

# CATHO CHRONICLE

CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CATHERINE HILL BAY



## UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S RECREATIONAL MASTER PLAN

Lake Macquarie City Council has published a draft of the Master Plan for recreational facilities for two precincts in Catherine Hill Bay - the Middle Camp Sports & Recreation Precinct and Surf Life Saving Club Precinct.

The initial draft concept plans and accompanying discussion paper are now available on Council's website here:

[www.shape.lakemac.com.au/chb](http://www.shape.lakemac.com.au/chb)

A consultation period will run from 21 March to 11 April and the community is invited to provide feedback through the online survey.

The draft plan was informed by a Community Working Group (CWG), consisting of ten members. It conducted its first meeting with Council and their project consultants (Locale Consulting) in February. Ten other groups have been consulted including the Surf Club, developers on land parcels, NPWS, CHB Progress Association, and others. Key features of the draft design include:

- An upgraded Surf Club with kiosk and expanded storage areas, in the current location,
- An expanded Surf Club car park with entry moved to the corner of Lindsley St and Flowers Drive,

IN THE AUTUMN ISSUE...

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**WALLALONG  
DEVELOPMENT  
SURVEY**

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**CHB COMMUNITY  
ALLIANCE**

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**THE FAMOUS  
PINK CAVE**

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**LANDCARE UPDATE**

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**NEXT MEETING  
at Catho SLSC on  
date TBA**

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## Update on Council's Recreational Master Plan (continued)

- A Heritage Trail Walkway connecting the Surf Club, Catho Lookout and Middle Camp Precinct.
- A Community Hall and cafe on the old bowling club site with village green and playgrounds.
- Loop road around Middle Camp Precinct including car parking at Graveyard Beach.
- Potential for private tourism development within the Middle Camp Precinct on private land.

The next CWC meeting is on 30 March, followed by two community drop-in sessions on the 31 March at the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club.

Please visit the Shape Lake Mac webpage for further details.

## Wallalong Development at Middle Camp – Community Survey

There has been a letterbox drop of a Community Consultation paper survey for the Wallalong Land Developments P/L proposal for a 222 lot subdivision to the north of Middle Camp in Catherine Hill Bay. Alternatively, the survey can be found at this website (closing date 26th March):

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/XNLTLBD](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XNLTLBD)

The following information is provided to inform respondents:

- The connection to mains water and sewerage lines at Raffertys Road, Cams Wharf, only applies to these proposed new residential hamlets. Old Catho's arrangements will remain unchanged – ie. tank water and on-site sewerage treatment or pump out.
- The Flowers Dr intersection upgrade is currently planned as a 'left in, left out' or 'seagull' construction. There will be no traffic lights. This would result in less traffic through Main Camp and Middle Camp.
- A major problem that the community experienced with the Coastal Hamlets P/L development was the number of heavy truck movements through the town. Trucks should only enter and leave via the north entry.
- The last remaining building of the mining period - the workshop building - should be retained and protected during the preparation of Hamlet B. The Concept Plan Approval supported this retention, but Wallalong Landholdings has indicated a wish to demolish it.
- Joe Warren, the protected tenant in Hamlet A, should be allowed to remain undisturbed in his home for the rest of his life.
- The proposed clearing of land is too close to Flowers Drive for Hamlet A. There should be a 15 metre "visual buffer" allowance with bushland kept intact to retain the natural bushland entrance into the Bay and Heritage Precinct.
- There must be a firm, enforceable timeline set for the building of the Heritage Walkway/bicycle track, which is proposed to follow the old train line from the pits to the jetty.
- The dam north of Colliery Rd is freshwater (whereas Lake Macquarie is saltwater) and during dry periods many more birds and different species are found here. The new development should be dog and cat free to preserve the wetlands there while maintaining a native wildlife corridor from Wallarah National Park to the Lake Munmorah Conservation Area.

## Update on Catho miner Joey Warren

Joe Warren's case to defend his claim of *Protected Tenancy* goes to the Supreme Court in May. The outcome will determine whether Joe can continue to live in the house in Sawmill Camp that he's called home for more than 50 years.

Given Joe is 78 years old and in poor health, where else could he go?

He owns a farm at Tenterfield where he keeps his horses. "I can't part with them; they are a rock around my neck." Joe started riding horses when his father-in-law brought out a little mare for his girls to ride in the Swansea Horse Riding Club. "It was a vicious little mare that nearly killed the lot of us, so I got an older horse and the kids started to ride it. My neighbour Ivan (Bridge) always had horses and showed us how."



When Joe was growing up in the town, "everyone had horses and they just wandered around. There was only a couple of cars." Joe acquired two more horses - 'Lady' and 'Coco' - and developed a passion for competitive stock horse sprint racing, winning the Cooranbong Cup in 1993 on 'Lady' and the 1994 Cup on 'Coco'. After finishing work in the pit on a Friday he would walk either 'Lady' or 'Coco' from one end of the beach to the other, maintaining that this kept them "hard". His stallion ('The Breaker', after Breaker Morant) was out of 'Lady' and sired all his other horses. Sadly, he died in the last long drought.

There's a story going around that Joe once rode his horse into the bar at the Catho Pub. Joe was non-committal when asked about it, but later admitted that old 'Drifter' - his daughter's horse - quite liked going there for a beer.

There's no house on the Tenterfield property, only a tin shed that he built years ago when he had the strength to do so with the help of friend and fellow Catho resident, George Robertson.

It's harsh country up there and the property is very isolated. Joe mentioned the terror of the big storms that come crashing in - the lightning and thunder - such that the horses run to hide in the trees while he sits alone in his shed, everything shaking.

Nowadays Joe needs to be close to medical help. A horse once rolled on him, breaking his pelvis and leg, and he also suffers from "extreme" hearing loss and lung problems from his time underground.

A petition on [change.org.au](http://change.org.au) has garnered strong community support with over 10,000 signatories in support of Joe being able to stay in his home for the remainder of his natural life. Joe is the third and last generation of miners here in Catho and he's the very essence of the Catho community - hardworking, intelligent, witty and always with good humour. He will continue his fight with his head held high.

Joe is not going elsewhere.



## Formation of the new CHB Community Alliance

The Progress Association has worked for over 100 years to support the interests of the residents of Catherine Hill Bay, achieving State Heritage Listing for the old township in 2010. The objects of the Association are to work for the advancement of the Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct, community and environment.

With the expansion of the village through the addition of the Moonee subdivision, the town now falls into three precincts, namely Middle Camp, the Bay and Moonee. We welcome the formation of a new group which aims to connect the community further - the Catherine Hill Bay Community Alliance - which has the aim to encourage community social events, promote neighbours supporting neighbours, and also address development issues initially within the Moonee precinct, however embracing the whole of Catherine Hill Bay in its purpose. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Community Alliance to advance the interests of the town and its residents.

If you would like to know more about the Alliance please visit [www.chbcommunityalliance.org](http://www.chbcommunityalliance.org).

## Landcare Update

Join us on the first Monday of each month 4-6pm in autumn. Please call ahead to Carmel on 0438 499636 and come earlier for a welcome and orientation. Bring your sun safe gear, water, and if you wish, a snack for a chat afterwards.

There's been great growth thanks to the rain - our path into the cemetery foredunes area is overgrown! We met on March 7 for some maintenance weeding there and on the Northside of the track; mainly Bitou bush stumps regrown, so the density is reducing seedling growth.

Some Lake Mac Landcare Green Team days are coming up - join us! They're always a friendly crew and a chatty morning tea break. Contact for details.

See the link below for our new plan on the PA website:

[www.catherinehillbay.org.au/services/landcare/Catherine%20Hill%20Bay%202021%20Landcare%20Agreed%20Action%20Plan.DOC](http://www.catherinehillbay.org.au/services/landcare/Catherine%20Hill%20Bay%202021%20Landcare%20Agreed%20Action%20Plan.DOC)



*Lake Mac Landcare Green Team at work in Catho in 2014*

## Catho's famous Pink Cave

It's gone crazy on social media and seems to have put Catho on the map!

Locals can't go anywhere nowadays without a visitor from Sydney or beyond coming up and asking for directions to the magical "Pink Cave."

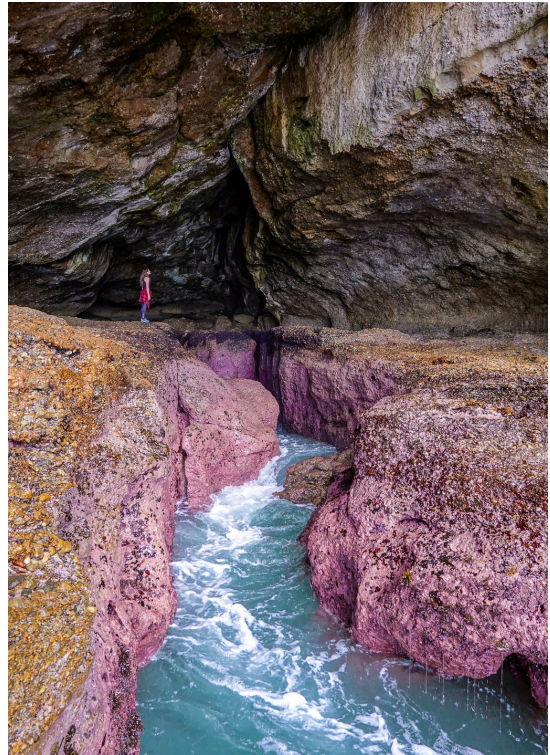
So, where is the Pink Cave anyway? It's a fair question, because there's no signage for it whatsoever despite the huge level of public interest.

We believe that either LMCC or NPWS, or both, should be developing a plan to manage this new tourism drawcard as a high priority. Not only would this help to reduce the large number of confused visitors wandering around Catho asking for directions, but it could also help to manage the potentially serious safety issues when visiting the cave.

Access to the cave is via the rock shelf on the headland at the north end of Moonee Beach. Both the cave and rock shelf are exposed to ocean swells and rogue waves. While most visitors seem to know to only visit the cave at low tide, there's always a few that don't. In addition, there are days when the cave is not safe on any tide due to the size of the prevailing ocean swell.

There's already been at least one dramatic helicopter rescue of people trapped in the cave. In the absence of some sort of management plan, the PA believes it's only a matter of time before lives are lost.

We encourage LMCC and NPWS to work together to develop a visitor management plan for the Pink Cave.



*Aerial shot of the Pink Cave including the rock shelf access via Moonee Beach  
(Photo courtesy of Images from the Sky)*



## Did you know ...

... that the rocky cove just north of the Pink Cave is called Desoto Inlet?

It was named after a Desoto taxi that was pushed over the edge as an 'insurance job' in the 1950s. Obviously, at the time no one owned up to the fraud. We understand that the dodgy claim was successful.

The Desoto car remained in quite good condition at the bottom of the sea for many years. It even became a favourite dive spot for local scuba divers to hop into the driver's seat, grab onto the steering wheel, and probably adjust the rear vision mirrors to make sure no sharks were sneaking up on them.

By all accounts, the submerged car was in good enough condition to pass a pink slip rego check right up until the early 1990s.



Going by a more recent picture (see below), this is no longer the case. However, it does appear that the car wreck has been taken over by the same pink growth that covers the Pink Cave.



*Remains of the car on the sea floor today (Photo courtesy of Grey Nurse Charters)*

Going back prior to all of this, Desoto Inlet had an even more colourful past. As the old Catherine Hill Bay company town was never sewered, there was a pan system for the, um, well ... 'night soil'. These pans were collected from the outhouses each week and placed on the back of a company-owned truck (presumably by a person on a higher pay grade than the Mine Manager).

The contents of the collected pans in Middle Camp were dumped on land north of the cemetery. Pans from the Catherine Hill Bay main village were taken to the inlet and poured over the edge into the ocean. Not surprisingly, prior to being known as Desoto Inlet, this location was referred to by the locals as Schitty Gulf\*.

Perhaps this colourful past may go some way to explaining the unique and colourful flora seen nowadays around Desoto Inlet and the Pink Cave.

*\* Spelling deliberately altered to maintain our G rating.*

## Wallarah Longboard Surf Club

The Wallarah Longboard Club's home base is in Catherine Hill Bay.

It's open to membership for men, women and juniors. Membership is free to all women and juniors, and for men existing and new members are \$20 annual fee.

Meetings are on the last Sunday of every month at 7am at the bottom (south) Carpark at Catho. Come along, sign up, have a surf, a BBQ and a few laughs.

They have a wide range of surfing levels from first timers to seasoned veterans. The club is based on the traditional surfing culture of good times and good vibes - no pressure, just like-minded surfers enjoying life. Feel free to come along have a chat, grab some breakfast and enjoy the morning.

Hopefully see you at the next Sunday morning meetup!



## Local Heritage Places Fund 2022-23

Applications are invited for grants to maintain or improve heritage items in the Lake Macquarie Area. Owners or managers of heritage items can apply for funds. Applications will be considered for projects that are:

- for heritage item(s) in a well-maintained heritage streetscape or landscape setting;
- for a heritage item(s) with public access and visibility;
- for urgent maintenance works to avert management risks (e.g. severe deterioration, demolition, or demolition by neglect);
- part of a heritage conservation area or precinct;
- fire, service and access upgrade for Building Code Australia compliance for ongoing or
- adaptive reuse of your heritage items(s); or
- have not received previous Council funding support in the last five years.

An application form and guidelines for making a grant application can be found on Council's website at:

[www.lakemac.com.au/community/grants-sponsorships-and-awards/local-heritage-fund](http://www.lakemac.com.au/community/grants-sponsorships-and-awards/local-heritage-fund)

Anyone interested in the program can contact the Heritage Support Officer at [sevans@lakemac.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sevans@lakemac.nsw.gov.au) or telephone 02 49210422 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) to discuss an application or if they would like further information about the grant program.

Applications close on Monday April 11th 2022.

## How to become a PA member

Would you like to become a member or friend of the CHB Progress Association?

The annual membership fee is \$20, or \$10 for pensioners.

The membership form is attached to this newsletter email. Please email membership forms to [accounts@catherinehillbay.org.au](mailto:accounts@catherinehillbay.org.au). Thank you to all our members and friends that have already renewed their payments.

To join the Catho Chronicle mailing list, please email us at [newsletter@catherinehillbay.org.au](mailto:newsletter@catherinehillbay.org.au)

**For more details check out our website:**

**[www.catherinehillbay.org.au](http://www.catherinehillbay.org.au)**

**and the various Facebook pages for the latest news and great photos:**

**[www.facebook.com/CathHillBay](http://www.facebook.com/CathHillBay)**

**[www.facebook.com/catherinehillbay](http://www.facebook.com/catherinehillbay)**

**[www.facebook.com/CathHillBayLandcare](http://www.facebook.com/CathHillBayLandcare)**

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**[www.facebook.com/Wallarah-Rural-Fire-Brigade-1014414335240696](http://www.facebook.com/Wallarah-Rural-Fire-Brigade-1014414335240696)**