

Item Details

Name

Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct

Other/Former Names

Address

Flowers Drive CATHERINE HILL BAY NSW 2281

Local Govt Area

Lake Macquarie

Item Classification

Item Type

Landscape

Group Name

Item Group

Landscape - Cultural



Item Category

Cultural Feature

Statement Of Significance

The Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct comprises picturesque and distinctive historic townscapes forming the oldest group of buildings in Lake Macquarie, set in land/seascapes of exceptional aesthetic and technical significance, both visually and as an archaeological resource for industrial heritage.

The boundary established by the Independent Heritage Advisory Panel for the Catherine Hill Bay Heritage Cultural Precinct encompasses the distinctive dwellings and coal mining infrastructure of the villages of Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp. The original buildings, most of which are small vernacular cottages dating from the 1890s to the 1920s form pleasing streetscapes evoking the settlement's origins as a nineteenth century mining village. Although few buildings belong to a recognised style or period, each is distinctive, and all display a high degree of consistency in terms of size, scale, form, setbacks, siting and materials. The urban pattern of the Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct can be appreciated in its bush and coastal setting, particularly on the northern approach.

The Precinct is set in a landscape, now largely dedicated as a National Park, which is distinctive both for its coastal topography which creates a natural visual catchment and for its evidence of coal mining dating from the 1890s.

The Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct is now rare, as an intact surviving example of "Company Town" development. In Lake Macquarie such developments generally evolved more informally than the company town infrastructures elsewhere in the Upper Hunter and other parts of Australia.

Assessed Significance Type

State

Endorsed Significance

State

Date Significance Updated

6/21/2010

Listings

Listing Name	Listing Date	Instrument Name	Instrument No.	Plan No.	Gazette Page	Gazette Number
Heritage Act - State Heritage Register	5/0/2010		01828	2342	5421	126
State Environmental Planning Policy	3/0/1989	Hunter REP				
Local Environmental Plan	1/0/1993	Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 1993	RT-18; CH-00			
Local Environmental Plan	30/0/2014					

Heritage Item ID

5061182

Source

Heritage NSW

Location

Addresses

Records Retrieved: 1

Street No	Street Name	Suburb/Town/Postcode	Local Govt. Area	LALC	Parish	County	Electorate	Address Type
	Flowers Drive	CATHERINE HILL BAY/NSW/2281	Lake Macquarie	Bahtabah	Wallarah	Northumberland	SWANSEA	Primary Address

Description

Designer

Builder/Maker

Construction Year Start & End

Circa

Period

YES

Unknown

Physical Description

Updated

The Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct, 26 kilometres south of Newcastle and 100 kilometres north of Sydney, located on the Wallarah Peninsula, bordered by Lake Macquarie to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the East.

The Precinct is set in a wider coastal landscape, now largely dedicated as a National Park, which is distinctive both for its coastal topography and which creates a natural visual catchment.

The village's early buildings in the village are typically small, vernacular mining cottages, dating from the 1890s to the 1920s, located sporadically in, and constituting a significant part of, the open coastal landscape.

The village is distinctive for its coastal topography as well as its sand bush backdrop. The area retains its open and undeveloped character, with slowly regenerating coastal scrub. It is highly sensitive, visually, to any new development due to a high degree of visibility from various vantage points across the landscape.

Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct has negligible to low significance for its natural heritage values, which are due to its bush backdrop and regenerating coastal scrub.

Its two villages, Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp consist principally of modest miners' cottages lining both sides of the road through the towns. In the Cultural Precinct and its surroundings are the evident and easily accessible remnants of mining infrastructure from the 19th century to the present.

From the south, at the corner of Clarke and Montefiore Streets, the dramatic landforms of the headland and beach dominate rows of small houses stepping down the hill. From the north, along Flowers Drive through Middle Camp, the jetty and headlands are visible. Against this striking backdrop, the character of the streets derives from the low-scale built form and highly consistent pattern of predominantly single storey weatherboard cottages. This reflects the historical association with the coal company.

Although the varied and dramatic juxtaposition of broader sea-land landscapes, ranging from exposed ridges and cliff forms to sheltered sloping gullies, does not lie within the Cultural Precinct, this setting contributes powerfully to the sense of the built environment's modest scale.

Physical Condition

Updated 06/21/2010

The Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct forms the oldest collection of buildings in Lake Macquarie with scale, fabric and interrelationship of the features largely retained and in good condition. The Precinct and its surroundings are significant archaeological resources for the investigation of the area's industrial heritage.

Modifications And Dates

Ongoing additions and modifications to the original building stock over time have tended to respect the prevailing scale, materials and spatial relations that characterise the Precinct.

Further Comments

History

Historical Notes or Provenance

Updated

This report was produced using the State Heritage Inventory managed by Heritage NSW. Check with your relevant local council or NSW government agency for the most up-to-date information. This report does not replace a Section 167 certificate or a Section 10.7 Certificate (formerly Section 149).

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Catherine Hill Bay village is the oldest collection of buildings in Lake Macquarie, retaining distinctive historical townscapes and land/seascapes, with scale, fabric and interrelationship of the features largely retained and in good condition.

Catherine Hill Bay takes its European name from the wreck of the schooner Catherine Hill, bound from the Richmond River, in 1867. In April 1865, Sydney merchants Jacob Levi Montefiore and Thomas Hale took out a mining lease on 265 acres, bordering the southern part of the bay. By the end of 1873, 'splendid samples of coal' (SMH) had been mined, the original jetty, a mine manager's residence and 'a number of good weatherboard shingled cottages for the workmen' were under construction in the new 'Township of Cowper'. In May, 1874, Thomas Hale wrote to the Postmaster General requesting a post office for the 100 people then in the township. In 1875, the company reduced miners' wages and the miners stopped work in protest, beginning a tradition of industrial disputes that was to characterise the community for a century to come. In March, 1876, the New Wallsend Coal Company, bankrupt and undercapitalised, suspended operations. By late 1880, the settlement was abandoned, many of its buildings dismantled and re-erected elsewhere.

In 1888 the Wallarah Coal Company, an English venture with strong colonial connections, purchased land including the former Cowper Township and began construction of a jetty to replace the original wharf which had burned two years before. By January 1890, the mining community was firmly re-established as 'Catherine Hill Bay' and the first shipment of coal left the new jetty. A brief industrial dispute the same year was resolved in the Company's favour. By 1892, Police services, a school, and rumours, at least of "telephonic connection with Wyee", joined several churches as harbingers of a lasting settlement. In 1899, several miners challenged their eviction from company housing in Court and won. By the turn of the century, Catherine Hill Bay's reputation as a 'picturesque' beauty spot had been added to its underlying identity as a scene of industrial prosperity and occasional labour unrest.

The township continued to grow and prosper through the first quarter of the 20th Century with expanding public services, a Court House, a School of Arts and a Brass Band. By 1908, miner's residences and mine-related services expanded to Middle Camp, a short distance up the bay, location of a pit-head and a large plant. In 1915, Catherine Hill Bay Public School, too, was shifted to Middle Camp, acknowledging this community as the new focus of Company development.

In August, 1917, miners at Catherine Hill Bay struck in sympathy with striking Railway workers. The Government replied by taking over direct control of the state's coal mines, importing strike-breaking labourers to keep them in operation. At Catherine Hill Bay, a train was deliberately derailed and the jetty dynamited. Extra police were sent to the town to protect the railway, the jetty, a nearby armaments depot and the strike-breakers. Even when relations between miners and employers were peaceful, discontent and public concern mounted over the deteriorating conditions in which Company housing obliged the miners to live. By February 1929, coal miners across NSW were once again on strike and strike-breakers were imported to work the Wallarah colliery. The world-wide economic depression followed. Jobs across the state in coal mining plummeted by some 10 000, by 1933. Increasing mechanisation of the coal industry affected Catherine Hill Bay by 1937, even as economic conditions began to improve, keeping employment precarious and fuelling the decade of industrial unrest that preceded the Second World War. In 1941, public attention focussed again on Catherine Hill Bay, when 100 Wallarah miners staged a stay-in for a record 101 hours over a penalty clause in their award. Publicity surrounding the event called attention to the squalid living conditions in the company town, noting that it was completely owned "by shareholders who live in England."

During the ensuing decade, sporadic schemes to improve housing, services and facilities in the communities of the Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct stalled, failed, were indefinitely postponed or succumbed to token gestures such as the bowling green, tennis court and recreation area which graced Middle Camp in the early 50s. These modest amenities were the first substantial public works since the Public School, in 1915. They were also the last.

In 1962, Coal & Allied Industries Ltd. absorbed the J & A Brown Abermain Seaham Collieries which had taken over the Wallarah Coal Company, in 1956. In 1964 Coal & Allied decided to sell the company cottages to their occupants. While this scheme provided greater incentive for the new owners to maintain and improve their homes, dwindling employment throughout the remainder of the 20th Century saw declining population and a corresponding disappearance of community services. The Public School closed in 1985. In 1992 Coal & Allied retrenched 280 workers and, the following year sold the operation to Lake Coal which cut jobs still further in preparation for closing down the mine. The Anglican Church and the Post Office both closed in 1993.

Today, the remaining miners and descendants of miners in the Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct have been joined by relatively recent arrivals, attracted by the distinctive character

of the built environment and the aesthetic appeal of its setting. That environment is a rare survivor among the state's former company towns, most of which are either abandoned (Joadja, Minmi) or changed beyond recognition.

In 2000 mining began to decline due to geological issues and mining ceased in Catherine Hill Bay in 2002 (Coal & Allied, 2010, quoted in LMCC, 2017, 7).

In 2008 Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register (ibid, 2017, 7).

In October 2013 Wallarah House was destroyed by fire. Formerly the mine manager's residence from the 1880s, and one of the oldest buildings in the area, it was a powerful reminder of late 19th-century coal mining in the district. It was a landmark, an historical site and a place of significant local heritage (Eklund, 30/10/2013).

Historic Themes

Records Retrieved: 14

National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
Building settlements, towns and cities	Welfare	Planned towns serving a specific industry
Building settlements, towns and cities	Welfare	A quiet Rural District
Building settlements, towns and cities	Welfare	A Picturesque Residential District
Building settlements, towns and cities	Welfare	20th Century infrastructure
Building settlements, towns and cities	Welfare	19th Century infrastructure
Building settlements, towns and cities	Mining	Leasing land for mining
Building settlements, towns and cities	Mining	Changing land uses - from rural to tourist
Developing local, regional and national economies	Aboriginal pre-contact	Maintaining maritime transport routes
Developing local, regional and national economies	Aboriginal pre-contact	Building and maintaining jetties, wharves and docks
Developing local, regional and national economies	Religion	Mining for coal
Developing local, regional and national economies	Religion	Miners' accommodation and living conditions
Developing local, regional and national economies	Events	Landscapes of industrial production
Developing local, regional and national economies	Events	Landscapes and gardens of domestic accommodation
Developing local, regional and national economies	Events	Developing local, regional and national economies

Assessment

Criteria a)

Historical Significance

The Precinct's built environments, location and geological character are state significant because of the key role played by 19th Century company towns in the development of Australian resources. It is significant for the continuing association of the area with coal mining. This development is clearly evidenced by remnants of railways, the structures and extent in the immediate setting of untouched landscape typical of mining occupation of the foreshores. The jetty and other structures play a key role in reflecting the long term importance of CHB as a company town. The place's strong sense of history is evidenced by remnants and structures which commemorate the working activity of the town.

Include

Exclude

- Evidence
- Association
- Continuity Evidence
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Integrity/Intactness

Updated 07/30/2019

The Catherine Hill Bay Cultural Precinct remains an exceptionally intact example of an early Australian company town.

References

References

Records Retrieved: 4

Title	Author	Year	Link	Type
When our cultural heritage goes up in smoke	Eklund, Professor Erik	2013	In Catherine Hill Bay in the Lake Macquarie region, the historic Wallarah House was destroyed by fire last week. Formerly the mine manager's residence dating from the 1880s, and one of the oldest buildings in the Lake Macquarie area, the house was a p	Written
Lake Macquarie Heritage Study, Catherine Hill Bay	Suters, Doring, Turner	1993		Written
Planning Report: Strategic Review of Coastal Development - Wallarah Peninsula	NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning			Written
Heritage Assessment Conservation Plan for Catherine Hill Bay	Architectural Projects Pty Ltd			Written

Heritage Studies

Records Retrieved: 0

Title	Year	Item Number	Author	Inspected By	Guidelines Used
No Results Found					

Procedures / Workflows / Notes

Records Retrieved: 2

Application ID / Procedure ID	Section of Act	Description	Title	Officer	Date Received	Status	Outcome
37308	57(2)	Exemption to allow work	Standard Exemptions	Minister Cowied	11/09/2020		
37310	57(2)	Exemption to allow work	Heritage Act - Site Specific Exemptions	netherb	11/03/2010		

Management

Management

Records Retrieved: 3

Management Category	Management Name	Date Updated
Recommended Management	Review a Conservation Management Plan (CMP)	
Recommended Management	Prepare a maintenance schedule or guidelines	
Recommended Management	Carry out interpretation, promotion and/or education	

Management Summary



Caption: SHR Plan 2342

Photographer: Michelle Galea

Copyright Owner: No Credit

Date: 11/5/2010 12:00:00 AM



Caption: Catherine Hill Bay, looking south; Middle Camp at left

Photographer: NULL

Copyright Owner: No Credit

Date: 7/1/2020 12:00:00 AM



Caption: Catherine Hill Bay, looking northwest from the Mine
Manager's Residence

Photographer: NULL

Copyright Owner: No Credit

Date: 7/1/2020 12:00:00 AM