Breath of Life

BACK TO THE CITY ARTS PROJECT

Sylvia Azzi
Gionni Di Gravio
Caroline Hale
Ann Hardy
Varelle Hardy
Jason Harvey
Elizabeth Milgate
Breath of Life

Collaborative Team

**Sylvia Azzi**
Has a Degree in Architecture and is a heritage consultant.

**Gionni Di Gravio**
Archivist, University of Newcastle. He has set up a number of online libraries of archival and rare book resources for community and academic teaching and research and experimenting with scanned archival resources located in the sourcebooks across the Google Earth canvas. Member of the Coal River Working Party and involved in recent New York exhibition Coalopolis to Metropolis: The New Adventures of Mark Twain.

**Caroline Hale**
Is a Visual artist and current candidate for PhD at the University of Newcastle. Hale has worked on community-based public art projects for over five years.

**Ann Hardy**
Is a Social worker and Heritage specialist and is currently completing Masters of Philosophy (history) studies at the University of Newcastle

**Varelle Hardy**
Visual artist, current candidate for PhD at the University of Newcastle

**Jason Harvey**
Is an Environmental scientist and is employed by Trees in Newcastle

**Elizabeth Milgate**
Is a Visual artist & Master of Fine Art
Site Location - Obelisk

Obelisk Park, the chosen site is bounded by Ordnance, Wolfe and Newcomen Streets, and Reserve Road, Newcastle, NSW (refer to Google Earth map)

Site Owner
Hunter Water Corporation
39 Honeysuckle Drive
Newcastle
Overview

This historic site, Obelisk Hill, attracted our interest as it commands an impressive view over the city of Newcastle and is easily viewed from many areas in the city, the harbour, beaches, and the surrounding suburbs. The use of the site as the location for a windmill by the early European colonists highlights not only one aspect of hidden cultural heritage but also focuses on possibilities for the development of sustainable energy in the future.

The site was originally named ‘Prospect Hill’. The windmill constructed on the site in 1821 occupied the site now taken up by the obelisk. The windmill was an important marker for navigation by ships as well as a functioning mill for grinding grain.
When the windmill was demolished there was a public outcry and a storm of protest from ship captains claiming that the old windmill was a guiding marker for the mariners entering the harbour. The windmill had become such a conspicuous object from the sea that it was a navigational ‘landmark’. It had also become a fixed marker for surveying. The protest compelled the Governor to act. In 1850 the Obelisk was erected on the site of the old windmill, providing a stable point of reference for navigation and cartography. A water reservoir was constructed in 1884 adjacent to the site of the obelisk. This reservoir was covered with soil and grassed over to form the landmark, which we know, as Obelisk Hill.
Concept/Project Description

Concept development has been informed by the early use of this site for a windmill to serve the needs of the community. An installation of small windmill forms, based on those available at fairs and agricultural shows, will be erected around the circumference of the top conical section of the hill and spill down onto the lower slopes. The windmill sails will have a one metre diameter wind collection area that will be approximately three metres above ground. The circular form of the installation will reference the original shape of the brick base of the windmill.

Lines of windmills will radiate from this circular boundary marker covering the slopes of the site with white windmill forms that will respond to the intensity of the wind creating an audible as well as a visual impact. The rotation of a windmill will be echoed in the installation of the work. The installation will also reference the cardinal points of the compass as well as the theme of directions.

Approximately eighty windmills will be installed. The movement of the mass of windmills will take on a life of its own performing a rhythmic dance of celebration and achievement. It is a reminder of the power of the wind and the potential for its use as clean energy. The feasibility of attaching a small generator to power small lights on the windmills that mark the cardinal points is being investigated.
Workshops with the general public will be held at the site. Materials will be provided and participants invited to make their own small version of the windmill. Drawing materials will also be available for participants to draw their own panorama. Drawings could be used to create the sail areas on the small windmills that people make. The project and the community participation will be documented by video recording.

Rationale
This site is an example of forgotten places. Very few would be aware that this beautiful place was part of the city of Newcastle’s early industrial heritage. Early drawings also pinpoint this area as being of significance to the local Aboriginal community. Obelisk Park is bordered by busy thoroughfares, particularly Reserve Road, that provides important transit route to the city centre. The current debate surrounding energy sources has become a crucial issue. Wind energy is an abundant natural resource; it is non-polluting, sustainable and free. It is the earliest form of energy to be harnessed for mechanical tasks. It is a form of energy that remains attainable without being a destructive force.

This site formed an important part of Newcastle’s early industrial and navigational structure. Our installation of small windmills is a timely reminder of what must have been an important aspect of life in Newcastle, the milling of grain, enabling the production of a staple food product, and of the means they employed to achieve this, a windmill and the construction of a water reservoir to provide reliable water supplies.

The site is an important visual marker and collection point. It is a pivotal place geographically, a central place where visual stimulus can be collected. It is a place that has clear sight lines, to and from, and panoramic views of the surrounding area, from Nobbys Headland, the harbour and the ocean. Prospect Hill, appropriately named, is where all the cities activities can be observed. It was also adjacent to the locale of the main street at the time, Watt St, the Government hub of Newcastle.

The ‘Obelisk’ is associated with solar worship and like a “sun” reflects the surrounding landscape features or visual links to the obelisk site. The surrounding suburbs, Nobbys, King Edward Park are all like “galaxies”, existing in their own right. At the same time there is a magnetic visual focus to the Obelisk.

Obelisk Park embraces the surrounding community, although tranquilly separate. Its position opposite one of the cities main parks, King Edward Park adds to its
significance. It functions as a social place for families to gather to watch cultural events such as firework displays and to participate in family celebrations.

This installation is informed by historical context as well as the increasingly urgent debate that focuses on sustainable energy. The connectivity of many themes forms the core of the concept. The circular nature of the installation and the site emphasises our journey that has come full circle to re-evaluate not only the site but the uses to which it has been put and the relevance of this form of energy to the future. Breath of life will remind us of the spaces that surround us and their uses, past present and future.

Site Construction, Installation and Costing

Site Elevations
Refer to Hunter Water Corporations documents and Plans (in Appendix) for site specifications.

Construction and Installation
Rotating sail structures will be constructed of High Impact Poly Styrene. These will be attached to metal rods that will stand three metres above ground. The windmills will pivot with wind changes. The vertical metal rods will be inserted into tubes that have been installed in the ground (1 metre in ground). Each component will be firmly attached using the appropriate fasteners and glues. The rotating sail sections will be above head height.
Risk assessment
A full OHS risk assessment will be undertaken using Newcastle City Councils standard format.

Material list and budget
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washers/bolts/pins/pegs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal rods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glue/expanding foam</td>
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<td>High Impact Polystyrene</td>
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<td>Hole Borer - 1 day hire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper and drawing materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary barriers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(low posts and bright tape as they are only intended to stop accidental wanderings into the installation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total $3263.00

Schedule
The estimated time for installation will be 2-3 days. Temporary barriers may need to be erected around the installation.

Will there be any changes to the work over the exhibition period?
No changes to the installation are envisaged during the period of exhibition.

Permission
Permission will need to be sought from Hunter Water Corporation regarding erecting installation and relevant safety guidelines followed.

Acknowledgment also to
Beau Hardy
Charlie Hardy
Alwyn Harrison
Warren Hardy
John Noble
Kate Noble
Amanda Pfeiffer (Hunter Water)
Maps showing current topography overlayed with Armstrong Map (1830) showing windmill on the site
Map showing current topography overlayed with Armstrong Map (1830)
Map 1844 showing windmill

Sophia Campbell, image showing the Windmill. National Library of Australia.
APPENDIX
2 Description of the Reservoir

The Obelisk Reservoir, with a capacity of 3.52 megalitres and water depth of 1.2m, was constructed of brick and coke concrete as a part of the Newcastle Council's water supply scheme in 1884. The reservoir is 13.7m in diameter with approximately one half the depth excavated into the natural ground. The above-ground section was covered with earth to give the appearance of a natural hill.

The roof of the reservoir consisted of a central dome with a diameter of 4.8m and a rise of 0.5m, which was supported by a concrete encased cast iron ring beam on eight 155mm square brick columns. The dome was surrounded by an arch having a span of 4.42m and a rise of 0.76m.

The reservoir was vented by a 752mm diameter central cast iron pipe which exhausted under a skirt through 24-150mm diameter holes. What appeared to be two 185mm square vents in the arch had been covered over probably when the inlet was modified from a bottom configuration to an outlet use.

The overflow consisted of a 250mm diameter cast iron pipe leading into a 300mm diameter vitrified clay drainage pipe which subsequently connected to the Council's stormwater system in Wolfe Street near Ordinance Street.

The location of the reservoir is as indicated on Figure 1.
FIGURE 2

Obelisk Reservoir
Cross Section Details of Centre Vent
and Inlet Aerator
By Ann Hardy

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the most prominent landmarks in Newcastle (NSW) which stands on the hill overlooking the city:

- the place is an example of navigational history, the ‘landmark’ was a navigational marker for ships approaching Newcastle.
- the place is closely related to seafaring and shipping history, including an industrial protest.
- the place is closely associated with the Penal settlement that existed around the site.
- the place illustrates its connection with marine navigation as indicated on charts of the coast and as written in harbourmaster reports.
- the place is an example of its ties with convict settlement and industry (flour mill), and also to free settlers of the colony.
- the place has a high degree of significance in regard to the purpose of the site, and use in navigation and shipping.
- the place illustrates early European occupation, and evidence of a prospering township.
- the place is part of a heritage precinct.

AESTHETIC VALUE

(It is significant in demonstrating the aesthetic value of the landmark and its surrounding area)

The Obelisk has a moderate degree of aesthetic value. The Obelisk site has significant heritage value, because of the landmark site evident since settlement, and as a fixed mark in surveying. The place including the maintained grounds of the ‘hill’ area adds to the prominence of the Obelisk and contributes to its landmark quality and aesthetics.

HISTORIC VALUE

(It is significant in the history of Newcastle, because of its convict and early European association)

The place is associated with the work of the colony and free settlers, and of the convict inhabitants at the site. The place illustrates the settlements industrial past as a flour mill. The place is closely related to the history of shipping and navigation, and as an important landmark for maritime services.
SCIENTIFIC VALUE
(It has scientific value in that its use as a navigational marker will provide information that will contribute to maritime study of Newcastle)

SOCIAL VALUE
The Obelisk is highly valued by the resident's of Newcastle and the general community. The continuing use of the site for community activity such as picnics, a lookout and an area for viewing fireworks over the harbour. These activities enhance the social value. The place is a distinct tourist and heritage site of Newcastle. The place is a significant landmark or ‘icon’ and contributes to Novocastrians sense of place.

DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE
RARITY
The place is a reminder of the industry carried out on the site (convicts and settlers –flour mill). The place is an illustration of the specific use of the site, as landmark and its importance in marine navigation in New South Wales.

REPRESENTATIVENESS
The Obelisk in Newcastle is representative of other such landmarks found around Australia in the 1900’s, and used for navigational purposes. The place is representative of other early European sites where windmills were established.

CONDITION
The Obelisk is in good condition. The fabric has been reconstructed and continues to be maintained. Even if the Obelisk was to deteriorate the significance of the place would not be adversely affected, because the primary significance is of the past use of the site (of old windmill), not necessarily of the Obelisk itself.

INTEGRITY
The Obelisk has moderate integrity. The place is no longer used as a navigational marker. This function is not sustainable. However its social and historical value continues to sustain the sites importance.

AUTHENTICITY
The Obelisk does not have a high degree of authenticity because the landmark has changed form several times. No original fabric (windmill) exists. The history of the place is authentic, as documented in sketches, paintings and written journals about the use of the site.
NEWCASTLE

On the orders of Commandant Morisset in 1821 a windmill was constructed on the hill overlooking Newcastle’s port. It was built to replace the hand mills used by convicts, and soon a second windmill was built to increase productivity. The shipping industry also used the windmill as a landmark by which to approach Newcastle.

In 1847 the Governor decided to get rid of it. Upon the demolition of the windmill came enormous outcry, and roused a storm of protest in shipping, where it was claimed that the old windmill was a guiding marker for the mariners entering the harbour. The windmill had become such a conspicuous object from the sea that it was a ‘landmark’. It had also become a fixed marker in surveying. The protest of the shipowner compelled the Governor to act, and in 1850 a subsequent erection of the Obelisk on the site of the old windmill was built.

The existing Obelisk has undergone repairs after being damaged by lightening strikes (1987) and in the 1989 earthquake.

Obelisk Hill is now a popular park and lookout, commanding exceptional views of the ocean and suburbs.