

EVIDENCE OF JAMES CLOHESY,¹ STONE MASON
JANUARY? 1820.

1. How long have you been in this settlement?

Four years next August.

2. Were you employed by Captain Wallis to build the church, the gaol and the hospital?

I was particularly employed in building the church and I cut the stone for the other buildings.

3. Had you any promise of freedom from Captain Wallis in consequence of your exertions in these works?

I had no promise of freedom, but only of a recommendation to the Governor when they were finished which recommendation was made on his Excellency's last visit to this place, but I have received no indulgence as yet.

4. Do you know why the recommendation of Captain Wallis has not been carried into effect?

Only I believe, that the Governor wished me to assist in forwarding and finishing the pier that is now in hand.

5. Who drew the plan of the church?²

I drew the first plan, but it has been altered and amended by Captain Wallis.

6. What number of persons was it calculated at first to contain?

Two hundred men, at first as there were not more than 85 in the settlement exclusive of the limeburners and the settlers and the military.

7. What year was that in?

In 1816.

8. What were the alterations in the plan that you speak of?

The church was made wider and lengthened.

9. Did you find in making the foundations that the soil was very sandy?

I did. There was nine feet of sand in the foundation of the steeple which was excavated and filled with solid masonry. I believe that there is not much greater depth of sand [than nine feet] for above the site of the church on the same hill we found stone though covered with sand.

10. What is the breadth of the foundation walls of the steeple?

Six feet in breadth.

11. What is the breadth of the foundation of the other walls of the church?

Three feet on the north side and the circular end but I cannot say what is the breadth of the wall on the south side as I did not build it. I do not believe that there was any thing more than brick work on that side.

12. What is the breadth of the walls above the foundation?

One foot six inches.

13. What is the height of the church walls to the wall plate?

Eighteen feet.

14. Had you the superintendence of the brick work and masonry of the building?

I had to the height of twenty feet in the steeple, I then ceased and other workmen were employed to superintend it, I only built the foundation of the church walls.

15. Who were the persons who finished it?

A man named Wheatley who is now here. I continued to do the stone cutting part.

16. When was the first time that any shrinking was observed in the church wall?

I think about ten or eleven months ago. It was perceived by Mr Kenworth of the 48th Regiment.

17. In what part was it perceived and from what cause do you think it proceeded?

In the part next the communion table where the first addition had been made to it for length by Captain Wallis, I think that the pressure of the timber in the roof was the cause of the shrinking.

18. Of what timber was the roof constructed?

I don't exactly know but I believe it was gum or iron bark.

19. Were the timbers strongly put together?

They were not sufficiently so as was proved by the tenons of the king beams being drawn from their mortices. The consequence was that the tie beams swayed in their [the?] centre lost the hold of the king posts and pressed upon the walls.

20. Were there any cracks in the walls nearby at the same time?

There were under every beam.

21. Were you and anybody else desired to inspect the church walls in consequence?

I was and Riley, the carpenter.

22. What did you discover on examining it?

I found several cracks in the plastering and in that part of the wall that had been lengthened.

23. What reason do you think produced this weakness in that particular part of the wall?

The manner of laying the bricks. The tooting of the end of the wall was omitted in the part that was lengthened and it was carried up square in the greatest part.

24. Was not the plan of the church made before the building was begun?

It was not. One part of it was ten foot high before it was lengthened and it was both widened and lengthened afterwards.

25. You have already stated that there was little foundation laid in the south wall of the church, what was the reason for such a difference in that and the north and other walls of the church?

I think it was neglect of the man who was superintendent.

26. Who is that person?

A man named Allen who is now a settler and [who]

obtained a farm from Captain Wallis.

27. Did Captain Wallis superintend the building of the church himself?

He did, he saw it almost every day.

28. Did you ever point out the defect you have mentioned to Captain Wallis and did he notice it?

I did mention it to Captain Wallis and to Allen and Captain Wallis thought that brick work would do better for the foundation than the stone that we used in the other parts and which he thought soft - some of the stone that we had laid was beginning to moulder away with the rain at the time.

29. Have you been required or employed since to do any thing to the wall you have just now mentioned and has it shrunk?

I have not been employed but a substance of stone and clay has been cammed in to strengthen the foundation part and a regular gutter and brick drain has been made round the church to carry off the water that had washed the same from the foundation [of] the wall [that] had shrunk. The bottom part of the gutters have been leaded by Major Morisset's order.

30. Do you think that the walls of the church are sufficiently strong for its present width and the beams that they have to support?

With the exception of the south wall foundation they are. And since the tie beams have been fastened by irons and shored up to their original pitch by Major Morisset, I think that they will stand.

31. How long was the church in building?

The walls were at eighteen feet high in twelve months from the beginning of the work above ground and the steeple to the height of forty five feet.³

32. Were there any regular bricklayers or builders in the settlement when the church was built?

There were not.

33. What is your opinion of the stone used in this settlement?

I think it very soft in some parts and I think it all will moulder away by exposure to the weather. I believe it all to be impregnated with salt water.

34. What reason have you for that belief?

Because I observe that after rain and on exposure to the sun it crumbles to pieces.⁴

35. Is the stone of the steeple giving way?

Except that part that is covered by mortar, it is.

36. Is the gaol built of stone?

It is and [of] rough cast.

37. Do you think the gaol was built sufficiently strong?

I do not. Except it had been for the good mortar that has been used in it, I think the stone would have mouldered away.

38. How are the stones laid in the gaol here?

The greatest part are laid upon the edge.

39. Do you think that more windows may be made in the south wall of the church with safety to the building?

I am apprehensive not but I am not a sufficient judge of the roof to speak decidedly.

(signed) J.B. Clohesy

REFERENCES

1. Bonwick transcripts, Box 1, pp. 483-490. James B. Clohesy, a native of Cork, arrived in New South Wales on the Somersetshire on 16 October, 1814, having been sentenced to transportation for seven years. In July 1816 he was tried for burglary in Sydney and was sent to Newcastle for life. As a stone mason he was employed in building Christ Church and most of the other public buildings constructed during his period as Overseer of Stone Cutters and Masons, 1817-1822. He claimed to have laid the foundation stone of Macquarie Pier and to have drawn the plan of Christ Church and carried it out. Though he was dismissed from the settlement by Morisset for a breach of regulations in 1822 he returned and in 1823 he was living there with his wife, Mary, and describing himself as 'a builder in general'. (Clohesy to Goulburn, 7 July, 1823, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, Records, In-letters; Sydney gazette, 6 July, 1816.)
2. Clohesy claims to have drawn the first plan of Christ Church in 1816 and does not mention Lycett's role (Evidence of John Allen, q.17) but Lycett was in Newcastle from 1815. If Captain Wallis was responsible for having the first plans drawn after his appointment to Newcastle, June 1816, why did he not involve Lycett in the project from the beginning? Having travelled to the Colony on the same ship as Lycett in 1813-14, Wallis would have known of his artistic abilities. (Australian dictionary of biography, vol. 2, pp. 140-1, Lycett, and 568-9, Wallis.)
3. If so, the construction took more than eighteen months. If the building took two years to complete, and was in use in May 1818 for Macquarie's visit, it must have been commenced before Wallis' arrival or in his first few weeks as Commandant.
4. The quarry was at the coal mine by the sea shore.