

⑧ George Street

Phillip's vision for Rose Hill featured a grand central avenue 205 feet in width from the landing place at the river up to Government House. This layout of wide streets stood in marked contrast to the settlement at Sydney Cove and in November 1790 Captain Tench admiringly recorded that: "This main street of the new town...is to be a mile long and of such breadth as will make Pall Mall and Portland Place [in London] hide their diminished heads."

The section of George Street within the Park is significant because beneath it are preserved the archaeological remains of road surfaces, pavements and footings from a 1790s convict town.

⑨ The Convict huts

The road alignments and convict hut allotments of the township of Rose Hill are clearly recorded on maps, and in early documents. Watkin Tench described the huts he saw at Rose Hill on November 16, 1790: "The main street of the new town is already begun ... It contains at present 32 houses completed, 24 feet by 12 each, on a ground floor only, built of wattles plastered with clay, and thatched. Each house is divided into two rooms, in one of which is a fire place and a brick chimney. These houses are designed for men only: and ten is the number of inhabitants allotted to each; but some of them now contain 12 or 14, for want of better accommodation. More are building; in a cross street stand nine houses for unmarried women: and exclusive of all these are several small huts where convict families of good character are allowed to reside...". By 1814/1815 these huts were falling into disrepair and were demolished as part of landscaping works undertaken by Governor Macquarie.

Conclusion

In 1789, Rose Hill was a small penal colony, perched on the edge of a vast unknown continent, isolated by months of difficult sea voyaging from the authority and certainly of the imperial base of London. From 1788 to 1792, the colony faced physical and psychological isolation, as well as lacking resources and supplies of all kinds. Phillip knew that the survival of the colony depended on it becoming self sufficient as quickly as possible. By the mid 1790s the challenge of establishing a successful colony had been met. As the colony flourished, so the Rose Hill site evolved: the Government Farm began to lose its importance, as agriculture became established further west, and the commercial focus of Parramatta moved to the Queens Wharf area, where a new store and Barracks were built.

The layout and design of the landscape of Parramatta Park continued to evolve as it was extended and extensive landscaping works were undertaken by Governor Macquarie, who was Governor from 1810 to 1820, and whose vision of a picturesque parkland still shapes the Park today. Despite the passage of time, the marks and signs of this turbulent four year establishment period are still visible within the unique landscape of Parramatta Park.

Opening Times

Parramatta Park is open every day from 6am to 6pm

(8pm in daylight savings time)

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For more information:

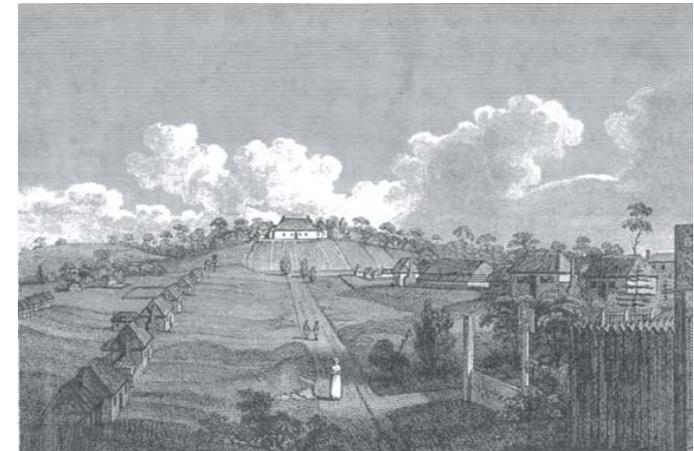
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Colonial Rose Hill

Parramatta Park

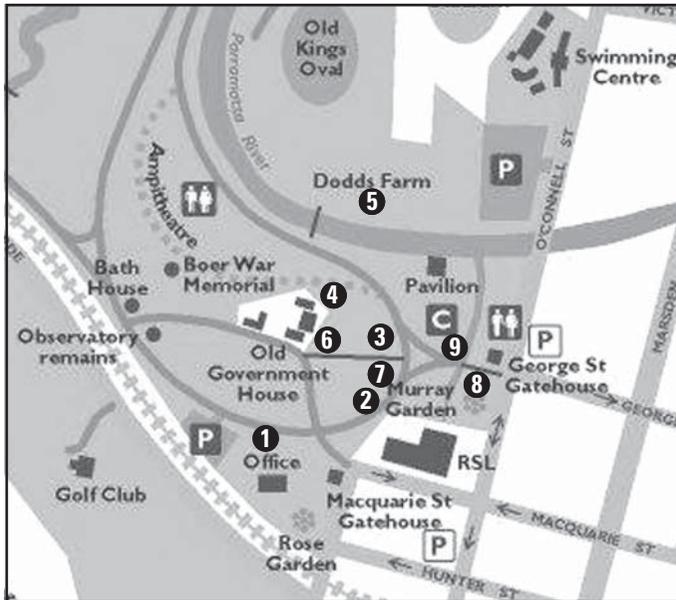
A self-guided walking tour



*A View of the Governor's House at
Rose Hill, c. 1796 (ML, SLNSW)*

Introduction

This tour explores the pre-colonial and colonial landscape of the former Governor's Domain when the English settlement at Rose Hill was being established. Rose Hill was the second site of settlement in Australia and, despite the passage of time the marks and signs of this earliest town are still discernible within the Park landscape.



1 Aboriginal landscape

The original inhabitants of this area were the Burramatta clan of the Darug. Parramatta Park was the core of their territory. Evidence of 20,000 years of Aboriginal occupation exists throughout the Park, and includes scarred trees, artifact scatters and pathways. The fertile landscape which attracted the first non-Aboriginal colonists was the result of careful land management practices. The land was regularly burnt, which developed a park-like landscape of large trees spaced well apart and a grassy understorey.

2 The Settlement at Rose Hill

Governor Phillip's instruction from King George was to "immediately ... proceed to the cultivation of the land ... for procuring supplies of grain and ground provisions". The sandy soil and unreliable water supply at the first farm, located in Farm Cove (which is now in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney) was unsuitable for farming. Phillip knew that the success of the colony depended on becoming self sufficient, so explored the vast harbour in search of fertile land. In April 1788 he discovered the lightly timbered, open country at the head of the Parramatta River, which offered the prospect of easy cultivation, and a settlement was established on 2nd November 1788. It was named Rose Hill in honour of George Rose, the English Secretary of the Treasury.

3 The River

The river was central to life in this area. It would have been an important food source and transportation route for the Burramatta clan, and was vital to Phillip in establishing and maintaining the settlement of Rose Hill. Initially the river was the only access to the settlement, and all stores and equipment were transported up by boat. It is possible that a track existed between Sydney Cove and Rose Hill by January 1790, but a cleared road covering the sixteen miles to Sydney was not established until May 1793, when it is recorded that Sydney was only just over six hours march away!

4 The Redoubt (fortified camp)

In November 1788 a group of marines and convicts were sent up the Parramatta River "to mark out the ground for a redoubt and other necessary buildings... [and]... a spot upon rising ground ... was ordered to be cleared for the first habitations". The Redoubt was the first structure built at Rose Hill and was a fortified camp designed as a place of refuge and security. Initially both convicts and soldiers were housed in tents, as the slow process of clearing the timber was undertaken. The Redoubt was completed by July 1789 and contained a number of buildings, including a Provision Store and Barrack.

5 The Government Farm

The Government Farm was the first successful farm established in the colony. Henry Edward Dodd, one of the few experienced farmers in the colony, oversaw the farm and in the spring and summer of 1788 seventy acres were cleared and planted. A barn, a house and a granary were also established. In December 1789 the first season produced a 'plentiful and luxuriant' vegetable crop as well as two hundred bushels of wheat, sixty bushels of barley and a small quantity of flax, Indian corn and oats. While this was a pleasing first crop, most of the crop was reserved for seed, and it was in no way sufficient to feed the colony, which was still dependent on supply vessels.

6 Phillips' Government House and carriage drive

While visiting the settlement of Rose Hill, Governor Phillip initially shared Dodd's house on the Government Farm, where he reports having to "sleep ... on the boards". In 1790, when labour and materials became available, Phillip built a modest Government House at Rose Hill. This building was a small, single story cottage of lath and plaster and was not much bigger than a convict hut, being 44 feet long and 16 feet wide. The former carriage entrance drive to Phillips' Government House has been located using historic maps and was excavated in August 2003, revealing the early road surfaces. By 1799 Phillip's house was "so much gone to decay" that Governor Hunter replaced it with a two storey Georgian brick house.

7 Bridge Street/Pitt Row

In 1789 Phillip laid out a town plan for Rose Hill. He and surveyor William Dawes proposed a symmetrical, well ordered town built on a generous scale. Bridge St was constructed when the main roads of the town were being laid out and, together with a small timber bridge, served to link the early settlement and the Government Farm. Distinct traces of the old road may still be seen in the foreground of Old Government House. This street marks the site of the earliest residential and industrial development at Parramatta and represents a unique survival from the late eighteenth century.