

COMMEMORATION AND IMPROVEMENT: PARRAMATTA ST JOHN'S CEMETERY, NEW SOUTH WALES, IN ITS CONTEXT 1788–c 1840

Harold Mytum, FSA

Harold Mytum, Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool,
12–14 Abercromby Square, Liverpool L69 7WZ, UK. Email: H.Mytum@liverpool.ac.uk

Parramatta was the second British settlement established in mainland Australia, and for a time was the largest. Its burial ground and monuments, the oldest surviving British cemetery in mainland Australia, provides important evidence for the aspirations, attitudes and practices within this fledgling community. It reveals the role of improvement concepts and practices in popular as well as governmental culture, representing an experiment in secular control over burial decades before the urban non-denominational cemetery first appears in England. The primary chronological focus here is from the foundation of settlement in 1788 to c 1840, by which time free settlers as well as emancipists had transformed Parramatta from a convict settlement into a colonial town.

Keywords: colonial studies; memorials; burials; funerary practices; convicts; improvement culture

INTRODUCTION

The permanent settlement of New South Wales, and then Australia, was a British colonial enterprise with the initial workforce formed of convicts and the necessary military and administrative infrastructure to both maintain order and manage the (at times) problematic relationships with the Aboriginal peoples into whose landscapes this alien culture was implanted.¹ The first mainland landing was at Botany Bay, in January 1788, but the fleet moved to a better anchorage at Port Jackson, where a settlement was created that became Sydney, and this expanded rapidly. An inability to grow crops in the immediate vicinity quickly led to exploration to identify potential agricultural settlements, and the first of these on the mainland was at Rose Hill,² which became so productive that it rapidly expanded and was made the location of the township of Parramatta. Whilst Sydney continued to develop, in the first few decades Parramatta was the only other major settlement on the mainland and was at times significantly larger than Sydney. Its topographical location also allowed imperial planning to be played out without Sydney's topographical limitations, and so here some of the motivations of the first governor, Arthur Phillip,³ together with his

¹ Irish 2017.

² Norfolk Island was settled earlier (in Feb 1788).

³ Fletcher 1967.

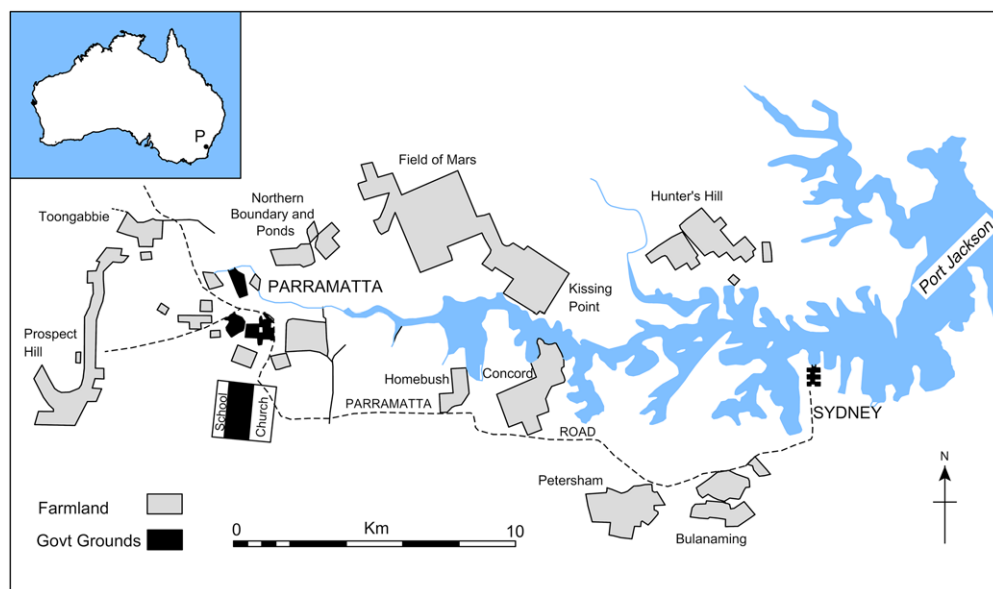


Fig 1. Location of Parramatta, Sydney and the main farming areas in the region by 1796 (after Perry 1963). Drawing: Robert Philpott.

surveyor general Augustus Alt,⁴ can be discerned through the planning and implementation of settlement development (fig 1).

At the end of 1792, the governor had to return to England due to failing health. He was followed by John Hunter (1795–1800),⁵ Philip King (1800–6)⁶ and William Bligh (1806–8). All four governors were naval officers, but they had varying attitudes to the management and development of the colony. Phillip was by far the most focused in his mission, but gaps between governors led to profiteering by major landlords, military officers and senior officials in the civil service. It was only with the arrival of Lachlan Macquarie in 1810 that another major period of strategic development of the colony took place, though by this time the local free population were defining their interests on many issues, so government imposition of decisions was no longer straightforward. A more draconian attitude to convicts, following the British government's acceptance of the Bigge enquiry in the 1820s, also altered social dynamics in the colony.⁷ The material evidence confirms the impact of decisive governors Phillip and Macquarie,⁸ but largely reveals the ways in which an adapted form of society was created by the emancipist and free settler population themselves, increasingly Australian-born and with their own distinctive world view and attitude to British rule.

Material evidence recovered from the first phases of settlement in Parramatta excavations provides insights into the lives of those otherwise only seen as the subjects requiring control by the imperial superstructure.⁹ The burial ground and its monuments provide a

4. Dowd 1966.

5. Auchmuty 1966.

6. Shaw 1966b.

7. Bigge 1822.

8. Kerr 1984; Gascoigne 2002; Casey 2010.

9. Higginbotham 1987; Parker 2006; many excavations are summarised in Casey and Hendriksen 2009.

uniquely valuable source of information previously not studied in detail by either historians or archaeologists. They reveal not only both names and dates, which allows linking of the artefacts with the documented sources, but also material forms that speak across a spectrum of the more successful elements of society. Whilst those represented by the monuments include the administrative class, most were created by those for whom the Australian experiment had allowed increased prosperity and the opportunity to contribute towards creating an Australia that could be self-sufficient. The memorials are also notable in being perhaps the first category of surviving British material culture made in Australia that displays taste and style beyond that closely associated with function, as they start to appear in the decades either side of 1800 before even government buildings with architectural embellishment are constructed,¹⁰ and are the earliest artefacts to survive that represent popular taste.

The role of material culture in creating and articulating socio-cultural aspirations and attitudes has been considered within Australian historical archaeology, but largely within the context of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and particularly through domestic architecture¹¹ and ceramics.¹² Consideration of improvement has largely focused on the buildings and the regulation of convicts, framed within the context of institutional control and convict resistance.¹³ The Parramatta burial ground provides an opportunity to consider the ways in which the concept of improvement, as recently reviewed archaeologically by Sarah Tarlow,¹⁴ can be seen to operate within a government top-down managerial context in its location and layout, and in a bottom-up phenomenon espoused by those able to exploit opportunities in the colony through the choice of monument forms and text. These consumers of mortuary culture lived and died in a world where agricultural and architectural improvement as well as moral and social improvement of both convicts and the free settlers was a dominant,¹⁵ though not exclusively accepted, imperative. The burial ground is here examined to reveal the extent to which the improvement ethos permeated the Parramatta society represented by the memorials.

THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE FOUNDATION OF PARRAMATTA

The removal of criminals from Britain was a long-established part of the legal system in Britain and Ireland, with the Caribbean and North America providing destinations for those who, along with indentured servants, could serve out their period of service in parts of the empire with large demands for labour.¹⁶ As an alternative to execution, it removed the criminal from society without the need to construct and then operate long-term prisons but instead introduced them as assigned workers for a set period in a colonial setting. Some hoped that this would create a new environment within which reform was possible, though others doubted this. In the colonies there was also mixed reaction to this often difficult to manage workforce and, whilst most were taken by Maryland and Virginia, at times even these states banned their acceptance.¹⁷

¹⁰ Kerr 1984; Casey 2010.

¹¹ Burke 2012.

¹² Hayes 2011, 2014; Crook 2015.

¹³ Casella 2001; Davies 2013.

¹⁴ Tarlow 2007.

¹⁵ Gascoigne 2002.

¹⁶ Shaw 1966a, 21–37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

The rise of the slave economy reduced demand, and then American independence in 1776 removed the largest market for convicts. This created a challenge to the British government, and the most popular solutions were to find new locations to which convicts could be sent or reform the prison system with convicts being kept in Britain and placed in specially constructed prisons. Bentham led those who opposed transportation and advocated the reforming prison, based on his Panopticon principle of observation also applied to the workhouse, another element of the improvement architecture and social engineering movement.¹⁸ The policy of transportation, however, remained dominant and New South Wales became the preferred destination,¹⁹ continuing in New South Wales until 1840 and until the 1860s for other parts of Australia.²⁰

The initial motivation of government was to remove the convicted from British shores, but at all stages there were less coherent but associated other perceived benefits.²¹ One was to establish a viable colonial presence, a useful base from which to explore and control the Pacific islands.²² There was little knowledge of the potential of the Australian mainland, but optimists looked for agricultural and mineral resources to be exploited. Some of the governors and other administrators, once in Australia, saw great potential and argued for improvement policies applied to landscape and people, even if the British government was more ambivalent.²³ This is most obviously exemplified in the policies of governors Phillip and Macquarie, but also through the increasingly powerful cohort of settlers and emancipated convicts who were establishing new lives, social order and economic infrastructure beyond that initiated by government, gradually challenging the authority of the remote British government and increasingly influencing local policy in the colony.²⁴

Attitudes behind workhouses and prisons – in terms of observation of the inmates and encouragement of their moral improvement through work – were visible in the early years and were later formalised in the barrack factory buildings for female and male convicts.²⁵ The dichotomy between transportation and incarceration were in practice melded in pragmatic but optimistic policies that contributed towards the effective formation of an Antipodean colony. However, that very success meant that government control was weakened as the small number of wealthy and large number of poorer inhabitants in their various ways could challenge, undermine or ignore the aspirations of distant government and even the local authorities.²⁶ Nowhere was this made more visible than through the archaeological excavations at The Rocks, Sydney,²⁷ but this is also manifest in Parramatta.²⁸ People of all classes increasingly engaged with a materialist and consumerist culture, and in both settlements a funerary commemorative culture was part of this process.

¹⁸. Gascoigne 2002, 123–7.

¹⁹. In the early years of the colony, all of Australia was called New South Wales, but the earliest mainland settlements were within the region that became part of the state of that name. Definition of other colonies began with Van Diemen's Land in 1825, followed within the period discussed here by South Australia in 1836.

²⁰. Shaw 1966a, 275, 335–60.

²¹. *Ibid*, 38–57.

²². Frost 2012

²³. Shaw 1966a, 127–45.

²⁴. Gascoigne 2002, 33–44; Karskens 2009.

²⁵. Kerr 1984; Casella 2001; Davies 2013.

²⁶. Parker 2006.

²⁷. Lydon 1993, Karskens 2009.

²⁸. Casey and Hendriksen 2009.

Archaeologists and historians hold views that vary along a spectrum from an emphasis on the imposition of a British, managed and controlling landscape and social structure at one extreme to that of a colony with limited governance and considerable agency of both individuals and groups to create their own worlds on the other.²⁹ The narrative of Parramatta, including that of the burial ground, suggests strong initial control, with some attempted and partially successful re-imposition of order and state control in the 1810s. Through most of the first half-century of settlement, however, the power to manage resources and create their own world was increasingly in the hands of the free settlers and emancipists. They transformed their built environment and material culture and, in the process, created a distinctive British Australian culture. The proportion of the population that were convicts rapidly decreased as other sectors (emancipists and free settler immigrants and native-born) grew in numbers, so, in the early part of the nineteenth century, Parramatta – and New South Wales generally – was no longer a punitive outpost but a colonial enterprise.

PARRAMATTA ORIGINS

The British first occupied the site of Parramatta when Rose Hill was founded in November 1788 as an agricultural settlement. Convicts at first lived in tents clustered around a redoubt close to where Government House would soon be constructed. These were then replaced with huts and associated gardens in a grid set out on exhausted fields, whilst clearance of forests and laying out of new fields continued as the settlement expanded.³⁰ The intention had been to establish Sydney as a planned city, but the combination of topography and the need for immediate building and infrastructural development meant that this was never fully implemented. In contrast, the settlement at Rose Hill was planned from July 1790.³¹ The town was designed by Governor Phillip and Surveyor General Baron Augustus Alt, and laid out on the ground by William Dawes (fig 2). The roadways were very wide – some 200ft – and created an architectural presence in this newly colonised land. Indeed, Tench wrote at the time: ‘To proceed on a narrow, confined scale, in a country of the extensive limits we possess, would be unpardonable: extent of Empire demands grandeur of design.’³² This may have been an ironic comment, but Smith considers the design of the early township inspired by Baroque vista planning;³³ the *via principalis* was roughly a mile long.³⁴ The illustrations of the settlement produced by visitors consistently suggest, if not an urban vista, undoubtedly a familiar style of improvement planned villages, albeit with romanticised, bucolic charm. The houses, however, were communal structures designed for ten male convicts, though accommodating more when necessary. With single-storey dimensions of 24ft × 12ft containing two rooms and a fireplace, they were not greatly different in scale from some of the improvement cottage designs widely distributed

²⁹ Karskens 1999; Gascoigne 2002; Casey 2006; Lawrence and Davies 2010.

³⁰ Casey 2009a, 8.

³¹ Collins 1798.

³² Tench 1793, 103.

³³ Smith 1969, 88.

³⁴ Kerr, J S 1977, 10, 1984, 6–7.

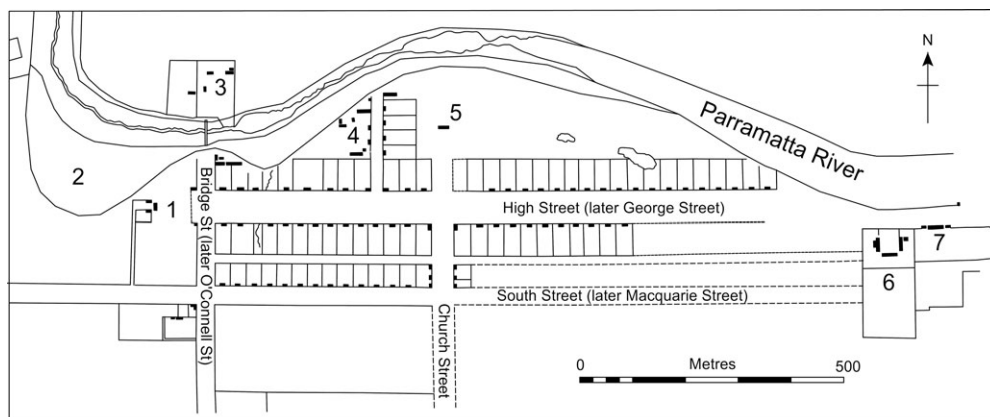


Fig 2. Map of Parramatta 1792 showing the main buildings, convict plots and huts (though many buildings were not constructed at this stage). 1: Governor's residence; 2: The Crescent; 3: Government Farm; 4: Hospital; 5: Town Hall; 6: Barracks; 7: Storehouse by the quay.
Drawing: Robert Philpott, based on 1792 map, TNA, C700 NSW4 1792.

at the time;³⁵ excavation has shown that these dimensions, and their arrangement as shown on early maps, were indeed carried through with remarkable effectiveness, though they were only made of wood and wattle and daub.³⁶

The design demanded a regular arrangement of streets and plots, yet the ground was uneven; this is only hinted at on the 1792 plan with the marking of three rivulets running northwards into the Parramatta river,³⁷ but Tench notes how much infilling was necessary, with deep gullies filled with tree trunks and earth. This indicates the desire to create formal order on the wild and uneven landscape.³⁸ At this stage, Rose Hill was significantly larger than Sydney.³⁹ The governor took a keen interest in the work by convicts in laying out streets and building their huts at intervals of 100ft, with substantial space for gardens around each structure.⁴⁰ It had been notable that during the previous months the Rose Hill convicts had resorted to little stealing of food, whereas this had been common in Sydney,⁴¹ because at Rose Hill they were already successfully growing vegetables and so were less reliant on government rations (though extremely hot weather and drought subsequently led to similar issues even at Rose Hill). Phillip also included a governor's house in the design, placed in a dominating and visible location on a rise at the end of High Street (later renamed George Street). Late in 1790, brickmaking commenced and a wharf was constructed; by November, thirty-two convict huts and a brick storehouse measuring

³⁵ Tench 1793, 78: '32 houses completed, of 24 feet by 12 each, on a ground floor only, built of wattles plaistered with clay, and thatched. Each house is divided into 2 rooms, in one of which is a fireplace and a brick chimney. These houses are designed for men only; and 10 is the number of inhabitants allotted to each; but some of them now contain 12 or 14, for want of better accommodation.'

³⁶ Higginbotham 1987; Casey and Hendriksen 2009.

³⁷ 1792 maps, TNA, C700 NSW3 1792, TNA, C700 NSW4 1792.

³⁸ Tench 1793, 140.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

⁴⁰ Collins 1798, 96, mentions 60 feet, but Phillip writes of 100 feet, confirmed by excavation evidence (M Casey pers comm, 6 Feb 2019).

⁴¹ Collins 1798.

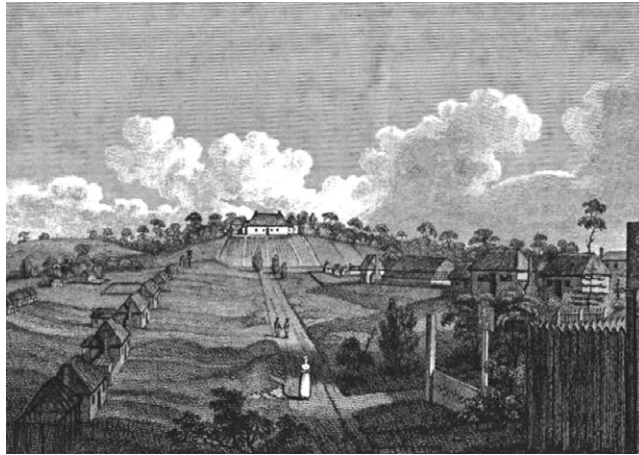


Fig 3. View of Parramatta High Street with Governor's House on the rise in the distance, convict huts in garden plots either side of the street. *Drawing: Collins 1798.*

100ft × 24ft was completed,⁴² and the following month the brick military barracks next to the store were laid out. The only bricks used in domestic structures were those used for the chimneys in the gable ends (fig 3).⁴³

The location for the church was identified but not a priority in the building works; religious services were held once a month and led by the one Church of England clergyman in the colony, Richard Johnson. The town was mapped in 1792, also recording the irregular pattern of surrounding fields representing the early agricultural endeavours. Governor Phillip wished to establish competent farmers around Parramatta to increase food production and food security – an essential element in limiting convicts' recidivism because of the predations of hunger during the periodic months of short rations. The soils around the original farm rapidly declined in fertility, so these areas were used for the planned township as new enclosures were laid out across the steadily cleared landscape, including Toongabbie, Prospect Hill, Field of Mars, Northern Boundary and Ponds (see fig 1).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BURIAL GROUNDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND NORFOLK ISLAND

Mortality was extremely high in the early years of settlement, partly because so many arrived extremely weak and ill after the traumas of the journey, and partly the harsh physical and social conditions in the colony itself; violence between convicts and robust justice by the state also contributed to a high level of mortality. Burial was not explicitly integrated into the first ambitious designs for either Sydney or Parramatta, but it had to be provided and was placed beyond the existing areas of settlement. Through the early years many of those who died may have been unceremoniously buried near where they fell, though some more intensive burial took place at Sydney on 'The Rocks' at Dawes Point to the north, and

⁴². Tench 1793, 78.

⁴³. One of these chimneys has been excavated on Marsden Street, see Casey 2009b.

beyond the initial settlement to the south.⁴⁴ One memorial from the 1780s was found in later building works; it is to George Graves, a seaman on the *Sirius*, who died in July 1788.⁴⁵

In 1792 the George Street burial ground was established in Sydney after one of the previous locations was required for officers' quarters.⁴⁶ The new graveyard, marked on the 1802 Leseur sketch as an extensive but unenclosed area indicated with schematic crosses,⁴⁷ was later given clear boundaries as the street layout expanded southwards. Karskens notes that this location was at that time at the end of the main avenue, thus creating the opportunity for funeral processions where those of rank could be appreciated by onlookers.⁴⁸ In 1812 the area for burial was extended and an adjacent new Anglican church, St Andrew's, was built,⁴⁹ but the burial ground did not come under church control. After c 2,000 interments the burial ground was considered unsanitary and was closed, with the last burial on 27 January 1820, whilst the Devonshire Street Cemetery opened, 1km to the south, in September 1819.⁵⁰ Some families removed the remains of their deceased members from George Street to other burial grounds; some memorials were also moved, and others that were still intact when the site was selected for the Town Hall were removed to Rookwood cemetery and can be used for comparative purposes,⁵¹ but most were lost.

Devonshire Street Cemetery⁵² took over as Sydney's burial ground, and in subsequent decades it expanded as distinct sections were added – Jews had a section from the beginning, with Catholics and Presbyterians in 1825, Wesleyan Methodists in 1836, Quakers 1837 and Congregationalists by 1839. It continued as the focus for burial until 1868, and Sydney's Central Railway Station was constructed on the site between 1901 and 1906; many memorials were removed to Bunnerong Cemetery in 1901.⁵³ Rookwood cemetery now became the major burial location,⁵⁴ though other burial grounds had also been established by then. As both the George Street burial ground and the Devonshire Street Cemetery are now both built over, Parramatta is the oldest extant formal European burial ground in mainland Australia.

Norfolk Island, some 1,400km east of New South Wales, was established in the 1780s as a settlement where convicts could conduct agriculture and take some of the demands for food off the initial mainland enterprise. The island was occupied by convicts from 1788 until 1814, and again in 1825–55. Little survives above ground from the first period⁵⁵ apart from a few stone memorials, most in poor condition. The earliest records a death in 1798

44. Johnson and Sainty 2001, 10–11; Mitchell Library, Marsden MS, ref C.244.

45. *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 June 1939, 13.

46. Collins 1798, Sept 1792. It is also known as Old Sydney burial ground, Cathedral Close or Town Hall cemetery: Birmingham and Liston [1976] 2006; Lowe and Mackay 1992; Murray 2001.

47. SLNSW, Mitchell Map Collection, M2 811.17/1802/2; also reprinted in the *Sydney Mail*, Z/M2 811.17/1802/2 (map of Sydney showing in contrast the town of 1802 redrawn with the city of 1873, suppl to the *Sydney Mail*). Note the Town Hall marked in red built in 1869 on the cemetery, with the cathedral on an adjacent site.

48. Karskens 1999, 110, referencing *Sydney Gazette* 8 May and 4 Sept 1803, 25 Mar and 23 Dec 1804.

49. Johnson and Sainty 2001, 14. Mitchell Library, ref A.772, Governor Macquarie diary 5 June 1812, p 45.

50. Johnson and Sainty 2001, 18; *Sydney Gazette* 11 Sept 1819.

51. Weston 1989; Murray 2001.

52. Also known as the New Burial Ground at the Brickfields and the Sandhills Cemetery: Johnson and Sainty 2001.

53. Zelinka 1991, 29–32.

54. Weston 1989.

55. Anon 2008.

and is still *in situ*,⁵⁶ and one other has a partial inscription of two female children from the 1790s;⁵⁷ six other stones are recorded from the first phase of occupation⁵⁸ and so are relevant *comparanda* to the first decades at Parramatta, but most of the memorials are beyond the chronological remit of this paper. It is notable that the cemetery was placed some distance from the settlement itself.

The First Fleet had one Church of England minister, Richard Johnson, but in 1794 Reverend Samuel Marsden arrived and settled at Parramatta.⁵⁹ However, most governors did not prioritise religion in the administration of the colony, and no higher-level clergy were present in the colony for over thirty years. This created an environment within which vested interests of the established church were not given priority over practical establishment of an infrastructure to cope with an alien environment. The burial grounds at Sydney, Norfolk Island and Parramatta were all placed beyond the edge of settlement, not near church buildings, and were used for all in the community, of whatever denomination. It is notable that the memorials considered here employ very limited religious textual references or symbolism.

The first recorded burials at Rose Hill were entered in the St Phillip's burial register in Sydney but were later crossed out. They were James Magee, a convict's child (31 January 1790); Elizabeth Scott, convict (2 April 1790); and William Dowling, marine (4 May 1790).⁶⁰ For most of the rest of that year there is no record of burials, and the location of interments is not known, but given Phillip's determination to create order in the landscape it is likely that these were within a formal, if not enclosed, area set aside for the purpose. At Parramatta, formal burial is recorded from 1791 on a discrete location beyond the settlement, in a field that had been used for cattle.⁶¹ The shape of this field, though later bisected by the extended street system, is still visible in the shape of the cemetery enclosure, reflecting a small element of the early field system of Rose Hill.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND FORMALISING OF PARRAMATTA BURIAL GROUND

Formal burial at Parramatta is indicated by a register operating from mid 1790, and it is likely that the existing cemetery was in use by this time. The first full year of 1791 records sixty-five interments; a total of 549 burials are recorded for Parramatta in the period 1790–7.⁶² Most register entries have no details, but, of those that do, many are infants, with others including those executed, three killed by indigenous people and one killed

⁵⁶ Dalkin 1974, 70, memorial no. 153. Dalkin notes that the stone is unusually well-preserved, it is well carved and has a commemorative inscription of some length, all in capitals, but with the use of italics in the first line.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 61, memorial no. 130.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: stone 136 (1801), p. 64; broken stone 153, p. 71 with a date either 1805 or 1817 when the island was abandoned. Dalkin suggests that, if the latter, this would therefore have been from a whaling vessel, but given that Sath Nash was an infant of eight months and a second body was also commemorated (details lost) it is far more likely that this is from the first period of settlement. Also stone 163 (1807) p. 74; stone 170 (1806) p. 75; stone 172 p. 76 (nd but the name is probably the daughter of a successful convict settler from first period settlement who arrived in 1790 and was there throughout the rest of the first period of settlement); and stone 173 (1807) p. 76.

⁵⁹ Yarwood 1967.

⁶⁰ Dunn 1996.

⁶¹ Collins 1798, 148; Dunn 1991, 15–16, discusses the evidence for this early start date.

⁶² Parramatta burial register 1790–8 (the last year has only 10 entries before the book ends); copy consulted at Parramatta local history library.

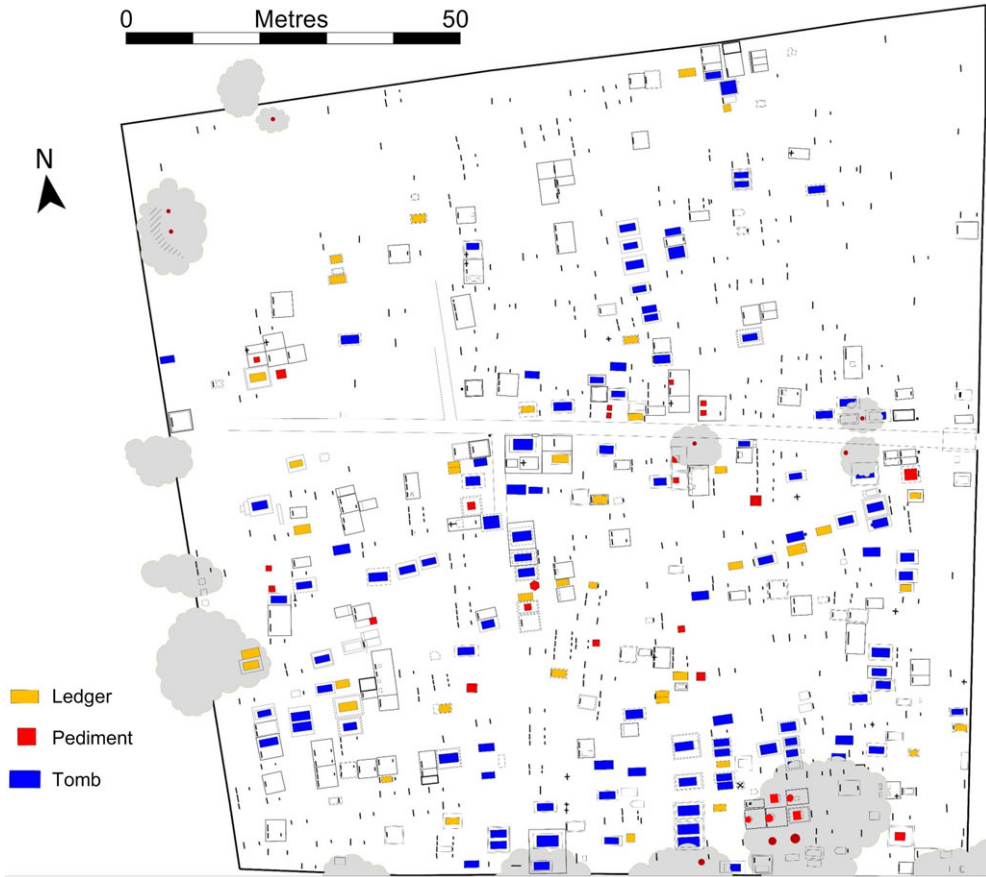


Fig 4. Map of all memorials at Parramatta. *Drawing*: Robert Philpott.

by a falling tree, presumably during the forest clearance to create the settlement or farmland.

Detailed management records for the burial ground only survive from the middle of the nineteenth century, and even then without a map, so the physical remains are the major source of information, particularly in terms of the spatial organisation of burial and choices in memorial form. A detailed plan has been constructed, with all the extant monuments digitally photographed. These resources, combined with the full set of published transcriptions by Judith Dunn,⁶³ which were checked on the ground during the fieldwork, provided the necessary evidence for a temporal and spatial study.⁶⁴ No accurate map existed until this version was created,⁶⁵ and for clarity is shown here without the memorial numbering (fig 4). The subsequent decade-by-decade maps show newly erected monuments by the

⁶³. Dunn 1991.

⁶⁴. Dunn's numbering has been retained for ease of comparison of the various sources. Dunn divided the cemetery into four sections, with monuments numbered along lettered rows, a methodology commonly followed by family history society transcriptions.

⁶⁵. Fenella Logan kindly produced the CAD drawing, based on the GoogleEarth image and images of every memorial and row already taken by the author. The resulting drawing was then checked

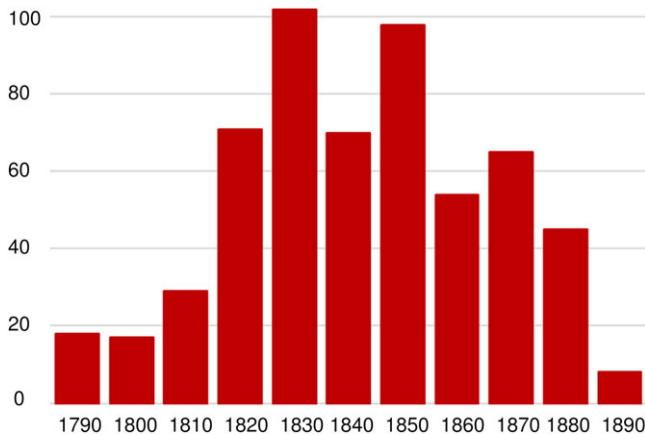


Fig 5. Bar chart: number of monuments erected by decade. *Drawing:* author.

decade of the death most likely to be the latest of the first inscriptional event on the stone. This is often (though not always) the first commemoration on the stone, and the phasing given here is the result of applying the accepted methodology for dating.⁶⁶

The memorials show the expected exponential rise in memorials from the late eighteenth century seen across the English-speaking world.⁶⁷ This continued through to the 1830s (fig 5), but the uneven pattern thereafter is a product of both an increasing population and of other cemeteries opening in the town. The Roman Catholic cemetery of St Patrick's was opened in 1824,⁶⁸ with Presbyterian Mays Hill in 1839.⁶⁹ A second Anglican cemetery, All Saints, began in the 1840s,⁷⁰ and the Baptists established their own cemetery, also at May Hill, in 1849. The cemetery nevertheless remained a significant place of burial and commemoration until *c* 1890. The spatial development of the burial ground in terms of loosely arranged rows was completed by the end of the 1830s. After this date, the burial ground was merely infilled around the developed landscape of burial rows that had by this time become well-established.

1790s

The memorials from the first decades of the cemetery reveal how it gradually developed into a fully functioning burial ground with clear spatial organisation. The memorials largely survive *in situ*. Although it is possible that some of the headstones may have been slightly moved to form straighter lines to assist maintenance in relatively recent times, the number of tombs and headstones with extant kerbs that would not have been moved, and the still irregular arrangement of many of the monuments, suggest that the arrangement can be

on the ground by the author. This resulted in very few edits and it was a remarkably efficient way of creating a map, helped by the satellite image resolution for Parramatta being so high.

⁶⁶ Mytum 2002b.

⁶⁷ Tarlow 1999; Mytum 2006.

⁶⁸ Dunn 1988.

⁶⁹ Dunn 1996.

⁷⁰ Dunn 2007.

assumed to be intact. What is unknown is how many memorials have not survived, though some have been re-set presumably after breaking or falling over, and these are frequently set such that they are now significantly shorter than they would have been. Nevertheless, the overall distribution appears to represent the usage of the burial ground as demarcated by those sufficiently affluent to be able to afford a memorial.

Records are poor for the early years of activity, and cease in early 1798, but they survive once more from 1826; just the four years recorded in the 1820s had 365 interments, with 1,424 in the 1830s. This suggests that around 7 per cent of early nineteenth-century burials had memorials. Nevertheless, this percentage is sufficient for some spatial patterning to emerge, and this is not a dissimilar percentage of commemorated deaths to some British graveyards for this period.⁷¹

The earliest burials were all in the north-eastern part of the later walled cemetery, with seven surviving memorials from the first four years (fig 6). During the rest of the eighteenth century, burials also spread to the east, with eleven further monuments surviving. Their distribution suggests that the initial burial area was c 50m × 40m and by the end of the decade had extended to 90m × 40m. The arrangement of these dated interments (and the placement of plots associated with later burials) suggests that whilst there were approximate rows of burials there was no system of gradually filling up the space in an ordered way, with some burials close to the later northern and western boundary walls, suggesting that these boundaries are primary features.

The first identifiable burial at the Parramatta burial ground was that of the superintendent of convicts, Henry Edward Dodd, who died on 28 January 1791. He may not have been the first to be buried in this area and this further suggests that the burial ground, set some distance down the early track cut through the vegetation running south from the Rose Hill settlement, was part of the initial design.⁷² This memorial was a ledger slab on which his surname and initials are carved as part of a simple inscription (fig 7a, left). It is not an elaborate memorial, but, given the early stage in the development of the colony, the lack of any stone buildings at the settlement and the focus on developing other aspects of the infrastructure, this indicates both the esteem in which Dodd was held and the importance of physical commemoration that was already manifesting itself in this fledgling settlement. One other memorial survives from a 1791 death – Thomas Daveny, the infant son of Thomas Daveny, an able seaman on the *Sirius* who then became superintendent of artificers. His role at Rose Hill was to lay out and superintend the planned agricultural village of Toongabbie from April 1791,⁷³ and he was able to commission a surprisingly elaborate headstone for his child, now broken and lying flat next to the Dodd ledger (fig 7a, right).

Most of the earliest memorials were headstones (fig 7c), but the earliest surviving chest tomb⁷⁴ at Parramatta is for Sarah Buckrel (d. 1793), wife of Richard Atkins, magistrate and

⁷¹ A higher percentage has been noted in Pembrokeshire (Mytum 2002a, 205–8), but a lower one similar to that in Parramatta is identified in Leicestershire (University of Leicester Graveyards Group 2012).

⁷² Dunn 1991, 15–16, considers that the burial ground was already in existence before Dodd's interment. Casey considers that it may have developed around his burial place (pers comm, 6 Feb 2019), which would place its foundation in 1791, but the formalisation of burial with the use of a register in 1790 may suggest that this was when the location became fixed.

⁷³ McClymont 1996, 28.

⁷⁴ Chest tombs are termed altar tombs in recent Australian literature (cf Dunn 1991; Karskens 1998), but terminology here follows Mytum 2000.

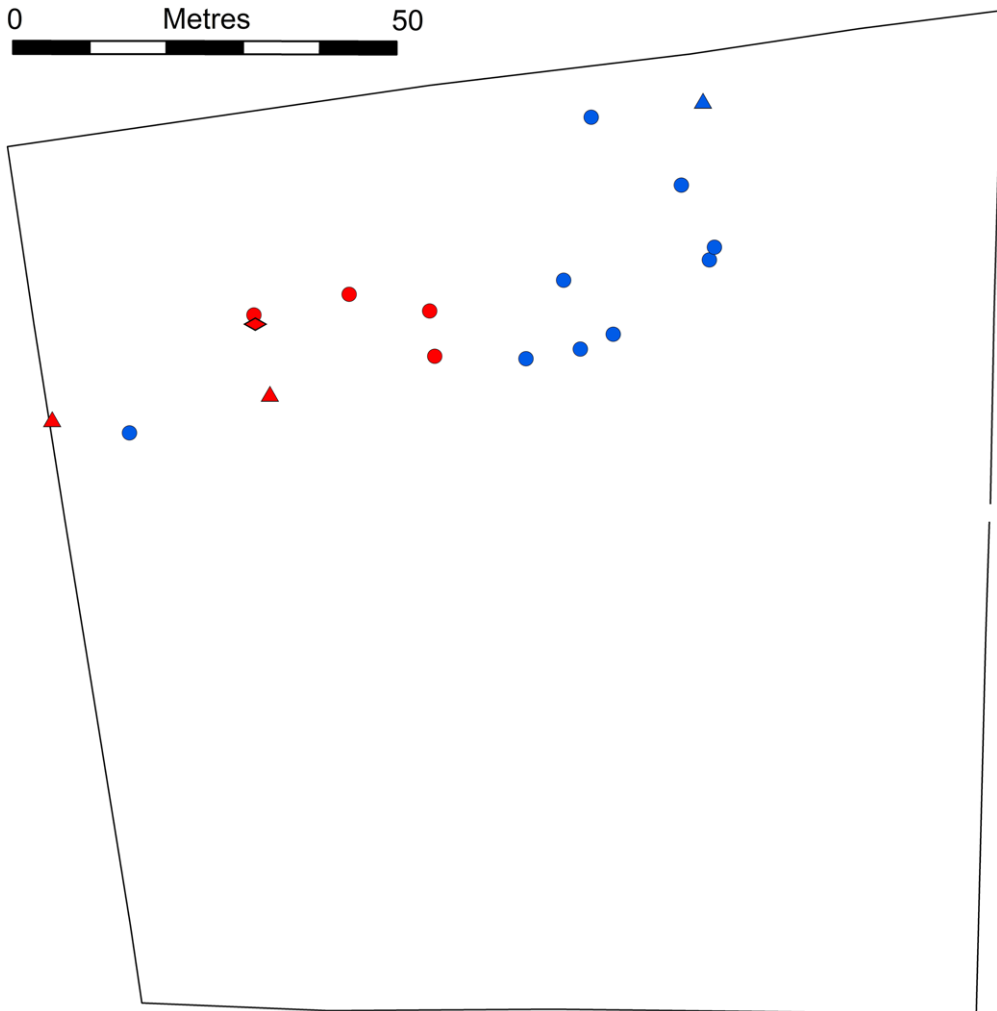


Fig 6. Distribution of memorials erected in the 1790s: 1791–4 red; 1795–9 blue. Rectangle (tomb), lozenge (ledger), circle (headstone). Boundary is of later burial ground, uncertain at this stage but memorials probably indicate its extent.

Drawing: Robert Philpott.

registrar of the Vice-Admiralty Court (fig 7b).⁷⁵ The tomb was a simple structure with no side panelling, but it displays a neatly moulded top with an elegantly cut inscription. Another tomb – that of Thomas Freeman, deputy commissary of stores and provisions (d. 1794) – is adjacent to the later brick boundary,⁷⁶ west of the other marked burials, and was perhaps close to the original entrance into the burial ground as such an early impressive monument seems otherwise unusually peripheral. Even in the first decade,

⁷⁵ Bennett 1966.

⁷⁶ Dunn 1991, 4J2.



Fig 7. 1790s memorials: (a) Dodds ledger (left) and Daveny headstone flat (right); (b) Buckrel chest tomb; (c) Harthen headstone. *Photographs: author.*

emancipists could accumulate sufficient resources to have memorials, the most elaborate being another chest tomb for David Kilpack (d. 1797).⁷⁷

Stone could be quarried from north of the river, though the early memorials reveal a range of different materials were being exploited; the chest tombs used softer yellow sandstone for the box element, and a harder, paler stone for the inscribed lid, as often seen in Britain. This suggests an awareness and capacity to select sources appropriate to their function on the memorials within the first few years of settlement. The shapes of the monuments and the layout of texts reveal an awareness of contemporary British and Irish styles, but the variation in content and quality of execution indicates a number of different carvers produced the memorials even in the first decade, and the masons had different levels of experience in the monumental trade. The foundation stone for the Church of England church was laid in 1797, so masons were working on this structure from this date, though work was slow and it was only opened in April 1803.⁷⁸ It was mainly of brick with stone quoins; it had a long rectangular nave and a small semi-circular domed chancel apse, and a porch supported on columns in Georgian style.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid, 2J16; <<https://stjohnscemeteryproject.org/name/david-killpack/>> (accessed 9 Apr 2020).

⁷⁸ *Sydney Gazette* 17 Apr 1803.

⁷⁹ Kerr, EJ 1977, 7–10.

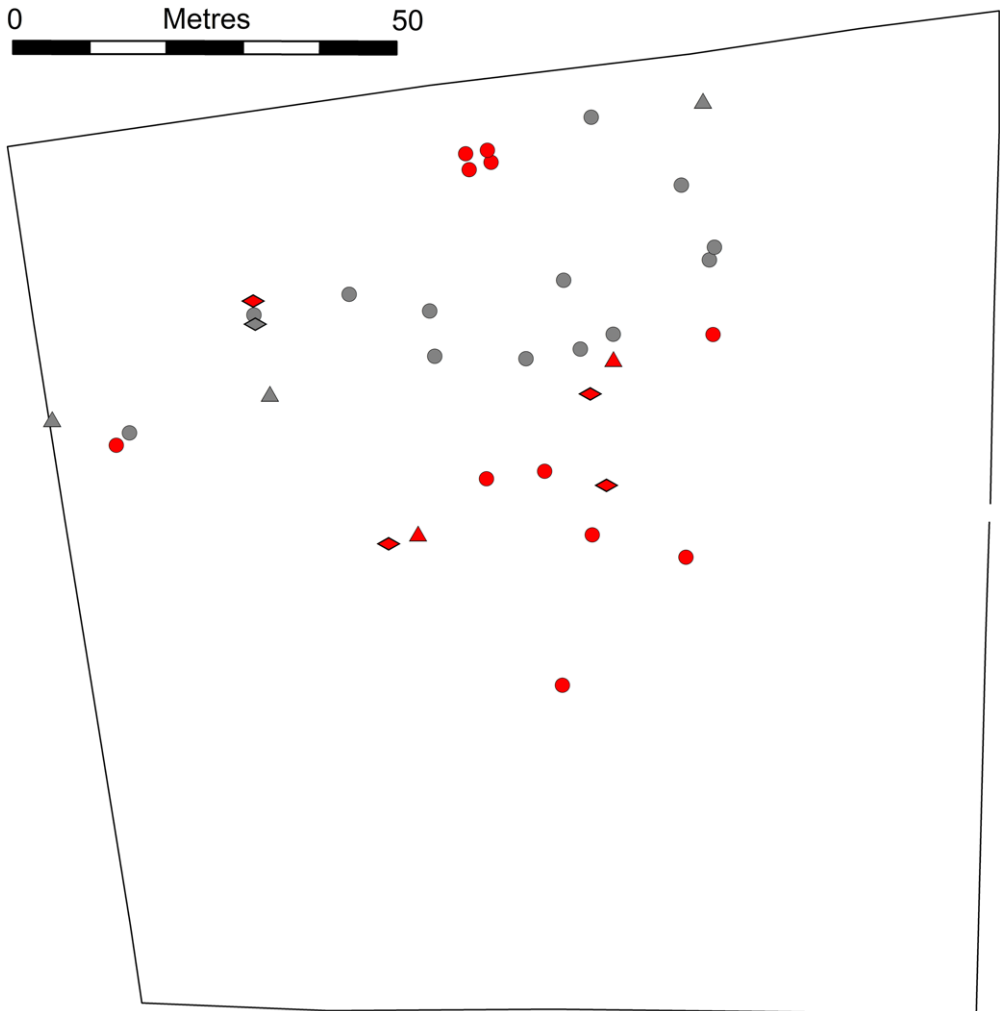


Fig 8. Distribution of memorials erected in the 1800s. Rectangle (tomb), lozenge (ledger), circle (headstone). Red symbols this decade, grey symbols already-existing memorials. Boundary is of later burial ground, uncertain at this stage but memorials probably indicate its extent. *Drawing:* Robert Philpott.

1800s

In the first decade of the nineteenth century burial continued within the original area, but also spread to the south, with slightly fewer new memorials than for the 1790s (fig 8). One memorial, a headstone to Thomas Ryan (d. 1803), a Roman Catholic, was placed significantly further south than any others. It remained isolated until the following decade, but this was still on flat ground, and the slope up to the south, which would become popular later, was still being avoided. Some of the other memorials continued rows already started in the first decade, indicating how the burial ground was being used in a planned manner.

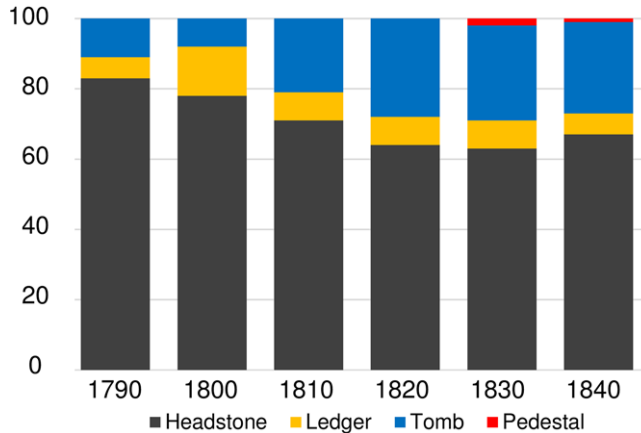


Fig 9. Bar chart of percentage of monument types by decade. Headstones (grey), ledgers (yellow), tombs (blue), pedestal monuments (red). *Drawing: author.*

It is notable that a third of the memorials were of ledgers or chest tombs, indicating the developing culture of investment in funerary monuments that became even more significant in the following decade (fig 9). The first chest tomb with decorated side panels in the burial ground is for James Archer (d. 1800, aged five years); it has some attempt to indicate pilasters on the ends, with wheel motifs on the side panels (fig 10a). These are adequately carved, but probably attempt to produce a motif that is then produced with more assured shell-inspired scalloped radiate designs in the following decade. The ledger of Harriet Abbott (d. 1808) is on a low brick base, and this is the earliest of this form of raised ledger which becomes popular, though normally on a masonry base.

The earliest headstone with an associated footstone (though not matching in profile) is that for Mary Farrel (d. 1805) (fig 10b), and the headstone to Mary Flinn (d. 1803) includes an epitaph quoting verses from Psalm 32:1 and then Psalm 31:1, and a statement by James Burcham extolling her virtues as partner and mother. These examples indicate how, within the headstone choices, there were opportunities to invest in more than a simple form and text, though only one headstone displays symbolic carving. This monument – for John O Bryan who died in 1802 – has a range of folk art style symbols indicating a Roman Catholic Irish affiliation (fig 10c). This is the most overt Catholic memorial in the burial ground, but another, to Bridget Egan (d. 1800), also decorated with a more traditional Irish design of crucifix with skull and cross bones below and kneeling figures either side, has been relocated to the Catholic church on Ross Street.⁸⁰ Probable Catholic memorials start to appear with IHS and a cross rising from the cross-bar of the H, as with that to Thomas Ryan (d. 1803) with a headstone form popular in parts of Ulster at this time.

1810s

Part of the government improvement strategy included the Female Orphan School (1818),⁸¹ a substantial symmetrical Georgian structure beyond the town with its own farm,

⁸⁰. Dunn 1991, 2P7A.

⁸¹. Liston 1996, 102–3.



Fig 10. 1800s memorials to: (a) Archer; (b) Farrel; (c) O Bryan. *Photographs: author.*

and the architecturally more modest but centrally placed Native Institution (1814), a school for Aboriginal children.⁸² There is no indication of a formal boundary for the burial area in the earliest years, but the improvement ethos was applied to burial in 1811 with a fund being established to enlarge and enclose the area with a fence and ditch. With the required £82 4s 7d raised by public subscription by early 1812, the whole site was enclosed.⁸³ In 1811 the government prohibited burial outside official burial grounds, such as on farms, which was a common practice in many colonial contexts, again part of societal regularisation.⁸⁴ The spatial spread of memorials in this decade indicate that this enlargement was immediately exploited, with a scatter of memorials relatively close to the southern boundary taking advantage of the rise in the ground to the south to increase

⁸². Barns and Mar 2018, 30–1.

⁸³. Dunn 1991, 18–19.

⁸⁴. Ibid, 17; Mytum 2003, 2004.

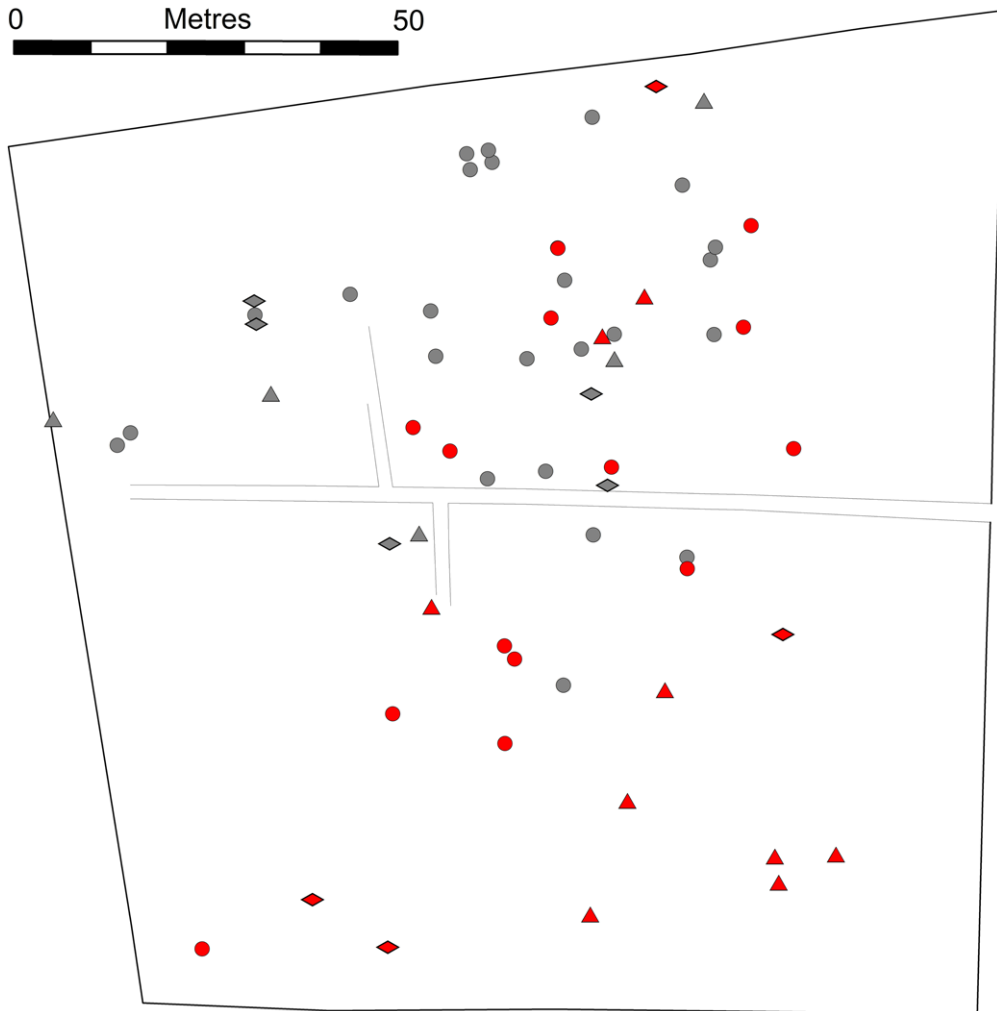


Fig 11. Distribution of memorials erected in the 1810s. Rectangle (tomb), lozenge (ledger), circle (headstone). Red symbols this decade, grey symbols already-existing memorials. The burial ground boundary was firmly established this decade; the paths and western entrance may have appeared at this stage. *Drawing: Robert Philpott.*

their visibility (fig 11). It is possible that it was at this point that the eastern entrance was introduced, though this may have only been achieved when the boundary was replaced in brick in the next decade. However, as O'Connell Street, the only side of the later burial ground boundary next to a street, was already laid out by 1814, it is likely that the increased burial ground and its western entrance was an integral part of Governor Macquarie's strategy of restructuring the town and extending its grid layout. This expansion only just reached the 'Burying Ground' (fig 12), and the leases for this area suggest occupation only from the following decade.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Information kindly supplied by M Casey.



Fig 12. Map from 1814 with extended street pattern on both sides of the river, with streets round three sides of the 'Burying Ground' (bottom left). Image: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

This formalisation of space is reflected in the increased investment in monuments within the cemetery. Not only was the number of memorials increasing, but about half were ledgers or tombs, not merely headstones. Moreover, some of these tombs were more substantial and more sophisticated in their design and production. The chest tomb for Joseph Ward has elegantly carved oval scalloped motifs and well carved fluted corner posts on a masonry base (fig 13a), but other strategies for display were chosen by other families. Andrew McDougall had erected a double-width tomb on a wide platform in memory of Elizabeth his wife (d. 1817);⁸⁶ biographical details were on one lid (later augmented by three more inscriptions to family members, including Andrew), but the other was filled with a eulogy to Elizabeth (fig 13b). Iron railings make their first appearance in the same decade that the burial ground is itself defined by enclosure (fig 13c).

A raised ledger for George Wilkinson (d. 1815) is the first monument with a distinctive top that recurs in subsequent decades. Instead of having a flat top surface, it is slightly convex, allowing the occasional heavy rains to run off the surface whilst also providing a more elegant appearance (fig 13d). Most of the headstones in this decade were with simple round-topped profiles.

⁸⁶ McDougall emigrated to construct corn mills, though 150 acres at Toongabbie were in his hands by 1799. His five sons had gained land grants on the Hunter River: Grenfell nd; <<https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/144557/Andrew-McDougall>> (accessed 29 May 2020).



Fig 13. 1810s memorials to: (a) Ward; (b) McDougall; (c) Lowe; (d) Wilkinson. *Photographs:* author.

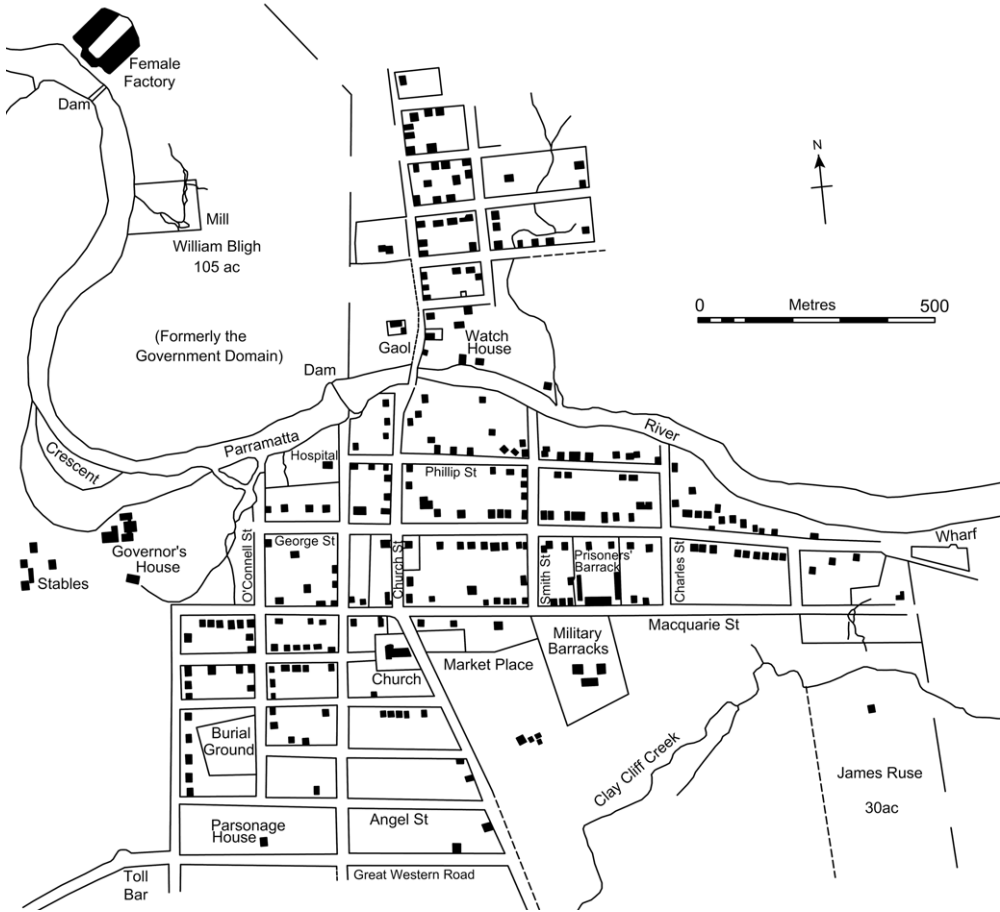


Fig 14. Map of Parramatta 1822 by G C Stewart. *Drawing*: Robert Philpott, simplified from a version published by J Campbell in 1926 redrawn in Kass *et al* 1996.

1820s

The timber fence and ditch were not well maintained, and within just a few years there were complaints that animals were once again entering the burial ground. In the early part of the decade the boundary was gradually replaced by the existing brick wall.⁸⁷ If not in place earlier, the main access point must have been from the east, as there is no infilled access point in the west wall, and indeed the 1822 map of the town shows the current boundary of the burial ground with public access only possible from O'Connell Street (fig 14). The town was now spreading around the cemetery that had until then been physically peripheral to settlement, but now newly built houses had gardens backing onto it. To the south, Samuel Marsden's parsonage looked down on the cemetery and the town. Moreover, it was during this decade that convicts were placed within central institutions rather than

⁸⁷ Philomath, 'To the Editor of the Australian', *The Australian* (Sydney, NSW: 1824–1848), Thursday 30 Dec 1824, p. 2.

scattered around dwellings in the town. The Female Factory (1821) and Male Convict Barracks (1822) were buildings in the mould of workhouses, further developing improvement institutions and practices, but, following the Bigge enquiry, where possible convicts were placed with civilians requiring labour, and the Female Factory became a prison; a Female School of Industry was founded in 1826.⁸⁸

In 1822 the governor ordered that all graveyards' burial plots need not be marked, yet should be uniformly placed and of equal length, but variable plot width was permissible, presumably so that families could reserve double plots as already seen at St Johns.⁸⁹ Existing memorials suggest organisation in the planning at Parramatta, but the ability to place vaults anywhere was continued despite the new regulation indicating that they should be only on one portion. In 1825 the Church of England gained control of all burial grounds (though in Parramatta the Catholics had their own from 1822, even if with uncertain legitimacy at first),⁹⁰ but by then the pattern of management and operation at Parramatta had been set, and there is no indication that the Anglican church affected spatial ordering or monument styles.

Commemoration within the burial ground continued on a small scale north of the path, particularly to the east. Most investment in monuments, however, took place in the central section of the southern portion of the cemetery (fig 15), creating a dynamic environment within which some impressive monuments were erected within rows also represented by a significant number of headstones, many with footstones. The most popular area was the most visible on entering the cemetery, with the slope sufficient that monuments further from the path were visible above those closer but on the lower slopes.

The chest tomb for D'Arcy Wentworth, a highly influential government official (d. 1827),⁹¹ was set on a raised masonry base on which substantial cast iron railings with urns on the corner posts could be approached by steps on the eastern end, though there was no access gate; instead, the slightly convex lid could be read from this vantage point (fig 16a). A tomb for William White (d. 1822) is notable because the lid is signed by the mason: 'Cann Sculp^v' (fig 16b).⁹² This tomb for William White is the earliest signed memorial in the cemetery, though the iron railings around the tomb for Annabella Campbell bear the name R. A. Ritchie (fig 16c).

1830s

The population of the town rose substantially during this decade, but improvement measures continued, with the King's School founded in 1831 and a neo-Classical courthouse constructed from 1837.⁹³ This decade witnessed the greatest number of interments (1,424) and the most monuments erected (a commemoration rate of 7 per cent). Whilst new monuments appeared in all parts of the cemetery, the greatest number were in the south-western portion which had, up to this point, been little used (fig 17). The Anglican monopoly on the control of burials in the colony was officially broken with

⁸⁸. Liston 1996, 97–100, 128.

⁸⁹. Dunn 1991, 20, referencing Government and General Orders, Brisbane to Chaplains.

⁹⁰. Dunn 1988.

⁹¹. Auchmuty 1967.

⁹². It now has a brick base and ends, but possibly through restoration.

⁹³. Liston 1996, 111–12, 128.

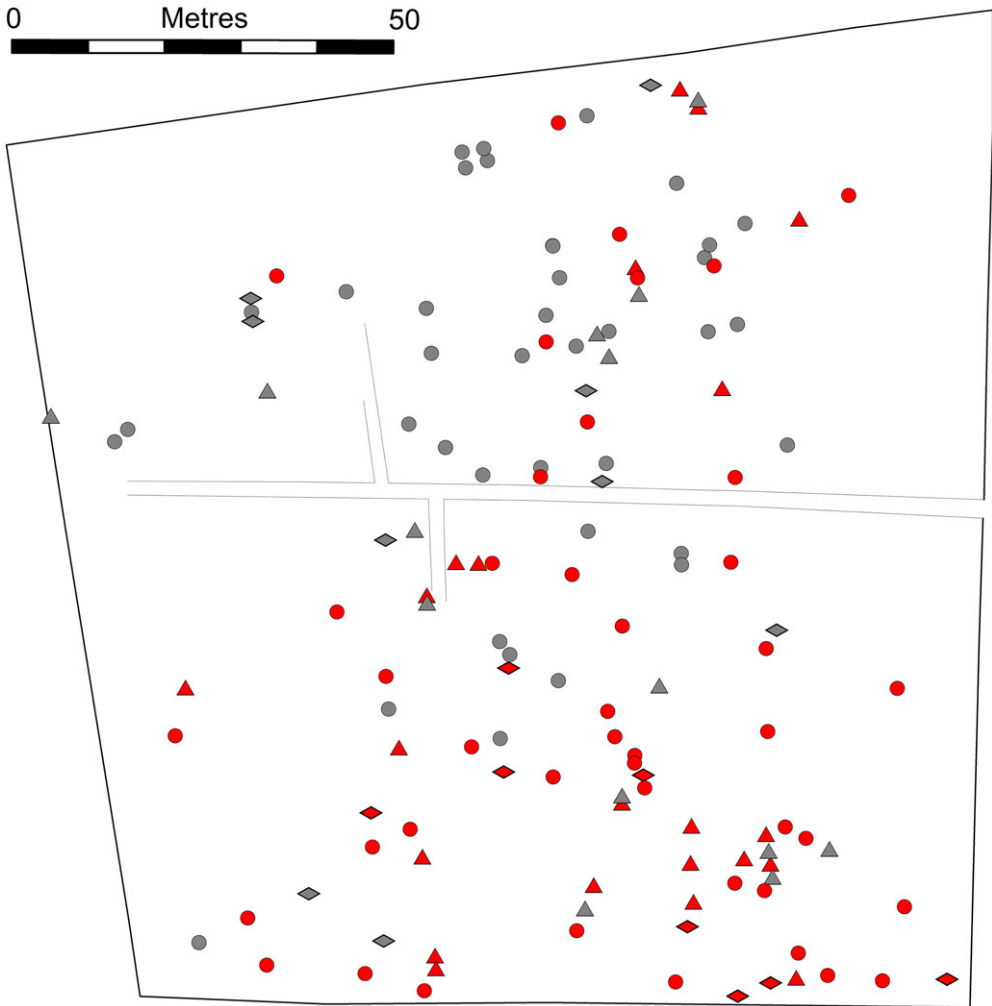


Fig 15. Distribution of memorials erected in the 1820s. Rectangle (tomb), lozenge (ledger), circle (headstone). Red symbols this decade, grey symbols already-existing memorials. *Drawing*: Robert Philpott.

the Church Act 1836, after which all denominations could establish their own cemeteries, and these soon appeared for nonconformist sects in the next few years. Nevertheless, St Johns remained a popular location for burial for several more decades, mainly due to the population of Parramatta steadily increasing and the proximity of the burial ground to the church and much of the population.

The first monument other than a ledger, chest tomb or headstone appeared with a pedestal tomb with a steep-sided pyramidal top for John Thorn (d. 1838), demonstrating on behalf of both client and mason a confidence and ambition to extend the monumental repertoire of the cemetery landscape (fig 18a). It is this decade that also sees the most substantial platform constructed, on top of which was placed a raised ledger memorial. Access to this monument to John Harris (d. 1838) was by steps with uneven risers at the western end



Fig 16. 1820s memorials to: (a) D'Arcy Wentworth; (b) 'Cann Sculp' on the top of William White's tomb; (c) William White. *Photographs: author.*

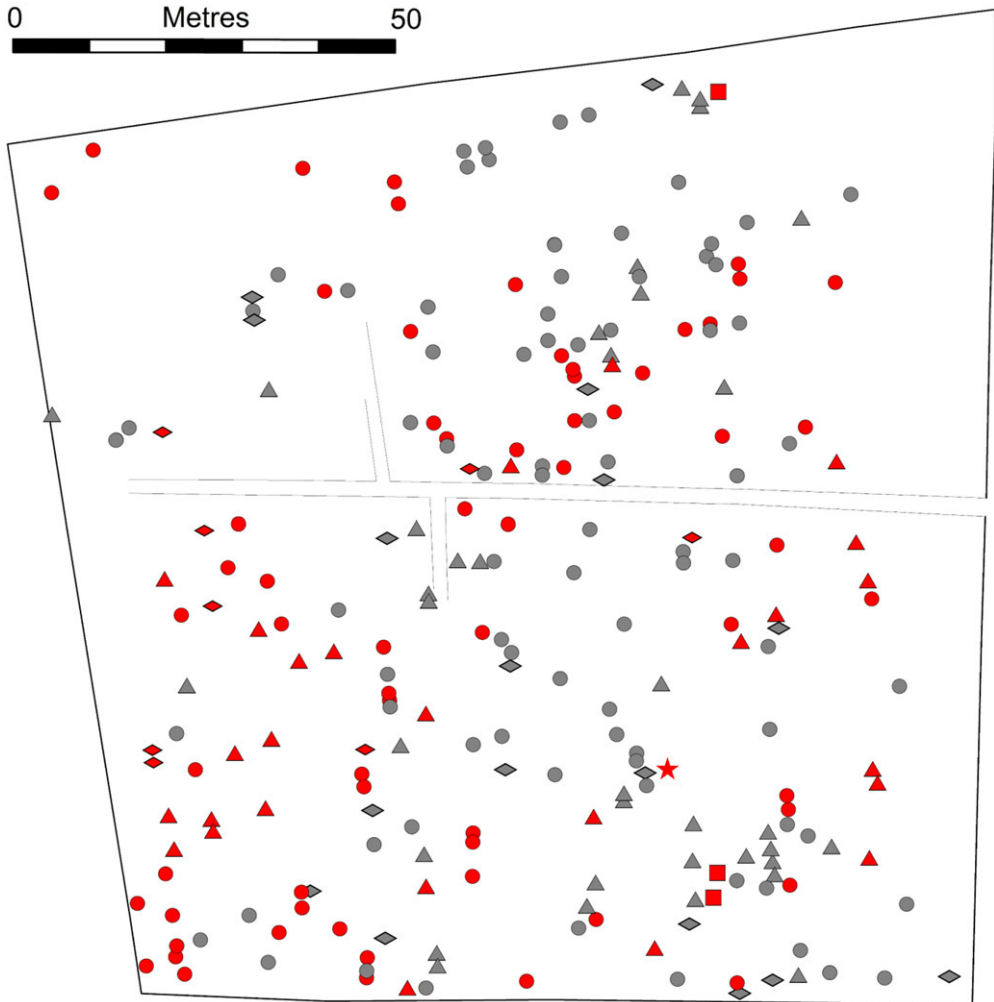


Fig 17. Distribution of memorials erected in the 1830s. Rectangle (tomb), lozenge (ledger), circle (headstone), star (pediment). Red symbols this decade, grey symbols already-existing memorials.

Drawing: Robert Philpott.

of the platform (fig 18c). After a varied career as officer-farmer and administrator, Harris became an extensive landowner.⁹⁴ The raised ledger/low tomb with a convex lid, albeit on simple masonry bases, became popular in this decade, suggesting a standardisation in production and marketing and a more mature monumental masonry profession. Traditional chest tombs continued to be commissioned and more examples of cast iron railings survive from this decade, usually set into masonry kerbs creating a space around the monument, though also being placed directly into the base for the tomb and close to the monument itself. The former designs have gated access to the interior space, but the latter do not, as it was possible to reach in to place flowers directly on the tomb. Numerous headstones continue to be erected in the forms already present in the cemetery (fig 18b).

⁹⁴ Fletcher 1966.



Fig 18. 1830s memorials to: (a) Thorn; (b) Herbert; (c) Harris. *Photographs*: author.

Later management and cemetery development

The cemetery, at some point consecrated by the very first minister in Parramatta, Reverend Samuel Marsden, was government property until 1857, when it was finally taken under Church of England control, though it had been managed by the Church since 1825.

In 1857 the lychgate was constructed, replacing a simple gate. (The present structure is one erected in 1982 as closely as possible in appearance to the original.) Some memorials have impressive iron railings surrounding chest tombs, but a photograph of c 1870 (fig 19) reveals the frequent use also of painted wooden picket fences around graves, none of which survives. A line of trees, with some missing, appears to run next to the main axial path, but



Fig 19. 1870s view of St Johns from the north, with the parsonage on the skyline to the south; Sydney Living Museums record no. 37945. *Image:* Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection.

these were deciduous, not the evergreen trees that now line this path. The evidence of grounds maintenance can be seen in the limited development of scrub, but the vegetation is relatively unkempt. It is similar in character to that visible in a 1901 photograph of Devonshire Street Cemetery, Sydney, which shows individuals and groups visiting graves without difficulty.⁹⁵ Unlike Devonshire Street, however, several small cypress-style evergreen trees can be seen in the central part of St Johns cemetery; these were not part of a coherent landscape design and were probably placed by the bereaved by specific graves. Burial continued with an average of eighty burials per year until the beginning of the 1890s (see fig 5), when the burial ground was considered full, though a small number of interments continued to take place in already-existing family plots through much of the twentieth century.⁹⁶

PARRAMATTA AND ITS PLACE IN CEMETERY HISTORY

The East India Company commenced secular cemetery organisation in a colonial context at Surat, India, in the seventeenth century, and this was continued at South Park Cemetery, in Calcutta, in 1767.⁹⁷ These had little wider colonial impact, however, and Caribbean burial, for example, was closely linked to the Anglican church. Parramatta therefore represents a different strategy, well ahead of its extensive application in Britain – particularly England. The foundation of Parramatta burial ground in the 1790s can be set within changes in attitudes to burial in Britain and Ireland. Whilst Calton Hill (in Edinburgh) and Clifton (in Belfast) had been established as cemeteries

⁹⁵ ML Royal Australian Historical Society: Sydney photographs, c 1870–1964, Call no/ PXA 1592, IE no. IE8952120, File no. FL8952126.

⁹⁶ St Johns Parramatta burial register 1826–90.

⁹⁷ Curl 1984; Scarre and Roberts 2005.



Fig 20. Elevated view of St Johns from the east. *Photograph*: author.

independent of ecclesiastical control in the 1770s, there was no such equivalent initiative in England.⁹⁸ Later arrangements within the cemetery were no doubt affected by other Australian and British innovations in cemetery design and management, but the early decades at Parramatta only had Belfast and Edinburgh, and also some of the Indian cemeteries, as exemplars. What is notable is that the new colony established burial separate from church control at the beginning, and at Parramatta, like Norfolk Island and Sydney, also physically separated from the planned religious building. By 1811 the cemetery had a clearly defined boundary and burials were already set within approximate rows, all signs of improvement mentality.⁹⁹

Although the site is not laid out on an exact grid, this is partly explained for the southern half of the site because of the slope of the ground, and it is undoubtedly because of this slope that many of the more impressive monuments were erected in sections 1 and 3, creating a tiered appearance enhanced, in many cases, by railings. Familiar plantings of evergreens survive as a partial avenue, and a few of the most impressive monuments and plots do line the central path (fig 20). The substantial areas with no memorials, particularly in the northern half of the cemetery, no doubt contain large numbers of now-unmarked graves.

Many of the monuments would be completely at home within a British graveyard or cemetery, with simple early forms and then a range of revival styles used both in forms of monuments and in symbolism. These designs reflect the templates in masons' and clients' minds gained from their time in Britain, but once the monumental mason industry was developed it no doubt also obtained publications from Britain with the latest fashions. There are, however, many designs that seem to be locally created. Some may exist in

⁹⁸. Brookes 1989, 6; Tarlow 2007, 112–15.

⁹⁹. Tarlow 2007.

Britain (it would require very detailed regional knowledge to be certain of the negative), but certainly are popular at Parramatta. Indeed, many of these features can be seen widely across New South Wales. The raised ledger form is not typical in Britain and Ireland, and ledger or tomb tops with a curved profile do occur, but more rarely.

The importance of the early monuments, erected in the 1790s, lies in their being some of the earliest effective production of artistic products for local consumption within Australia. Whilst buttons, and no doubt other items, were made by the town's inhabitants, the memorials display a range of skills and qualities that make them distinctive. For example, early brick manufacture generated only low quality products, and early ceramic production was also not able to compete with British imports for some time.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, within just a few years the masons of Parramatta (and Sydney – possibly the same craftsmen) were able to produce memorials indistinguishable in quality to those being produced in many areas of Britain and Ireland, matching those produced for the economically equivalent clientele in the homeland. Indeed, the high proportion of ledgers and tombs compared with Britain and Ireland created a distinctive funerary landscape, and one that reveals the importance of commemoration within the developing colonial culture. Even when imported goods to demonstrate status, achievement or aspiration could be relatively expensive or hard to obtain, locally produced memorials were avenues of material representation that were permanent in a world where land tenure, government office and business viability were all uncertain. However, there were opportunities for rapid accumulation of wealth, and transforming this into monumental form was clearly a strategy followed in Parramatta.

CONCLUSIONS

The colonial government initially established burial separate from religious control.¹⁰¹ It was government that at the same time enforced everyone to bury in the formal burial grounds, and no longer in family plots on farms. Only Parramatta survives from a period early enough to reveal colonial designs in Australia, but this is prior to the implementation of cemetery principles beyond a very small handful of British exemplars. It demonstrates how, free from clerical control, an improvement cemetery-like landscape could be established from the late eighteenth century, and those with sufficient resources – even in a pioneer colony with extremely limited infrastructure – could invest in mortuary monuments. Just as the colonial experience in India may have influenced the first breaks with Anglican control of burial, as with the Castle Howard mausoleum,¹⁰² so projects such as Parramatta could act as experiments with non-denominational planned burial grounds that could confirm the efficacy of such new forms of funerary landscape, both reflecting and reinforcing the improvement ideology associated with burial reform.¹⁰³ Most scholarly attention has been devoted to the development of Australian cemeteries in the Victorian period,¹⁰⁴ but the earlier decades of burial provision provide a narrative that offers new insights.

¹⁰⁰. Stocks 2008; Bagshaw 2018.

¹⁰¹. There is no documented consecration of St Johns, but it is assumed that Reverend Samuel Marsden, who resided in Parramatta, undertook this at some point.

¹⁰². Downes 1977; Mytum 2007.

¹⁰³. Tarlow 2007, 112–5.

¹⁰⁴. Murray 2003, 2013.

It is notable that even in the eighteenth century, when the infrastructure of the colony was so rudimentary, that competently carved stone monuments for individuals could be erected. The early colonial burial ground of Parramatta indicates the aspirations by at least some of the population for a new order where the able and lucky could rise socially as well as economically, and then materially express this success through permanent commemorative practices. Memorials could be produced locally in the way that many desirable factory-made domestic and personal consumer products could not, and so they were relatively accessible. Monuments were therefore more readily available as an avenue of conspicuous consumption compared with many British manufactures including housewares, clothing and items of personal adornment that were only intermittently available in the first few decades, and even then only in small quantities, as supply was poorly planned. It is notable that some of the most elaborate monuments in Parramatta were those comprising the shared plot for Benjamin Oran and Edward Riley, both involved with the trade of consumer goods into Australia via the Indian subcontinent, one of the routes by which Chinese porcelain arrived in Australia.

This is the first published spatial analysis of a colonial burial ground developing over time, and also an evaluation of the role of improvement in the development of the Australian burial tradition. The colonial experience clearly demonstrates the increasing role of commemoration and the use of material culture in coping with bereavement. The archaeological analysis of St Johns helps to support an interpretation of initial improvement culture by some of the early governors, transforming not only the moral character of the convicts (some of whom became sufficiently successful to invest in monuments), but also an improvement burial landscape with no intercutting graves, a non-denominational structure and a siting away from an initial highly ordered improvement settlement and the planned Anglican church site. The memorials indicate a relatively structured layout of burial from an early date, part of the spatial ordering in the early settlement. It is then indicated by the enclosure of the cemetery by 1812, and within a few years the enclosure of plots with iron railings and with other memorials placed on visible masonry platforms. Improvement is further demonstrated by the popularity of tombs and ledgers that cover the whole of the burial, protecting it as well as displaying material success; the use of footstones complementing headstones serves as a less expensive version of plot definition.

Settlers, operating within an improving culture on the edge of empire, demonstrated their taming of the perceived wilderness and success in agriculture – particularly pastoralism with the introduced Merino sheep breed¹⁰⁵ – with substantial monuments. Urban craftsmen and traders were also motivated to invest in funerary culture, often before their families transformed their dwellings, though this domestic transformation became more frequent as years passed and after some resolution of leasehold arrangements in 1823,¹⁰⁶ which encouraged greater expenditure on more substantial buildings. By this time, the landscape of the burial ground had been established, a forerunner of personal (rather than only governmental) investment in the built environment thereafter increasingly visible in the townscape. The cemetery monuments provide an assemblage of closely dated, spatially defined and personalised artefacts with text that directly links people with material goods. Integrating funerary culture within the wider practices of the living, memorials can contribute to the wider debates about the origins of Australian society and culture.

¹⁰⁵ Gascoigne 2002.

¹⁰⁶ Liston 1996, 112–4.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Faith Nolan for initial database entry and image numbering, Fenella Logan for most of the work digitising the plan and some editing by Kate Chapman. Rob Philpott has kindly developed the GIS application and produced the line drawings. The staff of the Parramatta local history library were extremely helpful. The author first visited St John's burial ground whilst researching memorials of Ulster Scots migrants as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council grant in 2006. It was revisited and the research completed on-site and in archives after preliminary data analysis and remote mapping in 2014 with a grant kindly provided by the Society of Antiquaries of London. Siobhan Lavelle and Mary Casey have both provided valuable insights, corrections, additions and encouragement, though they may not agree with all interpretations presented here.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

- NSW State of New South Wales, Australia
 SLNSW State Library of New South Wales
 TNA The National Archives, Kew

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