Newcastle Time Machine –
A collaborative approach to
digital cultural heritage

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NEWCASTLE 1818-1830

A SHORT CHRONOLOGICAL SLIDE SHOW
OF THE CONCEPT AND CONSTRUCTION
OF DIGITAL MODELS OF EARLY NEWCASTLE
This simple map overlay of the high water shoreline and Meehan’s 1818 map of Newcastle overlaid on a current Google photo illustrated the dramatic changes that have taken place to harbour foredunes and Nobbys over a two hundred year period. Stockton was also dramatically refashioned over time to its present form. It is planned to produce detailed maps and 3D models of town and its harbour facilities in the intervening period to further illustrate the evolution of Newcastle that we know today.
TOPOGRAPHY

ORIGINAL LANDFORMS, HARBOUR AND RIVER CONFIGURATION.
FLAGSTAFF HILL 1800 TO 1830

FLAGSTAFF HILL AS IT WAS 1800
BASED ON MEEHAN AND ARMSTRONG PLAN PROFILES

ARMSTRONG'S 1830 MAP SHOWING CLIFF FACE (WORKING) AND BREAKWATER

AMOUNT OF MATERIAL REMOVED TO FORM BREAKWATER

FLAGSTAFF HILL 1830 (BASED ON ARMSTRONG MAP)
THE MEEHAN (1818) AND ARMSTRONG (1830) MAPS

These two maps are perhaps the best contemporary references of the time that we have today! By creating a composite it tells us much of the way Newcastle’s early streets were laid out and it was not long after this that a grid street layout for Newcastle was adopted (Dangar plan) which is the present day layout.

It is evident (from these and earlier paintings) that Newcastle’s first main street was George Street (now Watt St) which ran up from the wharf constructed where the rail station is today. Other minor streets that were formed more than likely were no more than tracks, and by the time of Armstrong’s record some had disappeared, with more to follow later. Newcomen (A) and Bolton (B) Streets did not exist at this time.

Other points of interest is the Commandant’s Residence (C) is situated on what is now Watt Street (extended to Ordinance Street). Hunter Street (D) then Wellington St would appear to be a simple track leading out west. Christ Church (E) commanded one of the most prominent positions in Newcastle, and was by far the tallest structure at the time.

By the time Armstrong had compiled his map the lumber yard (F) had been formalized into a rectilinear enclosure. The boundaries of this are still evident today.

What is of particular interest is that the harbour foreshore was still in its original pristine state with sandy beach (Regent’s Beach) and deep channels. It is speculated by the author that the location of the wharf at the end of George St (Watt St) was deemed the best site as there would have been a deep channel close to shore with rock shelves under that would have afforded good foundation for such a structure that would have been subject to the ebb and flow of the river as well as occasional large swells that would have rounded the head and made their way up the harbour. Many early paintings and etchings depict this. From this location of the wharf that Newcastle’s streets developed. A painting by John Lewin (1819) clearly shows the early settlement with nothing more than the wharf, modest cottages snug along George St (Watt St) with Government House at the top of the street.
A. "Porch House". Located on the north side of King St going up the hill.
B. "Corner House". Large house added to over time. Located the south side of King Street on corner of through lane.
C. "Big house". Appears in most views. Located on the south side of Hunter Street (on corner of what is now Bolton St).
D. "Middle House". Located in most views on the east side of road behind Wall Street.
PART AMSTRONG MAP 1830
SHOWING PRESENT STREET LOCATIONS AND NAMES

INITIAL BUILDINGS AND ROOMS

HUNTER STREET

WATT STREET

SCOTT STREET

CHURCH STREET

BLOCK IN COLOURS FOR ROADS AND PADDOCKS

ADD INTERPRETIVE TEXTURES INCLUDING GARDENS, PATHWAYS, SIDE-WALKS AND ROADS
"View of the harbour beach (near where the Pay Master's Cottage is today). Sandy beaches extended all the way along the harbour foreshore to Bullock Island (Carrington) and possible some way up the river where mangroves would have began to be the dominant shoreline vegetation. Before the breakwater was built heavy sea swells would round the Flagstaff Hill headland. This area was soon turned into a boat harbour and a sea wall was constructed and back filled over time to create a large level area for goods handling. Later it was the site of the power Station and a railway marshalling yard. Today it is mainly the Foreshore Park.

NEWCASTLE. INNER HARBOUR 1800
NOBBYS FROM STOCKTON BEACH

Another view of Nobbys Island, Flagstaff Hill and Newcastle, from the harbour entrance.

In heavy seas, with strong winds, the entrance to Newcastle harbour was impossible to navigate as the swells would cross the harbour and break on Stockton Point (variously known as Pirate Point and Scott’s Point). Many vessels foundered on the “Oyster Bank”, which was a large sand bar that extended from Stockton Beach out to sea along the harbour channel.

Also, one of the great perils of trying to enter the harbour in strong winds was the loss of wind or the change in wind direction as one got close to Nobbys Island.

Decades later an attempt was made to completely demolish Nobbys Island to the height of the breakwater. An attempt that was successfully defeated by an orchestrated public outcry.
Thank You