

## Early recordkeeping

Prior to 1810 few records survive. One factor was the lack of stability in the office of Secretary to the Governor. Ten different men had served as Secretary to the Governor, or to the colony, or “to Government” since 1788. Most had served less than two years. The Secretary to the Governor following the arrival of Macquarie was John Thomas Campbell. Campbell was to hold the office for eleven years. The improvements made to the public records at this time have resulted in the greater part of the early records of the colony surviving from 1810 onwards.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Stationery supplies

Shortages of stationery continued to plague the colony. In 1816 Macquarie directed the Deputy Commissary General David Allan to send to the Governor’s office a complete case of stationery Allan had received from England per *Elizabeth* as his own and the secretary’s office was ‘much in want of every kind of stationery for the use of the Public Service’.<sup>[2]</sup>

In practice many early Governors did not distinguish between official and private documents. Hence when they departed from the colony they took many official records with them. Indeed in 1822 Earl Bathurst wrote to Macquarie’s successor Sir Thomas Brisbane correcting ‘an erroneous impression, entertained by Officers administering the Government of these Possessions, that my official correspondence with them was liable to be removed by them ... upon their retirement from the Government’.<sup>[3]</sup> These three factors, the brevity of office of the secretaries, the scarcity of stationery and the removal of official papers, may account in part for the paucity of records prior to 1810.

## Destruction of records

It should also be kept in mind that many records were destroyed as a result of the Rum Rebellion and the chaos of the following years. When Macquarie arrived he opened the room in Government House in which Governor Bligh’s papers were said to be sealed. ‘It has since been opened by himself, but no papers of any importance were found in it, and I understand they were all taken to England by Lieu’t Col. Johnston and Mr McArthur.’<sup>[4]</sup> Macquarie with the help of the methodical Campbell set about restoring order in the colony and regulating the conduct of public business.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Taking charge of recordkeeping

Macquarie was very much involved in the administration of the colony. While Governor most public correspondence, proclamations, government and general orders, memorials, instructions, etc were either addressed to him or issued in his name, and frequently drafted in his hand. The vast majority of the correspondence from this period is annotated with the initials ‘LM’ showing he had personally considered the matters raised.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1822 a claim of verbal approval from Macquarie to cut cedar was thought improbable because ‘Macquarie [was] very particular in giving written Documents for the most trifling things’.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Setting rules

When Macquarie took office on 1 January 1810 he set about correcting irregularities caused by the dissenting government which had replaced Governor Bligh. On 2 January 1810 he issued a government and general order which requested Colonel Paterson, the late Lieutenant-Governor of the colony 'to give necessary directions for all the public records, official books, and papers belonging to the Government to be sent to the Government House to-morrow morning at 10 o'clock, accompanied with an inventory, or list, of them'.<sup>[8]</sup> On 4 January 1810 he issued a proclamation revoking all appointments, trials, and grants of land since the arrest and removal of William Bligh and also commanding those who had held such appointments to deliver 'all papers, records and documents belonging to them ... to those persons who respectively exercised the duties of the same [offices] at the time of the arrest and removal of William Bligh'.<sup>[9]</sup> On 10 January 1810 he issued another proclamation declaring void all appointments, land grants and trials since the arrest and removal of Bligh.<sup>[10]</sup> Most of the land grants and pardons he revoked were later confirmed. Macquarie personally examined pardons and certificates of freedom surrendered which had been issued during the administration of Johnston, Foveaux and Paterson and he re-issued those which he regarded as valid or warranted.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Office business

On 8 January 1810 by a government and general order Macquarie fixed days for the speedy dispatch of public business. At ten o'clock every day but Sunday he would receive reports from civil officers, at eleven he would receive military reports, from twelve till two every Tuesday he would receive such gentlemen as may have occasion to call upon him on business. All applications for either grants of land, or of stock, or leases were 'to be made in writing, in the form of a petition or memorial, addressed to the Governor, and sent in weekly at twelve o'clock at noon every Monday'.<sup>[12]</sup> Macquarie issued a further general order in 1813 which stated that petitions and memorials would only be received on the first Monday of each month, those for land and cattle on the first Monday in June, and those from convicts for indulgences on the first Monday in December.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Organising the chaos

A major reorganization of the early Colonial Secretary's records took place in 1888-90 in connection with the publication of the *History of New South Wales from the Records*. Papers were ordered into bundles. For the period 1788-1809 there were only three bundles. For the period 1810 to 1821 there were bundles for each year.<sup>[14]</sup> Macquarie also was diligent in keeping copies of out-letters. Regular series of out-letter books exist from his arrival. *Copies of letters sent: local and overseas* (NRS 935) exist from 28 December 1809 and *Copies of letters sent to Van Diemen's Land, Newcastle and Norfolk Island* (NRS 936) from 6 January 1810. In 1814 the local letters were included in *Copies of letters sent within the Colony* (NRS 937) and the overseas letters in *Copies of letters sent outside the Colony, "Foreign"* (NRS 939). From 1817 many important documents were included in the series of *Copies of letters sent and received, mainly within the colony, or "Document books Nos. 1-3"*.<sup>[15]</sup> This system of out letter books was to continue well past Macquarie's time.

## Public vs private records

When Ellis Bent, the Deputy Judge Advocate who had accompanied Macquarie to New South Wales died, Macquarie was concerned that the records of his office should remain. On

18 December 1815 Macquarie requested all official documents of the Judge Advocate's department, left in Jeffery Hart Bent's care by Ellis Bent, be handed over to Frederick Garling, now appointed Deputy Judge Advocate. Jeffery Hart Bent reported that all such records had been handed over to James Foster, Clerk to the late Judge Advocate.<sup>[16]</sup> When it was found that some documents had been withheld on the grounds that they were private Macquarie again requested that they should be delivered to Frederick Garling.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Setting standards for the future

On 18 January 1817 Macquarie issued a proclamation that deeds and conveyances be registered and records kept. He established the Judge Advocate's office as the proper 'public office for the registration of all deeds, mortgages and conveyances.' He further provided that certificates of registration issued by the Judge Advocate's office were to be allowed in all courts as evidence of the registration.<sup>[18]</sup>

Among the earliest registers of convict administration are series which begin in 1810 and were recorded in [4/4427]. These include: *Registers of certificates of freedom, 4 Feb 1810-26 Aug 1814* ([NRS 12208](#)); *Copies of returns of Absolute and Conditional Pardons granted, 1810-29* ([NRS 1165](#)); *List of Tickets of Leave issued, 2 Jul 1810-3 Oct 1814* ([NRS 1166](#)); *Returns of Pardons and Certificates of Freedom surrendered, 29 Jan 1810-18 Feb 1811* ([NRS 1167](#)). One of those mentioned in the last series is Edward Dillon, whose conditional pardon signed by Macquarie has survived as a rare example in the Colonial Secretary's later correspondence.<sup>[19]</sup>

Macquarie thus took care that the records of the colony during his governorship should be kept in the colony and held by the responsible public office. The systems in place for the proper maintenance of the records would continue into the 1820s. It would not be until the governorship of Ralph Darling in 1826 when a major reorganisation would again take place in the office of the Colonial Secretary.

State Records is fortunate that Macquarie's care and concern that records be made and kept resulted in these important public records surviving into the twentieth century and beyond. In 1988 as a Bicentennial project the papers of the New South Wales Colonial Secretary 1788-1825 were microfilmed and extensively indexed. The [online index](#) and microfilms have opened up a wealth of information on Macquarie's governorship to the people of New South Wales and indeed the world.<sup>[20]</sup>

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Below is a rare example of a Macquarie pardon. Edward Dillon's conditional pardon No. 1216 signed by Governor Lachlan Macquarie, registered 31 January 1820

No 1216



**W**HEREAS HIS MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE THIRD, by a Commission under the GREAT SEAL of GREAT BRITAIN, by HIS MAJESTY'S Royal Sign Manual, bearing Date the Eighth Day of November, in the Thirty-first Year of HIS MAJESTY'S Reign, hath been Graciously Pleased to Give and Grant full Power and Authority to the GOVERNOR (or in Case of his Death or Absence the LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR) for the Time-being of His Majesty's Territory of the EASTERN COAST of NEW SOUTH WALES and the ISLANDS thereunto adjacent, by an Instrument or Instruments in Writing, under the Seal of the Government of the said Territory, or as HE or THEY respectively shall think fit and convenient for His Majesty's Service, to REMIT either ABSOLUTELY or CONDITIONALLY the Whole or any Part of the Term or Time for which Persons convicted of Felony, Misdemeanor, or other Offences amenable to the Laws of Great Britain, shall have been, or shall hereafter be respectively Conveyed or Transported to New South Wales, or the Islands thereunto adjacent.

BY VIRTUE of such Power and Authority so vested as aforesaid, I, LACHLAN MACQUARIE, Esquire, Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Territory of New South Wales and its Dependencies, taking into Consideration the good Conduct of *Edward Dillon who arrived in this Colony on the Ship Arch Duke Charles Jeffrey's, Master, in the Year 1813, under Sentence of Transportation for Life.*

DO hereby CONDITIONALLY REMIT the Remainder of the Term or Time which is yet to come and unexpired of the original Sentence or Order of Transportation passed on the said *Edward Dillon at County Wickliffe, in the Year one thousand Eight hundred and Eleven.*

PROVIDED ALWAYS, and on Condition, that the said *Edward Dillon* continue to reside within the Limits of this Government for and during the Space of *his* original Sentence or Order of Transportation:—Otherwise, the said *Edward Dillon* shall be subject to all the Pains and Penalties of Re-appearing: Great Britain or Ireland, for and during the Term of *his* original Sentence or Order of Transportation; or, as if this Remission had never been granted.

GIVEN, under my Hand and Official Seal, at Government House, Sydney, in NEW SOUTH WALES, this *Thirty first* Day of *January* in the Year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred and *Twenty.*

*L. Macquarie*

REGISTERED IN THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

*09<sup>th</sup> Sept 1823*  
*H. Douglas*

*W. M. Campbell Secy*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1822*  
*H. Douglas*

[1] G. D. Richardson, 'The Early Archives of New South Wales, Notes on their Creation and their Keepers', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 59 Pt 2 (June 1973), p.80.

[2] Colonial Secretary; NRS 897, [4/1736 p.171] Reel 6046; *Historical Records of Australia* (HRA). I. 1.483 quoted in Richardson, p.92.

[3] HRA I.X.800-801.

[4] Governor Macquarie to Viscount Castlereagh, 8 March 1810. HRA I.7.219.

[5] *Colonial Secretary Correspondence Guide*. See Introduction: History of the Office.

[6] *Index to the Papers of the New South Wales Colonial Secretary 1788-1825*, Sydney: Archives Authority of New South Wales, 1988. See [Macquarie, Lachlan. Governor of New South Wales](#).

[7] Colonial Secretary; NRS 938, [4/5783 pp.6, 16].

[8] Colonial Secretary; NRS 897, [4/1723 pp.2-6] Reel 6042; NRS 1046, [SZ1044 pp. 153-5] Reel 6038; NRS 1052, [4/426 pp.3-6] Reel 6039; HRNSW 7.254.

[9] *Historical Records of New South Wales* (HRNSW) 7.255-256.

[10] Colonial Secretary; NRS 1043, [SZ756 pp.641-3] Reel 6039.

[11] HRA. I.9 Introduction, p.vii; NRS 1167, Returns of pardons and certificates of freedom surrendered, 29 Jan 1810-18 Feb 1811 [4/4427 part] Reel 601, COD18; for land grants cancelled see NRS 1215, Register of land grants, Apr-30 Dec 1809, Reel 2505.

[12] HRNSW 7.267.

[13] General Order, 9 January 1813. *Sydney Gazette*, 9 January 1813, p.1

[14] *Colonial Secretary Correspondence Guide*. See Introduction 'The Letters Received and other papers, 1788-1826'.

[15] *Colonial Secretary Correspondence Guide*. See Introduction: The Out-letter Books, 1808-25 and Letters Sent: List of Series – Chronological, and Inventory of Series.

[16] NRS 897, [4/1733 pp.118-20] Reel 6045.

[17] NRS 897, [4/1733 pp.121-3 and reply pp.124-7] Reel 6045.

[18] NRS 897, [4/1737 pp.8-12] Reel 6046; NRS 1047, [SZ1044 pp.246-50] Reel 6038.

[19] NRS 906, [4/1124]; NRS 1167, [4/4430 p.137] Reel 774, COD19.

[20] The [online index is here](#). The microforms are available not just in Australia but in several countries around the world.

