

**Report for Mr Doug Lithgow,
A Freeman of the City of Newcastle**

**Where was Reverend Threlkeld's
First Mission House at Belmont?**



**The likely site, on the highest point, about 50 metres along Victoria Street,
west of the Pacific Highway, Belmont.**



Looking east to the Pacific Highway



Looking west to Lake Macquarie

**Emeritus Professor John Fryer
Bolton Point
February 2008.**

Report for Doug Lithgow: Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld

In November 2007, Doug Lithgow sent a copy of a TRACING of Portion 60 in the Parish of Kahibah, County of Northumberland. (see Figure 1) It appeared to come from Crown Plan 623-1501 and the plan may have been dated 22 March 1865. There was an indication that the tracing may have been made October 1882.

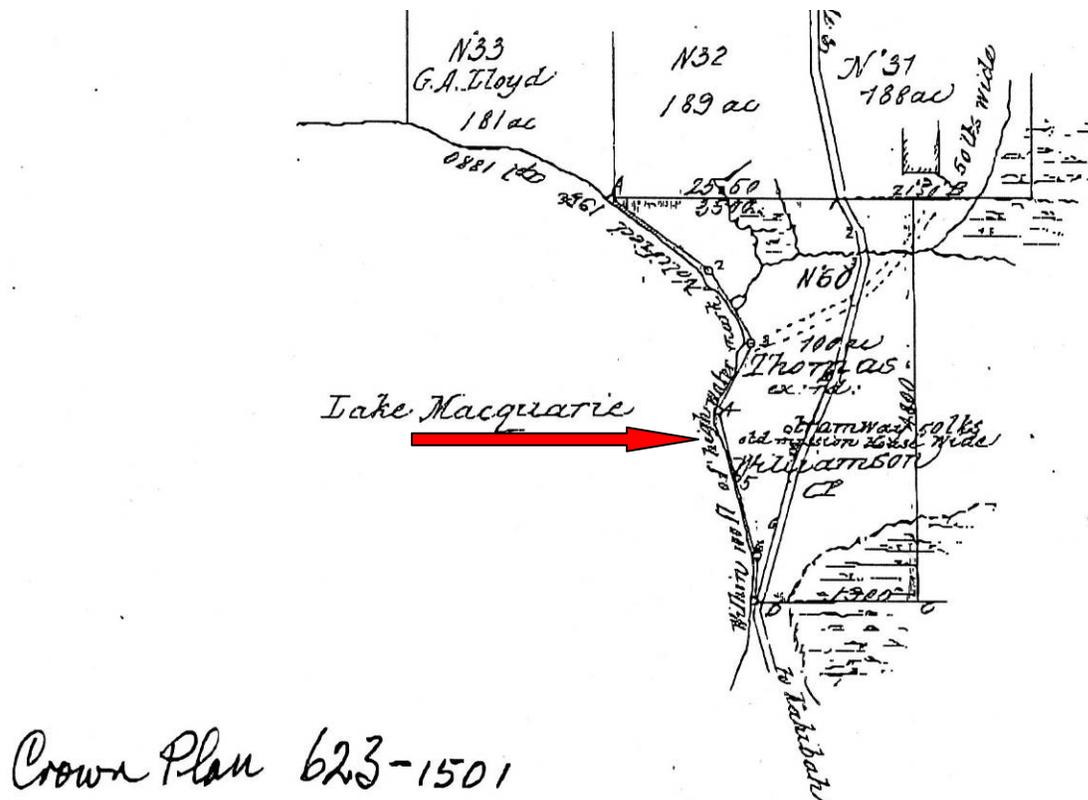


Figure 1. Part of Crown Plan 623-1501, indicating “old mission house” in the 100 acre Portion 60 of Thomas Williamson, dated 1865.

Portion 60 represented 100 acres of land situated in present day Belmont, fronting Lake Macquarie, with a water frontage of approximately one kilometre. Very roughly speaking, Portion 60 has the Belmont 16-foot Sailing Club near its northern extremity on the lake and the Lake Macquarie Yacht Club near its southern boundary. The actual northern boundary is now (partly) Maude Street and Portion 60 extended inland about 600 metres at that northern end. The southern boundary is south of the small reserve of parkland on the Pacific Highway just south of the Gunyah Hotel, and extended about 400 metres inland. Two years before it was granted in 1865 by the Crown Lands Act of 1861 to Thomas Williamson, the Pacific Highway from Newcastle to Swansea was dedicated, through it in a North-South direction, effectively splitting Portion 60 into two roughly equal parts.

On the tracing which Mr. Lithgow possessed, was a small square, indicating a possible building site, and annotated with the words “*old mission house*”. It was believed that this was the mission house established by the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld in 1825 (see *Reid’s Mistake* by K. H. Clouten, 1965, pages 21-35). The aim of this exercise was to try and substantiate, or otherwise, that indication and locate its present-day position.

Surveyors at the Land Titles Office, Queens Square, Sydney, very kindly performed an extensive search and as a result the following new information has come to light:

- **Most importantly**, Road Plan R321-1603 (see Figure 2) which created (basically) the Pacific Highway on 19 May 1863, says “**Ruin of Mission House**” on what became Thomas Williamson’s Portion 60 (about two years later).

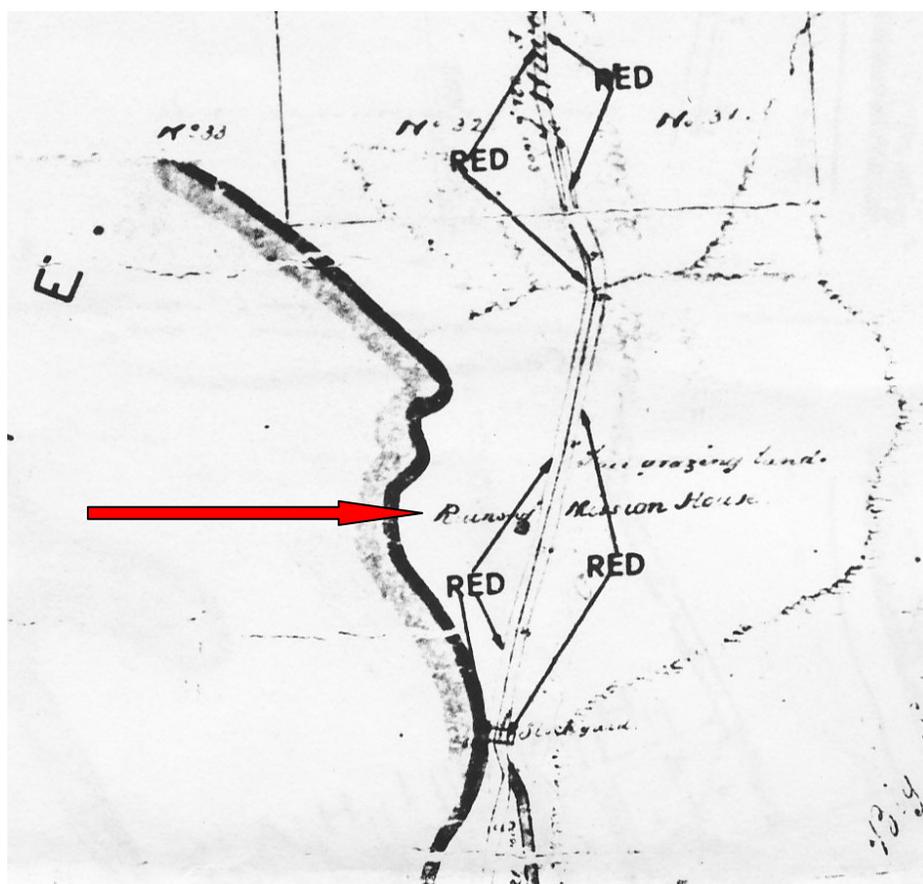


Figure 2. Part of Road Plan 321-1603, dated 1863, which creates the Pacific Highway through Portion 60. The “*ruin of mission house*” is indicated on this plan.

- On a plan 779-1501 (see Figure 3) referring to the sale on 16 June 1869 of the neighbouring Portion 78, immediately on the east of Portion 60, it shows two buildings on Portion 60, between the (now) Pacific Highway and the Lake ... this confirms the houses of Thomas Williamson described in *Reid’s Mistake*, p.166, and described more fully below.

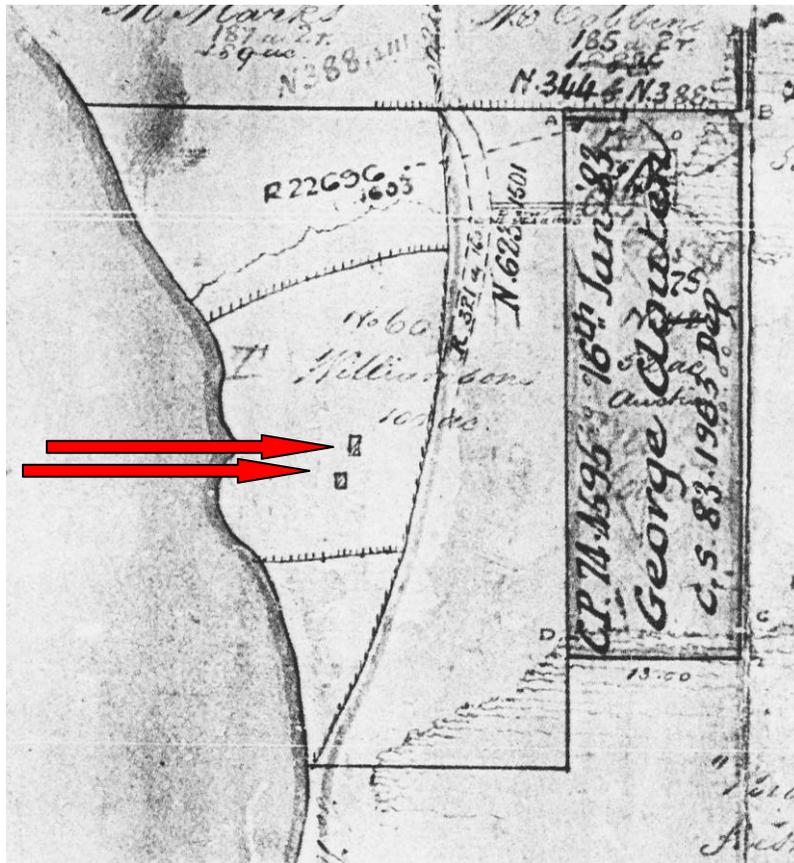


Figure 3. Sale plan 779-1501 of 1869 (for the adjoining Portion) shows two houses on Thomas Williamson's Portion 60, but no mention of the mission house.

- On a plan 388-2111 of 1877 (see Figure 4) on Thomas Williamson's Portion 60 it shows a Banana Plantation, an Orchard, a Store, a Shed, the two houses near to the Lake (described below), and a Horse(?) Yard between the Pacific Highway and the Lake and a School house on the eastern, or far-side of the Pacific Highway. No mention of Threlkeld's ruined mission house. Note that in "*Reid's Mistake, p.170*" it notes that T. Williamson opened Belmont School in 1873 as a private school. Also Thomas Williamson's accommodation house became a Licensed Hotel in 1876 ... presumably near where the Gunyah Hotel is today(?)



Figure 4. Plan 388-2111, dated 1877, shows that Thomas Williamson had developed an orchard, a banana plantation, some yards, store, shed, two houses and the first Belmont School House. The School House is situated on the eastern side of the Pacific Highway.

- Evidence for what is shown on these plans is to be found, again, in *Reid's Mistake, p.166* where it states (edited quote): 'Jonathan Warner (of Warners Bay) employed men in 1833 to pull down the disused mission station, and the place remained abandoned for about 30 years. In 1866 a large party visited the mission site for an Easter picnic. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described the day's outing as: ... a larger party went to what is known as the 'Old House', being the original settlement, a beautiful elevated situation commanding a magnificent view of the Lake and surrounding lovely scenery. But the Old House no longer stands there ... But a small heap of stones remains to mark the spot where a goodly edifice once stood ... Mr. T. Williamson, the enterprising owner, has had erected two substantial weatherboard cottages, just on the rise of the hill, and close to where the 'Old House' once stood.'

The conclusions which can be tentatively reached are that the word **"Ruin"** was omitted from the plan 623-1501, but that its location has been confirmed on other plans. Unfortunately the Surveyor's Field Books could not be found ... these would have provided direct field measurements to the 'ruin of mission house' site.

However, assuming the plotting of the positions of the ‘ruin’ were accurate, (and the plan’s stated dimensions have been verified for accuracy of transcription), the **“Ruin Of Mission House”** can be placed at the southern side of Victoria Street, just inside the Primary School grounds, approximately 50 metres to the west of the junction of Victoria Street with the Pacific Highway (see Figure 5). An inspection of that site shows it to be the highest point in the region and a logical position to establish the first house which served as a mission.

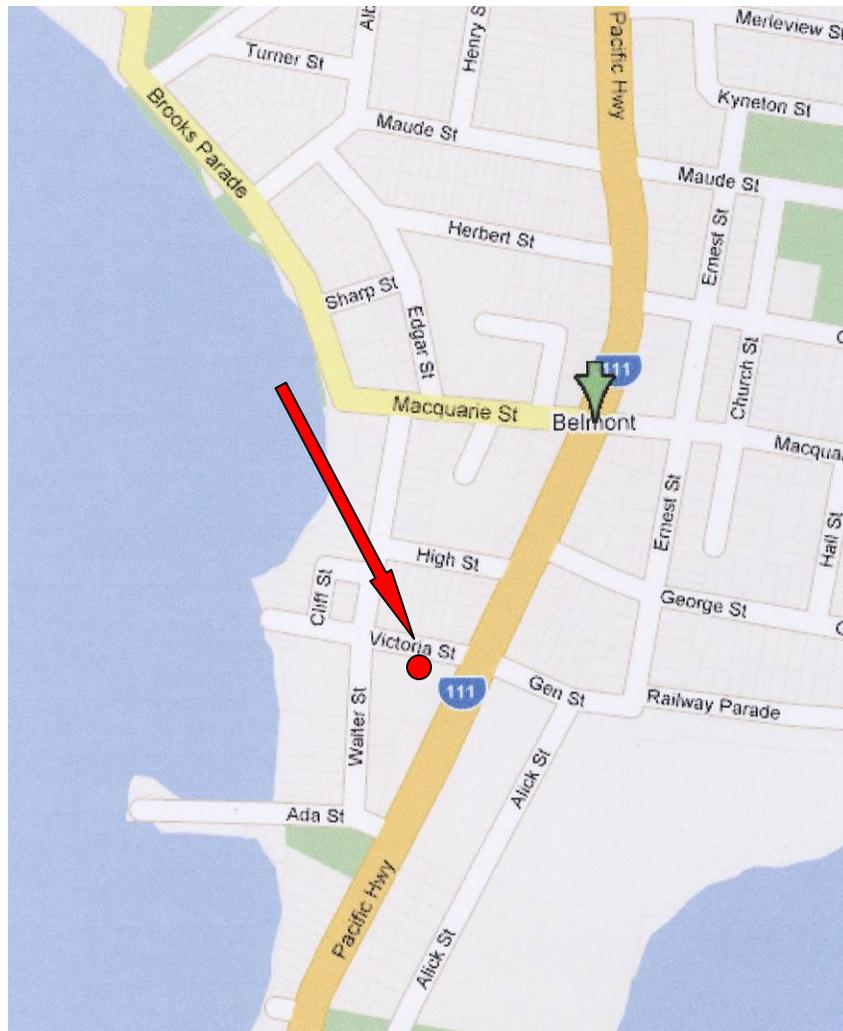


Figure 5. Deduced location of Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld’s Mission House, on southern side of Victoria Street on site of present day Primary School.

Emeritus Professor John Fryer
1 February 2008.