

# THE CONVICT LUMBER YARD IS AN IMPORTANT HISTORIC SITE LOCATED IN THE HEART OF NEWCASTLE.



The site that was discovered to be a lumber yard was the subject of an extensive archaeological dig between 1989 and 1992, resulting in the discovery of hundreds of artefacts dating back to the first days of the Newcastle penal settlement.

Important Aboriginal materials were found at deep levels within the site, reflecting the ancient Aboriginal occupation of the region.

The significance of the site has been recognised by inclusion on the NSW State Heritage Register and in the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan.

The site is now owned by Newcastle City Council as an urban park. Signage and artworks offer opportunities to learn about the history of the site.



## **Brief history**

After a short lived settlement in 1801, a small penal outpost was established in 1804 for convicts who committed secondary offences - including those responsible for the Rum Rebellion.

The site became a keeping place for coal, timber and lime produced by the convicts. In 1819 the site was enclosed "*with close log fence 11 feet high and two pair of folding gates 12 foot wide, length of the yard was 330 feet, width 150 feet*" and there was a large building on the western side of the site. An open roofed shed formed the northern wall.

In 1823, many of the convicts were moved to Port Macquarie but a small workforce stayed on to work the coal mines. The site continued to be used as a stockade. In 1832 its main building was turned into a barracks for those working on the breakwater (Macquarie's Pier) and two guard houses were built. In 1847, convict use of the site ceased with the completion of the breakwater.

Significant public buildings were built from the 1860s onwards including the Customs house, a residence for stationmaster, a Paymaster's building and the Sailor's Home. These and other buildings were constructed on top of the convict structures.

Historians had been aware of the national significance of the site for some time when convict bricks were found in 1987. A wave of community action followed to preserve the site from development. Shortly after it was transferred to Newcastle City Council and restoration then began on the Stationmaster's residence and the Paymaster's office.

