

# SHAPING THE DOMAIN

THE MACQUARIE LEGACY  
AT PARRAMATTA PARK

THE GOVERNMENT DOMAIN, PARRAMATTA 1810-1821



PARRAMATTA, NEW SOUTH WALES, c1822, JOSEPH LYCETT  
 COURTESY THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA  
 GOVERNMENT HOUSE PARRAMATTA AND THE DOMAIN  
 (NOW PARRAMATTA PARK) VIEWED FROM MAYS HILL

## THE MACQUARIE LEGACY AT PARRAMATTA PARK

*The landscape of Parramatta Park remains remarkably true to the estate created by Governor and Mrs Macquarie during their time in New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. This landscape is valued today because it is a public park that still has the structure and character of the 19th Century Australian Government Domain.*

*The Parramatta Park Trust now manages this historic parkland. The Macquaries carefully planned the design and establishment of this landscape, as they created both a home for their young family and a showplace for the British Empire in the colony.*



GOVERNOR LACHLAN MACQUARIE AND MRS ELIZABETH MACQUARIE c1819  
 COURTESY MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

### GOVERNOR OF THE COLONY

*“... all the trouble, plague, responsibility and odium of ... restoring order and tranquillity”*

On New Year's Day in 1810 Lachlan Macquarie was formally sworn in as Governor of New South Wales. The colony was then 22 years old, seven months sail from England and remote from the King's authority.

The survival of the colony was no longer in doubt – farming was established and the towns of Sydney and Parramatta were prospering. However the uprising against Governor Bligh and his arrest by the NSW Corps in 1808 had shaken colonial society, which was troubled by social divisions between convict, emancipist (freed convicts) and free settlers.

Macquarie had a difficult job to do and knew he was faced with “all the trouble, plague, responsibility and odium of new modelling the Govt. of New South Wales and restoring order and tranquillity”. It would be a challenge, but as Macquarie wrote to a friend, he was “contented ... [to] do my duty”.

Macquarie's first task was to gather information about the state of the colony of New South Wales, which he viewed as “a Penitentiary ... on a grand scale”. In 1810 it consisted of prisons at Norfolk Island, Van Diemen's Land and Coal River (now Newcastle), and settlements in three main areas on the mainland: Sydney, Parramatta and the Hawkesbury district. He was also responsible for the North Island of New Zealand. There were 9,000 non-Aboriginal inhabitants in the colony: these included about 6,000 free settlers and the convicts they were responsible for, as well as 3,000 convicts and soldiers who were dependant upon the Crown.

As with previous Governors, Macquarie held absolute authority in making laws and implementing them. He found the colony disorganised and set about imposing order. One of his first acts was to revoke all the appointments, land grants, sentences and pardons that had been made over the past two years during Governor Bligh's imprisonment. This made him some powerful enemies.

He also made a tour of the colony, during which it became apparent that public roads and buildings had been neglected since Governor Bligh was deposed.

Macquarie ordered a ‘General Survey of Buildings’, which led to an expanded program of public building and repair. This included building new army barracks; a general hospital; orphanages and a school for Aboriginal children, the Native Institute, as well as many roads – including the one linking Parramatta and Sydney. In all, he ordered over 265 public projects in 11 years. He founded five new towns in the Hawkesbury as well as Liverpool (1810), Campbell Town (1821) and the settlement at Port Macquarie (1821). He encouraged exploration and was responsible for opening up the land on the other side of the Blue Mountains. Macquarie is most famous for this expansion and building program, which reflected his vision that New South Wales could be “one of the greatest and most flourishing Colonies belonging to the British Empire”.

## THE PARRAMATTA DOMAIN

*“... we have resolved on passing a great part of our time here in future”*

Government House and the Parramatta Domain served as the centre of Government when Macquarie was in residence. Here he worked, planning the program of public works and convict assignments, as well as administering ticket-of-leave applications and grants of land or livestock. This site was a departure point for the many country tours made by the Macquaries as well as major expeditions to open up the inland of the continent. The Government Lumberyard at Parramatta and the convicts assigned to it, supplied building materials and labour for road gangs and building projects across the colony.

The Governor and his wife first visited Parramatta in February 1810 and clearly liked the town. They stayed there many times over their first years in the colony, although Government House was so badly neglected that Macquarie wrote that they could not remain “more than Two or Three days together”, because “the house was in danger of falling”, and its condition was “so very bad as to be extremely dangerous”. Renovations to the Parramatta Government House and Domain were part of Macquarie’s public works, and they transformed this site.

In 1810 Government House was still very much at the centre of the township of Parramatta, which had been established by Governor Phillip in 1789. Within the area that is now Parramatta Park there were many public buildings: the Government Lumber Yard, a Brewery, a Granary and the Government Provision Store, as well as convict huts and gardens. Under Macquarie, the centre of the old township was gradually demolished and the new public buildings were rebuilt a mile away, closer to the Charles St wharf.

The Macquaries’ influence saw Government House transformed into a Vice Regal administrative centre and a gracious home. The land around it was claimed as a Domain – the term applied to the estate attached to a manor house, which was used by the owner rather than by tenants. In October 1816 Macquarie recorded in his diary that “The whole of the additions and repairs ... ordered to be made to the Government House, garden and Grounds at Parramatta being now completed to our satisfaction, we have resolved on passing a great part of our time here in future”. The Governor and Mrs Macquarie, with their two and a half year old son Lachlan, took up residence at Government House Parramatta from 18 November 1816.

The creation of a private Government Domain was formalised by a physical boundary. Macquarie records that his estate was “surrounded either by the Parramatta River or a strong fence ... that part of the Grounds immediately in Front of Government House [was] enclosed with a stone wall with front and Rear gates”. This caused some resentment among the people of Parramatta, who had previously used the land as a common, to graze their livestock and gather their firewood.

The enclosure was reinforced by proclamations published in the *Sydney Gazette*, which forbade access to the land for hunting, grazing, woodcutting and recreation. The proclamation of 1810 warned that “... all persons are hereby

cautioned not to go into the said Demesne [Domain] on any Pretence whatever unless they are employed there as Labourers ... as every trespass ... in future will be punished ...”. These warnings were taken more seriously after April 1816, when three free men and two convicts were made an example of after an incident in the Sydney Domain. They were punished “by flogging ... for having broke over the Wall into the Government Domain, contrary to standing orders”. Macquarie records that “this Summary example had the desired effect of preventing the recurrence of the lewd & disgraceful assignation of Persons which had so long before been carried on with impunity in the retired parts of the Government Grounds”.

Both Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie took a keen interest in shaping the landscape around their home. Farmland and kitchen gardens at Parramatta supplied their family with fresh food – an acquaintance noted enviously in 1810, that “Parramatta supplies [them] with milk, butter, poultry vegetables etc.” Once in residence, they undertook extensive landscaping and construction of outbuildings, and the grounds quickly took on the appearance of a fashionable English Landscape Garden.

Out in the Domain, convict labourers cared for livestock, cleared the “old dead Timber and stumps”, levelled ground at the back of the new stables and harvested a good crop of hay – a successful experiment credited to Mrs Macquarie. In early 1817 a summerhouse, a dove and hen house and a cow house were built and in November the Lumberyard was set to constructing a “small house for an emu, rabbit hutches and a deer house”. The Parramatta Domain was a busy and active working estate throughout the Macquarie period and there were at times more than 80 people working there.



A VIEW OF PART OF PARRAMATTA PORT JACKSON, c1809, UNSIGNED, UNDATED TITLE IN CONTEMPORARY HAND. COURTESY MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW



SALTER'S FARMHOUSE, CONVERTED INTO A DAIRY, c1815, IS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST SURVIVING BUILDINGS AND CAN BE VISITED BY APPOINTMENT. PHOTOGRAPH 2010, PARRAMATTA PARK TRUST



OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE AND PARRAMATTA PARK, PHOTOGRAPH 2009, SKYSHOTS

## PICTURESQUE PARRAMATTA

*“The Governor’s residence ... looks just like a private country house ...”*

Grand English Landscape styled estates were familiar to the Macquaries. Such estates were show places for the wealth, power and prestige of the British elite, and featured beautiful parklands. They were much admired and copied. Estate owners could significantly improve their status and their standard of living through careful management of their land. Landscape experts and essayists published essays and pattern books describing how this might best be done, and Mrs Macquarie is known to have brought such books with her to the colonies. The improvements to the Parramatta Domain included fashionable elements such as a ‘sweep’ – the circular carriage driveway up to the front of Government House – and a ‘shrubbery’ – a corridor of lemon trees along a path which wound its way from the back of Government House to a quaint Dairy – a device popular and common enough to be known as the ‘ferme ornee’, or the ‘ornamented farm’.

The Domain at Parramatta served to promote the power and prestige of the British Empire in the colony, as the Governor and his wife received and entertained many important international visitors at Government House, Parramatta. The French explorer Louis de Freycinet and his wife Rose visited in December 1919. Louis observed that “The Governor’s residence ... looks just like a private country house; it displays ... the elegance that the English know so well how to create wherever they are, and which can also be observed in the adjoining garden and park, which are pleasantly laid out”. Rose de Freycinet describes going for a walk with Elizabeth Macquarie in the garden, where “We met about 30 native children ... educated ... at Government expense”. She described the “very agreeable air of simple elegance” at the Government Domain and recognised the skill that had gone into creating the gardens: “the situation of Government House at Parramatta lends itself naturally to the adornments that have been made: a crescent-shaped valley with a little stream flowing at the bottom provides shelter and ... views”. This “crescent-shaped valley” – first described by Governor Phillip in 1788 – remains a feature of the Park and still provides shelter and views.



VUE DE LA MAISON DU GOUVERNEUR, c1819, LOUIS DE FREYCINET  
COURTESY THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

The 11 years that the Macquaries spent at the Parramatta Government Domain saw many changes to the landscape that enhanced the natural beauty of this site and formed the basis of the modern parklands. Parramatta Park remains a lasting tribute to the Macquaries’ vision of a beautiful, yet natural landscape garden, which was much more than a source of food or a place to impress diplomatic guests. Landscapes such as these are a refuge and a source of spiritual refreshment, and 21st century visitors continue to be “charmed with the beauty of the countryside” at Parramatta Park.



ENTRANCE TO GOVT HOUSE, AT PARRAMATTA, c1821, EDWARD MASON  
COURTESY MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW

THE CRESCENT AND GOVERNMENT HOUSE PARRAMATTA FROM THE NORTH WEST, c1819,  
WATTS OR LEWIN  
COURTESY MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW



*In 1826 Elizabeth Macarthur, wrote that Mrs Macquarie “has left many memorials in the Government Grounds which she caused to be laid out and planted and embellished. The trees thrive and are very ornamental.” The landscape structure of the Macquarie era can still be clearly identified within Parramatta Park. The Macquaries’ vision of the Vice Regal Domain was of a private, picturesque, parkland where natural beauty was incorporated into designed features. In designing the Domain they intended to incorporate both beauty and utility to create a pleasing whole. Buildings such as the stables, gardener’s cottage, the dairy and the dove house were linked by informal plantings, curving carriage drives and pedestrian paths. These features provided the setting for the remodelled Government House and the sites of some can be explored using this map.*

**1 GOVERNMENT HOUSE PARRAMATTA** Successive Governors occupied Government House Parramatta. The first house on this site was built for Governor Phillip in 1790. This modest, single storey building was made of lathe and plaster. By 1799 Phillip’s house was “so much gone to decay” that Governor Hunter replaced it with a two storey Georgian brick building. Governor Macquarie ordered this house to be improved and enlarged so that it could be used as the main residence of his family and staff. The original Hunter block was retained as a central section. It was extended to the west, and two symmetrical pavilions were added with connecting colonnades, in the manner of a Palladian English country house. A timber portico was built to a design thought to be by convict architect Francis Greenway, and a new stable and coach house were built, as well as a Garrison Building. Government House Parramatta remains in this form in the centre of Parramatta Park, and is open to the public.

**2 THE LEMON HEDGE WALK** Shrubberies were a fashionable garden feature during the Macquarie era. A shrubbery was a walkway around carefully arranged trees and shrubs, designed to begin near the main house and wind through the estate, leading to attractive vantage points before circling back to the house. Mrs Macquarie quickly instituted such walks at the Parramatta Domain – one in particular was hedged with the lemon trees. A visiting Russian explorer left this description in 1820: “The garden at the back of the house terminates on one side in a fairly steep semi-circular hill covered with woods, on top of which is an alley of lemon trees three and a half feet high, recently planted and carefully pruned. Along the hedge surrounding the garden masses of yellow downy Mimosa flowers are growing. These trees contribute greatly to the beauty of the garden”. Mrs Macquarie’s lemon hedged path led along the top of the Crescent and the path and lemon trees have been re-planted so that you can enjoy the walk with its extensive views across the river valley to the hills beyond.

**3 THE BARK HUT** A rustic building next to the path, shown now in outline, is thought to have been an important stopping point along the Lemon Hedge Walk which took advantage of the lovely view over the ponded river. It was adapted by the Macquaries from an earlier building, possibly in the spirit of the Hermitages created on rural estates in Britain. This may have been the site of “Mrs Macquarie’s beautifully contrived Bark Hut”, where the family enjoyed their Christmas breakfast in 1820.

**4 THE GARDENER’S HOUSE** In 1822 Macquarie records that he had ordered the construction of “A Government Garden and Orchard ... and also a Brick house for the Gardener.” John England was a Government Gardener from 1811, and became Overseer of Government Gardens in 1815. It is possible that the house Macquarie describes was built for England, his wife and two children. John England’s job would have been a busy and responsible one, as he supervised the convict labourers, overseeing tasks such as: the delivery of loads of dung for the gardens; fencing; removing stumps and burning off. In August 1817 six convict labourers were assigned to the gardens, and another 31 were employed in the Domain. It is likely that John England carried out the Macquaries’ landscape designs, building paths and planting shrubs, as well as tending the kitchen gardens.

**5 SALTER’S FARM/THE GOVERNOR’S DAIRY** “An old Farm House converted into a Dairy ...” In October 1813, Governor Macquarie began to buy small farms which were close to Government House to create the private Domain. The purchase of George Salter’s 30 acre grant on the western side of the river, north of Government House was the first. Salter, transported for smuggling in 1788, had served his sentence and was freed in 1796, when he was granted a small farm on the banks of the Parramatta River. This land, and the small cottage Salter built on it, still survives within the current boundary of Parramatta Park. Salter had three convicts assigned to help him as he cleared and planted fields of wheat and maize. In exchange for his land at Parramatta, he was appointed Superintendent of Crown Stock in Hobart, and given a herd of 30 head of cattle. A short time later, in about 1815/16, Macquarie converted Salter’s cottage into a dairy. He added two wings, which give the cottage the shape we see today and added two pavilions, which have since been demolished, but which survive in the archaeology of the site. This building is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Australia and can be visited by appointment.

**6 THE KITCHEN GARDEN** In the colony of New South Wales a good kitchen garden was very important to the quality of the family diet. The Macquaries’ kitchen garden was “contiguous to the Mansion House, enclosed by a paling”. It was described as being “at the foot of the hill part of the ground”, and it had “been leveled and planted with fruit trees. Different kinds of European fruits are grown here such as apples, pears, peaches, currents, gooseberries, strawberries and raspberries ... the garden extends to the Parramatta River”. The kitchen garden would also have included boarders of “savory pot-herbs” – parsley, rosemary, thyme, mint and chives – as well as seasonal vegetables such as cabbages, potatoes, peas, carrots, turnips, lettuce, onions, broccoli and pumpkins. Plants from the kitchen gardens of this period were used for food, drink, fiber, dyes, and medicines for the families who grew them.

**7 THE RIVER** In 1817, Governor Macquarie ordered the construction of a dam, or a ‘tank’, to provide fresh water. Mrs Macquarie described this dam as providing “an ample supply of good Water to the whole of the inhabitants of Parramatta – before the accomplishment of this grand object there was in summer the greatest inconvenience felt by the people and I consider [it] by far the most useful Work which was performed during my Husband’s residence there.” The dam kept out the tidal salt water, providing a reliable source of fresh water for the people of Parramatta. It also changed the River upstream and formed a beautiful, natural looking freshwater feature visible from Government House. This was a strategy that was popular in creating English Landscape Gardens.

**8 THE ENGLISH GARDEN** Walking paths were both a beautiful and an essential part of an estate’s grounds. The walks around the Government Domain were extensive: “... another garden, called the “English Garden”... lies in the front of the house. We wandered through the winding paths, between the orange and lemon trees, each of them showing its fruits in the various stages of their growth”. Shale and slate were excavated, crushed and delivered to the Domain by convict laborers, and used to make these formal paths.

**9 THE CARRIAGE DRIVES** The fashionable ‘sweep’ or carriage loop in front of Government House is an important part of the Macquarie landscape. This ‘driveway’ does not appear in an 1814 map of the area, but it features in an image published by Louis de Freycinet, who visited Parramatta in 1819. It is thought that the carriage loop was constructed as part of Macquarie’s major works in the Domain, in about 1815. It was linked to “An excellent drive around the inside [of the Domain and] ... the brushwood cleared away with great taste & judgment to give variety to the clumps & screens of trees that are interspersed, which have a very beautiful and pleasing effect”. The alignment of the drive in front of Government House is marked by steel plates and bollards.

**10 THE POND** A watercolor painted by John Watts in 1819 shows that a small pond was located just down hill of the dovecote. This small pond is thought to have been made by the Macquaries, who used a swampy area to create a convenient water supply for horses and ducks thereby adding another picturesque feature to the landscape. This site is still quite swampy today, and the area that used to be pond has been planted with water loving sedge grasses, to show its former location.

**11 THE DOVE & HEN HOUSE** An elaborate dovecote was built next to Government House in the first three months of 1817. This decorative ‘Dove and Hen house’ was a charming feature in the formal part of the garden, but it also served the practical purpose of housing poultry, kept for their meat and eggs, and providing ‘bird lime’ for fertilizer. Dovecotes were common in Scotland, where they were known as a ‘doocot’, and it is likely that this led the Macquaries’ to have one built at Parramatta. The plans for this small building have survived. It is thought to have been to designed and built by Lieutenant John Watts, the Governor’s Aide de Camp, who oversaw much of the construction at Parramatta between 1814 and 1818. The dovecote was a distinctive feature of the landscape for many years and appears in paintings and on maps until after 1850. The seating area interprets the location, size and shape of the dovecote.

#### MACQUARIE’S WORKS IN THE PARRAMATTA DOMAIN

Reporting on his achievements in 1822 in response to the Bigge Inquiry, Macquarie listed the following work at Parramatta:

*The Old Government House repaired, enlarged and much improved by making it a double House and adding Wings to it ... [Today conserved at the Old Government House Museum run by the National Trust, NSW]*  
*A new Stable and Coach House built of Brick for the use of the Governor and his Staff, detached at a little distance from the Mansion House ... [Demolished to make way for the railway in 1860]*

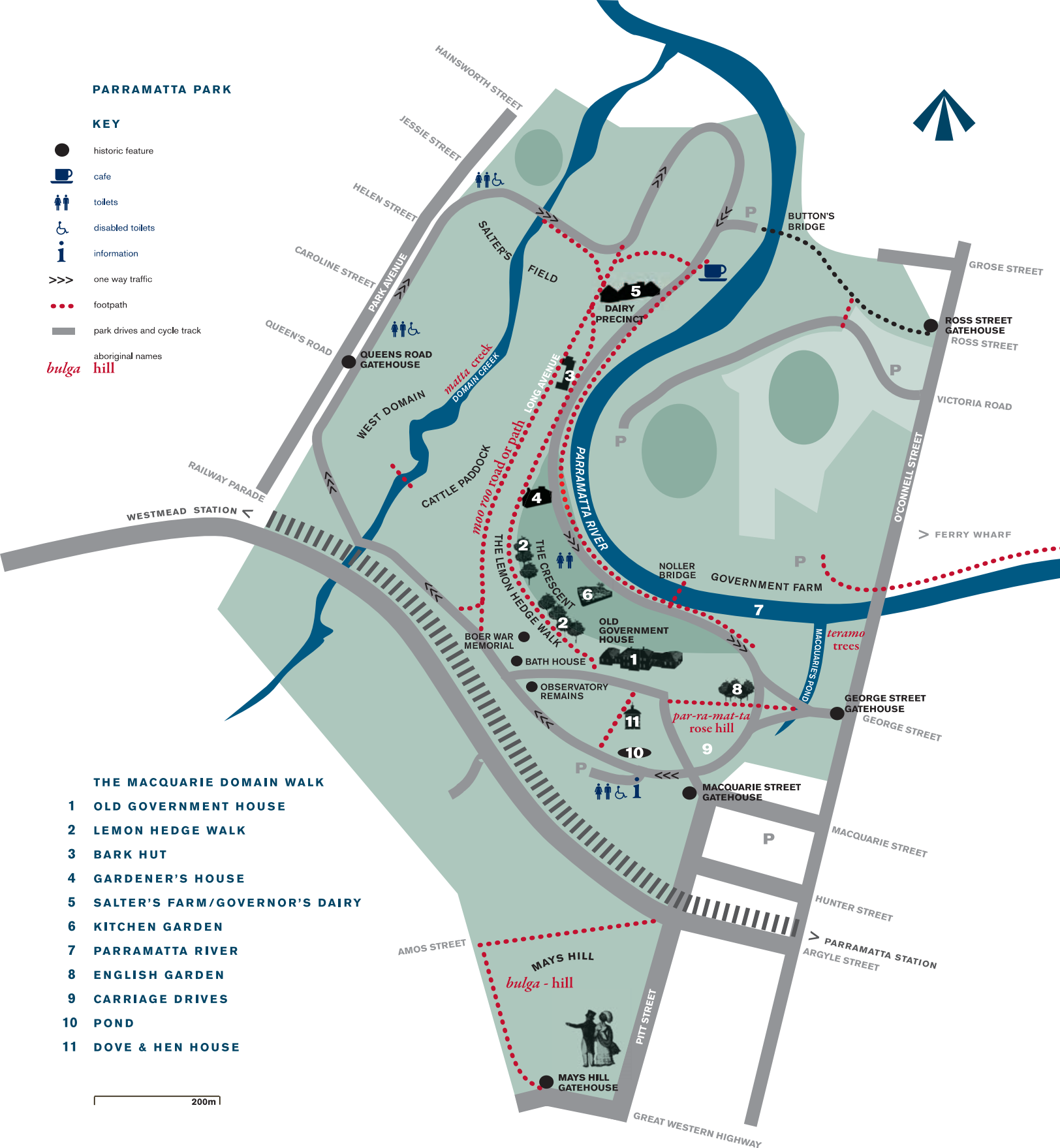
*A Government Garden and Orchard, contiguous to the Mansion House, enclosed with a Paling, and also a Brick house for the Gardener. [The floor plan of this building is interpreted adjacent to the path to the Dairy]*  
*An old Farm House converted into a Dairy and repaired as such ... [Dairy Cottage conserved and open to the public]*

*The Government Domain at Parramatta, consisting of about 500 acres of Ground, partially cleared of the Old dead Timber and Stumps, the whole being surrounded either by the Parramatta River or a strong fence ... that part of the Grounds immediately in Front of Government House being enclosed with a stone wall with front and Rear gates, and a small lodge at each... [85 hectares of which now remains, conserved as Parramatta Park]*

**PARRAMATTA PARK**

**KEY**

-  historic feature
-  cafe
-  toilets
-  disabled toilets
-  information
-  one way traffic
-  footpath
-  park drives and cycle track
- bulga* aboriginal names
- hill* hill



**THE MACQUARIE DOMAIN WALK**

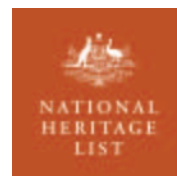
- 1 OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE
- 2 LEMON HEDGE WALK
- 3 BARK HUT
- 4 GARDENER'S HOUSE
- 5 SALTER'S FARM/GOVERNOR'S DAIRY
- 6 KITCHEN GARDEN
- 7 PARRAMATTA RIVER
- 8 ENGLISH GARDEN
- 9 CARRIAGE DRIVES
- 10 POND
- 11 DOVE & HEN HOUSE

200m

Old Government House & Domain [Parramatta Park] is one of 11 historic sites that together form the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property.

**PARRAMATTA PARK**

**OPEN EVERY DAY**  
 6am-6pm (8pm Daylight Saving)  
 Phone 02 8833 5000  
 www.parrapark.com.au



**Australian Convict Sites**  
 • inscribed on the World  
 Heritage List in 2010

Published by Parramatta Park Trust 2010  
 Reprinted by Parramatta Park Trust 2012  
 Text by Verena Mauldon, Curator Cultural Heritage

COVER IMAGE: PARRAMATTA, NEW SOUTH WALES, c1822,  
 JOSEPH LYCETT, COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA  
 DETAIL SHOWING THE DOMAIN AND PARRAMATTA TOWNSHIP.