Northern Parks and Playgrounds Movement

Historic Site

Newcastle East

Newcastle, New South Wales 1924 by Joseph E. O. Day

28 May 1969
HISTORIC SITE - Newcastle East

The area comprising Nobbys Island, the breakwater, Camp Shortland, portion of the power station and railway land, and Fort Scratchley has direct links with the discovery of the East Coast of Australia, and the early history and exploration of the Hunter Valley. All land in the area is publicly owned by either N.S.W. or Commonwealth Governments.

GENERAL AREA

NOBBYS ISLAND.

* The original height was 203ft. which is more than twice its present height.

* Nobbys Island was first sighted by Captain James Cook on May 10th, 1770, and described in his log book as a "small clump of an island lying close in shore".

* Lieutenant Colonel Peterson named the island "Coal Island" in June, 1801. It was also known as Hobby Island after Lieutenant Thomas Hobby of 102nd. Regiment.

* The Government acting on a suggestion of Colonel Barney of the Royal Engineers started to remove Nobbys Island.

The destruction of the island was stopped following a Public Protest Meeting which was held in Newcastle on June 21st, 1854.

* Present zoning - Special Purposes Open Space (County Planning Scheme).

CAMP SHORTLAND

* Land adjacent to breakwater and harbourside which was reclaimed about 1860 using material taken from the sandhills which extended from Newcastle beach to the Hunter River.

* Present zoning - Open Space (County Planning Scheme).

PORTION OF POWER STATION SITE - and portion of railway land.

* Landing place of Lieutenant John Shortland when he discovered the Hunter River on September 9th, 1797.

* Shortland camped on the site and found lumps of coal that "burned with great heat".

* Samples of coal were taken back to Sydney.

FORT SCRATCHLEY

* Area first known as Allen's Hill, later as Signal Hill now Flagstaff Hill.

* A signal station was erected on the site by Lieutenant Close in 1822.

* A beacon was established on the Allen's Hill which was fired from coal obtained from under the hill.

* First export of coal from Allen's Hill was taken to Bengal in 1799.

* Gun placements were made on the hill at an early date and in 1840 seven guns were in position.

* The main fort was built on the recommendation of Sir Peter Scratchley to defend Newcastle, the chief coaling station in the Southern Hemisphere for British Shipping.
THE BREAKWATER

* Governor Lachlan Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the breakwater.

* The event is recorded in his diary dated May 5th, 1818.

"At 4 p.m. accompanied by Captain Wallis the Rev. Mr. Cowper, Major Antill, Lieutenant Macquarie, and Mr. Meekan, I went to the shore of the channel dividing Coal Island from South Head for the purpose of laying the foundation, and first stone of the causeway, or pier to be constructed across from the mainland to the island and the stone being cut and ready with an inscription it was laid accordingly with all due form in the presence of the artificers and labourers to be employed in the construction of it, and Captain Wallis having proposed that it should bear my name it was accordingly called after me, "Macquarie Pier" which with the present year (1818) was cut and inscribed on the stone".

* Macquarie Pier was originally designed to carry a 33ft. wide promenade.

Materials for its construction were quarried from Signal Hill and carried to the site by convict labour.

* Mr. Scott, the Clerk of Works, officially opened the pier on June 9th, 1846.

* Heavy seas washed away parts of the pier and it was later rebuilt using stone transported by rail from Waratah.

********

Nobbys was prominently depicted on the arms of the City of Newcastle prior to the recent adoption of a registered "Coat of Arms.

********

"To think of Newcastle without Nobbys is to try to think of Sydney without the harbour and bridge."

S.M.H. Sept. 5.47

********
REFERENCES - Material from Local History Collection - Newcastle City Library.

1. AN HISTORICAL ISLAND - "Sydney Morning Herald" 5th September, 1947.
2. NOBREYS - "South West Pacific" New series No. 16.
3. DISCOVERY OF NEWCASTLE - "City of Newcastle Souvenir Civic Week 1929".
4. FORT SCRATCHLEY - Publication unnamed - 22.12.94.
5. FORT DEFENCE - "Newcastle Sun" - 21.9.53

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT - General

* Park land and vantage points.
* Removal of all buildings which have no historical or architectural value.
* Unified Landscape Treatment - roads, parking areas etc.
* Location and marking of Historic Features -
  1. Shortland's landing place
  3. Old mine shafts 4. gun placements.
* Museum - relics of early Newcastle (charts and photographs of area).