

# **Gunsmoke in the park – the Paddington Rifle Range**

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**John W. Ross**

**Cover photograph:**

Paddington Rifle Range – *Illustrated Sydney News*, c1870.





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## Foreword

Firearms were widely used in colonial Australia, either by professional or volunteer soldiers, for self-defence or sport shooting. In the early years, the settlers deployed rifles to supplement their meagre diets until farming was well established. Rifle shooting was a popular pastime in the nineteenth century that most people could afford, and other entertainments were scarce. Rifle clubs and associations sprang up to organise shooting competitions and social events.

Victoria Barracks was constructed in Paddington in the 1840s as the headquarters of the British military in New South Wales. In 1852, a rifle range was established to the south of the Barracks in present-day Moore Park for musketry training and ongoing practice. A Corps of Volunteers was raised in 1854 in response to the threat of war in Europe that may have left the colonies undefended. But when the Crimean War ended a few years later, the local Volunteer movement lost momentum.

The Volunteer Corps was revived in 1860 following the escalation of the New Zealand Wars, along with a Rifle Association to organise competitions and maintain interest in the movement. A second range was constructed next to the military range in 1862, providing a home for civilian riflemen to practise their craft. The British Government withdrew its last regiment in 1870, leaving the local authorities to supply and expand the defence forces of the growing colony. By the late 1880s, the Paddington range was deemed too small for the number of infantrymen then requiring practice, and unsafe for visitors to the new Centennial Park nearby. The range closed in 1890 and was replaced by a larger rifle range at Randwick.

As the rifle range was in a prime part of the town, the State Government received several requests from organisations to use the land. The Children's Hospital was initially allocated a site at the eastern end of the old range, but eventually built their new hospital at Camperdown. The main reuse of the land was to construct the Sydney Sports Ground, to be used for school sports during the week and a variety of other sports at the weekend, such as rugby union, cycling, athletics and motor racing. The Army established an engineers' depot to the east of the sports field, and finally ended its long residence of the rifle range site when the Sydney Football Stadium was built in 1988.

John W. Ross  
Surry Hills, Sydney  
May, 2020

email: [rossjw@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rossjw@ozemail.com.au)



## Defending the colony

### British regiments 1810-1870

Four companies of the Marine Corps arrived with the First Fleet in January 1788. When they returned to England in 1790, the British Government decided to create a special force to form a garrison for the new colony, called the New South Wales Corps. But squabbles with successive Governors culminated in the overthrow of Governor William Bligh in January 1808, masterminded by former and serving members of the Corps such as John Macarthur and Major George Johnston.

In response, the British Government sent out army Colonel Lachlan Macquarie in 1810 with his own regiment, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot, as the first non-Naval Governor. Thus began a succession of 24 British infantry regiments, as well as a number of smaller artillery and engineering regiments. The regiments typically remained in the Australian colonies for five to seven years, and were then posted to another part of the British Empire as part of their ongoing duties, often to India. Until the end of convict transportation (1840 in NSW, 1853 in Tasmania), many of the soldiers arrived as guards on the convict transport ships from England.



Figure 1 Victoria Barracks, c1870 (State Library of NSW)

Because of the shortage of security and other administrative personnel, the duties of the regiments were wide-ranging and often burdensome. Apart from activities connected with the convicts, they established a Mounted Police in NSW that operated between 1825 and 1850. The soldiers also constructed fortifications, fought fires and attended executions. They assisted police in keeping the peace between rioting sailors, rival political parties and various squabbling sectarians. Officers also sat on the early courts, effectively making them military tribunals, much to the dislike of civilian litigants (who did not want to be judged by soldiers) and the military (who did not think of court duty as part of their job description in any case).

They guarded anything and everything: shipwrecks, goldfields, colonial treasuries, quarantine stations, major government activities, and provided mounted escorts for gold transport. They manned coastal defences and fired artillery salutes on ceremonial occasions. They also saw action against Aboriginal resistance in most of the colonies. Some of the regiments served in New Zealand during the Maori Wars. Victoria Barracks was opened in the late 1840s on South Head Road in Paddington as the headquarters and principal training ground of the British military<sup>1</sup>.

From the 1860s, the cost of maintaining forces in Australia was a topic of debate in the House of Commons. As a result, it was resolved in 1862 that those colonies that had achieved responsible government would have to bear the cost of their own internal defences. Although the British Parliament continued to provide fifteen companies of infantry, these were paid for by the colonial governments by raising a poll tax, or a tax per head of liable citizens.

### **Volunteer Corps from 1854**

In the 1850s, the advent of responsible government in the Australian colonies led to increased responsibility and self-reliance. In 1853, the outbreak of the Crimean War and the French annexation of New Caledonia prompted the Australian colonies to supplement the British regiments with local volunteer forces, as it was feared that the troops would be redeployed to these conflicts. The Sydney Battalion Volunteer Rifle Corps was formed in 1854 by the *Volunteers Act*<sup>2</sup>. These Volunteers, who were mainly drawn from the upper class, were unpaid and required to provide their own uniforms, although the government supplied them with arms and ammunition.



**Figure 2 Sydney Volunteer Riflemen, 1870 (Illustrated Sydney News)**

But with the termination of the Crimean War in 1856, much of the momentum for establishing the force died out, and the Volunteer Corps practically ceased to exist. It was reformed in 1860 following the escalation of the New Zealand Wars, consisting of one troop of mounted rifles, three batteries of artillery, and twenty companies of infantry, with a total strength of 1,700. Some of the British troops

(and many volunteers) were sent from Australia to fight in the war<sup>3</sup>. By 1861, several companies of Volunteer Rifles were active in Sydney. Those mentioned in the press were based in Sydney (city), St Leonards (North Sydney), Newtown, Paddington, Surry Hills and Balmain<sup>4</sup>.

In 1862, the Mounted Rifles gave way to more artillery. But through the 1860s, colonial forces were plagued with problems of discipline, a lack of purpose, old equipment, poor training and a lack of command and control. In 1868, the military force was reorganised under the *Volunteer Regulation Act of 1867* and a grant of fifty acres was given for five years' efficient service<sup>5</sup>. Under this arrangement, a large force was maintained.

The Volunteer units had certain privileges compared to the professional militia. They could choose their own officers and the length of their own service, and were exempt from military discipline. The Volunteer units were not so much competent military forces as glorified rifle clubs, but they were enthusiastic. Drill was not too onerous, and shooting competitions were always popular. The Volunteers also sponsored a range of sporting teams to compete against civilian clubs. They also organised many cultural activities, such as theatrical and drama clubs, concerts, dances and picnics<sup>6</sup>.

The Volunteers were called upon in times of crisis: the Lambing Flat riots in 1861, the shooting of Prince Alfred in 1868 and the Sudan campaign in 1885<sup>7</sup>. Self-government was granted to New South Wales in 1855, and from 1862 the British government decided that the colonies with self-government would have to bear the cost of their own internal defence. The Volunteer movement faded in the 1870s, but was revived in 1885 by the war in Sudan and the death in January 1885 of the popular British General Gordon of Khartoum.

### **Self-reliance from 1870**

British troops withdrew by September 1870, leaving a small force of Royal Marines until 1913. Each of the colonies began to raise its own military and naval forces. Units were organised into standard formations such as battalions, with annual training camps.

Over time, the distinction between professional militia and the Volunteers became less clear, as some Volunteer units became paid or partly paid, and land grants were abolished in 1874. They lost the right to elect their officers, and were increasingly regulated. The militia was also essentially a volunteer force, as compulsory service was sometimes threatened but never enacted, so they voluntarily enlisted. After this, the military expanded and was reorganised into a more complex set of units, including Commissariat and Transport Corps, Torpedo and Signalling Corps.

The colonial military forces expanded rapidly in the early 1880s: between 1883 and 1886 the force rose from 8,000 to 22,000, although only about 1,000 were permanent soldiers<sup>8</sup>. The *Defence Act of 1903* was enacted to establish the structure of the Australian Army after Federation.



## Firearms of the nineteenth century

The nineteenth century saw the dramatic evolution of firearms from slow, troublesome and inaccurate flintlock muskets first used in the middle ages to much more accurate and efficient weapons using percussion cap systems and rifling. Short-barrel guns such as pistols and revolvers are not dealt with in this history, as there is no evidence of their use at the Paddington Rifle Range.

### Firing systems - flintlocks and percussion caps

The flintlock was the firing system used up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which a piece of shaped flint on the end of a short hammer struck a piece of steel, causing a spark which ignited gunpowder in a pan. Flame travelled along the barrel and ignited the main powder charge, causing an explosion that fired the ball-shaped bullet out of the barrel. The system was unreliable in wet weather, and was slow to fire the gun, giving the target some warning when the initial flash occurred. One duck-shooting clergyman in England requested a more rapid firing system, complaining that the ducks were able to take off at the sight of the flash and be out of range by the time the bullet was heading their way.

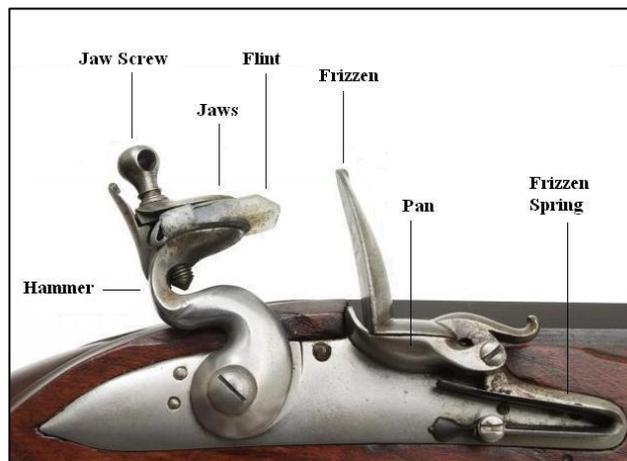


Figure 3 Flintlock mechanism (Wikimedia.org)

The percussion cap firing system was introduced around 1820, using a small brass cylinder with one closed end and a small amount of shock-sensitive material inside the enclosed end. When a hammer struck the percussion cap, the explosive primer in the cylinder was ignited and flame travelled through a hollow nipple near the hollow end to ignite the main powder charge. It was more reliable in wet weather, and many flintlocks were converted to this system.

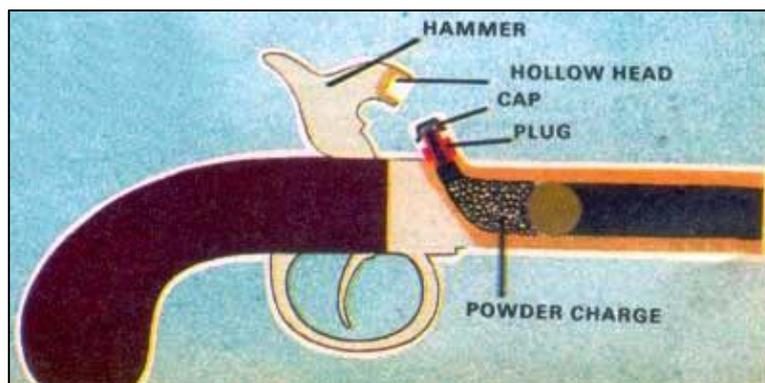


Figure 4 Percussion cap system (scotwars.com)

The modern firing system uses a self-contained metallic cartridge and projectile that is breech-loaded, so that the powder in the cartridge is ignited by the percussion method, the projectile is fired through rifling out of the barrel, and the used cartridge is ejected, either by opening the breech with a bolt or automatically by gas pressure. This was much faster to load than the original percussion cap system.

## Muskets

A musket is an older style of long-barrel gun in which gunpowder was packed into a smooth barrel followed by a ball-shaped bullet. A small amount of powder was then added to a pan at the firing end of the barrel, which was ignited to in turn ignite the powder in the barrel, firing the bullet (the flintlock system). Muskets were inaccurate, slow to load, and misfired in wet weather.



Figure 5 The Brown Bess musket (Wikimedia.org)

The British Army's long-barrel firearm in the early years of the Australian colonies was known as the Brown Bess. It was a muzzle-loading smooth-bore flintlock Land Pattern musket that contributed to the expansion of the British Empire with many incremental changes to its design. It was used from the 1720s to the 1830s, when it was superseded by a percussion cap smooth-bore musket. The Brown Bess was a common firearm used by both sides in the American War of Independence (1775-1783). The Maoris also used them during the so-called Musket Wars of the 1820s and 1830s, having purchased them from traders.

## Rifles

Advances in metallurgy during the Industrial Revolution allowed a helical groove to be bored on the inside of a barrel (a method known as rifling) that forced a tightly-packed pointed bullet to spin on its longitudinal axis when fired, improving the aerodynamic stability and greatly increasing its accuracy. Rifles were usually breech-loaded (using the percussion cap system), resulting in faster-loading and accurate firearms that were more weather-proof than flintlock muskets.



Figure 6 Enfield 1853 Pattern rifle musket (guns.fandom.com)

The standard issue military rifle when the Paddington Rifle Range was established was the Enfield 1853 Pattern percussion cap muzzle-loader, with a bore of 0.577". To hit a target at a range of 1,000 yards required a trajectory at least 75 feet above the line of sight<sup>9</sup>.

By the 1870s, the service rifle was the more powerful Martini-Henry breech-loading rifle<sup>10</sup>. This was the new generation of breech-loaded rifle with faster loading and greater range that saw service in the British Empire to the end of the nineteenth century.

## **Carbines**

These are long-arm firearms that were shortened for convenience of use by mobile troops. Many carbines fired the same ammunition as full-length rifles. They were typically used by high mobility troops such as special operations soldiers, paratroopers and mounted troops. The United States Army now used the M4 carbine as standard issue, a shorter and lighter version of the M16A2 assault rifle.



## The Paddington Rifle Range

### The Military Rifle Range

In 1851, a grant of land was given to the British Army just south of Victoria Barracks for use as a soldier's cricket ground and a garden. The first cricket match was played in 1854<sup>11</sup>. The Sydney Rifle Club had been holding competitions on an informal range next to the military garden from 1851<sup>12</sup>. In 1852, a rifle range was constructed for musketry practice by the military, adjacent to the Military Cricket Ground and garden. Shooters fired towards the eastern end where there were sandstone formations to place targets safely<sup>13</sup>. The range was not fenced for some years<sup>14</sup>, and passers-by sometimes took their chance to take a short cut across the firing area, timing their dash between tell-tale puffs of smoke from the shooting end<sup>15</sup>.

### The Volunteer Rifle Butts

In May 1862, a new rifle range opened for the Sydney Battalion Volunteer Rifle Corps, running parallel to and south of the military range. The range was 1000 yards long and 100 yards wide, enabling two firing parties to operate simultaneously. It was generally known as the Paddington Butts or Paddington Rifle Butts.

A high rocky ridge behind the targets was covered in sand and earth to indicate the impact of any stray bullets. On either side of the range were built two bulletproof shelters (mantlets), one for the marker of points actually scored, and the other on the more westerly side for the indication of ricochets. Both the military and Volunteer ranges were fenced off, with admission through gates<sup>16</sup>. In 1866, the New South Wales Rifle Association held its annual prize meeting at the Paddington Rifle Range for the first time<sup>17</sup>.

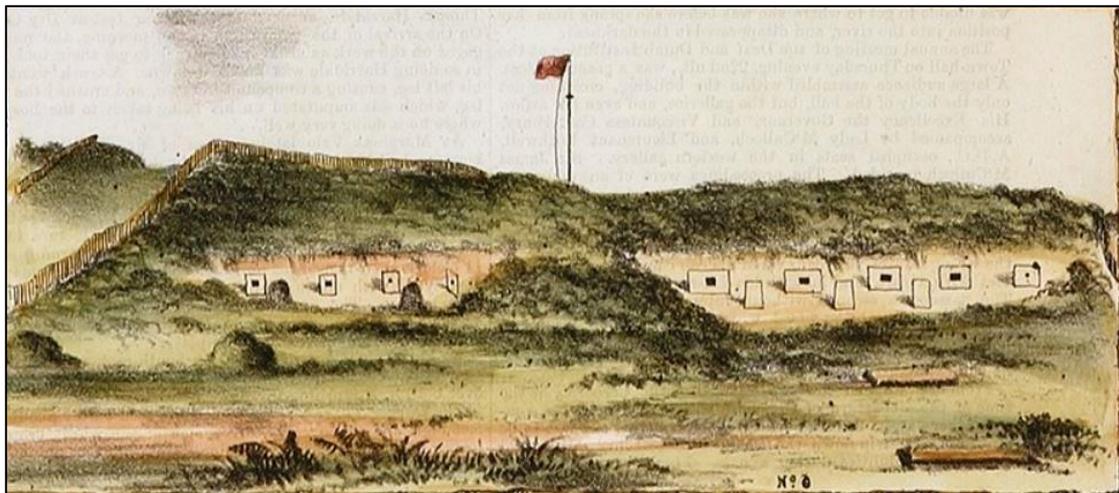


Figure 7 Paddington Rifle Range, 1870 (*Illustrated Sydney News*)

In time, military and sporting activities competed seriously for space in the area, with the rifle range operating at the same time as cricket and football matches. In 1875, a military spokesman complained that “we are driven from Moore Park by football players in winter and cricketers in summer”<sup>18</sup>. For their part, rugby players complained of having to play matches to the accompaniment of gunfire next door<sup>19</sup>.

By 1871, the safety limitations of Sydney's main rifle range at Paddington were being exposed by the firing power of the new service rifle, the Martini-Henry breech-loading rifle<sup>20</sup>. In 1886, an order was issued from the Headquarters of the Military Forces that the Paddington Rifle Range be closed, as it was considered that the shooting constituted a danger to the workmen in Centennial Park. But a subsequent deputation gained permission for shooting on Saturday afternoons only, and alteration to the stop-butts enabled shooting to continue there until 1890<sup>21</sup>.

In 1887, the Army decided that the rifle range was too small for the requirements of the growing armed forces. There was not enough room to give all the infantrymen the necessary training, especially in practice at moving targets. A larger site was selected just past Randwick, off Rainbow Street<sup>22</sup>. In 1888, the establishment of Centennial Park to the east of the rifle range resulted in occasional stray bullets flying overhead into the park. The range was acknowledged to be unsafe for the park users.

In March 1890, a quarryman in Centennial Park was wounded by a stray bullet from the rifle range, and the range was summarily closed by the Military authorities. This caused widespread complaints from marksmen, as no alternative range had been made available<sup>23</sup>. The annual prize meeting was not held by the Rifle Association that year, and *The Australian Star* helpfully suggested that if the riflemen went without practice for much longer, they might need larger targets when they resumed<sup>24</sup>. The new rifle range at Randwick was eventually opened in October 1892 for the use of troops<sup>25</sup>.

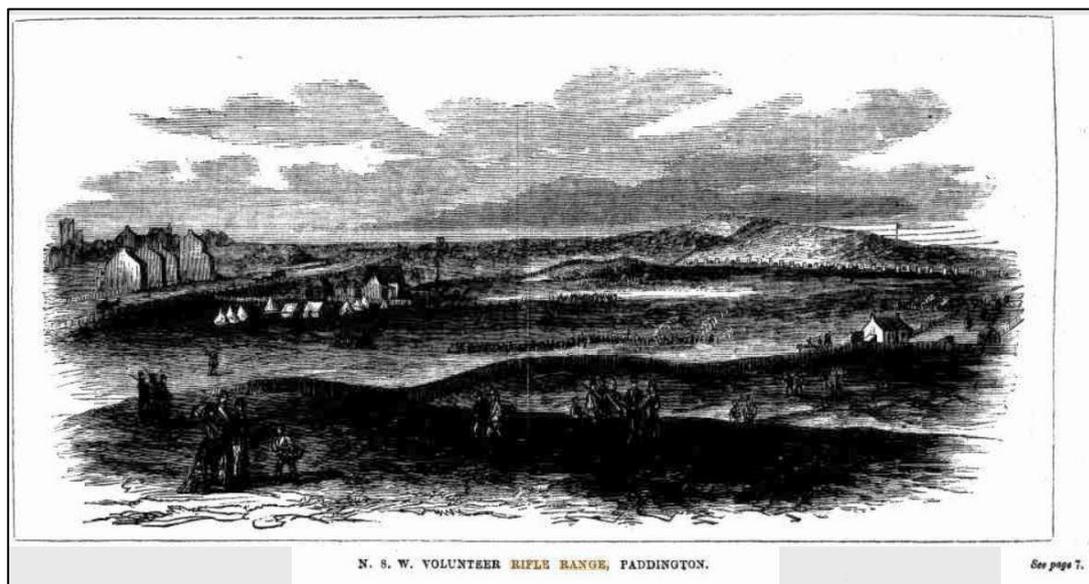


Figure 8 Paddington Rifle Range, 1877 (*Sydney Mail*, 13 October 1877)

## Catering to the shooters

Firearms were a major part of early colonial life in Australia. A great number of adults (and many youngsters) owned a firearm, either as a member of a British regiment or local Volunteers and Militia, for policing, self-defence or sport shooting (game and birds). The first use of rifles and hand guns in New South Wales was to supplement the meagre diets of the convicts and settlers and for security.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rifle shooting as a sport was a pastime which most people could afford, and filled an entertainment gap in the early days. But in many ways it was more than a sport, as various war scares in the nineteenth century drove the establishment of a popular Volunteer military movement with a focus on musketry<sup>26</sup>.

In common with many other popular pastimes, clubs and associations sprang up to organise competitive events and social gatherings. Gun shops were opened to supply and repair shooting equipment, and pubs were built at strategic locations to attract thirsty shooters on the way home from a hard day out on the range.

### Clubs and associations

#### The Sydney Rifle Club

In January 1843, an informal rifle match took place at the Red House Inn, Bedlam Ferry (near present-day Abbotsford Point), while a permanent rifle club was being planned<sup>27</sup>. The Sydney Rifle Club was formed soon afterwards and held its first shooting competition on Easter Monday<sup>28</sup>. The Club's aim was to teach the basic skills of marksmanship to the community<sup>29</sup>.

By 1846, the annual Easter Monday meeting was being held at the Sydney Water Reserve<sup>30</sup> (part of Sydney Common, probably in present-day Moore Park). In 1852, the Club was using an area near the newly-established military garden next to the Military Rifle Range<sup>31</sup>. Over time, the Club moved location from Paddington to Randwick (in 1890), then to Liverpool (in 1923) and finally to the Anzac Rifle Range at Malabar (in 1968)<sup>32</sup>.

A Volunteer Small Bore Rifle Club was formed in October 1863, with the aim of keeping the Volunteers who shot with small bore rifles in practice for the next Intercolonial Rifle Match<sup>33</sup>. Apart from these two groups, purely civilian rifle clubs would be a rarity in New South Wales for many years. But by the time of Federation, shooting for defence purposes had grown into a large rifle club movement, spurred on by patriotism generated by the Boer War<sup>34</sup>.

#### The New South Wales Rifle Association

The New South Wales Rifle Association (NSWRA) (often called the Rifle Association of New South Wales in the press) was constituted in 1860 as part of the *Defence Act*, to promote general rifle proficiency and to give permanency to the New South Wales Volunteer Rifle Corps<sup>35</sup>. Target shooting was seen as a good preparation and was popular as a patriotic pastime. Businesses and suburbs formed rifle clubs and even small towns maintained a rifle range<sup>36</sup>.

While announcing the first shooting competition of the Association in 1861, it was acknowledged that "there was an excellent rifle club in existence, but that it was not suitable for large numbers of members, or for furthering the efficiency of the volunteer forces of the colony. The rifle association

will, as do those in England and on the Continent, aid in preparation for danger from outside, and generating a spirit of self-reliance at home"<sup>37</sup>.

Leadership of the rifle associations came from the top levels of society from every field: judicial, political and administrative. Generally, businessmen and Catholics were not prominent in leadership of the associations, although this gradually changed as rifle shooting became one of the most popular pastimes of the people, albeit cloaked in patriotism. The first president of the NSWRA was Sir William Montagu Manning, Scottish-born barrister and politician, who held the position for 35 years until his death in 1895.

The first match in September 1861 at Randwick racecourse, courtesy of the Australian Jockey Club which was paid a third of the takings, was a moderate success. The Sydney Battalion of Volunteers had prepared the firing range by clearing scrub and constructing booths for the spectators. They also acted as scorers and markers during the competition, as well as supplying some of the competitors<sup>38</sup>. The first match over 300, 500 and 600 yards, was contested for prizes of twelve rifles valued at £247, as follows:

- Two Whitworth rifles.
- Two Westly Richards breech-loading rifles.
- Two Westly Richards carbines.
- One Thomas Wilson breech-loading patent rifle.
- One Lancaster rifle.
- One sea service prize rifle.
- One rifle corps rifle.
- One General Hay's pattern rifle.
- One long Enfield rifle.

The second match was for the Silver Cup of the Association, valued at £50, to be shot over distances of 700, 800 and 900 yards, and was open to the winners of the twelve rifles in the first match. Only enlisted Volunteers could compete in the first two matches, using any Government pattern rifle. Third and fourth matches were contested for cash prizes<sup>39</sup>. As rifle shooting at the Randwick racecourse was completely unregulated, there was constant danger to passing pedestrians and animals from stray bullets and ricochets<sup>40</sup>. The NSWRA continued to hold its meetings there until moving to the Paddington Rifle Range in 1866<sup>41</sup>.

The two colonies, New South Wales and Victoria, were even then highly competitive: New South Wales had the larger population with more established industry, whereas Victoria had gold and saw itself as more progressive. So it was not long before they found a new outlet for their rivalry by organising the first Intercolonial Rifle Match for small-bore rifles (calibre less than 0.577") in 1862 for a Challenge Shield<sup>42</sup>. The New South Wales team members used an assortment of Whitworth, Kerr, Alexander Henry and Turner rifles, which were all percussion cap muzzle-loaders at 0.451" calibre<sup>43</sup>.

The competition was held in November 1862 at the Sandridge Butts in Melbourne (in present-day Port Melbourne) between the ten best shots from the respective colonial Volunteer Corps. The New South Wales sharp-shooters were victorious in the inaugural competition.

The most memorable part of the trip south occurred on the way back to Sydney, when the steamship *City of Sydney*, with the whole New South Wales team on board, ran aground on rocks near Green Cape late at night in heavy fog. All 100 passengers and crew were taken to safety in life boats, but six of the ten rifles used by the Volunteers in the intercolonial match were lost. Two rifles were retrieved from the lower deck by their owners, who risked their lives to go back for them before jumping into a departing boat. The remaining two only survived because they were inadvertently left behind in the hotel in Melbourne by two members of the contingent<sup>44</sup>.

The annual matches were keenly contested and very popular with the public. Press reports noted a steady improvement in scores each year<sup>45</sup>. After seven annual competitions, held in alternating years at Sydney and Melbourne, New South Wales won perpetual ownership of the cup in 1867 by three victories in a row. Intercolonial shooting contests then lapsed until 1873, mainly because of financial and administrative problems within the Victorian Rifle Association<sup>46</sup>.

The NSWRA continues to run shooting prize meetings through the State, including at the Sydney shooting ranges at Hornsby and Malabar<sup>47</sup>.

## **Pubs**

A number of pubs opened in Paddington and Surry Hills to attract the soldiers stationed in Victoria Barracks and the Volunteer and civilian shooters who used the rifle range.

### **Rose and Crown Hotel (now the Village Inn)**

Address: 9-11 Glenmore Road, Paddington, on the corner of Gipps Street.

This pub originally opened as the Rose and Crown Hotel in 1851 in Glenmore Road, just a few doors off South Head Road<sup>48</sup>. It was built to cater for the soldiers across the road at the newly-constructed Victoria Barracks.



Figure 9 Rose and Crown Hotel, c1885 (Noel Butlin Archives)

The New South Wales State Heritage Register refers to the building as a small but fine Victorian period, Classic Revival/Italianate hotel. The construction of the Barracks stimulated both construction and settlement in the emerging area of Paddington. Small homes were the first to be built, housing the workers who built and served the Barracks, quickly forming the Paddington Village, as the corner with South Head Road became known.

The Rose and Crown, along with the Paddington Inn (1848) is a rare survivor of the early period of expansion in the district. The hotel was built on a modest scale in a constrained site, but was thoughtfully enlarged with an additional storey in the 1920s, which is integrated so well with the highly-styled façade that it is hard to tell that the upper floor was not part of the original design<sup>49</sup>.

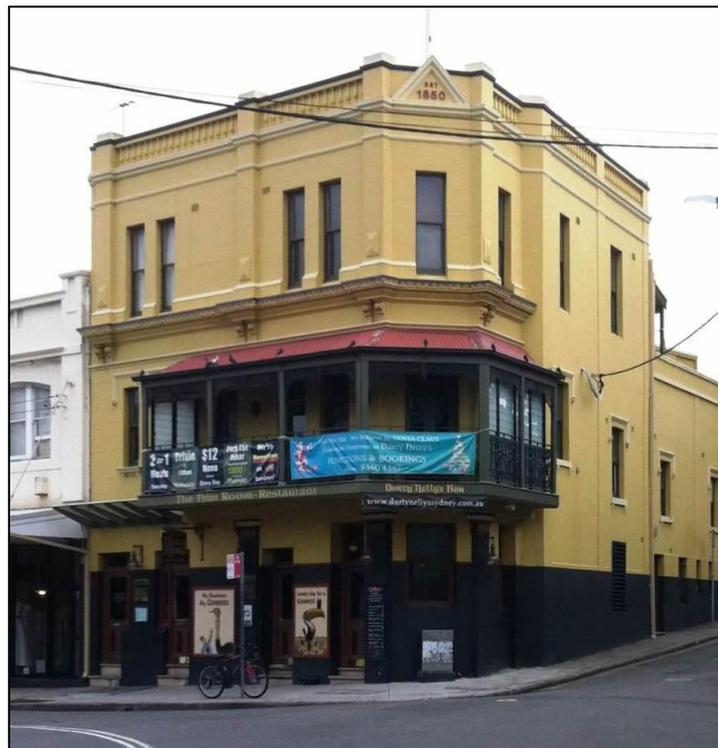


Figure 10 Durty Nelly's Bar (yelp.com)

In 1998, new owners transformed it into an Irish pub, renaming it Durty Nelly's Bar<sup>50</sup>. The pub was again sold in 2013<sup>51</sup> and in 2015 reopened as a pet-friendly local pub with traditional food, now called the Village Inn<sup>52</sup>.

### **Rifle Butts Hotel (now the Flinders Hotel)**

Address: 63 Flinders Street, Surry Hills.

This hotel opened in 1870 as the Rifle Butts Hotel in Flinders Street, Surry Hills<sup>53</sup>. The new licensee Edward Francis organised general repairs to the hotel in August 1900, and apparently decided that the pub was no longer attracting rifle shooters following the closure of the rifle range, so he changed the hotel's name to the Flinders Hotel a few months later<sup>54</sup>. When Flinders Street was widened in 1917-1919, the two-storey hotel was demolished and replaced by a three-storey building, retaining its name. It was owned by the large brewery Tooth and Company Pty Ltd at the time<sup>55</sup>.

In modern times, the Flinders was a late-night venue that was adversely affected by the early lockout laws introduced in New South Wales in 2014, and has been largely inactive since then, only opening for special events such as the annual Mardi Gras parade. However, with the relaxing of these laws in the Oxford Street area in January 2020, the Flinders is starting to resume its place in the local bar and nightclub scene by hosting Saturday night dance parties<sup>56</sup>.



Figure 11 Flinders Hotel, 1916 (City of Sydney Archives)

### **Rifleman's Arms Hotel**

Address: 75 Fitzroy Street, Surry Hills.

A two-storey brick building with five rooms had existed on the south-west corner of Fitzroy Street and Maiden Lane (now Marshall Street) from about 1858<sup>57</sup>, and operated as a grocery shop with a residence on the first floor. John Dimond purchased the shop and the adjoining building in 1870<sup>58</sup>, and converted them into a hotel. He was able to obtain a publican's licence when Luke Murphy moved his licence from the Sailor's Arms Hotel in Lower George Street to the new hotel in March 1872<sup>59</sup>, then transferred it to Dimond the next month<sup>60</sup>. The new hotel was first called the Rifleman's Hotel, but was later known as the Rifleman's Arms Hotel.

In June 1921, the licensee Phillip Smyth was prosecuted by Licensing Inspector John Fullerton for a breach of the *Pure Foods Act*. The Inspector said that samples of rum from the hotel were found to contain 26.6% added water. The licensee's counsel claimed that it was accidental, as he broke his thermometer and had to mix the rum by guesswork. After some semantic confusion, the learned gentleman admitted he meant "hydrometer", but whatever the broken instrument was called, the magistrate was unimpressed and fined the licensee £10<sup>61</sup>.

The new licensee (George Spiegel) was summonsed to appear at a deprivation hearing of the Licences Reduction Board in October 1922. But this did not go well as, according to the police, the place was "old, obsolete, dilapidated, poorly conducted, and not fit for a hotel at all". The only permanent boarder was the licensee's son. The licensee had been there since February, and had twice been fined for illegal trading. Women frequented the place, and the hotel had received extra police supervision. Spiegel tried to put on a brave face by optimistically claiming that it was the cleanest hotel in Surry Hills<sup>62</sup>. The Board's decision was to cancel the licence, effective 30 June

1923<sup>63</sup>. The owner was awarded compensation of £1,750 and the licensee £470<sup>64</sup>. 24 of the 58 hotels in Surry Hills lost their licences at this time.



Figure 12 Rifleman's Arms Hotel, c1920 (State Records of NSW)

The building is still intact, and was used as a grocery shop and residence for some years, and from 1990 was the home of Paddington Blinds and Shutters. It has been used as office space by various companies since then, and is presently available for lease<sup>65</sup>.

### Cross Guns Hotel (now the Imperial Hotel)

Address: 252 Oxford Street, Paddington, on the corner of Underwood Street.

The gunsmith Henry Challener (c1829-1877) built the Cross Guns Hotel in 1874<sup>66</sup> in Old South Head Road (now Oxford Street) Paddington, on the corner of Sarah Street (now part of Underwood Street). He was the local agent of the influential handgun maker William Tranter (1816-1890), who he knew from his time in Birmingham. Tranter's pistols were widely used by the Confederate States in the American Civil War (1861-1865).

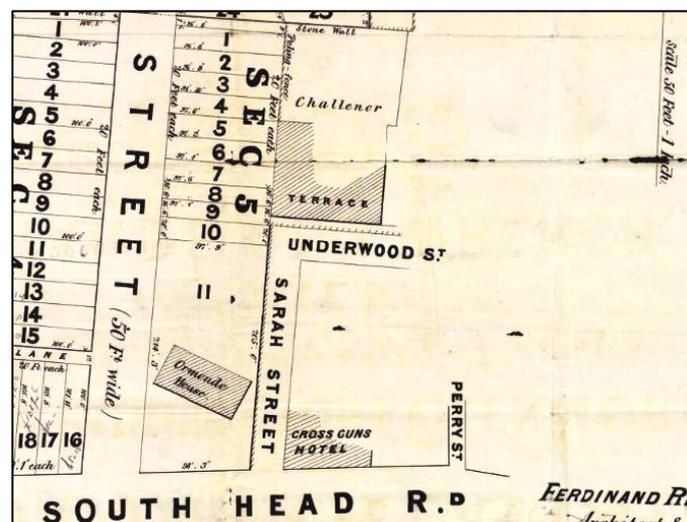


Figure 13 Olive Bank Estate, c1890 (Richardson and Wrench Ltd)

Henry Challener was the son of a gun maker from Birmingham, England, and migrated to Sydney in 1853. In the same year he opened a shop in Pitt Street, advertising himself as a gun and pistol maker and repairer. By 1871, he had built a two-storey house in Paddington called Gunney Villa, where 8 Underwood Street is now located. He retired in 1875 and died at his then-residence Ormond Hall (now called Juniper Hall) in January 1877<sup>67</sup>.



Figure 14 Imperial Hotel, c1893 (Dictionary of Sydney)

In 1889, the hotel was renamed the Imperial Hotel<sup>68</sup>. Edmund Resch of Resch's Brewery leased the hotel in 1901, and in 1910 his company purchased it and submitted plans for an impressive three-storey building<sup>69</sup>. This is the prominent structure that now dominates the top of the hill on the way to the Paddington shopping precinct.

The pub has been jointly owned by Owen Peters Pty Ltd since Resch's took it over in 1910, and this company still owns the freehold, making it one of the longest-running ownerships of a hotel in the country<sup>70</sup>. After a revamp in 2015, there are now several function rooms and even a barber shop<sup>71</sup>.



Figure 15 Imperial Hotel, 1949 (Noel Butlin Archives)

## Rifle Butts Hotel

Address: 234 Oxford Street, Paddington.

This second Rifle Butts Hotel in the eastern suburbs was opened by Frederick Alchin in 1876<sup>72</sup> in South Head Road across the road from Victoria Barracks, and just down the road from present-day Ormond Street. The hotel's name was changed in honour of different services and buildings that opened in the local area, firstly to the Tramway Hotel in 1880<sup>73</sup> after the trams that rattled past the hotel on their way to North Bondi.

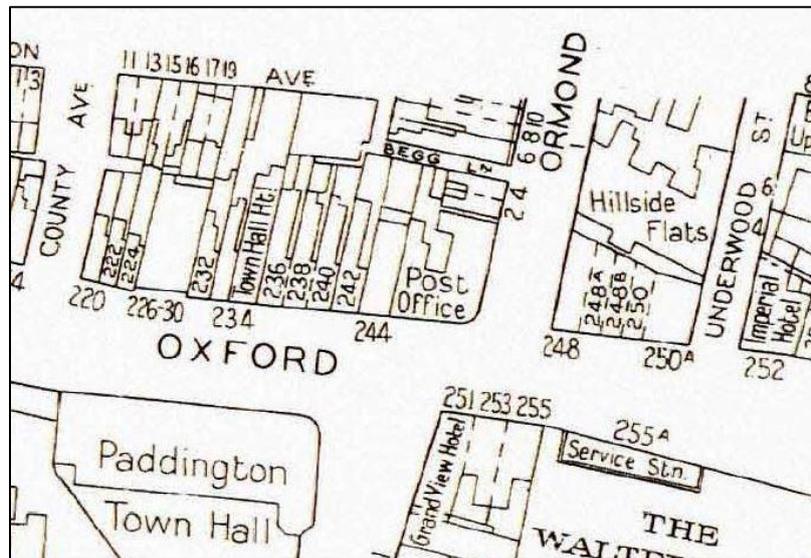


Figure 16 City Building Surveyor's map, 1949-72 (City of Sydney Archives)

The Paddington Post Office opened on the corner of South Head Road and Ormond Street in 1885, and the hotel was briefly renamed the Post Office Hotel in March 1890<sup>74</sup>. In October the same year the pub received its final name, the Town Hall Hotel<sup>75</sup>, after the Paddington Town Hall being constructed across the road, and which opened in 1891. The hotel was demolished in 1959 when the site became the eastern end of the Paddington Returned Services League Club<sup>76</sup>.

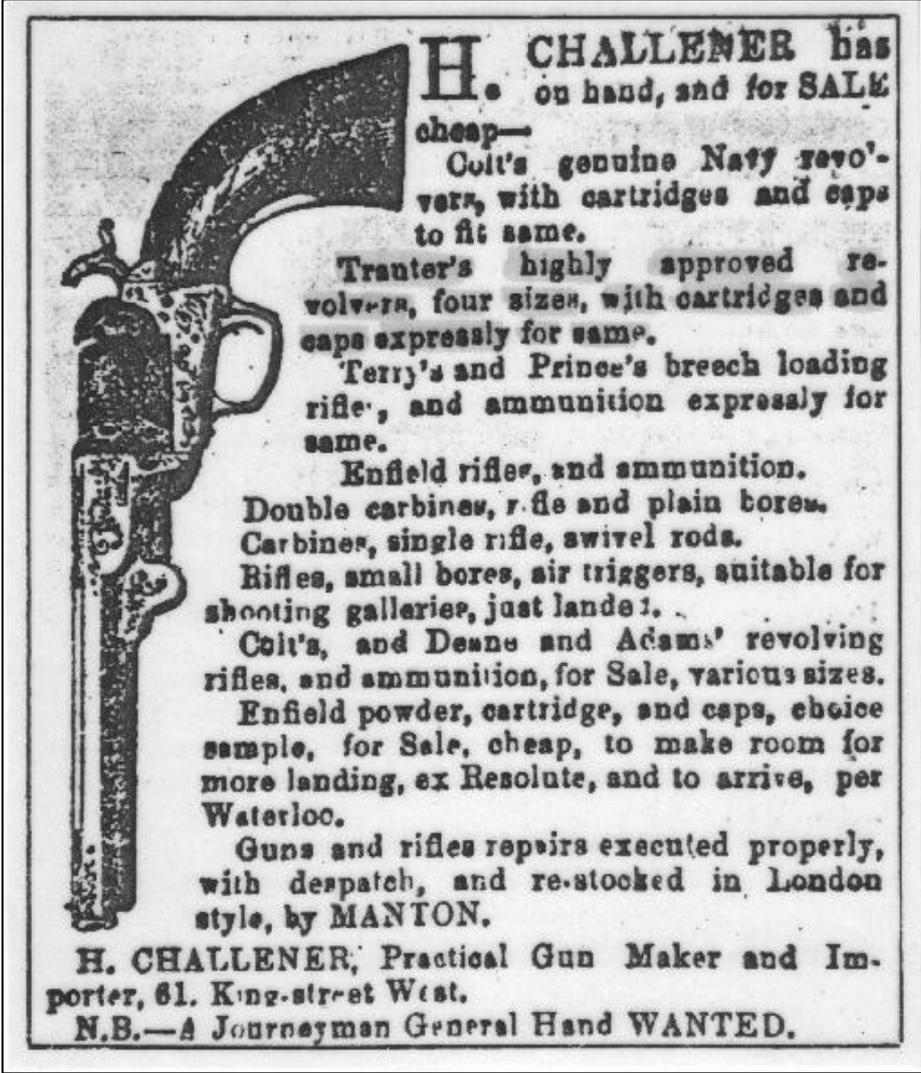


Figure 17 Town Hall Hotel, 1930s (Noel Butlin Archives)

## Gun shops

Most of the first bushrangers in Australia were escaped convicts. But the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s brought a wave of lawlessness to the colony and the need for protection. This second generation of bushrangers were well armed and were rightly feared by the population. This prompted gold diggers, squatters and travellers to also arm themselves appropriately, guaranteeing a brisk trade for gunsmiths throughout the colony.

Although colonial gunsmiths may have been capable of manufacturing firearms, Australia did not have a significant gun-making industry. Firearms of all types were in great demand from England, Europe and later America. In addition, ironmongers (hardware storemen), blacksmiths and other metal-working tradesmen also advertised themselves as gunsmiths<sup>77</sup>.



**H. CHALLENGER** has  
on hand, and for SALE  
cheap—  
Colt's genuine Navy revo-  
lvers, with cartridges and caps  
to fit same.  
Trauter's highly approved re-  
volvers, four sizes, with cartridges and  
caps expressly for same.  
Terry's and Prince's breech loading  
rifle, and ammunition expressly for  
same.  
Enfield rifle, and ammunition.  
Double carbines, rifle and plain bore.  
Carbines, single rifle, swivel rods.  
Rifles, small bores, air triggers, suitable for  
shooting galleries, just landed.  
Colt's, and Deane and Adams' revolving  
rifles, and ammunition, for Sale, various sizes.  
Enfield powder, cartridge, and caps, choice  
sample, for Sale, cheap, to make room for  
more landing, ex Resolute, and to arrive, per  
Waterloo.  
Guns and rifles repairs executed properly,  
with despatch, and re-stocked in London  
style, by MANTON.  
**H. CHALLENGER, Practical Gun Maker and Im-  
porter, 61. King-street West.**  
**N.B.—A Journeyman General Hand WANTED.**

Figure 18 Henry Challener advert (*Empire*, 22 July 1861)

Most of the specialist gunsmiths were based in the centre of Sydney, but *Sands' Sydney Directories* recorded a number of gun sellers and repairers operating (or in Henry Challener's case building a pub) within walking distance of the Paddington Rifle Range:

- 1855-1875: Henry Challener, King Street and York Street, Sydney.
- 1858: James Gregg, Underwood Street, Paddington.
- 1880: Frederick Stiefvater (or Stiefater/Stievater), 24 Barcom Street, Sydney, then 1881 to 1889 in the city.
- 1880, Thomas Callaghan, Brodie St, Paddington.
- 1885, John Baker, Ulster Street, Paddington.
- 1885: William F. Needham, Sutherland Street, Paddington<sup>78</sup>.



Figure 19 Henry Challener trade label (Firearms Technology Museum)

## After the rifle range closed

### Military use continues

The military continued to make use of the former rifle range after it closed in 1890. For example, the local naval and military forces paraded there for an inspection in May 1892<sup>79</sup>, prior to marching through the city to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday. In March 1893, a depot for the New South Wales Corps of Engineers was opened on the old rifle range<sup>80</sup>. This was located towards the north-eastern end of the range, where the targets were positioned (roughly where the Sydney Football Stadium is today).

A road (now called Driver Avenue) was constructed from Moore Park Road to provide access for vehicles and pedestrians to the Agricultural and Association grounds. The area lying to the east of the new road would become a military drill and exercise ground<sup>81</sup>. In February 1901, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Mounted Rifles, part of the Federal Contingent of troops going to the Boer War, camped at the old rifle range on their way to the troopships at Circular Quay<sup>82</sup>. This was the first time Australia had entered a military campaign as a nation, rather than as separate colonies.

The military retained the drilling ground and Engineers' Depot buildings until the construction of the Sydney Football Stadium on the site in 1988.

### Rugby players get a ground of their own

The government's intention was to hand the remaining part of the rifle range over for public use, and there was no shortage of interested parties. In May 1895, a deputation from the New South Wales Rugby Union (NSWRU) requested Mr. Joseph Carruthers, the Minister for Lands, that he grant part of the land site for use as a football ground. The footballers had been unhappy that the game was at the mercy of the Royal Agricultural Society and the trustees of the Sydney Cricket Ground, the administrators of the two playing fields nearby. The NSWRU wanted a ground that was under its own control, and pointed to the great popularity of football<sup>83</sup>.

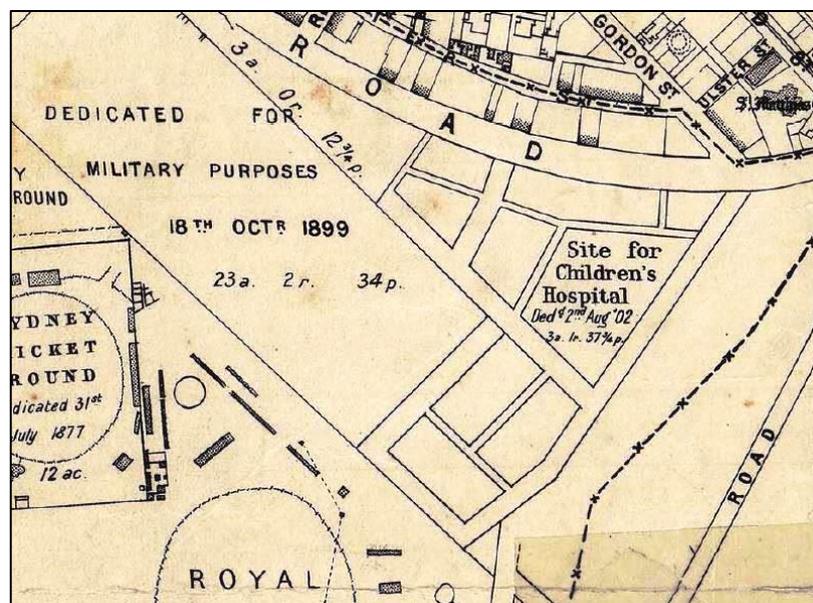


Figure 20 Proposed Children's Hospital, 1903 (City of Sydney Archives)

In May 1896, the New South Wales Government decided to allocate about six acres of the old rifle range as a recreation ground for public and high schools to use during the week, and for rugby union and other sports for use on holidays and the weekends. A triangular block of land to the north of the Association Ground was temporarily leased to the trustees of that ground, who would construct and maintain practice wickets there. This ground eventually became the Sydney Cricket Ground No. 2 Oval<sup>84</sup>.

In February 1896, the Children's Hospital asked for a grant of a portion of the Rifle Range for the erection of hospital buildings, due to overcrowding at Glebe<sup>85</sup>. By 1900, a site had been chosen near the corner of Moore Park Road and Cook Road<sup>86</sup>, but by 1903 the site was deemed to be inadequate for the purpose<sup>87</sup>. A site on Pymont Bridge Road at Camperdown was then secured and a new children's hospital constructed there<sup>88</sup>. The higher land to the west of Centennial Park would be reserved for public institutions<sup>89</sup>. This eventually became part of the Royal Agricultural Society showgrounds.



**Figure 21 Sydney Sports Ground, 1937 (Wikipedia)**

In 1901, the trustees of the proposed Sydney Sports Ground were appointed by the Government, representing the New South Wales Amateur Athletic Association, the New South Wales Cyclists' Union, the New South Wales League of Wheelmen, and the two school athletic associations<sup>90</sup>. Construction commenced, and by April 1903, rugby union matches were being played<sup>91</sup>. The Sydney Sports Ground was officially opened in October 1903 by the Governor, Sir Harry Rawson. Seating was available for 6,000 patrons in the grandstand, and the lawns and hills could accommodate some 20,000 people. For the opening, the New South Wales League of Wheelmen arranged a carnival of bicycle racing on the new asphalt track. In addition, a motor car race of twenty laps was conducted<sup>92</sup>.

In 1907, ten acres of land at the eastern end of the old rifle range (west of Lang Road) was offered for sale by the State Government. The Lord Mayor of Sydney complained that the whole of Moore Park was originally granted to the Council (in 1866) to hold in trust as a common, but that bit by bit a large portion was being taken away by the Government: the Royal Agricultural Ground, the SCG, and now the Sports Ground<sup>93</sup>. Fortunately, no real encroachment has since been made to the public areas of Moore Park. A zoo, a golf course and a garbage incinerator were established in later years, but they were all owned by the Sydney City Council.

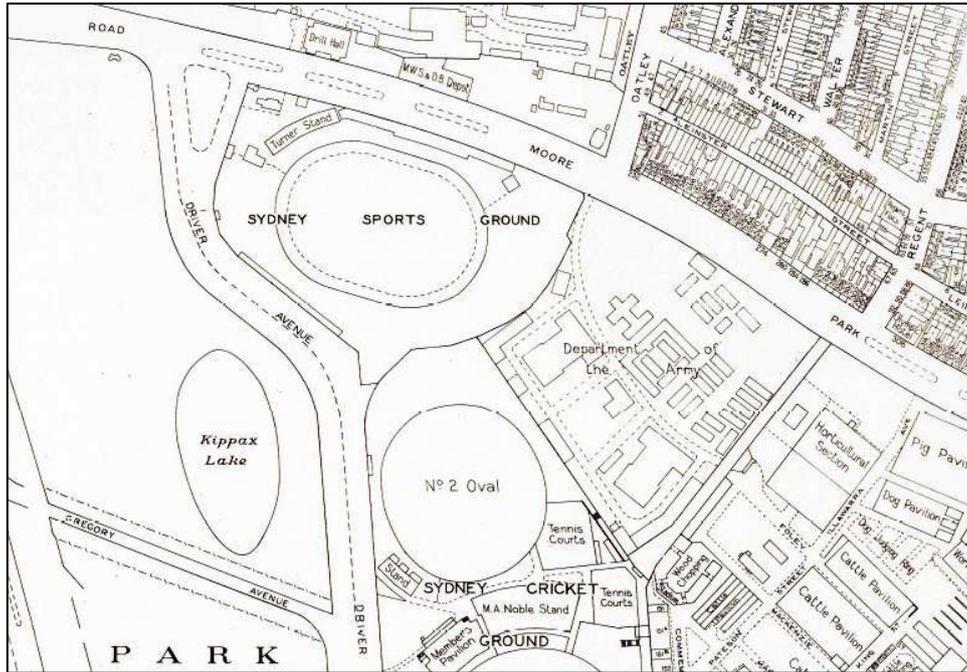


Figure 22 City Building Surveyor's map, 1949-72 (City of Sydney Archives)



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  - <sup>12</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1851.
  - <sup>13</sup> Moore Park Master Plan 2040 website.
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  - <sup>16</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 17 May 1862.
  - <sup>17</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1866.
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  - <sup>24</sup> *Australian Star*, 16 July 1890.
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  - <sup>27</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1843.
  - <sup>28</sup> *The Australian*, 24 April 1843.
  - <sup>29</sup> Sydney Rifle Club website.
  - <sup>30</sup> *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 11 April 1846.
  - <sup>31</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1852.
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  - <sup>33</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1863.
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  - <sup>36</sup> Museums Victoria Collections website.
  - <sup>37</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1861.
  - <sup>38</sup> Kilsby, *The Rifle Club Movement and Australian Defence*.
  - <sup>39</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1861.
  - <sup>40</sup> Kilsby, *The Rifle Club Movement and Australian Defence*.
  - <sup>41</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1866.
  - <sup>42</sup> Kilsby, *The Rifle Club Movement and Australian Defence*.
  - <sup>43</sup> History, New South Wales Rifle Association website.
  - <sup>44</sup> *The Newcastle Chronicle*, 12 November 1862.
  - <sup>45</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 December 1865.
  - <sup>46</sup> Kilsby, *The Rifle Club Movement and Australian Defence*.
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- <sup>60</sup> *Evening News*, 5 April 1872.
- <sup>61</sup> *The Sun*, 28 June 1921.
- <sup>62</sup> *Evening News*, 3 October 1922.
- <sup>63</sup> Licences Reduction Board, SRNSW.
- <sup>64</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 July 1923.
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- <sup>68</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1889.
- <sup>69</sup> Imperial Hotel Paddington, Time Gents website.
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- <sup>72</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 1876.
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- <sup>82</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1901.
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- <sup>90</sup> *The Australian Star*, 15 March 1901.
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- <sup>92</sup> *The Sunday Sun*, 4 October 1903.
- <sup>93</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1907.

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