

Anglesea Barracks, Hobart

Colonel Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of the Colony of New South Wales, paid his last visit to Van Diemen's Land, then a dependency of that Colony, in the latter part of 1811. During his inspection of Hobart Town which had been founded some eight years previously, Macquarie became concerned about the accommodation provided in the township for the detachment of troops from his Regiment, the 73rd of Foot, which was responsible for the security of the settlement.

'A Spot for a Barracks'

On December 2, 1811, Macquarie rode to the top of a small hill about 1.6 km south-west of the town and declared that it was the spot for a barracks. The hill has been called Barrack Hill from that day. Macquarie directed that barracks were to be built to house 150 men, with quarters for the officers and a hospital to accommodate 32 sick persons.

Macquarie, having returned to Sydney, kept urging on the construction of the barracks and demanding reports as to their progress. In 1815, he assumed that, 'the Military Barracks had been completed long before this', but it was not until 1818 that a return of public buildings completed included the barracks.

It is not clear as to when the first work on the new barracks was done but the Reverend Robert Knopwood, the first clergyman to officiate in the Colony, records in his diary that he attended the laying of the foundation stone of the officers' quarters and mess, by the then Lieutenant Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Davey, Royal Marines, on 17 August 1814. However, several buildings were partially completed by 1818 and troops were occupying the barrack area several years before that date.

The barracks were named Anglesea by Governor George Arthur after the Marquis of Anglesey, who was Master General of the Ordnance in England during Arthur's tenure. Anglesea Barracks remained the headquarters of the British Imperial Forces in Tasmania until the last British regiment stationed there left in 1870. Most of the Barracks then passed out of military control, except for a small portion retained for volunteer forces which had been raised during the 1850s with a small permanent military cadre staff.

Occupants of Anglesea Barracks then ranged from a boys' school, girls' industrial school, girls' reformatory, aged women's home, through tenants who rented the grounds for pasturage, to gymnasium, weather bureau, and the Royal Hobart Bowling Club. Only the Royal Hobart Bowling Club retains its original lease.



Built originally to house the field officers. Among the last residents were a Major Eric Hayter who served at Gallipoli and a Major Pinnock who is said to have lent his house one summer to the artist Norman Lindsay.

From 1898, the Ministry of Defence began to pressure the Minister of Lands for return of buildings rented out to allow for their occupation by an expanding defence force, precipitated by the Boer War and imminence of Federal control. It was only shortly after the Commonwealth came into being in 1901 and responsibility for Defence passed from former Colonial Governments that the Barracks passed again into full military control and have remained so ever since.

Anglesea Barracks is the oldest military establishment still occupied by the Australian Defence Force. It is listed by the National Trust and is on the Register of the National Estate. Many fine stone and convict brick buildings remain, including designs by John Lee Archer. Its commanding position provides an outstanding townscape. Architecturally, buildings within the Barracks can be divided into three phases. Those buildings erected between 1814-38, which are all constructed of convict bricks; those buildings constructed from 1838-70, mostly in local freestone (sandstone); and buildings erected since the turn of the century.

Anglesea Barracks Residences

The original field officers' married quarters were in a single storey, painted brick building constructed in 1824. Originally providing four quarters, one end quarter was destroyed by fire and demolished. The remaining building still stands having been converted to offices around 1912.

Another famous name associated with the Barracks is that of Christian Bjelke-Peterson who conducted a gymnasium there at the turn of the century. Christian's older brother Carl, also taught at school in Hobart at this time, before going to New Zealand where his son, Johannes, later Premier of Queensland, was born in 1911.

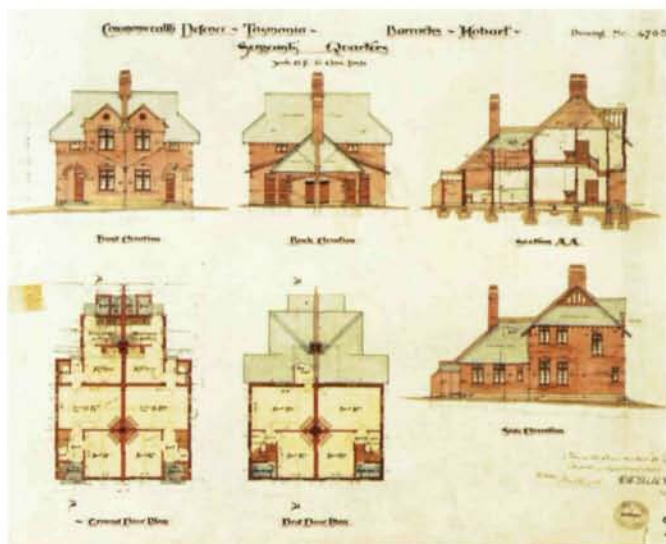
The guard house and the military jail have both been used as a married quarters at various stages of their life. The jail is by far the most impressive structure in the barracks from an architectural point of view. This handsome building with its classical Greco-Roman facade was built on the same Model Prison lines as the penitentiary at Port Arthur. Its entrance is guarded by a massive eucalyptus tree which is over 120 years old.

'The Garrison Tap Room' was erected as a soldiers' canteen in 1834 when the Barracks were occupied by the 21st Regiment of Foot, Royal North British Fusiliers (later Royal Scots Fusiliers). It is the last of the convict brick constructions in the Barracks and has extensive cellars underneath and features a fine portico. It was used as a school from 1870 but served as Tasmania's Weather Bureau from 1882 until 1986 when it was returned to the control of the Department of Defence and converted to a married quarter. More recently it has been taken over by the RAAF.

'Legge Cottage' was constructed as a magazine for the Barracks in the early 1900s. Later it was converted to a married quarter for which it is still used.

'Despard House', 'Chesney House', 'Elliott Hall' and 'Clarke House'. The married soldiers and non-commissioned officers' quarters which were erected in 1823 were pulled down in 1912 and the Hobart *Mercury* proudly proclaimed that 'in the

course of a year or two the Anglesea Barracks will be the most up-to-date in Australia'. In the place of the old quarters, two identical two-storey duplexes were built to house the senior non-commissioned officers at the barracks.



Built in 1913 as sergeants' married quarters, now 'Despard House' and 'Chesney House'.

These four houses built of stretcher bond brickwork on a sand stone substructure and with sandstone accents are still in use having been modernised internally in the 1980s. The roof is gambrel and gable with terra cotta tile and a central chimney shared in each duplex. Features are the entrance porches, two have brick semi-circular arches with sandstone impostes and keystone blocks, two have steep tiled skillion roofs with timber valences. Also notable are the cast iron rainwater goods and the louvered bulls-eye vents in the south gables. The original fire places and pressed metal ceilings have been maintained and there are some original skirtings and window architraves.

'Beumaris House', although located in Sandy Bay Road approximately 500 metres from Anglesea Barracks, this house has a close association with the Barracks, having provided two officers' married quarters (one upstairs and one downstairs)



Beaumaris House. At one stage of its history, the front grounds of this property housed Hobart's first zoo.

for much of the period since World War II. In recent years, it has been used as headquarters by the Air Training Corps and later by 12/40th Battalion, Royal Tasmania Regiment.

'The Commander's Residence'

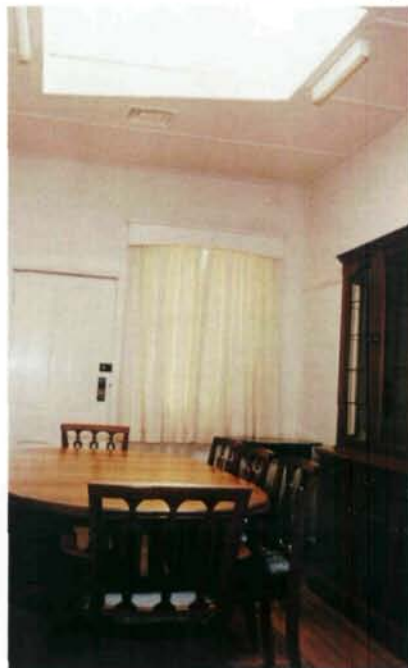
This building was completed in 1818 and is the oldest extant building within Anglesea Barracks. It was used as a hospital for soldiers, their dependants and occasionally civilians until 1870. It then became an adjunct to the girls' industrial school as sick quarters until the turn of the century, when it became the military commandant's residence which it remains to this day.

The Commander's Residence is a significant colonial Georgian building set in gardens near the main entrance to the Barracks. Its walls are of painted English bond brickwork and weatherboard and the original hipped roof of shingles is now corrugated iron. Ceilings are of plaster but there is evidence of earlier lath and plaster, pressed metal, and Baltic pine ceilings. There is a four panel front door with sidelights and a 15 pane fanlight.

When constructed, the building comprised four eight-bed wards on the western side with the surgeon's quarters and operating theatre on the eastern side. A skylight is let into the roof (originally of shingles) at the junction of the roof gables. Under this skylight was the operating theatre, fitted with a system of mirrors which could be operated by a pulley to focus light onto the operating table. Developed by a surgeon of

Wellington's Army during the Peninsula wars, this was a necessary feature in the days when artificial light was provided only by candles or oil lamps.

One of the features of the building is the open colonial verandah, typical of the period, ranging across its front. Set on brick foundations with a horizontal board and batten enclosure on octagonal braced timber posts, the verandah faces to the north east. It must have been a pleasant spot for recuperating patients to sun themselves during the winter months.



Behind the hospital was the morgue which was not built until 1828, some ten years after the hospital was finished. The foundations of the morgue are still visible. The garage for the residence is also a significant building, having been originally the detached kitchen and

The study in the Commander's Residence was built as the operating theatre for the Garrison hospital. The skylight was specially designed to adjust the light to best advantage for the surgeon.



The Commander's Residence was originally the Barracks hospital. The view is held by some Tasmanian historians that the building is the 'longest continually occupied dwelling in Australia'.

wash house for the hospital.

The Defence Housing Authority has substantially refurbished this residence in recent years with central heating, modern electrical wiring, new drainage and renewed verandah flooring, new carpeting and repainting.

Ghosts of the Past in Matron's Room?

Several of the previous residents will testify to the mysterious ghosts in the Matron's Room or to at least an unexplained chill which is always present in the room. Mrs Sally Gair recounted the story of her encounter with a thin faced young man dressed in a dark frockcoat and white neckerchief. 'I imagined him to be a patient, sitting as though he was by a bed; by his pallor and thinness he was perhaps a consumptive', she said. Although he left without speaking, she said that the apparition left a strangely comforting feeling which persisted.

A more recent lady occupant of the house also reported that she clearly heard some unmistakable deep male laughter from the same room; furthermore she observed the mysterious clanging of a set of hanging heavy cast iron cooking pots for

which there was no obvious cause.

The late Colonel Brian McAuley wrote to say that while he and his family had not experienced any ghost themselves, one of their lady guests, who knew nothing of the ghost story, was staying in the same room and was awakened by the sensation of someone stroking her brow but found no earthly presence to account for the sensation. Another of their guests, a young lady, late on the night of Good Friday, 1989, claimed that she felt the assistance of an unearthly but calm presence which gently removed her dressing gown as she was about to go to bed!

He also wrote, 'The other quite strange situation related to our Shepherd Dog, Rahm. Rahm was a mature male, some 8 years old, and a very steady and well adjusted dog. He regarded the Residence as his personal responsibility and his reputation for security was common knowledge. Rahm was a true house dog; he had complete run of the house, yet despite this freedom of movement he would not enter the room next to the sun room which we understood to be the Matron's room of old. During our time we uncovered the fire place, but even before that Rahm would not venture into that room. On one

occasion I forced him in, but he became quite agitated and when I released him he bolted from the room!' In a similar vein, the daughter of an earlier tenant remarked to Mrs Gair that she had experienced a coldness in the room and that her cat would never enter the room and struggled to escape if taken in.

Another story told to us was of a convict who was killed in the hospital by a surgeon with his scalpel in fury for a terrible deed which the convict committed on the person of a young female patient who later died. Who knows what tortured souls may still call Anglesea Barracks home!



The attractiveness of the lounge and dining room of the Commander's Residence at Anglesea Barracks belies its long history and spectral tales.

