

ILLAWARRA'S FIRST MILITARY GARRISON 1816

It is rare indeed to find a major event in the early history of Illawarra which has not been referred to in the publications of past workers such as Frank McCaffrey, Arthur Cousins, W.A. Bayley, Edgar Beale and Bill McDonald. The thoroughness of their investigations during the last century have left little to be 'discovered'. However, in the course of reviewing the role of the local Aborigines in Illawarra society prior to 1850 - an aspect of our local history which has been much neglected - I came across a heretofore unknown manuscript referring to a military expedition to Illawarra early in 1816, prior to any official white settlement.

The manuscript was an official report located in the Archives Office of New South Wales (Colonial Secretary Letters, 4/1735, Reel 6045, pp.60-62) dated 8 May 1816. It was prepared by a Lieutenant Parker of the 46th Regiment, and describes his Detachment's operations at Appin and journey to the Five Islands between 22 April and 6 May of that year in connection with Governor Macquarie's punitive expeditions against the Aborigines to the west and south of Sydney.

The circumstances which caused Lt. Parker and his men to travel to the Five Islands are many and varied, however they may be traced back to the hostilities between the Aborigines and settlers of the Cowpastures and Appin districts which had flared during 1814 (refer Carol Liston's *History of Campbelltown*, 1988). Those bloody encounters were a portent of things to come, repeated - only on a much larger scale - during 1816, with Governor Macquarie openly proclaiming his intention of 'terrorizing' the natives to the west and south-west of Sydney with military parties, and declaring any people captured by the regiment 'prisoners of war.' The bodies of Aboriginal men killed by the soldiers were ordered by the Governor to be strung up from prominent trees in the area where they fell so that their family and friends would be further terrorized.

By the end of 1816 the original inhabitants of those areas through which the regiments passed had either been murdered or forced off their lands into the mountains to the west and south, thus leaving the rich agricultural and grazing lands near Camden and Campbelltown free for exploitation by white settlers. Only a few natives were considered friendly and left alone. Some settlers such as Charles Throsby and the Macarthur family continued to provide assistance to local Aborigines, though the majority of whites were hostile to the blacks.

The central Illawarra (Five Islands) natives were considered friendly during this period of conflict, though newspaper reports state that the Aborigines from Jervis Bay were partially responsible for inciting the Mountain (i.e. Blue Mountains and Wollondilly / Wingercarribee) tribes to violence.

Whilst Governor Macquarie had partially blamed the white settlers for the 1814 incidents - aggravated by the brutal murder of an Aboriginal woman and her children early that year - by April 1816 his attitude had hardened towards the Aborigines. He now saw them as a threat to the agricultural and economic development of the Colony and acted accordingly with all the military might he could muster.

Following reports of native 'depredations' and 'atrocities' against white settlers south-west of Sydney during March 1816, Macquarie swiftly retaliated by sending out three detachments of the 46th Regiment to take by force all Aborigines encountered and terrorise them to such a degree that they would not strike back against the whites, despite the most extreme provocation. The Colony was suf-

fering a drought at the time and the Aborigines were forced to appropriate some of the settlers' crops and livestock to survive; the whites termed such pilfering 'atrocities'.

Many Aborigines were killed or taken prisoners of war by Macquarie's punitive expeditions of April-May 1816, and the Aboriginal children collected were placed in the Governor's 'Native Institution' at Parramatta, isolated from their families. By the end of 1816 the Appin and Cowpastures regions were largely cleared of the scattered Aboriginal families who - it was stated in one of the official reports - 'infested' the area.

This episode in Australia's history has largely been ignored, and is seldom referred to in published histories of Australia despite the fact that it was this country's first official war - at least in the eyes of the British such as Governor Macquarie and his soldiers - and fought as such. When the detachments were sent out in April there was a deal of secrecy surrounding their movements, and the Colony at large was not made aware of their actions until they returned to Sydney in May. The mystery surrounding these expeditions has remained.

Governor Macquarie - who is often portrayed as a humane man and friend to the Aborigines - failed to realise that due to the prevailing drought of 1814-16 and decimation of their traditional food resources, the Aborigines in the vicinity of Sydney were facing starvation, thereby forcing them to 'impose' upon the new settlers and their crops. Blame for the subsequent slaughter of Aboriginal people both during this period and throughout the nineteenth century rested with many levels of white society, from the Governor - who failed to prosecute European murderers, or promote humanitarian treatment of the natives - through to settlers and convicts who often indiscriminately shot at and abused the local people.

Lt Parker and his men were therefore sent to the Appin and Illawarra districts in search of 'hostile' natives, to attack and destroy if resistance was encountered. Parker's report to his commander Captain Wallis outlining his action is reproduced as follows:

Report of a Detachment of the 46th Regt. from the 22nd April to the 6th of May 1816.

Sir

Agreeable to the Instructions received from You, I marched to Mr. Woodhouse's on the morning of the 22 of April, and received the same evening Duall and Quiet, two hostile Natives who had been taken on Mr. Kennedy's Farm [near Appin] in the morning. On the following day I sent Duall to Liverpool in charge of McCudden the Constable and detain'd Quiet, who had volunteer'd to show me that Body of Natives to which he belong's. Tyson and Nobles went with him and returned late that night with intelligence that they had seen the smoke from their fires in the rocks at the back of Mr. Kennedy's Farm, but their situation precluded the possibility of attacking them unless with two considerable bodies of men acting together, which I was unable to procure as I was obliged to march east the following morning to Mr. Kennedy's on my route to the Five Islands.

I therefore despatch'd Nobles with Quiet to McCudden's house, with directions to have him forwarded to Liverpool as soon as possible, and proceeded to Mr. Kennedy's early on the 24th.

On the 25th, as I could only take McCudden's Cart as far as Kings Falls a distance of about three miles, I procured an additional Horse from Mr. Kennedy's and arrived the same evening at the Hut of Mr. Throsby's Stockman [near Belmore Basin, Wollongong] where I halted for the night, and on the morning of the 26th reach'd the long Point [Red Point or Hill 60], about six miles south of the Hut and as that was the Ground I was to occupy I gave directions for building the Huts and had them constructed before night.

The natives were at first alarm'd but became soon assured of our pacific intentions, declar'd themselves at Enmity with the Mountain Blacks and offer'd every assistance in capturing or destroying them should they descend from their retreats in the rocks.

On the 27th, being in expectation of you joining me and having a small allowance of salt provisions, I ordered a Bullock belonging to Mr. Cribb to be kill'd and serv'd out to the Men and a short allowance of Discuit at four each day per Man.

I remained on my encampment until the 1st of May and not having heard any thing of your Party or hostile Natives, and having only one days bread remaining I proceeded to the hut on my way back on the following day. On the 3rd I push'd on for Mr. Kennedy's and on my arrival found some Natives who had deliver'd themselves up the day before.

The salt provision I had brought from the Five Islands I left with the Party at Mr. Kennedy's which according to your Orders I augmented to six Privates and a Corporal and completed to hunt rounds of ammunition per man. As there were no conveniences for cooking their victuals, I left the camp kettle and frying pan in their charge and on the fourth arriv'd at Liverpool with my Prisoners and Party.

At Liverpool I received upwards of twenty Knapsacks and belonging to the light Company with orders from Capt. Schaw to have them forwarded to Sydney which with the addition of two white Prisoners and the circumstance of my Party of Natives being mostly Women and Children constrain'd me to procure another Cart from Mr. Moore.

On the 5th I arriv'd in Sydney and lodg'd my Prisoners in the Jail immediately. My Party were in perfect health and order.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your obedt. Servt.

A.G. Parker

Lieut. 46th Regt.

Commanding Detachment

The native Duall of Appin referred to in the report was eventually prosecuted by the authorities and sent to Port Arthur prison, Tasmania. Whether he ever saw his homeland again is unknown.

Throsby's stockman's hut - visited by the soldiers on 25-6 April and 2 May - is well known to students of Wollongong's early history (refer B.T. Dowd *The First Five Land Grantees and their Grants in Illawarra*, IHS 1977). Doctor Charles Throsby had established a cattle station at Wollongong sometime during 1815 (possibly in March), arriving in the district via Appin and a pass at Bulli, with

the assistance of his longtime friend Joe Wild and some local Aborigines.

On 9 December 1815 Joe Wild was made constable for the Five Islands district and was possibly living at the stockman's hut when Lt. Parker's party arrived there late on 25 April 1816.

Another early white resident of Illawarra referred to in the report was George Cribb who depastured his cattle near Unanderra, and left his stockman Will Richards - or Charcoal Will, after which Charcoal Creek was supposedly named - in charge.

Lt. Parker's instructions to proceed to Red Point and set up a small garrison there were obviously meant to be a show of force on the part of the local administration, with Red Point being the most prominent landmark in the Five Islands region and of immense significance to the local Aboriginal people.

Parker's comments that the local people were at first alarmed by the presence of the soldiers and their weapons suggests that they were acutely aware of the killing power of such a force. The Aborigines of New South Wales and Illawarra had very early come to fear white men in red coats. Bass and Flinders encountered such fear when they were at Lake Illawarra in March 1796.

Parker's garrison was maintained from 26 April to 1 May, when he returned to Sydney via Wollongong, Appin and Liverpool. It would be another decade (July 1826) before a similar garrison was set up in Illawarra, this time by Captain Bishop and 30 soldiers of the 40th Regiment. Initially it was located on the same site as Lt. Parker had erected his huts in 1816, though it was later transferred to Wollongong in 1829.

On 2 December 1816 there was a meeting at Throsby's hut of the first land grantees in the district (refer Dowd, op. cit.), following which the whole region was opened up to settlement by Europeans, and the land which the local Aboriginal people had called home for so many thousands of years was taken from them with no recompense nor consideration.

Parker's expedition is therefore significant in Illawarra history as being the first official show of force by the British invaders, aiming to placate the local people prior to the introduction of white settlers en masse. Fortunately the Illawarra Aborigines were considered friendly at this stage and their blood was not spilled as freely as that of their brothers to the west of the escarpment.

Why were the Illawarra Aborigines considered friendly, and those of Appin - Cowpastures termed hostile?

I believe the answer lies in the fact that there were no permanent white settlers in Illawarra until 1815 to corrupt, abuse, and aggravate the local people - though itinerant, lawless cedar getters had been in the area for a number of years. There was no major threat to the Aborigines' day to day survival or traditional culture prior to 1815, and no incidents in which white lives were lost to cause retaliation, apart from the Sydney Cove incident of 1797.

Unlike their coastal brethren, the Appin - Cowpastures Aborigines had known white settlement for many years; had seen abuses of their people and the transformation of their homelands; and had no option during 1814-16 but to 'attack' the settlers crops in a search for food.

The Illawarra Aborigines were most likely no different from their neighbours to the west apart from circumstance. Their 'friendliness' came from the fact that in 1816 they were still able to enjoy a traditional lifestyle and went about their

routine without threatening whites. Of course things were to change dramatically after 1816, but that is another story.

Michael Organ

6 October 1990