

Captain William Oldrey, RN

By John Sewell

This Broulee park and its Community Hall are named after an important figure in the early history of the area.



Captain William Oldrey, RN had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy. He enlisted in June 1804 to serve as a midshipman on the *Warrior* under Captain William Bligh. When Bligh co-captained the *Porpoise* on his voyage to become governor of New South Wales in 1806, he specifically called for Oldrey to act as a navigator¹. Oldrey returned home two years later on the *Buffalo* and saw active service against the French.

7 May 1813 saw him commanding the *Undaunted* and engaged in a battle in which "he attacked a French national schooner of the largest class, with a fleet of coasting vessels under her protection; two of the latter were taken, and several driven on shore; but unfortunately, just as he was about to board the schooner, a squall of wind arose, and she was enabled to effect her escape, notwithstanding that he made every effort again to close with her, and resolutely continued the chase as long as the most distant hope remained of doing so, although his boat had already suffered a severe loss, and he himself had had his thigh-bone fractured."²

He was permanently lamed and received a life pension of £91.5s.0d. He ranked as Captain in June 1838 and in September of that year was given two years leave to go to New South Wales as a bearer of dispatches including new land regulations. He left Portsmouth on 8 October 1838 as a cabin passenger on the barque *Andromache*, which carried 231 immigrants and arrived in Sydney on 31 January 1839. The Sydney Gazette listed his arrival but misspelt his name as Aldrey.

He is mentioned as a serving naval officer in December 1839. A USA naval vessel the *Vincennes* was in Sydney and its medical officer went ashore where he "was very kindly treated bythose off duty on leave of the Naval Service, among whom was a Captain Oldrey with whom he became quite intimate"³. Presumably Oldrey retired after his two years ended in September 1840. By then he had already begun to acquire land in Broulee, his area of choice.

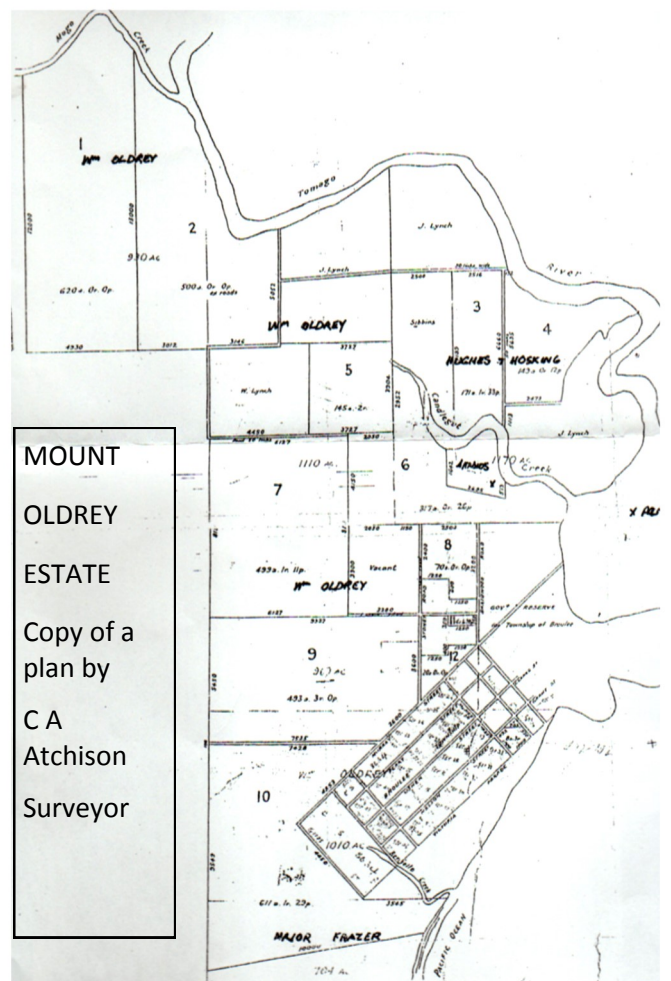
The Broulee area was surveyed by James Lamar from Braidwood who gave it an unfavourable report "Browlee, which may be called East and West Browlee, being divided by a narrow neck of sand subject to be overflowed at very high tides, appears not to possess.....any favourable feature for the formation of a town". On East Broulee (the island) he mapped eight streets and 55 blocks. On the west he

mapped Broulee Township allotments and larger holdings to the north and west. The area was gazetted in 1837.

Land sales commenced, with Captain Oldrey a prolific buyer. Within a month of his arrival he had applied for two portions, one of 960 acres, the other of 240. On 23 March he was given possession of the first portion for which he paid £192, claiming £300 remission as a serving officer.⁴

Land speculation was rife. A Government sale of land at Broulee in January 1840 offered 36 blocks. One went to Moruya resident Alexander McLean and three went to Oldrey – all the rest went to absentee buyers.

By purchase and lease, his acquisitions went on. By the end of 1843 he had the following properties:⁵



MOUNT
OLDREY
ESTATE

Copy of a
plan by
C A
Atchison
Surveyor

[illegible]

8 November 1847 *"Oldrey has taken a new lease of his life. He lives at Chippendale and always enquires*

A daughter, Victoria Jane Blanch was born the same year. A son, Edward William Oldrey, was born in 1852, and died two years later. Sadly, Oldrey did not see his son. He died on 29 December 1851, aged 63¹⁵

15 Family research by Mark Oldrey 2003.

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