

Macquarie Lightstation 200 years of history

30 November 2018





The Harbour Trust wishes to acknowledge the Birrabirragal people, the traditional owners and custodians of these lands.

The Macquarie Lightstation, also known as South Head Upper Light, is the site of the Australia's first lighthouse. A prominent Sydney landmark, it can be seen from the ocean and Sydney Harbour.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

Welcome — Mary Darwell, Harbour Trust Executive Director

Welcome to Country — Uncle Ray Davison, Metro Aboriginal Land Council

**Christian Langley and Freya McKinley-Rowe
School Captains — Kincoppal-Rose Bay School**

The Hon Melissa Price MP, Minister for the Environment, Member for Durack

**The Hon Gabrielle Upton MP, Minister for Environment,
Heritage and Local Government, Member for Vaucluse**

Patrick Dodd, President, The Macquarie Society

Event close/light refreshments

Macquarie Lightstation tours and Macquarie University virtual reality experience

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Harbour Trust is able to share this incredible site with the community due to the support of the Harbour Trust Macquarie Lighthouse Volunteer Tour Guides.

We would like to thank the following members of the community for their interest and guidance in shaping the Macquarie Lightstation Bicentennial celebrations:

Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Government | Dr. Stephen Gapps, Australian National Maritime Museum
Dan Glover, Australian Maritime Safety Authority | Prof. Roy Macleod, Harbour Trust Community Advisory Committee

Patrick Dodd, The Macquarie Society | Woollahra Municipal Council
John Ibbotson, Australian Lighthouse Traders | Ian Clifford, Lighthouses of Australia Inc.

The Harbour Trust would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Macquarie University for the creation of the innovative Macquarie Lightstation virtual reality experience.

Visit harbourtrust.gov.au/macquarie-lightstation for more information.

Old and new Macquarie Lighthouse, Sydney, N.S.W., 1884
/ photographer New South Wales. Government Printing Office.
Image: State Library New South Wales.



Laying the foundation stone for the new Macquarie Lighthouse, South Head, 1881. Image: National Library of Australia.

MACQUARIE LIGHTSTATION — 200 YEARS OF LIGHT

HISTORY

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, more convicts were sent to New South Wales, with more than 1000 arriving in 1818. The impending arrival of ships transporting convicts and an increase in the volume of shipping led to the commencement of a series of building projects in Sydney.

Governor Macquarie gave instruction for a lighthouse, the first in Australia, to be constructed at the entrance to Port Jackson on South Head. Francis Greenway was appointed architect and Captain John Gill supervisor.

The lighthouse was named after Governor Macquarie with the foundation stone laid 11 July 1816.

The lighthouse received some criticism because of the two kilometre distance from the location to the actual opening of Sydney Harbour, and Hornby lighthouse was subsequently built at South Head.

The original Macquarie lighthouse was commissioned to cope with the extra shipping traffic coming in and out of the harbour and was designed to be a symbol of British power to those arriving.

From the beginning, the purpose of this site was twofold — to communicate news to the colony at Sydney Cove about the long awaited arrival of ships and to guide ships safely into Sydney Harbour.

The original lighthouse was designed by convict architect Francis Greenway who received a conditional pardon from Governor Macquarie for a job well done. The Macquarie Lighthouse was constructed from sandstone quarried on the site and completed in 1818. Due to crumbling foundations, it was demolished and a new lighthouse was built in 1883.

The Lighthouse was the most difficult construction undertaken in the colony up to this time. Prior to Greenway's arrival, most buildings had been no more than two storeys high. Other buildings constructed on the site at the same time were four corner lodges for the 'keepers of the signal'.



Francis Howard Greenway / pencil portrait by unknown artist.
The original Macquarie Lighthouse, before 1882.



The retaining wall marked part of the original compound, and is the only remaining above ground structure of the original Greenway lighthouse.

The lighthouse and associated site were added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999 and to the Commonwealth Heritage List on 22 June 2004.



Macquarie Lighthouse photograph by Frank Hurley.
Image: National Library of Australia.

TIMELINE

• 1818

The first Macquarie Lighthouse was built. The light was provided by whale oil lamps concentrated with a series of mirrors. This light could be seen up to 35 kilometres out to sea.



Continuation of View from Bunkers Hill including Dawes Battery, Fort Lachlan & South Head lighthouse, 1820 / by R. Read
Image: State Library of New South Wales.

• 1822

Greenway's judgment about the poor quality of the sandstone proved correct as iron hoops to support the lighthouse were put in place. Additional iron hoops were added in 1866.

• 1873

The light cast by the Greenway lighthouse was insufficient and the lantern room was too small to accommodate the now favoured Fresnel lens for concentrating the light.

It was decided to build a new lighthouse, due to the original lighthouse's crumbling foundations, at a cost of £26,000.

• 1883

The new lighthouse, which stands on the site today, was completed and stands at 26m tall.

Designed by the Colonial Architect, James Barnet. Externally, it closely resembled the Greenway lighthouse, however Barnet used sandstone from a Pyrmont quarry, which he was concurrently using in building the Pitt St end of the GPO in Martin Place.

The new lighthouse was built less than four metres from the original and for a time the two lighthouses stood together.



Original lighthouse minus its lantern allowing the new lighthouse to commence signalling.
Image: State Library of New South Wales.

• 1887

The remainder of the original lighthouse was removed.

• 1933

The lighthouse lens (still in use today) was installed and the lighthouse was connected to mains electricity.

• 1976

The lighthouse was fully automated, with some staff still living on site to monitor and maintain the lighthouse.

• 1989

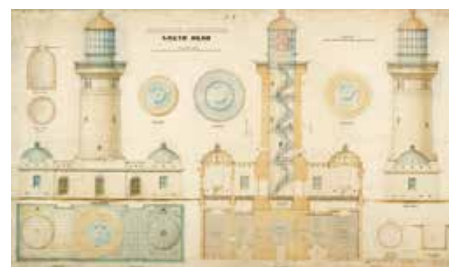
The last lighthouse keepers were withdrawn from the site with back-up power provided by batteries in the engine room.

• 2018

Technology provides an exciting insight into the site's history as Macquarie University utilises 3D imaging to create a virtual reality lighthouse experience and detect a possible underground tunnel.



James Barnet, Colonial Architect (1862–1890) designed the current Macquarie Lighthouse. Image: State Library of New South Wales.



Plan, section and elevations of the new lighthouse by James Barnet dated 22 May 1879.
Image: National Archives of Australia.

THE LIGHTHOUSE IN OPERATION TODAY

Fully-automated in 1976, Macquarie Lightstation remains one of Australia's most beloved and recognisable lighthouses. Its role in bringing ships safely into Sydney Harbour since 1818 makes it an important part of the nation's colonial history.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority still operates Macquarie Lightstation today for the safety of ships, with the Harbour Trust offering regular tours. Visit harbourtrust.gov.au/tours for details.



Australian Government
Australian Maritime Safety Authority

THE HARBOUR TRUST

For nearly 20 years, the Harbour Trust has protected and managed extraordinary foreshore sites on Sydney Harbour.

Along with Macquarie Lightstation, we have stewardship for Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour; Headland Park, Mosman; North Head Sanctuary, Manly; and Sub Base Platypus, North Sydney.

These First Nation countries are rich in history, with significant ties to Sydney's military, industrial and convict history. They also host some of Australia's most precious natural ecosystems.



The role of the Harbour Trust is to bring sites to life, creating vibrant new places open for community enjoyment and recreation.

Be Involved

Interested in volunteering, leasing opportunities, our e-newsletter or finding out more about the Harbour Trust?

harbourtrust.gov.au | info@harbourtrust.gov.au

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