

CATHO CHRONICLE

CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CATHO HILL BAY



PROPERTY DEVELOPERS' WISHLIST FOR CATHO

Rose Group and Hunter Group (formerly Wallalong Lands Pty Ltd) have recently revealed more details of their development plans for Catherine Hill Bay. A summary is outlined below.

Rose Group is contemplating changes to the yet to be commenced Stage 3 of the Beaches development. The current approval comprises 39 residential lots on the headland, a public coastal walk / stairway, and shops on the corner of Hale St and Montefiore Parkway backing onto a playground/park (the Village Green).

Their alternative proposal is to rezone lots along Montefiore Parkway to create an 'employment zone' to facilitate a retail and shop-top housing development. They propose to increase the maximum building height from 5m to 9m, with a footprint larger than the current approval for 750sqm of retail floorspace.

The provision of an adjacent Village Park is still planned in future development applications, but the location may be altered to facilitate the connectivity to the employment and residential uses.

SUMMER 2023 ISSUE...

CATHO JETTY UPDATE

COUNCIL'S DOGS IN SPACE STRATEGY

VALE BRIAN COGAN

LANDCARE UPDATE

NEXT MEETING at Catho SLSC on Sat 18th February

*Cover photo of Catho Jetty
courtesy of*

Jim Picot Photography

www.jimpicotphotography.com

Rose Group also proposes to alter the approval for residential lots on the headland to include an Adventure Tourism Hotel. The current building height limit of 5-7.5m is to be increased to 9m to facilitate the Hotel. They also propose to increase the height limit to 6.5m on the remainder of the headland to facilitate two storey residential units as well as reducing the lot sizes, presumably to allow a similar number of dwellings as currently approved alongside the proposed Hotel.

Provision of the coastal walk has been deferred to an indefinite future date, and potentially re-routed to allow for the Adventure Tourism Hotel. Rose Group is also proposing a hotel and restaurant on the jetty, with elevator access to connect to the headland Adventure Tourism Hotel and a separate Dive and Sports Centre.

In December 2022, **Hunter Group** won approval for 209 housing lots at the northern end of Catherine Hill Bay near Middle Camp. This development, which Hunter Group had been trying to get approved since 2017, will be located just outside the Heritage Precinct boundary. Hunter Group's new proposals - for which there are no current approvals - are all located in Middle Camp within the Heritage Precinct on land primarily owned by the developer. These include:

- Moving the historic Catho Pub to a site located at the northern end of the beach, adjacent to Catherine Hill Bay's historic cemetery,
- Constructing tourist accommodation on land in the Coastal Zone, adjacent to Council's proposed Sports and Recreation Precinct,
- Rezoning parts of Lot 4 (DP1180181) on Flowers Drive and Northwood Road from C2 environmental conservation to R2 Low Density Residential Zone to allow infill residential development of up to 17 houses in the current gaps in the streetscape.

Most of these proposals are not new ideas and have been debated through various forums and reviewed by experts dating back to 2002. What both the Rose Group and Hunter Group proposals have in common is an attempt to expand the scale and footprint of development in CHB. Increasing the allowable height of buildings and adding new buildings within the Heritage Precinct will undermine the essential qualities of the heritage village and has the potential to restrict public access to the scenic beauty of our coastline.

At the PA meeting on Saturday Feb 18th, there will be discussion as to how these proposals would impact the heritage township. We encourage all to attend. The Progress Association is also working with the Catherine Hill Bay Alliance to canvas community views on the above matters. The two groups will later hold a joint meeting of the wider Catherine Hill Bay community to discuss our responses. We believe that it is important to present a united response on these proposals as far as possible,

Catho Jetty Update

The Catho jetty is one of the most recognisable landmarks in the Lake Macquarie LGA and a highly visible legacy of the mining history of the town.

While there is strong community interest in saving the jetty, no maintenance has been carried out on it since mining operations ceased in 2002. Recently, a large metal girder fell off the jetty and landed on the sand where families walk beneath it every day. It seems that the State Government - responsible for management of the site - has a policy of demolition by neglect.

Back in 2018, the PA led a campaign to have the jetty listed on the State Heritage Register, but it was ultimately unsuccessful. We recently approached the State Government requesting a copy of the latest engineering advice on the condition of the jetty. The request was declined, stating that any reports are internal government documents.

Developers are now proposing to build accommodation and a restaurant on the jetty, which seems to be incongruous with the dilapidated state of the structure.

The PA is aware that the State Government is holding over \$3 million in a bond for the future demolition or refurbishment of the jetty. Given the high level of public interest in the Catho jetty, we urge the State Government to prepare an up-to-date, comprehensive, and fully public feasibility study on the options for the jetty and carried out at arm's length from the influence of developers and their vested interests.



Recently a large girder fell off the jetty onto the beach

Lake Mac Council's Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy

LMCC recently published a draft *Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy* to guide future provision for dogs and their carers in Council's open spaces over the next 10 years. The strategy document proposes changes to existing off-leash areas as well as new off-leash areas.

For the Catherine Hill Bay area, the draft strategy proposes an off-leash area on the beach at the far northern end, north of the cemetery. The middle section of the beach, between the cemetery and the south-end creek, is suitable for dogs on a leash. The area south of the creek and in front of the Surf Club is a dog-free zone.

Submissions from the public are now closed. The feedback is currently being reviewed and a report will be prepared for Council consideration. Further details can be found here:

www.shape.lakemac.com.au/dogs



Landcare Update

Landcare is taking a break over summer due to the heat, sandflies and ticks, but not the mighty Green Team! They were here on Tuesday 7 February at the Graveyard Beach site 9-11 am. Thanks to Wendy and her team of Wayne, Tom and Noel. Jann and I pitched in, too. We removed lantana and morning glory from the area beside the car park. Coincidentally, the Council bush regeneration team (organised by Simon over at Lake Mac Landcare) were here too, and worked on the cemetery side and the south end - so much Bitou bush and blackberry there! Thanks to both teams - your help keeps us going!

Our sessions resume at the north end on the 6th of March from 4-6 pm, being on the first Mondays of each month. The Pat Slaven Reserve site sessions resume on Thursday the 16th from 4-6 pm, being the second Thursdays of the month. Bring water to drink, gloves, and - if you can - secateurs, garden forks, pruners etc. Please wear light coloured long sleeves, long pants, and socks to prevent ticks. We'll have DEET spray. We're waiting to hear from Lake Mac Landcare about what Council's plans are for the Pat Slaven Reserve site - so we will continue in the meantime.



New volunteers are always welcome. Call Carmel on mobile 0438 499636.

Vale Brian Cogan

Brian Cogan settled in Catherine Hill Bay when it was a working coal-mining town. A former editor of the Newcastle Herald, he later worked as a consultant for Coal & Allied Industries. He held the role of Secretary of the Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association for many years.

Brian soon realized how precious this small town is. Catherine Hill Bay and its surrounds were the only large area of relatively intact coastal bushland between Nelson Bay and Port Hacking. This lack of urban development had allowed the survival of an area of critical environmental importance for the conservation of native flora and fauna in this part of Australia, one that is the most heavily populated and under the greatest pressure for urbanization. From 1969, Brian worked with the Central Coast Environmental Network to set about trying to protect the area.

He knew that when mining ceased, Catherine Hill Bay was a plum waiting to be picked by developers. Heritage listing was proceeding in an orderly way with the Department of Planning establishing its significance in 1980 and requiring Lake Macquarie City Council to undertake heritage studies of Catherine Hill Bay. This process was set aside by the Part 3A process in 2002, however the Minister for Planning - Frank Sartor - recognized this and offered State Heritage Listing to Catherine Hill Bay. In July 2010 Catherine Hill Bay was listed. These significant outcomes were achieved largely due to the imagination, perceptiveness and skills brought by Brian Cogan.

Brian sadly passed away just before Christmas 2022 after suffering a stroke. He will be greatly missed and remembered fondly by Catho residents.

Did you know ...

... that the imposing Knickerbocker Hall, also known as the Wallarah Hall, once stood proudly in Middle Camp on the current SES site?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the town was very different to the one we see today. Most of the buildings were already built but services were very limited. It was a great place for walking, swimming and fishing but there was no such thing as television, or cars, or Wi-Fi.

Knickerbocker Hall was at the northern end of town, on the site now occupied by the SES Storage unit (formerly the Rural Fire Service Station) and also a residence and shop built in the 1970s by Arthur and Tess Bevan. The hall played an important role in the social life of the town. Houses were too small for larger gatherings, so dances, wedding receptions, and going to war and welcome home parties were all held in the Knickerbocker Hall.

During the Second World War, dances were held in the hall and defence staff from the nearby secret Radar Station No 208 at Mine Camp used to attend. The women operators all came from Western Australia. One of them tells the story of her chair going through the floor of the hall as white ants were slowly eating the weatherboard structure away. Marriage matches were eventually made here; one of the guards met a local lass, married, and never returned to Victoria.



The hall also doubled as the cinema. The picture show at Catherine Hill Bay dated back to some very early ways of showing motion pictures. The first person ever to exhibit movies at the Bay was Walter Rumble, from Wyong, who was interested in amateur photography and the art of showing pictures that moved.

When Walter first brought his moving pictures to Catherine Hill Bay in 1910, they were shown by a light produced from carbide gas known as limelight.

A short time later a resident, Mr Payne, took over the outfit from Mr. Rumble and managed to obtain a direct current electric supply from the Wallarah Colliery for use in a new development called the "carbon arc lamp".



Sybil Mascord's wedding in Knickerbocker Hall

Films came from Sydney to the railway station at Wyee and then to the bay by means of a horse-drawn sulky. In these early days, music to accompany the silent films was initially provided by Mr Baker, the Bandmaster, and later a piano was purchased. In 1934 Mr Stan Reid, who worked at the pit as an electrician, ran the picture shows with his wife until Mr Talbot took over in about 1950.

Films were held every week. Everyone had their own place; small girls at the front, behind them the small boys and as you moved towards the back the older girls, then boys, then women and men with the stage being reserved for 'important' members of the community, such as the town doctor and mining staff. Whilst the hall had a stage, seats were placed upon it and the films were shown on a screen hung on the opposite wall. A projection box was built by Mr Reid onto the wall at the rear of the stage. All seating had to be movable as there were many other social functions demanded of this hall.

Mr Reid would paste up large and colourful posters at both ends of town on a Monday advertising the coming show on Friday night. Two pictures were shown per night. The "flicks" cost sixpence, ninepence, or one and sixpence and even though times were tough, most parents came good. Some of the young ones were more resourceful gathering wildflowers to sell to the Doctor's or the Pit Manager's wives. Or they tried to collect and cash in cordial bottles at the shop.

Mr Connor's shop was across the road and did a good trade at interval.

During the Depression years, Mrs Robinson - a local mum - made coconut ices and toffee apples to sell at the pictures. This way she earned the money to pay the bus fare for her two oldest children to attend Newcastle Boys High School.

Val D'Arcy recalled that, when the pictures finished, everyone left at the same time. "Mine Camp people peeled off to the right and most everyone else to the left. All you could hear



was the trampling feet up the gravel road and people saying 'goodnight' as they reached their houses or turn off, until only the bay end people were left. We lived off the main road, so we had to be careful to watch out for horses and cows resting on the ground. The trick was to bend low to the ground and find silhouettes on the horizon".

Many of these memories were gathered by Matt Diver and recorded in his very large Bay Book.

After the Second World War, an RSL Hall was built in 1952 on the land where the School of Arts had been sited. In the sixties, the Knickerbocker Hall was dismantled due to white ant infestation and the RSL Hall became the new gathering place in town. Then television arrived.

The old RSL Hall is now a private residence, as is the former school and post office. But the Knickerbocker Hall, along with the Methodist Church and the third school, were lost forever to white ants.

Community Noticeboard

Local artist **Kate Carragher** is running **Whale Tales: Watercolours & Wines** workshops at her Catherine Hill Bay studio. Thanks to everyone who has already come to play! Two more workshops are coming up AND one for teens as well (minus the wine, of course)!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11 - Adults

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18 - Teens

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19 - Adults

Class sizes are now for max 6 people - and we already have a few on the waitlist - so best to get in quick.

Kate has also launched a 7-week foundational drawing and art course for adults and children in the week commencing February 12. Each class is a power hour of drawing and painting fundamentals and exploration, and fosters a connection to our local area, nature and ourselves. Limited to 6-7 people per class, the course also includes a take-home art kit.

To book or find out more, visit www.studiocarragher.com/events or call mobile 0410 528 314.

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. 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

For more local news check the following websites:

www.catherinehillbay.org.au or

www.chbcommunityalliance.org

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

www.facebook.com/CathHillBay

www.facebook.com/catherinehillbay

www.facebook.com/CathHillBayLandcare

www.facebook.com/cathoslsc

www.facebook.com/cathoboardriders

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