

An Archaeological Survey
for
Aboriginal sites
at
Tourle St.,
Newcastle, NSW

by

Theresa Bonhomme

for BHP
Newcastle, NSW

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Bonhomme Craib & Associates
Archaeological Heritage Consultants

PO Box 61
Mudgeeraba
Queensland 4213

ACN 054359287

Disclaimer

This report was prepared for BHP Steel, Newcastle, August 1996 and was based on the current information available. Survey maps were provided by BHP. Background archaeological information was derived from a search of the NSW NPWS Site Register, review of the NPWS report holdings and other acknowledged published work. This review does not purport to be an exhaustive or current coverage of the available information. The information and recommendations contained in the report are intended for BHP Steel use only. Any use of the report by a third party is predicated on this understanding.

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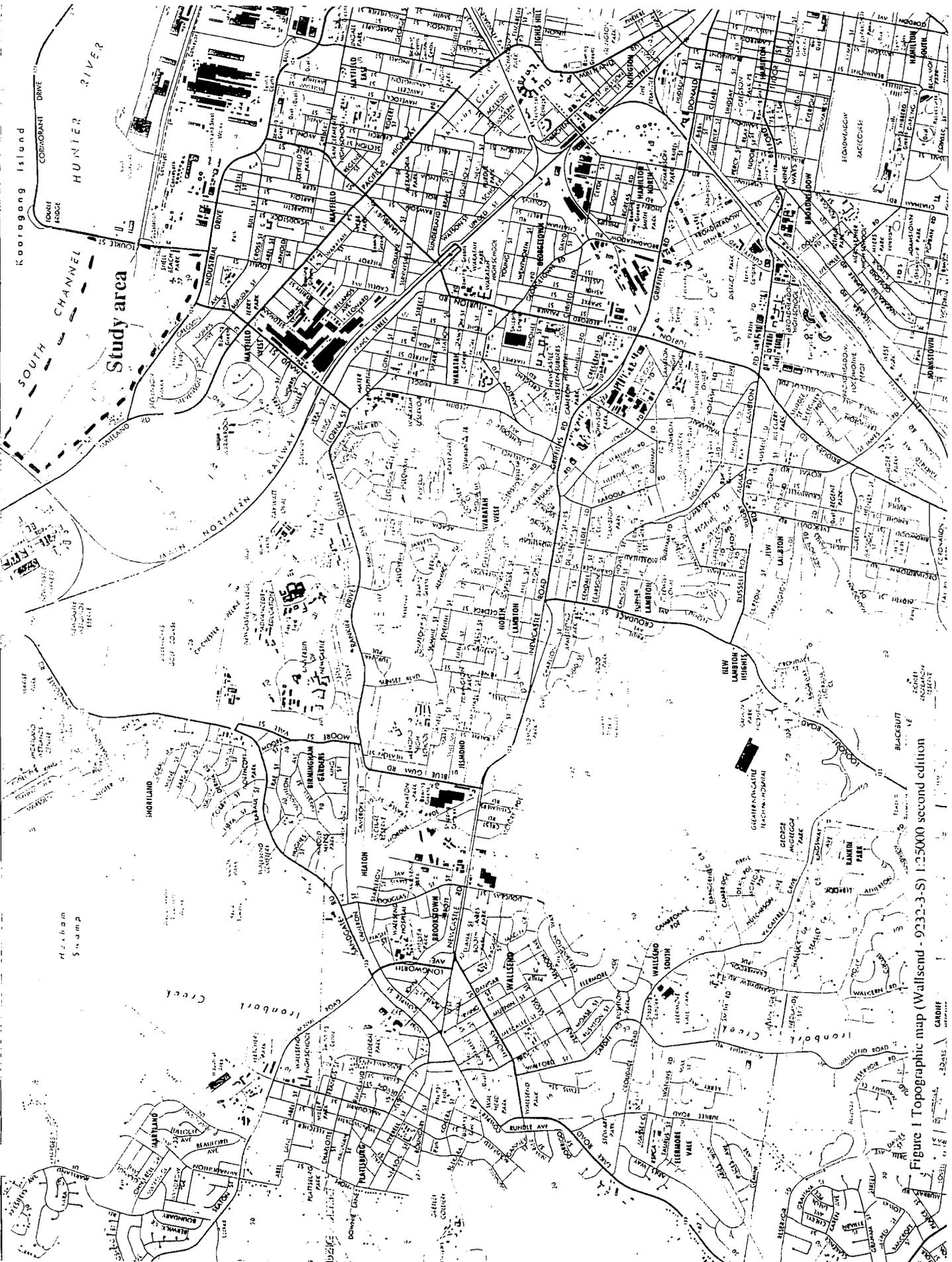


Figure 1 Topographic map (Wallisend - 9232-3-S) 1:25000 second edition

1.0 Introduction

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This study was undertaken to determine the presence and significance of any Aboriginal archaeological sites which may affect the development potential of the BHP land at Tourle St and Industrial Drive Mayfield West, Newcastle (Figure 1). BHP proposes to develop the land as an industrial estate, for which it is zoned.

The aims of this study were to:

- a) determine the presence/absence of archaeological sites within the study area and assess their condition, where present
- b) set out recommendations regarding the management or mitigation of any sites found

An archaeological assessment for Aboriginal sites was undertaken by Theresa Bonhomme. This involved background research on the past land use in the area, with particular emphasis on Aboriginal use of the area, an inspection of the NPWS register records and reports, field survey and consultation with the local Aboriginal Land Council representative. Field inspection was undertaken Thursday 4th July 1996. Mr John Kenyon (BHP Security) was present during the field inspection.

Consultation with the Awabakal representative Mr Ron Gordon was conducted Friday 5th July 1996. Survey maps of the area and aerial photos were provided by BHP and discussions regarding the nature of the fill across the study area were held with BHP surveyors.

This report describes the results of the archaeological survey for Aboriginal sites. The historic elements, some of which are mentioned in the description of past land use in the study area, do not form part of this report and are being addressed by BHP management in a separate study (in progress).

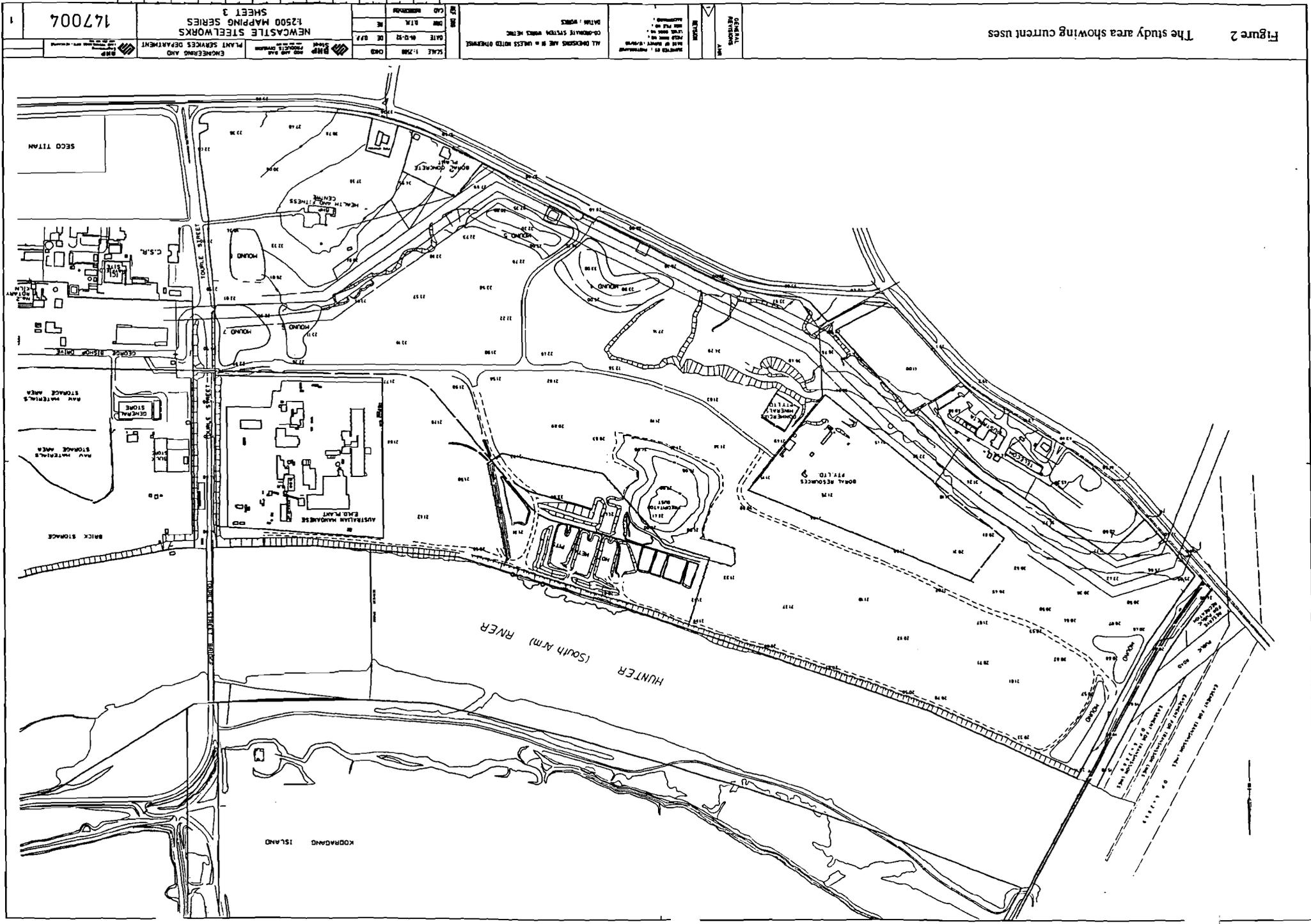
No Aboriginal archaeological sites were found. The Awabakal representative discussed the project with the consultant and inspected all the documentation and maps. He knew the area and was of the opinion that no sites existed in the study area. He declined an inspection of the area on the basis of his personal knowledge and the information presented to him. A copy of this report will be sent to the Awabakal Land Council.

1.1 The study area

Much of the land of the lower Hunter River is derived from sediment deposited by the Hunter River. The process is especially evident between Hexham and Newcastle where the river broadens into an expanse of marshy banks, islands, channels and mangroves. Silting produced mud banks which could be made usable. This was the origin of Kooragang Island, to the north of the study area which has been developed since 1951 to join together estuarine islands to form an industrial estate (Docherty 1983:1)

The study area comprises approximately 110 hectares along the Hunter River floodplain. It extends from Tourle St., west along Industrial Drive and Maitland Road to the Railway line to Kooragang Island. The area has been greatly modified in over the last 50 years by BHP. Before development of the area by BHP, the Hunter River separated into a north and south arm around a series of low islands which included Ash Island and Moscheto Island. The south arm diverted into Platt's Channel around Spit Island. Platt's Channel was surrounded by mud flats supporting mangrove vegetation. In the south, low hills along what is now Industrial Drive overlooked Platt's Channel, Spit Island and the southern arm of the Hunter River.

Figure 2 The study area showing current uses



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The study area now consists of reclaimed land in filled with industrial spoil. Quarries, hot metal pits, plant, mounds and roads now occupy the area (Figure 2) Test bore information (Table 1) conducted by BHP across the former Platt's Channel and Spit Island shows that over 10 m of fill exists and the base was still not reached. Recent land use has modified the south west portion of the study area and only a portion in the south east corner still retains a relatively natural ground surface (Plates 1 - 4).

The top of the remaining natural hill retains existing buildings which date to the period when the site was occupied by the Murray Dwyer Orphanage. A transmission line runs east west across the study area at the base of the hillside bordering Industrial Drive (Plates 5 - 6).

The lower slopes of the hills have been severely modified in the south western portion of the study area. They have been terraced and are now cut by old access roads. Evidence of structures can be found, which relate to an engineering firm dating from the 1960's (John Kenyon, BHP Security, pers comm) The study area is bounded by suburban residential development and the industrial complex of BHP in the north east.

Table 1 breaks out the various landforms and features within the study area and shows the area of each. Areas of relatively natural land include the former orphanage area (10.1 ha), the area adjoining the orphanage (3.2 ha), a former quarry area (3.4 ha) and the hillside and garden (6.3 ha). A total of 23 ha remains in relatively natural condition, however most of this area has experienced building, quarrying or cultivation in the past.

Table 1 Total Area of landforms and features in the study area (derived from BHP survey map 1974)		
Location	Area (ha)	% of total
Platt's Channel	34	31
Spit Island	28	25
Orphanage Site	10.1	9
Orphanage buffer	3.2	3
Quarry	6.5	6
Swamp	3.7	3
Hillside garden area	24.7	23
	110.2	100

Only a small portion of the south eastern part of the study area remains relatively undisturbed, although fill now extends up the foot slopes of the remaining hill and the gully to the west has been entirely infilled. This hill has been subject to a variety of uses, beginning in the 1820's with an early attempt at settlement and cultivation by John Laurio Platt. After 1836 the Australian Agricultural Company owned Platt's grant and constructed a house for its Superintendent (Gregson) on the remaining hill and in the 1930's the land was acquired by the Catholic Church and an Orphanage was constructed (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3 shows the study area after the closure of Platt's Channel and the modification of the northern bank of Spit Island. The southern bank of the Hunter River at this location is man made. The buildings and gardens of the Murray Dwyer Orphanage can be seen in the lower left quadrant of the view. The relationship between the lowlands of Platt's Channel and the hill slope where the Orphanage was located can be seen.



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Figure 3 View to north west from air of the study area showing the process of channel closure and the location of the Orphanage buildings.
(Newcastle Library photo collection)

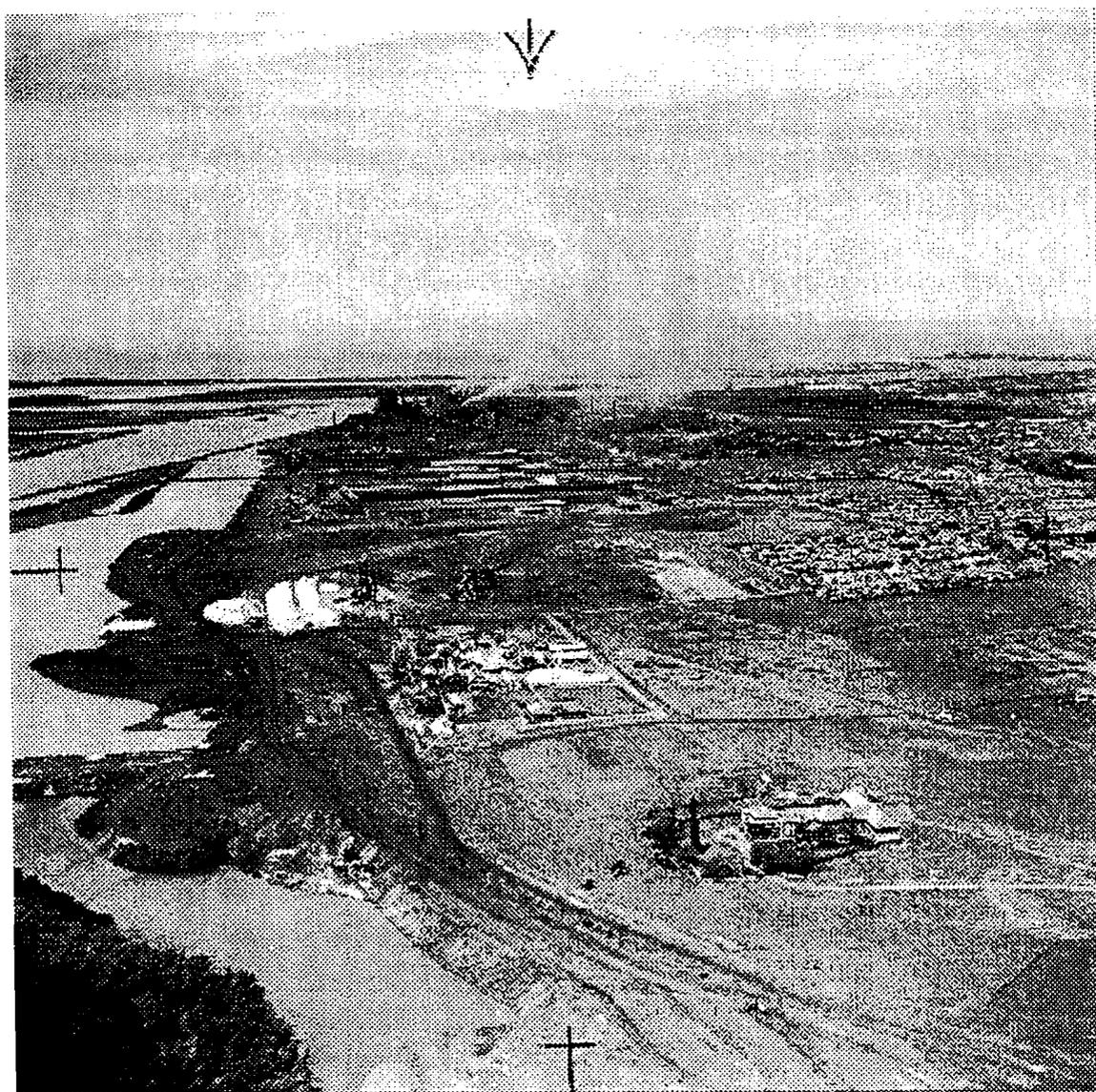


Figure 4 View south east over Newcastle Steel Works and Mayfield (1950's) showing Platts channel partially filled. The Orphanage complex with formal gardens, driveways and house is visible (Newcastle Library photo collection Negative Number 3/1696)

Several subsurface depressions are visible to the east of the buildings. Tourle St has now been extended past the buildings and runs across the location of the channel to Kooragang Island. Figure 4, taken in the 1950's when the channel was partially filled, shows the Orphanage complex. The formal gardens, driveways and the two story house with the verandah (the original Gregson house) are clearly visible. Evidence of ground disturbance, as a square outline, is visible to the east of the complex.

1.2 Early exploration and settlement of the Lower Hunter River and observations of Aboriginal people and their material culture.

Lt John Shortland discovered the mouth of the Hunter River in 1797. Shortly after, a convict settlement was established on the southern side of the estuary. The convicts were used to mine the local coal and during 1801 coal was shipped to Sydney. Regular mining ceased in 1802 and the settlement was abandoned when Governor King removed the convicts. In 1803 J. Palmer's exploratory party up the Hunter River found an '*abundance of the finest coal*' (Branagan 1972) and settlement and mining was re-opened in 1804. The convicts who were used were those who had offended in the colony. In the first years of settlement coal was extracted from the cliff face at Nobby's, mounds of shell were burnt and used as mortar and cement for buildings in Newcastle and Sydney, and timber resembling ash was cut from Ash Island.

The coastal areas of the Hunter Region, including the southern bank of the river, were occupied by the Awabakal who were centred on Lake Macquarie and the hinterland. Aborigines made wide use of all the resources of the coast, estuary, swamps and hills and evidence of their presence was reported by early explorers.

For example, on the lower Hunter in 1801, Grant while aboard the Lady Nelson reported that '*the fires of the natives and many individuals were seen opposite Ash Island*' (Grant 1803:154-55). Grant saw many Aborigines in the area of Ash Island including a young native looking for the roots of a fern (probably *Blechnum sp*). On the banks of a creek also in the area of Ash Island he found part of a net, the remains of fires and also a weir in the creek itself.

Near the mouth of the Hunter River Grant saw an abundance of fish which the Aborigines exploited '*Fish was taken in great quantities and of various kinds, particularly mullets which were large and well favoured*'. Others noted the use of canoes which were roughly made of bark but had fires in them for the preparation of the catch. Cunningham reported '*I have often seen canoes made of a single piece of bark capable of holding 6 to 8 people, generally these were cut from large river gum trees*' (cited in Brayshaw 1987:59). Fish were taken by hook and line, usually used by women in canoes.

Men speared fish from the shore and from canoes and hand nets and weirs were used. Scrapers of shell were used to sharpen spears and oyster shells were ground and shaped into fish hooks. Nets were used. On the lower Hunter, Paterson observed '*a new hibiscus which the natives used as flax for making their nets and other purposes*' (Brayshaw 1986:63). The nets described in use around Newcastle were worn by women around their foreheads and hanging down their backs. They were used like work bags for carrying fish hooks, prepared bark for string, glue for gluing spears and items of food.

Shields were made from the nettle tree or the giant fig tree (*Ficus* species). They were usually 3 feet long and 18 inches wide. The Awabakal made reed spears and exchanged them inland for possum skin rugs and fur cords. Spears were made from *Xanthorrhaea sp* and were of three kinds, fishing, hunting and a war spear.

Vegetable foods which were noted, included ferns (*Blechnum sp*), yams (*Dioscorea transversa*), the giant lily (*Doryanthus excelsa*) and the seeds of *Zamia spiralis*, which were soaked for weeks then pounded and roasted. *Blechnum sp* known as bungwall, is common in swampy low lying coastal country. It occurs as a dense subsurface mat in the paperbark swamps and is easily dug up by hand or with a digging stick. The rhizomes were then transported back to camp for processing. The stems were dug out with sharp sticks, partly dried in the sun, roasted and bruised with a sharp stone against a slab of wood.

Shellfish was a significant part of the diet because of its abundance. Grant observed that '*the shore was covered to a great depth with oyster shell*' (Grant 1803:155). He noted that everywhere '*the ground was covered with the shells of fresh water fish, of the sort found in the rivers of England and Scotland*' (Grant 1803 161-162). Exploitation of Newcastle oyster mounds formed the basis for early lime extraction for Sydney.

The only apparently recent account of Aboriginal life in the vicinity of the study area was found in NPWS file notes (undated, but cited in Steele 1993:4). Hartley a resident of Fennell Bay gave an account of Aboriginal occupation in the Hexham Swamp area. According to Hartley the tribe in the Hexham area was the Pambalong Tribe of the Barrahinebin (known to the settlers in the 1840's as the Big Swamps). Hexham Swamp was roughly the tribal boundary of the Pambalong (who were a clan of the Awabakal) and the Sugarloaf tribe.

Pambalong territory extended from south of the Hunter to Tarro and west to the Sugarloaf Range and south to Lake Macquarie. The Sugarloaf Tribe and the Pambalong socialised, sharing camp grounds at West Wallsend Cemetery and at Richmondvale. The designated Pambalong camp ground was located at the Gretley Colliery on a rise east of the Wallsend cemetery.

Hartley reports that a great corroboree ground existed in the area between Nelson St and John St., Wallsend. A watercourse cut through this flat land to the swamps. Another corroboree ground was said to be located at Buttai which was later used as a cricket pitch. Artefacts had been found on the site by settlers.

A ceremonial ground for initiation and marriage ceremonies was reportedly situated at Stockrington on high land at the head of Barrahinebin. The site overlooked the swamps and there were rock shelters and small caves in the vicinity. Burial sites were known to have existed to the south of Hexham Swamp.

At the time of contact the area was vegetated by Paperbark (*Melaleuca sp*) which surrounded the swamp margins. Casuarina with Eucalyptus species and a dense undergrowth were present. Along the southern margins of the swamp Spotted Gum (*E. maculata*) dominated the high ground and rainforest species were found along the water courses

1.3 Historic land use in the study area

In 1821 Newcastle was declared a free town. The first settlers in the Mayfield West district were John Laurio Platt and his family and their assigned servants. In 1821 Platt received a grant of 2000 acres of land (Figure 5). The grant started slightly north east of the site occupied by the Murray Dwyer Orphanage, "*ran in a straight line south to the centre of what is now Platt St, Waratah (a distance of 1 1/4 miles). Then it ran west for 2 miles and north to the junction of Ironbark Creek and from there between 2 and 3 miles along the River to the starting Point* " (Brahe 1936:113)

Platt occupied the grant in 1823 and built a home on the estate which he called Iron Bark Hill 'on the southern bank of the south channel of the Hunter River' (Brahe 1936:112). The most complete description of the Platt grant comes from Brahe's account.

Brahe described the area where the home was built as follows "*immediately behind the Mangroves fringing the River there was a small belt of dense tropical brush, consisting of wild native figs, black apple trees, myrtle, cedar and general brush growth. This extended along a gully running south westerly back towards [the now] Maitland Road. This bit of brush land was the only good land there - a matter of about seven or eight acres. The hilly land rising from the River was fairly thick forest land consisting mainly of iron bark, some grey gum and red gum.....The south eastern portion of the land was covered with dense ti-tree bush and other portions were swampy*" (Brahe 1936:112).

According to Brahe's account Platt built his first homestead and outbuildings just south of the Orphanage site. Platt also erected a windmill, he had hoped to export sawn wood to England but there is no evidence that he succeeded (Pike 1989:337). The most common account is that he used the mill for grinding grain. The first portion of the grant was cleared for cultivation and consisted of 40 acres right in the north east of the grant. This area started from where the Orphanage is now situated (Brahe 1936) and ran a distance to the south for a mile and west for a mile.

The cultivated area was sown with maize and wheat and "*a rough kind of a wind mill was erected by Platt just about where the Orphanage site is now where the wheat and the maize were ground*" (Brahe 1936:115). The area was known as Mill Paddock.

Platt attempted to make money out of the coal on the land and in doing so infringed the Australian Agricultural Company's monopoly for coal extraction. Two tunnels were driven under the Orphanage site to mine for coal, which was taken down stream on barges. He also used Aboriginal middens for lime production. According to Brahe "*there is evidence of oyster shells being removed from Black's middens for the purpose of making lime*" (Brahe 1936:115). The 1853 map of the grant area shows an area called Shell Beach in the extreme north east of the grant area adjacent to the then Platt's Channel. It is likely that this is the location of the middens referred to by Brahe.

In 1831 Platt's homestead was burnt and his two young sons were killed. Reports suggest that the boys were buried in a gully nearby. Brahe says that as a boy walking over the settlement site "*on a grassy knoll in a gully leading up from the River there were four or five unmistakable mounds which we were told were graves*" (Brahe 1936:116). These were reported to be graves of Platt's assigned servants but Brahe believed that it was likely to be the location of the boys' graves. After the fire Platt then moved to Ironbark Creek, near Sandgate and established a new home there - again called "Ironbark".

Platt was never successful in his ventures. By 1836, both Platt and his wife were dead and the estate was sold to the Australian Agricultural Company. When the Australian Agricultural Company acquired Platt's land they made no use of it and it remained in the same state as the Platt's had left it until 1885. Then a residence was built for Gregson, the Superintendent of the Company, on the same location as Platt's first house. This house was known locally as Argyle House.

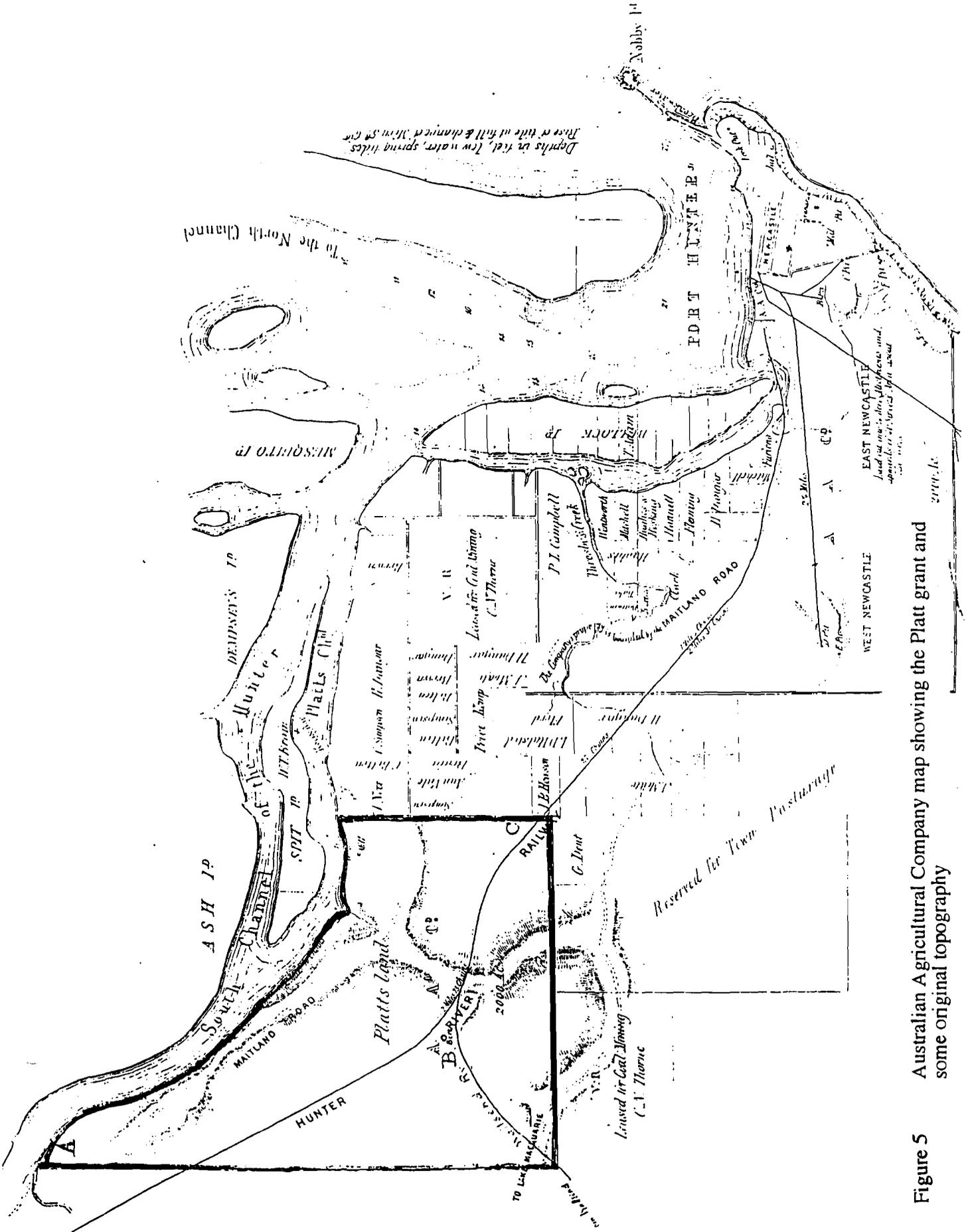
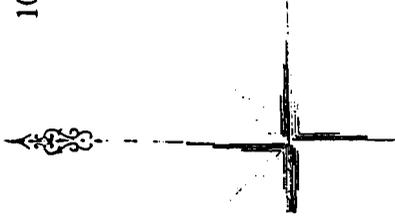


Figure 5 Australian Agricultural Company map showing the Platt grant and some original topography

In 1933 the Superintendent's residence was purchased by the Bishop of Maitland as a memorial to his predecessors the late Bishops Murray and Dwyer. The Murray Dwyer Boy's Orphanage was established and catered for boys between 4 and 12 years old. The work was in the charge of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. This home operated into the 1960's with a short interval when the home was occupied by the Army during the war.

1.4 Previous archaeological surveys

Archaeological surveys in the wider region have been limited to small areas or straight line transects. Several studies mainly as part of EIS studies have been undertaken in the vicinity of the study area, but little is reported for the Hunter River around Mayfield. Table 2 lists the known sites according to the NPWS site cards and Table 3 lists the surveys that have occurred in the general area.

The hilly country to the west overlooking Hexham Swamp was a focus of occupation according to Hartley. Similarly large groupings of people were observed along the coastline and ceremonial grounds and camp sites have been recorded. Grant for example, observed camp fires in the vicinity of Ash Island. The low hills to the south of the Hunter River and the connecting gullies provided routes from Hexham Swamp to the coast and south to Lake Macquarie.

Sites typical of the lower estuary area of the Hunter River are middens, some with evidence of activities other than shellfish gathering. The middens are associated with spring fed water holes and the dunes on the margins of swamps. Open artefact scatters occur on dry elevated ground and burials are reported in dunes, middens and in rockshelters. Scarred trees would have been common. Axe grinding grooves were located along creek lines wherever suitable stone was exposed.

The types of sites recorded in the upland hill country to the west and the south included camp sites, axe grinding grooves, burial and ceremonial grounds. Along the coast and estuary, open camp sites containing stone artefacts and shell predominated.

These accumulations of shell have been the focus of attention since first settlement and most have been destroyed. Lime burning was a major industry and there is a report that Platt excavated shell from a midden near his first house. Subsequent development activities have also impacted on the remaining sites. For example, Moscheto Island originally had an open camp site on the eastern end which was described as a midden. This has been bulldozed.

Another open camp site, described as a midden with artefacts, was located in the suburb of Waratah, near Mayfield. This was bulldozed during the construction of a new alignment of the highway. On Dempsey Island, a midden was almost completely destroyed during bridge construction. Survival of sites in the Newcastle area is low due to the rapid expansion of Newcastle, prior to any investigation for archaeological material. Most of the evidence would have a low visibility and unlike the large coastal midden sites, is not easily recognised.

Table 2 Sites recorded in the vicinity of the study area (NPWS records)

Site Number	Location	Site type
38-4-0030	Waratah, Mayfield	Open camp site A shell midden with artefacts
38-4-0031	Dempsey Is.	Open camp site Shell midden
38-4-0081	Wallsend	Axe grinding groove
38-4-0087	Sandgate	Open camp site Status as site now questioned
38-4-0407	Shortlands	Open camp site
38-4-0408	Shortlands	Open camp sites

1.4.1 Site Prediction

The information for the study area suggests that middens were present along the original south arm of the Hunter River, along Platt's Channel and probably in the vicinity of Shell Beach. These locations are now destroyed. Open campsites could be expected along the gullies which existed in the south and south east of the study area. These gullies are now infilled or have had road construction. Open campsites, scatters of artefacts and possibly shell have been recorded on higher ground in the low hills. It is possible that such material once existed in the area of the Orphanage, high flat ground being typically favoured as camping locations but significant ground disturbance on the hill means potential survival of any material must be rated as low.

The existing landscape or land history constraints on sites surviving in the study area are as follows

1. All sites along the former course of Platt's Channel and on Spit Island have been destroyed by the modification of the channel and the south arm of the Hunter River as described in this report.
2. The steep hill slopes overlooking the Hunter River would not contain open camp sites. Artefact scatters may occur on the hill tops. The geology of the area precludes the occurrence of shelters and overhangs which may have been occupied. Such areas do exist in the mountainous areas to the west of Hexham Swamp.
3. The geology of the area is not suitable for engraving or rock art sites. Axe grinding grooves can be expected along watercourses where suitable stone outcrops. Watercourses have not survived in the study area.
4. Middens can be expected in the low lying areas bordering the channels of the Hunter River. However, these locations have been destroyed in the study area.

Table 3 Archaeological reports consulted for the study area

Date	Author	Development type	Location
1979	Brayshaw	Gas Pipeline	Sydney to Newcastle
1981	Brayshaw	Colliery extension	Wallsend
1981	Lough	Freeway survey	Between Wallarah Ck and Wallsend
1982	Brayshaw		Maryland, near Wallsend
1982	Bowdler	Transmission line	Between West Wallsend and Tomago
1982	Dallas	Industrial development	Koorangang Island
1986	Donlon	Freeway	Between Estelville and Wallsend
1993	Steele	Urban release,	Edgeworth/Wallsend
1993	Oakley	Optus Route	Wallsend to New Lambton
1994	Dallas	Sewerage Scheme	Sandgate
1995	Mills	Subdivision	Minmi Rd Wallsend
1995	Effenberger	Sewerage	West Wallsend

1.5 Survey method and results

Field inspection was undertaken on Thursday, 4th July 1996. Mr John Kenyon (BHP Security) was present during the field inspection. A ground survey was undertaken. Background research and discussions with BHP staff defined those areas which were fill and therefore had no archaeological potential remaining. These areas were driven over and the nature and method of infilling was discussed. The existence and locations of Chinese gardens and light industrial areas were identified in the south west by John Kenyon. These areas are now fill or have been abandoned and destroyed. A foot survey was conducted over the Orphanage Hill area.

Visibility at the time of survey was poor (often less than 10%), grass cover was dense (100% cover) in many locations and the lower hill slopes to the north have been re vegetated to prevent any dust from the fill on the lower slope escaping. The route of the transmission line along the lower slope to the north of the Orphanage was inspected. This provided some cut face exposures with subsurface visibility.

Visibility on Orphanage Hill ranged from 0% to 20% in disturbed areas. The cut faces along the transmission line on the north side of the hill provided 100% visibility. Visibility under the low bushes along the cut was between 50% and 75%. The area to the south west of the Orphanage has been graded and gravelled and an access road has been constructed from the east up to the Orphanage. The remaining area, which is grassed slopes to the south east towards Tourle Road and Industrial Drive. This area had some exposures which were inspected. Pipes and sewerage facilities are present in this area.

No archaeological sites were found. Given the nature of the land use, the results of the background search for sites and the land use constraints on the survival of sites, the potential for Aboriginal sites being present in the filled and disturbed areas is rated as **nil** and in the Orphanage Hill area as **low**.

1.6 Summary

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This report has presented information derived from a variety of sources. The information supports the negative or low rating for site survival in the study area. The background information suggests that the area was rich in the kinds of plant, marine and land animal resources, commonly exploited by Aborigines, but those resources are not unique to the study area. Early survey parties up the Hunter River reported seeing Aborigines in the vicinity of the study area, often exploiting marine and plant resources. Many of the resources of the area were of interest to the Europeans (penal and free) and their activities saw the destruction of trees, middens and other kinds of sites, such as burial sites in dunes.

The landscape history of the area suggests that little of the original topography remains in the study area. Areas identified as potentially containing sites are now buried under fill. Only about 20 ha of the area, the land at Orphanage Hill, still retains some natural topography. This area has seen considerable building and landscape modification since the 1820's.

1.7 Recommendation

All Aboriginal sites are afforded protection under the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1974 as amended). It is an offence to knowingly damage, deface or destroy an Aboriginal relic without the prior written consent of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The following recommendation is based on an understanding of the landscape history of the area, the results of the background literature search, the survey results and discussions with the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council representative.

No Aboriginal archaeological sites are known to occur in the Tourle Street study area. Only the flat area on Orphanage Hill, has a low potential for site survival, survival in the remainder of the study area is rated as nil.

It is recommended that

1. No constraints be placed on the development of the Tourle Street study area on the basis of Aboriginal sites.

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Photo 1 View from the north west. Hillslope with Orphanage visible to the South East.

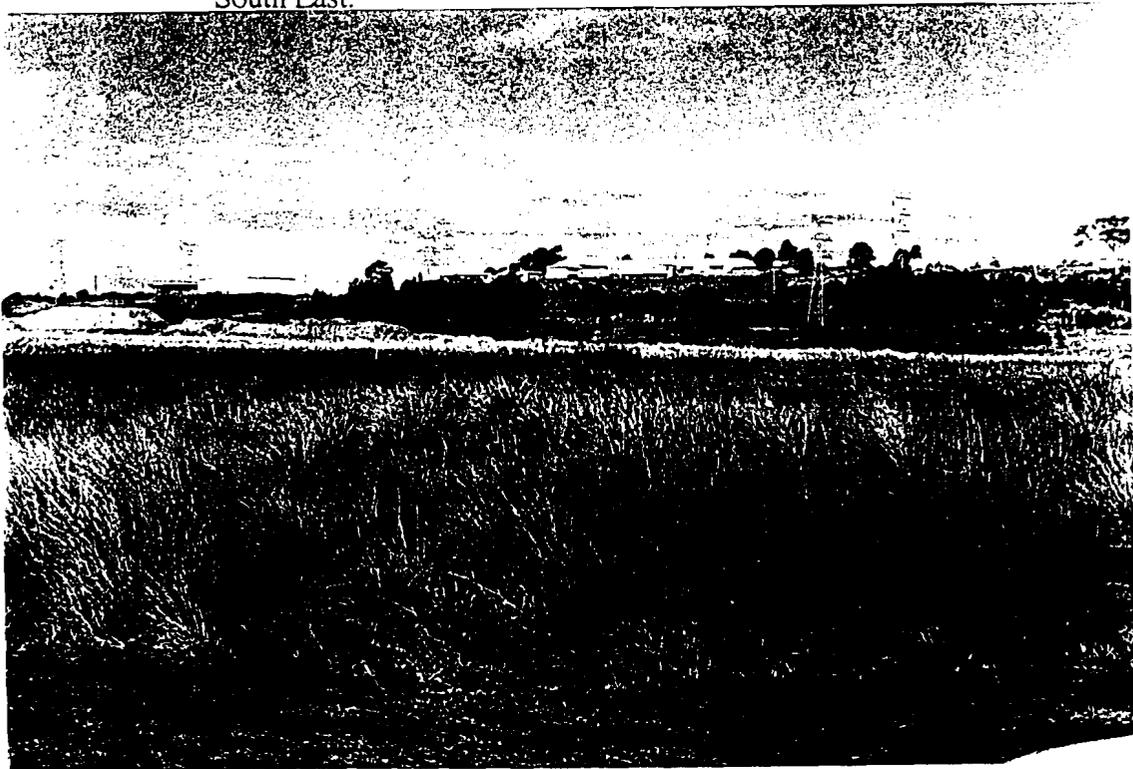


Photo 2 View from north west of study area. View is to the south east to the Orphanage hillslope. Transmission line and terracing are visible. Foreground entirely composed of fill.



Photo 3 Transmission line and old road tracks in the south west of the study area. Note vegetation cover.

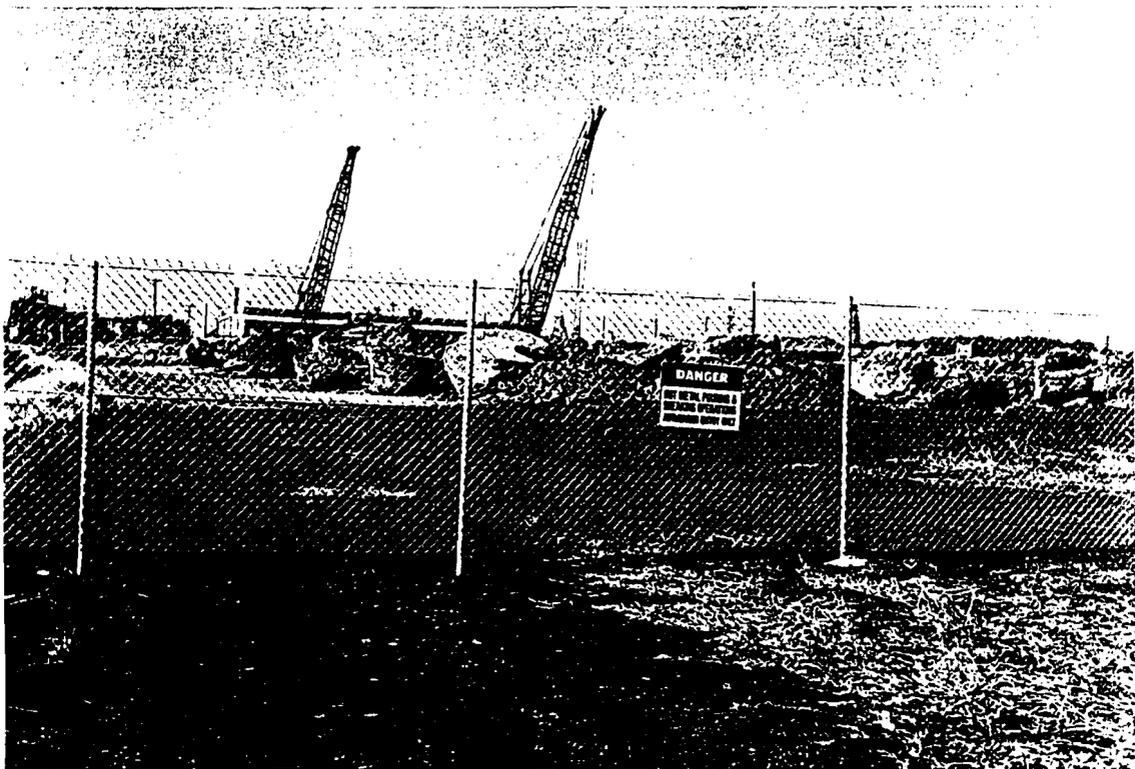


Photo 4 Hot metal pit area adjacent to the Hunter River in the north east of the study area



Photo 5 View of Orphanage and transmission line from the filled area. Note the remaining gardens.



Photo 6 View north from the existing building on the hill. The raised area mid picture is reported to have been the location of the original house or an extension of the Orphanage (John Kenyon pers comm)

A briefing note
to BHP Newcastle
regarding the historical values of land

at

Tourle St., Mayfield NSW

by

Theresa Bonhomme

September 1996

Bonhomme Craib & Associates
Archaeological Heritage Consultants

PO Box 61
Mudgeeraba
Queensland 4213

ACN 054359287

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Summary

During the preparation of a report on the archaeological survey for Aboriginal sites at BHP land at Mayfield NSW information regarding the European use of a portion of the subject land was discovered. Under the *Heritage Act 1977* all heritage locations, buildings and relics are protected.

Location, identification and documentation of heritage places are essential first steps in their management. To be able to manage a place, or make any decisions regarding it, you must know it exists, and know where and what it is. Documentation is the process of describing in a written permanent form, all or some of the places attributes. It includes the gathering and integration of all relevant written and graphic information about the place.

This information forms the basis of an historical assessment of the location. This type of information is needed before making decisions about the future of a place. A thorough understanding of the nature, extent and location of the heritage items, or values of the subject land is required before any decisions can be made regarding the nature or viability of development on the site.

Written histories of the Mayfield area documented local informants who reported that the south east hill in the subject study area was the location of the house of the first free settler at Newcastle. In 1821, John Laurio Platt was granted 2000 acres on the Hunter River and in 1823, established a house called *Ironbark*. He also constructed a rough mill. His house burned down and two of his sons were killed in the fire. They are reported to be buried nearby. On Platt's death in 1836, the grant was taken over by the Australian Agricultural Company, who among other endeavours, had the monopoly on coal extraction in the area. A house was built for the A. A. Co. managers in about 1885. The house and surrounding land was then taken over by the Diocese of Newcastle and an Orphanage was established. The Orphanage operated until 1968.

On the instructions of the client a brief search of documentary sources was undertaken to determine if more definitive information on the nature of the occupation of the subject land was available and on the basis of this to make recommendations about the need for further work and the management requirements of the site.

The search revealed that the basic elements of the history were correct and that the documentary evidence supported local belief that the Orphanage Hill was the location of the first free settler's house in Newcastle.

Information pertaining to the Platt family and the grant is housed in a variety of institutions, such as the State Archives, the Mitchell Library and the Auchmuty Library at the University of New South Wales. Information for the Murray Dwyer Orphanage is located at the Archives of the Diocese of Newcastle. The quality and quantity and the relevance of this information requires a thorough assessment. Some of the entries simply mention Platt's name in relation to jury duty and the like, while other papers, such as the records of the A. A. Co. potentially document events relating to the initial takeover of the grant.

These records may more accurately pin point the original locations of buildings on the site. There are no existing surface remains from the first two buildings on the site. However, it is likely that sub surface deposits and relics still exist.

Recommendation

It is recommended that an historical assessment be undertaken for the subject land. This will involve the following tasks:

1. Undertake a review of all relevant historical evidence. This will involve investigation of secondary and primary records, the production of an historical overview, placing the site in its local, regional and state perspective.
2. Undertake a survey of the subject land with a view to locating the sites of previous structures. Undertake a GPR survey to determine where evidence of possible sub surface remains is located. A thorough study of BHP photographic library, as it relates to the infilling of Platt's Channel will also be required.
3. Produce a report that includes the results of 1 and 2 and makes a preliminary statement of significance for the area. Recommendations for appropriate actions will be made in this report based on the results of the survey and overview.
4. A copy of the report is then submitted to Department of Planning for consideration.

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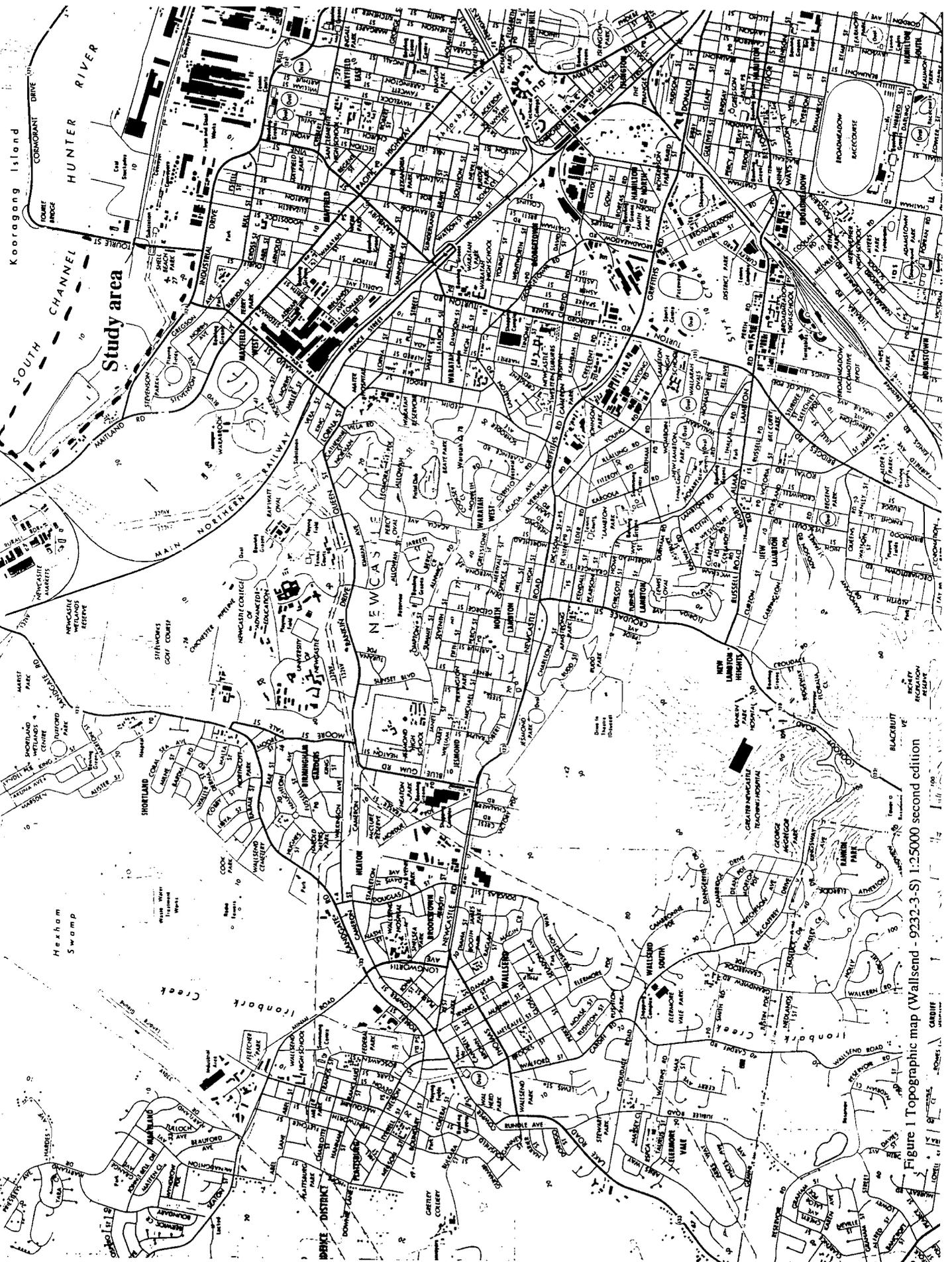


Figure 1 Topographic map (Wallsend - 9232-3-S) 1:25000 second edition

1.0 Introduction

BHP is seeking to develop land, which it owns, at Tourle St and Industrial Drive at Mayfield, a suburb of Newcastle, NSW, as an industrial estate (Figure 1). Most of the area is composed of recent fill. Only the south east portion of the study area retains a natural topography. The existing building on the site was the location of the Murray Dwyer Orphanage for boys established in 1933.

No above ground remains of any other structure, than the existing Orphanage, are visible although the existence of a large house which had been incorporated into the Orphanage was known. Remnants of a formal garden, relating to the early house remain. Photos of the infilling of Platt's Channel during the period 1950 -1960 also show the Orphanage site, the formal gardens and the driveways to the east and to the south. To the east of the Orphanage structure there is evidence, in the photos, of sub surface remains.

From the results of the preliminary search it was clear that more detailed and precise information regarding events on site was required. It was unclear at that stage if such material existed.

This report describes the results of the preliminary search for records regarding the history of the subject land and makes recommendations for future work.

The report is not a comprehensive historical review and should not be used as such.

1.1 Background

BHP commissioned an Aboriginal archaeological survey of the subject land in July 1996. During the library research into the land use history of the subject land, information relating to the historical values of a portion of the area was located.

The sources indicated that according to local accounts, which had been incorporated into various written local histories, the south east portion of the study area was the location of the home of John Laurio Platt, the first free settler in the Lower Hunter River area. Subsequent use of the subject land, prior to its purchase by BHP, was by the Australian Agricultural Company, who built a manager's residence. The Diocese of Newcastle established an Orphanage for boys.

This information was provided to BHP who then instructed the consultant to undertake a limited study to determine the nature of the information regarding activities which had occurred on the subject land, in particular documentation relating to structures which had existed and use of the subject land. Recommendations for appropriate management of the land, including further work were to be made.

1.2 Legislation

The *Heritage Act 1977* (with amendments in 1987) is the primary legislation protecting the historical heritage in New South Wales.

The Act aims to conserve the 'environmental heritage' of the state, which is defined as the 'buildings, works, relics or places of historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic significance for the state'. The Heritage Council is established to protect these items and is empowered to make recommendations to the minister in relation to the conservation and use of the heritage.

The major powers under the Heritage Act (1977) relate to the protection of items of environmental heritage and are offered through:

- **stop work orders (Section 136)**
- **Section 130 orders**, which give notice to owners that a place may have heritage significance, and requiring prior notice be given to the Heritage Council before any action that might 'harm' the place is taken. Harm is defined in the Act as follows:
 - a) in relation to a building or work - demolish
 - b) in relation to a relic - damage, despoil, move or alter; and
 - c) in relation to a place - damage, despoil, develop the land which comprises that place or damage or destroy any tree or other vegetation on or remove any tree or other vegetation from that place. It is an offence under the act to 'harm buildings, works, relics and places not subject to Conservation Instruments'. Section 130 orders last for twelve months.

Interim and Permanent Conservation Orders Interim Conservation Orders may be placed on an item with no prior warning, and are valid for a period of up to one year, in which time the item can be thoroughly investigated, and a Permanent Conservation Order enacted or an environmental planning instrument (under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*) applied to the item. A decision can also be made that the place is not an item of the environmental heritage (based on the assessment that has been undertaken) that requires such protection, or the Minister for some other reason can decide to revoke the order.

The Act also requires that an individual must have a permit from the Heritage Council to excavate land with the intent to discover, expose or move a relic, a relic being any deposit, object or material evidence relating to the settlement of New South Wales that is more than fifty years old, but not including Aboriginal settlement. This applies to all lands in New South Wales, not just those covered by conservation orders.

The Act also provides for notification to the Heritage Council of the discovery of a relic. Section 146 states that 'a person who is aware or believes that he has, in any circumstances, discovered or located a relic, not being a relic subject to a conservation instrument, shall within a reasonable time'.....'notify the Heritage Council of the location of that relic unless he believes on reasonable grounds, that the Heritage Council is aware of the location of that relic'.

While the Heritage Council has extensive powers under the Act, those powers are seen only as a last resort. The majority of the time the Council and its support body the Heritage and Conservation Branch of the Department of Planning, seeks to achieve the aims of the Act through negotiation, and in achieving protection through environmental planning instruments under Local Environmental Plans, under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (Pearson and Sullivan 1995:59). Planning legislation provides a process for implementing heritage protection regulations and controls.

1.3 Historical background

The limited land use search and subsequent preliminary document searches have confirmed the following:

The first settlers in the Mayfield West district were John Laurio Platt and his family and their assigned servants. In 1821, Platt received a grant of 2000 acres of land (Figure 2). The grant started slightly north east of the site occupied by the Murray Dwyer Orphanage, "*ran in a straight line south to the centre of what is now Platt St, Waratah (a distance of 1 1/4 miles). Then it ran west for 2 miles and north to the junction of Ironbark Creek and from there between 2 and 3 miles along the River to the starting Point "* (Brahe 1936:113)

Platt occupied the grant in 1823 and built a *home 'on the southern bank of the south channel of the Hunter River'* (Brahe 1936:112). The most complete description of the Platt grant comes from Brahe's account. He described the area where the home was built as follows "*immediately behind the Mangroves fringing the River there was a small belt of dense tropical brush, consisting of wild native figs, black apple trees, myrtle, cedar and general brush growth. This extended along a gully running south westerly back towards [the now] Maitland Road. This bit of brush land was the only good land there - a matter of about seven or eight acres. The hilly land rising from the River was fairly thick forest land consisting mainly of iron bark, some grey gum and red gum.....The south eastern portion of the land was covered with dense ti-tree bush and other portions were swampy"* (Brahe 1936:112).

According to Brahe's account, Platt built his first homestead and outbuildings just south of the Orphanage site. The first portion of the grant was cleared for cultivation and consisted of 40 acres right in the north east of the grant. This area started from where the Orphanage is now situated (Brahe 1936) and ran a distance to the south of a mile and west for a mile.

The cultivated area was sown with maize and wheat and "*a rough kind of a wind mill was erected by Platt just about where the Orphanage site is now where the wheat and the maize were ground"* (Brahe 1936:115). The area was known as Mill Paddock. This wind mill had been brought from England when Platt came out, with the purpose of felling and exporting timber.

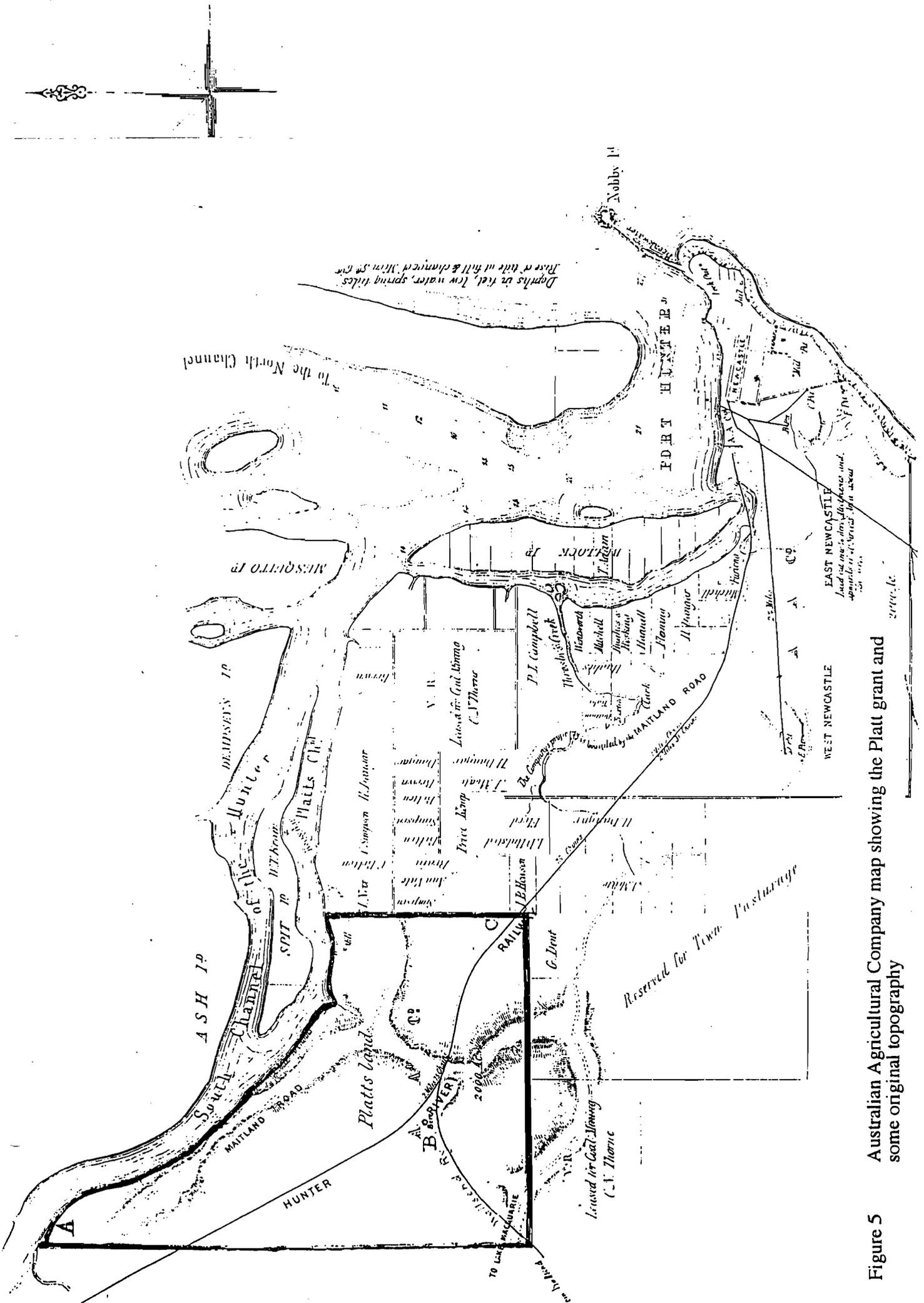


Figure 5 Australian Agricultural Company map showing the Platt grant and some original topography

Platt also attempted to make money out of the coal on the land. Two tunnels were driven under the Orphanage site to mine for coal, which was taken down stream on barges. He also used Aboriginal middens for lime production. According to Brahe *"there is evidence of oyster shells being removed from Black's middens for the purpose of making lime"* (Brahe 1936:115).

The 1853 map of the grant area shows an area called Shell Beach in the extreme north east of the grant area adjacent to the then Platt's Channel. It is likely that this is the location of the middens referred to by Brahe.

In 1831 Platt's homestead was burnt and his two young sons were killed. Reports suggest that the boys were buried in a gully nearby. Brahe says that as a boy, walking over the settlement site, *"on a grassy knoll in a gully leading up from the River there were four or five unmistakable mounds which we were told were graves"* (Brahe 1936:116). These were reported to be graves of Platt's assigned servants but Brahe believed that it was likely to be the location of the boys' graves.

After the fires, Platt then moved to Ironbark Creek near Sandgate and established a new homestead there - again called *"Ironbark"*. Platt was never successful in his ventures. By 1836 both Platt and his wife were dead and the estate was sold to the Australian Agricultural Company.

After the Australian Agricultural Company acquired Platt's land they made no use of it and it remained in the same state as the Platt's had left it until 1885. A residence was built for the Superintendent of the Company on the same location as Platt's first house. Later a portion of the grant was cut up for sale. This subdivision was called Platt's Hill Estate and was sold in acre blocks. A good deal of the land was later subdivided and is known as Cambridge Park.

In 1933 the Superintendent's residence was purchased by the Bishop of Maitland as a memorial to his predecessors, the late Bishops Murray and Dwyer. The Murray Dwyer Boy's Orphanage was established and catered for boys between 4 and 12 years old. The work was in the charge of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. This home operated until 1968 when the Orphanage was replaced by the Group Homes Scheme. The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle's Centacare now has the names of children who were in the Orphanage.

1.4 Summary of the Documentation located to date

State Archives

Original land grant awarded to J. L. Platt in the Township of Newcastle. This record was found in the *Colonial Secretary: Registers of Land grants and leases*. A body of correspondence received from a J. L. Platt concerning his land holdings was also found in the series *Colonial Secretary: Letter Received Regarding Land*.

Additional information may be available from the Land Titles Office.

Australian Agricultural Company

Records relating to the Australian Agricultural Company are held in the Noel Butlin Archives Centre in Canberra and in the Auchmuty Library, Newcastle University. Mr Di Gravio (Newcastle University) indicates that a considerable amount of material relating to the Company is held in the library archives. He says much of this material has not yet been sorted through or inventoried.

Mitchell Library

The Mitchell Library contains a series of manuscripts indexed under Platt's name. These include entries between 1821 April 30 June 1 papers in which going to New South Wales, is recommended, with the intention to erect a saw mill and export wood, 1826 when he was a juror for the district of Hunter River [Lists of Landholders 2] and the assignment of servants to Platt in 1832.. An inspection of these documents showed that most only mention Platt's name and there is little to detail the occupation of the land at Tourle St.

Platt family papers donated by various members of the family are housed at the Mitchell. Those by Eleanor Platt date to the period 1836 to 1993 and contains correspondence, certificates and biographical notes. The papers donated by E. C. Platt, dating between 1859 and 1897 comprising albums, photographs, and a manuscript are also located at the Mitchell. These documents potentially contain material that relates specifically to the structures and the use of the area around the Orphanage.

Diocese of Maitland

The Register of Deeds records were consulted. The sale of the property in 1968 to BHP is recorded but the purchase from the A. A. Co seems to be missing. No photographs of the Orphanage could be located. Some references to the Orphanage are in *Centenary Diocese of Maitland 1866-1966* (Campbell) and in *The Newcastle and Maitland Catholic Sentinel*

Newcastle University Archives

John Di Gravio of the Archives section of the University of Newcastle has independently been researching the history of the Mayfield area. He has interviewed at least one local informant, Mrs Ellen Lane regarding the study area. Mrs Lane was a resident at Argyle House during a part of the time [no date is given in her statement] the area was occupied by the Australian Agricultural Company. Mrs Lane's statement records the existence of Argyle House and the nature of the immediate area, particularly the Shelley Beach area.

Historical overviews

According to Rachel Kelly an Archaeological Zoning Plan has recently been prepared for the Newcastle Council. This document does not refer to the Platt grant. A history of Newcastle (Rosen) has been completed but also did not refer to the Platt's grant. As a result the area has not yet come to the attention of the Newcastle planners. These sources will however provide the necessary background historical information for the wider area.

1.5 Consultation

The legislative requirements for the management of the site have been discussed with the following agencies:

Ms Cathy Snelgrove of the Department of Urban Planning (Heritage Section). The requirement for an historical assessment and the methodology to be employed were discussed with Ms Snelgrove. Under the Heritage Act there is a requirement for disclosure of information, and for a Permit prior to any activity that might disturb or damage the site.

Ms Rachel Kelly (Heritage Planner) of the Newcastle Shire Council. Ms Kelly was aware that a request had been made some time prior for an assessment to be undertaken on the Orphanage. To her knowledge this had not been followed up. Ms Kelly checked the file for the Orphanage and indicated that the site is not subject to a conservation instrument under their LEP. She confirmed that a heritage assessment should be undertaken.

Discussions regarding the historical values of the site were held with Dr. Tim Murray (Chairman - Archaeology Department Latrobe University), Dr Sue Rosen, (Historian) and with Rachel Kelly (Newcastle).

Inspection of documentary material and requests for information were made at the State Archives and the Mitchell Library. John Di Gravio (University of Newcastle Archives) was consulted and provided material from his investigations.

The Archivist at the Diocese of Newcastle provided information on the Orphanage purchase and local contacts who may be able to provide more information. It is clear that a body of information regarding the area is to be found with local informants.

1.6 Conclusion and recommendation

Further work is required to fully document the nature of the historical records and the nature of any sub surface fabric, deposits or relics which may exist at the site. An historical assessment of the site will involve the following tasks.

1. An historical review. This will involve investigation of secondary and primary records, and the production of an historical overview, placing the site in its local, regional and state perspective.
2. A survey of the subject land with a view to locating the sites of previous structures and relics. The most efficient method of sub surface survey is to employ Ground Penetrating Radar. This method has been used at other historical locations with success in the Sydney - Newcastle region. A thorough study of BHP photographic library will be required. Air photos consulted during the archaeological survey indicate the presence of sub surface features to the east of the existing buildings.
3. Produce a report that includes the results of 1 and 2 and makes a preliminary statement of significance for the area. Recommendations for appropriate actions will be made in this report based on the results of the survey and overview.
4. Submit a copy of the report to the Department of Planning (Heritage Section) for consideration.