

WALKING TRAIL

Moderate
2hrs 45mins / 5km

CONVICT & INDUSTRY

Explore Newcastle's convict and industrial heritage with this self-guided walking tour.



Convict Lumberyard



- 1** Convict Lumber Yard
 - 2** Rediscovery
 - 3** The GNR Railway Yards
 - 4** Evolution 2
 - 5** Zaara Street Power Station
 - 6** Macquarie Pier
 - 7** Convict Coal Mining, under Signal Hill (Fort Scratchley)
 - 8** The First Gaol
 - 9** Toll Cottage, 51 Bolton Street
 - 10** The Bogey Hole
 - 11** Cathedral Park Burial Ground and Christ Church Cathedral
 - 12** Australia's First Railway
 - 13** 'The Res' Water Reservoir
 - 14** Newcastle Museum (Railway Workshops)
- Newcastle Visitor Information Centre
Walkability: Moderate-steep gradient

NEWCASTLE

SEEK OFF BEAT

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Newcastle Acknowledges its Local Government Area (LGA) sits within the Country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We Acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient relationships. The City of Newcastle Acknowledges the custodianship of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples and the care and stewardship they have performed in this place since time immemorial.



1 CONVICT LUMBER YARD

Hidden behind a framework of rusting steel near the corner of Watt and Scott streets, Newcastle's Convict Lumber Yard represents one of the earliest sites of convict industry in Australia. It was the location of a convict lumber yard, convict stockade and a series of shipping and railway-related buildings.

Newcastle was a penal settlement from 1804 to 1822, with convicts employed in the coal, timber and lime-burning industries. Red cedar logs felled along the river were bound together and poled downstream by convicts before being cut into planks at the water's edge and stored here.

Newcastle became a free settlement in 1822 but some convicts were retained to work in the coal mines. In 1831 the lumber yard was converted into a stockade to house convicts building the Nobbys breakwater, completed in 1846. The building was later destroyed by fire in 1851 with sand drifts preserving the convict relics until they were uncovered by an extensive archaeological dig in 1989-1992.

Now alongside archaeological remains of the site's various usages, you'll find the former station master's residence and paymaster's office and informative plaques that detail convict life and the indigenous history of the area.

2 REDISCOVERY

Newcastle-based artist Trevor Weekes was commissioned to create a large sculpture, titled **Rediscovery**, which explores the rich layers of artefacts uncovered during archaeological examination of the site.

Located at the eastern end of the Convict Lumber Yard, take the time to read the engraved panels around the edge of this area.

Did you know? The sculpture also references the accidental rediscovery of the yard by local historian Dr John Turner and his King Charles Spaniel, with a slab covered in dog paw prints and human footprints.

CONVICT & INDUSTRY WALKING TRAIL

Much of the modern Newcastle landscape has been shaped by the hands of convicts and industry.

During this walk you will explore the city's early years as a convict settlement. Visit remnants of the great industrial enterprises that once defined the city and discover amazing engineering feats that allowed the city and its people to prosper.

This walking tour starts at the **Convict Lumber Yard**, one of the most significant archaeological sites of convict industry in Australia. It ends at **Newcastle Museum**, the home of incredible objects and exhibitions that celebrate the industrial and convict heritage of the region.

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre
430 Hunter Street, Newcastle NSW 2300
Open 7 days
Phone (02) 4974 2109
Email visitorinformation@ncc.nsw.gov.au

 visitnewcastle.com.au

 [facebook.com/visitnewcastle](https://www.facebook.com/visitnewcastle)

 [@citynewcastle.au](https://www.instagram.com/citynewcastle)



3 THE GNR RAILWAY YARDS

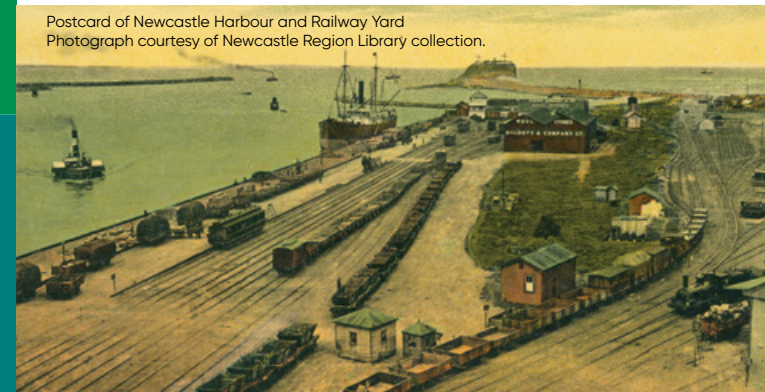
Head down the steps at the rear of the Convict Lumber Yard and gaze across the tranquil Foreshore Park, once home to a vast maze of railway sidings and goods yards.

The Great Northern Railway, running from Honeysuckle Point to East Maitland, was extended to Newcastle East in 1858 and for more than a century this place was filled with the sounds and smells of bustling locomotives and clattering wagons.

The exchange sidings allowed trains to meet the ships to load and unload cargo along Queens Wharf. Coal was transported in wooden hoppers to this point, where a row of steam cranes would lift the bodies of the wagons out of their frames to be emptied into the holds of the waiting ships.

Did you know? The goods yards remained in use until the 1980s, when the process of transformation into parklands began.

Postcard of Newcastle Harbour and Railway Yard
Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection.



SMITH GENERAL CONTRACTING PTY LTD

Robert and Bill Smith arrived in the Hunter in 1955. The Great Northern Railway had been severely damaged by floods in Maitland and these Aboriginal brothers were part of the army of workers tasked with getting the trains moving again.

Robert and Bill spent many years working on the NSW railways and in 1969 borrowed six dollars from their brother Roy to open a company bank account.

This was the beginnings of Smith General Contracting Pty Ltd. Utilising their railway skills, the brothers applied for contracts completing railway maintenance.

The company made more than one million dollars in its first full year of operation. The company completed contracts for BHP and was responsible for building the railway to the Port Waratah coal loaders.

At its busiest time, the company employed more than 130 people and over 70% of its employees were Aboriginal.

Robert and Bill were proud of their company, not just for its financial success but also for the opportunities it provided indigenous Australians to develop skills and gain employment.

4 EVOLUTION 2

Head east towards the former railway carriage sheds and you'll come across a curious circular collection of silicone bronze cast legs fitted with wheels.

The sculptures, collectively titled **Evolution 2**, were created by local artist Sandra Minter-Caldwell.

The work reflects the rotating wheels of busy locomotives moving the wagons and freight of the local industry of yesteryear, while the depiction of the legs and feet as either barefoot or wearing boots, heels and joggers, explores the movement of people through the park today.



Evolution 2 Sandra Minter-Caldwell
1998, silicone cast bronze

5 ZAARA STREET POWER STATION

Continue to the north-east end of Foreshore Park where you'll find a lush green reserve and natural amphitheatre regularly utilised for community events and music festivals.

In the early 20th century this space was dominated by a vast coal stacking area needed to power the gigantic coal-fired power station behind it.

Built by the New South Railways in 1915, the Zaara Street Power Station was connected to the Newcastle Borough Council grid in 1917, producing much of Newcastle's electricity throughout the 1920s.

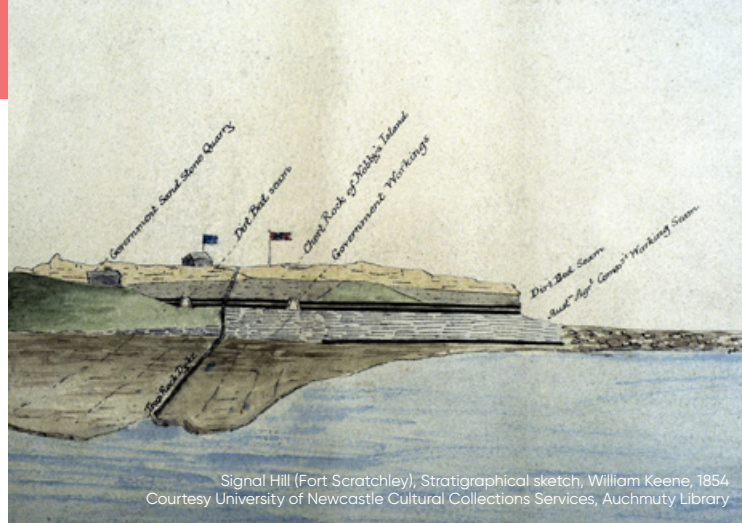
Did you know? The power station remained in operation until 1975 before being demolished in 1978, with no trace of it remaining today.

6 MACQUARIE PIER

Located diagonally opposite the end of Foreshore Park, Nobbys Beach is one of the city's most iconic coastal strips. But once upon a time this popular surfing and swimming spot was simply part of the open ocean, separating the mainland of Newcastle from the distant Nobbys Island.

Captain James Wallis, Commandant of Newcastle, proposed building a causeway to allow for safer navigation of the harbour. The foundation stone for Macquarie Pier (now known as Nobbys breakwall) was laid on 5 August 1818, with convict labour used to construct the pier through to its completion in 1846.

Did you know? In the years following construction of Macquarie Pier, sand accumulated along the breakwall to form Nobbys Beach.



Signal Hill (Fort Scratchley), Stratigraphical sketch, William Keene, 1854
Courtesy University of Newcastle Cultural Collections Services, Auchmuty Library

7 CONVICT COAL MINING

Take the narrow scenic route along the side of Fort Drive around the foot of Beacon Hill (also known as Braithwaite's Head) and you'll pass by some of the most spectacular scenery in Newcastle, as well as the site of the first European coal mine in Australia.

Lieutenant Shortland happened upon the Hunter River while searching for escaped convicts in 1797. He found no evidence of the convicts, but he did find coal. The earliest European coal mining in the Southern Hemisphere commenced here in 1801 under what would later become home to Fort Scratchley.

Did you know? Much of the ground beneath the city's CBD is a honeycomb of pits from former coal mines. The old tunnels beneath the Fort are still there, having been sealed by the 1880s construction of the military installation.

8 THE FIRST GAOL

Towards the end of Fort Drive turn south along Parnell Place until you encounter a grassy hill known as Tramway Reserve and you'll find the spectacular scenery once overlooked by Newcastle's first gaol.

Constructed in 1818, the gaol was separated from the town by large sand dunes, which were formed when the vegetation was removed to prevent escaping convicts concealing themselves.

The first gaolers were convicts themselves and it was not only a place of confinement but also a place where corporal and capital punishment took place.

In 1828 women from the overcrowded Parramatta Female Factory were transported to Newcastle, with the original gaol modified with new walls, lodges, gates and partitions to accommodate them.

Did you know? The gaol was abandoned in 1870, with the crumbling ruins eventually demolished to make way for a steam tram depot.

9 TOLL COTTAGE, 51 BOLTON STREET

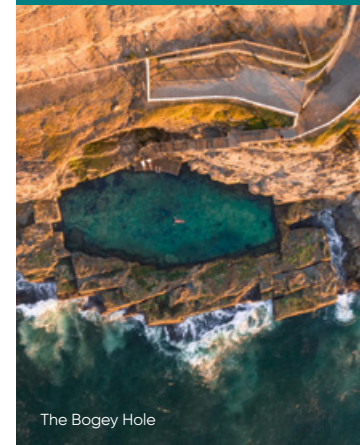
A zig-zagging path through Newcastle's east end will bring you to the edge of the CBD and the location of one of the city's oldest surviving buildings, Toll Cottage (formerly Rose Cottage).

Constructed in 1857, it now sits behind the modern buildings at 55 Bolton Street & can be viewed by heading around the back of the office complex.

Did you know? Newcastle was divided into 190 allotments in 1824, establishing the layout of the city centre as it exists today. Toll Cottage was built on allotment 35, however it was cut off from the road by a later realignment of the street.



10 THE BOGEY HOLE



The Bogey Hole

A steep climb up Watt Street and around to the bottom section of King Edward Park will bring you to another lasting project produced by convict labour—the Bogey Hole.

Located at the base of Shepherds Hill, construction began in 1819 by order of Commandant Morisset, who wanted it for his personal use.

Originally known as the Commandants Bath, the pool was perilously cut by hand into the rock platform by convicts.



11 CATHEDRAL PARK BURIAL GROUND AND CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Retrace your steps through King Edward Park then head down Newcomen Street and along Church Street to discover one of the most prominent religious buildings in Newcastle – Christ Church Cathedral.

Enter the grounds and head around the rear of the building to an area known as Cathedral Park, where approximately 3,300 people are buried.

The three acre plot of land was set aside for use as a church and cemetery in 1817 by Governor Macquarie, making this the oldest official European burial ground in Newcastle.

12 AUSTRALIA'S FIRST RAILWAY

Walk west along Church Street to the intersection of Brown Street and you'll pass by the site of the first railway constructed in Australia.

Built in 1831 by the Australian Agricultural Company, the incline plane and gravitational railway was used for the transportation of coal from its mines on The Hill to the waiting ships below.

A glance down the steep decline of Brown Street towards the centre of town will give you an idea of the ingenious feat of engineering required to construct and successfully operate the railway, which survived in a modified form, utilising locomotives, until demolition in 1923.

? **Did you know?** This pioneer double track railway needed a ton of coal to hold each wagon, with loaded wagons lowered down the inclined plane by a rope passing around a large wheel. To control the speed of their descent, the other end of the rope was attached to empty wagons, which were returned to the top of the hill for reloading.



Inner view of Newcastle (detail) Joseph Lycett c1818, oil on canvas. Purchased with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund, London UK 1961. Newcastle Art Gallery collection

JOSEPH LYCETT, CONVICT ARTIST

Much of what we know of how early European settlement in Newcastle looked, as well as insights into local indigenous culture and traditions, are drawn from the paintings, engravings and sketches of a convict.

Joseph Lycett was convicted of forgery and sentenced to 14 years with transportation to Australia in 1811. Found to be responsible for further forgery in Sydney, he was sent to Newcastle as punishment.

It was here that his skills as an artist came to the attention of Captain James Wallis. Wallis allowed Lycett to utilise his creative talents on a variety of projects. He drew up the plans for the first church on this site, which was completed in 1817. He also produced paintings for the altar piece.

Wallis wanted to prove to his superiors in Sydney he was capable of maintaining harmonious relations between the convict and indigenous populations of Newcastle, and therefore encouraged Lycett to paint the local Aboriginal people. The resulting works provide a valuable early record of the indigenous way of life.

After receiving an official pardon, Lycett returned to England in 1822 and published books of his illustrations.

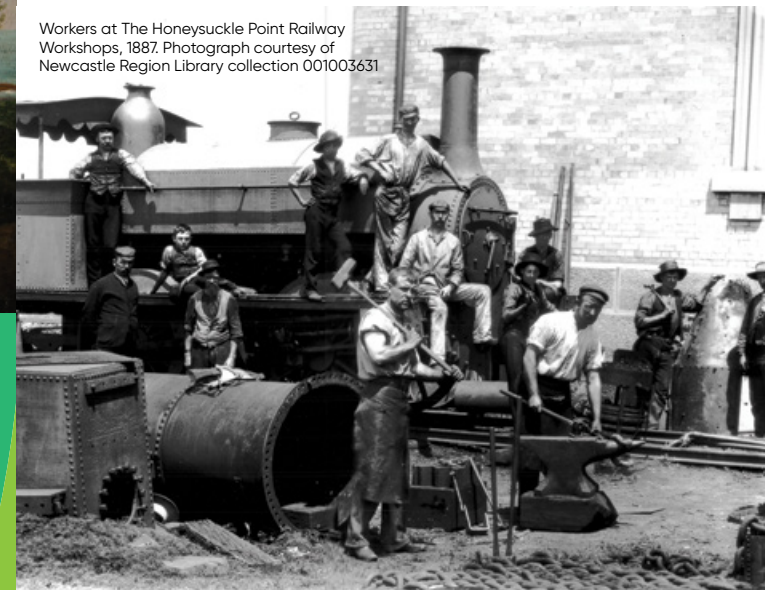
? **Did you know?** Several of Lycett's prints and paintings are held in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection including Inner view of Newcastle 1818, which travelled to the Royal Academy, London in 2013 for inclusion in the exhibition spanning 200 years of Australian art.

13 'THE RES' WATER RESERVOIR

Test your legs with the steep climb up Brown Street to marvel at the formidable outer brick that surround Newcastle's first water reservoir.

By the 1870s Newcastle was home to thousands of people. To ensure safe drinking water was available, the Hunter River Pumping Scheme was initiated in 1880, pumping water from Maitland (Walka Water Works) to Newcastle.

Workers at The Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops, 1887. Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection 001003631



14 NEWCASTLE MUSEUM (RAILWAY WORKSHOPS)



Newcastle Museum

Descend back down towards the waterfront and you'll encounter the Newcastle Museum, now housed in buildings that once formed part of the Honeysuckle Point Railway Workshops.

A crucial part of the Great Northern Railway's operations, the buildings were established during the construction of the railway in 1854 for the assembly, repair and maintenance of the region's fleet of locomotives and wagons.

? **Did you know?** Newcastle Museum is home to objects and exhibitions exploring Newcastle's heritage, showcasing everything from an enormous 60 tonne ladle used for pouring molten steel at BHP, to a button from a convict's tunic uncovered at Stroud.