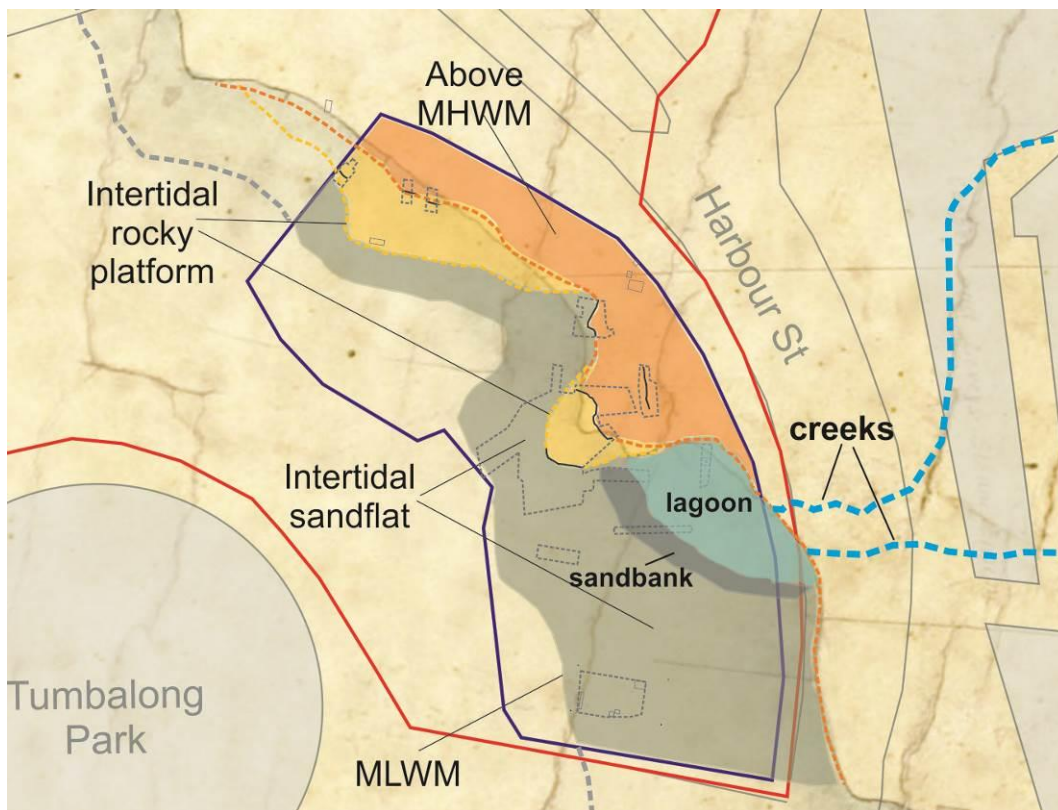


Darling Quarter (formerly Darling Walk), Darling Harbour, Sydney

Volume 1.1: Main Report



Interpretation of the foreshore environment prior to development in the 1820s. A Cryerhall

Report to
Lend Lease Development
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Executive Summary

The wharf facilities of Darling Harbour were crucial in the economic development and growth of Sydney during the 19th century. The Darling Quarter development provided a unique opportunity to excavate and record archaeological remains of this former 19th-century waterfront. In 1788 the site was once almost entirely below the high tide mark and through a number of phases of reclamation between the early and mid-19th century, it was transformed into large waterfront properties complete with timber wharf structures. The land was subsequently developed for industrial, commercial and residential use. Barker's mill and the PN Russell & Co Engineering Works are two significant 19th-century industries associated with the site.

The Darling Quarter site was one of the largest urban archaeological excavations in Australia. It took eight months between 2008 and 2010 to complete and resulted in the retrieval of a considerably large quantity of artefacts and archaeological data. Following the fieldwork, the post-excavation cataloguing, research, analysis and reporting was undertaken in stages between 2009 and 2013. This report presents the results of the archaeological investigation in six volumes.

Main Archaeological Findings

The original natural environment consisted of large intertidal sand flat abutting a rocky shoreline. Below the sands, a shell bed containing cockle, oyster, whelk and other shell species common to intertidal sand flats had accumulated over thousands of years. Freshwater from a creek flowed into naturally formed lagoon just above the high tide mark. The inner foreshore was once surrounded by *Casuarina glauca-Eucalyptus* swamp forest with some mangrove.

The natural resources of Darling Harbour were exploited by the Cadi for thousands of years prior to British colonisation. The remains of a shell midden consisting of over 90 per cent mature Sydney cockle and containing several stone artefacts were found on a rocky outcrop just above the high water mark.

Following British settlement, dramatic changes to the environment and in the use of the site occurred. Pollen analysis demonstrates increasing amounts of exotic species, weeds and levels of pollutions from the early 19th century onwards. In the early 1800s there was still little development in the surrounding area and use of the site was somewhat informal. Evidence for shell processing to make lime was found overlying the rock above the high tide level. A timber boat ramp constructed using logs from locally available hardwoods such as ironbark and blackbutt. Part of the intertidal sand flat was enclosed with timber post-and-rail and paling fences, perhaps to create holding areas for cattle waiting for processing at the nearby slaughterhouse owned by Captain Richard Brooks.

Development at the site intensified from the mid-1820s. By 1825 Cooper & Levey had constructed a large sandstone flour mill. This was located to the east of the site boundary and later became Barker's mill. They also undertook extensive earthworks and reclamation to construct a freshwater pond and jetty for the mill. Archaeological remains of both these structures were recorded during the excavation. The mill pond was constructed with a timber revetment reinforced by an external clay embankment. A large part of the intertidal sand flat was reclaimed using harbour sands, crushed or rubble sandstone and clay to create the jetty. The reclamation was retained on the north by a substantial sandstone wall. In 1827, the mill complex was purchased by Thomas Barker, who later modified and expanded it to include textile production by the end of the 1840s.

Barker also undertook extensive reclamation at the site during the 1830s. Bulk fills of heavy plastic clays, shales, crushed sandstone rubble and some industrial waste such as boiler ash, clinkers and coke, were used to reclaim and consolidate the new land. Through reclamation Barker increased

his property's land size by about 40 per cent. To the south of Barker's property, reclamation was also being undertaken on Brooks' land. The reclamation and wharf construction was mostly completed between 1830 and the early 1850s. A number of smaller reclamations and wharf redevelopments progressed between the 1850s and the 1870s by subsequent land owners. The wharf frontage was not within the excavation area but further to the west under the fills of modern Darling Harbour and Tumbalong Park. Overall, there were few artefacts within the reclamation fills as these consisted mostly of redeposited natural clays and sandstone rubble. The growing industrialisation of the area in the latter half of the 19th century was represented in the increasing proportion of industrial waste used within reclamation and levelling layers.

Poor economic conditions in the 1840s affected the sales and development of Barker's reclaimed land. Residential allotments were slow to sell and some remained vacant until the 1850s. The surfaces of vacant land were poorly consolidated and displayed signs of surface erosion. The large waterfront properties and failed residential subdivisions were bought or leased and initially used by a variety of merchants and businesses. The archaeological remains of Brodie & Craig's builders' yard, LJ Travers' yard, and George Dents coal and timber yard consisted mostly of informal surfaces and accumulations that reflected the low development and transient use of the land as storage depots in the first 20 or so years following reclamation.

Archaeological remains of seven of the 100 or so residential allotments offered for sale by Barker during the 1840s were within the excavation area. Situated among factories and goods depots, the Steam Mill Street houses were built, owned and occupied by working-class people between the 1850s and 1899. The houses were two-storey and were some of the largest in the neighbourhood. Three of the owners were occupiers, and also owned and rented-out their adjoining properties. Despite the social distinction between owner/occupiers and renters in the street, the artefacts and occupation material from the cesspits and underfloor cavities pointed to households of similarly unremarkable status. Spatial and activity-based analysis of the underfloor deposits suggests that the kitchens were all intensively used for a number of different purposes and even the more affluent households showed signs of resourceful uses of space. The archaeological material from the houses has raised questions about the working class/lower middle-class divide. It suggests that while working-class people with middle-class aspirations may have projected a higher status publicly, their private lives may have very closely resembled their less fortunate working-class neighbours.

The industrialisation of Darling Harbour increased from the mid-19th century. Located within the Darling Quarter site between 1859 and 1875 was the PN Russell & Co Engineering Works and Carriage Works, one of the largest employers on the harbour at the time. Limited excavations within the yard area revealed information regarding the operations and transportation within the foundry complex. The remains of a weighbridge which weighed wagons of raw materials and end products were recorded. Weighbridges are an integral part of operating a foundry and are features of 19th-century commercial wharves. The weighbridge, foundry buildings and wharf were connected by an internal transport system that consisted of narrow-gauge rail tracks, turntables and cranes or hoists.

Initially providing the mill with wharf access and then used as a coal and timber storage yard in the 1860s, the final section of Barker's reclaimed land was final sold to Miller & Harrison in 1875. Archaeological evidence of extensive land consolidation in the form of reclamation, levelling within a new timber frame and wharf structure was required to consolidate the land prior to constructing their large sawmill building, horizontal steam engine base and boiler bases. The steam engine base was a large solid structure built using machine-made shale bricks. Cut into the reclamation, below the sawmill floor, was the pit and sheet-metal housing for the fly-wheel.

To the south of Barker's mill, reclamation between the 1830s and early 1850s created a large wharf that was bought by James Murphy and became known as Murphy's Wharf. Several merchants and businesses, such as John Murphy's coal, lime and timber yard, operated from the wharf between the 1850s and 1920s. Within the Darling Quarter site (Area 7) there was archaeological evidence of a family living in a sandstone house within a large yard or depot between the 1840s and 1860s. This allotment and house was redeveloped in the 1870s by the Fresh Food & Ice Company. The archaeological remains of sheds, a cart house and stable footings, solid yard surfaces, and artefacts such as leather horse trappings and equipment, and hand tools, reflect the nature of the business as an importer and distributor of fresh and perishable goods.

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