



*Morpeth Court House*

# Morpeth Heritage Walk

## Introduction

We acknowledge the Wonnarua People as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land within the Maitland Local Government Area. We pay respect to all Aboriginal Elders, past, present and future with a spiritual connection to these lands.

Originally known by its Aboriginal name 'Illalaung' meaning green hills, Morpeth is nestled on the banks of the Hunter River and surrounded by picturesque farmland. With a rich Aboriginal heritage, and European settlement dating back to the early 19th century, the township of Morpeth is home to many significant historic sites highlighted along this walk.

Morpeth's role as one of the most important river ports in New South Wales began in the 1820s under the instruction of the Colonial Secretary. With the development of Queens Wharf in 1833 opening the trade route with Sydney, the town soon became a major industrial and agricultural hub.

Today parts of Morpeth are like a living museum with beautifully preserved buildings, cobbled stone pathways and sandstone kerbsides. With a great mix of everyday conveniences amidst unique shops where you'll discover artisan treasures, fashion boutiques and scrumptious treats, it's easy to see why Morpeth is one of Maitland's most popular places to explore.

Visit [mymaitland.com.au](http://mymaitland.com.au) to learn more about Morpeth and plan your visit.



*Morpeth Post Office*

*Maitland City Council acknowledges the use of photographs and other images for the Morpeth Heritage Walk project from: University of Newcastle Cultural Collections, Morpeth Museum Collection, Greg Ray Collection, Newcastle Region Library, Maitland City Library, National Library of Australia, Trove, State Library of NSW, Morpeth History Sleuth, State Library of Victoria and the Fairhall Family website.*

*While every endeavour has been made to ensure the accuracy of information publishers cannot be held responsible for consequences of inadvertent errors contained herein.*



# Instructions

Look out for the marker tile at each location and use the Maitland Walks App to listen to short audio clips, providing directions and historical information at each site. The app also provides opportunities to 'meet the people' and listen to character representation or view additional images or documentation.



## Legend



Start point  
Illalaung Park



Site markers



Public Toilets



Parking



Picnic area



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THE MAITLAND  
WALKS APP**





# Heritage Sites

- |                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Commercial Hotel               | 14. Morpeth Public School       |
| 2. Taylors Bond Store             | 15. Earlsdon<br>(Portus Home)   |
| 3. Morpeth Court House            | 16. Sim's Cottages              |
| 4. Sim's Foundry                  | 17. Astor Theatre               |
| 5. Morpeth Post Office            | 18. Murphy's House              |
| 6. Styman's Bakery                | 19. Morpeth School of Arts      |
| 7. River Royal Hotel              | 20. St James Anglican<br>Church |
| 8. JG White Joinery Factory       | 21. Campbell's Store            |
| 9. Morpeth Railway Station        | 22. Surgeon's House             |
| 10. Marlborough House             | 23. Ingall's Terrace            |
| 11. Workers Cottages              | 24. CBC Bank                    |
| 12. Police Station                | 25. Arnott Bakehouse            |
| 13. Former Methodist<br>Parsonage |                                 |

## Starting Point



### Illalaung Park, 134 Swan St

Start your journey at Illalaung Park. This land overlooked the bustling Morpeth port of the 19th century and offers many clues to the past.



## Site Markers



Each of the 25 sites on the Morpeth Heritage Walk can be identified by a site marker, similar to the example on the left. Site markers can be located either on the property or adjacent to the footpath.



### Site 1

#### Commercial Hotel

127 Swan St

The Commercial Hotel has been trading since 1865, formerly as the Farmers United Home Hotel. Several female licensees have operated it over the years including Abigail McKee, Julia Mullens and Eliza Sucker. At its peak in 1867 Morpeth boasted 11 hotels. Consequently, riotous behaviour often caused by alcohol ensued out into the streets.



### Site 2

#### Taylor's Bond Store

128 -130 Swan St

James Taylor saw the promise of the young town of Morpeth. He constructed the Taylor's Bond Store, which comprised of three buildings: the store, a residence, and commercial bank with stone steps leading up from the adjoining wharf. Caleb Soul later took over the business and became notable for selling the most potent rum in the colony and starting a nationwide pharmaceutical brand, Soul Pattinson & Co.



### Site 3

#### Morpeth Court House

123 -125 Swan St

Morpeth Court House, now the Morpeth Museum, bestowed justice from 1862 to c1950. Cases heard before the court included 'riding a dray (cart) too fast', insulting language to a policeman and being drunk and disorderly, which could earn seven days in the lock up.

The grand Court House, similar to the Post Office, was an expression of Morpeth's significance in the 19th century. The Morpeth Court House public clock was a great benefit as few people had timepieces.



### Site 4

#### Sims Foundry

107 -109 Swan St

Duncan Sim came to Australia in 1842 and first worked as a woodcutter, then as a wheelwright. The business he established steadily progressed and for many years it was the largest of its type north of Newcastle. 60 men once worked here casting iron ovens, agricultural machinery, railway rolling stock and other articles. D Sim and Sons Iron and Brass Foundry occupied this site from the 1850s to 1926.



### Site 5

#### Morpeth Post Office and Telegraph

105 Swan St

This grand building, designed by James Barnet, opened as Morpeth's Post Office in 1881. Previous postal services operated out of Morpeth Court House from the 1860s and at various locations prior to that, at either the private business or residence of the Postmaster. Morpeth's initial Post Office opened on 1 August 1838 with a Mr John Chastel in charge, at a time when mail would arrive and depart on private vessels, called steam packets.



### Site 6

#### Styman's Bakery

99 Swan St

William Styman was born in 1822. As a 14 year old he had joined the Royal Navy. He came to Australia in 1843 and worked in the NSW coastal trade. By 1851 the new goldfields beckoned. Although he had some success, by 1852 he had set up as a baker in Paterson and during the 1860s he came to Morpeth. By the late 1880s he had the largest and oldest bakery in the town. The sandstone post supports are the only reminders of the former shops verandah.



### Site 7

#### River Royal Hotel

97 Swan St

The River Royal Hotel opened in 1876, designated then 'The Royal'. It catered for shipping and railway workers and passengers arriving at the wharves and station. The stylish Victorian building added greatly to the streetscape of Morpeth.



### Site 8

#### JG White Joinery Factory

7 Robert St

JG White was one of Morpeth's quiet achievers. He arrived in the late 1830s and worked first as a bootmaker, then gradually established a significant joinery factory on this site after 1850. He made almost everything, furniture, beds, broom handles and coffins. He also acted as the local undertaker. At 91 Swan Street you can locate a recent recreation of JG White's original shop and dwelling.



### Site 9

#### Morpeth Railway Station

90 Swan St

Traders hoped that opening of the rail connection between Maitland and Morpeth in 1864 would support the river trade and assure the port's future. Instead it spelled the end as direct rail to Newcastle took over trade. The present station building was built in 1889 and the railway continued to survive as a passenger service up until 1953, when the line closed. The site has been used by the Public Works Department since 1959.



### Site 10

#### Marlborough House

73 - 75 Swan St

Around c1846 James Taylor built his grand residence, Marlborough House, for himself and his wife, Mary. The property has passed through a number of owners including Myles McRae, a local politician who opposed the railway. Later Marlborough House was the home of Dr Bennett the popular local doctor said to have had Morpeth's first motorcar and who died in the house in 1908.



### Site 11

#### Workers Cottages

69 Swan St

By the mid 19th century several single storey double cottages in Swan Street housed the families of workers who were employed at the shipping company wharves or on the railway.



### Site 12

#### Police Station

Cnr High and George St

The Morpeth Police Station with its residence and stables was built in 1879. It seems however, that its presence was overdue with the Maitland Mercury noting in 1879, 'Want of more police is urgently felt in Morpeth, for night after night there is dancing and howling at some of the pubs, till all hours ... If they can give a person three months for being a little tipsy, how much ought they give to those men that use such language on a Saturday night?'





## Site 13

### Former Methodist Parsonage

41 High St

This former Methodist Parsonage dates to c1868 and served as the Minister's House up until the mid 20th century. The building was renovated into a private residence in the 1970s.

## Site 14

### Morpeth Public School

36 - 46 High St

The National School provided education on its present site since 1862, however the public school building was not erected until 1866 replacing about six earlier private or church schools. The large allotment once contained a school farm that the children cultivated. The establishment of education in these early days was a strong statement attesting to Morpeth's growth.

## Site 15

### Earlsdon (Portus Home)

76 High St

Engineer John Portus Snr. established the region's first central flour mill, which his sons took over in 1855. John Snr. died in 1860 but the Portus family remained prominent citizens of Morpeth and district. Earlsdon is a second generation Portus family home.

## Site 16

### Sims Cottages

78 - 80 High St

These cottages provided accommodation for the workers of Sim and Sons Foundry. The demolition of Sim and Sons Foundry and Duncan Sim's own two storey home in Swan Street occurred in the 1940s, but these modest cottages remain to our present day.

## Site 17

### Astor Theatre

85 High St

Originally erected as a primitive Methodist Chapel in 1856, the building later housed a school, and was converted to the Astor Theatre in 1921. The theatre suffered significant storm damage in 1929 and was restored to continue on as the Astor Theatre, where it provided entertainment, from silent movies to cinemascope until 1964 when it fell victim to declining audiences.

## Site 18

### Murphy's House

106 - 108 High St

Moses Murphy was a successful contractor and hotelier in Morpeth. He was granted a publican's licence for two of Morpeth's busiest hotels, The Crown and Anchor and The Commercial. Moses built this elegant two unit residence which sits in one of the town's more salubrious residential areas, which was mostly occupied by merchants and business people.

## Site 19

### Morpeth School of Arts

110 High St

Morpeth School of Arts opened in 1863 with ideals about fostering the moral, social and intellectual growth of the community. The building was another example of Morpeth's coming of age and was used for a variety of purposes including visiting lecturers, film screenings, small concerts and meetings of groups like the Florence Nightingale Division, No. 29 of the Daughters of Temperance, Morpeth. A committee room here served as Morpeth Council Chambers from 1865 to 1944.



## Site 20

### St James Anglican Church

Tank St

The history of St James Anglican Church cannot be separated from that of its benefactor, Edward Charles Close, a former soldier who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, and who built the church on his own property in 1837 as an offering of thanks for his life spared in war. In 1874, the church suffered a fire that required significant rebuilding, with Close again paying the bills.

## Site 21

### Campbell's Store

175 Swan St

James Campbell's Store opened here in 1867 after trading for some time in a large stone warehouse diagonally opposite. Campbell had special tokens made for use instead of money. Today these coins are rare and valuable. Campbell's became the 'place to shop' and the store prospered up until the 1960s, when Morpeth's river trade started to fall into decline. The building's refurbishment in 1986 is seen by many as the start of the regeneration of the town which is now seen as a tourism destination.

## Site 22

### Surgeon's House

171 - 173 Swan St

The Surgeon's House was built for Dr. Francis Bennett and his wife Elizabeth c1845. For 60 years Dr. Bennett performed all the functions of the local country doctor, from treating illness to emergency surgery. Dr. Bennett is remembered for campaigning against 'modern female dress and ... the pernicious practices of tight lacing and wearing high heeled boots for their negative effects on the 'human frame'.

## Site 23

### Ingall's Terrace

153 - 163 Swan St

Richard Ingall was a local butcher whom successfully engaged in property development in Morpeth's heyday. Ingall's Terrace, which opened in 1862, comprised of several top quality shops and dwellings and became a major feature of the streetscape of Morpeth.

## Site 24

### CBC Bank

149 Swan St

The former Commercial Banking Company (CBC) was designed by the Mansfield Brothers, a prestigious architectural firm which designed many of the state's important commercial and civic buildings. The fact that the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney used Mansfield Brothers to design the Morpeth branch is an indication of the optimism in the town's economy in 1889 when the building opened.

## Site 25

### Arnott Bakehouse

146 - 148 Swan St

David Arnott rented the store, residence and bakehouse behind the shop in the early 1860s before going on to set up a premise in Newcastle. This iconic building in Morpeth, best known for its connection with Arnott's, where the original bakehouse oven remains has traded as a saddlery, bakery, boot making business and butcher throughout its history.





**The Morpeth Heritage Walk is an initiative  
of Maitland City Council.**

For further information or other  
self guided heritage walks contact

**Maitland Visitor Information Centre**

Cnr New England Hwy and High St, Maitland

**02 4931 2800**

**[mymaitland.com.au](http://mymaitland.com.au)**

