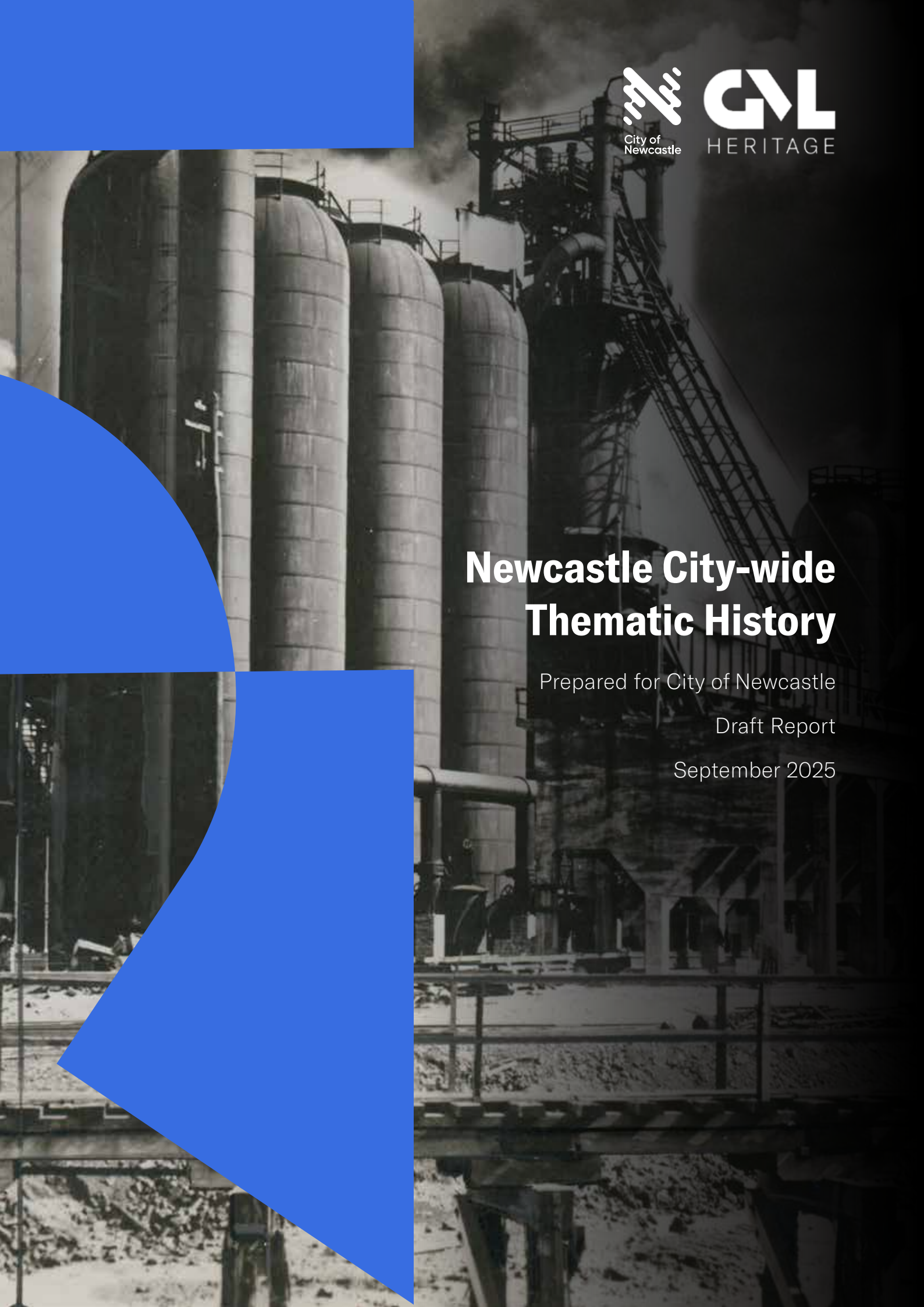

City of Newcastle

GML HERITAGE

Newcastle City-wide Thematic History

Prepared for City of Newcastle

Draft Report

September 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

City of Newcastle acknowledges with the deepest respect the Custodians of this land, a people who belong to the oldest continuing culture in the world. We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters, and unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, and seas. We are grateful for the rich, diverse, living cultures of Aboriginal people. We recognise the history of truth that acknowledges the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal people and how this still resonates today. We pay our respect to Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures, and the aspirations of Aboriginal people.

“Niirun Yalawa on Aboriginal burrei”

We all sit on Aboriginal land.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away.

Report Register

The following report register documents the development of this report, in accordance with GML's Quality Management System.

Job No.	Issue No.	Notes/Description	Issue Date
24-0037	1	Preliminary Draft Thematic History	19 June 2024
24-0037	2	Draft Thematic History	2 August 2024
24-0037	3	Draft Chapter for Review by Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee'	15 October 2024
24-0037	4	Final Draft for Review	16 April 2025
24-0037	5	Final Draft for Public Exhibition	9 September 2025

Quality management

The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality management policy and procedures.

It aligns with best-practice heritage conservation and management, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* and heritage and environmental legislation and guidelines relevant to the subject place.

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

We acknowledge and respect the inherent rights and interests of the First Nations in Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to be acknowledged and attributed for their contribution to knowledge but also respect their rights to confidentiality. We recognise our ongoing obligations to respect, protect and uphold the continuation of First Nations rights in the materials contributed as part of this project.

Copyright

Cover image: Broken Hill Proprietary Co Steelworks, Newcastle, c1932. (Source: Argus newspaper collection of photographs, State Library Victoria, 9917892783607636)

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Australian and NSW Heritage Themes compared with new Local Themes for City of Newcastle

Introduction

Hunter Street, Newcastle, early 1900s, by John Henry Harvey. (Source: State Library Victoria, cf001408)

Introduction

City of Newcastle (CN) commissioned GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) in March 2024 to prepare the Newcastle Thematic History. The new history updates and supersedes the original Newcastle City-wide Heritage Study Thematic History, 1996/1997.

The objectives of the project align with CN's Newcastle Heritage Policy and Heritage Strategy 2020–2030, which are to:

- enhance our community's knowledge of and regard for local heritage items and places to assist in protecting and conserving the city's heritage places for everyone;
- ensure the diversity of the city's cultural heritage is recognised and represented, reflecting the course and pattern of development of the local government area (LGA) over time, including Aboriginal occupation, history and heritage, landscape heritage, the impact of postwar and modern (post-1960) development, and all relevant aspects of environmental heritage;
- progress Action 1.1.1 of CN's Heritage Strategy 2020–2030 Action Plan to review and update the city-wide heritage study, including thematic history;
- create specific local themes relevant to contemporary communities, with due regard to the 36 NSW heritage themes;
- examine, identify and characterise what is unique about the LGA in a thematic context to reflect the course and pattern of Aboriginal occupation, historical land use, and development of Newcastle as it is today; and
- explain major factors that influenced the LGA's history and heritage and shaped its character, in an engaging, contemporary, and usable format.

Autonomy Day procession down Hunter Street, Newcastle, on 19 July 1967. (Source: University of Newcastle [UON], Living Histories)

What is a thematic history?

A thematic history provides a broad historical context for understanding the patterns and forces that shaped an area over time. In 2001, the State History Advisory Panel developed 36 NSW state historical themes for the Heritage Council of NSW to provide an overarching framework for the history of NSW. While taking into consideration this framework, this thematic history identifies locally distinctive themes to structure Newcastle's historical narrative. A theme can unite a variety of actions, events, functions, people and dates, and help prevent concentration on any particular type of item, period or event of history.

The thematic history is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all aspects of the area's history, nor to replace individually commissioned histories designed to serve other purposes.

What is unique about the City of Newcastle?

This thematic history is partly guided by the 36 NSW state historical themes. Yet as noted by Heritage NSW, 'not all themes are relevant throughout the state ...[and] local themes will not necessarily fit neatly into the state thematic framework.'[1]

The purpose of the thematic history is to identify those key themes that highlight the course, pattern and unique aspects of the City of Newcastle's history. Many LGAs can lay claim to themes such as convicts, agriculture and pastoralism; this history aims to investigate the distinguishing factors that shaped the history of the City of Newcastle.

Stakeholder Engagement Process

In preparing this thematic history GML and CN consulted the local community regarding the development of the themes and research used.
The process for engagement has been led by GML with assistance from CN. The engagement process involved the targeting of local community groups and was as follows:

1. **Identification of key invitees for workshops**—GML and CN confirmed the organisations participating in the workshops. Each organisation nominated a representative.

2. **Terms of Reference**—GML provided Terms of Reference guiding participants' involvement in the project.

3. **Consultation workshops**—GML and CN facilitated the following:

   - One-hour workshop with Guraki Aboriginal Standing Committee (members include CEOs of the Awabakal and Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Councils [LALCs]). GML presented the First Nations chapter for review, feedback and guidance.
   - One-hour online Group Workshop (for non-Aboriginal stakeholders) with Hunter Living Histories. GML presented the thematic framework and invited discussion on significant content.
   - One-hour workshop with key historical societies and groups online to present draft themes.

4. **Aboriginal Stakeholder Engagement**—GML and CN facilitated additional stakeholder engagement following the presentation of the first draft chapter to the Guraki Aboriginal Standing Committee meeting on 30 October 2024.

   - CN contacted stakeholders by email requesting EOIs in providing feedback on content and images in the thematic history by phone, email or in person.
   - GML followed up with face-to-face interviews, where requested by stakeholders.
   - GML amended the thematic history in accordance with the feedback received.
   - CN presented a second draft of the chapter to the Guraki Aboriginal Standing Committee at its 30 April 2025 meeting and issued members the draft for comment.
   - GML amended the thematic history considering the feedback received.

5. **Community exhibition of draft**—the draft thematic history will be placed on exhibition by CN for community feedback in 2025 on its Have Your Say website. CN is to invite the community to comment on the key themes and stories in the new draft thematic history, with the 1996/1997 thematic history provided as supporting information.

6. **Report on community exhibition and Council adoption**—GML and CN will review community feedback, and CN will report to Council on the exhibition and recommend the final Newcastle Thematic History for adoption by early 2026.

Research and literature review

GML has undertaken an extensive desktop review of key research collections and resources, including a literature review of books, reports, studies and secondary sources from collections including (but not limited to):

- Newcastle Libraries
- UON's Hunter Living Histories
- Newcastle Industrial Heritage Association
- Miss Porter's House
- Newcastle Museum
- Newcastle Art Gallery
- NSW Government's Heritage Library
- Trove (National Library of Australia)
- State Library of New South Wales
- Museums of History NSW (State Archives Collection).

Cultural warning

All readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away. This report also contains concepts, terminology and historical evidence that First Nations readers may find sensitive and painful.

GML has attempted to limit the use of such material, but for the purposes of the report, primary source documents are cited in full in some instances.

Gap Analysis

View from Newcastle City Administration Centre under construction, November 1975. (Source: Newcastle Libraries)

A review of the 1996/1997 thematic history identified areas to include and expand on as follows:

- **Include First Nations history and heritage:** The new thematic history should highlight the significance of continuing First Nations occupation; contemporary culture; sites and places of importance; the impact of colonisation and cultural revival today.
- **Expand the natural history:** Exploration of how the local geology, topography and landscape have shaped Newcastle will be included as a distinct theme.
- **Broaden the evidence base to include intangible heritage:** There is an opportunity to broaden the source material included in the updated history to capture the 'voices' of Novocastrians using Hunter Living Histories and CN's significant collections including oral histories. The history will also include intangible heritage i.e. people's testimonies of events like the 1989 earthquake and the Star Hotel riot.
- **Create bespoke themes:** Specific theme names were developed for Newcastle. These themes will be aligned with the NSW historical themes but streamlined to focus on key places and heritage items.
- **Include the diversity of historical experiences:** Include the history of significant women in Newcastle and the region. This will include a brief discussion of the important roles women played in the city's development, including their contributions during the two world wars and as pioneers of social change. LGBTIQ+ histories will be included based on research by the Hunter Rainbow History Group and LGBTIQ+ collection held at UON.
- **Include social history:** Social history will be included such as the diverse cultures and ethnicities in the LGA's recent history as well as the influence that migrants have had on the region over the breadth of Newcastle's history.
- **Address Newcastle today:** The thematic history will be updated to include content from the mid-twentieth century onwards, including economic, demographic and urban planning changes and other forces that have shaped the city in recent decades.

City of Newcastle's historical themes

In this history, eight local historical themes have been identified for the City of Newcastle. The themes draw upon those in the thematic history prepared by Suters Architects in 1996/1997. This work recognises the gap analysis findings and the 36 new NSW state historical themes as an overarching framework.

The relationships between the local historical themes identified for the City of Newcastle, the National Thematic Framework and the NSW state historical themes are included in a table in Appendix A.

Saltwater and sandstone

Newcastle's natural landscape has evolved over the last 250 million years. Its creation is intrinsic to First Nations people's understanding of Country. Exploitation of the rich coal seams catalysed European occupation but threaded through the region's natural history is a story of conservation and connection between Newcastle's people and its place.

Always was, always will be

Aboriginal people have inhabited the Newcastle LGA for thousands of years, with their living culture reflected in connections to places, continuing traditions, practices and the rich diversity of archaeological evidence throughout the region. Colonisation from 1801 severely disrupted traditional lifestyles, leading to displacement from Country and loss of access to resources. Despite these challenges, Aboriginal people have shown resilience and continue to advocate for their culture and land.

Convicts, coal and cedar

Coal drew Europeans to Newcastle when convicts were stationed there to mine it in 1801. 'Coal River' operated as a penal settlement from 1804 to 1833 with convicts working in mining, cedar harvesting, lime burning and salt production. Newcastle transitioned in the following decades to a free settlement and prospered as an industrial and trading port serving the mines and hinterland.

Blood, sweat and tears

In the nineteenth century Newcastle developed into the largest coalmining and export port in Australia. BHP and associated companies transformed Newcastle and the Hunter Valley from a farming and coalmining region to a major centre of twentieth-century industrialisation in Australia. In so doing, they powered the nation's manufacturing efforts during two world wars and beyond. 'Steel City' was made possible by a huge influx of workers from all walks of life from around Australia and the world.

Shipping, rail and road

Newcastle evolved from penal colony to coal port, industrial powerhouse, and now a modern, vibrant city (Australia's seventh-largest city), shaped by shipping, rail and road. Transport was vital to Newcastle's transformation in the industrial age, providing links from mines and factories to local, state and international markets. Transportation also facilitated the rapid suburbanisation of Newcastle in the 1900s with an emphasis on passenger travel within the district and to Sydney and beyond.

Homes for the people

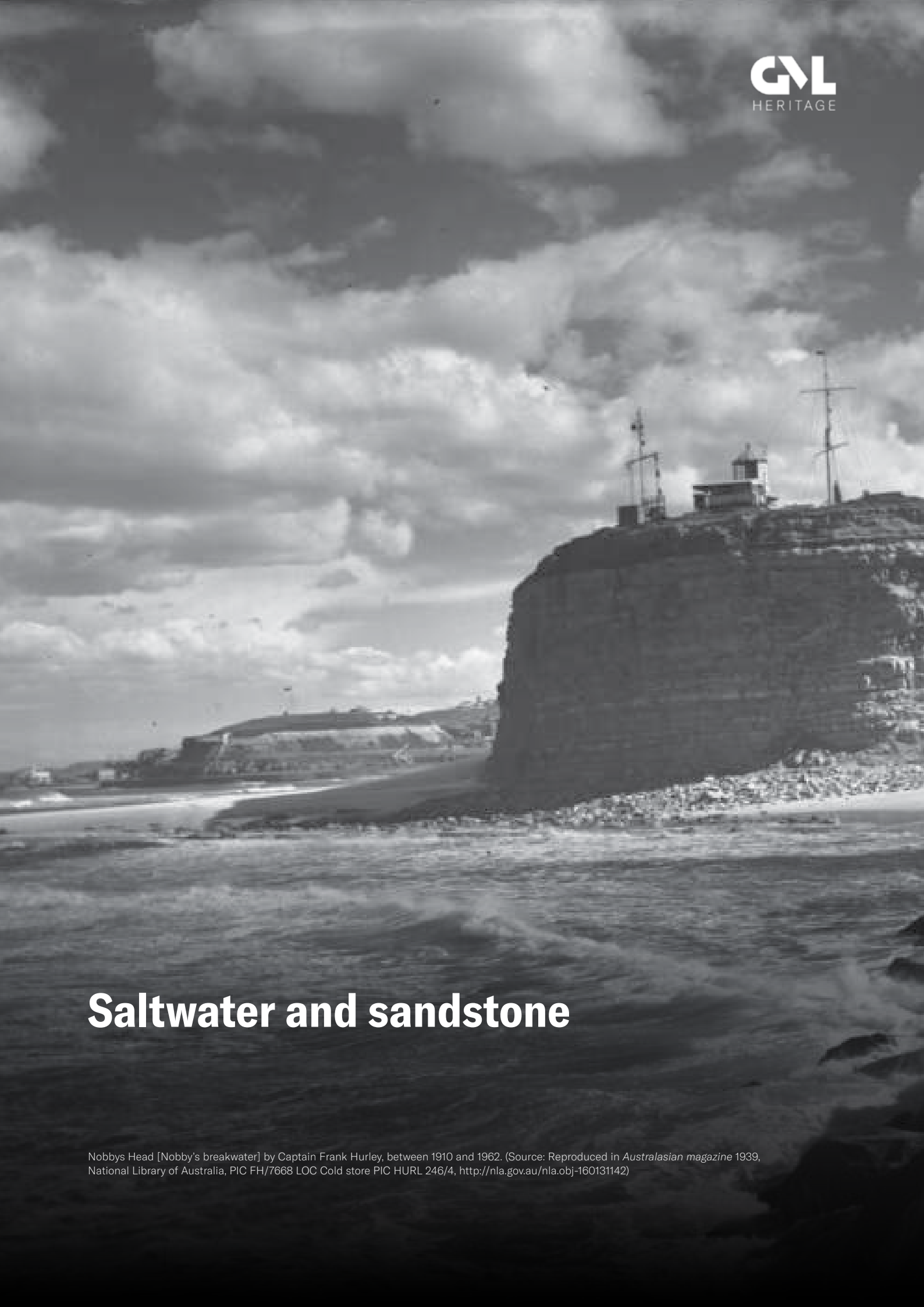
This theme explores the pattern and development of housing in Newcastle including how the region's topography, combined with labour and social factors, influenced new forms of domestic architecture and people's lifestyles. In the wake of Newcastle's industrial transformation in the twentieth century, the place transitioned from a series of mining hamlets to a modern city with suburbia stretching from the coast to the hinterland.

Radical Newcastle

Newcastle has a history of radical ideas and grassroots activism borne out of the region's working class and union movement. Novocastrians built vibrant subcultures in surfing, skateboarding and music, which have gradually gained mainstream acceptance. Radical Newcastle acknowledges the role of women in developing the city's labour and social institutions.

Newcastle now

The city's economy and urban fabric were transformed following the closure of BHP's Newcastle steelworks. Investment in new infrastructure, housing, and adaptive re-use of heritage assets along with Newcastle's culturally and linguistically diverse communities contributed to a vibrant new chapter in the economic, cultural and social life of the city.



Saltwater and sandstone

Nobbys Head [Nobby's breakwater] by Captain Frank Hurley, between 1910 and 1962. (Source: Reproduced in *Australasian magazine* 1939, National Library of Australia, PIC FH/7668 LOC Cold store PIC HURL 246/4, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-160131142)

Saltwater and sandstone

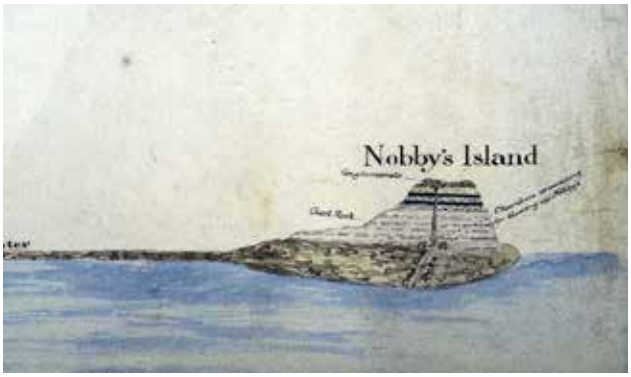
The Newcastle landscape has evolved over the last 250 million years. The delta of the Hunter Valley, the city bounded by sandy peninsula to the north, swamp to the northwest, forests to the west and sandy plains with forests to the south. Its creation is intrinsic to First Nations people's understanding of Country. Exploitation of the outcrops' rich coal seams catalysed European occupation but threaded through the region's natural history is a story of conservation and connection between Newcastle's people and its place.

Formation

Ice, flood and volcanic fire forged the landscape we know today. The City of Newcastle LGA is bounded by the Lower Hunter Plain; the Tomago Coastal Plain, defined by the Stockton Bight; the Awaba Hills; the East Maitland Hills; and the Sugarloaf Range (yet only the Black Spur Hill infringes into the LGA).

This ancient landscape evolved during the Permian period (299 to 251 million years ago), which saw the Earth's tectonic plates collide and create volcanoes and high mountain ranges along eastern Australia. The landscape here was covered in thick forest and wide flowing rivers that deposited sediments across floodplains and swamps.

Intermittent volcanoes erupting in the New England area, and possibly in the ocean, spewed ash that fell from the air and into the rivers. Layers of sediment and ash were compacted and became the layers of cliffs around Newcastle. This geological sequence is known as the Newcastle Coal Measures and coal seams can be linked from Whibayganba (Nobbys Head) to Merewether Beach. Whibayganba formed from tuff (a rock formed from volcanic ash that fell during eruptions in the Permian period). Each layer of ash averaged around 1 metre thick. Above the cap of Whibayganba, under the lighthouse, is a 4-metre-thick layer of darker shale and coal called the Victoria Tunnel Seam. At its base is the Nobbys Coal Seam and younger volcanic rock believed to be 90 million years old.[2]



Nobby's Island Newcastle to Burwood by William Keene, 1854. (Source: UON, Living Histories)

The Gondwanan mass started to break apart 165 million years ago as alternating sea levels and volcanic activity shaped the landscape. At 12 million years ago the tectonic uplift created the Great Dividing Range. Ancient rivers moved eastward, forging a path through the Hunter Valley. The Hunter, Goulburn, Paterson and William rivers gathered below Raymond Terrace and then entered the sea at Newcastle. Coquun (the Hunter River) and alluvial valley dominates the Newcastle LGA. Its barrier estuary is formed by sediments in the swamps and flats that line the coast. Up to 100 metres deep, the valley is at its widest over the Tomago Coal Measures and narrowest at Lochinvar Anticline west of Maitland. The tributary valleys join the Karuah Valley to the north, the main Hunter Valley to the northwest and west under Kooragang Island to drain the Toohrnbing (Ironbark Creek) catchment at Burraghihnbihng (Hexham Swamp).[3]

The Hunter Estuary evolved in response to fluctuating sea levels. Around 120,000 years ago, before the end of the last ice age, the sea level was up to 'five metres higher than now, with waves lapping at the shore near Largs, around Maitland.'[4] Some 15,000 years ago, the sea was 130 metres below current levels, and the shoreline was 25 kilometres east of the present location.

Had we been able to walk among this landscape Whibayganba (Nobbys Head) would have stood proud amid rolling forests and grasslands. Today, fossilised tree trunks can still be found reminding us of these ancient

forests such as the 1.5-metre log at the northern end of the Newcastle Ocean Baths, believed to have been a tree that lived over 250 million years ago. Dreaming stories pre-date the rise of sea levels, tracing the Aboriginal community's occupation back to at least 20,000 years ago. Traditional Custodians have recently dived sites along the coast of Burrabihngarn (Stockton) and mapped stories along the ocean floor that trace this submerged cultural landscape.

Eroded rock platform at Burwood within Glenrock State Conservation Area, undated. (Source: CN)

As the last ice age ended roughly 11,500 years ago, the sea rose again, and repeated floods created landmarks like Lake Macquarie to the south, while Whibayganba (Nobbys Head) became an island out to sea. When the sea level stabilised to its current level around 6,500 years ago, it left a series of swamps and marshlands in its wake. This included Burraghihnbihng (Hexham Swamp)—the largest of the remnant swamplands of the Hunter region. Coquun (the Hunter River) formed its 470-kilometre course 180 kilometres inland through valley, creating a vast floodplain and rich alluvial soils.

The river represents the third largest coastal catchment in NSW, being over 22,000 kilometres in square area.[5]

Aboriginal people bore witness to this seismic climate change. Between 20,000 and 45,000 years ago Aboriginal people occupied these rivers, forests, mountains and valleys. For Aboriginal people this deep time history is intrinsic to their understanding of Country. The creation of Whibayganba (Nobbys Head) is particularly significant:

> Whibayganba (Nobbys Headland) is the final dwelling place of the Kangaroo that broke Marriage (skin) Lore. Our skin Lore was one of the most important and stringent Lores regarding marriage, community structure and obligations.
>
> The Kangaroo Man had forcibly taken a Wallaby Woman, knowing that consequence of his actions was death, he fled from the rest of the people.
>
> Trying to outrun them he headed towards the coast, upon reaching the coast he used the cover of a thick fog to escape to Whibayganba. There he was forever trapped by the clever people within the island. An everlasting reminder to all of the punishment that comes with breaking Lore.[6]

These place names encode the landscape with meaning and map the relationship between people and Country:

Muluubinba is the traditional name for the people. Its name is attributed to a local sea fern that was traditionally harvested as a food crop.

In breaking down the word, it translates to:

> 'muluu' the name of the sea fern
> 'bin' is plural and
> 'ba' place of
> meaning - the place of many sea ferns.

This area is where the modern-day Foreshore, Honeysuckle and CBD are currently situated.[7]

Seaweed and molluscs in rockpool near Bar Beach, 2005. (Source: OZinOH, Flickr, Rock pools IMG_0090)

Luxuriant Landscapes

Mirroring the patterns of freshwater and saltwater are the green belts of vegetation that weave in and around Newcastle. Most vegetation from prior to colonisation has been cleared but in the upper reaches of the Hunter Valley are remnant tall open forests, including river oaks. In 1843, Quaker missionary James Backhouse evoked the landscape he'd encountered when he:

> took a walk into one of the luxuriant woods, on the side of the Hunter, such as are termed Cedar Brushes, on account of the colonial White Cedar, Melia Azedarach, being one of the trees that compose them. Eugenia myrtifolia and Ficus Muntia are among the variety of trees in these brushes … These Cedar Brushes are also thick with climbers, such as Cissus antarctica, the Kangaroo Vine, Eupomatia laurinae, a briary bush, allied to the custard-apple but with an inferior fruit, and several Apocineae.
>
> This scrub, sometimes so thick it was difficult to penetrate even a few yards, extended to the water's edge. Many of the trees were gigantic, and lichens, staghorns, elkhorns and mistletoe flourished.[8]

Glenrock State Conservation Area, 2019. Photograph by Adam Hollingworth for the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. (Source: NSW National Parks)

In lower areas, where saltwater begins to influence the landscape, swamp oak dominates while along the coast swamp mahogany, paperbark and cabbage tree palms thrive. Narrow alluvial plains still feature remnant forest trees of flood gum and weeping lilly pilly while in flood-prone areas the grey mangrove and river mangrove grow; and sea rushes and glasswort grow in the saltmarshes. Along the beaches in areas sheltered from salt spray, coastal tea tree, coast banksia, Sydney golden wattle, bracken and blady grass occur. Dunes and low beach ridges feature blackbutt, smooth-barked apple, red bloodwood, old man banksia and coastal tea trees. Most sought-after by the colonists was the red cedar that grew along Coquun (the Hunter River) and in the high ranges of Barrington Tops. It was almost felled to extinction.

The coastal rainforests and forests that once surrounded the wetlands have made way for the industrial urbanisation of Newcastle. However, the Awaba Hills to the south of Newcastle are still dominated by open forest of spotted and grey gums, grey ironbarks, and thin-leaved and broad-leaved stringybarks.

The rich birdlife of the Hunter continues to make the cries, calls and songs that would have been heard for millennia. In 1859, Austrian naturalist Georg Ritter von Frauenfeld described the cacophony of birds from Ash Island to Warrawelong (Mount Sugarloaf) (italics added):

> Pacific Gulls (*Larus pacificus)* skim up and down over the river fishing. The great New Holland Eagle (*Aquila fucosa*), moves along the banks high in the air, while countless Cormorants sit fearlessly on the bleached, white branches of the dead trees. Here and there on the sand banks a pair of the readily recognisable Long-beaked Oyster Catchers was busy. I was not able to distinguish the busy, cheeping Strand Plover running about between them …
>
> Countless birds, especially parrots drifted around the crowns of the trees screaming, the crane-like *Strepera graculina*, the white and black Gymnorhina tibicea, the bald-headed Leatherhead, *Tropidohynchus corniculatus*, the Common Soldier Bird, which is highly valued by all settlers for consuming poisonous snakes, and the carefully protected Laughing Jackass.[9]

Forces of nature

Over centuries Newcastle has contended with the forces of nature at their most powerfully destructive. The large floodplain of Coquun (the Hunter River) has cyclically wrought havoc, and flames have engulfed local homes in various parts of the LGA during catastrophic bushfires. The 1989 earthquake holds in many locals' memory as the most devastating disaster that remade the city.

The long history of floods in the Hunter region has been well recorded from Aboriginal Dreaming stories to colonists' observations from the nineteenth century. Reverend Threlkeld noted in 1855:

> The Aborigines have also a tradition that a great flood covered all the neighbouring mountains, but that one family escaped in a canoe, and the blacks told me as a proof of the flood, that cockle and other shells were found on the mountain tops.[10]

During the Lady Nelson survey mission of 1801, the exploration party led by Lieutenant Governor Colonel William Paterson recorded the following:

> Went up a creek that opens from the south'd into a bay about two miles above Colliers Point, where it divides into several arms. The ground is low, and apparently subject to floods; the soil blackish, mixed with sand; the trees very lofty, mostly blue gum (Eucalyptus) and Casuarina. From the great quantity of driftwood all over this place, and the country for many miles being low and intersected with creeks, I am convinced that the floods here are much higher at times than what has ever been known at the Hawkesbury.[11]

During the 1890s an inquiry was commissioned into drainage at Wallsend as the expanding business district along Nelson Street was subject to flash floods. Yet Newcastle's rapid urban development during the twentieth century saw buildings spring up on top of old swamplands and floodplains. With flash floods, natural flow paths and overflowing stormwater channels could quickly inundate the city. The Hunter Valley flood, also known as the Maitland flood, on 23 February 1955 went down in history as one of Australia's worst natural disasters. The flooded rivers went over both sides of the Great Dividing Range, effectively creating an inland sea. Up to 58 homes were lost and 25 people died.

Half a century later, on 8 June 2007, Newcastle was flooded when more than 300mm of rain fell in 24 hours. Approximately 10,000 properties were damaged and 5,000 cars written off. Ultimately the flood caused $1.6 billion in damages. But most dramatic was the

A house inundated during flooding, February 1955. (Source: Newcastle Morning Herald Collection, Newcastle Region Library Collection)

Pasha Bulker grounded on Nobbys Beach during a storm, 8–11 June 2007. Photograph by Sue Ryan. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection, 350 000450)

Pasha Bulker ship running aground on Nobbys Beach. It took 25 days for the 76,000-tonne bulk carrier to be refloated, and the storm became known as the Pasha Bulker storm.

Newcastle has also been subject to the bushfires that ravage the eastern seaboard. The 1938 Black Friday bushfires were fought off from the edges of Newcastle but some of the most vulnerable residents suffered its

F Norris, who lost his home to a bushfire, at the Jesmond unemployed camp, also known as Hollywood or Doggyville, 10 December 1938. Photograph by Ken Magor. (Source: Greg and Sylvia Ray's, Photo Time Tunnel webpage)

effects at a settlement of unemployed people in Jesmond, known as 'Hollywood' or 'Doggyville', where homes were made of makeshift materials.[12] Sixty years later the 1994 bushfire season was one of the worst in New South Wales' history. In total 800,000 hectares of bushland burnt from the South Coast at Batemans Bay to the Queensland border with the trainline to Newcastle cut off by flames.

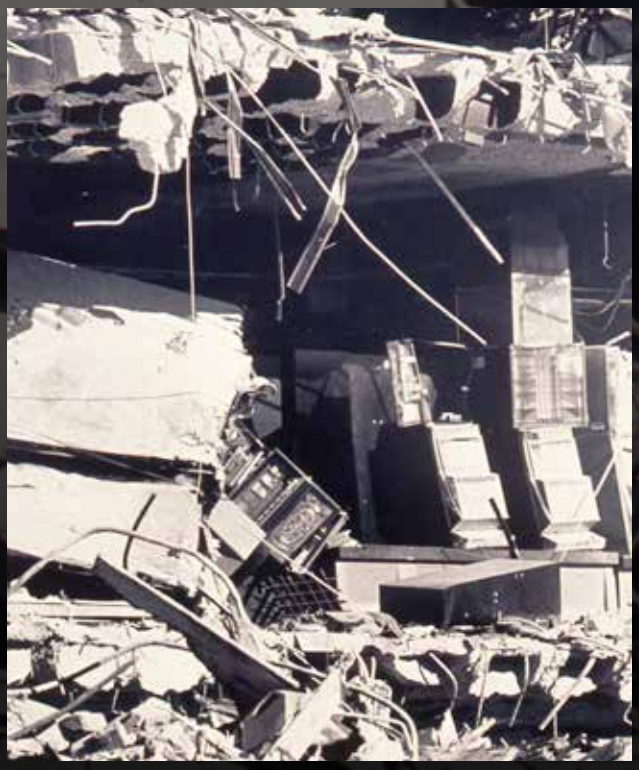
However, the disaster most indelibly printed in the living memories of Novocastrians was the 1989 earthquake. At 10.27am on 28 December, an earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale struck Newcastle. It was Newcastle's fourth and largest earthquake since colonisation, following earlier ones in 1842, 1868 and 1925. The worst hit areas were the Newcastle Workers Club in King Street; Beaumont Street, Hamilton; the Electric Lamp Manufacturers Australia (ELMA) factory in Clyde Street, Hamilton; and the Junction. The quake injured 160 people and thirteen people were killed: nine people at the Newcastle Workers Club, three along Beaumont Street in Hamilton, and another person the following day. If it had happened later in the evening the casualties may have been higher as thousands of people were meant to attend a Split Enz concert at the Newcastle Workers Club.[13]

The Workers Club 1972 extension was the most devastating building collapse. Elaine Stamford remembers being in the poker room kiosk at the club when the quake hit:

> At 10:28 there were big balls of black smoke ... My head hurt, my ear was cut, I was flung off the seat, couldn't hear anything and everything was quiet.
>
> That's when things started falling from the auditorium from above me, big clags of cement, dust, dirt.[14]

Approximately 50,000 buildings were damaged, of which 40,000 were homes. The estimated cost of the damages was $4 billion. The shock of the quake led some residents to assume BHP's Newcastle Steelworks had exploded, especially because flames were seen; this was later revealed to be the emptying of the furnaces as a precaution due to the quake. The force of thequake has been attributed to the two centuries of coalmining along an existing faultline; the amount of water pumped out to keep longwall mines dry, combined with the removal of millions of tons of coal, aggravated a faultline that may otherwise have been dormant.[15] Vivid and painful memories of that disaster are still part of the lived experience for many Newcastle residents today.

Memories of the Newcastle Earthquake



Former Newcastle Workers Club after earthquake. (Source: Medical Communications Unit, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/7897431340/)

"My husband Alec remembers how 'quiet' everything was, the birds not making a sound, just quiet. He was working over the engine of his old EJ Holden and he remembers a swaying feeling and wondered if it was because his head was at the angle it was, was he feeling lightheaded? Then he heard the 'noise'."

– Jenny Howard, Cooranbong, NSW[16]

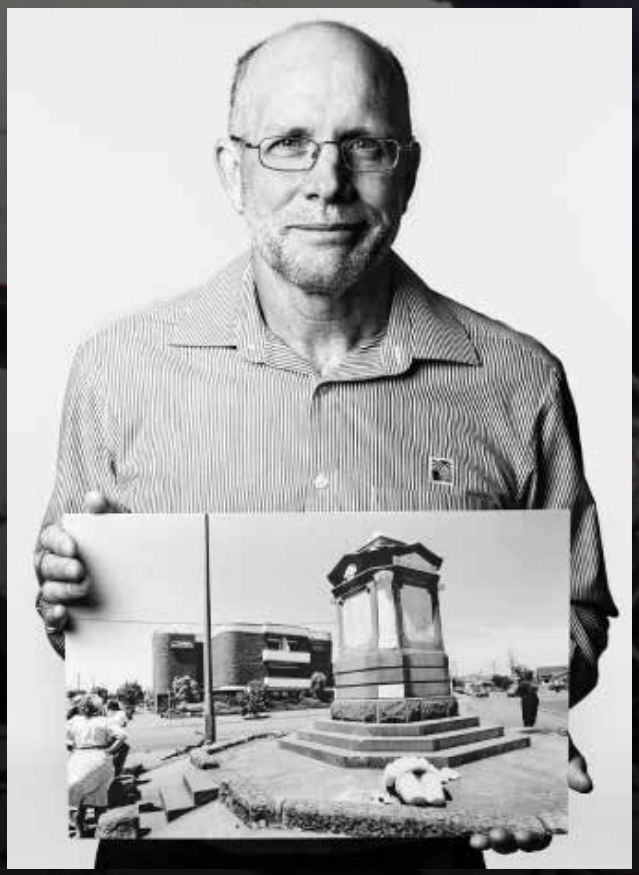
"It was probably one of the more dramatic failures in a building that we saw in the city ... We didn't really understand it as well at the time, but it's known as a soft storey failure, because the columns weren't robust enough."

– Geoffrey Douglass, a Council worker assigned to the army engineers to assess building damage and later appointed City of Newcastle Planner[17]

A car underneath the former Newcastle Workers Club. (Source: Medical Communications Unit, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/7897430430/)

I was up on the second floor of the Sanitarium Health Food Company. Suddenly there was a bang and the power went off. I thought that someone had dropped a mill roller. The brick walls gave a sound as though they'd been hit a heavy blow. I ran for my life. I thought someone was playing a trick on me and glanced back to see if they were laughing, but they were all running with panicked faces as well. We all gathered outside. The phones had stopped working and people thought something had gone wrong in the power station.

– David Fisher, Cooranbong, NSW[19]



Geoffrey Douglass with an image of the damaged war memorial and now-demolished Junction Motor Inn. (Source: Luke David Kellett/Headjam, 'Newcastle earthquake stories of tragedy, courage and community revealed in exhibition', ABC News, 27 December 2019)

I can't go under car parks; thunderstorms, lightning storms scare the shit out of me because of the noise factor of that club ... It was dead quiet and then when everything happened it was so loud, so, so loud ... It's like a mechanism in the back of your brain, you don't think about it until they really publicise it on the TV, the first anniversary, the second anniversary, etc.

– Kerri Ingram, Newcastle, NSW[20]

Original Plate XXXIX (39) showing possible site of Scott's home on Ash Island in background. (Source: Australian Museum)

Conservation and community action

While the epic industrial history dominates the historiography of Newcastle, there is also the lesser-known story of passionate advocates who have fought to save its natural history. Paradoxically land was also preserved through mining in some areas, as minerals were removed from underground but the surface left intact. During the 1960s, against the backdrop of rising environmentalism, several community campaigns led to the protection of places like Awabakal Nature Reserve and Glenrock State Conservation Area, and coastal revegetation programs at Stockton and Merewether.[21]

One of the, if not the, earliest community conservation campaigns was the fight to save Nobbys Head. In 1853, plans to cut Nobbys down to 65 feet for the building of the lighthouse proposed detonating the rock via explosives planted in tunnels beneath it. The community rallied under the leadership of John Bingle, protesting and putting a stop to the tunnelling.

Some of the best-known champions of Newcastle's bountiful natural environment were Harriet (1830–1907) and Helena Scott (1832–1910), artists and naturalists who lived on Ash Island (now part of Kooragang Island). The Scott sisters documented plants, animals and insects under the tutelage of their entomologist father Alexander Walker Scott (1800–1883). The sisters used living specimens, rendering their vivid illustrations lifelike and earning them renown in scientific circles of the day.

In 1842, explorer and naturalist Ludwig Leichhardt had remarked on Ash Island's beauty:

By the time the Scott family occupied Ash Island the ash trees that gave the island its name had been exploited by colonists, as had the red cedar. The island was later taken over for agriculture and was flooded during the 1955 Maitland Flood. Continued degradation of the island due to large-scale industrial development galvanised intervention through the 1970s Coffey Inquiry. Findings highlighted how crucial the conservation of the natural habitat in the Coquun (Hunter River) estuary was for supporting wildlife.[23] The Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project was launched in 1993 to help compensate for the loss of fisheries and other wildlife habitats, and activists like Dr Vera Deacon led the charge to replant the island. The Scott sisters' treasure trove of information has since been used to help guide the revegetation.[24]

Community organisations like the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Society were instrumental in fighting for Newcastle's 'fast decreasing pockets of bushland ... and priceless heritage.'[25]

The society successfully saved the Redhead area after it came under threat from plans to replace it with a garbage dump, expressway and housing subdivision. Working for the society, local doctor Nan Baxter provided crucial botanical research that bolstered the campaign to preserve 227 hectares of coastal heath as the Awabakal Nature Reserve in 1978. The group's lobbying, combined with research and advocacy from the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Society, ensured Glenrock State Conservation Area was gazetted in 1985. It represents one of the most diverse conservation reserves in the Sydney Basin, featuring 12 vegetation communities, eight of which are nationally significant.[26]

In the 1970s the union movement supported local resident action groups to help save several important sites in the Newcastle area. The Newcastle Trades Hall Council (NTHC) imposed about 20 green bans in Newcastle including at Foreshore Park, Blackbutt Reserve and Newcastle East End.

The Newcastle East Residents Group (NERG) was formed in 1971 in response to proposals by the NSW Government to demolish the historic houses and replace them with high-rise apartments and hotels. Led by local activists Jean Perrett, Del de Glorion and Ada Bender, the group was supported in their battle by the NTHC who imposed a green ban on all demolitions and building east of Watt Street in 1973. The NERG was effective in negotiating

"We went to Ash Island: it is a remarkably fine place, not only to enjoy the beauty of nature, a broad shining river, a luxuriant vegetation, a tasteful comfortable cottage with a plantation of orange trees, but to collect a great number of plants which I had never seen before."[22]

– Ludwig Leichhardt, 1842

future development in the precinct. Jean Perrett was disparagingly referred to in 1977 by a member of the opposing pro-development lobby as 'a little lady in Newcastle East with a gestetner and typewriter who is running the city'.[27] The NERG also helped to set up the Cooks Hill Residents Group a few years later.

A coalition of unionists and the Blackbutt Action Committee (a coalition of conservation groups in Newcastle), were instrumental in saving Blackbutt Reserve from the planned construction of a 1.2km section of Highway 23.

> Far sighted Newcastle citizens had worked to preserve Blackbutt. It was not in danger of being bisected by highway traffic.[28]

A green ban was also effectively deployed at this site by the NSW Builders Labours Federation (BLF) and actioned by the Newcastle Trades Council in 1974. The sustained campaign forced the government to consider the environmental impact and re-routed the highway saving the reserve from bulldozers. In 1979 a victory picnic was held to celebrate this event. Among the attendees was Doug Lithgow, Tom Farrell, Allan Morris MHR, Royleen Brinkworth, Elizabeth and RS Woodgate, Don Bennett, Bob Lower, and Wilfred and Mavis Dews.

Peter Barrack, Secretary of the NTHC from 1979, continued to promote the use of green bans beyond the 1980s. The NTHS gave support to Carrington residents in their struggle with the Maritime Services Board (Feburary 1983). Likewise, during the campaign to prevent closure of Wallsend Hospital in 1991-92 as staff and the community operated a 24-hour picket for 18 months, ultimately failing to secure the continued operation of the hospital.

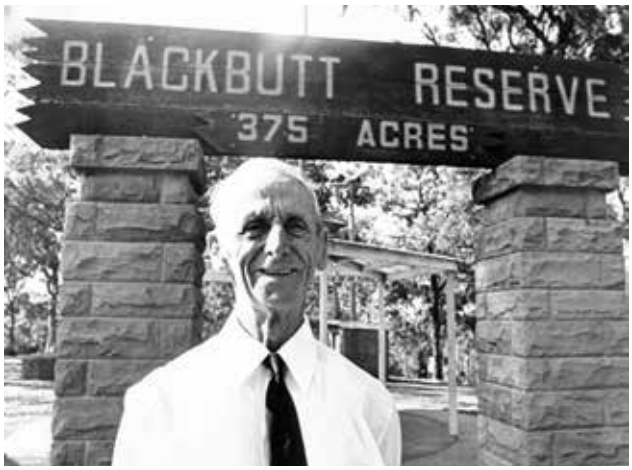
The Merewether Coastal Protection Group mobilised opposition to a beach resort complete with a toboggan ride that would have carved through Glenrock.

Regeneration of former industrial sites has also been an important part of Newcastle's legacy of community conservation. At Shortland in Newcastle's north, a former melaleuca swamp was exploited for timber, overrun by rail and then a rubbish dump and football field.

University of Newcastle Professor Max Maddock and local GP Paddy Lightfoot formed the Hunter Wetlands Group. Brian Gilligan was the first convenor of the group and led its efforts to conserve the wetlands of the lower Hunter, including the 2400-plus hectares of Burraghihnbihng (Hexham Swamp). Having purchased the former melaleuca swamp site in 1985, the group—now known as the Wetlands Trust—continues to work to rehabilitate the site and educate the public. In 1990, approximately 900 hectares of the swamp were dedicated as part of the Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve.

In 1979, the Islington Residents Association fought to prevent a petrol pipeline being built in their suburb. Its members then lobbied to renew Islington Park and rehabilitate Throsby Creek. The first clean-up in 1989 drew 400 volunteers who removed 56 tons of rubbish from the creek, reflecting a growing determination to protect the landscape into the future.[29]

As the Newcastle region faces the global threat of climate change, a new face of activism has emerged with the Rising Tide protest movement. In November 2023, hundreds of protesters ran a 30-hour blockade in kayaks in the Port of Newcastle to prevent ships exporting coal. At 97 years old, the Reverend Alan Stuart was the oldest protester to participate. Newcastle local Bryce Ham, aged 20 years old, described it as 'the biggest civil disobedience action for climate justice in Australia's history.'[30]



Joe Richley at Blackbutt Reserve, January 1977. (Source: Newcastle Morning Herald, Newcastle Region Library Collection, 104 009311)

Brian Gilligan, Shortland Wetlands, December 1987. Photograph by Patrick Lightfoot. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, Hunter Wetlands Collection HWB1-0226)

'Coral not coal' climate protesters at the Newcastle Harbour blockade in November 2023. (Source: Move Beyond Coal)

Living with pollution

As Newcastle's development as an industrial centre progressed with extensive landscape modification, its waterways carried not just rainwater runoff, but sewage and industrial waste. The Victorians regarded the district's waterways as little more than convenient dumping grounds for all manner of industrial waste. The lower Coquun (Hunter River) was contaminated by a heavy load of toxic and organic pollutants.

In 1887, for instance, Wickham Council formed a committee to investigate the pollution of the Styx and Tighes Creeks resulting from the various industries on the banks of the creeks such as tanneries, slaughterhouses and a woolwashing establishment.[31] The council appointed Dr Ashburton Thompson, a medical officer and international authority on infectious diseases, to investigate the district. Following his visit many improvements were undertaken to Mr Sparke's slaughterhouse, and the woolwashing establishment was relocated to Woodford in 1889.

In 1892 the Hunter District Water Supply and Sewerage Board (later Hunter Water) was established. It started construction of sewers to reduce the pollution of rivers in the Hunter region and improve public health. Construction of sewers in Newcastle, Merewether and part of Hamilton was completed in 1907. By the mid-twentieth century the City of Newcastle LGA was almost entirely connected and this led to an improvement in water quality.

Massive amounts of slag and rubble generated by the BHP steelworks were used to reclaim land along the edge of Coquun (the Hunter River) and create industrial sites on former islands in the river during BHP's 84 years of operation. Kooragang Island served as the landfill waste facility for the steelworks, creating high levels of contamination with a very great potential to leach into the river and groundwater. A $110 million project was undertaken between 2007 and 2024 at both the former BHP site and Kooragang Island to 'clean up' the two sites heavily contaminated by industrial pollution. Site remediation included construction of a 50m-deep by 1.4km-long underground 'barrier wall' at the Mayfield site, surface capping and stormwater drainage elements to prevent further contamination. The project also entailed the restoration of the wetlands on Kooragang Island with protective exclusion fences and refuge ponds to ensure

survival of the Green and Golden Bell Frog habitat.[32] Despite promising progress, water pollution remains a systemic problem in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley due to agriculture, mining, industry and urbanisation pressures.

Industrialisation and pollution left their mark on not only the region's waterways, but also its air quality. In the twentieth century, Newcastle was a notorious 'smoke city':

> Newcastle's industrial progress has produced a disreputable offspring, the Smoke Nuisance, which leaves a sooty trail on 38 square miles of homes and streets.[33]

The problem was widely acknowledged and as early as 1946 the Council had established a Smoke Advisory Panel. In 1951, according to the Council's City Health Inspector, 1,132 deaths in the district between 1936 and 1948 were attributed to respiratory system diseases.

> [Meddows] pointed out that for every million tons of coal burnt in Newcastle, it had been calculated that 40,000 tons of "pollution" were discharged. This means that Newcastle acts as a receptacle for up to 100,000 tons of pollution each year.
>
> It appears that Newcastle's respiratory disease death rate is 5 percent higher than the rest of the State.[34]

The following year the Council installed six gauges in various parts of the city to measure the air pollution. The worst areas were found to be in the vicinity of the Great Northern Hotel, Newcastle; Kings Road, Tighes Hill; and Kings Road, New Lambton. The nuisance at the Great Northern Hotel was attributed to the Zaara Street Power Station, locomotives in the railway yards and ships on the harbourfront. Industries were the main culprit for the high air pollution measured at Tighes Hill whereas smoke from the railway marshalling yards was responsible for the results measured at Kings Road, New Lambton.

Environmental reforms initiated from the 1950s in Newcastle required new industries to use smokeless fuel, which in turn encouraged the owners of existing factories to modify their output of smoke and airborne pollution.

Newcastle's reputation for smog and 'smokiness' declined after increasing deindustrialisation and the 1999 closure of BHP, which was for many years the main polluter, having emitted constant streams of coal smoke into the skies over the city and suburbs. Newcastle's atmosphere has since become cleaner than that of Sydney and Wollongong, with fewer pollutants and improved air quality.

Aerial view of Newcastle showing BHP smog, c1928. (Source: UON, Living Histories, courtesy of Phillip Warren)

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GML HERITAGE

Always was, always will be

Group of Aboriginal people camping near the mouth of Coquun (the Hunter River) in Newcastle. (Source: National Library of Australia).

Always was, always will be

Group of Aboriginal people holding a corroboree around a camp fire.

The following theme on Aboriginal history was based on research of primary historical documents (e.g. diaries, letters, government records, published papers, images and books, etc), and was written within the limits of the scope of a thematic history.

In Australia, the written historical record has typically been produced by non-Aboriginal people and may therefore not accurately represent Aboriginal knowledge, traditions, and practices. These accounts are fragments; snapshots in time left by colonial observers. European observers brought their own perspectives and prejudices with them. They were often active participants in the colonial project, their accounts of what they witnessed may have been shaped by this broader agenda; and their observations of Aboriginal people resisting and adapting to the change wrought by the arrival of Europeans.

Aboriginal people have lived on the land that is now the Newcastle LGA since deep time. The region's ancient landscapes and the culture of its first peoples can be read in the archaeological evidence—including middens, stone tools, grinding grooves and rock art—and the traditions of song, ceremony and language that knitted together a deep understanding of the land and how to care for it.

Aboriginal people's traditional ways of life were devastated by the region's colonisation in 1801. They were displaced from Country, cut off from traditional resources and impacted by violence but Aboriginal people have remained resilient and continue to fight for their Country and culture today.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report contains stories and images of deceased people.

Readers are also advised that some of the historical sources cited contain terminology and views which may be offensive. GML has attempted to limit the use of such material, but the purposes of the report require citation of these historical sources in some instances.

This thematic history has been formulated from a review of contemporary and modern historical documentary resources, and from recent historical research and Aboriginal community consultation conducted specifically for this project.

Deep time connections to Country

Connection to Country is bound by Lore—stories, customs, beliefs and spirituality learned from the Dreamtime. Lore provides protocols for interacting with Country, kin, community and neighbouring language groups. It defines individual roles to maintain balance and harmony within the clans.

Aboriginal people learn about Lore from a young age, through cultural practices, and story, song, dance and ceremony. This knowledge is vested in Elders who are the keepers of Lore and often responsible for determining when individuals are ready to receive new knowledge.

The Aboriginal people of the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie area have Lore associated with the creation and use of nikkin (coal). A volcano known as Kintiiyirapiin erupted at Redhead. Darkness came out from the mouth of the volcano and blocked the sun. The Elders advised the people that they needed to block the hole. They filled it with soil, rocks and plants and covered the darkness, which over time became nikkin.[35]

Lore also provided guidance on how to care for and live sustainably on Country. The land was divided among numerous Nurras (family clan groups). They would gather on regular occasions to pay respect to the Dreaming Spirits and Country and to share knowledge and traditions with each other through ceremony, song, and dance. This was done to strengthen relationships and ensure Lore was maintained and transmitted to the next generation.[36]

Despite the impact of colonial and industrial exploitation of Country, archaeologists have uncovered and documented some of the physical traces of Aboriginal people's use of natural resources, places and movements through the identification and recording of innumerable Aboriginal places and archaeological sites throughout the Newcastle LGA since the 1920s. These include open camp sites containing surface and subsurface artefact scatters, middens, axe grinding grooves, scarred and carved trees, quarries, ceremonial sites and burials (as well as contact sites).[37]

The remains of the fishing tree are on display in Newcastle Museum. (Source: Newcastle Museum)

Group of Aboriginal people spearing fish and diving for shellfish. Painting by Joseph Lycett, 1817. (Source: National Library of Australia)

Most sites were found near watercourses and in association with wetlands where a wide range of foods and other resources were located. The Hunter Estuary delta, Burraghihnbihng (Hexham Swamp), the Stockton Bight, and the Black Spur Hill were key locations for Aboriginal occupation within the region.[38] Key cultural sites were Black Hill, a cave site on Tyrell Street that was demolished for the Church, and Honeysuckle Corroboree ground in Wickham.[39]

Each Nurra's Country was actively managed and contained a mix of different terrains including forests, grasslands, rainforests, swamp marshes and dunes.

This ensured a range of flora and fauna resources were available seasonally throughout the year. Each Nurra was responsible for harvesting seasonally and maintaining Country, including by using fire at specific times of the year. Fire helped to germinate a variety of plants, reduce ground fuel and encourage regrowth, it also provided open grasslands which encouraged game and supported hunting. Knowledge about fire was learnt through Lore.[40]

Tools were made from the natural resources available. Various barks and timbers were treated with fire and used to make implements including the Kattal or Kuueeyung (traditional bark canoes), Gunnai (yamstick), Muuting (fishing spear), Tarama (hunting boomerang) and Kotara (club). Stone or hardwood barbs were attached to wooden handles or rods using resin or animal sinew to create a Bako (stone axe) or Gamai (hunting spear).

A group of Aboriginal people with spears attacking European people in a rowing boat. Painting by Joseph Lycett, 1817. (Source: National Library of Australia)

Bark could be stripped and woven to create rope, hunting and fishing nets, and Yirawaan (fishing line). The Birriwuy (fishing hook) attached to the end of the Yirawaan was made from various seashells.[41]

There were eight seasons, which coincided with the cycles of the local flora and fauna and a change in camp locations.

The warmer months were generally spent by the coast, where large quantities of fish could be caught from Coquun (the Hunter River).[42]

The annual mullet run in the warmer months was a key time for gatherings and corroborees to maintain relationships and celebrate and respect the life sustaining mullet as a plentiful source of food. This was traditionally undertaken in Burrabihngarn (Stockton). Corroba Oval was named after this event.

In addition to Yirawaan (fishing line), Aboriginal people fished with Muuting (fishing spears) from Kuueeyung (canoes) and from the shore. Nets and fish traps were also used to catch fish in shallow waters.[43]

The Newcastle Museum collections feature the remains of a tree that was used by local Aboriginal people for spotting schools of fish near Bagnalls Beach. The tree is estimated to have lived for 300 to 400 years and footholds remain in the tree. The top of the tree was felled in 1960 and remained as a hollow trunk until 2001 when vandals set fire to it.[44]

The abundance of shellfish can be traced by the scale and number of recorded shell midden sites across the LGA. Cockles, oysters and mussels were easily obtained, and lobsters were also caught from the waterways.[45]

During the cooler months, Aboriginal people moved inland. Accordingly, their diet focused on terrestrial animals such as kangaroos, wallabies, reptiles, emus and other birds and their eggs.[46]

Hunting larger animals would generally involve the whole clan, and location and type of terrain dictated the strategy required. Often large nets would be used. Women and children would chase the animal towards the net while men waited at various locations with Gamai (hunting spears) and Waddy (club).

Occasionally a whale would beach during the cooler seasons. When this occurred, messengers were sent to all the clans from the language group and their neighbours. A corroboree was held to celebrate the life of the whale, followed by a feast. Other parts of the whale would also be collected, such as the bones to make tools.[47]

Pieces of nikkin (coal) have been found in shell middens around Lake Macquarie and Swansea Heads, showing it was used by the local Aboriginal people for cooking shellfish. Nikkin was probably also used for warmth and for making coal tar to seal Kuueeyung (canoes).[48]

Contact and colonisation

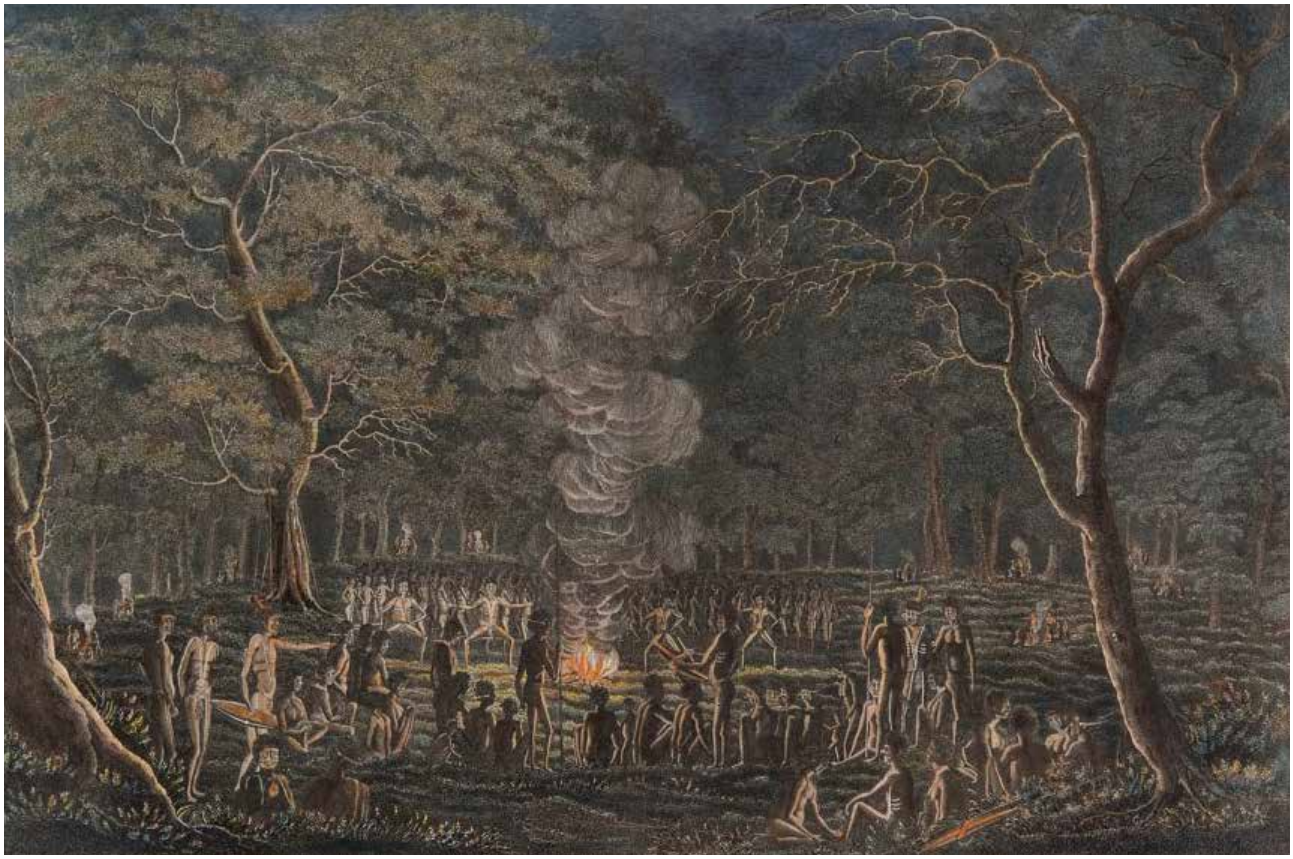
From the earliest encounters between cultures and following colonisation, European people relied on First Nations people across the continent for their knowledge, shelter, nourishment and navigation. Local Aboriginal people guided explorers and settlers to the Hunter Valley and showed them the overland routes between regions such as the Hawkesbury and the Hunter. Despite their crucial role in helping the strangers find their way in an unfamiliar landscape, many Aboriginal guides were left unacknowledged or unnamed in explorers' records and historical accounts.

The European desire to harvest the red cedar trees lining the riverbanks brought them into direct conflict with the local Aboriginal people. Removal of the trees had a devastating impact on the Aboriginal people's relationships and wellbeing as they were used for tools and shelter and integral to the health of the ecosystem which sustained local wildlife and people.

As the colony grew, Aboriginal people also worked as trackers and assisted in recapturing escaped convicts.[49] Commissioner John Thomas Bigge observed:

> The native blacks [sic] that inhabit the neighbourhood of Port Hunter and Port Stephens have become very active in retaking the fugitive convicts. They accompany the soldiers who are sent in pursuit, and by the extraordinary strength of sight that they possess, improved by their daily exercise of it in pursuit of kangaroos and opossums, they can trace to a great distance, with wonderful accuracy, the impressions of the human foot. Nor are they afraid of meeting the fugitive convicts in the woods, when sent in their pursuit, without the soldiers; by their skill in throwing their long and pointed wooden darts they wound and disable them, strip them of their clothes, and bring them back as prisoners, by unknown roads and paths, to the Coal River.[50]

A group of Aboriginal people using fire to hunt for kangaroos. Painting by Joseph Lycett, 1817. (Source: National Library of Australia)



James Wallis, 'Corroborree or Dance of the Natives of New South Wales, New Holland, 1821. (Source: Cultural Collections, University of Newcastle, Australia)

Early interactions between Aboriginal and European people were oftentimes unpredictable as protocols, behaviours and exchanges between the cultures were not well understood or misinterpreted. In 1796, a fishing boat was wrecked at Port Stephens and the crew walked back to Sydney. Aboriginal people guided the crew along connecting coastal paths along Coquun (the Hunter River), Lake Macquarie, and Broken Bay to Sydney Harbour. The wrecked men were most likely escorted through the different Countries by local guides.[51] However, another fishing crew who entered Newcastle Harbour that same year to collect large pieces of coal had 'conducted themselves improperly' towards the local Aboriginal people. Two fishermen were severely injured by spears.[52]

The Governor sent Quarter Master William Hacking to Coal River in 1799 to recover a stolen boat and locate missing convicts. Hacking questioned a group of local Aboriginal men. It seems that Hacking was predisposed to disbelieve their lack of knowledge in the matter and grievously attacked the four men, shooting and killing three of them; one man was injured but managed to escape.[53] In 1800, 15 escaped convicts from Botany Bay ran aground at Burrabihngarn (Pirate Point, Stockton). A local Aboriginal group sheltered and fed six of the convicts.[54] The following year Lieutenant James Grant was instructed by Governor King to undertake an official survey of Coquun (the Hunter River). Grant took Bungaree with him to work as a translator for the exploration party. As they travelled along Coquun (the Hunter River), Grant recorded his interactions with local Aboriginal peoples, ranging from close contact and exchange of gifts to cautious observations from afar.[55]

As colonisation spread, encounters between European settlers and Aboriginal people were increasingly marked by tenuous relationships that could escalate into violence. Charles Menzies, the first commandant of the second European settlement in Newcastle (1804 to 1805), worked hard to establish a peaceful relationship with the local Aboriginal people. Menzies noted that while local Aboriginal people left convict timber gangs alone, they were often involved in conflicts with commercial gangs of sawyers from Sydney, whose muskets they attempted to steal.

Aboriginal people also occasionally attacked the soldiers of the penal settlement. In 1814, soldier Peter Connachton and convict George Little were hunting together and they were joined by six Aboriginal men over several days.

One morning, the Aboriginal men suddenly attacked Connachton and Little, killing Connachton. The Aboriginal men took the European men's jackets and their kangaroo. The Aboriginal men were either captured or forced to surrender but their fate is unknown.[56]

Burrigon (or Burigon), also known as King Jack and the Chief of Newcastle, acted as a guide for Captain James Wallis, the Commandant of Newcastle from 1816 to 1818. The two men eventually developed a close friendship. Wallis wrote that Burrigon would take him 'fishing, kangaroo hunting, guiding me thro' trackless forests with more kindly feelings than I do many of my own colour, kindred, nation'.[57]

When Burrigon killed his brother during a dispute about a woman and feared retaliation from his clan, Wallis hid Burrigon in his office. Wallis was introduced to Burrigon's family and invited to witness a corroboree. Burrigon entrusted Wallis with his 10-year-old son, who was sent to the Parramatta Native Institution.[58]

Burrigon also worked as a tracker and was part of a party who recaptured convicts John Kirby and John Thompson. Upon the arrival of soldiers, Kirby attempted to escape by attacking Burrigon with a knife, cutting him in the abdomen. This attack was witnessed by Biraban (also known as John Mander Gill or John M'Gill) and Wallis, as well a group of soldiers and bush constables. Burrigon later died from his injuries. As a result, Seven of the 12 perpetrators, including Kirby, were charged and hung for their participation in the massacre. This case is significant as it was the first time European people were executed for the massacre of Aboriginal people.

Another colonist who most likely had a close relationship with the local Aboriginal people was Joseph Lycett. Lycett was transported to the colony for forgery in 1814 and sent to Newcastle in 1815 for reoffending in Sydney. There he worked as an artist for Wallis and recorded his observations of Aboriginal life.[59]

> It's like stepping back through time, it shows Aboriginal life as it was before 1788 and that is a rich cultural lifestyle.[60]

Lieutenant William Sacheverell Coke was second-in-charge of the Colony of Newcastle in 1827. In his diary in 1827 Coke wrote vivid accounts of the area and its nature, and documented the life and culture of local Aboriginal people including corroborees and battles. He established a close relationship with his Aboriginal 'servant' 'companion' Desmond, often going out with his tribe hunting and fishing. Magill, of the Lake Macquarie tribe, succeeded Desmond at Coke's Aboriginal offsider. Coke recalled in 1891 in the *Derbyshire Times*:

> 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.[61]

When the penal settlement of Newcastle was set to close in 1823, Henry Dangar was employed to survey Newcastle and the Hunter Valley from 1822 to 1825. Dangar recorded many Aboriginal place names and reproduced them on his maps, including Tahlbihn (Flagstaff Hill), Burrabihngarn (Pirate Point), Toohrnbing (Ironbark Creek), and Burraghihnbihng (Hexham Swamp).[62] The use of Aboriginal place names on maps helped the Europeans find their way across unfamiliar terrain as when they encountered Aboriginal people they could refer to the landmarks in language and get directions.

To a degree Dangar's surveying work reduced the need for Aboriginal guides, although they were still engaged up to the 1840s when people travelled to unsettled regions, for hunting and fishing expeditions, and botanical and natural history collecting trips, and as messengers.[63]

In 1826 Dangar accompanied Robert Dawson of the AACo to locate their extensive land grant in the Hunter. Dangar's surveys led to increased European incursions into the Hunter region and further destabilised Aboriginal culture and way of life. Conversely the AACo employed Aboriginal people in various roles, often as stockmen and housemaids.

As the footprint of permanent European settlement of Newcastle expanded with large land grants, Aboriginal people's rights and access to Country and resources were ruptured with profound consequences. Colonisation also brought with it violence that devastated Aboriginal families and communities.

Lieutenant Jonathan Warner served as Policy Magistrate at Newcastle and Visiting Police Magistrate at Brisbane Waters in 1833-1836. During this period he deployed military police to search for and capture Aboriginal people believed to have committed robberies and other acts of resistance. Some of these men were later captured and gaoled in January 1835.

Despite these circumstances Aboriginal people were resilient. They astutely adapted, forming new communities, continuing culture and traditions on Country where they could while participating in the colonial economy. They worked in Newcastle on boats and as servants, carrying wood and water in return for payment in food or tobacco. Others worked as servants or labourers on farms, but many refused to live on the respective properties and continued to live in the bush.[64]

A series of policy measures enacted by the colonial military administration and subsequent governments did not recognise the rights and interests of Aboriginal people. Over decades policies included assimilation, protectionism, and segregation.

Such policies, as well as certain underlying attitudes and beliefs about the inherent superiority of the colonial endeavour, accepted the battles and massacres that came to characterise the Australian Frontier Wars as the inevitable consequences of the colony's advancement.

Researchers for the Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia 1788–1930 project by the University of Newcastle estimated that at least 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were killed around the country in 416 massacres between 1780 and 1930. The University of Newcastle has also mapped the locations of these known massacres. For this research, 'a colonial frontier massacre is defined as the deliberate killing of six or more relatively undefended people in one operation'.[65] Under this definition, no frontier massacres were recorded within the Newcastle LGA but violence between Aboriginal people and European people did occur regularly, and some people associated with Newcastle were involved in frontier massacres elsewhere. It is also likely that massacres were significantly underreported to avoid consequences.

Wallis was promoted to the role of Commandant at Newcastle for commanding the 46th Regiment, which carried out the Appin Massacre in 1816.[66] Dangar, who became a prominent landholder and was an active participant in the dispossession of Aboriginal lands, is associated with the Myall Creek Massacre, as owner of the Myall Creek Station and massacre site in northern New South Wales. A group of convict and ex-convict workers attacked and killed late in the afternoon on Sunday 10 June 1838, twenty-eight Wirrayaraay Aboriginal men, women and children camping peacefully next to station huts at Myall Creek. Although he was not present at the time or a part of its planning, he ran a campaign against the trials and tried to disassociate himself from the perpetrators, betraying his overseer William Hobbs who reported the massacre to him, and is believed to have sacrificed the lives of two of his men, Kilmeister and Davey and reputations of two others in his effort to keep his fortune and reputation intact.[67] Seven of the 12 perpetrators were charged and hung for their participation in the massacre. This case is significant as it was the first time European people were executed for the massacre of Aboriginal people.[68]

Threlkeld and Biraban

The colonial government introduced measures to move Aboriginal people into missions and reserves including Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld's missions at Lake Macquarie during the 1820s and 1830s.

Threlkeld was sent to the Newcastle region to establish a mission for the local Aboriginal people in 1825. As part of his work, he was instructed:

> a knowledge of the language of the Natives must be regarded essential to the success of your Mission, you will deem it your duty ... to be using your best efforts to acquire it.[69]

Threlkeld initially lived at Government Cottage near Cottage Creek in Newcastle West while waiting for his mission house to be built. Aboriginal people chose to camp on the grounds of Government Cottage. Threlkeld wrote that this was for protection from male convicts, who regularly attacked them and attempted to abduct the Aboriginal girls and women, as female convicts were being relocated from Newcastle. During this time, Threlkeld wrote about a corroboree he witnessed:

> Our sable friends determined to celebrate our arrival amongst them with a ball and supper, and when all was prepared, late in the evening, messengers came to invite us to the entertainment in due form. About 40 natives were assembled and the music commenced, two sticks knocked together by one of the eldest of the men, which kept good time to the intonation of both male and female performers who changed the tune for the dancers, some joining in both exercises keeping the most exact time with the music of the sticks, the strains of the voice, the contortions of the body and stamping feet.
>
> The first set of the dance was indescribable, the second part consisted of the kangaroo dance in which the blacks place their waddies so as to resemble the tail of a kangaroo, and stooping forward in a bending posture, as though they were on all fours, each one placed his hands on the one before him near the sham tail, when they all jumped together, going around in a circle, like kangaroos, making a peculiar noise to imitate the cry of the animal, grunting Wa! Wa! Wa!, and making the ground resound with the stamping of their feet.[70]

Threlkeld's records and observations tell us that Aboriginal people still practised their traditional culture in the face of various threats and issues.[71]

In 1826, Threlkeld's mission house was completed, and he moved there with his family. The mission was known as Bahtabah ('the hill overlooking the water on the lake'[72]) and located at present-day Belmont. Threlkeld

Portrait of Biraban, wearing his brass king plate from Governor Darling. Lithograph by HBW Allan. (Source: State Library of NSW)

employed Aboriginal men to work on his farm and he learnt and recorded Aboriginal phrases. Although blanket counts are an unreliable source of accurately understanding population, a count undertaken in 1827 showed approximately 1712 Aboriginal people lived between Lake Macquarie and Newcastle and inland to Merton, approximately 700 Aboriginal people lived either at Threlkeld's mission or Newcastle.[73]

In 1831 Threlkeld moved his mission to Toronto, known by the local Aboriginal people as Punte, meaning 'a narrow place' or 'a narrow point of land'.[74] Threlkeld named his new mission Ebenezer reportedly after the historic Ebenezer Presbyterian Church where he preached at Cattai, near Windsor before 1829.[75]

At Ebenezer, Threlkeld was able to focus on his linguistic studies, which he undertook with Biraban. The Worimi and Awabakal people had a similar language but different dialect. Threlkeld was aware of the differences as was Lieutenant William Coke who referred to Worimi people seeking permission to cross the river for ceremony and trade. Biraban was a local Aboriginal man who was sent (or taken) to Sydney as a boy. He lived at a barracks in Sydney, where he worked as a servant for an officer and learnt to speak English. Biraban eventually returned to the Newcastle region and became fully initiated. He often acted as a mediator, interpreter and tracker for European people. He was Threlkeld's main translator and provided

information on not only the language but also local practices (e.g. gathering resources and hunting) and Lore including beliefs, rituals and important places.

Threlkeld published several linguistic works with Biraban's assistance, and they worked as translators in court. Governor Sir Ralph Darling acknowledged Biraban's work. He was given a brass king plate in 1830.[76]

During the 1830s, colonial support for Threlkeld's mission gradually decreased and the local Aboriginal population declined. Threlkeld wrote in his 1838 annual report that those who remained were constantly employed and could choose their work. They could undertake fishing, shooting, boating, carrying wood and water, or act as a guide.[77] In 1839, Threlkeld reported that even fewer Aboriginal people were coming to the mission; he claimed that whereas 160 people were initially at the mission, that number had reduced to 30, and only one person lived there.[78]

Threlkeld suggested relocating the mission to Newcastle but Governor Sir George Gipps decided to withdraw the government's financial support in 1841. The mission was closed soon after.[79]

Control and continuity

In 1845, the *Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines* was published. The Newcastle district magistrate wrote that only 38 Aboriginal people were in Newcastle—21 males, 12 females, and five children.[80] The magistrate painted a bleak picture, claiming 'their condition is wretched in extreme'[81] and they relied on European settlers for survival.

Not all estimates about the number of Aboriginal people and descriptions of their circumstances were correct. Certainly the Newcastle magistrate's count was incorrect. In 1838, another census counted 1720 people living between Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens.[82] There are reports from the 1830s to the 1850s of groups of Aboriginal people travelling together, sometimes numbering up to 200 people. European people also reported on witnessing corroborees that were attended by 400 to 500 Aboriginal people. They were seen farther inland at places like Singleton and Bulga, and to the north at Port Stephens. Aboriginal people continued their traditional practice of moving across Country. Their knowledge of Country meant they could retreat to areas that were unoccupied or less well understood by the settlers as desired and European estimates of their numbers are not necessarily accurate.[83]

In the 1880s and 1890s there are frequent references in the newspapers to Aboriginal people camping about the Newcastle wharves as in August 1888 when a group reportedly from Port Stephens took up residence near the steamers' wharf and AA Company's wharf.[84] There were also numerous accounts in the indicating a Charles Russell and his Aboriginal wife Susan, née Simon, were living in the area in the late 1880s. Likewise at least one of their relatives, William Ridgeway, late 'King Billy' was in Newcastle in 1890.[85] In another instance Honora King was in town from Port Stephens in June 1889 to take possession of her government-issued blanket; one newspaper claimed Honora was the daughter of 'King Billy', (William Ridgeway) and Charlotte, née Russell of Port Stephens.[86] The Russells and Ridgeways were related to the Dates family and the Karuah Aboriginal Mission.

During the late nineteenth century, newspapers occasionally published articles about the 'last of the Newcastle or Hunter Valley tribes'.[87] These articles applied race-based concepts of identity to Aboriginal people, and did not consider that many Aboriginal people had married non-Aboriginal people and had children with mixed heritage.

Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Aboriginal people continued to maintain ancestry and Lore. This was despite colonial government intervention and control over the practice of culture, language and displacement from Country which disrupted knowledge and cultural transmission.

St Clair Mission was established by Reverend JS White in Singleton in 1893. It was 60 acres. Most of the Aboriginal people who lived here were from the Hunter Valley region, including Newcastle. They farmed the land and continued traditional practices of subsistence. In 1903, the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM) took over the St Clair Mission and established another two missions in the region: Redonberry and Karuah.[88] St Clair was taken over by the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) in 1918 and renamed Mount Olive.[89]

Between 1894 and 1897 an Aboriginal Reserve was set aside at the mouth of the Karuah River. The 50 acres was formally gazetted in 1898. The reserve, in the heart of Worimi Country, was initially run by the newly formed Aborigines' Inland Mission (AIM) from about 1903. AIM pursued a religious agenda on the reserve and converted some of the Aboriginal people who settled here. Frederick Harold Dates (1882-1956) and his wife Eleanor Dates nee Russell, were 'native workers' (missionaries) at the Mission for many years after marrying in 1906, continuing after the reserve passed to the control of the APB. Frederick was the son of an Englishman Joseph Dates

and his Aboriginal wife Mary Mahr, who are believed to have met in Newcastle before going to Booral.[90] Fred and Mary's extended family, including the Ridgeways and Russells, also lived at the mission during the same period.

The APB had been established in 1881. Part of its remit was to acquire land for the formation of Aboriginal reserves, allocate rations and find farm work for Aboriginal people. In 1909, the APB was granted permission to remove children at the age of 14 from their parents. By 1918, the APB was given legislative power to control the lives of all Aboriginal people in New South Wales.[91]

Mount Olive was closed in 1923 and the former residents were forced to move to other reserves and camps. One of these camps was Platt's Estate in Waratah.

Platt's Estate was located on part of the original Australian Agricultural Company's estate on Coquun (the Hunter River). It was subdivided for development in 1920 but Aboriginal families may have been already camping there.[92]

When the Great Depression hit Australia in the 1930s, many shanty towns were built in and around Newcastle. Many white people found themselves living directly beside Aboriginal people for the first time, including at Platt's Estate.[93]

By 1943, 200 people lived at Platt's Estate in 'rough shacks and humpies'[94], including 20–40 Aboriginal people. The local health inspector recommended for Platt's Estate to be cleared of its occupants, directly referring to the Aboriginal residents. This was opposed by several members of the local council and eventually the residents were allowed to remain.[95]

Among the Aboriginal families living on the estate was Reginald George 'Reggie' Dates who was working as a railway employee. He and his wife Constance Winifred Dates née Buggs are listed at Platt's Estate in the 1951, 1954 and 1958 electoral rolls. The Ridgeways, related by marriage to the Dates family, were also living on the estate in the 1940s and 1950s including Amy Marjorie Ridgeway and her husband Arthur John Ridgeway. They were respected members of the community and were heavily involved in the establishment of the Mission Hall which opened at Platt's Estate in 1944.The Ridgeway family occupied the Platt's Estate until its forced closure in the 1960s. Generations of their families were born in Newcastle and Waratah Hospitals. A Newcastle City Council inspection of Platt's Estate in 1964 recorded 125 adults and 109 children, including eight Aboriginal families, living at Platt's Estate in tents, caravans, baggings and iron huts.

In 1963, the residents of Platt's Estate were evicted after the land was acquired by the University of Newcastle. 19 squatters, mainly Aboriginal people, remained behind. It took 18 months for the City Council, the University, the Department of Education, the Crown Solicitor and the Aborigines Welfare Board (which had replaced the APB) to reach a solution with the squatters, which was to provide suitable alternative housing.[96]

Typical housing, known as 'humpies', at Platt's Estate. This photograph was taken in 1953 by a journalist who accompanied the Newcastle City Council on an inspection. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Self-determination

From the early twentieth century campaigns for Aboriginal rights and constitutional change began to challenge the structural inequality that shaped Aboriginal lives. Government policies related to child removal, forced displacement and assimilation have left a legacy of intergenerational trauma and loss that continues to affect the Aboriginal communities of Newcastle and beyond.

In 1989, Shay Kelly interviewed her mother Mrs Annie Kelly, a Dunghutti woman who had relocated to Newcastle from Walcha to provide better educational opportunities for her four children. Shay wrote that while she and her siblings thrived at school, they struggled to find their place in society:

> These four skilled young people who were taken from their natural Aboriginal tribal environment were now young adults and were following their natural instincts in socialising in a 'white' environment and that was to prove unsuccessful. They had to return to their own people on the Reserves and in these environments they proved to be misfits as well.[97]

In 1924 Fred Maynard, a Worimi man, founded the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA). They spoke out against APB's injustices against Aboriginal people including the removal of their children, dispossession of their land and denial of basic rights.

The AAPA were the first organised all-Aboriginal organisation to be established in Australia. They put up the first demand for a national land rights agenda by demanding enough land for each and every Aboriginal family in the country.

> The request made by this association for sufficient land for each eligible family is justly based. The Australian people are the original owners of the land and have a prior right over all other people in this respect.[98]

They demanded self-determination fifty years before the Whitlam Labor Government.

The Central branch operated in Sydney but there were thirteen branches and four sub-branches formed across the state with an active membership of over 600. There were branches on the south coast, mid north coast, far north coast and western NSW. They held four conferences between 1925 and 1927 in Sydney, Kempsey, Grafton and Lismore. Worimi man Sid Ridgeway was the secretary of the Central branch of the AAPA.

Central branch officers Fred Maynard, Tom Lacey and Sid Ridgeway of the AAPA visited Newcastle in 1925 and held a large rally on the corner of Hunter and Crown Streets on Aboriginal rights.[99]

Though mainly based in Sydney, Maynard and other members of the AAPA travelled all over New South Wales to speak to Aboriginal people about their rights. The AAPA also wrote public letters and were widely published in the press right across NSW as well as Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. They were even front page news in the Sydney press with their first conference held at St Davids Church Hall in Surry Hills in 1925.

The Newcastle-based *Voice of the North*. AAPA members called for the abolition of the APB.

The AAPA disappeared from public view in late 1929. John Maynard believes this was the result of the combined actions of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board, police and missionaries.[100] Until his death in 1946, however, Fred Maynard continued to advocate for Aboriginal rights.[101]

For Aboriginal people living under the restrictions of the APB, a certificate of exemption offered the hope of freedom and acceptance in white society with access to education, health services, housing and employment. The reality was however much darker, with 'exempted individuals required to relinquish their language, identity and ties to kin'.[102] Leonard Andrew Dates (1923-1981) the son of Frederick and Ellen Dates, was born at Newcastle but grew up with his family on the Karuah Aboriginal Mission. He received his exemption certificate from the APB in 1953 and returned to Newcastle where he worked for 30 years for the Hunter Water Board. At one stage he lived under the Hexham Bridge with his family and fished the river to augment the family income. Electoral rolls show Leonard's address in 1972 as 138 Denison Street Carrington and in 1980 he is listed at 153 Wilson Street Carrington.

Anecdotal evidence from his descendants, the Dates mob, indicate that he defied some of the restrictions imposed by exemption, by passing on traditional knowledge and maintained deep, spiritual connections to the Country around Onebygamba.[103]

Many Aboriginal people across Australia remained frustrated by the lack of Federal Government action and formed the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House in 1972. In the same year, the Whitlam Government was elected and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established. Self-determination was adopted as the federal policy for First Nations Australian people, while First Nations Australian activists pushed for treaty and self-government over their local and internal affairs over the next two decades.[104]

Portrait of Beryl Mildred and Leonard Andrew Dates, undated. (Source: Private collection)

The Family Resettlement Aboriginal Corporation was also established in 1972. Its role was to provide housing and financial assistance to Aboriginal families. In Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, the corporation assisted with placing up to 40 Aboriginal families in homes. It found Aboriginal people employment as semi-skilled and unskilled labourers within enterprises in the region including BHP and Newcastle Abattoir.

However, as part of this program, Aboriginal families were deliberately dispersed throughout the region to limit their opportunities to interact. The program was discontinued in 1979.[105]

In 1973 the Newcastle Aboriginal Advancement Society was formed with a government grant. The society ran cultural awareness programs and its inaugural chairperson was Bill Smith.[106]

Smith was originally from the New England area. Along with his two brothers Roy and Robert, he established the Smiths General Contracting enterprise at Lambton in Newcastle. From the 1950s to 1980s, Smiths brought Aboriginal men and women from across Australia to Newcastle and gave them opportunities to acquire specialised skills in railway engineering and other fields, especially with BHP. At their peak, the Smiths employed 130 men, of whom 70% were Aboriginal. They were the largest private employers of Aboriginal labourers in Australia.

The company's most noted achievement was laying the track for the coal loader at Port Waratah.

The Newcastle Aboriginal Advancement Society was replaced by the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Cooperative Limited in 1975, which was formally registered in 1977. Its objectives were to provide services related to employment, culture, health, welfare, sport, housing and education. Jimmy Wright was instrumental in expanding the operations of the Awabakal Cooperative during the 1970s and early 1980s and was the organisation's first administrator/chief executive. Wright later successfully established Yarnteen and Yamalong. According to W Jonas:

> One of Jim Wright's strengths, and one which had positive effects for the Co-op was his awareness of, and willingness to participate in, the broader Aboriginal community and movement. This earned him wide respect and enabled him to tap into events, which benefited the Co-op. For example, at the time when Awabakal were establishing a medical centre he was a member of the National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (NAIHO) and he was the inaugural Convener of their Aboriginal Health and Resources Committee. When the Co-op was developing expertise in sites survey work he was a member of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Advisory Committee and a member of the Central Region Site Committee. He was Chairperson of the Newcastle Aboriginal Home Care Service Committee, Chair of the Hunter Aboriginal InterAgency Group, and has served on both Aboriginal Cricket and Football Committees from their inception.[107]

In 1990, the University of Newcastle hosted a corroboree and exhibition. Over 2,500 people attended the one-hour event, which included 20 performers from around New South Wales. The corroboree and exhibition were used as an opportunity to revive the teaching of Aboriginal Lore by several groups including the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd. Bill Smith advised that 22 males had undergone traditional manhood ceremonies and become custodians of land and culture through the knowledge passed on to them from their Elders.[108]

In 1995, the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd assisted in the development of Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, which provides education and training for the Hunter region's Aboriginal communities. The Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd still exists today as an Aboriginal organisation. Now known as Awabakal Ltd, it is focused on health and community services.[109]

The Sands Brothers, c. 1940s, unknown photographer. (Source: National Portrait Gallery)

A sporting chance

Aboriginal people have been involved in European sports in the Hunter region since the mid-nineteenth century. Sometimes equality and recognition could only be found on the pitch, on the field or in the ring, if temporarily.

In 1867, an Aboriginal cricket team toured England. In the following year the Aboriginal team played a white team at Maitland in front of 3,000 people. Many Aboriginal people continued to play cricket since then and since the late 1970s, all-Aboriginal teams have played in the Newcastle City and Suburban competition. A prominent Aboriginal cricketer of the region is Todd Ritchie, son of boxer Clem Ritchie. Todd played in the University First XI throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Another sport that Aboriginal people excelled in was boxing, which became popular during the Depression and post-Depression years. For Aboriginal people, it was an opportunity to gain recognition and earn money. Newcastle Stadium was one of the most successful boxing venues outside of Sydney. The stadium's popularity towards the late 1940s was owed to Aboriginal boxers, many of whom would sleep in bunks at the stadium after the crowds had gone home.

The most renowned Aboriginal boxers of this time were the Ritchie brothers, known as the 'Fighting Sands Brothers'.

Clem, Percy, George, Dave, Alfie and Russell Ritchie were active in the 1940s and 1950s. During those 20 years, they fought 607 bouts between them and one-third was won by knockout. Dave was the most successful brother and became the first Aboriginal boxer to win a title overseas. He died in a motoring accident in Dungog at age 26 and was ranked number three in the world at the time of death. In 1998, Dave was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.[110]

Ted Wotherspoon was an Aboriginal boxer who fought around the same time as the Ritchie brothers. Wotherspoon was born in Maryville and spent most of his life at Platt's Estate. He was a feature fighter known as Teddy McCoy at Newcastle Stadium and won 80 of his 120 fights. He married his wife Dot in 1954 and they

Champion jockey Merv Maynard on his horse Alinga. (Source: University of Sydney, *A history of Aboriginal Sydney*, 2010–2013)

worked in Newcastle. In 1971, Dot and Ted became the first Aboriginal people to hold a hotel licence, becoming the publicans of Wallarah Hotel in Catherine Hill Bay. Ted said:

> I was a little bit worried about going into business. I did not know how the patrons would take an Aboriginal as their publican.[111]

A few years later Ted and Dot came to own the freehold of the hotel too.[112] After Ted's death in 1981, Dot continued to run the hotel for another 30 years. She noted:

> I had all Aboriginal colours right through the pub. Yellow, red and black carpet right through the pub, because it was an Aboriginal pub.[113]

Ted and Dot were also instrumental in the establishment of the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd.[114]

Horseracing was another sport in which Aboriginal people found success during the first half of the twentieth century. Noel Saunders from Cardiff rode at the Newcastle racecourse during the 1930s and Norman Rose from Dirrinbandi was one of Newcastle's leading jockeys from the 1960s to 1980s.

Merv Maynard, son of Fred Maynard, was an Aboriginal jockey who rose to prominence in the 1950s. Maynard's career as a jockey spanned from 1949 to 1994. He rode over 1,500 winning horses in four different countries—Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia—and won several cups including the first Queen's Cup at Randwick Racecourse in 1952. Maynard was later inducted into the Aboriginal a Sports Hall of Fame.[115]

Aboriginal people also made a mark on rugby league. Ron Munro from Waratah played in local games in the 1960s. Michael Knight, who also played for the Awabakal Cricket Club, was the leading tryscorer for Newcastle's Western Suburbs club for several seasons during the 1970s. In the 1980s, Ashley Gordon became the first player signed by the Newcastle Knights football club.[116]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players from across Australia that have played for the Newcastle Knights include Brett Grogan, Leo Dynevor, Owen Craigie, Tyrone Roberts, Timana Tahu, Dane Gagai,

Jaelen Feeney, Caitlan Johnston, the first National Rugby League (NRL) Women's player for Newcastle,[117] and Caitlin Moran.

Running alongside the NRL is the NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout, known as Koori Knockout. Six teams attended the first competition, held in 1971 in St Peters.

Today, there are around 180 teams, each with 25 players. All the games are played over one weekend.

It is estimated that approximately 30,000 people meet for the Koori Knockout to watch 4,500 players from up to 40 different Aboriginal communities from around New South Wales.[118] Teams from Newcastle have won several of the knockouts including in 1987, 2012, 2013 (both men and women), 2017, 2018 (men and women), 2022 and 2023.

Ashley Gordon and other Newcastle Knights players preparing for the next season at UON's new sport field No 3, 1990. (Source: UON Living Histories, reproduced from the Bulletin, No 19, 1990, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/4480306571/)

Newcastle Yowies in 2013. Taken at the NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout. (Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, courtesy of Jamie James)

Dr Ray Kelly teaching Aboriginal language to students through the Muuya Barrigi program, 2021. (Source: UON, 'Mother Tongue' by Rosemarie Milson, https://www.newcastle.edu.au/hippocampus/story/2021/reviving-indigenous-languages)

Language and cultural revitalisation

University of Newcastle has become one of the leading supporters of the local Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people have been attending and graduating from the university since 1975.

It is one of the largest non-Aboriginal organisations to employ Aboriginal people in a variety of academic and non-academic positions.

In 1986 the College of Advanced Education received a Bicentenary grant to build the Wollotuka Institute. Now a part of the University of Newcastle, this institute is a strategic and operational body that represents and supports all First Nations Australians at the university.[119]

In the same year the Wollotuka Institute was established, the university supported an Awabakal language revitalisation program at Gateshead High School (now Hunter Sports High School). The program was created by Percy Haslam and aimed at the local Aboriginal community. The Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd assisted in teaching the program. Dr John Heath, who was an administrative and cultural officer at the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd and a lecturer in Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle, taught the program:

> We set the seeds of an Awabakal language program. Because Perc was white and an older person he wasn't a good teacher in the sense for the young kids so I became a teacher alongside him. My involvement was to learn the lesson the week before the kids. So together we started an elementary language program. We often had fifteen or twenty people, mainly kids, but we had older people as well.[120]

Haslam also ran language programs through other avenues including a weekly radio program of language lessons on 2NUR called Awabakal Voices and an Aboriginal language and cultural program at Cessnock and Long Bay gaols for Aboriginal inmates.[121]

The University of Newcastle has continued the language revitalisation program through the Wollotuka Institute.[122] The Muuya Barrigi program was developed by Dr Ray Kelly, Deputy Head of the Wollotuka Institute, and can be taught in person or online. Other organisations that teach Aboriginal languages that are local to the Newcastle LGA include the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre in Boolaroo and further north the Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative (Nambucca Heads). Dr Kelly has highlighted the importance of revitalising language for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

> Language classes give our people a sense of identity, connection and belonging, it provides us with a new profound purpose, while reinforcing our own personal and cultural values.[123]

Flying the flag

Although the Aboriginal community was subject to prejudice and oppression, Professor John Maynard suggests that overall Newcastle was more inclined to be sympathetic to Aboriginal issues:

> Newcastle's place as a blue-collar working-class industrial city did undoubtedly play a part in providing greater support and tolerance towards Aboriginal people and issues.[124]

Newcastle provided work opportunities for many Aboriginal people during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In steel factories and other local industries, Aboriginal people worked alongside white people. When white families were forced to live at Platt's Estate, a deeper understanding developed of the (pre-Depression) everyday struggles for many Aboriginal people including forced displacement and its psychological and health impacts such as loss of self-esteem. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people formed bonds through the empathy of this hardship that continued after the Platt's Estate closed.[125]

In 1977, under the direction of then Lord Mayor Joy Cummings, CN became the first city council in Australia to fly the Aboriginal flag over its town hall. In 2003, CN commenced flying the Aboriginal flag permanently beside the Australian flag on City Hall and on display in Council Chambers.[126]

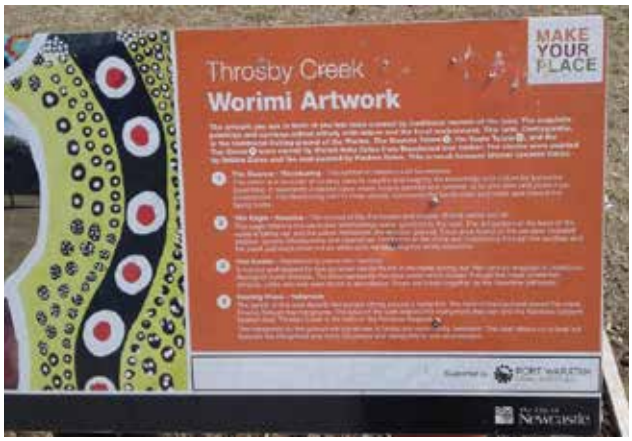
Shortly after the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* was passed, Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) across Australia held their first meetings. In the Newcastle LGA, there are three LALCs:

- Awabakal LALC;
- Worimi LALC; and
- Mindaribba LALC.

These organisations work to reduce the impacts of developments on Aboriginal cultural heritage within the Newcastle LGA.

In 1998 CN launched its Commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of the City of Newcastle. This signed commitment acknowledged 'the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Newcastle to live according to their own values and cultures'.[127] It was co-signed by Mrs Iris Russell, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner NSW East Zone, and Mr Jim (Jimmy) Wright and Mr Rodney Smith, Aboriginal community leaders.

Plan of landscape features with dual naming in inner Newcastle. *An Eye Sketch of Hunter's River*, by John Shortland in 1797, is the base layer. (Source: CN)



Throsby Creek Worimi Artwork signage, 2015, by Tom Smith. (Source: CN)

The Dates family at Throsby Creek, Onebygama, 2015. (Source: Private collection)

In the following year, as an outcome of this signed commitment, CN established the Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee. The Guraki Aboriginal Advisory Committee provides strategic advice and guidance with relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, gives life to Council's commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the City of Newcastle and engages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in local government. The committee is composed of stakeholders from several organisations including the LALCs, University of Newcastle and Aboriginal Affairs NSW.[128]

Other actions undertaken by CN to promote Aboriginal culture and heritage include Aboriginal dual naming of landforms and curation of Aboriginal cultural exhibitions at the Newcastle Museum and Newcastle Art Gallery.[129]

Since 2013 the Dates family have held cultural meetings on the parklands adjacent to Throsby Creek, Onebygamba. The place's central feature is a collection of four totems carved and painted by the Dates family, with financial assistance provided by a placemaking grant from the City of Newcastle.

The Dates family regularly meet here and maintain connection with Country as in 2019 following the passing of the family matriarch, Beryl Mildred Dates. Hundreds gathered for Newcastle's first outdoor funeral farewelling Aboriginal elder Beryl Dates.[130]

In 2018, an Awabakal and CN project celebrated 18 Aboriginal women as part of that year's NAIDOC Week theme: 'Because of her, we can'. One of the women chosen was Donna Meehan, who has worked with the Newcastle Aboriginal community for over 30 years, including producing the Awabakal Voices radio show on 2NUR for seven years and *Miromaa for Life* for 10 years on Rhema. She is also an author and has written, among other publications, her autobiography. Originally from Coonamble, Meehan was sent as a child to live with a white adoptive family in Newcastle. She faced many challenges regarding her identity and place and shared her story of self-healing along with those of other Aboriginal people with a similar background. She described the theme as 'by far the best ever':

> This unites the community. We have a vibrant community: so many wonderful achieving families and also supporting the vulnerable and those struggling with life every day. We stand in awe of the women who have marched, sacrificed, advocated, defended, and sung for our people. Every woman has a story and we celebrate being strong, j45
>
> black, smart and deadly.[131]

Since 2018 CN has continued to strengthen its commitment to Aboriginal people. CN has since committed to three Reconciliation Action Plans and

Donna Meehan, one of the Aboriginal women celebrated during NAIDOC Week 2018, 'Because of her, we can'. (Source: *Newcastle Herald*)

two Aboriginal Employment Strategies.

Through these strategies CN has established a RAP Working Group and Aboriginal Employee Network. These groups work together to realise the strategies and to create opportunities to get involved in cultural activities and initiatives. CN also supports significant Aboriginal curated programming such as New Annual. New Annual is a 10-day festival of art, culture and creativity in Muloobinba, Newcastle.

'Ngarrama – Sit, listen and know' was a sunset event held in King Edward Park on 25 January 2022 featuring truth-telling, singing and dance performances from young and old members of the Aboriginal community. This inaugural event was organised by the University of Newcastle in partnership with Awabakal Ltd and CN.

In 2022 local theatre company Curious Legends teamed up with the Newcastle Worimi Community led by the Dates family to present the Onebygamba Project, exploring Aboriginal culture along the banks of the Throsby Creek. An outdoor performance called *Gimbay Gatigaan* (friendly mudcrab in language) was held in March 2022.

During NAIDOC Week in July 2024, there were several events across the City of Newcastle celebrating First Nations people including the Awabakal Corporation's annual Community Day and March, a flag-raising in Civic Park and a family-friendly celebration in Foreshore Park. CN's libraries and the Museum also participated in NAIDOC Week, hosting a range of events celebrating the year's theme 'Keep the fire burning! Blak, Loud and Proud'.

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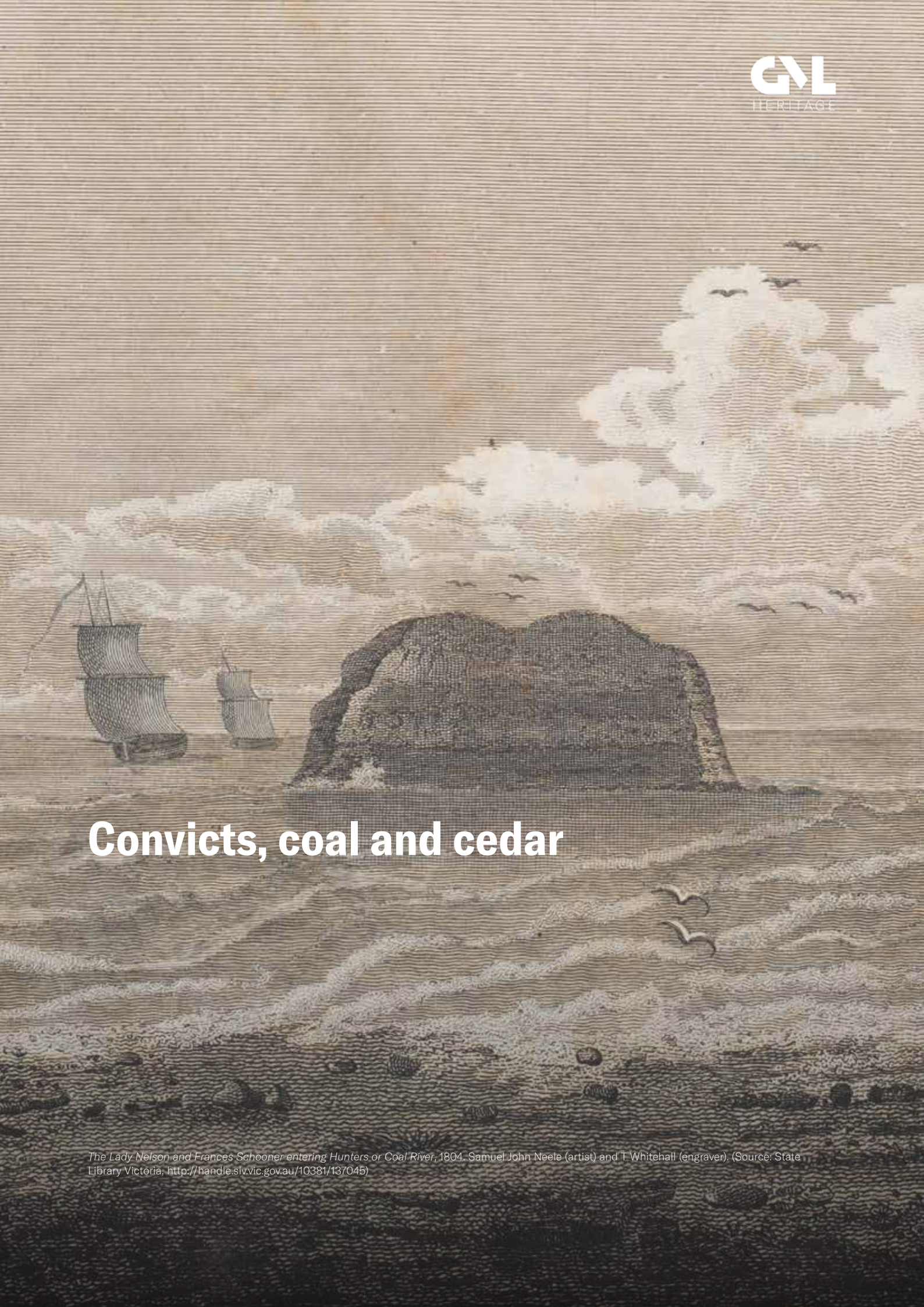


Convicts, coal and cedar

The Lady Nelson and Frances Schooner entering Hunters or Coal River, 1804. Samuel John Neele (artist) and T Whitehall (engraver). (Source: State Library Victoria, http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/137045)

Convicts, coal and cedar

Settlement of Newcastle, c1804, after Ferdinand Bauer. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Coal originally drew European settlement to Newcastle, when convicts were stationed there to mine it in 1801. The settlement was abandoned, but then re-established in 1804 as a place of secondary punishment for convicts from New South Wales and Tasmania. Between 1815 and 1818 Captain Wells laid out the streets of the original town of Newcastle evident in today's metropolis.

Newcastle remained a penal settlement until 1822 after which the area was opened up to farming and the small town began to acquire aspects of typical Australian pioneer settlement. A steady flow of free settlers began arriving to settle in the hinterland. In the late 1840s, additional mines were opened around Newcastle. The remainder of the nineteenth century saw it develop steadily, primarily as an industrial and trading port serving the mines and the hinterland.

This useful settlement

> I am of the opinion that Government might derive many advantages by forming a small settlement at this place. In the 1st instance, the coals are a principle [sic] object. 2nd Boiling salt, which could be done with little labour. 3rd Burning shells that are here in great abundance. Besides, salting of fish might be carried on with considerable benefit if some industrious fisherman could be found for that purpose, as the fish are plentiful and good. There is excellent pasture for cattle, but until where the rivers meet is not fit for cultivation. What I term forest land is remarkable fine soil.[132]

In 1801, Colonel William Paterson sent the above description of the mouth of Coquun (the Hunter River) to Governor King in August 1801. Lieutenant John Shortland was credited with having 'discovered' the river four years before Paterson's expedition, although convicts escaping from Sydney had been in the vicinity as early as 1791. Sydney merchants had sent small ships to the area for coal and timber from 1798.[133]

Soon after Paterson's report, an industrial settlement was established at 'Coal River' (the colloquial name at the time for the Hunter River), and Governor King declared its coal and timber the exclusive property of the Crown. To King, exploiting the rich resources of Coquun (the Hunter River) would enhance the colony's prosperity through exports of coal and, to a lesser degree, timber. By late

1801 three miners were digging 9 tons of coal per day from Colliers Point.[134]

The initial settlement of 'Coal River' failed after six months and was abandoned.[135] Coalmining continued at Coquun (the Hunter River) under the direction of John Platt, a convict and experienced miner who established new mines in 1802 and 1803 using convict labour.

In 1804 Lieutenant Charles Menzies re-established the first camp as a penal settlement with a small military detachment and 34 convicts. Menzies described his chosen location for the settlement as:

> ... a most delightful Valley about a quarter of a mile from the entrance and South Head and close to the mines.[136]

Menzies named the penal settlement King's Town after Governor King.[137] But the name Newcastle was soon adopted, which was associated with the coal industry in England.[138]

There were eight commandants of the Newcastle penal settlement:

- Lieutenant Charles Menzies (1804–1805);
- Dr Charles Throsby (1805–1806);
- Lieutenant William Lawson (1806–1810);
- Lieutenant John Purcell (1810–1811);
- Lieutenant Thomas Skottowe (1811–1814);
- Lieutenant Thomas Thompson (1814–1816);
- Captain James Wallis (1816–1818); and
- Major James Thomas Morisset (1818–1823).

Isolation

Separated from Sydney by the ocean, rivers, lakes and bushland, not to mention hundreds of kilometres of distance, Newcastle had the ideal level of isolation for a penal settlement. The only practical way to get to and from the settlement was by ship, and then only with permission from the Newcastle Commandant or the Governor in Sydney. This situation lasted until the 1820s when land routes to the settlement and the Hunter Valley were developed.

Escaped convicts from the Newcastle penal settlement usually did not get far. Many were tracked by the authorities with the assistance of local Aboriginal people who knew the terrain and could easily navigate known pathways through the bush. These pathways formed the earliest 'roads' in the district.[139]

'Bad characters'

When the penal settlement at Newcastle was established in 1804, it was intended as a place of secondary punishment.[140] The first detachment consisted of convicts who participated in the Castle Hill convict rebellion. Those sent after the settlement's establishment were sentenced to Newcastle for offences committed within the colony, although there were exceptions. Benjamin Grainger (transported for life) was sent to Newcastle in 1810 because he was a skilled miner. He worked as the supervisor of coalmines until 1822.[141]

The predominantly male convict population of the penal settlement worked on extracting coal, timber and shells for making lime. Though lesser in number, female convicts were also sent to Newcastle, and either employed by the government or assigned to settlers, usually as domestic workers. For the first seven years, approximately 100 convicts lived at Newcastle. After 1808, convict re-offenders that would have been sent to Norfolk Island were instead sent to Newcastle. In 1812 Governor Macquarie began his substantial building program for Sydney and Parramatta, which drove an increased demand for timber and lime. More convicts, including skilled convicts, were sent to Newcastle to obtain building supplies.[142] By 1815, Newcastle's convict population had more than doubled to over 250. There were 782 convicts by 1819 and 1,051 by 1821.[143]

Convicts were required to begin work before sunrise and labour until sunset on Mondays to Fridays. On Saturdays, they had mornings to themselves and then worked in the afternoon until sunset. On Sundays, convicts were required to attend church service. Constables and overseers were selected from the convict population and received an increased ration. The convicts received a standard ration of 'eight pounds of wheat and four pounds of salt pork, or seven pounds of salt beef or mutton per week'.[144]

Convicts could be forced to work in chain gangs or be flogged as punishment for offences committed at Newcastle. Convicts that were considered to be of 'bad character' or 'the worst' could also be isolated from the general convict population and sent to work as part of the lime burners gangs[145]

The Coal River or Port of Newcastle New South Wales..., attributed to John William Lewin, 1808. This watercolour drawing shows the layout of the settlement, made up of two rows of huts for convicts and others, and the commandant's house on the right. (Source: State Library of New South Wales, Digital order no: Album ID : 879109)

Constructing King's Town

The settlement began in an irregular fashion, evolving around the axis of George Street (later Watt Street). George Street ran from the wharf to the Commandant's house, which overlooked the settlement. Up until 1815, Newcastle was referred to as 'the camp'.

Most (if not all) of the early buildings were constructed from timber as there were no local brickmakers for the first decade.

The settlement consisted of a parade ground, flagstaff, superintendent of convicts' house, guard house, boat house, sand pits, lumberyard, officers' barracks, hospital, surgeon's quarters, coalmine, stone quarry, gaol and signalling post.

Convicts lived in timber huts with bark or shingle roofs that were placed at irregular distances from each other. The huts could be owned by the government or the convict. Each hut had a garden and the occupants were encouraged to cultivate the gardens and raise livestock to supplement their rations.

To better assert control over the convict population in the colony, Governor Macquarie required all convicts to move into barracks in 1820. By this stage, there were 71 convict owned huts and 13 government owned huts in Newcastle.[146]

James Meehan plan of Newcastle, 7 August 1818, with later annotations by Len Webber. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection, 515_000560)

Newcastle, New South Wales, by Joseph Lycett. Illustration published in 1824. Joseph Lycett left Newcastle between 1818 and 1819. (Source: National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135703314)

Under Captain Wallis' command (1816–1818), the town layout was reordered into a grid pattern and an ambitious building program was commenced. Brickmaking began on Khanterin (The Hill) and stone was quarried from the base of Signal Hill. These materials were used for more substantial buildings including a new gaol, an enlarged commissariat store, a new hospital and the settlement's first church.

A new lumberyard with workshops was also established. Several new barracks were also constructed as well as more convict huts with gardens.[147]

Macquarie praised Wallis for his work in the reformation and administration of Newcastle, as well as its physical improvement:

> ... from the Appearance of an humble Hamlet to the Rank and Capabilities of a well laid out, regular and clean Town. [148]

Due to a skills shortage, including the absence of a competent architect or builder and experienced bricklayers, Wallis' substantial buildings were poorly constructed. Some also developed serious faults within a few years of completion. The church sank as it had poor foundations. The gaol was poorly laid out and had a shoddy wall. The hospital was too small and poorly situated.[149]

Commissioner Bigge blamed Governor Macquarie for the failed building program, as Bigge believed the work had been rushed to complete it in time for Macquarie's visit to Newcastle.[150] In contrast, Bigge considered many of Newcastle's weatherboard buildings, mainly barracks built between 1816 and 1820, to be more appropriate in style. He praised Wallis' successor, Major Morisset (1818–1823), for the simplicity of their construction.[151]

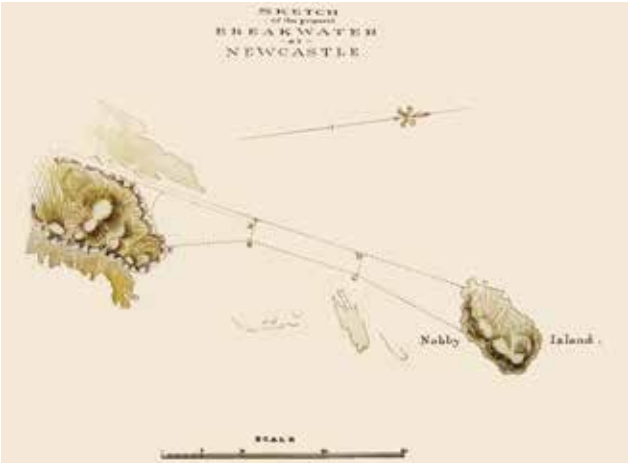
Nobby Island and Pier, Newcastle, by an unknown artist, 1820. This picture shows the beginnings of construction of the breakwater to Nobby Island. (Source: State Library of NSW)

In 1821, the first fort was built on Signal Hill with a battery of cannons. Lieutenant Edward Charles Close, who was the acting engineer, oversaw the project. He was also responsible for putting down mooring chains and removing dangerous shoals from Newcastle Harbour.[152]

A major construction project that began towards the end of the penal settlement period was the breakwater linking Nobby Island to the mainland. Begun in 1818 and completed by 1846, it was constructed by convict labourers. Commissioner Bigge wrote in 1822:

> The object of this work [construction of the breakwater] is to prevent the effect of a cross tide, which in south and south-east winds flows with rapidity and violence into the regular channel of the river, and throws vessels that are passing it on the shoals of the northern shore. The work will certainly be useful when it is finished, but it proceeds very, slowly.[153]

The 'Commandant's Bath' or Bogey Hole was also created using convict labour around this time. This involved the excavation of a swimming hole in a rock platform at Khanterin (Shepherds Hill). Historically, Morisset has been credited as the Commandant responsible for the Bogey Hole, though Wallis may have initiated its construction.[154]



Sketch of the proposed breakwater at Newcastle by Thomas Mitchell, 1818. (Source: NSW Parliamentary Library)

Conrad Martens' sketch of the Bogey Hole, here referred to as Morisset's Bath, 1841. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Industry

Governor King's decision to reopen the settlement was prompted by the incentives of coal and profit. Timber, lime and salt, readily sourced in commodities for the New South Wales colony.

Contrary to King's expectations, the economic value of Newcastle's coal production was not realised in the convict period. Most of the coal that was shipped to Sydney was used by the public service and the amounts exported were insignificant due to low demand in international markets. Between 1805 and 1820 the Newcastle penal settlement produced timber, lime, coal and salt valued at more than £43,415.[155] In 1805, 400 tons of coal were mined. By 1820, 21,728 tons were extracted, of which 18,911 tons were shipped, realising £9,497. [156] This was eclipsed in the same period by the timber industry, which employed fewer convicts and was worth £22,412.[157]

The convict lumberyard was the centre of manufacturing in Newcastle. Timber that was acquired inland was sawn here and loaded onto ships bound for Sydney. The lumberyard also forged and maintained metal goods, including mining tools, and turned out joinery.[158]

Convicts were sent inland, along Coquun (the Hunter River), to cut timber. An overseer and deputy would accompany the labourers, and the convict party would likely be absent for more than a month. The logs were tied into rafts and floated down the river. Huts would be constructed for the gangs and they would be required to take enough provisions for their time away from Newcastle.

As a punishment, convicts were also sent to manufacture lime for the mortar industry. These convicts were isolated from their associates and received reduced rations. They were located at Fullerton Cove. The convicts and one convict overseer were lodged in one wooden building and guarded by a corporal's guard. The convicts were required to collect a certain quantity of shell, which was burnt into lime. Once a month, the convicts were required to load the lime onto a ship heading to Sydney[159]

Lime manufacture was discontinued in 1822. Between 1805 and 1822 the Newcastle region yielded over 172,000 bushels of lime valued at £10,763. Lime was second in value only to timber. [160] It is likely that much of this product was destined for the local economy and used in construction of public works. However, the large-scale removal of shells burnt for lime led to the significant destruction of the existing midden system constructed by the local Aboriginal population over many thousands of years, especially at the northern end of the Stockton Bright.

Salt production yielded £645 from 1805 to 1809.

Tracks to Newcastle

The first recorded overland journey between Newcastle and the Sydney district (Windsor) was led by Major Morisset, Commandant at Newcastle. According to the *Sydney Gazette* on 1 May 1823 he arrived from Windsor:

> ...after a most fatiguing journey of nine days. Owing to the mountainous aspect of the country through which this expedition passed, it is much apprehended that extreme difficulty will be experienced in effecting an inland correspondence with the country in the vicinity of Hunter's River ... The distance from Newcastle to Windsor, by the route this expedition came, is 169 miles.[161]

This was by no means the first journey by land between Sydney and the Hunter region. Benjamin Singleton and John Howe set out to find routes north from Windsor in 1818 and 1819 respectively. Yet neither of these expeditions made it to the penal settlement at Newcastle.

These overland journeys foreshadowed the construction of the Great North Road by convict labourers between 1826 and 1836. Connecting Sydney to the Hunter Valley settlements, the route ran from Windsor via Wiseman's Ferry, St Alban's and through Wollombi. For many years it was the main road to the Hunter Valley, primarily used as a stock route. Travel by sea remained the principal means of communication for Newcastle, however, because travelling along the entire 200km route of the Great North Road took about nine days, whereas the same distance could be traversed in 12 hours by ship.

In the intervening period, a track was formed from Newcastle to Wallis Plains (Maitland) in 1820, generally following the high ground excepting at two swamps (Ironbark Creek and Hexham) and Wallis Creek. This route was later known as Maitland Road. Despite this new track, most goods and passengers continued to travel by water between the settlements.

Also in 1820, John Howe successfully founded a route between the Hawkesbury region and Wallis Plains. He blazed the trees on his return journey to mark the route. In 1821, Reverend George Augustus Middleton, First Chaplain at Newcastle, drove 173 head of cattle from Windsor to Newcastle following the MacDonald River,

part of Howe's track and Blaxland's Road. Middleton also marked his route so others could follow him. With the formation of Howe's road and Parson's road, Newcastle was no longer 'lost' in the bush. Convicts were able to easily escape by following these routes.[162]

A new penal settlement farther north was earmarked in 1819. It was to become Port Macquarie. Planning for the new settlement began in 1821. Two years later, it was published in *The Sydney Gazette* that Newcastle was:

> ... to be no longer considered a place of banishment for our own felons; but to be favored with the immunities of the capital.[163]

Despite this, the colonial government continued to operate the Newcastle coalmines using convict labour. In 1830, the collieries were transferred to the Australian Agricultural Company, which also used a convict labour force. Although the penal settlement had relocated to Port Macquarie, a large convict population remained in Newcastle and the government maintained a military detachment in town until the mid-1850s.[164]

An Australian Agricultural Company convict button found in Pitt Row (now Swan Street), Newcastle, c1830. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Reshaping Newcastle

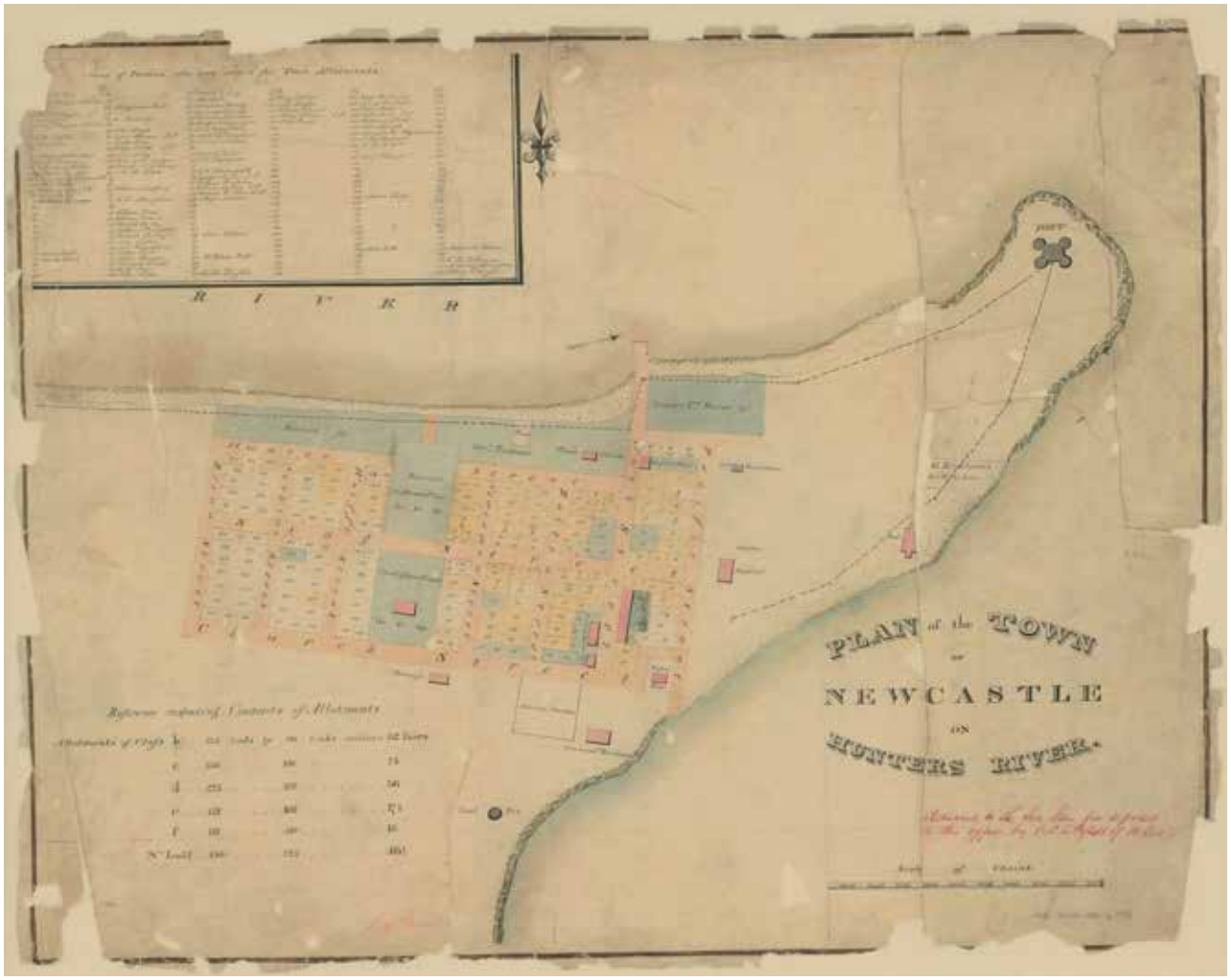
In the 1820s the government created a plan for redevelopment of the Newcastle area in the wake of Commissioner JT Bigge's three reports to the House of Commons. The plan provided for large land grants in the interior to be made available to proprietors with capital to develop the land through convict labour. Newcastle was envisaged as the seaside town of the region and each proprietor was allowed to select an allotment there. The proprietor was provided with a 21-year lease for their allotment for a small annual fee and was encouraged to build a substantial house on their allotment. However, like in Parramatta, it appears most of the buildings in Newcastle prior to 1844 were constructed in timber. Only a few substantial buildings have survived, such as Claremont on Newcomen Street and Toll (formerly Rose) Cottage on Bolton Street.[165]

Surveyor Henry Dangar was responsible for reshaping Newcastle to a regular grid plan. He made provisions for 190 allotments and a church enclave and marketplace in the centre of town.

During the first few decades of the free settlement of Newcastle, industrial development was centred on the eastern portion of town, but over time spread to other parts. Enterprises included George Blaxland's saltworks, Dangar's meat works, Arnott's biscuit factory and the British Iron Foundry. Bakeries, inns, flour mills, cloth factories and other smaller businesses also opened.

Public buildings were also erected during these times and often later repurposed, such as the courthouse at the corner of Bolton and Hunter streets that was finished in 1842. It included a lock-up, which comprised two cells. The courthouse was later used as a post office and for military offices.[166]

A military barracks and parade ground were constructed between 1836 and 1847. The barracks was occupied until 1855 following the departure of the Imperial Forces in 1851. A community-based volunteer regiment was formed at this time and that company rented the Government Domain and used some of the buildings. In 1866 the government established a reformatory for 86 women and girls in the former military barracks.[167]



Henry Dangar's plan of Newcastle, 1823. (Source: NSW State Archives Collection, NRS-4481-3-[7/16036]-St18119G)

Initially Newcastle was intended to become the regional capital of the Hunter, but Morpeth-Maitland became the dominant town on the back of steamships that could travel inland along Coquun (the Hunter River). Newcastle's growth stagnated until the railways developed in the second half of the nineteenth century.[168] From the late 1820s, Newcastle's general population fell below 1,000 people and remained low until the mid-1830s. The number of free people was frequently lower than the number of convicts and former convicts.[169]

Land on the western side of Newcastle was reserved for further expansion but in 1829 the Australian Agricultural Company (AACo) was allowed to occupy 2,000 acres west of Brown Street, for coalmining purposes.[170] This was not a problem as many of the allotments were left undeveloped up until the 1840s.

Most employees of the AACo were convicts. Other convicts at Newcastle worked on government works, including the breakwater. The convicts lived in the gaol, hospital and barracks.[171]

Under the terms of its grant, the AACo could not sell its land. This embargo was lifted in 1853. The AACo then subdivided its land, which was predominantly vacant. The allotments were Thereafter, the AACo would periodically release land for sale.[172]

A town common adjoining the western boundary of the AACo's grant and stretching from Broadmeadow to Wallsend was set aside in 1849. Known as the Newcastle Pasturage Reserve, it was a public stock run but coal seams were found within its boundary. In 1861, a land Act was passed to allow for the reserve to be mined and many miners came to squat there in rough shelters. By 1871, 300 people lived on the reserve and they lobbied the government to obtain legal title.

Eighteen years later, the *Newcastle Pasturage Reserve Act 1889* was passed (comprising approximately 5000 acres). This granted residents the right to purchase the land they lived on while the remainder of the land was allowed to be sold or reserved for public use.[173]

Between 1804 and 1822, approximately 1,600 women were sentenced to serve time at the Newcastle penal settlement. The government considered the women sent here to be so 'incorrigible' that confinement at the newly established Parramatta Female Factory was not a severe enough punishment. King wrote in 1806:

> Was a different plan followed, sickness would arise from the confined manner in which a thousand females must be kept.[174]

In the first year of penal settlement there were 14 women, and this number slowly increased every year until its closure. Not much is known about the labour undertaken by the women during the early years of the penal settlement, although they probably worked as servants. Dr John Turner wrote:

> Female convicts were never more than a tiny minority of the total adult population and though they were occasionally put to picking oakum or sorting shell for lime burning, they were not easily employed and might well be disregarded except for the supporting roles they performed in the settlement.[175]

Between 1816 and 1818, the Newcastle Gaol was constructed on a site overlooking Newcastle Beach that came to be known as Gaol Hill. The gaol was used as a receiving depot for female convicts. They could be imprisoned here, assigned to one of the settlers or employed by the government. Even after closure of the penal settlement, the gaol continued to be used as a depot for female and male convicts awaiting assignment.

The women were provided with one jacket, one petticoat, one shift, one cap, one handkerchief, one pair of stockings and one pair of shoes. They received two-thirds of the male ration, which Morisset mentioned was not enough food for them. Some women resorted to prostitution or cohabitation with a male convict to ensure they had a place to live without needing to part with any of their rations.

The difficulty in finding work for the women at Newcastle continued until at least 1820. In Bigge's 1822 report on the state of the colony, he commented on how Newcastle was unsuccessful in reforming convicts. He noted:

> It is least effectual in its operation on the female convicts, who, from the difficulty of finding proper places of confinement and employment at the Coal River, and from the disproportion of the sexes there, obtain the means of enriching themselves by the connections that they form.[176]

Following the closure of the penal settlement in 1824, many of the women were relocated to the Parramatta Female Factory. Not all left, as many had been assigned to settlers in Newcastle and the Hunter region. Some women had also married locally and remained with their husbands.

By 1828, the Parramatta Female Factory was overcrowded with women and children. Plans were made to adapt part of the Newcastle Gaol to make it suitable for 150 women.

These plans were enacted in 1831, following the Parramatta Female Factory riot of February 1831. By March most women involved were sent to the Newcastle Gaol, where there was a women's yard, separated from the common yard by a wall. From then on, the institution was known as the Newcastle Gaol and the Female Factory. Although the rioters had been sentenced to spend three years at a penal settlement many of these women were assigned to private settlers in the region by September 1831.

Female convicts were also sent to the Newcastle Gaol for other reasons. In 1832, about 40 women from the Parramatta Female Factory were sent to Newcastle so the unmarried men of the region could consider them for marriage. In 1836, 31 women who had recently arrived in Sydney were sent immediately for assignment in Newcastle and were housed temporarily at the Newcastle Female Factory.

Many women sent to Newcastle were young, often in their mid-twenties. They mainly undertook domestic work for families, such as washing, cooking, cleaning and caring for children. Most women had no more than two masters and over half had no convictions or only one minor offence. Many of the women married during their time in the Newcastle region and would often be reassigned to their husband.

‘The most degraded of her sex’

c1760–1800 watercolours of English sentimental scenes. (Source: State Library of NSW, FL994445)

Only a small number of women were repeat offenders, but this is not to say the majority were passive and docile bystanders. Many acts of resistance by the women of the Newcastle Female Factory were documented: among them, absenteeism, retribution, appeals to authority and refusal to take orders from their masters. In 1838, Rose Smith was pulled up before the magistrate for disorderly conduct, after she had told her master:

> if that was the best dinner you can give me you had better send me back to the Gaol.[177]

By 1840, the Newcastle Female Factory was getting overcrowded; it housed 60 women and girls. Some of the women were serving sentences at the Female Factory, while others were admitted for medical treatment or were no longer required for private service and were therefore returned to the government. A journalist commented:

> ... we say it is monstrous to think, that a girl of unblemished moral character, should for a comparatively light offence be compelled to herd for weeks or months with convict prostitutes — yet there is no alternative, the gaol is so limited in its accommodation, that it is utterly impossible to separate them.[178]

The number of women at the Newcastle Gaol was halved by 1842. Local newspapers encouraged private settlers to apply to the government if they required a servant and by 1845 more women had to be bought up from the Parramatta Female Factory to meet demand. In 1848, the Newcastle Gaol was closed, and the inmates were moved to Maitland Gaol.[179]

Newcastle, showing the soil reclaimed by enclosure from the sand by Conrad Martens, 16 May 1855. The gaol is at far right above the beach. (Source: *Colonial sketches: an album of views of Sydney and NSW* / E. West, F. Terry, Conrad Martens et. al., State Library of NSW)

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Blood, sweat and tears

BHP worker stocking furnace, 23 March 1942, by Ray Wolfe for *Pix* magazine. (Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

Blood, sweat and tears

A 'coalopolis' in the nineteenth century, Newcastle developed into the largest coalmining and export port in Australia. BHP and a raft of associated companies transformed Newcastle and the Hunter Valley from a farming and coalmining region to a major centre of twentieth-century industrialisation in Australia. In so doing, they powered the nation's manufacturing efforts during two world wars and beyond. 'Steel City' was made possible by a huge influx of workers from all walks of life from around Australia and the world.

Coalopolis

Coal was unofficially discovered by the Europeans in the area in 1791, and officially in 1796 and 1797, foreshadowing the first export of coal from the colony in 1799.[180] John Thompson wrote to Captain Schanck on 8 September 1799:

> We have also some hopes that coal with which the country abounds will be of much Colonial advantage. A ship lately returned to Bengal loaded with coals, and it gave no small satisfaction to every person interested in the prosperity of the colony to see this first export of it; and I am hopeful from these advantages that New South Wales, however contemptible it may at present appear in the list of our colonies, may yet become an acquisition of value to the mother country.[181]

The first coalmine in Australia was opened at Colliers Point (present Fort Scratchley) in 1801. This was a short-lived venture as the convict outpost was withdrawn in 1802; however, miners remained at Coal River. Coal was obtained by private vessels and, in small quantities, for government use. Miner John Platt, employed by John Palmer, was credited with having discovered a new mine, as reported in May 1803.[182]

When the penal settlement was re-established in 1804, all timber and coals of the district were declared to be the property of the Crown. Soon after, Lieutenant Menzies reported to Governor King on 19 April that 'an excellent mine has been opened'.[183] In the early years, coal was raised by convicts from two sites: beneath the present Fort Scratchley headland (formerly Colliers Point) and at the Government Domain. The output of coal varied from year to year until 1822 when Newcastle ceased to be a penal settlement.

In 1823 Commissioner Bigge recommended that the government mines in the former penal settlement of Newcastle be leased to private interests.

The AACo was formed in London in 1824 to cultivate and improve waste lands of New South Wales. Though it did not include coalmining among its proposed activities, the demand for coal for steamer navigation to India induced the company to negotiate with the British Government to obtain leases of the Newcastle mines as coals from Newcastle '... may be procured at one half the present expense in consequence of the short distance and the want of cargoes for convict and trading vessels.'[184]

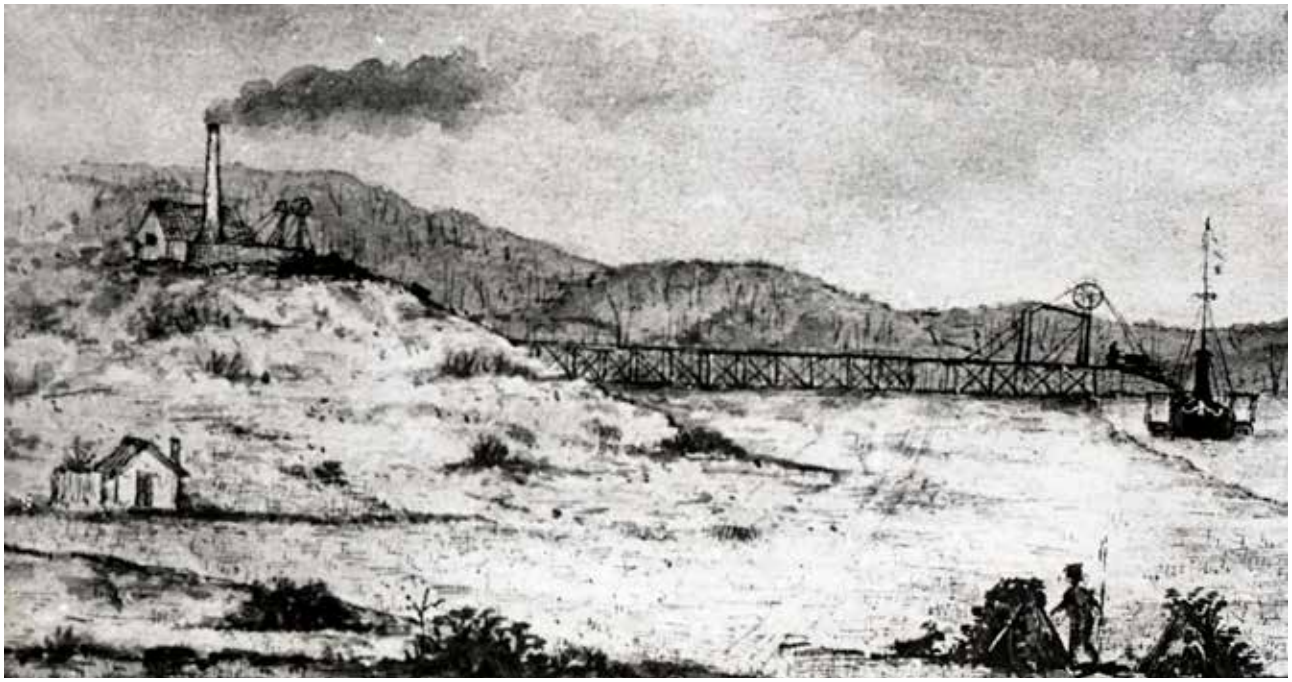
The company was originally assured a 31-year lease of the Newcastle mines in return for 5% of the output from the mines; however, the company charter precluded a lease. In its place the AACo was granted 2,000 acres (which had been reserved for expansion of the town) and the government handed over the Newcastle Coal Works to the company.

The AACo sunk a new pit, set up the engines and erected the inclined plane railway to a new wharf. The new mine was officially opened on 10 December 1831. The new steamboat Sophia Jane (the first of its kind in Australia) took on the first load of coal from the mine, heralding a new era in Newcastle's coal industry and the birth of the coastal steamer service to Sydney.

A labour shortage plagued the industry following the end of convictism, forcing the AACo to sponsor indentured British miners in the following decades. Continued shortages of skilled labour gave miners significant negotiating power for higher wages and better conditions.

Initial output from the AACo mine was small, yielding 7,000 tons in 1832. In 1836 the AACo exported about 12,000 tons, but by 1847 the figure was over 40,000 tons. In this period the AACo opened new pits around the district and sponsored the first British indentured miners.

The company's monopoly was challenged from the 1840s and onwards by the arrival of new coal producers including the Newcastle Wallsend Coal Company, the Scottish Australian Mining Company, the Minmi Collieries, and the Waratah Coal Company.



Coal Works at Newcastle, NSW, a sketch by Isabella Parry, 1833. Depicts the A Pit coal staithes of the AACo. (Source: UON, Living Histories, C919-0909, original sketch held at Cambridge University (Scott Polar Research Institute) as part of the Polar Art Collection, https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/museum/catalogue/article/y77.4.12/)

"When we view the opening of coalworks on so extensive a scale, in combination with the (now certain) addition to the number of our steam vessels, and the probable increase of other machinery, who can venture to say, to what extent these benefits may not ere long be carried?"[185]

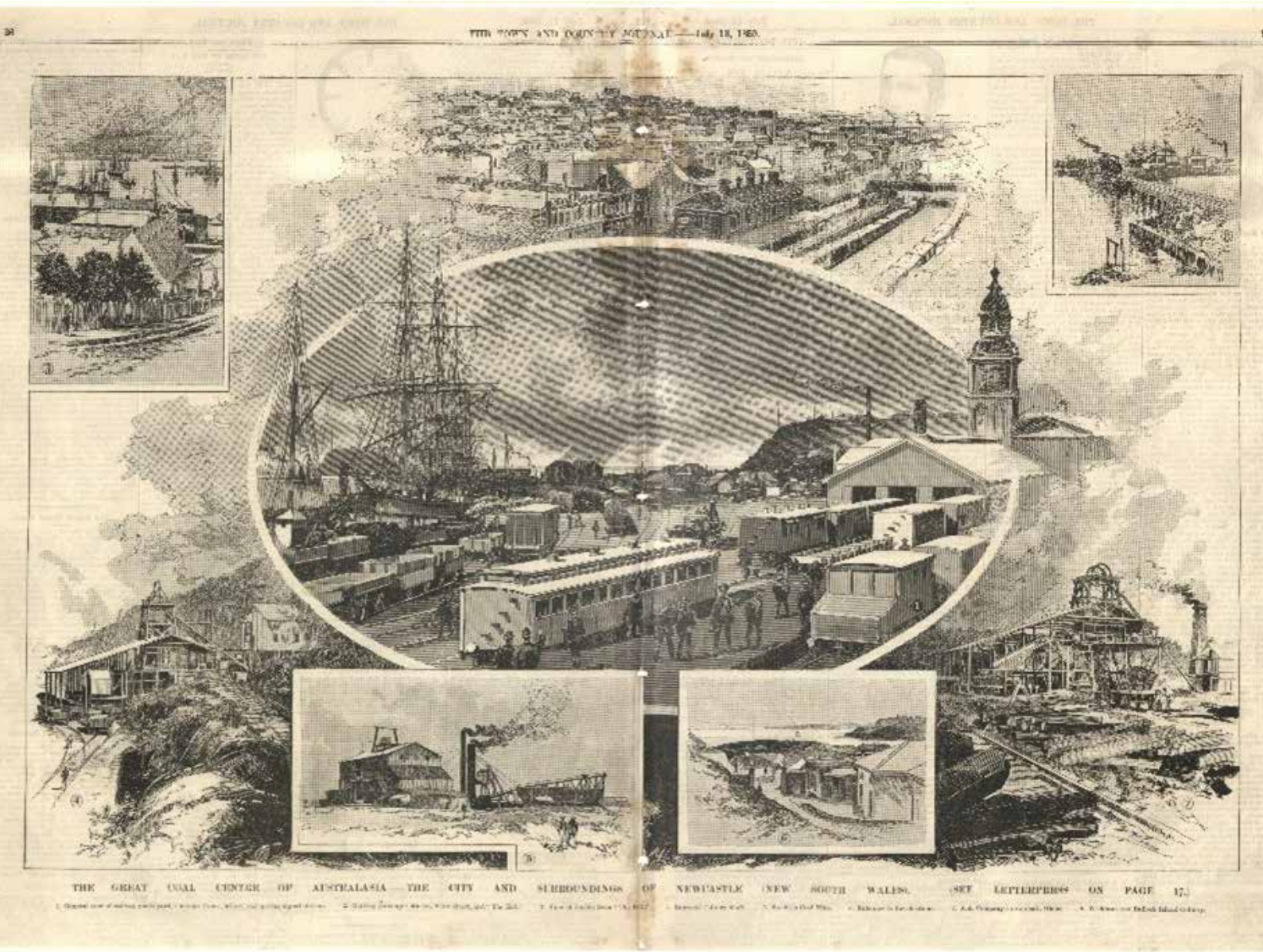
By 1890 the Newcastle district had 40 mines employing 6,873 miners. The AACo had the second largest coal output in the southern hemisphere with three working pits (No 2, Hamilton and Sea Pit) all connected by rail to three staithes (landing stages for loading coal directly into ships' hold) on the company's own wharf. The largest colliery in the district was the Newcastle Wallsend Coal Company, established in 1860, capable at full production of raising half a million tons annually.[186]

By the end of the nineteenth century over 60,000,000 tons of coal were raised in the district and Newcastle was the fifth-largest coal shipping port in the British Empire. The *Sydney Mail* proclaimed in 1900 'the present year has been one of exceptional activity in Newcastle'[187] and predicted the coal output to exceed the previous record set in 1898. Coalmining was the engine of growth in Newcastle in the twentieth century, especially after the establishment of the BHP steelworks and allied factories that were powered by coke from the valley's mines.

Glebe 'A' Pit Colliery, 24 February 1899. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: *UON Hunter Living Histories*, https://www.flickr.com/photos uon/3270567379/)

Hetton Colliery, Bullock Island, with rail trucks loaded with coal, 1875. Photograph by John Henry Harvey. (Source: State Library Victoria, http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/137239)

Miners at Wallsend No 1 tunnel, Wallsend, June 1897. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, ASGN0179-B7)



'The Great Coal Centre of Australasia – The City and Surroundings of Newcastle', published in *The Town and Country Journal*, 13 July 1889. (Source: UON, Living Histories)

City of steel

> Ask steelmen throughout the world about Australian steel and they will tell you that it is of the highest quality. And go into any of the Newcastle works that produce this steel and you will know why.[188]

Between 1915 and 1950 Newcastle became Australia's first large-scale manufacturing centre, nurtured by federal and state governments. The Newcastle industrial hub comprised steel manufacturing, steel fabrication and heavy engineering companies, public utilities and associated supplier support services.[189]

Newcastle's steel industry was established by the Broken Hill Proprietary Co (BHP) when it erected steelworks at Waratah in 1915. General Manager GD Delprat was behind the 1909 plan to pivot BHP from mining to steel manufacturing. After touring America he engaged engineer David Baker to assess the best location for the new steel plant in Australia. Baker recommended Newcastle as it was an existing coal port with good coking coal, suitable land to build the plant, fresh water and an adequate labour force available as well as convenient residential areas for workers nearby. He was also appointed to build the steelworks, manage its start-up and be plant manager.

Preparatory work on the 264-acre (106.8-ha) Port Waratah site commenced in January 1913. Almost simultaneously the NSW Government opened the Walsh Island State Dockyard and Engineering Works. The NSW Government facilitated the success of both of these endeavours by dredging the harbour to increase the capacity of the port for larger and heavier shipping.

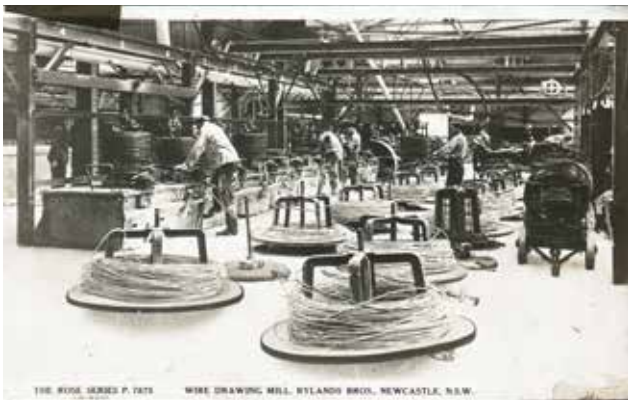
Site works, dredging and construction of the steelworks continued through 1914 with upwards of 1000 men labouring on site. The BHP steel plant was completed in 1915 and officially opened on 2 June by the Governor-General of Australia. By 1920 the plant employed 4600 men, increasing to over 5000 within 12 months.

Group of workers, BHP steelworks, undated. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, Bill Ruddick, Ruddick_bhparchives_005)

A Goninan & Co Limited, Wickham, on 21 April 1906. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3307233505/)

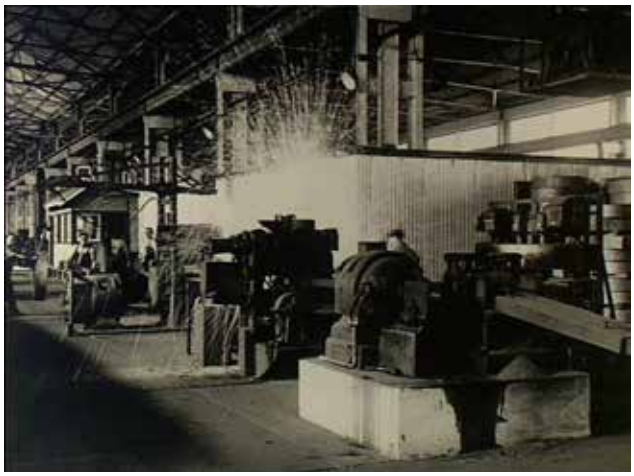
Related steel fabrication companies joined BHP at Newcastle during the next few years, boosted by wartime shortages and a growing demand for goods. By 1921 Newcastle was the home of Commonwealth Steel Products Company, which manufactured forged steel products; Rylands Bros, which manufactured wire products; John Lysaght (Australia) Ltd, which manufactured flat steel sheet and corrugated iron products; and the Austral Nail Company, which manufactured wire and wire products.

On arrival at Stewarts & Lloyds Pty Ltd tube mills from BHP steelworks, coils of strip steel known as 'skelp' are brought end to end and welded. Interior of the factory showing the operation in progress, circa June 1942. Photograph by Clifford Bottomley. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 013136)



Rose Series postcard of wire drawing mill, Rylands Bros, Newcastle, 1910s. (Source: UON, Living Histories, A5194-025.5)

Newcastle plant of John Lysaght (Australia), pre-1929. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection, 072_000004)



On arrival at Stewarts and Lloyds Pty Ltd tube mills from BHP Steel Works, coils of strip steel known as 'skelp' are brought to end and welded. Interior of the factory showing the operation in progress, about June 1942. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 013136)

The development of the Newcastle industrial centre was fostered by organisational changes within BHP, government protection through tariffs and the introduction of improved technologies. These factors combined to lower the manufacturing cost of steel manufacture and improve the Australian industry's competitive position.[190]

Steel production continued during the Great Depression, albeit at lower levels. It reached its lowest point of 179,312 tons in May 1932. The industry rebounded after the Depression with steel production rising to 1,000,000 tons by 1939. Steel tube manufacturer Stewarts & Lloyds began operations in Newcastle in 1934 while each of the other steel fabricators increased production of their products. In 1935 the industrial hub comprised BHP steelworks, its wholly owned subsidiaries (BHP Shipping, BHP Stevedoring, BHP By-Products and BHP Collieries), subsidiaries (Rylands Bros. (Aust), Australian Wire Rope Works, and Commonwealth Steel Co), associated firms (Lysaght Ltd, Stewarts & Lloyds (Aust) Ltd), heavy engineers (Goninan, Morison and Bearby, Cardiff Railway Workshops) and the public utilities (Port of Newcastle, Hunter Water and Supply Board, Newcastle Electricity Supply Council Administration otherwise known as NESCA, and Technical Education).

Steel production ramped up in Newcastle ahead of World War II, supported by public utilities such as electricity generation and water supply. Power for the manufacturing industries was supplied from Zaara Street Power Station, which grew by 80% by the end of the 1930s.

Stacking shells prior to dispatch, BHP, Newcastle, 8 February 1940. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 000654)

Fortress Newcastle

On the eve of World War II, Newcastle industry was well placed to manufacture and develop a wide range of steel products required for wartime. Newcastle and the Hunter region were deemed of high strategic importance and critical to Australia's wartime efforts, hence the term 'Fortress Newcastle'.

The Newcastle district was Australia's major industrial production hub for manufacturing and supply before and during World War II. A shell attack by a Japanese submarine on 8 June 1942 raised fears for Australia's manufacturing war effort centred on Newcastle. For this reason, a military operation known as Fortress Newcastle secured Newcastle's vital wartime manufacturing hub with defence installations along the coastline and across the region including four fixed coastal defence forts, two major air bases and four army accommodation and training camps.[191]

The war drove innovations in technology including 42 wartime products manufactured for the first time in Australia including armour plate steel and tungsten carbide tools.

Newcastle was heavily fortified during the war and tens of thousands of servicemen and women were stationed in the region.

Women were essential to Fortress Newcastle, volunteering in droves for a range of defensive and intelligence roles through the Australian Women's Army Services (AWAS) and Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF).[192]

At the Commonwealth Steelworks, a subsidiary of BHP, employees prepare a bomb for air testing, about January 1940. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 000682)

'Before the war, this girl [sic] was a shop assistant. Now, after a short period of training, she is operating a lathe in a munitions factory. This picture shows her at work, turning the copper driving band on 20-pounder anti-tank shots. She has been identified as Elsie Myra (Judy) Richards of Newcastle, NSW.' Photograph by Clifford Bottomley, 4 September 1942. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 03178)

Women munitions workers stamping identification ciphers onto 20 pounder anti-tank shot, Newcastle, 4 September 1942. Photograph by Clifford Bottomley. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 013179)

During the war, labour shortages were filled by women recruited to work alongside men in the steel industry. BHP, Lysaght and Australian Wire Rope Works applied in 1942 to employ women in their plants. The following year a statewide conference of female delegates of the Federated Ironworkers' Association and Munition Workers' Union held in Sydney was attended by 26 delegates from Newcastle who represented almost 1300 female workers employed in the heavy and war industries in Newcastle and district.[193] The total number of women employed in the steel industry at Newcastle between 1942 and 1945 was approximately 2000.[194]

The last whistle

After the war Australia's steel production dropped to 700,000 tons, resulting from the worldwide postwar shortage of plant coupled with a major industrial strike and coal rationing. Production did not return to pre-war levels until 1950 and the Newcastle Steelworks ramped up modernisation and expansion to meet the postwar demand. In the 1960s the BHP steelworks employed between 12,000 and 16,000 people and BHP was the largest single employer in Australia, apart from the public sector.

Global steel demand collapsed in the early 1980s. This, combined with competition from much larger integrated steelworks overseas, particularly in Asia, reduced the profitability of the Newcastle steelworks. In 1983 BHP commenced a restructuring plan. The company decommissioned more than half of its Australian blast furnaces (across three plants, including Newcastle), and started to reduce the workforce.

In 1997, BHP announced that it would close its Newcastle steelworks in 1999. BHP progressively reduced its staff from the date of that announcement until mid-1999 when the steelworks was to finally shut its doors.

The Rod Mill, Bar Mill, and the factory buildings, in conjunction with Stewarts & Lloyds, Rylands Bros and the Australian Wire Rope Works were all amalgamated as OneSteel.

The day the BHP steelworks closed

Between 1,500 and 1,800 workers lost their jobs and walked out of the steelworks on 30 September 1999, marking the end of 84 years of operation. The Last Day Marchout was captured by fitter machinist Bill Ruddick who worked at the BHP steelworks until the day the site closed. These images and more are held in the UON Hunter Living Histories.

There was fear, there was excitement, there was trepidation, there was worry, anger and hate. All the emotions were there on that day. I seen [sic] grown men cry. When we walked out the gate I saw men propped up by other men. Men were walking out with their heads up, heads held high but broken inside. People who had been there all of their lives just didn't know what they were going to do. Even on the last day when we were marching out, I witnessed grown men crying.

– Aubrey Brooks, shop foreman, employed 38 years[197]

Well it's a sad day. They've reached into the hearts of the town and ripped them out.

– Unnamed BHP worker[198]

This was a boardroom betrayal of working class Australia.

– Bob Carr, NSW premier[199]

Nobody should pretend that the governments can intervene and reverse commercial decisions of that kind.

– John Howard, Australian prime minister[200]

In my view we are facing up to what needs to be done to have a viable business in Newcastle in the future.

– Unnamed BHP worker[201]

It's a bad day. It's a bad day, but oh well, that's the end of it.

–Kev Legg, BHP worker[202]

For me it's the break-up of a very large family.

– Dano Rebronja, BHP worker[203]

It's going to be tough for everybody. There's 12% unemployment in Newcastle.

– Carol Knox, BHP Human Resources[204]

If we laugh we don't cry, so we thought that might be a good way to go out.

– Steven Skelton, BHP worker[205]

Kuueeyung, a traditional bark canoe made in a traditional style from a sheet of bark folded and tied at both ends with plant-fibre string. The box (the front) is folded tightly to a point; the stern (the rear) has looser folds. The canoe was made on site at Newcastle Museum by Wylaa Buuranliyn (Luke Russell, Scott Luschwits, Shaun Stowe, Shannon Thrift). (Source: Newcastle Museum)

Shipbuilding

The original boatbuilders of the Newcastle region were the Traditional Custodians. They crafted Kuueeyung (canoes) using the bark from trees, ideally the Punnah (stringybark), Swamp She-oak (*Casuarina glauca*) or Bangalay (*Eucalyptus botryoides*). The bark canoes were used to ply the waters of the harbour, lake and rivers in Country, to catch fish and to harvest food. Rev Threlkeld witnessed Aboriginal people constructing bark canoes, writing: 'a fire is made upon the bark and being heated the steam of the sap softens it so as they can crumple up each end like a folded fan...'[206]

The colonists' early foray into shipbuilding in the Newcastle area experienced mixed results. From primitive beginnings in 1819, shipyards appeared in the harbour at Stockton and Carrington from the 1830s; however, shipbuilding was never a major industry nor big employer in the district in the nineteenth century.

The construction of the dockyard and engineering works at Walsh Island in 1913 by the NSW Government heralded a new era in shipbuilding and Newcastle's industrial progress. Opening in 1914, the dockyard had become the second largest employer in the district by the early 1920s, with upwards of 2500 workers at its peak. However, successive years of operating at a loss led to its eventual closure in 1933. In the intervening period the dockyard was converted to a general engineering workshop.

During its years of operation 47 vessels and a 15,000-ton floating dock were constructed at the dockyard. The engineering works fabricated bolts and castings, completed steel fabrication and assembled carriages and trams for the NSW Government.

The NSW Government revived the shipbuilding capability of New South Wales by re-establishing a State dockyard but relocating the facilities and equipment to Dyke Point. The floating dock was towed down river to Dyke Point and Carrington. During the war years 600 ships were repaired at the new works and completed 24 vessels of varying size. The State dockyard closed its doors in March 1987, having built many ships and repaired thousands of vessels. At its peak the dockyard employed over 2,000 workers including migrants, women and Aboriginal people.

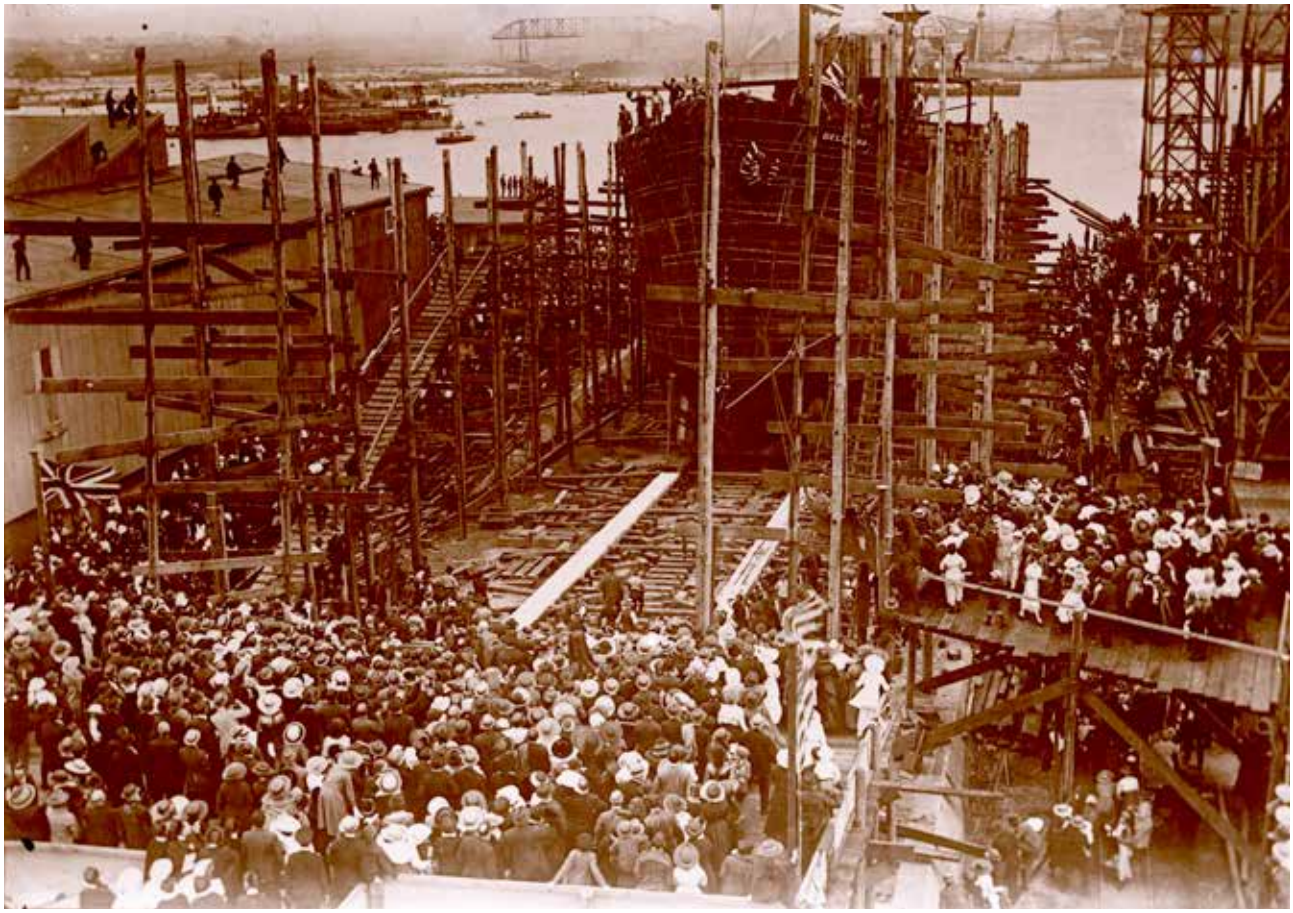
The migrants came after the war. The workforce skills of my part of the world were always short, so the dockyard went over to England and they bought out English migrants, boilermakers, joiners, fitters, plumbers ... The Italians came after the war and all the other different nationalities [and] then there was Aboriginals worked over at the dockyard. The Sands brothers was one example, there's quite a few other ones ... There was a girl painter was put on ... and there were women employed in the office ... in the canteen. (John Aubin, interviewed by Mark Perriman, 1988)

Made in Newcastle

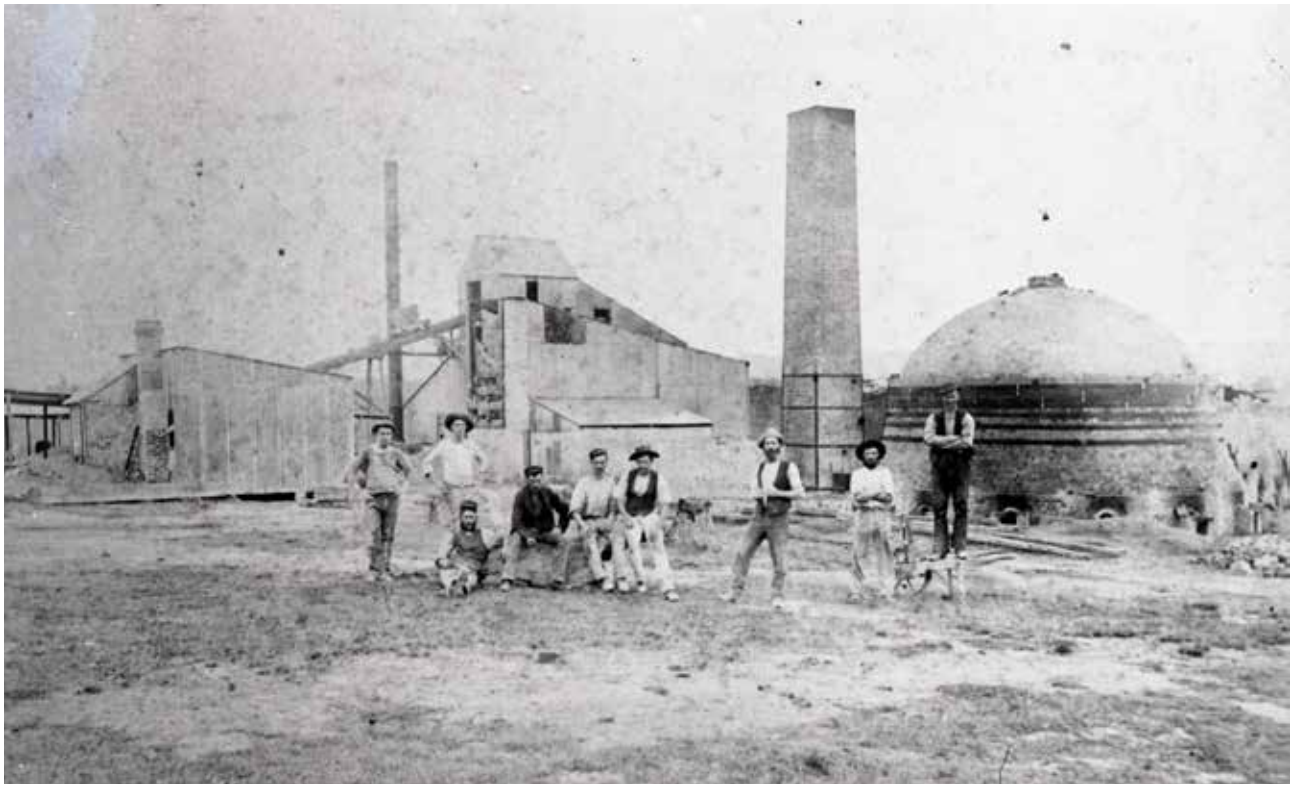
Newcastle's comparative isolation in the nineteenth century, coupled with the ready availability of coal, clay, fresh water and developing port and railway facilities, helped a raft of local industrial enterprises develop, albeit with mixed success. These included brickworks and potteries, a soap and candle factory, a cloth factory, boatbuilding establishments, flour milling and food processing.

One of the most successful enterprises from the nineteenth century was Hughes and Drury's Newcastle and Burwood Fireclay and Brickworks, established in 1866 near present-day The Junction. Though not the only pottery located in the district, it came to dominate the colonial market in the second half of the nineteenth century. The company supplied firebricks, tiles and drainpipes to many industries and builders in Newcastle, Sydney and north of Newcastle. After abandoning production of firebricks, the company continued to manufacture drainpipes in the Newcastle district until its closure in the early 1980s.[207]

Another entrepreneur to make a success of his business in the district was Charles Upfold, who relocated his Sydney Soap and Candle Company's plant and machinery from Johnstons Bay, Sydney, to the site of its branch works at Wickham in 1882. Three years later the company built an extensive new factory on a 23-acre (9 ha) site at Calcina Flat, North Waratah, opening in February 1886. By 1895 the factory employed over 500 people. Later renamed J Kitchen and Sons, the business effectively ending manufacture of its products in the district in 1934 when its land at Newcastle was sold to BHP, though it maintained a presence after this date.



Launching of steamer *Delungra* at Walsh Island, 25 March 1919. (Source: The Rodoni Archives, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/16786792470/)



Sydney Soap and Candle Company, undated. (Source: Mrs Faulkner, UON, Living Histories)

The industrialisation of the Greater Newcastle area in the twentieth century supported a broad range of manufacturing enterprises apart from coalmining, steel manufacture and related industries. Electric Lamp Manufacturers (Australia) Ltd (ELMA) was established in 1930 (finalised in 1931) by the amalgamation of the world's largest lightbulb manufacturers to take over the new incandescent lightbulb factory under construction by the Australian General Electric Company Ltd in Clyde Street, Hamilton. This was a new industry in Australia with production commencing in April 1931. By 1933 the factory employed 164 people, which was expected to increase to closer to 400 when the plant reached capacity. At its peak, however, the plant employed over 1,000 workers.[208] Cheaper imports, declining market share, financial losses and falling world prices led to the closure of the ELMA factory in 2002.

Food processing became an important industry in the district from the late nineteenth century, providing employment and locally grown and made produce. Several food producers in the region became household names including Arnott's, Oak Dairy, YY Cordials and John Bull.

Workers at ELMA Group factory, 1961–1969. (Source: Electric Lamp Manufacturers (Australia) Pty Ltd (ELMA), UON Hunter Living Histories, A8519_(viii)_Elma_Group)

William Arnott opened a bakery at Maitland in about 1856 but relocated to Newcastle in 1865. He expanded his business premises in Melville Street, Cooks Hill in 1875 under the name William Arnott's Steam Biscuit Factory. He shipped biscuits to Sydney, initially by ship then by road, and his products were found throughout the colony. In 1889 the factory contained nine ovens and employed

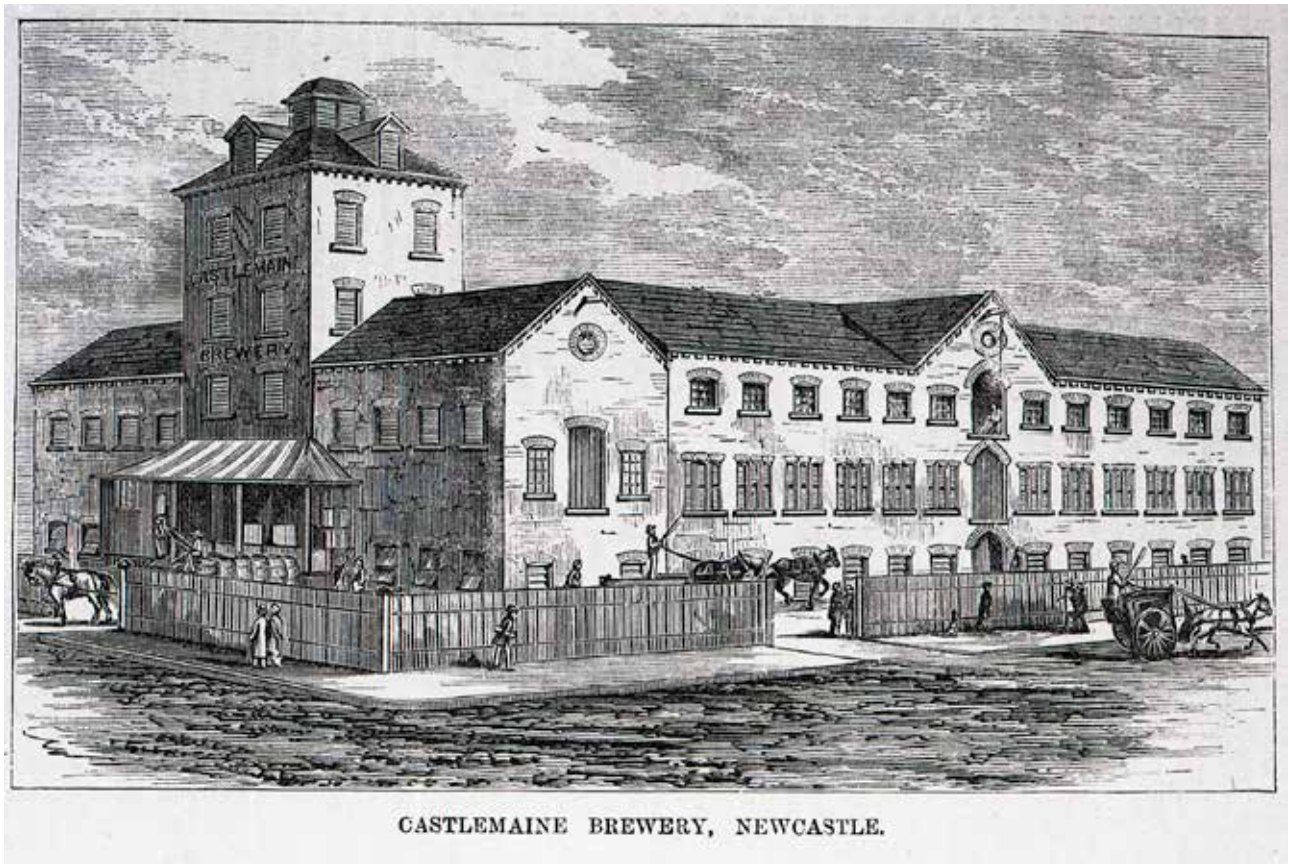
Arnotts Steam Biscuit Factory, undated. (Source: Damaris Bairstow, UON Hunter Living Histories, C919-0773)

Arnotts Biscuits advertisement, undated. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, A5194-010.6)

300 people. The number of employees grew steadily throughout the next decade reaching 700 in 1904. By 1892 the range of biscuits exceeded 80 varieties.[209] He established a new main factory in Sydney (Homebush) in 1907–1908. The Newcastle factory was closed in about 1933 (demolished in 1949) and production moved to Sydney. The property was sold to a timber merchant in 1935.

JA Bull and Co Ltd moved the whole of its production of the John Bull Pure Food Products from Sydney to Newcastle to a mill in Military Road, Newcastle, in about 1924. Production ceased locally and the main factory was established in Sydney.

Beer and cordials were produced in the Newcastle district in small quantities for local customers prior to the development of large-scale production concentrated the industry in the hands of a few large companies. For instance, the NSW Aerated Waters Pty Ltd was taken over by Schweppes while Castlemaine Brewery was absorbed by Tooth & Co in 1921. Prendergast, Woods & Co established a brewery in Hunter Street, which in 1887 became Castlemaine & Wood Bros & Co Ltd. Brewing at the site continued until 1931 when it closed. Later, from 1988 to 2000, the brewery was the home of Newcastle Museum.



Castlemaine Brewery. (Source: *Illustrated Sydney News*, 13 July 1878, John Turner Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

In 1950, the National Bottling Company Newcastle Pty Ltd acquired the business of AF Moore's in Darby Street, Newcastle, which had been established in 1867. YY Cordial factory was started by George Edward Redman who opened a cordial factory in Blane (later Hunter) Street, Newcastle, in 1862, later moving to larger premises in Newcomen Street, and Wickham. The business was absorbed in 1896 by the NSW Aerated Waters Pty Ltd. Going strong in the postwar period, NSW Aerated Waters built a new factory at Orlando Road, Lambton, in 1954, replacing its two factories in Hunter Street, Newcastle, and Wallsend respectively. Production ceased in the 1980s, part of a broader local phenomenon as the local manufacture of beer and soft drinks had largely ceased by this time and the remaining companies had become distributors of product made outside the region.

Locals were well-catered to in respect of baked goods, notably bread. The Store (the Newcastle and Suburban Co-operative Society) owned the biggest bakery in Newcastle (and at one time the biggest in Australia). The first bakehouse was built in 1908 and produced about

Redman's Cordial Manufactory, Wallsend, c1880s, photographed by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection, Hunter Photo bank 0001 003240)

4,000 loaves of bread each week, increasing to 20,000 loaves per week in 1923. A new modern and state-of-the-art factory opened in 1939 in Clyde Street, Hamilton, that was capable of producing 100,000 loaves a week. The Store had also established a separate pastry bakehouse in 1914.

By the mid-2010s Newcastle's industrial landscape had changed and the focus of labour and production veered towards the glass manufacturing, home building, and automotive industries.

Chinese market gardens

Newcastle was home to a small but vibrant community of Chinese market gardeners and grocers in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Newcastle's Chinese population originally clustered near Watt Street in Newcastle East.

By 1901 about 300 Chinese people lived in the city and suburbs, generally occupied as hawkers, market gardeners and storekeepers, though two worked as cabinetmakers and upholsterers. The Chinese community was concentrated in Watt and King streets, Devonshire Street, Auckland Street, Dawson Street (west of the gasworks), Kemp Street (The Junction) and Lower Church Street. Many of the gardens were in the vicinity of the gasworks.

The concentration of Chinese residents in the Newcastle LGA declined in the twentieth century. The bulk of Chinese residents were engaged in gardening or hawking. Garden plots once proliferated at places like Cooks Hill, Waratah and Hamilton before the spread of suburbia. By the end of the 1930s just a handful of Chinese market gardeners worked on the outskirts of the district. Although rare, there remained a handful of Chinese market gardens in the area in the 1930s and 1940s such as one close to the administrative offices of Stewarts & Lloyds.

Chinese market gardener at Ralph Snowball's home in Clarence Road, New Lambton, September 1886. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3964534583/)

Tong Sang of Bull Street, Mayfield, collecting a bunch of soup vegetables in his garden. (Source: *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 16 May 1946, p 1)

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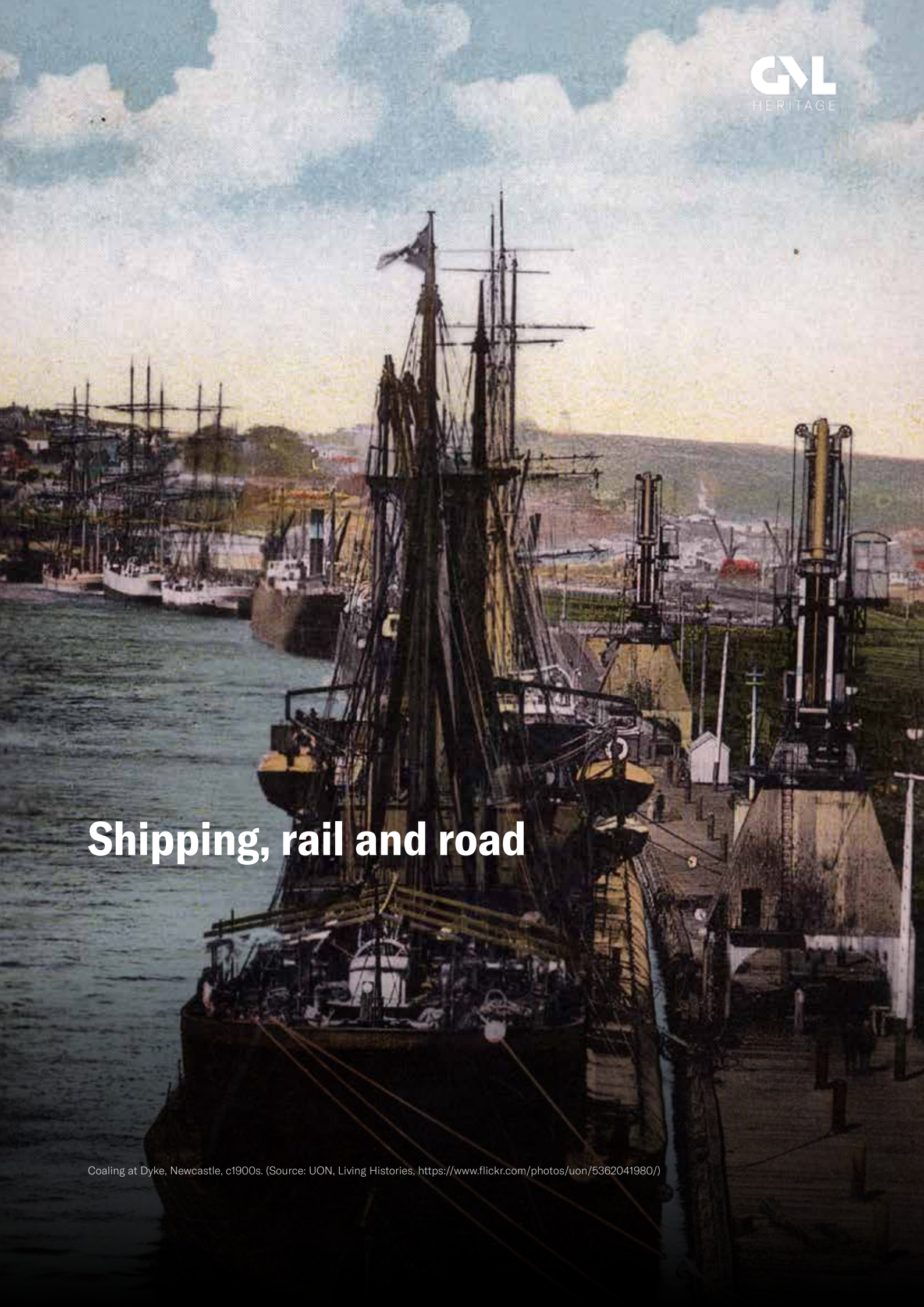


Shipping, rail and road

Coaling at Dyke, Newcastle, c1900s. (Source: UON, Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/5362041980/)

Shipping, rail and road

Newcastle evolved from penal colony to coal port, industrial powerhouse, and now a modern, vibrant city (Australia's seventh-largest city), shaped by shipping, rail and road. Transport was vital to Newcastle's transformation in the industrial age, providing links from mines and factories to local, state and international markets. Transportation also facilitated the rapid suburbanisation of Newcastle in the 1900s with an emphasis on passenger travel within the district and to Sydney and beyond.

By oar, sail and steam

> A visit to Newcastle, the great centre of the coal trade of New South Wales, impresses the stranger by the magnitude and extent of the various works carried on the harbour, crowded with shipping, from the stately ocean-going mail boat to the coasting schooner, being seen loading or laying in the stream awaiting for departure.[211]

Prior to the British arrival, local Aboriginal people had a canoe culture and the waters of Coquun (the Hunter River) were their highways, used for transport, hunting and fishing. The Traditional Custodians made their canoes, called Kuueeyung, from the bark of the Punnah, Stringybark tree. Both men and women were extremely skilled on the water. Ensign Francis Barrallier made the following observation in 1802:

> I have seen them, to Escape faster, quit their Kenous [sic] and swim, tho I was a mile distant with my boat & only had 2 Soldiers with me. - They navigate their Skiffs along the river by a long pole, & make them go well against the Stream.[212]

Europeans had first reached Newcastle by water. It was isolated from Sydney Cove by distance and difficult terrain including dense bushland and precipitous cliffs.

Coquun (the Hunter River) was 'discovered' by Lieutenant John Shortland in September 1797, as he recounted to his father in Sydney Cove one year later:

> My Dear Father, About a twelvemonth since I went on an expedition in the Governor's whaleboat as far as Port Stephens, which lies 100 miles to the northward of this place. In my passage down I discovered a very fine coal river, which I named after Governor Hunter. The enclosed I send you, being an eye-sketch which I took the little time I was there. Vessels from 60 to 250 tons may load there with great ease, and completely landlocked. I dare say, in a little time, this river will be a great acquisition to this settlement. The short time I remained at this river we had rain, which prevented my doing so much as I otherwise should.[213]

This was not, however, the first arrival by Europeans; some escaped convicts may have arrived by sea in 1791, and in 1796 fishermen brought back samples of coal from an unnamed river where they found shelter. The first export of coal from 'Coal River' (the Hunter River) took place in late 1799 on a vessel bound for Bengal.

A short-lived penal settlement was established at Newcastle in 1801 by Acting-Governor King for the purpose of 'procur[ing] coals, timber and lime for the service of Government'.[214] He reported to the Duke of Portland late in 1801 (dispatched in 1803) that further shipments of 100 tons were sent respectively to Bengal on the *Cornwallis and Hunter* and 'a brig belonging to an individual is loaded with 100 tons, bound to the Cape of Good Hope'.[215] Newcastle's dependence on sea transport for supplies was one of the factors contributing to the abandonment of the settlement six months later.

The convict settlement was re-established in March 1804 under Lieutenant Menzies. The contingent, including 34 Irish convicts, departed Sydney on the *Lady Nelson* and two other vessels on 29 March. Simultaneously Governor King enacted regulations for shipping and cargo for the port, including (but not limited to):

> 2nd No private boat or vessel is to go the Coal Harbour or Hunter's River without a specific license from the Governor's Secretary, stating the purpose of such voyage ...
>
> 9th No vessel is to leave the harbour between dusk in the evening and daylight.
>
> 10th No boats are to land about the settlement in any other place other than that pointed out by the Commandant.[216]

Coquun (the Hunter River) was a vital transport route.

PS Namoi at Kings Wharf, Newcastle, c1900s. Postcard published by G Giovanardi. (Source: Graeme Andrews Worling Harbour Collection 82541, City of Sydney Archives)

A small fleet of privately owned boats, known as the 'Mosquito Fleet', transported farm produce, goods and people between Morpeth, Newcastle and Sydney. The first sailing packet to travel between Sydney and Newcastle was the cutter *Eclipse* but this was soon replaced by a weekly overnight trip on the *Lord Liverpool*. Coastal paddle steamers such as the PS Namoi and PS Newcastle, conveying passengers and freight by the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company, commenced service between Sydney and Newcastle in 1883 and 1884 respectively. The paddle steamers ceased service in the 1920s.

Places like Stockton, Mosquito Island, Ash Island and Hexham were initially serviced by punts operated by hand. The Mosquito Island punt was established in 1894, connecting the island to Port Waratah. John Bernard Duggan, a resident of Mosquito Island from 1916 to 1923, recalled:

> There was an arm strong driven punt across the river which took all the milk carts, butcher carts, general public.[217]

A hand-operated punt service also operated on the river at Hexham, providing residents with access to Newcastle and north to Raymond Terrace.

Sitting on the northern side of the harbour, Stockton, Newcastle's first industrial suburb, was connected to the town centre from 1853 by a ferry service, initially a rowing boat operated by Hugh Boyce. In 1869 he introduced a steam ferry across the harbour, the first of many, by himself and other operators. The vehicular ferry Mildred commenced the Stockton-Newcastle service in 1916 operated by the Public Service Department. From 1930 the service was taken over by the Main Roads Board and operated until 1972 when Stockton Bridge was officially opened.

Recognising the growing importance of Newcastle for its rich resources of timber, coal, lime and salt, successive governments began to transform the estuary of Coquun (the Hunter River) from a series of mudflats and shallow channels to a major deepwater trading port. Harbour works and reclamation started in the convict era.

Punt across Coquun (the Hunter River) at Hexham on 21 June 1894. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3271417580/)

Mosquito Island punt, 1894. Photographed by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3309675603/)

The first of these works, commenced in 1818, was the construction of Macquarie Pier to link Nobbys Head to the mainland. Construction continued until early 1823 when the project was suspended. Yet work recommenced in about 1835 and the breakwater was completed in 1846. During the mid-1840s a channel was dredged through the mudflats along the river to assist steamer transit between Newcastle and Morpeth.

Double-decker bus and cars on the vehicular ferry *Koondooloo* on the Newcastle–Stockton route, 18 September 1971. Photograph by John Ward. (Source: John Ward Transportation Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, 09039_180971)

A coaly seaport

Newcastle's increasing coal trade in the 1850s was the impetus behind large-scale harbour improvements designed by Captain Edward Moriarty, engineer for Hunter River improvements (1855–1858). He proposed to regularise and form an unbroken wharf line by building retaining walls, to build a northern breakwater, and to build a retaining wall (The Dyke) with wharves built at Onebygamba (Bullock Island or Carrington) and to deposit ballast to train the river for a wide estuary. Construction of The Dyke and river training walls designed by Moriarty was completed between 1861 and 1874. The Northern Breakwater at Burrabihngarn (Stockton) was completed in 1886 whereas the Macquarie Pier was stabilised by 1872 and extended to Big Ben reef by 1883; 60-ton concrete blocks were used to finally stabilise the breakwater in 1950.

Plan No. 5, Harbour of Newcastle NSW, 1858. (Source: 'On the Coalfield of New South Wales' by HT Plews, reproduced in UON Hunter Living Histories)

The *Illustrated Sydney News* reported in November 1871:

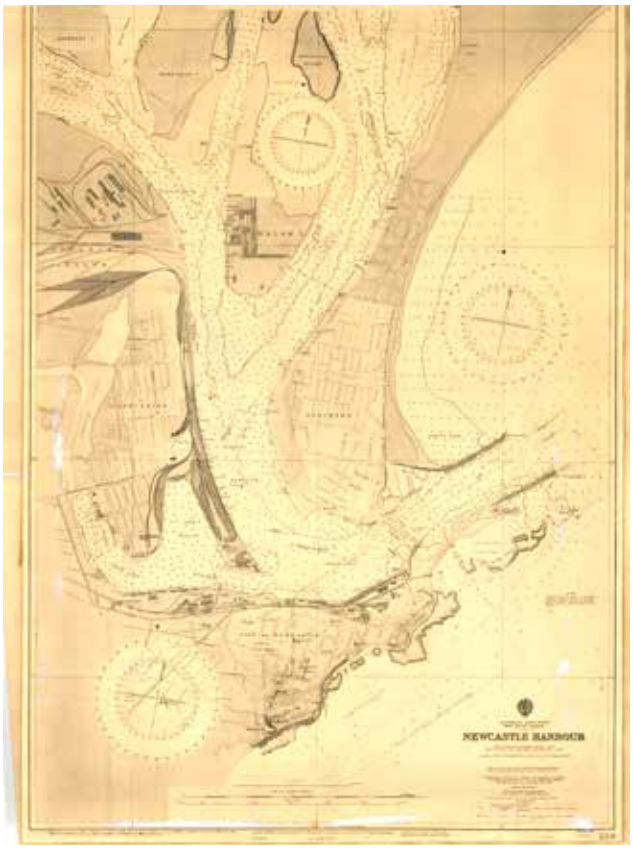
> Newcastle, whose trade is second only to that of Sydney, owes its commercial importance, if not its existence as a large shipping port, in no small measure to the works which have been completed there. There are at present two breakwaters in course of construction at Newcastle—one about 2000 feet long, connecting the main land with Nobby Island, a high rook at the southern entrance to the port and the site of the light house, called the southern break water; the other, the northern breakwater, extends from the North Head, in the direction of the River Hunter, out into the ocean.[218]

In 1884 the *Newcastle city and country almanac & directory* described the extensive works completed at Onebygamba (Bullock Island) including a government railway line connected with Wickham, a bridge connected to Newcastle for vehicle and foot traffic, roads, a hydraulic engine house to power several cranes to load coal onto ships. It also noted:

> An extensive wharf has been erected on the eastern side of the island, about a mile in length, and capable of berthing about twenty large vessels at one time. To facilitate the export of coal, branch railway lines are being extended to each extremity of the wharf.
>
> A boat harbour has lately been completed. It is a great accommodation for the public, and more especially for the shipping lying at the above wharf.
>
> ... At the south end of the island there is a commodious sheet of water, reserved for dock purposes, which, when completed, will prove a grand acquisition to the harbour.[219]

The extensive harbour improvements undertaken in the second half of the nineteenth century meant that by 1900 the Port of Newcastle was capable of handling 4,000 ships a year. The Official Year Book of NSW in 1904–05 reported 56 steamers of 5,493 tons and 49 sailing vessels registered in the books of the Navigation Department as belonging to the Port of Newcastle, their net tonnage being 6,503.[220]

The facilities of the Port of Newcastle have been subject to continuous adaptation in the twentieth century to accommodate the larger and faster ships carrying coals, steel, wool and wheat. By 1954 the port had large wool stores and grain elevators, electric and hydraulic cranes, and a floating dock at the State dockyard to handle major repairs to all types of vessels.



Colonial government survey of Newcastle Harbour by JF Parry, November 1916. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, M4819)

The Port of Newcastle is currently the largest deepwater port on the east coast of Australia. In 2023 the Port of Newcastle received 2,149 vessel visits and there were 4,426 vessel movements; 147,765,054 tons of commodities, predominantly coal, were exported from the harbour.[221]

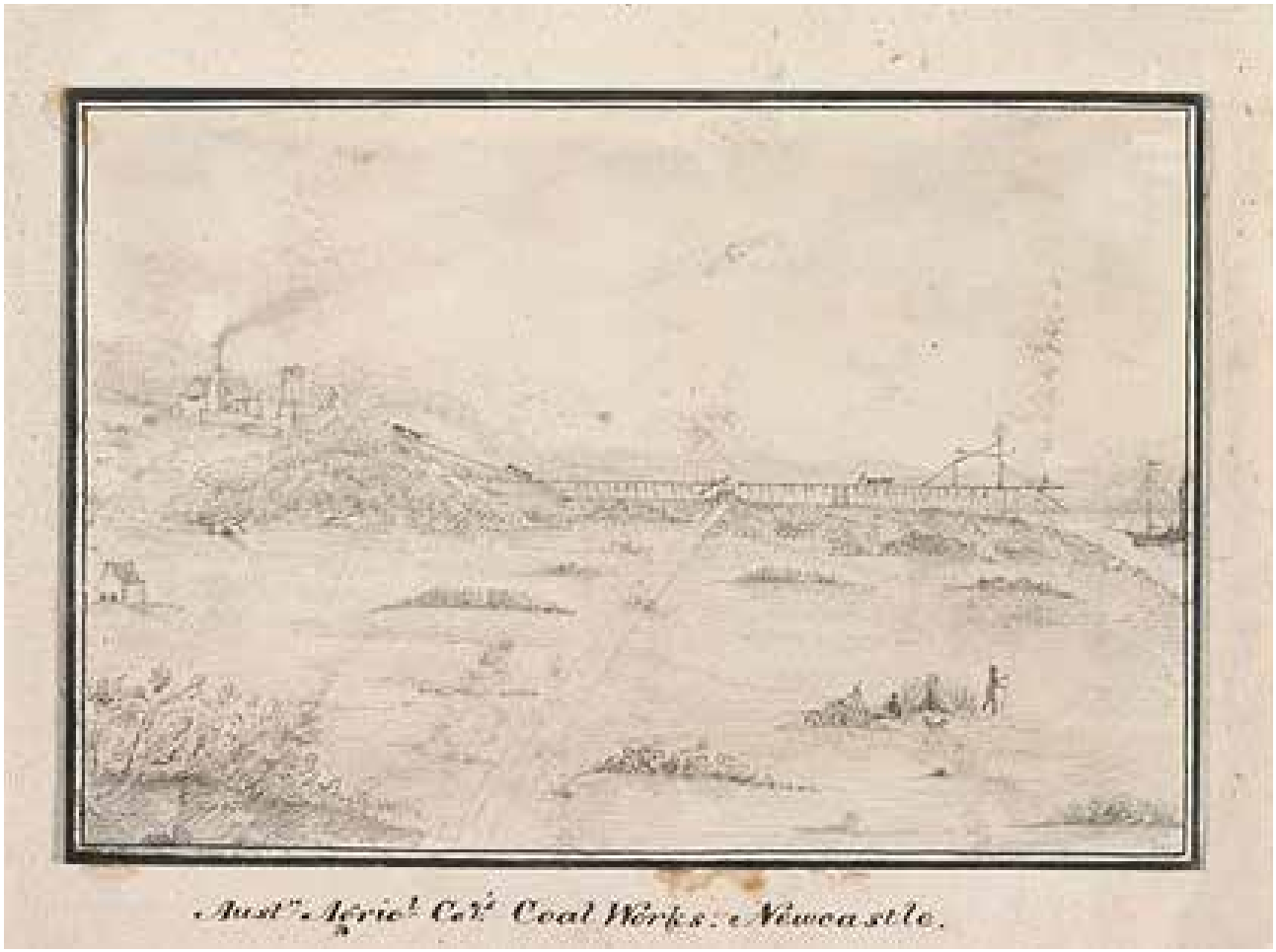
Arteries of steel

Australia's first railway was built in Newcastle in 1831 by the AACo after it secured 2,000 acres (809.337 ha) including exclusive rights to mine coal in Newcastle. The company opened a new mine on 10 December 1831 ('A' Pit) and erected an inclined plane railway to the harbour where it built a wharf and coal loading staithe. The 'A' Pit line was Australia's first railway. New pits were progressively established on the AACo landholding at Hamilton and Merewether and a network of railway lines transported coal to the port.

The government ended the AACo's mining monopoly in 1847. This did not immediately result in the opening of new collieries in the region. The government was forced to intervene in 1849, giving Dr James Mitchell of the Burwood Colliery permission to erect a wharf and coal chutes on the waterfront at Newcastle. The following year the government passed its first private Act of Parliament, *Burwood and Newcastle Tramroad Act 1850*, which allowed Mitchell to carry coal through AACo land.

New coal companies constructed private colliery railways from the mid-1850s, including from Minmi in 1856, Waratah in 1856, Wallsend in 1859, Plattsburg in 1861, Lambton in 1863 and New Lambton in 1867.

The construction of the Great Northern Railway was a significant factor in the growth of the coal industry and associated industries in Newcastle. In 1853 the Hunter River Railway Company was created by an Act of Parliament to build a railway line between Newcastle and Maitland, and then farther into the Hunter Valley. The company chose Honeysuckle Point for the site of the terminus to avoid the tramways of the Burwood mines and the timber trestle bridge across Blane Street belonging to the AACo. Construction of the railway line commenced in 1854 but the company ran into financial difficulties and all of its works, assets and liabilities were taken over by the government. The Sydney Railway



Sketch of the Australian Agricultural Company's coal works, Newcastle, 1833. Attributed to JC White. (Source: State Library of NSW; the original sketch is held at Cambridge University (Scott Polar Research Institute) as part of the Polar Art Collection, https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/museum/catalogue/article/y77.4.12/)

Sketch of the Australian Agricultural Company's coal works, Newcastle, 1833. Attributed to JC White. (Source: State Library of NSW; the original sketch is held at Cambridge University (Scott Polar Research Institute) as part of the Polar Art Collection, https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/museum/catalogue/article/y77.4.12/)

Company was taken over at the same time, making the New South Wales railway the largest government-owned railway in the British empire.

By February 1856 the line was completed between the Honeysuckle terminus and Hexham. The railway line was extended to East Maitland over the course of the next year and the Great Northern Railway line officially opened in March 1857. The following year the line was extended east to Watt Street and a new railway station called Newcastle built adjacent to the waterfront. The opening of the railway line, coupled with the subsequent growth of port facilities, made possible Newcastle's role as the Hunter region's capital. The line linked the mines of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley to the port.[222] The Newcastle branch railway line was also connected to the John Eales Colliery Railway, the AA Co Railway and the Newcastle Coal & Copper Railway.

The increasing coal shipments from Newcastle led to construction of new staithes and coal chutes with rail connections. In 1865 the *Illustrated Sydney News* reported:

> The Australian Agricultural, Waratah, Minmi, Wallsend, Lambton, and several other mines, are now in full operation, each having trains running down to the wharf, where four steam cranes are continually employed in loading vessels of every description.[223]

Growth of services on the Great Northern Railway triggered the need for improved workshop facilities to cater to new rolling stock and to maintain existing stock. By 1866 the Great Northern Railway comprised 52 miles (83 km) of permanent railway with 17 locomotives, 55 passenger vehicles and 131 goods vehicles. By 1871 this had increased to 109 miles of permanent way, 19 locomotives, 75 passenger vehicles and 292 goods vehicles.

Congestion on the waterfront at Queens Wharf prompted the relocation of coal loading to the northern side of the harbour at The Dyke in 1875. A branch line was connected to the Great Northern Railway at Hamilton in 1878 comprising 1½ miles(2 km) in length plus 7 miles(11 km) of single rail laid for sidings and new wharves.[224] The *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported in September 1897 that a record amount of coal shipping was recorded in the port including the greatest amount loaded in one day (14,932 tons) and the loading of 65,083 tons of coal and 462 tons of coke in 130 hours at the cranes at The Dyke (Carrington).[225]

As the century wore on, the branch railway network expanded to cater to new factories and industrial enterprises in and around Newcastle. At the BHP steelworks an extensive network of railway lines was constructed.

In September 1886 the Strathfield–Hornsby section of the main line was officially opened, followed one year later by the Gosford–Waratah section of the Sydney–Newcastle railway in August 1887. The event occasioned a public holiday in both the Gosford and Newcastle districts. Broadmeadow and Adamstown were two of eleven railway stations built on the extension of the Great Northern Railway between Gosford and Waratah (Hamilton), officially opened in August 1887. Unbroken train travel on the railway between Sydney and Newcastle was achieved in 1889 with completion of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge, linking the two main commercial centres in the state. Real estate agents, investors and property owners sought to profit from the completion of the railway line and lobbied heavily for new railway stations.

Newcastle Railway Station, 1891. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON, Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/4861819095/)

The subdivision of land for a new garden suburb in the district resulted in the construction of a new railway station at Kotara on the Strathfield–Hamilton line in November 1924. The 1925 auction sale advertisement for the new suburb comprised 191 building allotments, 'elevated and undulating, [and] 17 minutes from the city by a frequent train service'.[226]

In connection with a replanning of the Newcastle district railway facilities, the Honeysuckle Station was closed, and a new station was opened at Hannell Street and named Wickham in February 1936. This followed the opening of the Civic Station in December the previous year.

Subdivision plan for Kotara, a new station on the main railway line between Adamstown and Cardiff, 17 January 1925. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, M3041)

During the twentieth century, steam gradually gave way to diesel. From 1961 diesel railcars provided the local suburban service to Maitland on the Hunter line and south to Fassifern and Toronto on the Toronto branch line. However, the long-distance trains to Sydney were operated by steam haulage until their final withdrawal from passenger services in 1971, and from freight trains in 1972.

In June 1984, the Main North Line was electrified from Gosford to Newcastle as an extension to the Sydney–Gosford electrification completed in 1960.

One of the biggest recent shake-ups of Newcastle's transport system was the construction of the Newcastle Light Rail. At the end of 2014 the Newcastle Branch Line was truncated at Wickham. Heavy rail operations ceased to the east of Stewart Avenue, and Wickham, Civic and Newcastle stations all closed. In 2019 the Newcastle Light Rail was opened between Newcastle Interchange (Stewart Avenue) and Newcastle Beach (Pacific Park) with intermediate stops at Honeysuckle, Civic, Crown Street and Queens Wharf.

Another initiative was the conversion of some of Newcastle's old railway corridors into active transport corridors for walking and cycling, such as the Fernleigh Track (a 15km track between Adamstown in the Newcastle LGA and Belmont in the City of Lake Macquarie LGA) and the planned Richmond Vale Rail Trail (a 40km-long pathway being developed across multiple LGAs).

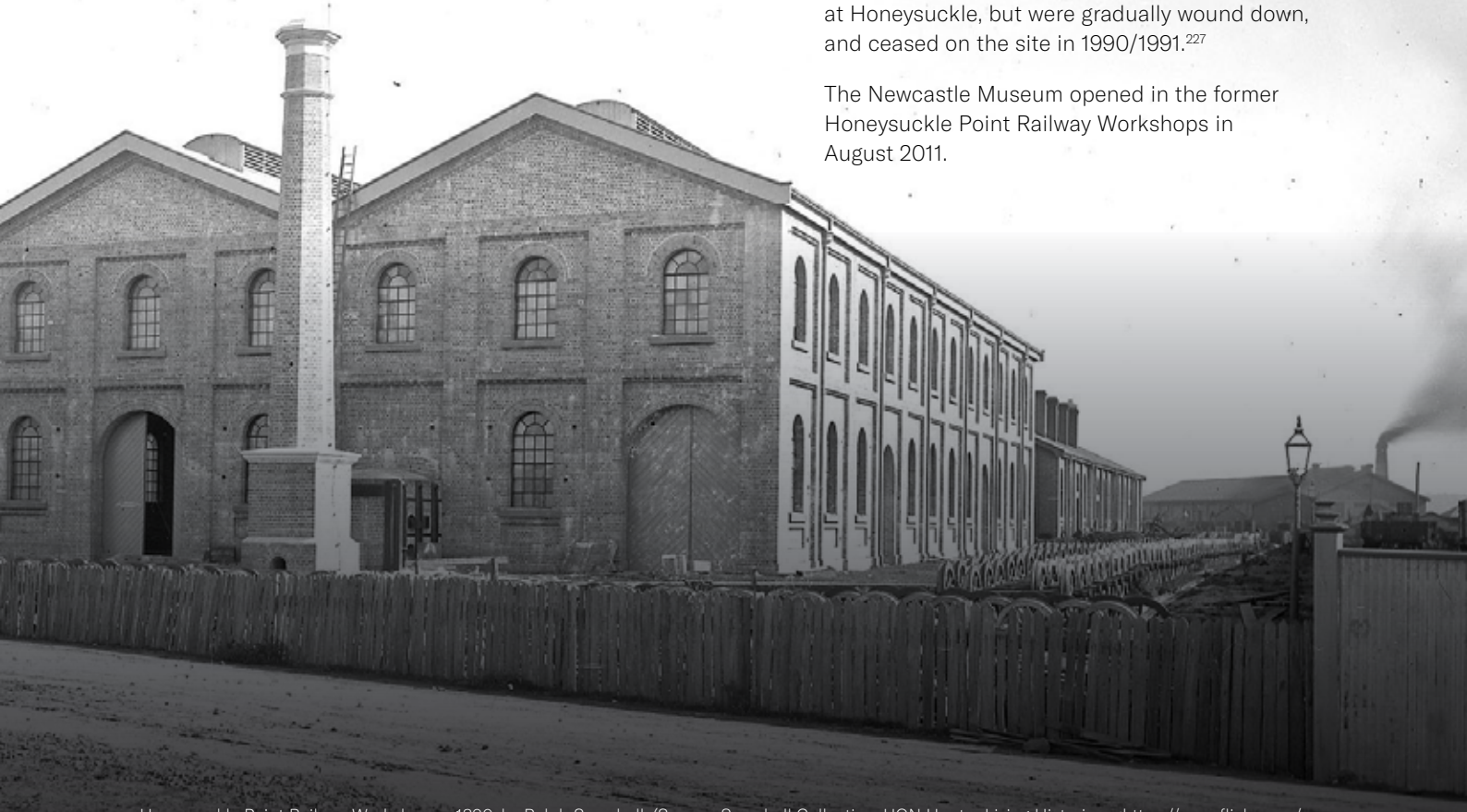
Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops 1854–1990s

The opening of the railway in Newcastle can be seen as the most significant day in Newcastle's nineteenth-century history. Prior to the railway, Newcastle had struggled against Maitland as the main town and service centre for the Hunter region. However, with the opening of the Great Northern Railway line on 27 March 1857 and the subsequent growth in port facilities, Newcastle's role as the regional capital was set.

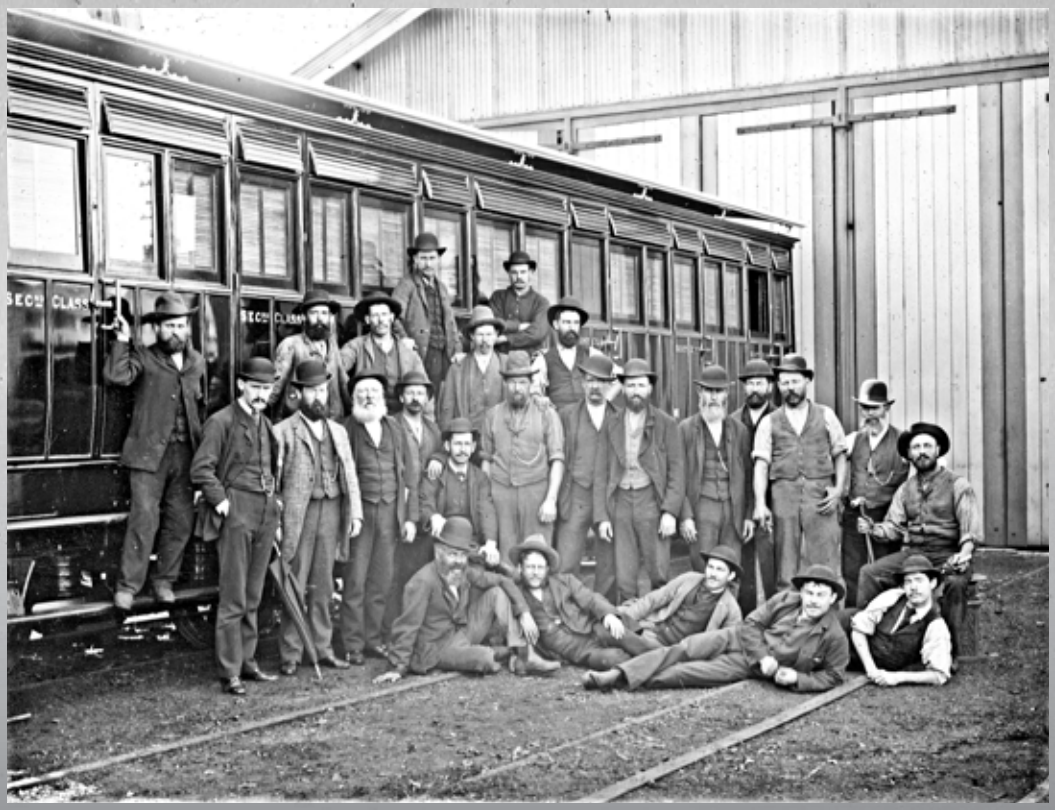
When the line opened, the terminus area at Honeysuckle Point was already well developed as the site for the railway workshops. Adequate workshop facilities were considered vital to economic operation and development of the railways and, although most of the first rolling stock was imported, the Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops were soon producing equipment such as horse-boxes and brake vans.

The workshops were established in 1856 and were enlarged between 1870 and 1920. They operated for many years as a major and comprehensive workshop handling loco, carriage, wagon and per-way work. However, in 1929 the loco work was transferred to Cardiff Railway Workshops. The wagon and per-way workshop activities continued at Honeysuckle, but were gradually wound down, and ceased on the site in 1990/1991.[227]

The Newcastle Museum opened in the former Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops in August 2011.



Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops, c1890, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3836221318/>)



Carriage builders, Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops, April 1886, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/4045224250/>.)

The entrance to the Newcastle Museum in the former Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops. (Source: Newcastle Museum)

Adamstown horse-drawn bus, undated. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3270598307/)

Newcastle tramways

The first horse buses commenced service in Hunter Street, Newcastle, in 1868. Soon after, horse bus services were established to cater to the mining townships not served by the Great Northern Railway or areas with irregular or circuitous train routes.

By the early 1870s Peter James was operating a horse-bus line from Newcastle to Minmi via Wallsend and there were several similar services operating in the heart of Newcastle and to the mining communities in the hinterland. Newcastle, inspired by Sydney's lead in 1883, urged the Minister for Works to construct a tramway between Newcastle and Wallsend as at this time residents of the small townships of the hinterland were dependent on horse buses for public transport.

The Newcastle to Plattsburg (now Wallsend) steam tramway was constructed between 1886 and 1887 to provide a reliable and convenient service between Newcastle and Plattsburg via Lambton, New Lambton and Jesmond.

Over the next 20 to 30 years the Newcastle tramway network expanded with new routes. Frequent letters to newspapers criticised the state of cleanliness, frequency and reliability of the tram services and raised other issues. 'Traveller' wrote in 1902:

> Being a constant traveller on the trams of Newcastle, I would like to bring under the notice of the public the dirty state the trams are allowed to run on the lines. A person cannot put on a decent dress or suite of clothes without being smothered in dirt.[228]

Opening of the Mayfield Stream Tram, Mayfield, 11 January 1901. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3270098141/)

'Observer' complained in 1907 of insufficient and overcrowded trams:

> Sir,-Last Monday night, owing to the crowded state of the Glebe (one car) tram leaving town at 10 to 10, there were no less than seven ladies travelling in the smoking compartments, and five men had to hang on to the rails outside. On this line (Glebe) such a state of things often occurs, more particularly by the 4.50, 5.20, and 5.50 trams. When the authorities are so intent on cutting down expenses that you have miners just out of the pit travelling by those trams, then I think more accommodation should be provided.[229]

The tramways were electrified from 1923 onwards. The trams were vital to the hinterland suburbs, especially in the Depression years. Mrs Jones recalled catching trams into Newcastle as 'there was no buses then, and it [the tram] used to go right in. I think for an adult, it was threepence, and for children, it was a penny.'[230]

Soaring costs and declining patronage led to the progressive closure of tram routes in favour of motor buses. The Carrington and Port Waratah line closed in November 1938 and the Mayfield and Waratah routes closed in 1948 and 1949 respectively. Buses proved more flexible and efficient in catering to the population expanding into the suburbs. The Newcastle tram network closed in 1950, replaced by buses. The Hamilton Tram Depot was subsequently converted to a bus depot.

The first motor bus service was started by a Mr Gee in 1918 travelling from Beaumont Street, Hamilton, via Tudor Street and Hunter Street to Newcastle Hospital. By the 1920s a large private bus network serviced the city and the hinterland suburbs of Newcastle. The bus operators formed themselves into the Newcastle Motor Omnibus Association in 1922.

The Commissioner of Road Transport and Tramways assumed control of the Mayfield Bus Service in 1936. A double-decker and two single-deck buses were acquired to service the route. The double-decker bus was the first of its type to be used in Newcastle. The removal of trams in favour of buses was not universally welcomed and from time to time bus patrons criticised private and government bus routes, timetables and fares. Some of the complaints stemmed from Novocastrians' affection for the tram network. In 1947 EI Vaisey wrote:

> Sir—I was shocked to learn that it was proposed to replace the Mayfield tram with a bus service and to scrap trams in favour of buses.
>
> That would be an act of vandalism and I would fail in my duty as a citizen if I did not voice a protest. We want more trams.
>
> In a modern transport system there is room for both trams and buses, but they should not run in opposition.[231]

Shortly after the last tram ran in Newcastle in 1950 Oliver Holt wrote in 1954 in the Newcastle Souvenir:

> For transport is yet in its infancy here. The green buses which are following as quickly as they can the trail of the home builder will improve in capacity and increase in speed as roads are made to suit the new age, until places on the outskirts of the valley will be drawn into the dormitory zone.[232]

At its peak Newcastle Buses and Ferries (part of the State Transit Authority) operated 26 bus routes through the LGA.

Chapman's Hamilton South double-decker bus leaving BHP Steelworks off Selwyn Street, Mayfield, 18 October 1975. Photographed by John Ward. (Source: John Ward Transportation Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, 06701_181075)

The motor craze

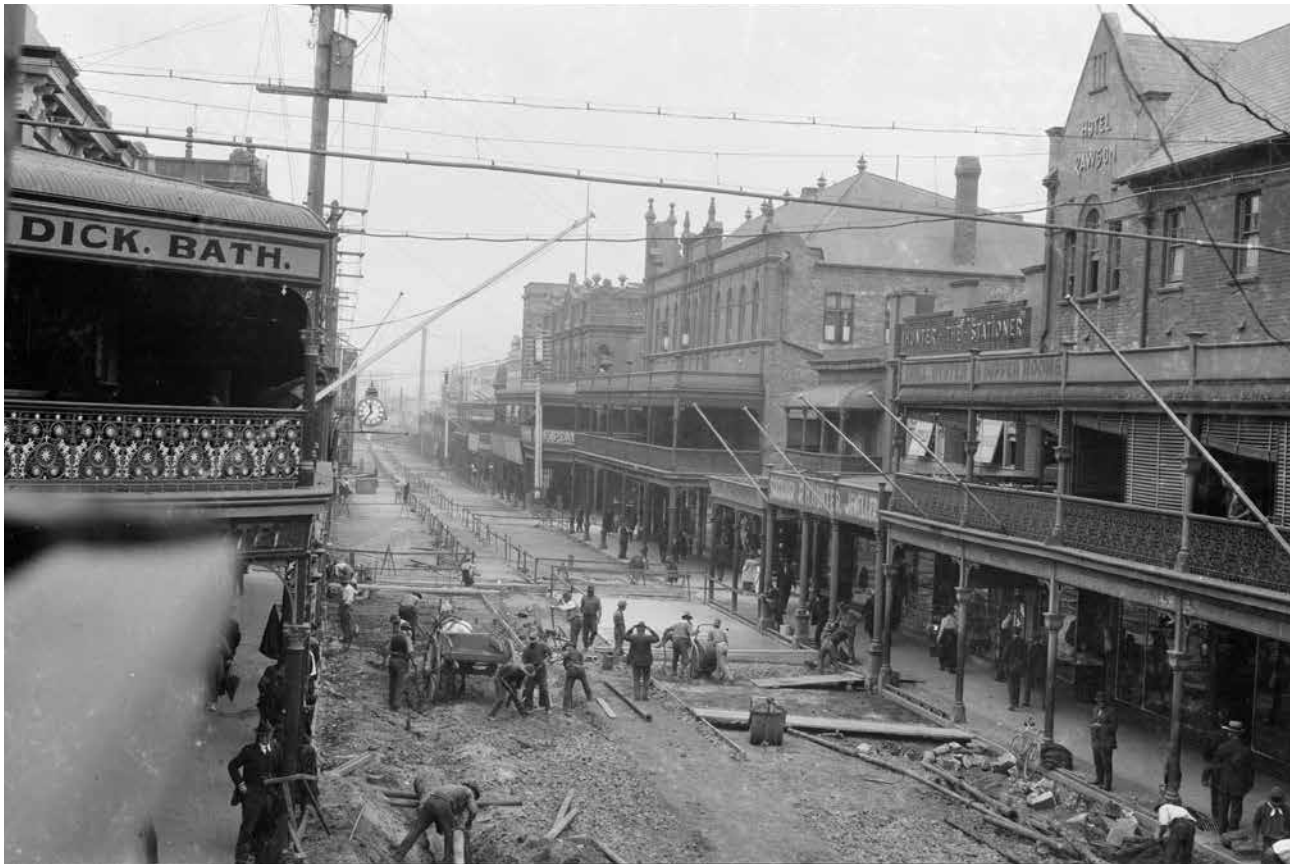
> He [sic] who owns a motor car may come and go when he [sic] pleases without waiting for trams or steamships.[233]

The first motor cars arrived in Newcastle in about 1905, followed soon after by motor lorries. The advent of motor cars on the Newcastle scene was not as swift as in Sydney where a more extensive road network and a greater number of wealthier citizens fuelled the craze.

The first roads in Newcastle and the surrounding mining villages were rough gravel tracks more suited to horses and oxen than motorised vehicles. By the 1840s there was a small network of roads in the heart of Newcastle while the Maitland Road provided an overland connection to the Hunter Valley. The Lake Macquarie Road was the first road to the south. A road to the west was formed when the Wallsend Coal and Copper Company began to develop its estate in 1859. The Newcastle–Wallsend Road was formed in this period as a track through the future area of Lambton in about 1863. This road has been known by many names including Newcastle Road, Griffiths Road and Donald Street.

Within this road network Novocastrians struggled and it inhibited the development of the townships and communications across the Newcastle LGA. Until municipal councils were formed, roads were deplorable and even after incorporation improvement was slow.

The Main Roads Board commenced work in 1926 on a new road to be built between Gosford and Sydney via Peats Ferry, connecting with the existing road from Gosford to Newcastle via Wyong, Catherine Hill Bay and Swansea, completed in 1930. The Great Northern Highway from Sydney to Brisbane was renamed the Pacific Highway in 1931. Sections of the Pacific Highway ran through Newcastle and to the north via a patchwork of disparate roads that linked up, arriving in the CBD at Wickham before heading out of town to the north.



Workmen laying concrete paving, Hunter Street, Newcastle, c1921. Photographed by Sam Hood. (Source: State Library of NSW, a002809)

Aerial view of Newcastle in 1965, looking east across Newcastle and the BHP steelworks, towards Stockton. The Pacific Highway can be seen in the centre of the photograph. Ken Redshaw, Industrial Illustration Pty Ltd. (Source: State of New South Wales, Transport for NSW, P01472-24.tif)

Improvements to the Pacific Highway were undertaken at regular intervals as traffic increased rapidly after World War II including the opening of the Hawkesbury River Bridge in 1945. A new Sydney–Newcastle Freeway (F3) was constructed in stages commencing in the 1960s to provide a high-speed replacement for the 1920s and 1930s sections of the Pacific Highway.

The motor car came to dominate Newcastle's transport environment as car ownership rapidly grew in the postwar period. No longer were cars the preserve of the wealthy and businesses. Car registrations in the district increased as vehicles became more affordable and roads improved.

communications by road with the wider Hunter Valley region, were tamed in the postwar period with the construction of a network of bridges across Coquun (the Hunter River). A steel truss bridge with a central lifting span over Coquun (the Hunter River) at Hexham (Tarro to Tomago) was completed in 1952 and duplicated in 1987. The Tourle Street Bridge opened in 1965 between Mayfield and Kooragang Island and the Stockton Bridge opened in November 1971. It was the second longest bridge in New South Wales at the time of completion.

At present CN has responsibility for 800km of roads in the LGA while Transport for NSW manages state and regional roads through the district. The dominance of the motor car as the preferred form of transport is evident in car ownership statistics. In 2021, 87.7% of households in the LGA owned at least one car and 50% had two or more vehicles. This figure in part reflects the varying adequacy of public transport in parts of the LGA and the socioeconomic status of some households.

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GML HERITAGE

Homes for the people

Milkman and OAK Dairy Foods delivery van, NSW. (Source: Home Grown in the Hunter Hannan Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Homes for the people

As Newcastle evolved—from a compact rudimentary convict settlement, to a town surrounded by a series of mining villages separated by generous swathes of landscape, to today's sprawling suburbia stretching from the coast to the hinterland—so too did its housing.

Which suburb is it to be?

Newcastle's social geography was evident from the very beginning of the settlement. Social class was manifested in the location and design of housing in conjunction with the quality of materials used in construction. By the onset of the twentieth century, proximity to transport and workplaces, as well as who could afford the premium in a property's aspect and orientation, determined the stratification of the growing city.

> Every suburb has some virtue that its neighbour does not possess. Elevation, locality, means of transport, are among the serious factors determining the choice of a home.[234]

By 1900 between 66 and 80% of land in Newcastle was jointly owned by five coalmining companies, a small number of large private estates and the NSW Government.[235] Consequently Newcastle did not experience the suburban expansion that took place in Sydney in the 1870s and 1880s in which the building boom was driven by the subdivision of extensive private estates. In Newcastle private estate owners such as the Merewether and Quigley families refused to sell and their landholdings remained intact until 1910 and 1923 respectively. Likewise, the Church of England was not allowed to sell land on the Glebe Estate (0.2% of Newcastle land) until 1923.

Newcastle from Fort Scratchley, 23 December 1899, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3631689770/))

Minmi, 1890, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3924326799/)

This pattern of land ownership, mostly unchanged from the nineteenth century, restrained widespread suburban development and created housing concentrations in geographically fragmented pockets of the district. The most densely populated areas were the waterside suburbs adjoining the harbour and wharves, namely Carrington, Cooks Hill, Newcastle East, Stockton and Mayfield North, which had evolved in the nineteenth century. Many of Newcastle's suburbs had, however, originated from the mid-nineteenth century as mining villages, notably Merewether, Hamilton, Wallsend, Minmi, Waratah, Plattsburg, Lambton, New Lambton and Hexham.

Newcastle from Fort Scratchley, 23 December 1899, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3631689770/))

Lambton colliery and township, 15 October 1900, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3219718862/)

In the 1880s and 1890s the AACo sold some of its Newcastle Estate in Hamilton and Islington to the Newcastle and Suburban Mutual Building, Land and Investment Company Ltd (formed 1886) for subdivision and sale. On the government's Newcastle Pasturage Reserve, which encompassed parts of the Waratah, Lambton and New Lambton municipalities, miners who had illegally squatted and built houses were allowed to buy their land from June 1889 when legislation was passed in parliament; 91 hectares (226 acres) were sold under this legislation by 1900. The government sold land at Carrington from 1865 whereas at Stockton the Lands Department subdivided 34 hectares (84 acres) adjoining the Quigley family land in 1887, creating 341 allotments and realising £31,077 in sales.

The 1890s depression coupled with uncertain economic circumstances arising in the coalmining industry resulted in a significant population decline. Some residents, principally miners, moved to the outlying mining townships or to the new coalfields of the Hunter Valley.

By this time Newcastle's class distinctions were visible in the landscape as many of the wealthier residents lived on the high ground in Newcastle overlooking Hunter Street, the CBD and the harbour. The suburbs of Waratah, Wickham and Carrington shared a mixed working-class population while the mining towns of Adamstown, Lambton, Merewether, Hamilton, Minmi and Wallsend were occupied by predominantly low-skilled labour class populations.[236] These self-contained mining villages were tight-knit communities sustained by local businesses, recreation and social institutions such as churches, schools and halls. The manager of the mine and the businessmen of the township lived in better-quality houses cheek by jowl with working-class villagers occupying humble timber cottages. These townships were fiercely parochial and were governed by their own municipal councils. The councils of Wallsend, Plattsburg, Hamilton, Lambton, Wickham, Waratah, Adamstown, Carrington, New Lambton, Merewether and Stockton were established by 1900.

In the early twentieth century, Mayfield had a core of upper-class houses, the home of some prominent Newcastle merchants such as William Arnott (biscuit manufacturer), William Winn (retailer), Nelson B Creer (real estate agent and property dealer) and Julian Windeyer (solicitor).

Winn's House, Mayfield, November 1900, photographed by Ralph Snowball. Originally built for Charles Upfold, later owned by William Arnott then Winn from 1898. (Source: UON, Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3449564584/)

The substantial villa 'Annesley House' at 13 Section Street, Mayfield, was designed by noted local architect JW Pender in 1883 for Charles Upfold, owner of the Soap and Candle Factory at Mayfield East. When Annesley House was completed in mid-1884, the *Newcastle Morning Herald* proclaimed that the new house and grounds 'form about the prettiest and most substantial suburban residence in the district of Newcastle'. The house was sold in 1888 to William Arnott, founder of Arnott's Biscuits. Businessman Isaac Winn, of Newcastle retail business Winn and Co, purchased the house in 1898 and owned it until 1921.

Real estate poster for the AACo Estate Cooks Hill Subdivision. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories)

This enclave, referred to as the 'Toorak of Newcastle', was surrounded by the more modest homes of working-class residents. Mayfield's social landscape changed from 1901 when a new tramway made it a more attractive destination for other white-collar workers such as clerks and shop assistants.

Farther afield, the closure of collieries freed up new land for subdivision. The AACo held land sale auctions at The Junction from 1908, Cooks Hill from 1912, Khanterin (Shepherds Hill) from 1915 and Bar Beach from 1924. During a short-lived return to prosperity Newcastle experienced a great acceleration in land subdivision and a building boom during the 1910s and 1920s. This coincided with the growth of heavy industries led by the BHP steelworks and the State dockyard. Former mining townships became more attractive to new residents as these areas shed their mining and industrial past.

Winn's House, Mayfield, November 1900, photographed by Ralph Snowball. Originally built for Charles Upfold, later owned by William Arnott then Winn from 1898. (Source: UON, Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3449564584/)

Miss Porter's House

Herbert and Ella Porter with their daughter in front of their house in about 1913. (Source: Miss Porter's House collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Florence Porter with her daughters Ella and Hazel, between 1940s and 1970. (Source: Miss Porter's House collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

In 1909 Herbert Porter built the freestanding Edwardian terrace house at 434 King Street, Newcastle West. The following year he moved into the house with his bride Florence Jolley and they soon started a family: Ella was born in 1911 and Hazel in 1914. Florence became a widow and sole parent in 1919 when the influenza epidemic killed her husband Herbert and his mother.

Sisters Ella and Hazel Porter lived in the house their whole life and never married.

> My sister and I were born there [Newcastle West] so there is a lot of sentiment attached.[238]

> The sisters were really nice people, lovely, quiet, gentle souls. Ella was the talker, Hazel the quiet one. Unnamed source

> They'd be walking down Hunter Street arm in arm and stop to talk to my mum. Always a little bit different but always beautifully dressed.[239]

The house was damaged by the 1989 earthquake but restored to its former glory.

Ella and Hazel were the breadwinners of the household, looking after their mother. Both had clerical jobs. Hazel outlived her sister and bequeathed the house to the National Trust of Australia in 1997 with its contents intact. The sisters donated thousands of documents and items including photographs, genealogical lists, medical records, wills, household bills, postcards, letters, shopping lists, school exercise books and live theatre programs, as well as household furniture, furnishings and personal possessions capturing the lives of Mrs Florence Porter and her daughters from 1909 to 1997. Miss Porter's House is open to the public by the National Trust (NSW) as a house museum offering visitors a snapshot of domestic life in twentieth-century Newcastle.

Hazel Porter in the fernery at her house, Newcastle West, between 1990 and 1997. (Source: Miss Porter's House collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Geoff Horn standing at the gate of his cousin's earthquake-damaged house, Newcastle West, 1989–1990. (Source: Miss Porter's House collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Miss Porter's House damaged by earthquake, after 28 December 1989. (Source: Miss Porter's House collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

The Garden City (or suburb) movement

> The garden suburb is no longer a fad, the toy of the millionaire, but a fact that has come to stay on commercial lines. (Mr JH Barlow)[240]

The Garden City movement originated in England in the 1890s in response to crowded and polluted city conditions. In Australia as the fledgling town planning movement entered public discourse the Garden City idea was adapted to local conditions—model houses and garden suburbs were planned with larger allotments that combined generous space for private gardens and public parks.

Newcastle's first 'attempt at a practical application of the principles of modern town planning in the vicinity of Newcastle'[241] was pioneered by the AACo on 250 acres of its land at the Melville Street Swamp. The model suburb scheme, announced in 1913, was designed by noted town planners and architects John Sulman and John F. Hennessy. The model suburb was to feature 'fine wide streets, planted with trees in such a way as to be ornamental in fact as well as in name'[242] with attractive bungalows and consistent building setbacks.

The NSW Government's scheme to establish a garden suburb at North Stockton, similar to Daceyville in Sydney, was announced in 1913 but did not proceed until 1919. The scheme was not a success and just 61 of the planned 400 houses were built.

The first sales in the AACo's garden suburb of Hamilton took place in March 1914 comprising 85 allotments and two modern brick cottages. The subdivision of the Hamilton-Junction area progressed slowly because of the onset of war in 1914 and, later, the Great Depression in 1929. The final subdivision and sale took place in 1935.

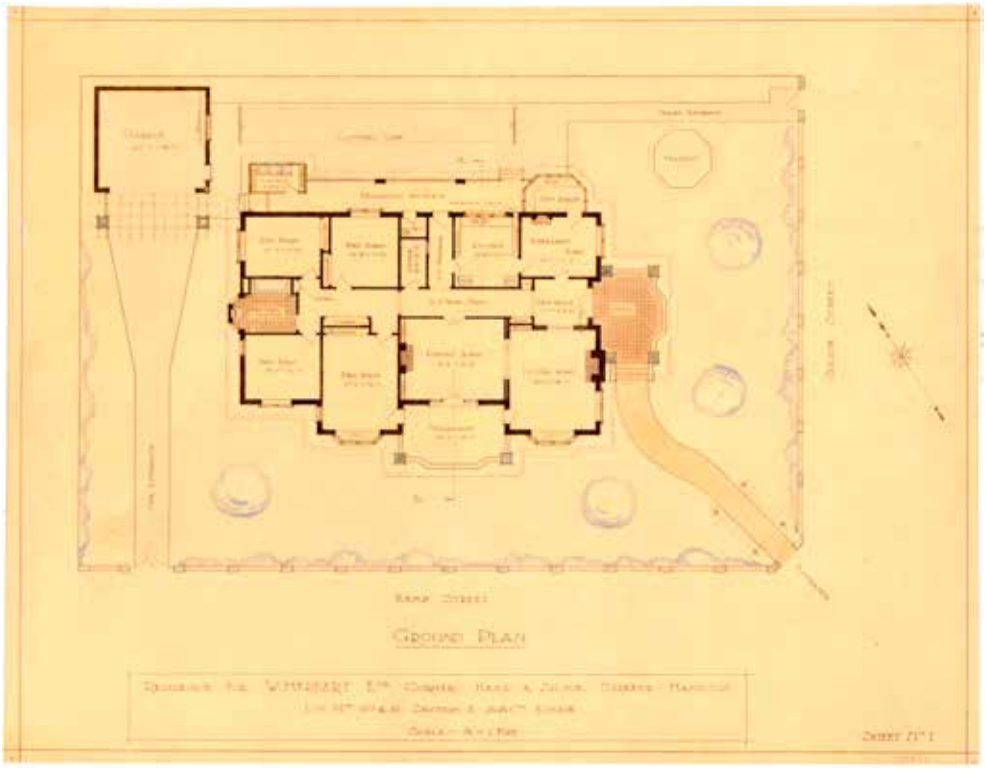
Other garden suburbs were privately developed at Wallsend and New Lambton in the 1920s. The Avenue Estate at New Lambton-Adamstown was promoted in 1916 as a 'model subdivision of 133 healthy home sites'.[243] At Jesmond the Birmingham Gardens Estate was under construction in 1923 and the first sales commenced the following year. The Birmingham Gardens Estate in 1923 boasted '820 allotments most artistically laid out, without sacrificing any points of building utility'.[244] The subdivision promoted by the Newcastle-Wallsend Coal Company had no parks and was remote from public transport, reducing its appeal to potential homebuilders. Scarcely more than 100 houses were built there by 1940. The private sale of the Beresford Estate, 'Newcastle's New Model Suburb', in April 1925 attracted 200 potential homebuyers who caught the special train from Newcastle to the new railway station erected on the estate.[245]

The subdivision of Kotara in 1924 by the Scottish Australian Mining Company was also inspired by the Garden Suburb movement:

> The vendors have gone to great expense in laying out the area upon model township lines, with wide streets and avenue, and provision for recreative space.[246]

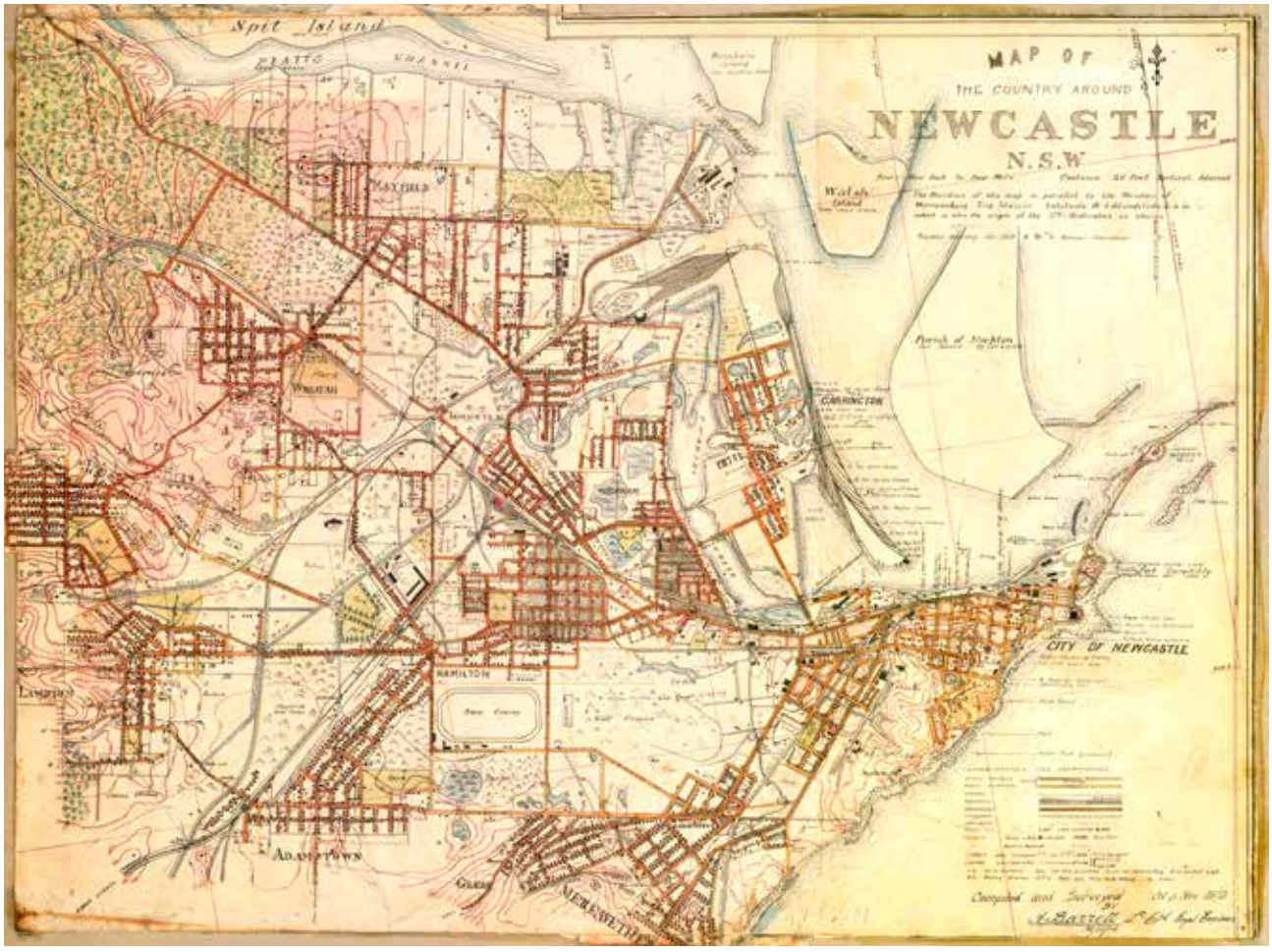
Kotara's early promise as a desirable place to live did not reach fruition until after World War II when additional housing was required to accommodate the wave of postwar immigration and population growth.[247]

Subdivision plan for the garden suburb of Hamilton, 1914. (Source: State Library of NSW, FL20493809)



Floor plan, residence for W Herbert, Newcastle, undated. (Source: UON Hunter Living histories)

30 Silsoe Street, Hamilton South, June 2025. (Source: CN)



Plan of the country around Newcastle, 1910, compiled and surveyed by LC Cpl A Barrett, Royal Engineers. This plan delineates the early mining villages and suburbs of Newcastle before widespread suburbanisation. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, M4631)

Spread of the suburbs

Newcastle experienced a land subdivision and house building boom in the 1910s and 1920s fostered by the release of land formerly tied up by the mining companies. The Newcastle Morning Herald reported in July 1914:

> For many months Newcastle, its suburbs and the contiguous districts have been enjoying much building activity. It shows no indications of ceasing. On the contrary, the activity is becoming more pronounced...
>
> The activity in the matter of cottages is the surest indication of faith in the district...The class of buildings [cottages] is, moreover, the surest indication of the prosperity and thrift of a community. Of these, then, there cannot be less than three hundred in progress to say nothing of a goodly number that are projected.[248]

Many of the houses under construction at this time were cottages for moderate sized families ranging in cost from £250 to £400 to £500 and larger houses ranged from £800 to £3,000.[249] Whether seeking small or large dwellings, homebuilders were adopting the 'new style of Australian architecture'.[250]

The opening of the steelworks and dockyard sparked a boom in housing construction. Housing was required for the large influx of new workers, particularly at Mayfield, Waratah, Wickham and Stockton.

Private developers and building companies accounted for most of the home building activity immediately after World War I. Nonmus and Co commenced work on a subdivision at Mayfield in 1918 on which it subsequently built 100 brick tile workers' cottages replete with electric light, water and sewerage. The manufacturer John Lysaght built a chapel, a community hall and 75 identical five-roomed brick houses in Mayfield to accommodate steel workers and their families brought from England and Wales to work in the steel mill, earning it the nickname 'Pommy Town'.

In the 1920s home building was most pronounced in Hamilton and Waratah, but following the Depression growth suburbs were Adamstown, Lambton, New Lambton, Merewether and Wallsend, which, apart from Wallsend, were mining townships in decline. The mining companies and large private landholders were responsible for the re-making of old mining townships within the inner city and outer areas of Newcastle. The outward spread of suburbia provided cheaper land for home buyers unable to afford homes in the middle-class garden suburbs of the inner city.

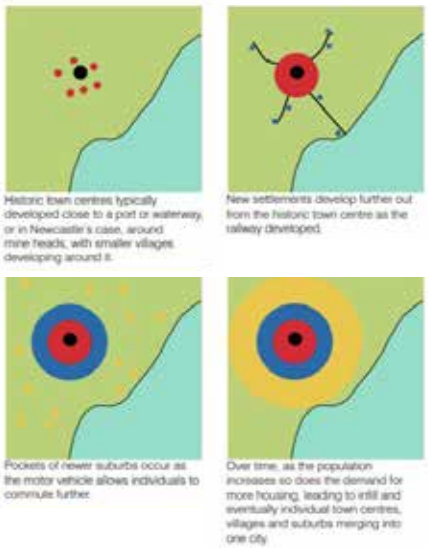
Alice Ferguson lived at Merewether her entire life and recalled the houses she'd resided in:

> I know where I was born down the next street. It was a little pink home, dear little house. I moved from there too. It's still there, the green [sic] house where I lived, and Allan and I lived with Mum around there until we got enough money to pay for our house. We built this home for one thousand pounds, and we lived with my mother until such times as we had enough to pay for it and get into it.[251]

In the postwar era, the focus of house building shifted to the outer suburbs of Hexham, Kooragang, Sandgate and Shortland. At the same time new subdivisions consolidated the suburbanisation process in the inner suburbs of Adamstown Heights, Merewether Heights, New Lambton Heights, Rankin Park, Waratah West and The Hill West.

Real estate poster for the Birdwood Estate, Lambton, c1941. (Source: State Library of NSW, M1594)

Rankin Park Estate, New Lambton Heights, 1962. (Source: National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1632949059)



The historic urban development of the City of Newcastle has led to the current urban structure, which is characterised by a series of concentric rings around the original towns. (Source: *Newcastle Local Housing Strategy*, 2006, p 31)

Flat dwellers increase in Newcastle

> Flats in the city, flats at the beach, flats penetrating even the hitherto exclusively suburban Hamilton![252]

Between the wars there was a corresponding rise in the construction of residential flat buildings, especially in the inner city, which transformed the architectural and social character of the City of Newcastle LGA.

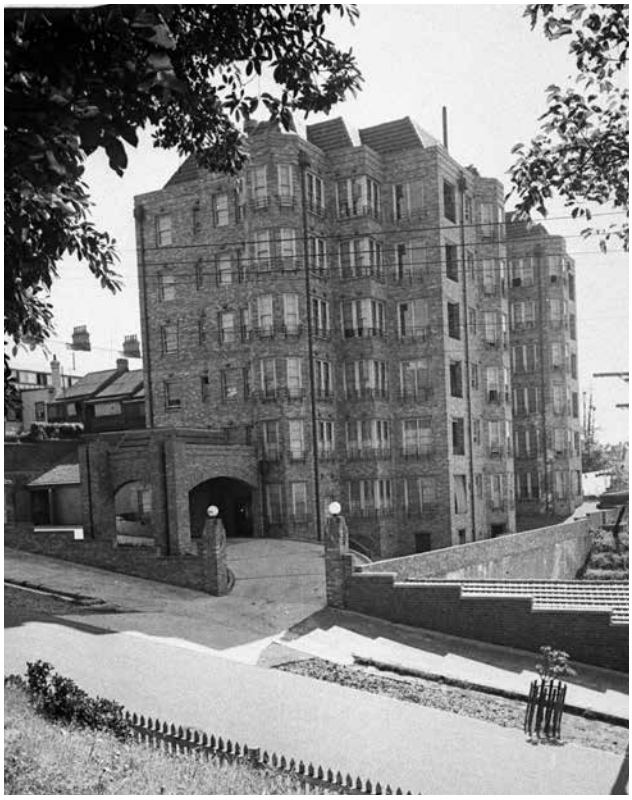
Attitudes towards flats varied in this period, yet outlying townships and suburbs were generally opposed:

> Your city is surrounded by rolling hills, yet you have slums. Individual homes, rather than flats, are needed in Newcastle. Flats do not provide home life and the natural atmosphere for bringing up a family. If you want a beautiful city you must have homes and gardens.[253]

> It would be far preferable if the people were educated to spread out and live away from the city's noise, bustle, etc., on the beautiful hills surrounding Newcastle on all sides, with their health-giving fresh air, any amount of playing area (thus keeping the mites from playing in the streets), and hobbies innumerable that can be indulged in. Letter from "Cosmopolitan", Wallsend.[254]

Visually prominent 'high-rise' modern flat buildings were constructed on elevated sites on the slopes of Newcastle, Bar Beach and Cooks Hill. Notable examples include the Segenhoe Flats in Wolfe Street, Newcastle, designed by Sydney architect Emil Sodersten in 1935. Jeater, Rodd and Hay designed Wirraway Flats at the corner of Church and Watt streets, overlooking Newcastle Beach, in 1939. This seven-storey building contained 27 flats, a shop, a community garage and five other garages.

Years later, in 1946, the Greater Newcastle Council lost its battle to prevent the Housing Commission from erecting flats that did not conform to Council's standards. The commission subsequently built six large blocks of flats in Cooks Hill. Australia's then-largest block of flats was to comprise 72 apartments for old-age pensioners across six separate three-storey buildings in Darby Street.[255]



Rankin Park Estate, New Lambton Heights, 1962. (Source: National Library of Australia, http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1632949059)

Housing Commission flats, Cooks Hill, 1949. (Source: Museums of History NSW, State Archives Collection, FL3816717)

Life on the margins

A recession in the coal industry in the mid-1920s was an early signal of the economic woes that peaked later in the decade with the global Depression. Intermittent work in the coal industry was one symptom of a larger problem in a region heavily dependent upon the district's rich coal seams and related industries such as steel manufacturing, shipbuilding and the Port of Newcastle. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported in April 1929:

> The idleness of the mines in the top field, and the consequent curtailment of shipping and industry generally, have already thrown between 500 and 600 men out of work at the Steel Works.[256]

By June 1933, 38% of the city's male workforce was either unemployed or partly unemployed. As a result of unemployment and financial distress, makeshift shanty towns sprang up throughout the district, housing the many people who were evicted after falling behind on their mortgage or their rent.


PIX

"HOME SWEET HOME"—For Two Australians

"Home Sweet Home" – For Two Australians. (Source: *Pix*, Vol 2 No 4, 23 July 1938, p3)

Some of the shanty towns were located near Horseshoe Beach near Nobbys Head. Often colourfully named, other shanty towns included 'Coral Trees' in Stockton, 'Texas' in Carrington, 'Hollywood (also known as 'Doggyville' or 'Lambton Camp') at Jesmond, 'Little Moscow' in Adamstown, and 'Platt's Estate' and 'Tram Car' at Waratah.

By January 1932 the Nobbys Unemployed Camp housed 13 married couples, 110 men and 27 children in shacks constructed mainly of iron and wood salvaged from demolished buildings.

Kathleen Jones lived through the Great Depression as a young wife and mother. Her husband was a baker, but he lost his job at the height of the Depression. She was more fortunate than others in Newcastle. With the help of Kathleen's extended family, they were able to rent a small house in Mayfield where they pooled money and coupons, and grew vegetables, making do until the economy improved. Kathleen had vivid memories of some of the camps such as the gun pits at Stockton and Hollywood near Jesmond, which was:

> ... beyond the park in bush ... and that was where people lived. They all built their houses out of anything that they could get. There was no sanit[ation] ... [and] the houses were made of corrugated iron and anything. They used to do a lot with bags, and you'd put the bags on then paint over them with tar. Mostly though they'd do that for the roof, and that wouldn't let the rain in. But there was all races there. There was Australians and Aboriginals [sic]. There wasn't any new Australians then.[257]

When Nobbys Camp was closed and dismantled in 1937 many of its occupants moved to Platt's Estate in Waratah. The remaining camps were gradually closed and removed, though some lasted well into the 1950s owing to the acute housing shortage in the district.

Homes for the people

GML Heritage

When Members Of Unemployed Camps Want A Bath, they have to carry water in tins and buckets to a tub inside the house, as this woman is doing. The closest tap may often be some distance away from their shacks.

UNEMPLOYED CAMPS (Continued)

"Impossible Conditions For Children"

Typical Unemployed Camp Shack, constructed of old roofing iron and odd pieces of timber. It has no flo ing. In wet weather the ground inside becomes a muddy pool. The hut has a smoky fireplace.

"IT is impossible to bring up children under such intolerable conditions," said the then Assistant Minister (Mr. J. B. Shand) when he made an inspection of unemployed camps in the northern district in 1936.
The camps are still there.
In one camp inspected by the Minister there were 70 children under the age of 14 years and 30 children over 14. Since 1936, population of the unemployed camps has fallen slightly.
But the majority of the shacks still are occupied.

From The "Window" Of His Shack. This Austral who lives in Adamstown (Newcastle) unemplo camp, has been unemployed for several ye Other members of the same camp have had no w in periods ranging from five to eight ye

"Home Sweet Home"

'Home Sweet Home – for Two Australians: "impossible conditions for children"', (Source: National Library of Australia, *Pix* Vol 2 No 4, 23 July 1938 p 4)

The Occupant Of This "Home" was out when PIX cameraman called. Other members of the little community assured him it had been the occupant's "residence" for several years. Lack of space inside apparently has forced the owner to hang his "kitchen" utensils outside. Arrow points to tennis racket!

Many Unemployed Camp Dwellers Take Pride in their surroundings. two boys are gazing at birds in an aviary, which was built by the mem of one community in Newcastle. A loft was also provided for pige kennels were constructed for the dog population.

PIX ——— Page Four

Housing shortages

Public authorities contributed to Newcastle's housing stock in the interwar period. The NSW Housing Board erected 29 brick cottages in that section of the Municipality of Hamilton known as Newtown (now Hamilton North) in the early 1920s.[258] The need for affordable workers' cottages was acute at this time. In January 1921, for example, a keenly contested ballot was held for the 15 completed houses at Newtown for which there were 107 applicants. [259] The War Service Homes Commission provided houses in Waratah and Stockton and a 9-acre estate at Mayfield called Roe's Estate on which about 80 houses were built commencing in 1920.

On the cusp of World War II, Newcastle's rapid development as an industrial centre was the imperative behind increased building activity. In the three years to 1940, 2,250 houses were built in the region, yet an acute shortage of houses remained, fuelled by the expansion of heavy industry and an influx of population:

> Several local agents report that when a cottage becomes available to let they did not advertise it because of the clamour there would be for possession. The practice seems to be to select from a waiting list a tenant for a vacancy when it occurs.
>
> ... the demand for homes on low deposit and easy terms, said another agent, was most insistent. The Rural Bank, this agent stated, had helped in a small way to overtake the demand, but a bigger scheme was urgently needed[260]

In January 1941 the Council's Park and Building Surveyor reported on house building activity for the previous three years. Most of the houses built in that period were weatherboard cottages, outnumbering brick by more than two to one. The average cost of building a brick house was £950 compared to £700 for a weatherboard cottage, though brick veneer construction was increasing in popularity as it cost 15% less to build than a brick cottage.[261]

The following year 19,200 workers were employed at 11 centres of industry in Newcastle including BHP. An additional 12,000 people were working in the collieries of Newcastle, Cessnock and Maitland. Demand for housing influenced the spread of suburbia and residential development in outlying townships such as Hexham, Tarro and beyond. Yet in 1944 an estimated 6,000 families still shared homes in the Newcastle region and an estimated 600 families lived in substandard housing.[262] The Greater Newcastle population increased to over 127,000 in 1947 and there were 32,194 dwellings.

Roe's Estate, Mayfield, sold to the War Service Homes Commission, 1920. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, M3525)

After the war, planners and government projected the Greater Newcastle region's population would top 1,000,000 by the turn of the century. They grappled with strategies to increase the supply and locations of new housing estates against the backdrop of continuing material and labour shortages. The Housing Commission was a key developer in this period, supplying 6,320 dwellings in New South Wales between April 1944 and March 1946. In the Greater Newcastle area, the commission acquired land at Wallsend for public housing in 1944 and by 1949 had completed 180 houses.

In 1947 in the Greater Newcastle area the Housing Commission was building at Lambton, Gateshead, Wallsend, Cooks Hill, Adamstown and Merewether and had ordered construction of over 600 dwellings. One of the biggest housing schemes planned for Newcastle was on 54 acres (21.85 ha) at Lambton, formerly owned by the Scottish Australian Mining Company, to be subdivided into 270 allotments.[264] In the wake of World War II there was keen competition for new homes built by the Housing Commission and regular ballots were held. For instance, ballots were drawn in Newcastle in August and November 1953 for 40 and 110 cottages respectively. The ballots were highly competitive. In November 1953 there were eight applications for every home available.

Portion of a group of cottages forming a Housing Commission project adjacent to the beach at Stockton, Newcastle. (Source: Housing Commission of NSW, 'Homes for the People' [pamphlet], February 1947)

"It is hard to understand why tenants of the Housing Commission's homes at Wallsend should complain about the cottages ... We knew what to expect before we submitted our names to the ballot and we have not been disappointed. We think the Government has done a good job in giving us a nice, comfortable home on a good, level block of land."[263]

– Mr S Leis, Wallsend

Journey into the future

Newcastle's return to prosperity in the 1950s heralded a wave of private residential development across the district. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported in 1950:

> A quick survey of the outskirts of the city will show fresh offshoots of homes creeping up the flanks of Waratah Hill, wedging themselves down the slopes and gullies of Kotara-New Lambton, flinging themselves somewhat recklessly across the land that once separated Jesmond from Wallsend, and edging their way cautiously along the steep sides of Cardiff Heights.[265]

Pockets of development occurred in the suburbs of Lambton, New Lambton, Waratah, Birmingham Gardens and Mayfield. Some notable large houses were built at New Lambton Heights.

The sharp increase in homebuilding was evident, with 80 building applications lodged in March 1950 alone. Wallsend headed the list with 16 homes valued at £22,607, followed by Lambton with 11 at £22,030.[266]

Building figures remained relatively stable in this period. In August 1953 the Newcastle City Council approved 65 applications to the value of £152,562 and in December the Council received 53 applications valued at £133,206. Lambton headed the list in the August 1954 statistics with 15 homes (£41,296).[267]

Postwar residential development was generally confined to new subdivisions spanning undeveloped land between the existing suburban areas. Some of the new land releases had steep slopes and bushland settings offering elevated sites and panoramic views. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported in April 1950 on how the some of the new dwellings fitted into the landscape and were 'making attractive suburbs of former bushlands.'[268] Real estate advertisements highlighted the 'delightful bush setting' of such properties, 'among gum trees and modern homes'.

The steep topography played an important part in the architectural style and the form of housing development at Merewether Heights in particular, but also Adamstown Heights, New Lambton Heights and Kotara Heights

(now Kotara). Dr and Mrs Richard Bourke's house at Merewether Heights was 'built for the view' according to the *Newcastle Sun*.[269] The house was described as 'white with yellow woodwork and shutters, on the Scenic Highway, a place of high-blowing sea air and panoramic views' looking over Merewether and Bar beaches.[270] New Lambton Heights was promoted in advertisements as the 'dress circle of Newcastle' and appealed to wealthier homebuyers and builders erecting large, conventional, solid brick houses. Nearby, Kotara Heights was an attractive up-and-coming neighbourhood for middle-class homebuyers. In March 1954 an auction sale of 12 home sites attracted 100 potential buyers.[271]

Architects and builders experimented with innovative and new building technologies and modern architectural expression. Orana at Adamstown Heights was designed by Sydney C. Morton and completed in 1953. The Modernist house was featured in Architecture magazine in 1954 under the banner '£270 per square' and in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* as 'This is it – the California style'.[272] Unlike neighbouring houses, the two-storey building did not present to the street and was oriented to the north to capture the northern sunlight. It had an asymmetrical, angled corrugated asbestos roof and was clad in stained red mahogany weatherboard, with a ramp entryway rather than stairs.

Allan Farrelly's 'Modern Homes of Newcastle' series in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* in the 1960s presented a range of new homes ranging from experimental to conventional styles. Farrelly was particularly fascinated by the architecture of new housing at Merewether Heights: 'split levels, cantilevered balconies, butterfly roofs, glass, brick, stone, wood, metal follow in almost bewildering profusion'.[273]

'Christmas Box'

"The best Christmas box I could ever have," Mrs. M. Hammond (above) said when she won a house in a Housing Commission ballot at Newcastle City Hall yesterday.

With Mrs. Hammond is her husband and daughter, Yvonne, 6. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond also have a 10-year-old son, Garry. The family live in a bedroom and verandah, with the use of conveniences, at East Maitland. They have been applicants for a commission home for three years.

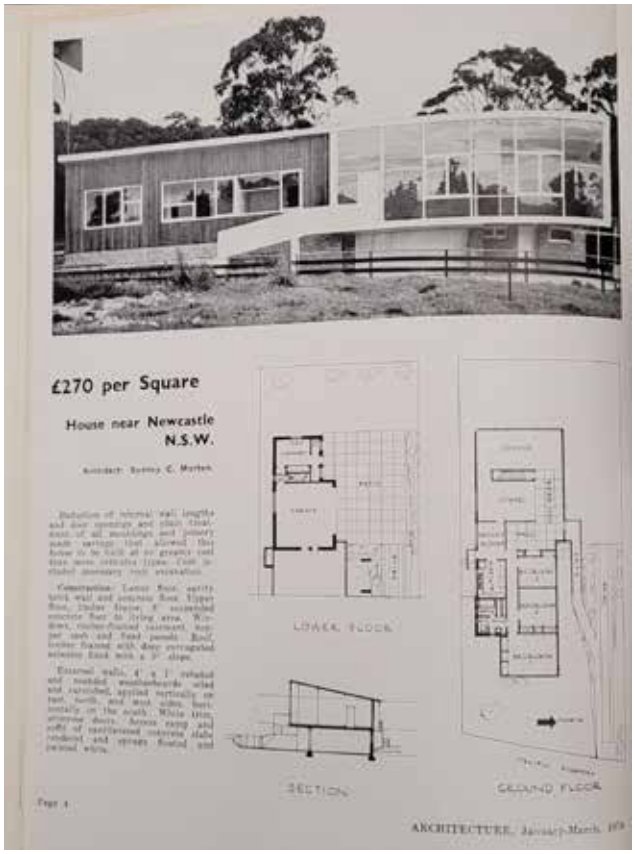
Another family successful in the ballot live in a tent at Belmont.

cessful in the ballot live in a tent at Belmont, while a third family who won a home live in a gun emplacement at Stockton.

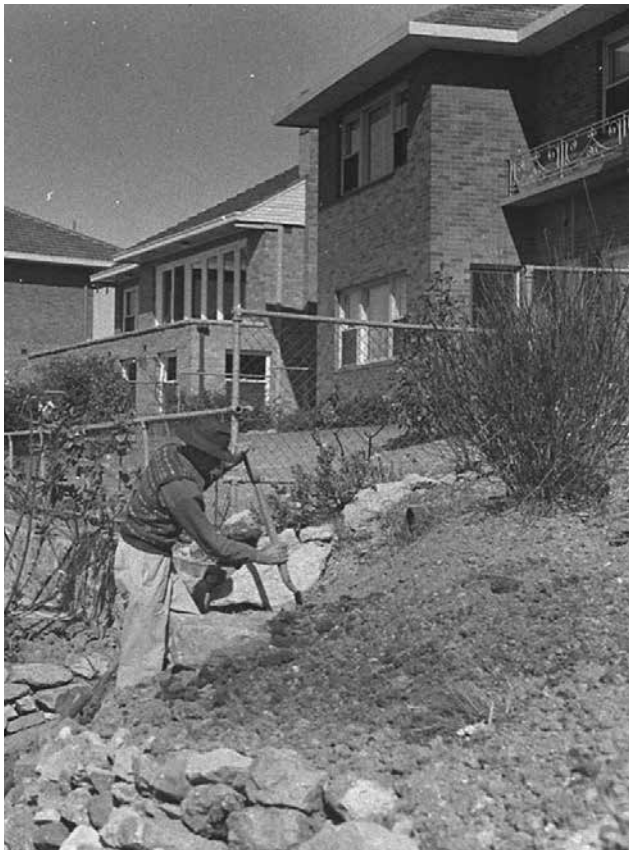
Mrs M Hammond with her husband and their daughter after winning a house in a Housing Commission ballot at Newcastle City Hall. (Source: *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 27 November 1953, p 1)

These new houses in Newcastle's outer areas are typical of the modern homes which, fitting into the landscape, are making attractive suburbs of former bushlands. 1. Mr. J. McCann's home in Highfield-parade, Highfields. 2. The home of Mr. J. Beath, in Kahibah-road, Highfields. 3. The home of Mr. F. V. Hilliard in Charlestown-road Cardiff. 4. The home of Mr. R. Thomson on Lambton Heights. 5. The homes of Messrs. J. A. Robertson, F. Treasure and J. Boadle, on Lambton Heights. 6. The homes of Messrs. J. C. Congdon and S. Lindgren, in Fay-avenue, Kotara.

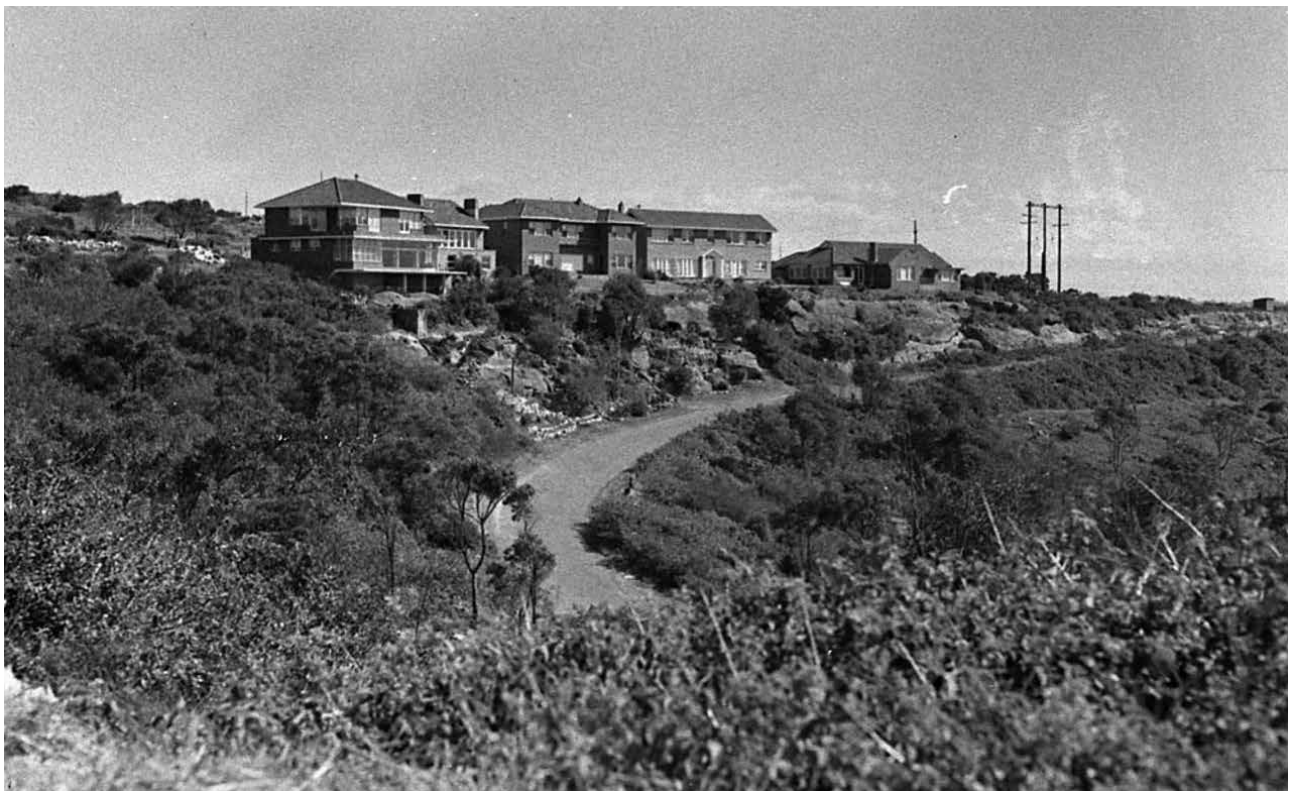
New and attractive homes in Newcastle. (Source: *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 11 April 1950, p 4)



House near Newcastle NSW designed by Sydney C Morton. (Source: *Architecture*, January-March 1954, p 4)



New houses at Merewether Heights, 1955, by Sam Hood. (Source: State Library of NSW, Sam Hood Collection)



New houses at Merewether Heights, 1955, by Sam Hood. (Source: State Library of NSW, Sam Hood Collection)

Moylan residence, New Lambton, 1975. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection)

Modern architecture became the hallmark of architects and builders in Newcastle's coastal suburbs, at Cooks Hill, Bar Beach and Merewether. Architect Brian Suters designed his own family home in 1974 on Wolfe Street, The Hill, for which he won the prestigious Blacket Award for Architecture in 1980. The four-level terrace house with a rooftop entertaining area was influenced by the Bauhaus movement and used exposed brick circular walls, waffle pod slab concrete ceilings, and expansive glass walls to take advantage of the views. Suters was also involved in the design of the public housing on Nobbys Road. Suters & Snell's design for the sprawling Newcastle East public housing precinct was completed in 1989.

The inaugural Newcastle Civic Design Awards established by the Council in 1975 promoted quality urban design in the city and surrounding areas. The Moylan Residence at 5 Ardlessa Way, New Lambton, was awarded the inaugural Charles Davis Award. The Menkens Awards winner in 1976 was 'Off 51 Carrington Road, New Lambton Heights'. Other neighbouring councils joined in the 1990s when the annual competition was renamed the Lower Hunter Urban Design Awards.

Off 51 Carrington Road, New Lambton Heights, 1976. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection)

Brutalism in the city

The modern city landscape was also transformed in this period. Newcastle was home to a range of Brutalist public buildings. Brutalism, a style of late Modernist architecture featuring untreated concrete and bold geometries, developed during the 1960s as the main institutional architectural style, especially for works produced by the Government Architect NSW division of the NSW public service. With the increase in demand for a range of new public buildings in Newcastle during the 1960s and 1970s, civic centres, art galleries, post offices, schools, universities and hospitals were constructed in a Brutalist style. By the mid-1970s Brutalism in Australia had been well absorbed into the mainstream of architectural practice.

The new buildings of the University of Newcastle's Callaghan campus feature a number of fine examples of Brutalism. Early additions included the Student Union Building (1969) and the university's Great Hall (1968–1973) by Ancher Mortlock and Woolley. Another significant educational building was the Newcastle Teachers' College (1968–1974; now part of Newcastle University) by Government Architect NSW, with J McKinney as Project Architect. This building adopted a staggered structure of parallel box gutter/roof beams and a sequence of stepped courtyards in acknowledgement of its hillside setting.

Frederick Romberg, who had been appointed to the Faculty of Architecture at Newcastle University in 1965, designed a bold city centrepiece in the City Council Offices (1977). A major contribution to the city centre, the building likely referenced the Brutalist cantilevered forms of Boston City Hall, Boston (1969), by Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles. Another major project was a whole city block in the Newcastle Government Offices (1983) bounded by concrete louvred pavilions and turret staircases raised on a distinct precast concrete plinth. Other major civic projects completed in a Brutalist style include the Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle (1977), by B Pile.

Residential projects in the Brutalist style were less common but Suters Town House, Wolfe Street (1974) by Brian Suters evinced some Brutalist influences in its design. St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Hamilton (1970), is another example of the style, applied to a religious building.

Brian Suters (architect), who designed the Newcastle Administration Building, Newcastle, Australia. (Source: University of Newcastle History, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/5037814939/)

Although initially criticised for not responding to its historic context Brutalism evolved to a more nuanced approach as can be seen in the Newcastle Police Station (1975–1982), one of the last major Brutalist projects undertaken by the Government Architect NSW. The building's highly modelled architectural form shows a specific response to its historic urban setting.

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Radical Newcastle

Ron Bell photograph of the Star Hotel Riot, 1979. (Source: Ron Bell, Lost Newcastle Australia, Stories of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley, Star Hotel, https://lostnewcastle.com.au/star-hotel/)

Radical Newcastle

Newcastle is no stranger to radical ideas and grassroots activism. As a port town, it has long been a hub where not only goods were traded but also ideas. Political ferment had its roots in the working class and unions but has been shaped by emerging social movements.

Resisting the mainstream and looking for a new way to live, some Novocastrians built vibrant subcultures, memorably in surf, skateboarding and music. Over time, activities with alternative origins became mainstream and won broader community acceptance—surfing and skateboarding, for instance.

Credit to James Bennett, Nancy Cushing, Erik Eklund for this theme title, their scholarship and contributing authors has informed this chapter.

Miners' strike gathering at Cooks Hill, 15 September 1888, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories, ASGN0229-B11)

A culture of solidarity

The industrial reputation of Newcastle is synonymous with its culture of collectivism and industrial action. Confrontation by miners and waterfront workers against police and armed troops created enduring scenes in the fight for better working conditions. Particularly 'in the second half of the 19th century, trade unions became identified with Eight-Hour Day Street demonstrations, workplace actions, delegations, petitions, lobbying, street corner gatherings and meetings and wages for workers.'[275] The imaginative power of these scenes has endured if not the reality of moderate mainstream Labor politics in Newcastle—a political leaning that is shifting once more today.[276]

Eight Hour Day parade at Hunter Street, Newcastle, 1890, by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Ralph Snowball Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

The move towards an independent industrial organisation in the Hunter region emerged with the Eight Hour Committee formed in Maitland and Newcastle in 1869. The committee was the precursor to the NTHC (now the Hunter Workers). However, the union movement in Newcastle did not gain momentum until significant migration from coalmining areas in the United Kingdom during the 1880s. These migrants brought with them longstanding working-class English, Welsh and Scottish traditions, including those of 'union organisation and class solidarity, friendly societies, fraternal orders, and brass bands ... and Primitive Methodism ... that many trade union leaders practised in their leadership, their voices fired by a sense of Christian socialism.'[277]


GREAT STRIKE AT NEWCASTLE.

'Great Strike At Newcastle', 10 November 1909. (Source: *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, p 30)

Key events that characterised union conflicts are the 1870s–1880s industrial actions including the 1888 Adamstown Riot, the Great Strikes of the 1890s, the 1909–1910 Peter Bowling Strike, the 1916–1917 anti-conscription protests, the infamous 1929 Rothbury Lockout, and the 1949 Coal Strike by 23,000 miners.

Although recriminations of potential violence played out on both sides, often the weaponry of soft power and public opinion prevailed in favour of the unions and their workers. During the 1879 action, hundreds of NSW Permanent Artillery soldiers occupied parts of the Newcastle coalfields for 95 days. At least four miners were gaoled for assaulting free labourers for breaking the lines and working. Union workers would sing 'Marching through Georgia' and 'the Dead March' from Handel's Saul at scab labourers. Other members of the community in their thousands also sang the songs, and struggles like this set up the miners' union 'as the champion of the workers and their families. This culture pervaded the Valley for generations and still lingers in the population today.'[278] Media outlets like the *Newcastle Morning Herald* were publicly sympathetic to the plight of workers. During the 1888 strike and lockout it editorialised:

> The wealthy, in their greed for gain, forgot that the men who were contributing to their riches had souls and minds, and that education was teaching them to realize that the people who produced were of more importance to the country than the individuals who were the mere recipients of the result of united labour.[279]

The great strikes of the 1890s and their collapse in the face of state opposition and armed forces galvanised the labour movement. Union leaders and their working members saw that 'industrial action was doomed to failure if the power of the state was turned against it. Labour needed more comprehensive political and parliamentary organisation.'[280] Coalmining leaders were prominent in the formation of the Labor party at state and then federal levels. The Political Labour League, formed in 1891, was a precursor to the Labor Party. It was created in response to local conditions as much as the nation-wide shearers' and maritime strike. Dissatisfaction with local parties' representation of working-class interests fuelled the movement.

In the early twentieth century and particularly the 1930s, global economic forces and ideologies shaped events in Newcastle. The rise of communism became associated with the unions. Meanwhile, the Depression meant many workers became unemployed. The closure of most of the collieries between February 1929 and May 1930 affected 10,000 miners and thousands more in associated industries—railway men, wharfies, turners, fitters, boilermakers and ironworkers among them. In 1937, there were 12,000 unemployed men aged between 14 and 25 years old in the Newcastle and coalfields district, representing over half the unemployed youths in NSW.[281]

Out of work and unable to pay rent, anti-eviction picketers clashed with police evicting a family in Clara Street in 1932 at Tighes Hill. Tensions erupted. The riot, reported to have lasted little more than 10 minutes, left 30 men injured including police.[282]

High unemployment persisted up to the beginning of World War II alongside low levels of unionisation due to punitive industrial policies by mining employers. Nonetheless the NTHC mounted a successful campaign against the Menzies Government's *Supply and Development Bill* and *National Registration Bill*, seen as an industrial form of conscription and an attempt to weaken the trade unions.[283] During the war the full employment in all trades and increasing rates of unionisation gave labour organisations across Newcastle the confidence to call for change. This was further emboldened by the Australian Labor Party being in power at state and federal levels in 1941.

At a community grassroots level, the collectivist approach in Newcastle saw the creation of friendly societies and cooperatives that supported miners and their families. The most successful and enduring example was The Store, founded in 1898 and peaking with 98,000 members in 1974. Sustained by working families on a

Interiors of the Newcastle Co-Op Store, c1920s. (Source: John Lamb Collection, UON Living Histories)

membership basis, Novocastrians could find everything including food, a barber shop, funeral funds, insurance, a credit union and the iconic Christmas window displays. A staff social welfare club and education committee also fundraised for a wide range of community causes across Newcastle. Its demise in 1981 ended the 120-year history of retail cooperatives in the Hunter Valley.[284]

During the 1970s, the NTHC under the leadership of Keith Wilson (Secretary 1968–1979) took on an expansive agenda championing local, national and global struggles including First Nations Australian rights, women's rights, the peace movement and nuclear disarmament. The green bans movement became particularly prominent, holding close ties with the NSW BLF. Jack Mundey made a guest appearance during the 1972 Newcastle May Day rally. Newcastle green bans, led by the NTHC and over 25 community groups, fought to save Blackbutt Nature Reserve from the proposed Motorway 23. A green ban was imposed at Newcastle East End on behalf of local residents 'wishing to retain the working class content, and opposing the extension of high-rise office buildings and motels in the East End'.[285]

The NTHC's involvement in the life of the city continued. During the mid-1980s the NTHC threatened a green ban when the State Rail Authority proposed to auction

Save Blackbutt: The Case Against Highway 23 Violating Blackbutt Reserve. (Source: Blackbutt Action Committee, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Foreshore Park for private development. The organisation supported the Carrington Residents Action Group in its efforts to preserve historic architecture and affordable housing in the suburb; the NTHC engaged Brian Suters to design medium-density development for Carrington that retained and expanded the residential area. The NTHC was also heavily involved in the redevelopment of the Wickham and Honeysuckle precincts in the 1990s and 2000s.[286]

Swimming exams at Newcastle Ocean Baths, December 1953, Sam Hood, taken for *Newcastle Morning Herald*. (Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, Digital order no:hood_27232)

Because of her we can

In traditional written histories of Newcastle 'men of steel' dominate, obscuring the role of women in fomenting historical change. Women have been agents of resistance, activism and radicalism, advancing progressive ideas to improve the lives of others in Newcastle and Australia at large.

From the earliest inception of the colony, the desire to contain convict women and girls—typically deemed depraved by colonial authorities—led to their institutionalisation. The biological fact that a woman could become pregnant emmeshed her 'in an array of social and cultural prohibitions which made women more at risk for being imprisoned for "social" crimes such as public drunkenness and prostitution, where men's imprisonment more frequently involved crimes of violence.'[287] The Newcastle Industrial School for Females was established under the *Destitute Children Act 1866*. It was Australia's first industrial school for girls. Girls under 16 years old were taken there and detained in the convict-built military barracks if identified as neglected by their parents or associated with prostitution. Open to the public view of Newcastle, the girls 'protested their confinement with wild rioting, obscene language, lewd behaviour and frequent escapes.'[288] Documented descriptions of the girls convey the failure of the institution and frustration of its inmates:

> [Eliza O'Brien] has absconded from the Institution on three several occasions, she had frequently thrown stones with violence at the new bell, injuring the paint work, and rang it contrary to all discipline.
>
> She is constantly instigating other girls to acts of mischief and inciting them to insubordination. Her whole conduct has been such, and her violence of temper so ungovernable, I have no hope of any reformation on her whatever.[289]

Public outcry forced the institution to close and relocate to Cockatoo Island (Biloela) in 1871. Other disciplinary buildings in Newcastle such as the lock-up are literally etched with women's voices that refuse to be silenced. Cell F still features graffiti in red fingernail polish: 'DEAD MEN DON'T RAPE.'[290]

At the end of the nineteenth century, the consciousness of women's structural inequality forged political movements for change. Women within Newcastle and the Hunter Valley were part of this agitation including Mary Windeyer, Rose Scott (cousin to Harriet and Helena Scott) and Rose Selwyn.[291]

University of Newcastle students march on Town Hall, *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 13 April 1961. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/7696161066/)

Helenus Scott (wife of the Police Magistrate), Mrs JD Langley (wife of the local manager of the Bank of Australasia) and Mary Windeyer were inaugural committee members when the Newcastle Relief Society was founded in 1870. Rose Selwyn was vice-president of the society for many years. The society aimed to make 'unostentatious efforts to afford relief and comfort to the needy and distressed'[292] including women, men and children.

Women had no legal rights over their children, employment and education were largely inaccessible, divorce was almost impossible and even those women who worked were paid a fraction of men's wages. Women could not vote in New South Wales but the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW set out to change this. Rose Selwyn founded the Newcastle Branch of the Girls Friendly Society in 1882, while her niece Rose Scott became a vital liaison between the Newcastle and Sydney branches. Both women were attuned to the injustice women experienced in their private lives including sexual and domestic abuse. It is thought they would also have witnessed or been aware of the riots at the Newcastle Industrial School for Females.

Rose Scott and two women, c1910. (Source: State Library of NSW, https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/YdmdaJg9)

"I almost felt as if I could not speak ... and then when I saw the sea of earnest faces and heard them saying 'we want the lady', 'is that Miss Scott?' I felt as if I could do anything."

– Rose Scott on addressing a crowd from the balcony of the Crown and Anchor Hotel, corner of Hunter and Perkins streets, Newcastle.[294]

Rose Selwyn became a force to be reckoned, frequently lobbying politicians and senior clergy in Newcastle.[293] Rose Scott, in contrast, became preeminent in Sydney but continued to influence Newcastle, delivering lectures and linking other influential women like Maybanke Wolstenholm to speak on women's suffrage. These lectures at places like the Newcastle School of Arts were a lifeline for women in a city without a higher education institution.

The fight for women to play an active role in public life and shape their own lives is integral to Newcastle's labour history. Women played a vital part in the Newcastle branches of political organisations including the Communist Party of Australia, the Unemployed Workers Movement and Militant Women's Movement (a section of the Communist Party) who organised the first International Women's Day in Newcastle in 1931.

Hope sparked for equality during World War II as women took over men's jobs also kindled a consciousness of wage inequality. Kathleen Blackett, working in Newcastle during World War II, remembers:

During the postwar period, the Union of Australian Women (UAW) made the personal political at a time when women were expected to be confined within the home. Activists such as Barbara Curthoys became a lightning rod for social change across the Hunter region. Curthoys fought for various causes and established the Newcastle Trades Hall Council Aborigines Committee, working with Harrie Saunders to improve conditions at the Purfleet Aboriginal Settlement in Taree.

Even though the right to an abortion was available under certain circumstances as of the 1970s, it was contested. Feminist activist Josephine Conway campaigned tirelessly to defend women's rights in Newcastle including revocations of Whitlam's medical benefits for abortions.[295] In 1982, Conway established the Right to Choose Abortion Coalition, campaigning until her death in 2007 despite being spat on, punched and experiencing death threats.

Out of the radical 1970s environmental campaigns emerged one of Newcastle's most beloved leaders, Joy Cummings (1923–2003). Cummings was the first

Communist Party float, May Day, 1945. Vera Deacon is one of the women on the float. (Source: Courtesy Stan and Vera Deacon)

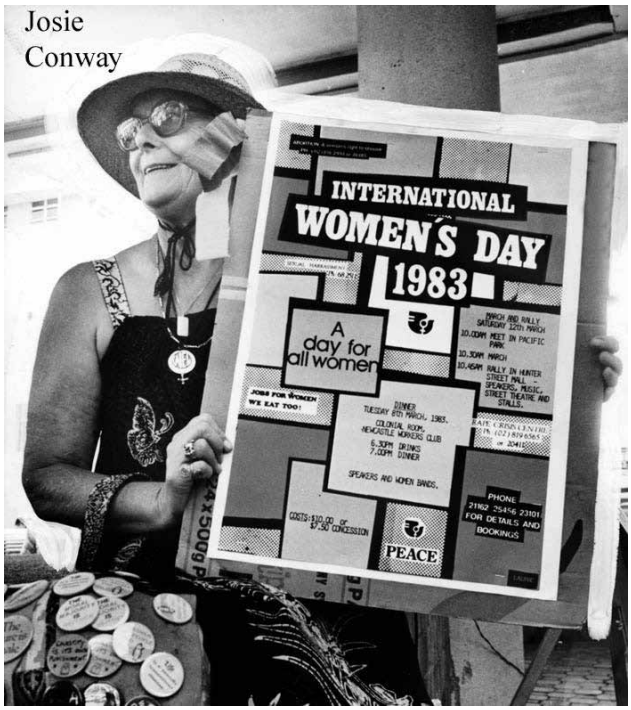
woman in Australia to be elected Lord Mayor, in 1974. Her leadership shifted the dial for local government. A passion for the arts and the conservation of Newcastle's built heritage were guiding forces of her term. Cummings's legacy included the establishment of the Hunter Wetlands Centre, conservation areas in Newcastle East, Newcastle's harbourside Foreshore Park and the refurbishment of the Civic Theatre and adapting the Civic Theatre as a venue to house the Hunter Valley Theatre Company. She was the first Lord Mayor to raise the Aboriginal flag over a town or city hall, and the first to hold a civic reception for Aboriginal people. Undaunted by the bastions of male privilege, Cummings was the first woman to enter the Newcastle Businessman's Club and Newcastle Club. Cummings's daughter Helen described how:

Newcastle Lord Mayor Joy Cummings. (Source: University of Newcastle History, UON Hunter Living Histories, P850A-114)

> Joy's love of Newcastle was infectious and she changed the way Novocastrians felt about their grimy industrial city. She showed them its beauty, that industry had its own beauty, but also convinced them that they deserved natural beauty as [sic] and showed them that it was possible.[296]

"In the industries we found, as I said, that the men were a little bit resentful because we were taking their mates' places I suppose, but they'd gone to the war and rather than leave a hole in the machines, they let us on them. I started off doing wire stitching for aeroplane wings, which was a light load really but we weren't allowed to lift any more than 35lb. which is approximately 16 kilos. Therefore we couldn't get our quota out as we had to wait for one of the men on the other machines to help us. But eventually they accepted us."

– Kathleen Blackett, 1988 (UON, Living Histories)



Josephine Conway of the International Women's Day committee at the International Women's Day Rally, 12 March 1983. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories)

DIY culture

Historically Newcastle was accused of indifference to developing cultural and intellectual pursuits, its citizens obsessed only with 'a hedonistic lifestyle encouraged by a tradition of participatory sport, easy access to many surfing beaches and large expanses of water.[297] Sydney surgeon Dr Roland Pope sought to redress this lack of culture by donating a collection of 100 paintings and rare books to the city in 1945 because it was deemed one of the largest provincial centres without cultural institutions. Newcastle's cultural expression nonetheless thrived, even if at times this was borne out of frustration against a conservatism that had made no space for alternative cultures, and a sense of being overshadowed by industrial history. The benefits of a close-knit community, available space to carve out artistic practices and a desire to counter stereotypes about the city have produced cultural exports to wider Australia and the world.

Imagining Newcastle

Arguably Newcastle's earliest 'do-it-yourself' attitude can be seen in its colonial artist Joseph Lycett. Convicted for forging banknotes and sent to Newcastle for punishment, he gained a second chance by demonstrating his draughtsmanship of the Christ Church Cathedral for Captain James Wallis. Though his 'habits of intoxication' [298] were considered incurable and his suicide ignominious (cutting his throat and tearing the wound out in hospital after an arrest for further forgeries), his enduring paintings of early Newcastle recorded significant parts of Aboriginal culture and colonial contact.

Other 'sons' of Newcastle have been claimed such as artists Sir William Dobell and John Olsen, though their creative oeuvre was defined by their adult lives abroad. But those artists who were drawn to Newcastle found their work forever changed. Playwright and activist Dymphna Cusack was a teacher and was assigned a Newcastle posting in 1942. The city was in the midst of a housing crisis, so she lodged with a working-class family in Parnell Place overlooking the ocean baths. Becoming emmeshed in the city and its working-class community, she wrote *Southern Steel* about three brothers working in industry in Newcastle and *Shoulder the Sky* about the lives of canteen workers in Newcastle during World War II. Her descriptions palpably evoke portraits of working-class families, and the intersection of Newcastle's natural landscape and industry:

> Seeing the whole city spread out before him, he was filled with a sense of exaltation: the harbour sparkling between the winding shores of the estuary, its waters streaked with the purplish line of the river, the twin arms of Nobbys and Stockton enclosing it like the pincers of a giant crab; the huddle of buildings along the waterfront; the scatter of suburbs, thinning out between coast and timbered heights; the innumerable factory chimneys, and, towering above them all, sign and seal of Newcastle's existence, the smoke-stacks of Southern Steel and Broken Hill Proprietary under their perpetual silver-black clouds.[299]

Prolific painter Margaret Olley, who forged her career in Sydney, fell in love with Newcastle during the 1960s. Buying several properties in Newcastle and East Maitland, Olley painted 23 works of the city and waterfront. She championed the Newcastle Art Gallery and emerging artists, donating up to 48 artworks to the collection.

For other writers and artists, the tension of leaving and returning to Newcastle was a powerful creative driving force, as was the spectre of a bigger city like Sydney:

> I think this goes down into something about Newcastle as a working town, and with that working town mentality a sense that you should never get too big for your boots. The flipside of that are the close-minded small-minded inhibitions that step on anyone who is odd or artistic – one reason why we all had to escape.
>
> Though I fancy the big spaces of Newcastle drive us to fill out something in ourselves we never could have done in Sydney.
>
> We really are a part of some secret society – Novocastrians – and I get a kick out of that and even feel sorry for people born in Sydney, as if they were somehow born without dreams and songs to take them somewhere else and then to send them back home.
>
> – Mark Mordue 'Transistor'[300]

Recently a reverse trend has developed as Sydneysiders increasingly leave the State capital for Newcastle. While the population cohort most likely to move away from Newcastle is still that of people aged 15–24, the city has seen moderate population growth fuelled partly by people leaving Sydney.[301] Since the 1990s, Sydney's unaffordable rent and increased gentrification has seen an exodus of both younger and older generations to Newcastle and elsewhere. Although the influx of new arrivals to Newcastle doesn't represent 'a specific bohemian event in the way the colonisation of the inner suburbs of the capital cities was in the 60s, 70s and 80s',[302] it has opened up the possibility of living a lifestyle no longer possible in Sydney, and supported the burgeoning of new writers, musicians and artists.

Newcastle Harbour in late afternoon, 1971, by Margaret Olley. (Source: Margaret Olley Art Trust)

Coronation decorations in Hunter Street by Hubert James Bear, 1953. (Source: Newcastle Region Library Collection, 225-000337)

Going out and coming out in Newcastle

The nightlife of Newcastle has given NSW and Australia some of the most indelible associations with the city. In the 1970s and '80s the pub scene fostered the likes of the Screaming Jets, and one of Australia's biggest exports, Silverchair, started playing as teenagers during the 1990s. The Star Hotel riot of 1979, in which 4,000 patrons fought police, and the later controversial lockout laws attracted media headlines about the city's gritty pub culture. However, these violent images belie the strength of Newcastle's alternative communities such as the LGBTQI+ residents and artists who historically carved out spaces in the city, at the back of clubs, underground and also on stage under the spotlight alongside the mainstream.

Long-lost icons of the city's nightlife like the Palais Royale, no longer a part of the streetscape, are instead nostalgically evoked in people's memories and old family photo albums. The site evolved from the Empire Music Hall in the 1890s, to a vaudeville venue, a silent movie theatre and an ice rink during the 1920s until its major refurbishment as the Palais Royale. The dance hall became a beloved hotspot of Newcastle up to the 1960s. Its last incarnation was a nightclub during the 1990s before its demolition in 2008.

As a counterpoint, the revived Victoria Theatre now stands proudly as the oldest theatre still surviving in NSW. It remains a significant touchstone in the memories of those Newcastle residents who worked as ushers, film projectionists, performers or who were patrons. Pat and Ron Todd's daughter, Kathy Evans, credits the theatre with her very existence:

> I'm here because 62 years ago my parents met somewhere in the middle of the theatre. They were on a blind date[;] as a result they have a daughter, a son, two granddaughters and four great-granddaughters and sons. So big heritage from this one meeting in Victoria Theatre.[303]

During the 1970s and '80s, the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie LGAs had an increasingly large population of young people, which fuelled a bourgeoning of pubs, clubs and bars that catered to the different subculture scenes of the day. Clubs like The Ambassador (known as The Bass) and Newcastle Workers Club played host to local and touring acts aligned to the Oz rock genre including Kevin Borich Express, Rose Tattoo, Mi-Sex, Ayers Rock, The Heroes, Mike Rudd's Instant Replay, Midnight Oil, Gunther Gorman's G-Force, Supernaut, Swanee, Jimmy and Boys, Russell Morris, Split Enz, Sidewinder and The Radiators.

The 1970s ended with the explosive image of the Star Hotel Riot. One of Australia's largest riots, it became a textbook example for police of how not to control an aggressive crowd.[304] Though the rioters were dismissed as drunk, angry, young men, later interpretations of the riot have pointed to a heady cocktail of social factors. Like many places, Newcastle was suffering a downturn as the economy shifted away from traditional employment in manufacturing. By 1979, 5499 men and 3,888 women were registered as unemployed in Newcastle but only 131 job vacancies were listed.[305] The Star was a refuge for the city's youth and university students drawn to its live music six nights a week and drag shows in the Middle Bar:

> In its heyday, the Star blurred the differences between youth, feminist and gay sub-cultures and the dominant working-class cultures of the city, creating new synergies that challenged prevailing social mores. Nearly everyone who frequented the Star was in some way marginalised – by poverty, unemployment, gender, youth or sexual identity – and this created a sense of kinship[306]

Police and ambulance ball at Palais Royale, 13 September 1933. (Source: Image from the Newcastle Sun Collection, held by the University of Newcastle Library's Special Collections)

But at the beginning of 1979, licensee Don Graham banned homosexuals from entering the Star, advertising it as 'The Pub with No Queers.' The LGBTQI+ community picketed the Star in protest. The Star's owner, Tooth & Co, closed the pub with only one week's notice on 19 September, declaring it would be more economical to demolish it than to repair it. Its closure was a blow to a community who had socialised, partied and sought refuge within this venue. Graham promised, 'We'll have the biggest wake the city has seen.'[307] Free beer flowed from 5 to 6pm and the crowd swelled to 5,000 people. The police entered at 10pm and stopped The Heroes playing and cleared the bar. Outside, a police car knocked down a passerby and the crowd erupted. Projectiles and punches began to fly and a brawl escalated. By the following day, 14 policemen and 8 civilians were injured and 28 people charged with 100 offences. The riot made national and international headlines.

The expansive 1980s made room for more left-of-field cultural offerings in Newcastle. The rise of dance and electronic music saw clubs adapt their music. Comments in the *Newcastle Post* noted the cultural shift at The Ambassador (aka The Bass) in 1984:

> Now, a lot of people know The Bass only as the sort of place where head-bangers go to have their eardrums pierced. Bikies, rough heads, molls, the sort of stuff which can put a damper on your night if you don't groove on getting involved in all-out brawls. It has come as a shock ... that the head-bangers no longer totally dominate The Bass ... More of your New Wave, less of your plug ugly thug in leather. (*The Newcastle Post,* 11 April 1984, p 16)[308]

Over at the Clarendon Hotel, something completely different was taking shape. The Castanet Club was a group of local artists who were 'more than a band, more than a club ... an ethos, an art movement, a fashion movement and a musical uprising.'[309] The Club emerged out of a scene at University of Newcastle featuring actors such as John Doyle (aka Rampaging Roy Slaven), Mikey Robbins and Stephen Abbott (the Sandman) of Triple J and later ABC Good News Week fame. Their merchandise, stage sets, club signage and posters were designed by Michael Bell whose 'acid-trip circus aesthetic' perfectly represented the club.[310] The DIY aesthetic was afforded by a free venue—the ex-disco space adjoining the Clarendon Hotel and an era freed of constraints such as insurance. Some of the theatrics and on-stage provocative content could be seen later in bands like Machine Gun Fellatio, with founding Novocastrian Glenn Easton Dormand heading up the act during the early 2000s.

Front cover of the *Newcastle Sun*, Thursday 20 September 1979. (Source: *Newcastle Sun*)

For the LGBTQI+ community, safe spaces were found at the Star Hotel pre-1979, the Wine Bar in Hamilton and Zorba's in Hunter Street, which also had the late licence of 3am attracting the overflow from the Star. Unlikely allies for the lesbian community were found at bikie pubs like the Premier Hotel. During the 1980s, it was Uptown Circus upstairs at the now-demolished Newcastle RSL or the upstairs dance bar at the Gunfighters Rest, the Congo Club or Ziggy's. After the earthquake in 1989, the Wickham Park Hotel also became a popular lesbian hotel. The Newcastle University Gay Society was instrumental in organising dances and parties at big civic venues like Newcastle Town Hall (now City Hall), Cooks Hill Surf Club and the Polish Hall in Broadmeadow[311]. Many remember the importance of these venues as providing a modicum of acceptance in Newcastle:

Castanet Club at the rear of the Clarendon Hotel, Newcastle, 1985. (Source: University of Newcastle History, UON Hunter Living Histories, P798-61)

> ... Sure, some didn't like gay men or women, but there was general acceptance, and you could tease your hair or dye it purple and wear second-hand clothes, like big overcoats over ripped up skirts, and you fitted in, cause peopled just wanted to have fun with their friends and not be, you know, hassled out by yobbos.[312] (Sue describing the LGBTQI+ scene in Newcastle during the 1980s)

However, despite the acceptance or tolerance at public venues, being 'out' in the workplace or to your family was still stigmatised. It could have punitive consequences of losing your job, daily discrimination and the fear of violence. Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1984 under the Wran Labor Government but recognition and equality were still hard-won. It wasn't until 1995 that a landmark case awarded Newcastle gay couple Andrew Hope and William Brown a victory in their battle against health insurer NIB to extend family health insurance policies to same-sex couples in NSW.

Newcastle's nightlife has continued to hit the headlines in recent decades. Fears of spiralling alcohol-fuelled violence led to some of NSW's toughest controls on liquor licensing being introduced in 2008. The lockout law model was considered so successful in reducing assault rates it was applied to Sydney a few years later. However, others—including the emerging generation of musicians—saw it as a blow for the night-time economy. From 2021, the lockout laws were relaxed in tandem with a *Newcastle After Dark* Council strategy to promote cultural life in the city.

No one's going to help you, so you've got to help yourself in Newcastle … We never set out saying we're gonna be a DIY band, we just wanted to start playing … there was nowhere to play so we did a lot of house shows and bowling clubs and wherever we could do it.

– Leroy Macqueen, Gooch Palms[313]

Newcastle was [and] still is this real yobbo town. Like, you'd go to the Workers' Club … you'd see all these blokes standing round the dance floor checking out the chicks. It's, like, the girls are all on display, and you pick the one you like and track her round the club asking to buy her a drink. Not many guys would get up and dance, even to Jimmy Barnes, unless they were really pissed or trying to get a root. But when you went to a club like Ziggy's or the Gunnies everybody danced … the music kind of made you dance. Not like the yobbo joints, where if you danced you were a poofter.

– Peter remembering dancing in Newcastle in the 1980s[314]

I remember Jesse saying, "Look! They're three young dudes from Newcastle [Silverchair]. We're two young kids from the country. If they can do it, we can." Witnessing their career blossom, we started to believe that something similar might be possible for us.

– Ella Hooper, Killing Heidi[315]

Newcastle has become a lot more inclusive and accessible for non-male performers to get involved … it's a generational shift for the better.

– Maddie Mitchell, member of Rort Menace and BOUDICCA[316]

Ranger and Walmsley dancing at Newcastle City Hall, 20 July 1933. (Source: Newcastle Sun Photos, UON Hunter Living Histories)

Newcastle band The Cult performing at University of Newcastle International Students Union Dance, June 1967. Photograph by Ross Smith. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories)

Silverchair performs at the Across the Great Divide Tour in 2007. Photograph by Jeanie Mackinder. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, Silverchair-AcrossTheGreatDivide.jpg)

Poppy Star Olson showing her skills at Bar Beach Skate Park. (Source: CN)

Half pipes and point breaks

The local subcultures of surfing and skating played their part in shifting the rusted-on industrial image of Newcastle. Conformist rather than radical in its origins, Australian surf club culture in the first part of the twentieth century was exported to the world in images of bronzed life savers on beer advertisements, tourist posters or as swimwear models. Many of the surf life savers were ex-servicemen perpetuating the mythology of their heroism against the backdrop of Australian coastal towns. This was a largely exclusionary space for women who were cast in the role of models at surf carnival pageants. The Surf Life Saving Association in Australia didn't admit women as full members until 1980. However, the sport of surfing had countercultural origins during the 1960s and 1970s. In recent decades Newcastle's women have claimed this territory including world champion surfer Philippa Anderson.

Daylight bathing in the ocean was banned in New South Wales up until 1902, confining swimming into enclosed baths segregated by sex. In Newcastle, the Bogey Hole was for men's use while the Ladies Baths were established at the southern end of Newcastle Beach but described by the *Newcastle Chronicle* in 1860 as affording women very little privacy: 'It is a positive fact that some men go so far as to get behind the rocks, over top of which they level spy-glasses, in order that they may enjoy a nearer and more distinct vision.'[317]

By the end of the nineteenth century, the lure of the beach overpowered the restrictions. The Newcastle Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) was established in 1908 (a year after Australia's first club in Bondi). Stockton SLSC and Cooks Hill SLSC followed. During the 1920s, Nobbys SLSC was also formed. The coastal mining villages rescued local swimmers and vied against each other in competitive surf carnivals. Newcastle also gained the historic Ocean Baths; construction started in 1910 but they weren't formally opened until 1922. The Stripped Classical / Art Deco façade and bleacher seating became the backdrop to many a Novocastrian's swim lesson, competition and scene of summer relaxation.

The emergence of the new surf culture in the 1970s and '80s was partly driven by a conscious effort to generate a new image for Newcastle. During the 1970s, the Newcastle International was offered some of the biggest surf prizes in the world. Surfest was established in 1985, becoming the biggest such competition in the southern hemisphere. Merewether surfer Mark Richards, patron of Surfest, became a proud Newcastle export, winning four world titles. He also brought with him some of the Newcastle DIY aesthetic, refining his own version of a twin-fin surfboard design. According to *Surf Simply*: 'What made Richards' design unique wasn't the fact that it had two fins, but the way in which he combined other design elements – chiefly the shape of the tail and the position and outline of the fins – to optimise the design's potential, creating a more versatile craft altogether.'[318] The importance of Newcastle in Australian surfing was further recognised when Merewether was crowned as a National Surfing Reserve in 2009.

Surf life savers exercising, Nobbys Beach, 1930s. (Source: Newcastle Sun Photos, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/8225167857/)

In 1985, a wooden skate ramp built in a suburban backyard kickstarted skate culture in Newcastle. (Source: Newcastle Sun Collection, University of Newcastle Library's Special Collections)

Phillippa Anderson rides a right hand break in Heat #2 in the Newcastle Women's Open Round of 25, Surfest 2010. (Source: PJ in Oz, https://www.flickr.com/photos/pj_in_oz/4435443046/)

"Over at Bar Beach in 1985, skaters were desperate for a space to ride. One lonely fibreglass ramp on the beach provided the only useful incline. Skater Sean Mussett aka Gravel Burns sought out his friend's dad's concreting business and they began building a 3-metre-tall ramp. The ramp ended up being constructed inside a suburban backyard on Ridge Street in Merewether. Dismantled due to planning issues, it still helped foster a subculture in Newcastle that has been taken up by the next generation including Poppy Starr Olsen, who in 2020 made history as the first Australian to compete in Olympic skateboarding."[319]

Motor Cycle Club, Hill Climb at Merewether, 1932. (Source: Newcastle Sun Collection, University of Newcastle Library's Special Collections)

King Edward Park Hill Climb, 28 April 1951. (Source: Newcastle Morning Herald, Newcastle Region Library Collection, 104 001611)

Hoons and heroes

Some of Newcastle's more prominent sporting cultures have taken place on the road and out on the field. Self-confessed 'hoons' of Newcastle proudly own their obsession with petrol. Some veterans of car sports see the hobby as a natural extension of their lives working in BHP trading in parts and fuelling machinery.[320] The tradition of motor sports in the Hunter region had its origins in the first official motorcycle speedway race meet in December 1923 at Maitland Showground and took shape in well-loved events at the Newcastle Motordome (1977–2002) on the Old Punt Road in Tomago and the King Edward Park Hillclimb. Hairpin bends along York Drive made for thrilling driving amidst a picturesque coastline overlooking Nobbys Beach.

Unauthorised yet popular events took place out at Kooragang Island where burnouts and drag racing made for a lively Saturday night. In 2014, police reported more than 300 cars and 600 people had gathered and 45 traffic infringements were issued for burnouts. In recent years, formalised competitions like the Newcastle 500 have become a boon for tourism in the city while in equal measure vexing many of its local residents.

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The Newcastle Rugby League is one of the oldest competitions in Australia. Competing in the 1908 Sydney Rugby League premiership, the local competition broke away to form the Northern Branch of the New South Wales Rugby League in 1909. The league was bound into the industrial history of Newcastle, with the emergence of the coalfields teams during the 1930s. From the 1950s, football well and truly shaped the social fabric of the city. Major clubs opened licensed social clubs and revenue was generated through bar sales and poker machines.

In 1988, the league shifted again with the expansion of the New South Wales Rugby League premiership into a national competition and the admission of Newcastle Knights. The significance of the Knights and league as a social institution was writ large by their 1997 Grand Final victory over Manly. The game could not have been more loaded with the history and hopes of the city:

> Newcastle and the Hunter Region ... having suffered in recent decades from a continual loss of employment in the manufacturing sector, experienced a remarkable bicentennial year in 1997. In April, Broken Hill Proprietary Limited (BHP), once Newcastle's largest employer, provoked widespread pessimism about the future of the city following its announcement of the impending closure of raw steelmaking there. Less than six months later, the victory of the Knights (positioned as the provincial 'battlers' team) over Manly (positioned as the metropolitan 'silver tails' from Sydney) provoked a burst of optimism that the city's spirit could overcome any 'setbacks' like those of the 1989 earthquake and the BHP steelworks closure.[320]
>
> Newcastle has been drunk for three weeks. It is a city intoxicated not just on beer, although there has been plenty of that flowing since the Knights victory in the Australian Rugby League grand final.
>
> Newcastle is drunk on pride. It is celebrating having stuck it to the establishment, of having humiliated those who gave its footy team no chance against the slick superstars of Manly, of having put its head down and driven forward against the odds and earned the shield of victory. – *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1997, p 15

Newcastle Knights at Hunter Stadium, 2003. (Source: Sue Ryan, Newcastle Libraries)

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Newcastle Now

Cafe culture Newcastle, Newcastle 2018. (Source: City of Newcastle)

Newcastle Now

Café culture, Newcastle, 2018. (Source: City of Newcastle)

Newcastle's transformation following the closure of BHP has seen a shift in the city's economy and the shape of its urban fabric. Fundamental to the changes are investment in new infrastructure, housing and adaptive re-use of heritage assets. Newcastle's culturally and linguistically diverse communities, though small in number, have also contributed to the economic labour history and the social infrastructure of the city.

Renewing Newcastle

> People who ought to know better still think of this city as it was thought of years ago. They read of new enterprises and new ventures and also of visions of a many-sided industrial future, but are not moved away from the past: they still think the city's development is limited by the coal trade.[323]

The shutdown of Newcastle's coalmines, its factories and its dockyards in the 1990s was a blow to the city. The closure came hot on the heels of two decades of decline, the Newcastle Earthquake, population decline and rising unemployment. The city's built and social fabric decayed as people and jobs moved to the suburbs or left Newcastle altogether. Many heritage buildings fell into disrepair while other industrial buildings emptied.

The blow was softened somewhat by the city's transition from the secondary to tertiary sector and initiatives developed by BHP in conjunction with the unions, community and government to transition Newcastle to a post-BHP landscape.[324] BHP invested $7 million into Personal Pathways (1.5 % of the payroll at the steelworks), an extensive program of assistance, retraining and job placement for employees facing retrenchment. A raft of initiatives was also implemented at all levels of government to transition Newcastle to new industries and future economic development beyond the steel, coal and shipbuilding industries.

Queens Wharf, February 1989, photographed by Percival William Sternbeck. (Source: Coalfields Local History Association, UON Hunter Living Histories, Sternbeck_Bk23_0289_B_000)

Foreshore Park was formerly the site of the Newcastle East Marshalling Yard (largely disused State Rail Authority land), the Zaara Street Power Station (demolished in 1975) and two bond stores. The park's layout was the result of a design competition in the 1980s to convert the area into an open space parkland. Work began on the redevelopment of the site in 1985 and it was officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1988 to mark Australia's Bicentenary.

Another major development was the revitalisation of Honeysuckle following the establishment of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation in 1992 to redevelop surplus government railway and port-related land along 4 kilometres of harbourfront adjacent to Newcastle's central business district.[325]

Honeysuckle before redevelopment. (Source: Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation, *Honeysuckle Celebrating 20 years*)

The high-profile campaign Renew Newcastle was initiated by Marcus Westbury in 2008, as a DIY urban renewal scheme to take over 30 empty buildings in the city for creative outlets such as galleries, start-ups and bespoke boutiques. Westbury founded Renew Australia in 2013 following the success of Renew Newcastle, becoming a 'national social enterprise designed to catalyse community renewal, economic development, the arts and creative industries across Australia'.[326]

Momentum was regained later in the decade with the Revitalise Newcastle program by Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, NSW Treasury, the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation and Infrastructure NSW. The resulting $650 million investment into the revitalisation of the city centre has included transport infrastructure, commercial development, homes and public spaces. The program has

Honeysuckle before redevelopment. (Source: Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation, *Honeysuckle Celebrating 20 years*)

not been without controversy in the community including the truncation of the heavy rail line at Wickham. The NSW Government's objective was to connect the city to the waterfront, and provide new public space along with commercial, retail and residential development. Although there were critics of this project who saw the redevelopment as funded by public money but operated by private interests, with the touted benefits of public space increasingly infringed upon by commercial and private residential development,[327] the passage of time has proven those critics wrong.

The urban renewal of the Honeysuckle precinct has successfully integrated employment, residential, tourism, recreation and public domain. It includes a revitalised Newcastle Station precinct, providing direct, unbroken connection between Hunter Street and the waterfront, a well-used and loved foreshore park and an extensive promenade along the foreshore from Nobbys Head to Newcastle West. As recently as April 2024 the Cottage Creek southeast section of the public domain was completed. The Honeysuckle Redevelopment is substantially complete.

The Broadmeadow Regionally Significant Growth Area is the latest locality set for significant development and revitalisation. The 'Broadmeadow Place Strategy' was prepared by CN in partnership with the NSW Government and adopted by Council in March 2025. This document will guide redevelopment of 313ha of land in Broadmeadow and Hamilton North over the next 30 years, anticipating creation of up to 15,000 jobs and 20,000 new homes for an estimated 40,000 residents. One of the first actions under this plan was initiated by the NSW Government rezoning of four government-owned sites in Broadmeadow's growth area.

The transformation of iconic industrial and heritage buildings has played a key part in the revitalisation of the city. The state heritage listed Newcastle Post Office, which had fallen into disrepair, was bought in 2017 for $3.3 million by hotel magnate Jerry Schwartz. He proposed to turn the property into a conference centre and bar. Successful arts initiatives have revitalised other heritage places such as the adaptive re-use of the Newcastle Police Station. In 1988 it became the Hunter Heritage Centre and is now the Lock-Up, a multidisciplinary experimental arts space.

The urban structure of Newcastle was formerly dictated by the industrial and mining economy and characterised by a pedestrian oriented series of suburbs based around workplaces and retail high streets. New settlements developed further out as the railway network expanded. Then by the 1970s, mirroring increased car dependency, urban sprawl had become the byproduct of low-density suburban expansion. In 2003, suburbs like Maryland had an average of 26.4 people per hectare, around half the density of Cooks Hill.[328] By 1989 the destruction caused by the earthquake had led to infill and new development in the Newcastle CBD and surrounding suburbs.

Today urban renewal corridors, housing release areas and catalyst areas are identified within CN and NSW Government strategies as a means of targeting areas for housing provision. Areas targeted for urban renewal in the *Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012* and *Newcastle Development Control Plan 2023* include

The Signal Box after 2019 after heritage restoration. (Source: Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation)

Islington, Mayfield-Tighes Hill, Hamilton, Broadmeadow and Adamstown.

On 7 December 2023, the NSW Government announced the proposed Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Program as well as Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy planning reforms. The changes aim to increase housing capacity close to transport, jobs and existing infrastructure to address the state's housing crisis. The TOD program, which proposes new planning controls, will allow more homes within 400m of metro and suburban railway stations including the Newcastle Interchange.

Increased pressure from housing shortages and programs such as the TOD prompted a review in 2024 of Newcastle's heritage conservation areas (HCAs) including Newcastle City Centre, Newcastle East, The Hill and Cooks Hill. The buildings, streets and precincts of these four Newcastle HCAs have undergone significant change as part of economic revitalisation. Streetscapes have come under pressure as older buildings have been replaced and vacant sites infilled with new higher-density, mixed use development. The review found residents within the HCAs generally want to maintain the special character of these areas. The community identified several distinct character areas, particularly in the Newcastle City Centre HCA, for protection and conservation.

In June 2024, a planning proposal was made to create a ninth HCA: that of Cameron's Hill, a 13.73-hectare parcel of land known for its Victorian and Federation-era homes that takes in areas of Hamilton and Broadmeadow. The proposal was received by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in August 2024 with public exhibition in September 2024. Council adopted the planning proposal in February 2025, a decision by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to gazette amendments to create the new HCA is expected by mid-2025.

The changing faces of Newcastle

Compared to the rest of New South Wales's population, the cultural make-up of Newcastle is less diverse. Residents are more likely to have been born in Australia (86.1% for Newcastle vs 72.4% for New South Wales overall) and the majority speak only English at home (90% vs 74.9%).[329] Nonetheless migrant communities have made their mark on Newcastle.

The Australian goldrushes brought increased Greek migration to New South Wales during the 1850s. The presence of Greek people in Newcastle can be dated from the 1880s. Greek run oyster saloons and fruit shops clustered around Queens Wharf, the former Newcastle Railway Station, and along Hunter and Blane streets. Chain migration from Ithaca saw many families congregate in Newcastle. By the early twentieth century there were at least 30 Greek owned and operated businesses in Newcastle associated with the food industry.[330]

During World War I, fears that Greece would side with Germany triggered anti-Greek rioting and attacks on three businesses including John Zervos' shop in Hunter Street. However, this did not deter the community nor prevent a rising number of Greek milk bars from opening. The Art Deco interiors and 'exotic' American style meals came into their own during World War II when American servicemen were assigned leave in Newcastle.

The draw to Newcastle was also based on further chain migration from Macedonia. Many Macedonian families were sponsored by relatives in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with the population reaching 600 in Newcastle during the 1940s.[331] Suburbs such as Mayfield, Tighes Hill, Islington and Hamilton became home to Macedonian families working at BHP, Rylands Bros, and Stewarts & Lloyds. Most of these jobs were unskilled and many people worked with the intention of saving money for their own home, sponsor family members to Australia or to return home.. Kiril Murgev was born in Macedonia and remembers his father's experience of working at BHP:

> I can remember we lived in Mayfield East, most of the time he walked to BHP to work, and then he would come home very tired. In the evening after day shift, working in the open hearth, swinging a sledgehammer ... 14kg ... and he would come home and show me, he couldn't even close his fist...[332]

Between 1947 and 1961, many migrants from Eastern Europe including Croatia and Macedonia settled in Australia's industrial areas including Newcastle. One of the largest postwar immigrant camps in Australia was established at Greta, 40km northwest of Newcastle. The first cohort of displaced persons to be settled in Australia outside of a capital city arrived at Newcastle Harbour on 19 August 1949 aboard the *Fairsea*, and 1,096 migrants were transported to the Greta Migrant Camp via train. Just under a month later, 100 migrants from the camp were recruited to work at BHP. This was not without complaint from locals who feared that migrant employment was 'to the detriment of Australian workers.'[333]

Italian families such as the De Martins were influential in Newcastle's construction economy, establishing one of the area's longest-running concreting companies (in Mayfield). During the 1950s and '60s, the De Martin Brothers business employed hundreds of Italian migrants on construction projects, including suburban petrol stations for BHP.[334] The brothers created a decorative terrazzo for the Royal Newcastle Hospital and the State Library of NSW, before starting their own company in Mayfield making granite benchtops.

Migrant communities influenced the built form of Newcastle and shaped cultural, sporting and religious facilities. In 1969, Newcastle's first Greek Orthodox church, St Demetrios, was founded in Hamilton East, followed by the Holy Apostles Church in Hamilton. The Croatian Wickham Sports Club supported the establishment of the Newcastle Croatia Football Club in 1984.

John Black Oyster Saloon, 56 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW, 1891. (Source: Ralph Snowball Photographic Archive, UON Hunter Living Histories, https://www.flickr.com/photos/uon/3964533511/)

California Café, c1940s–1950s. (Source: Sikiotis, reproduced by Spero Davias on https://www.soundworld.com.au/cafe/)

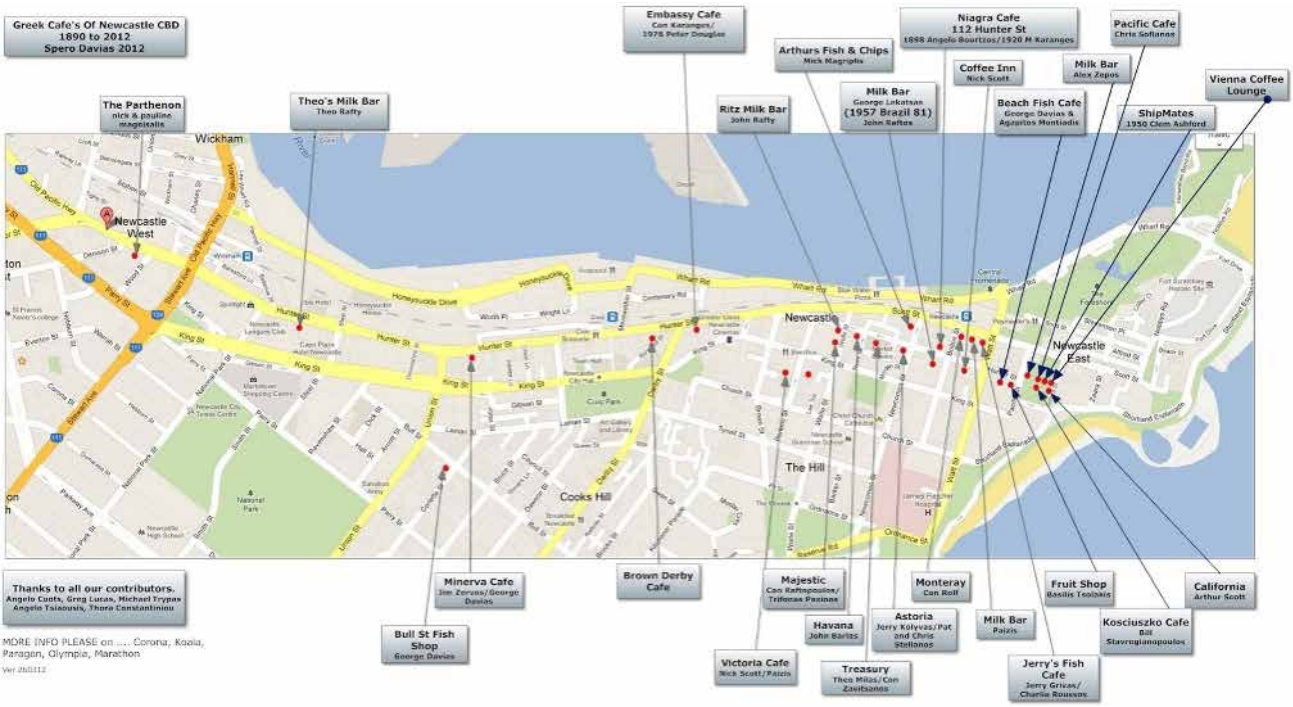
Ithacan picnic, Newcastle, 1940s. (Source: J Comino, from 'In Their Own Image: Greek Australians' National Project Archives)

John Zervos, Dionisios Trohlis (Troulias) and Peter Zervos, Newcastle, NSW, late 1910s. (Source: Leonard Janiszewski and Effy Alexakis, Novocastrian Hellenes: an insight into Newcastle's Greek settlement)

In the early twenty-first century, refugee communities have become part of the life of Newcastle. The Hunter African Communities Council had helped resettle people from Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Rwanda. Short-term accommodation has become a feature of several Newcastle suburbs such as North Lambton. Other refugees have secured long-term accommodation in Broadmeadow, Carrington, Islington, Jesmond, Mayfield, Shortland and Wallsend.[335]

Internal migration within New South Wales to Newcastle remains the main source of population growth. Since COVID-19, Newcastle has experienced another shift in population as people are increasingly leaving Sydney to find affordable housing, in turn driving up house prices in Newcastle and elsewhere. Most migration comes from the Central Coast, Mid North Coast, Singleton, Port Macquarie-Hastings and Sydney's Northern Beaches. The younger population moves in a push and pull pattern. The age group moving into Newcastle most frequently is that of 18–24 year olds as they arrive from regional areas seeking tertiary education and employment opportunities. But the most common age group leaving Newcastle is the next bracket up, between 25 and 34, who tend to move back to neighbouring Lake Macquarie, Maitland and Cessnock LGAs seeking affordable housing and employment.[336]

Newcastle's population is projected to grow by 41,000 between 2016 and 2041 (from 160,900 to 202,050 people). New households are expected to increase by 18,250 in the same period. This is partly due to population increase but also due to changing household formation rates that are made up of more retirees, young people living alone or two-person households.[337] The outskirts of Newcastle around Fletcher, Minmi and Maryland draw young families who tend to leave the inner-city areas dominated by younger adults. These fringe suburbs have been identified as significant greenfield opportunities



Map of some of the cafés in Newcastle's inner city, updated March 2010. (Source: Spero Davias on https://www.soundworld.com.au/cafe/)

alongside Elermore Vale and Wallsend. Inner-city areas such as Newcastle, Newcastle West, Mayfield, Adamstown, New Lambton, Broadmeadow, Maryville, Wickham and Islington are also expected to provide new dwelling opportunities.

Newcastle 2040, endorsed by Council in April 2025, sets out a 10-year roadmap to deliver and finance Council's vision of Newcastle as a liveable, sustainable, inclusive global city. The ongoing opportunities and challenges which the City of Newcastle faces in the next decade includes climate change, long term impacts of COVID-19, affordable housing and housing provision shortfalls, industry transition and low education coupled with moderate population growth, lack of diversity and local brain drain.

Martin Bros concrete contractors at 80a Maitland Road, Mayfield. (Source: De Martin Family)

Concreters including Giusepp Suprano finish a slab at King Street car park, 1961. (Source: De Martin family)

The Holy Apostle Church, 11–17 Steel Street, Hamilton, June 2025. (Source: CN)

NUspace is a $95 million landmark education precinct under development by the UON in the heart of Newcastle's CBD. (Source: University of Newcastle History Collection, UON Hunter Living Histories)

From Steel City to Smart City

Since 1999, employment in the healthcare and social assistance sector has grown, making this the largest industry in the Newcastle and the Hunter region. It employed over 23,000 residents in 2021, the largest occupation segment as measured by the last census.

The John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct provides healthcare services for Newcastle, the greater Hunter region and northern NSW communities. John Hunter Hospital was established in 1991, integrating four separate hospitals (Royal Newcastle Hospital, Calvary Mater Hospital, the Western Suburbs Hospital, and the Wallsend District Hospital) on a new campus at Rankin Park, Lambton Heights. Since that time it has become the major trauma and teaching hospital outside the Sydney metropolitan area and one of the busiest hospitals in the state.

Education/training has also expanded, becoming the second major employment sector in Newcastle. The University of Newcastle was established as an independent institution in 1965 and was relocated to the campus at Shortland soon after (now the Callaghan campus). The university has grown rapidly since that time. New courses such as law and medicine have been introduced, and several new campuses established including at Ourimbah and Gosford on the Central Coast, in the Newcastle and Sydney CBDs, and in Singapore.

Plan for the University of Newcastle campus, Shortland, 1964. (Source: UON Hunter Living Histories, P3023-119)

Newcastle remains one of the largest coal export ports in the world. The amount of coal shipped through the Port of Newcastle was recorded as 144.5 million tonnes (valued at $38,693 million to the economy) in 2023.[338] Yet this volume of exports does not correlate to a significant workforce. Only 5% of the Hunter region's workforce (which includes Newcastle) is in mining; the sector ranks behind health care and social assistance education and training, retail trade, accommodation and food services, construction and manufacturing. During the 1990s, CN adopted the slogan 'A clean green city' and introduced a range of sustainability measures. One initiative, the world's first greenhouse gas speedometer, sought to draw attention to the city's emissions from carbon dioxide, electricity, gas, waste and water.[339] However, as environmental historian Nancy Cushing argued, 'as climate change makes carbon pollution a global rather than a local issue, ongoing coal exports challenge Newcastle's claims to have escaped its smoky past and to be clean, green, post-industrial.'[340] CN has forged ahead with its own initiatives including achievement of its goal to generate 30% of its electricity from low-carbon sources by 2020, and securing a $6.5 million loan from Australia's Clean Energy Finance Corporation to build the region's biggest solar farm.

In 2023, the Hunter offshore wind zone was declared. Stretching from Norah Head on the Central Coast up to Newcastle, it occupies 2,000 square kilometres of ocean space.[341] The plans have divided the community, like in other parts of Australia, with concerns over environmental impacts and whether the project would deliver long-term employment. Nonetheless the shift away from coal is inevitable and has driven the growth of the Newcastle container port and proposal for a deepwater container terminal. In 2021, the Port of Newcastle challenged the restrictions placed on container movement by NSW Ports. The Federal Court ruled in favour of NSW Ports, which prioritises Port Botany and Port Kembla as the key trade gateways. This ruling has not deterred Port of Newcastle's policy, which has flagged 80 hectares of vacant port land for development, representing 25% of total landholdings at the Port of Newcastle. In the face of climate change and the Hunter's population increase, the Port of Newcastle sees the potential for diversifying port freight as a key pillar economic growth for the region.[342] The diversified port included a proposal for a passenger cruise terminal, but funding was withdrawn from Infrastructure NSW in 2019.

Despite the absence of a cruise terminal, tourism has become a key pillar of Newcastle's diversified economy. In 2019, it was estimated that tourism contributed $945 million to the local economy and sustained 4,950 or nearly 5% of total jobs.[343] With its combination of cultural heritage, natural environment, and nighttime economy, the City of Newcastle continues to draw significant visitation. The opening of the extension of the Newcastle Art Gallery, providing an additional 1,600sqm of exhibition space, by the end of 2025 is set to boost cultural tourism to the city.

The 29 July 2025 opening of the international terminal at the Newcastle International Airport is also expected to drive increased visitation to the city with planned flights to destinations such as Bali firmly putting it on the map as the state's second international airport.

Our population

Newcastle population 2023 **174,294**

Population by 2046 **205,445**

Greater Newcastle population 2021 **604,115**

Population by 2041 **773,825**

Estimated annual population growth rate **0.77%**

Planning NSW Population Projections, forecast.id

People

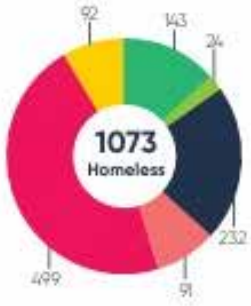
Median age
Newcastle 37
NSW 39

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population
Newcastle 4.4%
NSW 3.4%

Born overseas
Newcastle 15%
NSW 29%

Speak a language other than English
Newcastle 11%
NSW 27%

134 different languages spoken at home – most widely spoken includes Mandarin, Macedonian, Italian, Greek and Arabic. Languages spoken with greatest need for translation included Arabic, Mandarin, Swahili, Persian/Dari and Tibetan.



Homeless categories

- 'severely' crowded dwellings
- improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out
- supported accommodation for the homeless
- temporarily with other households
- boarding houses
- other temporary lodgings

Housing stress

Of the 20,700 households in private rentals in Newcastle 4,935 (23.8%) were in rental stress in 2021 compared to 28.1% for Regional NSW. Of the 20,894 households with a mortgage in Newcastle 1,303 (6.2%) were in mortgage stress in 2021 (Regional NSW average 8.4%).

Our city, our people: Our population. (Source: *Newcastle 2040 it's our future, Community Strategic Plan revised 2024/25*, p 25)

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Appendix A
Australian and NSW heritage themes compared with new local themes for City of Newcastle

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
1 Tracing the natural evolution of Australia	Environment – naturally evolved	**Saltwater and sandstone**	Features occurring naturally in the physical environment, which have shaped or influenced human life and cultures.	Glenrock Reserve (I322) Coal River Precinct (SHR 01674) The Cowrie Hole (Rock Platform) (I483)
2 Peopling Australia	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures	**Always was, always will be**	Activities associated with maintaining, developing, experiencing and remembering Aboriginal cultural identities and practices, past and present; with demonstrating distinctive ways of life; and with interactions demonstrating race relations.	Coal River Precinct (A5) Kauma Park (A21) Yutilliko Park (A22) Coal River Precinct (SHR 01674)
2 Peopling Australia	Convict	**Convicts, coal and cedar**	Activities relating to incarceration, transport, reform, accommodation and working during the convict period in NSW (1788-1850) – does not include activities associated with the conviction of persons in NSW that are unrelated to the imperial 'convict system': use the theme of Law & Order for such activities.	Convict Lumber Yard or Stockade Site (A7) Coal River Precinct (SHR 01674)
2 Peopling Australia	Ethnic influences	**Blood, sweat and tears** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with common cultural traditions and peoples of shared descent, and with exchanges between such traditions and peoples.	Newcastle Muslim Association (Building) (I645)
2 Peopling Australia	Migration	**Blood, sweat and tears** **Radical Newcastle** **Newcastle now**	Activities and processes associated with the resettling of people from one place to another (international, interstate, intrastate) and the impacts of such movements	Former migrant camp (I291)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Agriculture	**Always was, always will be** **Convicts, coal and cedar**	Activities relating to the cultivation and rearing of plant and animal species, usually for commercial purposes, can include aquaculture.	Commandants Farm (A8) Dairy Cool Rooms (I339) Former Flour Mill (I139) Bailey's Orchard (I323) Fuit Packing Shed and Residence (I321)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Commerce	**Always was, always will be** **Convicts, coal and cedar** **Homes for the people**	Activities relating to buying, selling and exchanging goods and services	ANZ bank (I401) Ireland Bond Store (I425) Newcastle Customs House (I372) Stanton Catchlove Bond Store (Earp Gillam Bond Store Precinct) (I373) Shop (I73) Frederick Ash Building (SHR 00642) David Jones (Commercial Building) (I407) T & G Mutual Life Assurance Building (I391) Rundles Building (former R Hall & Sons) (I458)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Communication	**Shipping, rail and road**	Activities relating to the creation and conveyance of information.	Adamstown Post Office (I1) Carrington Post Office (I70) Former Waratah Post Office (I669) Maryville postal pillar box (I239) Wallsend Precinct—post office (I654)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Environment – cultural landscape	**Sandstone and saltwater** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with the interactions between humans, human societies and the shaping of their physical surroundings	Parkway Avenue, including verges, median strips, public footpaths, public roads, kerbs and gutters, street trees, garden beds, bridges and stormwater drain (I704) Fig trees in median strip (I50) Fig trees (I161) Styles Grove landscape (Moreton Bay fig trees) (I237)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Events	**All themes**	Activities and processes that mark the consequences of natural and cultural occurrences	Connolly Park War Memorial Gate (I56) Mine Disaster Memorial (I523)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Exploration	**Convicts, coal and cedar**	Activities associated with making places previously unknown to a cultural group known to them.	Explorers route, marked tree, camp site, explorer's journal, artefacts collected on an expedition, captain's log, surveyor's notebook, mountain pass, water source, Aboriginal trade route, landing site, map.
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Fishing	**Always was, always will be** **Fishing, rail and road**	Activities associated with gathering, producing, distributing, and consuming resources from aquatic environments useful to humans.	Prawners Slipway (A10)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Forestry	**Convicts, coal and cedar**	Activities associated with identifying and managing land covered in trees for commercial timber purposes.	Convict Lumber Yard or Stockade Site (A7)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Health	**Convicts, coal and cedar** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with preparing and providing medical assistance and/or promoting or maintaining the well being of humans	Wallsend Hospital (I643) Rankin Park Hospital (I356) Newcastle Hospital North Wing (I442) Former Sister Ogden's Hospital (I524) Fettercairn (former residence and hospital) (I143) Hamilton Nursing Home (I146) Merewether Baby Health Clinic (I294) Newcastle District Ambulance Station (I160)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Industry	**Blood, sweat and tears** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with the manufacture, production and distribution of goods	Oak Factory (I1778) J & A Brown's Hexham Workshops (I183) Goninans Administration Building (I186) English & Australian Copper Co (industrial site) ((40) Former Dick Bros Engineering Building (I198) Hexham Shipbuilding Yards (I180)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Mining	**Blood, sweat and tears**	Activities associated with the identification, extraction, processing and distribution of mineral ores, precious stones and other such inorganic substances.	Jubilee ventilation shaft (Wallsend Colliery) (I111) Minmi Coal Carriage (I342) Duckenfield No 2 Colliery air furnace shaft (I333) Glenrock early coalmining sites (00988) English & Australian Copper Co. (Industrial Site) (I40) Scottish Australian Mining Co (Site) (A9)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Pastoralism	n/a	Activities associated with the breeding, raising, processing and distribution of livestock for human use.	n/a
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Science	n/a	Activities associated with systematic observations, experiments and processes for the explanation of observable phenomena.	ELMA Factory (I168)
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Technology	**Blood, sweat and tears**	Activities and processes associated with the knowledge or use of mechanical arts and applied sciences.	Computer, telegraph equipment, electric domestic appliances, underwater concrete footings, museum collection, office equipment, Aboriginal places evidencing changes in tool types.
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Transport	**Shipping, rail and road**	Activities associated with the moving of people and goods from one place to another, and systems for the provision of such movements	Hexham Bridge (I187) Newcastle Railway Station (additional group) (I1705) Former Tramway Substation 9I416) Former West Wallsend Steam Tram Line 9I112) Broadmeadow Railway Station Group (I51) Railway Goods Shed (I632) No 1 Lee Wharf Building A (I 389) Former Broadmeadow Aero Club (I16) Wreck of Adolphe (A12) Former Wickham and Bullock Island Railway Corridor (I706)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Towns, suburbs and villages	**Convicts, coal and cedar** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with creating, planning and managing urban functions, landscapes and lifestyles in towns, suburbs and villages	Civic Park Heritage Conservation Areas
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Land tenure	**Always was, always will be** **Convicts, coal and cedar** **Homes for the people**	Activities and processes for identifying forms of ownership and occupancy of land and water, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal	Hamilton South Garden Suburb HCA (C3) Newcastle East HCA (C5).
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Utilities	**Blood, sweat and tears** **Homes for the people**	Activities associated with the provision of services, especially on a communal basis	Northumberland County Council Building (I359) Hunter Water Board Building (I497) Lambton Pumping Station (I235) Brick stormwater culvert (I693) Electrical Substation (I27)
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Accommodation	**Always was, always will be** **Homes for the people**	Activities associated with the provision of accommodation, and particular types of accommodation – does not include architectural styles – use the theme of Creative Endeavour for such activities.	Church and Watt Street Terrace Group (00273) Segenhoe Flats (02038) AA Company Display Home (I173) The Salvation Army Men's Hostel (689) Mereyulah (residence) (I659) Clarke Street Cottage (I630) Farquhar Street Terraces (I610)
5 Working	Labour	**Convicts, coal and cedar** **Blood, sweat and tears** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with work practices and organised and unorganised labour	Former Railway Pay Office (I454)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
6 Educating	Education	**Always was, always will be** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with teaching and learning by children and adults, formally and informally.	Newcastle High School (I174) Lambton Public School (I211) San Clemente School (I261) Former Minmi Public School and residence (I345) Miss Chippendale's School Room (I446) Stockton Public School (I522) Waratah Technology High School (I670)
7 Governing	Defence	**Convicts, coal and cedar** **Blood, sweat and tears**	Activities associated with defending places from hostile takeover and occupation	Fort Scratchley group (buildings and underground forts—Coal River Precinct) (I480) Fort Wallace, Heritage Precinct including observation tower, gun emplacements, casualty station, engine and radio room (I696) Army Drill Hall (I508) Former Rifle Range (I7) Shepherds Hill Defence Group Military Installations (I460)
7 Governing	Government and administration	**Convicts, coal and cedar** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with the governance of local areas, regions, the State and the nation, and the administration of public programs – includes both principled and corrupt activities.	Former Council Chambers (I63) Former Wickham Town Hall and Council Chambers ((673) Municipal Building II406) Former Department of Public Works Office (I397) City Administration Centre, Newcastle (former) (I430) Newcastle City Hall and Civic Theatre (I430)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
7 Governing	Law and order	**Always was, always will be** **Convicts, coal and cedar**	Activities associated with maintaining, promoting and implementing criminal and civil law and legal processes	Former Newcastle Court House (I375) Wallsend Precinct—Courthouse (I637) Former Lambton Police Station and lock-up residence (I213) Mayfield Police Station (I275) Former police station and courthouse (I328) Former police lock-up (I621)
7 Governing	Welfare	**Radical Newcastle**	Activities and process associated with the provision of social services by the state or philanthropic organisations.	Cooks Hill Special School (I92) Former Hunter Institute of Technology (I260)
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Domestic Life	**Homes for the people**	Activities associated with creating, maintaining, living in and working around houses and institutions.	Miss Porter's House (I506 and SHR 01445)
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Creative endeavour	**Radical Newcastle**	Activities associated with the production and performance of literary, artistic, architectural and other imaginative, interpretive or inventive works; and/or associated with the production and expression of cultural phenomena; and/or environments that have inspired such creative activities.	Everyone's Theatre (I68) Former Regent Picture Theatre (I 201) Former Savoy Theatre (I 347) Civic Theatre (I418) Former Victoria Theatre (I444) and (01301) Theatre Royale (I498) Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre (I86) Von Bertouch Galleries (I91) 2Hd Studio (I519)
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Leisure	**Radical Newcastle** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with recreation and relaxation	Merewether Baths (I303) Ocean Baths (I489) Newcastle Recreation Reserve (I580) Newcastle Ocean Baths (01301)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Religion	**Always was, always will be** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with particular systems of faith and worship	St Francis Xavier Catholic Church (I61) St Lawrence O'Toole Church (I43) St Andrew's Presbyterian Church (I89) Wesley Church (I116) Bethal Congregational Church (I215) Merewether Baptist Church (I319) St Josephs Convent and Sacred Heart Church and School (I503) St Paul's Anglican Church Group (I521) Our Lady of Lurdes Church (I547) Christ Church Cathedral (I562) Newcastle Synagogue (I608)
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Social institutions	**Always was, always will be** **Homes for the people** **Radical Newcastle**	Activities and organisational arrangements for the provision of social activities	Adamstown RSL Memorial Hall (I6) Former Masonic Hall (I115) Lambton Masonic Hall (I233) Former Masonic Hall and former Lyrique Theatre (I432) Wallsend Masonic Hall (I644) Former School of Arts (I690) Former School of Arts (Fellowship House) (I631) Waratah School of Arts (I666) Henderson Park Community Hall (I314) New Lambton Scout Hall (I348) Tarro Community Hall (I549)

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme for City of Newcastle	Notes	City of Newcastle Local Examples
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Sport	**Always was, always will be** **Homes for the people**	Activities associated with organised recreational and health promotional activities.	Hawkins Oval (I675) Reid Park Tennis Clubhouse and tennis courts (I25) Cooks Hill Surf Life Saving Club (I28) Townson Oval Pavilions-Mitchell Park (I318) Entire Broadmeadow Racetrack Site) (I48) Reid Park Tennis Clubhouse and Tennis Courts (I25)
9 Marking the phases of life	Birth and Death	**Always was, always will be** **Homes for the people** **Newcastle now**	Activities associated with the initial stages of human life and the bearing of children, and with the final stages of human life and disposal of the dead.	Cemetery (I334) Sandate Cemetery (I516) Stockton Cemetery (I694) Former Maternity Hospital (I289) Former Western Suburbs Hospital (I671) Newcastle Crematorium (I34) Wallsend Hospital (I643)
9 Marking the phases of life	Persons	**All themes**	Activities of, and associations with, identifiable individuals, families and communal groups	John William Parsons Monument (I152) Hannel Family Vault (I179)

GML
HERITAGE