

3.0 Cultural, Historical and Archaeological Context

A detailed historical timeline is included as part of the Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) (Placemark 2017) being prepared for the portion of the proposed circuit located within the Coal River Precinct. As such a detailed historical context of this area of Newcastle is not included as part of this archaeological assessment. However relevant historical documentation and reports have been reviewed and where relevant to this archaeological assessment discussed below and throughout the report. Historical reports reviewed include, but are not limited to:

- Macquarie Pier and Nobbys Head Historical Report (Turner 1994)
- Newcastle Archaeological Management Plan (Suters Architects 1997)
- Macquarie Pier, Nobbys Head and Southern Breakwater Conservation Management Plan Revised (Suters Architects 2000)
- In Search of Nobby's Tunnels (Roslyn Kerr 2011)
- Destination Newcastle (Ray, Greg and Sylvia 2013).
- Newcastle The Missing Years (Ray, Greg and Sylvia 2016).
- Recovered Memories Newcastle and the Hunter (Ray, Greg and Sylvia 2016).
- Newcastle Archaeological Management Plan Review (Higginbotham 2013).

The historical timeline prepared as part of the 2017 SoHI for the enabling civil works should be referred to if further information is required.

3.1 European Exploration and Aboriginal Contact

The wider area forms part of a landscape that was used by the traditional Aboriginal owners, the Awabakal, for many thousands of years prior to European contact and continues to be highly valued by Aboriginal people today. The occupation of the Newcastle area by Aboriginal people is demonstrated by oral history, historical records and the presence of a range of archaeological sites that include evidence of varying levels of occupation and utilisation of different landscapes and resources within the Newcastle area. Following non-Aboriginal settlement, there are records of Aboriginal people interacting with the non-Aboriginal population in the early period of settlement but subsequent records are relatively rare until the modern period (Umwelt 2014). The Newcastle CBD, was known by the Awabakal as Mulubinba. Mulubinba is a significant place in the Awabakal cultural landscape, reflected through both the tangible evidence of Aboriginal history (archaeological sites) and the intangible and continuing connection to country (cultural and spiritual attachment).

Prior to European contact, the shorelines of the Hunter River estuary and coast would have provided a range of reliable and easily accessible resources for Awabakal people, such as fresh water from the estuary and springs in the immediate area (such as near the corner of Wolfe and King Streets), a range of aquatic fauna and migratory birds from the estuary and coast lines, and rhyolitic tuff for stone tool manufacture from Nobbys Island (Whibayganba).

Intensive occupation of the Newcastle CBD by Aboriginal people over many generations created large midden sites along the Hunter River foreshore, the deep sands of which were also known to have been used for burials. It is noted that the occupation of Australia by Aboriginal people represents by far the lengthiest human use of the continent and that, by comparison, the occupation of Australia by non-Aboriginal people has been of short duration albeit associated with significant impacts.

With the arrival of European settlers in the 1770s, traditional patterns of Aboriginal life throughout New South Wales were quickly and dramatically altered, through disease, displacement, forced movement and assimilation. Newcastle, one of the earliest European settlements in Australia, was no exception to this; but its history is also characterised by the development of unique relationships between Awabakal people and early European settlers.

Perhaps the single-most important source of ethnohistoric information for the Awabakal people was the missionary, Lancelot Threlkeld, who established a mission at Belmont and subsequently at Toronto on Lake Macquarie and collected extensive information about the Awabakal people and their language in the period 1825-1841. While records also exist of corroborees or ceremonial events being undertaken in the Newcastle area, there are very few other records of the spiritual beliefs and practices of the Awabakal people, with the notable exception of the recording of two locations (Nobbys Head and Newcastle Beach) associated with spiritual beliefs that featured in the worldview of the Awabakal (Umwelt 2009).

An Aboriginal Cultural Due Diligence Assessment has been prepared for the entire circuit (Umwelt 2017).

3.2 European Settlement

3.2.1 Penal Settlement (1804 to 1822)

Captain James Cook sailed past Stockton Bight in 1770, noting only Nobbys Island (Whibayganba) and Port Stephens. The first knowledge of the Newcastle and broader Hunter region came in 1791 through tales told by escaped convicts. In 1797 Lieutenant John Shortland entered the Hunter River estuary and came ashore along Stockton Bight, Nobbys Head and the Hunter River foreshore during a search for escaped convicts. He discovered the coal resources responsible for much of the later European settlement in the wider Hunter area.

Governor Philip King sent an expedition in HMS Lady Nelson, which arrived off the mouth of the Hunter River on 14 June 1801, to make a more systematic exploration of the Newcastle area. As a result Governor King decided to establish a permanent settlement there; however the venture failed within six months and the convicts and their overseers were evacuated back to Sydney (Turner 1997:7). It was not until 1804 that Newcastle was resettled as a penal colony with Watt Street forming the settlement's main street.

The penal settlement was located on a basin of low-lying land (in the area of present day Watt Street to the west of the Coal River Precinct). In the last years of convict use, the settlement comprised 71 convict huts, 12 government buildings, with the foci of church (Christ Church) and state (the Commandant's house) on the elevated land at the western and southern boundaries of the settlement, and industry (timber yard, mineshafts, wharf and breakwater) on the low-lying land along and behind the foreshore. Public and government buildings were constructed including the Christ Church, a barracks, a hospital and gaol. Stone was quarried from the base of Signal Hill (later Fort Scratchley) and bricks were being made locally. The Fort Scratchley site was the location of the first coal resources identified and mined in Newcastle. The strategic importance of the hilltop site overlooking the harbour was also recognised with navigational beacons being established in 1813 and a signal mast installed 1816.

Macquarie Pier was constructed to link Nobbys Head to the mainland. The pier was conceived by Captain James Wallis, the then Commandant of Newcastle, and its construction agreed upon by Governor Lachlan

Macquarie in 1818. Surveyor James Meehan drew up the plans showing the lines of the intended pier and its construction commenced in 1818 (refer to **Plate 3.1**). A quarry was opened in the area of present Fort Scratchley to provide stone for the pier and other construction projects. By 1822 it was reported that approximately 625 yards of the proposed 930 yard pier had been completed (Turner 1994:2-5). However when Newcastle ceased to be a penal settlement in 1823 works on the pier were discontinued.

Without the convict workforce to work on the pier, its construction did not recommence until 1833. Due to development of the Hunter Valley, the increased importance of a port at Newcastle and pressure from settlers the Government decided to allocate funds to the construction of the pier/breakwater; which resumed in 1833 with the majority of the small number of convicts remaining in Newcastle employed on its construction. The top of Nobbys Head was quarried from 1836 to obtain more stone and begin construction from the Nobbys Head end of the pier/breakwater. The pier/breakwater was completed in 1846 with maintenance of the new breakwater continuing into the 1850s (Turner 1994:5-6).

3.2.2 Newcastle's Government Town (1823 to 1853)

In 1823 assistant surveyor Henry Dangar laid out the Newcastle town plan, the core of which makes up the current Newcastle central business district to the west of the Coal River Precinct. Dangar imposed a regular grid plan on the disorganised settlement of 1804 to 1822 and the natural topography of the headland. Dangar made provision for a town of 190 allotments, commencing at Pacific Street to the west of the Coal River Precinct, with a church and market reserve at its centre. Existing streets were realigned and renamed. Three new principal streets were established aligned east to west along the ridgelines and named after governors Hunter and King, and the existing Christ Church. The intersecting cross streets were named after engineers contributing to the discovery of steam: James Watt, Matthew Bolton, Thomas Newcomen, James Wolfe, and Thomas Perkin. In laying out the town plan the intention was to prepare the town for its role as a port to service the rapidly developing Hunter Valley (Turner 1997 12 and Higginbotham 2013 Volume3:46).



Plate 3.1 Detail of Nobby's Island and Pier 23 January 1820

Image shows Nobby's Island, Signal mast on Fort Scratchley and Macquarie Pier under construction. Note the early shoreline prior to any reclamation.

© State Library of NSW and Coal River Working Party

3.2.3 Development and Expansion (1853 - 1900s)

The population of Newcastle remained very low until the 1850s, with the commercial and industrial development of the area hampered by inefficient land transport (Suters 1997:2/2) and the AA Company's monopoly over land and the coal industry.

The A.A. Co had been chartered by the British Parliament in 1824 and established itself in Newcastle soon after. The company was granted 2000 acres on the west edge of the Newcastle settlement for the development of their coal mining operations, which they had taken over from the colonial government after the closure of the Newcastle penal station. In 1831 they sank their first shaft, mining coal with the intention of exporting it to India to supply the steam ships of the East India Company. The company operated ten collieries within the Newcastle area, located between Darby Street and Hamilton, through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

The A.A. Co was guaranteed a monopoly on the mining operations and their land in Newcastle was therefore left undeveloped from any commercial or residential use, effectively defining the west boundary of Newcastle. However with the lifting of the monopoly in 1847, some of the A.A. Co's surplus land was made available for subdivision for development. The first subdivision in the early 1850s included the extension of Hunter Street, then known as Blane Street and named after the deputy governor of the A.A. Co. New coal mines and their associated villages also began to appear. The mines began to ship their coal through the Port of Newcastle, contributing to its development and fostering commerce in Newcastle itself.

The construction of the Great Northern Railway began in 1854. The first stage between Honeysuckle Point Station at Newcastle and East Maitland was opened by Governor Sir William Denison on 30 March 1857. The railway gradually extended through the Hunter Valley and into Northern NSW, reaching Tamworth 25 years later. Newcastle could now serve as the port of a rapidly expanding region with the development of the railway system bringing coal and agricultural produce from the Hunter Valley. Private railways facilitated the transport of coal to Newcastle and within a decade mines had opened at Minmi, Wallsend, Lambton and Waratah (Turner 1997:27). Over the middle decades of the nineteenth century greater Newcastle developed as a series of outlying colliery and manufacturing villages encircling the town centre, which essentially functioned as the port for the export of coal.

In 1866 it was decided to reconstruct the Southern Breakwater (former Macquarie Pier) using stone from a quarry in Waratah. An embankment was built from the Great North Railway so the stone could be brought by rail to the edge of the breakwater. Nobbys Head Railway comprised the extension to the Great North Railway along the breakwater out to Nobbys Head. Nobbys Head railway was utilised from approximately 1869 to transport ballast and large stones that had been brought by rail from the Waratah Coal Company quarry to assist the construction and strengthening of the breakwater to Nobbys Head and then out to Big Ben Reef (Turner 1994:6-7). Between 1875 and 1883 the breakwater was extended beyond Nobbys using the rail line along the breakwater to transport the stone. In 1896 the breakwater was further extended when the railway line was re-laid to allow the movement of stones weighing up to 30 tons (Turner 1994:6-7).

There were three lines associated with the rail line at Nobbys:

- the Breakwater Line extending along the full length of the breakwater
- the Sand Siding line which branched off the Breakwater line before Nobbys Head to allow for the mining of sand from the sand dunes between Nobbys Head and what is now Nobbys Beach and
- Wave Trap line around the west side of current Nobbys Beach Reserve to the west side of Horseshoe Beach.

The Foreshore and Wharf area became a busy and productive complex of rail lines, yards and associated rail infrastructure.

3.2.4 The Nobbys Shanty Town and Camp Shortland

During the Great Depression camps or shanty towns were established on Newcastle's beaches for unemployed men. By July 1930 there were approximately 170 unemployed men camped around Newcastle's beaches. One of the main camps was a large camp established by the State and Commonwealth Governments on Horseshoe Beach on the west side of the Southern Breakwater; in present day Nobbys Beach Reserve. In 1937 when Nobbys Shanty town comprised 81 shacks housing 144 people it was removed on the grounds that the site was required by the Defence Department as a parade ground. Subsequently the army camp known as Camp Shortland replaced the shanty town on the west side of the breakwater (Turner 1994:13-14).

3.3 Archaeological Context

The AMP Review 2013 divided up its study area into broad city blocks as well as the inventory number areas. As a result of the extended area discussed in this report, the following discussion broadly follows the three blocks utilised in the AMP Review that include the Coal River Precinct. **Table 3.1** discusses the inventory numbers, blocks and location relative to this report / the Coal River Precinct. These are further discussed below utilising historical maps, photographs and other images to understand the history of occupation of these locations.

Table 3.1 AMP Review Inventory Numbers and Block Description

AMP Review Inventory Number	Description	Block Number	Location
2176218	Block bounded by Nobbys Road, Wharf Road, Shortland Esplanade and Fort Drive, including parts of adjacent streets (Nobbys Road, Wharf Road, Shortland Esplanade and Fort Drive) (excluding Fort Scratchley).	Block 011	Nobbys Road area
2176219	Block bounded by Nobbys Road, including Nobbys Head and the Southern Breakwater	Block 012	Nobbys Beach Reserve Area
2176285	Blocks bounded by the Hunter River, Nobbys Road, Stevenson Place, Telford and Bond Streets, including parts of adjacent streets (Wharf Road).	Block 044	Wharf Road Area

3.3.1 Nobbys Road Area

The Nobbys Road area is likely to always have had a pathway or road in the approximate alignment of current Nobbys Road from early on in the European settlement of Newcastle. The first improvement in the area is shown to be a 'road under the cliff' partly along the line of current Nobbys Road (Higginbotham 2013). The first buildings known to be in the area are shown on an 1839 map of Newcastle (refer to **Plate 3.2**). These comprised a building on the slope on the west side of present Nobbys Road and two buildings located at the base of Fort Scratchley to the east of Nobbys Road (refer to **Plate 3.2**). These buildings are thought to be associated with the Engineer's Workshops and later accommodation for Harbour Pilots (Higginbotham 2013).

By 1843 additional buildings (Engineers 'shops and huts') have been constructed to the east of Nobbys Road. The structure on the west side remains in place at this time. A well is also shown at the intersection of Nobbys Road and Stevenson Place (refer to **Plate 3.3**).

By the 1860s a number of buildings have been constructed on the west side of Nobbys Road (refer to **Plate 3.5**). Although on plan they appear to be constructed alongside Nobbys Road other imagery indicates the buildings are down slope to the west (refer to **Plates 3.6 and 3.7**)

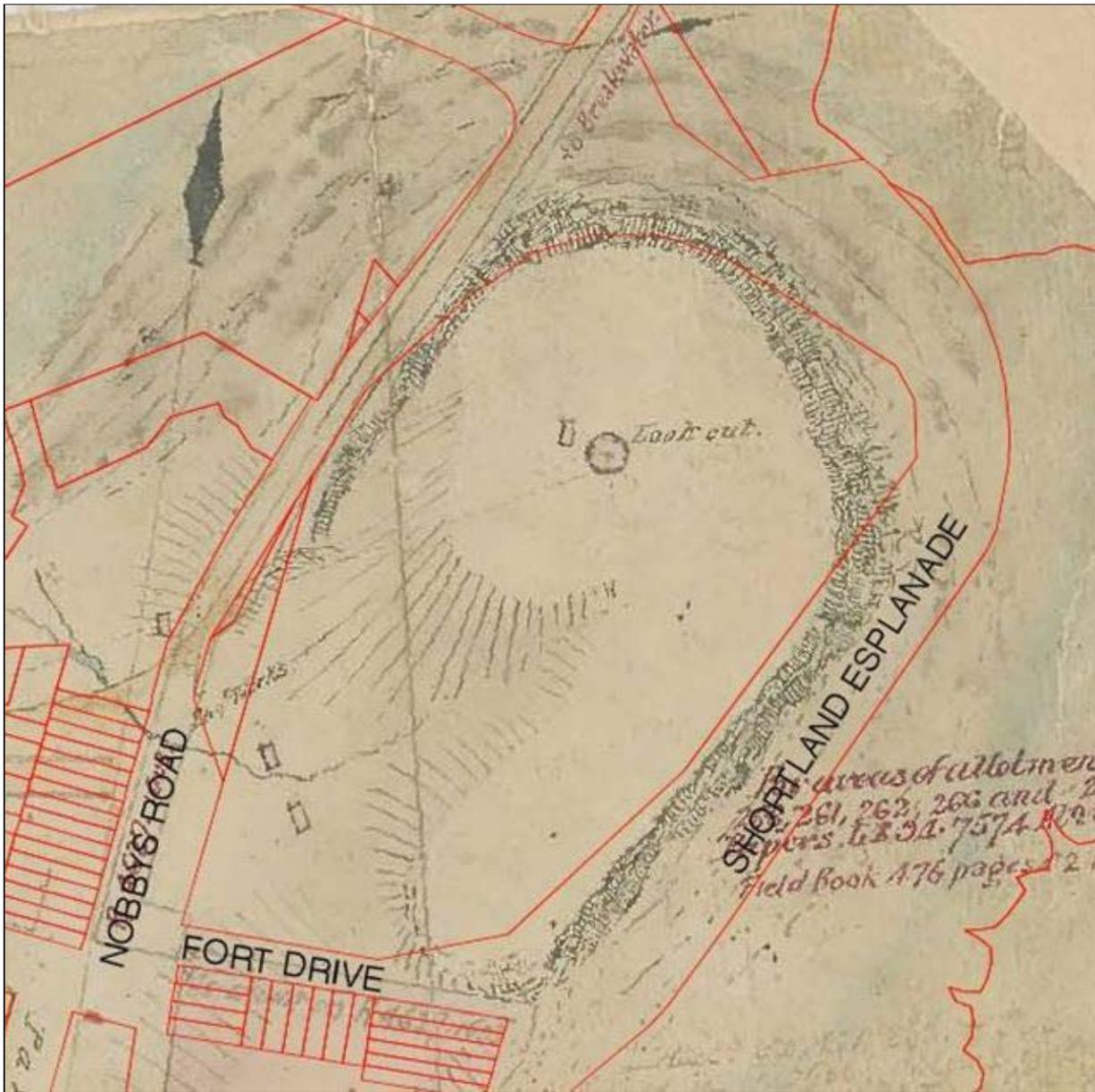


Plate 3.2 Detail of 1839 map of Newcastle

Note the buildings either side Nobbys Road

© Land and Property Information / Higginbotham 2013

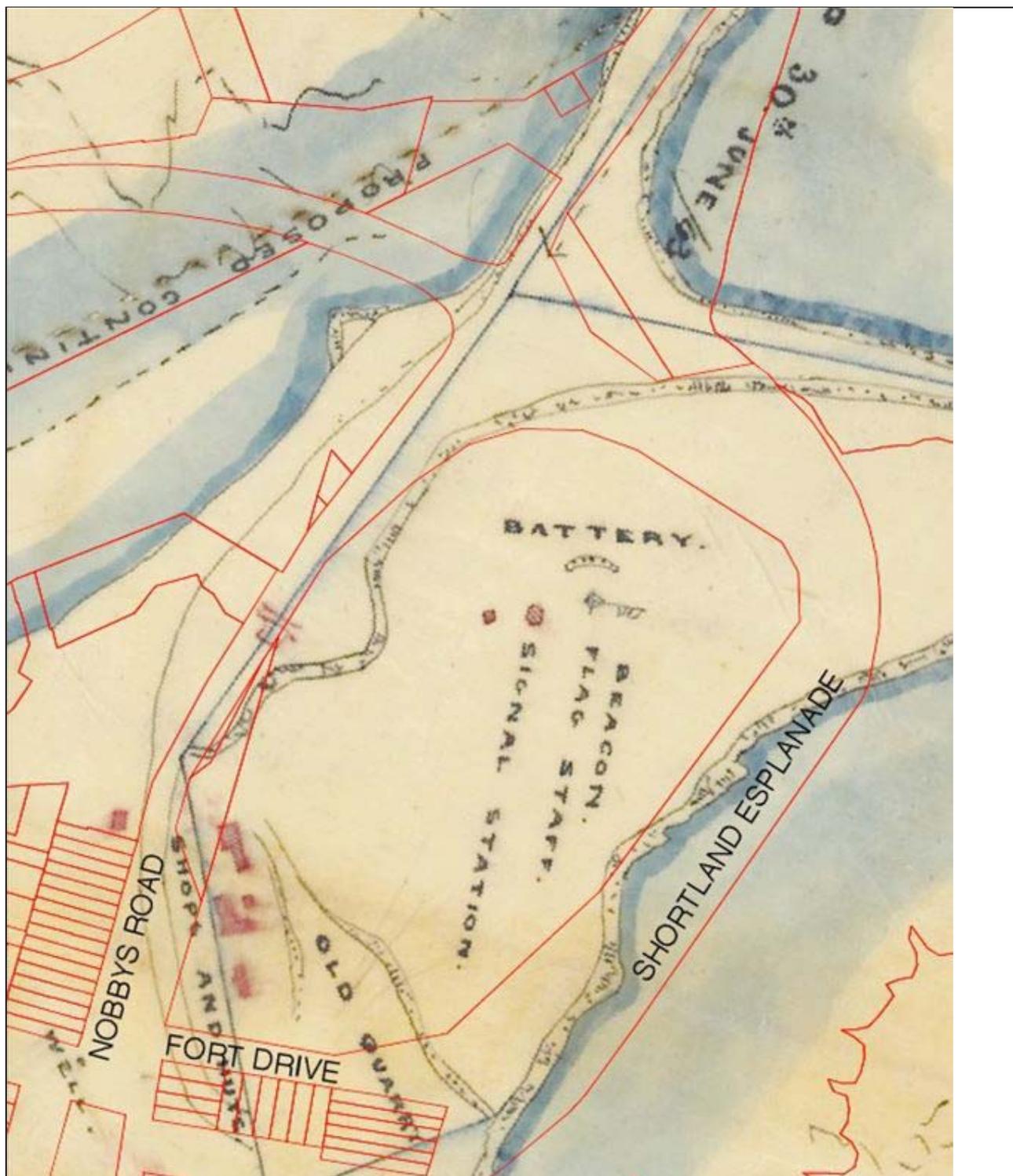


Plate 3.3 Detail of 1843 Plan of the Breakwater of Newcastle

Note the buildings either side of Nobbys Road

© State Records Plan 2426 / Higginbotham 2013

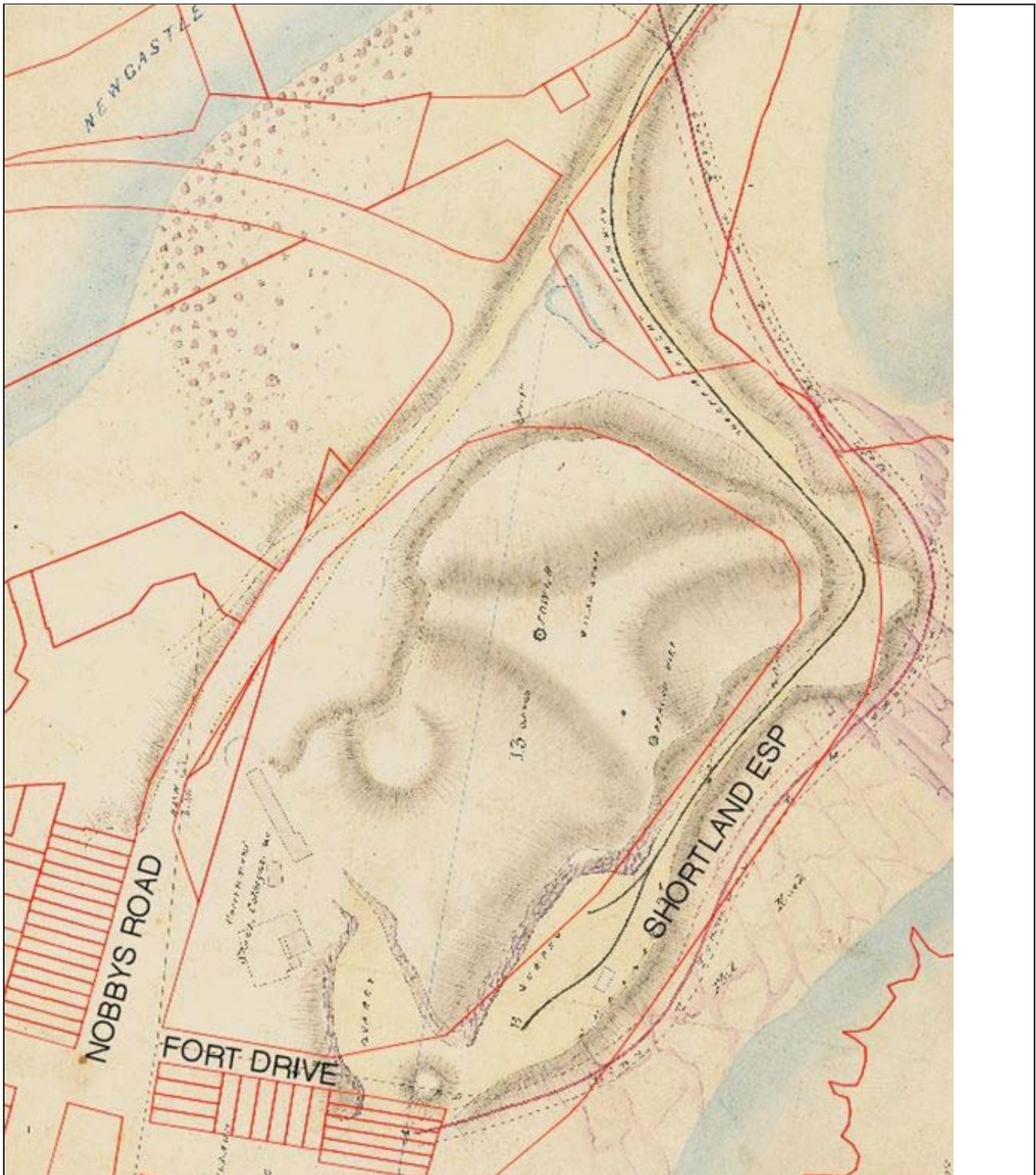


Plate 3.4 Detail of 1856 plan of Flagstaff Hill, Newcastle

Note structures on east side of Nobbys Road at the base of Fort Scratchley. The building on the west side is not noted at this time.

© State Records Plan 4064 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.6 Detail of 1875 dated lithographic view of Newcastle

Detail shows the buildings on the east side of Nobbys Road at the base of Fort Scratchley and also the buildings down slope on the west side of Nobbys Road.

© State Library NSW V1B_Newc_1870_79_1 and Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.7 Detail of Gibbs Shallard & Co engraving of Newcastle, undated (approx. 1880s)

Detail shows the buildings on the east side of Nobbys Road at the base of Fort Scratchley and also the buildings down slope on the west side of Nobbys Road.

© National Library of Australia nla <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135857980>

The 1874 Plan of the Port of Newcastle again shows the two rows of buildings either side of Nobbys Road. Although the plan suggests the structures on the west side of the road are within the road alignment they are most likely to be located down slope from the level of Nobbys Road (refer to **Plate 3.8**); as shown on **Plates 3.6** and **3.7**. An 1880s dated photograph showing Nobbys Road confirms the location of the houses on the west side of the road as being down slope rather than on the same level and/or encroaching into the Nobbys Road alignment (refer to **Plate 3.9**). The occupants of these buildings are considered to have been government employees (Higginbotham 2013).

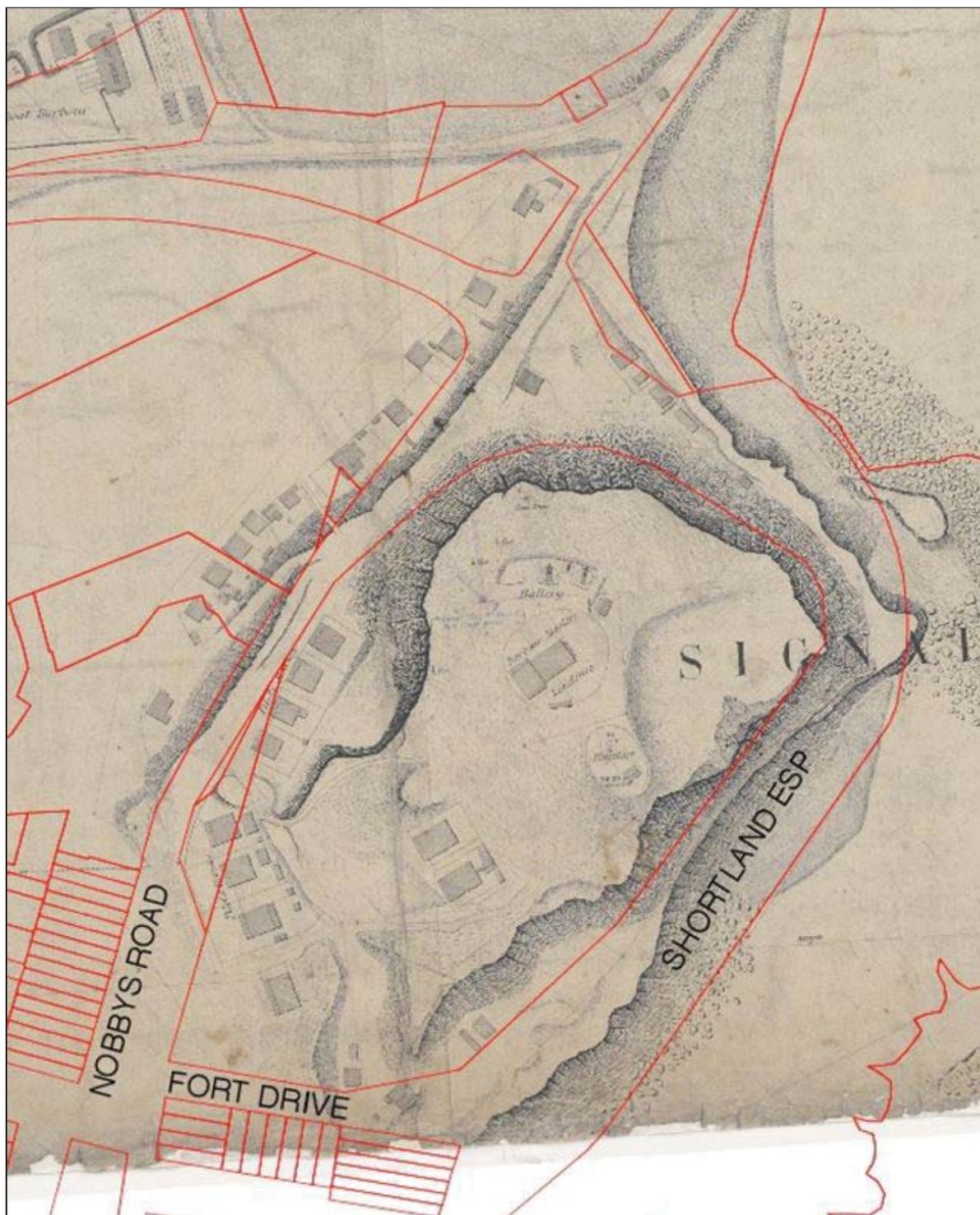


Plate 3.8 Detail of 1874 Plan of the Port of Newcastle

© State Records Plans 1314-1317 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.9 1880s photograph of Newcastle from Fort Scratchley

Nobbys Road is located in front of the buildings in the foreground. Note buildings down slope to the west of the road and the extending railyards into the Foreshore Park area.

© Hunter Photobank 04500121

The 1874 plan showed buildings at the intersection of Nobbys Road and Shortland Esplanade and Wharf Road. These are again shown in a series of plans dating from the 1890s and likely remain in place until the construction of the Zaara Street Power Station in 1915 (refer to **Plates 3.10** and **3.11**). With the change in levels resulting from the natural slope of the area the buildings on the west side of Nobbys road are considered to have been located down slope from present Nobbys Road levels. The structures on the eastside at the current intersection of Nobbys Road and Shortland Esplanade are likely to have been constructed on the same level as Nobbys Road.

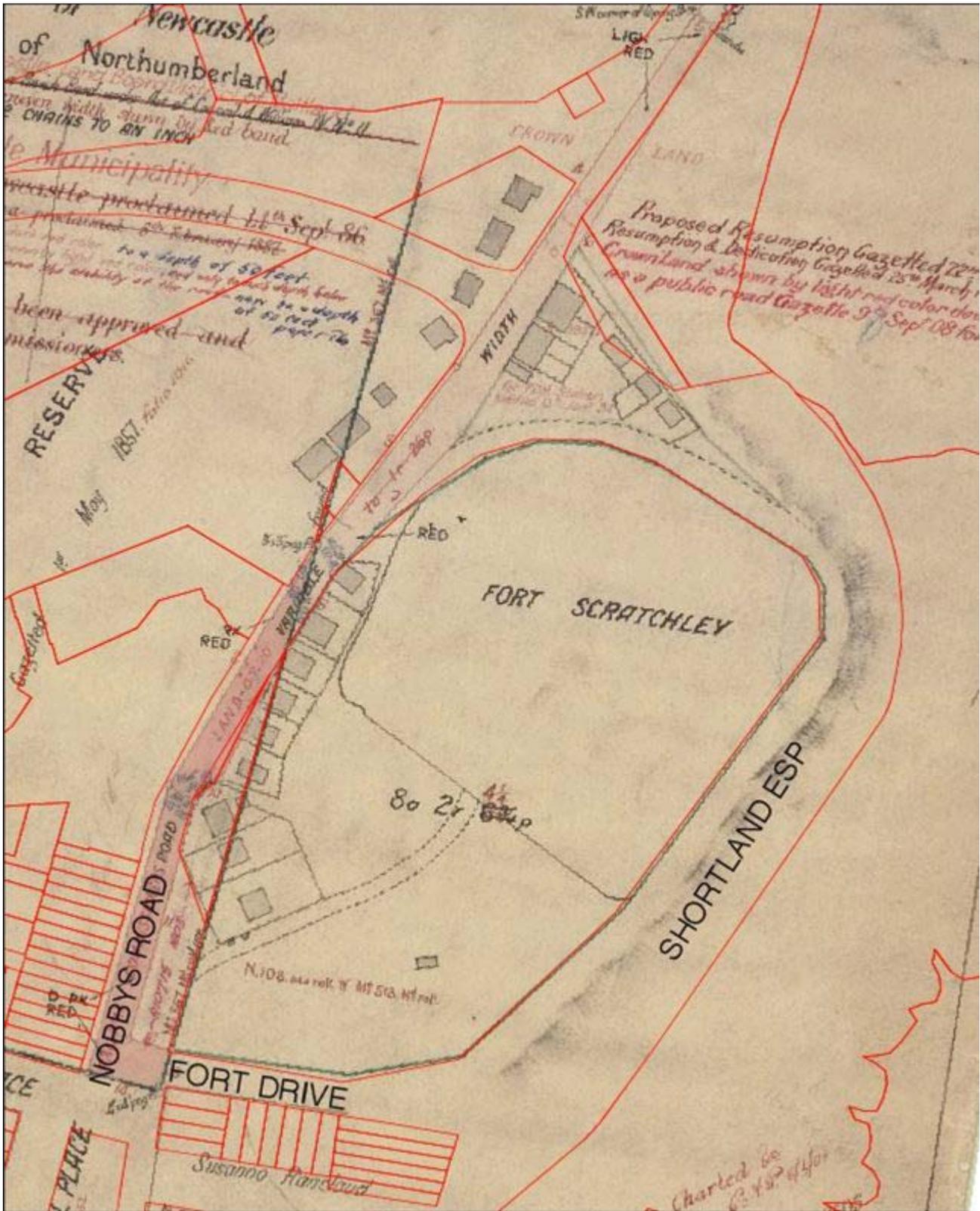


Plate 3.10 Detail of 1893 Plan of Fort Scratchley

© Land and Property Information // Higginbotham 2013

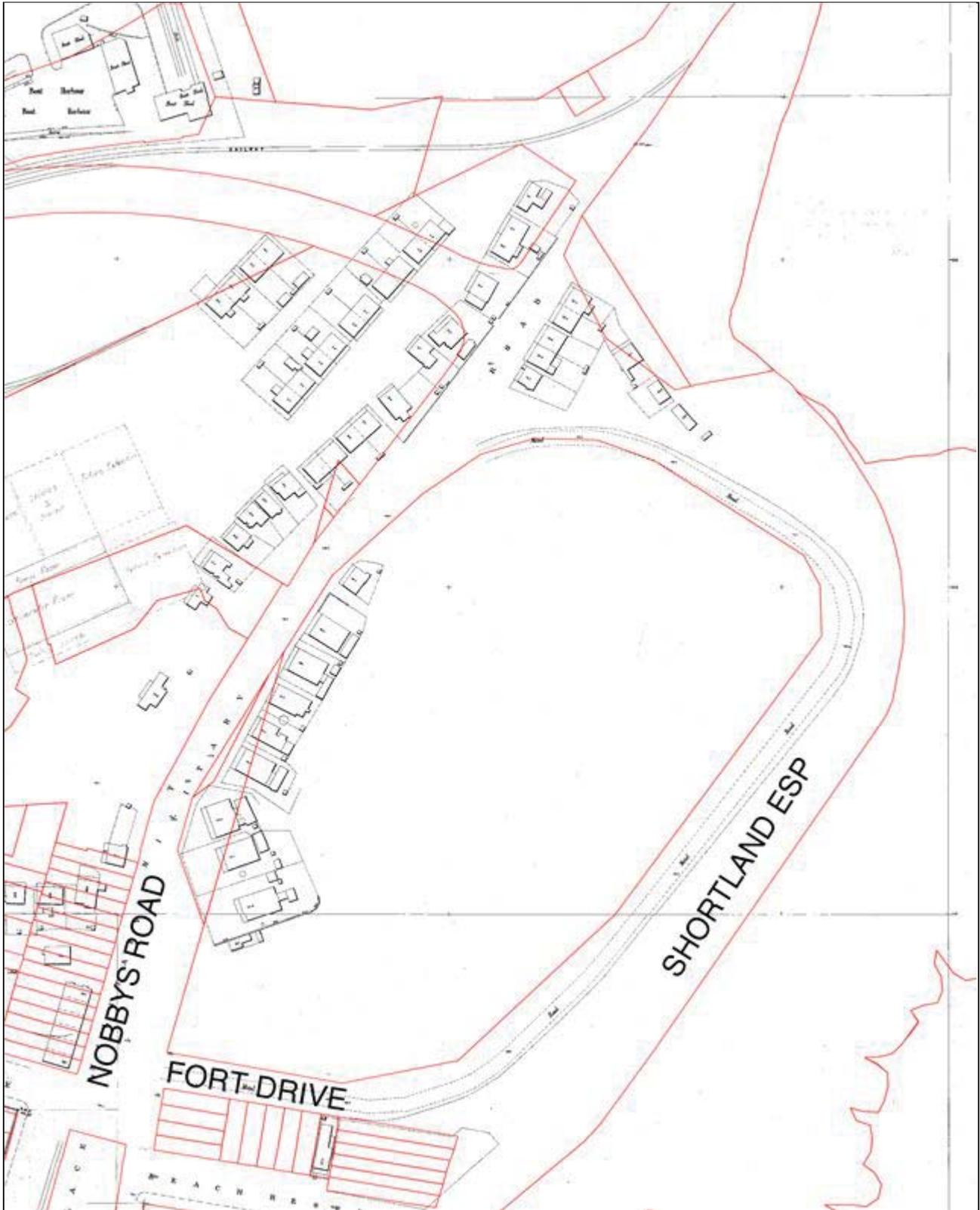


Plate 3.11 Detail of 1895-97 Newcastle Detail Series

© Newcastle City Council / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.12 1906 Photograph of Newcastle East and Fort Scratchley

Note the extending railyards and the buildings at foot on Fort Scratchley and down slope on the west side of Nobbys Road.

© Hunter Photobank 10200036



Plate 3.13 1909 Image of Fort Scratchley showing military camp at the base of Fort Scratchley

© Hunter Photobank 16300157

A series of aerial photographs dating from 1940 (refer to **Plates 3.14 to 3.16**) show the changing nature of the area following the construction of the Zaara Street Power Station in 1915. The nature of the buildings around the base of Fort Scratchley has also changed as larger military like buildings replace many of the residential cottages in the early 1940s. Zaara Street Power Station remained until 1977 when it was demolished and the extensive rail yards, lines and other facilities were removed and the Foreshore Park area developed.



Plate 3.14 Detail of 1940 aerial photograph

© Recovered Memories Newcastle and the Hunter - Greg and Sylvia Ray2016



Plate 3.15 Detail of 1942 aerial photograph

© Recovered Memories Newcastle and the Hunter - Greg and Sylvia Ray2016



Plate 3.16 Detail of aerial photograph dated to World War 2

© Recovered Memories Newcastle and the Hunter - Greg and Sylvia Ray2016

The construction of the Zaara Street Power Station, and the earlier constructed extension to the rail yards and associated infrastructure, resulted in substantial impacts to the surrounding area (refer to **Plates 3.17** to **3.19**).



Plate 3.17 1939 photograph of rail yards in Zaara Street Power Station area

© Destination Newcastle Greg and Sylvia Ray2016



Plate 3.18 1938 photograph of Zaara St Power Station area

© Recovered Memories Newcastle and the Hunter - Greg and Sylvia Ray2016

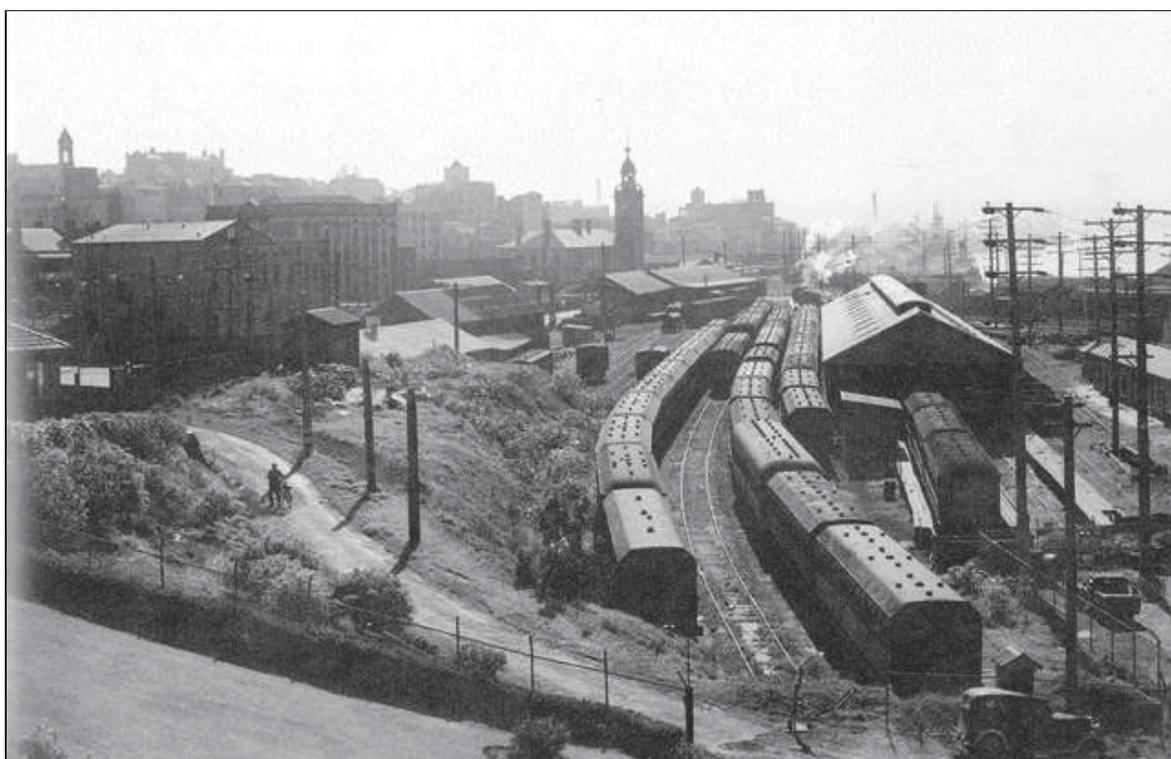


Plate 3.19 1946 photograph showing rail yards in current Foreshore Park

Note edge of Nobbys Road left corner of photograph and the change in levels on the west side of the road to the rail yards.

© Destination Newcastle Greg and Sylvia Ray2016

3.4 Nobbys Beach Reserve Area

At the time of the European settlement the Nobbys Beach Reserve area was part of Newcastle Harbour until well into the 1850s when reclamation likely comprising ballast and sand reclaimed the foreshore area. Prior to this the area was either permanently under water or consisted of sand flats which were likely only partially dry only at low tide (refer to **Plates 3.20 to 3.22**).



Plate 3.20 Detail of Detail of 1843 Plan of the Breakwater of Newcastle

© State Records Plan 2426 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.21 Detail of an 1857 Plan of the City of Newcastle

© State Records Map 4405 / Higginbotham 2013

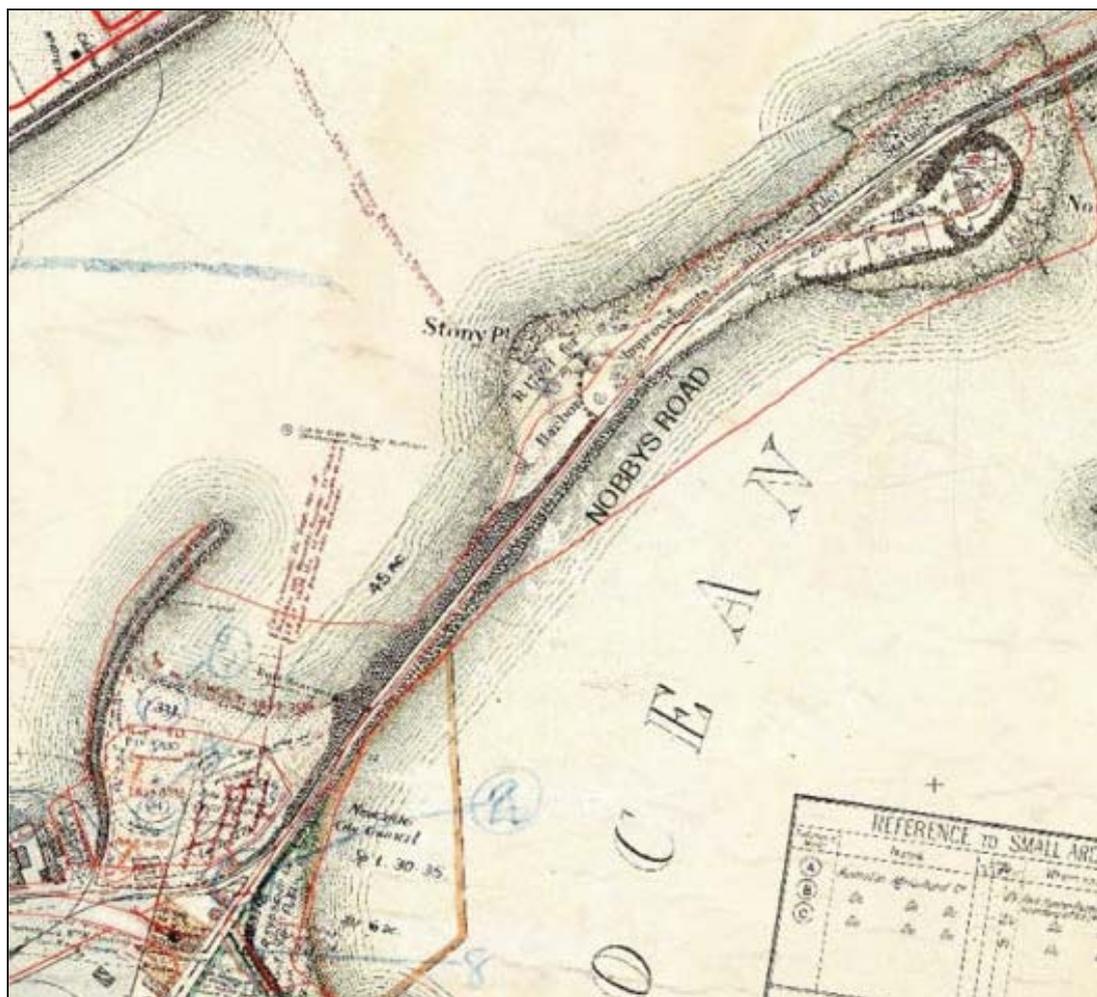


Plate 3.22 Detail of 1915 Map of the City of Newcastle

© Parish Map Preservation Project / Higginbotham 2013

The first real European use of the Nobbys Beach Reserve area in terms of construction came during the Great Depression when a camp or shanty town was established on the area for unemployed men. This was a large camp established by the State and Commonwealth Governments. The Shanty Town was likely located at Nobbys between approximately 1934 and 1937. **Plate 3.23** shows the Reserve with no structures but in 1937 the Nobbys Shanty Town was removed on the grounds that the site was required by the Defence Department as a parade ground. A regimented military encampment was established known as Camp Shortland (Turner 1994:13-14 / Placemark 2017), refer to **Plates 3.23** to **3.28**. The Reserve was extensively re-landscaped as part of the 1986 to 1988 Bicentennial Project.



Plate 3.23 1934 Photograph showing Nobbys Beach Reserve prior to the Shanty Town

© Images on Glass 2015 Greg and Sylvia Ray



Plate 3.24 1930s Photograph of Nobbys Camp. Shantytown

© Hunter Photobank

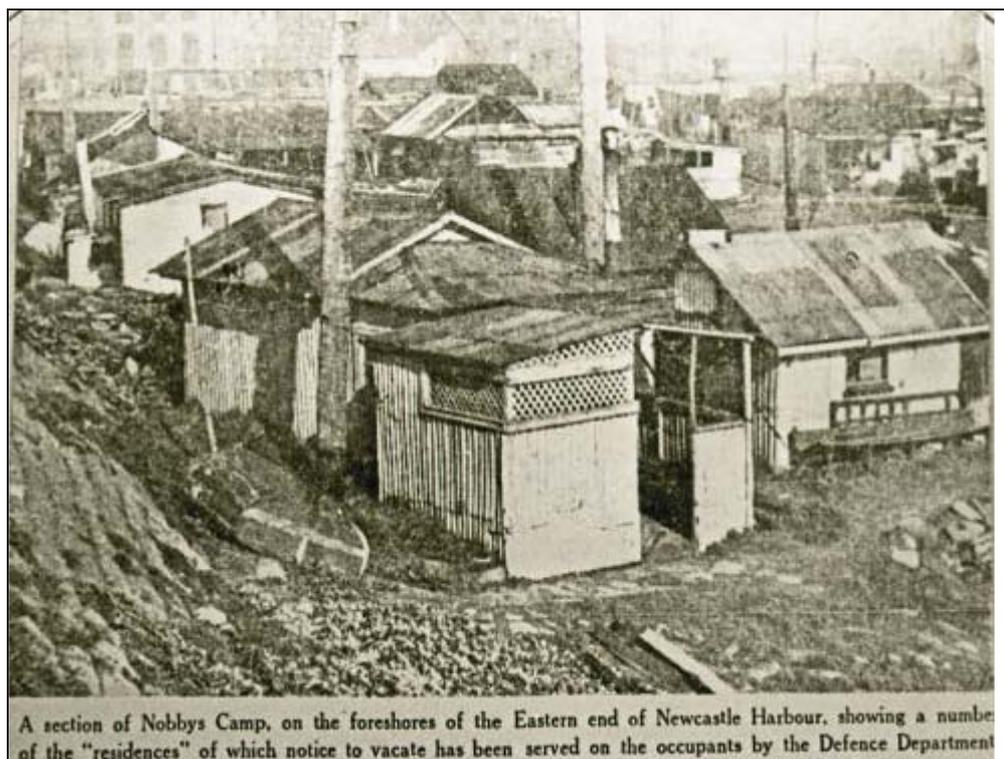


Plate 3.25 Newspaper photograph showing Nobbys Shanty Town

Photograph taken prior to the Shanty Town area being acquired by the Defence Department.

© Norm Barney Photographic Collection Cultural Collections University of Newcastle, NSW



Plate 3.26 1838 Photograph showing Nobbys Shanty Town shortly before removal

© Newcastle The Missing Years Greg and Sylvia Ray2016



Plate 3.27 Detail of 1944 Aerial Photograph of Newcastle

Shows the military encampment on Nobbys Beach Reserve area to the south of Horseshoe Beach, Zaara Street Power Station and the extensive rail network and associated infrastructure.

© Newcastle City Council



Plate 3.28 Detail of 1965 Aerial Photograph of Newcastle

Shows the military encampment on Nobbys Beach Reserve area to the south of Horseshoe Beach, Zaara Street Power Station and the extensive rail network and associated infrastructure.

© Newcastle City Council

3.4.1 Wharf Road Area

As with Nobbys Beach Reserve the area now comprising Wharf Road was part of Newcastle Harbour at the time of the European settlement. Reclamation of the Foreshore Park and Wharf Road area commenced in approximately the 1850s and continued through into the 1880s (refer to **Plates 3.29 to 3.33**). In 1866-7 the Stone Boat Harbour was constructed on the north side of Wharf Road (outside the circuit) with weatherboard Boat Sheds and the Pilot Station (refer to **Plate 3.34**). The Illustrated Sydney News and New South Wales Agriculturalist and Grazier (8 April 1875) reported that

There was little improvement in wharf accommodation till the railway was commenced in 1855. In 1858, it became necessary to reclaim the land for the Railway terminus, and to lay down sidings for the shipment of coal. Sand was rolled down the space over which the tide flowed, up to the upper line of Scott-street, and was filled up to the Market Wharf.

Plates 3.36 and 3.37 show the extensive rail terminus, sheds and yards, in addition to the Zaara Street Power Station.

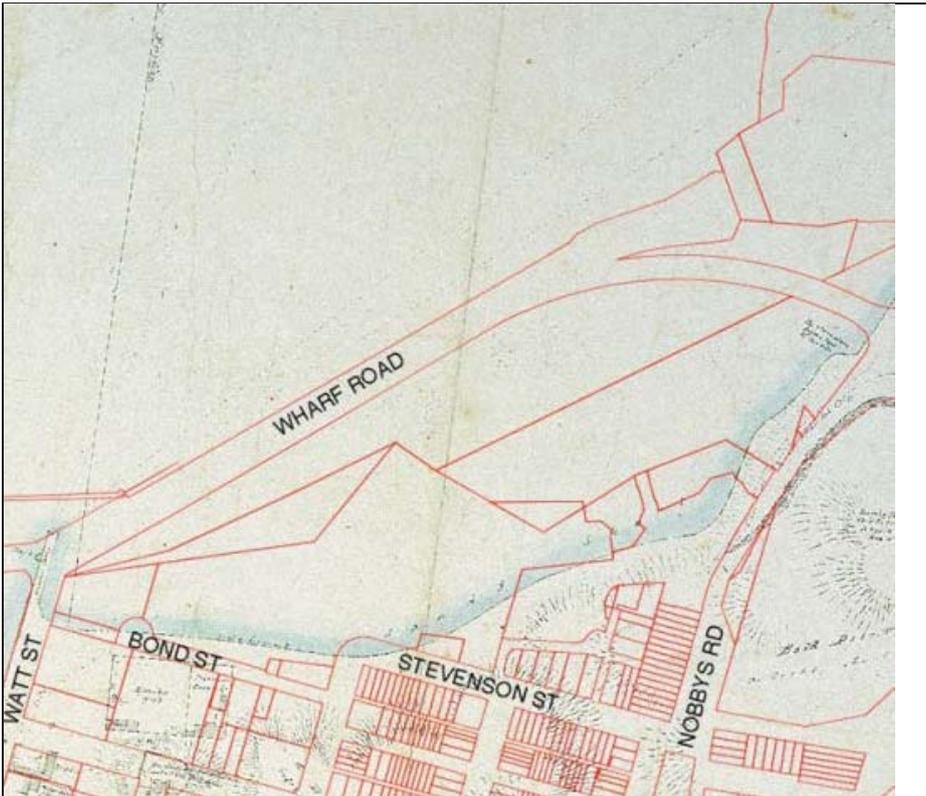


Plate 3.29 Detail of Armstrong's 1830s Plan of Newcastle in NSW

© National Library of New Zealand



Plate 3.30 Detail of 1843 Plan of the Breakwater of Newcastle

© State Records Plan 2426 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.31 Detail of 1846 Plan of Newcastle

© State Records 4506 / Higginbotham 2013

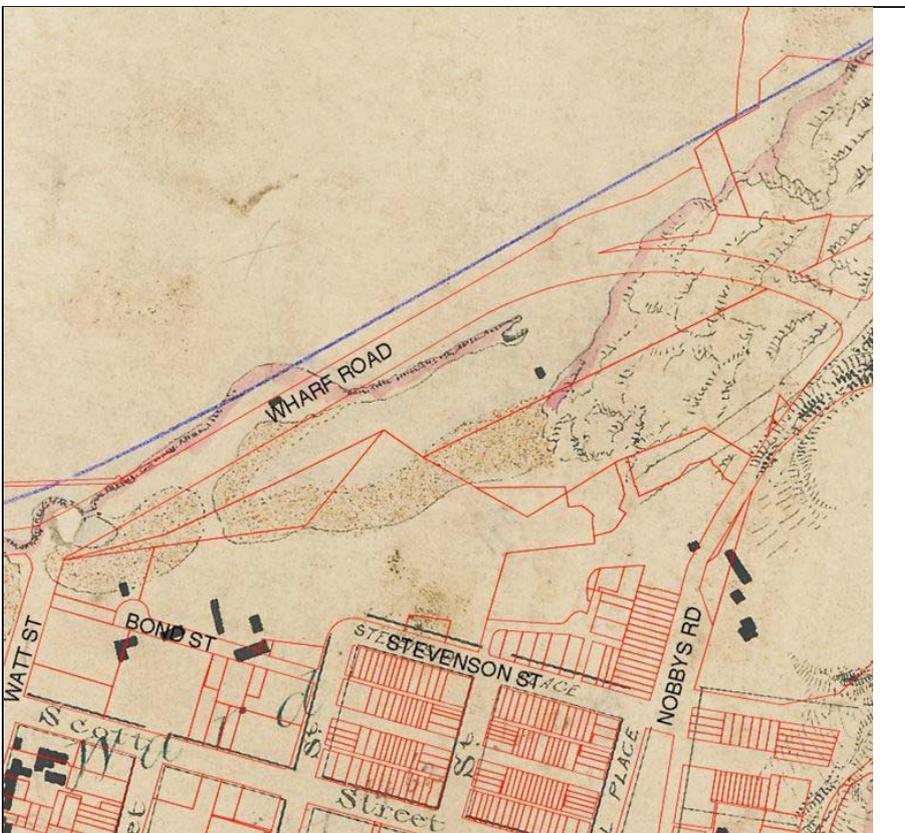


Plate 3.32 Detail of 1857 Plan of the City of Newcastle

© State Records Map 4405 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.33 Detail of 1860 Plan of the City of Newcastle

© State Records Map 4406 / Higginbotham 2013



Plate 3.34 Detail of 1882 Plan of the Port of Newcastle

© National Library of Australia / Higginbotham 2013

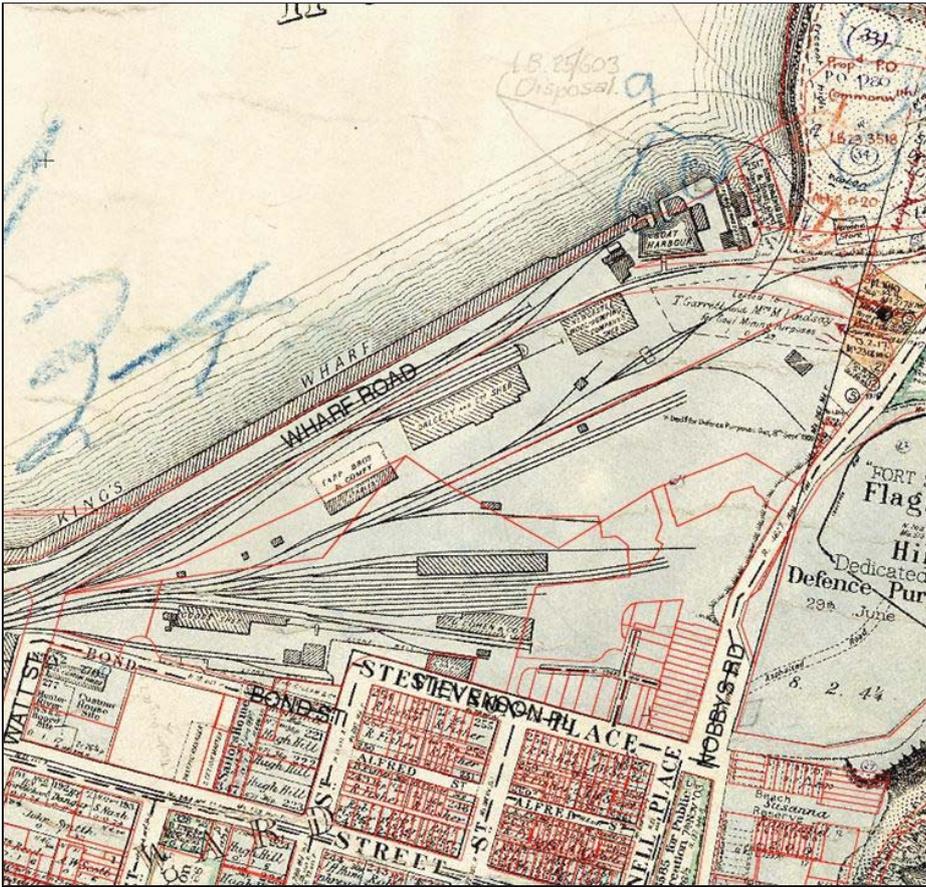


Plate 3.35 Detail of 1915 Map of the City of Newcastle

© Parish Map Preservation Project / Higginbotham 2013

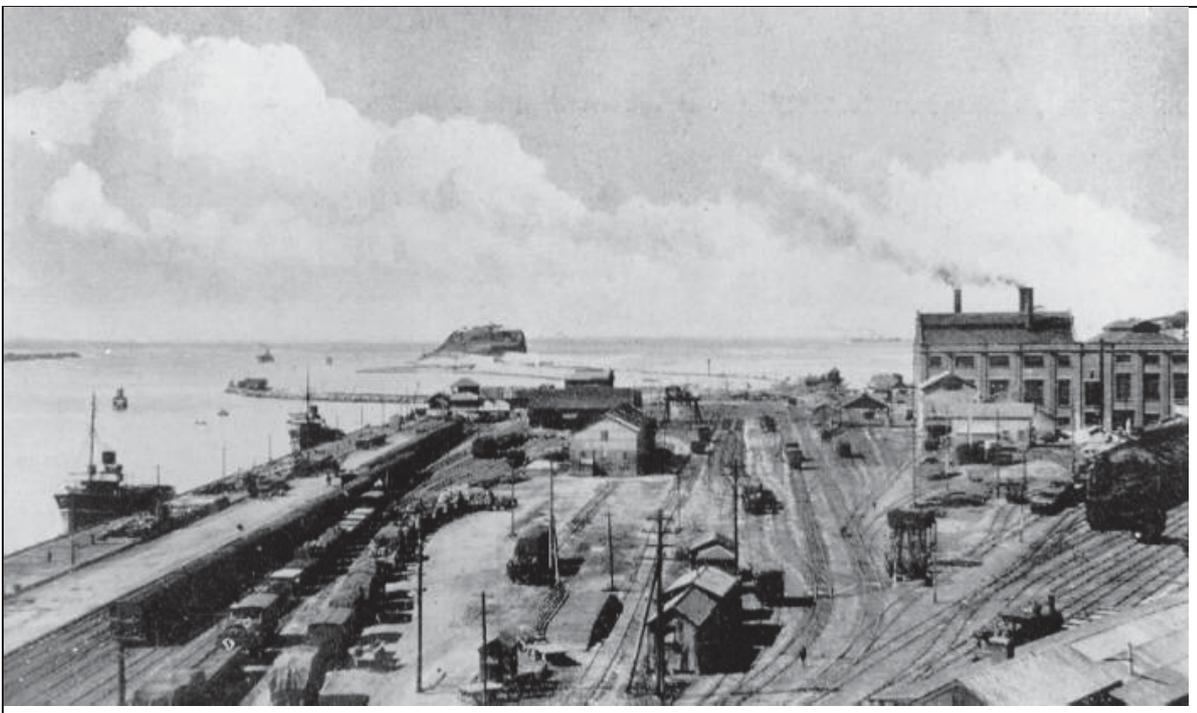


Plate 3.36 Detail of 1924 Photograph showing the rail yards on Wharf Road / Foreshore Park area

© Hunter Photobank 09600056



Plate 3.37 Detail of 1961 aerial photograph

© Newcastle City Council

In 1955 it was proposed to extend Wharf Road through the rail yards to link up to Nobbys Road and Shortland Esplanade (refer to **Plate 4.37**). The west part of this extension essentially forms part of the circuit.

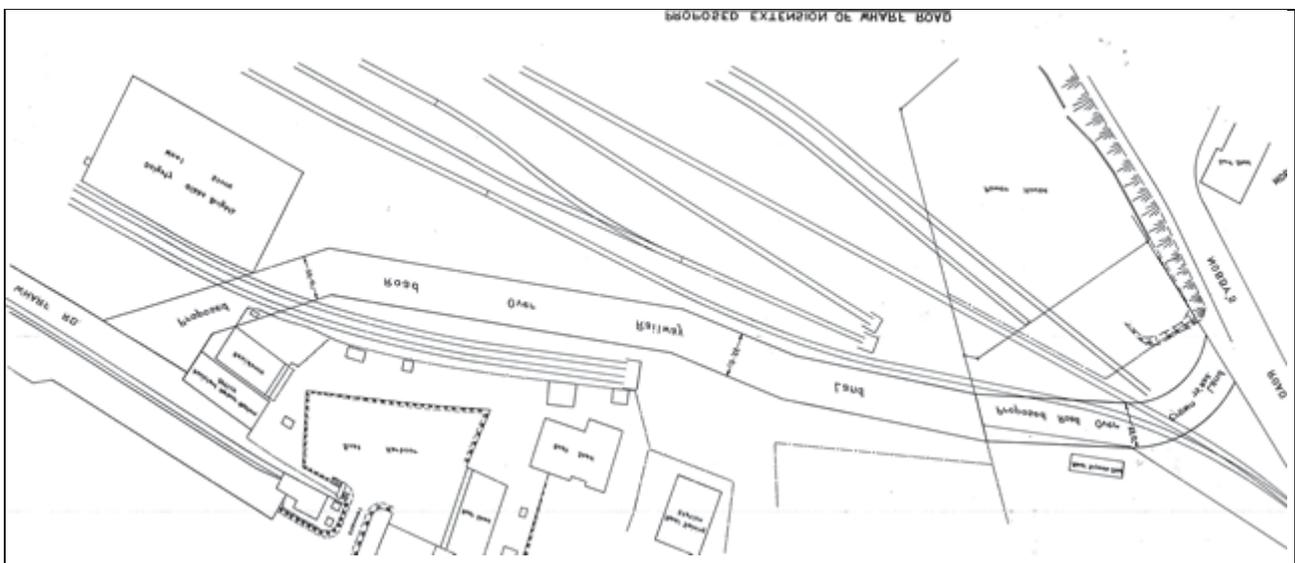


Plate 3.38 1955 Plan showing proposed extension of Wharf Road over Railway Land

© Newcastle City Council