

# EXPLORE



## Stockton

We acknowledge the Worimi people, the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters which are featured in this guide. We recognise their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection to the land and waters, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging.



Aerial Photograph, Stockton, 1979. University of Newcastle, John Turner Collection

FOR thousands of years the Worimi people have lived on the land known as Burrinhngarn, which stretches from Stockton to Port Stephens. They enjoyed a varied diet with abundant oysters, pippies and fish, which were supplemented by native animals and plants such as yams and roots. Evidence still remains of large piles of shells, called middens, which were left by the Worimi people in the Stockton sand dunes.

Burrabihngarn is the Aboriginal name for Stockton, which is a place of cultural significance for the Worimi people. In a joint venture by Newcastle Council and Stockton Historical Society, plaques along the harbour describe its importance. *“Sand is a key element in the landscape at Burrabihngarn. The natural forces of tides and waves combine to wash sand from the ocean bed to the shore where strong winds shape the shifting sand into massive banks. These ancient dunes formed over thousands of years are lined with remnants of extensive middens.”*

Lt John Shortland is recognised as the first European to land at Stockton in the late 1790s. After a penal settlement was established at Newcastle in the early 1800s, there was little European settlement on Stockton apart from some timber cutters' and lime burners' camps.

The first land grant was obtained by Potter McQueen in 1830 (10 acres) and then by Alexander Walker Scott (50 acres) and Dr James Mitchell (70 acres) in 1835. Mitchell's property to the south of Clyde

Street was a private town and land was leased, not sold, by the family. It wasn't until the early 1900s that people could purchase in this area. The area to the north of Clyde Street was known as the “New Township” and was subdivided early in 1887. It is presumed the name Stockton grew from Scott's Town, then Scotton and finally Stockton.

Nature provided challenges to mariners trying to enter Newcastle harbour. Nobbys was an island and a decision had to be made as to which side ships would pass. Both options presented difficulties, including a rocky outcrop and ships being becalmed in certain wind conditions. A sand spit at the mouth of the Hunter River on the Stockton side, the Stockton Oyster Bank, also presented difficulties for mariners.

Until the early 1900s, ships of all sizes were wrecked on the Oyster Bank. Newcastle's worst maritime disaster was in 1866 when the steamer *Cawarra* was wrecked with the loss of sixty lives. Many studies were undertaken to assess what needed to be done to improve safety. In 1908 it was decided to extend both breakwaters, north and south of the harbour, to establish a safer entry point.

Shipbuilding and associated activities were an important industry in Stockton, due to the extensive use of waterways as a means of transport. This dependence continued until 1971 when the Stockton Bridge opened.

**Key:**

1 - 28

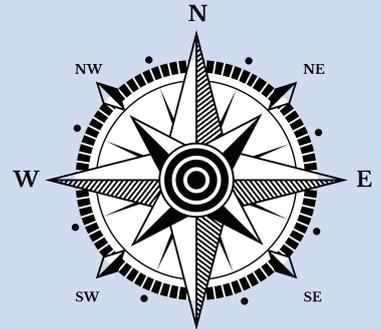
A - B

Places of interest

▲ Heritage Plaques



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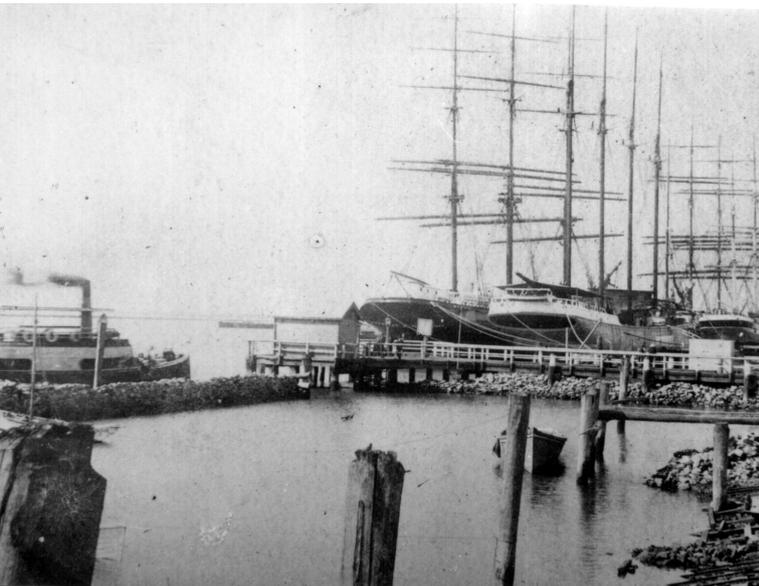
APPROX. METRES

Hunter River

Newcastle Harbour

## 1 Ferry Wharf

Hugh Boyce operated a ferry service from 1853, rowing people across the harbour. He introduced the first steam ferry, *Lady Belmore*, in 1865. Extensive reclamation has meant the ferry wharf has moved a number of times. The present-day wharf has operated from the same site since the late 1960s.



Stockton Ferry Wharf, 1906. University of Newcastle, Ross & Pat Craig Collection

## 2 Pirate Point (Burrabihngarn)

In 1800 a group of convicts “piratically seized” the sloop *Norfolk* at Broken Bay and sailed north. On entering Newcastle harbour the boat was wrecked and the land of nearby Burrabihngarn was named Pirate Point. After seizing another boat, the convicts resumed their escape, but were eventually captured.

## 3 Site of Royal Hotel/Anchors

The Royal Hotel opened in 1877 and traded from a two-storey weatherboard building. This was demolished in 1923 and a replacement building operated until 1953. On the former hotel site are two of the four anchors that once moored the floating dock at Walsh Island and Carrington.



Matherson's Coach, Stockton Wharf 1920s. University of Newcastle, Ross & Pat Craig Collection

## 4 Site of Chemical Plant

Owned by J Blake, the main product was sulphuric acid, with nitric acid, muriatic acid and superphosphate also being produced. The plant operated from 1845 until the early 1860s and was reopened by James Tennant in 1863. It was sold to George Barrow in 1866

### NOTICE.

**G**EOERGE BARROW AND CO. beg to inform their Friends and the Public in general that they have commenced operations at their new Chemical Works, Stockton, where they intend to Manufacture Sulphuric and Muriatic Acids of the very best description, and trust, by civility, attention, and punctuality to all orders entrusted to them to gain a fair share of public patronage.

**GEORGE BARROW AND CO.,**  
Stockton, Newcastle.

*The Newcastle Chronicle - August 22, 1866*

## 5 Site of Government Crane

This was the site of a timber wharf, on which a 16-ton crane was installed in 1902. The wharf was 600 feet long, with the western end being constructed by Peter Callen in 1885.

## 6 Site of Slips & Slipways

Former sites of a number of slipways and a slip. The first recorded slipway was here and the schooner *Pilot* was built by Taylor Winship in 1847. The only transport option for the residents was by water, so boats were an important part of their daily lives.



Launch of Newcastle harbour ferry Darra at Stockton C1934. Greg & Sylvia Ray's phototimetunnel.com

## 7 Site of Lime Kilns

They were located adjacent to the Salt Works and continued operations until the early 1900s. Oyster shells were burnt for the lime content, which was mixed with sand and water, to form lime mortar. Much of it was used in the construction of early brick and stone buildings in Sydney.

## 8 Site of Salt Works

A W Scott commenced his business of evaporating salt water in salt pans in 1838. The works were destroyed by high winds in 1848 and were not rebuilt. By 1861, W Heugh had opened a soap and candle factory in the former salt factory.

C T Stephens then built a tin smelter on the site. The first furnace started operating in 1872 and a second was built soon after. It is presumed the factory closed as it could not compete with the Sydney Tin Works.

## 9 Norm Bassan MBE Lions Park

The park opened in 1975 and features two lion statues, which were obtained from Singleton Army Camp when they were no longer required. Constructed in Germany and made of concrete, the statues were originally located at an Australian Army Camp in Malaya and were moved to Singleton in 1960s.

The Lions Club memorial recognises the contribution made by Stockton to the military fortification of Newcastle. The poppet wheel came from Rothbury Colliery and is a reminder that the Stockton Colliery once existed within 400 metres of the park.

## 10 Police Station

Built around 1870, this station was seen by many as being in an obscure location and too small to adequately service the community. From the early 1900s Council made requests to have a larger station erected in a more central location. Today the police station is located in Douglas St.

## 11 Site of Stockton Colliery

At the time of opening in 1885, the mine shaft was sunk to a depth of 367 feet, which was the deepest in the area. Due to the problem of layers of clay, sand and mud lying on top of the coal seam, shafts had to be reinforced to stop them from collapsing. Cast iron cylinders 15 feet in diameter were used for this purpose. This added to production costs, but money was saved on transport as coal could be stacked on the foreshore ready for export.

In 1896, the bodies of two men were found in the mine. When an exploration party went to obtain evidence about how they died, they also got into trouble and a rescue party was sent to help them. Four of the exploring party and five of the rescuers died, overcome by carbon monoxide. The mine closed in 1908.

## 12 St Paul's Church & Rectory

Anglican Church services were first held in a wooden structure built in 1865. The substantial brick church, which still stands today, opened in 1890 and the adjoining rectory was constructed the following year.

High maintenance costs led to the sale of the rectory in the 1930s. At one stage the building was converted into seven flats, with a number of kitchens and bathrooms added and the front verandah bricked in. In 1965 extensive restoration was undertaken to convert the building back to a single, family home..

## 13 Site of Temperance Hall

This hall was a popular meeting place for Stockton residents after opening in 1885. It was the venue for dances, meetings, card games etc and services for the First Methodist Church were held there. In 1916 it was converted for use as the Picture Palace, which operated until a new theatre opened in the Masonic Hall in 1922. The hall was dismantled and re-erected at Main Road Cardiff as the Southern Cross Picture Theatre

## 14 Round Roof House

Built for Mariner Captain Peter Murray, who regularly spent time pearling in the South Pacific. During his travels, he noticed the round-roof houses which were common in the cyclone prone area. On returning home he built his own home in this style. The house was renovated in 2021 with the owners keeping and restoring the iconic roof.

## 15 Lookout Hotel/Gladstone Hotel

For the first four years the hotel on this site was named The Lookout Hotel. After a change of ownership in 1891 it became the Gladstone Hotel. It continued to trade until 1900, when it closed for two years and then reopened. The original building was demolished in 1937 and replaced with the Art Deco structure which still stands today.

## 16 Catholic Church/School

St Peter's Church opened in 1887 and on weekdays was used as a school. Two years later, a convent to house the Sisters of St Joseph, was built adjoining the church. The first purpose-built, school structure was opened in 1903 and the Sisters of Mercy ran the school until 1985. Today the school operates under the control of the Newcastle Catholic Schools Office.



Stockton Colliery, Stockton 1897. University of Newcastle, Norm Barney Collection

## 17 Shipwreck Walk

Construction commenced in 1898 on a northern breakwater, which we know today as Shipwreck Walk. It was built of stone from the Waratah quarry near Braye Park and a railway system hauled the stone down King Street. The breakwater was extended to the wreck of the *Adolphe* after it was pushed by heavy seas onto the wrecks of the *Colonist*, *Wendouree* and *Cawarra* in 1904. Part of its hulk can be seen today and underneath the walk are the remains of other iron and steel wrecks.



*Wreck of the Adolphe beyond the end of Stockton breakwater. In foreground are masts of Regent Murray which sank in 1899. Greg & Sylvia Ray's phototimetunnel.com*

## 18 Memorial Gates at Lynn Oval

Dedicated to the memory of eleven miners, who died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning, at Stockton Colliery. The gates are of Gothic design and made from Pymont stone. They were dedicated in August 1897 and funding was obtained by public subscription.

## 19 Ocean View Hotel

The licence for this hotel was only granted for the period 1892-1894. The proposed breakwater was to have been built opposite, but its location was changed and the hotel was forced to close. The building was then converted to residential use.

## 20 Boatrowers Hotel

In 1887, the hotel started operating from a two-storey weatherboard structure. The building fell into disrepair during the 1920s and council was concerned about its safety, especially the substantial two-storey verandah. New owners Tooth & Co replaced the building in 1929 with a new brick structure. This hotel still trades today under the same name.

## 21 Presbyterian Aged Care Wescott

Opened in 1913 the Chelmsford Institute for Mission to Seamen was named after the NSW Governor Lord Chelmsford. The organisation provided support for seafarers including social activities, transport, mental health and communication services. A chapel opened next door in 1914 and was known as St Andrew's Seamen's Church. The facility was in use until 1944 when its headquarters moved to Hannell St, Wickham. The Presbyterian Church now provides an aged care facility at the site.

## 22 Site of Gantry Crane

Stone was mined from the Waratah Quarry for the construction of the Stockton breakwater. Carried by rail to a Carrington wharf, the stone was placed on punts and ferried across the river to the north Stockton foreshore. A gantry crane unloaded the stone into rail wagons which were pushed down King Street by two locomotives and unloaded close to its final destination.

## 23 Public School

The state school opened in 1881 with an enrolment of 167 pupils. A number of schools had previously existed and were run by individuals and religious groups. There was a marked increase in student numbers when the mine opened in 1885 and an infants' department street was built in 1887 to cope with a doubling of the school population.

## 24 Site of Council Chambers

Stockton became a municipality in 1889 and three years later council chambers were built. The building had distinctive turrets and battlements with English-style leadlight windows. When eleven suburban councils amalgamated in 1938 to form Newcastle Council, the building was no longer required. Stockton RSL Club took over the site, demolished the former council chambers in 1967 and had new premises constructed for the club.



*RSL & Council Chambers. Stockton Historical Society*

## 25 The Laurels

Completed in 1897, this was home to William F B Quigley, one of the joint owners of the Stockton Estate. He was the grandson of Dr James Mitchell who obtained one of the first land grants in 1835. The property was commandeered by the army to use as a command post during World War II and it was purchased by the Catholic Church to use as a convent in the 1950s. It is now a private residence.



*Quigley's House, Stockton 1897. Stockton Historical Society*

## 26 Former Vehicular Ferry Wharf

Operated from 1916 to 1973 when the Stockton bridge was opened. The punt, *Mildred*, was the first to operate the service between Newcastle and Stockton and was capable of carrying 16 cars. Larger ferries, the *Leurgurena* (purchased in 1945) and the *Koondooloo*, (entered service in 1952) took over the route until the bridge opened. Both ferries then headed to the Philippines but broke from their moorings and were wrecked off South West Rocks in 1972.



*Leurgurena, Newcastle 1970, University of Newcastle, Ross & Pat Craig Collection*

## 27 Site of Tweed Factory/Tannery

In 1840 James Mitchell established a tweed mill and leased it to Robert Fisher and Alexander Donaldson. By 1850 the mill employed about 300 people and produced 70,000 yards of tweed

and 800 yards of flannel a year. In July 1851 the factory burnt down and was not rebuilt. It was one of the largest factories in the colony and produced over a third of the colony's needs.

After repairs to the burnt-out buildings, a tannery opened in 1864. The premises were equipped so that 1000 sheepskins could be processed each week by a staff of 20. These skins were mostly used to make aprons for masons and blacksmiths.

**TO LET, those Commodious and Centrally-situated premises at Stockton, known as the STOCKTON TANNERY.**

**The Building, which is substantially built, is 126 by 60 feet, has upstairs and downstairs apartments, and is in every respect well furnished for the purposes of a First-class TANNERY.**

**There are twelve tan-pits quite watertight on the premises, immediately adjoining which is an extensive drying ground for woolwashing. There is also a substantial wharf connected with the works by a tramway.**

**Full particulars on application to  
C<sup>o</sup> CHARLES ROBINSON,  
Stockton Tin Works.**

*The Newcastle Chronicle - December 6, 1873*

## 28 General Washington Hotel

Commenced trading in 1865 and except for a break from 1881-1884, the hotel has continued to trade on the original site and under the same name. The original building was demolished and a new hotel constructed in 1966. When built, the hotel was close to the ferry wharf, but over time reclamation has been undertaken and the ferry wharf is now further south.

### FURTHER AFIELD:

#### A Stockton Centre/Stockton Hospital

Originally designated as a quarantine hospital in 1893, the facility did not open as a quarantine centre until 1900. An outbreak of bubonic plague in that year forced authorities to construct buildings and open the facility. Prior to this, sailors from disease-stricken boats were transported to the Sydney Quarantine Station. In 1911 the complex was converted to a mental health facility named Stockton Hospital. A further name change occurred in 1917 when it became the Stockton Mental Hospital. It closed in 1989 and became the Stockton Centre. The government closed this facility in 2020 and plans have yet to be released regarding future use of the site.



*Stockton Hospital, 1944. Greg & Sylvia Ray's phototimetunnel.com*



*Fort Wallace. Stockton Historical Society*

#### B Fort Wallace

Built in 1913, the fort was equipped with two 6-inch guns and was rearmed with two 9.2-inch guns in April 1939. It closed in 1945 and was occupied by the 130 Signal Squadron in 1960s. The site contains a number of historically significant buildings and gun emplacements. A plan by Defence Force Housing to build accommodation on the former defence site was endorsed by Newcastle Council in 2019.

**Walk takes approximately 90 minutes and is on flat terrain**

Most information sourced from publications by Stockton Historical Society

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