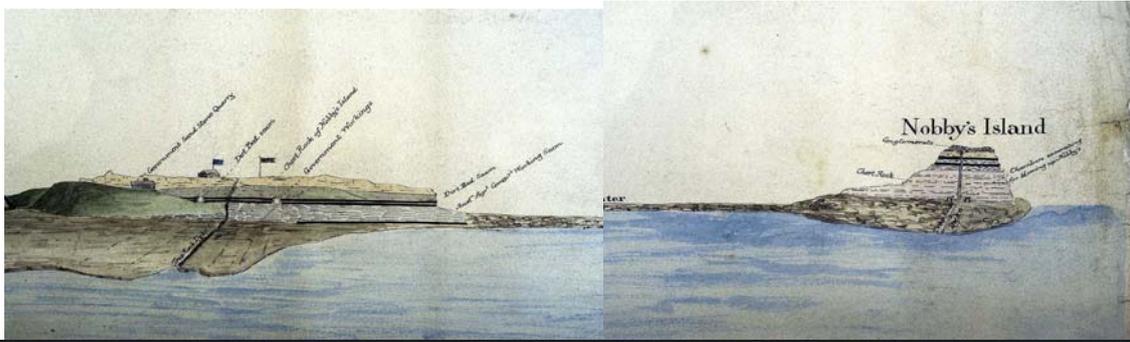




Nobbys Island and Pier, Newcastle 1820



STRATIGRAPHIC SKETCH William Keene Examiner of Coal Fields 1854

Coal River Heritage Park Newcastle

NATIONAL NOMINATION

A living and accessible record of the nation's evolving landscapes and experiences.

Coal River Heritage Park marks a series of important transitions in Australia's journey to nationhood; from government industry to private enterprise, from convict to free labour, from punishment to profit, from a natural to a human-fashioned landscape. National recognition and further development of the Coal River Heritage Park present an unparalleled opportunity to show large numbers of Australian and overseas visitors crucial elements of the Muloobinbah and convict story in a vibrant, lively and accessible precinct.

The National Heritage List is a record of places in the Australian jurisdiction that have outstanding natural, Indigenous or historic heritage values for the nation. These places are protected by federal law under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Compiled 2007 by:
University of Newcastle's 'Coal River Working Party'
Chaired by Dr Erik Eklund



Coal River Heritage Park

NATIONAL NOMINATION.

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The Coal River Heritage Park is situated at the entrance to the Port of Newcastle, New South Wales. It includes landmarks such as Nobbys, Macquarie Pier, the southern headland (Colliers Point/Signal Hill and Flagstaff Hill) including Fort Scratchley, the convict lumber yard and adjoining foreshore. It fronts the Tasman Sea on the east and the Hunter River to the north. Both Nobbys Lighthouse and Fort Scratchley within the Coal River Precinct are Commonwealth Heritage Places. The convict lumber yard, which is in close proximity to the Coal River Precinct on the west, is identified as 'only that Crown land within Lot 2 DP 706760'. The entire Lumber Yard extends beyond Lot 2 into adjoining property to the north, east and west. The street address is Scott and Bond Streets Newcastle NSW 2300.



What is its significance?

The Coal River Heritage Park is of outstanding heritage significance because it is a place of living history. The distinctive and attractive natural landscape coupled with identifiable historic sites and archaeological remains, mean the Coal River Heritage Park is a stunning example of a “living and accessible record of the nation’s evolving landscapes and experiences”. (‘National Heritage’, www.deh.gov.au/heritage/national)



Nobbys Island and Pier, Newcastle 23 January 1820.
(Courtesy State Library of New South Wales)

The proposed Coal River Heritage Park marks a series of important transitions in Australia’s journey to nationhood; from government industry to private enterprise, from convict to free labour, from punishment to profit, from a natural to a human-fashioned landscape. The Coal River Heritage Park tells these stories in a dramatic fashion; through its changing landforms shaped by the demands of industry, through its archaeological remains in tact and *in situ*, and through the continued and inescapable presence of a bustling working harbour.

The area retains significant natural and cultural landmarks including Nobbys Head, Flagstaff Hill, Newcastle Harbour and the Hunter River. These landmarks are of outstanding heritage significance for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. At the heart of Newcastle city, the Park is filled with people daily, and represents a remarkable fusion of heritage and the everyday. Such a highly accessible and culturally-valued landscape allows for a creative engagement with its Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage.

We have identified *four* principal themes, **Economy, Coal, Convicts and Industry**, which capture the outstanding significance of the Coal River Heritage Park. Each theme embodies a transition which is highly significant to the Australian people and nation.

1. Economy.

The economic development of Newcastle, initially with convict and later free labour, established the basis of the colony’s first export industry. This remarkable transition continues today. By 2005 Newcastle was the largest export coal port in the world with up to 100 million tonnes of coal leaving through its much-transformed harbour.

Governor King wrote to Sir Joseph Banks in April 1801 detailing the export of coal from Coal River to Bengal which secured ‘the first return made from New South Wales’. King expected that Coal River would be ‘a great acquisition for many purposes’. (Governor King, 1801, 359)

European patterns of resource exploitation and wealth acquisition stand in stark contrast to the hunter-gatherer economy which existed for millennia along the Hunter River. The Awabakal and Worimi people lived in this area enjoying its rich and varied environment. Despite extensive changes, evidence of Aboriginal occupation can still be found in the Coal River Heritage Park, south at nearby Glenrock Lagoon, to the north

along Stockton Bight and west on the shores of the Hunter River. There is a strong theme of Aboriginal economy, with sites including shell middens, grinding areas, clay digs and stone tools. Chert, still present at the base of Nobbys head, was a major source of raw material for the fashioning of stone tools. It is very rare for such material to be found so close to a large regional city (Walker et al, 1989, 25). As indigenous historian John Maynard notes: 'The area today known as Newcastle was an industrial and trading centre long before white intrusion.' (Maynard, 2003, 250)

The vital importance of the Newcastle economic base was acknowledged by colonial authorities from the 1850s as volunteer regiments were stationed on Signal Hill. A major fortification was constructed in 1881 and from 1887 known as Fort Scratchley. The Fort is the only coastal installation, or shore battery, in Australia to have fired on an enemy in time of war when the fort's guns returned fire on an attacking Japanese submarine in the early hours of 8 June 1942. (Carey et al, 1986, 1-6) The site is on the Commonwealth Heritage List, (See www.environment.gov.au/heritage/commonwealth/nsw.html#scratchley2) and is included on the State Heritage Register as part of the Coal River Precinct. It was dedicated to all past and current service personnel by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard MP, in June 2001.

2. Coal.

The Coal River Heritage Park is the birthplace of Australia's coal mining industry and marks the site of the discovery of coal and of the first coal mining undertaken in the Southern Hemisphere.

Research undertaken by the Coal River Working Party in 2005 proved the existence of the first coal mines, revealing video and photographic evidence of the continued survival of these first adits beneath the concrete ramparts of Fort Scratchley (Coffey Geosciences, 2005, 'Investigation of Convict Coal Mine Workings Beneath Colliers Point, Newcastle East - Results of Drilling Investigation').



P. Francis Adams

Plan of Flag Staff Hill Newcastle (Detail) 2 April 1856. Also known as Signal Hill, the 'beacon fire' and three 'drift' locations have been marked.

(Courtesy State Records New South Wales)

Governor King first established the outpost in 1801 to control unchecked exploitation by private traders and open a coal mine for the colony. The settlement was withdrawn in 1802, but re-established in 1804 to provide hard labour for re-offending convicts following the Irish rebellion at Vinegar Hill, Toongabbie. Systematic extraction of coal continued in the Colliers Point area from 1804 to 1817, after which newer mines

west of the nominated area were opened. The Australian Agricultural Company took over the government mines in 1831. Free labour eventually replaced convict workers from the 1840s (Pemberton, 1986).

Coal features in the economic and cultural life of local indigenous people. The Awabakal are the only recorded Aboriginal group to utilize coal for fuel, and their language, comprehensively recorded by the Reverend Threlkeld and Aboriginal leader Birabahn, notes the only known Aboriginal word for coal, 'nikkin'. (Threlkeld in Gunson, 1974, 65).

3. Convicts.

The Coal River Heritage Park represents an important chapter in the history of convictism in Australia indicative of the transition from a punitive convict settlement to a free settlement based on an emerging civil society through economic and cultural development. Unlike Port Arthur and Norfolk Island, which remained sites of secondary punishment or incarceration, the Coal River Heritage Park is emblematic of the shift from punishment to profit, convict society to civil society. No other convict sites, including those proposed for World Heritage nomination in a statement by the then Minister for Environment and Heritage on 12th January 2007, capture these economic and cultural transitions so well. Most convict sites are no longer 'living sites', whereas the Coal River Heritage Park makes tangible the links between convict industry, subsequent development, and the present-day.

Two highly significant convict sites are the convict coal mines, described above, and the convict lumber yard site. Professional excavation of the convict lumber yard site between 1987 and 1989 found 'substantial evidence of its own history and hence of the major themes which generated the development of Newcastle.' (Walker et al, 1989, 25)

The Newcastle settlement, established twenty-seven years before Port Arthur, was the archetypal site of secondary punishment. The presence of valuable resources such as coal, salt, cedar and lime encouraged the development of Newcastle to become the colony's economic powerhouse as evidenced by Commissioner Bigge's special interest in the area in 1820 (Turner, 1973, 11-12). That official interest in developing profit-making ventures occurred as early as 1801 adds further weight to ongoing historical arguments about the balance between punishment and profit. The use of convict labour for coal mining was a model for later developments such as the Coal Mine outpost in Van Diemen's Land in 1833. The adoption of convict coal mining as a form of punishment at the Coal Mine outpost was a direct copy of the earlier Newcastle experiment. Clearly, further research on the Coal River convicts and the settlement they built will have an important role to play in the evolving historiography of convictism.

4. Industry.

The Coal River Heritage Park is central to the establishment of Newcastle and the port as the base for Australian commerce and industry. In addition to its fundamental importance to the Australian Coal Industry, and its ongoing role as the largest coal port in the world, the Coal River Heritage Park was the site for the development of other natural resources of crucial importance to the fledgling colony such as timber, salt, and lime. Subsequently, the Hunter became the centre for industry and manufacturing, forming the basis for the transition to a more mature industrial economy.

The lumber yard (also known as the 'coal yard', and later the 'convict stockade') is the oldest surviving convict industrial site in Australia (Bairstow, 1989, 7-8). Extensive research and conservation work has been carried out at this site, with the archaeological remains conserved, managed and sensitively presented by Newcastle City Council. It was typical of early industrial sites that were owned by the Government and worked by convicts between 1804 and 1847.

The convict industrial sites of the coal mine and the lumber yard form a unique pairing with extensive middens, grinding sites and quarries, evidence of an extensive Aboriginal economy based on the resources of the sea, and indicative of 'the presence of a large scale stone implement manufacturing industry.' (Maynard, 2003, 252)

The choice of Newcastle and the development of its harbour, together with the widespread availability of coal, cedar, salt, and lime, were the preconditions for the major geographic concentration of industry which followed. By 1915, with the opening of the BHP Steel Works, Newcastle was the largest regional industrial centre in Australia (Docherty, 1983, 8). This trajectory towards industrialisation was set in motion by the first convict workers and their gaolers.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history

The Coal River Heritage Park reveals patterns of economic and social development. The movement from government-controlled and convict-worked industry through to the arrival of free labour and the beginnings of private enterprise is expressed in a tangible way through a number of physical sites including the convict coal mines, the convict lumber yard, the Macquarie Pier, Nobbys Lighthouse, the Cornish Dock, as well as the nearby Customs House and railway heritage.

- The Park is an outstanding example of the large-scale transformation of local geography to meet industrial, commercial and residential demands. This work was begun by convict labour in 1804 and continues today through ongoing improvement and maintenance of harbour facilities.
- The proximity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal industry make it a place of outstanding heritage value because it encapsulates in the one landscape the complexities of Australian national development, showing both what we have created and what we have lost.
- The Park encapsulates the central importance of mining to the nation's economy. Coal ships enter Newcastle harbour daily and pass the headland site of the first Australian, convict-worked coal mine. The subsequent coal industry development throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and later in the Hunter Valley stemmed from that beginning.
- The transformation and improvements to the harbour, the construction of breakwaters, beacons, and lighthouses, reveal the extent to which the colonial period in particular was a maritime economy, its trading networks extending beyond the colony almost from the beginning of white occupation, and again still reflected in present-day port usage.
- The natural history of Australia has been revealed through the work of early geologists and the coal measures were an important part of their investigations. The measures were studied by J.D. Dana, Ludwig Leichhardt, P.E. Strzelecki and later Edgeworth David. These late Permian coal measures, which outcrop in a number of places in the proposed Coal River Heritage Park, together with the Nobbys Tuff, and a basaltic dyke which intersects the Park, are valuable scientific and educational resources and an outstanding complement to the nearby site of Australia's first coal mine (Percival, 1985).

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history

The coal mines at Signal Hill, located, surveyed and photographed in 2005, are by far Australia's oldest surviving mining heritage. No similar workings, whether worked by convict or free labour, survive from the first half of the nineteenth century. No mine workings survive from the Coal Mine site in Tasmania. The Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park date from extensive gold mining in the 1850s. The Coal River Heritage Park, with significant surviving physical evidence, would be a valuable addition to our mining heritage beyond mid-nineteenth-century gold mining.

- The lumber yard was established in 1804 as an essential element of the colony's regime of secondary punishment, and as a vital workshop for the settlement. There are no similar surviving sites in Sydney, Moreton Bay, Port Arthur, Port Macquarie or Norfolk Island (Bairstow, 1989, 7-8).
- Macquarie Pier was a major harbour building exercise begun in an early phase of Australia's economic and maritime development. Governor Macquarie was a strong supporter of the Newcastle settlement and visited three times. In recognition of his support Captain Wallis named the pier after Macquarie, with the Governor being present at the laying of a foundation stone in August 1818. (L. Macquarie Diary, <http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/digital/lema/1818/1818aug.html>) Together with the Great North Road, the Pier is one of the largest surviving convict constructions in New South Wales. The pier was significantly extended, enlarged and repaired, but beneath these subsequent layers of maritime engineering are the first workings by convict labour started in 1818 and finished in 1847.
- Evidence of an Aboriginal camp site at the Convict Lumber yard, together with Aboriginal sites to the north, south and west of the proposed nomination, reveal a rare incidence of Aboriginal archaeology close to the major regional city.
- Nobbys lighthouse, which is Commonwealth-Heritage-listed, is the oldest surviving light on the east coast of Australia. In 1857 this light replaced the earlier coal fired beacon located on Signal Hill.
- Fort Scratchley is a rare example of an intact coastal fortification showing patterns of evolution in construction and military technology from the 1880s to the 1940s. It is currently undergoing an extensive restoration funded by the Commonwealth Government.

- When Captain Cook sighted what is now known as Nobbys Head on his voyage along the east coast of the continent in 1770 Nobbys was an island in the river mouth, twice as high as it is today. The river flowed unrestrained into the sea with the high water mark at the base of what is now Fort Scratchley. The beautiful heritage areas of Nobbys beach, the lighthouse, the breakwater and the land that lies in a triangle between the river and the open ocean represent the physical transformation of landscape by industry and commerce that date from the convict period.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history

In late 2005 the survival and location of the nation's first coal mine was proved by geotechnical investigations at Signall Hill (underneath Fort Scratchley). This is of outstanding heritage value to the nation as it was the first time coal was extracted and put to domestic and commercial use. This illustrates Australia's early position at the forefront of applied coal mining technology and the impact of this to the nation's economic development. The site represents the establishment of an industry that continues to be a major strength of the Australian economy. The Coal River Heritage Park has great potential to reveal, through archaeological field work based on sound historical research, Australia's early cultural history. A substantial amount of this work has already been carried out (see www.newcastle.edu.au/coalriver). There is scope to reveal these workings in a lively and educational fashion through further targeted drilling and exploration, and ultimately, the construction of a world-class interpretative centre on site.

- Macquarie Pier is one of the largest convict-built structures in New South Wales, but as yet no professional investigations have been carried out on the fabric or technique of its construction. This is necessary both to understand the nature of the construction and techniques used, and to ensure the conservation of the convict-era workings.
- Further valuable work can be done at Nobbys. Written and visual evidence from this site indicates that professional archaeological examination may reveal convict artefacts and tunnelling work, as well as the excavation work by Lieutenant Colonel Barney prior to the construction of the lighthouse in the 1850s.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

Aesthetically the Coal River Precinct is a rare example of the transformation of the natural landscape that has been shaped by convict labour and early European occupation, depicted over two centuries in many artworks. Early artists including Ferdinand Bauer, Joseph Lycett (convict artist), Sophia Campbell and Walter Preston produced artworks that depicted Newcastle. Throughout the centuries images of the precinct have continued to show the evolving changes in the beautiful landscape as trade and industry increased. The precinct, especially Nobbys Headland is an outstanding landmark and continues to be a much published 'icon' of the city represented by contemporary artists Margaret Olley and Brett Whitley.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

The proposed Coal River Heritage Park is particularly outstanding because of the technical achievements that have been revealed to date and the great potential for further discoveries and interpretation

- The Coal River Heritage Park shows evidence of the transfer of innovative 'bord and pillar' coal mining techniques across the world - used for the first time in the Southern Hemisphere (c.1804) and only recently introduced in mines in England in the previous thirty years.
- The Lumber Yard has already revealed the first industrial workplace (c.1804/8). Macquarie Pier was a great work of masonry and quarrying built between 1818 and 1847 using convict labour, improving the navigational safety of the Port of Newcastle and with ongoing maintenance, is still in use today.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

The proposed Coal River Heritage Park includes Nobbys lighthouse which is a Commonwealth-listed heritage place. This lighthouse, the oldest on the Australian mainland completed in 1857, is an icon. As a landmark it is clearly identified with the southern arm and the entry to the Port of Newcastle.

The Coal River Heritage Park contains within it a number of sites that have a strong and special association for various social and cultural groups.

- The Nobbys lighthouse rests on Nobbys headland, the island that was cut in half by mostly convict labour and connected to the mainland via Macquarie Pier by 1846. The city's Coat of Arms, granted in 1961, included an image of Nobbys and the lighthouse. The city's logo, gazetted in 1988, also includes a representation of Nobbys, making Nobbys and the Lighthouse an icon for all the people of Newcastle and a recognisable symbol of Newcastle for the Nation.
- Nobbys Headland is a dreaming place for local indigenous people and as such represents a site of fundamental importance to local Aboriginal peoples. The former island features in local dreaming stories. (Threlkeld in Gunson, 1974, 65)
- Nobbys beach, the beach formed along the line of the breakwater is of great importance to the city and to the Surf Life Saving community. The Art Deco Club House sits in the southern corner beneath Fort Scratchley and adjacent to the salt pan site. The Beach is indicative of the shift from work and industrial usages of the area to more leisure-orientated pursuits (promenading, swimming, and later surfing) from the beginning of the twentieth century.
- Fort Scratchley has a strong military history and is of great significance to local and national military communities. It is a site for Australia Day events and marks a significant cultural and heritage place for the city. In 2001 the Fort was honoured by the Prime Minister as a living monument dedicated to all current and former serving members of the armed forces, making the Fort of national significance.

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, or importance in Australia's natural or cultural history.

A wealth of individuals has found creative inspiration from sites within the Heritage Park. The area stimulated the colony's most talented artists and illustrators. From the convict period they included the well known Joseph Lycett, and T.R. Browne, both of whose work was encouraged by far-sighted Commandants, Lt Skottowe and Major Wallis. Sophia Campbell, rendered beautiful water colour paintings of the area including the harbour, the lumber yard, the river and Nobbys Island.

- Coal River is an outstanding convict site and has the potential for advancing our understanding of convicts as a cultural group and the contribution made by their enforced labour and later their participation in general society. Recognition, further investigation and interpretation will expose their contribution to a better understanding. Key convicts include John Platt and James Broadbent, convict miners who set out the mines of 1804 using the bord and pillar method. This material is of great significance to the national heritage as it has the potential to enhance and develop the current national historiography with regard to convictism.
- Other notable individuals who have had a strong association with the proposed Park include-
 - Birabahn, Aboriginal leader and confidant of Reverend Threlkeld
 - James Wallis, Commandant, 1816-1818
 - Major James T. Morisset, Commandant, 1818-1822
 - Lieutenant Colonel George Barney, Royal Engineers, advisor on the construction of the breakwater and proposal to remove Nobbys Head.
 - Lieutenant Colonel Peter Scratchley, British military advisor on the construction of the fort on Flagstaff Hill
 - Captain Allan, Newcastle harbourmaster
 - Frank McNamara, convict poet, (Frank The Poet)
 - Ralph Rashleigh

The Coal River Heritage Park has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.

The Coal River Heritage Park contains sites of outstanding significance for local indigenous people. Whyba garba (Nobbys Head) and Coquun (The Hunter River) are the locations of a dreaming story that details Newcastle's and the Hunter's earthquake history.

The proposed Coal River Heritage Park is a unified cultural landscape rich in historical importance that is comprised of sites which invoke and exhibit the four themes of transition enumerated above. The Park is a unique precinct that shows the transition from a penal settlement to a civil society and to a major port city, and the transition from a place of punishment to a place of outstanding economic importance to the nation. The site is now ready for national recognition and professional management. The principal heritage elements of the nomination are:

Nobbys

Nobbys is a distinctive landmark at the mouth of the Hunter River, noted by Captain James Cook during his voyage of discovery up the east coast of Australia. On 10 May 1770 Cook wrote in his ship's log that the Endeavour passed by a 'small clump of an island lying close to shore'. Shortland named the island Hacking Island, in his 'Eye Sketch'. Paterson named it Coal Island presumably because of the visible coal seams. The Aboriginal name was Whybaygamba.



Lewin, J. W. (John William), 1770-1819
Nobby Island from Coal River
(Courtesy of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery)

Nobbys Island was used as a place of confinement for the worst convicts before the island was joined to the mainland. The entrance to a tunnel shelter in the northern cliff face has been covered by rock falls.

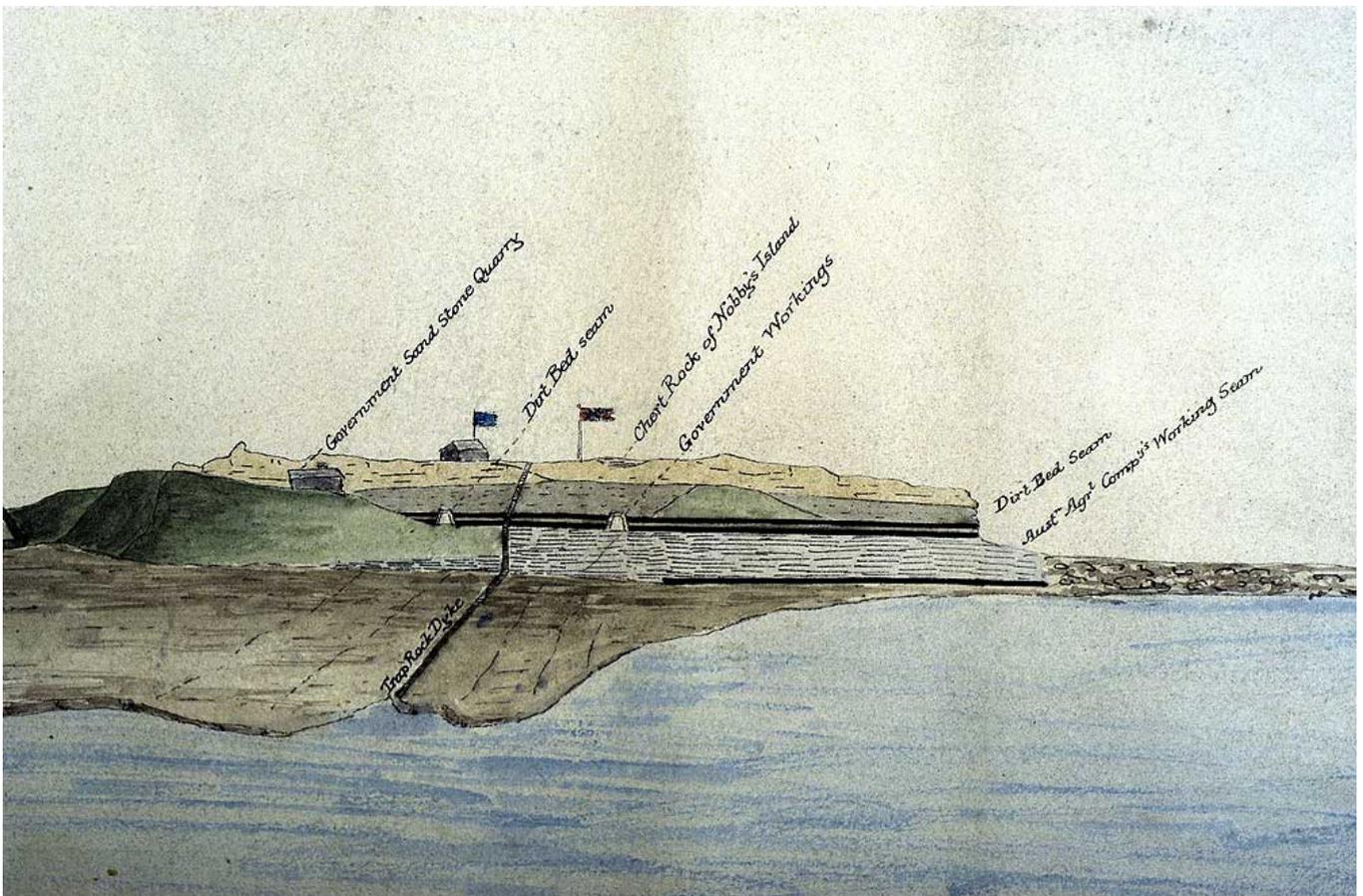
A meeting was held in Newcastle in June 1854 to protest against a perceived threat to remove the island in the interests of navigation. However Nobbys was cut down from 62 metres to 28 metres instead and the lighthouse established there in 1857 replacing the coal-fired beacon that had been operating at Signal Hill.

Nobbys is a Newcastle icon that was depicted on the Newcastle City Coat of Arms until 1968.

Colliers Point Mines

Lieutenant Colonel Paterson writing to Governor King named the headland Collier's Point and explained that:

The point is composed of two strata in sight and one, which is bare at low-water mark only. This is by much the best coal, which you will see by the specimen I desired might be kept apart from the other, which is the middle strata, about 16 inches deep; that below is 22 inches; the distance between them is about 20 feet.



William Keene (Examiner of Coal Fields) "Copy of Stratigraphic sketch from Nobby's Island Newcastle to Burwood, showing coal seams and their Order of Superposition." Detail 2 (Flag Staff Hill Detail) 31 May 1854 (Courtesy State Records New South Wales)

In 1801 and 1804 John Platt, a skilled coalminer set out the mines in what was clearly the method at the forefront of mining technology - the bord and pillar system. He advised Governor King of the damage done when the mines were not properly regulated and timbered. Colliers Point was the site of the first coalmining in Australia, which continued at the location until 1814. Dr D F Branagan has identified the lower seam and the middle seam as the Dirty or Dudley seam.

The *Newcastle Morning Herald* 29 January 1885 reported on the old convict coal workings and the wall then being built the fort:

All necessary precautions having been taken by filling in or roofing the many underground chambers their entrances were finally blotted out of sight for ever by a thick wall of concrete and masonry.

Macquarie Pier

Governor Lachlan Macquarie laid the foundation stone for 'Macquarie Pier' on 5 May 1818. The pier was the most ambitious harbour improvement project of a convict era.

The connection to Nobbys Island was completed in June 1846. Heavy seas in subsequent years breached the pier, which was later strengthened on the seaward side by using huge sandstone blocks transported by rail from a quarry at Waratah. The work was completed by 1872. A sand dune system and the popular Nobbys Beach have formed on the ocean side of Macquarie Pier. In 1957 the harbour side of the breakwater was cement rendered except for a small stairway near Nobbys.



Nobbys Island from Mullumbimba Cottage, Newcastle
(Courtesy of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery)

Convict Stockade Lumber Yard

The stockade was once enclosed by a 3.4 metre high log wall. Here convicts both lived and worked. They were also employed outside the stockade at timber cutting, lime burning, coalmining and breakwater-building. In 1820 there were about 1000 convicts working in the area.

The stockade ceased to be a convict workplace by about 1850 and much of the fabric from this era remains buried beneath the sand drifts that subsequently covered the site.

The Berthing Master's Office and the Stationmaster's Cottage on the stockade site are evidence of the association of the area with Newcastle's port and railway history, as are the Customs House and Sailors Home adjoining to west and east, beneath which extend the archaeological remains of the stockade's fabric.

The stockade is already a nationally significant archaeological site marking the beginnings of industry at Newcastle.

Harbour Works and Reclamation

Harbour works and reclamation started in the convict era. They are important historic themes of the Nobbys Coal River Precinct.

The first wharf was built west of the stockade, and a lagoon embayment to the east provided a harbour for the small craft used to convey convicts for cedar getting and lime burning tasks. A ballast wharf was constructed east of the main wharf (Watt Street) and a stone boat dock was built within the reclaimed area about 1860, for the use of pilots and port boatmen. Slipways were added in 1870. The dock and the boat sheds were part of the pilot Station.

The space between the ballast wharf and the shoreline was reclaimed and used for railway marshalling yards. A rail extension was provided to carry Waratah sandstone to reinforce the breakwater.

The Commissioners for Railway built Zaara Street Power House at the eastern end of the yards in 1915. Most of the area is now part of the Foreshore Park.

Signal Hill

Signal Hill is an important and historic landmark with a commanding position overlooking the river entrance. The northern extremity was Colliers Point.

Lieutenant Shortland camped at the base of the hill when he entered and surveyed the river in 1797 and noted the coal seams in the cliff face. The 1801 Coal Harbour mining encampment, was also located at this site.

Fresh water was available from a small watercourse at the base of the hill.



Corroboree at Newcastle (Detail)
Oil painting by Joseph Lycett
(Courtesy State Library of NSW)

The coal-fired beacon erected on Signal Hill to guide and warn mariners was probably the first light on the Australian coast. It was extinguished in December 1857 when the new lighthouse at Nobbys commenced operation. On the hill were also erected a signal station, a distinctive pagoda like building as a residence for the stoker and signalman, and about 1860, a house for the harbourmaster (Captain Allen).

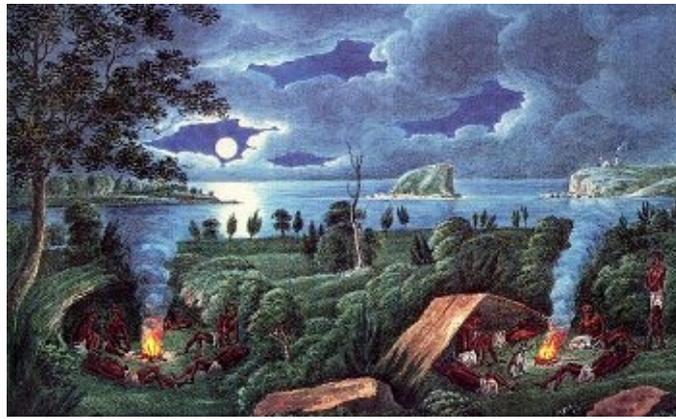
Signal Hill was also known as Beacon Hill, Captain Allan's Hill and Flagstaff Hill by 1840. Due to a perceived threat from Britain's enemies in the 1870's, substantial fortifications were erected at key outposts in British colonies, such as Fort Scratchley in 1881.

Extensive quarrying to gain material for Macquarie Pier and other purposes has dramatically altered the shape of Signal Hill and the old convict coal workings beneath the hill were sealed up with a thick wall of concrete in 1885.

The place has remained in public ownership because of its great significance to harbour and port function, defence and other strategic considerations. This has contributed to its present spatial integrity with a considerable amount of surviving physical evidence in the sites identified in this nomination. Further archaeological and investigative work is needed to reveal more physical evidence. An effective overarching plan of management, driven by the aims and objectives of the National Heritage List, is necessary in order to manage, protect, and integrate the diverse heritage items and themes that are demonstrated by the proposed Coal River Heritage Park. Piecemeal management and poorly integrated planning represent potential threats to the National Heritage values included in the Park. Such a threat can be seen manifest in the current proposal for a restaurant, managers residence and eight unit motel style development on Nobbys headland, which has the potential to compromise the Commonwealth-Heritage Listed Nobbys lighthouse, and the National Heritage values of that area of the proposed Park.

History of Coal River

Newcastle was the first area of white occupation in New South Wales outside of the Sydney basin and was permanently established as a place of secondary punishment in 1804. By 1819 there were almost 700 convicts in the area, and by 1820 the total resident white population was approximately 1,200.¹ The area was of major economic importance as a source of coal, timber, lime and salt for the new colony. The closure of the penal settlement at Newcastle in 1823 led to a decade or two of stasis. Population growth, trade and wealth shifted towards the lower Hunter Valley, and the principal town of Maitland and its nearby port Morpeth.



Aborigines Resting by a Camp Fire near the Mouth of the Hunter River, Newcastle, NSW.
by Joseph Lycett (ca.1775 - 1828)

Awabakal and Worimi people live in and around the Hunter River. The Awabakal's traditional country ranges from Lake Macquarie to the southern shore of the Hunter River, while the Worimi live in what became known as the Stockton Bight/Port Stephens area. From the late 1790s initial contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people tended to be sporadic, but after 1804, the Awabakal and the Worimi had to contend with the permanent occupation of their country by convicts and their gaolers. Written, visual and archaeological evidence indicates that traditional patterns of their economy, society and kinship were maintained into the 1850s. Thereafter, traditional societies were overwhelmed by more widespread and intensive land use with many Aboriginal people choosing, or being forced, to relocate to a mission on Lake Macquarie which was established by Reverend Threlkeld in 1824. Others moved to the Lake Macquarie area, and their ancestors are resident in the region today, and still have connections to their culture and land.

It was the presence of coal which initially attracted Europeans to the area in the early 1800s. The outlet of the Hunter River and the presence of coal was officially noted by Lieutenant John Shortland in 1797. Shortland's journey north of Sydney in the Governor's whaleboat in September 1797, his eye-sketch of the river he named after Governor Hunter, his optimistic impression of the area, and his return of coal samples to Sydney were historically important factors in the eventual expansion of the newly-established penal colony out of the Sydney Basin.ⁱⁱ

Shortland's visit was not the first landing in the area by Europeans. William and Mary Bryant, along with six other escaped convicts and two children from Sydney, may have landed in the area in March 1791.ⁱⁱⁱ There is some debate whether they entered what was later known as the Hunter River, and most likely they landed at Glenrock Lagoon, five kilometres south of the Hunter River. The Bryants are well known to Australian history since they, remarkably, made it all the way to Timor, only to be found out by British officers from the recently-wrecked *Pandora*.^{iv} In Newcastle history, however, their claim to fame rests with their discovery and use of coal at Glenrock Lagoon.^v

Another pre-1797 European contact came in June 1796. David Collins, Judge-Advocate for the fledgling colony, detailed a visit by a party of fisherman 'from a bay near Port Stephens'.^{vi} This party brought back samples of coal to Sydney. Unlike Shortland, a navy man with a subsequent heroic career, these unnamed fishermen of lowly status were difficult candidates to eulogize as European explorers, despite the impeccable European credentials of Collins as a source. Moreover, their visit to Coal River had been an occasion for violence between the visiting party and local Aborigines. Collins reported that the party 'conducted themselves improperly on shore, two of them were severely wounded by the natives...'^{vii} Collins does not record nor did he probably know of the outcome for local Aborigines. Coupled with these on-shore visits by Europeans was Captain Cook's sighting of what later became 'Nobbys Island' in May 1770.^{viii}

Further exploration in 1801 confirmed the area's resources and potential. In June 1801 Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson, together with Lieutenant Grant, Ensign Barrallier, a party of marines and a gang of convicts arrived at Coal River to work the coal and exploit the cedar, accessible via the Hunter River.^{ix} The more senior and capable officers left in July leaving Corporal Wixstead in charge. The 1801 settlement struggled under the inexperienced leadership of Wixstead and later the overly severe Surgeon Mason, and was withdrawn in early 1802.

A convict settlement was re-established in 1804. This was designated a place of secondary punishment. The first convicts sent to Coal River were Irish rebels who participated in the Castle Hill insurrection. Coal mining had the dual value of being both dangerous, punishing work, while also producing a potentially valuable resource for the new colony.

Coal mining was seen by early colonial administrators as a possible means to make the colony more financially self-sufficient. Governor Hunter had reported that the coal sighted at Coal Cliff, south of Sydney, was inaccessible, but the Coal River deposits outcropped at convenient locations at the entrance of the Hunter River. In 1797 Lieutenant Shortland was impressed with the loading and trade potential of the area: 'Vessels from 60 to 250 tons may load there with great ease.' (Shortland, 1798 in *HRNSW*, 481-82) It was these seams at the entrance to the river, outcropping at Nobbys and on Colliers Point/Signal Hill, that were the focus of the first systematic coal mining. The officer in charge of the 1804 settlement, Lieutenant Menzies, wrote that to Governor King that 'an excellent mine has been opened, the strata of which continues a yard six inches thick.' From geological records, and later written evidence, we know this seam to be the upper split of the Dudley seam. (Lt Menzies in *HRNSW*, 367)

From 1811 both coal production and the settlement's population increased. From 73 persons in 1811 the population almost doubled to 134 by 1812. Similarly coal production increased from 800 tons in 1808 to 1400 tons in 1811, and peaked at 2193 tons in that decade. The penal settlement continued until 1823 with the convicts mining coal, preparing lime from shell and timber getting. The increase in convict numbers and production levels at Coal River coincided with Governor Macquarie's decade-long programme of public works and construction. Such ambitious colony building would not have been possible without the resources provided by the Newcastle outpost. (Broadbent in Broadbent & Hughes, 1992, 157) For example, the first Government House at Parramatta was constructed using imported lime to secure the sandstone bricks, while Macquarie's extensive building programme utilised the vast amounts of lime from Coal River.

If the first occupation of the 1800s was largely about coal, subsequent free settlers of the early 1820s were attracted by land. It was the availability of fertile land with rich alluvial soils adjacent to the Hunter, Williams and Paterson Rivers which was especially appealing. The Hunter Valley was opened to free settlement in 1823, and extensive numbers of settlers, sheep and cattle entered the valley in the next five years. Some of the more recalcitrant convicts were removed to the new penal station at Port Macquarie. However, convicts remained in the town, as assigned servants, as labourers on the town gang, and after 1831, as miners working for the Australian Agricultural Company, which took over the ownership and operation of the Government mines. Some convicts were also sent to Newcastle Gaol during the 1830s after conviction in the Sydney courts. (McCabe, 1999, 179). During the 1830s, one historian estimates that 165 female convicts passed through Newcastle gaol whether on their way to private assignment, after conviction in Sydney, for punishment, or for re-assignment (McCabe, 1999, 181). By the 1830s, the Hunter Valley included a number of wealthy landowners with large estates, many owned by ex-army officers, which typically had considerable demand for convict workers. (Walsh, 2006, 67-90)

In the 1830s large numbers of convicts returned to Newcastle. The convict lumber yard was renamed 'the stockade' and a large gang was put to work on finishing the Macquarie Pier. A guard house was built adjoining the stockade in 1833 as the public work gang returned to continue the breakwater. Work on the pier had lapsed in 1823. It was finally complete by 1846. Over this period Nobbys was also used to 'stockade' convicts, usually as a method of punishment.

By the 1850s Newcastle resumed stronger economic growth. The gold rushes momentarily unhinged the regional labour market, but the ending of the Australian Agricultural company's monopoly in coal mining in 1847 and the boom in emigration in the 1850s and 1860s, sparked a new round of coal mine development which shaped the urban typography and demographic makeup of the developing suburbs of Newcastle. These new developments around the pit top towns of Adamstown, Hamilton, Waratah and Wallsend, were inaugurated by private companies. The coal mining industry of the Hunter Valley had finally transformed into a market economy.

This firm economic base encouraged other related industries such as railway workshops, regional steamship companies and secondary manufacturing, as well as naturally created further demands for improvements in harbour facilities, navigational services, and coal loading technology. From 1857 the Great Northern Railway, augmented by the private lines of the coal companies, formed the backbone of the regional economy, linking Newcastle with the produce and trade of the valley, and ultimately eclipsing Morpeth and Maitland as the economic hub of the region. It wasn't until 1887, when a direct rail connection to Sydney was opened, that the centrality of the port in Newcastle's maritime economy was significantly challenged.

Likewise by the 1850s elements of the proposed Coal River Heritage Park had firmly entered the hearts of Novocastrians. Nobbys Head by this time was a clearly identifiable image of the town so much so that plans to remove Nobbys via explosive methods were vigorously resisted. An 1854 petition called on the government to halt the destruction of Nobbys. This petition represents one of the nation's earliest demands for the preservation of a culturally-significant landmark. The subsequent construction of the 1857 lighthouse on a preserved Nobbys crowned Newcastle's most identifiable landmark. It announced the maritime connections of the town, and the port community's continuing battle with the vagaries of the sea and the dangers it posed to

seafarers. At a deeper cultural level strong feelings for Nobbys showed that Novocastrians no longer evinced a migrant sensibility as they embraced their local environment and its significant features in a place they now called home.

No other convict sites in Australia exhibit the range of transitions in their surviving physical evidence as shown by the proposed Coal River Heritage Park. These other sites, including Port Arthur Historic Site, Norfolk Island, Fremantle Prison, and Hyde Park Barracks, show important features of the convict story yet there is no tangible link to subsequent economic and cultural development. The outstanding heritage value of the proposed Park lies in this relationship between our colonial past and our present, and in the archaeological and surviving built evidence.

It is important to bear in mind that Norfolk Island was initially established in 1788 not as a place of secondary punishment, but as a way to divide the colony's resources in the face of scarcity. It was only after the closure of the Newcastle penal settlement in 1823 that Norfolk Island was re-established as a place of secondary punishment in 1825, its regime and underlying philosophy based on the first such experiment at Coal River. The personnel for the new site of punishment later included Commandant James Thomas Morriset, who had spent three years at Newcastle from 1819 to 1823. Newcastle was indisputably the first place of secondary punishment and an experimental outpost which was highly influential on later convict policy. Similarly, the Sarah Island site, on the west coast of Van Diemen's Land, was established the year after Newcastle was closed. It too was a convict outpost that sought to exploit the local resources of coal, timber, and lime. The successful Newcastle experiment must have weighed heavily in this case too.

Furthermore, while places such as Norfolk Island, Fremantle Prison, and Port Arthur are particularly strong on evidence of changing incarceration and punishment regimes, they are less revealing in terms of the convict industrial and economic role. The First Government House site is an evocative place that says much about colonial society and the personalities that controlled the convict system yet again it does not evoke the role of the convict workforce. At the Coal River Heritage Park the presence of the convict coal mine and the nearby convict lumber yard is an especially significant pairing which reveals much about the economic role of convictism in producing crucial resources for the emerging colonial economy.

Other sites of secondary punishment such as Port Macquarie, Sarah Island, and Moreton Bay have less physical remains than the Coal River Heritage Park. These sites are often located in isolated areas with difficult access. The Coal River Heritage Park sits at the ocean gateway to Australia's largest regional city. The well-populated Central Coast and Hunter Valley regions, together with the nation's largest city, Sydney, are only a short drive away.

National recognition and further development of the Coal River Heritage Park represent an unparalleled opportunity to show large numbers of Australian and overseas visitors crucial elements of the convict story in a vibrant, lively and accessible precinct.

On-line Resources

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/archives/coalriver>

Coal River Timescape Google Earth addon

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/archives/coalriver/pdf/1801_barralliermap.pdf

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/archives/coalriver/pdf/1801_24thjune.pdf

ⁱ J.W. Turner, 'The Development of the Urban Pattern of Newcastle: A Critique', *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol.XI, No.2, September 1971, p.179.

ⁱⁱ Lieutenant John Shortland of the *H.M.S. Reliance* named and charted the River on the 9th September 1797 whilst en route to Port Stephens. The letter to his father reporting the discovery is in *Historical Records of NSW*, Vol.3 pp481-82.

ⁱⁱⁱ Victor Critten ed. *Memorandums: Escape from Botany Bay, 1791: being 'Memorandums' by James Martin*, Canberra, Mulini Press, c1991, pp2-3.

^{iv} C.H. Curry, *The Transportation, Escape and Pardoning of Mary Bryant*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1983.

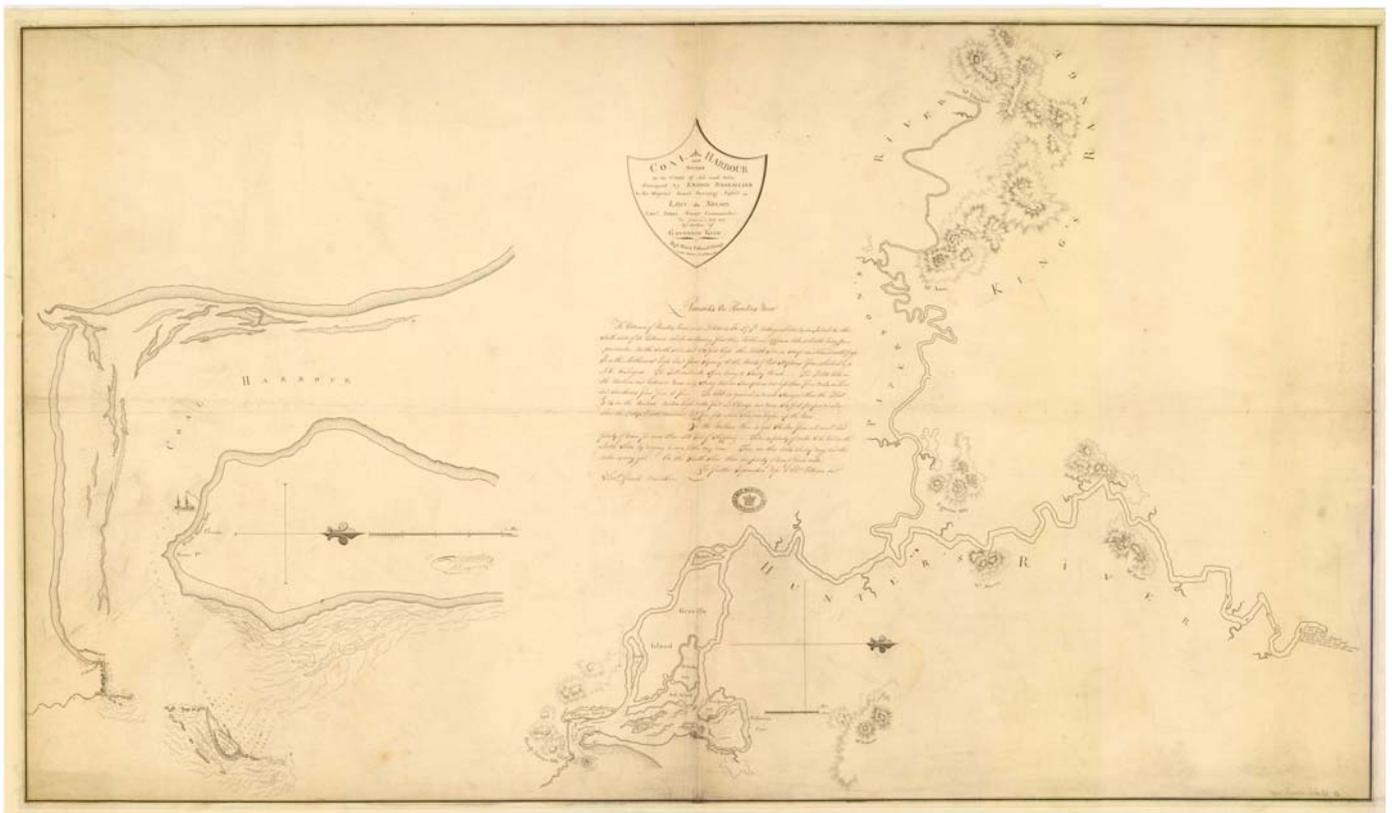
^v Transcribed from pages 2-3 of: James Martin (fl.1786 - 1792) *Memorandums: Escape from Botany Bay, 1791 : being 'Memorandums' / by James Martin*, introduction and notes by Victor Crittenden (Canberra : Mulini Press, c1991).

^{vi} David Collins, *An account of the English colony in NSW from its first settlement in January 1788 to August 1801 : with remarks on the dispositions, customs, manners &c. of the native inhabitants of that country : to which are added some particulars of New Zealand, compiled ... from the Mss. of Lieutenant-Governor King, and an account of a voyage performed by Captain Flinders and Mr. Bass ... abstracted from the journal of Mr. Bass*, London : Printed by A. Strahan ... for T. Cadell and W. Davies ..., 1804, 2nd edition, 4 p328.

^{vii} Collins, *An account*, p328.

^{viii} *Captain Cook's voyages round the world ; the first performed in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771 ; the second in 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775 ; the third and last in 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780 ;for making discoveries in the northern and southern hemispheres, by order of his present Majesty. Containing a relation of all the interesting transactions which occurred in the course of the voyages. Including Captain Furneaux's journal of his proceedings during the separation of the ships. With a narrative of Commodore Phipps's voyage to the North Pole. And an abridgement of Foster's introduction to his history of northern discoveries on the progress of navigation. To which is added, Governor Phillip's voyage to Botany-Bay [sic] ; with an account of the establishment of the colonies of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, &c. &c Published Newcastle : Printed by M. Brown ..., 1790, 1790 V.1 pp437-39.*

^{ix} Lieutenant Grant to Governor King, 14th June 1801 in *Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol.4 Hunter and King 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, Sydney, Charles Potter, 1896, pp404-09.



Survey Map of Coal Harbour and mining encampment and Hunter River by Ensign Barrallier June 1801