

ANGLESEA BARRACKS

(Australia's oldest military establishment)

by

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Administration Centre

The barracks are two hundred and nine years old and that it is the oldest continuous military establishment in Australia.

In the intervening years between the British military leaving Tasmania (1870) and the reorganisation of the nation's defence after Federation, the Barracks did go through a period of decline. After all, the local militia personnel that replaced the British army lived in their own homes and there was no need for barracks to house them. Amazingly, the site was used for all sorts of purposes ranging from schools to an aged women's home. A number of the buildings were even rented to sporting bodies and the weather bureau.

Its history begins in the year 1811. We can thank Governor Lachlan Macquarie who, when visiting Van Diemen's Land from Sydney, expressed concern that the 73rd Foot which protected the colony was lacking accommodation. Taking a great interest in the orderly planning of Hobart Town he rode to the top of an impressive hill just outside the town, with his Aid-de-Camp Captain Antill. The hill had a strategic view of the settlement and river and after inspecting the site he said, "This is the spot for a Barracks". It has been the main military headquarters ever since. The site became known as Barrack Hill and it was not until the coming of Governor Arthur (1824-36) that it was named Anglesea Barracks. Gov. Arthur

naming it after the Marquis of Anglesey. Macquarie left the island leaving instructions that barracks for 200 soldiers, quarters for officers and mess and a hospital be erected.



Governor Macquarie statue, Hyde Park, Sydney

It was not until 1814 that construction began under the administration of Lt-Governor and Lt-General, Thomas Davey. The Rev Bobby Knopwood, pioneer priest mentions that he attended the laying of the foundation stone in 1814 of the Officers quarters and mess on the 17th August. The occasion was also the first time public attention was given to Freemasons in Hobart Town, with a number being present at the ceremony. It took until 1818 for the buildings to be partially completed, but further buildings were erected from convict bricks up until 1838. Afterwards, until the British left in 1870, buildings were made from local sandstone.

When the British Imperial Forces did leave they left a substantial number of buildings. Tasmania did have a number of colonial volunteers, emerging from the end of the Crimean War (1854). Some of these volunteers did use portions of Anglesea for training, together with a small permanent military staff. To utilise the other buildings during this period, it was decided to let much of it out to the community. Occupants were once a boys' school, a girls' industrial school, a girls' reformatory (1888-1905) and an aged women's home. Grounds were rented to the Royal Hobart Bowling Club and buildings to a gymnasium and to the weather bureau, which used the premises until 1986. With the declaration of the war in South Africa (1899-1902), the **Tasmanian** Ministry of Defence saw the need with an expanding military to regain control of the site; thus Anglesea Barracks passed again to full military jurisdiction.

After Federation, defence responsibility passed to the new Federal Government then in Melbourne. Placed in over all command was Major-General Hutton and Tasmania became the 6th Military District. In 1910 Lord Kitchener visited Tasmania to advise the Federal Government on defence planning. As a result further construction of buildings took place

and Anglesea became the headquarters of the Citizen Military Force (CMF). This extra construction was a big asset when World War I began as it was almost able to handle the many volunteers that arrived. However, other camps were needed and sprung up at Sandy Bay, Claremont, the Waterworks and elsewhere. During the war and after, the Barracks was a place for the returning wounded and for discharging soldiers.

As the headquarters for Administration and recruitment Anglesea played a similar role during World War II. Post World War saw its involvement in the Korean War and Vietnam. It was the home to the CMF for many years and even today, is where cadets of the three services meet and train.

The base naturally contains more than its share of historical features. There are a number of guns displayed, ranging from two British 8 inch mortars dating from the Crimean War, a Ships' 9-Pounder from the 1850s, two brass guns probably dating before 1774, two 303 Vickers Machine Guns and a number from World War I and II. There are many buildings, including the *Commander's Residence*, a marvellous colonial Georgian building, near the main entrance to the Barracks with its open colonial verandah. This was originally the hospital, built about 1820. The building has been substantially renovated over the years and supposedly has its own ghost.



Legge Cottage was constructed as a magazine for the Barracks in the early 1900s. The *Garrison Tap Room* was erected in 1834-5 and is now home to the RAAF. Other important buildings are Two-Storey Soldiers Barracks (1847-48), The Fives Court (1835), New Soldiers Barracks (1827) with extensive alterations in 1934, Subaltern's & Officers Mess (1827-1842) and the Field Officer's Quarters (c1814) now Headquarters for the Royal Australian Navy. Some buildings have actually been pulled down. The married soldiers and non-commissioned officers' quarters, erected in 1823, was demolished in 1912. *Beaumaris*

House, although not at Anglesea and located close by in Sandy Bay has been used as an officers married quarters, later the Air Training Corp and even later by the 12/40th Battalion, Royal Tasmanian Regiment.



The Gaol was erected in 1847 and is now home to the Military Museum.

The only Memorial, (erected in 1850), to the Maori War of 1845-46 in Australia is in the grounds of Anglesea together with many other interesting tombstones, plaques and memorials. It was from Anglesea that soldiers of the 99th Regiment left Tasmania to fight in New Zealand. One enters the area through an archway, which was originally part of the Bath Inn located at Lemon Springs, the Midlands.



99th Memorial

Anglesea Barracks is listed by the National Trust and is listed with Commonwealth Heritage.



Barrack's entrance



Korean Memorial Anglesea Barrack grounds



Machine gun



Photos: Reg Watson