REPORT ON THE STAGE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, HYDE PARK BARRACKS AND THE ROYAL MINT BUILDING, SYDNEY. 1980-81.

W. THORP
I. PREAMBLE

The first stage of archaeological work refers to all documentary research and on-site investigation carried out before the commencement of the second stage of archaeological involvement during 1981.

II. BACKGROUND TO STAGE I

During 1980 following the involvement of the National Trust and the N.S.W. Heritage Council in the restoration of Hyde Park Barracks and the Royal Mint building it was considered necessary that an archaeologist be appointed to prepare a Cultural Resources Report on the archaeological and historical significance of these two sites.

Previous to this appointment some documentary and exploratory work had been carried out on the Mint and an archival report had been prepared on Hyde Park Barracks.

During August 1980 Ms W. Thorp was appointed to prepare this report. Close liaison was to be maintained with a sub-committee of the Archaeological Advisory Panel of the Heritage Council during the preparation of this document.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Stage I work were both immediate and long term. The immediate tasks were to record the two sites as they then existed and to supervise certain aspects of the restoration project as it proceeded to ensure the protection of archaeological data.

The long term objectives of the first stage were to assess the areas of cultural significance and, in conjunction, investigate areas that were to be disturbed in the future works programme.

IV. CONSTRAINTS

The major constraint to the work concerned only the Mint site where the limited documentary evidence available curtailed archaeological investigation to a minimum. Further archival work on the Mint was carried out during Stage I and has continued into Stage II.
V. METHODOLOGY

1. HYDE PARK BARRACKS

Recording of the site was carried out by detailed photographic, written and graphic records. Supervision of any work was done by the consultant in liaison with the Public Works Department and B.C.and M.

The archival report prepared during June-August 1980 allowed a detailed assessment of all areas of archaeological potential on the Barracks site. A schedule of works was supplied by the P.W.D.

On the basis of these two sets of information a number of areas were determined that were to be significantly disturbed and were deemed to be of critical archaeological importance.

To assess the archaeological data contained in each of these areas it was considered necessary to excavate test trenches. These were to be investigative only and to cause minimal disturbance.

A team of archaeologists was appointed to excavate and prepare reports on these areas. It consisted of Ms D. Bairstow and Messieurs M. Davies, E. Higginbotham, W. Wickmann and G. Wilson. Ms Thorp co-ordinated the excavation and the reports. During August-December 1980 a total of ten trenches were excavated in the Barracks and its precincts.

2. THE ROYAL MINT

The same procedures used to record the site and supervise the work at the Barracks were applied at the Mint. Similarly a schedule of works was supplied to establish the areas of immediate disturbance, however, due to the limited archival material available at the time it was necessary to minimise the excavation. During September 1980 to January 1981 a total of five trenches were excavated within the Mint and its environs.

3. SPECIALIST REPORTS

In addition to investigation by excavation a number of specialised reports were prepared on specific aspects of the site. These were soil science studies carried out by Dr B. Davey and Dr H. Giering of Sydney University; mortar analysis by Dr G. Gibbons of the Institute of Technology; faunal analysis by Mr G. Faulkenmire; analysis of structural materials by Mr R.
Varman and a preliminary report on the under-floor deposit of the second floor of the Mint building by Ms D. Bairstow.

VI. PRECIS OF TRENCH REPORTS (FOR LOCATION OF EACH TRENCH SEE PLAN)

1. HYDE PARK BARRACKS

TRENCHES 1 AND 2

Location: Two trenches were excavated in the south-east ground floor room of the Barracks building at the eastern and western ends. Both ran north-south across the entire width of the room.

Reason for Excavation: An unspecified amount of the deposit in this room was scheduled to be removed for air conditioning ducts.

Objectives: To determine the extent of the deposits.
To determine methods of construction in the original superstructure.
To investigate the extent of evidence around door and window cavities.
To determine the extent of disturbance in the deposits.
To determine evidence of later building programmes and occupational history.

Methodology: The surface scatter indicated that at the eastern end of the room considerable disturbance had occurred. The eastern trench was intended to determine the extent and nature of this disturbance, the western trench was primarily concerned with recording relatively undisturbed strata.

Both trenches were 1.0m wide and excavated in squares. Each square was excavated until the upper limit of the natural soil profile was reached. In each trench one square was carried down below this limit to determine activity on the site prior to the erection of the Barracks and to provide a section against each wall to investigate the method of construction.

Results: The disturbance was revealed to be extensive rodent activity.

Evidence was gained concerning the clearance of the site prior to construction.

The series of strata were identified and provided a guide to the artefactual potential of the remaining deposit. Some differentiation could be made between the various occupations based on the artefactual assemblage.

Evidence was ascertained of later building activity.
TRENCHES 3 AND 4

Location: Two trenches were excavated in the north-east ground floor room of the Barracks building. Trench 3, at the eastern end of the room, was at the intersection of an original internal wall and a later brick transverse wall of which only four courses were visible. Trench 4 was excavated in the centre of the western end of the room.

Reason for Excavation: The entire deposit in this room was scheduled to be removed for air conditioning ducts.

Objectives:

Trench 3 To ascertain the difference between the two walls at depth and their relationship.

To determine the purpose of a large sandstone block placed at the intersection of the two walls.

To record the variations, if any, of the stratigraphical horizons in this room from those recorded in Trenches 1-2.

Trench 4 Because Trench 3 was considerably disturbed by two foundation trenches Trench 4 was excavated to determine whether the remaining strata in Trench 3 were indicative of the whole room.

Whether a hearth, at that time demolished, had disturbed an extremely dense rubble layer at the surface.

The relationship of a series of stone piers carrying the present floor bearers to the rest of the deposit.

Methodology: Both trenches were 1.0 x 1.0m square to minimise the disturbance. Both were excavated until the upper limits of the natural soil profile were reached. Trench 3 was extended below this limit to determine whether any other evidence of activity on the site before construction could be ascertained and to record the construction techniques of each wall.

Results:

Trench 3 That the brick transverse wall was a later addition and contained at least two phases.

That the sandstone block was apparently part of the floor support system.

That, other than the earliest strata, the subsequent deposit was entirely different from that in the south-east room.

That similar evidence of pre-construction activity on the site could be determined.
Trench 4: That the strata in Trench 3 were commensurate with those in Trench 4.
That both the hearth and stone piers had not disturbed the dense rubble layer.
That this same rubble layer had apparently been spread deliberately though it was unclear whether the compaction had been deliberate or accidental.

TRENCHES 5 AND 6

Location: Two trenches were excavated in the Barracks courtyard Trench 5 at the immediate north-east corner of the Barracks building and Trench 6 immediately east of the rear door of the Barracks.
Reason for Excavation: A large area (exact dimensions unspecified at the time) at the rear of the Barracks was to be excavated for an underground plant room.
Objectives:

Trench 5 To determine whether the foundations of the external walls of the 1886 Equity Court building were extant.
To examine the strata in the Barracks precincts.
To determine the level of the original ground surface.

Trench 6 To determine whether any evidence survived of the internal arrangements of the 1886 court building.
To record various surface finishes and ascertain the level of the original ground surface.
To discover whether any evidence of a stepped plinth as shown on the Greenway plan of c.1817 could be found.

Methodology: Trench 5 was a 1.0 x 1.0m square excavated to a depth where it became clear that evidence of earlier activity and surfaces had been seriously disturbed by the building activity of 1886.

Trench 6 was a 1.5 x 1.5m square excavated until it was considered that the natural soil profile had been reached.

Results: Trench 5 The external foundations of the court were found to be present.
Most of the successive strata had been disturbed by the building activity for the court building.
It has become evident since excavation that the lowest level reached in this trench, an extensive deposit of yellow clay, at the time of the excavation thought to be the top
of the A horizon is actually part of a very extensive and deep fill laid over the original ground surface.

Trench 6 Evidence of the internal arrangements of the court were found. Below this was an earlier building phase represented by two large sandstone blocks. No structural evidence could be found of the plinth, however, the depth of the various working surfaces indicate that some similar arrangement must have existed. It was possible in this trench to record the various strata in the courtyard. The original ground surface in this trench was also not reached. The same extensive clay deposit found in Trench 5 was also found in Trench 6.

TRENCH 7
Location: The south-east corner of the former Deputy Superintendent's residence i.e. the central room in the northern range of buildings.
Reason for Excavation: This entire room was scheduled to be disturbed when a new floor was installed.
Objectives: To ascertain the nature of the original flooring. To determine whether any occupational change could be determined through stratigraphic evidence. To determine the level of the original ground surface.
Methodology: A 1.6 x 1.6m square was excavated to the top of the extant soil horizon.
Results: It was found that there was good evidence for an original timber floor. To a limited degree it was possible to evidence occupational change through the strata. The level of the ground surface was found and corroborative evidence for the initial preparation of the site.

TRENCH 8
Location: In the centre of the under-floor area of the "cell block" located at the north-west corner of the Barrack compound.
Reason for Excavation: At the time of excavation it was planned to extensively disturb this area when a new floor was constructed.
Objectives: To determine the relationship between the underfloor deposit and the changes of function and development of the room.
To determine the location of the now vanished cell walls and their method of construction.
walls and their method of construction.

Methodology: A section of the floor was removed to allow excavation. A 1.0 x 1.0m square was initially excavated in an area in which the partition wall and return of a cell was shown as existing on the c.1817 Greenway plan. This square was subsequently enlarged by two extensions, one in the north 1.0 x 0.5m and one in the south east 0.5 x 0.5m square. These were necessary to determine the dimensions and orientation of features located in the first square.

Results: Further evidence of the 1817 construction period was found.

The trenches for the cell wall footings were located. Evidence for later construction changes were found.

TRENCH 9

Location: On the eastern wall of the proposed "cafe", a former 1817 storeroom.

Reason for Excavation: The area was to be extensively disturbed in the works programme by trenches for pipes and the construction of a new floor.

Objectives: To determine the nature of the deposit.

To investigate the method of wall construction and the sequence of activities occurring within this room.

Methodology: A datum point was established 3.7m from the south wall of the room. Initially a trench 1.0m wide was laid out against the east wall from the datum to a point 2.5m to the south. The trench was divided from north to south into two 1.0m squares and one 1.0 x 1.5m trench designated 9A, 9B and 9D respectively. 9A was excavated first and based on information retrieved it was decided that it was more valuable to excavate a 1.0 x 0.6m trench north of 9A instead of opening 9D. This was designated 9C. Each square was excavated independently, layer by layer.

Results: Considerable evidence was gained concerning the original construction and subsequent alterations in the rooms structure and function.

TRENCH 10a AND 10b

Location: Trench 10a Directly in front of the main entrance to the Barracks building in the middle of the west facade.

Trench 10b In a direct line from the main entrance in the western facade on the eastern section of the present garden.

Methodology: Both trenches were excavated down to the apparent
natural soil horizon.
Results: Trench 10a Successive surfaces were exposed, in particular one of ironstone in a hard matrix which was apparently consistent all over the site.

The evidence was inconclusive regarding the plinth.

Trench 10b It was ascertained that the earlier garden did extend further east than the present garden.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

All ten trenches were successful in their objectives and have provided a valuable guide for the Stage II work. In addition information was gained during excavation which was to prove useful for the restoration programme and data unavailable in the documentary resources was gathered concerning the initial construction phase and subsequent history and alterations on the site.

2. THE ROYAL MINT

TRENCH A
Location: In the north-east corner of the central southern room designated G4 on the ground floor of the Mint building. 
Reason for Excavation: It was at that time scheduled for a lift to be incorporated in this half of the room necessitating the removal of the under-floor deposit.
Objectives: To determine the nature of a western transverse wall, its relationship with the southern original wall and the principal supporting beam to the west of it.

To determine the nature of the filling deposit.
Methodology: A 1.0m wide trench was excavated along the southern wall of G4 between the eastern wall and the western transverse wall.
Results: The transverse wall was found to be the western limit of a previously unrecorded cellar underneath G4. The most probable date for the construction was c.1813.

It was determined that the most likely date for the filling of the cellar was during the period of the conversion to the Mint c.1854.

TRENCH B
Location: Against the eastern veranda's western wall at approximately the mid point of G4's eastern wall. Due to the reasons for excavation in this area, the trench could have been located at...
any point along the eastern verandah, however, it was chosen to position it here as further investigation into the cellar discovered in G4.

**Reason for Excavation:** The entire eastern verandah under-floor deposit was scheduled to be disturbed because of the necessity of under floor ventilation.

**Objectives:** To assess the significance of the deposits in the northern section of the eastern verandah.
- To determine the depth and extent of these deposits.
- To determine the existence of any structures in the area of investigation.

**Results:** A second cellar was discovered in the area of investigation of apparent original construction. A well constructed flagstone floor and drain were excavated.

The subsequent fill was found to be primarily from the later 1820's.

Further evidence of later nineteenth century building activity was also discernible.

**TRENCH C**

**Location:** In the Mint courtyard east of the Mint building immediately over the south-west corner of a former 1811 kitchen.

**Reason for Excavation:** The area was scheduled to be extensively disturbed for the laying of various pipes and drains.

**Objectives:** To ascertain whether any of the 1811 kitchen remained.

The southern extension of the trench was to record the external strata.

**Methodology** A 2.0 x 1.0m trench was excavated to the depth of the major feature.

**Results:** A large stone covered drain with clay packing was revealed.

No evidence of the kitchen was discovered but it was considered likely that part of the materials used in this structure were reused in the drain.

**TRENCH D**

**Location:** In the southern section of the eastern verandah approximately in the centre of the eastern wall of room G6.

**Reason for Excavation:** Similar disturbance as that planned for Trench B was to occur in this area. Following the results of the excavation of Trench B it was deemed necessary to investigate the deposit at the southern end.
Methodology: A 1.12 x 0.90m trench was excavated to a depth where it became dangerous to continue.

Results: The evidence strongly suggested that this was, in the initial occupation period, another open cellar area though it could not be conclusively proven without reaching the lowest level.

It appeared to be filled during the later 1820's with further deposition in the 1860's-90's.

TRENCH E

Location: In the centre of the southern wall of the former carpenters shop (i.e. the easternmost room of the southern wing).

Reason for Excavation: This and the adjoining room were scheduled for extensive disturbance due to the conversion of the area to a plant room.

Objectives: To determine the nature of three exposed bricks set in a mortared line.

To determine the nature and significance of the deposits.

Methodology: A 2 x 1.5m trench on the southern wall of this room was excavated until the major feature was exposed. A small section was exposed in the south-east corner to ascertain the successive underlying strata.

Results: A large brick "platform" covering nearly the entire trench was revealed. It probably formed a footing for some heavy machinery.

Evidence of earlier strata was too limited to be conclusive due to the extent of the feature.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

As in the Barracks the Mint excavations were more than successful. The discovery of the cellar in room G4 led to the abandonment of a proposed lift to ensure the protection of the archeological data.

The results of the test trenches have again provided a guide for the later Stage II work and have provided valuable corroborative and new data on the development of the site and its structures.

X. STAGE I POST EXCAVATION WORK

During Stage I a number of intermediary reports and
statements were presented. The final recommendations for continued archaeological work were tabled in December 1980. The extensive Stage II work is the outcome of these recommendations.

The final report for Stage I work inclusive of documentary, on site records and the archaeological report is now in preparation.
ARTEFACTS RECOVERED FROM STAGE I

The Stage I excavations yielded the complete assemblage of materials that were later to be found in Stage II and in comparable statistical volumes viz. ceramics, clay pipes, glass, bones, seeds, textiles, paper, metal, leather and miscellaneous items.

The collection is currently stored with preliminary conservation treatment on site. A comprehensive inventory, descriptive catalogue and analysis integrated with the excavations is in preparation for the final Stage I report. Included in the material are artefacts recovered by a previous consultant primarily from the third floor of the barracks.

To be included as a paragraph in the Stage I report.