

SOME HISTORY OF GOVERNOR MACQUARIE

In an Australia Day speech last year our NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, who is a great admirer of the accomplishments of Governor Macquarie said

“Lachlan Macquarie, whose momentous twelve year term of office began on 1st January, 1810, when he was 48 years old, a seasoned traveller and an army Lieutenant with a rich fund of experience and hardened by war.

At that time the country was divided by faction as a result of the Bligh rebellion, and was almost starving. Public buildings were in ruins, roads and bridges were impassable, but he immediately set about transforming the deeply depressing conditions.

Two hundred years ago he saw the role of education in building a nation and made it one of his first priorities.

He established the nation’s economy—an environment in which commerce and manufacturing could flourish, he introduced coinage in 1813, & in 1817 the colony’s first bank, the Bank of New South Wales—opened its doors.

When he left office in 1821, he could point to 265 public works carried out during his term, many designed by Francis Greenway, the former convict appointed civil architect—roads to Parramatta and the Blue Mountains, the five planned towns (the Macquarie Towns) including Richmond, Liverpool and Windsor, built beyond reaches of the floodwaters from the Hawkesbury River. The city of Bathurst was largely his creation. Campbelltown was named after his wife (her maiden name). The longest, straight street in Sydney he named after himself.

He began the tradition of horseracing and agricultural fairs.

He encouraged exploration of pastoral land with the ever-present threat of famine in the colony relying on shipments of food.

After the successful crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813, the road was commissioned the following year and built in an extraordinary **six months** as a gateway to the pasture lands beyond.

He set up the Benevolent Society whose aims were “to relieve the poor, the distressed, the aged & the infirm, and to encourage industrious habits among the indigent poor.”

(The paragraph below was written by Marie Sullivan whose enthusiasm helped plan this Macquarie Bicentenary 2010.)

“Few or none of these things existed prior to the Macquaries’ arrival in NSW: Churches, schools, hospitals, journalists and newspapers, roads, agricultural and farming pursuits, racing carnivals, lawyers and courts, artists and architects, surveyors and explorers, annual festivals, banks, botanists and botanic gardens, places where the disabled, the mentally ill, the convicted prisoner and the young could be adequately and safely housed and cared for, urban planners and carefully laid-out towns, buildings and lighthouses of architectural magnificence, leadership with probity, kindness and vision.”

Looking forward to meeting many of our members during the forthcoming events this year. Di Cox.