

# Archaeological Investigation

# 95-101 George Street

## Parramatta

### What's Happening?

This site, at the corner of George and Charles Streets, Parramatta is being redeveloped by Leighton Properties on behalf of Colonial First State Property. A new twelve-storey commercial building will be built by John Holland, to be completed in August 2006.

### Why the Investigation?

As part of the development process Leighton Properties is undertaking an archaeological dig to unearth any evidence of past occupation on the site. As part of the planning and assessment process for this new building it was found that there is likely to be substantial archaeological evidence preserved here which will be investigated and documented before construction starts.

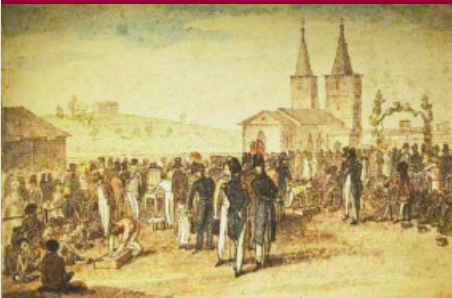
### What's our Role?

The objective of the archaeological investigation is threefold:

**Documentation** Uncovering and recording all the evidence of past occupation.

**Investigation** Enhancement of our understanding of Parramatta's development.

**Interpretation** The information will be used to interpret the history of the place, making the new building a continuation of the history of this location.



The annual meeting of the native tribes with the Governor at Parramatta, near St. John's Church



Old Government House at Rosehill, July 1790. Looking west along George Street

### *Evidence of Aboriginal people*

Before Europeans arrived in 1788 Parramatta was part of the traditional lands of the Boromedegal people of the Darug Group. This area provided a rich resource of food and raw materials from the land and river. Evidence of Aboriginal occupation dating back at least 10,000 years has been found close to the site.

### *The landscape of the past*

It is hard to imagine the forests and grasslands that were once the environment of Parramatta. This site was low-lying and may have been subject to periodic flooding. Archaeology can contribute unique evidence to enable us to reconstruct the past landscape and environment and this is one important aspect of the investigation. The dig will also look at the impact of European settlement on the landscape.

### *Forming of a town*

Parramatta was founded on the wheat fields of James Ruse's Rose Hill Farm. It was first cleared for that purpose. The town plan was laid out in 1790, two years after Sydney was founded and George Street became the main thoroughfare. This street was much wider than it is now; we will be looking for evidence of those first moves towards shaping a new town.

### *Convict life*

During the earliest years of the town of Parramatta much of George Street was lined on either side by regularly spaced wooden huts set in garden allotments that were each home to as many as ten convicts.

This site held at least two of those huts and gardens and it is an important component of the investigation to see if evidence survives of them and, if so, to compare it to evidence of similar buildings found in other parts of Parramatta. This is our best and, in many ways, our only way to shed light on the lives of these first settlers.

### The George Street frontage

The excavation site has two distinct property histories that provide the context for investigation; the land along George Street and that along Charles Street and the block at the intersection of both.

### *The Lord Nelson Hotel*

The first occupant we can give a name to on this site is Robert Cable and his wife Mary. By 1809 they owned the land from 99-93 George Street. Possibly in one of the old convict huts they established a public house known as The Lord Nelson. The inn had several out-buildings and a garden. The dig will determine if there is evidence of the establishment on site. Cable remained publican of The Lord Nelson up to 1820 when, on his death, his wife inherited the property.

### *Armstrong's Hotel*

Mary then married a soldier, Robert Armstrong, in 1821. He had been superintendent of the convict barracks situated close by; he resigned his commission and took over the old Lord Nelson that became known as Armstrong's Hotel.

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George Street

# 95 - 101 George Street

It is unclear if he built a new hotel or added to the old; he certainly leased the Inn to a new publican in 1833. He died in the Liverpool Military Hospital in 1842 leaving Mary again in charge. Mary died in 1852. The later history of these buildings, convict hut and hotel, is very unclear and the dig may solve some of the mystery during the excavation. Their principal buildings may have survived until the later 1840s when they were demolished and replaced (at 93 George Street) with a house.

## *Hampstead and Corio*

In her will Mary bequeathed the George Street property to her adopted son Gilbert Hunter Smith. He lived first at 93 George Street while he built a new two-storey house he named "Hampstead" at 95-99 George Street. This was finished in 1883. He then moved there, demolished the older building at 93 George Street and built a second two-storey house, named "Corio", on that land in 1884. "Corio" became his permanent home and he leased "Hampstead" to tenants and sometimes used it for business purposes (he was a real estate agent). Both houses survived into the twentieth century.

## *Subdivision*

Smith died in 1910 and his daughter inherited the property. She died five years later and the property was placed in trust for her two daughters while her husband lived on the income. He died in 1929 and the daughters then inherited; Fanny Verena became the owner of Corio and Eleanor acquired Hampstead. Fanny Verena subdivided her land and ultimately Corio was demolished. 93 George Street is now occupied by the multi-storey commercial building next to this site. Eleanor retained her house, with some additions, to 1958. The NRMA bought the site that year and constructed a new office building, possibly incorporating some of the older Hampstead house within it. The NRMA building remained standing until 2003.

## The Charles Street land

### *The Hassall Family*

From about 1802, the land on the Charles Street frontage was part of a much larger property owned by a prominent local family, the Hassall family. Their main house and improvements were on land now on the opposite side of Charles Street. This site is likely to have been part of a garden or paddock.

When Charles Street was formed in 1811 this land was cut off from the main property and appears to have remained vacant for much of the first half of the nineteenth century. Excavation will determine whether the site had any particular use.

## *General store and commercial use*

Henry Kidd Harpur purchased this land in 1855. He appears to have established a general store or warehouse along much of the Charles Street frontage. After he became bankrupt, the property was placed in his wife's name. On her death in 1875 it passed back to him. He sold it in 1876. A subsequent owner, James Hamilton, may have been responsible for the demolition of Harpur's buildings and the construction of a house on at least part of the site. Much of this period of the site's development is poorly documented and the archaeological investigation is designed to provide a new source of evidence to make clear what happened here. The property was sold in 1885 to John Ryan.

By 1892 there were several new structures on Charles Street and its intersection with George Street. In 1899 Ryan purchased the land to the south to Macquarie Street to serve as a paddock for his horses. By 1910 very large additions had been made to the site. Ryan was a grocer and it is likely that the bulk of the buildings were used for storage, stabling and as a shop. Ryan died bankrupt in 1914 and the property was sold to meet the demands of his creditors. It was purchased in 1928 by Arthur Brown, a local builder.

## *Rebuilding the site*

By the 1930s some of the older nineteenth century buildings remained at 99 George Street, but those at the intersection of George and Charles Streets had been replaced by a two-storey free standing building with a large building behind it. The buildings remained here until their demolition in 2003.

## *The Programme*

The archaeological programme is expected to last between 4-6 weeks on site. Work will continue off-site to produce a final report at the end of the year.

## *Getting up close*

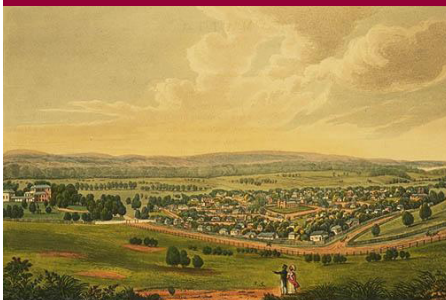
We will be opening the site for inspection and questions during the course of the investigation. We will place advertisements in the local press and information on the fence so that you can book into the tours.

The site can be viewed at any time through the safety fencing on George or Charles Streets.

For further details please contact:  
Leighton Properties (02) 9925 6666  
[www.101george.com](http://www.101george.com)



Plan of the Township of Parramatta 1804 by G. W. Evans with the study area highlighted



View of Parramatta 1819



Artist's impression of the development at 101 George Street, due for completion in 2006



LEIGHTON PROPERTIES

The archaeological investigation on 95 - 101 George Street Parramatta is funded by Leighton Properties Pty Limited and is being undertaken by Cultural Resources Management.

This investigation is managed within an S140 excavation permit approved by the Heritage Council of NSW.