

# LACHLAN MACQUARIE

## The Father of Australia



Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales

**I**N 1811 Governor Lachlan Macquarie made his first visit to Tasmania. His month-long tour of inspection had a big impact on the future direction of the island, which at that point was divided into separate colonies, north and south. Macquarie's party sailed from Sydney on board the *Lady Nelson* on November 4, 1811, and arrived in Hobart 19 days later.

A military man, Macquarie had assumed office in 1810, a tumultuous time for the infant colony of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. His predecessor William Bligh had been deposed by the military and crime and excessive drinking were rife among convicts and soldiers. Macquarie, with the support of his second wife Elizabeth, embarked upon an ambitious program of social reform and public works.



The arrest of Governor William Bligh by the NSW Corps in 1808. Picture courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

### Early years

LACHLAN Macquarie was born in Scotland on January 31, 1762, to Lachlan Macquarie senior and Margaret Maclaine. His father was the cousin of the last chieftain of Clan MacQuarrie and his mother was sister to the Laird of Lochbuie. The family lived at Mull on land leased from the Duke of Argyll. Lachlan had six brothers and a sister. In 1776, he joined the British Army as a volunteer. He served in Canada before being posted to New York and Charleston during the American War of Independence.

He returned to Scotland in 1784 to work the family farm. Three years later he was commissioned as a lieutenant and sent to India. In 1801, Macquarie was appointed deputy-adjutant-general to the 8000-member Indian army and sent to Egypt. He returned to England in 1803, was presented to the king and queen, dined



Hobart Town in 1817, drawn by Lieutenant Charles Jeffreys, Royal Navy

with the royal family, had his portrait painted and, after a year, travelled to Scotland to visit his family.

In 1805, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and served in northern India until 1806 when he returned to Britain, travelling overland to London via Baghdad, Moscow, and St Petersburg with the journey taking six months. In Britain, Macquarie spent much of his time on family affairs, marrying Elizabeth Campbell in November 1807.

### Appointed governor

ON January 26, 1808, soldiers led by Major George Johnston deposed Governor William Bligh in Sydney. The colony, including Tasmania, was ruled by the military until Macquarie was appointed as the new governor in chief. Taking office on January 1, 1810, he embarked upon an ambitious public works program, reorganisation of the colony and social reform.

Macquarie was shocked by the dishevelled state in which he found the colony when he arrived to take up his governorship. His first task was to restore order in the wake of the rebellion. He then set about reorganising the layout of the settlement and encouraging exploration. His lavish spending, championing of emancipated convicts and strategies for dealing with the Aborigines attracted criticism but many of his initiatives can be seen to this day.

- Macquarie endowed Sydney with the Domain, Royal Botanic Gardens, Hyde Park Barracks and Parliament House. He was also responsible for the construction of Hobart's Anglesea Barracks, Mt Nelson signal station. He ordered town plans for Hobart, New Norfolk and George Town and decided where Hobart's hospital and Anglican church would be built.
- He was the first to use "Australia" in an official dispatch in 1817. The name was suggested by Matthew Flinders.
- He recognised Australia Day in 1818, granting a holiday for government workers.
- After holding the first race meeting, in 1810, he became known as the "Father of horse racing in Australia".
- He ordered, in 1820, that drivers should keep to the left.
- Macquarie was a believer in a second chance for all, with many believing the concept of a "fair go" came from his attitude and that of his wife Elizabeth.
- He established the first bank (now Westpac) and post office and introduced the "holey dollar" made from Spanish coins.

### Tasmanian tour

AFTER a rough voyage from Sydney, Lachlan Macquarie arrived in Hobart on November 23, 1811. As he was rowed up the Derwent in the government barge, the governor was struck by the beauty of his surroundings. His diary records his reflection that the river's beautiful hilly banks were extremely grand and picturesque. With Government House "being much out of repair", Macquarie was accommodated in the cottage of Commandant John Murray who also owned a farm at New Town.



Surveyor G.P. Harris's Cottage, Hobart Town, 1806, National Library of Australia, (an5380489). Macquarie stayed in a similar house owned by Commandant Murray in 1811.

Unimpressed with the layout of Hobart Town and the standard of its buildings, he designed a grid of seven principal streets and ordered that it be adhered to. He visited New Norfolk and renamed it Elizabeth Town. After several days in the south Macquarie and his party travelled overland to Launceston, bestowing names on rivers, hills and localities along the way. The governor admired Launceston's landscape but ordered that the northern capital be relocated to George Town, newly named by him.

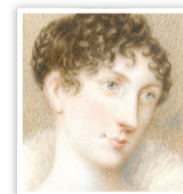
After nearly a month on the island, Macquarie set sail for Sydney on December 20. In the following year he decided to amalgamate the colonies of northern and southern Van Diemen's Land, eliminating the imaginary boundary of the 42nd parallel.

### Resignation and death

IN January 1819, a commission of inquiry into the state of the colony of NSW was announced, to be headed by English judge J.T. Bigge. The judge's report was unfavourable toward Macquarie's public works programs. Macquarie was also in conflict with a faction of society known as "the exclusives" who did not agree with his policies regarding convicts, former convicts and Aborigines. Many of these elites had influential friends in English political circles. Constant criticism and frustration, combined with illness, eventually led to Macquarie's resignation in 1821.

The next governor, Thomas Brisbane, arrived while Macquarie was on his farewell tour of Tasmania. On February 12, 1822, Macquarie and Elizabeth and their son departed for England to defend the charges against his administration. A period of frustration and further ill health followed as the family struggled to settle into their new life.

In June 1824, Macquarie was alone in London when he fell ill. Elizabeth rushed to his side but by July 1, exhausted and disappointed, he was dead. He was buried on the Isle of Mull where his gravestone honours him as "The Father of Australia".



Elizabeth Macquarie

### Making their mark

ELIZABETH and Lachlan Macquarie's names live on in many areas and institutions in Australia. Tasmanian examples include:

#### Named after Lachlan Macquarie

Macquarie St (Hobart, Evandale, George Town, Cressy) Macquarie Court (New Norfolk), Macquarie Island.

Also Macquarie Harbour, Macquarie Heads, Macquarie Plains, Macquarie Point and wharf, Macquarie River, Macquarie Rivulet, Macquarie Springs and Governor Macquarie's Resting Place.

#### Named after Elizabeth Macquarie

Campbell Town (Elizabeth Macquarie's maiden name) Elizabeth River, Elizabeth St (many throughout Tasmania, including Hobart and George Town), Elizabeth Town (now New Norfolk)

#### Places named by Macquarie

George Town, Mt Nelson, Perth, Ross, Oatlands, Brighton, Glenorchy and Sorell among many others. Hobart's first streets: Collins, Liverpool, Macquarie, Elizabeth, Argyle, Harrington and Murray.

### Things to explore

- Macquarie's Journals  
[www.lib.mq.edu.au/all/journeys/menu.html](http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/all/journeys/menu.html)
- State Library of NSW  
[www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_collections/history\\_nation/macquarie/index.html](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/macquarie/index.html)
- Australian Dictionary of Biography Online  
<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macquarie-lachlan-2419>
- Macquarie University Library  
[www.lib.mq.edu.au/lmr/biography.html](http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/lmr/biography.html)
- Governor Macquarie 1810-2010  
<http://macquarie2010.nsw.gov.au/>