

Attachment 8:

HERITAGE ADVICE ON DEVELOPMENT AREA D

—

'SLACK ALLEY'

By Suzanne Whyte,

Local Historian

DEVELOPMENT AREA D—SLACK ALLEY

The Heritage Impact Assessment (Appendix 1) prepared by ERM does not satisfactorily address the Director Generals Requirement 6.

Heritage-Provide a heritage impact statement in accordance with NSW Heritage Office Guidelines. The statement should assess the impacts of the application on the area and any significant components of the site. The heritage significance of the area and any impacts the proposed development may have upon this significance is to be assessed.

Error 1: Table 4.1 Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp-Chronology

“1889- Population grows to 2000 by September 1889.”

We disagree with this figure because in August, 1890 the reason given by the Legislative Assembly Administration of Justice for opening a Court House in Catherine Hill Bay was that the “population at that time (was) between 300 and 400 and increasing”. (See attached document 1).

As stated, “The sources for this chronology are Architectural Projects (1999), EJE (2005), Nilson (1995) and NSW Department of Lands.”

Two of these secondary sources have been checked:

Architectural Projects (1999) *Heritage Assessment Conservation Plan for Catherine Hill Bay* Consultancy report prepared for the LMCC and

Nilson L (ed.) (1995) *Lake Macquarie: Past and Present LMCC*

No population figure of 2000 in 1889 is given.

There exists a consultancy report prepared for Rosecorp Pty Ltd, *EJE Conservation Plan-Wallarah and Moonee Collieries, Catherine Hill Bay NSW*, however it was prepared in 2004. In it there was no mention of a population figure of 2000. If this figure came from a report prepared later by EJE in 2005, we have not been able to track it down. We were assured by Lake Macquarie Information Resources, that any maps from the Department of Lands would contain no information on population.

The historical claims made by EJE in the RoseCorp Concept Plan were shown to be so often exaggerated and false that the developer was advised by the Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel to get new architects which they did. If this figure of 2000 comes from this source then it is highly suspect.

The population figure of 2000 is included because much weight is given to Catherine Hill Bay having had a very large population in the past. Such a claim is used by Coal & Allied to give credibility to this development proposal.

In a booklet prepared by Coal & Allied in 1988, to celebrate the centenary of the formation of the Wallarah Coal Mining Company, it says "By 1889 there were 120 men and youths working for the Wallarah Company." (See attached document). Given that virtually no one other than miners and their families lived in Catherine Hill Bay at that time the figure of 2000 seems wildly conflated according to the company's own records.

Error 2

Catherine Hill Bay is the only coastal mining village in NSW that was a company town. This is not acknowledged or examined in this Heritage Impact Statement. How can an accurate assessment of heritage significance be made in a study which omits such an important fact?

The chronology for Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp (Table 4.1) does "outline the phases of settlement and activity that have occurred since the 1870s" however, it is necessary to flesh out this outline in order to understand the way a 'company town' worked.

The Wallarah Coal Company in 1889 built the jetty; the railway that joined the jetty to the mine, two and a half miles north; a sawmill and "14 cottages occupied and others in progress".

Many miners lived under canvas during the week and returned home to Newcastle on the weekends to see their families. Many miners built huts around the mine. This village came to be known as Mine Camp and contained areas such as Angels Rest and The Row. In a petition to the Federal Postmaster General in 1904 requesting an additional 6 pounds per annum be paid to the postmaster at Mine Camp there were 101 signatures from people residing at Mine Camp.

The Wallarah Coal Company owned all the land and in some cases built some of the houses but in the vast majority of cases the shacks were built by the miners themselves on company land, with company approval and a small ground rent was paid. Houses were built by the miners in areas such as Moonee, Sawmill Camp, Federal City and Slack Alley.

It is particularly the area of Slack Alley that we wish to examine in more detail. It is a vital part of the history and cultural setting of Middle Camp.

The Coal and Allied Concept Plan identifies Slack Alley as *AREA "D"*

Prior to 1908 a series of 6 small company houses lined the eastern side of the railway embankment. Only 1 of these now remains. There were 12 other dwellings here, some were 'batches', occupied by single men and other houses were occupied by families. The 'batches' were small buildings of around 20 sqm in area. The family houses were around

40sqm consisting of 2 or 4 rooms. These were sited informally in an open landscape. These were built by the miners with company approval. (See document 3).

Between the years, 1908-1912, the Wallarah Coal Company built what is now known as Middle Camp Village.

Slack Alley had its own supply of fresh water. There still exists a well from which the Bowling Club draws its water.

Fresh water was a constant problem for Catherine Hill Bay. It was difficult to gather enough water from the roofs of the houses as the roof areas were so small. Fresh water from the Moonee Stream was never available to the miners. This water was only connected to the mine and the staff houses. This was a source of contention between the miners and the company and reflected the stratification of society in Catherine Hill Bay. The staff houses, (excluding No 8) in what is now known as Colliery Road (Area B in the Coal&Allied development proposal) were connected to the Moonee Water supply and this area was known as 'Snob Hill'.

Significant parts of the mining history of Catherine Hill Bay have been played out at Slack Alley. The mine at Catherine Hill Bay was kept in production during strike periods by the introduction of "scabs" brought in by ship and moved to camps under police protection. There were strikes in 1933 and a nationwide strike in 1949. Much of the coal mined by these scabs was left in huge dumps in Slack Alley as the miners refused to touch this coal or load it onto the ships. These dumps would spontaneously catch fire and were a trial to the women whose lines of washing would suffer and to the children who fell into them when playing. (See attached document 4)

The railway used to pass through Slack Alley until the early 1960s and the railway embankment is still clearly visible. To build new housing on either side of this embankment would destroy this physical evidence of the past and the spatial context in which the railway existed.

Every year an increasing number of schools come to Catherine Hill Bay to enable their students to learn about the history of a mining settlement in their region. The next school that is booked in is Callaghan College from Wallsend on the 18th of March How can we take Year 10 History students and make their history "live" if there are houses suffocating the area? Catherine Hill Bay is a wonderful teaching resource, the students can see the history, the spatial distances, the problems encountered and how these were solved by the mining company and their miners.

Slack Alley is the best example in Catherine Hill Bay of a form of land tenure that is only possible in a company town.

When Coal&Allied bought the mines in the early 1960s they never ran Catherine Hill Bay as a company town. Times had moved on. Mechanization meant a smaller workforce was needed in the mines. Many of the miners owned their own cars and lived out of town anyway. When Coal&Allied bought the mines they set about immediately to survey and put their houses that fronted Clarke St, Lindsley St, Flowers Drive and what is now Northwood Rd, up for sale to the occupants.

Their other houses they determined would be demolished as quickly as possible (within 24 hours of becoming vacant).

In Slack Alley only one remaining house was a company house. The other four were privately owned but built on company land, (Coal&Allied has already bought one of these) with the approval of the Wallarah Coal Company and a ground rent still continues to be paid.

Slack Alley should never be developed. Any new housing will be visible from the town and will destroy the heritage values of Middle Camp. Slack Alley should never be developed as it is an integral part of the history and cultural setting of Middle Camp.

This town has a commitment to sharing the town and its story with everyone. Every year we run a 'Back to the Bay' Heritage Festival which seeks to inform and inspire our local community and visitors to learn more about the Bay's unique natural environment and built heritage. Since inception in 2004, we estimate close to 5,000 people have directly participated in the festival activities and programs. The range of activities include over 12 heritage walks hosted around the Bay, people viewing heritage displays, Bay luncheons and Re-unions, attendance at the Film Festivals, participants and visitors to the Art Shows and Schools Education days. The 2007 "Back to the Bay" Heritage Festival celebrated the 140th anniversary of the discovery of coal in the cliffs near the Jetty, and the establishment of the village as we now know it. The festival was so successful that we were awarded the Australia Day Award for the "Best Community Event" by the Lake Macquarie Council. Our annual festival is considered a hallmark event by the Lake Macquarie Council.

We also run tours for the National Trust and participate in Heritage Week.

The entire Catherine Hill Bay area is regularly used as the basis for primary and secondary schools and tertiary research programs. The groupings of buildings, their setting, the specific heritage buildings, the industrial relics, and the 'slack alley' site (C&A Area D) form the evidence for many studies of our Australian history. These depict the influence of mining companies and the stories behind why we are and how we are. Development of the areas as proposed by Coal&Allied would destroy this precious resource. Reinterpretation of heritage relics doesn't match and never is the same as being able to experience the place as is.

Catherine Hill Bay Court House.

The court house was opened in June 1906 and closed 1st June 1936.

“ At present the only building in course of erection is the courthouse. The building was formerly in Swansea but the Department decided that the Court should be held at Catherine Hill Bay where the greater part of the work arose. The building at Swansea was pulled down and the material removed to Catherine Hill Bay where it is being re erected next to the Police Station.

The contractor for the work is Mr E W Dumbrell of Toronto and is expected to be finished in 2 to 3 weeks.

The town of Catherine Hill Bay is shortly to be gazetted to the official site of an office and Court House of Petty Sessions. The Court will sit every fourth Friday.

9th June 1906.

1890 Legislative Assembly Administration of Justice at Catherine Hill Bay .

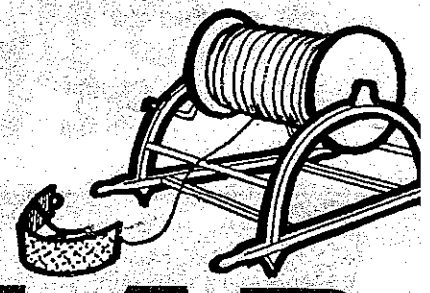
To be printed 19th August 1890, population at that time between 300 and 400 and increasing.”

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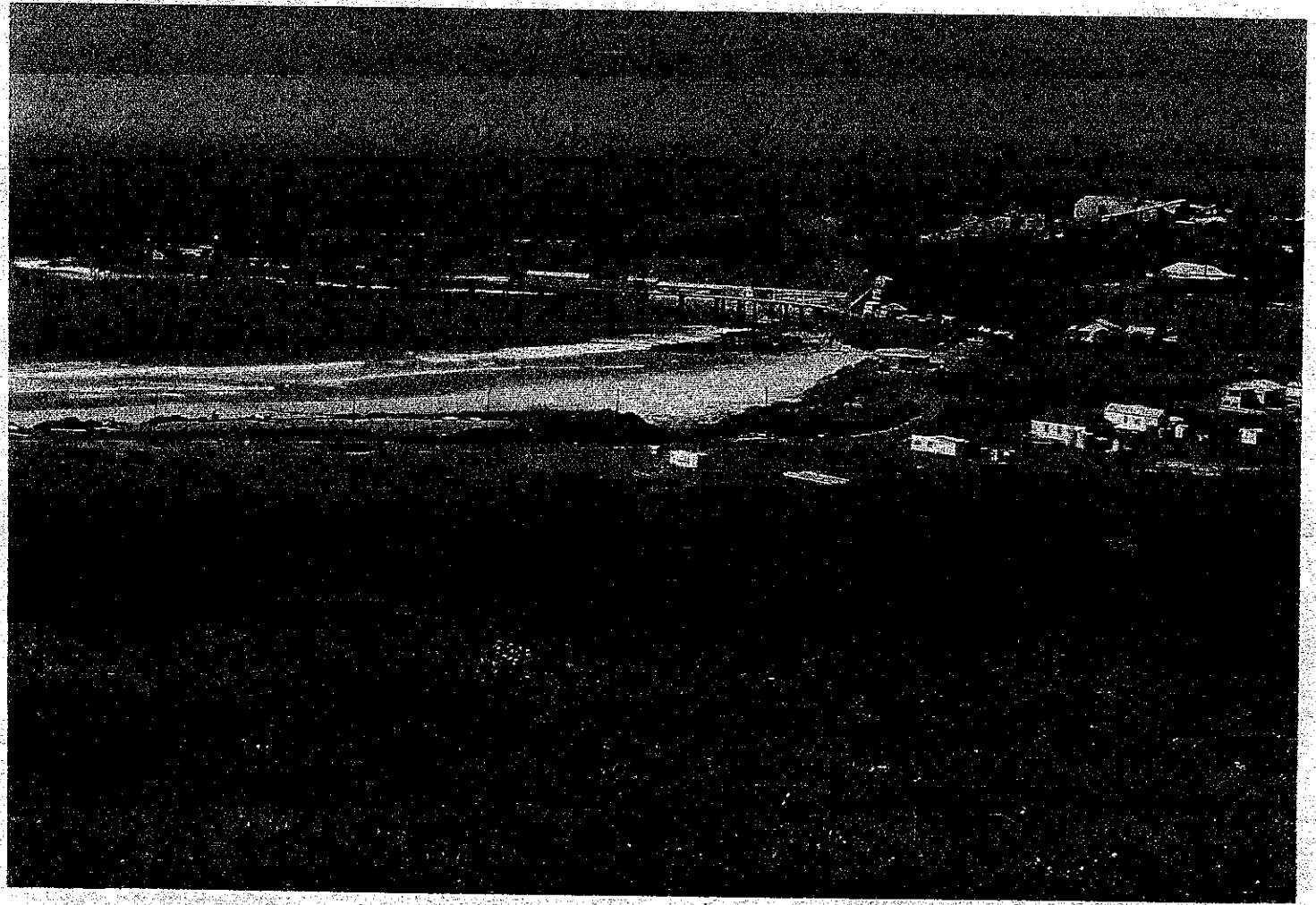
Coal & Allied's



SURF SPECTACULAR

in conjunction with Catherine Hill Bay SLSC

CATHERINE HILL BAY, APRIL 23, 1988



Today's Surf Spectacular and mine inspection celebrates the formation of the Wallarah Coal Mining Company 100 years ago.

Southern Program

Long History of Mining at Catherine Hill Bay

For 15 years after 1873 the Catherine Hill Bay area was the subject of intermittent coal mining.

But in June 1867 such a situation was to change when a heavy gale forced a small schooner laden with cedar and pine from the Richmond River on NSW's North Coast, into a bay south of Swansea.

The ship was battered by the storm for several hours and eventually the Captain decided to beach the vessel.

Two men were washed overboard in the exercise and the remaining four were found on the beach next day, wet, naked and hungry.

The ship was the "Catherine Hill" and her wrecking was to give a name to a beautiful bay and one of Australia's most outstanding mining townships.

Six years after the wreck coal mining began with the coal being shipped from exposed seams in the cliff face of the bay.

In July 1873 a tunnel had been driven into the cliff on behalf of the New Wallsend Coal Company.

By 1874, 70 men were on site and about 300 tonnes of coal per week was transported along a jetty to vessels bound for Sydney.

By mid-1875 the township — still unsure whether to call itself New Wallsend or Catherine Hill Bay — boasted an hotel, a couple of general stores, a butcher and a baker.

One of the major drawbacks of the site was the openness of the bay.

Nor-easters kept the New Wallsend company's steamer from loading for weeks at a time.

According to a report of the day the company did not seem to have the means of "storing more coal than a few tons" and this "coupled with the want of energy and pluck on the part of the shareholders, has kept the mine idle for some months, and as a consequence has rendered the place almost too poor for any man to live in".

Soon after, an announcement was made that the shareholders of the New Wallsend Company had decided to dissolve the company.

Catherine Hill Bay was forgotten for almost 10 years.

Then in 1888 land adjacent to the old mine was offered for sale.

The Wallarah Coal Mining Company, which was formed in London in 1888, sent Mr Thomas Parton, who was to become the first manager of the Wallarah Colliery, to report on the land and the prospects of mining it.

The report was favourable and the land was purchased.

By 1889 there were 120 men and youths working for the Wallarah Company.

They needed to be housed so the company laid out what has become the village of Catherine Hill Bay on "a beautiful undulating slope overlooking the bay".

Construction of the tunnel that became known as the 'A Pit' began in 1889.

Horses were used for underground haulage when it was finished and the company planned to use steam power as soon as the mine was opened out.

The coal being won from the 'A Pit' was considered good steaming coal, "equal to anything in the district".

The success of 'A Pit' soon led to other sources of coal being sought. 'B Pit' opened a short distance from 'A Pit' on the opposite side of the small valley, above what is today Flowers Drive.

'C Pit' was built nearer to the bay on the same side of the valley as 'A Pit'. 'D Pit' was close to the beach and the jetty.

By 1894 two seams had been worked only 150 feet underground. The coal was said to be of superior character and its quality for steaming and household purposes was claimed "unexcelled".

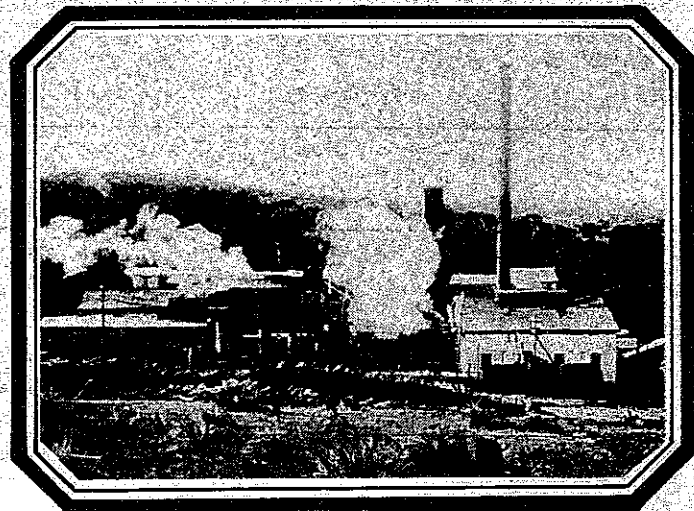
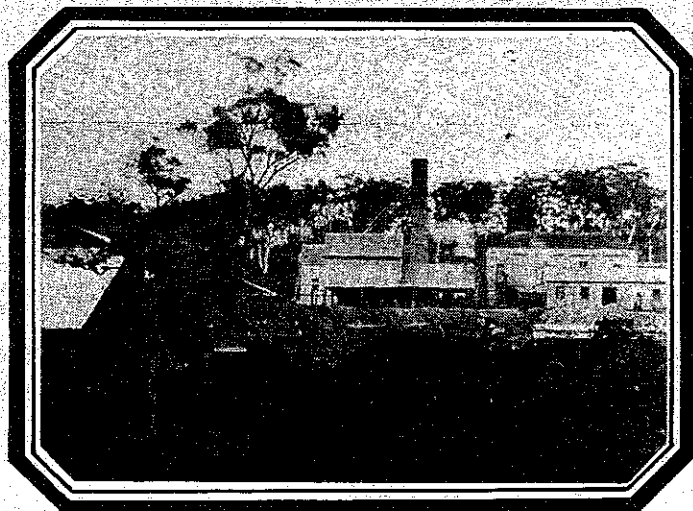
The use of horses to haul coal was ended in the early 1950's but it wasn't until the early 1970's that the use of horses for general duties around the mining area came to an end.

In 1958 Coal & Allied purchased the Wallarah Coal Company and has continued its operations to the present day using the latest mining methods.

The reputation of Wallarah brand is today still very high with overseas customers.

Like most mining communities Catherine Hill Bay had, and still has, a strong sense of identity and kinship.

Catherine Hill Bay is a peaceful, restful place and most of the people who live there have a strong attachment and love for the area. Its people, past and present, have managed to live constantly with the difficulties of underground coal mining and enjoy a unique environment.



Walarah 'E' Pit at the turn of the century.

