to Europe in 1815 and then back to Ireland. Wright's regiment was next posted to the Colony of New South Wales where he arrived, via Van Diemens Land, in 1822 on board the Richmond. In December of 1822 Wright sailed for Hobart where the Governor appointed him the Commandant of the Macquarie Harbour convict station.

Captain Archibald Clunes Innes (November 1826-April 1827) 3rd Buffs The name Innes looms prominently in the history and development of Port Macquarie; most notably for the construction of the large mansion on the shores of the large fresh water lake that now bears his name. Archibald Clunes Innes (1800-1857) was born at Thrumster in Scotland. He



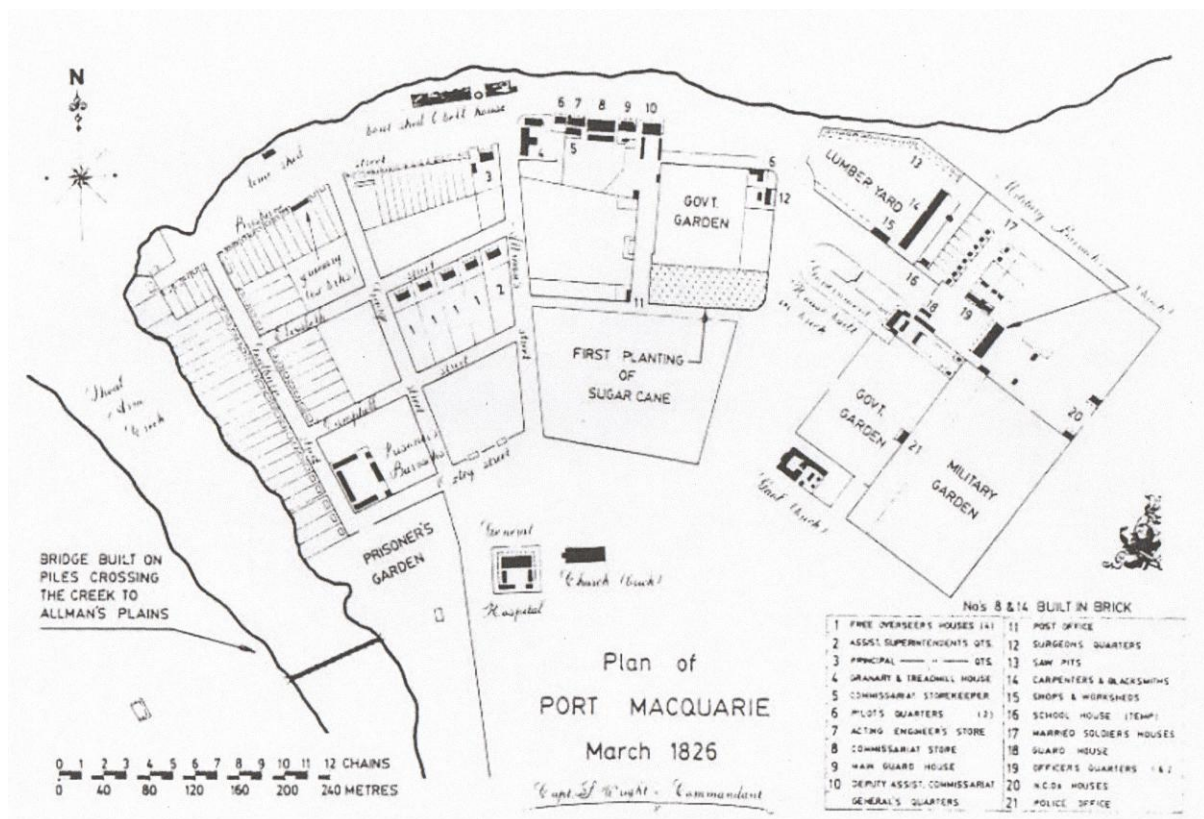
enlisted in the 3rd Regiment in 1813 and served in the Peninsular Wars. Captain Innes arrived in Sydney with his regiment on board the Eliza in 1822. Between January 1824 and May 1825 he served in Van Diemens Land (Tasmania) before being appointed as aide-de-camp in December 1825 to the Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales, and then a magistrate in November 1826. Innes was appointed to the position of Commandant in Port Macquarie in December 1826, succeeding Captain Gilman. His tenure only lasted six months, as he returned to Sydney in April 1827 as a Brigade-Major. Innes left the army in 1828 to take up an appointment as magistrate and superintendent of police at Parramatta, resigning in 1829 - the year that he married Margaret, daughter of Colonial-Secretary Alexander McLeay. Innes's main period of connection to Port Macquarie began in 1830 when he was appointed as Police Magistrate, along with a land grant of 2,568 acres (1,039 ha). This land, together with a contract to supply food to the convict

population, and convict workers, allowed Innes to transform his property into a magnificent country estate. His growing prosperity saw him venture into other areas such as sugar cane,

sheep and cattle properties, and an ill-fated attempt at wine production. Innes also acquired properties in the New England region and was chiefly responsible for the construction of the road linking the New England with the coast. The depression of the 1840s saw Innes's fortunes crumble and he was declared bankrupt in 1852. He died in Newcastle on the 29th August 1857. Much of what we know of the lifestyle of the Innes Lakes estate comes from the journal kept by his niece, Annabella Boswell, who recorded her view of life at the estate between 1845 and 1848. Major Innes was responsible for much of the prosperity of Port Macquarie as it transformed from a penal settlement into an agricultural region and pointed the way for many future endeavours.

In 1826 Governor Darling instructed Wright to take command of the Port Macquarie convict station. During his short tenure as Commandant, Wright explored the local area and reached the Macleay River which was initially called Wrights River. (Archibald Clunes Innes, who succeeded Wright as Commandant, renamed the river Macleay in honour of his father-in-law (Colonial Secretary Alexander Macleay). In 1826 Wright decided to leave the army, rather than go to India with the Regiment, and settle in Australia. In February 1827 he returned to Newcastle as Police Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, replacing Francis Allman. In September he was granted 2,560 acres in the Hunter Valley. Samuel Wright accumulated a number of significant debts over the next few years, and after visiting Sydney in 1852 he disappeared while returning to the Hunter on board the ship Rose. The conclusion was that he jumped overboard and was declared to have died on 24th March 1852.

Shown on Captain Wright's map of 1826, the police office was in the area of the Military Barracks and Resident Magistrate's Quarters (approximately Clarence Street and the Public School). The land for the Court House (Old Court House) was allotted in the 1830's and the building erected 1868 as the original Court House was in a dilapidated state. The second police station was between Munster, Market and Murray Streets. The lock-up is incorporated in the present Police Station in Hay Street.



Map of Port Macquarie circa 1826

Lieutenant Thomas Meyrick (June 1828-August 1828) 39th Regiment Adjutant Lieutenant Thomas Meyrick of the 39th Regiment, and his wife, sailed from Deptford, London, on 5th August 1826 on board the ship Woodford. He was a part of a guard detachment escorting 100 convicts to Van Diemens Land (Tasmania). The ship arrived in Hobart on 22nd November 1826 where it discharged its cargo of convicts and proceeded on to Sydney with supplies for the colony. Meyrick had been in Port Macquarie for several years, serving as Engineer Officer, before he was appointed Acting Commandant on 7th July 1828.

Meyrick was replaced as Commandant by Philip Aubin on 14th August 1828 and remained in Port Macquarie where he is listed as Superintendent of Works in 1830. He left the colony in July 1832 after a period serving as Superintendent of Police in the Airds district (Campbelltown N.S.W.). He died of cholera at Bangalore, India, on 23rd March 1833. He had served for 22 years in the 39th Regiment. Port Macquarie Hastings Council Library 4 **Captain Phillip Aubin (August 1828-October 1828)** 57th Regiment Philip Aubin was baptised at St. Helier, Jersey, on 9th February 1794, son of Germain Aubin and Mary Poingdistre. He was appointed Ensign in the 57th Foot, by purchase, on 14th February 1811. He was promoted to Lieutenant, without purchase, on 29th April 1813. he served in the Peninsular Wars from November 1811 to the end of the war, including the battles of Vittoria, the Pyrenees, Nivelle, Nive as well as other minor skirmishes. He also received a Captain's pay being only a Lieutenant at the time. A fortnight later, on March 18th. Lieutenant Aubin, commanding the 57th Light Company, was severely wounded. He served afterwards in North America in 1814-1815, and in France and Flanders in 1815-1818. He was appointed Adjutant on 7th April 1825, and promoted to Captain on 22nd June 1826. From 1827 to 1831, Captain Aubin was in NSW, being in command of the guard on board the convict ship

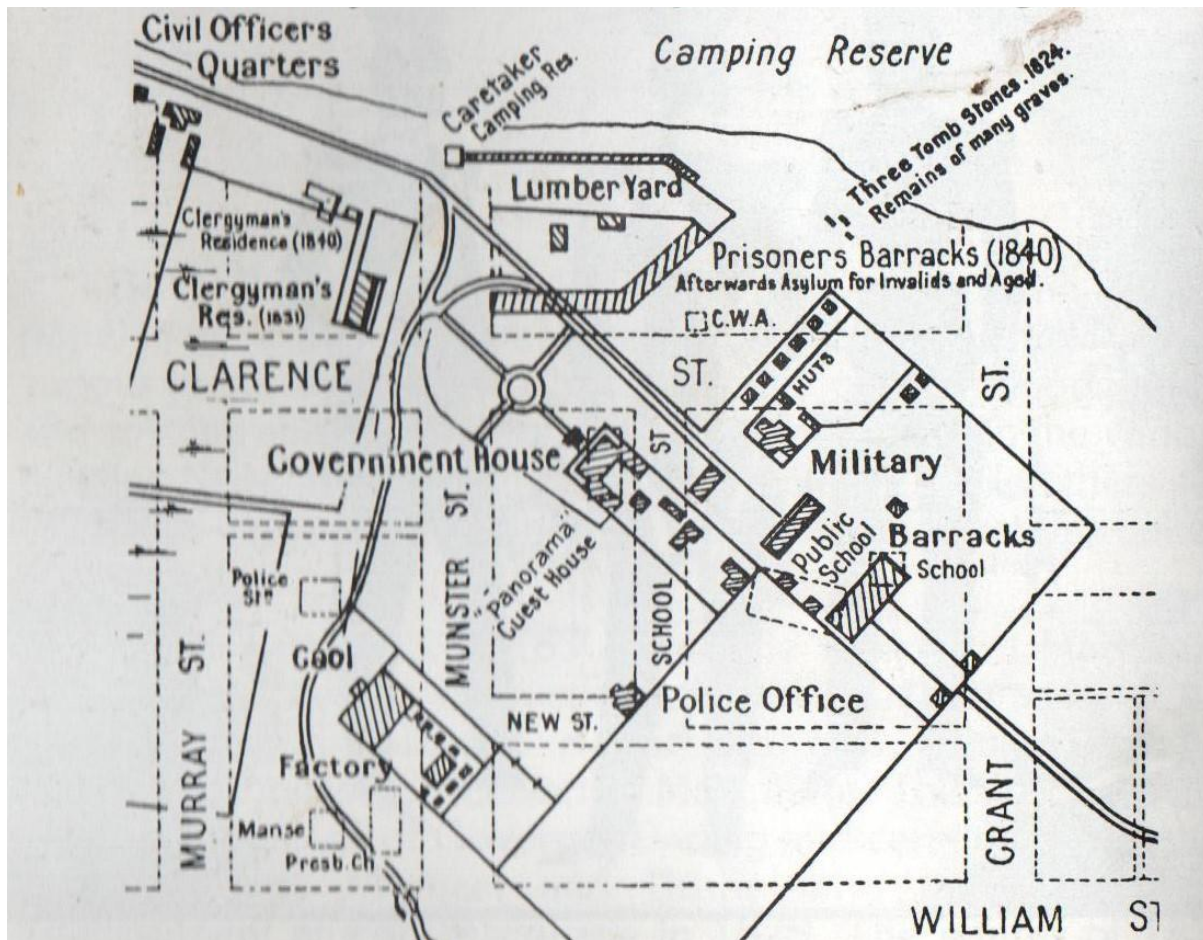
Borodino which arrived in Sydney in July 1828, his wife being among the passengers. His term as commandant at Port Macquarie ran from August to October 1828. In January 1829 he was in command of a detachment of the 63rd Foot on the convict ship Vittoria at Port Jackson. In August 1829 he was appointed to take charge of the police establishments at Wallis Plains and Pattersons Plains, to take action against bushrangers in those areas. Having been promoted to Major, by purchase, on April 12th 1831, he embarked at Sydney on board the Red Rover on 8th June 1831, together with 4 officers, 6 sergeants and 96 rank and file of the 57th Foot, and arrived in India on 31st July 1831. Major Aubin returned to England in July 1840, and retired on full-pay on 11th February 1842 he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel on 28th November 1854, and died at Rockingham House, St. Helier, Jersey on 7th May 1863. he is buried in the family crypt at Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey, St. Helier.

The effort to close Port Macquarie was taken up by Brisbane's successor Governor Darling in 1828. Governor Darling informed England that only 530 convicts remained at Port Macquarie, and that that number would decrease further by the expiry of the sentences of convicts who remained at Port Macquarie. Darling estimated that by 1829 there would only be 290 convicts remaining. The Governor believed that the opportunity to open Port Macquarie to free settlers should be taken and that the penal establishment should be abolished.

In 1828 the Commissioners of Inquiry at Port Macquarie also recommended that it cease to be a penal settlement as soon as possible. In November 1828 Governor Darling was given the authority to abolish the penal settlement at Port Macquarie and open it up to free settlement.

On 26th November 1828, Sir George Murray, Secretary of State, wrote to Governor Darling approving the abolition of the penal settlement.

Captain Robert Hunt (October 1828-November 1828) 57th Regiment Robert Hunt of the 57th Regiment served for only three weeks as Commandant at Port Macquarie. He arrived in Sydney in March 1828 on the ship Morley along with a detachment of soldiers and 192 convicts from Dublin. On 17th October 1828 he sailed for Port Macquarie on board the government brig Mary Elizabeth with a detachment of the 57th Regiment to relieve the 39th and to assume the role of Commandant. Despite only a three-week tenure, The Australian newspaper on 21st April 1829 reported that no Commandant since Allman has "discharged his duties so much to the general satisfaction as Captain Hunt". He was appointed as Commandant of Norfolk Island to replace Captain Wright who was recalled to Sydney to faces charges in respect of the death of a convict. He served there from November 1828 to November 1829 before he too was recalled, arriving back in Sydney on the Isabella on the 5th March.



An early plan of the Port Macquarie Settlement with current streets imposed in dots.¹⁸

Chapter Six: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SETTLEMENT

The settlement soon proved to be self-sustaining and, by 1824, convicts were employed in building, agriculture (mostly wheat, tobacco, cotton, vegetables and maize), boatbuilding, blacksmithing, teaching, baking and clerical duties etc. Poultry, pigs, cows and horses were also slowly amassed. St Thomas' Anglican Church was built between 1824 and 1828 and a Female Factory, where the women made nails and other items, was erected in 1825. As timber was being rapidly decimated in the Newcastle area, the cedar and other timber near Port Macquarie was of particular interest to administrators. In 1821 Captain Allman also instructed a black prisoner from Antigua in the West Indies to commence the cultivation of

¹⁸ *The History of Port Macquarie*. Hastings District Historical Society.1957. P 20

the first sugarcane in Australia. The first sugar mill was established in 1824. However, the port was a little too southerly and the industry was abandoned in the 1860s.

Agriculture was foreseen as a major endeavour of the new settlement. Before the first settlement was established, Governor Macquarie foresaw the settlement to be self supporting by producing wheat, maize, Indian corn and pork. All of these, in fact, happened. In 1823, Governor Brisbane appointed William S. Parker to take charge of all of the settlement's farms and produce, except for sugar and tobacco. From 1823 to 1826, the number of men under Parker's orders varied from 200 to 300. In 1826 he had between 100 and 130 men and for the year ended 30 June 1828, from seventy to ninety men.

Provision of education for the children of Captain Allman and other officials was initially supplied by John McCabe, a former prisoner who had received an absolute pardon. During 1823 the Colonial Secretary informed Commandant Allman of the despatch of "...*twelve leaves, each containing six lessons, together with 24 first pages of the spelling book printed for the Sunday School Union.*" Gamaliel Farrell was the next recorded School Master. A return from Port Macquarie states he had fifty-six pupils enrolled. In January 1826, Edward McRoberts was School Master at forty pounds per annum; his wife taught needlework. He was School Master for five years.

Official attendance at the school from May 1st 1828 to 31st December 1828 was 46 with an average attendance of boys 21, girls 17, total 38.

Mr Benjamin Reed succeeded Mr McRoberts. Mrs Reed was also officially appointed to the school. The attendance at the school for 1829 was twenty-three scholars. It appears that the school was held in the Church of St. Thomas.

Cedar cutting had become a major export of the settlement. However, in 1824, the drought which hit the Hastings Valley early in the winter of that year, greatly affected the level of the Hastings River. From June to October there was insufficient water in the river to float the cedar logs being cut upstream down to the settlement.

Captain Henry Smyth (November 1828-June 1832) 39th Regiment Henry Smyth was born in England in 1776. He was the longest serving Commandant at the Port Macquarie penal settlement. He was a member of the 39th Regiment of Foot and served during the Napoleonic Wars and the Peninsular Wars. He saw service at the battles of Vittoria, Pyrenees, Nivelles, and Nice. The 39th Regiment of Foot were posted to Australia in November 1825 and they set sail in eighteen different groups over a period of twenty-two months. The British wanted to establish a settlement in northern Australia and so Captain Smyth was despatched to what is now the Northern Territory to found Fort Wellington. He was to be Commandant, and was accompanied by 30 soldiers, 14 Royal Marines, 13 Royal Navy other ranks and 22 convicts from Sydney. Smyth remained as Commandant from June 1827 to June 1828 before falling ill, as so many other men had done. He returned to Sydney on the brig Governor Phillip on 24th April 1828. His term as Commandant at Fort Wellington was marked by an incident that resulted in the deaths of up to thirty members of the local Iwaidja Aboriginal nation. Smyth was soon after appointed Commandant at Port Macquarie and began his term in November 1828. One of his concerns during his tenure was the state of the bar and possible safety measures that could be implemented. With the ending of convict transportation to Port Macquarie and the opening up of the district to free settlers, the Government was keen to close the penal settlement. Smyth was therefore the last of the Commandants, being succeeded by Police Magistrates. On 13th September 1839 he was granted 640 acres in the Parish of Kincumber, fronting onto Brisbane Water. He was a

director and shareholder in the Bank of Australia which collapsed in 1843 resulting in his loss of much of his money. In July 1847 he sold his Kincumber estate. Smyth returned to England to his family home on the Isle of Wight and became a benefactor to several local churches. His wife Elizabeth died in 1863 at Sandown, Isle of Wight, and in the same year Smyth retired from the army on half-pay. He died on 24th August 1867 at his residence, Royal Heath Villa, Sandown, Isle of Wight. Obituaries described him as a highly respected man of a good family.

In June 1828, Governor Ralph Darling appointed two Commissioners, Lieutenant-Colonel J.T. Morisset, Principal Superintendent of police and James Busby, Collector of Internal revenue, to conduct an enquiry into irregularities at the Port Macquarie Penal Settlement. The Commissioners had wide terms of reference: investigation not only of agricultural operations and the sugar plantation, but also management of the Commissariat and overall departmental conduct of the settlement. Their findings uncovered corrupt practices, abuses, indulgences, and exposed the shady side of key officers of the penal settlement at Port Macquarie. Management was restricted and a new code of regulations for the conduct of the settlement implemented.

But it became apparent to the colonial government that Port Macquarie could no longer effectively fulfill its original aim of being 'a place of banishment'.

By mid-1829 Governor Darling had received approval from Secretary of State Sir George Murray to abolish the Port Macquarie penal settlement. While Darling prepared to open Port Macquarie to free settlers, violence erupted among the Aborigines, first on the outskirts of the station in April where there was a pitched tribal battle between a reported 150 to 200 men on each side. Another report made to Commandant Smyth claimed that three white men had been murdered by Aborigines near Seal Rocks.

By 1830 the transportation of convicts to Port Macquarie had virtually ceased and the district was opened up to free settlers. On the 15 August 1830 a proclamation was issued inviting free settlers into the area.

While Allman and his successors established reasonable initial relations with the local Aborigines, reports of attacks, including killings and reprisals, are recorded. The following article appeared in the *Asiatic Journal Monthly Miscellany* Vol 26 Page 224 (1838).

The Aborigines at Port Macquarie- Rumours of outrages alleged to have been committed by the Port Macquarie blacks, and of reprisals on the part of the white residents in that district, have, for the last twelve or eighteen months been in frequent circulation, but in such vague forms as to render it impossible to arrive at any definite conclusion as to their origin. We have hitherto been prevented, as well by the isolated position of Port Macquarie, which precluded the possibility of any personal inquiry, as by the absence of any authentic source of information regarding the occurrences in the district, from those entertaining with any degree of certainty the truth or likelihood of the rumours. Lately, however, I've have taken measures to effect this purpose and the result has been the disclosure of a series of cold-blooded atrocities perpetrated on the wretched aborigines who frequent the settlement, almost without a parallel among the barbarous massacres which disgrace the earlier years of our colonial progress. We request the attention of the attorney-general to what follows ; the main features of the case we pledge ourselves will be found to be substantially correct, though it is possible we may fall into error with regard to the minor details.

It is impossible at this distance of time, and with the necessarily imperfect knowledge we possess, to trace the causes which led to the commission of the last outrage on the part of the blacks (the murder of four assigned servants when asleep in their huts), which was the more immediate provocation to the atrocities to which we shall presently refer; but our knowledge of the nature and habits of the tribes which inhabit the vicinities of the settled districts is sufficient to assure us that the outrage must have been provoked, either by their sufferers themselves, or by some of their fellow-servants ; for it as a well-known trait in the character of our aborigines, that it is not the perpetrator of the injury that has provoked their vengeance, that alone pays the penalty for his misdeeds. We know not to what to attribute an outrage so atrocious; but, certain it is that someone or other of the tribes who frequent the vicinity of Port Macquarie surrounded a hut belonging to Mr. M'Leod, in which four of his assigned servants were asleep, and killed them with the aid of their spear and other weapons. The intelligence of this outrage was communicated to the authorities at Port Macquarie on the following day, and an armed force was despatched by Mr. Gray, the police magistrate there, in quest of the murderers. The search was ineffectual, for the blacks, aware that they had exposed themselves to the certainty of punishment if caught, and too little acquainted either by experience or otherwise with British law to know that justice rewards punishment only to the guilty, betook themselves to a distance, or concealed themselves effectually among their native fastnesses. The search, although continued for several days, failed of success, and it was not till three weeks or a month afterwards that the atrocities we complain of were committed. According to the statement of the constables, it would appear that Mr. Gray, the police magistrate at Port Macquarie, finding that all efforts to secure the murderers were fruitless actually offered a reward for every black the constables could shoot (in clarity to Mr. Gray we are willing to believe that he confined this order to the blacks known as the actual murderers of the whites), the proof of the commission of the deed required by the police magistrates at Port Macquarie, being the production of the right ear of each murdered black. This, we repeat is but the statement of the constable when met marching homeward with three human ears tied up in a little bag, the product of the day's excursion, but we are not now prepared to affirm that any such offer was actually made. Whether any such offer did emanate from Mr. Gray, or whether, as is more likely, the constables made use of the subterfuge to screen themselves, certain it is that the murders were committed, and that no step that we have heard of hitherto has been taken to bring the perpetrators to justice. -Sydney Gaz. Feb.6.

APPENDIX

Pre Decimal Money: Because New South Wales (Australia) was a colony, in the early years, pre 1910, the British Pound was the accepted form of currency.

Pre-decimal monetary terms Prior to decimalisation in 1966, there were **12 pence (written as 12d) in a shilling (written as 1s or 1/-) and 20 shillings in a pound, written as £1** (occasionally "L" was used instead of the pound sign, £). There were therefore 240 pence in a pound. It wasn't until **1910**, nine years after Federation, that Australia created its own currency – the Australian pound. Even then, its coins were minted by branches of Britain's Royal Mint in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

1 Pound	=	Two Dollars (\$2.00)
1 Shilling	=	Ten cents (\$0.10)
1 Pence (penny)	=	One Cent (\$0.01)
Florin (Two shillings)	=	Twenty cents (\$0.20)

Imperial Measurements:

Some examples of imperial measurements converted to metric measurements from this research:

1 acre	=	0.404686 hectares
10 acres	=	4.04686 hectares
15 acres	=	6.07028 hectares
25 acres	=	10.1171 hectares
32 acres	=	12.9499 hectares
2560 acres	=	1036.288 hectares
1 chain	=	20.1168 metres
10 chains	=	201.168 metres
100 chains	=	2011.68 metres
1 yard	=	0.9144 metres

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