

Bungaroo

Short histories and oral statements on Bungaroo, Middle Harbour

By

E Hilder 22 April 1970

Harry Morris 1990

F Mcleod 15 May 1983

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BUNGAROO

The first visitors to this historic spot were Captain Arthur Phillip (Governor of N.S.W.) and his party, who having arrived by boat at the head of navigation of what is now known as Middle Harbour Creek, camped the night there, on 16th April, 1788. The head of navigation is a rock bar or ledge across the stream which forms a small waterfall, where the fresh water falls into a deep pool of salt water. A detailed examination of this spot some two years ago suggested that floodwater from the fresh water section of Middle Harbour Creek kept this saltwater pool clear of silt. The best campsite at this spot is on the southern bank of the creek and is still in use as a camping and picnicing spot.

The next significant official visit was nearly 100 years later - in 1885 when Staff Surveyor Gordon completed a detailed Design for Subdivision of a whole new district on the St. Ives side of Middle Harbour Creek. Surveyor Gordon surveyed one side of a proposed road from the vicinity of Souter Trig. Stu. to Middle Harbour Creek just downstream of Bungaroo. It is reasonable to assume that this surveyed line was turned into a bush track by local residents.

Surveyor George H. Knibbs also surveyed the area in 1885 to complete a detailed Design for subdivision of a whole new district on the French's Forest side of Middle Harbour Creek. None of these visitors seems to have left a record of a name for the swimming pool or locality known as Bungaroo - the only reference on plans and maps was a note - Head of Navigation of Tidal Limit.

Local interest in Bungaroo continued to grow and by 1923, the bush track from Soutar Trig. Stn. had become a cart track which was used by a multitude of people who made Bungaroo a popular picnic spot. Far sighted local residents and conservationists of the day became seriously concerned when the trial railway survey to Narrabeen was undertaken in the early 1920s, that the whole valley of Middle Harbour Creek would be filled with houses and factories, and that the inevitable pollution of Middle Harbour Creek would ruin the area forever, as well as causing serious pollution damage to the popular fishing spots in nearby Middle Harbour.

The battle to save this vacant Crown Land for posterity was led by Councillor Lockley of Ku-ring-gai Shire Council and John Sulman of the Town Planning Association. Very soon Ku-ring-gai Council, The Town Planning Association, ably assisted by Warringah Council and Willoughby Council stormed the Lands Department demanding a hearing on this subject. After several refusals, the conservationists took their case to the daily press and after a series of very candid articles in the Sydney "Sun" newspaper, the Minister for Lands, Mr. Wearne, realised that the matter had become very important. He promptly agreed to the conservationists demands and sent Staff Surveyor Stone to make a detailed survey of the vacant Crown Land and to recommend suitable areas for preservation. Surveyor Stone completed the detailed survey about two months later and the reserve was dedicated for Public Recreation about six weeks afterwards. After numerous proposals, competitions, etc., Mr. Wearne named the reserve Davidson Park after Sir Walter Davidson the recently deceased Governor of N.S.W. at that time (1923).

Surveyor Stone was assisted in his task by Councillor Lockley of Ku-ring-gai Shire Council - this is borne out by the following sentence taken from Metropolitan District Surveyor H.F. Kall's letter to the Under Secretary for Lands on 31st July, 1923, "It is also suggested by Mr. Stone that Mr. Cr. Lockley of the Ku-ring-gai Shire be consulted in connection with the allotting of names to any part of the reservation". Surveyor Stone's field book shows a map of Souter Trig. Stn. and surroundings with a note "Cart track - To Bungaroo". His completed plan shows Bungaroo in the bed of Middle Harbour Creek with a note "Swimming Holes". His letter of transmittal to the Surveyor General on 16th July, 1923, on completion of his survey does not name Bungaroo, but simply states "Good track to a popular picnic spot". Surveyor Stone only reported recorded names on his survey with the notable exception of Bungaroo, which must have been given to him by a local resident, probably Cr. Lockley. The map of Davidson Park published by the Department in 1924, appears to be the first printed map with the name "Bungaroo" on it. Although it did not appear on the Parish map of Manly Cove for some years, the name Bungaroo was added to the Sydney Harbour Tourist map, 6th edition of November, 1926, published by the Department for the Harbour Trust.

The name Bungaroo was before the public again in 1934 when Emerson Curtis published an article called "The Secret of Bungaroo" in the "Sydney Mail" of 7th March, 1934. This article described a new weir across Middle Harbour Creek at Bare Creek Junction and a new access road to the weir from Douglas Street, East St. Ives. This construction was financed by unemployment relief money given to Ku-ring-gai Council. The map accompanying the article shows "Bungaroo Swimming Pool" at the junction of Bare Creek and Middle Harbour Creek and describes the area as Bungaroo. This misplacement of the name was followed by large numbers of Boy Scouts camping in the area, who assumed that it was the correct name - in recent years the area has become polluted and camping in the area is not common. The name is being used more in regard to its original location. It is most interesting to note that Mr. Emerson Curtis wrote that Bungaroo, an aboriginal word - meant "running water". This has not been confirmed from any aboriginal vocabulary, but it seems a very appropriate name for the original area, where the fresh water runs into the salt water over a waterfall.

The name Bungaroo has been used officially in this area for nearly 50 years, its unofficial use may go back some 60 - 80 years, and it is a euphonious aboriginal name that seems a rather appropriate name for a new but nearby suburb, especially as it does not appear elsewhere in Australia.

W. HILDER

22nd. April, 1970.

THE NAME "BUNGAROO"

Comments by Harry Morris, 1990

- i. An area of Middle Harbour Valley, behind Acron Oval St Ives, was known by that name from the early 1920's. I have seen that same area still marked as "Bungaroo" on a Gregory's Street Map of the mid 1960's. A Middle Harbour Creek junction in that area is now marked on all maps as "Cascades" and the name "Bungaroo" has been transferred to the tidal limit. Many locals who rely on their lifetime knowledge of local names still confuse the present "Bungaroo" historic site with the area they once knew by that name (now the "Cascades").

- ii. It might be an Aboriginal term for running water. The latter translation could be relevant. Surgeon White confirms that Phillip did have tents with him - "without which the Governor never travelled".

- iii. He became the first Aboriginal to circumnavigate Australia when he went with Matthew Flinders as an interpreter. He was later given a gorget by Governor Macquarie reading "Bungaree, King of the Blacks".

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ORAL HISTORY STATEMENT

BUNGAROO

Comments by Miss F. McLeod, of 10 Carr Street, Chatswood. May 15, 1983.

"There is some interest at the moment in Bungaroo. And it seems that the name has moved up and down the area. We were taken to the area by Ella Macfadyn and her brother Cliff in the early '30's and it was a favoured picnic ground. Ella died in 1976 aged 87 and had known the area for many years. Cliff had a wonderful collection of local things historical which were promised to Mrs Ware and the Society, but despite our efforts, they escaped us. They took us from Douglas Street, where the Chinese vegetable gardens were, down an old formed bush track to the top of Middle Harbour - an area of flat rock, marked by small deep potholes (wonderful for washing up as they held our hot water). As far as I can judge, it was where French's Creek came in, because one day we climbed up the creek and came out where is now Pringle Avenue (we checked this with Margaret Pringle). As it was a rocky bed to the upper harbour (only creek size here) it could always be crossed easily and I should guess from the path that led down to it and the path up again to Belrose, that it was a well established route.

Well below this area, which we called Bungaroo, was the bridge used to carry the water pipes from Pymble to the Beacon Hill area. Below that again was the limit of tidal waters, and below that again the emergence of a track from Lindfield along Gordon Creek into the Davidson Recreation area. A path from this area led to the Tidal Limit.

During the War (World War II), there was at one time a jungle training school at "our" Bungaroo."

Contained in letter to Margaret Wyatt, dated May 15, 1983.

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