

BRUSH FARM

Set back from the narrow plain on the northern side of the Parramatta River is a high, westerly running ridge of Wainamatta shale covering Hawkesbury sandstone, cut through intermittently by valleys and gullies.¹ One of these gullies at Brush Farm Park in Eastwood, still supports large trees on its upper slopes with rare rainforest vegetation species lower down the gully.

For thousands of years prior to European Settlement, this ground to the north of the Parramatta River, known to the Aborigines as Walumetta, was home to the Wallumedegal people who were part of the Eora tribe.² In their time, the whole area was covered in forests of huge trees and the Wallumedegal, who may not have numbered more than about twenty, were hunters of everything from kangaroos and koalas through to ducks and parrots, depending on the time of year.³ They also fished from the rocks and canoes chasing after snapper, bream, flathead and blackfish which, in season, remained plentiful for many years after European settlement.⁴

The world of the Wallumedegal however changed forever with the arrival of the First Fleet in January 1788. Initially landing at Botany Bay, Governor Phillip found the area unsuitable for a settlement and on 22nd January, set out with a party in a small boat to explore Port Jackson to the north, which had been named but not entered by Captain Cook, eighteen years earlier.⁵ Whilst Phillip explored many of Port Jackson's coves, ultimately fixing on one he named Sydney as suitable for settlement, it is highly unlikely that on this expedition, he ventured up the Parramatta River at all.

However within a very short time after moving the First Fleet to Sydney Cove on 26th January, Governor Phillip ordered a survey of Port Jackson involving a small party including Captain Hunter and Lieutenant Bradley who got as far as Homebush Bay on 5th February.⁶ As such, they would have been the first Europeans to set eyes on the Brush Farm area, which would have stood out to them, being experienced Naval officers used to reconnoitring unfamiliar landscapes, as a prominent piece of tall timbered, high ground on the northern side of the river.

Within a few days, Governor Phillip himself had explored the area, naming the Duck River and noting that the soil at the head of the main river was much more fertile than at Sydney Cove.⁷ By the end of 1788 near the head of the main river, Phillip established a small settlement at Rose Hill which he later renamed Parramatta.⁸

According to First Fleet diarist Watkin Tench, this settlement experienced explosive growth and by 16th November 1790, he reported 552 people 'employed at Rose Hill'.⁹ Just one year later on the 26th November 1791, Tench reported 1,628 people 'of all descriptions' at Rose Hill compared to just 1259 at Sydney.¹⁰ Describing this exodus from Sydney, Tench said '*the number of convicts here diminishes every day; our principal efforts being made wisely at Rose Hill where the land is unquestionably better than about this place*'.¹¹

As a result, the Parramatta River itself rapidly became a key transport route between Rose Hill and Sydney Cove with the high ground of Brush Farm being a prominent

landmark for the rapidly increasing number of travellers along its course. Indeed, until the turnpike road from Sydney to Parramatta was completed in 1810,¹² river transport would have been the only efficient way to move large cargoes. The first river boat which operated in the area between 1789 and 1800 was the 'Rose Hill Packet' affectionately nicknamed 'The Lump' which weighed about ten tons and was powered by a combination of oar and sail.¹³

During this time, Parramatta had been growing so rapidly in importance that by 1799, Governor Hunter built a second Government House there on the same site as an earlier one built by Governor Phillip, reinforcing the importance of Parramatta as the Colony's second most important settlement.¹⁴ Not surprisingly by 1792, Judge Advocate David Collins was '*obliged to travel regularly to Parramatta and stay overnight*' to deal with a crime wave including robberies which '*reached alarming proportions*'.¹⁵

Contact between the colonists and the Wallumetta people now became more frequent and early accounts indicate that the aborigines were feared, although there is no record of an actual attack.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Wallumetta along with other aborigines all around the harbour were tragically laid waste by a smallpox epidemic which swept through the area within two years of European settlement.¹⁷ Tench reported that in April and May of 1789, '*an extraordinary calamity was now observed among the natives...(with)...repeated accounts brought by our boats of finding bodies of the Indians in all the inlets of the harbour...Pustles similar to those occasioned by smallpox were thickly spread on the bodies*'.¹⁸

From this point forward, the history of the Brush Farm area was dictated by its usefulness to the colonists arising principally from its proximity to the river, tall timber, fertile soil and high elevation. Within just a few years, Brush Farm by virtue of its location, became an intermediate hub of transport and communications between growing settlements and important resources to the east, west and north.

In January 1792, two marines, Isaac Archer and John Colethread, were each granted 80 acres on what is now the Ryde Parramatta Golf Links.¹⁹ These grants were part of a total of eight such grants to marines on what Governor Phillip called the Field of Mars, possibly in reference to their military connection.²⁰

Other grants soon followed and between 1794 and 1797, nine soldiers and ex convicts were granted land to the north of what is now Victoria Road in the immediate vicinity of Brush Farm.²¹ Where Brush Farm House now stands, 25 acres were granted to Private Zadoc Pettit on 9th December 1794 whilst to his immediate south and on the same day, another 25 acres, which according to the Brush Farm Historical Society became known as 'One Tree Hill' Farm, were granted to Private Thomas Bride.²² Some of these grants were soon sold on to John Macarthur.²³

By 1801, the nine grants, along with some others in what is now Dundas Valley, had been purchased by Lieutenant William Cox and soon came to be known collectively as 'Brush Farm'.²⁴ Unfortunately, Cox who had succeeded Macarthur as Paymaster of the New South Wales Corps, overstrained his credit and facing a whopping deficiency in his regimental accounts of 7,900 pounds, was suspended from office and forced to assign Brush Farm to his Trustees.²⁵ He was then ordered to England under arrest but

does not appear to have ever been tried, returning to New South Wales a few years later where he subsequently achieved fame as the builder of the first and still main road over the Blue Mountains.²⁶

Meanwhile Cox's properties appear to have been purchased at auction by D'Arcy Wentworth and Simeon Lord who by 1807 had on sold them to Gregory Blaxland.²⁷ It is worth pausing here to note the serendipitous Brush Farm connection where Cox's Blue Mountains' road was built over a route discovered by Gregory Blaxland along with D'Arcy Wentworth's son William.

Following Gregory Blaxland's purchase of Brush Farm in 1807, the property remained in his family for the next three quarters of a century.²⁸

The Blaxland brothers who hailed from Kent were friends of Sir Joseph Banks and came to New South Wales with strong capital backing and contacts in very high places.²⁹ According to Robert Hughes³⁰, *'the authorities realising that here at last was the first settler of unimpeachable respectability, showered him with favours which on the instructions of Colonial Secretary Castlereagh included the use of 40 convicts all to be fed and clothed by the Crown for the first eighteen months at a total cost of 1,300 pounds'*.

Soon after arriving in the Colony, Gregory Blaxland purchased '450 acres at the Brush Farm' for 1,500 pounds³¹ and was also granted 4,000 acres of land *'in perpetuity in a situation of his own chusing'* by Governor King on instructions from Lord Castlereagh.³²

In the same year as this purchase, 1807, the outgoing Governor King warned his successor William Bligh that he would be 'plagued with' Gregory Blaxland.³³ This prediction came to pass when Blaxland co signed a letter in January 1808 requesting Major Johnston to arrest Bligh which in turn led to the Rum Rebellion and Governor Bligh's overthrow.³⁴

Despite or maybe because of their stormy politics and a lot of help from the Crown, the Blaxlands rapidly became wealthy and successful pastoralists but faced the dilemma of a growing shortage of suitable grazing land on the Cumberland plain. This was Gregory Blaxland's principal motivation in successfully leading his little team of Lawson and Wentworth to find a path over the Blue Mountains and open up the western slopes and plains for grazing.³⁵

In 1814, Blaxland like many others was hit hard by a rural drought and depression and his relations with Governor Macquarie became very fractious³⁶ with Macquarie describing Blaxland to the Colonial Secretary Lord Liverpool as *'one of the Colony's prime nuisances'*.³⁷ The fact that by 1820 Blaxland ceased to be on the official list of the principal land holders in New South Wales where some of those listed had as few as 1,000 acres, was strong evidence of his financial difficulties.³⁸

Sometime during this period, Blaxland settled down to live on his Brush Farm Estate, which had been described by Macquarie as early as 1810 during an official visit to Kissing Point where Blaxland acted as his guide, as *'a very snug good farm and very like an English one in point of comfort and convenience'*.³⁹

Describing this tour, Macquarie's biographer Ellis says *'they trotted through the countryside...wandering as far abroad as the Field of Mars, Mr Marsden's farm at One Tree Hill...Liberty Plains, Dundas and Baulkham Hills'*.⁴⁰ Governor Macquarie records in his Journal that he left his wife *'at Mr Marsden's Farm of One Tree Hill before visiting Mr Blaxland's farm at The Brush'*.⁴¹

At Brush Farm, Blaxland farmed with the assistance of convicts and conducted many experiments with crops, grasses and tobacco making full use of the fertile, shale derived soil and relatively high rainfall on the southern part of his farm as well as the drier, clayey soil on the western part.⁴²

However, his most successful experiments there involved grape vines he had imported from the Cape of Good Hope and in 1822, Blaxland shipped the first export of Brush Farm wine to England.⁴³ This export wine amounted to a quarter of a pipe (about 26 gallons) of red wine to which had been added 10% of French Brandy to enable it to endure the long sea voyage and was described as a *'light sound wine with a nose and flavour resembling claret'*.⁴⁴ The wine won a silver medal from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which was later renamed the Royal Society of Arts, in London.⁴⁵ In 1828, the same Society awarded Blaxland the gold Ceres medal for a tawny red wine described as *'wholly free of the earthy quality which unhappily characterises most of the Cape wines'*.⁴⁶

Just exactly when Blaxland permanently settled at the present day Brush Farm House is difficult to pinpoint but on 21st November 1818, he wrote a very important letter to Governor Macquarie and this letter subsequently became part of the official record of Commissioner Bigge's Inquiry into Macquarie's governorship.⁴⁷ In the letter, Blaxland indicated an intention to move his Brush Farm residence because:

'the present premises is so situate on the farm that they are...so low and unhealthy that my family never escape a summer without being subject to disorder or debility from want of proper circulation of air, heat and dampness for which reason I have for some time been determined to remove the whole of the present premises on a higher part of the farm gradually as my circumstances will afford it..'

This part of the letter foreshadows Blaxland's intention to build the present Brush Farm House which, according to the Brush Farm Historical Society, was built about 1820. In the same letter to Macquarie, Blaxland went on to express concern about *'Government timber carriages with timber'* on his property and said he sent a message to Major Drutt who was in overall command that:

'I had no objection to the Government timber carriages passing through my farm..I wished them to keep the old road which was but a short distance further round and equally convenient to use the hill as the road they had now taken went immediately through the spot of ground on which I intended to erect my house and premises and particularly requested that they would not come nearer to the spot I intended for...my house than at least twenty rods...'

Blaxland explained to Macquarie that, despite this message of concern to Major Druitt, the timber carriages:

'drove over crushed and destroyed everything that was not strong enough to resist them that came in their way...and I ordered my men to inform them when they came back that there was no Government road that way and to direct them to go the old road..whilst I was there one came they persisted in going on after some considerable altercation the business was compromised by promising that if I let them pass that time that they would not come that way any more..'

Blaxland told Macquarie that he then called on Major Druitt and following their conversation was *'fearful that some mistake has arisen'* apparently comprehending that the new road alignment was intended to be permanent. Blaxland's final plea to Macquarie was that the new road be *'at least twenty to forty rods from the spot I had marked out to erect my future dwelling house so that I may have a small field or inclosure surrounding it not intersected by a road.'*

Whilst not free from all doubt, I believe the road Blaxland was complaining about is the present day Marsden Road and it is easy to see from the proximity of that road to Brush Farm House that Blaxland lost out to Major Druitt, the timber getters and Governor Macquarie. Their plan as it turned out was to provide access to the Parramatta River for the convict timber getters who Macquarie had placed at Pennant Hills to produce sawn timber for his public building programme.⁴⁸

Another priority was to provide Parramatta River access for the settlers around Castle Hill and Pennant Hills who could then compete with the settlers at Kissing Point in getting their produce to the Sydney market using a wharf which was built in 1817 at the southern end of what is today Wharf Road, Melrose Park.⁴⁹ Known as Pennant Hills Wharf, the name of this vital piece of early colonial infrastructure clearly emphasised the origins of its users rather than its location on the river and further underlined the futility of Blaxland's opposition to Macquarie's road.

The wharf's importance was highlighted by the fact that there was no road linking the northern shore of the harbour and the Parramatta River to Sydney for many years due principally to the barrier of the Lane Cove River and the width of the harbour itself.⁵⁰ An 1820 map of the settlements of New South Wales clearly shows what is now Parramatta Road as the main link with no road at all on the northern side of the harbour or river. The only road transport route to Sydney from the Pennant Hills was to travel west to Parramatta before linking up with Parramatta Road to travel to Sydney.⁵¹

Despite the inevitable consequences of these transport and commercial pressures, Blaxland's fight with Governor Macquarie did not end there but moved to a new and more damaging forum.

In 1819, Blaxland who had already successfully taken on Governor Bligh years before, joined the colonial opposition to Macquarie which was widespread amongst the 'free' settlers and in 1819 sharply criticised Macquarie's administration to Commissioner Bigge.⁵² Macquarie identified Blaxland as one of a number *'in the*

rank of gentlemen’ who he looked on as his secret though not avowed enemies and *‘from whom he had always experienced every opposition’*.⁵³ It is no accident that Blaxland’s letter of complaint about the new road through Brush Farm is in an Appendix to the Bigge Report that directly led to Governor Macquarie being recalled to England.

If Blaxland got any satisfaction from Macquarie’s recall, it did not solve his problem with the new road which rapidly became a permanent and ever more busy fixture. Indeed the road symbolised the rapid growth of the logging industry further to the north which Blaxland simply could not stop because the ridge outside Brush Farm House along which the new road was built was the only way to directly link the Parramatta River with the other ‘Pennant Hills’ where the logging was going on. That is to say the ridge on which Brush Farm House was built, then as now, provides one continuous road transport link all the way along present day Marsden Road and Pennant Hills Road to Hornsby. In building his house across this route, Blaxland could no more turn back the rapidly rising tide of commerce demanding access to it than King Canute could turn back the tide itself a thousand years earlier. Blaxland was effectively planning to build his new house right in the path of what was soon to become one of the Colony’s busiest commercial highways.

In the early days, the demand was for tall Blue Gum High Forest timber which extended along the high ridge now followed by the railway line from Epping to Hornsby and across to West Pennant Hills.⁵⁴ This forest consisted principally of the Sydney Blue Gum, Blackbutt and Grey Ironbark, in some cases growing 30 to 40 metres tall and these trees were interspersed with smaller Angophoras, She-oaks and the like. A remnant of this forest is preserved at the Blackwood Sanctuary, Beecroft.⁵⁵

At Pennant Hills, the trees were described as *‘in general of an uncommonly large size perhaps more so than in any other part of Cumberland and therefore very advantageously situated so near a rapidly increasing town.’*⁵⁶ As these trees were cut down, the land was cleared for farms and orchards, which were followed in turn by the suburbs we know today, encouraged in their early development by the completion of the Northern Railway in 1886.⁵⁷

Despite all this, Blaxland proceeded to build Brush Farm House which remains near the corner of Marsden Road and Lawson Street to this day. Described by Jill Conway who wrote Blaxland’s entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography as a man *‘of moody and mercurial character’*, Blaxland committed suicide on the 1st January 1853.⁵⁸

During the years Blaxland lived at Brush Farm House, river travellers could see on the rise above Ermington *‘the telegraph on One Tree Hill near which is situated the residence of Mr G. Blaxland with its vineyard at a little distance before it.’*⁵⁹

The very words ‘Pennant Hills’ evoke all sorts of images of signalling devices and over the years, there has been much debate and conjecture about their location, significance and history. This is not surprising given the extreme isolation of the early settlement and the central importance which signalling played in all contact with the outside world; both friend and foe.

In January 1788, the French Captain La Perouse astonished Governor Phillip by turning up at Botany Bay just days after the arrival of the First Fleet.⁶⁰ Thereafter, Tench records that for the first eighteen months, a party of Marines used to go regularly to Botany Bay to see whether 'any vessel ignorant of our removal to Port Jackson might be arrived there'.⁶¹

However as early as 1790, a flagstaff was erected at South Head and a lookout stationed there to keep watch for shipping movements to report to the signalman on Dawes Point. Tench captures the romance, importance, and technical detail of this operation in his wonderful chronicle as follows:

*'A party of seamen were fixed on a high bluff called the South Head...on which a flag was ordered to be hoisted whenever a ship might appear which should serve as a direction to her and as a signal of approach to us...Here on the summit of the hill every morning from daylight until the sun sunk, did we sweep the horizon in the hope of seeing a sail...If a ship appeared here we knew she must be bound for us...'*⁶²

*On 5th April (1790) news was brought that the flag on the South Head was hoisted...To satisfy myself that the flag was really flying, I went to the observatory and looked for it through the large astronomical telescope..but I was immediately convinced that it was not to announce the arrival of ships from England; for I could see nobody near the flagstaff except one solitary being who kept strolling around unmoved by what he saw. I well knew how different an effect the sight of a strange ship would produce...'*⁶³

*On the evening of 3rd June (1790) the joyful cry of 'the flag's up' resounded in every direction...I was sitting in my hut musing on our fate when a confused clamour in the street drew my attention...I instantly started out and ran to a hill where by the assistance of a pocket glass my hopes were realised. My next door neighbour a brother officer was with me but we could not speak...our eyes and hearts overflowing.'*⁶⁴

After boarding a boat to meet the ship (which turned out to be the female convict transport Lady Juliana) at the entrance of the harbour, Tench continued:

*'We pushed through wind and rain the anxiety of our sensations every moment redoubling. At last we read the word London on her stern. Pull away, my lads! She is from Old England! A few strokes more and we shall be aboard! Hurrah for a bellyful, and news from our friends!'*⁶⁵

News of foes as well as friends was very much on the colonists' minds and following the French Revolution in 1789, the rise of Napoleon greatly added to this concern with rumours of Napoleonic ships adventuring southward⁶⁶ as Britain and France fought out a world historic conflict over the next quarter of a century. Not surprisingly, French visits to Australian shores by the likes of d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin⁶⁷ also kept the colonists on edge although not hostile because they were acutely aware of how isolated they were from the rest of the British Empire.

After returning to France in 1804, Francois Peron who visited Sydney with Baudin prepared his 'Memoire sur les establishment anglais a la Nouvelle Hollande' which canvassed the military invasion of Port Jackson in concert with dissident Irish convicts⁶⁸ and noted:

*'Once the English Colony is conquered it can be easily defended by our troops against attack under great force and since the Colony has enough subsistence it won't starve of hunger because of enemy warships. Thus it will be strong enough to hold out against the British land and sea forces.'*⁶⁹

And Matthew Flinders' six years' incarceration by the French on Maritius because he happened to call there in an unseaworthy vessel at a time when Britain and France had resumed hostilities,⁷⁰ rammed home how volatile, unpredictable and unforgiving the French threat was. Indeed even after Waterloo, suspicions of the French remained strong down at least until the Crimean War forty years later.⁷¹

Given the importance of Parramatta, the number of people living and working there and the amount of time the Governor spent there, it would have been logical to extend the South Head to Sydney Cove signalling system to Parramatta via a series of relay stations from the early 1790s. However there is just no evidence that such a system was in place until the 1820s and early communication with Parramatta appears to have been limited to messengers travelling in boats or on horseback.

Had such a signalling system been in place in 1804 at the time of the Castle Hill convict rebellion and subsequent battle of Vinegar Hill⁷² or in 1808 during the Rum Rebellion,⁷³ there would surely have been a reference somewhere during either of those unprecedented security crises, to messages going back and forth on that system between Sydney and Parramatta but there are none.

Equally had the system been in place at the time of Blaxland's crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813⁷⁴, then surely first word of his success would have reached Sydney Cove by telegraph but there is no evidence of this happening at all.

In terms of physical evidence, it is clear from Tench's account of the signalling system as it operated in 1790, that it involved a significant establishment of manpower and equipment and had such a system existed in the One Tree Hill area in 1810, it is inconceivable that Governor Macquarie would not have written about it in his Journal following his visit. The fact that there is no reference clearly indicates that it simply did not exist.⁷⁵

According to Jim Symes, who in 1988 wrote at length about signal stations at South Head, Fort Phillip and the extension to Parramatta, it was not until October 1825 that the telegraph was extended to Parramatta at May's Hill with two stations on very high ground in between at Bedlam (Gladesville) and One Tree Hill (Brush Farm Park/Dundas).⁷⁶ This was apparently an extension of an upgraded semaphore between South Head and Fort Phillip recommended by Commissioner Bigge to Macquarie in 1820 involving a system utilising '48 positions of the vanes of the Telegraph'.⁷⁷ Reference in the Sydney Gazette of 8th June 1827 to a Coronal Inquest into the death of the Signal Master's assistant Gamaliel Farrell who was attached to

the Signal Post at One Tree Hill '*for 12 months past*',⁷⁸ puts its existence beyond doubt.

However the signal post at One Tree Hill had a very short operating life and was discontinued by Governor Darling on the 14th December 1829 when the Surveyor General was instructed to ascertain whether the buildings and gardens of signal post were located on Mr G. Blaxland's property and if so to deliver them up to him in their present state.⁷⁹

Mr Symes says that although no reason was given for the closure, it would seem that a new set of telegraphic signals introduced in 1828 which used descriptive and numerical flags and a ball on the yard arm, meant that the flags could be seen from a greater distance thus making One Tree Hill, as an intermediate relay between Bedlam and May's Hill, unnecessary.⁸⁰

The Bedlam and Parramatta telegraph stations were subsequently closed in 1843 followed in turn by the closure of the stations at Fort Phillip and South head in 1857 when the electric telegraph was introduced.⁸¹

Despite the One tree Hill telegraph station being discontinued in 1829, the ruins of the disused signalling shed remained at the site of the present day Lauriston House for many years.⁸² As late as 1870, a County of Cumberland Plan of a proposed road from Castle Hill to Pennant Hills Wharf referred to the ruins of the '*Telegraph Cottage*' at that site.⁸³

No doubt the romance attached to the early signalling stations together with the ongoing existence of the telegraph station ruin for many years, gave a profile to the One Tree Hill Station which went way beyond its actual significance. The name 'Pennant Hills' was also a factor even though it had nothing to do with the telegraph station and is believed to be connected to Thomas Pennant, a friend of Sir Joseph Banks.⁸⁴

In 1816, Gregory Blaxland's daughter Eliza married an Army Surgeon Dr Thomas Forster and spent some years with him in India, Wales and Ireland.⁸⁵ They returned to Sydney in 1829 with their son William who had been born in India in 1818 and settled '*at Brush Farm, Field of Mars, near Ryde*' which Blaxland formally conveyed to his son in law Dr Forster in 1831.⁸⁶

William attended the King's School where he won a prize for poetry and subsequently became a pastoralist going on one of the first overland expeditions to Port Phillip and later buying properties at Port Macquarie, Clarence River and New England.⁸⁷ Despite his expeditions, William still found time to publish a great deal of poetry and Bede Nairn who wrote his Australian Dictionary of Biography entry said '*though his wit is occasionally peevish, there is an inventiveness and technical skill in the whole of Forster's work that places it in the front rank of nineteenth century Australian literature*'.⁸⁸

In 1856, William Forster won the seat of Murray and St Vincent at the first elections under responsible Government and served in nine of the ten parliaments up to his

death in 1882 holding a number of Ministerial offices including Colonial Secretary, Secretary for Lands and Colonial Treasurer.⁸⁹

In 1859-1860 he was Prime Minister of New South Wales, as the Premier was then known, for five months, being the youngest holder of that office until Nick Greiner's election in 1988.⁹⁰ Explaining Forster's short tenure as Prime Minister of New South Wales, Trevor McMinn says '*Forster had paid the price made inevitable by his unyielding independence and his rooted disinclination to involve himself in faction politics.*'⁹¹

William Forster held seven different seats at various times including seats as far afield as Queanbeyan, East Sydney, Murrumbidgee, Hastings and Illawarra but that did not mean he lived in those places.⁹² Like many of his Parliamentary contemporaries, William Forster lived in Sydney and was more a patron of the areas he represented than a local member.⁹³ Indeed after Forster quit country life to return to Sydney in 1854, he mostly resided at Brush Farm.⁹⁴

In 1874, the Sydney Morning Herald said:

*'Mr Forster seeks no friends in public life, makes no alliances, asks no one into his confidence and is sometimes evidently repentant that he has ventured to confide in himself.'*⁹⁵

Forster had numerous major disputes with the most prominent politician of his day, Henry Parkes on a range of issues including federation, education legislation and Forster's criticism of Parkes' poetry.⁹⁶ Following William Forster's death at Edgecliff in October 1882, the Freeman's Journal said:

*'the boldest, frankest, least selfish and most honourable man who has ever taken part in our public life has been taken away from us.'*⁹⁷

In the year before his death, William Forster sold Brush Farm to L.E. Threlkeld and John Bennett who, apart from being a busy entrepreneur, established Rosehill Racecourse.⁹⁸ Bennett altered and renovated Brush Farm House considerably before proceeding to subdivide part of it.⁹⁹

About fourteen years later an area of land, including the present Brush Farm House, was leased to the New South Wales Government.¹⁰⁰ By 1904, the Government had resumed 38 acres of the property that was used firstly as a reformatory for delinquent children and then as home for destitute children.¹⁰¹

In the early twentieth century, some of these children came from the training ship Sobroan to Brush Farm which was then known as the Carpentarian Reformatory where they were taught land based trades such as blacksmithing, tailoring, boot making and orcharding.¹⁰²

During the twentieth century, successive New South Wales Government Departments responsible for the welfare of children built a complex of buildings around Brush Farm House. Until 1987, Brush Farm House was used as an administration centre for a handicapped children's school run by the Department of Youth and Community

Services but due to a change in the methods of caring for these children,¹⁰³ the property was declared surplus to requirements in that same year.¹⁰⁴

Recognising the historic and architectural significance of Brush Farm House, the New South Wales Government placed a Permanent Conservation Order on the property¹⁰⁵ and a small surrounding curtilage which were then sold to Ryde Council.¹⁰⁶ The remainder of the property, including the numerous twentieth century Government buildings, was transferred to the New South Wales Corrective Services Department which now uses the complex to train prison officers.¹⁰⁷ Since then, ‘trusty’ prisoners have often been seen working in the grounds of the Corrective Services Academy and so the wheel has turned full circle mirroring the days almost two hundred years ago when Cox and Blaxland used convict labour at Brush Farm.

Following a State Cabinet meeting at Ryde on 6th June 1989, Premier Nick Greiner said that Brush Farm House would be sold at \$775,000 to allow Ryde Council to proceed with restoration of the site as a major project for its Bicentennial celebration in 1992.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately at the time of writing, Brush Farm House is in a state of distressing disrepair and various plans for its use, including as a Corrective Services Commandant’s residence have come to nothing.

Given the long and colourful history of the House, it is to be sincerely hoped that it will be fully restored and put to good use before it falls down altogether.

¹ Benson and Howell, 1990. *Taken For Granted*, p124.

² Levy, *Wallumetta, 1947*. W. E Smith, p3.

³ Note 2 at p4.

⁴ Note 2 at p4.

⁵ Stockdale, 1789. *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, London, p47

⁶ Geeves, 1970. *A Place of Pioneers*, Ryde Council, p3.

⁷ Note 6 at p3.

⁸ Note 6 at p4.

⁹ Tench, W. 1788, Tim Flannery (ed), Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1996, p159.

¹⁰ Note 9 at p226.

¹¹ Note 9 at p102.

¹² Ellis, MH, 1952. *Lachlan Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, p199.

¹³ Stacey (ed), 1966. *A Basic History of Ryde*, p13.

¹⁴ Rosen, S, 2003. *Government House Parramatta*. C Simpson, Sydney, p37.

¹⁵ Currey, J, 2000. *David Collins: A Colonial Life*, Melbourne University Press, p113.

¹⁶ Note 2 at p6.

¹⁷ McClymont. *Pictorial History Parramatta and District*, Kingclear Books, p2.

¹⁸ Note 9 at p202.

¹⁹ Note 6 at p7.

²⁰ Note 6 at p7.

²¹ Brush Farm Historical Society, 1996. *Brush Farm and Its Neighbours Pamphlet*.

²² Note 21

²³ Note 21.

²⁴ Note 21.

²⁵ *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1966. Volume 1*, MU Press, p259.

²⁶ Note 25

²⁷ Note 21.

²⁸ Note 21.

²⁹ Note 25 at p115.

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- ³⁰ Hughes, R, 1987. *The Fatal Shore*, Pan Books, p286.
- ³¹ Note 25 at p116.
- ³² Note 30 at p286.
- ³³ Note 25 at p116.
- ³⁴ Note 25 at p116.
- ³⁵ Note 25 at p116.
- ³⁶ Note 25 at p116.
- ³⁷ Note 12 at p251.
- ³⁸ Clarke, MH, 1962. *A History of Australia Volume 1*, Melbourne University Press, p384.
- ³⁹ Note 25 at p116.
- ⁴⁰ Note 12 at p199.
- ⁴¹ *Governor Macquarie's Journal, 1810*, p5.
- ⁴² Note 25 at p116.
- ⁴³ Note 25 at p116.
- ⁴⁴ Walsh, Gerard, 1979. 'The Wine Industry of Australia 1788-1979' in *Wine Talk*, ANU.
- ⁴⁵ Note 43.
- ⁴⁶ Note 43.
- ⁴⁷ Bigge, John Thomas, 1822-1823. *Bigge Appendix, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 17*, Mitchell Library, Sydney, pp2271-2274.
- ⁴⁸ Note 6 at p24.
- ⁴⁹ Note 6 at p24.
- ⁵⁰ Note 13 at p13.
- ⁵¹ Note 38 at p353.
- ⁵² Note 25 at p116.
- ⁵³ Note 12 at p410.
- ⁵⁴ Note 1 at p104.
- ⁵⁵ Note 1 at p104.
- ⁵⁶ Note 1 at p104.
- ⁵⁷ Note 1 at p104.
- ⁵⁸ Note 25 at p117.
- ⁵⁹ Note 6 at p62.
- ⁶⁰ Note 5 at p53.
- ⁶¹ Note 9 at p120.
- ⁶² Note 9 at p120.
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- ⁶⁹ Note 68 at p54.
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- ⁷⁶ Symes, J, Dec 1988. *Signal Stations at South Head*, Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society, p18.
- ⁷⁷ Note 76 at p18.
- ⁷⁸ Note 76 at p18.
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- ⁸⁰ Note 76 at p18.
- ⁸¹ Note 76 at p19.
- ⁸² Buttrey, Ron, 2003. *What Happened When - A Time Line of Eastwood's History 1794-2003*, Brush Farm Historical Society, p13.

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- ⁸⁴ Note 76 at p19.
- ⁸⁵ Note 25 at p119.
- ⁸⁶ Note 25 at p119.
- ⁸⁷ Note 25 at p119.
- ⁸⁸ Note 25 at p200.
- ⁸⁹ New South Wales Parliament, 1999. *The Parliamentary Record 1824-1999, Volume VI, First Edition*, p117.
- ⁹⁰ Note 89.
- ⁹¹ McMinn, Trevor, 'The Premiership of William Forster', JRAHS Vol 67 Pt 3, p247.
- ⁹² Note 89 at p117.
- ⁹³ Discussion with Dr D. Clune, NSW Parliamentary Historian, 23rd October 2003.
- ⁹⁴ Note 25 at p200.
- ⁹⁵ Note 25 at p200.
- ⁹⁶ Note 25 at p200.
- ⁹⁷ Note 25 at p201.
- ⁹⁸ Note 21.
- ⁹⁹ Note 21.
- ¹⁰⁰ Note 21.
- ¹⁰¹ Note 21.
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- ¹⁰³ McClymont, B (Mrs), 31st March 1987. Letter to Planning Minister Bob Carr.
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