

= William Baker (colonist) =

William Baker (c . 1761 ? 14 September 1836) was a New South Wales Marine and member of the First Fleet that founded the European penal colony of New South Wales .

Initially an orderly for the colony 's first Governor , Arthur Phillip , Baker was later appointed government storekeeper in Parramatta , and storekeeper and superintendent of convicts in the rural settlement of Hawkesbury . In 1810 he was dismissed from all government posts after being found to have misused his position for personal gain , and relocated to Hobart where he became the inaugural crier for Australia 's oldest colony @-@ wide judicature , the Supreme Court of Van Diemen 's Land .

The Australian fish *Latropiscis purpurissatus* , or " Sergeant Baker " , is named in his honour .

= = Early life = =

There are no surviving records of Baker 's life prior to enlistment in the New South Wales Marine Corps at the age of 26 . Enlistment requirements mandated that members of the New South Wales Corps were at least five and a half feet tall , with previous satisfactory service in the British Marines and the appearance of being among " the stoutest , fittest and healthiest [of] men " .

= = = Voyage on First Fleet = = =

Baker joined the First Fleet to New South Wales in 1787 as a Marine corporal of the 53rd (Portsmouth) Company , embarked aboard the convict transport *Charlotte* . The Fleet set sail from Portsmouth on 13 May 1787 . Two days later Baker was severely wounded when he accidentally shot himself in the foot , having placed his loaded musket on the deck while preparing for guard duty . Ship 's surgeon John White treated the wound , and reported a significant injury to the right ankle :

" The bones , after being a good deal shattered , turned the (musket) ball which , taking another direction , had still force enough left to go through a harness cask full of beef at some distance , and after that to kill two geese who were on the other side of it . "

Baker was incapacitated for three months , but took pains to advance his recovery through exercise and careful tending of the wound . To the surprise of his shipmates he had recovered sufficiently to resume active duty when the Fleet reached Rio de Janeiro in August 1787 . Surgeon White recorded that Baker had regained " the perfect use of the wounded leg " , which he credited to Baker 's youth and " good habit of body " .

= = = Marine Service in New South Wales = = =

The Fleet arrived in New South Wales in January 1788 , with the Marines disembarking first at Botany Bay . Six days later they reboarded the ships for the voyage to Port Jackson , where they were reorganised into four companies under the commands of Captains James Campbell and John Shea , and Captain @-@ Lieutenants Watkin Tench and James Meredith . Baker was promoted to sergeant and assigned to Tench 's company alongside fellow sergeants William Perry and Edward Campion . He was further appointed as orderly to the colony 's Governor , Arthur Phillip , an administrative office that relieved him of routine duties such as supervising the landing of convicts or clearing trees and undergrowth for the building of the settlement .

Immediately on arrival in Port Jackson Baker also took a common @-@ law wife from among the convicts ? 25 @-@ year @-@ old Susannah Huffnell , who had been sentenced to seven years transportation for petty larceny . Their only child , Elizabeth , was born on 1 January 1789 . The relationship was not a happy one and Baker refused to accompany his wife and child when they were transferred to the remote colonial outpost of Norfolk Island in March 1790 . Susannah and Elizabeth had no further contact with Baker , even after they returned to Sydney in the 1800s .

Baker 's Marine service was uneventful , and his name rarely appears in colonial records for this period . He was an enthusiastic fisherman and may have been the first to catch *Latropiscis*

purpurissatus , a common species along the New South Wales coast and described as " growing to more than two feet , coloured red to violet blue with red and yellow tail fin " , and " edible , but not greatly esteemed " . The fish was named in his honour in 1843 .

Marine Corps ' terms of enlistment were for three years , with Baker 's service expiring in 1791 . The bulk of the Marine force departed in December of that year aboard HMS Gorgon , leaving sixty men behind under the command of Lieutenant John Poulden to support the newly established New South Wales Corps . Baker also remained in the colony , continuing his duties as orderly to Governor Phillip . He returned to England in December 1792 , in company with Phillip and the remaining Marines as passengers aboard the convict transport Atlantic .

= = Civilian life = =

On arrival in England , Baker declined re @-@ enlistment into the British Marines and returned to civilian life . Within six months he received an appointment from the Navy Board to act as civilian superintendent of convicts aboard the transport vessel Surprise , which departed for New South Wales in early 1794 . A British loyalist , Baker took an immediate dislike to four of the convicts under his watch , sentenced for political offences and collectively known as Scottish Martyrs . Late in the voyage he advised Surprise 's captain Patrick Campbell that the Martyrs planned to mutiny and seize the vessel . Acting on Baker 's word , Campbell had three of the four confined until Surprise reached Sydney Cove .

= = = Farmer and storekeeper = = =

On reaching Sydney Baker resigned his Navy position and sought opportunities as a farmer . His interests were assisted by the deregulation of land grants under Governor Phillip 's successor , Francis Grose . In October 1794 he obtained a grant of 40 acres (16 @.@ 2 ha) of farming land near Toongabbie , which he partly cleared and planted with wheat and maize . To supplement his farming income he petitioned for administrative employment and was appointed storekeeper in Parramatta in January 1795 , supervising distribution and security of military and civilian supplies . On 26 August 1795 , having comfortably established himself as a farmer and government agent , Baker married former convict Elizabeth Lavender .

Two months later Governor John Hunter appointed him superintendent of convicts for the Hawkesbury region , a newly established area of farms to the northwest of Baker 's own lands . His reputation was somewhat marred by a 1797 conviction for stealing a boat worth ? 16 from a neighbour , Thomas Raby . Baker admitted possession of the vessel but denied it was Raby 's . He was found guilty of theft and fined a proportion of the vessel 's value .

In 1798 Baker received a third official appointment , as government storekeeper for the Hawkesbury region in addition to his equivalent duties in Parramatta . Despite his past experience , Baker was quickly found wanting in the management of the stores , specifically those for farmers near the settlement of Windsor . In 1798 the local grain harvest was too large to be receipted and stored in the Windsor storehouse , so Baker elected to fill that store solely with produce supplied by the region 's three largest landholders . In consequence , smaller farmers at Windsor had no means of selling or storing their grain and were brought close to bankruptcy . Baker was deaf to their complaints , and Governor Hunter was forced to intervene in person to keep the peace . In a letter on 19 April , sent via the New South Wales Corps commander in Hawkesbury , Hunter directed Baker to return half of the harvest he had already stored , and instead fill the storehouse with goods from smaller farms .

Regardless of this setback , the following years were personally prosperous for Baker . In early 1800 he received a further official grant of 30 acres (12 @.@ 1 ha) at Mulgrave , and on 20 June he purchased another 30 acres from a dissolute former convict , Charles Williams , who had settled in 1791 but abandoned active farming . Baker 's dealings in this period were not particularly honest ; in 1800 he refused to pay a government debt of £ 86 owed for use of two servants that had worked on his farm since 1798 , and historian Brian Fletcher has suggested he also misappropriated

supplies and labour from his own government store . No action was taken against Baker for these offences , and with ready access to resources he was able to swiftly clear and farm his properties .

Land grant records in 1801 indicate that Baker had twelve acres of maize and wheat under cultivation with another twelve acres lying fallow , and that he owned one horse , four goats and 22 hogs . His two unpaid servants were recorded as still being present on the farm . In 1800 Baker also bought and began operating a public house , The Royal Oak , selling alcohol to convicts and settlers in Windsor .

= = = Dismissal = = =

As a publican Baker supported Governor William Bligh 's attempts to regulate liquor imports , and signed a letter to this effect in 1807 . Despite this , he publicly welcomed Bligh 's overthrow in the 1808 Rum Rebellion and congratulated former Marines officer George Johnston for helping seize executive authority on behalf of the New South Wales Corps . In so doing he drew the attention of Bligh 's replacement , Governor Lachlan Macquarie , who commenced an investigation into accusations that Baker had unfairly treated Hawkesbury settlers by appropriating supplies from the government store . The accusations were upheld and in 1810 Baker was dismissed from all his government posts . The Royal Oak , described by a later historian as one of " the worst houses along the river " , was also ordered to be closed .

= = = Life in Hobart = = =

His business interests having collapsed , Baker abandoned his farm and relocated from New South Wales to the southern settlement of Hobart in Van Diemen 's Land . In 1814 he is recorded as holding the office of government storekeeper in Hobart . A year later , at an approximate age of 54 , he accepted a job as town crier for the newly created Deputy Judge Advocate 's Court , calling witnesses and announcing verdicts on the roadside outside the courthouse . Any remaining business links with New South Wales were severed in 1819 with the sale of Baker 's former farm to a colleague , Samuel Terry , who had recently visited him in Hobart . His wife , Elizabeth Baker , died in April 1824 and was buried in Hobart Cemetery .

The Supreme Court of Van Diemen 's Land was established by The Royal Letters Patent of 13 October 1823 and commenced activities on 10 May 1824 , with Baker as its inaugural crier . This would be Baker 's last and longest occupation . In February 1836 he received his first pay rise since becoming crier , being granted an extra £ 20 . A contemporary reference applauded Baker 's respectable appearance as crier but noted that he was " in the habit of sometimes getting tipsy " while performing his tasks .

= = Death = =

Baker died in Hobart on 14 September 1836 , at the age of 75 . At the time of his death he owned 230 acres of uncultivated land at Argyle and Ulva , Van Diemen 's Land .

He is commemorated in the naming of Baker Street in Windsor , New South Wales , adjacent to the former site of The Royal Oak hotel , and in Baker 's Lagoon , a body of water located between the Hawkesbury River and the town of Richmond .