

Need More Information or Advice on Wellington?

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MAYNGGU GANAI

HISTORIC SITE



History behind the Site

The Maynggu Ganai Historic Site is a historic convict and agricultural station commanded by Lieutenant Percy Simpson in 1823. The Wellington Valley was discovered in 1817 by John Oxley and was named after the 1st Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley.

At this time, Wellington was literally on the far western edge of the colony and became only the second colonial outpost west of the Blue Mountains after Bathurst. Government outstations like Wellington became centres of administrative and military presence, and settlers congregated around them for the security they provided. From the outset, the Wellington convict station was intended to be self-supporting but also provide food for the starving Sydney colony using convict labour.

The settlement originally spread over an area of about 10,000 acres (~ 4000 hectares) but housed only a modest number of convicts (80 to 90), compared to others such as Bathurst, which housed 284. The convicts at Wellington were put to work to grow crops (wheat, maize and tobacco) and raise farm stock (cattle, sheep, pigs and horses).

The Wellington Convict Settlement struggled from its beginning and was not a success, either as an agricultural station or as a penal facility. While it may originally have been intended for use as a secondary penal facility, it instead assumed a small, relatively insignificant and somewhat neglected role in the colony's penal network. Commander Simpson was sacked after three years, and the station later closed in 1830 after the efforts of several successive commandants.

A number of factors appear to have contributed to the failure of the settlement, including the unsuitability of the first commander and a lack of farming skills among the convicts.

In addition, the settlers in the surrounding area did not need the convicts' services and refused to buy their produce, so the settlement was costly to run and increasingly inefficient.

When the convict station was closed, convicts were relocated or assigned to settlers, but it was some years before all the farm stock (including 3500 cattle) and stockpiled wheat could be sold off.

Photo #5 – Remains of Well Block



Photo #6 – Interior of Well

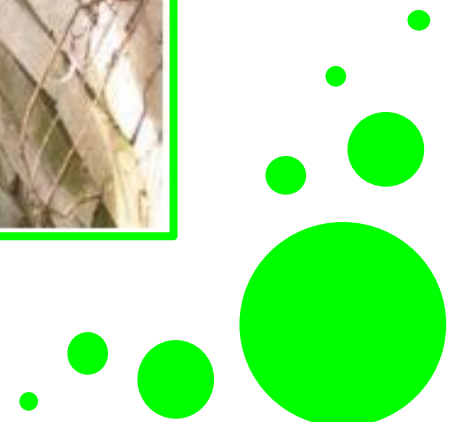


Photo 3 – Wellington Valley, looking East, from Government House, Augustus Earle, watercolour c. 1826–7

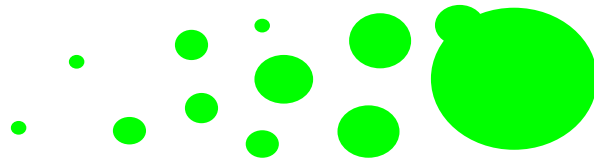
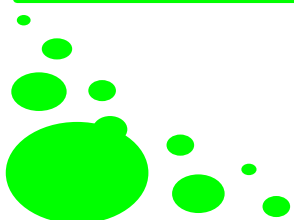


Photo #4 – Wellington Valley Watercolour Location



In 1832, part of the site was deeded to the Church Missionary Society to establish a mission to the Aboriginal people. This was the first Anglican mission in Australia, and only the third mission in colonial New South Wales (after Parramatta–Blacktown and Lake Macquarie). For the local Aboriginal community, it was the first of several missions and settlements in the Wellington area, which included Nanima, Apsley, the town common and others.

Like the convict station before it, the mission was short-lived and not a resounding success in terms of converting the Wiradjuri People to Christianity. However, the missionaries left outstanding legacies in the form of the earliest written records of the Wiradjuri People, including culture, language and way of life. The lexicon, grammars, and painstakingly recorded diaries are still useful today for language restoration projects. The Bishop of Australia William Broughton visited Wellington Mission in 1841 and declared it a total failure. The government withdrew its annual funding of £500, and the mission was wound up in 1843.

In 1845, the settlement was abandoned in focus of the development of Wellington as a town, which was proclaimed in 1846.

Photo #1 – Overview of Maynggu Ganai



On the Site

On the site there was everything a convict settlement needed. The site comprised of a Government House, Stores, Church, Offices, Dairy, Flagstone, Stockyards, Vegetable Gardens, multiple Military Barracks, a police barracks, 19 Thatched Huts, Convict Stockade, Receiving Store, Engineers Store, Blacksmiths, and a Food and Provisions Store (all locations on Photo #1).

There were about 10 main buildings constructed from adobe or sandstock bricks and thatch, and 300 acres (~ 1200 hectares) of plough land. In all, there had been some 40 buildings, including 14 huts constructed from bark.

Present Times

The site has major significance to both the local Wiradjuri community and archaeological societies nationally. There are no ruins of any of these buildings left today, and it has proven difficult to locate them with any certainty. However, there are information board posted around the site for visitors to view.

Nowadays, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service maintains the site and it is open to the public for people to explore (weather permitting).



Information and photos obtained from National Parks and Wildlife Service and Wellington Historical Society.

Photo #2 – Location of buildings

