

FAUNA PARK HISTORY

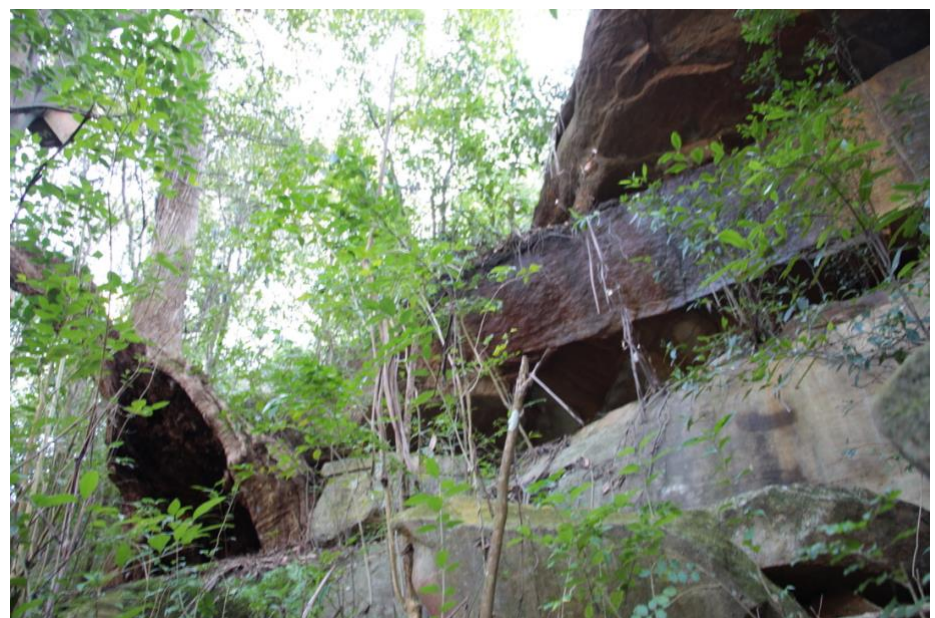


Aboriginal people inhabited the Sydney basin for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans. The northern coastal area of Sydney was home to the Guringai people. The Guringai lived primarily along the foreshores of the harbour and fished and hunted in the waters and hinterlands of the area. All clans harvested food from their surrounding bush. Self-sufficient and harmonious, they had no need to travel far from their lands, since the resources around them were so abundant, and trade with other tribal groups was well established.

Song-line carvings on rock near Mars Ck Lake

~ 1.5km southeast of sacred women's birthing tree and rock shelters at Terry's Ck

The British arrival in 1788 had a dramatic impact on all of the Sydney clans. Food resources were quickly diminished by the invaders, who had little understanding of the local environment. As a result, the Aboriginal people throughout the Sydney Basin were soon close to starvation.



The Sydney clans fought back against the invaders, but the introduction of diseases from Europe and Asia, most notably smallpox, destroyed over half the population. The clearing of land for settlements and farms displaced local tribes and reduced the availability of natural food resources, leaving Aboriginal people reliant on white food and clothing. The French surgeon and pharmacist Rene Primavere Lesson, who visited Sydney in 1824, wrote: "the tribes today are reduced to fragments scattered all around Port Jackson, on the land where

their ancestors lived".

(excerpt from City of Ryde Aboriginal Site Management Report, Aboriginal Heritage Office, 2011)

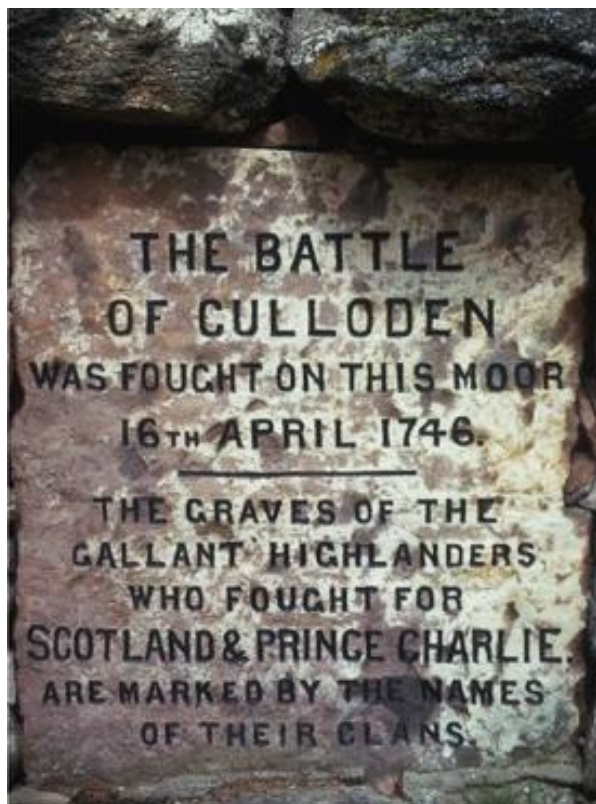
Water holes drilled in bedrock of Terry's Ck below sacred rock shelters



The suburb known today as Marsfield was formed from the Field of Mars Common, an area of 5050 acres (2044 hectares) declared in 1804 by Governor King as one of six 'commons' in the Colony, to be used for the grazing of livestock by local residents. The Common followed the path of the Lane Cove River and consisted mainly of heavily timbered bush. By the 1840s the area was notorious as the haunt of unsavoury society, home to a range of activities such as gambling, sly grog selling and a range of antisocial activities. *Derelict chimney near old quarry*



Following many years of community agitation and debate including a Parliamentary Select Committee, by 1874 the Common was formally resumed to allow sale and settlement by small farmers.



A regular grid pattern of streets was laid out and the land subdivided into small farms of between 0.4 and 1.6ha, with areas reserved for open space and special purposes. The street names chosen continued the martial tradition of the "Field of Mars" and referenced famous battles and British victories. The land itself was released for sale in stages, with the first being in the East Ryde area in 1885. A considerable proportion of purchasers bought multiple lots, paving the way for later re-subdivision.

The Battle of Culloden, 1746, was the final confrontation of the Jacobite uprising

The residents of Marsfield were numerous and settled enough to demand self-government, and the "Municipality of Marsfield" seceded from the Ryde Municipality in 1894. Development was slow, small livestock farms such as poultry and market gardens, each with a modest dwelling, were eventually established throughout the district. Many of these poultry farms were established in the years following the First World War as part of the Soldier Settlement Scheme. Unlike in many other areas where the Scheme was established, it appears to have thrived in the North Ryde and Marsfield area. Other agricultural activities included market gardening and the production of a wide range of produce for the Sydney Markets, including fruit,



vegetables, flowers, small livestock, milk and eggs. Aerial photos taken in 1943 support this observation, showing small holdings scattered throughout the area, each with a modest cottage. The area remained rural in character though, with no evidence of a commercial hub other than the shopping areas near Eastwood Station.

Harry Smith purchased 170 acres of land at Marsfield between 1892 and 1898 and Curzon Hall was built in this period. The architect was Mr, D.T. Morrow of St. George's Hall, Newtown.

The stone was quarried from a site in the present Macquarie University [Fauna Park] grounds near Talavera Road, about a mile from Curzon Hall.



Curzon Wall: reject blocks from quarry

The house was named after the family of Smith's wife, Isabella Curzon Webb, related to Baron Curzon of Kedleston, who had a distinguished public career and was



appointed Viceroy of India in 1898. The family later took on the noble name, calling themselves

Curzon-Smith. (excerpt Office of Environment & Heritage)

In the days of the old Sydney railway station few men were better known than Mr. Harry Curzon Smith, who died on Saturday, at Curzon Hall, Marsfield, near Eastwood. For about 26 years he was lessee of the Railway Refreshment Rooms at Sydney and of about a dozen country stations. Mr. Smith was ever foremost in his efforts to advance the district in which he lived. He founded the Marsfield School of Arts, and was president of the local Progress Association. *(excerpt from Obituary: Sydney Morning Herald, 23 June 1913)*

Cottages built c. 1950 by John and William McAvoy were later used for the Dept. of History and - to further the University's mandate to be inclusive - as a childcare centre and student housing with disability access. Later, they were converted into the Dept. of Brain, Behaviour & Evolution and the area used to study bees, lungfish, wallabies, poultry & spiders in a natural setting.

