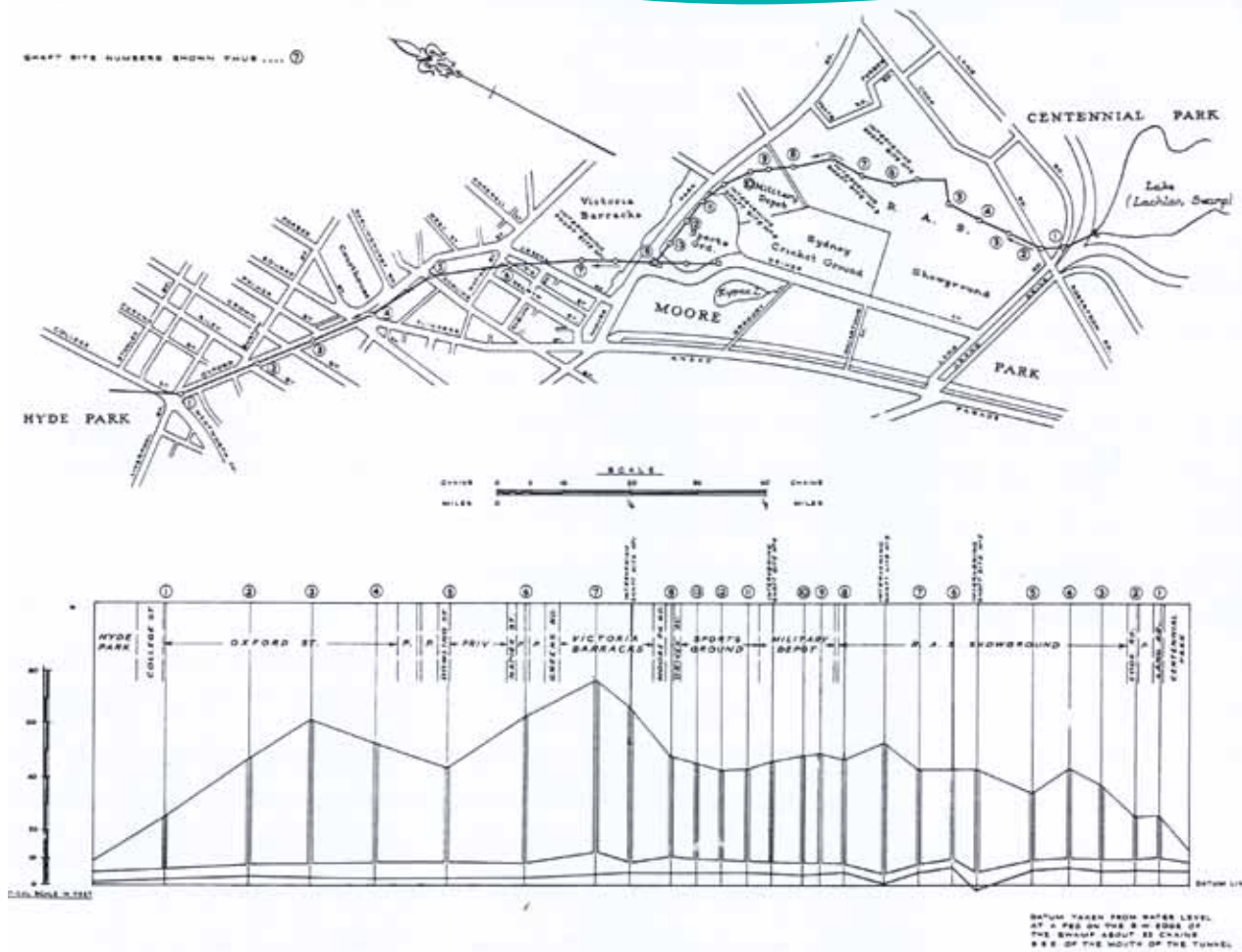


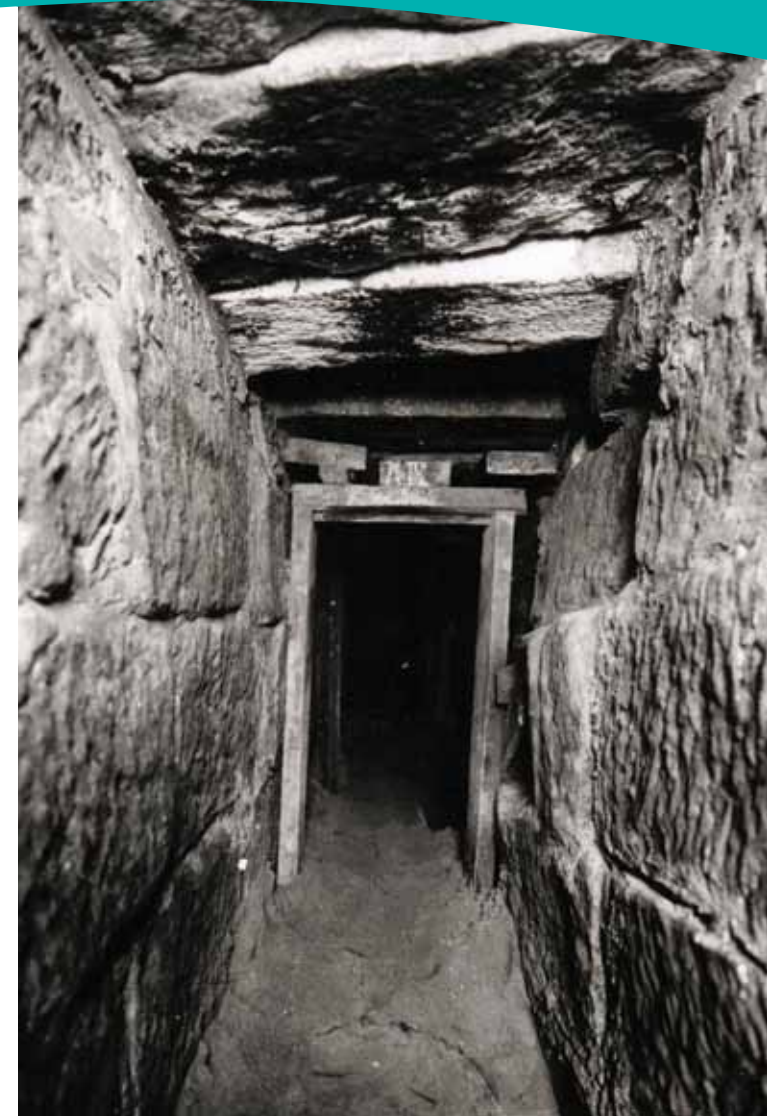
In recognition of the importance of this early water supply system to the people of Sydney and New South Wales, Busby's Bore was entered on the NSW State Heritage Register in 1999.

Front cover photo: Busby's Bore under Oxford Street Darlinghurst, between Riley and Liverpool Streets.

# Busby's Bore



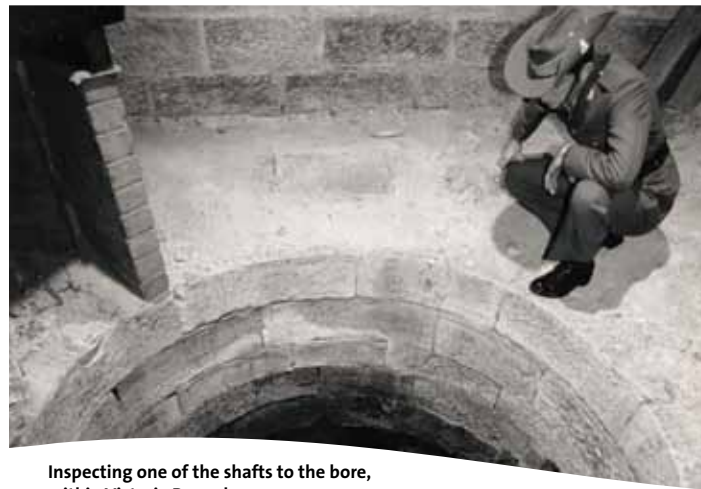
BUSBY'S BORE





**Busby's Bore in Hyde Park.**

Photograph: Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales.



**Inspecting one of the shafts to the bore, within Victoria Barracks.**



**These troughs still remain on Oxford Street - a remnant of the bore's supply system.**

## Sydney's second water supply

**Sydney's first water supply was the Tank Stream. As the population grew and the city expanded, the stream could not supply enough water and was threatened by pollution.**

In 1824, Governor Darling appointed 59 year-old engineer John Busby, as Government Mineral Surveyor. Busby recommended the Lachlan Swamps between Paddington and Randwick (now part of Centennial Park) as a suitable new source of water.

The Lachlan Swamps was a low-lying marsh with a plentiful supply of fresh clean water, and a site of considerable significance to the local Aborigines.

Busby determined that the water could be conveyed to the city through an underground tunnel or 'bore', for distribution at the racecourse (today's Hyde Park).

Hopes were high for the colony to have its new clean water supply within a few years, but this was not to be.

Difficulties digging through the rock and with the 'unmanageable and unskilled' convict labourers delayed the project for 10 years. It was finally completed in 1837.

The convict labourers excavated the bore by hand. The bore stretched 3.6 kilometres under the city. It varied from 1.2 to 1.8 metres wide and was up to three metres high in places.

The bore follows an erratic course and has several dead-ends, possibly because of Busby's hesitation to go down into the tunnel. He believed the convicts working on the project were 'disagreeable gentlemen' and seems to have directed the tunnelling and excavation from above ground.

During construction, numerous shafts and wells were tapped into the bore (28 have been located to date) including two in Victoria Barracks, Paddington.

Busby's plans for a 65 million-litre reservoir in Hyde Park were abandoned. Instead, the water was piped across Hyde Park on trestles to the corner of Elizabeth and Park Streets. From here, it was distributed throughout the rapidly expanding city by horse drawn carts.

In the 1840s, construction began on the city's first water pipes, laid from the bore to various parts of the township.

As Sydney's population grew, more water was sourced from the Botany Swamps System. In 1859, this took over as the primary source of supply, but Busby's Bore continued to serve parts of the city and Woolloomooloo. Pollution slowly infiltrated the bore, so eventually it was only used to flush creeks and ponds in the Botanic Gardens.

The bore lay almost forgotten until 1934, when part of the tunnel beneath Oxford Street threatened to collapse. As a result, this section of the tunnel, from Hyde Park to Riley Street, was filled with sand.

When work was completed on Busby's Bore back in 1837, it could supply Sydney's 20,000 people with up to 1.5 million litres of water each day from the Lachlan Swamps. Today Sydney Water distributes about 1,700 million litres of water a day to about 4.2 million people, with dams, recycling, desalination and water efficiency all part of the water supply plan.