

COAL RIVER PRECINCT

CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL TOURISM MANAGEMENT PLAN

Working Paper 4. Interpretation
DRAFT March 2007



KEY TO THE VIEW OF

14. Australian Agricultural Company's Coal Sheds,
15. Australian Agricultural Company's Office,
16. Gile's Railway,
17. Australian Agricultural Co.'s Railway to Mines,
18. Church of England (St. John's),
19. Baptist Chapel,
20. Congregational Church,
21. Primitive Methodist Chapel,
22. Steamery,
23. Roman Catholic Church (St. Mary's),
24. Presbyterian Church,
25. Loading Light Towers,
26. Public School,

27. Clinic,
28. Grammar School,
29. Church of St. Andrew,
30. Church of St. James,
31. Church of St. Paul,
32. Lunatic Asylum,
33. Church of St. George,
34. Presbyterian,
35. Hospital,
36. Bank of New South Wales,
37. Joint Stock Bank,
38. Commercial Bank,
39. Post Office,

Coal River Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

Working Paper 4 Interpretive Concept
DRAFT 1

CONTENTS

PART 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Brief
- 1.2 This Working Paper
- 1.3 Previous Findings
- 1.4 Approach to Interpretation

PART 2 INTERPRETIVE CONTENT – Communication Objectives

- 2.1 *Mulubinba*
- 2.2 *Newcastle Beginnings*
- 2.3 *The Hard Folk*
- 2.4 *Protecting the Colony*
- 2.5 *The ‘Brighton of Australia’?*

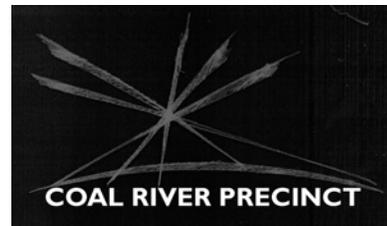
PART 3 AUDIENCE

- 3.1 Novocastrians
- 3.2 Tourists

4. INTERPRETIVE CONCEPTS

- 4.1 General
- 4.2 *Fiddlesticks* - The Newcastle Sky Canons
- 4.3 Overall Precinct Interpretation
- 4.4 Precinct Entry
- 4.5 Precinct Elements
 - 4.5.1 Celebrating the ‘birthplace’
 - 4.5.2 Nobbys
 - 4.5.3 Fort Scratchley
 - 4.5.4 Central / Pavilion
 - 4.5.5 Pilots / Tobruk

5. PRIORITIES



Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

PART 1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Brief

The Newcastle City Council is seeking a plan which will:

- Clarify the significance of the place and improve its contribution to the heritage of Newcastle, NSW and the nation.
- Provide a considered and orderly approach to the future conservation of the precinct
- Identify an appropriate, sustainable tourism future for the precinct
- Engage local community groups in an integrated and constructive approach to the precinct's future

In respect to interpretation, the brief calls for:

...

- Preparation of an interpretive strategy and concept options for the precinct as a basis for full briefing of place interpretation

...

1.2 This Working Paper

This Working Paper 4 follows Working Paper 1-3 which have been issued for discussion and comment between November 2006 and February 2007. These Working Papers have been revised in the light of stakeholder responses and formal consultation with Council officers. On the basis of comment, agreement with the principal strategic directions is assumed. This Working Paper follows Working Paper 2: Conservation Management which examines conservation management directions based on the precinct's:

- significance
- interpretative potential
- permit requirements
- tourism potential
- redevelopment potential

This Working Paper will be followed by consolidated final reporting.

1.3 Previous Findings

1.3.1 Significance

“With its Indigenous associations the Coal River Precinct is a true ‘birthplace’ site. Its land, buildings and subterranean remains concentrate elements of the Newcastle story from pre-history through the first hundred and fifty years of European settlement and beyond. In the beaches and the later Surf Club Pavilion the all-embracing questions of the Newcastle character are also exemplified.

It is difficult to think of another major city which can point to such a rich mix of important heritage themes in such a special landscape environment.”

1.3.2 Purpose of this Plan

- *To assist in the sustainable conservation and interpretation of the significant landscape, built fabric and archaeological remnants of Newcastle's past.*

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

- *To identify the contribution the Coal River Precinct can make to increasing tourist numbers and to enriching the tourism offer to targeted market segments*
- *To improve understanding of Newcastle's history – its importance to the nation; and, its contribution to the character of the City - and to interpret this as a source of community pride and cohesion*

Appropriate conservation and interpretation of the Coal River Precinct can provide a source of communal pride and a focal point for tourism activities and can contribute positively to other preferred strategic outcomes – social and economic.

1.3.3 Precinct Heritage Themes

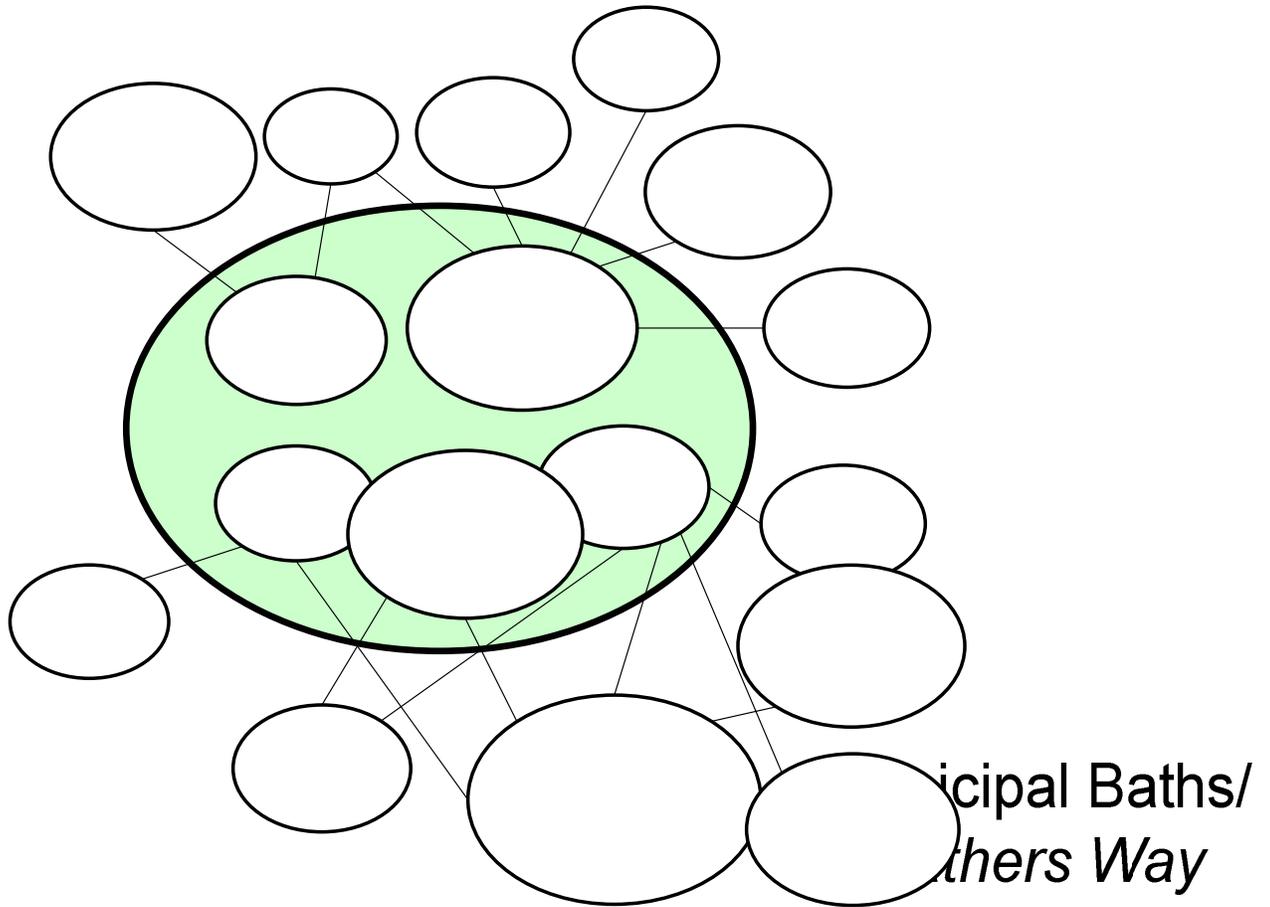
- *Mulubinba – The place of the sea fern. Indigenous Occupation and first contact*
- *Newcastle Beginnings – European discovery, first settlement*
- *The Hard Folk – Convict life and winning coal: the character of Novocastrians*
- *Protecting the Colony – military and maritime*
- *The 'Brighton of Australia'? – images and self images of Newcastle*

1.3.4 Tourism

- Newcastle is performing positively against broader regional trends of plateauing visitation
- its image lacks 'cut through' somewhat trapped in perceptions of it as an industrial city
- its preferred positioning is *"... a surfer, dripping wetsuit and surfboard under arm, walking home past tug-boats, historic streets and buzzy cafes. Welcome to Newcastle, an historic port city...A fusion of creative, friendly people..."*
- three guiding principles are the basis of an approach to the tourism market:
 - tourism should enhance the place and its heritage fabric, not diminish it.
 - The primary 'audience' for the visitor experience is Novocastrians.
 - The precinct can work as a tourism asset at three levels:
 - city-wide;
 - precinct wide; and,
 - at the individual component level

1.3.5 Interpretation

- Not all themes of Newcastle's heritage can be interpreted within the site
- Not all aspects of the priority themes can be interpreted within the site – other places' and sites' contributions can be integrated into the Precinct interpretation (as follows):



1.4 Approach to Interpretation

This interpretive plan is intended to respect to the cultural requirements of the Indigenous owners.

It is also designed to conform to the Burra Charter of ICOMOS Australia:

The challenge for interpretation of the Coal River Precinct lies in the diversity of its potential audience. From sophisticated cruise ship tourists to weekend 'doof doof' teenagers, all visitors are entitled to have a window on Newcastle's most special place. It is proposed that, four interpretive philosophies are adopted:

'Whole of Project'. A project should not be separated from its organizational and social context. Understanding the city-wide objectives of the Council and such issues as economic or social benefits are an important part of the interpretation process. Here tourism, civic pride, Indigenous reconciliation, and economic growth issues are relevant.

Visitor/Audience. Identifying target visitors' and citizens' needs ... and satisfying them ... are at the core of the project. Designing experiences from the visitors' point of view is central to the approach to this project. For the Coal River Precinct target audiences will include school children, families, casual visitors, domestic tourists, and international tourists

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

'Programs'. Today, visitors demand a complex mix of entertainment, information, education, and socialisation to create a "unique" visitor experience. Different audiences and different content requires different approaches to interpretation. Interpretation should converge new and old techniques to achieve an innovative solution. Off-site opportunities are proposed to be integrated into the interpretation process.

'Spatial Value'. Commercial developers understand differential values of space *within* a parcel of land or, say, inside a shopping centre. These insights can be applied to heritage interpretation of the precinct.

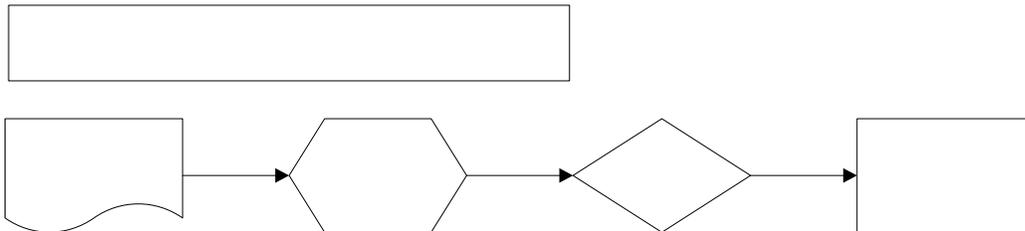
Success of the interpretive effort can be judged in two ways:

- impact – improvement the individual's awareness and understanding of the significance of the precinct
- reach – engagement of sufficient citizens and visitors in the experience

In summary, **Working Paper 4: Interpretive Concepts** will consider:

- A city-wide experience marking the precinct as a focal point for understanding Newcastle's physical birthplace and character
- On-site interpretation of the precinct's themes
- Interpretation of individual components to exemplify their contribution to the precinctual themes.
- Identification of experiences relevant to different visitors
- Opportunities for off-site interpretation

The interpretive process is based on a sequence of choices as follows:



2. INTERPRETIVE CONTENT – Communication Objectives

Content follows the five heritage themes:

- *Mulubinba – The place of the sea fern.* Indigenous occupation and first contact
- *Newcastle Beginnings* – European discovery, first settlement
- *The Hard Folk* – Convict life and winning coal: the character of Novocastrians
- *Protecting the Colony* – military and maritime
- *The ‘Brighton of Australia’?* – images and self-image of Newcastle

2.1 Mulubinba

Communication Objective The communication objective for the Mulubinba theme (see WP 1: 4.1) is to improve understanding of the Indigenous culture which pre-dated European contact for some 6000-8000 years. In particular, interpretation should tease out the complexities of:

- daily life
- importance of association with the land
- tribal interactions, clan and family arrangements
- political and ‘nation’ boundaries
- trade
- song lines, religion and legends
- the effects of contact (including the Karuah Reserve and the return to the city of many families in the 1930’s)

As much as possible, information should be based on direct Awabakal or Worimi knowledge and be interpreted within the requirements of Indigenous customs. It should represent a story which is owned by the current Indigenous community and be useful as means for the community to educate its youth.

Other Objectives In understanding the richness of Aboriginal culture and the stresses of contact the Coal River Precinct project offers a unique opportunity for Newcastle to formally celebrate its Aboriginal heritage and to renew a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous owners.

2.2 Newcastle Beginnings

Communication Objective In some ways this is the traditional history of Newcastle – its discovery, early attempts at settlement, winning coal, convicts, etc. The major facts are already told in a number of ways in the precinct - on plaques, information signs, and so on. This is base information which every Newcastle school child should know and which should provide a general background for visitors. It is also important to communicate a sense of the broader context of the NSW settlement and its relationship to European events. (see WP 1: 4.2).

In particular interpretation should provide an understanding of:

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

- Cook's sighting
- Relationship to Sydney Cove
- 1801, 30th March 1804, and 'Kings Town'
- The importance of coal in settlement
- First settlers
- Early conditions
- Pristine landscape

Other Objectives A key objective for this project is to identify the precinct as the Newcastle 'birthplace'.

2.3 The Hard Folk

Communication Objective If *Newcastle Beginnings* describes the facts of settlement, *The Hard Folk* tells us more about the character (and characters) of early settlers and their impact on future generations. It is intended to highlight the:

- Hardship of daily life in the early settlements – for aborigines, convicts and military administration
- The isolation from Sydney and Britain
- Irish and British links
- The impact of the Depression and 'making do'
- The growth of an anti-authoritarian culture
- The lineage of 'hard folk' – miners, officers, steel workers, industrialists, unionists, boxers, surfers ... the Newcastle Knights (?).
- Depression

The Hard Folk attempts to explore the special toughness, resilience and local pride that remain a part of the Novocastrian character today. (see WP 1: 4.3)

2.4 Protecting the Colony

Communication Objective The communication objective for *Protecting the Colony* (see WP 1: 4.4) is to improve understanding of the NSW colony's strategic and commercial reliance on the sea and Newcastle's special contribution to maritime heritage. (see WP 1: 4.4) The importance of the sea and maritime affairs in shaping Newcastle's economy and identity is also important. In particular, interpretation should explore:

- Indigenous fishing, navigation etc.
- Tides, currents, shoals, and channels
- Early colonial coastal navigation
- Shipwrecks and pilotage
- Colonial defence policies
- Early navigation aids and defences
- Fort Scratchley – rationale, construction, manning, ordnance, daily life, action.
- War – HMAS Maitland and Camp Shortland
- Foundation of the coal port

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

2.5 The 'Brighton of Australia'?

Communication Objective The 'Brighton of Australia'? provides a concept with which to explore Novocastrians sense of identity and the image that the rest of the world has of the place. Generally this is the history of two continuing forces within the Newcastle community – one that views Newcastle as a flourishing 'coalopolis' based on burgeoning industry; the other that sees Newcastle as a place by the sea - known for its relaxed lifestyle, recreation and restorative qualities.

Issues to be dealt with include:

- Changing popular images of Newcastle
- Coal and early industrial development
- Thoughts of the 'coalopolis'
- Early calls for promotion of a 'Brighton of Australia'
- Early bathing
- 'Bronzed Aussies', beach culture and surf lifesaving



Newcastle Region Library

3. AUDIENCE

3.1 Novocastrians

The primary 'audience' for the interpretation of the Coal River Precinct is the people of Newcastle.

A broad local understanding of the heritage of this precinct is important for the following reasons:

- A source of pride. This is a rare and special site. As Newcastle enters a new chapter in its history, many of the forces which have shaped life in Newcastle till now are reflected and exemplified. Just as indigenous owners respected this land, those that have come since can take pride in this particular part of the city as a marker of achievement - both tribulations and triumphs. It is also likely that a great number of Newcastle families will have direct relationships with the land through their habitation, labours, war service, or through simple recreation.
- A focus of the Newcastle character. The stories of the place are great ones. Taken together they start to explain 'why Newcastle is different'. A community's understanding of its own identity is the basis of a mature assessment of its strengths and also as a basis for projecting a real image to the world.
- Tourism. From a tourism development point of view it is well established that the 'citizens are the best ambassadors'. Additionally, a local understanding opens opportunities to reinforce the focus on the area. Already, for example, we see that restaurants bear the names of historical characters and there are further possibilities to utilise indigenous naming for places and events.

The objective for this interpretive effort should be to reach all Novocastrians. However it is self evident that different parts of the community will engage in the stories and sites of the precinct in different ways. Some may never even visit it; some may be infrequent visitors for events; some may have a special interest in one historical aspect; some may have to make decisions about planning or promotion; some may simply be glad to give their children a better understanding of their shared heritage ... For some, understanding the 'headlines' will be enough; for others only detailed information will suffice.

Within the broad community five target audiences are proposed:

- School children
- Family groups
- Recreational visitors (including visitors with a special interest in particular aspects of history)
- Policy makers
- Media

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

3.2 Tourists

The precinct has broad appeal to many tourists. However it is proposed for strategic purposes that short term priorities are established amongst the strongest existing visitation segments. Figure 1 (below) develops an indicative model (only) highlighting a possible breakdown of visitation. The analysis is based on untested assumptions of percentage allocations to standard segments for mindset groups but suggests a focus on six targets:

- ‘Compatriots’ – Visiting friends and relatives
- ‘True Travellers’ – Holiday or Leisure
- ‘True Travellers’ – Visiting Friends and Relatives
- ‘Wanderers’ – Holiday or Leisure
- ‘Groupies’ – Holiday or Leisure
- ‘Groupies’ – Visiting Friends and Relatives

Figure 2: Indicative Model – Existing Tourism by Mindset and Tourism Segment

Mindset	900,000 ¹		Holiday or Leisure (%) ²	Holiday or Leisure (nos.)	VFR (%) ²	VFR (nos.)	Bus-ness (%) ²	Bus-ness (nos.)
	Total (%)	Total (nos.)						
‘Pompadours’	14	126000	28	35000	48	60000	25	31000
‘Compatriots’	20	180000	28	50000	72	130000	0	0
‘True Travellers’	23	207000	47	97000	36	75000	17	35000
‘Wanderers’	19	171000	44	75000	35	60000	21	36000
‘Groupies’	24	216000	39	85000	41	89000	19	42000
	100	900000	38	342000	46	414000	16	144000

Notes: 1. Estimated Newcastle Domestic Tourism
2. Estimated allocation

Priority

High
Med
Low

The implication of these priorities is that the initial interpretive effort should be directed to satisfying the ‘high’ target segments’ needs. In summary, the ‘mindset’ segment preferences have been characterised (see WP 3) as follows:

Figure 3: Segment Preferences

	Enjoy
‘Pompadours’	Pools, retail, fine dining, spas, yachts
‘Compatriots’	Water sports, kids clubs, supermarkets, theme parks, beer gardens, TVS BBQs, outdoor
‘True Travelers’	Maps and info, guide books, local history, bush tucker
‘Wanderers’	Information Centres, Maps, guidebooks, short walking trails, lookouts, souvenirs
‘Groupies’	Pubs and clubs, beaches, fast food, fridges, activities,

4. INTERPRETIVE CONCEPTS

4.1 General

The Coal River Precinct is already a vibrant part of Newcastle life. Its beaches are used by families, promenaders, surfers, kite surfers and many visitors to the city. Fort Scratchley has a track record in attracting numbers to the FSMHS's tours and outreach programs. The precinct is also the venue for significant community events (including ANZAC Day services) and temporary attractions such as travelling amusement parks. Cadet sailing at TS Tobruk and surf lifesaving boat training add further dimensions to the maritime activity. The place is full of life and any interpretive effort should aim to add vibrancy – not reduce it.

Additionally, Burra Charter principles encourage a 'light touch on the ground' and an approach which considers uses (including interpretation itself) which protect, conserve or enhance the key heritage elements should be encouraged. In some ways the analogy is with the Indigenous way of handing-down shared culture – not through the written word but through awareness of relationship to land, story telling and events.

Accordingly an innovative interpretation philosophy which minimises new physical intervention – signage, buildings, (and in the light of the plethora of existing plaques) markers – is proposed.

The needs then are to:

- raise general awareness of the Precinct
- invite understanding of the key themes
- provide information on the key themes
- encourage further exploration of the place and its stories
- establish links to external interpretive resources

From the perspective of tourism objectives, the need is to:

- emphasise the '*beach days, harbour sights, city nights*' branding.
- provide a landmark
- "... celebrate Newcastle as a renewed city; a compact regional capital filled with optimism, creativity and a laid back lifestyle second-to-none"
(Mark Metrikas)
- orientate visitors
- meet target segments' needs
- provide marketable packaging of attractions.

4.2 *Fiddlesticks* - The Newcastle Sky Canons

Like Paris, light is an important part of the special character of Newcastle. Due to Newcastle's maritime setting and hillside siting the changing moods of weather – its colour, light and shade - are easily detected. At night, industrial lighting along the port facilities provides a unique backdrop to the city. The riverside bollard lighting creates a ribbon of light from the wharves to Nobbys.

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

The idea of using lighting to accent the heritage of Newcastle, and to make a city-wide impact, is not new. The *Illumination Newcastle* project – undertaken in 1996-97 by the City Council with major sponsorship from EnergyAustralia – lit some 30 buildings throughout the city. The project was a popular success and many property owners have retained the lighting to the present. In 2006 Breast Cancer Week promoted its cause by illuminating (in pink!) the Carrington silos – again to popular applause.

This Plan proposes an iconic landmark approach to marking the Coal River Precinct in the local, national and international psyche – the Newcastle Space Cannons.

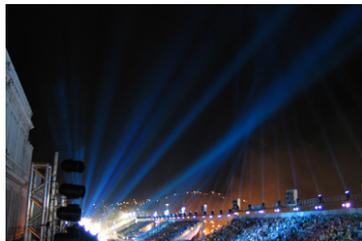
The concept is simple. It calls for at least five beams of light ('sky canons') - mounted at key places in the city and aligned to intersect in the sky directly above the Shortland camp site. Symbolically, each beam would have its own significance; its own story to tell and its own contribution to understanding Newcastle. Each would draw attention to the special landmark at its base. For example:

Location	Association	Theme
Nobby's	<i>Indigenous Ownership</i>	<i>Mulubinba</i>
Fort Scratchley	<i>Military and Maritime</i>	<i>Protecting the Colony</i>
Carrington Silos	<i>Industry and Work</i>	<i>The Hard Folk</i>
Shepherd's Hill (or the Obelisk)	<i>Military and Maritime</i>	<i>Protecting the Colony</i>
Christ Church Cathedral	<i>Religion/ Spirituality</i>	<i>All</i>

Taken together they would focus attention on the 'birthplace site' (*Newcastle Beginnings*) and its stories of settlement, coal extraction, first contact and so on. More beams could be added sequentially from other key sites – eg. Stockton, the Customs House, Town Hall, etc.

The beams have been inspired by the search lights of war-times. Their 'shape' would also be reminiscent of the 'fiddlesticks' (building timbers) noted during the construction of Fort Scratchley or even the shape of an Aboriginal 'gunyah' (shelter). In addition to offering a prompt to telling the heritage stories, these 21st century 'fiddlesticks' would provide a stunning anchor to the idea of '*beach days, harbour sights, city nights*'.

(Other opportunities for using the shape of the lattice of beams for interpretation and marketing will be discussed further below.) It should be said that Newcastle



would not be the first international city to employ sky canons. New York's 'Towers of Light' (above) (commemorating the destruction of the World Trade Centre) are a static installation employing some twenty 7000 watt lights. Rio's Carnivale (left) has

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

also employed Space Cannon [V.H S.p.A] xenon lights. Other temporary installations include Moscow, Budapest, Madrid, Athens and Sofia (below).



Perhaps most notably, Hong Kong has encouraged building owners and businesses to contribute to the nightly *Symphony of Lights* sound and light show (below).



Newcastle may, however, be the first city to combine:

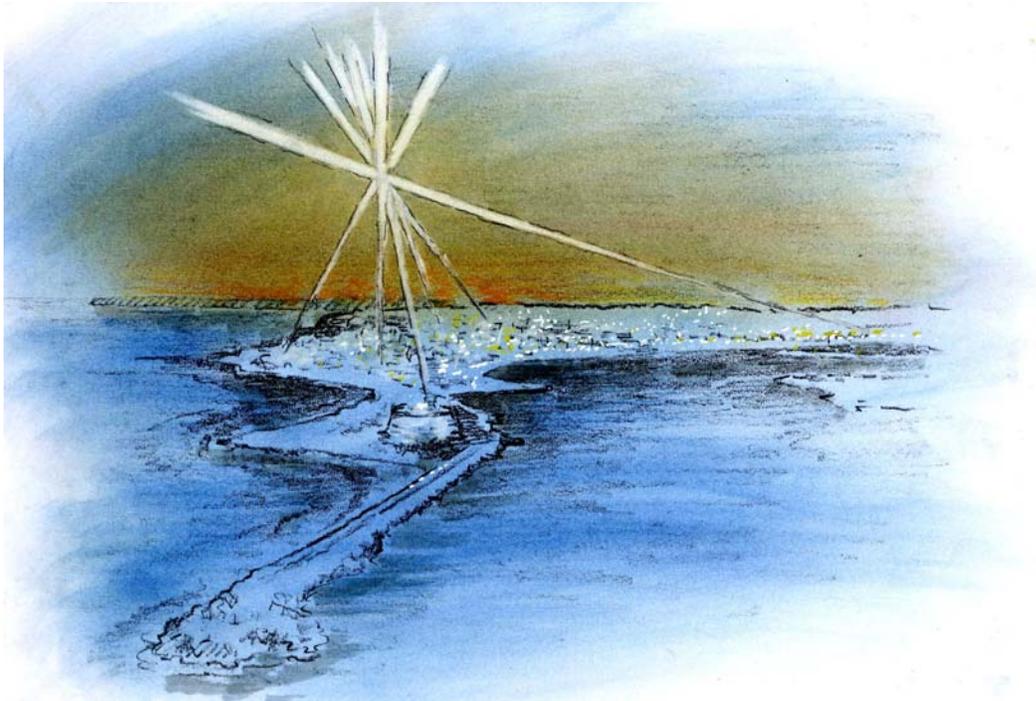
- symbolic story telling
- static installation
- a 'focussed' (not 'fanned') display.

The Newcastle sky canon concept appears to have the following advantages:

- Outstanding reach. Over a short time, the sky canons will be observed by nearly all Novocastrians (including those who do not visit the site). Visitors to the city will be sure to see them. For each time someone asks "what is that?" there will be an opportunity for locals to pass on the stories.

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

- Celebrating Coal River. The focus on the Coal River Precinct provides definition of the site and a continuing prompt to explanation of its heritage significance
- Cost effectiveness. The sky canon's cost is relatively inexpensive (by comparison to, say, a museum installation). Preliminary indications suggest suitable equipment may be available for \$50,000 - \$60,000 per light (plus installation). It is strongly likely that the concept will provide an extremely attractive sponsorship opportunity – either in one package or in a number of smaller packages. Again, preliminary indications suggest modest energy consumption and 'green' energy options.
- Landmark / Branding. Although the 'stories' of the 'fiddlesticks' are rooted in Newcastle's heritage, the medium is thoroughly 21st century. They will project a city image of excitement, energy, sophistication and innovation. In turn, their shape may provide branding, promotional, and signage opportunities.



- Flexibility. The sky canons can be programmed for special effects on significant occasions. They can also act as an 'armature' for development of other major sound and light events. In operation, it is possible for the light-up time each day to be coordinated with other events – firing the Fort canon, dropping the time-ball, ANZAC services, NADOC marches, etc.
- Low residential impact. The focused nature of the light will cause no, or minimal, impact on residents.

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

4.3 Overall Precinct Interpretation

It is not proposed to recommend extensive further interpretive plaques or signage within the precinct. The existing mix of commemorative devices (especially the Foreshore markers) covers much of the factual information of the site's history. The East Newcastle Heritage Walk and the Bathers Way provide very satisfactory walking routes for those who enjoy this type of exploration (probably *True Travellers*). They do require only further support in the form of readily available maps, promotion and graffiti maintenance.

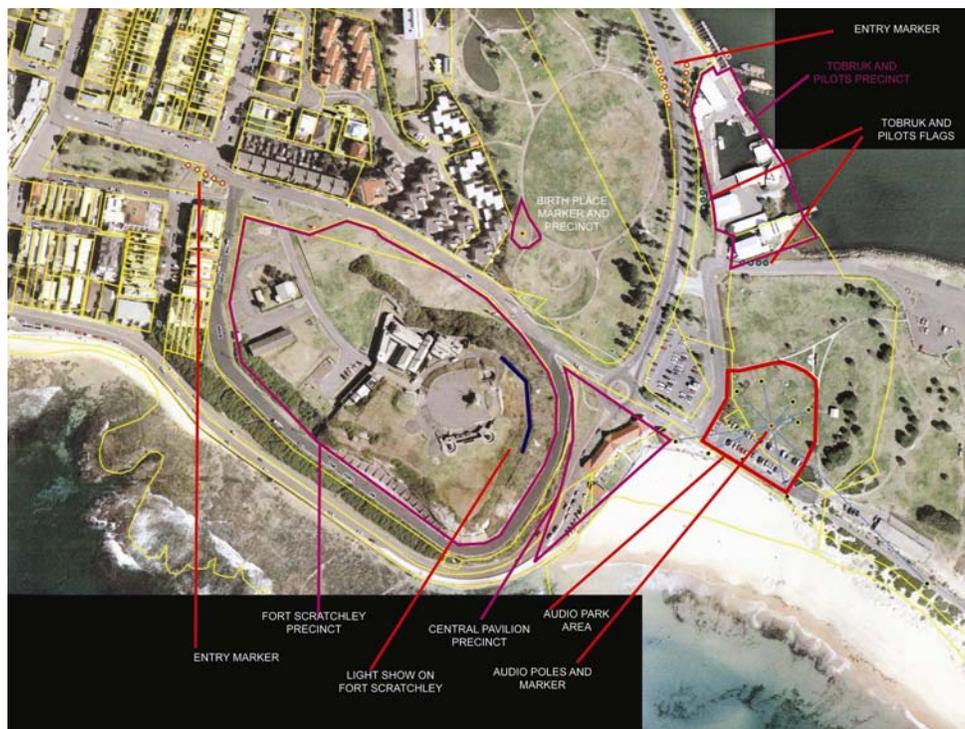


Additionally, whilst *True Travellers*, *Wanderers* and *Groupies* (on holiday) may respond to some written material; it is not likely that the biggest tourism target – *Compatriots* (visiting friends and relatives) – would.

Nonetheless trails provide a ready resource for teachers with students.



Again, a dedicated interpretive centre is not recommended for the short term (although the possibility for this facility - should the resources required become available – is not precluded as a component of this Plan). The aerial plan (below) describes the five (including Nobbys – obscured) interpretive zones proposed for the precinct:



For initial implementation, a more dispersed strategy is proposed, involving existing major zones – Fort Scratchley, Pavilion / central, Nobbys, the Pilot /

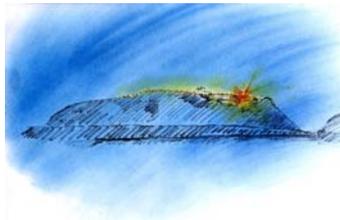
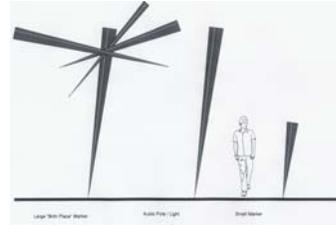
Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

TS Tobruk area and the Shortland camp site – on site; and other institutions – the Regional Museum, Maritime Museum, Lumber Yard, etc. – offsite.

The challenge is to provide an accessible experience which brings together the major heritage themes of the precinct in a way which will appeal to:

- Those casually wandering on to the site – beach visitors, promenaders, etc; and,
- Those coming to the site in an organised way – school children, parents with children, tourist groups.

An 'audio park' is proposed. This facility would consist of an outdoor audio installation north of the Nobbys Beach lookout /store. The audio park would be the gathering point for any large-scale son-et-lumiere events including installations on Nobbys and the Fort. In addition to its interpretive function the installation would provide basic visitor orientation around the site.



4.4 Precinct Entry

The road system is the predominant form of access to the precinct – either along the River on Wharf Rd., south via Shortland Esplanade, or past Parnell Place.

Delineation of the exact [Heritage Council] boundaries is not considered essential (for example the Frog Pond could comfortably be included in the precinct concept). However a modest sense of arrival is desirable and it is proposed that each of these entry points provide some acknowledgement of entry into the precinct – options range from significant portals, to more restrained public art pieces, or simple signage. It is proposed that the form of the entry reflect the 'fiddlesticks' logo.



4.5 Precinct Elements

From an interpretive perspective there are five distinct precinct elements:

Working Paper 4 – Interpretation. Draft 1.
Boyce Pizzey Strategic

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

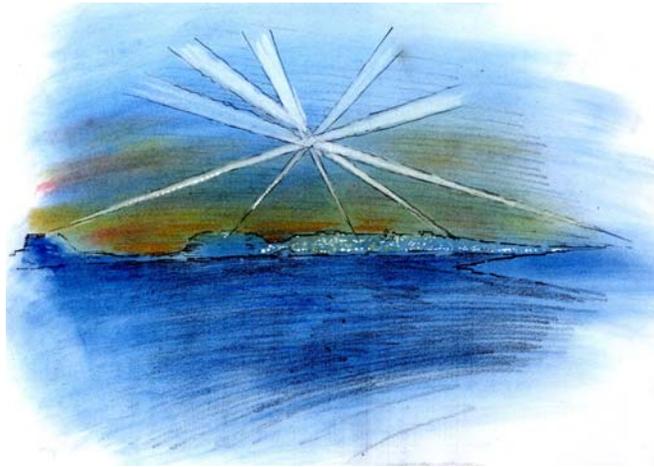
- The 'birthplace site'
- Nobbys
- Fort Scratchley
- Central / pavilion
- Tobruk / Pilots

Each could be the purpose of an individual's visit or fairly easily accessible as a total experience. Each can provide a focal point for encouragement of future development and interpretation.

4.5.1 Celebrating the 'birthplace'

Although the place of 'natives' identified in the Shortland's 'eye sketch' (near today's Frog Pond) may represent a sighting of a group on the beach (rather than a place of habitation), it is clearly in the vicinity of Shortland's camp site at the base of Colliers Point and it is appropriate to symbolically join the two in one commemorative spot (near the present Shortland Lawn amphitheatre)

The focal point of the sky canons provides one general pointer to this place. It is also proposed that this 'birthplace' site be commemorated on the ground by a major piece of interpretive art. Again the form of the 'fiddlesticks' sky canons is proposed as an inspirational starting point. An additional



element could involve a fire feature – symbolising camp fires of early inhabitants, the signal fires essential to navigation, memorials to fallen servicemen and citizens - the *Hardy Folk* - that have created today's Newcastle. (This fire feature may reflect the beacon cauldron represented on pinnacle of the Town Hall Tower).

4.5.2 Nobbys

Subject to further consultation with the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-op and the Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association, it is proposed that interpretation of Nobbys focus on telling the *Whyba-Garba* (Nobbys) / *Karamba* (Entrance) knowledge and the European Nobbys story – including the prime significance of the lighthouse and signal station and their contributions to all the five heritage themes.

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

As a Newcastle Sky Canon site, Nobbys' role in the five themes will be highlighted in supporting publications and promotion. Additionally it is proposed that the *Illumination Newcastle* floodlighting be re-instated.

Other (onsite) Nobbys interpretation will be dependant on the public access. The Port Corporation has indicated a desire to provide greater public accessibility to the lighthouse and signal station and a development approval for an adaptive re-use of the signal station as restaurant/ kiosk/ accommodation complex has been issued by the City of Newcastle.

However this approval is now under review by the Commonwealth under its National Estate powers following submissions by the Parks and Playgrounds Movement in association with the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Nature Conservation Council of NSW, and the Total Environment Centre Standing Committee on Newcastle East Development that: "...

- The Newcastle Port Corporation and Nobbys Lighthouse Pty Ltd have breached section 26 of the Environment and Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. 1999
- The proponents have not considered the Commonwealth Heritage Values of the unique Nobbys Lighthouse which is probably the oldest operational Lighthouse on the Australian Coast. ..."

Resolution of this issue is not anticipated before completion of this report. However as a matter of principle, a marker outlining Nobbys contribution to the heritage themes and discreet plaques identifying buildings and installations may be acceptable. Opportunities may also present, as a part of future uses, to provide aural, visual, theatrical or written interpretive material as a part of the day to day operation of a commercial enterprise. There may also be opportunities to site special events or performances in the adapted facilities.

4.5.3 Fort Scratchley

The Fort Scratchley Interpretation Plan (Graham Brooks and Associates. 2003) provides a useful general introduction to issues of interpretation. In particular it suggests:

- Signal Hill Stairs – to link the Fort and East End to the lower precinct
- Themes:
 - Geological Time – the geology of the region and coal deposits
 - Aboriginal Australians
 - Navigation and Maritime Safety
 - National Defence
 - East End
- Extension of trail signage to 'Fort Scratchley interpretation points'.
- Visitor orientation at the Fort
- 'Interpretive Extensions' – film, re-enactments, sculpture, open air drama, website, guidebook, oral history project, etc.
- Orientation centre.

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

Many of these directions have merit. However, this Working Paper does not support the proposal for the Signal Hill steps - on the basis that they are neither necessary nor a positive contribution to the heritage of the landscape. Additionally, this Working Paper proposes that the principal interpretive focus of the Fort relate to the Fort itself and its role in national defence not the broader range of themes. Further signage consistent with the East Newcastle Heritage Walk could be considered at the Parnell Place entry to the Fort. Taking this into account, as a matter of general policy, it is proposed that Section 3 of the Fort Scratchley Plan of Management (Draft 2005) be endorsed as an appropriate policy basis for interpretation of the Fort.

Interpretation of Fort Scratchley will be most impressive where it is in person. Accordingly, support for the Fort Scratchley Military Historical Society's regular guided tours is proposed as the centre-piece of offers for schools, cruise ships, *Groupies*, *Compatriots* and *True Travellers*. Tours of the underground passages may be enhanced by some lighting and theatrical devices. It is subject to approval for adequate disabled access and egress.

Much as Hong Kong's 'Noonday Gun' attracts attention, firing of the Fort's guns offers an outstanding opportunity to coordinate with nightly 'light-up' and to provide VIP occasions for tourists or other groups at the Fort. Guidebooks and school kits describing the Precinct heritage and the Fort's history are required.

The Fort has been dedicated by the Commonwealth to the contribution to Australia of all ex-servicemen and it is proposed that a display of Army, Navy, and Air Force flags provide a visual reference point (atop 'Signal Hill' -looking from the Nobbys Beach).

Removal of *bitou* bush and revegetation with appropriate native grass and vegetation is recommended.

Above all, establishment of appropriate site security and commencement of conservation works remains the urgent top priority.

4.5.4 Central / Pavilion

Maintenance of the existing built fabric is a first priority. The condition of the external pavilion joinery is only fair and change/ toilet/ kiosk facilities are now substandard to modern tourist and surf club needs. Replanning of facilities, in addition to conforming tightly to Burra Charter principals, should encourage new works which retain the form, detailing and fabric of the existing central pavilion but which encourage access and engagement with the 'audio park'. Adaptation of the 1983 store/ lookout building may also offer opportunities to expand facilities and integrate the visitor experience of the audio park.

Banners or flags are proposed to mark the zone and to add colour –each, perhaps, with a motif reflecting the five heritage themes.

4.5.5 Pilots Compound / TS Tobruk

It is proposed that the area around and including the Pilot Station and TS Tobruk be identified for interpretive purposes as a special zone, reinforcing the Maritime aspects of the five themes, particularly *Defending the Colony*.

The Port Commission currently utilises facilities housed within the fenced area however its long term commitment to the site may change in the light of new technologies and pilot procedures. For the purposes of this Plan it is recommended that:

(a) Short term – replacement of green steel fencing to improve visual access to the waterways and, in particular the Pilot's Ramp (or Cornish Dock) complex.

(b) Long term – options for sympathetic adaptation, re-use or development by

- expansion of boating and lifesaving facilities – including surfboat storage
- possible supporting maritime recreational uses – café, kiosk, etc.
- a possible interpretation facility

... are encouraged.

Similarly, improved public access and utilisation of the facilities of TS Tobruk are recommended as an integrated part of this maritime zone. Massed flags of the armed services are proposed for the existing TS Tobruk site recalling the use (HMAS Maitland and Camp Shortland) of the adjoining park during World War II.)



Newcastle Region Library

Coal River Precinct Conservation and Tourism Management Plan

5. PRIORITIES

5.1 Summary

Implementation of an integrated interpretation plan requires action on a number of fronts. Some require long planning lead times and identification of resourcing. Others can be implemented relatively quickly and inexpensively. Issues are summarised below based on the importance, reach and impact of each activity.

Figure. Summary Priorities

<i>Item</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Next Step</i>
Newcastle Sky Canons	1*	*Sponsorship With support promotion	Feasibility report Concept design
Fort conservation works	1	Urgent	Commonwealth
Pavilion conservation works	1	Pressing	Newcastle City maintenance cycle
Audio Park	1*	*Sponsorship Tourism Packaging	Feasibility report Concept design
Central / Pavilion banners	1		Design and install
Fort flags	1		Specification and Installation
Tobruk flags	1		Specification and Installation
Regional Museum Links	1		Program planning
Maritime Museum Links	1		Program planning
Entry Public Art	1/2	With NRG	Commission
Birthplace Public Art	1/2	With NRG	Commission
Fort Guns firings	1	Tourism Packaging	Schedule FSMHS
Fort Tours	1	Tourism Packaging	Concept design and script
Fort Trail markers	3		Specification and Installation
Nobbys	1	Pending approvals	Concept design and script
Removal Intrusive elements	2 2 3	Pilots fence; Fort playground; Surf boat shed	Redesign Remove Integrate into P/T MZ
Pilots / Tobruk maritime zone	3		Feasibility. Concept Design
School kits	1		Script and Publish
Trail maps	2		Review and republish
Trail markers/ plaques etc – existing	2	Maintenance and graffiti removal	Council maintenance cycle
Removal <i>bitou</i>	2	Colliers Point and Nobbys	Specify and Execute
Interpretation Centre	4	Maritime zone	

