

# CATHO CHRONICLE

CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CATHO HILL BAY



## PROPOSED TOURISM PRECINCT ON CATHO HEADLAND

Rose Group has revealed plans for future development in CHB, some of which differs from previous plans for Stage 3 of Beaches. The original DCP included a village green, children's playground, retail space, Hale Street reinstatement, and a coastal walkway. Details of the proposed variations, as shared with the CHB Alliance, include:

- Relocating the children's playground from the north end of the Village Green to be next to the retail space.
- Increasing the retail floorspace to allow more versatility of offerings such as a café, general store, bakery, and commercial services. The aim is to allow retail space to go along Montefiore Street (as opposed to Hale Street) to provide better access & parking.
- Changing the development on the former Washery Plant site to create a tourism precinct in the form of a hotel, diving & surfing location, and restaurant at the washery and along the jetty. This will include jetty restoration and ongoing maintenance.
- Removing the coastal walkway from the headland development to make way for the proposed Tourism Precinct & hotel.

The various community groups are in consultation with members about these proposals, and in communication with each other. Firm community views will be finalised when detailed plans are available.

IN THE SPRING ISSUE...

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**DIVING THE  
SS SHAMROCK**

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**RECREATIONAL  
MASTER PLAN  
UPDATE**

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**WALKING IN CATHO**

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**LANDCARE UPDATE**

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**NEXT MEETING  
at Catho SLSC TBA**

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*Cover photo of Catho Headland  
and beach courtesy of  
Jim Picot Photography  
[www.jimpicotphotography.com](http://www.jimpicotphotography.com)*

## Update on Catherine Hill Bay Recreational Master Plan

On Monday 26th September 2022, Council formally adopted the Catherine Hill Bay Precincts Master Plan. Further details can be found here:

<https://shape.lakemac.com.au/chb>

It is noted that Council has allocated budget in their 2022/2023 Operating Plan for detailed feasibility and planning studies for the new Surf Club building and Middle Camp sports facilities.

## HCA Planning Proposal & Area Plan approved by LMCC

The draft Catherine Hill Bay Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) Planning Proposal and Area Plan were adopted by Council on 22 August 2022.

Council will now proceed to finalise the Draft Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) Area Plan. The Area Plan will become effective on the date the draft LEP becomes effective via notification on the NSW Legislation website.

We have been advised the effective date is currently unknown and may take several months to be processed by NSW State Government.

## Landcare Update

The Graveyard Beach sessions continued in June-October - while admiring our growing Banksia, Acacia Soporae, Tuckeroo and Tea trees, with Pigface and Snake vine spreading over the dunes. Taking the yellow bitou bush flowers and black berries offsite seems to be a good idea - less seedlings! We're continuing to meet on the first Monday of the month in the Graveyard Beach carpark, now it's 3-5pm. Team members are Jann, Dave, Lindsey, Clarita, Wendy, Jayne & Greg.

Following on from the Green Team session near the cemetery, Simon from the Landcare Resource Centre has put in a grant application for a Bush Regeneration Team to work all along the cemetery fence next year. The cemetery side is infested with Morning glory vine!



Our second team continued on the south site in June-September on the 2nd Thursdays of the month, now also 3-5pm. We've been weeding near the (restored) access road to the beach - mainly Morning glory and Bitou bush - and replanting broken Pigface runners in cleared areas. A blue wren pair has been supervising us, and the prunings we leave add to their habitat. Weather has interfered with sessions, and erosion has caused damage (sadly we lost those Banksias).

The new Recreation Master Plan means that works for a bridge and ramp would ruin our south site, and our October session wasn't possible as Council workers had fenced off the area! Rocks are going in around Pat Slaven Reserve to reduce erosion, which is long overdue. Our intrepid team will continue, nonetheless. Members for these sessions have been Pam, Paul, Fae, Neil, Jann and Clarita, and we have a few others ready to start soon.

Feel free to join us! Please call Carmel ahead on 0438499636 and come earlier for a welcome and orientation. Bring your sun safe gear, water, secateurs, a gardening fork if you have one, and a snack for a chat afterwards. All welcome!

## Walking in Catherine Hill Bay (by Sue Whyte)

There are so many beautiful and interesting walks in and around Catherine Hill Bay.

### ***Around Catho Headland***

One of my favourites can be traced on the photograph below. I'd walk from the hill near the Bin Building down to Moonee Beach on the path that followed the ridgeline, with fantastic views all the way and wildflowers on either side. After spending time on Moonee Beach, we'd return along the cliff top with no set track as the wind kept foliage at ankle height.

I really missed this walk when it was locked off but was comforted by the fact that a coastal walk following the ridgeline was to be reinstated as part of the approval from State Government for the creation of 550 residential lots by Coastal Hamlets Pty Ltd. This now appears to be at risk with the announcement of alternative plans for a tourism precinct on the headland.



*Catho Headland in the 1980s, showing the old coastal walkways and unsealed road to Little Beach*

In the early days of Catherine Hill Bay, when Wallarah Coal Company owned all the land, there was easy access to Little Beach & Moonee from the headland. Little Beach, behind the jetty, was also known as Perrys or Lonsdales, as these families had shacks down there. Other families lived along the track to Moonee. In the 1980s I often drove down to Little Beach taking food for very hungry boys who were camping there during school holidays. After the 2013 fire burnt the remaining part of the second jetty, Lake Coal brought down a large machine - via the unsealed road to Little Beach - to remove the burnt poles. Divers valued this vehicle access to Desoto Inlet and under the jetty, as their equipment was too heavy to lug from the Surf Club carpark. Presently this area can only be accessed at low tide by walking under the jetty.

### **Moonee Beach**

Townspeople picnicked frequently at Moonee Beach or the Sandhole at Moonee. An area of the beach between Moonee and Ghosties was renowned for small cowrie shells which were used to make covers for milk containers, bracelets and necklaces.

Moonee was also a campsite for people from out of town, such as Cessnock and beyond. This eventually got out of hand as there were no toilets or garbage areas, so in 1988 the mining company closed the area and gave it to the Department of Planning, which later passed it on to Lake Munmorah State Recreation Area.



*Picture showing the houses at Moonee Beach that were eventually demolished.*

### **Between Main Camp and Middle Camp**

Another coastal walkway going north from the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Club has been included in Council's recently approved Recreational Master Plan. Our Local State Member, Yasmin Catley, is a strong advocate for these coastal walks, which not only showcase the scenic beauty of this area but provide safe access for the public. It's currently too dangerous to walk or cycle between Main Camp and Middle Camp along our narrow roads.

### **Heritage Village Walk**

There's an excellent brochure entitled the *Heritage Walking Trail Catherine Hill Bay*, supported by the Australian Government, LMCC and the CHB Progress Association. This is a self-guided walking tour of the State Heritage Listed Township. Copies are readily available from the Association or at: [www.catherinehillbay.org.au/pages/progressassociation/](http://www.catherinehillbay.org.au/pages/progressassociation/)

### **North to Caves Beach**

Another favourite walk is to the Bogie Hole, which can be accessed by walking north, towards Caves Beach, around the stunning northern headland of the bay. This Bogie Hole is deep and has amazing sea life. You can also venture further north to Shark Hole and on to Caves Beach (NB - walking on coastal rock shelves has inherent risks and the sea state and tides should be carefully considered before walking in these areas).



*One of the stunning rock pools north of Catho (photo courtesy of Kayla Brockett Photography)*

National Parks & Wildlife Service run some good guided walks from time to time and they have material on Eco Walks and Geological Walks (however you need a knowledgeable guide for these walks).

### **Walking to Mine Camp**

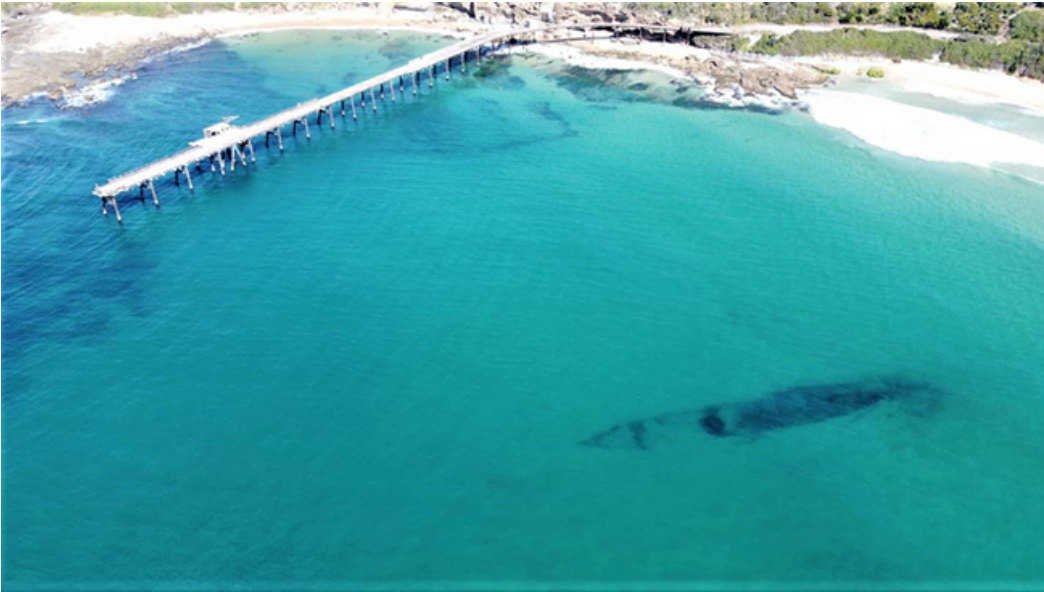
Another very interesting walk is to the area known as Mine Camp. When the Wallarah Mining Company first began mining operations in 1889, the jetty was built in the safest part of the beach protected by a southern headland. However, the mine was around 4 kilometres further north. The Company linked the mine to the jetty by building a rail line that ran along the cliff to the jetty. Miners built homes adjacent to these early pits and the camp was known as Mine Camp having areas such as The Row and Angels Rest.

When "E" pit was opened in 1906 and Middle Camp was built by the Mining Company, Mine Camp began to be derelict. During the Second World War, the Government built Radar Units north of the village on the high cliffs, including new housing. These radar units still exist, making for a very interesting heritage walk in this area.

## Diving the wreck of the SS Shamrock

The wreck of the SS Shamrock lies just to the north of the Catherine Hill Bay jetty. It was built in 1878 by the Tyne Iron Shipbuilding Company in the UK, weighing 1427 tons and 78 metres in length. It sank on the 31st March 1903.

It's possible to dive the Shamrock by swimming out from the Catho Surf Club when the surf is small. Because it's in a shallow sandy area, the amount of the wreck exposed varies with moving sand. At its best the entire outline of the wreck, propeller and shaft, engine and boiler are visible; but when sand is in place only its boiler and some parts of its structure can be seen.



*The wreck of the SS Shamrock from above ...*



*... and below.*

*(Content courtesy of Grey Nurse Charters, [www.greynurse.com.au](http://www.greynurse.com.au). Aerial photo of the SS Shamrock by Heskphotos, [www.instagram.com/heskphotos/](http://www.instagram.com/heskphotos/))*

## Community Groups representing Catherine Hill Bay

The CHB Progress Association and the CHB Community Alliance have been working collaboratively in recent times to achieve the aims of both community-based organisations. While their aims are not identical there is a lot of common ground between the two groups, and both feel that there is strength in the wider community banding together and supporting each other. A couple of good examples are the second Twilight Barbeque, being held on 19 November at the Surf Club, and the clean-up day scheduled for 12th November (details on the last page of this Chronicle). In addition, earlier in the year, the Community Working Group formed by LMCC to assist with the planning of community facilities was formed from residents from the three sections of our village; ie Moonee, Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp. Some strong relationships have been formed through this Working Group. Given the Chronicle's aim is for distribution across the entire village, the section below seek to introduce the residents of the wider CHB community to the organisations which represent us.

### **What exactly is the Catherine Hill Bay Community Alliance?**

With the development of the Beaches Estate and the greatly increased population, the demographic of Catherine Hill Bay has changed dramatically. The goal of the Alliance is to recognise this change and bring together the entire community around the common values that we share, and to embrace the influx of young families that will grow up together here as well as respecting the established residents and the heritage values of the original village. The Alliance therefore wants to keep abreast of the many views across the entire community to identify what matters are important.

Now that LMCC has earmarked Catherine Hill Bay as a strategic priority for future development, it plans to invest heavily in coastal infrastructure over the next ten years. All of this poses important challenges, and we need to ensure that people's views are made known to the relevant third parties so that decisions made by them are in keeping with our collective values. Our mission is to uphold and sustain Catherine Hill Bay's iconic lifestyle, and to respect our unique environmental, cultural, and community values to help its future growth and development.

We also want to keep the community informed of all the developments and anything else that may affect them. Our members are local residents who bring a wide range of knowledge, experience, and expertise. Together we continue to foster a strong sense of community for all who call Catherine Hill Bay home. We also seek to create opportunities for people to gather and build relationships as we continue to grow as a community together. It's easy to join up and become part of the Alliance. Membership Fees are: \$10 joining fee and ongoing \$10 annual fee. Sign up at [www.chbcommunityalliance.org/membership](http://www.chbcommunityalliance.org/membership)

Benefits of being a member include:

- Access to members area of website which will include minutes of committee meetings and other information that is specifically only shared with members.
- Receive regular updates by e-mail regarding upcoming events.
- The chance to engage with the wider community and to enjoy social events
- The opportunity to join our sub-committees and get involved – Development, Services, Communications, Social.

## **The Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association**

The PA was established in 1901. It's the longest running Progress Association in Australia and continues to advocate for the residents of Catherine Hill Bay. It aims to protect the heritage values of the original township and improve the environment and culture of Catherine Hill Bay. The PA's website contains a lot of information from the last 20+ years, detailing activities the group has been involved in as well as documenting community events through galleries of photographs. It's a great resource for residents to read about the history of the historic village:

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

Some activities the PA is currently involved in include:

- The PA presented to and made representations to the Regional Planning Panel considering a new development to the north of the village. Our aim is to hold the developer accountable to commitments such as land remediation, traffic and pedestrian safety issues, bushfire threat and so on,
- Supporting long term tenants living on developer land,
- Responding to recent Council plans for the development of the village as a tourist destination,

Residents are welcome to join the PA and can do so via the website (or see details on the last page of this newsletter). The Association welcomes residents of the heritage village to join as voting members and residents of the wider community as friends.

## **Did you know ...**

When Australia was in danger of attack from Japan in 1942 and 1943, a small group of specialist RAAF personnel maintained an around-the-clock warning of approaching aircraft at Radar Station 208RS, Mine Camp.

This radar station was one of many protecting the East Coast of Australia at the height of World War 2. The stations were to provide warning of Japanese warplanes approaching from the Pacific. During the war, all radar operations were classified 'Top Secret'. RAAF radar personnel did not talk about what they did. The word "radar" was unknown at the time and came into usage via the Americans only when the war was ending. Photographs were rare, and never published.

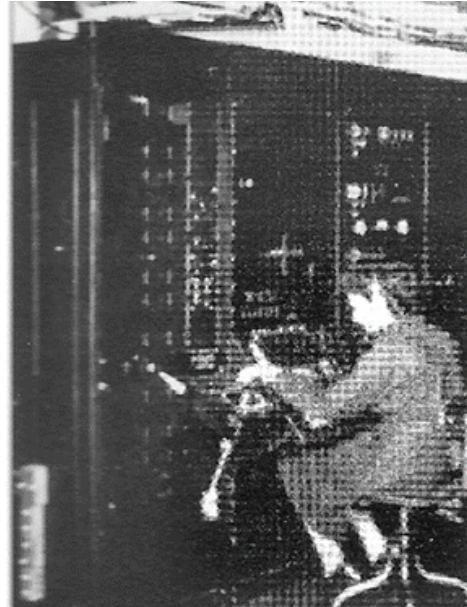
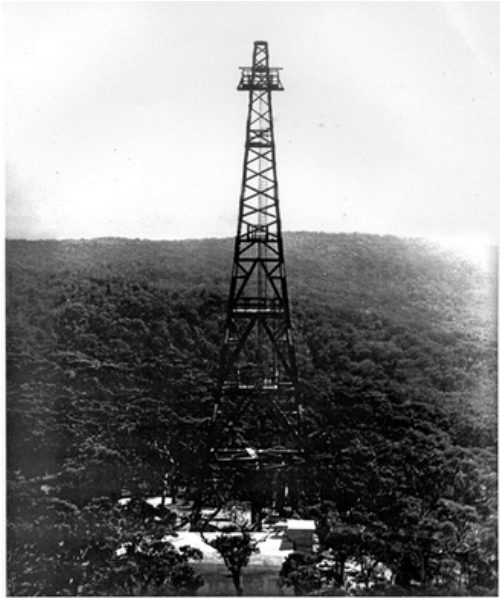
The distinctive twin bunkers - called igloos - still remain intact in Mine Camp on the headland. Radar stations were often on headlands for line-of-sight reasons.

Also distinctive of this British made ACO radar were two Eiffel-like towers, 70m apart. The towers stood on massive 1.5m concrete blocks which remain today, with steel sections projecting, where the towers were cut away some years ago (technical details of radio provided by Eric Manning).

Inside the igloo, airwomen watched the cathode ray tube and turned the dials to operate the equipment under the tower remotely.

The British design twin towers were uncommon in Australia. The more common Australian-made radar had a rotating aerial which served both to transmit and receive. This British radar had one aerial to transmit and another to receive.





This was a highly secret endeavour. Personnel were drawn from areas far away. The women operators came from Western Australia. Some also worked in the Operations Room and in the ACK Ack Battery in New Lambton.

Mrs D Caine (nee Bailey), recounted, "The idea was we were to do everything the men did, and if successful, men could be released to serve in New Guinea and Islands, as things were very bad then.

he male guards came from Victoria. One guard told me he was told to get a train to Newcastle then a bus to Swansea. Upon getting off the bus he asked where Mine Camp was. No one knew. Then a lady came up to him and told him to wait at the bus stop and a bus would come along and take him to Mine Camp. I asked him if he saw any action. Once, he told me, on night duty he heard a rustling in the bushes and asked for the password. There was no answer, so he let off a shot but his enemy turned out to be a cow.

Where were these operators and guards to be housed? The Government came up with a clever plan. Build houses that looked like miner's dwellings. After the war they were rented out to locals using a ballot system. These well-built houses extended the life of Mine Camp for many years.

## Catho Clean Up Day

- Saturday, 12 November 2022
- 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

The CHB Alliance is hosting an opportunity to work together on Saturday 12th November @ 9am @ Coastal Haze Café. Come and register, grab some rubbish bags, sunscreen and protective gear and get to know some of your neighbours while helping to make our community shine!

Register here: [www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/fundraisers/kerrysurace/catherine-hill-bay-community](http://www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/fundraisers/kerrysurace/catherine-hill-bay-community)

## Catho Community Twilight BBQ

A Catho Community BBQ will be held in the Surf Club and Pat Slaven Reserve at 5pm on Saturday 19th November 2022. Entry by small donation. All welcome.

There will be a sausage sizzle and the bar in the club will be open (no BYO). Please bring a sweet or savoury plate for the share tables. The maximum capacity of the Surf Club function area is 100.

## 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)**

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