



FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

MAJOR PROJECT

2007

BACHELOR OF SURVEYING

RESEARCH PAPER

A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE COLONIAL SURVEYS AT OLD BANKS. PATERSON RIVER.

LUKE DORAN

3030906

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INTRODUCTION

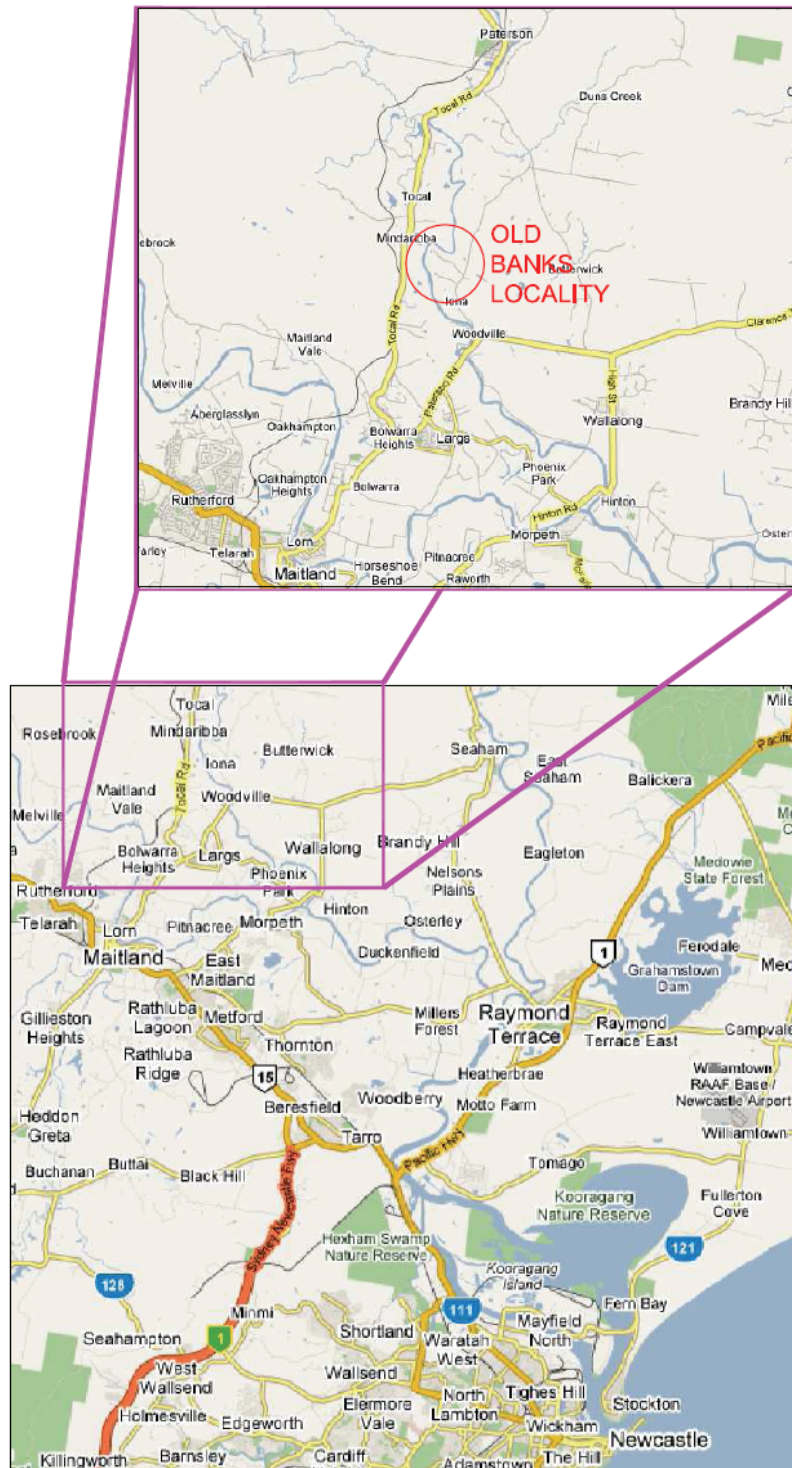
This research project is a historical investigation into surveys performed in the 1820s and 1830s at a locality known as “Old Banks”. The site is located on the Paterson River, approximately 7km south of the township of Paterson, which is in the lower Hunter Valley, New South Wales. A locality diagram can be found on the following page.

“Old Banks” was the site of a military station, from about 1812 – 13, the first such station established inland from the main penal colony of King’s Town or today’s Newcastle.

By the 1820’s it was realised that the lower Hunter had enormous agricultural potential, also with land transport routes being established south to Sydney the colony at Newcastle became less isolated, and convicts easily escaped back via the Hawkesbury. It was decided by the Governor Brisbane to move the penal colony north to Port Macquarie, and open up the Hunter Valley to free settlers. To aid this land release process, the skills of a surveyor would be required to measure existing farm settlements and create boundaries that would benefit both the existing land holders and the newcomers, all subject to the approval of the Governor.

It is these surveys, performed by Mr. Henry Dangar in the early 1820’s and later by Mr. George Boyle White in the late 1820’s and early 30’s that will be analysed. The research will only focus on relevant surveys in the area known historically as the Paterson’s Plains, and more specifically, the “Old Banks” locality.

It is the intention of this research project to investigate the relevant colonial surveys using skills obtained through my Bachelor of Surveying, experience in the field of surveying and a general interest in historical maps. My project will endeavor to define on today’s landscape the spatial positions of the structures and assets from “Old Banks” when it was used as a military station.



MAP 1
LOCALITY DIAGRAM - LOWER HUNTER RIVER
CREATED BY : **LUKE DORAN** OCTOBER 2007
Source: GOOGLE MAPS

CONTEXT

Research is currently being done on early colonial military stations in the lower Hunter Valley by Mr. Peter Johnson. It is this ongoing research that my project will serve. His research project is being undertaken as part of a larger study being made into the expansion of early convict and frontier settlement of the Hunter Valley, the Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of NSW. This broader study is being performed by the University of New England's Heritage Futures Research Centre headed by Dr. Andrew Piper and Dr. David Roberts, Dr. Piper has worked in the cultural heritage industry since 1981 as an archaeologist, curator and site manager, Dr Roberts lectures in Australian history in University of New England's School of Classics, History and Religion, and is Director of UNE's Heritage Futures Research Centre, of which Mr. Johnson is an associate. Recent research by Mr. Johnson has identified previously unreferenced colonial documents that, to varying degrees, detail the assets and spatial layout of the military station. Mr. Johnson's methodology involved reconciling early colonial letters with maps of the period. Then he applied this information to aerial photographs of 1940, 1965, 1969 and 1974, in conjunction with analysis of the present landscape. However, Dangar's early map proved problematic and so he sought the assistance of a research associate in the surveying field to interpret Dangar's map and field books, with the hope that the positions of the *Old Banks* assets can be more accurately defined and laid out on the ground. This task directly addresses his hypothesis that the government established its first station on the left bank in 1812-13, and that Chief Constable Richard Binder occupied the very first Government cottage in the early 1820s, and/or other primary assets of the Government at that location thus, new research into the field books and field methodology of surveyor Dangar is necessary before a more detailed appreciation of the Government's activities on the left bank can be confidently proffered¹.

¹ Johnson, P.L., *Forum on Early Convict and Colonial Landscape*, 24th April, 2007.

This project is therefore part of a larger umbrella that is trying to increase knowledge and understanding of Australia's early convict and settlement history. It is hoped that the findings of this report and the associated papers serve to be a valuable asset to the history of Paterson, the Hunter River and New South Wales.