PRE-INSTITUTIONAL PHASE

Once widely used by indigenous people of the Darug language group, primarily the Burrangmatgal after which Parramatta derives its name, this area was first explored in April 1788 soon after the arrival of the First Fleet.

Established as Gaol Town and Government Farm in November 1788, Parramatta soon became the destination for all unassigned convict women sent to the colony of NSW.

In 1792 Charles Smith was granted 30 acres north of the township and a water driven Mill and Race was built on the riverbank next to Smith’s grant in 1798. By 1803 the Mill had been destroyed by floods and the grant uncultivated and it was at this time that Reverend Samuel Marsden acquired the property. Within 10 years he increased his holdings with the purchase of an adjacent 6 acre lot where he built a Mill near the juncture of Parramatta River and Toongabbie Creek.

In 1806 Governor William Bligh was granted 105 acres extending from the township of Parramatta to the Marsden property. On his departure from the colony Bligh’s grant returned to the government. After many complaints by Marsden that the convict women held in the town gaol were the source of general moral decay in the colony together with the need to provide better accommodation for them and their children, Governor Macquarie designated 4 acres of Bligh’s former grant as the site for a new Female Factory in 1816.

The foundation stone was laid in July 1818 with work proceeding over the next few years until completion in January 1821. From then until the end of transportation to NSW, at least half of the 12,600 convict women sent to the NSW colony spent time in the Female Factory. Today their descendants number in the millions.

In 1845 the Marsden property was transferred to John Blaxland and in 1866 purchased by the Lunatic Asylum. This land together with a portion of Bligh’s former grant forms the present day Cumberland Hospital site.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide explores the historic Female Factory and the early Lunatic Asylum buildings located at Cumberland Hospital 5 Fleet Street North Parramatta.

Many buildings are outstanding examples of public architecture reflecting the Victorian, Georgian and Classical Revival notions of grandeur and reveal the influence of colonial architects Francis Greenway, James Barnet and Walter Liberty Vernon.

Generally the various elements and structures presented in this guide represent three building phases:

- Female Factory phase (1821-1849)
- Lunatic Asylum phase (1849-1878)
- Parramatta Hospital for the Insane phase (1878-1960)

ADVICE FOR VISITORS

Cumberland Hospital is an operating mental health facility. Please respect the privacy of individuals visiting this site. Visitors are advised that there are no public amenities on site.

CONNECTING PAST TO PRESENT

Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Memory Project is a social history and contemporary art project initiated by Parragirls to document, interpret and promote the history and heritage of these historic sites with the aim of activating this historic precinct as a cultural heritage destination and Australia’s first Site of Conscience.

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FEMALE FACTORY PHASE (1821-1849)

Situated near the Fleet street entrance on an area of approximately 8 acres the Female Factory was modelled on Workhouses of England. Designed by architect Francis Greenway, it was intended to lodge and employ at least 300 women. In 1842 the Factory was residence to 1203 women and 263 children.

Built using convict labour using locally quarried sandstone the Female Factory was a complex of buildings with the Main Barrack at the centre flanked by a number of ancillary buildings to the rear (inner yard) and fore (outer yard). Convict women were confined to the inner yards where workshops, a bath house, privies and kitchens were located. The outer yard contained a Porter's Lodge at the entrance, Storekeepers' Quarters, a hospital, dispensary and storeroom; and Weaving room, Committee Room and Matron's quarters. Drying yards and vegetable gardens were laid out to the north and south of the main and the entire complex was enclosed with high sandstone walls. The Main Barrack was demolished in 1883 with stone reused in the building of Ward 1 and a large clock gifted to the colony by King George IV in 1821, once located above the entrance to the Barracks is located in the north tower. In 1825 a 2 storey barrack (13) for the criminal class was built and in 1838 a 3 storey, 72 cell penitentiary range (8) was constructed in the Drying Grounds south of the main building. This building was demolished in 1885.

Surviving buildings from this phase include:

- Perimeter enclosure walls & Compound yards
- Criminal Class Sleeping Quarters & Turnkeys Rooms (13)
- Matrons Quarters, Committee, Weaving & Store Rooms (2)
- Storekeepers Quarters, Storeroom, Dispensary & Hospital (3)

LUNATIC ASYLUM PHASE (1849-1878)

In December 1849, the Female Factory was officially gazetted as a Lunatic Asylum for the homeless chronic variety and destitute people with other forms of chronic disease. During this phase existing Female Factory buildings were adapted and new accommodation Wards built. Many of these new buildings were located over the footings or utilised materials from earlier Female Factory buildings.

PARRAMATTA HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE (1878-1960)

This phase saw the demolition of some Female Factory buildings and the construction of new buildings within and outside of the original Female Factory perimeter. Surviving buildings identified in this guide include:

- Deadhouse c1897
- Criminal Insane block c1861
- Dining shed c1863 (18)
- Spinal Range 1876-77 (14, 16)
- Male Weatherboard Division Sports Shelter Shed 1880
- Ward 1 Dining room 1880 (9)
- Ward 1 1885 (5)
- Ha Ha c1895 (12)
- Ward 8 (Wet & Dirty)
- Ward 4 West 1890 (15)
- Ward 4 North 1901 (15)
- Kitchen Range 1893 (19)
- Ward 2 1897 (20)
- Administration 1910 (1)

CUMBERLAND HOSPITAL (east campus) with footprint of FEMALE FACTORY

- FF entrance (inner yard) Asylum Admin building
- FF Matrons Res, Committee room, Weaving room, now Lecture Rooms Institute of Psychiatry
- FF Storekeepers Res, Hospital, Dispensary, now Credit Union building
- FF Main Barrack (pavilion)
- Asylum Ward 1, now Institute of Psychiatry
- Memorial Plaque Sisters of Charity
- Administration 1910 (1)
- FF 3rd Class penitentiary & yard, Drying Grounds

Roman Catholic Orphan School 1844-1896
Parramatta Girls Industrial School 1897-1974
Kangara 1974-1985
Parramatta Park 1980-2010

Female Penitentiary or factory, Parramatta. [1826?] Augustus Earle
NLA PIC T85 NK12/47