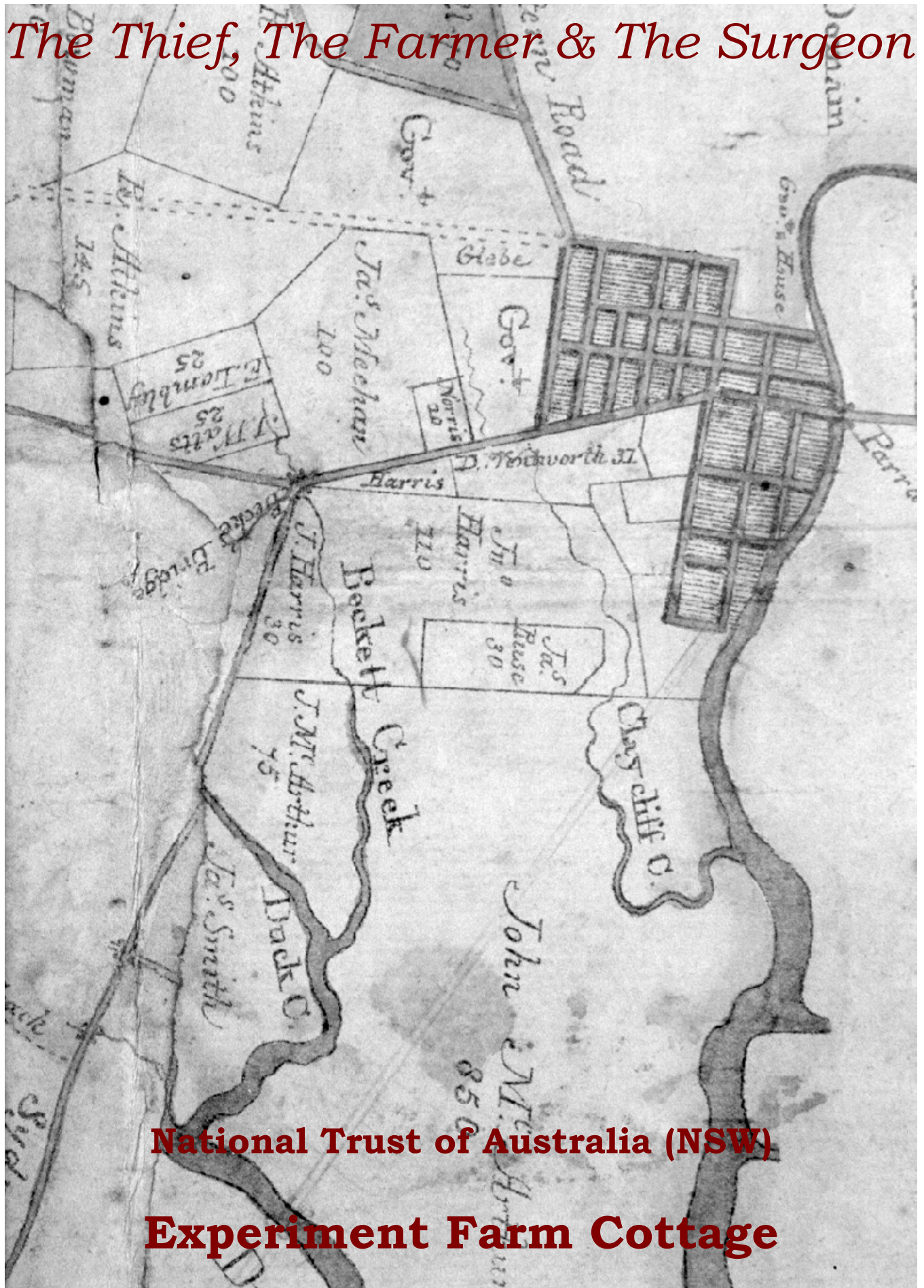
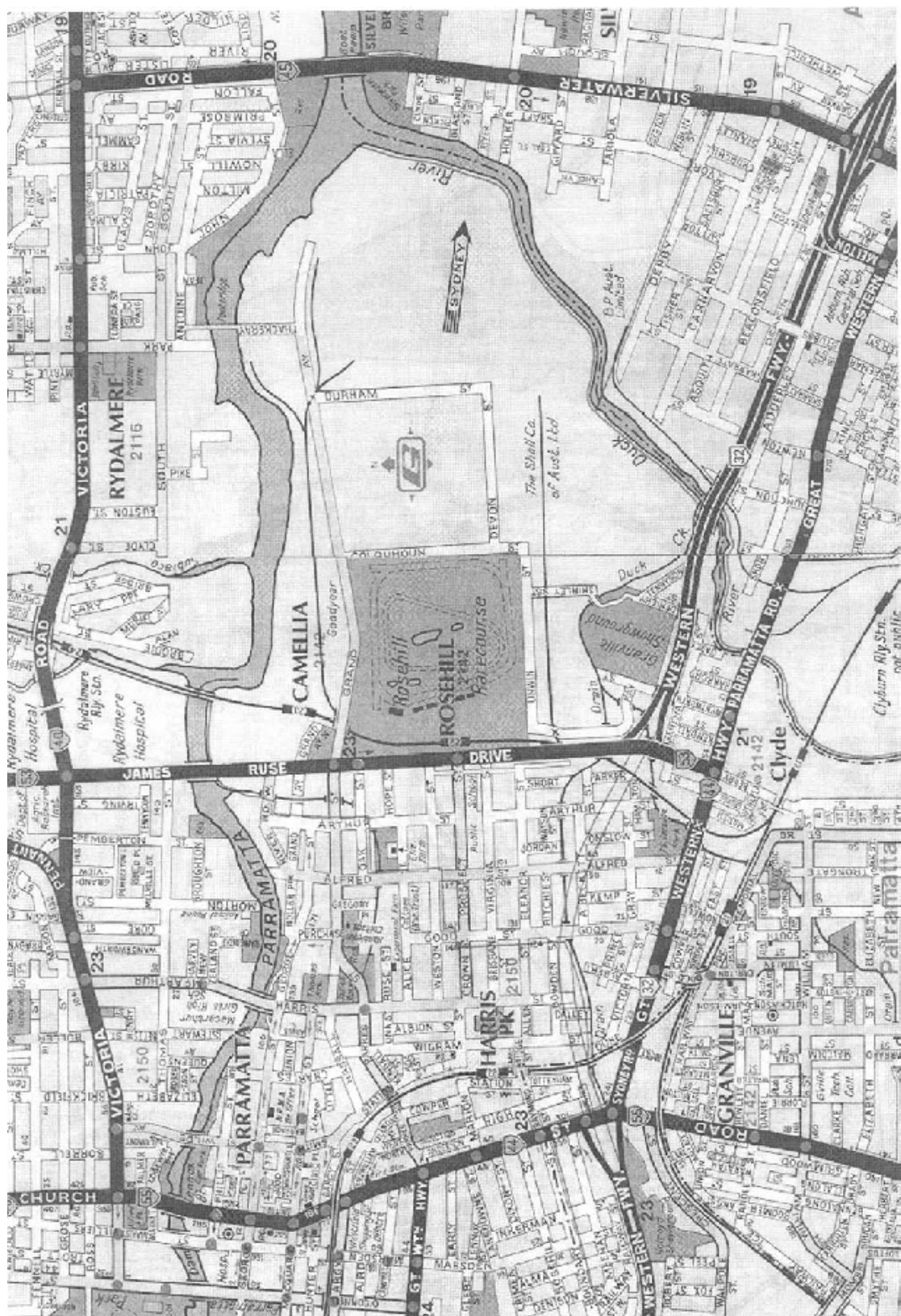


# *The Thief, The Farmer & The Surgeon*



**National Trust of Australia (NSW)**

**Experiment Farm Cottage**



# THE THIEF, THE FARMER & THE SURGEON

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# Syllabus links

The Thief, The Farmer & The Surgeon school program is relevant to the following Stage 2 syllabus links:

TOPIC	THE THIEF, THE FARMER & THE SURGEON	PROGRAM ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
<p><b>Change &amp; continuity Significant Events and People:</b> The establishment of the British colony- Significant people and the contribution that they made.</p> <p>Changes to people and places in the Sydney region as a result of colonisation.</p> <p><b>Time and Change:</b> Causes and effects of change in the local community and other communities</p>	<p>-Arrival of 1<sup>st</sup> fleet. Governor Phillip's search for arable land for food production. - Development of Government farm. - James Ruse, ex-convict given first land grant to prove self-sufficiency. -John Harris, a surgeon in the NSW army corps built the cottage that stands today.</p> <p>-Changes in the Harris Park landscape as a result of occupation &amp; land use. Pre-colonial use of the area by the Darug. Clearing of the land for the first land grant. Surgeon Harris's expansion of the farm. The building of the cottage.</p> <p>-Comparisons made between early land-use and types of housing with the present day. -Expansion of Parramatta &amp; changes to local demographics coinciding with further development.</p>	<p>-Slide presentation includes maps &amp; early images. An introduction to Governor Phillip and early life in the colony. -Themes are food, shelter and the contribution of individuals towards the establishment of the colony at Parramatta. -Cellar display details the life of James Ruse. -farm work, seed planting mimics work done by James Ruse -Surgeon Harris's house, Experiment Farm Cottage, is explored to find evidence of the original inhabitants and the roles of individuals in the house. Revealed through the furnishings, clothes, medicines and personal items. -A site tour of the landscape where students can see evidence of changes to the natural features in the landscape. -Students compare historical with current maps to observe changes to the Parramatta area from pre-colonial to the present day. -Different types of housing used throughout ongoing occupation of the area are discussed &amp; compared.</p>	<p><b>Students will be able to:</b></p> <p>-Sequence the series of events that led to the development of the colony. -Understand that the occupation of the land in the area studied dates back thousands of years before colonial occupation. -Explain the roles played by significant people during the occupation of Australia as a penal colony, including the achievements of convicts &amp; ex-convicts. -Describe some of the environmental consequences of colonial occupation. -Describe and compare the lifestyles of convicts to the military &amp; free- settlers. - Learn to use various sources for reconstructing the past including letters, documents, Maps. -identify the effects of change in land-use on the environment</p>



# Aims of the Program

## **To explore the levels of occupation and use of the site of Experiment Farm**

Explore the different use of the land, from Aboriginal land management practice to the present day. Understand how different cultural and food practices have changed the natural environment.

## **To interpret the physical context of The Ruse Farm**

Explore the site of the original acre and a half land grant down to the water supply. Understand the farming techniques of James Ruse, including watering and seed planting.

## **To link the physical context of the Ruse property with the importance of the experiment to determine if people could survive from the land at Parramatta**

Understand the living conditions in the colony shortly after the arrival of the first fleet in 1788. Understand the reasons for the failure of farming efforts at Sydney Cove.

Trace Governor Phillip's journey along the Parramatta River in search of arable land  
Detail the lives of James and Elisabeth Ruse in order to understand the living and working conditions of ex-convicts as early settlers.

## **To interpret the daily life and times of a wealthy individual as revealed by the design, artefacts and use of the house**

Explore furniture, objects and clothing belonging to, or reproduced as a copy of, a wealthy citizen in the colony in the early 1800's.

Compare the living conditions of Surgeon Harris to the conditions of James and Elizabeth Ruse.

## **To understand the importance of preserving historical sites as a way of learning about the past.**

By visiting a house museum students are able to interpret historical information on both a personal and cultural level.



*Experiment Farm Cottage, photographed from the north-east of the house c.1914.*

## Description of the Program

The school program at Experiment Farm Cottage is designed for Primary school children, years 3-6. The tour operates for 90 minutes and is done in rotation in two or three groups.

The students see a brief introductory slide presentation to give them background information on early life in the colony. The presentation focuses on the themes of change and continuity, food and survival and the importance of the success of Experiment Farm to the establishment of the colony.

There are three main areas that are visited during the program:

- Cellar: The cellar display introduces the theme of food and food production. The food practices of the indigenous people of the Parramatta area, the Burramatagal clan are discussed. The Barramattagal diet of fresh food, hunted and gathered is in contrast to the list of food supplies that were bought out on the first fleet. The purpose of the cellar display is to convey an understanding of the difficulties of obtaining food in the early colony and how this problem was solved. The lives of James Ruse and Elisabeth Parry are told through the use of storyboards and relevant objects.
- Landscape: The focus when exploring the landscape surrounding Experiment Farm Cottage is to see the site where James Ruse was given his original land grant and also to define the changes to the area, from pre-colonial land management to the present day. Students are given an exercise in comparative map reading to see the changes to the Harris Park landscape and then trace some of the area on foot. The work of James Ruse is evoked through the use of colonial tools and seed planting in a cultivated plot, as James Ruse would have done.
- Experiment Farm Cottage. The life and work of Surgeon John Harris is revealed through the design and contents of the house, the furnishings, clothes, objects and his work tools. Students are introduced to the scent and look of some medicinal herbs and can identify their use after viewing the bottled medicines in Surgeon Harris's travelling kit. The objects associated with Harris in the cottage provide a distinct contrast to those of James Ruse and provide a narrative for understanding the differences in lifestyles between free settlers and convicts/ex-convicts in the early colony.
- At the end of the tour the students are gathered together on the verandah at rear of the house for a brief conclusion to the program.

# Experiment Farm as an historic site

## Aboriginal Occupation

The Parramatta area is well documented for both pre-contact and post-contact Aboriginal occupation. The large area which extended from Broken Bay to the Shoalhaven River and from the coast to the Blue Mountains, was occupied by the Darug language group. The Darug group who occupied the Parramatta region were the Burramattagal clan who lived adequately from hunting and gathering in the area. The name Parramatta is a European interpretation of the Barramatta name. 'Parramatta' has been variously translated as meaning 'the place where the eels lie down', 'the head of the river', and 'plenty of eels'.

Fishing from the Parramatta River supplied the Burramattagal people with mullet, perch and eels. All groups took advantage of the rich range of fruits and vegetables such as yams. They hunted possums and sometimes kangaroo as well as many other animals on the open grasses, and used fire as a means for changing the environment and as a tool to assist with hunting.

## James Ruse and Experiment Farm

When the first fleet arrived in 1788, the food supplies bought out on the ships were insufficient to support the colony for an extended period of time. Governor Phillip was driven to search further inland for arable land after attempts at agriculture in the Sydney Cove area failed. Following the early success of the Government farm at Rose Hill, Governor Phillip recognised the necessity of establishing a self-sufficient colony.



*A view of Government Farm  
at Rouse Hill, NSW, 1791*

On 17 June 1790, he wrote to Lord Sydney:

*"In order to know in what time a man might be able to cultivate a sufficient quantity of ground to support himself, I last November ordered a hut to be built in a good situation, an acre of ground to be cleared, and once it was turned up it was put into the possession of a very industrious convict, who was told if he behaved well he should have thirty acres."*

W.Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, ed. L.F.Harding, Sydney: LAH, 1961, pp. 97-8

In 1782 James Ruse was given a seven year sentence for stealing two silver watches. After spending four and a half years on a convict hulk in the river Thames, he arrived with the first fleet in 1788. Ruse had worked as a farm labourer in Cornwall and was chosen to work on the Government Farm at Rose Hill. When Ruse's sentence expired in July 1789 he was chosen by Governor Phillip to cultivate a small farm. In addition a 1½ acre landgrant, Ruse was provided with assistance to clear heavy timber. Clothing and rations were supplied from the public store for fifteen months and a simple hut was built. He was given seeds, clothes, tools, two sow pigs and six hens. Ruse's intention was to become self-sufficient.

Twelve Months after being granted the land, Ruse noted to Watkin Tench (a diarist and commander of marines with the first fleet) that he had cultivated:

*"..an acre and half in bearded wheat, half in maize and a small kitchen garden... My maize I planted in the latter end of August, and the beginning of September. My land I prepared thus: having burnt the fallen timber off the ground, I dug in the ashes, and then hoed it up, never doing more than eight, or perhaps nine, rods in a day; by which means it was not like the government farm, just scratched over, but properly done. Then I clod-moulded it, and dug in the grass and weeds. This I think almost equal to ploughing. I then let it lie as long as I could, exposed to air and sun; and just before I sowed my seed, turned it up all afresh. When I shall have reaped my crop, I purpose (sic) to hoe it again, and harrow it fine, and then sow it with turnip seed, which will mellow and prepare it for the next year. My straw I mean to bury in pits, and throw with it everything which I think will rot and turn to manure. I have no person to help me at present but my wife, whom I married in this country; she is industrious".*

1788 Watkin Tench, ed:Tim Flannery, Melbourne, 1996. pp158

Elisabeth Parry was transported as a convict on the second fleet. She had been sentenced to seven years for theft. On arrival in the colony she was chosen to work on the Government Farm at Rose Hill where she met and married James Ruse three months after her arrival. Parry was the first female convict to be emancipated in 1792.

David Collins, Judge advocate and diarist with the first fleet recorded in March 1791:

*"Some time this month, James Ruse, the first settler in this country, who had been upon his ground about fifteen months, having got in his crop of corn, declared himself desirous of relinquishing his claim to any further provisions from the store, and said that he was able to support himself by the produce of his farm. He had shewn himself an industrious man; and the governor being satisfied that he could do without any further aid from the stores, consented to this proposal, and informed him that he should be forthwith put in the possession of an allotment of thirty acres of ground in the situation he then occupied."*

An Account of the English Colony In New South Wales by David Collins, London, 1798, Vol. 1, pp130.



By December 1791, Ruse had eleven acres and a half in cultivation. With the use of convicts, several more acres had also been cleared. Ruse was provided with the assistance of one male convict up until November 1790. After this, he was only able to obtain convict labour during their leisure hours and in return of the first year's crop. Ruse described the soil on his land as 'middling' and noted that the farm would not be productive without cattle for manure.

There were also other difficulties including the constant theft of his crop by convicts during the night. Ruse still managed to sell 600 bushels of corn to the commissary for £150 in August 1793. Subsequent crops failed, caused by a combination of the exhausted soil and a prolonged drought.

Ruse sold Experiment Farm to Surgeon John Harris for £40 in October 1793 and secured another grant in the Hawkesbury area.

### **Surgeon John Harris**

John Harris was born at Moneymore, Ireland and trained for the medical profession at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. For ten years he was a surgeon in the navy in Indian waters before coming to New South Wales. John Harris arrived in Sydney on the *Surprize* with the second fleet in June 1790 as the surgeon's mate with the 102nd Foot Regiment (NSWCorps). He was stationed at Parramatta.

Harris quickly established himself as a leading land owner in the colony, as well as holding military and civil posts including those of Military Surgeon, Naval officer, Police Magistrate, Superintendent of Public Works and Deputy Judge Advocate.

In recognition of his services, Harris was granted Ultimo Estate, where in 1804 he built Ultimo House.



*View of the seat of Ultimo, near Sydney, in New South Wales. Engraving c.1812. The house of Surgeon John Harris.*

Harris received a grant of 100 acres adjoining Experiment Farm in April 1793. The property was named 'Harris Farm'. Under the terms of the grant, Harris was required to improve the land through clearing and cultivation. Harris continued acquiring land and by the end of 1807, Harris owned a total of 2,576 acres of land. Harris intended to settle in New South Wales and develop his agricultural landholdings and enterprise.

In 1808, Harris was required to return to England to give evidence at Major Johnstone's court martial. Prior to his return, Harris wrote to Earl Bathurst:

*After a service of 32 years in His Majesty's Service, having been 10 years in the Royal Navy in India, previous to having been placed in the 102nd foot, and a residence during the whole of that period in a tropical climate, He finds his health endangered even by a sojourn in England.*

*He therefore solicits your lordship's permission to proceed to N.S.W. in the character of Free Settler and to be indulged in such grants of land, as your Lordship, in your protecting wisdom and liberality, may deem worthy of it.*

Historical Records of Australia - Vol 8; Sheedy 1986: 2.14.1

Harris returned to the colony accompanied by his newly wedded wife Eliza. The Parramatta estate was one of several properties acquired by Harris. Becoming one of the largest landowners in the colony, other properties included Shanes Park at South Creek, Longbottom at Five Dock, Pitt town and Ultimo estate near Sydney. Harris also owned properties outside of Sydney in Bathurst and Callangen near Yass.

Harris constructed a cottage on his property that has been identified in early painted views of Parramatta. In 1804, the Sydney Gazette noted that:

*Mr John Harris, Surgeon of the NSW Corps informs parents of children belonging to the military that he will attend to inoculate with vaccine injection those who may choose to attend him at his house every Tuesday and his house in Parramatta every Saturday until further notice.*

Sydney Gazette, 3 June 1804

The current Experiment Farm Cottage was completed in c.1835. Harris only occasionally resided at Parramatta. Suffering from acute arthritis, Harris passed away at Shane's Park in 1838. In the will, Harris's estate was divided between his Irish relatives. Harris's farm at Parramatta was left to Thomas Harris, son of his brother William Harris, who travelled to Australia to claim his Harris Farm inheritance.

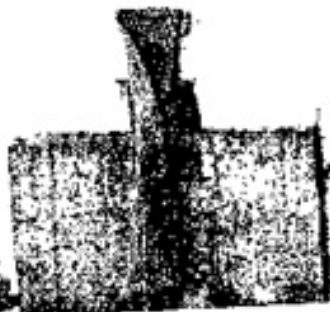
The property remained within the Harris family until 1921 when Experiment Farm (including Experiment Farm Cottage) was sold and the adjoining land subdivided.

# Deed of sale for Experiment Farm James Ruse to John Harris 1793

These Presents Testify That I have granted unto the within  
Patent incontinent, As hereby for and in the sum of Forty Pounds  
sterling to me paid, at or before the underwritten day, of these Presents  
The Receipt whereof I have by Act of Council and of a many  
part thereof I have acquit from the said George, Mr. John  
the heirs, and assigns, all that and every the said forty Acres of Land  
known by the Name of Exposition, lying on the South  
Side of the Barrack Ponds, at Brompton, in the County of Middlesex, the said  
Mr. John Morris, his heirs, and assigns, in as full and complete possession  
as the same is granted, and conveyed, to me in and by Virtue of  
the said Letters Patent, and the Statute in that behalf made, bearing date  
the first day of January in the first year of the said King's Majesty's said  
which I and my heirs could lawfully claim in or to the said  
Acknowledging to have received the said sum of  
Forty Pounds here in full consideration of the  
same, In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal  
the first day of October one thousand six hundred and  
three.

This  
Corner  
is  
dedicated  
to  
the  
memory  
of  
the  
late  
Mrs.  
Mary  
Ann  
H. H. H.

Let me deliver in person  
myself. I had the  
pleasure of seeing you at the  
Foster's. I am very  
sincerely yours  
J. W. Foster



## Time-line for James Ruse

1759	August 9 <sup>th</sup>	James Ruse born in Cornwall, England
1780		Works as a farm hand
1782		Charged with Burglary of 2 silver watches Sentenced to 7 years imprisonment
1788		Ruse transported with First Fleet to Botany Bay Governor Philip establishes a settlement at Sydney Cove Attempts to grow food at Sydney Cove fail
1788	April	Governor Philip travels up the Parramatta River 13 ½ miles to find arable land
1788	November	Settlement established at Rouse Hill, land cleared and cultivated to make the Government farm Ruse working on Government farm
1789	November 21 <sup>st</sup>	Ruse given 1 ½ acre land grant, seeds, tools, 6 chickens, and 2 pigs in order to grow own food and become self sufficient
1789	December	First successful harvest of Government farm
1790	May	Ruse sows some wheat
1790	June	Elizabeth Parry arrives with the Second Fleet on the <i>Lady Julian</i> and goes to work on Government farm Ruse advises Philip that if one more acre were cleared for him he would be able to support himself
1790	September	Ruse marries Elizabeth Parry (1791 – c.1801 Parry & Ruse have 6 children) Ruse loses convict help
1790	May	1 ½ acres wheat, ½ acre maize and a small kitchen garden
1791	February 25 <sup>th</sup>	Ruse declares that he is self-sufficient, declines further help from Government store
1791	March	Ruse granted a further 30 acres and has a brick house built
1792	July 16 <sup>th</sup>	Elizabeth Ruse first female convict to be emancipated Ruse has 11 ½ acres cultivated and has several more cleared by convicts in their leisure hours on condition they receive first crops Has 4 breeding sows and 30 fowls
1792	December	Elizabeth no longer on Government stores
1793	October	Ruse disappointed with failure of crop Sells farm to Surgeon Harris Ruse moves out to the Hawkesbury River to farm with fellow convict and farmer, Charles Williams
1837	September 5 <sup>th</sup>	James Ruse dies

## Time-line for Surgeon John Harris

1754		John Harris born in County Derry, Northern Ireland
c.1782		Studies medicine at University of Edinburgh
1781 - 1788		Surgeon in British Navy
1790		Arrives on <i>Surprize</i> stationed at Parramatta as the surgeon's mate in the NSW corps
1793	April	Harris accepts 100 acre grant at Parramatta working as a surgeon and farmer
1793	June	Letter from Mrs Ann Harris (mother): <i>"I am happy to hear that you have got some produce off that Barren Ground tho at the same time I hope you will make little stay make use of it"</i> .
1793	October	Ruse disappointed with failure of crop; sells 30 acres, 4 goats and 1 sheep for £40 to Harris
1794	April	John Harris appointed magistrate at Parramatta
1795		John Macarthur introduces the plough to the colony
1795	October	Harris goes exploring with Lieut. Barallier to Hunter River area
1800	September	Harris appointed magistrate and given charge of police establishment
1801	March	Harris given five extra convicts as reward for extra duties in colony
1801	July	Appointed Naval Officer, based in Sydney
1802		Receives a land grant to 153 acres, purchases 150 acres Has 120 acres cleared; 56 acres wheat and maize, 7 horses, 4 horned cattle, 149 sheep, 72 goats, 10 hogs
1802	May	Given four extra convicts (remuneration for extra duties)
1803	February	Harris appointed deputy Judge Advocate Harris undertakes building a road to South Head
1803	November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Granted land 206' x 47' in Bond St Sydney where he builds his Sydney town house
1803	December	Granted 34 acres South brick fields which he named Ultimo
1809	April	Harris leaves for England
1814	February	Harris returns to Port Jackson on the <i>General Hewitt</i> accompanied by wife Eliza with permission to become a free settler
1817	February	Harris elected Director of Bank of NSW
1819		Harris Surgeon to Oxleys' expedition to Bathurst Appointed a magistrate
c.1835		Harris builds Experiment Farm Cottage
1838	April 27 <sup>th</sup>	John Harris dies



## Suggested pre-visit activities

There are several activities that can be useful in preparing for a visit to Experiment Farm Cottage.

Following are some suggestions of activities that can be introduced before the visit.

**-Using the separate time-lines for James Ruse and John Harris provided in the teachers resource kit, construct a combined time-line.**

The aim of this activity is to provide an easy format in which to sequence the series of events that contributed to the development of the colony. The time-line provides a clear table that can be used to compare and contrast the lifestyles of James Ruse and John Harris.

**- As an extension to this exercise add in to the time-line other world events that happened simultaneously to the lives of James Ruse and John Harris.**

**- Construct your own time-line using events that have happened in your life. Also include outside events that have affected your life, for example; the Olympic Games or a major event in your family, community or school.**

The aim of this exercise is to understand how to construct and read time-lines. Constructing a time-line provides an opportunity for students to learn how to research various primary and secondary sources and reconstruct the past in a sequential format.

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**- Devise a role-play detailing an event in the life of James Ruse. Other characters can be included in the role-play, such as Henry Dodd the initial overseer at the Government Farm at Rose Hill, Governor Phillip and John Harris. The role-play can be based on an event in the life of James Ruse from the time that he worked as a farm hand in Cornwall to when he sold Experiment farm to John Harris for £40 in 1793.**

The aim of this exercise is to stimulate learning through drama and research. Students can develop an understanding of individuals involved in the development of the colony by empathising with their lives. They are also able to create comparisons with other individuals at the time as well as with the lives of people today.

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## Suggested post-visit activities

There are several activities that can be completed after visiting Experiment Farm Cottage.

Following are some suggestions for activities that can be used as a follow up to the visit.

- **Convict brick making.** Using a mould the shape of a brick, pack with clay and press an imprint of a symbol into the top of the clay so as to identify the brick maker. Each student can decide on their own symbol and make the imprint using either found objects or made in a harder material such as plaster. The clay brick can be fired or sun dried.

This exercise can demonstrate the way that convicts made their individual marks on bricks as a way of keeping account on the day's productivity.

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- **Having learnt about the lives of James Ruse, Elizabeth Parry and John Harris,** students write a letter to either one of these people. They ask questions in relation to the work that these people did. For example; James Ruse could be questioned as to what he is growing on his farm and where he is selling his produce. John Harris could be addressed from the point of view of a sick child. Elisabeth Parry could be asked questions about the type of work that she does on Experiment Farm.

This project can develop a deeper understanding of the roles that James Ruse, Elisabeth Parry (Ruse) and John Harris played in the early development of the colony.

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- **Write a journal as a servant working in the house of Surgeon John Harris at Experiment Farm Cottage.** This journal can include a map of the house and a list of the tasks that the servant would do in each room. The journal could be set for a period of one week and include day to day tasks such as cleaning out the fireplace, setting the table for a special dinner and preparing the bath for Surgeon Harris.

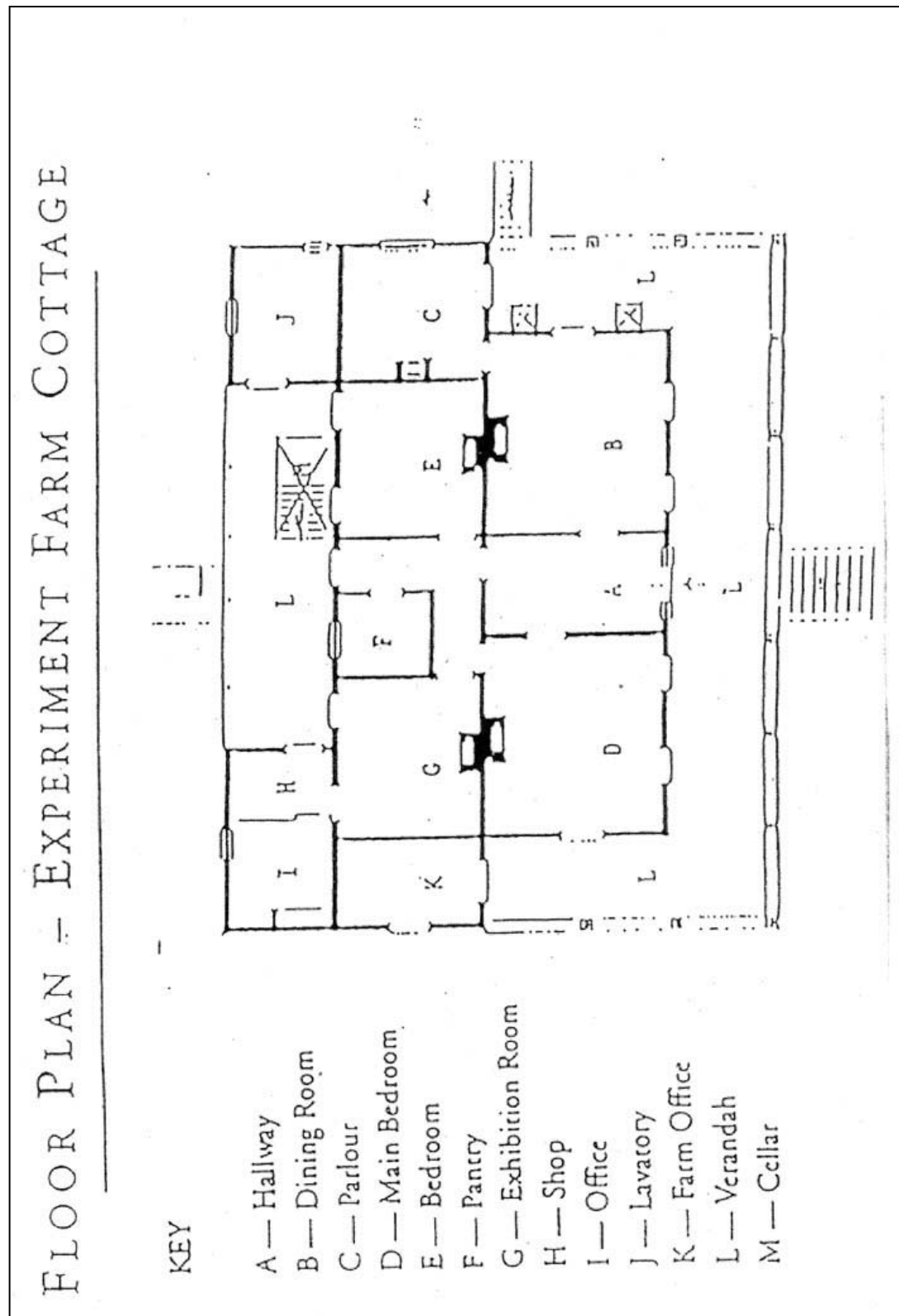
Understanding the daily tasks of the servants as well as the lifestyles of prominent people can provide students with material for comparing the daily work of a broad cross section of people in the early colony.

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- **Plant sweetcorn/maize seeds at school. If possible compost the soil. Watch the seeds grow into large plants that grow cobs of corn.**

The success of James Ruse's experiment was due largely to the type of plants that he chose to grow. The maize plant was an easy and productive plant for him to grow. This is an opportunity for the students to see a similar type of plant grow to that which contributed to James Ruse's success at Experiment Farm.

## Floor Plan – Experiment Farm Cottage



**The thief, the farmer and the surgeon**  
**EVALUATION FORM**  
**Education Program, Experiment farm Cottage**

School / Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM    Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Year / Level: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did you receive the 2005 National Trust school programs booklet? Yes / No

2. Where did you find out about this program? Please circle

2005 booklet                  have been before                  recommended by others

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Were the students briefed at school prior to this visit? Yes / No

3. If yes, were the pre-visit materials used and were they useful? Yes/ No

Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Was the slide introduction an effective pre-amble to the program? Yes / No

Any comments? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you think that the house tour was suitable and engaging for the age of the students? Yes / No: Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Was the program relevant to the curriculum subjects? Yes / No

Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you consider the seed planting exercise a useful learning activity? Yes/No

Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Any other comments \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your assistance for the evaluation of our education program.**

Updated 16/03/05