

# The early development of Australian cemetery commemorative strategies: insights from Parramatta

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*The carving and erection of permanent grave markers commenced remarkably quickly in New South Wales, but because of cemetery redevelopment in Sydney the evidence for the earliest phases is limited. In contrast, Parramatta retains its original burial ground, St. John's, which allows fuller consideration of the earliest phases of commemoration. Within 35 years other cemeteries were established in the town, and this paper considers the changes in monument form, material and decoration across eight decades at St John's, noting some variation at other Parramatta sites. A memorial typology developed in Britain has been applied here to allow comparative analysis. This reveals very early monument production—a form of manufacture not previously appreciated in the infant colony—followed by a rapid establishment of monumental masonry businesses and the development of distinctive styles alongside the emulation of British fashions. This study reveals the generation of an active and distinctively Australian commemorative culture, not merely a colonial copying of British fashions.*

**Keywords:** Cemeteries, memorial typology, comparative analysis, Parramatta

## Introduction

Studies of mortuary monuments formed part of the earliest phases of historical archaeology in Australia (Birmingham 1973), with contemporary early interest in Britain (Burgess 1963; Jones 1976). However, this initial work did not lead to a development in this form of fieldwork, despite a book largely of images by Gilbert (1980) which revealed the variety of commemorative strategies in Australia, and a reminder by Lavelle and Mackay (1988); instead site location and excavation became the dominant mode of investigation. The same stalling of research was apparent in Britain, though some work by those with art-historical or cultural history interests did produce some important early studies (Brears 1981; Chater 1976, 1977; Willsher 1985; Willsher and Hunter 1978). This slow development of an archaeological research tradition is in contrast to that of North America where, after iconic papers by Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966, 1977), interest has continued, though sadly largely in parallel rather than integrated with that of art historians and folklife scholars (Benes 1977; Ludwig 1966). Most of the research has been on early memorials (with non-archaeologists focusing on identifying carvers and aspects of Puritan theology represented in the iconography), and is therefore of limited relevance for an Australian context, but from the 1980s there has also been more analysis of 19th- and 20th-century monuments, often published or reported in the annual bibliographies in the journal *Markers*. These are not further listed here as the North American traditions, apart from the 20th-century adoption of lawn cemeteries with their name plaques flush with the turf, have had less impact on Australian memorials than those of Britain, though Murray (2001: 229) notes the probable copying from the Vermont Marble Company Design Book.

British and Irish archaeological memorial research has only significantly increased in scale since the 1990s (e.g. Mytum 1994, 1999; Tarlow 1999), with investment mainly in methodological issues (Mytum 2000, 2002a, 2019; Mytum and Peterson 2018). Interest in Australia has also increased,

though most recent studies have largely (though not exclusively) concentrated on South Australian memorials from the 1830s onwards (Muller 2015), though a few significant studies consider the Sydney region. The main focus has been on analysing the content of inscriptions, though on occasion with some consideration of material characteristics and their setting. These studies have largely remained as unpublished theses, which has further limited their impact (e.g. Adamson 2011; Andrews 2011; Farrell 2003; Janson 2015; Marin 1998; Muller 2006; Murray 2001; Parrington 2018; Wright 2011). The only study which substantively considers memorial forms is that by Casey (1992) for Camperdown cemetery, Sydney. Being such an innovative study, it is unfortunate it did not receive greater distribution, but further research both in Britain and Australia means that it is now possible to build on this pioneering work. Historical interest in Australian cemeteries has increased over the same period, with an emphasis on conservation and associations with garden history. Some early developments have been noted but the main focus is on mortuary landscapes from the 1830s onwards as this applies to many more sites (Martin 2004; Murray 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2008); some social implications of mortuary culture have also been considered (Karskens 1998). These are all important developments, but the early stylistic changes in monument form and content (both textual and iconographic) have yet to be addressed, just as few substantial studies have yet taken place on this aspect in Britain (Tarlow 1999; Mytum 2002b).

A research programme examining aspects of New South Wales memorials has had two complementary research strands. The first has been the examination of memorials of Irish migration, particularly the Ulster Scots (Mytum 2020a), which is set against other migrations to North America (Mytum 2009). The other is to analyse the cemetery evidence in Parramatta to examine the earliest surviving burial ground with a significant number of *in situ* memorials surviving on mainland Australia (Mytum 2020b). This study forms part of that second strand, considering both the choice of memorial types and styles over the early decades of settlement, and the early production of a category of material culture—the stone memorial—against that known for other artefact classes

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(Bagshaw 2018; Stocks 2008). This paper concentrates on memorial typology, with limited discussion of motifs or text beyond some of the material aspects of layout, competence, and lettering styles.

### Parramatta: planning living and dying

Rose Hill was established in November 1788 to provide agricultural produce for the growing colony, given the failures around Sydney. The settlement was planned and laid out with improvement aspirations (Mytum 2020b); it grew rapidly and for a time was the largest settlement in Australia. A formal burial ground was established not around the intended church site but at a separate location on the margins of the existing settlement. There may have been informal and scattered burial in the first months, but there was a formal register established during 1790, with a stability in burial location. This is in contrast to the repeated shifting of burial location experienced in Sydney. No very early burials have been excavated in the numerous urban excavations at Parramatta (Casey and

Hendriksen 2009), in contrast to those at some of the formal burial sites in Sydney that have been redeveloped (Birmingham and Lister 1976; Donlon *et al.* 2017; Lowe and Mackay 1992; Owen and Casey 2017; Owen *et al.* 2017; Pitt *et al.* 2017).

The burial ground was increased in size and enclosed in 1811 by a fence and ditch, replaced with the existing brick wall around a decade later. A detailed plan of the memorials and paths (Figure 1) has been created from satellite imagery with ground truth checking, and an archive created using the existing numbering system (Dunn 1991); 747 memorials of all dates were recorded. The transcribed inscriptions have been checked and digital photographs taken of all memorials. The large areas with no memorials are no doubt full of unmarked graves; this pattern is also frequently the case in British graveyards and cemeteries. Comparison of commemorations on extant memorials and burial registers suggest 7 per cent of interments at St. John's are represented during the 19th century; this fits within the variability within Britain, though



Figure 1: Plan of St John's burial ground, Parramatta showing monuments of all periods.

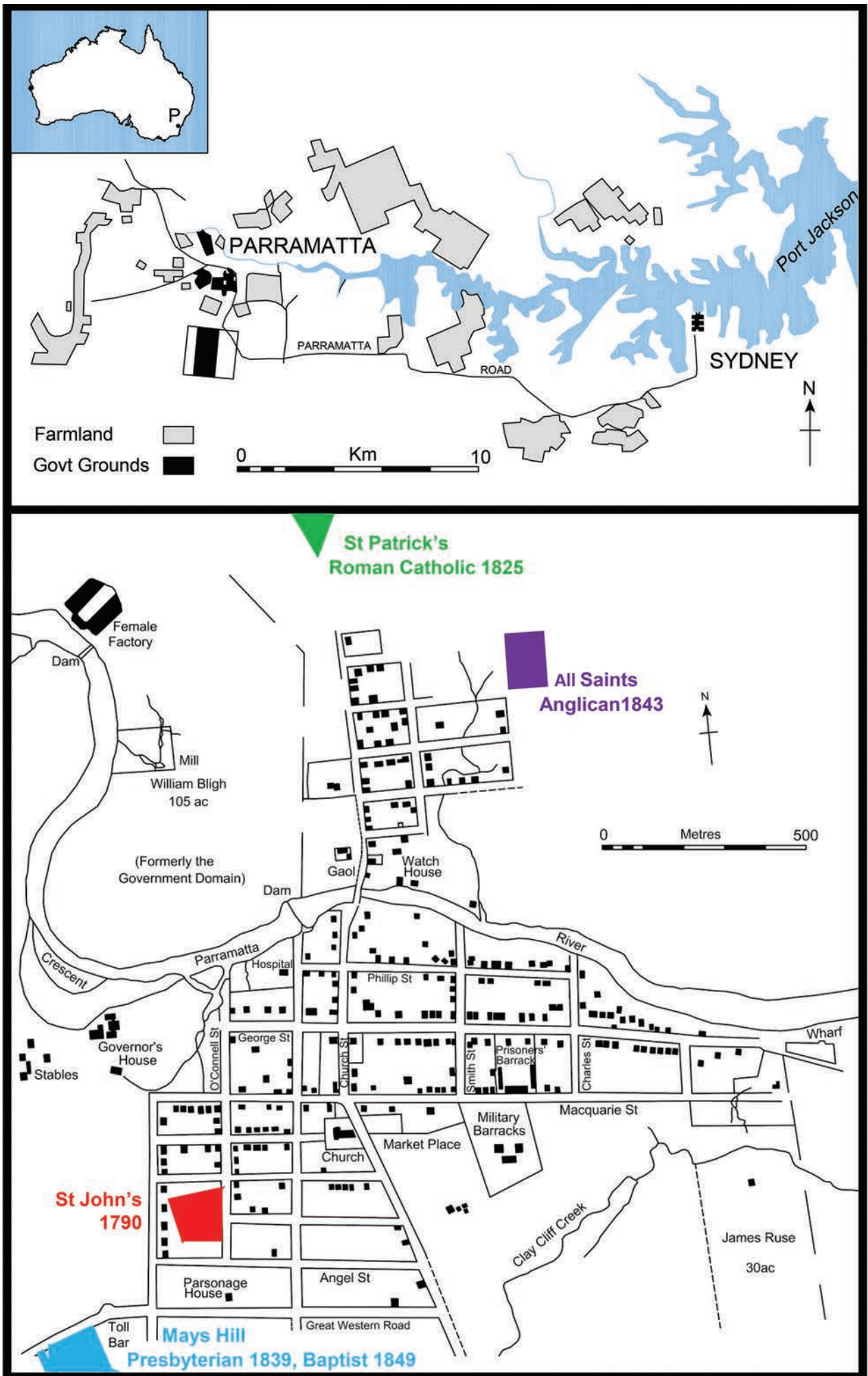


Figure 2: Map of Parramatta 1822 by G C Stewart, simplified from a redrawn version published by J. Campbell in 1926 and with all 19th-century Parramatta cemeteries added.

sadly relatively few studies have examined this issue (Mytum 2002b; University of Leicester Graveyards Group 2012).

St John's has sufficient memorials even from the first decade to reveal reliable commemorative trends, with almost 20 memorials per decade over the first 20 years. In Britain and Ireland, regional studies reveal an exponential growth in commemoration starting in the late-18th century (Tarlow 1998; Mytum 2006), so the settlement of Australia coincides with the start of the trend towards more popular permanent commemoration and Parramatta demonstrates the same pattern. The numerical data is here limited to St. John's, but the wider discussion of the forms includes the evidence from the St Patrick's (Roman Catholic, from 1824), May's Hill (Presbyterian from 1839, and Baptist from 1849) and All Saint's (Anglican, 1843); these have all been transcribed and their histories researched (Dunn 1988, 1991, 1996, 2007). None of the burial grounds in Parramatta are directly placed alongside or around churches; St John's is just outside the town when it was established (Mytum 2020b), and then the later phase of cemetery establishment also took place on the northern and southern peripheries of the settlement, though all have subsequently been engulfed by development (Figure 2).

The first five decades at St. John's reveals the classic exponential rise in total memorials seen widely elsewhere across the English-speaking world (Tarlow 1998; Mytum 2006), but after this an irregular but gradual decline takes place through to the 1880s (Figure 3A); thereafter use is very low, but carries on through much of the 20th century, though some are just additions to existing family plots. The decline is because burial was moving to the other cemeteries, now organised on a denominational basis, rather than at St. John's which had previously served the whole population. There are some clear denominational preferences in iconography, which may also relate to the socio-economic context of the users and their national and regional origins. The most prominent differences are noted here, but further analysis is necessary to differentiate between these and other factors such as chronology, monumental masons' influences, and the varied commemorative landscapes at the various cemeteries that may have influenced choices by the bereaved.

A few British and Irish regions have a significant use of memorials in the early eighteenth century, and these are of a folk art tradition (Burgess 1963); by the later 18th century this has been much reduced with more standardisation, but there is still considerable regional variation from still relatively rustic styles through to sophisticated design and implementation by professional carvers (Mytum 2004). Therefore, the folk art phase anticipated by Birmingham (1973) is only represented by a few memorials carved by those who came from regions where these cultural expectations lingered. What is more notable is how rapidly the New South Wales evidence shows not only the aspiration but ability to achieve design and production qualities equivalent to those in Britain and Ireland, but also including new regional styles. By the middle of the 19th century the monumental mason industry is well established, as revealed in this study which runs to the 1870s, with distinct preferences by masons—and possibly their clients—in many places.

### Defining memorial types

The memorial types found at Parramatta and more widely across Australasia are within the broad range of monument forms found in Britain and Ireland which has meant that the standard recording classification could be used for the Parramatta memorials (Mytum 2000). This system has been

adapted and expanded, now to cover many North American types as well, and is freely available (Mytum 2019). The supporting documents and the recording form is available for free download (DEBS 2020). The recording system can be entered up into data bases for curation and analysis and can also be permanently archived with open access, for a fee, at the Archaeology Data Service.

Memorial shapes are each given a four-digit number, which is hierarchically structured so that analysis can be fine-grained or variations can be combined (Adams 1988); the first two digits indicate the general form. Even with this system, however, minor variations have to be grouped—memorials can be almost infinitely variable as they are hand-carved. The use of photographs is also therefore a critical element of the record, as then more subtle variations can be identified. The variability in memorial forms was recognised by Casey in an Australian context when studying Camperdown Cemetery, Sydney, where 103 types were defined, though some had variants making a total of 192 shapes (Casey 1992); these can be allocated numbers in the four-digit system (albeit some grouped together), allowing better comparison between assemblages across sites. Many other aspects of the artefact are also recorded—dimensions, materials, style and technique of lettering, symbols (Mytum 2019). The text is transcribed on the form, but further analysis of the text is not within the scope of the system as there are too many questions that might be asked, though the system does have a data base for people recorded on the memorials which allows some anthropological analysis. For Parramatta, Dunn's transcriptions were used (Dunn 1988, 1991, 1996, 2007) and checked in detail at St. John's, with Dunn's memorial numbering used to allow easy correlation with existing sources, but dimensions have been remeasured in metric.

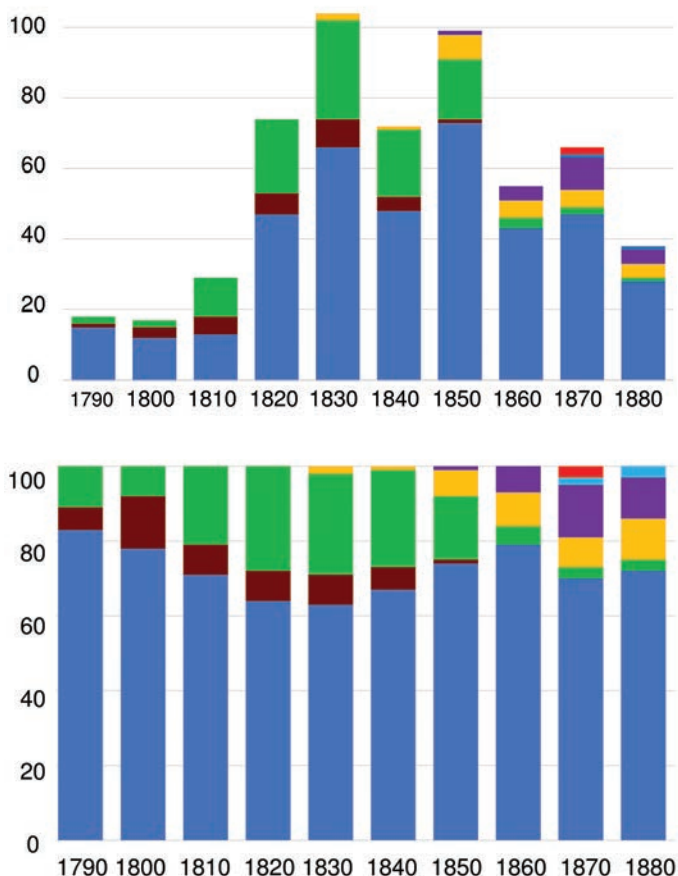


Figure 3: Bar chart of monuments 1790s–1860s (by type): absolute numbers (3A top) and percent (3B bottom) by decade.

The main forms at Parramatta for the period being discussed here are the ledger, tomb, headstone, footstone, and pedestal monument, though others begin to appear at the end of the period (Figure 3). These are also noted as the main forms by Murray (2001: 192–195). These were popular types used in Britain at this time, though the relative popularity at St. John’s is distinctive, with variations (even taking into account later start dates) for the other Parramatta cemeteries. For example, the tombs here represent a significant minority (between 20 and 30 per cent) of the memorials in the first half of the 19th century. Equivalent sized samples from Ryedale (North Yorkshire), the Vale of York (North Yorkshire) and Pembrokeshire (Wales) all have under 5 per cent of memorials as tombs for the same period.

The arrangement of text follows established conventions but shows the same variations found elsewhere, no doubt in part reflecting preferences of different masons. The texts may be a mix of upper and lower case, or all capitals; certain elements may be italics. Elaborate lettering on introductory words or phrases is not common but does occur, and the fonts are those found in Britain and across Australia (Andrews 2011).

Introductory terms generally emphasise memory (e.g. Sacred to the memory of; In memory of; In affectionate remembrance of), but some continue an older tradition of emphasising the location of the body (e.g. Here lies the body of; Here lies the remains of). As found elsewhere (Mytum

2002b), their popularity changes over time, with body locations declining whilst the sacred emphasis is increasingly replaced with those where affection is overtly emphasised, evidencing the increasing role of emotion as a factor in memorial choices (Tarlow 1999). Epitaphs are relatively rare but are informative of emotions and religious beliefs, but they are not the focus of this study; in Britain epitaphs are more common in some regions than others, and there is also regional variation in thematic emphasis. Comparative research is needed before this can be considered for Australia, though some case studies form a basis from which to develop this theme (Farrell 2003; Wright 2011).

## Ledgers

The ledger (Figure 4) is a rectangular slab (0100) laid on the ground; its surface may be set flush with the turf or may be proud of the surrounding ground (Casey 1992: 116–117). The ledger has dimensions that cover the complete surface of the grave. The surface of the ledger top is normally flat, but a convex cross section occurs occasionally in Britain on low monuments, a form not found at Parramatta. However, the convex cross section is important for local tomb tops (see below). Some memorials that now appear at Parramatta as ledgers, including ones with convex tops and elaborate bevelled edges, may originally have been placed on tombs which have since eroded, and the tops have been placed on the ground. These appear in the graphs as ledgers, so ledger use may be overestimated, and tomb popularity underestimated.

## Tombs

Tombs (Figure 4) are more varied in form than ledgers; they cover the whole of the burial plot, and in essence they consist of a raised ledger either on legs as a table tomb (1300) or with side and end panels (1100)—chest tombs in Britain, but often termed altar tombs in Australia (Dunn 1991; Casey 1992: 113–114). The form of legs varies greatly, as does the construction and decoration of the side panels and end panels. Moreover, the top slab, often of a slightly more resilient rock than the rest of the tomb, can had different forms of flat or moulded edges. These monuments sit on top of an earth grave or brick-lined family vault (Birmingham and Liston 1976); these arrangements have been well documented in Britain (Litten 1999; Mytum 2020c). Inscriptions are usually placed on the tomb top, but the side panels may remain plain, decorated or be used for inscriptions. Some side panels are also used to attach inscription plaques at a later date. The layout of text on tombs follows the same patterns as that on contemporary ledgers and other monument forms. Whilst tombs are sometimes on a low platform in Britain, this is a notable feature at St. Johns, and some have steps at one end to facilitate reading the inscription and perhaps the placement of flowers on the tomb. This is not a feature of British tombs, and is an example of local innovation.

Many forms of memorial could be surrounded by cast iron railings, but these were most frequently used for tombs as they were an additional cost and the tombs were the most expensive monument in the cemeteries (Figure 4F). It is notable that the oldest surviving photograph of St John’s c. 1870 shows low timber picket fences around many other graves (Figure 5A), but none of these survive (Figure 5B). Many different variants of railings survive, and they were produced in Australian foundries.

Low tombs (Figure 4B, E), which Casey termed low plain style (Casey 1992: 112), are not a common form in Britain, though in Ireland ledgers are more often propped up above the

**Table 1: Concordance of National Trust of Australia (NSW) and Mytum (2019) memorial classification. In most cases, the latter classification allows greater detail to be recorded and includes many more shapes.**

National Trust of Australia	Mytum (2019)
<i>Headstones</i>	
Norman	4100
Norman with acroteria	4104
Norman with shoulders	5102
Norman with cutaway shoulders	5107
Norman with stepped shoulders	5109
Norman with rounded shoulders	5106
Norman with scroll on shoulders	4507
Cambered	4500
Gothic	4200
Gothic with acroteria	4204
Gothic with shoulders	4209
Rectangular	4700
Gabled	4300
Gabled with acroteria	4304
Pedimented	4400
Anthropomorphic	5181
Anthropomorphic with peaked shoulders	5181
Stepped	4709
Ogee	4806
<i>Other memorials</i>	
Desk with tablet	8100
Desk with book	8120
Desk with scroll	8150
Pedestal	9000
Pedestal with draped cinerary urn	9472
Obelisk	9440
Rustic	8400
Altar	1100
Table	1300
Sarcophagus	0500 [0540]
Latin cross	2100
Celtic cross	2260
Calvary cross	2130
Plinth	In comments and measurements



4A



4E



4B



4F



4C



4G



4D



4H

Figure 4: Ledgers and Tombs, St. John's. Numbering from Dunn (1991) in brackets, followed by Mytum (2019) coding of shape:

- A Ledger (1G1/0510);
- B Altar and low tombs (1B9/1123, 1B10);
- C, D Altar tomb and construction method (4J2/1110);
- E Low tomb on platform with steps (3K1/1120);
- F Altar tomb with railings and external steps (2J3/1123);
- G Table tomb (1D6/1300);
- H Tomb with wheel designs on side panels (2N11/1120).



5A



5B

Figure 5: Photographs of St. John's burial ground, Parramatta.

A: View from the North of the burial ground with its vegetation and picket fences round graves and the Parsonage on the horizon, c. 1870.

B: View of the southern half of the burial ground from the east, 2006.

turf on rocks, though infrequently with the ashlar stone substructures that the Australian examples display. This appears to be an early local variant that gave ledgers are more visibility and may even be inspired by the Irish traditions, but the local Parramatta sandstones could be easily carved into blocks rather than relying on small boulders as in Ireland. Some low tombs are also on substantial platforms (Figure 4E), so the low tomb itself was clearly not just to create a less expensive monument. The low tombs vary in their height, and so for the graphs they have been combined with other tombs.

### Headstones

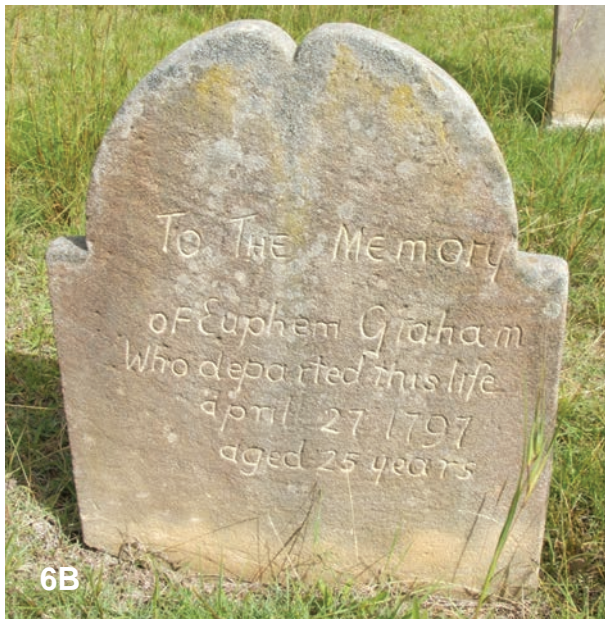
Headstones (Figure 6) form the largest portion of the memorial population, and these occur in a wide range of shapes and sizes (4000–5999), as recognised by both Casey (1992: 97–108) and Murray (2011: 195–202). However, some main shapes can be identified which have minor variants. The rock types used for headstones in Parramatta were local, and easily worked but the materials came from several quarry sources. Non-local stones only appear with a single example of marble in 1830 and small



6A



6D



6B



6E



6C

Figure 6: Headstone forms. Numbering from Dunn (1988, 1991) in brackets, followed by Mytum (2019) coding of shape: A–J, L–N: St. John's; K: St. Patrick's.  
 A Sinuous form (2J8/5101);  
 B Cusped top (2R3/4769);  
 C With cut shoulders (3F12/5107);  
 D Round top (3K14/4100);  
 E Headstone and footstone (3F14/5107);





6F



6H



6G



6I

Figure 6 (cont.):  
 F Anthropomorphic (3M1/5181);  
 G With expanded top (2X8/4703);  
 H Unusual folk art carving (2U4/5107);  
 I Gothic (3F4/4200, 2M8/4200);



6J



6K



6L



6M



6N

Figure 6 (cont.):  
 J Gothic (3F4/4200, 2M8/4200);  
 K, L Headstones with high relief carving (E702/4110, 3A1/6660);  
 M Head and footstone within railings (1E12/4100);  
 N Headstone and footstone within kerbs (3F11/5101).  
 Note: features such as kerbs, railings and body stones are coded in the additional elements of the record form.

numbers until the 1880s when it is more frequent; the first use of granite occurs in the 1860s. Most headstones have well-shaped sides and backs, some showing signs of the tooling used to create them, but some have less well finished backs. Unlike some in Scotland and Ireland, no headstones have carving or text on the back.

Headstone profiles are distinctive features, and many simple sinuous headstone forms were in use during the first three decades in both Sydney (Johnson and Sainty 2001) and Parramatta; many continue to be popular through to the middle of the century. Some are variants on form 5100, particularly 5107, commonly found not only in Britain and Ireland but the English-speaking world in the late-18th and early-19th centuries (Mytum 2003). The apparently earliest Gothic style headstone commemorates a death in 1823 (Figure 6J), but all features of the monument are unlike any others of this or the subsequent decade, and it is probably a later replacement; a broken headstone with similar features at St. Patrick's is from the 1870s. The high relief carving of the central flower with broken stem is distinctive of later memorials (see below) which further suggests erection about half a century after the only death commemorated. Simple Gothic revival stones start to appear in the 1840s (Figure 6I) with more elaborate examples appearing from the 1860s at St John's, though slightly earlier at St. Patrick's; more of the Roman Catholic memorials have symbols and decorative elements, including several examples of similar designs not represented at all at St. John's. Motifs are not discussed in detail here; they will be subject to a separate study which will combine with analysis of text to reveal messaging of the memorials. Some headstones can be surrounded by iron railings (Figure 6M).

Footstones are usually inscribed with the initials and year of death of an individual commemorated on the headstone (Figure 6E, M, N). Often the profile of the headstone matches that of the footstone, but this is far from always the case. Sometimes only the footstone survives; there were probably many more footstones marking the grave length in the past.

## Pedestal monuments

Pedestals (Figure 7) are the tallest and often most striking memorials in Parramatta burial grounds. Casey (1992: 118) calls these monuments pillars, though uses pedestal frequently in the monument descriptions. Pedestal monuments are usually constructed in the same way as altar tombs, with side panels of softer stone and horizontal bevelled elements of harder stone. They are often have several stages, and may be topped by an urn or cross. Some pedestal forms are made of a solid block, either sandstone or marble; some of these forms are far more popular in Australia than Britain and Ireland. Pedestal monuments can be surrounded by railings.

## Low monuments

Low monuments (Figure 7; 0500) occur widely in relatively small numbers across the whole of Britain and Ireland, and they come in a range of shapes and rock types. Casey (1992: 115–116) termed this the sarcophagus, but they are often based on medieval grave slab designs rather than body containers. Low monuments are very rare in Parramatta (Figure 7H); in England the memorials were more expensive than headstones and tended to be from more affluent merchants, industrialist or minor gentry, but the most frequent commissioners were clergy or aristocracy; both these sets of clients were not present in any numbers in Australia, and it seems that at Parramatta the tomb was the preferred alternative for the more affluent.

## Crosses and desk monuments

Crosses (2000) come in many forms but the most frequent are the Calvary crosses with stepped bases (Figure 7G); they appear in the late-19th century but are most popular in the early twentieth century; many are now broken. Many other cross forms, including the Celtic cross, can be amongst the tallest memorials in the burial ground but there are none at



Figure 7: Pedestal and later monuments. Numbering from Dunn (1988, 1991) in brackets, followed by Mytum (2019) coding of shape: A–G: St. John's, H: St. Patrick's. Numbering from Dunn 1988, 1991 in brackets: A Pedestal within railings (1120/9420);



7B



7C



7D



7E



7F



7G



7H

Figure 7 (cont.):  
 B Large pedestal with urn on top (1B2/9421);  
 C Pedestal with tall pyramid (1K7/9450);  
 D Pedestal with column with urn (fallen) and elaborate scroll for inscription (3B14/9471);  
 E Hexagonal solid pedestal (1119/9100);  
 F Pedestal with marble inset text panels (2J13/9420);  
 G Cross on stepped base (2W6/2130);  
 H Low monument (A209/0540).

St. John's. Desk monuments (8100) are low box shape with a sloping face on which an inscription is placed. It may be a single piece of stone or be formed from several components, especially if there are side elements with scrolls. Sometimes a separate material is inset on the sloping surface for the inscription. These monuments are often constructed with kerbs and may also have integral or separate flower containers. The few examples within time period may be replacements or were erected when subsequent deaths took place and a monument erected to all those mentioned, as the form becomes popular from the 1910s.

### Dating memorials and defining temporal trends

Dating the erection of monuments is not as straightforward as it might seem. The texts reveal death dates, often to the day (which when compared with other records may not all exactly agree), but this is not the date of the monument production. Often, memorials were not commissioned until after the burial had settled in the ground, to minimise subsidence affecting the stability of the monument. This period also allowed for settling of the estate and the calculated decision by the bereaved on the selection and production of the monument (Mytum 2018).

In some parts of Ireland and Scotland, memorials state who commissioned the memorial (often with the inscription 'erected by ...') and sometimes also give a year of erection. Only these monuments have a certain date. Moreover, many memorials have texts which record the deaths of several people, possibly all placed on the stone at one go, in which case the latest date provides the *terminus post quem*, but they may have been added at one at a time in what have been termed inscriptional events (Mytum 2002a). In a case with several death dates, consideration of details in the inscription and relative preservation of different entries may allow identification of the primary inscription, but this may only be a provisional assessment. Study of stated erection dates compared with death dates on those memorials reveals monuments both erected before any deaths and those erected decades later, but most fall within a decade (Mytum 2002a). Indeed, the later the memorials are erected the closer death and erection dates tend to come, but a rare example of the recording erection date at Parramatta is in 1873 when a monument is erected to a brother in law who died in the 1850s (Dunn 1991: 173).

Another issue regarding dating is backdating—when external memorials first start being commissioned in a region, some descendants arrange for monuments over their ancestors, usually parents. This has been well-attested in New England (where in the most extreme cases memorials identified by stylistic features to a carver have death dates before he was born). As burial marking was already part of the known package of behaviour brought by the first settlers, this is unlikely in Australia unless there was any logistical delay to production, for example in some newly settled areas without the necessary infrastructure. There is no evidence of backdating at Parramatta. Given the range and number of memorials from the 1790s there clearly was no delay in introducing commemorative practices to Australia. The dates ascribed to memorials in this study are analysed by decade in graphs, deduced from the latest death date within the primary inscription. It is likely that relatively few monuments at Parramatta were erected long after the deaths they commemorate, as in a fluid society with both social and geographical mobility it is likely that monuments would be erected within a couple of years or not at all. Any exceptions should not affect the overall trends, which are very clear at St. John's.

Throughout, the headstone is the choice of the majority, but several other types have significant presence, the percentage chosen by decade (Figure 3B) reveals the changing dynamic more clearly. The ledgers occur from the beginning but cease by the 1850s, having been most popular in the 1800s. In the early stages, tombs are the other main monument type, and form a significant proportion from the 1810s to the 1840s. Pedestal monuments chronologically overlap with tombs but then become more popular, though never gaining the same total percentage as tombs. The tombs and pedestal monuments, the most elaborate types present here and indeed in most burial grounds in Britain, form between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the memorials for several decades. This is a significantly higher proportion than is normally seen in Britain, and this suggests that a distinctive social structure that developed in early colonial Australia. The opportunities for mercantile and agricultural success within the developing colony allowed a significant group of self-made individuals to display their material success. Mortuary monuments became one of the favoured arenas for conspicuous consumption, one that is seen (though still with lower percentages) in city cemeteries such as Bradford and Liverpool where pedimented monuments, in particular with columns or obelisks, were grouped in prestigious areas.

Murray (2001: 278) notes that St. John's may have been particularly attractive to the higher social levels because two wives of Governors were buried there. Elyzabeth Jane Bourke (d. 1832) and Lady Mary Fitzroy (d. 1847) lie in adjacent plots. Each has distinctive railings, the former with a low tomb, the latter with one of the most elaborate altar tombs in Parramatta. It could be argued, however, that it was already established as a prestigious location given the earlier high proportion of tombs, so it was a suitable place for such individuals to be laid at rest; the location was also close to the Governor's House. It should also be noted that many complaints regarding the state of Sydney burial grounds (Johnson and Sainty 2001) may also have been a factor in making St. John's attractive for those who had a choice.

At Parramatta the flowering of major exterior monuments is an earlier phenomenon than in British cities, and so is mainly manifested through tombs; some of the equivalent groups, the affluent urban middle classes, were instead interred within crypts beneath churches, and so have no external memorials (Mytum 2020c). It is notable that most monuments of all types are clustered in the southern half of the St. John's burial ground (Figures 1, 5B), though it was the north-eastern portion that contains all the early memorials (Mytum 2020b). The grouping is most probably because the ground rising to the southern boundary enhanced the visibility of memorials in this area. Indeed, whilst some of the most elaborate monuments are close to the main path, as seen in British cemeteries, many others are scattered on the slopes, forming striking plots surrounded by railings, or are in the lower areas with few memorials around them, possibly placed where most were unmarked graves so their appearance was even more striking.

Some forms of memorial are erected in the burial ground from the middle of the 19th century. The pedimented monuments (including both Gothic and Classical revival styles) have their floruit in the period covered in this paper, but they are always rare because of their high cost. From the 1850s the cross and from the 1870s the low monument and desk forms appear. These new types are not common at St. John's, but the desk is popular at Mays Hill and becomes a dominant form in the following decades. These new arrivals reflect a change in commemoration which continues into the 20th century, and they deserve a separate study.

All these forms are common in Britain and Ireland, though the forms of the desk type are more diverse in Australia, and their popularity is notably greater. Similar but noticeably different desk forms are common in Britain and Ireland, often associated with kerbs enclosing the whole plot. Kerbs occur widely in Australia, but their survival depends on management decisions between erection and recording; many have been removed to aid grounds maintenance. It is quite possible that many of the memorials, including headstones, were accompanied by kerbs; some headstones were accompanied by footstones, but they could still have had a kerbed surround; a few survive at St. John's.

### 1790s memorials and the rapid establishment of a craft

The Parramatta memorials commemorating deaths in the first half of the 1790s reveal from the start a variety of memorial forms available to clients. The oldest monument is a ledger to Henry Dodd, but headstones in several shapes commence the same year. That to Thomas Daveny is not only an elaborate shape but also has different lettering used, with italics for the introductory phrase 'In Memory of ...', before the short biographical text in lettering with serifs. The text is symmetrically laid out, well-spaced, and competently carved. This is similar in style to that on the Dodd memorial, though its inscription is very short and, sadly, eroded. Some of the other earliest memorials have lost their inscriptions, though earlier records allow their identification and dating (Dunn 1991: 142). This may reflect their age, but it could be that the better sandstone beds for memorial use had yet to be identified. The headstones at this early phase include several with a profile interrupted at the centre of the top with a cusp, as that of Eupheni Graham (d. 1797), and this may be a feature of a particular mason (Figure 6B). Headstones with this feature are popular in some parts of Ireland, though often less competently achieved. From 1799 another, more sinuous, shape makes an appearance, with four headstones erected that year with that shape (Figure 4B), though other profiles were also being selected. These are all shapes familiar in Britain and Ireland.

It is notable that the first altar tombs are erected in the 1790s, (Sarah Buckrel d. 1793; Thomas Freeman d. 1794), suggesting a rapid development of a variety of monument forms available almost immediately. The Buckrel tomb has completely plain vertical elements but Freeman has slight incised vertical mouldings, and the tomb tops are competently carved with bevelled profiled edges. Freeman's tomb top is damaged, but this has provided a view of how the side and end panels were joined, using lead binding strips set into the elements in a manner used in Britain (Figure 4C, D). These demonstrate an understanding of monument construction, not just appearance, or the application of more general masonry skills to churchyard monuments. The other tomb in the first decade (David Kilpack d. 1797) has a plain top with undecorated side panels, the first tomb for an emancipist as earlier tombs were for government officials or their families. Interestingly, this is the first tomb to commemorate more than one family member with an infant son (d. 1798), and then the wife (Mary, d. 1825). In the following decade more elaborate tomb decoration commenced, with that to James Archer (d. 1800) having spoked circles on the sides and ends, which are shown in their more refined scalloped forms on the Joseph Ward (d. 1812) tomb.

The memorials from this earliest period of settlement can be compared with the few others that survive Norfolk Island

and at Sydney, though the latter are displaced. The earliest Norfolk Island *in situ* memorial is that to Thos. Headington (d. 1798) on Norfolk Island (Dalkin 1974: 70); the text uses varied script but is not as competent as that on Daveny's memorial (with letters less well shaped, and not so neatly arranged); but it does have a verse in capitals; the whole text is also carved at a slight angle. The other early headstone, presumably also *in situ*, has an only partially legible inscription but it is from the 1790s. Both headstones are the same profile and one not found Parramatta. In Sydney early memorials have been identified. The oldest is that to a sailor on the *Sirius*, George Graves who died in July 1788 was found in 1931 being reused for paving (King 1939). The lettering shows more elaborate lettering for parts of the introductory line, but the letter forms are not quite as competent as many early memorials at Parramatta. Some early-19th-century memorials survived because they have been moved to other cemeteries around Sydney, and others are known from photographs and sketches (Johnson and Sainty 2001).

During the early-19th century, British regional memorial forms become more accomplished as more specialist masons supplied the increasing demand for commemoration in stone. As with the earliest monuments, most were unsigned, but later in the 19th century, some memorials are signed. Murray (2001: 223–234) notes that carved memorials could be imported from Britain in the late-19th century, but this is not obvious from the monuments at Parramatta for the period considered here. Instead, designs from British pattern books created by either monumental masons or architects ensured that Australian masons could know the latest fashions (Murray 2002: 215–224). These are particularly apparent at Rookwood but there and at Parramatta local interpretations of such styles can be seen. Murray (2011: 200) discusses Parramatta monumental masons; J. Craig operated from Church Street for 18 years from 1856; he signed six products at St. John's. George Peters was another mason in operation from 1868 to 1901, with a similar number also with his name.

From the middle of the 19th century a particular style of carving, often of cherubs or angels, and with foliage and swags in very high relief, was available in Parramatta (Figure 8B, C, D). Another different popular distinctive design is that a hand at the top of the headstone holding an unfurled scroll on which the commemorative text is incised (Figure 8E, F, G); this also occurs at Camperdown cemetery, Sydney (Casey 1992, Type U13 vari 6; U57), which also have similar designs without the hand (U41 vari 1). Rapid surveys of other contemporary sites in the region, including Liverpool, Ryde, Wilberforce and Windsor burials grounds, did not identify other concentrations, but revealed other localised stylistic features alongside the shared repertoire of shapes, no doubt reflecting different masons (Gilbert 1980). Some of these memorials also included designs in very high relief, reflecting a wider regional preference, albeit manifested more locally, including at Rookwood.

These designs are both highly distinctive, and they are highly time-consuming products as so much stone has to be cut back, to give the designs in relief. They are confidently produced, but the cherub and angel designs have a certain naivety in style, which makes them distinctive. A similar phenomenon can be seen at Camperdown cemetery, though not with the same designs as those at Parramatta. Casey describes this style as more primitive (1992: 127) meaning compared with the more rococo or classical examples of the pattern books and some of the Australian-made examples. A regional style developed in the Parramatta and Sydney area, which is inspired by some imported illustrations. In Britain



Figure 8: Headstone carving. Numbering from Dunn (1988, 1991) in brackets, followed by Mytum (2019) coding of shape: A, D, E: St. John's; B, C, F, G: St. Patrick's. A Urn (3F15/4100); B-D Naive style cherubs (B207/4110, E209/4100, 2R9/4100); E-G Scrolls held by a hand (1K4/4302, B101/4610, E206/4707).

such designs would only be carved by this date by those who delivered products with a convincing Classical style. These monuments show a regional lack of sophistication as seen in local traditions half a century earlier in Britain and Ireland. These monuments deserve detailed treatment in a separate study. Other deeply carved contemporary memorials are identical in treatment to those in the pattern books, so this suggests it is not lack of skill but a deliberate creation of a local style.

## Conclusions

The establishment of businesses that could successfully compete with imports coming from Britain and elsewhere has been a research focus in Australasian historical archaeology (Stocks 2008; Bagshaw 2018). These often reveal how localised production faced problems with limited expertise amongst convicts and early free settlers, and competition from imports. The latter were less of a problem for large, heavy memorials, but the former does not appear to have been a challenge either.

It is notable that the level of competence in memorial production is almost immediately equivalent to that in Britain and Ireland. The range of shapes, styles of lettering, and varied levels of accomplishment (seen in memorials in Britain and Ireland too at the turn of the century) also suggests a number of different producers from the 1790s onwards, though there would not have been sufficient demand for full time monumental masons for a few decades.

Whilst most monumental forms continue to maintain strong similarities to those in Britain and Ireland, for the first few decades there is a clear emphasis on simple shapes and text, with limited use of decorative motifs. Some early memorials at St. John's do have symbolism, but they are notable because of their rarity. Only a few have Roman Catholic symbolism such as IHS, though these are present (Figure 6H). This may reflect the rarity of Roman Catholics in those groups who were sufficiently affluent to commission a memorial. The rarity of motifs aligns the early Parramatta (and indeed Sydney) memorials with certain English regional styles, but not closely enough to suggest one regional influence; indeed, the early headstones with the central cusp are most frequent in Ireland. The Roman Catholic St. Patrick's also has numerous plain memorials, but there are many more with motifs, and not only ones with manifestly Catholic associations; in contrast, Nonconformist Mays Hill memorials are less elaborate. A few more rustic monuments indicate either home-made or inexperienced carvers, but these are remarkably rare (and occur in many parts of Britain and Ireland over the same period).

Burial markers are amongst the earliest surviving items of Australian-made material culture which survive in numbers and are of equivalent quality to imports. The popularity of the low tomb is distinctive, and the innovation of the stepped viewpoint on some of the most substantial tombs is an innovation. The development of designs with very high relief is a regional phenomenon, including designs similar in quality to those in pattern books and others with a less sophisticated, though highly ambitious and competently composed and carved style. A slavish imitation of British models was clearly not the intention here. Not only did a commemorative tradition in stone become established very quickly in New South Wales, it also developed its own regional tradition which made it distinctive though within the overall trends seen in Britain over the first century of colonial occupation. More widely, the first half of the 19th century sees numerous distinct variations by

individual monumental masons across the Sydney region, a pattern of variability within overarching trends which reflects both the interconnections of the imperial world but also the localisation of monument production and consumption.

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