The 1827 Newcastle Notebook and Letters of Lieutenant William S. Coke H.M. 39th Regiment

Cynthia Hunter
Desmond, A New South Wales Chief, painted by Augustus Earle

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Uniform of 39th Regiment of Foot. This would have been the basic uniform worn by William Coke at Newcastle for parade occasions. Other versions of the uniform include a dress uniform for the officers' mess and something less formal for daily work.

PHOTO—Colin MacLaren's collection, from the British Army Museum, Dorset
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PREFACE

The New Castle Notebook and Letters of Lieutenant William Sacheverell Coke, and various Coke Family papers, are held in the Archives of the Derbyshire Record Office, England. The Notebook and Letters paint a fresh picture of life in Newcastle in 1827, one sketched at a time of great social change.

Newcastle marks the maritime gateway to the Hunter Valley. For many years after 1801, convicts laboured here under military guard. The majority of this workforce moved to Port Macquarie in 1822, leaving enough men behind to continue coal production and maintain various public works. The agricultural land of the Valley was thrown open to European settlement just five years before Coke arrived. The military continued to control the residual convicts amid an increasing population of free persons. Expectation of more democratic institutions to administer law, order, trade and commerce generated some opposition to the ongoing military presence.

Newcastle and its environs in 1827 was home to a native population that some observers claimed was at times equal to the population of newcomers. This balance was to be short-lived. However, Coke’s Notebook shows that in 1827 Aborigines maintained much of their traditional lifestyle. He found their skills and rituals a source of immense interest. He benefited from their ability to hunt native fish and animals, and birds which he preserved and forwarded to his friends and family in England.

Coke meticulously noted the weather each day in his notebook, also a selection of events of significance to him, and the coming and going of other soldiers, settlers, and the small sailing ships that maintained a line of communication with Sydney, and thence with England.

Archivists at the Derbyshire Records Office put me in touch with Mr Colin MacLaren of Northamptonshire, the author of an unpublished work that includes a biography of William Sacheverell Coke. Mr MacLaren’s late wife was William Sacheverell Coke’s grand-daughter.

Colin MacLaren’s work is an extensively researched study of the Coke Family of Brookhill whose estates were proximate to the legendary Sherwood Forest. The study traces the careers and fortunes of the large family of D’Ewes Coke and in particular, his second son William Sacheverell Coke whose long life spanned most of the nineteenth century. Coke trained to become a military officer, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. However, at twenty-three years of age, he resigned from this career in the army. His military service, which included a voyage to Australia and two years military duties at convict garrisons, occupied only a brief phase of his life. This experience was, however, an influential one, and one that became of increasing importance to him as his age progressed. In the 1870s and 1880s, reminiscences of his colonial experiences were published extensively in regional newspapers where almost every reference to him included a brief account of his voyage to New South Wales and the time he spent at Newcastle.
Colin MacLaren's manuscript is a history of an English family of some distinction. Surprisingly, this work, which focuses on times, places and events so remote from Newcastle NSW, nevertheless provides a context for appreciation of documents created at Newcastle NSW 170 years ago and now stored in an English archive.

The brief account of Coke's family and own life narrated in this book has drawn on Colin MacLaren's substantial work, with his permission, for the purpose of enabling the New Castle Notebook and Letters to be more thoroughly interpreted.

*Cynthia Hunter 1997*

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**Acknowledgements**

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- The authors of the many books consulted during research.
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- Jenny Hunter, my daughter, for editorial guidance.
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A VIEW OF KING'S TOWN ca. 1820
Rex Nan Kivell Collection—National Library of Australia
Lieutenant William Sacheverell Coke of His Majesty's 39th Regiment of Foot, officer of the guard aboard the convict ship REGALIA, reached Port Jackson from Dublin on 5 August 1826, after a voyage of almost five months.

Six months after his arrival, Lieutenant Coke moved to Newcastle as second-in-command of a minor garrison stationed at that settlement. The garrison's responsibilities included the control of convicts working for the government or assigned to civil employers. Shortly after his arrival at Newcastle, Coke wrote to his family describing the place as 'a small village on a peninsula, half bare land, the other half dotted with single storey cottages with verandahs to keep the sun off'. The officers of the regiment occupied some of these cottages. On the verandahs, in the cool of the evening and after their day's work, they relaxed, drank coffee and talked.

On such evenings during the months he stayed at Newcastle, William Coke might have told his friends and fellow officers stories about his life and his family. He might have told them that he was the second son of D'Ewes Coke of Brookhill in the County of Derby, head of a family of landed gentry whose ancestry was long and from time to time distinguished.

The Cokes had owned land and houses in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire at least since the beginning of the fourteenth century. His father was the son and heir of the Reverend D'Ewes Coke. Of his father's brothers, John Coke was proprietor of Debdale Hall near Mansfield, a Deputy Lieutenant, a magistrate and, soon to become High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire. John was influential in establishing the Pinxton Porcelain Factory and the Pinxton Coal Mines. Another uncle, Sir William Coke, was Chief Justice of Ceylon prior to his death in 1818.

One of his father's school fellows was Richard Bourke, later Major General Sir Richard Bourke, veteran of the principal wars of the early 19th century and who, in 1825, was Lieutenant Governor of the Eastern District of the Cape Colony. In December 1831, Bourke became Governor of New South Wales, after Sir Ralph Darling's six year term came to a close.

* * *
William Sacheverell Coke’s long life spanned almost the entire nineteenth century; he was born in 1805 and his death occurred ninety-one years later. His brother Francis Lillyman D’Ewes Coke was one year older than William. As boys they watched the troops going to and from the battle of Waterloo. Victoria ascended the throne when William was thirty two years old and she was still monarch at his death, fifty nine years later. Lord Melbourne (William Lamb, 1779-1848) who became Prime Minister of England in 1835, assumed a special role of influence and friendship with the new young Queen. Previously, the wealth and position of the Lamb family benefited from a marriage with a Coke heiress.

In 1815 William's mother died leaving four sons and five daughters. D’Ewes Coke had the sole responsibility of the children’s upbringing, their education by tutors or at schools and colleges, and later finding an occupation that would provide each of them at least a degree of independence.

The eldest son and heir, Francis, enrolled at Oxford University. D’Ewes Coke sought the aid of his friend the fifth Duke of Rutland and his Duchess to influence the Duke of York to accept his second son William as a cadet at Sandhurst Royal Military College. Here, young men were admitted from the age of twelve years. William was fourteen when he enrolled. He studied classics, Latin, French, arithmetic, geography, landscape drawing and the elements of military practice.

The Royal Military College opened in 1802 at Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire and, in 1812, moved to Sandhurst, later becoming the Royal Military Academy. His Royal Highness the Duke of York, Commander in Chief of the Army, established the Academy in order to improve the military education of army officers. This was a direct result of the challenge of Napoleon and the success of his campaigns. Previously, the training and skills of the British Army changed very little since the Marlborough wars of the early eighteenth century. The Senior Department at Sandhurst became the principal section of the college and this in due course became the Staff College.

There was a Junior Department—an educational establishment for cadets—and it was here that William enrolled. In the early days, 400 cadets filled three categories: first, one hundred orphan sons of officers killed in His Majesty's service, to be educated free, second, eighty sons of officers active in His Majesty's service each paying £40 per annum and third, one hundred sons of noblemen and gentlemen, sixty cadets of the Royal Artillery, and sixty cadets of the East India Company, all paying
ninety guineas per annum. The last category raised revenue for the college, at the same time fulfilling the desire of the wealthy to fit their younger sons for commissions in renowned regiments with splendid uniforms.

In 1819, at the time William enrolled at Sandhurst, there was a recession in the British economy manifest by hardship in the country districts and reduced government spending. The charitable category of cadets was greatly reduced in number. Additionally, a military career was then not particularly attractive as there was little opportunity to distinguish oneself in war, the possibility of which was rather remote. Some older officers on half pay, with war experience, took up foreign service in countries such as South America, although private soldiers had few prospects within the military establishment and even fewer prospects of alternate employment elsewhere. Ireland was perhaps the one posting offering a little practical experience.

William entered the college in the category of the son of a gentleman. Sandhurst required cadets before leaving to satisfy the examiners that they had a thorough knowledge of Euclid, were well versed in either Classics, French, German or History, were conversant with the first and second systems of Vauban, proficient in Military Drawing, and of exceptional general conduct. From family letters that refer to William’s college reports, it appears that he did not excel at these requirements and constantly gave his father cause to reprimand and admonish him. On the
other hand, Sandhurst was considered by many as an oppressive and restricting institution that would sorely test the resolve of any sixteen to nineteen year old boy. D’Ewes Coke pondered his son’s performance and believed his ‘failings’ jeopardised his future. He could ask his distinguished friend the Duke of Rutland to assist in a commission and a placement for William, but good college reports were imperative.

William’s own most pressing cause for concern was his constant shortage of money and the deprivations experienced by the lack of it. His father was most cautious in its apportionment to him.

In 1822, at the age of seventeen, William took leave from Sandhurst and set out on a modest ‘Grand Tour’ of Belgium, Holland, France and Germany, visiting the sites of various fortifications and the many battlefields of Marlborough’s and Napoleon’s wars where, as he wrote to his father, ‘we picked up bones, cockades and small arm balls...’

William’s tour of Europe occurred in a relatively ‘quiet time’ between the military occupation that followed the battle of Waterloo and the later revolutions that were to disrupt Europe from the 1830s onwards. The Battle of Waterloo, on 18 June 1815, which saw the final defeat of Napoleon, occurred seven years before William’s visit. He spent much time in the company of a group of older British officers, war veterans who remained in France, first in the army of occupation and later living on half-pay after the allied occupation in France ceased in 1818. William travelled by stage-coach and although he carried excellent letters of introduction and had the manners of a gentleman, there was little money for other than the basic essentials. For recreation he engaged in a little fencing and boxing.

During the years in which Europe struggled to overcome the devastation of war and the disruption of occupation, England assumed the position of the most powerful and stable nation in the world. England had a strong navy, resourceful banks, a large fleet of merchant ships, and the benefit of a head-start in reaping the dividends of the industrial revolution. However, this outward prosperity concealed a depressed period for British agriculture and lean years with plenty of social discontent, misery and disorder amongst the ordinary people. Ireland suffered even greater poverty.

Sea power ensured trade monopolies. Between 1800 and 1818, Britain acquired Malta, the Ionian Islands, footholds in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, the islands of Ascension and Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore and the Straits Settlements. In South America, Britain ‘possessed’ part of Dutch Guiana, Trinidad, St Lucia and Tobago. Occupation of Australia
also advanced steadily although the problems associated with the presence of too many convicts and too few free settlers called for new policies to resolve the ensuing difficulties.

William returned to England, crossing the channel in a little sloop-rigged, single-masted cutter. He spent the summer of 1823 with his family at Brookhill. His future career as a soldier and the possibility of a commission were his foremost concerns.

The Duke of Rutland invited William to Belvoir Castle, probably to have a look at him before recommending him to the Duke of York. The Duchess and several of their daughters were at home at the castle. In later years, William remembered this visit with some anguish. ‘My kit was not of the best, and to my horror on entering my room in the Great Tower I found my portmanteaus unpacked and my silk stockings, well worn and in holes, spread on the clothes horse before the fire’. D’Ewes Coke kept his son constantly short of money: lack of cash and holes in his stockings were to be a problem for a long time.

After leaving Belvoir Castle, William went to London to wait upon the Duke of York. Because of Rutland’s kindly interest, His Highness appears to have taken some trouble over the young man. William wrote in later years that the Duke of York ‘was very kind to me both at that time and afterwards when I obtained my lieutenancy’.

William’s commission as an ensign in His Majesty’s 39th Regiment of Foot, then serving in Ireland, carries the date 28 January 1824. This commission directed him to join the regiment at Limerick on or before the ninth day of March next, and to report to the Officer Commanding.

**His Majesty’s 39th Regiment of Foot**

His Majesty’s 39th Regiment of Foot formed in 1702 and was one of the regiments raised in preparation for the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) in which Lord Marlborough led the British forces. The Regiment seized Gibraltar from the Spaniards in 1704 and, in 1783, defended it against the Spanish and French. The Regiment served in the seven year war (1756-1763) in Europe and also for many years in India. The Regiment’s motto was ‘Primus in Indis’ marking the fact that it was the first King’s regiment (as distinct from the East India Company’s) employed in that country. The Regiment took part in the battle of Plassey (23 June 1757) when Clive defeated a Bengal army and its French allies. The 39th served in Spain and the South of France from 1809 to
1814. On 16 May 1811, the second battalion took part in the horrendous battle of Albuera. The allies lost 4000 men out of an army of 10,000. The French lost 7000 of their 24,000 men. Following that battle, and wherever stationed, the regiments that participated, and those who survived, always commemorated the anniversary of Albuera.

After Napoleon's abdication in 1814, the 39th moved to North America but was recalled when Napoleon escaped from Elba and began his march to Paris. The regiment did not reach Europe in time for the battle of Waterloo, but joined the victorious allies in Paris and remained in France until 1818 when the allied occupation ended. Lieutenant Colonel Cavendish Sturt was then Commander, and it was under him that the regiment moved to Ireland in December 1818. It was there that William joined it in 1824.

The Prince regent, eldest son of King George III, became King George IV on the death of his father in 1820. Under his influence, uniforms became showy and ornamented: shakos became higher and gorgeous with gold and silver braid. The 39th's headgear was seven and a half inches high, bell-topped and with a long plume. A band of gold and silver lace embellished the base. It was only surpassed by the shakos of the 57th Regiment which were half an inch higher with gold lace decorating the top.

Ireland

In the 1820s, the British armed forces were scattered all over the world. Of the eighty three line regiments, seventy four were out of England and nine were at home. Of the seventy four out of England, twenty three were in Ireland. Strictly speaking, Ireland was not 'abroad' since the Union Act of 1800 made it part of Britain, with its ultimate authority in Westminster and an executive, but no parliament, in Dublin, ruled by a Lord Lieutenant and a bureaucracy. When William arrived in Ireland, the Lord Lieutenant was the Marquess Wellesley, elder brother of the Duke of Wellington.

In spite of the hope stirred among the Irish majority by the growth of support for some kind of emancipation for Catholics, administration of Ireland continued in the interests of the Protestant ascendancy. Catholics and their priests were excluded from every process of government and administration. In consequence, discontent and violence were rife. Desperation made the actions of the Irish resistance brutal and poorly organised. The Irish peasants themselves were
frequently the victims of the ensuing violence. Their houses, farms and crops were burned and their cattle killed or maimed.

The police and the militia, backed up by the magistracy, disciplined the unruly and the criminal, and the British Army was there to deal with events beyond the capabilities of the civil powers. The British Army became an object of hatred and episodes of violence against army men became part of William Coke's experiences.

William made the passage to Ireland in a steam boat. Shortly after his arrival, in March 1824, William found himself in the company of Daniel O'Connell, travelling in a coach from Dublin to Limerick. The two men shared a room at the overnight stop at Parsons Town. The years of repression saw Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association, once banned, become a powerful organisation, giving the Irish people some strength and unity against their rulers. O'Connell himself rose to political notoriety and was prosecuted in late 1825 on charges of inciting rebellion, although later acquitted for lack of evidence. Later again, in 1826, he was elected to the Westminster Parliament but he could not take his seat because he would not take the oath. Unfortunately William made no comment in his letters about his impression of O'Connell, nor did he record any further details of his meeting with him.

However, William did describe to his father some of his duties. At the time of his arrival at Limerick, two thirds of the regiment (there were over 600 men) were on detachment and 200 men were stationed at headquarters. William attended two drills each day. He went on marches with his men, a few miles from their quarters, 'carrying the colours'. He attended Courts Marshall. He attended the Assizes. Those unfortunate enough to be found guilty were hanged. The bodies were supposed to be dissected but were not, due to 'disturbances'. At off-duty times, William socialised with the local gentry at picnics or balls.

In October 1824, William forwarded to his father details of his pay and other emoluments. His pay was 5s 3d a day, that is about £7.10.6 a month. In addition he received 7s 6d a week for lodgings, fuel and candles while on detachment. His expenditure, taking account of powder and shot, was about £2 a month more than his income. Without taking any account of the cost of clothing, boots and so on, he estimated that he needed £50 a year in addition to his pay to meet his living expenses 'as a gentleman'. Army pay was certainly not enough to support an officer, even of the lowest rank, but William's father was reluctant to provide a regular allowance and preferred to send money from time to time, when his appeals became almost desperate and his catalogue of debts too long for comfort.
Promotion in the army could be purchased from the War Office, a system that did not come to an end until 1870. William continually urged his father to provide money for the purchase of a promotion. He believed that his diligence and valour entitled him to promotion.

D'Ewes Coke had a reasonable income from his position as a landed gentleman and a part proprietor of a coal mine, but his eldest son was at Oxford, and William had three younger brothers, two preparing for the army and the third for the Anglican priesthood and all were making demands of some sort or other on his purse.

William’s fellow officers included many ageing gentlemanly subalterns who had served in legendary campaigns in India, Spain and Northern Europe. They spent their spare time talking of the past: the future appeared to have few opportunities for them. William’s youth and inexperience made him an avid listener. The officers were frequently quarrelsome and duels were not uncommon. Even William found himself committed to a duel. His new friend Charles Sturt agreed to be his second. William certainly did not write to his father about this incident and knowledge of it comes from his later recollections:

After a review when all the officers had been inspected, and we were sitting down at mess, there were many toasts given and much wine drunk. An ensign under me, flushed rather by the effects of the wine, leant against me, and put his arm on my shoulder. I, unfortunately, pushed him off, and he fell over his chair to the mess-room floor, which caused quite a stir among the superior officers. After midnight, when I was in bed, an officer waited on me with a challenge, which I could not refuse. We went out on a cold winter’s morning, with the snow on the ground, to some distance outside the lines. We were both placed, and Sturt, of the Light Company, being my second, said ‘do not shoot the poor fellow, he is not to blame’. We were placed twelve paces apart: the words ‘Gentlemen, are you ready?’ were given: then ‘Fire!’ My opponent’s ball seemed to pass very near my head, and I then fired in the air, and we returned to the barracks. When the Colonel got up in the morning he was told that we had met. His face immediately turned, and he said ‘Acted like gentlemen? I forgive them. Hurrah!’
Soon after his arrival in Limerick, William learnt from rumours that the regiment’s next move would be to New South Wales. He had then recently met Lieutenant Charles Sturt, beginning a lasting friendship that strengthened during the few years when they were together in Australia. William invited Charles Sturt to Brookhill during the first summer leave from duty in Ireland.

In May 1825, William’s younger brother Edward gained a commission in the 45th Regiment of Foot, then serving in India. Before departing, he and William enjoyed a brief holiday together in Europe. In July 1825, orders arrived for the 39th Regiment to go on to New South Wales. D’Ewes Coke undoubtedly thought this was the appropriate time to secure a lieutenancy for his second son.

**Australia**

Like Ireland, in the 1820s New South Wales needed a strong military presence. A substantial part of the population consisted of convicts still in confinement and subject to repressive discipline. The 39th Regiment was directed to undertake guard duties in New South Wales, supporting the civil authorities. On their passage out, they would act as guard for transported convicts.

Following his brief holiday in Europe, William returned to England then went on to Chatham Barracks on the Thames Estuary, a naval dockyard and outfitting depot since the time of Queen Elizabeth. While awaiting orders for departure, he organised his personal affairs for his sojourn in New South Wales. His friends were people of distinction and many farewells were necessary. His letters to his father reveal that he viewed his colonial posting with excitement and saw the possibility of an improvement in his expectations. He constantly reminded his father of the meagreness of his finances (which he recorded in detail in an account book) and his desire that a captaincy be purchased for him. William spoke of those of his contemporaries whose fathers had already purchased, and of his friend Sturt, whose father was supposed to be making certain negotiations at that time.

Ideally, an infantry regiment consisted of a battalion of ten or twelve companies, each of 100 men. In practice, a regiment contained about 600 to 800 men. In command of a company was a Captain and two subalterns – Lieutenant and Ensign (or, later, 2nd Lieutenant). The senior officers of a regiment were a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, and two Majors.
While at the depot at Chatham, the 39th Regiment was divided into eighteen detachments of varying sizes. Most of these detachments were assigned to convict transport ships to serve as guards. William’s detachment was among the first to leave, in December 1825, while the last of the Regiment departed in April 1827.

Lieutenant Coke was placed in command of the guard of REGALIA, a ship of 360 tons, wood built and copper bottomed, constructed in Sunderland in 1811 and owned by William Grey. The captain for the voyage was Robert Burt. The surgeon, who also had magisterial powers, was James Rutherford. The guard of soldiers numbered seventeen. Their charge was one hundred and twenty Irish convicts. The government paid each officer who took out convicts £95 for the passage and for clothes. Captain Burt agreed to supply food and wine for the passage to William and the doctor for £50 each. This arrangement was accepted, leaving William £45. William then determined his needs for the passage and his situation in New South Wales. A meticulous keeper of expenses, William drew up the following list of his requirements and forwarded it to his father.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2 knives</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scissors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cork Screw</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever pointed pencil</td>
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<td>2 books for men’s accounts</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 quire post paper</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 do 1/6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 do foolscap</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 balls string</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>box wafers</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 prepared groats</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 doz cotton sheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 pair regular grey trousers</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallon tin bottle and feeder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washing basin pewter</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 boxes pastilles</td>
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<tr>
<td>oil of roses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 tooth brushes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 gall. pickles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bottles Harvey sauce</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 lbs Windsor soap</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>1 effervescent Chelt Salts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coarse Black Trows</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 pair for ship</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cloth for 2 new Red Coats</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 new blue</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 new gauntlets</td>
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etc.
'My linen and clothes cost me with trunks about £30. Besides these things', he wrote, 'I need to get some good books etc to read on the passage or else I shall be very lonely ... I think with £30 or £40 I can get everything comfortable which I hope you can spare without putting you to any inconvenience.' He also asked his father to get his shirts ready and send him a good cheese or two and a few pickles.

William’s time at Chatham passed in guard duty, drills and sword exercises. The call to sail finally came in late December. While REGALIA was outfitted and victualled for the passage to Ireland and then Australia, he wrote to his father from Deptford:

...here is nothing but confusion, the commands and bawling of the Boatswain, the crying of children, 30 of whom besides 6 women and 7 children are in a cabin much less than Mr Riley’s pantry and there is a door from it into my cabin, so I can hear every word they say, the women grumbling and the soldiers abusing them and the children. Besides this I have a hundred written orders to obey, reports to write, men to see, and am obliged to be continually on deck. On the 21st we marched 16 miles, the 22nd 12 and embarked. 23rd went to London to settle for men’s pay. 24th I am now settling all my accounts and am hurried in writing this letter to you ... I dine on shore ... but ... for the future I shall sleep on board ... I am shivering in my cabin. We have no fires. I am very much obliged to Uncle John for the gun ... If you can possibly spare any money ...

D’Ewes Coke, from his home at Brookhill, wrote to his son with fatherly advice and concern for his well being on the risky undertaking ahead of him. He forwarded his son some money and the cheeses. William quickly replied, telling his father of an alarming incident in which he acted with commendable professionalism, followed by a comment about the several commissions provided for his friends prior to their colonial service.

I have had a great deal of trouble with two of the soldiers. One of them threatened to throw the mate overboard and has sworn to be the death of him before the voyage is over. The other was mutinous but I have got rid of him. An escort arrived last night at 11 to take him prisoner to Chatham. They had to march 28 (miles) from 2 until 11 o’clock in the
evening. The first man I am obliged to keep on board. I got hurt in assisting to seize and bind them down and so did several of the men. The prisoners laughed when loaded pistols were put to their skulls and swore in Irish dreadfully and struck down everyone they could. One of them is suspected of having been concerned in the murder of Major Goring in Ireland. His father and most of his friends have been hung.

I have just got the bill cashed.... Sturt has just got his Company, and Hall his Lieutenancy, and Moor his Ensigncy...

At the time of departure from Deptford, William learnt of the deaths of the Duchess of Rutland who, with her husband, had assisted in furthering his career, and the head of his regiment Major Carthew, at Chatham. William described the departure:

At our first starting the pilot ran us aground near Blackwall and two ships ran foul of us and injured themselves and us a little into the bargain.

Upon getting into the Thames, the weather changed, the wind turned direct ahead, and they could do no more than 'beat about in the middle of the river'. This change heralded the onset of a week of easterly storms that, had the ship reached the southern coast of England before they set in, would have 'driven them before the wind in four days to Dublin'. Instead, they could but wait in the river. 'The moment the wind changes we can drop down to the Downs in two tides' William wrote to his father on 7 January 1826. He gave this letter to Captain Burt who lowered a boat to meet the London Steam Packet that conveyed his and other letters back to the city that they had left behind some days before.

After a stormy and dangerous passage, at night on 17 January 1826, REGALIA reached the Irish port Kingston (previously known as Dunleary, but renamed after the king landed there on a visit to Ireland.) William wrote:

I was sick 2 days of the gale. 26 soldiers were sick all the way. I did not get my bed made during the storm and although I had nailed all the boxes down and fastened them with cord, everything gave way and they were pitching about from one side of the cabin to the other and I could not
stop them till we arrived here. I am getting a cot sling as it is impossible to sleep in a fixed bed in stormy weather unless you are tied down.

Upon arrival, REGALIA was quickly boarded by a butcher who also acted as a Post Master, delivering mail including letters from D’Ewes Coke to his son. In reply, William wrote:

*I was on board the convict hulk today. We have to take a terrible bad set with us. They have set the ship (hulk) on fire 5 times during the last fortnight. The guard was obliged to shoot one of them.*

After the convicts came aboard REGALIA, William remarked that they were ‘all very quiet and seem very glad that they are escaped out of the hulk’. Thirty of the convicts had been ships captains or soldiers and one of them was a cousin of one of the soldiers of the guard. ‘They did look an ugly lot’, he wrote. In the last letter to his father before departure from Ireland (March 1826) William urged him to buy his further promotion to a company of his own, again citing several of his fellow officers at Sandhurst whose fathers had already done so.

William was to receive an inheritance upon reaching the age of twenty one years. So anxious was he at this time to secure the wished for promotion to a captaincy that he suggested its cost be born out of his inheritance. However, his father was unmoved by this plea and took no such action.

REGALIA experienced appalling weather in the Irish Sea and had to put back. The conversion of Dublin Bay into a safe harbour had only just begun and it was still a dangerous place. In stormy conditions, the wreck of ships was a frequent occurrence in the vicinity of the Bay. Upon REGALIA’s return to Kingston, William noted ‘one large ship being driven so far inshore that her bowsprit nearly touched the window of Armstrong’s Hotel’.

Command of REGALIA was the province of Captain Burt. William’s task was management of the convicts and on the occasion of this return to the mainland, he was alert enough to find one night, under the ship’s long-boat, a fugitive, naked, determined to swim ashore.

The captain was eager to get under way again and dropped anchor outside the tideway, ready to take advantage of any change in wind. During continuing storms, one night the vessel parted from her anchors
loosing ninety two fathoms of cable chain. The ship drifted perilously close to the rocky coast at Howth Head. With most soldiers sleeping below and all the convicts locked up, one of the guard overheard the captain give orders to prepare the quarter boat, silently, for himself and the sailors. This information was quickly conveyed to William who promptly responded, ordering his men to shoot or bayonet the first man who attempted to leave the vessel. Arrested in their would-be escape, the captain and crew could only set to work to recover more cable from the depths of the laden hold, and take other measures to check the vessel's drifting. When daylight came, REGALIA was so close in to the rocky cliffs that she could not be seen from Dublin Bay and was reported as lost. The next day she returned to the port, proving the observation incorrect. Two further attempts to leave were necessary before the ship began the voyage in mid March, somewhat depleted of stores and provisions.

William hoped that God would speed the ship as, in his opinion, a vessel more unsuitable to weather the winter gales and keep convicts at a safe distance could hardly be found. There was no poop, high and distinct from the prisoners’ space where the soldiers could keep guard. Instead there was a small round-house used for taking meals. This structure interfered with the working of the ship and was always at risk of being swept away in a storm. A 'slight barrier' three feet high (a 'quarter-deck') was the only protection against a rush of convicts and served to 'keep a few feet to ourselves, a sentry being placed during the day at each gateway'.

By the 1820s, the roles of the three leading figures on board a convict ship were well established. Captain Burt, like most convict ship masters, was in his trade to make money for himself and the ship's owners if he could, but, as the incident in the storm reveals, his own survival was paramount. Rutherford was a 'gaunt and worn-out doctor of the Navy' and could hardly have been in a convict ship from other than necessity.6 William, officer and gentleman, flushed with youth and ambition, was acutely aware of the responsibility and power of his position and bore a simple and straightforward attitude to his duty to himself, to his regiment, to his task, and unconsciously, to his class.

The delays to the departure gave each of the principal players the opportunity to evaluate the character of the others in preparation for the months ahead, months in which they would have to take meals together in a confining round-house overlooking 120 uneasy convicts. REGALIA sailed by Madeira on 25 March. She reached the Cape Verde Island of San Antonio on 5 April. If stores, fuel and the condition of the ship held out, this would be the last landfall before reaching New South
Wales. In the early days of the voyage, William suffered from a cold and inflammation of the chest. The surgeon treated this by bleeding him of twelve ounces of blood. William believed that this procedure contributed to his well being for the remainder of the voyage, especially the time spent in the tropics.

An awning was raised over the quarter deck to shelter the soldiers but the convicts on the other side of the railing had no such consideration shown them. William walked up and down the deck from ten in the morning until half past eleven or twelve at night. He practised with the gun given him by his Uncle John, shooting at birds in flight and once attempting to wound a whale. He wrote to his Uncle about the gun, a weapon that no doubt impressed the convicts with its capabilities.

However, the gun was not impressive enough to prevent thoughts of mutiny! A plot was brewing below decks that would have seen William and all the guard murdered, and the doctor, captain and crew saved only to sail REGALIA to another destination. An old convict confessed the plot in time to prevent any bloodshed. No official records appear to have survived to tell, even in brief detail, how this situation was managed and what steps were taken to restrain or punish the errant convicts. William’s own letter refers to it but briefly. He wrote in far more detail about the birth of twin kids to his milking goat and the quality of the refreshments on board:

\emph{The water is very bad. Even the best weakens the intestines in a balmy climate. I drink nothing but coffee and cocoa in the morning, wine at dinner, and tea in the evenings, let me be ever so thirsty... Smoking is the best thing for thirst.... As to spirits I never touch any, but the captain will either go mad or kill himself as he often takes a glass of brandy between dinner and tea (4 to 6) besides the claret and sherry, a double share of which he drinks at dinner. The effect on his countenance is very great already and he begins to laugh like an idiot. I drink rather freely of his claret which is wholesome. We also have pale ale, porter and spruce beer on board, but I seldom touch it although it is more wholesome than water. We have hot rolls for breakfast and fresh bread every day.}

In crossing the equator the convicts had little opportunity for gaiety or ritual but the captain, officers and soldiers made the most of it with rough and ready fun—shaving, tarring and consuming great quantities of whiskey.
The doctor lived in a state of apprehension about the convicts. His duty was to be in daily contact with them: their well being was his business. If he made sure that the convicts were properly medicined, victualled and exercised, he stood to win ten shillings for every one delivered in good health. They were, however, restless, and 'conspiracies' were continually being reported. He assured them that if they caused him harm in any way, the officer of the guard would hang every one of them from the yard arm. Restraint by leg irons was no threat since the irons on board were of too large a size for most of their ankles. At night, the convicts were locked below and a sentry stood over the only opening to the air of these confining quarters. A lamp swung from above his position. In the soldiers' berths there were small holes just large enough for the muzzle of a gun. These flanked the convicts' quarters. During the day, half the convicts were allowed on deck at any time and ordered to stay fore of the wooden barrier under threat of being knocked down by the butt end of a musket should they pass. If several should rush, they were assured that they would be fired upon.

The effect was soon felt of Captain Burt's decision not to wait for additional supplies at the Dublin docks to replenish those consumed during the lengthy delay at their departure. BeCalmed in the tropics, they ran out of cooking fuel. Every spare spar, all the linings of the ship's boats, even the barriers on deck that were supposed to separate the officers and crew from attack by the convicts, were burnt for fuel. Provisions and water were running out.

The diminishing supplies made necessary a stop at Rio de Janeiro. Captain Burt, whose charting skills may have been affected by wine and whiskey, failed to locate Rio harbour and made a landfall at Ilhã Grande instead. When the mistake was realised, the captain tried to reach the open sea again but the ship fell becalmed. William and a small party of soldiers took a boat and rowed ashore to the tropical island. They stayed ashore overnight and the next morning walked to a large plantation and met the German planter who, with the labour of 300 slaves, grew tropical fruit, sugar and coffee. He offered to supply REGALIA with sugar and coffee and provide twenty slaves to cut firewood, at a reasonable price. Those who came ashore at Ilhã Grande and experienced its tropical beauty were loath to return to the ship but none wished to risk being court marshalled for desertion.

Captain Burt saw the chance to make a handsome profit by buying the planter's sugar at three farthings a pound and selling it in New South Wales for the going price of two shillings and five pence farthing (3,800% profit!).
How irritated he was when REGALIA could not defeat a strong off-shore wind and return to Ilha Grande!

On their return to REGALIA, the doctor vehemently reproached those who had gone ashore for leaving the ship under-guarded for so long and the responsibility of the convicts in his hands - it was too much! The remaining soldiers had earlier dismissed his protest with threats to throw him overboard. The challenge to his authority and dismissal of his concern increased his anxiety.

In a ship the size of the REGALIA, two officers at least should have been able to settle any differences by talking them out but this was not so for Rutherford and Lieutenant Coke. Continuing tensions appear to have prevailed. Situations that arose reveal Rutherford agitated and at times almost at the mercy of both soldiers and convicts.

Among the Coke family papers is a formal letter to 'Lieut Coke, Officer of the Guard on board The Convict Ship Regalia' from a harassed Doctor and written at William's insistence:

Sir

In compliance with your desire that I should state to you in writing my reasons for requesting you to continue to enforce the order you gave on a former occasion - that the soldier Pearse, should not be again placed as sentry in the main hatchway, I beg leave to remind you that, at a subsequent period of the same day on which you issued this order - the 18th of April last - the same soldier Pearse, threatened me, in your presence, with a complaint to the Commander of the Forces - that is, to His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, which threat of complaint I am suffering under at this moment.

Now, Sir, as I have been since that time threatened by more than one of the convicts with complaints to the Governor of New South Wales, I think it a hard case and unfair that this prejudiced soldier should be placed, an only witness, not a convict, of my conduct to the prisoners below: and as, from the circumstances which took place on the 18th of April and which then induced you, even without any wish of mine expressed on the subject, to judge it necessary to give the order alluded to, there is some reason to apprehend that this mode lately adopted by the more
vigorously inclined of the convicts of endeavoursing to deter me from doing my duty (in keeping them under necessary control) by threats of complaints to the Governor, may have been suggested to them by this soldier, I think he should not be placed in any situation which would afford him opportunities of communicating privately with the prisoners. For these reasons, therefore, together with those which induced you to think the order necessary and proper in the first instance, and of which you are yourself, of course, aware, I do request that you will have the goodness still to continue your order of the 18th April, in force - namely, that the soldier Pearse be not again placed as sentry in the main hatchway.

I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient very humble servant

J Rutherford, Surgeon and Superintendent

Despite the falling out between William and Rutherford following to the going-ashore episode and the strained relationship over the insubordination of the soldier Pearse which the above communication suggests, they both agreed that they could no longer tolerate their confinement at meals with Captain Burt. They decided that after they left Rio they would organise their own mess even though this would increase William’s expenditure for the voyage by a further £12. This situation might suggest that William and Rutherford had formed a satisfactory working relationship aboard the small, cramped and malodorous REGALIA but many issues of contention remained and came between them before they were finally free of each other’s company.

Rio de Janeiro

REGALIA dropped anchor in Rio’s splendid harbour on 17 May 1826, deliberately close to WELLESLEY, the flagship of the British Admiral Sir George Eyre. Several other ships of the British Navy were at Rio at that time. William was quick to make himself known to Sir George and establish his connections with Derbyshire where many members of the Eyre family then lived. Sir George offered to watch his ship during his stay while the young man enjoyed the opportunities which Rio society
afforded. William was well looked after by the junior officers of the navy and was presented to the Emperor and Empress at a court levee on 19 May at which he, and the officer who accompanied him there, ‘were the only persons that did not fall down and kiss (the Emperor’s) hands’ as was expected of the local population. This was not bad manners. The British had explicit exemption from the king. William recalled the Emperor as a stout-made man, much marked by small-pox.

Portuguese sailors settled in Brazil from the early 1500s. They married with native women and their descendants developed large area of country. Between 1580 and 1820, slave traders brought about four million African slaves from Angola to Brazil. Sugar became the chief export. Many more Portuguese settled in Brazil following the discovery of gold and diamonds there, about 1700. King John VI of Portugal and his wife Donna Carlotta fled to Brazil when Napoleon invaded that country and enthroned a French King, provoking the Peninsular Wars (1808 to 1814). Don Pedro, their eldest son, legal heir and Vice Regent, declared himself and his wife Emperor and Empress. Under Don Pedro, Brazil peacefully gained independence from Portugal in 1822.

William’s arrival at Rio corresponded to a period of potential danger for the Emperor Don Pedro. His father, John VI King of Portugal, died in March 1826 (just as William was leaving England for New South Wales) and though Don Pedro was legal heir, the Queen wished her younger and favourite son Prince Miguel to take the throne. Don Pedro later renounced the throne in favour of his young daughter Maria.

William made the most of his stay, attending court and dining aboard WELLESLEY as often as he chose. The officers were all ‘remarkably civil’ to him. On one occasion, the midshipmen entertained him generously with drinks. He told his father that this hospitality:

...made me nearly drunk, but still I was obliged to go and dine with the Lieutenants at 4 and had the Admiral and Captain next to me and I had to scheme well not to be too heavy with the wine.

Despite the unavoidable state of intoxication, in the evening William accompanied his hosts to the opera.

Being an officer in charge of the discipline of convicts, with some responsibility for the administration of ultimate sanctions was, in some ways, not unlike being in charge of sailors in the British navy. William no doubt exchanged much professional chat on these social occasions.
Ships of the American navy also called at Rio and William spent some time in the company of the American Admiral. He recalled later how the English sailors amused themselves through WELLESLEY’s port-holes by laughing at the American sailors, showing them their own muscular arms. The Americans were not so muscular as the English. In that hot climate, the American sailors wore blue cloth trousers, which was a cause of some sneering on the part of the English officers and men, who were all in white.

One of the delights of this visit to Rio was to go up river in the cool of the evenings to dine with a diamond merchant at his country seat, situated ‘amidst most lovely scenery’. William and his friends received white calico jackets to change into before dinner, on account of the heat.

In the years after Waterloo, many naval officers, hitherto fully employed, were put on half pay. The less resigned of them sought to return to the sea or other employment. The Foreign Enlistment Act had a deterrent influence on such actions but not a very powerful one judging from the wide range of former British naval officers to be found outside the British navy. William met many celebrated men at Rio, in the employ of the navies of Brazil, Montevideo and other foreign countries.

It was in Britain’s interest to foster a stable monarchy in Brazil in order to facilitate trade. During his stay, several British vessels arrived at Rio with emissaries whose task was not only to encourage trade but to influence the Emperor and the Brazilians to suppress slavery. William watched ships arrive almost daily bringing their cargoes of slaves. He attended the slave markets. He saw the conditions under which slaves worked on the plantations he visited. He expressed a sympathy about the slaves which he quite overlooked bestowing on the poor convicts in his charge on their way to Australia.

When the time came to prepare for departure, William faced the resumption of the voyage to New South Wales, after the society and delights of Brazil, with gloom and reluctance. He must have looked forward to his tour of duty in the Antipodes with, at best, resignation.

D’Ewes Coke received no letters from his son for some time after REGALIA left Rio. He nevertheless received occasional communications from William’s fellow officers, some with news of him, others keeping him informed of the availability of a captaincy to which William now constantly aspired. The sum needed to purchase it was about £1500.
Arrival in Sydney.

Sixteen convict ships sailed from London or Ireland for New South Wales or Tasmania in 1826. REGALIA was among the smallest of this fleet, the tonnage of which ranged from 320 to 640. In that year, about 2270 convicts were transported to Australia. More than 99% of them survived the voyage, an astonishing achievement if one relates that figure to the probable number of deaths of any contemporary group of that size during a period of four to five months. REGALIA's journey in 1826 has the distinction of being one voyage of transportation without any convict deaths. For that achievement, Dr Rutherford is to be commended. Lieutenant Coke also deserves commendation for the efficient execution of his duty. Captain Burt's demeanour, avarice and navigation skills may have discomforted the other two officers from time to time during the voyage but he did steer the ship and its crew safely to Australia.

REGALIA reached Sydney Cove on 5 August 1826. Coke's own recollections of the months following his arrival, reproduced in the following pages, are taken from his reminiscences titled Early Life in New Holland, published some time between the 1870s and the 1880s. Copies of these articles are contained in family scrapbooks kept by Coke's youngest son Algernon who failed to date these articles, published in the Derbyshire Times. These scrapbooks are at present in the possession of Mr Colin MacLaren of Suffolk whose late wife was a grand daughter of William Coke.
Early Life in New Holland
—An extract from Coke's reminiscences published in the Derbyshire Times

On the fortunate termination of our perilous voyage in the Convict Ship we were all, as may naturally be supposed, anxious to get on shore at Sydney as soon as possible. Just as I was in the boat rowing ashore, another boat that was passing us stopped, and I had the pleasure of shaking hands with my old St Omer friend, Townsend, a half-pay artillery officer, who, his duty ended, was now returning to England. In one of the frequent quarrels that used to take place at St Omer, two Voltigeur officers entered his room, and demanded satisfaction. Pistols were resorted to, and Townsend's ball struck his adversary in the hip bone. Now, as the French officer was young, handsome, engaging, a splendid dancer, of courtly manners, and the pet of the ladies, their hatred naturally turned against my friend for maiming their beau ideal of a man, and the gentlemen followed the lead of the ladies, so Townsend was cut by all the English and French. He then, to pass the time took to miniature painting and met with great success.¹⁹

Having landed, we marched up the street, and were met by the officers of the Buffs, to which regiment I was to be attached till the headquarters came out.¹⁰ On our way we passed an almost naked native, lolling listlessly with a spear in his hand, and though he seemed to take no notice of anything, yet, nevertheless, nothing escaped his sleepy eye. Farther on we came to a guard house with a verandah round it, and a little beyond this on the same side, we passed the guard and entered the barrack yard. In front were the men's barracks, and the officers' quarters were chiefly placed at right angles to these - on the left, sloping down towards the guard house and wall. They consisted of one floor, with a very broad portico or verandah, supported by strong pillars on dwarf walls, whereon, late at nights, the officers used to sit and chat with one another. On these stones, during the hot winds, the thermometer often stood at 105° at midnight.

On inquiring after the two officers who had preceded me, I was told they had started half an hour before, towards the Botany Bay side, on a shooting excursion.¹¹ I followed and soon overtook them. When our tale had been told of all that had happened since we parted at Chatham, we toiled on, now under forest trees, now through tangled bush, having above and around us lots of screeching parrots. One of our number, Captain Wakefield, so often smelt a snake or heard one, that at last I turned tail and said, 'As you have guns, and leather leggings reaching up to your thighs, and I nothing but light white trousers, I shall go back
again.' This I did at once, and was nearly suffocated on the way.

One can hardly believe it, but use so lessens the sense of danger, that in a few days, without any protection whatever, I was shooting green ground parrots, amongst snakes, tarantulas, and lots of such venomous things; and in a few months I went unconcernedly about barefooted, accompanied by natives only, who in case of a bite, tie a ligature instantly above and below the wound, and suck the poison out. The first snake I came across I did not see until I had a foot on each side of it, but then I quickly jumped away. The soldier who was with me was quite paralysed with fright. I cried out to him 'get out of the way', yet he still stood looking at the reptile, so I fired and killed it. The snake was 13 feet long, green with gold spots, and was, as I afterwards ascertained—though I did not know then—quite harmless.

At the evening mess, we of the 39th appeared in coats with facings buttoned close and in such a heat, while the Buffs were in cooler dress, with open coats and buff waistcoats. Now I saw mosquitoes to advantage; the large grey ones, plauguy, persevering, and furious! The Colonel was named Stewart, and his nephew, of the same name was his adjutant. ... The officers were a nice, agreeable set of men. Old Colonel Stewart was made Acting Governor during the absence of Sir Ralph Darling; and as military officers were not allowed to have a grant of land, he sold himself 20,000 acres at sixpence per acre, a valuable property which the Stewarts now enjoy.

Time passed with us very agreeably; we built or fitted yachts, and had many a pleasant voyage in them. The land wind died away about 5 o'clock in the morning, and at 10 the sea breeze set in, coming to its full force about 2 in the afternoon: so we used then to get off, beat down towards the Heads, land in a charming little bay, knock the small sweet oysters off the rocks, and with our vinegar, pepper and other like ingredients, make a good lunch: and then have a pleasant run back before the wind, getting home in time for evening mess, before the sea breeze died away.
The oysters actually grew, as one may say, on the boughs of the mangrove trees; they used to attach themselves not only to the rocks almost out of the water, but also to the branches of the mangroves which dipped in it. The mangroves grew to the height of about 15 feet, in the water and on muddy shores, and it was no easy matter to pass through them. We often carried home, as a curiosity, branches of them covered thick with oysters.

* * *

An additional account of Coke's first few months in Sydney is contained in a letter written in November 1826 to his Uncle John (John Coke Esquire, Mansfield Woodhouse, near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire England), with post scripts on 26 November and 9 December. The letter travelled home on REGALIA's return voyage which finally departed Sydney on 20 December 1826.

My dear Uncle,

You have no doubt heard long ago of my arrival in this Colony and as I know it will give you pleasure to hear from me I have taken up my Pen to give you as accurate an account of this Colony as possible. In the first place I will let you know how we live here – our Barrack is situated on a Peninsula, directly below us lies the Shipping, on our left there is a Fort which serves as the Saluting Battery. The Barrack is large and as fine as any in England, in front there are Verandas to shade us from the Sun, the Men's buildings are two stories high, the Officers only one, in rear of each Officers quarter there is a building consisting of a bed and kitchen for our Servant, all our furniture is made of Cedar as well as the Window Shutters etc. The houses are all covered in with pieces of Wood called Shingles as there are no tiles in the Country.

The Subalterns that is to say the Lieutenants and Ensigns have no duty here except sitting on the Criminal Court and seeing Men hung. The Jury here is formed of seven Officers, every day we sit we get 15 shillings allowed us each for our trouble. The Court in general consists of
the Judge, one Counsel against the Prisoner and the Witnesses, seldom indeed does any person come as a Spectator and the prisoners seldom employ a Man to defend them; we sometimes condemn five in a day to be hanged; it is more in appearance like an Inquisition as the Prisoners seldom call Witnesses and men are condemned with little Ceremony.

The Convicts are kept in very good order here, they are all obliged to salute whenever they meet us. Every necessary of life is twice as dear as in England and our daily pay is expended always in paying for our Mess and breakfast at Sydney. Clothes are immensely dear, as well as boots; the latter are cheap at two pounds five a pair, and these being made of Kangaroo leather badly tanned will not last half so long as the English leather which is very much esteemed here.

A blue Coat costs eight Pounds, butter four shillings a pound, Colonial Cheese 2 shillings and 6 pence. The Potatoes are wretched and unwholesome and cost twenty shillings a bushel - Peas cost not shelled at the cheapest time 2 shillings a peck. The only fruits we have here are Peaches, Guavas, Strawberries, Loquats, Oranges and Lemons. Strawberries cost two shillings and sixpence a quart. Peaches are cheap as well as Lemons, the latter cost 4d a dozen the former about 2d. Vegetables such as Greens etc are very scarce and dear. White Sugar at this moment costs by the Loaf eighteen pence a lb, brown which is made in this Country costs 5d a lb. Tea and preserved Ginger is very cheap. The native Currant is very good in Tarts as it is very acid and makes a pleasant drink when made into a Jelly and mixed with Water. Spirits are very dear as there is a duty of ten shillings a Gallon. Porter and Pale Ale cost two shillings and six pence a bottle. I believe the Grape and Tobacco will grow very well here. Now for the Climate. The Winter is never cold I believe, but the Summer is very hot, the Sun being nearly Vertical, the hot Winds that blow from the Northward are terrible, the Thermometer often rising to 115 in the Shade. This Wind blows very strong
but feels exactly as if it had been blowing over a furnace, and weakens the eyes very much; very few people can bear being exposed to it for half an hour. This Wind is warmer here than in India but we have the advantage over them as it in general changes about 8 in the Evening into a Cold Southerly Wind with Thunder and lightening which illuminate the horizon completely and is not confined as in England to one part of it. Often at 1/2 past 7 in the Evening we cannot bear our Coats on and are laying down panting for breathe and in a quarter of an hour afterwards of leaving the Mess we are cold, shivering and wishing for a fire. These sudden changes kill many people. Soldiers and the Inhabitants die very quick here, what with drinking and being exposed to the sudden changes in Weather.

Dysentery and bowel Complaints are the only dangerous diseases here and they carry off hundreds. At this time Ladies and elderly people as well as Children are dying of a disease called the Catarrh.

I send this Letter by the Ship that I came out in and I shall most likely write by the next. I have shot many birds and preserved the Skins for you, when I get a good collection I will send them you home, but I assure you that shooting is attended with a great deal of danger here, if a Snake bites you in this country, instant death follows. One of the most deadly and common snakes bite is so bad that the person bit only shivers and falls dead immediately. I am so much employed by the Criminal Court that I have hardly time to write and I only heard yesterday the 12th that the Ship I came out in the Regalia was to sail in the 15th instant.

The Clergyman in the Church here last Sunday gave a terrible Lecture most particularly to the Ladies and said these Hot Winds [which come now very often and 20 years ago it was surprising if they had more than 2 in a year] and the Catarrh was sent as a Judgment on them; I think he will frighten the Ladies now as in this last week we have had five days of hot Winds, the thermometer in the shade standing at 104 exposed to the Wind, and the Catarrh in the last two days killed in Sidney (sic) alone thirty seven people.
I have just got a great treat from the Captain of the Ship I came out with namely between 50 and 60 lb of Pickled and Salted Salmon in Jars for which I only paid him £2.10, I do not believe there is any more in the Colony and he might have sold it for £7 easily: it will be a fine thing at one of these distant Detachments.

26th Sunday. The Regalia will not start for a few days. This last Week has been terrible, the Thermometer stands at 104 in the Shade, all the Country and forests are on fire, the town is quite blackened by the Smoke and many Cottages are destroyed.

I dined on board the Volage yesterday with Grey son of Earl Grey. He is a Lieutenant on board. I often dine with the officers of the Volage, the Capt. is the Honbl Dundas, son of Lord Melville. The Commodore Sir J Brisbane is dying of a bowel Complaint. The Warspite Fly and the Volage Frigate are going to South America they ...

Dec 9th 1826

The Commodore Sir J Brisbane is not dead yet but he is lying on his back without power of speech and even if a spoonful of Arrow Root is put to his lips he vomits directly. He is dying of the Dysentery, a few soldiers have died lately of the colera morbus which is rather a strange disease in this Colony. All medical men now say it is undoubtedly an unhealthy climate. A French Ship came in here 3 days ago, the Officers have been dining at the different messes here, they are going to New Zealand.

My love to Aunt and Cousin John and believe me to be dear uncle your affectionate nephew W Sach‘ll Coke

REGALIA

Several months after he arrived in New South Wales, and when REGALIA was preparing to sail for England having been laid up for major repairs after the voyage, William bade farewell to Captain Burt and no doubt wished him a safe return voyage. He arranged to send a letter to
his Uncle John, and he probably sent others to his immediate family. The jars of pickled and salted salmon no doubt pleased William for both its nourishment, prestige and value. The generous gesture of Captain Burt may have been a belated amendment for his poor provisions and drunken company during the long voyage to Australia.

The French ship L'ASTROLABE entered Sydney Harbour on 2 December 1826. William Coke, in his reminiscences (page 96–97) recalled the time he spent showing the 'French Admiral Deauville' around the settlement. No doubt official visits to the French ship and socialising with the officers occurred with military and naval formalities. L'ASTROLABE resumed the discovery voyage on 19 December, the day before REGALIA sailed. Coke visited the quayside during the time that both ships moored at Sydney Cove.

REGALIA transported convicts on two occasions, the first time to Tasmania in 1820 and the second time to Sydney in 1826. She changed owners in 1827 and in that year made a voyage to London and to St Kitts in the Caribbean. Ownership changed again in 1829 and 1833. In the latter year, REGALIA made a voyage to Greenland. In 1836, a new owner used her in the coastal trade around England. A record exists of the wreck of REGALIA in 1852 although no account of the circumstances appears to remain.

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Part 1 End Notes

1 Letter to 'My dear Sisters', New Castle 2 April 1827. See page 83.
2 Wellington's armies suffered 15,000 casualties, the French 25,000 and the Prussian more than 7000.
3 Coke Family Papers, in possession of Mr Colin MacLaren.
4 These figures are quoted from Coke's own writing. The Sydney Gazette, 9 August 1826, Shipping Arrivals, notes a Guard of Lt Coke and 30 men, and 129 male convicts.
5 Dunleary was a little creek flowing into Dublin Bay. It was later incorporated into Dublin Harbour, under construction at the time of William's visit.
6 Brother Doctors Rutherford RN, made several voyages to NSW as Surgeon Superintendents of convict transports in the 1820s, becoming familiar figures in shipping circles in Sydney at the time.
9 This incident refers to William Coke’s time spent in touring Europe in 1822 or 1823. See page 4.

10 His Majesty’s 3rd Regiment of Foot (the Buffs). This regiment, during its period of service in Australia, consisted of one party under Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cameron which arrived at Hobart Town in May 1822, and another party including the Headquarters and Lieutenant Colonel William Stewart which arrived at Sydney in March 1823. Arrival of the regiment was spread over two and a half years.

The 3rd Regiment (Buff) was noted for the large number of casualties suffered at the Battle of Albuera, 16 May 1811. During their time in NSW, a detachment of the Buffs was appointed to Newcastle in January 1827. Officers of the Buffs who sought land grants in the Upper Hunter Valley with the intention of becoming settlers included Captain Samuel Wright, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cameron and Lieutenant Robert Stirling. The Headquarters of Coke’s own regiment, the 39th, arrived at Sydney in September 1827. This date marks Lieutenant Coke’s departure from his post at Newcastle.

11 REGALIA’s arrival in Australia was preceded by that of WOODMAN, which ship departed from London on 6 December 1825, and landed 146 male prisoners at Hobart Town in May 1827. WOODMAN came on to Sydney, arriving early June, bringing Captain Wakefield, Ensign Innes and forty rank and file of the 39th and 57th Regiments.

12 ‘The ground parrots, all green feathered, are so called because they live on the ground, and do not feed on flowers, as the tree parrots do, whose flesh thereby becomes scented or aromatic. The ground parrots are eatable. I went constantly barefooted because treading with a boot on a dead bough made a noise and annoyed the natives when stealing on Kangaroos etc., that were in sight, and looking at us. The native then used to stand quite still; if his arm was up, there it remained; and being naked, there were no clothes to flutter about. When the game began to graze, the native moved on, planting his whole foot firmly on the ground. The tarantula is an enormous spider, with hairy feet three inches long or more, and webs stretching for yards, which it was very difficult to break.’ (This footnote is Coke’s own, in his reminiscences.)

13 Colonel William Stewart joined His Majesty’s army in 1794 and transferred to the 3rd Regiment in 1796. He served in the West Indies, and then in the Peninsular Wars from 1808 to 1812. In Portugal in 1810 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He commanded the 3rd Regiment in America in 1814, returned to Europe to be part of the Army of Occupation in France from 1815 to 1818. He became a Colonel by purchase in 1819. In 1821, the 3rd Regiment was ordered to NSW. Colonel Stewart arrived in 1825. He was the senior military officer in NSW and served as Acting Governor in the interval between the departure of Governor Brisbane and the arrival of Governor Darling (1825). With his regiment, following 1827, he saw duty in India, before retiring to an estate near Bathurst in NSW. (Further reading: Australian Dictionary of Biography.)

14 In 1828, William Coke acknowledged the extravagance of this indulgence. He wrote ‘I was certainly rather foolish in a Purchase I made of a Boat for Shooting, one which (when sold again) I lost a little money’. See page 107.

15 See Coke’s reminiscences Part 2, for an account of the visit of these warships and the subsequent death of Commodore Sir J Brisbane.

16 L’ASTROLABE, Captain D’Urville.
In January 1827, Lieutenant Coke was sent to the Newcastle settlement. A detachment of the 57th Regiment already stationed there was to be replaced with a new complement of officers and soldiers of the Buffs to which regiment Coke was appointed prior to headquarters of his own regiment reaching Sydney.

Shortly after his arrival he began to keep a notebook of days and events beginning 1 February 1827. He also wrote three letters from Newcastle to his family. These are reproduced on pages 83–89. The accompanying illustration of Newcastle (above) depicts the progress of the settlement to which he came. Macquarie's Pier was under construction. The semaphore was erected on Signal Hill. In the illustration, the Watt Street wharf is discernable.

Henry Dangar, in his book, Index and Directory to Map of the Country Bordering upon the River Hunter ... and Emigrant's Guide, described Newcastle in the 1820s thus: its public or Government buildings consist of a church, once a neat edifice but latterly divine service has not been performed in it in consequence of the steeple having been considered unsafe, and which is now taken down. The other public buildings are, the residence of the resident police magistrate, the parsonage house, surgeon's quarters, court house, subaltern officers' quarters, commissariats stores, military barracks and guard room, hospital, gaol, residence of mining manager, wind mills, etc., with a fort, on the extremity of the neck of land commanding the entrance of the harbour, which is capable of being made very strong. Its private houses do not yet amount to more than from twenty five to thirty; and about 200 inhabitants, (exclusive of the Government mining establishment,) amongst which are storekeepers, or mercantile men, shop-keepers, inn-keepers, (five in number,) carpenters, bricklayers, brick-makers, blacksmiths, etc.
1 February 1827—
(1) Returned from Port Stephen overland 7 days out and 2 at Port Stephen.

Friday 2nd—Out shooting in the Morning, killed some Quail and other birds for their plumage. On my return found one Native amongst a Group who was noisy and drunk: he annoyed another man and they fought. Some of the other men picked up large stones and knocked the drunken man down.

Saturday 3—Sent Desmond out a
(2) fishing, he brought me back 12 large Snapper, each weighing 15 lbs. Wind N.E.

Sunday—Thermometer shade 106, in
(3) sun 122.—Terribly Hot. A very severe hot wind changed to a cold Southerly wind after dark. Wind N. East.

Monday 5—Went out shooting, killed only a brace of Quail. The Bush was all on fire. At 9 in the Evening Grey of the 57th and Scott called in, they were going to embark at daylight for Sydney.

Wind N. East.

Tuesday 6—Desmond came in the Morning with a doleful countenance and said he was not able to go out a shooting having had a dream. He had got a bowel complaint and wanted a dose of Winegar, as he termed it. I however gave him some brandy and nutmeg. I took one of the Soldiers out with me. We put up several Kangaroo and Wallaby, but did not succeed in

killing anything except some black Cockatoos and Green Parrots.

Wednesday 7th—Amused myself throwing Spears with the Natives - Sent Desmond to shoot Kangaroo
(4) on the opposite Peninsula. The Gins (Natives Wifes) very joyful and singing, most of the men being out on an expedition.

W. N.E.

Thursday 8—Desmond returned with some Mullet and Curlew. Weather unfavourable for Kangaroo and the cock screw of the Gun was broken. I got a terrible ducking from the Sea breaking over me as I was walking on the Rocks.

Wind easterly

Friday 9—I went out shooting in the Bush, saw numbers of Kangaroo, killed two - I returned home very tired having lost myself for 5 hours in the bush, and it being very sultry and hot.

Saturday—Staid at home, bathed in the Sea. Desmond did not come, having beaten his wife was obliged to stand
(5) Punishment. I and the superintendant walked to the mine.

Natives dancing their wild dances -

Sunday—Terrible hot Wind - Desmond came - his wife brought me some Mullet - Natives were driving the thunder and lightning away by
(6) their yells - they had a stone fight, after burying a dead man - painted themselves white for mourning.

Ther. 102 shade. At sundown the wind changed to a cold Southerly - Ther ...
Monday—Very badly hurt by the Surf of the Sea dashing me against the Rocks.

Tuesday—News arrived of the Wellington having been seized by the 66 Prisoners although under charge of 16 soldiers of the 57th Regt going to Norfolk Island. Retaken by the Sisters (a whaler) at New Zealand.

Wednesday 14th—Went out sailing, took Casey and Morris with me, had a rough squall. Blucher swam across the Bay after us when blowing very fresh.

Thursday—Went out shooting on the opposite North Peninsula. Stormy day—terribly hot in the bush, saw plenty of Kangaroo. Killed some Wild Duck. Desmond started with a number of blacks to Wallis’s Plains to have a Sea Corroberry.

(8) Met Mr Knowland—asked him to dinner, he was going to Sydney.

Friday 16 Feb.—Pleasant day. Desmond’s wife brought me some fish. Corp Westbroke and six men went out in the Bush beyond Reid’s Mistake in search of Bushrangers. The Darling Schooner put back nearly being lost on the Rocks.

Saturday 17th—Thermometer in shade and not exposed to Wind 106. Exposed to Wind but in shade 110.

—The Hottest day I have known blowing a Hurricane at the same time a hot Wind, worse than being close under a furnace.

18 Sunday—Hot day. Sea Breeze


20 Tuesday—Sea breeze

21 Wednesday—Hot Day. Sea breeze.

22 Thursday—In the Evening seized with Cholera Morbus. In dreadful agony all Night.

23—At 6 in the Morning I was able to swallow physic. An inflammatory disorder on the chest made its appearance—very painful. Had a strong blister put on.

24—Saturday Mending. Pains yet in my Chest. Not able to swallow anything.

Sunday—Could touch Rice, Milk

Monday 26—able to walk. Hot day

Tuesday 27—Walked a little: bowels and head out of order

Wed. 28—Very hot. N.E.

Thursday March 1st—Went out Sailing—March 1827

Friday 2nd—Went out with my gun—very weak.

Saturday—Went out Wild Duck shooting in the Sailing Boat: chased with my Dogs a Native Dog and overtook it. Cured a laughing Jack Ass.

Sunday—At Prayers: in the Evening walked about with Mr Middleton (Parson) and Mr Macay.

Rainy Night—N.E.

Monday 5—Rainy. S. E. wind.

Desmond shot a White Crane and several birds.

Tuesday—Hot, sultry day—went out walking, staid with Natives fishing. N.E. Prisoners sent in... Sydney

Wednesday 7—Warm Day. Sea Breeze, walked to the Signal Post and on the Sea Beach. Stuffed some birds.

(14) Planned a Saluting Battery for Superintendent. Desmond brought plenty of Snapper.

Thursday 8—Received a letter from Innes by the Liverpool offering an Exchange of Detachment with Lieut Bowen by which I should gain 5 shillings a day. Dr Bauman
called, just come from Sydney -
Went to the mine with Macay.
Friday 9th—Southerly Wind, Morning,
rore letters and drew, Middle of
the Day, hot wind - Evening, Sea
breeze set in - Walked on the Beach
with Macay and in the Sea. Sent
letters by Liverpool to accept the
(18) exchange. Drawing a Plan for
Church. Desmond went out shooting,
wanted a blister for his wife
(19) very bad.
Saturday 10th—Went out fishing with
Macay and the Blacks, caught
plenty of Salmon, Tailor and 2
Sharks, we were obliged to return
the Sharks having broken all our
(20) Lines - Land on Nobby’s and fixed a
Cross on the Top of the Rock.
Stuffed a black Cockatoo and King
Parrot. Desmond shot a Wallaby.
Southerly Wind.
Sunday 11th—Very warm Day, had
Prayers. Out sailing until 8 in
Evening, N.E. from Noon
Monday 12—Went out fishing with Mr
Middleton (Clergyman) and some of
the blacks, got a ducking, being
caught in a storm - Planning Signals
in the Evening with Macay for the
(21) Telegraphic Post.
Wind N.E. Morning. S.E. a short
time at Noon.
13 Tuesday—Sea Breeze — Unwell, slight
attack of Dysentry and pains in my
chest. Rev. ... Middleton went to an
Oyster Feast with the blacks. I was
to have accompanied him and we
were to stay in the Bush two nights.
Desmond brought ... mullet.
Wednesday—N.E. by N.—Warm Day.
Employed fitting out Canteen. In the
Evening walked under the
Rocks along the Coast with Macay.

Thursday 15th—Went up to the Signal
Hill. Wind - N.E.
Friday 16th—Wind south—Stuffed a
Parrot and Wood Pheasant that
Macay gave me. Assisted him in
(22) stuffing a Guana. Planned a Tent.
In the Evening went out walking
with him
Saturday 17th—South—Captain Wright
who arrived late last night in the
Liverpool called upon me. Mr
(23) Knowland dined with me. ... Reid
H. P. called on me. In the Evening
walked out with Mackay and
(24) afterwards Capt Wright had Coffee
with me, he is appointed Police
Magistrate. Read a letter from
Bowen agreeing that I should go to
Western Port.
Sunday 18th—Wind South—At Prayers,
went out walking with Mackay, had
Tea with him.
Monday—Sea Breeze—Fine day - Met
(25) Mr Bucknall. Liverpool sailed.
(26) Wright and P... Verandah ... ....
day and evening. Party sailed to
Port Stephens.
Tuesday 20—Sea breeze—Walked out
with Mackay Warm day Wright and
P... Verandah.
Wednesday 21st—
(27) Rather Cold. Dull Day - In the
Evening when walking out with
Macay fell in with a Camp of
Natives, they were Corrobberry.
The men performed war gestures
whilst the women sung and beat
time on the ground with their
hands. About an hour before there
had been a bloody fight, we saw
several with blood flowing from
their heads - Whilst we were
talking with some of them, a spear
was thrown by some person, which
had liked to have killed a man, the alarm was given through the Camp, all were in Arms in a moment. I believe it was one of themselves who was in a passion took this treacherous means of killing if possible his Enemy. W and P... in Verandah. Day and ... Evening.

Thursday 22nd—Warm Morning. Sea Breeze. In evening a heavy shower. Southerly Wind.

Desmond brought me 7 large snapper each weighing about 20lb. W and P in Verandah.

Friday 23rd—Wind Southerly—A Cold and Rainy Day, impossible to go out with Mackay on an expedition for 2 nights in the Bush. Up at Mackay’s planning improvements.

Saturday 24th—Went out shooting with Mackay. Killed some King and Blue Mountain Parrot. In the Evening had tea with Mackay and Capt Wright, Buffs, Police Magistrate.

Sunday 25th—Cold Rainy day, had prayers walked out in the Evening with Mackay to the Black’s encampment. Wright and P... in Verandah.

Monday 26—W. N.E.—Went out shooting, took Casey with me, shot several Blue, Mountain and King Parrot. Walking with Mackay in Evening.

Tuesday 27th—N.E. Evening South—Out shooting for a short time, obliged to return on account of Thunder Storm. Very heavy rain in the Evening with thunder and lightning. The Port Stephens Party returned after being out four days in an open Boat. W and P in corner - verandah

Wednesday 28—South and N.E.—Reed a letter and a 5£ Note from Major Macpherson - Rather a cloudy morning.

Thursday 29th—N.E.—Had my Rooms white washed - walked a little with Mackay and with Capt Wright Buffs - Rather Warm Day. Wright and P (29) in Verandah obliged to give way. Agreed to give Washerwoman

Shirts .......... 3 Table cloths ...4
Trowsers ...... 3 Pillow Case ... 2
Towels ........ 1 Sheets .......... 8
Handkerchiefs 1 Waistcoats ...... 2
Socks ..........1 Dressing Gown..5

Friday 30th—Fine day. Out walking - Stuffed a King Fisher that Mackay shot for me - Wright and I had a quarrel, he talked of

Satisfaction, when I offered to give it him, he said it could not be managed here and walked off. He and his lady sat in the Verandah. Mackay told me the ... of a Cottage came up and said Wright and his Sergt had burst in this Cottage to see if there were any Govt men at work without ceremony - luckily for Capt W. the owner was not at home. Sat with Mackay in the Evening.

Saturday 31st—Wind Southerly—Went out shooting with Mackay. Killed several Pluver and other Birds.

Sunday April 1st—N. East—Did not attend Prayers, had a looseness in the Bowels and my nose was bleeding repeatedly - Capt Wright in his Red Shell Jacket at 3 o’clock walked up the Streets arm in Arm with his Woman. Kelleher sentry carried Arms to him - Man rather crooked. Went with Mackay over Commandant’s house - Capt Wright Buffs had Coffee with me.

2nd—South—Rainy day. Not well,

having taken Calomemel - Informed the Store Keeper that I should
discontinue drawing a Ration for Private Servant, Desmond not having been here for four days although I gave him Lines and he promised to return in 3 days. Wright and P... in the Verandah.

Tuesday 3rd—N.E.—Went out shooting nearly to Red Head - Killed a Wollaby, Cockatoo (black) and several Parrots. Young Shadforth 57th arrived in a small Vessel with Party of men in search of Bush Rangers. 39th Borough and Hughes (Buffs) had also started in other Vessels in search of Runaways - Had Coffee with Capt W. Buffs. Mackay was there. Shadforth slept in one of my Rooms.

Wednesday—N.E.—Warm Day - Capt Wright B. called. Shadforth had an early Dinner and started to Port Stephens with Corpl and 4 men - 2 blacks. Mackay and I walked a little way with him. The Corpl was one of the men that were overpowered by convicts going to Norfolk Island. M and P sitting in Verandah.

Thursday 5th—N. East—Went out shooting with Mackay - Wounded only one Kangaroo. Chased a Native Dog - on returning near being bit by a black ... Snake which I shot - Very hot in the Bush. Killed several Parrots and Quail.

Friday 6th—Wind South—Fine Warm Day - Collecting Shells on the Beach.

Saturday—Wind S. East—Rainy, Cold and squally Day. Went out shooting Kangaroo with Mackay. I wounded one of the largest Old Men Kangaroo I had ever seen, but I lost him, the bush being so very thick - It was so stormy that we only succeeded in shooting one of a middling size and the Dogs killed another. Read a letter from Macpherson by the Liverpool.

Sunday 8th April—Wind South

Monday 9—N. Easterly—Rainy Stormy Day. Called on Capt. Wright Police Magistrate. Asked me to dine with him. Offered part of his house -


Wednesday 11—N. East Sea Breeze—Fine and hot Day - Went with Mackay to examine the Pier, it had suffered by the Storm - Went out with a Black and young Brown who had a bone run through his nose to make him pretty - They speared several Fish -

Thursday 12th—N. E. Morning Storm, N. W. and S. IV.—Shadforth returned from Port Stephens at 9 in the Morning, did not much like lying on the Bare ground. Mackay gave me over all the public works in charge. Shadforth dined with me in the Evening we went up to Capt Wrights of the Buffs and had Coffee there. Mackay was also there. Blew very fresh in the Evening.

Friday 13—Wind North—Fine Day. Shadforth sailed for Sydney at half past seven in the Morning. Good Friday - had Divine Service - Walked out, very hot.
Saturday April 14th—Wind South—
Morning engaged until ten with
Convicts - Rainy - Out shooting
until dinner time, killed several
Parrots and Cockatoos for stuffing.
In the Evening had Coffee with
(37) Police Magistrate. Robinson
mounted Police was there. Stuffed
King and Lowrie parrot -
Sunday 15th—Wind South—Reed
several Letters concerning Prisoners.
(38) Mr Cunningham came by Liverpool
after Prayers arranged to send his
Baggage for his Expedition into the
Interior. Rec'd a letter from
Macpherson who thinks of
exchanging me -With P. Magistrate
and Robinson - Sultry day.
Monday 16—Sent Mr Cunningham
Baggage off at 6 in the Morning, he
dined with me. Very entertaining,
should have liked to have accompanied
him had I had time to prepare.
Mr C. very much affected with
Rheumatism. Court Martial had
been 3 times round New S Wales.
17th—W South— Mr Cunningham
(39) breakfasted with me. At 10 He and
Robertson Police with the two
(40) Macquintires started for Wallis's
Plains. At 8 in the Evening Mackay
returned and brought with him ...
... flying foxes.
Wednesday 18th—Called on Police Mag.
At 10 o'clock set out on a Shooting
Party with Mr Middleton. Slept at
an Encampment of the Blacks near
Throsby's Creek. Had plenty of
Mullet from them.
19th—Went up to Main Land beyond
Ash Island, the Black and his
Jane left us at Limeburners Island
in order to stay and spear Fish
there. Shot some Parrots in the
Evening, Thousands of
Mosquitoes.
Friday 20th—At Day break went out
Kangaroo shooting, could not get
our Guns to go off being wet from
the Night's Rain. Returned down
Hunters River having lost my
Dogs, stayed at an Island, near
killing two Beautiful Black Swans,
made a Fire and cooked some
Oysters. Reached New Castle at
Dusk in the Evening.
Saturday 21st—Very hot and Sultry - In
Morning walked out with Mackay
to endeavour to find the distance of
the Sugar Loaf by observation.
Blucher returned half starved, he
had swim over more than two
Miles of Water.
Sunday 22nd April 1827—Wind
Morning Calm Evening South—
Dined with Capt Wright Police
Magistrate. Drummer (the Hound)
who I lost in the Bush on the 19th
returned with an empty Belly -
Must have swim over 1 1/2 miles of
Water or more - Hot Sultry Day.
Monday 23rd—Wind Evening East—
(42) King's Birth Day. Rainy Morning,
fine day rather Warm. Fired a feu
de joie, gave three cheers - dined
with Mackay. Mr P. Campbell was
also there. Superintendent of Road
Parties, he arrived by Liverpool
last night. Rec'd a Letter from
Macpherson. He informed me of
Wright's being removed and I or
another Officer being appointed to
Command.
Tuesday 24th—Wind N E 1/2 E. —
Cloudy Day. Employed all morning
stuffing a Pelican. Light showers
and rather cool. Wrote to
Macpherson by the Liverpool.
Wednesday 25th April 1827—Wind S East
Thursday 26th—Wind East—Warm Day.
Accompanied Capt Wright P M out shooting. Fell in with a few Quail and ground Parrots.
Friday 27th—Wind South—Putting Garden to rights. Planted Cabbages, Lettuce and Turnip.
Saturday 28th—Wind South Evening East—Rainy in the Morning, after 10 very hot and fine weather - Gardening McKay went to Sugar Loaf.
Sunday 29th—Wind North Evening N E.—Attended Divine Service, very hot Day - Calm in Morning. Mackay returned, had tea with him. Walked along Coast in the Day.

**Coke’s Notebook after this date has a more organised style—see p.56.**

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Monday April 30th 1827
Weather - very hot Calm - Wind - N. E.
(45) Received 5£ by Leviston, the Liverpool brought the Sheriff etc down for the Trials. Government changed their mind and this Detachment is not to be reduced for the present. Two Drummers arrived to carry the Sentence of a Court Martial into Execution.

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Tuesday May 1st
Weather Very hot Calm until 12 at night.
Wind N East -
Flogged Pearson at 1/4 to 7 in the morning - Reed 200 Lashes -

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Grand Jury Sitting - Shipped 4 bushels of Indian Corn for Major Maepherson and gave Drummer a letter. Had a Quarrel with Capt Wright, he would not meet me with Mackay as a second, wished to put it off until his Lady was gone. Said he did not mean to insult me.

Wednesday 2nd
Weather Fine rather cloudy Wind - West afternoon N. East.
The Liverpool sailed in which Mr Knowland (who called upon me) Capt Wright (Buffs) the 2 drummers and Murphy went to Sydney - I went out shooting, took Shehan with me, Returning home I straddled over a large Diamond Snake however I observed it and sprang over in time and turned round and shot it. It was a mere chance I saw it and I had on Shoes and White Trowsers. In the Evening Mr P Campbell dined with me. Mr Knowland invited me to go to his Seat on his Return.

May 3 New Castle
Weather Fine - Wind West. Rather Cool in the Morning, Hot at Noon -
(48) Saw Mr Ogilvie who was going up the Coal River. On my return from Walking Mackay informed how he had been grossly insulted by Dr Brooks the Magistrate in the Court. We persuaded him neither to challenge nor horsewhip him for fear of the Consequences by the Law.

Friday May 4th
Weather Very Fine - Wind Light Sea Breeze N E.
Went out fishing with Mr Campbell, rather too late in the year and a heavy swell on, had no success - Took a walk on the Cliffs, delightful
weather, but the Sun is rather too powerful yet unless there is a fresh Breeze. ...[indecipherable sentence]... Natives all left New Castle to go to Battle. Women and a few old Men remained.

Saturday 5th
Weather Very Fine - Wind Westerly. The Liverpool arrived. Strolling about with Campbell and Mackay. Got well drenched by the Sea dashing over me, obliged to climb up steep Rocks to escape from it. (50) Read the Australian for the first time. W and P 2 days up Town.

Sunday May 6th New Castle
Weather Fine and Warm - Wind West and N E.
Had no Church Service, Mr Middleton being unwell. Out walking with Mackay and Campbell - Beautiful Day but very Warm.

Monday May 7th
Weather Warm - Fine - Wind N. East.
After Breakfast went out shooting. (51) Met Lt Simpson H.P. who wished me and Wright to make up the Quarrel. Tomorrow he goes to his Farm at Reid's Mistake - The Hounds chased several Kangaroo, had 2 or 3 shots at them but I had only dust shot with me. Lost the Hounds in the Marshes - Shot several Birds and stuffed a Laughing Jack Ass - Thousands of mosquitoes in the Bush. Met a Black who just came from the Field of Battle, informed me Desmond was run through the thigh with a spear and wounded on the leg with a Bomebring but he killed one of the Enemies, spear passed through his Arm in to his Heart. Met Campbell on my return.

Tuesday May 8th
Weather Very hot Calm Wind -
Went up the River with Campbell, he landed me at the Fig Trees
(52) with Magill a Black - Saw a beautiful Regent Bird. Walked home. Saw Desmond laying Wound. the Bomebring wound pained him terribly. Spear Wound not painful. He said I am wounded at last. I had often told him he would be. Mackay and Campbell had Coffee with me.

Wednesday May 9th New Castle
Weather Very Hot Wind N E.
Stuffed a Cat Bird and Pigeon. Walked along Beach with Campbell. On my return met Mr Ralph (Surveyor), he had Coffee with me in the evening, asked my advice about an affair he had with Macleod (Dr) at Port Stephens and who he shot through both legs - Mr Dawson behaved rashly.

Thursday May 10
Weather Cloudy - Hot - Wind South.
Went out shooting (with Campbell and Mr Ralph) to Platt's Farm. I shot a Wallowy and several Birds. Very shovery in the Morning, fine afternoon. Mr Ralph dined with me. Campbell and Mackay had Coffee with me. Numbers of Blacks in New Castle coming for clothes, all naked. Magill brought me three black Duck. Grand Corroberry.

Friday May 11th
Weather Fine. Wind - West, Strong
morning Died away Evening.
Walked about. Mr Ralph started in a Whale Boat and ... boat with his men - Fine Breeze for Sailing and Calm Sea. An Eclipse of the Moon from 7 until 8 in the Evening.
Saturday May 12 New Castle
Weather Cloudy Wind - South.
Went out shooting - Liverpool arrived; Capt Wright ordered to (56) return and I appointed to the Command with thirty men and 9 Port Stephens. Received several Articles from Major Macpherson with a Servant. Dined with Police Magistrate. Saw Mr Knowland.

Sunday May 13th
Weather Cloudy and Showery. Wind South.
Attended Prayers in the Barrack. (57) Wrote several Letters on Service. Engaged by sending a Detachment to Port Stephens. Took a short walk with the Police Magistrate along the Cliffs.

Monday May 14th
Weather Cloudy Wind - South. (58) Attended the Sale of Clarkson who had escaped from the Colony, he was exiled from the Isle of France. In good Circumstances once.

About 200 Blacks has Clothing issued out, before this they were all naked - Wright Buffs received 2 Sheep for us from Knowland.

Tuesday May 15th New Castle
Weather Rainy Early Fine Day Wind East. (60) The Liverpool did not sail on account of taking about 70 Witnesses. Introduced to Mr McCleod and Dr Carlisle by Police Magistrate. In the evening Wright embarked on board the Liverpool.

Wednesday May 16th
Weather Fine and Warm Wind North. The Liverpool sailed at 7 in the Morning. Wright went in her with three Privates. Employed with two Men putting the House to rights - Walked a little with Police Magistrate, Campbell and McKay.

Corpl Westbrooke and 6 men returned from Port Stephens having marched all night.

Thursday May 17th
Weather Fine Wind North until Noon then S E.

Friday May 18th New Castle
Weather Cloudy Wind South.

Saturday May 19th
Weather Fine Wind N W.
Cold morning - Went out Shooting to Platt’s. Killed a Wallaby and some Birds - At 6 in the Evening a Man returned from the Port Stephens Boat (named Hickson) who wished to have more provisions as the Boat he said was detained in a Bay 26 miles off without provisions. They had had 3 days fair Wind.

Sunday May 20th
Weather Fine Wind N W.
Nearly a Calm all Day. Attended Prayers in the Bk Room. Liverpool arrived, received a Letter from Major Macpherson. Two ships in sight leading one supposed to be a Man of War (the Success) the other supposed to contain Capt Smyth and a party going to form a Settlement within 9 degrees of the Line. Sent two Soldiers with provisions to the Party at the Boat.
Monday May 21st
Weather Fine Hot. Wind N West very Light.
Employed in getting Barracks and new Guard House white washed.
The Port Stephens party arrived at 12 at night in the Boat very leaky.
(63) Mr Middleton resigned the living.
The Monitor Paper converted into a Magazine to avoid Four Penny Duty, very scourillous Language.

Tuesday May 22nd
Weather Fine and Hot. Wind N W. Sent Corpl Hopkinson and the seven men ordered to Sydney - Liverpool started very suddenly and nearly left them behind - Gave up the Guard House on the Hill and mounted the Guard in the Bk. Had a Wicket Gate made through one of the Sentry Boxes. Went down to the Farm with Capt Wright. Getting my Kitchen white washed.

Wednesday May 23rd
Weather Cloudy, Hot. Ther 80 Shade. Wind Calm North.
Prisoner white washing my Rooms.
(64) Walked with Wright and Mackay after Mr Busby's track of Road.

Thursday May 24th 1827 New Castle
Weather Fine. Ther Shade and Wind 77.
Wind N W 1/2 W.
Walked with Wright. Met Mr Busby, had a long conversation with him Launched with Wright. Had my House rough Cast. Mustered the Detachment. Drew two Rations from this Date. Magill shot me two Teal.

Friday May 25th
Weather Fine. Ther 79 Wind Light

Westerly.
Walked out as far as the Farm with Mackay. Very fine and warm Day. In the Evening Campbell came from Iron Bark Stream and had Grog with me. Confined Shehan and Morris for very bad Conduct. Confined Casey, drunk out of Barracks at 10 at Night. Tattoo at eight o'clock

Saturday May 26th
Weather Fine and Warm Wind N West. Walked about with Campbell, Met Lt Simpson who had just come from Reid’s Mistake, badly off for Provisions, asked him to dinner. Wright Police Magistrate returned from Wallis’s Plains.

Sunday May 27th 1827 New Castle

Monday May 28th
Weather Fine. Ther 80 Shade Wind N W. Received cooking things from Jerviss. Walked about with Campbell - Sent Corpl Westbrook to take charge of Wright’s things. Sent all the Returns on board the Liverpool - Saw some Sperm Whales in the offing. Magill shot me three widgeon. Released Shehan and Morris.

Tuesday May 29th
Weather Fine. Ther 77 Shade and Wind. Wind N.
Walked out with Wright. The (68) Lambton (Australian) Cutter came into Port.
Wednesday May 30th 1827 New Castle
Weather Cloudy. Ther 70 Shade. Wind South.
   Took a walk with Police Magistrate along the Beach. Doctor recommended that Inglis should be sent to the Regt Hospital at Sydney. Brown released from confinement.
Thursday May 31
Weather Fine. Wind -
   Went with Captain Wright to the Lake near Red Head, returned through the Interior. Had Coffee with him in the Evening.
Friday June 1st
Weather Fine. Wind N W 1/2 W.
   Breakfasted with Wright and then rowed up in the Gig to Iron Bark Creek; Arrived at Campbell at 9 then hunted and killed some Wollaby, crossed over to the Land called Tomago - the dogs killed an old man. Shot two immense Emu’s in the Swamp, they escaped before the dogs could see them. Slept in Campbell’s Hut.
Saturday June 2nd New Castle
Weather Fine and Hot. Wind West and N East.
   After Breakfast at Campbell’s Hut I went out and shot a Wollaby. At 12 I returned to New Castle in the Gig (with 6 Oars) with Wright, Robison (Police) and Campbell. Had Coffee with Wright and Robison.
Sunday June 3rd
Weather Fine. Ther 71. Wind West and NW.
   Attended Prayers. Took a Walk with Robison. Dined with Wright and Robison.
Monday June 4th
Weather Fine but Cloudy. Wind West.
   Went with Campbell beyond the farm to make choice of a place for constructing a Bridge across the marshy ground. Collected several flowers - In the Evening a Man brought my hounds back from Iron Bark Creek -
June 5th 1827 New Castle
Weather Fine. Wind West.
June 6th
Weather Cloudy Rainy afternoon. Wind South.
   Contrary wind, could not sail to Reidd’s Mistake to sound the Harbour - Campbell brought me a Regent Bird which Magill shot. I stuffed it. Wright called, introduced me to Mrs Carter. Campbell dined with me. Fitzgerald put in the Cells.
Thursday June 7th
Weather Cloudy. Wind South and South East.
   Went out Kangaroo Hunting, took my Servt and 2 Black Boys with me. The Dogs killed several in the thick Brush but we only brought one home - Before the Blacks put their hand in the holes of Trees (to catch the Opossum) they thrust a stick and if hair is attached they seize the animal with their hands without fear of Snakes. Sergt Carter went in the Liverpool. Fitzgerald in the Cells.
New Castle June 8th 1827
Weather Cloudy Very Heavy Rain, Evening. Wind S E, North, S E.
   Went out shooting Sea Birds along the Coast, shot several. Fitzgerald
Tuesday June 12th
Weather Cloudy and Showery. Squalls Evening. Wind South.
On getting up in the Morning I was terribly stiff with Pains all over my body I suppose from the change of weather - Went out Kangaroo Hunting in hopes of throwing it off, took my Servt and two black boys - I brought two Wolloby's home - We generally lose two or three which the dogs kill, the brush being so terribly thick - A Man made a Complaint of one of the Corpls taking his wife from him whom he had married this morning.

Wednesday June 13th
Weather Rainy. Wind South.
Sergt Carter arrived very late in night. He brought me several Letters and 50£ from Maepherson - who informed me of the Governor's intention to come here and of Murphy's dying drunk on Guard. Recd a Letter from Crotty, Wright, ... and Berkely - Wright ordered to Norfolk Island - I took Physic for pains all over the Body. Stuffed a Saturn Bird that Magill and Campbell brought me.

Thursday June 14th New Castle
Weather Fine. Wind N W and West.
Went out Wolloby Hunting, could not kill any although we saw plenty in the thick Brush, the Blacks having disturbed them - My Servant was near being bitten by a deadly black Snake about 4 ft long and very bulky. I shot it. In the Evening two Blacks brought me a letter from Ralfe at Port Stephens, he had been surveying the Mayal River - Campbell dined with me.

in Cells - Brown Confined. Casey put in Cells at Night. In Hospital - Corpl McMullen - Mackay Veterans - Morris and Brennan 39th

Saturday June 9th
Weather Very Rainy and Cloudy and Stormy. Wind Light S S East.
Did not stir out so very Rainy. Campbell called. In the Evening Casey and Fitzgerald escaped from the Cells when allowed to go to the Privy. I found them at the Shoe Makers. Fitzgerald put in Leg Irons and Casey handcuffed, both Impertinent. In hospital - Corpl McMullen and Pvts Brennan and Mackay. In cells Pvts Fitzgerald and Casey At Sydney Sergt Carter Port Stephens 1 Corpl and Eight Privates New Castle - 52 privates.

Sunday June 10th
Weather Cloudy Stormy Rainy. Ther 50. Wind North fresh Southerly. Rather Cold.
Did not attend prayers. I had a stiff Back. Took a Walk with Mackay and Campbell. In the Evening had Coffee with Wright who had returned from Wallis's Plains - From the Cliffs saw the Lambton (Australian Cutter) tacking beautifully on a wind. Most dreadful night followed but she did not founder.

Monday June 11th New Castle 1827
Weather Stormy Heavy Showers. Cross Sea. Wind South. Ther. 44.
Terribly stormy Night and Day. I could hardly stir out - Released Fitzgerald from the Cells - Took the Handcuffs off Casey. A very heavy Surf - On this Coast the Surf in Summer are much heavier than in winter, on account of the Sea Breeze setting in so regularly.
Friday June 15th
Weather Fine. Ther 73 - Shade. Wind West.
  Took a walk with Campbell.
  Chased two Black Wolloby but they escaped the Dog. At Tattoo Casey was drunk and riotous, put in the Guard House and bound down. On Sergt Carters going to gag him Sergt Lynch (Junior) would not allow him until I came - He acted wrong but I did not allow him to be gagged.

Saturday June 16th
Weather Fine. Ther 78. Wind West.
  Went out Kangerooing on the North Peninsula, had two chases but my Dog too distant - after lunch went to the Walloby Ground I shot some Duck - McIver and Brown (black Boys) accompanied me as usual. Campbell and Mackay were also with me.

Sunday June 17th New Castle
Weather Cloudy. Wind S East.

Monday June 18th
Weather Cloudy Wind South.
  Wright and Campbell called, walked with latter down to the Cottage. Engaged stuffing a Bird and writing Letters. Casey in Cells.

Tuesday June 19th
  Went out Shooting accompanied by my Servant. Had two chases after Kangaroo but they escaped the Dogs. There were such thousands of Blue Mountain Parrots that they were actually a nuisance, they made so much Noise.

Wednesday June 20th 1827 New Castle
  Rainy Night, at Noon wind changed and weather became very fine. At Sun Set Rainy again. Called on Wright met Mr McIntyre. At night ... Soldier arrived from Port Stephen with Letter from Mr Ralfe and from Corpl Evans.

Thursday June 21st 1827
Weather Fine Cloudy from 11 o’clock. Wind North East.
  A vessel arrived from Port Macquarie with 6 soldiers and 21 Prisoners.
  Went out shooting - returned at 3.
  All the men of Buffs on board Brig drunk but two, gave charge of Men to a Man named Brothers.
  Had Coffee with Wright.
  Wrote Letters to Ralfe and Corpl Evans.

Friday June 22nd
  In the Morning had the Corpl of Buffs brought to my Quarters and I reprimanded him - At Noon went down to the Sea Side, on my Return the Sergt brought me a Requisition for 3 men from the Captain of the Aligator - I pressed a Boat and hastened on board (every soldier excepting Brothers was drunk).
  The vessel was underweigh accompanied her outside and gave charge of the Prisoners to Corpl Westbrooke and 3 Men of my own, brought the Corpl and 1 man Buffs
on shore fighting and drunk.
Confined Hegarty in Cells, very
impertinent and said everyone was
making a fool of him and he did not
know that I was not.
New Castle June 23 Saturday 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N N W.
Engaged making Returns -
Campbell had launch with me -
Golloher came with 4 Emu Eggs for
sale which Mackay bought. Took
half a Pig and Campbell the other half.
Hegarty in Cells.
Boyle, Morris, McKay - Hospital.
Inglis (hospital) Sydney.
Corpl Westbrooke Pts Fennel,
Downey, Kelleher - Escort Duty.
Sunday June 24th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West.
The Liverpool arrived with
Berkely. Did not attend Church.
Took a walk along the Coast.
Monday June 25
Weather Fine. Wind S East.
Went out Shooting towards Red
Head with Berkely and a black.
Killed 2 black Wallaby. Hard Work
to carry them to New Castle.
Berkely knocked up completely -
Black wanted to lay down and cook
the Wallaby and stick by them till
all eat.
Shehan Confined for striking a
Sergt and Impertinence.
Tuesday 26
Weather Very Fine.
Went out Shooting towards Platt's
and Throsby's Creek - The Dogs
chased two Kangaroo - Berkely
killed a Wild Duck.
Wednesday 27
Weather Fine Hot and Shower in
Evening. Wind W.
Staid at home. Dined with Wright.
Thursday
Weather Fine. Wind West.
Went out shooting to Red Head
with Berkely.
Friday 29th
Weather Fine Very Cold. Ther. 50 -
Wind West
Fine day, remained at home.
Saturday 30th
Weather Fine Cold. Wind S West.
Went out Shooting to Ash Island
with Berkely and Mackay - Wright
and Campbell returned in Boat
from Wallis's Plains - In the
Evening Lynch reported the bad
conduct of Brown, Fitzgerald and
Crawley at Parade. Fitzgerald very
impertinent and called out to me
from Streets when prisoner that I
was going again to put him under
charge of bloody Prisoners.- Casey
conf'd by Carter very impert to me,
would not be quiet when ordered
but kept insisting upon Court
Martial - Said he was a mouse in
the hands of a bloody Cat.
Released Shehan promised to be
good.
Sunday July 1st New Castle 1827
Weather Cold. Wind West.
Berkely and I attended Prayers in
Barracks. Mr Middleton preached
for his Successor.
(75) Dr McTerner breakfasted and
dined with us, he brought me a letter
from Sturt. Very bad cold and
catarrh.
Monday July 2
Weather Cold. Wind West.
Did not stir I was very unwell. I
had a touch of the Catarrh. Very
heavy feel in the Head; Nose
continually running.
Tuesday
Weather Fine. Wind S West.
Very unwell staid at home. Sent a Black out up the River to shoot Kangaroo for Berkely to take to Sydney.

Wednesday 4
Weather Fine. Wind South.
Liverpool could not sail. Berkely went out Shooting with Wright - My Cold nearly well. Campbell dined with us.
A small Dandy Cutter Boat arr'd she was bound to the Hawkesbury (or Nepean) and driven down here. We imagined at first some Accident had happened to the Man of War Rainbow and that it was her Launch.

New Castle July 5 Thursday
Weather Fine. Wind N N W and West. Berkely sailed in the Liverpool at eleven o'clock. Took a walk with Wright over the Cliffs. Liverpool still in sight at Sun Set.

Friday July 6th
Weather Fine. Wind West.
Went out Shooting took Joney a black with me. On our return Parmegony had arrived, but he brought only two Black Duck, his Shot being by far too small to kill the Large Kangaroos. It appears the Green or Diamond Snake is harmless, the blacks say he very quiet fellow but the black snake is deadly they say Snake bite you, not waddie him or both die together - If Snake live both live. Casey Released. Spirits given again.

Saturday July 7th
Weather Cloudy. Wind East.
Sent Parmegony to Ash Island - He returned with two immense Hawks only, fine sport for him as they are a delicious morsel.

At night released Fitzgerald from the Cells.

New Castle Sunday July 8th 1827
Weather Rainy. Wind South.

Monday July 9th
Weather Cloudy. Wind South.
Dined with Wright and Macdonald late Buffs.

Tuesday July 10th
Weather Very Fine and Hot. Ther 85 Shade. Wind South.
Went out a Shooting in the Morning. Macdonald and Joney (black) accompanied me. Fine and lovely day.

Wednesday July 11th
Weather Fine Hot. Wind S E.
Took a walk with my Gun in my hand accompanied by Macdonald - On our return Campbell called; at 3 o'clock Liverpool sailed. Macdonald went in her, sent Brown, Casey and Fitzgerald 39th and Mackay Veterans to H. Quarters.

Thursday 12 July 1827 New Castle
Weather Cloudy. Wind Strong S W.
The Liverpool was obliged to return after having reached nearly Broken Bay - Mr Ralfe the Surveyor arrived from Port Stephen and dined with me. He gave me a long account of Mr Dawson's treatment.

Friday July 13th 1827
Wright, Campbell and Mackay went to Wallis's Plains - Mr Busby and Lister called on me on account of the conduct of a Sentry - Ralfe dined with me - At 9 at night sent the four Soldiers on board Liverpool.
Saturday July 14th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Strong Westerly.
Liverpool sailed very early in Morning. I went out Shooting accompanied by Parmegony, only killed one Wild Duck, a large Black Walloby escaped us badly wounded, we made a Circuit of about 12 miles.

Sunday July 15th 1827
Weather Fine. Ther. 69 Shade. Wind Westerly.
No Prayers, Clergyman not arrived. Found some strawberries in the garden. This is the middle of winter and they are excellent. It is perhaps singular but all the Native Plants are in blossom during the coldest days in what we term Winter.

Monday July 16th 1827 New Castle
Weather Fine. Wind Westerly Strong. Employed gardening, strong westerly wind. Cool morning - hot during day and cool at night. It is singular the very wind that is unsupportable on account of its heat in Summer is the coldest in Winter. Rice and Boyle in Hospital.

Tuesday July 17th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West afternoon South.
Very hot Day employed in planting Fig Trees etc. It is very often the case that there are as hot days in the middle of Winter as Summer excepting the hot winds of the Latter. Golloher took his Kangaroo Dog Spot away.

Wednesday July 18th 1827
Weather Fine and Hot. Ther. 80 Shade. Wind South Light Breeze.
Hot Day employed in the garden. Took a walk with Campbell. At 6 in the Morning sent Bartly and Kelleher overland to Port Stephens.

Thursday July 19th 1827
Went out Sailing, took Corpl Jones and Thomas with me. In the Evening it became Calm and we had a heavy pull home. Recd the Papers from Sydney.

Friday July 20th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Light North, S W. Afternoon south almost a Calm. A fine and warm day. Took a walk on the Cliffs - Pts Healy and

(78) Torlue arrived from Port Stephen, they slept at the Sand Hills.

New Castle Saturday July 21st 1827
Weather Fine. Ther. 75. Wind West. Light Breeze.
Walked along the Sea Coast, the breakers dashed all over me. A Brig in Sight. In the Evening when Natives throwing Spears I made one of them light a fire by friction, this was easily performed in two Minutes.

Sunday July 22nd 1827
Weather Fine but rather cloudy. Ther. 70. Wind West. Evening South. Light Breeze.
Early in Morning a Brig entered the Harbour after having fired ten Guns for a Pilot. The newly appointed Clergyman (Mr Wilkinson) with his Lady were on board - No Divine Service - Took a walk with Wright who returned yesterday from his Grant, well pleased with the Upper Branches of the River.

Monday July 23rd 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West, N E, West Night.
Very fine day - Took a walk with Police Magistrate - Mr Scott called
on Duty. In the Evening the sky was very black and the Natives began screeching, youling and threatening to drive the Storm away. They never stir in the Dark for fear of Devil, devil but lay with their faces to the ground.

Tuesday July 24th
Weather Showery. Wind South.
Rather cold Day with Showers, the Liverpool arrived with three Privates Hynes, Galbrain and Griffin - Dr McTerner and Campbell dined with me - Gave the former a Pelican.

New Castle Wednesday July 25th
Weather Fine. Wind south nearly dead calm.

Very fine day. I and McTerner went out shooting. In the Evening he dined with me and then went on board the Liverpool to sleep - Horsefall and Quin arrived from Port Stephen, they started yesterday morning, lost their way and had to sleep in the Bush without fire in the midst of the Rain.

Thursday July 26th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West.
Went out Shooting took Thomas with. The Dog pointed numbers of Quail but I went out for a different purpose - At Sun Set a Vessel tacked for the Harbour supposed from Port Macquarie.

Friday July 27th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West. after noon South.
Very fine day. Walked to Signal Staff. Mackay had reached Reidd's Mistake before wind changed. At 8 in the Evening there came on a most terrible Storm with very heavy Rain. Settled all the month's accounts.

Saturday July 28th 1827
Weather Fine Hot. Ther. 83. Wind South - at 3 p.m. N East.
Took a walk, very hot after the nights storm - Stuffed a Wood Pheasant. At four I received a letter from Mr Dawson. At 7 four men with Mrs Evans arrived from Honey Bay, they sailed on Thursday from Port Stephen, left Corpl Evans in Boat who arrived at eight with two black Swans.
This Dett (Detachment) lay first night at Nelson's Bay and the 2nd night during the heavy Storm at Honey Bay.

New Castle Sunday July 29th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N West. after Sun Set North.
Attended Prayers Mr Brookes read the Service. Took a Walk - Black swans lively, Ralfe's (Surveyors) men brought me a snapper as a present.

Monday July 30th 1827
Weather Fine. Ther. 79 Shade. Wind N West
Went out Shooting took Thomas and a Black Boy with me - On my Return I took a walk with Wright. Half an hour after Sun Set the Liverpool arrived, brought news of the Guilford Prison Ship having arrived with part of the Grenadiers and the Papers stated we were to return to England instead of going on to India - Lieut Governorship abolished. Sergt Carter drunk, Campbell at dinner.

Tuesday July 31st 1827
Weather Fine. Ther In Shade expd to Wind 80. Wind West.
Engaged making accounts up, at four Wright sailed in the Liverpool.
In the Evening Sergt Carter had been drinking and was impertinent.
Higgins confined by Corpl Evans.

Wednesday August 1st 1827
Weather Fine. Wind South.
Took a Sail in the Boat, landed at Ash Island and killed four Pidgeon
two of which weighed 2 1/3 lbs.
Boatman, black boy was with me - Sergt Carter under an arrest. The
Wonga Wonga Pidgeon feed on the Fig Tree, it is one of the most
beautiful Trees in the Colony - being extremely lofty and shady, it
bears a purple berry or Fig.

Thursday August 2nd 1827 New Castle
Weather Fine. Wind North.
Engaged stuffing a Superb Warbler
and two Pidgeons. Released Sergt Carter, he having apologised for his
conduct. In Hospital Corpl Jones,
Pvts Crawley and Healy.

Friday August 3rd 1827
Weather Fine. Ther. 78 Shade. Wind
South.
Sailed to Ash Island accompanied
by Thomas and Fennel, killed two
Pidgeon then sailed on to the Main
River at night it fell Calm and we
were obliged to sleep on the Main
Land without water, shelter or
anything, luckily we made a fire
and roasted the two Pidgeon.

Saturday August 4th
Weather Cloudy Cold. Wind north.
Early in Morning my Servt and
Fennell went out to endeavour to
Kill a Kangaroo. I did not
accompany them, a heavy dew
having fallen. They fell in with a
herd of Kangaroo who wheeled
about as they said by Subdivisions
but not having Ball and being
unaccustomed to shoot them, they

could not kill any. They were all old
Men - At 1/2 past seven we
embarked and what with pulling
and Sailing, we arrived at New
Castle at 1/4 to 10 in the Morning -

(83) Dr Brooks called and with his
Requisition sent two men with
Constables to look after six
Prisoners who escaped out of Jail
last night - the Party to proceed to
Reid's Mistake. When coming from
Tomagoes (Main Land) we saw
some black Swan and thousands of
Duck, but we did not wish to delay
New Castle Sunday August 5th
Weather Fine. Wind N West.
Divine Service performed in
Church (by Revd Wilkinson) for
the first time for 2 years. Liverpool
arrived in the morning. Mr
Knowland called with a Mr James.

Monday August 6th
Staid at home, fine day.

(84) Tuesday August 7th
Weather Fine. Wind West. Ther. 90.
Set sail for Port Stephen in Officers
Boat accompanied by my Servant
and another Soldier Fennel and 2
of Ralph's men. Arrived at Narrow
Gut at 10 at night, lifted the Boat
across the Beach and slept on Sand
all night. Kangaroo running about
all night. Man and cask of Spirit in
case of ...ing

Wednesday August 8th
Weather Fine. Wind S West.
Set sail and entered between the
Rocky and Wild Heads of Port
Stephen at 9 in the Morning. Stayed
a short time at Nelson Bay, reached
Soldiers Point at 3 and landed at
the Settlement at four. Dined at
Dawson's, he was absent. Present,
Dr McCleod. Slept in Ralfes Tent.
Thursday August 9th
Weather Windy. Wind South.
   At Noon set sail, Ralfe followed with two Boats, we all got aground on the Sand Banks. Our Boat ran off for Nelson's Bay as it began to blow fresh. After dinner we crossed the Bay having a black as a Pilot, Entered the Mayall River, met Ralfe's boat coming to our assistance (the other party having lit a fire). Had some Coffee and slept in Tents.

(85) Friday August 10th
Weather Very Hot. Ther. 92 Shade.
Wind North, Calm.
   Went a few miles farther up the River, met hundreds of Pelican. The Wild Duck almost covered the Water. I shot several. Landed and had a Hunt after several Kangaroo. One old man wounded several Dogs, nearly killed one of the Men, and we only mastered him by shooting him through the Head with a Ball. Returned to Tents to Dinner. The blacks had got us some Fish.

Saturday August 11th
Weather Fine. Wind Morning S West, Noon N E, then Calm.
   Set sail, landed at Nelson's Bay. Filled the Boat with Native Currants. Wind changed, left the Heads and slept in Narrow Gut Bay. Terribly annoyed by Mosquitoes, particularly Fennel.

Sunday August 12th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N E North.
   The blacks supplied us with Fish. After breakfast pulled to Honey Bay, a dead calm. A Breeze sprung up, set sail and arrived at New Castle half and hour after Sun Set.

Monday August 13th
Weather Fine. Wind West, Calm.

Tuesday August 14th
Weather Fine. Ther. 85 Shade. Wind North.

Wednesday August 15th
Weather Fine. Wind N N West.
   Employed Drawing and Gardening. At night released Horsefall. In Hospital Corpl Jones and Pvt Healy.

Thursday August 16th 1827
Weather Cloudy, Light Shower. Wind South
   Employed Gardening and Drawing

(86) - A Brig arrived to take Coal to India. Soldier's Convict confined by order of Magistrate Dr Brooks. Very light Shower had ... Weather getting too warm, all Vegetables running into Seed.

Friday August 17th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N East
   Went to Davis's Farm, took Sergt Carter and my servt Thomas with me, brought one Dog (Fly) back with us, we got something to Eat, on Tuesday he is going to sell 130 Head of Cattle at New Castle.

Saturday August 18th
Weather Fine. Wind N W North.
   Took a walk under the Cliffs along the Coast. Employed in Sketching. Rather unwell in Bowels.
Sunday August 19th 1827
Weather Hot and Sultry. Ther. 88 Shade.
Calm until 3 afternoon Wind S East.
Remained with Catholics during Church Service. Took a Walk on the Cliffs, very Sultry - Towards Evening a Breeze sprang up and the Liverpool arrived. Capt Wright arrived, he brought me a Letter from Condamine concerning the Invalids. Read a Letter of Credit for 150£ from the Agents.

Monday August 20th 1827
Weather Cloudy. Wind East N East.
Capt Wright called. Free Man released who was put in Watch House for impertinence to a Soldier. Took a walk. Recd five pr of Trowsers from Sydney.

Tuesday August 21st 1827
Weather Heavy. Wind East.
Sessions took place this Day. Mr Knowland called - In the Morning a strong Band of blacks in battle Array arrvd from Port Stephen. Each man was naked (except a belt made of Opossums skins round the Loins) and painted, they were armed with Spear, Shield waddie and Bomabring. Tomorrow they are to fight the Main River Blacks, they all paid me a visit and I gave them Tobacco, they are confident of Success and looked very well with their Hair tied up and ornamented with flowers and Feathers.

Wednesday August 22nd 1827
Weather Dull and Warm. Wind West.
Lightning at Night.
Met Mr Knowland and McLeod both gave me very pressing invitations to their Farms. Took a walk with Wright and McCleod, former brought 300 Ewes of Mr Knowland for 700£ Sterling. Liverpool sailed and took Letters to Macpherson and Berkely from me.

Thursday August 23rd 1827
Weather Morning Shouvery. Wind S East.
Light Showers in the Morning.
Called on Wright.
Employed Drawing and Gardening.

Friday August 24th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Sea Breeze.
Employed Gardening and muster etc. Fine day and Sea Breeze. In the Early part of the Night Showery.

Saturday August 25th 1827
Weather Showery. Wind N W. North.
Engaged with Returns etc etc. In the Evening walked to see the Blacks fight. The Main River Natives had refused the Combat. Therefore the New Castle blacks and Port Stephen were drawn out opposite one another, and alternately a man of each stepped to the front to challenge anyone. There being very little animosity amongst, not more than twelve Single Combats took place - I was near being struck by a bomerbring but a black boy saved me. (Brown Boatman Innes N. boys) Morris in Cells for Corpl Evans.

Sunday August 26th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N West at night Squally.
Went to Church with the Detmt. Then took a walk; very strong Gale from the North West. At night light Shower. Four of the men drunk - Morris in Cells.
Monday August 27th
Weather Fine. Wind Strong West.
Liverpool arrived - Recd letters from Macpherson and Lloyd and a Circular after reading which the Detmt subscribed three days Pay and a Guinea. Wrote answers to all the Letters and sent them by a Small Sloop. Reed Lamp, Razors and Cheese from England.
Tuesday August 28th New Castle
Engaged Drawing - Mr Knowland called - At Noon went to the Flat alongside the Bay to see the Port Stephen and Reid's Mistake Blacks fight. Only one man was speared as it was chiefly a Waddie and Bomerbring Battle, several Heads were broken. Mr Knowland dined with me in the Evening.
Wednesday August 29th 1827
Weather Clear. Wind Westerly Gale.
Thursday August 30th 1827
Weather Clear. Wind Gale from West.
Evening South East.
Mr Scott called on Duty. Took a walk - Captain Wright called and asked me to dinner but did not go, however took a walk with him. Corpl Jones came out of Hospital. In Hospl Healy and ...

(88) Friday August 31st 1827
Weather Fine. Wind East.
Took a walk with Wright. I and Mackay dined with him. My Birth Day.
Saturday Sept 1st 1827 New Castle
Weather Fine. Wind East.
Employed before Noon in making out Returns and Drawing. Took a walk with Wright along the Rocks and on the Sea Coast.
Sunday Sept 2nd 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Westerly.
Took a Walk with Wright - Talking over and giving opinions respecting the growth of Sugar. Lamton Cutter passing on the Offing.
Monday Sept 3rd 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West.
Called on Wright, who went up the River at 11. Mackay dined with me.
Tuesday Sept 4th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Calm. Noon
Easterly Wind. 4 P.M. NE Sea Breeze
After Midnight S East.
Met Simpson and Campbell who had just come in Town. Went to Court to remonstrate with Dr Brooks, who ordered the Sergt and a Private to take their Caps off. At noon set sail and soon after left the Harbour. My Man with Desmond and his wife accompanied me - At four o'clock we were about 23 miles out at Sea and the wind changed. It soon after fell Calm, we then lay too and fell asleep - At 12 at Night a light breeze sprung up, and as it was foul and there was heavy lightning, no hopes of proceeding we put the Helm about and returned to New Castle, a little before we entered the Harbour the Wind changed to the Southward. At 1/2 past four in the Morning I entered my Cottage. (Cutter was wrecked all hands perished.)
Wednesday Sept 5th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind Calm till Noon. At 1 Strong Easterly.
Mr Knowland called on me, soon afterwards Mr McAlister formerly of the 48th. Simpson H.P. and
Mackay. At noon the Liverpool started and in two hours was out of Sight.

Thursday Sept 6th 1827
Weather Very hot in Morning. Wind Near calm. P.Noon South.
Went with Desmond to the Shore.
He dived in a tremendous Surf from the Rocks and brought a Lobster. Another black named Robert brought two up - Simpson was driven back in going to Reidd’s Mistake, he dined with me.

Friday Sept 7th 1827
Weather Stormy. Heavy thunder with Lightning. Wind South.
Amused myself by drawing.
Uncomfortable Day - Thunder so heavy and Loud that it shook all the Furniture in my Rooms.
Lightning very vivid and piercing.
Each flash completely dazzled us for a few moments.

Saturday Sept 8th 1827
Weather Stormy with Rain. Wind S S W.
Engaged in Drawing - Stormy Day with very heavy Rain - When it rains in this Country it lasts generally for three or four Days and the Water falls in Torrents.

Sunday Sept 9th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind S E.
Liverpool arrived. An Officer of the 48th named Wilson came in her from Sydney as well as an Asst Surgeon. They both had just arrived from India on Sick Leave - Orders arrived for our being relieved by Lt Brown and forty two men of the 57th. Mackay had a Glass of Grog with me.

Monday Sept 10th 1827
Weather Fine and Hot. Wind Light East.
Engaged Gardening. Conf'd

Horsefall and Morris. Mackay Called.

Tuesday Sept 11th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind N West.
Remained at Home. Engaged with the Detachment. Had a Glass of Wine with Mackay.

New Castle Sept 12th Wednesday 1827
Wind N West. Weather Fine till noon then Thick fiery Atmosphere.
Calm until Noon, Then a Hot North West Wind.
Engaged at home, Took a Walk along the Beach. At night the Sky was beautifully illuminated by a Tract of Country being on fire, ... volcano blazing.

Thursday Sept 13th 1827
Wind Strong W N West. Weather Fine.
Went out Shooting accompanied by my Servant. My Gun being at Sydney I took the Blacks Musket, had little Sport as it continually missed fire. Called on Wright who had just returned from his Farm.
By a Serious Mistake of Section Lines Capt Allman had built a large Stockyard on his Grant and Capt Wright’s Grant.

Friday Sept 14th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind West.
Took a walk under the Cliffs with Wright, perceived an old Goat that had got on a ledge of Rock about 60 feet from the Ground and could not get away, it was nearly starved.
In the Evening saw the Wreck of the Sloop Charlotte about 2 miles off in the Bight. All hands were lost. Had Coffee with Wright.

Saturday Sept 15th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind S West and South.
Went to the Cliffs accompanied by my servt. After a deal of Trouble we
succeeded by the assistance of a Tomahawk and a Spade in getting on the Second Strata above the Goat and with a long Rope we managed to draw him up by the Horns. He was nearly starved to death. Launched with Wright.

Sunday Sept 16th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind W by North.
No Divine Service. Liverpool arrived and brought the Orders for Capt Robison and Lt Sweeney (92) relieving me and mine - Took a walk with Wright, Had Coffee with him in the Evening.

Monday Sept 17th 1827
Weather Cloudy. Wind Calm till Noon then North.
(93) Received a Letter from Grey of the Village, he was just getting under way for Lima. Engaged Packing my things up - Had the Hospital cleared out for the Veterans on their Arrival. Called on Wright who offered me a Bed at his House on the Arrival of Relief.

Tuesday Sept 18th 1827
Weather Morning Hot and Fine. a.m.
Cloudy. Wind S W, East, N E, S East.
Liverpool sailed - Walked with Wright on the Cliffs. The Governor Phillips was to sail this day, but not in sight at Sun down.

Wednesday Sept 19th 1827
Weather Fine. Wind South East Blowing fresh.

Thursday Sept 20th 1827
Friday
Sailed for Sydney

(95) Savage life undoubtedly preferable to civilized.

Death of young Sullivan

No alteration has been made to spelling and punctuation used by Coke in the Notebook
**Inventory of Coke’s possessions prepared at the time of his departure from Newcastle.**

**Box with cover**
- 2 Red Coats, 1 Blue Do. 3 Jackets 2 Shooting Coats.

**Camphor Wood Trunk**
- Shirts, socks, White Trowsers.
- 4 pr Sheets, 6 Pillow Cases.

**Portmanteau with Cover**
- Pocket Handkerchiefs, Night Caps,
- 4 pr Boots, 3 pr Shoes.

Dressing Case Cedar, Wash hand Basin, Chamber Pot, Clothes Brush, 2 hair brushes, Tooth Brushes, Pint Lavendar Water, Cold Cream, Tooth Powder, Bottle of Oil, Looking Glass, Tumbler, Soap Dish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Cups and Saucers</th>
<th>Portable Couch</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Cream Jug</td>
<td>Box with Cover</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Slop Basin</td>
<td>Portmanteau with Do</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sugar do.</td>
<td>Two Camphor Wood Canteens</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Large Plates</td>
<td>Cedar Dressing Box</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Small do.</td>
<td>Camphor Trunk</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Salt Cellar</td>
<td>Gun Case</td>
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<td>1 Cruet Stand</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Coffee &amp; Tea Pot</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Butter Bowl</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Candle Sticks &amp; Snuffers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tumblers</td>
<td>Large Chest with Drawers</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Wine Glasses</td>
<td>Large Deal Box</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Side Dishes</td>
<td>Box without Cover with brass Nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Decanters</td>
<td>Small Box formerly Canteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Liqueur Case</td>
<td>Box lined with Tin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Water Jug</td>
<td>Large Cedar Canteen</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Dishes</td>
<td>Pickling Cask</td>
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<td>2 Small Do.</td>
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Coke's drawings of Newcastle natives and their weapons.
Monday, June 11th

Weather: Stormy. Night & Day, showered heavily. Rose from the hills. Fort the hanging of Hony 

A very heavy Sea. In this Coast the ships in better over seas much heavier then 
in Winter, on account of Surge & wave 

Winds South S.E. 4 B.

Tuesday, June 12th

On rising up in the morning heavy 

On setting up in the morning I was 

I sayd that the weather was cloud of 

in a heavy Sea. All of the ships 

Winds South

Wednesday, June 13th

Left Letter arrived very late last night. He brought me several letters. 50 letters from Macpherson. He informed me of the Governor's intention to come here 

Winds South

Sample page from Coke's Notebook
Newcastle became an established convict settlement in 1804. The first Commandant was twenty-one year old Lieutenant Charles A. F. N. Menzies of the Royal Marines. Commandants who succeeded Menzies over the following score years, drawn from military regiments, include Lieutenants Villiers and Lawson from the New South Wales Corps, Lieutenant Purcell from the 73rd Regiment, Lieutenant Thompson and Captain Wallis from the 46th Regiment and Major Morisset and Captains Gillman and Allman from the 48th Regiment.

In Gillman's time, the majority of the convicts transferred to Port Macquarie leaving a reduced number at Newcastle to work the coal mines and attend to other public works.

In 1823, Henry Dangar was sent by the government to the Hunter Valley. His task was survey of town and agricultural land for free settlement. That year, the total population of Newcastle was just over seven hundred. By 1825, more than 790 persons were possessed of over 370,000 acres in the Valley.

Captain Francis Allman of the 48th Regiment was the last military commandant of Newcastle. His appointment covered the years from early 1824 to the end of 1826 when the office ceased to exist in response to the changing composition and mood of the inhabitants, now a growing population of free settlers. On 1 January 1827, Allman took up the appointment of 'Police Magistrate' at Newcastle and upon his retirement in mid 1827, Captain Samuel Wright of the Buffs succeeded him. In early 1827, Duncan Forbes Mackay, a civilian, was appointed to two positions—Superintendent of Convicts and Superintendent of Public Works—previously held by military officers. As time passed, more free persons served as civil magistrates. The gradual adoption of civil administration for law and order occurred by this process. However, as survey and occupation of Hunter Valley land continued, the new landowners received many convicts as agricultural labourers. Others worked in gangs on roads and on public works. A military presence in the district was essential for the management of the convict population.

In 1826, two hundred and fifty convicts laboured at the coal mines at Newcastle and at other government establishments. A detachment of
thirty or forty soldiers supervised these men. Controlling the soldiers were two sergeants, a subaltern and a captain. A table entitled ‘Distribution of the troops in New South Wales’, 5 May 1827, (Historical Records of Australia Series 1, volume 13, p. 276) indicates this structure.

The Australian Agricultural Company (AA Company) originated in England in 1824. The Imperial Government sanctioned the company a grant of a million acres. The establishing group of personnel arrived at Sydney in November 1825. Robert Dawson, the Chief Agent of the company, and Henry Dangar, the surveyor, travelled overland in January 1826 from Newcastle to Port Stephens. Here, Dawson selected land on the north side of the harbour and activity at the chosen location commenced in February 1826.

References

(1) Returned from Port Stephens overland...
When Coke arrived at Newcastle, a corporal and two privates of the 57th Regiment occupied a station at Soldiers Point, on the south side of Port Stephens. Their task was to intercept escaping convicts. This outpost was long-established in 1827. The memos in Coke’s notebook, noting the movement of soldiers between Newcastle and Port Stephens, both by sea and overland, disclose the regular communication that occurred between these two places.

(2) Desmond...
The Aborigine, Desmond, appears to have had some status in the settlement and acted as a ‘private servant’ to Coke. William Coke drew rations for him and was particular to note that in Desmond’s absence (see notebook, 2 April) these rations were to be discontinued.

In Coke’s later reminiscences, he states:

I was a great deal in the bush, and saw much of the natives; my companion being Desmond, chief of our tribe (see page 93).
Augustus Earle painted a portrait of ‘Desmond, A New South Wales Chief’ (see p.56a). The estimated date of this work is between 1825 and 1827. Towards the end of 1826, the artist journeyed inland to sketch the Blue Mountains, Bathurst, Wellington Valley, the Hunter Valley, Port Stephens and Port Macquarie. By February 1827, he returned to Sydney.

J. Hackforth-Jones, in ‘Augustus Earle, Travel Artist’ says of the portrait:

Paintings such as Desmond, A Native Chief of New South Wales, make it evident... that Earle was aware of the lingering dignity of some Aborigines. Desmond, in his native dress and painted for a tribal ceremony, proudly faces the spectator. He expresses the pride of tribal chieftain deeply conscious of his customs and heritage.

The available evidence cannot confirm if Coke’s Desmond, chief of our tribe and Earle’s Desmond, A Native Chief of New South Wales, is the same person. The probability is real and worthy of consideration.

3) Terribly hot...

In 1827, the military structure of the settlement at Newcastle imparted a contemporary but transient character. The Aboriginals with whom Coke interacted so comfortably, disappeared within a few more decades. The coastal climate is, however, timeless. During the summer season, Coke repeatedly refers to high temperatures, hot winds and bushfires. He often describes the arrival of a cold southerly, or a north-east sea breeze. He describes summer thunder storms - Natives were driving the thunder and lightning away by their yells.

Coke’s notebook, and the letters to his family, note the mild winter climate: Found some strawberries in the garden. This is the middle of winter and they are excellent. It is perhaps singular but all the native plants are in blossom during the coldest days in what we term winter. Hot during day and cool at night. It is singular the very wind that is unsupportable because of its heat in summer is the coldest in winter.

4) ... on the opposite peninsula ...

The peninsula opposite Newcastle was at first (c.1800) known as ‘Pirate Point’ and later ‘Stockton’.

5) I and the superintendent walked to the mine.

In 1827, the output of coal for the year from the Newcastle mines was about 4000 tons. The government used approximately half and the other half sold privately. By a Government Order dated 24 May 1827, D. F. Mackay, Superintendent of Convicts and Public Works, could sell coal to private individuals for 10/6 per ton, in quantities not exceeding fifty tons each. Mackay’s responsibilities included preparing the ‘Receipt of Lading’ for each sailing ship that called regularly at Newcastle for coal.

6) The natives ... had a stone fight, after burying a dead man - painted themselves white for mourning.

An Aboriginal burying ground was on land near the Hunter River. Reminiscences recorded in 1915 by persons who recalled the stories of the early settlers, note that ‘blacks had been buried on the spot where the Borough Markets were built many years later’. Another

1 J. Hackforth-Jones, Augustus Earle, Travel Artist, pp. 8, 33, 35, 97, 149
2 JW Turner, Coal Mining in Newcastle 1801-1960, p. 25
recollection stated that the ‘site of the Newcastle School of Arts was a burying ground for blacks, and a black’s camp’. Here, in the early years, a sandy beach ran along the harbour and the tide came up to a foreshore paddock. Another person said ‘The Aborigines were buried in a paddock in the vicinity of Hunter Street, but they were very reticent as to the actual places where they buried their dead’.3

(7) **News arrived of the WELLINGTON having been seized** ... WELLINGTON left Sydney on 7 December 1826, with sixty six convicts guarded by a sergeant and a detachment of soldiers. Twelve days later, when approaching Norfolk Island, the convicts piratically seized the ship and ordered the course set towards New Zealand. On 3 January 1827, the whaling ship SISTERS met the WELLINGTON entering the Bay of Islands, and the captain, Robert Duke, came on board to speak with the captain of the WELLINGTON. Duke became suspicious of the sham crew. He recognised one or two of the ‘sailors’. They were known felons.

The next day, SISTERS and another vessel opened fire on WELLINGTON, whereupon many of the mutineers leapt overboard, swam ashore and ran into the bushes, only to be caught by Maori and then sold to Captain Duke for firearms. The convicts were brought back to Sydney for trial. Five suffered execution and the remaining sixty-one were sent to Norfolk Island for life.4 The ringleader appears to have been a former subaltern of the 48th Regiment, convicted as a receiver of stolen goods. He was under sentence of transportation. The final episodes of this incident appear in the *Sydney Gazette* 8 March, and *Australian*, 13 March 1827. Coke’s notebook entry, 4 April, refers to a corporal proceeding to the Port Stephens outpost. He was one of the men that were overpowered by convicts going to Norfolk Island.

Captain Duke claimed from the government expenses of £1800 for his part in apprehending the convicts. He claimed that he lost the income of a season’s whaling by apprehending the convicts and returning them to Sydney.

(8) **Mr Knowland.**

This may be Timothy Nowlan, who arrived in New South Wales from Tasmania in 1822. He earned renown for his efforts in improving the quality of sheep. He applied for land in the Hunter and, in mid 1825, obtained a large grant in the parishes of Middlehope and Wolflingham.

Dangar marked land in the Upper Hunter at Patrick Plains for William and Henry Nowland in 1824, but it is unlikely that Coke’s reference is to either of these settlers.

(9) **Reid’s Mistake...**

A ‘bar lagoon’ (so described by Governor King and now known as Lake Macquarie) merited the name Reid’s Mistake in 1800, commemorating the error of a sea captain who thought he reached Hunters River.

Lieutenant John Shortland R. N. was the first European officer to locate Hunters River which he entered during September 1797, noting the presence of readily available coal. One of the small vessels sent thither in 1800 to obtain a cargo of coal was MARTHA, a small schooner whose master was Captain William Reid. Captain Reid obtained a cargo of coal from near the entrance to Lake Macquarie, but not until he returned to Sydney did he realise that his port of call was a place different from Hunters River.

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3 ‘Early Burial Place’, *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 13 November 1915.
4 One of the men executed was reprieved from an earlier sentence of execution at Port Stephens for his part in the murder of a native. See Robert Dawson, *The Present State of Australia*, pp. 231, 232, 259, 260.
(10) *The DARLING schooner...*

The DARLING, or GOVERNOR DARLING, was a colonial-built sailing vessel that, between 1826 and 1831, traded between Tasmania, Newcastle, Sydney, Twofold Bay and New Zealand, until lost by shipwreck.

(11) **Mr Middleton, Parson.**

Reverend George Augustus Middleton began his duties as first chaplain of Newcastle in August 1821. The settlement was on the threshold of social change, from a convict prison to a civil town. Middleton came to New South Wales in 1819 on the transport ship PRINCE REGENT whereon personnel of the 48th Regiment formed the convict guard.

At Newcastle, Middleton met almost everyone who arrived at the port. He travelled extensively throughout his parish - the Hunter Valley. He bought land near Paterson in the mid 1820s. He resigned his chaplaincy in May 1827 because he wished to remain in the Hunter Valley rather than take a posting to the penal colony of Port Macquarie. He made his home on a twenty acre farm, Moore Park, near Hinton, where he continued a voluntary ministry.5

(12) **Macay (Mackay, McKay, Mackie)**

Duncan Forbes Mackay arrived in New South Wales in September 1826. He came on ORPHEUS, on which ship he served as second mate. ORPHEUS brought out from England over 213 men, women and children. The men were members of the New South Wales Veteran Corps. Mackay was a civilian, attached to no regiment. On 1 January 1827, the governor appointed him Superintendent of Public Works and Superintendent of Convicts at Newcastle. His salary was £150 per year, with quarters allowed.

The principal work of the convicts in 1827 was coal mining, building the southern breakwater (Macquarie Pier) and maintaining government property at the settlement.

(13) **Walked to the signal post...**

Signal Hill was the site of the flag staff and signal station, as well as the military fort. Today, its name is Fort Scratchley.

(14) **Planned a saluting battery for superintendent...**

William Coke often sketched plans to illustrate practical ideas.

(15) **Innes, offering an exchange of detachment...**

Archibald Clunes Innes was the son of a distinguished soldier. He earned a commission as an ensign in the 3rd Regiment, the Buffs, in 1813, and served in the Peninsular War. In 1822, he came to New South Wales in the convict transport ship ELIZA, in the position of captain of the guard. After some time in Tasmania and Sydney, in December 1826 he assumed command of the convict settlement at Port Macquarie. He held this position until mid 1827 when he returned to Sydney. In 1829, he resigned his commission, married the daughter of the colonial secretary, and became a settler on a large estate at Port Macquarie.

Although Lieutenant Coke ‘accepted the exchange’ (notebook, Friday 9th), the move did not happen. The entry for 17 March indicates that Bowen ‘agreed that he (Coke) should go to Western Port’. This did not happen either.

The indication that the transfer would improve his financial position was worthy of mention in Coke’s notebook!

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5 Further reading: A. P. Elkin, *The Diocese of Newcastle*. 
The above drawings accompanied a letter from D. F. Mackay to the colonial secretary dated 2 March 1827. The original is in the NSW State Archives.

**ABOVE**—Plans of New Castle Church showing east end, stairs, tower, bowed window and altar.

**LEFT**—Elevation of the east end of New Castle Church drawn on 1 March 1827.

**BELOW RIGHT**—Sketch of the New Castle Church with the spire, drawn by Val Anderson.
(16) **LIVERPOOL.**
LORD LIVERPOOL was the principal sailing vessel that transported passengers between Sydney and Newcastle from 1826 until the introduction of steam powered vessels in 1831.

(17) **Dr Bouman called...**
Dr James Bowman R.N. acted as surgeon superintendent on several convict ship voyages to Australia between 1816 and 1819, at which later date he took the post of principal surgeon of the colony. He married a daughter of John Macarthur and, by 1824, received a land grant in the Upper Hunter.6

(18) **Drawing a plan for church (9 March 1827)**
Construction of a stone-built church at Newcastle began in 1817. The commandant, Captain James Wallis of the 48th Regiment, laid the foundation stone. Governor Macquarie described it as a ‘handsome neat church with a spire’. In January 1821, the spire suffered damage during a severe electrical storm (*Sydney Gazette* 6 January 1821). Subsequently, the spire was taken down. Surviving illustrations indicate that some time later a bell-cote was erected in its stead.

In an article ‘Observations on Newcastle’, published in the *Australian*, 31 January 1827, the writer noted: ‘The Church at Newcastle which some years ago was a highly respectable place of worship, with a lofty steeple, serving as a landmark at the entrance of the harbour, is now shorn of its beauty, and remains without a spire...’

D. F. Mackay, as Superintendent of Public Works, prepared specifications and an estimate for substantial repairs for the church. At that time, the church was a government-owned building. The most urgent repairs needed were new shingling, lead guttering and flashings to keep out water, and roofing in the tower to repair the damage done by removing the spire. The accompanying drawings of the church carry the date 1 March 1827. They accompany a letter to the colonial secretary, dated 2 March 1827.

The *Sydney Gazette*, 14 September 1827, reported from Newcastle that three months ago (that is, about May or June) ‘repairs of our Chapel commenced, at which period the building was nearly in ruins. The despatch with which it has been carried on, as also the neatness both of the interior and outside of the building reflects we think the greatest credit on Mr Mackay, our Superintendent of Public Works, by whom it was commenced and finished. Service has been performed in it for the last 4 weeks by the Rev. Mr Wilkinson, and we have no doubt but now this Church is in a fit state that it will be continued without interruption’.

William Coke, by his own account, spent time ‘drawing a plan for Church’ at almost the same time that Mackay prepared the estimate for works to which is appended the church drawings.

(19) **Desmond ... wanted a blister for his wife very bad.**
No doubt two weeks earlier Desmond watched Coke have ‘a strong blister put on’ (notebook 23 February) and wished to try the treatment on his wife.

(20) **Land on Nobby’s Island and fixed a cross on the top of the rock.**
The significance of this feat is not clear. Landing on the island, then climbing the rock with a cross to be fixed to the top may have been a challenge for a newcomer to Newcastle.

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6 Further Reading: Allan Wood, *Down in the Valley*
### TO DESIGNATE VESSELS APPROACHING.

**FLAGS FOR STRANGERS:**
1. A blue Ensign ................. A Man of War.
3. A yellow Flag, with a red St. George's Cross .......... A Brig.
4. A yellow Flag, with a blue St. Andrew's Cross .......... A Schooner.
5. A yellow and blue perpendicu- lar Flag .............. A Cutter.

**PENDANTS FOR COLONIAL VESSELS.**
6. A blue Pendant, with an Union A Govt. Vessel.
8. A Pendant, yellow, red, yellow A Brig.
9. A Pendant, blue, yellow, blue A Schooner.
10. A Pendant, yellow and blue... A Cutter.

**SIGNALS TO VESSELS IN THE OFFING.**

11. A blue Flag pierced, with a yellow Square .............. Stand off to Sea; it is not safe to approach the Harbour.
12. A yellow Flag pierced, with a blue Square ............... Stand in for the Harbour, you may approach with safety.
13. A white Flag pierced, with a red Square ................ Lay to for a Boat.
14. A red Flag pierced, with a blue Square ................. The Pilot's Boat has left the Wharf.

### GENERAL SIGNALS.

15. A red Flag ........................ The Pilot is on Board the Vessel coming in.

*Newcastle, July 20, 1827.*

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**LEFT—Notification of signals for use at Newcastle, from Sydney Gazette —30 July 1827**

**BELOW—Coke's Notebook contains several sketches of tents. This is a copy of one of his drawings.**
Planning signals... with Macay for the Telegraphic Post

Communication by signals in New South Wales dates from Governor Phillip's time. Then, a lookout and flagstaff at South Head, Port Jackson provided a method of sending information. In that era, the most important news was the sighting of an approaching ship. Information about the ship could be conveyed to Sydney by flying coloured flags in various positions on the flagstaff. In 1820, the royal commissioner, J. T. Bigge, recommended a telegraph system for Sydney and a person engaged at each station to control the signals created by the position of vanes protruding from the flagstaff. At first, the principal use of such a system was a maritime one. In 1826, the line extended to Parramatta, with two signal posts between Sydney and that township.

William Coke would have been familiar with such systems. By 1825, they were standard equipment in England for naval and other purposes. His time at Sydney and Parramatta would also have made him familiar with the 'Telegraphic Post' between those centres. In New South Wales, tables showing the meaning of vane positions, and flags, featured in readily available Almanacs and Directories. Everyone could read the signals if they so desired.

Following the entry in Coke's notebook, notification for new signals for use at Newcastle appeared in the Sydney Gazette, 30 July 1827.

Planned a tent...

Coke's drawings of tents illustrate his original notebook (See opposite).

Reid H P...

Possibly Lieutenant James Reid R. N., who applied for a grant of land in the Hunter in 1823. His grant was at Rosebrooke. Coke uses the initials H. P. where today one would use J. P.

Captain Wright... is appointed Police Magistrate...

This appointment, from the colonial secretary's office, 9 March 1827, says: 'Colonel Wright Esq., late of the Buffs, to act as Police Magistrate at Newcastle. Salary £150 per year'. Samuel Wright had just retired from the army. He obtained a land grant in the Upper Hunter (see also page 66).

Mr Bucknall

Mr William Bucknall obtained a grant of land in the Hunter in January 1827. He called his property Elmshall.

Wright... and P... in Verandah...

This is the first of several comments that indicate a situation of conflict between Captain Thomas Wright and William Coke. Unfortunately the entries are difficult to read.

(27) (Wednesday 21st)

William Coke makes no subsequent mention in his notebook of the much publicised duel that took place in Sydney at this time between Colonel William Dumasresq (his second was Captain Gillman) and Dr Robert Wardell, seconded by W. C. Wentworth.

Dr Wardell, editor of the Australian, had supposedly made a libellous attack on Dumasresq in the newspaper. This provoked the challenge to a duel.
(28) **Major Macpherson**

Major MacPherson of the 39th Regiment, although a soldier many years his senior, was described by Coke as ‘my kind and fine Highland friend. We were fast friends to the last day of his life’. In 1827, Major MacPherson was commandant of the district of Parramatta, and Coke’s superior officer. Coke corresponded regularly with him, as the notebook reveals.

(29) **Wright...in verandah obliged to give way.**

In the entries that precede and follow, clearly there are two Captains Wright. Captain Samuel Wright, Buffs, was first police magistrate at Newcastle and then retired from the army to become a Hunter Valley settler. He is undoubtedly on good terms with Coke. As the notebook unfolds, clearly a strong aversion exists between Coke and the other Captain (Thomas) Wright of the 39th Regiment. This Captain Wright is at first senior to Coke at Newcastle. From notebook entries, it seems that the dispute included Coke’s occupation of a cottage which Thomas Wright begrudged. Samuel Wright offered Coke a part of his house (notebook 9 April) in an attempt to resolve the dispute, at least in part. The notebook entry for 23 April indicates that (Thomas) Wright may be removed, and Coke or another officer appointed ‘to command’ at Newcastle. This is confirmed on 12 May.

Captain Thomas Wright proceeded to Sydney from whence he was appointed commandant of Norfolk Island (notebook entry 13 June) for a period from August 1827. Here, in October 1827, Thomas Wright survived an assassination attempt perpetrated by Patrick Clinch, one of the mutineers of September 1826. Wright warded off the blow and Clinch escaped into the bush. Shortly afterwards, Clinch was shot. Wright’s ‘persevering disposition’ together with his determination to ‘punish with the utmost severity’ any irregularity that came to his attention, were believed to have been the causes of the prisoners’ revolt against him (*Sydney Gazette* 13 Feb 1828). Perhaps these traits of character explain the conflict with Coke at Newcastle.

(30) **He talked of satisfaction...**

The reader will by now be mindful that resolving a quarrel, or responding to the aggravation of an insult, by duelling, was not uncommon in the 1820s.

(31) 2 April

On this day William Coke began his letter ‘My Dear Sisters...’

(32) **Young Shadforth...**

Young Shadforth was the son of Lieutenant Colonel Shadforth, commanding officer of the 57th Regiment that served in Australia from mid 1826 to March 1831 when it moved on to Madras. A detachment of the 57th did duty at Newcastle prior to January 1827 when a party of the Buffs, including William Coke, arrived to relieve them.

(33) **bushrangers... and runaways...**

Bushrangers and runaways were convicts escaped from civil masters or from government service.

(34) **Wednesday 4 April**

Date of letter to ‘My Dear Papa’...
(35) **Heard of the attempt to take Norfolk Island...**
A proposal to reoccupy Norfolk Island as a place of ultimate punishment for the worst convicts dates from 1824. This followed the great influx of free settlers into New South Wales in the early 1820s and their spread to various coastal areas. Existing penal settlements lost their influence as fearsome, isolated places. The first party landed at Norfolk Island in June 1826. The piratical seizure of the WELLINGTON occurred in December 1826. Considering the severe policy of convict management, it is not surprising that insurrection occurred. In April 1827, Governor Darling wrote to the British Authorities about ‘an attempt to surprise the Garrison on 25 September last ... one soldier lost his life, one convict shot and two drowned’. News of this rebellion appears to have reached New South Wales in late March. Subsequently, the story reached Newcastle. The governor reported it to the Home Office in April. Two of the ringleaders of the uprising suffered execution in Sydney and the others returned to Norfolk Island to labour in chains.

On 16 October 1827, one of these men ‘furiously assaulted’ the new Commandant, Captain Thomas Wright. After further attempts to assault or murder other persons, this convict was shot.  

(36) **Went with Mackay to examine the pier...**
In 1818, Governor Macquarie laid the foundation stone for a pier. The finished structure would link Nobbys Island to the mainland near the Signal Hill. Convicts formed the workforce and the military supervised the convicts. Governor Brisbane ordered the work stopped. The incomplete pier deteriorated under the influence of storms. The building task was later resumed, and completed in 1848. Building the pier was one of the principal convict works continued in the years after Newcastle ceased to be a penal settlement.

(37) **Robinson... mounted police...—See (39)**

(38) **Mr Cunningham...**
Allan Cunningham (1791-1839), botanist and explorer, was an experienced collector for the Royal Botanic Gardens when he came to Australia in 1816. His explorations extended over much of the known districts. Cunningham’s biographer states that his longest and perhaps most important journey lasted from 20 January to late August 1827. From the Hunter Valley, he travelled northwards to the Darling Downs, returning to the Hunter River, and then proceeding to Bathurst.  

(39) **Robertson, (same as Robinson, mounted police, above.)**
Captain Robertson, a mounted police officer, accompanied Allan Cunningham and G.B. White on their explorations and surveys.  

(40) **...the two Macquintires...**
Several McIntyres or Macintyres settled in the Hunter Valley in the 1820s. Coke possibly refers to the brothers Peter and John McIntyre who acted as agents for T P McQueen’s estate in the Upper Hunter.  

(41) **...the Sugar Loaf...**
Sugar Loaf is a visible and distinctive mountain and range to the west of Newcastle.

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7 Further reading: Frank Clune, *The Norfolk Island Story.*
8 Further reading: *Australian Dictionary of Biography.*
(42) **The King's Birth Day.**
This day was one of celebration throughout the colony. A number of private and official dinner parties marked the occasion in Sydney (*Sydney Gazette* 25 April 1827).

(43) **Mr P Campbell**
In 1827, Mr P. Campbell was a road surveyor responsible to surveyor Henage Finch, and in charge of about 120 convicts in two road gangs, making the road from Newcastle to Wallis Plains, and Wallis Plains to Wollombi.

(44) **CURRENCY LASS**
CURRENCY LASS was one of the sailing ships that, from 1826, traded regularly between Newcastle, Sydney, Tasmania and New Zealand.

(45) **Leviston**
This name is probably Captain Alexander Livingstone, master of LORD LIVERPOOL.

(46) **the trials... and court martial...**—(no information available)

(47) **Flogged Pearson...200 lashes.**
This was a particularly severe punishment but details about the incident have not been located. It may have been a military punishment.

(48) **Mr Ogilvie**
Lieutenant William Ogilvie R. N. had twenty years experience at sea when he decided to retire. With his wife and children, he came to Australia in the convict transport GRANADA in 1825 to take up land in Tasmania. However, he chose New South Wales instead and in 1827, took up land, first in the Hunter Valley at Merton, and later in the New England area.

(49) **Dr Brooks**
Dr George Brooks was assistant surgeon, officer in charge of the convict hospital, honorary regimental medical officer and a civil magistrate at Newcastle where he lived for several years following 1822. In 1827, his five year's experience at the settlement no doubt gave him a certain advantage over other more transient officers.

Additional particulars about the incident to which Coke alludes can be located in official correspondence. The case for each party involved in the matter provides an insight into the 'justice' of the times - especially that meted out to the convicts - and into the arrogance of some other persons who considered themselves important.

A boat belonging to the settler James Phillips was at the wharf, laden with goods and ready to depart. The boatmen were on shore and Phillips guarded the vessel.

An overseer ordered a convict John Brown to take charge of a government boat, get it loaded without delay and proceed up the river. Brown came to the wharf and instructed some government men to move Phillips' boat aside and bring the government boat in. Phillips forbade it. An altercation between Phillips and Brown ensued. Phillips claimed Brown was insolent. Brown claimed that Phillips called him a scoundrel and said he would get him a 'damm'd good flogging'. Phillips called the constables, went to the police office and charged Brown with insolence to himself. Dr Brooks heard Phillips' charges. Brown stated his case and two witnesses supported him. However, Brooks sentenced Brown to three days solitary confinement on bread and water.
At this point, Mr Mackay, the superintendent of convicts, who was in the police office, said: ‘Cannot the prisoner (Brown) appeal from the decision of the Bench? I consider he has good grounds for it’.

Mr Brooks replied, ‘What do you mean?’

Mackay: ‘That the man was convicted without the charge being proved’.

Brooks: ‘Leave the Court, Sir, - If you repeat that again I will commit you; - Constables - take that man out of Court; - I am surprised you should show so much ignorance, and set so bad an example to those under you’.

Mr Mackay in the mean time, whilst Dr Brooks was speaking, said ‘I did not mean to offend - I only inquired if there was not an appeal’.

Of course, both Brooks and Mackay reported this incident to the colonial secretary who requested Captain Samuel Wright to send him a full report on the ‘alleged impropriety’ of Mackay in the police office. In Brooks’ letter to the attorney general, he claimed that subsequent to the incident, Mackay accosted him in the street and told him that ‘if he did not make a simple apology, he should expect that satisfaction one gentleman should give another’.

William Coke notes in his notebook: ‘On my return from Walking Mackay informed how he had been grossly insulted by Dr Brooks the Magistrate in the Court. We persuaded him neither to challenge nor horsewhip him for fear of the Consequences by the Law’.

(50) Read the ‘Australian’ for the first time...

The Sydney Gazette, an officially sanctioned publication, was Australia’s first newspaper (1803 to 1842) and remains the only record of current events in Australia up to 1824. The Australian newspaper began publication in October 1824. Governor Brisbane allowed both papers a degree of editorial freedom. The Australian exercised a strongly independent, free-press policy which at times was critical of colonial administration. The principal men associated with its production were W. C. Wentworth and Robert Wardell.

In his letters and notebook, William Coke makes no mention of the Sudds-Thompson episode of late 1826. Two soldiers, privates of the 57th Regiment, suffered harsh penalties for a minor offence, resulting in the death of Sudds. The Australian challenged the actions of the governor in this case. Wardell, the editor, faced subsequent prosecution for criminal libel.

In early 1827, Wentworth actively petitioned for trial by jury, taxation by consent, and a legislative assembly elected on a property franchise that would not exclude emancipists either from membership or electoral rights. He continued this campaign in the Australian. Governor Darling responded by having an Act passed which restricted the freedom of the press.

It is surprising that Coke did not record any timely comment about these momentous issues. His note ‘read the Australian for the first time’ suggests that he was a professional Imperial soldier and regarded colonial affairs with detachment.

(51) Met Lieutenant Simpson...

Lieutenant Percy Simpson received a military commission and fought in the Napoleonic Wars prior to 1815. He next served as governor and judge advocate for two years in the small island colony of Paxos. He returned to England, receiving a military pension. In 1822, he came to New South Wales. Mrs Simpson was a relative by marriage to Sir Thomas Brisbane, the new governor of New South Wales.

Simpson took a government position as commandant of an agricultural establishment at Wellington Valley. When Governor Darling took over the administration of New South Wales, this settlement was abandoned. Simpson then took up his land grant in 1826, on Dora Creek, in the Lake Macquarie district. During the construction of the Great North
Road from Castle Hill to Wollombi by way of Wiseman’s Ferry, Simpson acted in a supervisory capacity for northern road works.

Settlers such as Simpson visited Newcastle regularly to forward private or official letters, collect letters (from the police office), negotiate about their convict work force, or obtain supplies.

(52) **Magill**
Following Desmond’s wounding on the ‘Field of Battle’, noted on 7 May (Coke visited him on 8 May) it was not until 4 September that Coke recorded his presence again. Possibly this was a period of recovery for the native chief. On that day (8 May), another native, ‘Magill’, assumes a similar role to Desmond’s earlier one. During May and June, Magill brought Coke duck, teal and widgeon to eat, and a satin bower bird to stuff.

A native M’gill (Magill) was a ‘chief’ of the Lake Macquarie tribe and an assistant to Reverend L. E. Threlkeld at the mission station there, established in 1824. M’gill spent some time as an officer’s servant in Sydney, and as a bush constable at Port Macquarie with Captain Allman. Magill later assumed the name Biraban when admitted into the full rites of his tribe. An 1838 record lists him as ‘Chief of the Black Tribe at Newcastle’.10

The battle wherein Desmond received wounds no doubt brought Lake Macquarie natives including Magill to the Hunter River. Magill, who appears of equivalent status in his tribe to Desmond, made a suitable and experienced successor and associate of the white chief Lieutenant William Coke.

(53) **Mr Ralph (Surveyor) ...**
James Ralph was one of a number of surveyors taken on by the Surveyor General in 1826 or 1827 to assist in catching up with arrears in the survey department.

(54) **Dr Macleod ... shot through both legs ...**
A duel occurred at Port Stephens between James Ralph and the surgeon Mr William Macleod. The incident had political consequences of some moment. See (80)

(55) **Platt’s Farm**
Lieutenant John Laurio Platt and his family arrived in New South Wales in 1822. He selected land at Ironbark Hill, near Ironbark Creek, in the Lower Hunter.

(56) **...I appointed to the command...**
Following this promotion, William Coke set about implementing changes and improving the buildings under his charge. His increased responsibility in dealing directly with the discipline, behaviour and well being of the soldiers under his command appears regularly in notations about their conduct or health.

(57) **Wrote several letters on service—See (80)**

(58) **... attended the sale of Clarkson**
Throughout 1827, the schooner ADVENTURE, owned by Thomas Street of Sydney, called at Newcastle almost every second week for a cargo of coal. In early April, a man ‘of genteel appearance’ approached and engaged his passage in her to Sydney in the usual manner.

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10 Further Reading: *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L. E. Threlkeld*, vols 1 & 2.
Supervision of the coal loading at the Public Wharf occupied the captain’s attention. Neither the Newcastle pilot nor his crew who were nearby, raised any alarm that this person was a prisoner of the crown. He reached Sydney without hindrance.

The guards at Newcastle soon realised that a prisoner had absconded. Reports forwarded to Sydney made known the escape. The captain and owner of ADVENTURE faced questions from the authorities. Information about the prisoner was sent forth on land and sea in an attempt to trace him.

William Clarkson, the prisoner, was a ‘man of colour’, well educated and, as Coke states, ‘in good Circumstances once’. He came from Mauritius where, in 1824, he was tried in the Admiralty Court, convicted of murder and sentenced to death. An eloquent appeal by Clarkson won amelioration of the sentence to transportation to New South Wales. He was shipped aboard the HM SUCCESS, the warship that visited Australia in late 1826. He was forwarded to Newcastle, where he arrived about 23 December. He merited approval to move about within thirty miles of the settlement.

Clarkson’s movements, following his running away from Newcastle, were traced. At Sydney in late April, he secured a passage on the CUMBERLAND bound for Hobart Town where he arrived and subsequently found lodgings with a ‘widow woman’. In January 1828, he sought a passage to Batavia on the WATERLOO, but was apprehended, charged with being a runaway and cast into gaol. The authorities in Sydney sought his return, so a passage was obtained on the ALBION, sailing from Hobart on 28 January. The master supposedly had the responsibility of delivering Clarkson to the authorities on his arrival.

Before ALBION entered Sydney Heads, William Clarkson jumped overboard and upon reaching Sydney the captain reported him drowned. An investigation ensued into the procedures followed at Hobart to convey the prisoner to Sydney. The mate and boatswain of ALBION came to trial for allowing Clarkson to escape them.

By April 1828, information came to hand that Clarkson had not drowned, but had effected his escape a second time, leaving the colony in a ship called TIGER, for Valparaiso.

The interesting records created by William Clarkson’s sojourn in New South Wales form a sizeable bundle at 27/5752 in the colonial secretary’s letters at the State Archives.

Following Clarkson’s escape from Newcastle, his forfeited property was disposed of by auction, on 14 May 1827.

(59) About 200 blacks has clothing issued out...

In the census of New South Wales, published in November 1828, the number of Aborigines in each district is recorded by figures based upon the number of blankets and slops given out, as recommended by the magistrates.

For Newcastle, the count was

- Coal River Tribe, 140 (50 men, 40 women, 50 children)
- Ash Island Tribe, 120 (40 men, 35 women, 45 children)
- Reid’s Mistake Tribe, 150 (50 men, 50 women, 50 children)
- Tugrah* Beach Tribe, 200 (70 men, 60 women, 70 children)
- Kangaroo Ground Tribe, 150 (55 men, 50 women, 45 children)

(* not to be confused with Tuggerra Beach, Brisbane Water district, which was a different location).

The colonial secretary forwarded to the magistrates in each district a circular, number 19, dated 31 March 1827, which was for the purpose of gathering the information for the census. Coke’s notation suggests the action taken in response to this circular.
The circuit court was convened at Newcastle until August 1829 when it was moved to Wallis Plains (East Maitland). As the population increased in the valley, Newcastle took on the role of a coaling station and ‘port of call’ for ships trading between Sydney and Morpeth. Maitland then became the valley’s principal centre of justice and trade.

Dr Carlisle
Dr William Bell Carlyle served as Surgeon Superintendent on at least six convict ships travelling to New South Wales between 1822 and 1830. Carlyle was promised an estate in 1822 but eventually selected 2000 acres in 1825, near Invermein in the Upper Hunter. He was a friend of Dr Peter Cunningham.11

Capt Smyth and a party going to form a new settlement within 9 degrees of the line...
HMS SUCCESS, Captain Stirling (see page 118) and the MARQUIS OF LANSDOWN, left Sydney in company on 16 April 1827, for Port Essington. The government brig MARY ELIZABETH followed a few days later. Captain Henry Smyth was the first commandant at a new settlement - Fort Wellington - established in 1827.

In 1818, Captain Phillip Parker King made the earliest survey of Port Essington, located on the Coburg Peninsula in the Northern Territory. In 1823, he recommended this sheltered inlet as a suitable site for a settlement. In 1824, a party under Captain Bremer landed and occupied the area but, finding no water there, chose another site instead, Fort Dundas on Melville Island. The party that followed in 1827 established Fort Wellington, believing it to be more favourable. Although visited by many naturalists and explorers in the years following, the settlement was not commercially successful and was abandoned in 1849.

Mr Middleton resigned the living.—See (11)

Mr Busby’s track of road—See (77)

Capt Allman
Captain Francis Allman, of the 48th Regiment.

Orders for the 48th Regiment to serve in New South Wales came in 1817. In 1824, notification arrived from England that India was their next placing. Early in 1824, Captain Allman was commandant at Newcastle. He followed Captain Gillman, and before him, Major Morisset, all of the 48th. Allman remained commandant at Newcastle until late 1826. Then, following the cessation of that office, he stayed a few months as police magistrate. Allman was previously the founding commandant at Port Macquarie, followed by Gillman in late 1823. Officers of the 48th who resigned their commission and settled in the Hunter Valley include Captain Allman, Lieutenant E. C. Close, Lieutenant T. V. Bloomfield, and Major Johnstone. These men, as well as Major J. T. Morisset and Captain Gillman, were among the survivors of the Battle of Albuera (Spain, 1811).

The native chief Magill accompanied Allman to Port Macquarie where he served as a bush constable. No doubt Magill renewed his acquaintance with Captain Allman during this visit.

Drew two rations from this date...
A privilege that followed Coke’s promotion to the command.

11 Further reading: Allan Wood, *Dawn in the Valley*. 

(67) **Heard of the death of the Duke of York...**

The convict transport MARINER arrived at Sydney on 23 May 1827, bringing the news of the death of the Duke of York. (Since 1820, a brother of King George IV was the Duke of York. Following his death, another brother then became Duke of York who, in 1830, upon the death of George IV, became King William IV.)

Coke’s friend, Captain Charles Sturt, came to New South Wales aboard the MARINER, as an officer in charge of the guard.

(68) **The Lambton (Australian) cutter came into port...**

The Australian Agricultural Company bought the cutter LAMBTON in February 1827. The company used LAMBTON as a trading, passenger and supply vessel for the Port Stephens settlement, until 1835. LAMBTON occasionally called at Newcastle.

(69) **Tomago**

Tomago or Tomagoes, (4 August) is an Aboriginal name, said to mean ‘sweet water’. The locality that bore this name extended for some distance on the north bank of the Lower Hunter River. In its natural state, extensive wetlands characterised the area and fresh water was easily recovered in the sand beds. In 1824, A. M. Beveridge took up a grant of 850 acres of this land, and called it ‘Tomago’. In the late 1830s, Richard Windeyer bought this estate.

(70) **Robison**

See (92). A Captain Robison of the Royal Veterans served at Newcastle from September 1827.

(71) **...the Governor’s intention to come here...**

Governor Darling and other officials left Sydney aboard HMS RAINBOW for a tour of the northern settlements. They visited Moreton Bay and Port Macquarie but bad weather prevented the party calling at Port Stephens or Newcastle. *(Sydney Gazette 6 July 1827)*

(72) **Received a letter from Crotty**

Captain Crotty of the 39th Regiment, a friend of Coke’s, served a period as commandant at Port Macquarie, his appointment starting in September 1827.

(73) **Wallaby Ground**

In the 1820s, the township of Newcastle extended westward only a short distance. Early surveyors marked out a large town reserve towards the interior consisting of sandy flats covered with scrub. Part of this land bore the name ‘the Wallabee Ground’, a name that lasted for some years. In the late 1820s, the area was frequented by sportsmen hunting for kangaroo, and their dogs. Ownership of part of this land, which was coal-bearing, passed to the Australian Agricultural Company. Beyond this land was the Town Common, and the farm westward of that was ‘Platt’s’.

(74) **ALIGATOR**

This schooner (ALIGATOR/ALLIGATOR), under government charter from December 1826, plied regularly during the next year between Sydney, and Moreton Bay and Port Macquarie.

(75) **Dr McTernan**

Dr McTernan was the Surgeon Superintendent aboard MARINER which ship brought to Australia Captain Charles Sturt and a detachment of the 39th Regiment. The *Sydney Gazette* 19 November 1827 notes Dr McTernan R. N. returning to England on the ship ELIZABETH.
(76) Mackay Veterans to H Quarters  
Not D F Mackay, Superintendent of Public Works and Convicts, but a member of the Veteran Corps.

(77) Mr Busby  
John Busby, a mineral surveyor and civil engineer, with his wife and family, emigrated to New South Wales in 1824. He took up a government appointment associated with the management of coal mines and the provision of a water supply for Sydney. In 1826, John Busby came to Newcastle. His task was to report on coal deposits in the area for the AA Company. Following 1835, John Busby retired to his property Kirkton, in the Hunter Valley.  
His son James is the noted early viticulturist. His sons Alexander and William assisted him for a time with the Sydney water supply scheme and other public works that proceeded under his direction.

The Sydney Gazette, 6 March 1827, remarks that ‘Mr Alexander Busby under the direction of his father the Civil Engineer, has succeeded in completing the wharf at Newcastle which is 169 ft in length and proportionally wide. At the extremity, even at low water, there are from 6 to 7 feet besides about 3 or 4 feet of mud so that vessels which are in the habit of frequenting Newcastle can discharge and take in their cargoes with every despatch’.

The previous remark about Mr Busby’s track of road (64), suggests the association of both father and son(s) with district road work.

In mid 1827, the bridge over Wallis Creek at East Maitland was under construction and the Busbys appear to have played a supervisory role. Alexander McLeod of Luskintyre promoted the erection of this bridge.12

(78) the Sand Hills.  
Sand drifts located between the settlement at Newcastle and the ocean-facing cliffs were so named for most of the nineteenth century. One crossed and climbed the Sand Hills in order to reach the Signal Station on Signal Hill.

(79) ...the newly appointed clergymen (Mr Wilkinson)...
Reverend Frederick Wilkinson received the appointment to be a chaplain in New South Wales before he left England. After some time spent at Parramatta, he came to Newcastle subsequent to the resignation of Reverend Middleton (noted in notebook 21 May). Reverend Frederick Wilkinson came to New South Wales in the convict transport GRENADA in 1825, in which ship the Ogilvie family also travelled. Reverend Wilkinson received a large land grant in the Upper Hunter, which William Ogilvie managed for him. Reverend Frederick Wilkinson was an uncle of Captain Samuel Wright.

(80) At four I received a letter from Mr Dawson ...
The Brookhill Collection in the Derbyshire Records Office holds the letter that Robert Dawson wrote to William Coke.

William Coke mentions in his notebook regular visits from Mr Ralph, the surveyor, with whom he shared dinner, coffee and conversation. Coke lends a sympathetic ear to the stories that Ralph tells him. He is aware of the duel and appears to believe the account Ralph gives of Robert Dawson’s conduct.

12 Further reading: Australian Dictionary of Biography
When William Coke assumed command of the soldiers at Newcastle, he became responsible for the conduct of the detachment at Port Stephens as well. When Robert Dawson had cause to complain of Corporal Evans, he wrote of his concerns to Coke. Dawson stressed in his letter that the complaints were not ‘official’, which probably explains why the letter remained in Coke’s hands rather than in government records.

Dawson’s letter bears the date 26 July 1827. Dawson notes that on 13 May, Coke wrote to him. This letter is one of those that Coke mentions in his dairy—Wrote several letters on Service. On 9 May, Coke first met Ralph and learned something about the duel in which Ralph shot Dr Macleod in both legs. Mr. Dawson behaved rashly, wrote Coke in his notebook. This was an opinion based only on Ralph’s testimony. During the subsequent two days, Coke and Ralph conversed further, and possibly Ralph’s men joined the discussion.

Ralph appears to have influenced Coke to write to Dawson about grievances that the soldiers stationed on the southern shore of Port Stephens attributed to Dawson and his management of the AA Company estate.

Dawson did not wish to document a reply and, since Corporal Evans, the soldier in charge, told him Coke was to visit Port Stephens shortly, he chose to wait until he (Dawson) could speak with Coke personally about the problems that existed at Soldiers Point. Coke’s visit did not happen, and Dawson was subsequently called to Sydney.

This circumstance prompted Dawson to write to Coke. Dawson referred to the ‘relaxed state of discipline in which Corpl Evans kept his men which produced serious inconveniences’ to the company’s personnel. Evans was unfit to remain. Dawson would prefer no guard to one under the influence of Evans’ discontented and captious disposition.

The most serious problem stemmed from Evans and the soldiers, and Mr Ralph, who wilfully ignored a directive issued by Dawson that no one should shoot into the bushes on the margins of the company’s estate. Dawson sought to prevent accidents to persons working in the area. When challenged by Dawson for ignoring the directive, Evans’ men responded by firing off weapons there and then. Dawson had several respectable witnesses to these insulting acts.

Dawson instructed the company’s servants to discontinue certain indulgences previously allowed the soldiers, the exchanging of beef for flour being one such favour. This caused further problems. Dawson insisted that he did not want the soldiers punished, only put under better discipline, and this accounted for the non-official nature of his letter. He wanted Evans replaced by an active man ‘who will do his duty like a soldier’.

Corporal Evans, his wife and possibly all the soldiers at the outpost, returned to Newcastle at the same time as Dawson sent his letter. Ralph continued to influence Coke by sending him gifts (29 July).

On 7 August, Coke set out by boat for Port Stephens with several men, and provisions. At Soldiers Point, he met Ralph. Dawson was absent from the company’s settlement but Coke spoke with Dr Macleod. He returned to Newcastle on 12 August. Although Coke describes in his notebook the weather, his passage, the assistance given by the natives and the difficulties of navigating the waterways, no remarks reveal any insight into his handling of this serious issue.

The affair was to prove unfortunate for the company’s chief officer Robert Dawson, who documented a lengthy account of his version of these events.¹³

¹³ Letter, from Robert Dawson to the Australian Agricultural Company Colonial Committee, 78/1/4, pp. 597-605, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.
The background to the affair was as follows: James Macarthur, son of John Macarthur, members of the colonial committee, notified Dawson early in 1826 that Mr Oxley the surveyor intended to send Mr Ralph to survey the harbour and other parts about Port Stephens. James Macarthur warned Dawson to be cautious, that Ralph was no better than a mad man. Oxley acknowledged that Ralph had given him no end of trouble. Be civil to him, Oxley said, but do not allow him to take any liberties.

Ralph arrived at Port Stephens in May 1826. During the next twelve months Dawson occasionally invited him to dinner when he called at the settlement for supplies. In April and May 1827, Ralph became ‘troublesome and disagreeable’: he insulted the surgeon Mr William Macleod who ‘called Ralph out’. The outcome of this challenge was a duel. When Dawson learnt of it, he made enquires from all parties. The seconds explained that Ralph and Macleod were to fire at the drop of a handkerchief. The Doctor did so, the bullet passing by Ralph who withheld his fire, turned and then deliberately shot Macleod in the legs. Evidence suggested that Ralph meant to kill Macleod. Dawson considered the act ‘unfair firing’ and ‘ungentlemanly’. Ralph could no longer be received at his table and all future contact with the settlement was to be on official business only.

Ralph took up a lodging at Soldiers Point and shared his ill feelings with the soldiers at the outpost there.

Subsequently, Dawson issued the order not to shoot in the bushes near the edges of the settlement which Ralph and all the soldiers disobeysed. Dawson reported the case, and Ralph’s conduct, to the surveyor general, John Oxley, who handed the letters to the governor. Meanwhile, Ralph moved to Newcastle from whence he too forwarded letters to the governor, complains of Dawson’s conduct. The governor forwarded Ralph’s statements to Dawson who, upon receipt thereof, left Port Stephens in July 1827 to take up the matter in person with the governor. Finally, Ralph withdrew his charges against Dawson. Dawson did not wish to have Ralph dismissed from his position and Oxley was able to influence Ralph to return to Port Stephens in order to finish the survey under strict instructions not to visit the company’s estate.

However, the matter did not rest there.

Macarthur and the colonial committee subsequently summoned Ralph to give evidence before them against Robert Dawson. Ralph was willing to furnish ‘ruinous statements’ and ‘a volume of trash and falsehoods to answer the purpose of James Macarthur and his associates’. Following this, Ralph applied to the governor to renew his charges against Dawson. The governor refused to receive them. However, the schemes of the colonial committee achieved their purpose. This is revealed in the letter William Coke wrote to his father, in May 1828.

Mr Mac Arthur (King John) has deposed Mr Dawson the Manager of the Australian Agrl Compy at Port Stephens, he wished me to go down with him but I thought it advisable not to have my Name called into Question, so I declined it. He has applied to have an Officer sent down there to act as a Magistrate, as I am a favourite of his, perhaps I may be sent, but I shall not ask for it; I might be thought too young.

William Coke was fortunate to be able to call upon his youth to justify what appears to be a detached stance throughout this affair. Caution, attention to duty, self interest and maintaining a working relationship with most of his colleagues characterises his actions. These were the same distinct traits revealed on his passage to Australian in the REGALIA. He appears to have avoided any allegiances that could be interpreted as political.
(81) **Honey Bay**

Now known as Anna Bay, but named Honey Bay on surveyor Mitchell’s map of 1834.

(82) **GUILFORD**

The ship GUILFORD, bringing Captain Forbes and a detachment of the 39th Regiment, and 189 convicts, as well as various instructions and orders, arrived at Port Jackson on 25 July.

(83) ...*six Prisoners who escaped out of Jail last night...*

Another ‘occurrence of importance’ that created much paperwork for Dr Brooks and the colonial secretary was the escape from the gaol of six prisoners. A watchman, also a convict, faced a charge of allowing the escape from his custody to occur. He was found guilty of ‘Neglect of Duty’. His punishment was twelve months hard labour in an iron gang. The Prisoners’ Barracks were in a state of decay and not tenable in wet weather so the watchman had an almost impossible task preventing escape.

(84) 7 August

On this day, Charles Sturt wrote the letter to Coke reproduced on pages 99–101.

(85) 10 August

On this day, Coke started the letter ‘My Dear Father’. He finished the letter on 25 August, following receiving letters from England on 13 August.

(86) **A brig arrived to take coal to India...**

This vessel was the HAWEIS and departed from Newcastle on 8 September for Batavia.

(87) **A letter from Condamine concerning the Invalids**

Lieutenant Thomas de la Condamine of the 57th Regiment was ADC to Sir Ralph Darling during his governorship.

*The Invalids...* see also (92)

(88) ...*letters from Macpherson and Lloyd and a circular after reading which the detm subscribed three days pay and a guinea.*

In a list of personal expenditure made during his stay in the colony, Coke notes that he made subscriptions of one guinea for both Colonel Cameron and the Duke of York (see page 106).

Colonel Charles Cameron was a Peninsular War veteran who had a distinguished career in Tasmania and New South Wales during the 1820s. He left with his regiment, the Buffs, for India, in January 1827, and died in May 1827, shortly after his arrival at Calcutta. News of the death of the Duke of York reached Sydney in May 1827. The August notebook entry probably refers to a subscription for a memorial to the Duke of York.

(89) 31 August 1827

On this day Lieutenant William Coke celebrated his twenty second birthday.

(90) **Took a walk with Wright, talking over and giving opinions respecting the growth of sugar.**

In 1821, during Captain Francis Allman’s time at Port Macquarie, (1821 to 1824) experimental planting of sugar cane occurred followed by an attempt to grow the plant on a larger scale, in
1823. Doubts abounded about its suitability as a crop in that district, and its production and management was controversial. Captain Samuel Wright, the fourth commandant at Port Macquarie - in 1826 - therefore, had first-hand knowledge of the venture while Coke’s own experiences included the Ihla Grande sugar plantation visited during the voyage of REGALIA. Cultivation of sugar cane virtually ceased at Port Macquarie following an inquiry in 1828.14

(91) **Cutter was wrecked and all hands perished.**

The *Sydney Gazette*, 28 September 1827, reported news from Newcastle that the ‘little schooner CHARLOTTE lies stranded on the beach about 5 miles from Newcastle towards Port Stephens. It appears that she left Newcastle for Sydney on Thursday the 6th of the present month, with a steady breeze (according to Coke’s notebook, the storm occurred during early hours of the morning, 5 September, the cutter probably having left Newcastle on 4 September) but from the very strong southerly winds which prevailed on the following day, she, in all probability foundered and was afterwards, by the violence of the winds, driven on shore. It is feared that as no account has yet been heard of any of the crew, that all hands on board perished. Some cedar, a keg of butter, and some other articles have been picked up by some persons on the shore where the vessel lay and brought to the settlement where they have been deposited in the Post Office’.

(92) **Captain Robison and Lieutenant Sweeney relieving me and mine.**

At first, (9 September) Coke notes that Lieutenant Brown and forty two men of the 57th Regiment would form the replacement. However, Captain Robison (officer in charge of the military), Lieutenant Sweeney and a detachment of the Royal Veterans arrived instead.

The ship ORPHEUS that arrived in September 1826, brought out from England over 213 persons. The men were members of the New South Wales Veteran Corps, with their families. Colonel Dumaresq commanded the Veterans and the officers included Captain Robison, and Lieutenants Warner and North. Warner and North later settled in the northern district.

The founding of companies of Invalids and Veterans was a practice originating in the earliest years of the British Army. Their members were men considered unfit for active service but fit for garrison duties.

A ‘Royal Veteran Corps’, established early in New South Wales’ history, provided occupation and position for men of the old New South Wales Corps. This was finally disbanded in 1823.

Between 1826 and 1833, three companies of Royal Veterans raised in England served in New South Wales and Tasmania. Their duties were mainly as police, usually mounted, or as convict overseers on public works. At the end of two years’ service they were allowed to settle with the option of taking up a grant of land.

Duncan Forbes Mackay came to New South Wales as second mate of the ORPHEUS. He was a civilian, attached to no regiment. He was appointed by the governor, on 1 January 1827, Superintendent of Public Works and Superintendent of Convicts at Newcastle. Unlike his relationship with William Coke, which appears from the notebook to have been agreeable and constructive, Mackay and Captain Robison were incompatible personalities. Aversion also arose between Governor Darling and Captain Robison. At Newcastle, this situation led to serious disharmony, culminating in the Court Marshall of Robison and dismissal of Mackay in 1828. In 1829, Mackay became the pioneer settler of the Upper Williams district.

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Grey of the Volage...

VOLAGE sailed from Sydney on 6 January 1827, for South America by way of Cook’s Strait.

Governor Phillips

GOVERNOR PHILLIPS was a brig taken into government service in mid 1826 and which, in 1827, linked Sydney with the convict outposts of Newcastle, Port Macquarie, King George Sound, Tasmania, Moreton Bay and Norfolk Island.

Savage life undoubtedly preferable to civilised.

William Coke’s observations of the habits of the Aborigines and their cooperative relationship with the military and civil inhabitants of Newcastle, enrich what is otherwise a simple day-to-day journal of an active military officer on detachment, concerned with his position, his duty, his immediate personal relationships and his recreations. No doubt in his concluding remark, Coke compared the few material possessions of the Aborigines with the long lists of his own possessions, and their cost, and the trouble involved in transporting them from place to place.

The inestimable value of Coke’s Newcastle notebook lies in the regular, matter-of-fact notations that reveal many agreeable associations with the Aborigines. The reader learns how quickly after his arrival at Newcastle, Coke sought to learn Aboriginal skills—Amused myself throwing spears with the natives (7 February). His experiences indicate a climate of trust, epitomised by providing Aborigines firearms for hunting. Coke portrays Aboriginal men and women cooperating with the military, acting as boatmen or pilots, as guides for hunting expedition and as teachers of food-gathering skills on land and sea.

The Aboriginal Desmond quickly assumed the role of a practical food-gathering assistant or part-time attache. He exchanged his work for rations, and fellowship. He is generally reliable. Their interaction at the time of Desmond’s wounding in a tribal fight reflects Coke’s concern for and interest in his native companion. A report from the ‘Field of Battle’ detailing Desmond’s injuries reached Coke with little delay. Coke set out the next day to find him. Coke writes: He said I am wounded at last. I had often told him he would be (8 May). This simple discourse reveals the extent of their previous ‘soldier to soldier’ dialogue. When Desmond resumes his position, in September, he appears to have made a good recovery—able to dive into the surf and bring up a lobster.

That Coke and Desmond shared a mutual regard for one another is testified in a subsequent recollection, published in 1891.15

Once when lying ill with cholera ... and not expected to recover, Desmond came and bent over me and said ‘Never mind, I will see that you are buried like a warrior’.

Once when out with him far into the bush we suddenly came upon about 300 natives - 150 on each side of a ravine - all ready for a fight between themselves, and armed with spears, waddies (a kind of large club), and boomerangs. It was no use to turn back, so we walked on between the lines. Two tall men rushed down upon us, and, not knowing what to expect, I could only cock my gun and await the sequel. However, after some words we were allowed to proceed; but next morning, when I awoke, Desmond told me that he had just speared one of them in a duel - merely some quarrel about a wife he had taken from the tribe.

The role of the duel seems little different in English and Aboriginal society.

15 Derbyshire Times, 12 September 1891.
The Aborigines did not mind Coke being a spectator at some of their ceremonies, and in fact moved to protect him when his proximity to life-threatening action placed him at risk: *I was near to being struck by a boomerang but a black boy saved me* (25 August). *Boomerang* and 'Boomerang' are no doubt names for the same implement.

The *Australian*, 31 January 1827, published some 'Observations on Newcastle' including the statement that 'the black population of Newcastle is as great, if not greater, than the white'. One can understand, therefore, how the natives then sustained traditional ways and rituals, despite the slowly transforming environment.

Reverend L. E. Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society, who established a mission to the Aborigines at Lake Macquarie in 1826, documented concurrent accounts of Aboriginal life in the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle districts. A Report prepared by Reverend Threlkeld in May 1827 differs considerably in its emphasis from Lieutenant Coke's portrayal.

Threlkeld sought to change the ways of the natives, for as little cost as possible, to conform with actions and values of the Society's doctrine. The natives' innate habits thwarted his plans to encourage them to build more substantial dwellings, cultivate crops and submit to formal 'education'. Their gregarious and social manner kept them frequently on the move, interacting with their neighbours and constantly responding to new scenes of interest and action.

Coke, on the other hand, had no such mission. His interest focused more on the expression of their traditional habits. He had much to learn from a friendly association with them.

Coke's position in relation with his soldiers appears akin to Desmond's with his tribe. Both understood the similarity, generating a valued empathy. It is difficult to see how the natives could have any understanding of Threlkeld's vocation.

Coke and Threlkeld were men of vastly different purpose. Coke had no reason to wish the natives different from the way he found them. Threlkeld, on the other hand, did, and gave himself no end of trouble, as the downfall and adversity experienced by his mission attest.16

Threlkeld wrote:

> The Blacks will not associate and continue in one place unless they are provided with flour, clothing, and other necessaries of life, for which they are willing to perform such work as they are capable of, when superintended by persons who will condescend to treat them with kindness.17

The expense of providing the natives with food and other items in exchange for labour was a constant difficulty for the mission. The military officer's arrangement, bartering one kind of food for another, was not a problem. He had subordinate soldiers and convicts at hand for other tasks.

Threlkeld lamented that the Aborigines, especially the young ones, were 'abandoned to vice', saying:

> Newcastle has attraction for drunkenness and prostitution, which, the promise of land and every encouragement to labour for their own advantage at this Station, cannot at present overcome... ...they are all with their friends at Newcastle, where drunkenness is as common with the black boys, 7 or 8 years old, as prostitution is with the other sex of the same age...

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16 Further reading: *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L. E. Threlkeld*. Also, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

Coke has nothing to say about the natives’ morals, and refers to drunkenness only once: an entry on 2 February. However, he told the following story in his reminiscences.

At the sand hills I saw one day a dozen blacks tipsy through having soaked in water an Isle of France sugarbag that had been cast upon the shore, and drunk the decoction; though to me, it seemed to be only like water with a slight taste of sweetness.

He was far more concerned with drunkenness among the soldiers under his command.

Other writers who described Aborigines and their lifestyle, contemporary with William Coke, are Robert Dawson, chief agent of the AA Company from 1826 to 1828, and Peter Cunningham, naval surgeon and settler in the Upper Hunter from 1825 to 1830.

Of the Newcastle and Port Stephens natives, Cunningham noted a distinctive superiority to those of the interior and about Port Jackson:

The Newcastle natives, and all the coast tribes northerly, are docile, obliging, and very willing to do occasional work, if it be not hard; but Johnny M’Gill and Jemmey Jackass, from the Newcastle settlement, are certainly a remarkable exception to the general body, as these individuals cleared ten acres of heavy-wooded land for the missionary at Reid’s Mistake as well and as quickly as could be done by white people.18

The AA Company’s establishment was not the first to make contact with the Port Stephens’ natives. In earlier years, speculators in timber sent parties, who showed little sympathy for the existing inhabitants along the Karuah and Myall Rivers. Robert Dawson later wrote: ‘No person in this colony, has, I believe, ever had the same advantages for forming correct judgement of the natives as myself, arising from my insular situation, my authority as a magistrate, and the means at my disposal of employing and feeding them’. Dawson had, therefore, advantages over Reverend Threlkeld whom he considered sensible, zealous and amiable but unable to perform the impossible.19 For Threlkeld, the proximity to Newcastle distracted the natives of Lake Macquarie from staying at the mission. His limited funds prevented him offering them other inducements to stay. Port Stephens natives appear less frequent visitors to Newcastle and the resources of the company were superior to those of the Missionary Society. Dawson accepted the Aborigines’ wandering habits. The tribe was large enough (several hundreds) for a constant but changing group to perform work in exchange for rations and tools.20

Dawson sought to maintain friendly intercourse with the natives: ‘to do them all the kindness in my power in return for our interference with their country; and to receive an equivalent in their labour for the food which was given them, were all I aimed at: and the result fully equalled my expectations’.21

All observers agreed that the natives would never hurt a white man if treated with civility and kindness.

Dawson considered that there was no king or chief in the organisation of families and groups at Port Stephens. This contrasts with Cunningham’s note, ‘something of chieftainship being apparent’, and Coke’s and Threlkeld’s definite observations of it. The question arises whether a role such as ‘chief of the tribe’ stemmed from mimicry of the social structure of white society at Newcastle during the previous twenty-five years.

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20 ibid p 157
21 ibid p 157
Cunningham noted:

Civilisation depends more upon the circumstances under which man is placed than upon any innate impulse of his own,- the natural inclination of man tending towards the savage state, or that in which food is procured with the least possible effort;—there being something so irresistibly captivating in a wild, roaming life of this description, that few who have made the trial ever relish civilised society thoroughly again.22

Coke expressed a similar sentiment with greater simplicity:—Savage life undoubtedly preferable to civilised.

22 P. Cunningham, Two Years in New South Wales, p. 46.

Throughout 1827, the Buffs and their headquarters (Lieutenant Colonel Cameron) were progressively removed from New South Wales to duty in India. Colonel Lindsay and the headquarters of the 39th Regiment arrived at Sydney by the CAMBRIDGE on 17 September 1827. The arrival of CAMBRIDGE was expected, so that this event prompted the recall of Coke and the detachment to Sydney. Lieutenant William Sacheverell Coke’s notebook ends on 21 September 1827, the day he left Newcastle, presumably by the return voyage of GOVERNOR PHILLIPS.

Post Script

A detachment of Imperial troops served at Newcastle until 1855, which year saw the removal of the last of the ironed gang convicts who laboured on maintaining the breakwater (Macquarie Pier) and other public works. Absence of a military presence at Newcastle was brief because, later that year, No.3 Battery Volunteer Artillery formed. In the ensuing years, the former fort on the Signal Hill took on an increasingly important role in Australia’s coastal defence strategy.
Letters from New Castle

To the Miss Cokes, Brookhill Hall, Derbyshire

New Castle April 2nd 1827
My dear Sisters,

I cannot write to one of you alone or the rest would be jealous. I am at last able to spare a little time to write to you although I cannot write to each a separate letter as we are 15,000 Miles a part and the carriage would be very heavy. You see that I am removed from Sydney to a place called New Castle (it has coals). New Castle is a small Village situated on a Peninsula, half of which is only bare Land. We have no houses of two Stories, but have small Cottages with Verandah's round them to shelter us from the Sun. It is very hot here particularly as it is so exposed. We have plenty of Birds (in the Forests) of beautiful plumage and number of Snakes, most of which are deadly, some few can be cured amongst which is the Diamond Snake, it is green with yellow stars and seldom less than 8 feet in length and is so familiar as to steal our Fowls and to come into our Bed Rooms. There are number of the Natives always about us, they carry each a Spear and Club but have no Covering, they go out a shooting or fishing with or for us and are very honest and never steal; they always sleep in the open Air and will never live in Cottages or Cultivate the Land, as they can kill plenty of Kangaroos and catch fish.

Now as to the Currency Men and Women (Sons and daughters of white Men born in the Colony - they are both (Men and Women) much taller and fairer than us, and the Women are rather pretty.

You know that we are just under you, when it is day with you it is night with us. The Southerly Wind is cold; the Northerly hot. Swans are black - Cranes are white and so are Hawks. Moles lay Eggs. In winter the trees and Vegetation are greener than in Summer and all the trees throw off their Bark and remain white in Summer - Here we have no English Fruits. Strawberries are continually in flour (sic) but never come to anything - Melons do grow here but it is almost to (sic) warm - At Sydney there are plenty of Peaches and Melons. Potatoes will not grow. Lemons and Oranges thrive beautifully. We have fine delightful Days and Nights and are never troubled with Snow and seldom rain except in the 3 winter Months. The old people are not frightened by the
Winter here as in England; they generally die in Summer. Old Mrs Shore would live forever here. The Mosquitoes annoy us terribly; we have the Cholera Morbus, Inflammatory disorder, Dysentery and Catarrh.

Sir James Brisbane (Admiral) and a Midshipman, died here of Dysentery, they only meant to pay a passing Visit—I believe we were the Death of the fine old Commodore by giving him and his fleet a Dinner. I was myself very unwell indeed but I have recovered. We have wretched Water in this Country and very little of it.

I was near being made King of King Georges Sound and should have lived on Salt Beef and Biscuit in all my splendor and dignity, but Macpherson thought I had better remain quiet here. I am employed collecting all kinds of birds for Uncle John, I have had three or four narrow escapes from Snakes already. If I have health I may be able to make a collection for Brookhill but it is very tedious and it is so dreadfully hot in the thick Forest and you may be three Days without Water. Do not imagine that I shall get darker here, on the contrary all Europeans get paler both here and in South America. A Pale sickly brown is the colour of our Countenances.

Whether I shall return to England or go to India I do not know yet. Edward will be lucky if he gets back to England, very few of our Regt will ever return. Money is everything both in a Cold and Warm Climate, with that one may be tolerable and comfortable anywhere; without it one might as well have the Cholera Morbus always in sight as an evil genie. However I suppose if I live I shall see you all one day or another; if I do not fall in love and get married and settle here, as a great many other Officers have already done before, and very rich and comfortable they are at present, and never trouble their heads about Old England. One of the Convicts I brought out with me made himself Capt and overpowered a Sergt and sixteen Soldiers besides Sailors (with his seventy convicts) who were conducting him to Norfolk Island, the Soldiers were in confinement for 60 days and afterwards retaken.

Another Set of Prisoners tried to overpower the Military at Norfolk Island (this is a Penal Settlement, the Prisoners are about 40 in number to each Soldier) but the Soldiers beat them at last.

My love to you all and believe me to be my dear sisters your affect brother

W Sach'll Coke
Letters from New Castle

New Castle April ... 1827

My dear Papa,

I can only write you a short Note, I have received several Letters lately from you. Crotty brought the last. Surely I have not been guilty of any great fault that makes you write so severely to me. Weigh in your own Mind my Conduct for the last 3 years and see if I have been wilder or more expensive to you than other young Men. If I am rather ambitious to get on in the Army do I not pay for my promotion? I have been terribly unwell since I have been here but I am now recovered and I hope to continue in good health, but I have my fears as I have had an inflammatory attack besides Cholera and several Attacks of Dysentery.

It is not for want of care here from necessity I am obliged to live ..., the only fresh meat we can get is Beef, we are however lucky. At many Detachments where there are 1,500 Prisoners alone, they never have fresh meat from one end of the year to the other. Here we have no fruit. New Castle is situated on a hot Sandy Peninsula. Your advice for my Meals and Excercise may be very excellent no doubt for England, but remember this Country is 10,000 miles from you. Our rule here is never to stir out between 6 in the Morning and 2 in the Evening, after that time take Excercise, I have and do associate a good deal with Medical Men here, but they say it is almost unaccountable how suddenly a person may be taken ill and die. I like the Country; a warm is preferable to a Cold Climate. At New Castle I am endeavouring to save and lay by Money to pay for our heavy expenses at Sydney, it is by far dearer than any quarter I have ever been in, if I could save here for a year it would only just pay my debts and would not suffice to keep any Clothes etc in good order. If I should be ordered by the Medical Men to England I could never muster £10 towards the £130 for the Passage to London alone. Most young men bring out £300 and lay it out to Interest for which they get 10 or 15 Per Cent which suffices with their Pay and then in case of illness they have the Capital at hand.

Here are some of the prices at New Castle –

- Common soap, 1d and 2d a lb.
- shot 1 shill a lb.
- brimstone 6d an ounce.
- Milk 8d a pint.
- Bread 4d a lb.
- Salt pork 9d a lb, and if the contractor can spare any Beef he sells it for 4d a lb, 6d in Sydney.
- Fowls 5d and 6d a couple. Eggs 2 shillings a dozen at cheap times.
All your lozengers... 3 boxes had melted in the Hot Weather. Next time I write I hope to be able to give you better account, but it is impossible for an Officer to live under £50 a year besides his Pay and then only by good management. Our Regt is in great favour with the Governor. If I could afford to buy Materials for Stuffing Birds I could make a Collection for Brookhill when I had finished Uncle John's. (I did not leave the Captain's Mess at Rio)

believe me to be my dear Papa Your affectionate son

—W Sach'il Coke

My Dear Father,

I merely write to say I have now been more that a Year in Australia and have not received an Answer to any of my Letters. I am in good health, there is actually no Winter here, I have been eating Strawberries every Day in what is termed Winter, and Lemons ripen in the coldest Weather in the open Air. It is only in the Winter that Peas, Beans and other European Vegetables will grow. The Thermometer has never been lower than 50 and we have had nothing like a Frost. You would be surprised to see shivering with the Thermometer at 50: it is the case, a cool Wind even affects us. I had the Catarrah, but it was not a serious Attack, yet it almost turned my Brain whilst it lasted. I now really think it would be almost madness in me to return to a Cold Climate. If ever I return to England I must endeavour to arrive in June and even then I shall be fearful of the Consequences.

The only fault I have to find with the Colony is the extravagant Prices that are charged for all Articles. A Common Labourer in the Streets earns nearly twice as much as I do in a Day; We ought to have the Indian Allowances.

I have now been nearly eight Months on Detachment, saving money, yet I have not been able to clear more than half my Debts. In a few Minutes [Months] (probably ere this reaches the Line) I shall be at Sydney and my Expenses will be doubled. I am in want of every Article of Clothing.
I have almost made up my Mind not to purchase my Commission but to trust to chance or Interest, from the latter however I may expect very little now the Duke of York is dead.¹

I have made up my Mind not to return to England for some Years, that is if anything is to be gained by staying away.

If I am a Lieutenant for the next five Years, it signifies little so as I can enjoy health in these Warm Climates. If my Constitution is not completely broken up I would as soon live all my Life in India as in England.

August 20th—Since writing the above I have just received some Letters and Parcels from Lloyd, he had only just entered Sydney Harbour and dropped Anchor when the Packet fired her Gun to sail here, so I have only read the Letters, Pap(ers) and Army List.² I assure you I am very thankful for the Letter of Credit which the Colonel is to bring out. Want of Cash was a heavy Load on my Mind; it hurt my feelings very much in thinking I had been above eight Months on Detachment without the least — and after all my Care, I could not return to Sydney out of Debt, Although a Merchant was kind enough to make me several offers of Money and would not take any Interest. This is very unusual in this Country. By your Letters you seem to think that I am discontented, it is quite the reverse, I assure you I am far happier and more contented than most of our Officers, many who have not been here two Months are continually abusing the Colony.

I wish it was in my power to save the Rupees like Edward, but it is utterly impossible, at all events I will be careful. I am ashamed of the Power of Attorney but you must excuse me as I wrote your name and my own down on Paper for the Attorney the truth is at the time both of us were busily (sic) employed in the Criminal Court from Morning till Sun Set and we were too careless being troubled with hot Winds at the Time. When I return to Sydney I will send a correct Copy to you. Here I am alone in a Cottage with six Rooms, detached Kitchen and Gardens. I have forty two Soldiers under my Command (and seven at Port Stephen) and we have to keep I believe about fifteen hundred Prisoners in Subjection, however they behave very well. Wright was recalled long ago and I remained in Command by the desire of Major Macpherson, the

¹ William Coke reached the age of twenty one years on 31 August 1827. An inheritance was then due to him. Had he wished, he could have purchased his commission.
² See diary entry, 13 August 1827. The letter of credit, 19 August 1827.
Governor had determined to send an old experienced Officer, but Macpherson recommended me so strongly that he allowed me to remain although he was afraid I was too young, now he is well satisfied with me. I think you need not be frightened of my Conduct. The Officers that brought me Letters out from you never took the Liberty of writing to the friends of other Officers. It clearly shows that I am on good terms with all or they would not have taken the trouble of writing to you a perfect Stranger for my Sake. Major Macpherson (thou') he is commanding officer writes friendly Letters to me by every opportunity, and he makes any purchases for me I wish for and sends them here. Dr Gibson is married and has entered the Colonial Service. Cunningham the King's Botanist has offered me any information I required, he wished to take me with him on his present Expedition of Discovery for four Months, but I had not the means of going, he went alone, I never heard of his having made the same offer to any person (except in one instance) before me.  

I have not bought a horse, nor do I intend—I assure you I am glad that I came out one of the first. If I had only waited for the following Ship, I should still be at Sydney and heavily in debt. I keep a Journal but it would not be any source of Amusement to you. What can you expect in a Small Village, crowded with Convicts and Savages and no Ladies or Gentlemen. I believe the Natives are my best friends, we often witness Battles between different Tribes even in the Village. They are very expert in throwing a Spear as far a 200 Yards.

I have not found Sarah Waruley out yet nor have any hopes of so doing (When I am relieved I can pursue my Enquiries) unless I knew the Year and Ship she came out in—She is most likely in Service here or in Van Dieman's Land.

I am endeavouring to teach myself painting, I seldom read less than four hours a day, but I have read all the Literary Publications that I can obtain. I shall be glad when I receive the Books you have sent, good Works are as dear as Gold. I never touch Spirits but take perhaps five Glasses of Wine during the Day, the Doctors say it is absolutely necessary.

Several of my men have already been sent to the Gen'l Hospital as incurable and a many have died. We expect the Colonel daily, he will receive £400 a year less than he expected as in future there is to be no Lieutenant Governor.

3 Diary entry, April 15, 16, 17.
The Governor is very unpopular, I will send you by the first opportunity the Australian Newspapers.

Capt Smyth sailed 2 Months ago to form a Settlement at Port Essington—very few of his Men will return as it is so near the Line and the Malays are very warlike. By the last Account from King Georges Sound Wakefield wrote and said he was very happy, he had no Provision excepting three weeks flour, but that there were plenty of Mutton Birds on an Island and they lived on them. The Vessels that sailed with Provisions were not able to reach their destination as it lies due West from Sydney and Westerly Winds prevail all the Winter Months. A Vessel sailed round the Continent with provisions but she will not arrive there for four or five Months. The last Vessel that took Provisions to Melville Island found the Commandant living on Bandicoot (a kind of Rat) and Mice—but Wakefield has nothing but Sea Birds.4

I can give you some idea of the Climate when I inform you that last Summer the Thermometer stood as follows. In the Shade 112° In Shade exposed to Wind but not to the reflection of the Sun 120°; I witnessed it and all the Papers state the same.

4 For further details of these outposts, see Part 2.

**DUELLING**—The ceremony of duelling—a fight with deadly weapons between two persons in the presence of seconds to settle a quarrel—was still prevalent in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Male members of the upper classes and officers of the army and navy who were often younger sons of the aristocracy and gentry, were the practitioners of the custom. It was a type of private warfare derived from the feudal past, once performed with swords but later with pistols. By such a ritual, gentlemen defended their honour. Nearly all countries had laws against duelling. However, there was no legal redress for having one’s honour slighted so members of the upper classes generally ignored the law. Duelling was an accepted part of the aristocratic mode of living.

A duel was generally staged at a secluded meeting place, at dawn. The second was usually a friend or fellow officer. His duty was to guarantee fair play and act as councillor, observer and director. When ready, the duellists saluted each other, then at the second’s signal, exchanged sword thrusts or shots. Wounds, even death, were the occasional outcome but the process vindicated the noble status of the participants.

Preserving Subjects of Natural History—ABOVE: Title and facing pages of William Bullock’s treatise on preserving subjects of natural history. This 1817 treatise is a small work of 36 pages, well suited for the traveller. It is likely that William Coke carried a copy of this, or a similar manual, containing instructions for the preservation and stuffing of bird skins prior to forwarding them to relatives in England.

In the early nineteenth century, the popularity of collecting specimens of natural history from distant countries owed much to the voyages of Lieut James Cook and Joseph Banks. Just prior to the publication of Bullock’s treatise in 1817, the natural history collections of Banks and Cook were given to the British Museum, whose collection of bird specimens—about 3000—was the largest in the world.

Bullock’s treatise was published to satisfy ‘frequent inquiries made by sportsmen, gentlemen in the army and navy, and persons going abroad, for instruction as to the mode of preparing subjects of natural history so as to enable them to collect and transmit home such curious or interesting articles as they may occasionally meet with.’ (p.iii)

A bird was skinned, then the skin was treated with a preserving powder or ‘soap’ made of arsenic, burnt alum, tanner’s bark, camphor and musk. The skin was reshaped by inserting an internal wire frame and the body cavity filled with tow or cotton, or hay, then sewn up, glass eyes attached, and the specimen mounted.
Continuing the reminiscences of William Coke, recalling events both prior and subsequent to his posting to Newcastle.

Convict ships kept coming in; and on board of one of these arrived my kind and fine Highland friend Major MacPherson, (uncle of Cluny, chief of the clan) who afterwards became Colonel. We were fast friends to the last day of his life. Head-quarters arrived with Colonel Lindsay who claimed the title of the Earl of Crawford; a splendid man, and the beau ideal of a brave soldier.¹ From him we had particulars of the death of the Duke of York. Crossing from Ireland, the DUCHESS OF YORK, a miserable old transport ship, which brought out our head quarters, was several times near foundering.² Nearly half the soldiers had to be on deck, so crowded was the vessel; there was no room for them below. They all wore long crape (sic) scarfs, and their bear skin caps were all covered with crape.³ When all had arrived it was drill, drill, drill! Letters seldom came in those days.

One of the last officers that arrived was Captain Smith, who came in the PORTLAND. Having gone on board, by the invitation of the Port-captain, I was astonished to find that Smith had suspended in the cabin his wife’s coffin. There it had swung for weeks, and he had been obliged to sleep on the cabin floor to allow room for it. Mrs Smith had died off Tristan d’Acunha, and during the long voyage therefrom stormy weather had set in, whereupon the superstitious sailors, regarding the coffin as a thing of ill omen,—as the sailors of old did Jonah,—came in a body to request that it might be thrown overboard. But Smith said to them, ‘Be off; the first man that proposes such a thing again, I’ll blow his brains out!’ and he would have done so! He was a tall, cool, collected man, and his wife had been a daughter of a banker at Ludlow. He had been through the Peninsular War, was twice in the West Indies, had also served in Canada, lived at Madras, and been in several Indian battles; yet, after all, he reached the good old age of 91, and died peaceably in the Isle of Wight. ... I saw Mrs Smith buried, and made a sketch of her tomb, which her friends were much pleased to have.⁴

Our duties were by no means light, as we had so many guards to mount; besides which we were continually employed at the criminal court as jurors, receiving for our services fifteen shillings a day of four
or five hours long. The Judge generally fancied he was ill of dysentery, which killed so many of our men often in a few hours. On Mondays a subaltern was always told off to see the men hanged; and sometimes there were as many as six or eight suspended at once on the same gallows.\textsuperscript{5} The law was then very harsh, as Sir Robert Peel’s Act had not yet come into force to ameliorate its terrible severity. I sat on one very curious case, when it became necessary to seize and hang a gang of bushrangers. A constable was disguised as a pedlar and sent into the bush, supported by a party of soldiers. As he was walking along, a powerful young man, named Cook, dashed out and ordered the supposed pedlar to deliver his pack; whereupon he threw it on the ground, and, as the bushranger stooped to take it up, shot him through both cheeks. A \textit{meelee} took place: soldiers on one side, bushrangers on the other; and unfortunately the pedlar was killed. The six officers on the jury at once pronounced Cook ‘guilty’, but it struck me that there was no proof of the robbery, as the bushranger was shot before he touched the pack; so he was acquitted. He did not seem very grateful, however, saying, ‘Hang me now, for I am sure to be hanged on some other charge!’

The same routine continued:— trying, hanging, guards, and drilling.\textsuperscript{6} Sometimes we had balls at the Government House and at Captain Piper’s, who used to send boats and carriages to take us to his house. There all was enjoyment, in spite of the heat, which, during the hot winds, often raised the thermometer to 125 deg. in the shade. Alas poor Captain Piper! One day he had himself rowed out by his boat’s crew ... and ordered some of his band to play the dirge in ‘Macbeth’, then suddenly he jumped overboard and never rose again; whether he was insane, or had been weighed down by his dress, or seized by a shark, nobody knows.\textsuperscript{7}

In those days the natives wandered about the streets with their boomerangs, spears, clubs and throwing sticks. They used to make some supposed delinquent stand punishment in the barrack yard, his only chance of escape being by parrying a volley of spears, and if he was killed it was looked upon as a clear proof of his guilt! But a stop was at last put to this. Old King Bungaree, as he was called, had a brass plate hanging round his neck, on which was engraven ‘Bungaree, Chief of the Botany Bay Tribe’. He was very polite, taking off his cocked hat, copying the manners of the Governor of the time,—polite, cool, or haughty, as the case may be. Now and then his tribe gave a \textit{corroboree}, or moon light dance. A former Governor, Macquarie, thought to civilise them, by building them something between a wigwam and a cottage, with garden
ground all prepared, and seeds sown therein. But the end of the civilisation was as follows:—Governor Macquarie meeting Bungaree one day said to him, 'Well, Mr Bungaree, how do the seeds get on?' 'Very well,' replied he, 'except the fish hooks, and they won't come up at all!' Now, fish hooks were Bungaree's only inducement to try agriculture, so when these failed to grow, he preferred his old wild life.

About this time there arrived the first 74-gun ship that visited Sydney, the WARSPITE, commanded by Commodore Sir James Brisbane, who soon died of dysentery, and was buried with all military honours. It was at first feared that the 74 would not be able to pass the 'Sow and Pigs', sunken rocks near the entrance. Soon followed the VOLUME, of 28 guns, commanded by the Hon. Saunders Dundas; the FLY, of 18 guns, Captain Wetherall; and the SUCCESS, of 18 guns, Captain Stirling. Everybody was delighted, and gaiety prevailed in Sydney for a while, until a gloom was cast over all by the Commodore's death: and the WARSPITE and VOLUME left, under Captain Dundas, for New Zealand.8

Captain Stirling was sent to Swan River. He reported favourably of the country, settlers were enticed there and he became Governor.9 The first lieutenant of the FLY, Colson Festing, landed at King George's Sound with Captain Wakefield and some soldiers of the 39th Regiment, to form there a convict settlement, and I lent him my kangaroo dogs.10 The party suffered severely—having to live for six months on mutton birds—as the small brig sent with provisions for them could not beat through Bass's Straits, and was obliged to make almost the entire circuit of New Holland by Torres Straits. Captain Wright, of the Buffs, with a party, settled at Port Phillip, now Melbourne.11

Afterwards I was sent to Newcastle, on the Coal or Hunter River, 62 miles north of Sydney, which then consisted of some 20 buildings. I had 52 men, and a corporal and five men were detached to the Australian Agricultural Company's settlement of a million acres at Port Stephen, 20 miles further north, where Mr Dawson had 600 convicts.

I was a great deal in the bush, and saw much of the natives; my companion being Desmond, chief of our tribe. Often two or three hundred of them would lie naked around their fires, close to us; and they walked in and out of my cottage just as they liked, but never stole anything. I used to find them a musket, with two loads of powder and shot, and they would bring me home, without any pay, some wild ducks or a kangaroo, or some other acceptable game. Their acuteness was something wonderful. Once, when I had lost the silver side screw of the lock of my gun, I sent a native to search for it, and, to my astonishment,
he actually found such a small thing as this, lying five miles off, amidst long and thick grass.

When wandering in the bush, great care is required, as you are apt to go circling round and round when you think you are going straight on. At the sandhills I saw one day a dozen blacks tipsy through having soaked in water an Isle of France sugar bag that had been cast on the shore, and drunk the decoction; though to me it seemed to be only like water with a slight taste of sweetness.

When lolling against one of the pillars at the end of my verandah, gazing over the river and the country beyond, a lot of savages would often appear, wishing to cross. At once I used to send boats to bring them over; and up they would flock, equipped with spears, shields, waddies, and boomerangs, telling me they had come to fight my tribe, and that I must be present. The battle generally took place early in the day, in a kind of natural amphitheatre, with hills at the back and the river Hunter in front. First there was skirmishes, perhaps two on each side, and then came the battle, the end of which was to me always a mystery. There was no fight, but all at once peace,—one side being acknowledged victors. At sunrise next morning the great warriors who had been killed in the battle were buried with full savage honours, followed to the grave by mourners with hawks’ feathers in their hair, and their ribs marked white; then they re-embarked and went off. The natives seemed to look on these fights in much the same light as English youths regard a football match, and to derive pretty much the same amount of enjoyment from them; and to many people both these kinds of sport seem to furnish good illustrations of that principle of human nature which the old Malmesbury Philosopher excogitates in his pleasant Derbyshire retreat at Hardwick, and enunciated in the somewhat startling formula that ‘the normal state of mankind is a state of warfare’.

When young, the natives were good looking, before they had disfigured themselves by flattening their noses and passing a stick through the bone that separates the nostrils. Before being admitted to the dignity of men, the youths are placed on a native’s shoulder, or on a rock, a narrow stone pressed against a front tooth, and then, by a blow on this from another stone, the tooth is knocked out, and this they must bear without giving any sign of pain. The women who fish, have the first joint of the little finger of the right hand cut off, as it interferes with the drawing in of the lines. They were always stark naked, and in diving off the rocks they used to go down feet foremost, and always
found, they said, the water quite still at a depth of 10 or 12 feet. They tried to persuade me to go down with them, two of them offering to hold one of my hands each.

The tree natives—as those who live away from the sea coast were called—are wonderful climbers. With a stone hatchet they cut a small place for the ball of their foot, and, to get an oppossum (sic), ascend a tree 70 feet high and 15 feet round, without a single branch along its trunk. All were bold and brave. In Captain Cook's voyages, nowhere, except in New South Wales, did one native oppose the landing of a whole boat's crew.

When a thunderstorm was approaching they threatened it with their clubs, and on an eclipse taking place, they told me that the Devil was squeezing the blood out of the moon. They had no idea of God; and I believe their knowledge of the Devil was derived only from the free use of his name by the convicts. Neither had they any idols or anything approaching worship.

One of the earliest Australian explorers, after Oxley, was Captain Sturt, of the 39th Regiment. Captain Barker, also of the 39th, when on a journey of discovery, was killed by the natives in the district now known as South Australia. Major Logan, of the 57th, when on a like expedition to Moreton Bay, now Queensland, had taken the saddle off his horse, and was eating something, when, seeing some natives, he jumped on his horse, without the saddle, and galloped off, but, found himself everywhere headed by the savages, excepting at one point, where there was a deep ravine. He put his horse at it, but both fell on the opposite bank pierced with many spears.

In continuation of my article of last week I would point out the evil done by the total abolition of Penal Settlements for our convicts. Surely no man in his senses would wish to keep all the bad characters in England, whilst many English farmers, owing to 'bad times', are forced to emigrate and seek a living elsewhere, thus depriving our country not only of good and honest men, but also of capital, for one party quite lately took out £100,000. The outcry against transportation was chiefly owing to the somewhat misguided action of the then Bishop of Tasmania, who preached up and down England that the colonies were being hampered by only having the worst characters sent out to them. This aroused a general outcry from the Cape and from Australia, and further transportation almost entirely ceased. This was a mistake, for there was plenty of room for fresh settlements; some thousand miles or

\[\text{\textcopyright A copy of this article is unavailable.}\]
so of coast line in Western Australia alone being still unoccupied. Besides which there was New Guinea; but the Government, although entreated to do so by Queensland, would not annex this island until quite lately, when they found that Prince Bismarck had awakened from his long dream and had managed to seize half the country ...

Penal settlements were a great ... blessing; for not only did they take the evil characters out of England, but also gave them a chance of redeeming their past life, which they could never have had in England—watched and blackmailed, as they would be sure to have been by their former evil companions and by the police. Of course when a settlement became, so to say, 'respectable', fresh ones should have been continually formed in order that the honest settlers and reformed convicts might not be annoyed or injured in any way.

I had considerable experience among the convicts myself, for not only did I take out to New Holland (as Australia was formerly called) 120 convicts in the ship REGALIA, with only a guard of seventeen soldiers, but I was quartered in New South Wales for three years, and commanded a corps of 52 men at Newcastle on the Hunters River, together with a detachment at Port Stephens, which was the Australian Company's Settlement, with its 600 convicts. Year by year I saw most of the convicts—at least four-fifths of them—doing well; the good gradually raising their position, while the bad ones were sent away to settlements on the coast or to Norfolk Island, and the worst came to the gallows.

I may here mention that I never had occasion to call out a single soldier during the whole of my sojourn on the Hunters River. At that time the convicts had 'piece work' to do, and when that was over they were allowed to work at anything they liked for themselves, and thus were enabled to earn money by which they might purchase small farms and themselves become settlers. All worked well and were contented, but the authorities made a change—(at the instigation, I believe, of Lord Glenely {sic})—and forced them to work all day long, thus shutting out all hope for the future and totally ruining their dispositions. It was this cruel and high-handed policy which, by preventing the convicts from improving both their character and position, brought out all the evil that was in them, and thus made the settlers dread them and object to the formation of fresh penal settlements.

As an instance of the peaceable state of the country I may mention the French Admiral, Deauville (sic), when sailing round the world and trying to find out where La Perouse was lost, visited Sidney (sic) in a
large frigate, and I was appointed to show him around the settlement.\textsuperscript{16} He was greatly surprised and pleased with all he saw, and he told me that having just left the Portuguese Penal Settlement of Fernandez de Noronha, he could scarcely believe that Sydney was really a penal settlement.

As I look back to the time when, besides myself and the soldiers, there was only one free man at Newcastle—where now wharfs extend for miles along the river, crowded with ships taking in coal for all parts of the world—and remember that the first settlements at Melbourne, South Australia, King George’s Sound, and Port Raffles on the N. Coast were formed by my own regiment—so that the origins of all these places was really a convict settlement with a few soldiers—I am more convinced than ever that penal settlements, if properly and carefully conducted, would really be a benefit not only to the mother country, but also to the convicts themselves. I will conclude this article by giving a few instances of how convicts became good and useful citizens. Terry, a fine gentlemanly-looking man, who was said to have been flogged at the cart tail for stealing two geese, was known, before his decease, to have been worth £72,000 a year\textsuperscript{17} and Fraser, the contract baker, told Major MacPherson and myself that he had sent £500 to the parish in Scotland which had transported him, telling them that by doing so they had conferred the greatest possible blessing upon him.\textsuperscript{18}

At one time when sailing up an Estuary, on my way to Sidney (sic) by sea, we came upon some cultivated grounds, with a good house hard by. There we were hospitably received by the owner, and on our arrival found that his wife and children had just finished Sunday prayers. Everything was most clean and comfortable, but after dinner the man told me that he was a liberated convict, and that he now grew and sent yearly £1,500 worth of onions to the Sidney market. I was so pleased with him that I lent him my yacht for his next trip, and when I left the country he begged to be allowed to purchase it from me.

Once when sitting under the verandah of my house a respectable, well-dressed man rode up, took off his hat, and hoped that I was well. Seeing that I did not recognise him he said, ‘Do you not know me, sir?’ ‘Certainly not,’ said I. Then he gave me his name, and told me that he had been a convict under my charge on board the REGALIA, and that he had come to thank me for my care, saying that if it had not been for me the ship would certainly have been taken by the convicts. He was now in a good situation as manager of a large estate, with a salary of £200 a year.
At another time, when about to embark, a man stopped me, asking if I was from Brookwell (Brookhill). I said ‘Yes, who are you?’ He said ‘When Brandreth was beheaded at Derby I was sent here for being one of his followers, and I want you to take a message to my wife at South Normanton, and tell her that I am now rich and shall come home next year’. He had made his money through knowing how to sink wells (he being a collier) when no one else could do so. I promised to convey his message to his wife, but upon making inquiries afterwards I found that she had been re-married for seven years.

Charles Sturt

Among Coke’s friends in the 39th Regiment was Charles Sturt, ten years his senior, whom he first met in Ireland where Sturt spent five years on garrison duties.

Charles Sturt was born in India in 1795, the son of a judge. He travelled to England in 1800 for his education and at fifteen years of age entered Harrow. In 1813, family influence obtained for him a commission as ensign in the 39th Regiment. He served in the Peninsular War and then the Regiment moved to Canada, engaging in action against the Americans. The Regiment was recalled to Europe after Napoleon’s escape from Elba, arriving just too late to take part in the battle of Waterloo. Sturt passed three years in France in the army of occupation. In 1818, the Regiment began garrison duties in Ireland. Sturt was promoted to lieutenant in 1823 and captain in 1825. He sailed for Australia a year later than Coke, in December 1826, in the convict ship MARINER with a detachment of his regiment, and like Coke, acted as officer of the guard. MARINER arrived in May 1827. The governor, Sir Ralph Darling, appointed him military secretary and major of brigade. Darling appointed many members of his family to key positions in his administration. Charles Sturt was a cousin of Mrs Henry Dumasresq. Henry Dumasresq’s sister was Ralph Darling’s wife.

The unchartered inland of New South Wales beckoned Sturt. He was able to influence the governor to agree to him leading an expedition despite his lack of specific qualifications to do so. During the 39th’s tour of duty in Australia, there were many extensive explorations into the interior and both officers and soldiers took part in these operations. In November 1828, Sturt received instructions to attempt to trace the course of the Macquarie River, and in November 1829 the Darling River. The latter expedition, which charted the Murray River, took six months.
Sturt's duties took him to Norfolk Island in 1831 as commandant of the garrison. A period of ill health followed and he returned to England. He married in 1834, sold his commission and returned to Australia to settle on land granted to him. After some time in South Australia, including further explorations, he returned to England in 1853 where he spent the remaining sixteen years of his life. He renewed his friendship with William Coke. People frequently consulted him about Australian affairs.

Coke reached Sydney in August 1826. His notebook, written at Newcastle, begins in February 1827. Sturt arrived in May 1827. Coke records a subsequent exchange of correspondence with Sturt, indicative of the importance of their friendship. Coke sent Charles Sturt gifts of stuffed birds. The surviving letter, reproduced below, which Charles Sturt sent to Coke, was written during the months he waited for the governor to approve his first exploration.

Court House 7 August 1827

I have been so idle of late, my dear Coke, that now I am really ashamed of taking up my pen both to thank you for your kind reception of Mr Fraser and for the present you sent by Berkeley. I know not how it is, but I have not even written to England since my arrival, so that in truth you must forgive my negligence to you. My head has been so full of projects and expeditions that I have been reckless of everything else, and after all I find that I am just as near the accomplishment of my wishes as when I put my foot on these shores. It appears to be the ruling principle of the governors to check rather than encourage enterprise, and our profession, and effectively prevent activity, so that a military man has little chance of gratifying a roving disposition. I wrote to Mr Lithgow and offered to conduct an expedition to attempt the turning of the waters in the interior, and to explore the country between this and Moreton Bay, and in consequence of the letter I got an invitation to Government House, and was there for two days, but the General (Darling) was so ill that he could not enter on public business, and told me he was obliged to defer speaking to me to some early opportunity.

† A member of Sturt's first expedition
Thus the matter stands at present, but I suppose I shall hear of it in the course of a short time. Mr Cunningham has returned and advises me to go to Moreton Bay and thence to the northward. He says I shall find a delightful country, and probably some river or bay. Mr Oxley (the Surveyor General) however, thinks the marsh runs all along to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and that consequently I shall not be able to turn it. His opinion is that the water has receded from the shores and that formerly the high land in the interior and round the coast was so many islands. It is an ingenious supposition and I believe a true one.

I generally go after breakfast to see how your boat gets on. The man appears to be a neat workman. He says it will be too narrow for its length and I am sorry you will not be here in sufficient time to make an alteration in her, for it is a principal in boat building (for sailing boats I mean) to give them a breadth of beam at least one third of the length of the keel, often of the upper length, and I recollect when I used to be at Brownsea my Uncle Charles, who was a lieutenant in the navy always built on that plan when he wanted a sailing boat and a narrow one for rowing. I am in hopes that you have taken your model from some fast sailing boat and in that case yours will probably be like her. Berkeley is to have a race with Forbes, and has a boat of Burns which he is rigging out. Berkeley is getting two inches and better of a false keel on the little boat to make her hold the wind better, and also a mizen for she had too large a jib, that threw her off the wind.

MacPherson read me a part of your letter relative to your gun, and I immediately went to the Armourer and examined it. How in the name of fortune did you manage to bulge it out in that manner and abuse it so much? I measured the breech with my own and found that when cut off it would be longer. So I directed Devereux to do it, for there was no way to make it sound and even again. The musket I did not think worth repairing. I fancy you will soon be tired of headquarters. It is a dull place. I sent all my company to Parra Matta with Brough, and MacPherson will join them as soon as the Colonel arrives.
It is now time for me to think of you. I was very much obliged for your kind present. I am sending most of them to Milner who will value them. They were very well preserved and skinned. I have not met with anything curious here, nor have I been drawing. I have written this in the Criminal Court and shall add any news I may hear when I return to the barracks. In the meantime believe me that with all my idleness no one will be more happy to wish to return to the mess than myself.

I am most faithfully yours

G Sturt.

Coke’s sailing boat, about which Sturt expressed rather dogmatic doubts, was one of several owned by the officers. In his later years Coke recalled that ‘time passed with us very agreeably. We built or fitted yachts, and had many a pleasant voyage in them’.

At Sydney, September 1827 to mid 1828

Following the arrival of the 39th Regiment’s headquarters, the officers, soldiers and detachments were recalled to Sydney for a lengthy period of military training following which they would again do duty at penal settlements before proceeding to India.

Coke entrusted a letter for his father to his friend Dr Christie who returned to England in February 1828. At that time, he noted that detachments of his regiment faced withdrawal from Western Port and King Georges Sound due to inherent difficulties at these locations. The soldiers at Melville Island experienced near starvation and related illnesses, and hostility, wounding and many deaths at the hands of the Aborigines. Coke found the loss of friends under these circumstances distressing.

Soldiers were garrisoned at seven outposts, identified by Coke as ‘39,37,33, 32,24,11, and 9 South’. Sydney was the least preferred station because ‘we cannot afford to live here’, he wrote to his father. ‘I assure you that I am obliged to live in the most economical way, which is distressing as every one observes it’.

Coke’s February letter to D’Ewes Coke was a forceful one, conveying his resolve to determine his own future. It was tempered, however, by his seeking his father’s approval for his plans. His earnest confidences were
studded with laments for his ongoing shortage of money and justifications for his absolute need of further advances to meet the modest but essential agreements into which he had entered in order to initiate his future plans. The letter is, however, optimistic and enthusiastic, the thought of investing his inheritance and several years of his life as a colonist presenting him with a rosy picture of increasing wealth.

*I now intend laying before you my future plans in life. I have after a very mature consideration determined not to purchase my Compy as it is only money thrown away—I will take my chance, and when I get my Promotion for nothing, I shall go on Half Pay. In the mean time I wish you to send me a Letter of Credit out, that I may draw the Sums of Money that will be coming to me (after you have repaid yourself). With this I intend buying cattle etc., and I shall be entitled to at least 1,500 Acres of Land. Many very respectable Gentlemen (indeed the first and richest of the Colony) will take charge of my Stock or Farm (and find farming men) for less than one third of the Offspring or profits, and thus my stock will be increasing until I leave the Army, then I shall retire and take charge of my own Farm and Stock. Several Officers who have retired or are retiring, have offered to superintend or take care of my interests during my absence. I am quite determined to carry my plans into effect, that is with your consent, which I trust and hope will not be withheld. I have made a vow never to return to England unless in better circumstances that I left it. Purchasing a Compy will never benefit me in money matters and I could get here from 15 to 20 per Cent interest on cash with good security—I have given over taking wine and have curtailed my Expenses as much as possible and shall in future if possible live within bounds.

Another Officer was sent to Port Essington in spite of my earnest request to be sent there, but he was very much disliked and they were glad to send him out of the way. You see I was absolutely obliged to draw 50£ more than I intended, which I hope you have paid to the Agents, it was of great service to me, but I am even at present far from having a good and sufficient supply of clothes and linen.
I give you my word I will not spend a Pound of the Money you send me, except in Stock or in Farming... In ten years from this I shall return to England with a thousand a year at least (Plût au Dieu). Send if you can possibly spare it a Letter of Credit for a thousand or 12'00 Pounds or all that is due to me, and then instead of troubling you, I shall be able to assist you or my family in a short time.

Coke’s estimate of costs to set up as a settler. These costs are included in his notebook

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Cows</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pigs</td>
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<td>Salt</td>
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<td>1500 lb Pork</td>
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<td>Turkies</td>
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<td>10 Cwt Flour</td>
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<td>Fowls</td>
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<td>Geese</td>
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<td>SaltPetre Salt</td>
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<td></td>
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Coke's inventory of items needed by a settler.  
This list is included in his notebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saws</th>
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<td>Silk</td>
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<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Knives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anvil</td>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>Leather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinges</td>
<td>Spirits</td>
<td>Pitch, Tar</td>
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<td>Padlocks</td>
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<td>Paint</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Windlass</td>
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<td>Iron Kettles</td>
<td>Butter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying Pans</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grid Irons</td>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>Cows</td>
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<td>Salt Saltpetre</td>
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<td>Scythes</td>
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<td>Fowls</td>
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<td>Reaping Hooks</td>
<td>Tobacco &amp; seed</td>
<td>Pigs</td>
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<td>Buckets</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churns</td>
<td>Nets</td>
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<td>Bowls</td>
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<td>Lines</td>
<td>Barometer</td>
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<td>Vice</td>
<td>Powder</td>
<td>Charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shot</td>
<td>Osburgh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In May 1828, Coke wrote another letter to D’Ewes Coke, having received one from him written over seven months earlier. Coke was still stationed at Sydney.

In the few months since February, William Coke’s plans underwent a complete turnaround. Instead of a farming future, he spoke of a preference to complete a term of military duty in India. ‘I must purchase a Compy if possible’, he wrote. ‘Most Officers say they would sooner proceed to India immediately, even if they were certain of dying the day after their arrival, than they would remain here if half the Colony was given to them’.

The foundation of Coke’s decision, in mid 1828, not to choose a farming life was the economic downturn occurring throughout the colony. The onset of a period of severe drought, lasting more than three years, brought ruin to most new settlers who invested in livestock to establish their future. Coke wrote:

As to this Country it is now quite useless to lay one’s money out, (I must purchase a Compy if possible). The Settlers are all bankrupt, the Cattle are dying by hundreds in the Bush, there actually has been no rain, excepting occasional and partial thunder storms on the Sea Coast for fifteen months. I travelled for one hundred miles and every marsh was dry and not a drop of water could be had. The Country is too dry to be unhealthy, what a misfortune that there are no extensive fresh Water Rivers as in England.\(^{20}\)

In addition to widespread adversity in the colony, Coke had his own private enduring problem—the lack of adequate money. ‘What is the good of a fine climate, good health and great appetite if we cannot afford to fill our bellies’, he wrote. He placed before his father his expenditure during two years in New South Wales and the projection of his requirements in the year ahead, that is until he reached India. He could hardly have realised then that his meticulous account-keeping would, more than 160 years later, provide an inventory of the personal needs of a young man on a budget trying to maintain the position of an officer and a gentleman. He wrote:

I shall endeavour to show you what Money I have expended in two years in this Colony, and also what Sums I shall be in need of to furnish me with the Articles I shall
mention. To that amount I absolutely must draw on you, and then having a tolerable Set of Clothes etc., I hope by being careful and economical to make both ends meet until I reach India, on my Arrival in which Country I shall most likely have to draw on you once again.

Expended in two years

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Blue coats</td>
<td>14.0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Shell Jackets</td>
<td>13.10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Grey Trousers</td>
<td>12.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 pr Boots</td>
<td>28.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Chaco</td>
<td>4.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Forage (cap)</td>
<td>3.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Cloth</td>
<td>1.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Cloth</td>
<td>4.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs</td>
<td>4.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk Neck</td>
<td>2.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Box</td>
<td>4.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep(air)s Gun</td>
<td>3.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosquito Curtains</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regt Subscriptions</td>
<td>13.2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col Cameron's (subs)</td>
<td>1.1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duke York's</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Tea</td>
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<td>Gloves</td>
<td>1.10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rep(air)s Watch</td>
<td>4.10.0</td>
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</table>

Exchange of Watch 4.4.0

Debts, first arrival 30.0.0

(Hunting) Coat 3.5.0

Shooting Coat —

Coarse blue Trousers 1.17.0

Servant's Hat 1.6.0

Waist Belt 1.5.0

Loss in Lodgings 2.0.0

Compass 1.0.0

Servants Livery and Clothes 12.0.0

Servant's Hat 1.6.0

1 Red Coat 9.0.0

1 Blue Coat 7.0.0

4 Waistcoats 6.0.0

1 Forage Cap 3.0.0

1 Chaco 2.0.0

1 Counter Pane 0.11.6

6 Shirts 3.9.0

2 Pr Boots 4.10.0

Table Cloths

Stationery

1 Red Shell jacket 3.10.0

From England

2 Epaulettes

1 Sash Regt Buttons

12 Canteen

1 Books

All trifling Articles are left out, yet you can imagine that there is at least fifty Pounds expended which I have not mentioned.
Paper has cost me 3d a sheet, and pens 3d a piece. You see how money is easily expended and at this moment there is hardly an article but what I want. You need not blame me with extravagance. I insist upon you repaying yourself (from the inheritance).

I was certainly rather foolish in a Purchase I made of a Boat for shooting, on which (when sold again) I lost a little money. I have never had a person in my room at night for six months. I have even the character of being too careful. I never drink extra wine at night and often (though it is wrong) I never take any at all.

Another unavoidable expenditure lamented by Coke during his time at Sydney was the obligation to entertain officers from visiting war ships.

The Rainbow arrived from India and has brought me letters from Edward and from Naval Officers on the Station. I wish these Men of War would keep away, we are obliged to entertain English, French and Russian besides Indian Officers who come here on leave. And what with Judges, etc., etc., our Funds and Purses are low enough.

This circumstance explains the preference for appointment to the outposts rather than remaining at the Sydney barracks.

The most informative account of the next period of Coke's Australian service forms a small part of his reminiscences, a copy of which is held in family papers.

After leaving Australia I went to Van Diemen's Land (or Tasmania as it is now called) with a company of the 57th Regiment, and upon our arrival at Hobart's Town we joined the mess of the 40th Regiment, which was stationed there. On leaving them we marched up country to Oatlands, where the last of the Tasmanian aborigines were driven back. These soon after dwindled down to one man and twenty women, who were placed by the Government on an island off the mainland. They were not long-haired like the Australian natives, but were woolly-headed Negroes like those of Africa. Until they were finally subdued they constantly made war on the English, headed by an escaped convict or two, and even when we were at Oatlands the man who carried the mails used to always travel by night for fear of being seen and killed by day.
Coke’s experience with the natives in Tasmania must have contrasted starkly with the seemingly pleasant intercourse at Newcastle. In Tasmania, conflict between European and Aborigine had already reached serious proportions there when, between 1821 and 1824, rapid colonisation diffused settlers and servants throughout districts hitherto unlocated. Displaced natives faced escalating oppression. This prompted multiple acts of hostility and reprisals on a large scale. In late 1826, the government of Tasmania took extraordinary means to repress native retaliations. Aborigines were directed to particular districts and military were stationed in the interior to carry out government orders. In April 1828, natives were forbidden to enter the settled district. Conflicts escalated until, in November 1828, Martial Law was proclaimed. This was seen as the authorised destruction of the Tasmanian Aboriginal, the order lasting until late 1833.

The state of convict management in Tasmania also dismayed William Coke. He described his experience thus:

It was pitiful to see the atrocious management of the convicts there. They were surrounded with soldiers when at work, while in Australia there was only one free man as onlooker to each road gang. I even knew a case where a gentlemen named Rory MacLeod had 85 convicts under him, and he carried out contracts with only one free man to assist him in their management. There certainly was a great want of order in Tasmania, when a couple of regiments were unable to put down marauders—whether black or white ...

If family considerations had not influenced William Coke to seek leave from the army in August 1828, one could well believe that the reason stemmed from the duties required of him in Tasmania to implement government policies on the Aborigines and the convicts of that small island colony.

Return to England

In August 1828, Coke applied for and received a year’s leave enabling him to return to England. His departure brought to an end his short army career. When he left Australia there was no indication that he knew that this was so, and the presumption is that between his decision to leave Australia and the time due for his return, something happened to change his prospects.
Three army documents exist which give the outline of what happened. The first is a General Order No 85/5 dated from Sydney on 14 August 1828.

*The Lieutenant General has been pleased to grant Lieutenant Coke 39th Regiment twelve months leave of absence to return to England.*

*By Order,...*

*Charles Sturt, Major of Brigade.*

Sturt also signed General Order No 87 dated 17 August authorising Coke to ‘proceed to Van Diemen’s Land in order to obtain a passage from thence to England in pursuance of the leave granted to him’.

This General Order suggests that William Coke returned to Sydney prior to August that year. Charles Sturt, back on routine duties between his first and second expeditions, very likely smoothed Coke’s way to an unusual grant of leave.

In spite of the authority to find a ship in Van Diemen’s Land, Coke sailed from Sydney in the barque WANSTEAD, departing on the evening of 19 October 1828. WANSTEAD sailed by Cape Horn, touching Tristan da Cunah and Ascension Island and reached Crookhaven in Southern Ireland on 22 March 1829—a long voyage taking five months out of Coke’s twelve months’ leave.

On this journey, Coke kept a log book of his own, in orthodox style, giving daily positions, weather, and anything observed on the sea or in the sky. By this account it was, until the last few days, an uneventful voyage but adventure did come in the end, one long remembered. Seventy years later, the writer of Coke’s obituary, reviewing his long life, included in it an account of the salvage of the brig NORMANHALL.

Coke’s own notation in his log book states:

> 12 March Lat 49.48 Long 16.57: after a stormy night during which spars of the WANSTEAD were carried away (and subsequently replaced) a ship, and a disabled brig carrying a valuable cargo and with a distress signal were seen.

Coke took a boat crew, boarded and examined both vessels. He stayed all day aboard the unseaworthy NORMANHALL, the carpenter making some repairs. Then WANSTEAD took the ship in tow. That evening, under the influence of a freshening gale, the towing chain snapped. Next day six men were sent to rig a jury mast and bowsprit.
Again NORMANHALL was taken in tow. On 20 March, both vessels neared Cork and soon anchored safely at Crookhaven. Coke later received a small payment for his part in the salvage.

William Coke reached Brookhill on 2 April 1829 with only six months of his leave unexpended. An application for further leave followed quickly upon his first meeting with his father. The response, dated 5 May 1829, granted Lieutenant Coke extended leave of absence from 25 November 1829 until 24 February 1830, adding by way of indication that the grant was exceptional 'by which time he must positively be with the Regiment in New South Wales'.

Coke's original year's leave granted in Australia expired on 13 August 1829. On that date, the 39th Regiment of Foot records the resignation of his commission and the end of his army career. He made the decision to resign between May and August.

Evidence is not available to confirm precisely why Coke sought leave to return to England when he did, or why he decided to resign from the career that had otherwise so strongly influenced him. As noted earlier, Coke was entitled to receive an inheritance upon reaching twenty one years of age. This was in August 1826. He had once beseeched his father to use this inheritance to purchase him a commission in the army. Later, he desired to use the inheritance to establish himself as a settler in New South Wales. Later again, the desire for the army commission returned. Instead of taking up any of these options, he sought leave to return to his father and Brookhill. It appears that the outcome of lengthy interviews with his father was actually a decision to resign from the army and return to Australia as a free settler. Several of his fellow officers had made a similar decision. The colony of his choice may have been Swan River which he noted in one letter from Sydney (February 1828) was 'a month nearer England than this shore of New Holland'.

The Cape Colony

William Sacheverell Coke left England in August 1830 with the intention of returning to Australia and taking up land. He sailed from Gravesend in the ELIZA. However, upon reaching Cape Town he decided to go no further. His father's friend Major General Richard Bourke returned to England in September 1828 from his posting as Lieutenant Governor of the Eastern District of the Cape Colony. Bourke's association with the Coke family may have influenced Coke's decision
although there is no particular evidence that this was so. One advantage of the Cape Colony over Australia was its closer proximity to England. At the Cape, Coke bought Elsjeys Kraal, about 1000 acres of land with building and animals, for £700.

Coke’s years at the Cape Colony were ones of unease for the British and Dutch (Boer) inhabitants. The Dutch resented British rule and colonisation. They wanted to preserve the slave system opposed by the British. The Boers moved away from the Cape and into Natal and other parts of southern Africa setting up republics. This created conflict with native Africans and much brutal warfare ensued. British occupancy of Natal drove the Dutch towards Transvaal.

Coke led an active life at the Cape. Elsjeys Kraal produced coffee, tobacco, vines, barley, oats, wheat and vegetables. Cows, calves and bullocks were reared. He wrote to his father of an Englishman who killed so many elephants in little more than a day that their tusks sold for £3000. His letters to his father continued to bemoan his lack of money. He had no wagon and insufficient work horses, a shortage of farm implements and no grain store.

A gentleman farmer, to do well, should have on arrival £1,500 or £2,000, and one English servant: a common farmer £700 or £1,000 and no servant, since he can get as many as he likes in the colony. The gentleman farmer should try to live within 20 miles of Cape Town, the common variety further off.

Hottentot men’s wages are 7s 6d a month with meat and bread, employed in ploughing, driving cattle, and so on. Boys get only their food.

If I had a wife with a little money I might live well, have a house in town and drive 10 or 12 in hand, which all the farmers do.

Alluding to his financial despair, he suggested not very seriously, marriage with a woman likely to be soon widowed, or becoming an elephant shooter, or taking a job as a parish sexton. D’Ewes Coke sent him from time to time £50 or £100, and his uncle, John Coke, contributed a double barrelled gun, a replacement for his previous gift of a similar gun which he had contrived to ruin in New South Wales. His father’s extensive estates implied wealth but surplus cash was another matter. At the time, D’Ewes Coke, whose health was poor, also had
serious budgetary problems managing his own household and large family, and maintaining Brookhill. Administering his own estates, and those of the ailing Duke of Rutland, called him away from home for lengthy periods. Rents from the colliery had to be deferred for a year due to disputes. The state of agriculture was depressed, crops brought poor returns and several tenants gave notice that rents must be lowered or farms would be vacated.

Coke farmed at the Cape from 1831 until 1838. A letter has survived which indicates that he sent a speculative cargo to the Swan River settlement in 1831. He entrusted the sale of these goods to an acquaintance. The venture was not a particularly successful one.21 In 1834, the ship WELLINGTON called at Cape Town. On board were some of his friends from the 39th Regiment, returning to England, their tour of duty in New South Wales completed. He was particularly pleased to see again Major Crotty and Lieutenant MacPherson.

Shortly after this event Coke returned to England. His return appears related to the onset of mental illness in his elder brother Francis. This forebode of Francis’ inability to take on the responsibilities that primogeniture required of him and for which he had been educated. However, William returned to the Cape in November 1835.

D’Ewes Coke’s financial situation subsequently improved and he arranged for the transfer of the Langton Hall property to William, thereby assuring him of a proper standing in the country. William decided to marry sixteen-year-old Sarah, daughter of Lieutenant John Deane R. N., of County Tipperary, and, reflecting upon the undertaking as the day approached, he wrote to his father:

To tell the truth I begin to feel rather nervous about marrying. Not about Sarah herself because I do not see where I could find a girl that would suit me better. I think of the expense of living etc., etc.’

Of his marriage, William explained the ‘uncommonly heavy’ expenses associated with his marriage to his father:

I have to pay £18.15.0 this day at the stamp office before the Colonel Secretary will grant a licence. Police charge is £3. Clergyman from £5 to £10 ... clerk ... wedding cake etc ... carriage. So you see I shall be run very short of cash ...
The British Governor during the later part of Coke's stay in the Cape (1833-1837) was staff officer Lieutenant General Sir Benjamin D'Urban whose name is commemorated in the city of Durban. One of his last acts as governor was to approve the marriage, on 15 November 1837. William and Sarah Coke left Cape Town in the spring of 1838. The principal reason for his return was his brother Francis' mental health and the realisation that he was not likely to make a recovery. The third son, Edward, was married and away soldiering. The fourth son, Richard, was absent overseas, and John Henry, the parson's son, was unlikely to be of much help with the estate. Of all D'Ewes Coke's sons, William was the one most fitted to assist his father in the management of the family properties.

The Coke family, along with other landowners living in the middle and late 19th century, enjoyed increasing prosperity from their landed estates. For the Cokes, the Pinxton colliery was a source of additional benefit.

Francis Coke's collapse into derangement darkened the lives of William and his father. For D'Ewes Coke, this lasted until he died in 1856, aged eighty two years. For William Coke, it lasted until he succeeded to full and formal headship of the family and possession of its estates upon Francis' death in 1873.

As for William Coke's siblings, in the late 1830s, D'Ewes Coke had purchased an ensigncy in the 45th Regiment for Edward who also enjoyed the patronage of the Duke of Rutland. Edward Coke took part in action in Burma, and published a volume A Soldier's Furlough based on his experiences in the British Provinces of North America. D'Ewes Coke also purchased for him a captaincy of a company of the 49th Regiment, the cost—nearly £2,000, being paid for by a loan from his late wife's family. Edward Coke inherited the property of his uncle, John Coke, married to advantage, had eleven children (two of his sons and one grandson rising to become Major Generals), and rose to a Lieutenant Colonel, later living in France to the age of eighty one. He died in 1889.

John Henry Coke, the Anglican Clergyman, also benefited from the Duke of Rutland's influence in securing him a living in Lincolnshire. His children rose to high office in the army. Richard Coke spent some time in both New South Wales and the Cape Colony, married, had ten children and lived on one of the Coke properties that he acquired in 1879. Two sons died as soldiers in Britain's wars. Of William's five sisters, by 1839, three had married and left Brookhill, while Eliza and Harriet remained
unmarried, their life characterised by idleness and boredom. In a similar manner to Francis, Eliza later required full time nursing care.

The Squire of Langton Hall and Brookhill Hall

William maintained a close rapport with his father and assisted in the management of the estates until D'Ewes Coke death in 1856. The richness of their correspondence, the voluminous letters exchanged between them that have survived to the present, show that both put a special value on their relationship.

William and Sarah made their home at Langton Hall. The first of their children arrived in October 1838. The seventeenth child arrived in November 1863, twenty five years later. Sarah died in 1870, aged forty eight.

William Coke travelled extensively in Europe during the 1850s and 1860s. At first, his family and servants accompanied him although later he travelled alone. During subsequent years many problems, in particular those associated with coal mining at Pinxton, beset him and severely divided his family.

Shortly after the death of Sarah in 1870, he took a second wife Susan Annie, forty three years his junior. He fathered three more offspring. This dismayed his older children and led to many later conflicts. The second marriage, a particularly happy one, lasted twenty five years.

Following the death of Francis, William at last occupied Brookhill Hall. Susan Annie and his second family enriched the twenty five years he spent there as its ‘Squire’. Annie Sacheverell Coke, as she chose to name herself, enjoyed modest renown as a composer of verses and song lyrics. Her husband encouraged her to sing in public and published some of her work.

During the years of the second marriage, William Coke began writing lengthy reminiscences of his early experiences, undoubtedly based on the surviving letters and notebook created during his adventurous years in the army and in the colonies. These essays were embellished with his opinions on the major issues of his time. The Derbyshire press published his work in a series of articles. Interest in these reminiscences was widespread. In the late 1870s, Coke entered a correspondence with Henry Heylyn Hayter of Melbourne to whom he appears to have sent copies of various documents pertaining to Australia. In Hayter’s reply to Coke, dated 2 September 1878, he wrote:
I am sure I am much obliged to you for the very interesting letters you have sent me, the perusal of which places the early days of these colonies before the mind's eye much more vividly than any description of them which could be written.

Some of the anecdotes of the aborigines are really valuable as being authentic information respecting a race which is fast disappearing from the face of the earth.

I am too much taken up with official duties to write anything about the history of the colony at the present time. In the course of a year or two however, I hope to have more leisure when I trust to be able to make use, at any rate of some portion of the matter you have furnished me with, when I shall not fail to make known the source from whence I obtained it.

It is not known whether the communication with Hayter occurred before or after publication of the Reminiscences in the Derbyshire Times. Nor is it known if Hayter used Coke's material in any way. Hayter was a statistician whose skill was recognised internationally. He visited England in 1879. He appears to have had a keen interest in history and was author of Carboona, A Chapter from the Early History of Victoria, published in 1885.25

With old age encroaching and travel done, Brookhill and its environs took on a more intimate dimension for William Coke. A highlight was the annual celebration of his birthday. The event usually happened on a September Saturday and was held in the grounds of Brookhill. As the years passed, and Coke's participation grew less active, the scale of the celebration increased. In the last years, it merged with the annual demonstration of the local Friendly Societies, featuring brass band contests, football matches, a generous supply of refreshments, oratory, versification and singing. The Derbyshire press opened its columns to reports of these celebrations and employed its most eloquent and skilful writers to record the names of all the prominent people present and not a word of their utterances was missed. Each year, the newspapers devoted generous space to the ancestry of the Cokes and to William Coke's youthful adventures in Ireland and New South Wales. An affection and respect for him and his wife is conveyed in these lengthy reports. The Derbyshire Times in its issue 12 September 1891, devoted many columns to his eighty sixth birthday celebrations. Perusal of the multitudinous
guest lists at these occasions reveals the absence of the children from his first marriage.

After 1892, the birthday celebrations diminished and finally were abandoned. Susan Annie died in 1895 and William, blind, deaf and infirm, died the following year, aged ninety. The funeral was elaborate and stately but heralded a period of acute dissension for the surviving family.

Disharmony overshadows the final chapter of William Sacheverell Coke's life and death. His will, made in 1890, provided fairly for all his children and named the eldest son as residuary legatee. However, the nine surviving children of the first marriage disputed and successfully challenged the will. The three children of the second were deprived of the inheritance intended for them. Coke's youngest son from this marriage, Algernon, lived to be ninety four and died in 1970.

As a result of the legal challenge, the only surviving son of the first marriage, Colonel William Langton Coke, inherited the Brookhill estate. He became Lord of the Manor, Patron of the living of Pinxton and Joint Lord of Normington, Derbyshire and Notts. He died in 1913, aged seventy years. His eldest son, Major Langton Sacheverell Coke, was killed in action in 1914 leaving his only son Roger George Sacheverell Coke, born in 1912, to inherit Brookhill Hall, the Manor and the Living. With Roger Coke's death in 1972, unmarried and without an heir, the male line of Coke ceased.

Brookhill Hall at Pinxton was sold in 1973. Prior to this date, an extensive collection of letters and diaries of the Coke family were deposited in the Derbyshire Records Office.

Today all the Coke property in Derbyshire is in other hands.

Part 2 End Notes

1 Sir Patrick Lindsay (Lindesay) entered the army and soon afterwards became a lieutenant. His regiment served in the wars of the early 19th century. Lindsay was in command of the 39th Regiment, arriving in Sydney in September 1827. He succeeded Colonel Stewart of the Buffs in command of the garrison at Port Jackson. He later became a member of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council. He served as Acting Governor between the departure of Governor Darling, and the arrival of Governor Bourke (1831). He supported Charles Sturt, a captain in his regiment, in Sturt's desire to undertake exploration in NSW and collect natural history specimens. (Further Reading: Australian Dictionary of Biography)

2 According to New South Wales shipping arrivals, Colonel Lindsay arrived on the ship CAMBRIDGE from Dublin on 17 September 1827.
News of the death of the Duke of York reached Australia in May 1827 by the MARINER, on which ship Captain Charles Sturt was an officer in charge of the convict guard. The Duke of York was heir to the throne, then occupied by his brother George IV. The Duke of York died at the house of his friend the Duke of Rutland.

According to New South Wales shipping arrivals, Captain Smith arrived on PORTLAND, 11 Sept 1826, one month after REGALIA and so would have been one of the first officers to arrive. The incident of Mrs Smith’s coffin appeared in the Sydney Gazette 13 Sept 1826.

A Government Order issued from the Colonial Secretary’s Office on 13 Oct 1826 listed the procedures for the execution of seven convicted men. The Notice was published on the front page of the Sydney Gazette (14 Oct 1826). The criminals were to be taken from the Gaol in Sydney under a Military Escort to several places of execution. Other convicts, such as those in Road Parties in the neighbourhoods, were instructed to witness the executions. The bodies of all the criminals were to ‘remain suspended during the day’ as an example to others who may be disposed to evil. Such practices were commonplace in New South Wales during William Coke’s stay.

The presence of the military in Sydney, and at the penal establishments, imparted a distinctive character to these settlements, attended with regular ceremony. When a ship arrived carrying a detachment, the officers and soldiers landed with military formality. ‘The usual honours’ (SG 13 Aug 1827): ‘The detachment landed and marched to the military barracks’ (SG 14 Feb 1827): ‘The detachment marched to their barracks preceded by buglers’ (SG 10 Oct 1827). In Nov 1827, the 39th Regiment accompanied by its band, took part in a church parade (SG 19 Nov 1827). The regiment was reviewed by the Lieutenant General in Hyde Park (SG 11 June 1828) and inspections were made at other times. The Regiment band played at the Quay when the governor returned from his tours (SG 19 Dec 1825); also at commemorative dinners, and balls and parties given by distinguished people.

John Piper came to NSW as an officer of the New South Wales Corps. He acquired great wealth and, in the 1820s, lived in a most luxurious style, his home the ‘scene of many sumptuous entertainments’. In 1827, following official inquiries into financial affairs with which he was associated, Piper tried to drown himself, but was rescued. An account of the life of John Piper, and the circumstances leading up to this incident, are noted in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, volume 2.

HMS WARSPIE, a warship with seventy four guns and 500 men, sailed from India to Lima in 1826, calling at Sydney on 19 October, the first line of battle ship to do so. On board were Sir James Brisbane, Commodore of HM’s Squadron and previously in command of the East India Station, and his family—Lady Brisbane, their son Lieutenant Brisbane and two daughters. HMS WARSPIE was accompanied by two others ships of His Majesty’s Navy, HMS VOLAGE and HMS FLY. (HMS SUCCESS was already in Australian waters taking personnel to the Melville Island outpost.) HM FLY, eighteen guns and 110 men, was to remain in NSW for some months. A large party of Naval heroes from WARSPIE, VOLAGE and FLY were entertained by Governor Darling and others during the visit. The visit was a time of much celebration. Sir James was a distinguished relative of Sir Thomas Brisbane, Governor of New South Wales from Dec 1821 to 1825. Sir James Brisbane took ill, and died from dysentery in late Dec 1826. References: Sydney Gazette 21 Oct 1826. An Obituary for Sir James Brisbane appeared in Sydney Gazette 20 and 23 Dec 1826. Sir James Brisbane was buried with full honours and ceremony. The regiments then serving in NSW and their bands took a prominent part in the large funeral procession. HMS WARSPIE and HMS VOLAGE departed 6 Jan 1827 for South America.
James Stirling of the Royal Navy took part in several naval battles and rose to the command of a fighting ship in 1812. He spent many years in American waters. Following the defeat of Napoleon, he was placed on half-pay. When the possibility of French colonisation of the Pacific was recognised in England, the authorities decided to strengthen the garrison at Melville Island, in Northern Australia. In 1826, Captain Stirling in the SUCCESS was sent to NSW to achieve this task. In 1827, Governor Darling agreed to allow Stirling to examine the west coast of Australia for a possible garrison or settlement to open trade with the East Indies. Stirling selected a site at Swan River as a suitable place, and Darling supported forming an outpost there. Not so the colonial office in London, on the grounds of expense. Stirling attended to his task at Melville Island, then returned to England where his influence finally saw the establishment of the Western Australian settlement, with Stirling as its founder and administrator for the first decade. (Further reading: Australian Dictionary of Biography).

Melville Island is a large island off the north coast of the Northern Territory. It was first surveyed in 1818. In 1824, the British Government made the first attempt to establish a settlement on the north coast of Australia, possibly to deter the Dutch from doing so and to protect trading ships from piracy. Fort Dundas, on Melville Island, was chosen and occupied by convicts, Royal Marines and soldiers. In 1826, Major J Campbell arrived as relieving Commandant. Conditions at the settlement were adverse. A second and possibly more favourable settlement, Fort Wellington, was established in 1827. The first commandant here was Captain Henry Smyth. Also unfavourably situated, the settlement was abandoned in 1829. No further settlements were attempted for another decade.

King Georges Sound (King George the Third Sound) was named in 1791. It is a large sheltered inlet in the south of Western Australia. Surveyed by Flinders in 1801, the sound was visited by D'Urville in L'ASTROLABE in October 1826. In November 1826, Major Lockyer of the 57th Regiment, with a detachment of troops, and convicts from NSW, sailing in the AMITY, occupied the area to prevent a possible French settlement forming there. The settlement was named Frederickstown, after General Frederick Maitland, Duke of York and Albany, brother and heir to George 4th, and Commander in Chief of the British Army (who died in January 1827, although news of this did not reach Australia until May 1827). Control was transferred from NSW to the new colony at Swan River, in 1831.

The apprehension felt about a possible French colonisation attempt was the result of voyages of discovery and exploration dating from 1801 when Nicholas Baudin in LE GEOGRAPHE led an expedition to chart and investigate the coast of Australia. In 1824, a French 'discovery ship', LA COQUILLE, entered Port Jackson, and in 1825, two French ships, LA THETIS and L'ESPERANCE called. The visit of L'ASTROLABE in 1826 raised further concern about the colonisation ambitions of the French government.

Captain Samuel Wright, of the 3rd Regiment of Foot, the Buffs, was a veteran of the Peninsular Wars, and a survivor of the Battle of Albuera. The regiment arrived in NSW from 1822 onwards. Between 1823 and 1825, Wright served as Commandant of Macquarie Harbour (a penal settlement on the west coast of Tasmania which existed from 1822 to 1833). He then commanded a detachment of the Buffs at Newcastle, in 1825, and was appointed Commandant at Port Macquarie in January 1826. When planning to found a settlement at Western Port to forestall the French, Governor Darling chose Captain Wright to lead it. He recalled him from Port Macquarie, appointing Captain A C Innes of the Buffs to replace him there, and in October 1826, Captain Wright, in command of DRAGON, sailed for Western Port to establish the settlement there. He established Fort Dumaresq on Phillip Island. Wright returned to Sydney in December. In mid 1827, Wright sought to leave the army and become a settler in the Hunter Valley. He was, meanwhile, appointed Superintendent of Police (Police
Magistrate) at Newcastle, replacing Captain Francis Allman who retired. On 3 August, he received notice of the sale of his commission. His letter of possession for his land grant, Bengalla, near Merton in the Upper Hunter, is dated September 1827. (Further reading: Alan Wood, *Dawn in the Valley*.)

Western Port is a large inlet on the Victorian coast separated from Port Phillip Bay by the Mornington Peninsula. It was surveyed by Lieutenant Grant in 1801, and also visited by the French explorer Baudin that year, and in 1826, when D'Urville examined the area. Apprehensive of a French attempt at colonisation, Governor Darling sent a detachment of troops and convicts, but adverse conditions brought about the withdrawal of the settlement within a year. The vessels HMS AMITY, HMS FLY, and DRAGON (chartered) sailed together in October 1826 for Western Port and King George's Sound.

12 According to Colin MacLaren, the 'old Malmesbury Philosopher' was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), born Malmesbury, educated Magdalen, Oxford, who wrote in his *Leviathan*: 'The condition of man ... is a condition of war of everyone against everyone'.

13 See entries in Index for Captain Charles Sturt who was a life-long friend of William Coke.

14 Captain Collet Barker entered the army in 1806 and advanced through the ranks of the 39th Regiment obtaining a captaincy in 1825. He was a close friend of Charles Sturt. Barker was in Ireland with the regiment when it was posted to NSW. His party arrived in February 1828, and he was appointed commandant of the settlement at Fort Wellington, Melville Island. The command of Fort Wellington fell to officers of the 39th, first Captain Smyth, then Lieutenant Sleeman, then Captain Barker in Sept 1828. Barker was renowned for his excellent skill at negotiating with the native population. The settlement was abandoned in August 1829. Barker then took command of the penal settlement at King George's Sound. He departed this settlement, together with the convicts, in 1831. He was asked to examine the country around the mouth of the Murray River on the passage to NSW. Here he was killed by natives in April 1831. (Further reading: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*) A memorial plaque to Captain Barker is in St James' Church, King Street, Sydney.

15 Captain Patrick Logan was an officer in the 57th Regiment. Logan saw service in the Peninsular wars, the American war of 1812, and in the army of occupation in France following the defeat of Napoleon. He then went on half-pay, but rejoined his regiment in 1819 in Ireland. The 57th was ordered to NSW in 1824. Logan arrived in 1825. He was appointed by Governor Brisbane to command the convict settlement at Moreton Bay. Logan led several expeditions of discovery. His regiment was ordered to India in 1830, but Logan was killed by aborigines before his scheduled departure. (Further reading: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*)

16 The French ship was L'ASTROLABE, corvette, 12 guns, Captain D'Urville, on a voyage of discovery. D'Urville was in Sydney between 2 and 19 December 1826.

17 Probably Samuel Terry, the 'Botany Bay Rothschild'. Terry was transported to NSW in 1801 for theft. His sentence was for seven years. He then became a rich merchant and landowner and, by the 1820s, was a person of public eminence in Sydney, and politically active in furthering the cause of the emancipists. On his death in 1838, his personal estate was valued at £250,000 plus a huge income from rental and landed properties. (Further reading: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*)
18 Mr Frazier, the emancipist Scottish baker, died in January 1827. Details of his wealth and his will were published in the Sydney Gazette, 5 January 1827. The writer of his obituary noted that he had risen from the humblest circumstances in life, and had, by industry, honesty and continued sobriety for years, obtained independence.

19 Coke spoke of the ‘many very respectable Gentlemen (indeed the first and richest of the Colony)’ who would assist him with his plans. John Macarthur was one such man, referred to in two letters as ‘King John’. He visited the Macarthurs at Parramatta and wrote in the February letter, ‘King John’... Macarthur has taken a great fancy to me’. In his May letter, he noted that ‘Mr Macarthur (King John) has deposed Mr Dawson the Manager for the Australian Agr.I Compy at Port Stephens, he wished me very much to go down with him, but I thought it advisable not to have my name called in Question, so I declined it. He has now applied to have an Officer sent down there to act as a Magistrate, as I am a favourite of his, perhaps I may be sent, but I shall not ask for it, I might be thought too young’.

20 The soundness of Coke’s decision was reinforced by the words of his friend Major Campbell of the Buffs who wrote to him, describing conditions as they were in the colony, about January 1829. He wrote ‘Affairs are going on gloomily in New South Wales—failures are taking place, the banks losing their credit, the Australian has been again robbed, cattle and sheep selling for next to nothing... ‘. Letter J. Campbell to W. S. Coke, 27 October 1829, Coke family papers.

21 Chaco/Shako —military headwear

22 Account of the boat is to be found in Sturt’s letter to Coke, the illustrations and the reminiscences.


24 Letter from H H Hayter, Melbourne, Victoria, 2 September 1878, to W S Coke, Brookhill Hall. Derbyshire Records Office.

Chronology of the wars referred to in the text.

War of the Spanish Succession, 1702 to 1713.

The Duke of Marlborough, one of the greatest military commanders of all time, led the British and their allies in successful campaigns principally against French ambitions of power and trade in Europe, the Netherlands and America.

Napoleonic Wars took place in Europe between 1799 and 1815.

Napoleon rose to prominence following the French Revolution of 1789 and the declaration of a French Republic in 1793. He secured a position of vast power within the French army. In 1799, he assumed the personal rule of France. At the time, Britain had been at war with France for several years. In 1800 Napoleon's armies were victorious over the Austrians. In 1802, a truce was established with Britain, but hostilities resumed in 1803. Napoleon abandoned his plans to invade England, following the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

In 1805, his armies defeated an Austro-Russian army and in 1807, a Prussian-Russian army. Napoleon then tried to prevent European trade with Britain. In 1808, Napoleon invaded Spain and placed his brother on the throne.

In an effort to secure trade with Spanish ports, British forces landed in Portugal and initiated the Peninsular Wars (1808 to 1814) in which the Duke of Wellington, commanding a British army, supported by Portuguese and Spanish allies, withstood the French for several years and eventually drove them out of Spain. The Battle of Albuera occurred on 16 May 1811.

Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812. On his retreat from Moscow in the winter, the majority of his army perished. On reaching France, he tried to raise another army and was intent on challenging the rest of Europe. A coalition of powers marched on his army from the north and the British, Spanish and Portuguese advanced from the south. Napoleon surrendered in 1814, and was exiled to the island of Elba.

In 1815, Napoleon escaped, returned to Paris and raised another army, intending to defeat the British and the Prussians. The army under the Duke of Wellington (Sir Arthur Wellesley), considered the greatest British general, and leader of the Peninsular War campaigns, defeated Napoleon and his army at the battle of Waterloo, on 18 June 1815. Napoleon was exiled to St Helena, where he spent the last six years of his life. The British Army of Occupation remained in France until 1818.

Following the defeat of Napoleon and the cessation of war, many of the army regiments were reorganised to accommodate those soldiers who choose to stay in the army. The convict colonisation of Australia was in
progress at the time. Selected regiments were ordered to garrison duties in New South Wales and land regulations were subsequently formulated to encourage soldiers upon retirement to become colonists. Therefore, a significant number of settlers from the earliest years of land alienation were veterans of the Napoleonic Wars.

William Sacheverell Coke, a lieutenant at 20 years of age, without war service, was in an exceptional position amid the experienced British army personnel in Australia.

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**Brief chronology of events in the life of William Coke**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>Birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>Death of mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Military college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Tour of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Appointed an Ensign, duty in Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Holiday in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825 July</td>
<td>Promoted to Lieutenant: Regiment ordered to NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825 December</td>
<td>Departs England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Departs Ireland, arrives NSW. 21st birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Appointed to Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Seeks leave to return to England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Resigns from army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Returns to NSW but chooses Cape Colony instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Revisits England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Married Sarah at Cape Colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Returns to England to assist in the management of the family estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Death of father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Death of Sarah (17 children, nine reach adulthood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second marriage, to Susan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of elder brother, inherits headship of family and estates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Death of Susan (three children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Death of William Sacheverell Coke, aged 90 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Persons mentioned in the notebook, associated with the garrison and military administration at Newcastle, with rank when given, and civilian appointments marked *

BARTLEY
BERKELEY, possibly stationed at Parramatta
BLUTCHER
BOROUGH (39th)
BOYLE
BRENNAN, (39th)
BROWN
CAMPBELL, P, Superintendent of Road Parties *
CARTER, Sergeant
CASEY
CRAWLEY, Private
CUREY
DOWNEY, Private
DRUMMER
EVANS, Corporal
FENNEL, Private
FITZGERALD
GALBRAIN, Private
GRIFFIN, Private
HEALY, Private
HEGARTY
HICKSON
HIGGINS
HOPKINSON, Corporal
HORSEFALL
HUGHES (57th) Buffs
HYNES, Private
INGLIS
JAMES, Corporal
JONES, Corporal
KELLEHER, Private (sentry)
LYNCH, junior, Sergeant
MACKAY, D. F. Superintendent of Convicts & Public Works *
MACKAY, Veterans
McMULLEN, Corporal
McPHerson, Captain, stationed at Parramatta
MORRIS, Ensign
MURPHY
PINSEN
PRICE
PEARCE
PEARSON
QUIN
RICE
ROBINSON, Mounted Police
ROBISON, Captain (Veterans)
SHADFORTH (57th)
SHEHAN
(SHEHANE)
SWEENEY, Lieutenant (Veterans)
THOMAS, Corporal
THOMAS, (my servant)
TORLUE, Private
WESTBROKE, Corporal
(WESTBROOKE)
(WESTBROOK)
WILSON (48th)
WRIGHT, Samuel, Captain
WRIGHT, Thomas, Captain
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