

Parramatta's archaeological landscape

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Settlement at Parramatta, the third British settlement in Australia after Sydney Cove and Norfolk Island, began with the remaking of the landscape from an Aboriginal place, to a military redoubt and agricultural settlement, and then a township. There has been limited analysis of the development of Parramatta's landscape from an archaeological perspective and while there have been numerous excavations there has been little exploration of these sites within the context of this evolving landscape.

This analysis is important as the beginnings and changes to Parramatta are complex. The layering of the archaeology presents a confusion of possible interpretations which need a firmer historical and landscape framework through which to interpret the findings of individual archaeological sites. It involves a review of the whole range of maps, plans and images, some previously unpublished and unanalysed, within the context of the remaking of Parramatta and its archaeological landscape.

The maps and images are explored through the lense of government administration and its intentions and the need to grow crops successfully to sustain the purposes of British Imperialism in the Colony of New South Wales, with its associated needs for successful agriculture, convict accommodation and the eventual development of a free settlement occupied by emancipated convicts and settlers.

Parramatta's river terraces were covered by woodlands dominated by eucalypts, in particular grey box (*Eucalyptus moluccana*) and forest red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticormis*), with an open grassy understorey. Mangroves (*Avicennia marina*) may have colonised the river margins up to the tidal limit, approximately below Charles Street. The common reed (*Phragmites australis*), paperbarks (*Melaleuca linariifolia*) and rough barked native apple (*Angophora floribunda*) are predicted to have occupied wetter and drier areas on the lower river terraces respectively.¹ Stands of these trees can be seen in many images, often represented as encircling the settlement and illustrating the extent of clearing which had been undertaken.

The initial British settlement on Rose Hill was established in November 1788 by Governor Phillip who had sent out exploring parties to survey Sydney Harbour and the river at the head of the harbour shortly after landing at Sydney Cove. The area of Parramatta, at the head of the Parramatta River which feeds into Sydney Harbour, was discovered about three months after settlement. On Sunday 2 November 1788 Governor Phillip and others, including marines, established a military redoubt on Rose Hill.² The detachment was to include a captain, two officers and 25 non-commissioned officers and 40 or 50 convicts.³ The marines were to protect the new settlement from attacks by the Aborigines. A redoubt is a small fortification, typically enclosed with earthen embankments on four sides – a ditch is dug and the spoil is thrown up to form a raised defensive mound.

Convicts were sent to Rose Hill to commence farming as this land was considered to be more fertile than the land near Sydney and Farm Cove which was found to be rocky, with shallow, poor soils. The ground at Parramatta *was of a stiff clayey nature, free from that rock which every where covered the surface at Sydney Cove, well clothed with timber, and unobstructed by underwood.*⁴ Initially an agricultural settlement, Rose Hill soon expanded into a small town and grew in importance, becoming the centre of British settlement for some years. Sydney Cove remained as the port town, main home of the governor and a major brick-making area.

The original agricultural settlement was mostly located on the high ground above the 'Crescent', part of the Government Domain and later Parramatta Park. It is important to emphasise that Rose Hill initially was not intended as a town but as a place where a military redoubt could be established to protect the new arrivals, who were to clear and till the land to grow crops, from Aboriginal incursions and to maintain order over the convicts.



FLATS AT THE HEAD OF PORT JACKSON
& CHANNEL TO ROSE HILL, 1789,
WILLIAM BRADLEY, (DETAIL)
MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

By February 1789 Rose Hill was a small settlement where the convicts and military still lived under tents and very little molestation was at this time given by the natives but there was ill treatment of the original inhabitants by the new arrivals.⁵ By 14 July 1789 the convicts' tents had been replaced by huts and the soldiers were living in barracks within the redoubt which also contained the provisions store. Dodd's farm was built with his house, and barn and granaries, into which wheat and barley was to be placed. The convicts had huts with gardens which they worked for themselves:

the convicts were all found residing in very good huts, apparently under proper regulations, and encouraged to work in the gardens, which they had permission to cultivate during those hours which were not dedicated to public labour. A barrack for the soldiers was erected in the small redoubt which had been constructed, and in which also stood the provision store. Some ground had been opened on the other side of the stream of water which ran into the creek, where a small house had been built for the superintendant Dodd, under whose charge were to be placed a barn and granaries, in which the produce of the ground he was then filling with wheat and barley was to be deposited. The people of all descriptions continued very healthy; and the salubrity of the climate rendered medicine of little use.⁶

William Bradley made a detailed sketch of the settlement in mid-1789, close to when David Collins described his visit above. Bradley's plan illustrates three distinct groupings of structures by mid-1789. To the south of the river and above the Crescent was the redoubt with the red ensign and the barracks and storehouse along the northern and western sides. The storehouse inside the redoubt was used for storage of provisions, the daily rations provided by government, rather than newly grown crops.⁷ There were four other structures with gardens to the south, possibly a group of huts to accommodate the military, perhaps predating the barracks. Immediately east was a closely packed row of seven huts/tents and gardens. It is not clear who was living in these after the barracks were built within the redoubt. Possibly these were the original tents for the marines but may have been given over to the convicts once the officers and men moved into the barracks.

At some distance to the east are two groups of structures, two buildings enclosed by a fence and located at an odd angle to the track, and a line of huts with gardens at the front. The purpose of the two structures enclosed within the fence is uncertain but they were possibly the *commodious blacksmith's shop* or the *wretched hospital*, as these are the only specific structures for which we do not have probable locations by the end of 1789.

The row of huts further to the east was presumably to accommodate convicts, with gardens for growing crops in their spare time. The eastern convicts' huts are on the eastern side of the gardens while the western huts are on the western side of their gardens, making their huts as far away from each other as possible but still within sight. The reasons for this are not clear.

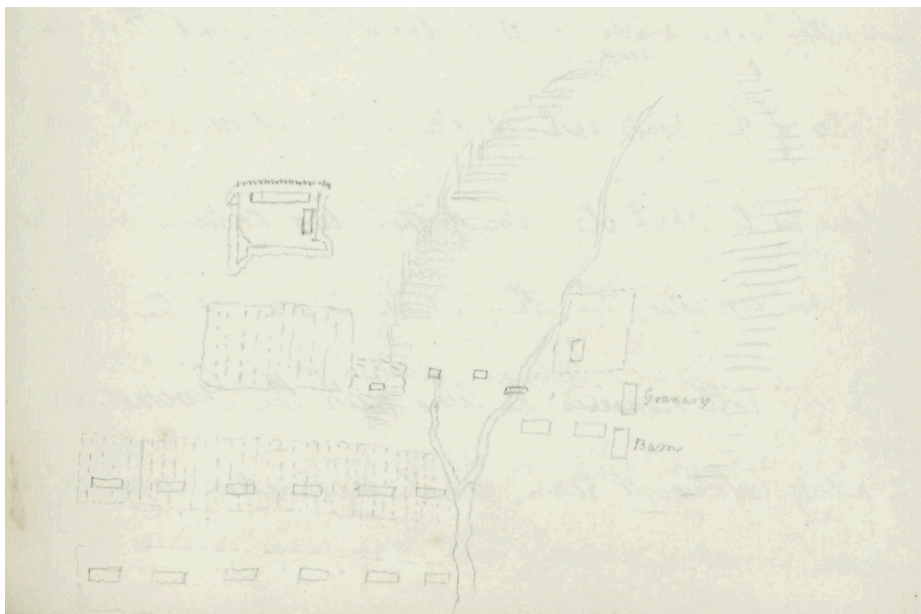
Lieutenant Phillip Gidley King, later Governor King (1800–1805), reported on the early settlement at Rose Hill in his diary in April 1790, 16 months after its establishment:

Governor Phillip having been several journeys the intent of which were to inform himself fully of the Country & to find out a better place for Cultivation, than the land about the lower part of the harbour is which is invariably a Sandy Soil, covered with rocks; at length fixed on a situation at the head of the harbour which is about eleven miles from Sydney Cove, the Soil here was found much better than at Sydney Cove A Number of Convicts were sent there in 1789 with a Captains Guard (which was afterwards reduced to a Lieutts) to prevent any disputes with the Natives & to preserve Order among the Convicts.

On the 9th [April 1790] I attended Governor Phillip to Rose-hill the name of the above place ... We landed about half a mile from the Settlement & walked up to it. The Settlement is on an elevated Ground, which joins to a very fine Crescent, as regular as if formed by art, It is supposed that this Crescent & the regular Slopes which surround the Settlement has been formed by very heavy rains, The Soil is loam, Sand & Clay, & the trees are not so large here as lower down the harbour, but the large roots lying on the Ground renders it difficult to clear. A fine Stream of fresh Water runs into the head of the harbour, which in the Winter & heavy rains sometimes rises 7 or 8 feet & is a rapid torrent.



A VIEW OF GOVERNMENT FARM AT ROSE HILL,
NEW SOUTH WALES, 1791,
PORT JACKSON PAINTER.
BRITISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
ZOOLOGICAL LIBRARY, IMAGE REF NO. 12018



SKETCH PLAN OF ROSE HILL, APRIL 1790.
REMARKS & JOURNAL KEPT ON THE EXPEDITION
TO FORM A COLONY ... ,
LIEUTENANT KING'S DIARY,
MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

A redoubt is constructed here in which are very good Barracks for Officers & Men, also a Storehouse. On the Opposite Side of the Brook is a farm house, where a Servant of Governor Phillips lives [Dodd], & who is charged with the Superintendance of the Convicts & the Cultivation of the ground, to which charge he is very equal, & is of the greatest use to the Governor, as he has no other free person whatever to overlook the least piece of work carrying on by the Convicts; near this Farm house is a very good Barn & Granary, the Convicts houses form a line at some distance in front of the Barracks, with very good Gardens before & behind each house; the whole joined to the pleasantness of the situation makes it a fine landscape. In 1789 the Quantity of ground sowed with Wheat sowed here & at Sydney Cove was 22 Acres, with Barley 17 Acres, Flax & Indian Corn Beans &c 3 Acres. For the Cultivation of Wheat & other Grains, nearly One Hundred Acres will be cleared this Year at Rose Hill of which 40 will be sowed with Wheat. The quantity of Wheat raised last Year was 200 Bushells, Barley 60 Bushells. Flax, Beans & other seeds 10 Bushells. The Wheat is a full good grain.⁸

Lieutenant King described Rose Hill about 12 months after Collins visit and Bradley drew his plan. King also sketched a plan which clearly illustrates the redoubt with a ditched earthen embankment on three sides, bastions on the two eastern corners and most likely a palisade fence along the western side. The frequent reference to the fortification at Rose Hill as a redoubt would indicate the presence of ditches but this sketch is the only evidence to support this view. The construction of military fortifications or redoubts on high flat ground is a typical strategy for a defensive position.⁹ The likely area for the redoubt is behind Government House and above the steep sides of the Crescent. It is reasonably flat ground with the steep hill of the Crescent to the north. The corner bastions allowed the soldiers to fire guns in two separate directions and offered a strategic advantage.

The need for a defensive structure to secure the British settlement from attacks by Aboriginal people must be perceived as precautionary. By November 1788 there were few encounters between the local people and the settlers. The spearing of Governor Phillip did not happen until 7 September 1790, some nine months after the kidnapping of Bennelong and Colbee in December 1789.¹⁰ Therefore the decision to build the redoubt was pre-emptive rather than responding to a specific threat. The British were struggling to develop any relationships with the Aboriginal people and there were frequent problems caused by the behaviour of many of the new arrivals. The redoubt and its barracks continued to be used until a new barracks was completed at the other end of the settlement, down near the wharf, in May 1791.

By June 1791 relations with some Aboriginal people had developed but there were considerable ups and downs. Collins describes the deterioration of the relationship:

Since the establishment of that familiar intercourse which now subsisted between us and the natives, several of them had found it their interest to sell or exchange fish among the people at Parramatta; they being contented to receive a small quantity of either bread or salt meat in barter for mullet, bream, and other fish. To the officers who resided there this proved a great convenience, and they encouraged the natives to visit them as often as they could bring them fish. There were, however, among the convicts some who were so unthinking, or so depraved, as wantonly to destroy a canoe belonging to a fine young man, a native, who had left it at some little distance from the settlement, and as he hopped out of the way of observation, while he went with some fish to the huts. His rage at finding his canoe destroyed was inconceivable; and he threatened to take his own revenge, and in his own way, upon all white people. Three of the six people who had done him the injury, however, were so well described by some one who had seen them, that, being closely followed, they were taken and punished, as were the remainder in a few days after.

The instant effect of all this was, that the natives discontinued to bring up fish; and Bal-loo-derry, whose canoe had been destroyed, although he had been taught to believe that one of the six convicts had been hanged for the offence, meeting a few days afterwards with a poor wretch who had strayed from Parramatta as far as the Flats, he wounded him in two places with a spear. This act of Ballooderry's was followed by the governor's strictly forbidding him to appear again at any of the settlements; the other natives, his friends, being alarmed, Parramatta was seldom visited by any of them, and all commerce with them was destroyed. How much greater claim to the appellation of savages had the wretches who were the cause of this, than the native who was the sufferer?¹¹

King's sketch indicates the presence of a fence enclosing an area of agriculture; this may be a vegetable garden which needs to be fenced off from the depredations of the thieving convicts, as well as various animals. There are frequent references to convicts stealing vegetables during the early period both in Sydney and Parramatta.¹² By this time there were only two rows of huts with gardens, all of which were occupied by convicts.

Dodd's farm is a neat group of buildings within cleared and tilled ground accessible by a bridge across the river, with the barn and granary marked. While the enclosure was originally for grazing cattle it now appears to be a well organised garden with pathways and rows of plants. There is a dirt entrance road locked by a gate opposite the bridge, two cottages with a fireplace and what appears to be three tree stumps. The rest of the structures look to be farm buildings such as the granary and barn, to the rear. It is possible one of these may be the blacksmith's shop. The early brick kiln is indicated on the southern bank of the river.

The farm on Bradley's 1789 plan indicates the presence of four structures, one to the west of the entrance road and three to the east. King's sketch has five structures within the farm group, an additional one running east-west, with the eastern one annotated as 'barn'. King's April 1790 sketch indicates additions to the earlier group, possibly only building the barn once there were crops to be stored? By 1791 there are two other buildings in this group, making a total of seven structures. Three appear to be barn/granary style with horizontal timber slab construction and thatched roofs; two are houses with a central door, windows either side, and a brick chimney at the end. These look to be whitewashed wattle and daub structures. A granary typically is built to store the threshed grain. All the 1791–92 evidence indicates two separate areas at the farm, the working buildings to the east which were separated by a fence from the superintendent's house to the west.

The agricultural settlement was established in November 1788 and by February 1789 land was being cleared and cultivated. The removal of the trees was more difficult than anticipated due to the spread of the roots and the absence of cattle or horses to help remove the trees.¹³ James Smith was the original person placed in charge of the government farm at Parramatta but Edward Dodd replaced him by March 1789.

Henry Dodd was the governor's personal servant who had managed the farming at Farm Cove and proved to be an extremely capable overseer of the convicts.¹⁴

There are various reports of the success of agriculture at Rose Hill. On 16 November, 1790, Captain Tench toured the locality with Rev. Richard Johnson *the best farmer in the country* and Dodd. The cleared land equalled 200 acres (81 hectares), with 55 acres (22.3 hectares) of wheat, barley, some oats and 30 acres (21.1 hectares) of maize and the rest either cleared land or occupied by buildings and gardens. There were to be four pens or enclosures of 20 acres (8 hectares) each for cattle and two of these had already been built. There was a house in the centre of each enclosure to accommodate the person to take care of the cattle. *The cleared land gave to them a very park-like and beautiful appearance.*¹⁵

There were no ploughs available to turn the soil and each convict had to hoe 16 rods a day (approx. 400 sq yards) although this size meant that it was *just scratched over* and not well turned. The ground was left open for some months before the remains of the trees were burnt and the ashes dug in. Dodd did not think areas could be replanted after the first crop without *a large supply of cattle* to provide manure to fertilise the soil.¹⁶ Most of the ground in crop was visible from the top of the Crescent:

*The view from the top of the wheat takes in the ... whole of the cleared land of Rose Hill. From not having before seen an opening of such extent for the last three years, this struck us as grand and capacious. The beautiful diversity of the ground (gentle hill and dale) would certainly be reckoned pretty in any county. Continued our walk, and crossed the old field, which is intended to form part of the main street of the projected town. The wheat in this field is rather better, but not much ... The next field is maize, inferior to what we have seen, but not despicable. An acre of maize, at the bottom of the marine garden, is equal in luxuriancy of promise to any I ever saw in any country.*¹⁷

With the success of farming at Rose Hill and its expansion beyond the initial areas, Phillip decided to open up the settlement in order to support the convict labour force, its military guards and associated infrastructure and civilian officers. In July 1790 Governor Phillip and Surveyor Augustus Alt laid out a town plan with High Street (George Street) running between the planned site of Government House and the Landing Place at the eastern end of Parramatta, near modern day Harris Street. The township was set on land previously used for growing crops but which was quickly exhausted due to the want of manures and the inability to break up the soil adequately in the absence of oxen or horses to pull a plough.¹⁸ Watkin Tench describes George Street:

The main street of the new town is already begun. It is to be a mile long, and such breadth as will make Pall-Mall and Portland place 'hide their diminished heads.' It contains at present 32 houses completed, of 24 feet by 12 each, on a ground floor only, built of wattles plastered with clay, and thatched. Each house is divided into two rooms, in one of which is a fire place and a brick chimney. These houses are designed for men only; and ten is the number of inhabitants allotted to each; but some of them now contain 12 or 14, for want of better accommodation. More are building; in a cross street stand nine houses for unmarried women: and exclusive of all these are several small huts where convict families of good character are allowed to reside. The public buildings, beside the old wooden barrack and store there is a house of lath and plaster, 44 feet long by 16 wide, for the governor, on ground floor only, with excellent out-houses and appurtenances attached to it. A new brick storehouse, covered with tiles, 100 feet long by 24 feet wide, is nearly completed, and a house for the store-keeper.

*The first stone of a barrack 100 feet long by 24 feet wide, to which are intended to be added wings for the officers, was laid to-day. The situation of the barrack is judicious, being close to the store-house, and within a hundred and fifty yards of the wharf, where all boats from Sydney unload. To what I have already enumerated, must be added an excellent barn, a granary, an enclosed yard to rear stock in, a commodious blacksmith's shop, and most wretched hospital, totally destitute in every conveniency. Luckily for the gentleman who superintends this hospital, and still more luckily for those who are doomed in case of sickness to enter it, the air of Rose Hill has hitherto been generally healthy.*¹⁹

As set out, George Street was 205ft (63m) wide and a mile (1.6km) long. On either side of the street, huts were to be erected, each capable of containing 10 persons and at a distance of 60ft (18.5m) from each other, with a garden area allotted at the rear of each hut. Tench and Collins wrote that they were 60 ft (18.5m) apart but Governor Phillip had written to the British Government they were to be 100ft (30.8m) apart. The huts were to be built of wattle and daub with a thatched roof and were to be 12 by 24ft (3.7 x 7.4m).²⁰



SKETCH OF PARRAMATTA, APRIL 1793,
FERNANDO BRAMBILA,
MAP LIBRARY, COPYRIGHT BRITISH LIBRARY
BOARD, MAPS T.TOP.124 SUPP F44

Phillip named the township at Rose Hill, Parramatta in June 1791. It appears to have been so named on 'his majesty's birthday'. Parramatta was the name given by the traditional owners.²¹ Parramatta township referred to the area from the foot of Rose Hill and the land for one mile along the creek (Parramatta River). In a drawing by Brambila (1793), an artist on the Malaspina Spanish expedition, the main street has rows of modest huts regularly spaced along the street leading towards Government House. For a period Parramatta, as the main agricultural settlement and focus of convict labour, became the main township with Sydney being less important.²²

Governor Hunter had limited resources and not a lot of convict labour when the *Barwell* arrived in May 1798. Collins observed *the weakness of the public gangs, however, was such, that this allotment of villainy was considered as an acquisition to the general strength, and it was hoped that they might be employed to advantage.*²³ But apparently the *Barwell* did contain *some useful mechanics*. Prior to its arrival Hunter had to pay for skilled builders and carpenters as there were few convicts available with these skills. 11 months later in April 1799 foundations were laid for a new Government House to replace Phillip's small hut:

*To the list of public buildings, which, young as was the settlement, time had overthrown, was now added the government-house at Parramatta; the roof of which falling-in in some bad weather, the building was surveyed, and found so weak and decayed as not to admit of repairs. It was therefore determined to take this entirely down, and erect a new one; for which purpose a gang of brickmakers was shortly after sent up there.*²⁴

Hunter's new government house was completed at the end of his administration in September 1800. The design was of a simple Georgian house with five bays, with an arched fanlight over the central door.

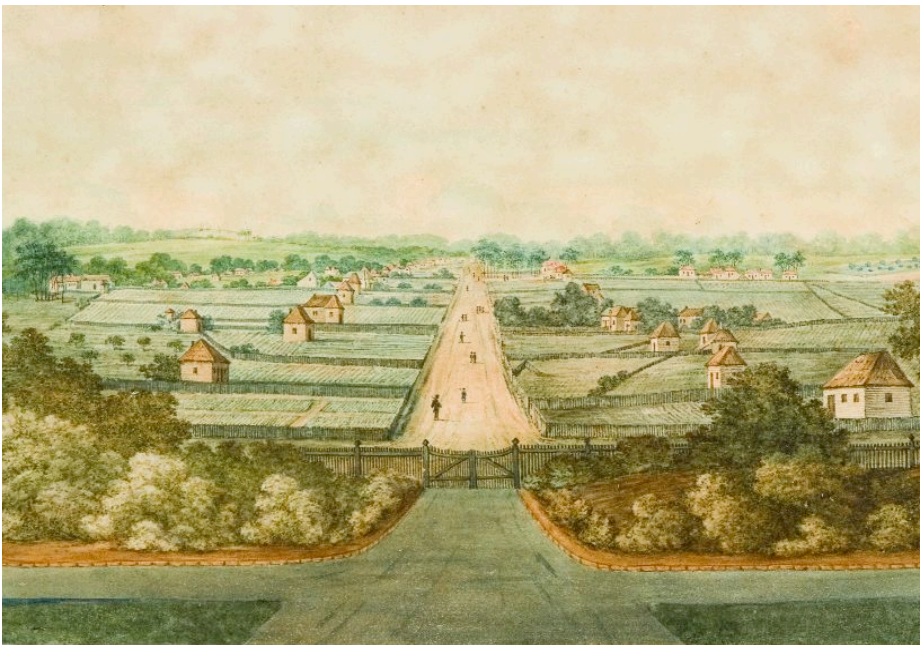
Up to 25 September 1800 Governor Hunter had been responsible for leasing 47 acres in the township of Parramatta. The first official lease was on 26 March 1800 to James Larra although Captain John Macarthur had received a lease on this same property in September 1796, presumably from Hunter but it was cancelled.²⁵ In September 1800 there were 1,226 people living in Parramatta including nine civil officers, 86 military and six of their wives and 10 children, 49 settlers and their four wives, 590 male convicts, 245 female convicts and 221 children of convicts.²⁶

On 25 September 1800 Governor Hunter reported that the *Government huts at Parramatta and Toongabbé originally built by Governor Phillip for the reception of convicts on their arrival, but which had been some years neglected, and were now in a state of ruin. Many indeed had fallen down.*²⁷

On 28 September 1800 Governor King wrote regarding the work of convicts that were on public rations:

*... and shall direct as many as the remainder as can be spared from other public works to be employed in cultivation on the public account, for which purpose I shall cause the huts now in ruin at Toongabbe and Parramatta to be put into repair for the reception of such convicts as may hereafter arrive from England, and those that I may be able to draw from Sydney from other indispensable public works, and those that may return to public labour from those now employed by officers ...*²⁸

On 31 December 1800 King reported that one bricklayer and two labourers had *repaired, plaistered, and whitewashed the Government huts, the houses of all the officers, civil*



GEORGE STREET, PARRAMATTA,
FROM THE GROUNDS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE
GEORGE WILLIAM EVANS, c1805,
WATERCOLOUR,
CAROLINE SIMPSON COLLECTION,
HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST OF NEW SOUTH WALES

*and military, the storehouses, granaries.*²⁹ These references suggest that the huts were only used intermittently by recent convict arrivals, who were then dispersed to other places, either to labour on public works or on agriculture or were assigned to people. The disrepair of the buildings speaks to the discontinuation of their use. This break in practice was probably related to the inefficient governance of the colony during the First Interregnum (time gap between officially appointed governors) and the failure of Hunter to implement their repair and use.³⁰ These statements show that the convict huts were meant to provide short-term accommodation, they were allowed to fall into disrepair and were renewed by Governor King. Sometimes we can see this during the excavation of hut sites where the post holes have been recut and the posts replaced.

A number of leases of these former convict huts were given out in Parramatta from 1804 to: John Jennings, Timothy Hollister, Thomas McKenzy, James Wright, Joseph Barsden, Humphrey Thorn, Sarah Brabyn, Joseph Ward, Thomas Halfpenny, James Horrax and Obediah Ikin.³¹ Larger grants and leases were given out to civil and military officers in 1799 around the periphery of the town. These included: Assistant Surgeon D'Arcy Wentworth, Surgeon John Harris, Surgeon William Balmain, Captain Edward Abbott. The 1804 map provides a significant survey of how the town looked at this time, what leases were given and who had received them. Only 16 small town plots had been leased by 1804, including two which we have excavated: Timothy Hollister (Parramatta Justice Precinct) and Obediah Ikin later leased to Rev. Rowland Hassall who had his store operating by this time.

George William Evans' painting c1805 shows the town near the end of Governor King's administration. The High (George) Street was a relatively narrow dirt road with fences built up to the street frontage. While the houses were set back from the road there were probably gardens in the area between the road and convict hut. Lines of fences are shown in the Evans' painting but not in Brambila's 1793 drawing, indicating that they were erected later. Fences appear on the 1804 plan surveyed by Evans. Brambila does indicate the use of ditches (right foreground) which appear to have also operated as boundary lines and possibly as stormwater drainage lines. Fences would indicate the changing perception of these properties from those owned by the government and used to accommodate convicts to those leased by individuals and their families. The fences represent the transfer to private control and the desire to keep unwanted guests out of what had become their 'private property'.

In time, as convicts were freed and free settlers acquired houses in the town, a less rudimentary settlement emerged. Huts, and later houses, were bought and sold although the possessors had no title to them apart from the right of occupancy of a piece of land assigned to them by the magistrates or the Governor. In order to

regularise the situation, the crown commenced to issue leases for town allotments, both in Sydney and Parramatta, for either 14 years or 21 years duration. There was a trickle of leases issued from the 1790s onwards, usually to people with business interests in the town who were seeking security of tenure. Between 1790 and 1820 convicts mostly had to provide their own accommodation. After this time convicts were housed in barracks rather than the earlier huts allowing the land to become available for emancipists and new settlers. Soon convicts were sent on assignment to labour on rural properties where the owners had to provide food, clothing and accommodation. Often married convicts were assigned to their free or emancipist spouse or relative.³²

During Governor Macquarie's administration (1810–21) major change happened in Parramatta. Both Elizabeth Macquarie and aide-de-comp John Watts, who had architectural training, were instrumental in a number of these changes. The town plan expanded considerably. A whole group of new buildings were constructed including: a new Government House, St Johns remodelled with two towers built, the Lancer Barracks and Convict Hospital. These were based on designs by John Watts. Elizabeth Macquarie influenced the design of the St Johns towers and especially the Palladian-style design of the Female Orphan School and Government House. Paintings indicate that the spreading town was encircled by Palladian-style buildings on the high points. The workers from the Government Lumber Yard provided the labour and materials to construct these buildings and in the case of the convict hospital there are weekly lists illustrating what was built and what materials were supplied. By the end of Macquarie's administration the township of Parramatta was remade from a straggly street of wattle and daub huts into one of fine Georgian houses, many with their symmetrical facades. There is little comparison between the town painted by Lycett in 1819 to those of Brambila in 1793 or Evans in c1805 other than the layout of George Street and a few of the other streets.



MAP SURVEYED BY GEORGE WILLIAM EVANS,
c1804
UK NATIONAL ARCHIVES, CO700 NSW 22

Governor Macquarie also tried to institute better relationships with Aboriginal people and established the annual *meeting of the tribes and native feasts* where Civic Place is today. These meetings were intended to encourage better relations with local Aboriginal groups. The government distributed blankets and awards to Aboriginal men and women who had *given proofs of industry and inclination to be civilised*. It was at this annual event that certain Aboriginal leaders received their breastplates.³³

After the replacement of Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1821 by Sir Thomas Brisbane and in the wake of the Bigge commission into the colony, the Surveyor-General, John Oxley, was delegated to create order from the chaos of town tenures across the colony. After Parramatta was comprehensively mapped in 1823 in order to establish the identity of the holders of town lands, many occupiers were offered leases from the Crown, which they accepted. All leases were dated as 30 June 1823. On the basis of these leases, householders in Parramatta could apply for a grant of land if they had erected buildings worth over £1,000 or, alternately, they could obtain a grant by the payment of 21 years quit rent. Consequently there is far greater information about the nature of buildings, improvements and the identity of landholders in Parramatta after that date. Finally we can begin to know so much more about Parramatta and its residents. We can begin to associate artefacts and buildings with individual families and ever so gently touch their lives.