### A list of dates relevant to the change of wetland habitats at Kooragang Island and elsewhere in the lower Hunter River.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1796-1895</td>
<td><strong>Early Development Stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Fishermen driven ashore find coal littering the beach near the unnoticed mouth of the Hunter River (Perry 1963).</td>
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<td>1797</td>
<td>Discovery of the mouth of Hunter River by Lt. J Shortland when directed by Governor Hunter to recapture convicts escaped from the Sydney settlement (Coffey 1973). Subsequently, two commercial vessels visit the river, one of which carries coals and cedar to Sydney (Perry 1963).</td>
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<td>1799</td>
<td>First coal shipment (Manley 1963).</td>
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<td>1801</td>
<td>Under orders from Governor Hunter, the lower Hunter River is surveyed by Lt. Col. W. Paterson. Paterson gives the name &quot;Ash Island&quot; to what we now know as Moscheto Island after the trees which resembled the English ash (cedar and gum trees were also present). A sawpit is dug on the island and operates for some months. Ensign Barralier produces the first map of the group of large islands in the lower Hunter River. First rock and sand wharf facilities constructed in the vicinity of present day King's Wharf (Anon. 1950, Anon 1954, Manley 1963, Coffey 1973).</td>
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<td>1802</td>
<td>Closure of first penal settlement at Newcastle (Perry 1963).</td>
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<td>1804</td>
<td>Second penal settlement when convicts from the Castle Hill uprising are sent to Newcastle (Perry 1963, Hartley 1995). Sydney Gazette reports &quot;Strata of coal is immense, quantities of fish are easy to be procured and up the river is an abundance of wildfowl&quot;. (Anon. 1804)</td>
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<td>1808</td>
<td>Salt production halted and lime (burning of oysters) begun (Perry 1963).</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Howe's Road from Windsor to Wallis Plains (Maitland) (Perry 1963).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1822-1823</td>
<td>Penal settlement at Newcastle closed; new penal settlement started at Port Macquarie (Perry 1963, Hartley 1995).</td>
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<td>1827</td>
<td>Newcastle resident Mr A.W.Scott buys 1000ha of land on Ash Island [Ed. here Ash Island refers to the large western most island in the Hunter estuary, now the western end of Kooragang Island.] and plants an orange orchard. His oranges become famous throughout the colony (Anon. 1993)</td>
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<td>1829</td>
<td>The islands of the lower Hunter are described in the Sydney Gazette as &quot;abounding in fish, duck, kangaroos and pigeons&quot; (Ruello 1976).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1825-1828</td>
<td>Drought, followed by wet period (Hartley 1995).</td>
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1830 First small farmers (squatters) on Dempsey Island (Turner in prep.)
1831 Daily vessels track from Sydney to Newcastle to Morpeth (Manley 1963).
1836 Saltworks constructed on Moscheto Island; later sulfuric acid plant is built and operated until 1870 (Coffey 1973).
1840 Depression and drought in NSW (Hartley 1995).
1842 Except for swampy foreshore downstream, both banks of Hunter cleared between Newcastle and Morpeth (Hartley 1995).
1845 Dairy farming commences on the islands (Anon. 1954).
1846 Nobby’s Breakwater completed, but later breached by storms (Manley 1963).
1877 Commercial prawn fishing commences in the Hunter River in mid 1800s (Ruello 1969, Turner in prep.).
1857 Major flood.
1858 King’s Wharf begun; land for Newcastle railway station reclaimed (Manley 1963).
1859 Possibly stemming from the flood and/or the need to load coal, dredging is commenced in Newcastle Harbour and approach channels, with the spoil being dumped east and west of Bullock Island. Dredging continued intermittently for many years (Manley 1963, Coffey 1973, Dames and Moore 1978).
1860s Floods
1867 Start of Walsh Island in the early 1860s from spoil dredged to make a channel to the site on which the steelworks now stands (Dames and Moore 1978).
1862 Bullock Island reclamation further enhanced with the construction of a long training wall known as the Bullock Island Dyke along the alignment of the South Channel (Manley 1963, Coffey 1973).
1864 Flooding serious enough to wash away approaches to vehicle and railway bridge, isolating East and West Maitland (Hartley 1995).
1866 Scott’s farm fails and his property is cut into farms (Anon. 1893a, Turner in prep.). [Ed. Subdivided into smaller farms].
1868 Wallaroo Mining and Smelting Co. opens a copper works at Port Waratah, works closed in 1893 (Turner in prep.).
1872 Dempsey Island Salt Works erected (Turner in prep.).
1878 Wharf construction along southern bank completed (Manley 1963).
1887 Newcastle railway station built on reclaimed land.
1886 District Inspector of Schools reports a population of 220 on Moscheto Island, 62 of school age.
1890 Construction of Miller’s Forest Wharf (Manley 1963).
1893 The “Great Flood” causes Moscheto Island residents to take to the roofs and leaves a dry area of about 2 ha near the school at the eastern end of the island (Anon. 1986). Moscheto Island is “suffering effects of excessive rains, and in consequence the grass is almost perished” (Anon. 1893b).

1896-1950 Mid Development Stage

1896 BHP acquires 10 ha of waterfront land at Wallaroo to smelt lead and zinc ore. Smelter did not proceed (Anon. 1935).

1898 Construction of the first section of the Walsh Island training wall; reclamation continues behind it for the next 20 years (Manley 1963, Coffey 1973). Construction started on southern guide wall; completed 1902 (Manley 1963).

1899 Bullock Island merged with mainland; small islands in the North Channel removed.


1903 Start of series of reclamations at Throsby Creek (Manley 1963).

1907 Two fishing boat hire services with 60 boats between them are available in Newcastle but this is not adequate to meet the demand for recreational fishing (Ruello 1976).

1912 Newcastle Iron and Steel Works Act of 1912-1913 is passed to allow the construction of heavy industrial facilities (Anon. 1935). The Act provides 40 ha of Crown Land and grants a 50 year lease on a water frontage of 14 ha; the State government undertook to dredge and maintain a channel between the works and the sea; the company also purchased another 46 ha freehold (Anon. 1935).

1913 State Engineering Workshops, including dockyard, commenced at Walsh Island. NSW Minister for Works resumes 240 ha of Moscheto Island for homes for Dockyard workers. No homes were ever built on Moscheto Island for this purpose; they were built at Stockton instead (Anon. 1940, Coffey 1973).

1913-1928 Levee bank constructed around Fullerton Cove; large drains including Dawson’s, 14 ft., 10 ft., and numerous side drains dug, beginning of ring drain.

1915 Production of steel by BHP commences at the Port Waratah works; Walsh Island dockyard and shipbuilding flourishes from this time (Coffey 1973).

1917-1928 Carrington Wharf (old Bullock Island) constructed; start of wall to link Goat, Walsh and Spectacle Islands, and subsequent reclamation; reclamation at Wickham and Throsby Creek (Manley 1963). Wharf construction around the east side of Bullock Island extended along the northern shore. Walsh, Goat and Spectacle Islands further consolidated by reclamation.

1930 Public Works Department constructs weir between Hexham and Ash Islands to increase flow in North Channel and lessen siltation (Manley 1963, Turner in prep., J. Latham pers. comm.)

1933 One outcome of the Great Depression is the closure of the Walsh Island dockyard and the termination of reclamation begun in 1898 (Coffey 1978).

1935 Large scale removal of shell from Fullerton Cove by the Sulphide Corporation for cement manufacture (Turner in prep.).

1938 Construction of Wallis Creek floodgates at Maitland (Manley 1963).
1939-1945 The Second World War enhances industrial output from the Hunter district. Anti-aircraft batteries are placed on the eastern end of Moscheto Island (V. Deacon pers. comm.).

1941 State Dockyard established (Manley 1963).

1947 Newcastle Chamber of Manufacturers proposes the extension of port facilities and new industrial sites including “development of islands in the lower Hunter River into industrial land” (Coffey 1973).

1950 NSW Government approves BHP application to block off Platt’s Channel to use firstly as a disposal site for waste and then as an expansion site for industrial facilities (Irwin 1968).

**1951-1989 Late Development Stage**

1951 Dredging and island reclamation/consolidation is recommenced (Dames and Moore 1978, Turner in prep.).

1953 Newcastle Harbour Improvements Act is passed. Resumption notices are issued to 17 families on Ash Island; NSW Public Works is given ownership of the Kooragang islands and the formal responsibility to construct a “single land mass” and coordinate all industrial development and servicing. Reclamation commenced almost immediately with material dredged from the harbour (Coffey 1973).

1954 Bunds placed in Platt’s Channel.


1958 Walsh and Moscheto Islands are linked by reclamation; Walsh and Dempsey Islands joined by filling in Moscheto Creek (Dames and Moore 1978). A gravel road is built along the southern shore of Ash Island to link the Ash Island Bridge to the site of the future Stockton Bridge (Turner in prep.)

1960 BHP begins to fill Platt’s Channel (Anon. 1960). Northumberland County Planning Scheme was introduced, under which Kooragang Island was zoned Industrial B (Heavy), meaning that industries other than those considered to be offensive or hazardous could be established on the island (Coffey 1973).

1963 A record monthly prawn catch from Stockton Bight after repeated large scale flooding of the Hunter region in April and early May (Ruello 1973).

1964 Greenleaf Fertilizers Ltd. is the first company to take up a lease on Kooragang Island (Coffey 1973).

1965 Tourle Street Bridge links Kooragang Island with Mayfield (Dames and Moore 1978).

1966 Start of construction of railway which cuts Moscheto Island in half, facilitating reclamation of the southern portion of Moscheto Island and Dempsey Island. West bank of North Channel stabilised with training and retaining walls (Moss 1983).

1967 Mouth of Mangrove Creek filled for road construction (Moss 1983).

1967 Seaham Weir constructed (Ruello1976).

1968  Minister for Public Works approves Williamstown-Long Bight- Tomago drainage scheme including enlargement of ring drain and heightening of levee bank around Fullerton Cove (Turner in prep.).

1969  Highest recorded salinity at Raymond Terrace (18.2 ppt.) after a large high tide. (Ruello 1976).

1969  Levee banks constructed along the Hunter River at Miller’s Forest (upstream of junction with the Williams River) (Ruello 1976).


1971  Stockton Bridge completed (Dames and Moore 1978); high dust carryover to Stockton and elsewhere from industries sited on Kooragang in the late 1960s causes residents’ complaints (Coffey 1973).

1972  Ramsar Agreement on wetlands of international significance especially in terms of waterfowl habitat (Ramsar 1996).

1973  The “Inquiry into Pollution” is begun in June to deal with residents’ complaints. This is the first inquiry conducted under the terms of the State Pollution Control Commission Act of 1970. Over 300ha now fully reclaimed under Newcastle Harbour Improvement Act. The NPWS and (the then) State Fisheries advocate the extension of Moscheto Creek to overcome the ecological problems arising from the blockage of the creek by the railway (SPCC 1973).

1972  650 acres now fully reclaimed under Newcastle Harbour Improvements Act; Minister for Works announces 600ha (19%) of Kooragang Island to be left in its natural state (Coffey 1973).


1979  The Kooragang Advisory Committee, constituted by the Minister for Works to resolve a number of alternative planning ideas, provides its first report recognising different attributes and potential of areas "A-E" (Moss 1983).

1981  Department of Planning and Environment commissions the NSW Institute of Technology to report on the natural areas of Kooragang Island (Moss 1983)

1983  Kooragang Nature Reserve is gazetted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

1985  Promulgation of SEPP 14 establishes protected wetlands in NSW, including Kooragang Island (Adam et al. 1985).

1990  The culvert at the mouth of Cobbans Creek is washed out (Genders 1996).

References.


Anon. (1893a). Newcastle Morning Herald. 8/4/1893

Anon. (1893b). Newcastle Morning Herald. 16/10/1893

Anon. (1940). Newcastle Morning Herald. 28/6/1940

Anon. (1950) Newcastle Morning Herald. 24/5/1950

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