

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

THE CARRINGTON CHAMBERS

AND

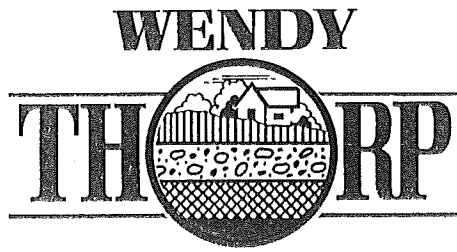
GEORGE HOTEL SITE

A Report Prepared for the Department of Planning



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Section 1.0 Summary and Management

1.1 Summary

This report was undertaken at the joint request of the owners for the site and the Department of Planning. The study area, Lot 195, is located at the corner of Scott and Watt Streets Newcastle. Two former buildings on this site were demolished after receiving structural damage in the Newcastle earthquake of December 1989. The potential archaeological resource which might reside within the site has been the subject of this investigation.

The objectives of the work have been to assess the extent, nature and significance of any such resource and, based on this assessment, make appropriate recommendations for the responsible management of it during any possible future redevelopment.

There is no evidence to suggest that the subject site was occupied during the penal period of Newcastle's history. Although situated in a strategic and desirable location it is likely that the ground was unsuitable or difficult for building. The only structures in the area up to the 1840s appear to have been a government cottage in the line of the present Scott Street and the watch-house on the dune adjoining Lot 195.

The block was bought at auction in 1834 but there is no evidence to suggest that the new owner, Simon Kemp, developed the site before the later 1840s or 1850. The earliest certain reference to a structure on this site is in 1851. Licences for the Hotel Metropolitan do not begin until 1858 so it is possible that this building either served as an hotel under a different name until that year or was utilised for some other function, possibly a house.

Between 1851 and 1861 Simon Kemp built four small cottages south of the Metropolitan on the site of the later Carrington Chambers. These two roomed houses appear to have been intended for rental accommodation. By that year the Metropolitan was described as a brick, twelve roomed establishment. The cottages were demolished to make way for the Carrington Chambers, at first named Parnell's Building, in

1878. This structure, with various additions, extensions and a name change occupied the site until its demolition in 1990. The structural evidence presently visible on the surface of the site relates to this building, not an earlier phase of development.

The original Metropolitan Hotel was largely demolished and rebuilt in 1886 and, again, in 1913. At that time the new building was re-named the George Hotel. It also, with some additions later in the twentieth century, occupied the site until its demolition in 1990.

The site is likely to contain evidence of the later nineteenth century and twentieth century structures and additions made to both the Metropolitan/George Hotel and Carrington Chambers. It may be expected that evidence of services and landscape features associated with these two structures might be revealed if the site was disturbed. Artefact dumps, particularly associated with the hotel, are also a likely archaeological feature.

The combined hotel and chambers site has strong historical significance but the archaeological significance is limited. It is unlikely to reveal considerably more than is available from the documentary sources and there are intact examples of comparable sites within Newcastle. However, as the adjacent lumber yard excavations have revealed, it is possible for undocumented sites in this area of the city to be revealed by excavation and, secondly, the archival record is not always accurate. For this reason a watching brief has been recommended for any future redevelopment of the site with a provision for a reassessment of the significance and management requirements of undocumented features which might be revealed during redevelopment.

1.2 Recommendations

In light of the evidence presented in this report and the assessment of the potential archaeological resource, the following recommendations have been made for the management of this resource during any future redevelopment of the George Hotel/Carrington Chambers site.

It is recommended that, in the event of any future redevelopment of the study area which requires disturbance of the surface and excavation of the underlying deposits:

- an excavation permit be sought from the Department of Planning prior to the commencement of any redevelopment
- a watching brief should be initiated using the services of a qualified and Heritage Council approved archaeologist.
- the archaeologist should monitor the excavation for the purposes of identifying and recording and, if necessary, retrieving archaeological evidence. Sufficient provision of time must be provided for in the development programme to allow this work to be carried out in a responsible and professional manner
- a separate strategy should be recommended by the archaeologist and implemented if significant undocumented archaeological evidence is revealed during future redevelopment
- any artefacts recovered from the site should be processed and curated in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Planning excavation permit.

Section 2.0

Preface to the Report

2.1 Parameters of the Investigation

This investigation is concerned with all those structures, features, relics and deposits which might contribute archaeological evidence towards interpreting the past use and history of the study area. This area is a block of land, Lot 195, within the city of Newcastle. It is a corner block bound on the north by Scott Street and on the east by Watt Street.

Figs. 1, 2, 3

2.2 Initiative for Investigation

This investigation has been undertaken at the joint request of the Department of Planning and the owners for the site. The two buildings which formerly occupied the study area were demolished after receiving structural damage in the Newcastle earthquake of December 1989. The vacant block was considered to have some potential archaeological significance which required definition and assessment prior to any future redevelopment.

2.3 Status of the Site

The site is vacant following the demolition of two buildings, the George Hotel and the Carrington Chambers, after the December 1989 earthquake. Some sandstone walls, part of a basement structure, may be seen at the surface on the Carrington Chambers site.

2.4 Objectives

The following objectives were defined for the work.

- To assess the potential archaeological resource of the study area
- To assess the significance of this resource
- To recommend an appropriate programme of site work before and/or during redevelopment of the land

2.5 Methodology

The following tasks were undertaken to achieve the preceding objectives:

- a search was made to locate existing material relevant to the development of the study area both for historical and archaeological perspectives
- archival research was undertaken using primary and secondary sources to define the historical development of the study area
- this evidence was used to assess the potential archaeological resource and the significance of this resource
- recommendations were established on the basis of the preceding assessment

2.6 Authorship

This report has been prepared by W. Thorp who also undertook the assessment of archaeological potential and significance and has prepared the recommendations which have arisen out of the investigation. The majority of historical research was undertaken by Dr J. Turner from the Department of History, Newcastle University. Dr Turner's report appears as an appendix to this report.

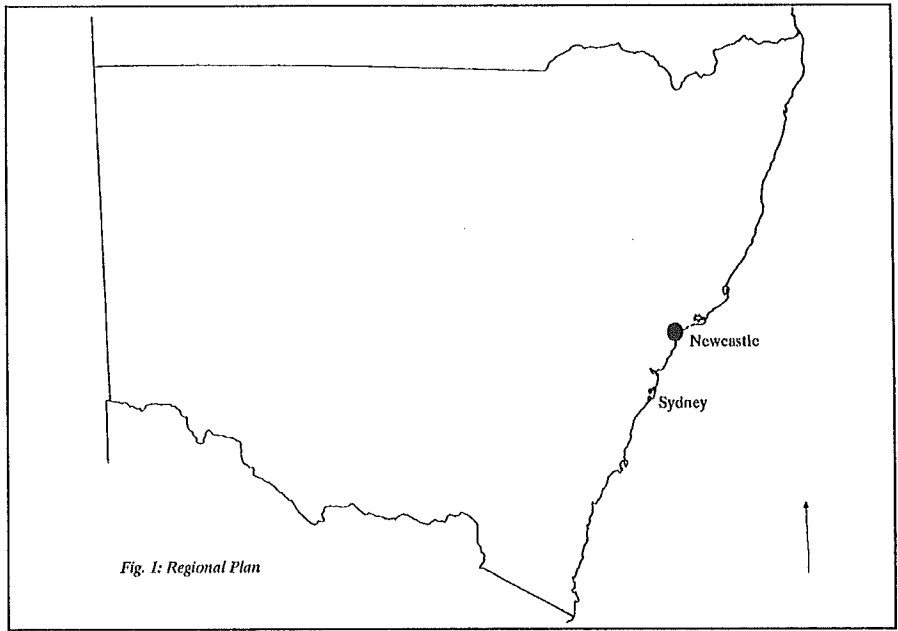


Fig. 1: Regional Plan

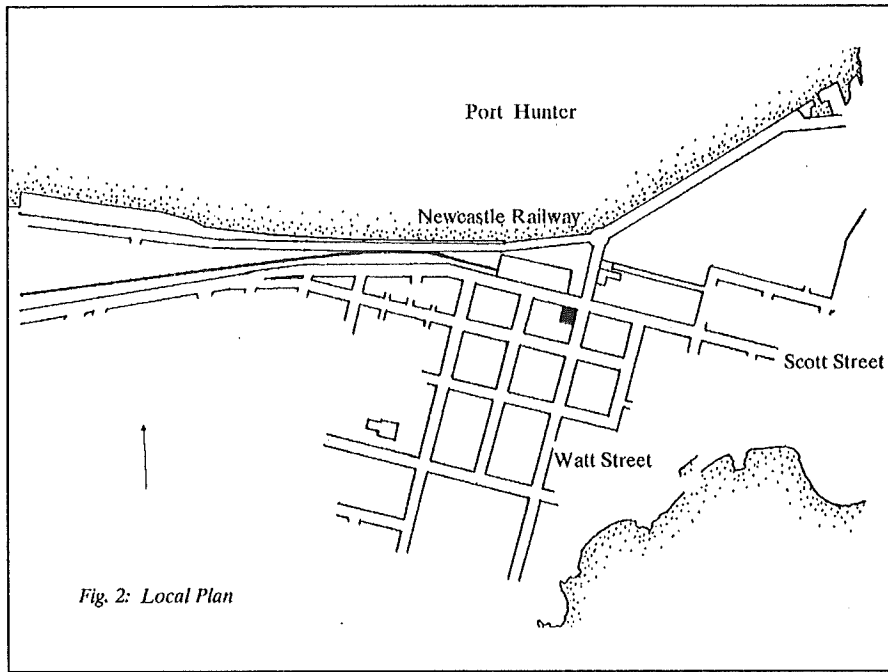


Fig. 2: Local Plan

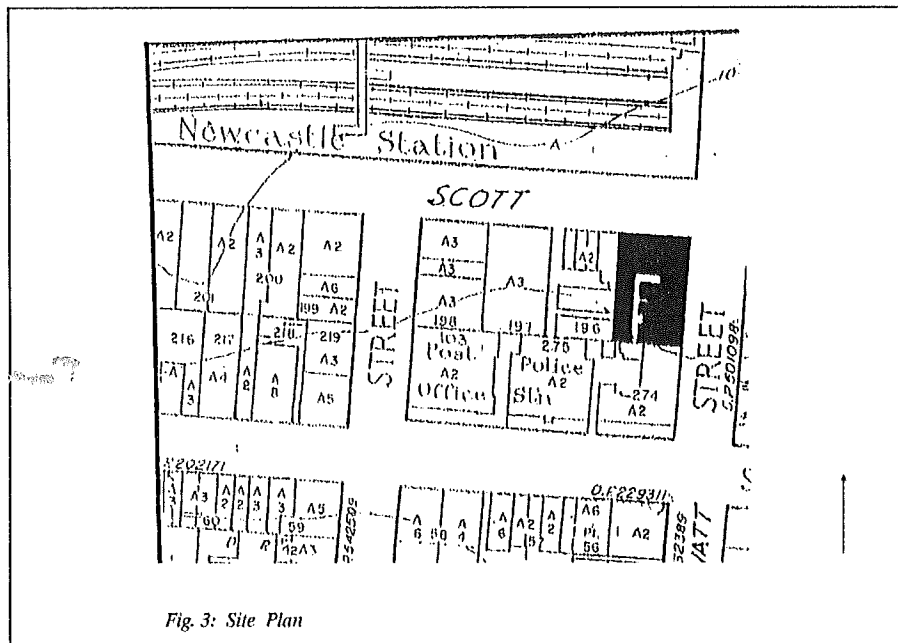


Fig. 3: Site Plan

Section 3.0

Historical Context

The material for this section has been researched by Dr John Turner of the Department of History, Newcastle University. Some subsidiary research has been undertaken by the author. Dr Turner's report appears as an appendix to this report (Section 6.1)

The development of the site has been considered in a number of phases. These phases represent major periods of progress in the physical layout and use of the study area. These phases are:

Phase I: 1801 - 1823 The Convict Settlement

Phase II: 1823 - 1867 Simon Kemp and Commercial development

Phase III: 1867 - 1908 Edward Parnell

Phase IV: 1908 - 1990 The Later Years

3.1 Phase I: 1801 - 1823

The Convict Settlement

Prior to settlement the shoreline of the Hunter River encroached on the southern side of the site of the future Scott Street. It covered all, or part, of the present Newcastle Railway Station, cut across the site of the future Customs House and followed the line of the future Bond Street and Stephenson Place. This shoreline did not change significantly until the first reclamation programme which began during the 1840s, east of the Watt Street wharf. Until that time the wharf at the foot of Watt Street was the focus of the settlement's transport system.

The site of the convict settlement of Newcastle was hilly. These hills were formed by a series of old sand dunes which became known in the settlement as Gaol Hill, Hospital Hill etc. When Surveyor Dangar laid out the town, in 1823, Watt Street was originally known as George Street. It was defined by the wharf at one end and the Commandant's house at the other (*Fig. 4*). A small stream may have exited on the western side of this wharf and, close to the wharf, was another small sand dune which was selected as the site for the watch-house (*Fig. 5*). From here the constables surveyed the settlement. This watch-house was recycled for use as a court house and police station and the southern half of the block was retained for these purposes.

There is no evidence to suggest that any structure from the penal period of Newcastle's history was located on the study area. There were buildings close to Lot 195 during this phase of Newcastle's development. Returns prepared for Governor Bigge indicate the presence of five cottages along the waterfront in this area, however, the closest of these appears to have been a cottage occupied, in 1830, by a government official. This appears to have been located in the line of the present Scott Street. Contemporary cartographic evidence indicates the adjacent watch-house on the dune but the area of Lot 195 is shown to be vacant (*Fig. 6*).

Plate 1