Morpeth Cultural Landscape Development Processes

Evidence of biological, physical and cultural patterns of historical development
Influence of the River on Settlement Patterns

- Flood plain
- River terrace
- Morpeth
Pattern repeated further west

Largs

Ancient river courses

Paterson River

floodplain

Hunter River

Morpeth
Railways

1890

1915
Monthly rainfall in NSW

Key:
- 0 - 1 mm
- 1 - 5 mm
- 5 - 10 mm
- 10 - 25 mm
- 25 - 50 mm
- 50 - 100 mm
- 100 - 200 mm
- 200 - 300 mm
- 300 - 400 mm
- Over 400 mm
Patterns north of Morpeth

Poorer soils

Grazing country

Land grant boundaries
Subdivision patterns

- Spaghetti in new town (Largs)
- Radial patterns
- Chequer-board on land with no water access
- Parallel small holdings with water access
- Grid in old town (Morpeth)
- Radial patterns
1828 map of Hunter River (north to the right)
Map shows Parishes and Grants
Brief Chronology

- Traditional land of the Wanaruah nation
- First European contacts with squatters in early 1800s
- Massacres and genocide reported in late 1820s
- Most aboriginal people displaced from traditional Hunter valley land by 1840s
- River reserves and stock routes became refuges
European history

- Early exploration by Lt. Col. Paterson in 1801
- Paterson named the locality Green Hills
- Squatter precede early land grantees to the area in 1810-1820s
- Land grant to Lt Edward Close (former soldier, then engineer in Newcastle) in 1821
- Close built Closebourne House in 1824
- Convict labour built road to Wallace Plains (Maitland) in 1827
- Private town of Morpeth grew after 1830s land sales of 1834 (1831-1841)
- Toll road from Maitland
Economic History

- Early settlers cleared the Hunter River rainforests off what is now the alluvial flats of the flood plains
- Steam paddle wheel ships revolutionised coastal trade (1830s)
- Morpeth became the first river port north of Sydney (1830-1846)
- Port was an export centre (coal, wheat, hay, barley, wool, sheepskins, hides, casks and tallow)
- Port imported goods to Hunter Valley and New England regions
- First port of call for immigrants in some cases
- Two steam ship companies established with own wharves (1850s)
- Customs station established for international trade, plus bond stores
- Railway by passes Morpeth, linking Newcastle and Maitland (1857)
- Arrived in Morpeth in 1864 (outskirts) and wharves (1870)
- Railway become the main trade transport method
- River begins to silt up as a result of land clearing upstream (1890s)
Town Centre Civic Buildings

- Closebourne House 1824
- St James’ Anglican Church 1837 (Blacket extension 1862, Horbury Hunt 1874)
- Morpeth House 1852
- Slab cottage (Tank Street) 1820s (relocated)
- JJ White Joinery (The Trading Post) 1838
- Marlborough House 1846
- Campbells Store 1850
- Taylors Bonded Stores 1851
- Post Office 1861-1866
- Court House 1862
- St Bede’s Catholic Church 1870
- Police Station (James Barnet) 1879
- Railway Station 1889
- CBC Bank 1889
- Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception 1897
- School of Arts building, High Street (date?)
School of Arts Building High Street
Town Planning Themes

- First town layout by surveyor in 1831
- Early 19th century style planning with no laneways
- Main streets parallel to river
- Tank Street on boundary between grants leading to river crossing (later Queens Wharf)
- Basic structure retained, but first subdivision plan reflects Darling Plan with primary and secondary streets and lanes
- Town grows southward, but is contained east and west by Edward and Tank Streets
- Town completed in basic layout before railway arrives
- Town stagnates in early 20th century: later infill happens in back lanes by subdivision of deep blocks
- Primary streetscapes retain their 19th century character
Secondary Street in Traditional Form
Princess Street: now a 20th century street