

Avalon

Avalon lies east of Clareville, between Whale Beach to the north and Bilgola to the south.

This area was part of 1200 acres granted to Rev. JJ Therry in 1833. Father Therry had plans for a township called Brighton and even had an unsuccessful attempt to mine coal. In 1880 after Therry's death the land was offered for sale but there was little development at this time.

In 1920 AJ Small purchased, subdivided and named Avalon. He established Palmgrove Park, the golf course and planted the Norfolk Island Pines along the beachfront. He saw Avalon as a retreat similar to that of King Arthur at Avalon, Glastonbury, England.

For many years a stone arch called the Hole in the Wall stood at Avalon beach and St Michael's Cave was a popular tourist destination.

Avalon is home to the few remaining koalas able to survive in an increasingly urban environment, a reminder that there once were many more in Pittwater.

Memories

"In 1935 the Hammonds took on the management of a branch dairy owned by Mr. Bill Jones. The dairy was situated on a site at the intersection of Barrenjoey Road and Careel Head Road, North Avalon.

There were only two buses per day to Narrabeen and the tram from Narrabeen to the Spit. Roads were only sandy tracks. The Hammonds had the only phone for miles – there was no electricity and the only form of entertainment was the wireless. They grew their own fresh vegetables but most of their meat was tinned."

Manly Warringah: People Places & Pastimes. During the 30's.
Narrabeen Local History Resource Unit, 1985.

Mrs Hammond remembers

"My husband being a country man, they came to us, asked him if he'd take over the dairy, and we could move into the dairy house, but they'd have to employ me too to look after the men, that had to work and milk the cows in the dairy. They had to milk twice a day because there were no refrigerators, only the ice. They used to have to get up in the morning, two o'clock or one o'clock, they used to start at midnight and get up, some to harness up the horse and the others had to milk the cows.

I was going to say we had 100 cows, whether it was more or less I can't recall. The cow bales, on their own block of land, was all hand done, I had no occasion to go to the bales at all, my husband managed all that, then there was the house, then there was the men's quarters.

Well, I had to do for the men, so I had a full-time job, rearing my family and looking after seven men, so my neighbour, Mrs Tunnie, used to help me. We had a huge dining room, we had to wait on the men, bring their meals in and they paid board. They had to pay me board.

Big meals, steak for breakfast, working men. After they'd had to milk the cows, the same crew, had to deliver the milk, at two o'clock in the morning, all up and down those hills at Palm Beach, return, do their books up, hand them into the office, then go and milk the cows in the afternoon and take the horse and cart and milk out for the second delivery. They came home, had dinner, made up their books for that run, hand them in. Then tea was ready for them. Always baked dinners, heavy meals. Cup of tea at twelve before milking, cup of tea and toast at 2 o'clock before they went out, breakfast at 11 o'clock, sleep, then you gave them a big tea, then supper before they went to sleep at night. There was no TV, we had the wireless.

I've always been in the habit of working at night. Big wash up. Not one of my kids ever went to school with a button off their shirts or holes in their socks. You didn't throw them away, you darned everything in those days. I polished the kids shoes to the nines. Today's mothers don't do all that. All the clothes were starched. I did the men's washing too, in an old fashioned copper. But when you're young and energetic you don't notice it."

Mrs Hammond, oral history, 1984.

Reading

A ride to Barrenjoey...

"The road from the Jenkins' estate runs over a flat within a few yards of the coast, till it reaches the Narrabeen Lagoon, and parallel with it is a long narrow field of rich green; after heavy rains it is difficult to cross the lagoon, and horsemen or pedestrians usually head it, but at the present time the water at the ford is not at any part more than twelve inches deep, and a line of posts defines it. At Narrabeen the road takes a more inland direction, over flats and gentle hills, until it reaches the sheep folds of the late Mr. Jenkins; and here again it comes out on a cliff covered with grass, from which the South and North Heads of Broken Bay may be seen, while stretching away in the distance are beautiful valleys, some cleared, and some full of the cabbage trees, ferns, and other beautiful specimens of the vegetable kingdom. It is the same until you reach the farm once occupied by the Farrells, who were two years ago convicted of destroying cattle owned by a farmer named T[h]erry. A long and magnificent beach fronts this property, flanked by two imposing headlands; and on crossing a rustic bridge over a small salt-water creek, the pinch of the road is met with winding up a cliff not less than 300 feet above the sea. About two miles farther on, from another eminence, a view suddenly breaks on the way-farer, certainly unsurpassed, we think, in this or any other country. It is a magnificent valley, nearly surrounded by hills, in the centre of which is the dairy farm of Mr. John Collins, nearly opposite whose door rises, to the height of 360 feet, the South Head of Broken Bay. On the west side are the ranges that divide Pitt Water Harbour from the Hawkesbury River, and through a narrow flat, may be seen the placid water of one of the numerous bays of this fine haven. This farm is a part of the property of the late Rev. Mr. Therry, R.C., and is also well covered with rich grass. Mr Collins

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is seldom without visitor, either by sea or land, and very few ever pass his hospitable cottage on the way to Barrenjoey without calling. Here, too, is the cave to which has been given the name of St. Michael, the descent to which over the cliff has been rendered somewhat easier than it was – and about a mile from the cave is the ‘Gothic Arch’, almost perfect in its proportions, though a purely natural formation. It is about seventy feet high, and from a distance is exactly like the altar window of some huge ruined cathedral erected by the sea-side."

From *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22/3/1867 in G & S Champion, *Manly Warringah and Pittwater 1850-1880*, Vol.2, 1998.

Further reading

Charles de Boos, *My Holiday from Manly to Palm Beach 1861*, 1991.
Interesting description of people and places in 1861.

Joan Lawrence, *Pittwater Paradise*, 1994, *Pittwater Pictorial History*, 2006
Historical and contemporary information.

James J. Macken, *Pittwater's War*, 2002.

Peter O'Donovan, *Urbanisation & Koalas in Avalon*, 1989.

Jan Roberts, *Avalon landscape & Harmony*, 1999
History and local work of three architects, Walter Burley Griffin, Alexander Stewart Jolley and Harry Ruskin Rowe.

Jan Roberts, *Remembering Avalon: Growing up in the 1940s & 50s*, 2011
A group memoir where fifteen people write about aspects of their Avalon childhood.

Geoff Searl, *Warringah History*, 1988
Architecture of Avalon, especially Alexander Jolley

Geoff Searl, *Avalon Surf Life Saving Club History*, 2002.

Alan Sharpe, *Manly to Palm Beach*, 1983
Historical photos and text.

Peter & Judy Smith, *Warringah Shire Koala Study*, 1989.

The People of Avalon 25 Years a Parish, 1984
The history of the Catholic parish in the Avalon area.

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