

## RUBBISH DUMP

Next door, at the cottage, the newly filled and levelled yard appears to have been largely used to dispose of rubbish. Many large pits were found excavated into the introduced fill. Some were so big and deep that they cut through underlying features, for example, the eastern end of the dairy was removed by a pit cut from above.

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## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1893 the daughter who had inherited the cottage sold her share to her sister. The cottage remained tenanted and the hotel continued to be the property of the Fitzgerald family until 1914. The cottage was demolished in the 1930s.

The early years of the twentieth century are marked by the introduction of services through the site. On both sides of the 1841 wall service pipes were cut through the levelling fill, rubbish pits and in some cases down to the underlying sand. A major sewer that was laid in the 1920s through the site adjoining the north was cut through the old 1815 wall to connect to a riser that had been placed in the shaft of the old cottage cess pit.

Plans show that there were new buildings constructed on the northern boundary of the cottage yard during the later nineteenth century but no evidence was found of them in the excavation although some of the building debris spread around may have come from them. The most likely explanation is that these buildings were demolished in the 1920s or 1930s and the rubble removed at that time.

The 1841 wall survived above ground until the 1960s when it was razed to ground level. A layer of sandstock bricks spread above the upper levels of the excavation derived from this work. Above the rubble, layers of soil, blue metal and bitumen were laid to create a car park. The 1815 wall was demolished in 1981.



# A History of the Site

A HAWKESBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM FACTSHEET





ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological excavations carried out before construction of the 2008 building revealed a large body of evidence about the use of the museum site from around 1811 through the twentieth century. Note: for information about the historic house fronting Thompson Square, see the separate fact sheet *Howe’s House*.

INDIGENOUS RELICS

A sample was made in part of the car park site to test for the presence of indigenous relics. This revealed an extensive assemblage of what is likely to have been a tool-making site of considerable longevity.

WILLIAM BAKER’S FARM

The earliest European association with this site was through a grant of thirty acres made to William Baker in 1800, but the excavation revealed no evidence that could be associated with his ownership.

THE MACQUARIE ARMS HOTEL

In 1815 Governor Macquarie granted Richard Fitzgerald land for the express purpose of building a hotel to service the town and provide accommodation for visiting gentry. The land encompassed the site of the Macquarie Arms Hotel, the rest of the George Street frontage to Baker Street and all of the land behind to the boundary of the property now associated with the museum. The hotel that he built to fulfil his grant condition was the Macquarie Arms Hotel (now extended) and it was opened and in operation, if not completed, by 1818.

Apart from the hotel, the site also contained stables, stores and possibly a detached kitchen. Next to the hotel was a very substantial domestic residence, possibly present before the hotel was built.

THE BOUNDARY WALL

An intact length of the boundary wall was uncovered during the excavation. It was founded on a stone base course and constructed from red sandstock bricks. Although leaning to the north off the base course it is the only intact portion of the wall in its original state that is known to exist.

The excavation revealed that this boundary wall did not completely enclose the property. It stopped several metres short of joining the Baker Street frontage where plans show that there were gate posts next to the entrance. Examination of the wall showed that it was deliberately constructed to end at this point. There was a stone-built drain set into the wall here to empty into the adjoining property. From this point to Baker Street the gap was filled with a remnant ashlar (dressed) stone wall.

*constructed from red sandstock bricks.*

THE DAIRY

The archaeologists were baffled by this gap: surely the owner had not simply run out of bricks? There was no apparent attempt to join the stone and brick walls. One appeared to be later than the other.

The situation became clearer when the excavation revealed what appeared to be two patches of brick paving less than 300mm from the stone wall. When the excavation of this feature was completed the evidence was interpreted as the remnant of a dairy. Although only a fragment of the building remained it conformed to early nineteenth century descriptions of these buildings; two stone or brick floored rooms with drains. Ideally these buildings were dug into the ground but here the sand and the slope of the hill probably deterred this method of building. Along the back of the building was a shallow spoon drain under what would have been the drip line of the roof leading to a small brick sump.

These structures considered together give a quite vivid picture of the domestic life of the early hotel. The best explanation is that Fitzgerald took advantage of the unoccupied grass slope next to his hotel to run cows on it for the supply of the establishment. The dairy was situated immediately next to this for convenience; the wall stopped at exactly the point where the dairy began. Possibly there was a wooden fence between the dairy and the slope but the later work had removed any remains.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

The land next door was granted in 1819 and it must be supposed that when the slope was no longer available for the hotel to run its cows, they were moved elsewhere and the hotel property was secured by filling in the gap in the boundary wall by the stone ashlar (dressed stone) walling.

Elsewhere in the excavation area was some other evidence of the use to which this yard was put during the first period of occupation by the hotel. At the extreme eastern end of the excavation a series of half-moon shaped cuts were revealed in the sand. These were interpreted as a series of regular spade cuts to turn sod or soil, arranged in rows, as in a vegetable patch.

Finally, from this period, was evidence of steps taken to improve the site for construction. One striking aspect of the excavation was how low the original ground surface was from the present level of the street, over two metres. This level in relation to the position of the Macquarie Arms Hotel suggests that the original topography consisted of a very considerable slope. As well, in the south-eastern corner of the excavation, a very large depression was revealed. It was a natural formation that was found to have been exposed for a long time; it had filled with water, dried out and been filled with sand and the process repeated on many occasions. The first occupants of the site had filled this depression with a load of mixed sand and loam and broken bricks.

THE OFFICERS’ MESS

Between 1835 and 1840 the Macquarie Arms Hotel was leased by the Government to serve as an officers’ mess for the men stationed at the nearby barracks. Unfortunately, it is a very poorly documented aspect of

the site’s history. Within the excavation area only one feature was revealed that may relate to this period of occupation: a square excavation cut into the sand. Its dimensions suggest that it may have been intended as a cesspit.

*Between 1835 and 1840 the Macquarie Arms Hotel served as an officers mess*

SUBDIVISION: ROBERT FITZGERALD’S HOUSE

Richard Fitzgerald died in 1840 and his son Robert inherited the property. With the lease to the Government at an end he decided to refurbish the old hotel and use it as a family home. He also decided at the same time to lease the cottage next to the hotel to a tenant. This informal subdivision of the property was made clear by the construction of a wall behind the hotel and the cottage, running from the stables to the northern boundary wall. The wall was obviously intended to provide security and privacy for both families.

The size of the wall and the effort taken to construct it is unusual. It is wider than the boundary wall, approximately 50cm, and is sunk to a depth of over two metres. The latter may have been because of concerns felt about founding the wall in the underlying sand. This idea is given some credence by the method used to build it. A very wide trench was excavated, over a metre, and the wall was built up against the western side of this trench. The trench was then backfilled from the east. What is even more unusual is that, at the junction of this 1841 wall and the 1815 boundary wall, instead of butting the two together, a section of the older wall has been demolished to enable the new wall to be keyed into it.

THE COTTAGE

For many years the occupant of the cottage adjoining the hotel, now Fitzgerald House, was a Captain Black and his wife. She ran a small school from the house. The western half of the excavation is largely concerned with the use of the yard in association with this house.

In this phase of occupation this bottom end of the yard became a service area for the house. A new cesspit was dug at the junction of the 1841 wall and the 1815 wall. The old dairy remained in use.

In the middle of the 1841 wall, just south of the cesspit, a timber slab hut was built of which approximately a 3x3 metre section remained in the excavation; it is likely to have been wider as demonstrated by the post holes extending south into the area of the car park. Lines of post holes inside suggest that it was divided into narrow sections. This suggests that the building was a stable or animal byre or milking shed. Nearly two metres beyond this shed was another row of post holes that suggest this enclosure was defined by a post and rail fence. This would have left a wide “aisle” between the old dairy enclosure and the shed enclosure. There was a number of shallow rubbish pits dug into the ground around this building.

THE 1867 FLOOD AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The massive flood of 1867 reached above the level of this site. A flood of that scale inevitably leaves a substantial trace in the archaeological record of debris and waterborne deposits. However, there is no such evidence within the excavation. This absence of evidence along with other anomalies within the excavated area leads to certain conclusions:

The first is that all the structures within the cottage yard were flooded and damaged or destroyed to such a point that they were beyond salvage. There is, however, absolutely no evidence of their demolition. The site is completely clean. In fact there is no topsoil left on any part of the excavated area. The conclusion is that after the flood receded, or fairly soon afterwards, what was left of the buildings and yards was demolished and removed and the sodden sites were stripped to the underlying sand. This sand on both sides was not left exposed for any length of time. Huge quantities of fill were brought to the site and tipped to level the site and raise it over a metre in height.

*The massive flood of 1867 reached above the level of this site.*

RETURN TO THE HOTEL

After Robert Fitzgerald’s death in 1865, the building was held in trust for one of his daughters, and brought back into service as a hotel. It was during this early period of renewed hotel use that the site was flooded, raised and levelled. During the later years of the nineteenth century, a new building, possibly a cess pit, was built at the museum end of the yard. One or two small rubbish pits were excavated into the soil but there is little evidence of other use here for many years.