

## Timeline for the Macquarie Harbour region

### ? to present day

Aboriginal sites indicate human occupation in Tasmania for at least 35,000 years. Aboriginal people were present during the last ice age, making them the most southerly dwelling people in the world.

### 24 November 1642

Abel Tasman becomes the first European to sight Tasmania, noting the peaks Heemskirk and Zeehan to the north of Macquarie Harbour. These peaks were named over 150 years later by Flinders after Tasman's ships.

### 28 December 1815

Captain James Kelly enters Macquarie Harbour and becomes the first European to sight this magnificent stretch of water.

### 3 January 1822

The brig, *Sophia*, under the command of Captain James Kelly, arrives at Sarah Island with the first complement of convicts. Lt. John Cuthbertson becomes the first Commandant of Sarah Island.

### 4 March 1822

First attempted escape, by John Green and Joseph Saunders. Neither were ever heard of again.

### 10 March 1822

The second escape attempt takes place. All six men were believed to have perished.

### 20 September 1822

The infamous cannibal convict Alexander Pearce escapes with a party of eight prisoners. It is alleged that Pearce participated in cannibalism. Pearce became the first escapee to have crossed the interior to the settled eastern districts.

### 24 April 1823

Lt. Cuthbertson drowns while attempting to rescue a schooner that had slipped its moorings.

### 16 November 1823

The cannibal convict Alexander Pearce escapes for the second time.

### January 1824

Lt. Samuel Wright becomes the second Commandant of Sarah Island.

### 7 June 1824

Matthew Brady escapes, beginning a life as a bush-ranger that was to last nearly two years.

### 19 July 1824

The cannibal convict Alexander Pearce is executed in Hobart Town.

### 16 February 1825

Three convicts are hung on Sarah Island for murder. The Commandant's intention that the execution would deter further murders was thwarted by the men as they joked and shouted words of encouragement to their fellow prisoners from the scaffold.

### 21 April 1825

Lt. James Bulter becomes the third Commandant of Sarah Island.

### 4 May 1826

Matthew Brady, the famous bushranger who escaped from Sarah Island, is hung.

### 12 July 1829

Captain James Briggs becomes the fourth Commandant of Sarah Island.

**11 March 1831**

Major Perry Baylee becomes the final Commandant of Sarah Island.

**28 November 1833**

Sarah Island ceases to operate as a penal settlement

**13 January 1834**

Convicts left behind to complete the final ship seize the brig, *Frederick*, and sail her to South America.

**28 April 1842**

Sir John and Lady Franklin and Party visit Sarah Island for a tour of inspection of the deserted settlement, noting the greatly dilapidated condition of many of the buildings.

**April 1846**

Sarah Island re-opens as a probation station to be operated by convict pass-holders.

**April 1847**

Convict pass-holders removed from Sarah Island. The second period of operation as a penal settlement failed to result in the anticipated profits. None of the convict pass-holders were paid the wages promised them.

**19 September 1894**

The steamer *Devon* is wrecked at the entrance to Macquarie Harbour with no loss of life. Her remains were incorporated into the breakwater at the entrance to the harbour where they were visible for many years.

**1896**

First commercial cruises take place on the Gordon River.

**13 August 1907**

The *Kawatiri* is swept onto the North Spit while attempting to enter Macquarie Harbour in a heavy gale. Two adults and four children are drowned.

**13 January 1925**

The last train steams out of Kelly Basin Station, marking the end of an era for the Basin township of Pillinger.

**9 February 1926**

Sarah Island and Grummet Island are gazetted as a Scenic Reserve, the first formal recognition of their importance to Australia's cultural heritage.

**19 November 1932**

The Lyell Highway is officially opened.

**3 May 1939**

Gordon River Scenic Reserve proclaimed.

**29 June 1963**

Mt Lyell workers make the last journey on the Abt railway between Queenstown and Strahan.

**16 October 1979**

The HEC tables a report on the Gordon River Power Development.

**13 May 1981**

The Franklin — Gordon Wild Rivers National Park is proclaimed

**14 December 1982**

World Heritage Commission accepts and lists the Western Tasmanian Wilderness National Parks as a World Heritage Area.

Conservationists begin their blockade of the Gordon River, an act of mass civil disobedience which results in a total of 1272 arrests over a period of nearly three months.

International media attention is focused on the campaign.

**January 1983**

Tasmanian Wilderness Society director, Bob Brown is arrested at Sir John Falls and internationally renowned botanist David Bellamy is arrested at Warners Landing.

**1 July 1983**

High Court rules that under the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983*, the construction of the dam must cease.

**12 December 1989**

Additions made to the World Heritage Area, which included most of the previously unreserved lower Gordon catchment.

**9 October 1992**

A mass stranding of 76 pilot whales is discovered at Ocean Beach.

**22 November 1992**

Strahan Visitor Centre officially opens.

**2000**

First stage of new Abt railway to link Queenstown and Strahan is completed.