

Old Sydney Burial Ground

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Recent works on Sydney Town Hall resulted in the rediscovery and excavation of a number of graves from the Old Sydney Burial Ground, which was originally used between 1792 and 1820. Seven graves or parts of them were subjected to archaeological excavation as part of a wider conservation project during 1991. A number of graves, including one substantial brick tomb, have been conserved in situ. This paper, by consultant archaeologists Tony Lowe and Richard Mackay, recounts the history of the site and the results of the excavation program. The paper then addresses the assessment of significance of historical archaeological sites using this site as a case study.

INTRODUCTION

Old Sydney Burial Ground was Sydney's first permanent cemetery. It was located near the current corner of George Street and Drutt Street (Figure 1). The burial ground was originally established in September 1792. Since its closure in 1820 the site has undergone a number of alterations. The alignment of George Street now impinges upon the original burial ground area. The construction of the original St Andrew's Church (1842) and Deanery (1871-1872), as well as the current Sydney Town Hall site clearing (1868-1869) have caused major destruction to surviving fabric and archaeological evidence.

As part of a major conservation program undertaken as part of the Sesqui-Centenary of Sydney, a series of works were completed on the Sydney Town Hall. These included installation of new stormwater pipes to provide for separation of stormwater and sewerage systems. Following the excavation of a number of trenches for the pipework and the discovery of some cultural material in early 1991, a baseline archaeological assessment was prepared. This assessment was required by the recently adopted provisions of the City of Sydney Local Environmental Plan which require that such investigations precede sub-surface disturbance in areas expected to contain archaeological relics. The baseline assessment concluded that it was possible that features from 1792 to 1820 may be discovered and it was recommended that a program of monitoring be undertaken. The following weeks saw first the discovery of eight sandstock bricks comprising the lowest course of the corner of a vault and then a more extensive brick tomb.

At the point of discovery of these early tombs, consultation occurred with the Heritage Council of New South Wales and a permit for excavation at the site was issued in accordance with the requirements of the New South Wales Heritage Act.

Initial excavation of the second grave feature revealed extensive remains. Following detailed excavation work it was determined that the proposed stormwater line should be re-routed. Concurrently, extensive media and community interest was shown in the grave itself and a number of events, tours, media releases and press stories ensued. The matter became one of considerable substance and was the subject of discussion at a full meeting of the Sydney City Council in April 1991.

The re-routing of the stormwater line resulted in the discovery of no less than five additional graves. These

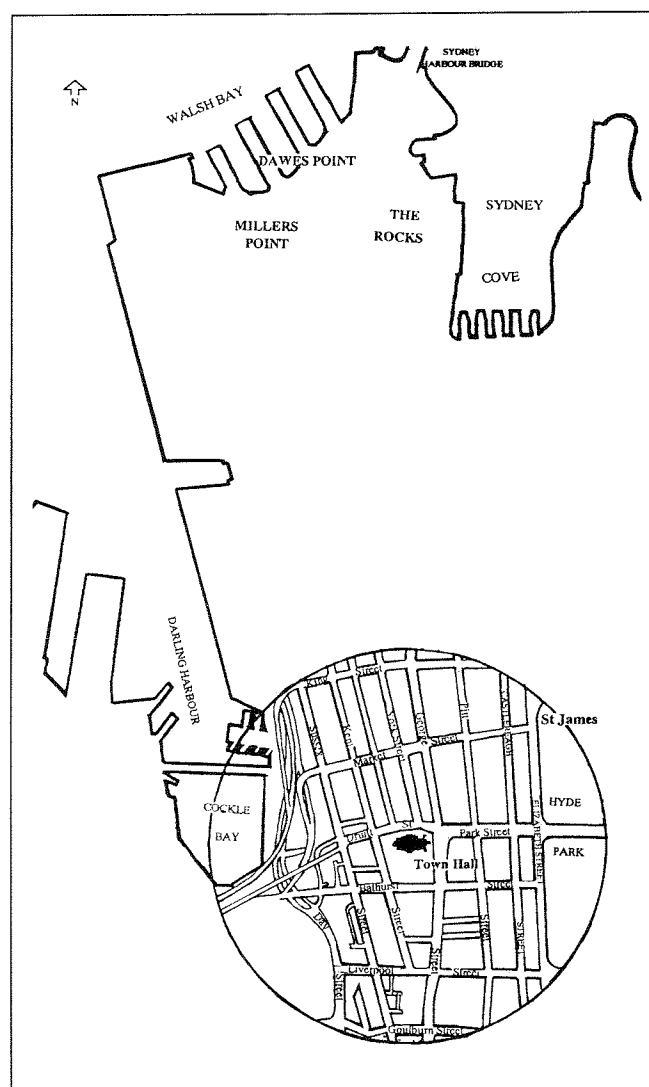


Fig. 1. Old Sydney Burial Ground (Sydney Town Hall) Site Location and Context.

were duly excavated and recorded. However, a decision was taken that additional re-routing was impractical as the line of stormwater pipes would inevitably pass through apparently undisturbed contexts no matter which

route was chosen. A decision was taken to provide for the *in situ* conservation of the most substantial graves, numbers 2 and 3. A program of physical conservation work occurred prior to the backfilling of these graves.

Figures 2 and 3 provide a ground plan and detailed plan of the Sydney Town Hall indicating the location, extent and configuration of the excavated graves.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

Old Sydney Burial Ground

Up until the latter part of 1792 burials in Sydney were made in land adjacent to the military barracks near the present day Grosvenor Street.¹ In September 1792 Governor Philip and the Reverend Richard Johnson set out the new cemetery.² The land belonged to Marine Captain Shea, who at his request had been buried there in 1789, so there was a precedent for its use in this way. The cemetery was expanded in 1812 by Governor Macquarie, more land being added to the northern and western sides.³ The burial ground fell under the jurisdiction of St Phillip's. Clergy from the Church conducted the burial services and apparently everyone was buried with Church of England rites regardless of their denomination.⁴ A burial register was kept but the departure of the Reverend Johnson in 1800 meant that records were poorly maintained until W. Cowper arrived in the colony in 1809. Reverend Cowper later estimated that some 2,000 people had been buried in the 'George Street' cemetery.⁵

Most of those buried in the Old Sydney Burial Ground would have been convicts or ex-convicts, but prominent citizens such as Thomas Reiby and members of the

various regiments and their families also came to rest there. The cemetery monuments would have varied from the non-existent (for perhaps many of those who died as convicts) through simple wooden crosses and perhaps plainly carved stones for the poor, to elaborate altar monuments. Similarly, coffins would have varied from well made cedar examples, expensively fitted out, to nothing at all.

The burial ground was used until 1820 when the Brickfield or Sandhills Cemetery, now the site of Sydney's Central Railway Station, was opened. According to government orders the burial ground was closed because the nature of the ground rendered it unsuitable for further use.⁶ The cemetery had suffered considerable damage even while it was in use. Herds of cattle wandering through it and pigs rooting among the gravestones no doubt had done their share. A wooden fence was subscribed for and erected but was soon torn down for firewood and a stone fence was later erected. The *Sydney Gazette* recorded recovery of stolen goods from inside an open tomb.⁷ After the cemetery closure the damage continued. A witness before the 1845 Select Committee gave evidence that by this stage most of the graves were no longer marked and it would be impossible to find them without clearing the land down to the coffins.⁸ The historian James Bonwick, visiting Sydney in 1866, described open graves, boys burrowing into the exposed tombs and the headstones, 'with the exception of a dozen, thrown down, broken, defaced, trodden over'.⁹ In 1868 the Mayor of Sydney called the old cemetery 'a disgrace to the city'.¹⁰

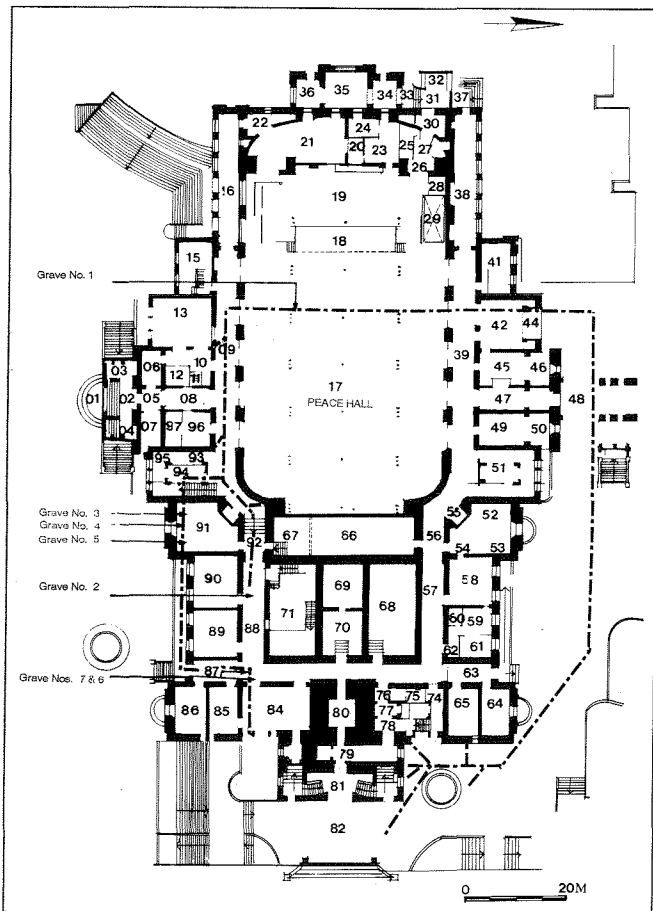


Fig. 2. Sydney Town Hall Basement, showing excavated sewerage and drainage line, room numbers and grave locations.

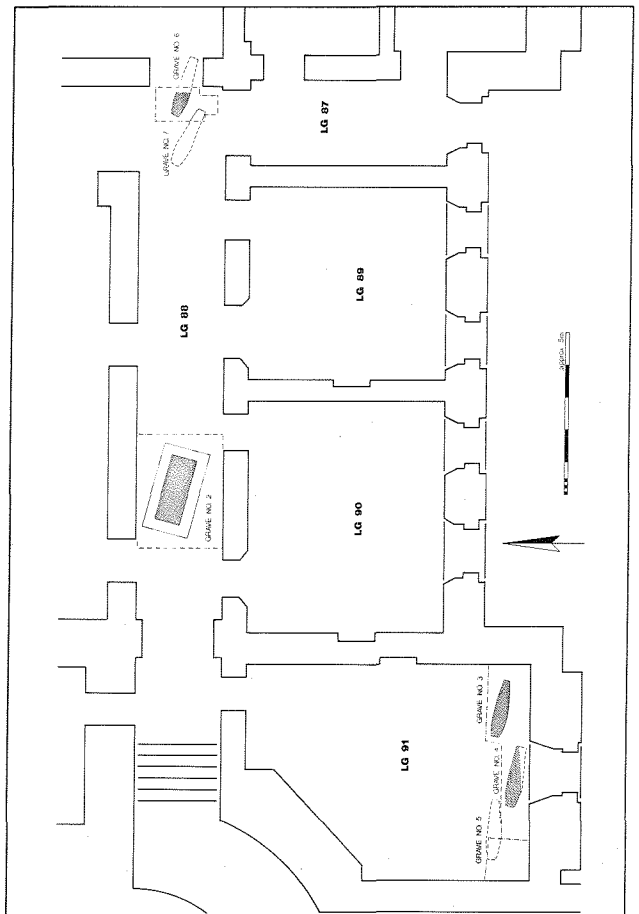


Fig. 3. Sydney Town Hall Basement - Location and Orientation of Graves 2 to 7, showing excavated portions.

Sydney Town Hall

By the end of 1868 it had been decided that the Old Burial Ground would make way for the construction of the Sydney Town Hall. Notice was given in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the remains of the interred, 'so far as they can by reasonable search be discovered', together with all legible headstones would be reburied at Haslem's Creek (Rookwood). As it was, virtually none of the headstones from the old cemetery found their way to Rookwood with the possible sole exception of Captain Gavin Hamilton's (1798), which was removed by a family friend.¹¹

The Chief Engineer's advice to the 1867 Select Committee was to dig only that part of the site where foundations were to be laid and not to bother trying to remove remains outside this area.¹² There is no reason to think that this advice was not taken. Apparently, when ordinary graves were unearthed traces of remains could be found, although the vaults uncovered held remains in a much better state of preservation.¹³ The human remains unearthed while digging the foundations were re-interred under a monument at Rookwood, but as there were no names inscribed on it apparently none of the remains could be identified.¹⁴

Later Discoveries of Graves

The Old Sydney Burial Ground extended under the present Drutt Street footpath, while the south-east corner was situated well into the present George Street roadway (Figure 4). This meant that whenever street works took place, to lay water mains, sewerage or for other purposes, remains of graves were likely to be found. The newspapers of the day contained periodic accounts of grave discoveries.¹⁵ More were found during the laying of new electricity cables.¹⁶ Tombstones and ironbark coffins were found during the open-cut excavation for Town Hall Station in 1929.¹⁷

The 1974 Excavation

In 1974, before the 1977 Heritage Act had been passed, work in Sydney Square between the Town Hall and St Andrew's Cathedral included the demolition of the old Deanery and resulted in an unknown number of tombs and graves being destroyed. Fortunately four tombs were examined by a team organised by Judy Birmingham of Sydney University.¹⁸ The tombs included a nearly intact example (Vault 1), with vaulted brick roof, which was completely recorded. The walls of the tomb were one brick length thick and the inside measurements were 2.18 metres by 1.51 metres. The vault survived to a height of 1.7 metres. There was a bricked up doorway at the western end and the floor was of natural clay.

The coffin had been placed on four brick piers. It was made of cedar planks and the ghost of a silver name plate was visible on the lid. The coffin had floated or was otherwise disturbed from its piers and had become embedded in water-deposited mud. Evidence suggests flooding on at least two occasions. The skeletal remains were fragmentary and evidently disturbed and included a large fragment of the skull plus one femur.

Another tomb (Vault 2) was suspected to lie adjacent to Vault 1 to the south but was not excavated. Vaults 3 to 5 lay in an evenly spaced row and had approximately the same dimensions.¹⁹ Vault 3 contained fragments of the probable altar monument that marked the grave on the surface.²⁰ This was part of an old collapse. As no coffin was found it is likely that the collapse occurred during or after the removal of the remains.²¹ Little was left of Vault 4 but the remains of the coffin had been observed in it prior to the excavation starting.²² Vault 5 had a roof

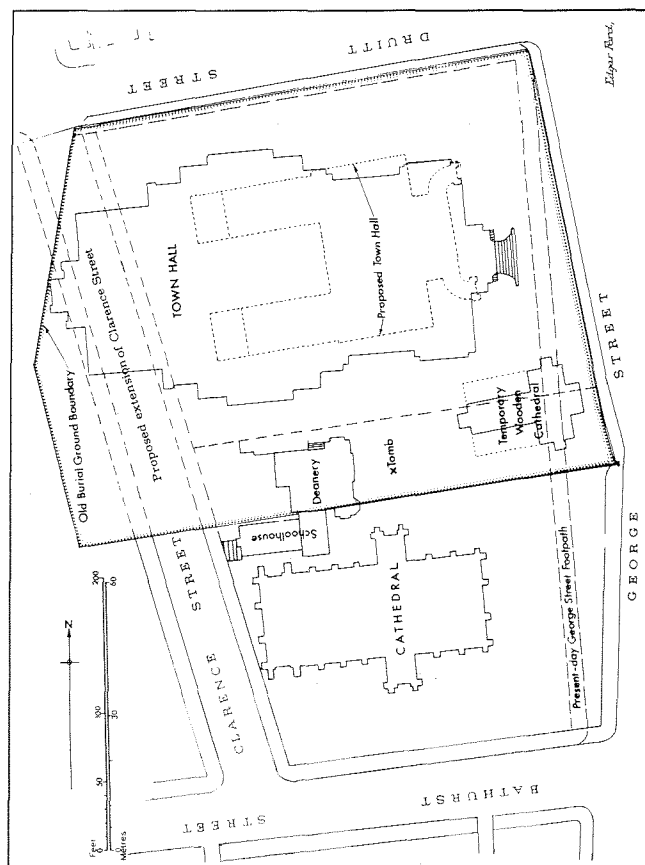


Fig. 4. Old SBG in Relation to Current and Former Features. (Reproduced from J. Birmingham and C. Liston 1976.)

constructed of hardwood beams. Like Vault 3 it had collapsed and was empty.²³

For its time the 1974 excavation of Old Sydney Burial Ground was a landmark achievement and represented a major step forward for historical archaeology in Australia. The project also resulted in the systematic recording of information about the burial ground and vaults that added significantly to available knowledge about the place and assisted greatly with the 1991 excavation project.

FEATURES

Grave 1

Grave 1 was located in the southern half of the Peace Hall (Figure 2). The remains consisted of the corner of a brick tomb, of which only eight bricks from the bottom course had survived (Figure 5). The rest of the tomb had been removed during the levelling of the area in preparation for the construction of the Town Hall and by the sinking of a roofing support pier. No artefacts were recovered.

Grave 2

Grave 2 was located under the corridor LG88 (Figure 3). This area is approximately 1.5 metres higher than the Peace Hall. This rise meant this area was much less disturbed than the lower Hall.

In the process of levelling the area the Town Hall builders had removed the roof and various wall courses of this brick tomb. Only four courses remained in the north-western corner. The corridor fill began directly above the remnant walls. The foundation trench of the northern wall of the corridor had just missed the north-west corner of the tomb.

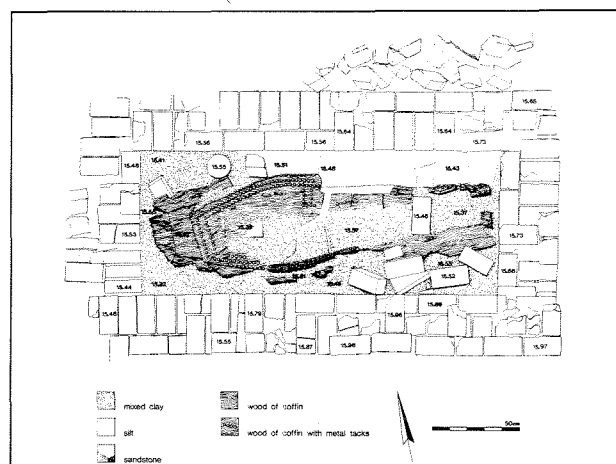
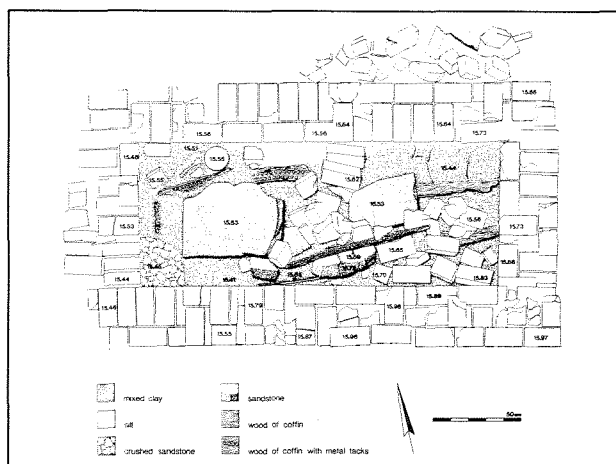
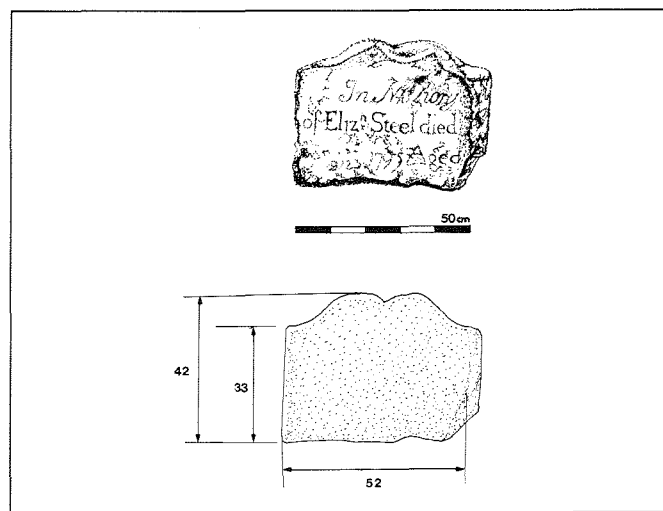
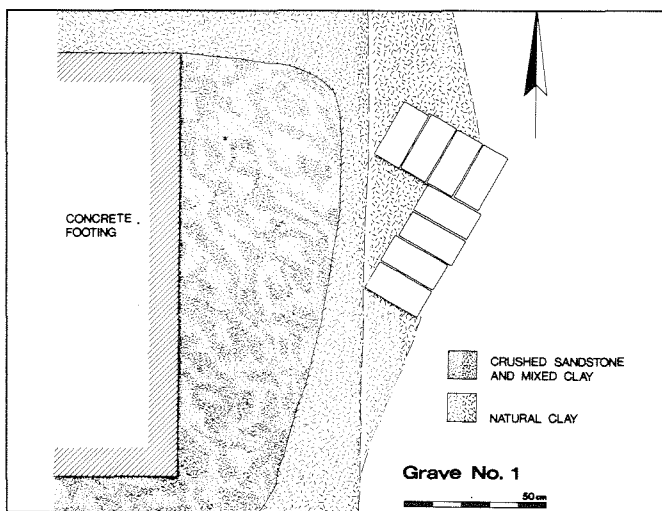


Fig. 5.(top left) Grave No 1 Plan. Fig. 6.(bottom left) Grave 2 plan showing rubble fill and headstone. Fig. 7.(top right) The Headstone of Elizabeth Steel. Fig. 8.(bottom right) Grave 2 Plan showing coffin.

The brick tomb was 2.6 metres long and 1.48 metres wide (Figure 6). Its walls were one and a half bricks wide, which would suggest they were meant to support a roof. The brick mortar contained no shell-lime but was merely brown sandy soil. However the quantity of shell fragments in the fill of the tomb just above its base would imply that the bricks had been bonded by a weak shell-lime mortar which had subsequently washed out. The western end wall was not bonded into the long walls and the evidence from a cut west of it indicates the coffin was placed into the tomb from this end (cf. Vaults 1 and 3 from the 1974 excavation).

Directly above the coffin was brick and sandstone rubble (Figure 6) which was interpreted as being mainly remains of the tomb walls and roof, and debris that fell into the exposed grave, either when it was disturbed by the Town Hall builders or when the tomb was disturbed prior to 1868. Some of the sandstone rubble included fragments of headstone. A human patella was recovered from this debris and is presumed to have come from the burial. Glass and ceramic mainly dating from the 1850s onwards was present in the upper part of this fill. Towards the western end of the coffin, overlying the coffin lid, was the upper portion of a headstone (Figure 7), belonging to Elizabeth Steel. Evidence as to the state of the graveyard in the years after its closure suggests the headstone could have been displaced into the grave

before the Town Hall building activities began. The partial headstone is inscribed:

In Memory
of Elizh Steel died
.....1795 Aged

The stone is broken at this point and no further inscription is present.

The stone appears to be crafted from Sydney sandstone. The remaining portion is 520 mm wide and 420 mm high. It has a number of damaged areas, indicating rough treatment prior to its deposition in this grave. The monument is the upper part of a stele (headstone), a memorial type that occurs frequently in cemeteries and churchyards in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain and in early Australian burial grounds.

The format is a stylised double stele; the curved top edge form derives from the double memorial type more common in Britain towards the early part of the eighteenth century. The front of the stone has wide chamfered edges. The back of the stone is roughly chiselled.

The script on the stone is naive and is similar in style and execution to other extant memorials from Old Sydney Burial Ground. The craftsman is unknown.

Elizabeth Steel was transported to Australia on the *Lady Juliana*, arriving 3rd June 1790. It is recorded that she was 23 in 1789 and she died in 1795 soon after completing her sentence on Norfolk Island. Her burial at the Sydney Burial Ground was recorded on 8th June 1795. She was described in the register of St Phillip's Anglican Church as 'Elizabeth Mackey soldier's wife' of Sydney. Her age would have been 29 if the statement that she was 23 in May 1789 was correct.²⁴ The skeletal remains buried in the tomb are of a woman somewhat older than this.

Owing to its proximity to the water table, and as a result of frequent flooding the wooden coffin was found to be water logged and extremely fragile. It measured approx 1.75 metres x 0.55 metres. It had collapsed and, with the lid lying on the base of the coffin, had subsided down over the two brick piers on which it had been placed (Figure 8).

The lid and sides of the coffin were decorated with rows of brass tacks similar to the studded design of the 1974 Vault I coffin.²⁵ According to Litten there were no distinct English regional trends in basic coffin style (cf. his illustrated coffins showing tacked decoration).²⁶ The corrosion of the tacks had helped preserve the wood, particularly on the lid. Coffin wood examined by the Forestry Commission of New South Wales closely matched Australian Red Cedar (*Toona australis*). This also was the identification for the wood of the 1974 Vault I coffin. As no nails were found wooden pegs seem to have been used.

No skeletal remains were found inside the coffin. A skull was embedded face downwards in fill outside the coffin near the north-west corner of the tomb, at the end where the head would have been placed (Figure 8). The skull was cracked and the frontal area from the eye orbits down was missing. The lower jawbone was present under the skull and a fragment of scapula was nearby.

The skull was independently examined by several experts and although it possessed several masculine features such as moderately developed supraorbital ridges it was judged to be female in the mid 40s to 50s age group. The teeth had severe occlusal wear and showed evidence of advanced periodontal disease and suggested the same age grouping.²⁷

The matrix around the skull was a brown silty clay with shell fragments that seems to have washed into the tomb through the walls and roof. Further to the east this deposit was covered by a thin layer of white silt indicating that the tomb was at times inundated. As this silt did not intrude inside the coffin it is clear that it was still intact at the time of inundation.

The location of the skull outside the coffin perhaps is best explained as evidence of tomb disturbance in the decades prior to 1868. It appears that the skull was displaced and later became incorporated into the deposits entering the tomb. When the tomb was found by the Town Hall builders they are likely to have examined it and removed evident remains, but being outside the coffin, the skull went unnoticed.

Various elements were removed from the grave, including the skull, fragments of the coffin and brass studs, and the tombstone. It is planned that the tombstone and coffin fragments will form part of a permanent display detailing the story of the grave, its excavation and conservation.

The feasibility of keeping the tomb on display was investigated but the problems that would be encountered in keeping the wood moist and free of bacterial growth meant that this option was not possible. It was decided that conservation of the grave *in situ* for the future was

preferable. The coffin was sprayed with a fungicide (Panacide Biocide) and the tomb covered with Gor-Tex, a permeable fabric which allows the transfer of moisture while preventing the passage of contaminants. The membrane also separated the grave from the infill.

The grave was covered and infilled with washed river sand and the tomb was built up to a common height and finally covered by a concrete board. It is planned to mark the position of the tomb in the corridor.

Grave 3

Grave 3 was one of three graves found in the room LG91 during the diversion of the drainage trench (Figure 3). There is no evidence that this grave was discovered during the Town Hall building phase. The top of the coffin was about 20 cm below the room's floor packing. The coffin had been placed in a hole barely wider than itself, particularly at the base where the sides of the hole were undercut to allow for fit.

The coffin measured 1.75 metres long by 0.43 metres wide and at least 0.20 metres deep. It had completely disintegrated leaving a black deposit. The impression of the bottom of the coffin showed that it was made of one piece of wood, left quite rough at least on the underside. The lid had collapsed onto the base of the coffin, crushing the skeletal remains. The bones were badly preserved but skull fragments and remains of the arm and leg bones were discernible (Figure 9). The right femur was separated from the body, possibly having rolled away but it also may have been disturbed by animal or human action. No artefacts were found other than nails from the coffin. The clay in the northern section of the trench was disturbed and it is likely that another grave lies immediately to the north.

The grave was sprayed with fungicide (Panacide Biocide), covered with a permeable membrane (in this case Te-Tex Multi PES-15-380), infilled with inert sand and covered with a concrete board. The drainage trench was diverted to the south with shoring erected to protect the remains.

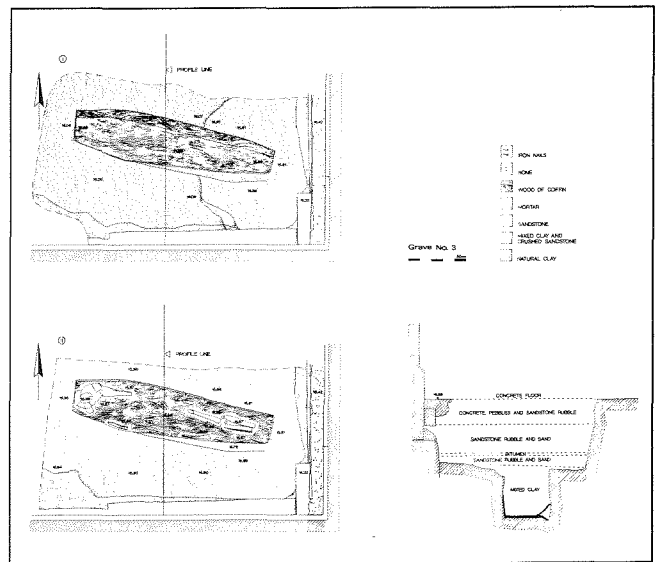


Fig. 9. Grave 3 Plan and Section.

Grave 4

This grave lay just to the west of Grave 3 (Figure 3). It had been sliced roughly in half by the excavation of the foundation trench for the southern wall of the Town Hall (Figure 2). It is obvious by the line of this trench that the builders realised that they had encountered a grave and dug into the side of the trench and recovered what they could. Part of the coffin lid had been removed. The skeletal remains also seem to have been removed at this time as there was no evidence of any bone except for a fragment of long bone against the northern edge of the coffin.

The coffin had decayed leaving no structural wood but the impressions of the timber planks were preserved in the clay. No artefacts were found except for the coffin nails. The coffin lid was built of narrow planks running lengthwise. The coffin base was not preserved well enough for individual planks to be made out but it also seemed to be made up of narrow planks. Additional planks had been nailed to the base and northern side of the coffin apparently in an effort to reinforce it.

As with Grave 3 the section indicated the probable presence of another grave immediately adjacent to the north.

Grave 5

Grave 5 was situated to the west of Grave 4 (Figure 3). It was not excavated since its cut was not recognised until after the drainage trench was dug in this area and most of the grave lay outside of the line of the trench. The orientation of this grave is similar to the others. The coffin seems to have disintegrated completely. No artefacts or bone were observed.

The three graves in this room and the evidence of two more to the north of Graves 3 and 4 highlight the unplanned nature of the cemetery. The graves are not in any particular alignment and there is no evidence of any pathway here. There are likely to be many more graves under this room and the rooms to the east.

Grave 6

Grave 6 lay in the corridor just outside room LG84 (Figure 3). It had been sliced through here by the foundation trench of the wall here (Figure 10). Unlike Grave 4 there is no indication that the builders wanted to deal with this burial. Their levelling activities had sliced into the top of the coffin, the lid having collapsed sometime prior to this. There was some displaced bone on the coffin lid and wood from the northern side of the coffin had been removed when the foundation trench was dug, leaving its impression. The rest of the coffin had decayed leaving only a black deposit.

Upon removal of the lid remnants (by brushing) the outline of the skeleton was revealed (Figure 10). The foundation trench had cut through it halfway down the pelvic bones. The body had been laid on its back with its arms at its side. The radius and ulna of the left arm were missing, as was the side of the coffin here, and the arm fragments were probably those found on top of the coffin lid. The bone had been crushed to a thickness of 5-10 mm and there was very little whole bone left. No artefacts other than coffin nails were found.

The drainage trench could not be diverted from this area and the remains were removed for reburial. The grooves left in the clay by the sides of the coffin (Figure 10) indicated that the base board of the coffin was butted to the sides. No other evidence for coffin manufacture was discernible.

Grave 7

This grave lay just to the south-west of Grave 6 and only the eastern end of the grave that intruded into the line of the drainage trench was excavated (Figure 3). No artefacts or skeletal remains were found. There was no black coffin residue here but a soft reddish deposit may have been remains of the wood. As with Grave 6 the sides of the coffin were lower than its base.

As with Graves 3, 4 and 5, Graves 6 and 7 demonstrate the cemetery's disorder. Although they are orientated the same way there is no evidence for planned rows of graves here.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE

Community Interest

The discovery of the Town Hall graves in 1991 was an event of extraordinary interest to the media, to government officials and to a wide spectrum of community groups and individuals. Unlike the 1974 scenario in which archaeologists were merely provided with an opportunity to record features prior to their destruction, the 1991 discoveries became a focus for interest in eighteenth-century Sydney and discussion largely centred on understanding the significance of the place and options for its conservation. In accordance with the principles established by the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS, formal assessment of the significance of the site became a key issue in deciding appropriate future conservation action.

Basis for Assessment

Traditional approaches to the assessment of cultural significance use a range of frameworks. The Burra Charter, for example, includes categories such as aesthetic, historic, scientific and social. However, such frameworks are not always directly appropriate to archaeological sites where the remains are entirely sub-surface and significance is essentially scientific. The

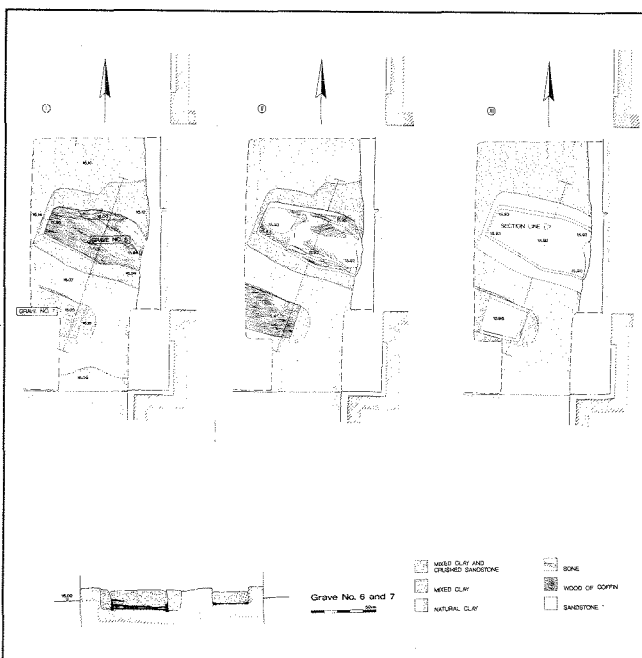


Fig. 10. Graves 6 and 7 plans.

Old Sydney Burial Ground is, to some extent, an exception as the place is also significant for historic and social reasons.

Recent amendments to the Australian Heritage Commission Act have included addition of the following specific criteria for assessment of significance:²⁸

- A. Importance in the course or pattern of Australia's natural or cultural history;
- B. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history;
- C. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history;
- D. Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of Australia's natural or cultural places or a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments;
- E. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
- F. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;
- G. Strong or special associations with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
- H. Special association with the life or works of a person or group of persons of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history.

While these criteria provide a useful overall framework, they are not specific with regard to archaeological values. Bickford and Sullivan draw attention to the dilemma faced by archaeologists and developers in connection with sites that are to be destroyed as a result of development and discuss effective means of assessing their heritage value.²⁹ They define the following questions:

Can the site contribute knowledge that no other resource can?

Can the site contribute knowledge that no other site can?

Is this knowledge relevant to knowledge to general questions about human history or other substantive questions relating to Australian history, or does it contribute to other major research questions?

It was reasonably expected that the archaeological site beneath Sydney Town Hall would have heritage value that transcended its archaeological and scientific significance. Therefore the assessment considered both the broad ranging criteria used by the Australian Heritage Commission and the specific questions posed by Bickford and Sullivan.

EVALUATION

Importance in the Course or Pattern of Australia's Natural or Cultural History

Old Sydney Burial Ground was an integral part of the fledgling settlement of Sydney. The Burial Ground was an element of the town layout and fabric which not only provided an essential service and facility for the small community, but fostered the continuance of the fundamental religious and social customs. The Burial Ground contains the graves of a number of prominent early settlers who played important roles in the history and development of New South Wales.

Position of Uncommon, Rare or Endangered Aspects of Australia's Natural or Cultural History

The Old Sydney Burial Ground is unique. It contains the earliest known in situ European burials in Australia and has an unparalleled role in Sydney's history. Further, the extent of building activity already undertaken within Sydney's central business district during the twentieth century has removed existing historic features and stratified deposits at many sites. As a result, the site is also exceedingly rare as a place within central Sydney which contains late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century European fabric.

Potential to Yield Information that will Contribute to an Understanding of Australia's Natural or Cultural History

Archaeological deposits and features, particularly when considered in conjunction with documentary evidence, can provide evidence of material culture that yields information unavailable from documentary sources alone. The Old Sydney Burial Ground site is an important archaeological resource which may contribute information that leads to a better understanding of early Sydney's history and particularly an understanding of religious practices and burial customs. Of particular scientific interest would be consideration of the transposition of burial practices of eighteenth-century England, and evidence available at the site about brick and stone masonry technologies and the state-of-the-art in carpentry and associated trades at the time.

Importance in Demonstrating the Principal Characteristics of a Class of Australia's Natural or Cultural Places

The Old Sydney Burial Ground has representative value as it illustrates late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century burial practices. Its fabric may also illustrate contemporary construction and carpentry techniques.

Importance in Exhibiting Particular Aesthetic Characteristics Valued by a Community or Cultural Group

In its current state the Old Sydney Burial Ground has minimal aesthetic value.

Importance in Demonstrating a High Degree of Creative or Technical Achievement at a Particular Period

The artistic and technical attributes of the Old Sydney Burial Ground are largely obscured. However, the remnant monument fragments and tombs do demonstrate state-of-the-art construction techniques and craftsmanship for the time.

Its Strong or Special Associations with a Particular Community or Cultural Group for Social, Cultural or Spiritual Reasons

The Old Sydney Burial Ground is one of Sydney's earliest religious sites. The site continues to have symbolic and cultural importance for the community, as evidenced by public interest and the conduct of a number of religious services associated with the archaeological program. As with all cemeteries, the Old Sydney Burial Ground has special social value for the descendants of the interred. In addition, as one of the few places in Australia which contains eighteenth-century fabric relating to the earliest phase of European settlement, the site has outstanding contemporary social value as an icon and symbol of early Sydney.

Special Association with the Life or Works of a Person, or Group of Persons of Importance in Australia's Natural or Cultural History

The Old Sydney Burial Ground has strong associational links with early Sydney and with the founding of the colony. The site has direct links with the country's first

governor and Chaplain who laid it out and to Governor Macquarie who ordered its closure in 1820. The site is necessarily associated with many of Sydney's earliest settlers who have at least an initial (if not a final) resting place there. The names of prominent individuals such as Thomas Reiby and James Bloodworth appear in the scant available records, but the site also includes burials of convicts and members of the New South Wales Corps – indeed the majority of people who died in Sydney during the first three decades of European settlement.

At a contemporary level the site also has associational significance and importance as a place which was the subject of one of the first major archaeological digs undertaken in Sydney (1974) and one of the few places where archaeological features are to be retained and conserved *in situ* on account of their heritage significance.

Can the Site Contribute Knowledge that No Other Resource Can?

In view of the scant records that remain relating to the Old Sydney Burial Ground, and destructive events that have occurred on the site since its closure, historical records about the site are few and far between. In addition, records relating to the early years of the colony are themselves minimal. As a result the archaeological record is likely to provide evidence that can supplement the limited documentary resources that are available.

In addition, data available from the analysis of the fabric may be different from written records. Some of the information gathered from the graves' fabric is not likely to be gained elsewhere.

Can the Site Contribute Knowledge that No Other Site Can?

In addition to being the only site with *in situ* graves from the earliest period of European known settlement, Old Sydney Burial Ground is important as one of the handful of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century European settlement sites in Sydney.

Information that would be revealed by archaeological investigation is unlikely to be available from other sites. The site is the earliest burial ground from which remains have been recovered, making the excavated and still *in situ* skeletal remains an important anthropological resource.

Is this knowledge relevant to general questions about human history or other substantive questions relating to Australian History, or does it contribute to other major research questions?

The site of Old Sydney Burial Ground, and a knowledge of what it may contain are seminal to an understanding of European Australia's origins and developments. As a fundamental element of the social and urban fabric of Sydney Town, and in view of the potential for revealing the historical and technological information through examination of extant features, the Old Sydney Burial Ground has enormous value as a potential contributor to major research questions about Australian history.

The skeletal remains have high anthropological value as few remains from this period are available for study.

Statement of Cultural Significance

On the basis of the above evaluation and synthesis of the key heritage values of the place, the following statement of significance for the site was derived:

The site of Old Sydney Burial Ground has symbolic value as one of very few places in central Sydney which contain fabric dating from the earliest phase of European settlement in the colony.

As a burial ground which includes remains of some of the city's founding pioneers, and one of

Sydney's oldest European religious and ceremonial sites, the Old Sydney Burial Ground has outstanding social value to the people of Sydney and Australia.

As an archaeological resource Old Sydney Burial Ground has high scientific research potential as it contains material culture related to a seminal phase of the nation's history. Analysis of the fabric of the site is likely to provide evidence of social customs, lifeways, construction technologies and other aspects of early settlement, which is unavailable from other sites and resources. The site has particular relevance to the study of transposition of burial practices and customs from Britain to Australia, during the early period of settlement.

Old Sydney Burial Ground has strong historic associations with prominent identities from early Sydney.

Old Sydney Burial Ground is an item of high public interest and esteem which has strong potential for interpretation of the history and the development of Sydney.

THE FUTURE

During the course of excavation and subsequent conservation program the remains of Old Sydney Burial Ground grew from being an impediment to the proposed construction works to being a major historic icon. Two of the excavated graves have been subject to methodological *in situ* conservation work and stabilisation.

Exposure and interpretation of the graves will not occur until such time as appropriate methods and techniques for preservation of fragile timber and other elements are available.

Consideration will also be given to the social and moral question of exposure of European human remains.

It is intended that material recovered from the graves will be analysed and conserved. The records, other artefacts and the headstone will be retained by Sydney City Council. An informative video has been made which outlines the history of the place and the results of the excavation. It is expected that a range of other grave sites are present in the vicinity and provisions have been put in place to ensure that sub-surface disturbance within the Town Hall is minimised and only occurs following site specific archaeological assessment and excavation.

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NOTES

1. *New South Wales Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings. Report from the Select Committee on the General Cemetery Bill, 1845*, p.818.
2. Johnson 1970:26.
3. Johnson 1970:30.
4. Votes and Proceedings, *op. cit.*
5. *ibid.*
6. Forde, p.5.
7. *Sydney Gazette*, 27/11/1820.
8. *Sydney Gazette*, 29/11/1804.
9. *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 1863-4*, Vol.5. Return to an Order - Burial Grounds, Sydney and Proposed General Cemetery, 1963.
10. Forde, p.5.
11. Votes and Proceedings, 1845, *op. cit.*
12. Johnson 1970: 37, 40-1.
13. *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 1867-8*, Vol.4. Report from the Select Committee on the St. Andrew's Cathedral Close Bill, 1867, p.400.
14. Forde, p.5.
15. Johnson 1970: 37, 40-41.
16. See, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8/3/1904.
17. *Daily Telegraph*, 28/7/1924.
18. Forde.
19. Birmingham and Liston 1976: 10.
20. *ibid.*, p.10.
21. *ibid.*, p.16.
22. *ibid.*, p.17.
23. *ibid.*, p.17.
24. Research on Elizabeth Steel was undertaken by Michael Flynn. See Flynn 1991.
25. Birmingham and Liston 1976.
26. Litten 1991: 103.
27. See dental analysis by C. Griffiths in excavation report.
28. Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975.
29. Bickford and Sullivan 1991.

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