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Coal River Open Day

30th March, 2004

9.30am to 3.30pm

Nobbys Road, Newcastle

This is an invitation to local Schools to visit the Coal River Precinct. On this historic day, exactly 200 years since permanent European settlement, encourage your students to explore aspects of our convict and colonial history.

Availability: Bookings are essential. We have a limited number of slots throughout the day for school groups of up to 60 children. Contact: Erik Eklund on 49215219 or email Erik.Eklund@newcastle.edu.au

Parking: Buses are advised to park at the Fort Scratchley car park, and children should walk around the Fort past the playground equipment to the Coal River Marquee.

Where: Nobbys Road, Newcastle (just beneath Fort Scratchley and not far from the Nobbys Beach car park)

When: 30th March 2004, 9.30am to 3.30pm.

What: Historic Displays, and Guided Tours of the three mine sites on Fort Drive.

Curriculum: The field trip builds on the HSIE and Science and Technology Studies curricula. Further historical information for teachers can be found at www.newcastle.edu.au/coalriver



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Newcastle turns 200 years old on the 30th March of March 2004.

Lieutenant Charles Menzies was given a commission to establish the settlement and in his dispatch to the Governor dated 19 April 1804 he reported that: “we arrived here on Friday the 30th of March at noon. Previous to the vessels entering the harbour I went in a small boat to examine the situation of the mines, and fix on a place the most suitable for the settlement which I found to be a most delightful valley, about a quarter of a mile from the entrance and south head, and close to the mines. I immediately ordered a disembarkation to take place, and began to unload the vessels.” (Menzies Commission 1804 signed by Philip Gidley King, Governor of the Colony of NSW)

The settlement of Newcastle was permanently established from 1804 primarily as a site of secondary punishment for convicts who had reoffended in the colony, or on the voyage to Sydney cove. The coal mines of the area were known to Europeans and been worked sporadically from the late 1790s. These mines were properly established by Lt Menzies and coal mining was one of the main economic tasks of the settlement. The coal mines were supervised by a convict miner, John Platt, and were one of the first in the Southern Hemisphere.

The University of Newcastle’s Coal River Working Party, with support and assistance from the Newcastle City Council, is endeavoring to find these mines which were covered over in the early 1880s during the construction of Fort Scratchley. So far we have made good progress. In February 2004 our members discovered an 1856 survey which enabled us to pinpoint the exact locations of the three mines that lie underneath Fort Scratchley. Work with Ground Penetrating Radar provided further evidence of the accuracy of our locations. In late March or April 2004 we hope to begin drilling into two of those mine locations.

On 30th March we will have a Marquee with displays and information on the grassy area just off Nobbys Road. From there, tours will be taken around the mine sites on Fort Drive. There will be a road closure around the Fort Drive to facilitate the movements of groups to visit the various mine entrance locations.

The Open Day is an initiative of the University of Newcastle’s Coal River Working Party. Guides and other staff involved are all volunteers. Monteath & Powys Pty Ltd Consulting Surveyors & Planners came forward to prepare a schematic plan and then doublecheck the markings that have already been identified. Coffey Geosciences Pty Ltd have been engaged to carry out the ground penetrating radar and drilling component of the project. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the Newcastle City Council. We look forward to seeing you on the 30th March.

Regards

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