

## William Lowe

William Lowe built *Clarence* at his Deptford shipyard on the Williams River, NSW in 1841.

William Lowe (1805-1878), shipbuilder, was born on 21 July 1805 at Leith, Scotland, the second son of William Lowe, a 'landed proprietor', and Margaret, née Steel, of Stirling. The family descended from Huguenots who settled first in England and later in Scotland. At 14 William Lowe junior was apprenticed to the shipbuilding trade at the Royal Dockyard, Deptford. At 19 he was sent to Stettin, Prussia, to work on the building of several ships and there he stayed for nearly three years. He returned to Scotland, where his father gave him a considerable share of his estate. Thereupon Lowe sailed to South America where he visited Ecuador, Peru and Chile; from Valparaiso he embarked in the *Tiger* for Sydney, where he arrived on 22 September 1828. On the voyage Lowe and a fellow passenger, James Marshall, were so useful in repairing damage suffered in a gale that the captain refunded their passage money.

Lowe, who was joined by James Marshall, built a wet dock, and by February 1831 they had built some small craft and were building a steam vessel for Grose, (*William the Fourth*, 54 tons) launched October 1831, which traded on the Australian coast for more than thirty years, and on the China coast for many years after that. *William the Fourth* was the first coastal steamer wholly built in Australia, was eighty feet (24 m) long and usually travelled at eight knots (15 kph).

On 30 September 1831 Lowe and Marshall had purchased 640 acres in the County of Gloucester for 162 pounds, 13 shillings and four pence situated on the east bank of the Williams River opposite the northeast corner of Clarence town (Land Grant Index Serial 75 p.46). This 640 acres of land is located east of Clarence Town.

In 1834 Lowe married Henrietta Blandford who died in 1846 leaving six children. On 14 Sept 1836 Lowe purchased Lot 53 for 1120 pounds consisting of 1120 acres situated in the district of Dungog in the county of Durham on the Williams River (Land Grant Index Serial 64 p.3). This 1120 acres of land is located north of Clarence Town. In 1836 Lowe delivered *Ceres* to the Hunter River Steam Packet Association. Then, in 1837, his partnership with Marshall was dissolved and Marshall was later drowned in the river.

In the 1841 Census Lowe reported 19 people (15 male and 4 females) at Deptford including 7 'mechanics', 2 shepherds and 2 domestic servants (5 of whom were assigned convicts) living in 3 wooden houses, only one of which was described as 'finished'. Some of the younger individuals reported living at Deptford (2 males 2 to 7 years, 1 female under 2, 1 female 2 to 7 years and 1 female 7 to 14 years) may well have been some of Lowe's children (six children were living when Lowe's first wife Henriatta died in 1846).

Lowe continued building small high quality vessels, mostly under 50 tons, at the Deptford yards, until about 1860 when they were demolished. Four of the first twelve steamships built in the colony of NSW were Lowe's or Lowe's & Marshall's. From 1833 to 1836 Lowe was a director of a company that ran a

steamer service to Parramatta, and from 1843 to 1852 his *Comet*, 50 tons, maintained a service to Parramatta, first in rivalry with and later in conjunction with Edye Manning's *Emu*.

In 1849 he married Mary Penfold, by whom he had eight children. Lowe died in May 1878; his second wife Mary lived until 1898.

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