

Western Foreshores

The area commonly referred to as the Western foreshores comprises three bays on the south western side of Pittwater. All the settlements here adjoin Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, and can only be reached on foot through the park, or by boat.

The northernmost, Towler's Bay, was named after Bill Toler who used to camp there. Originally named Morning Bay in a survey of 1869, it was officially named that again in 1984.

Lovett Bay is named after John Lovett who lived here in 1836. It was named Night Bay in the survey of 1869. It was a popular spot to visit in the 1890s and a path was constructed to the lookout above the bay. Dorothea Mackellar, the poet, lived here at her house, Tarrangaua, built in 1924.

The northern headland at Elvina Bay, is called Rocky Point. In 1842 William Oliver had his first farm here, cutting timber and later he established fruit trees.

The homes here, so close to the national park, are vulnerable to bush fire, and in 1994 ten houses were lost at Lovett Bay and one at Elvina Bay.

Memories

Elizabeth Franklin remembers the 1994 bush fires

"Saturday January the 8th dawned, it was hot, it was still, and with that acrid scent of heavy ash in the air. The bay was obviously on the alert and everyone began preparing for the inevitable. Bushfire vehicles moved up and down the road, hoses were laid out, backpack extinguishers were filled and people, in or out, of uniform seem to appear from everywhere. Police boats cruised by with their loud-speakers warning us of the approaching threat, while overhead, helicopters with their monsoon buckets dipped down into the bay on their fire-stopping mission.

It was towards lunchtime, I remember standing out on the deck, when I felt a few drops of rain and we thought, Oh blessed it's come. But it was in actual fact it was it was condensation that preceded, the fire...so it wasn't it wasn't a good omen as we thought. It was midday before we finally gathered our few suitcases, with a few possessions and mementos and my children's paintings, which I managed to strip from the walls, and we carried them down to the two wharves. Then we returned to make lunch, but it was too late. A fireball had come over the hill and the flames were racing down. I had wanted to stay and try and protect my property, but the police who'd been round in the early morning had given us very stern orders to evacuate, so there really was no time to argue or debate. I remember as we reached the wharf, hearing a wild roar, and turning round I saw the gum trees just keeling over sideways, before a 70 mile gale that always proceeds the fire. The wet towel wrapped round my neck flew off and trying to grasp it, I might too, have followed it into the water, had I not felt Jenny's grip tighten on me. The boats were tugging at their moorings but we managed to get ourselves and the paintings into the boats and within minutes the choppy

copper-coloured waters of the Bay were alive with boats of every description. Police boats, rescue boats, commuter boats, pleasure boats, barges and the Western Shore's Fire Brigade boat. So there was an amazing support and co-operation everywhere. It was a huge theatre of activity, and in amongst the flotilla of vessels I remember seeing two young boys in a canoe trying to rescue a stricken bird. There were so many acts of kindness, some generous donors of Church Point had delivered sandwiches to those on the wharf and when we were on the boat a barge came round with thirst-quenching water. Fortunately, I found a silver bowl in my bag, one of the last things that I grabbed as I was rushing out of the house so I could give Tom our labradoodle dog a drink. It could not have tasted any sweeter than our water from our plastic mug. Meantime, the real drama was being played out behind a dense curtain of smoke that enveloped the southern slopes of Elvina Bay, being played out by a small and courageous band of fire people, residents and volunteers who confronting a wall of fire approaching them both on two fronts. From the boat you couldn't see the flames except where they crept down a creek and started to lick the water line, nor could you see any of the houses. You just had to sit and wait and hope for over five hours. But the time didn't seem to have a relevance when you were out there. It was not the past or the future you thought about. All that was important was the immediacy of the present, and you just had to hold on to the emotions in the pit of your stomach, while trying to find a bit of humour in the situation, even if at times, it was a little black humour. It was after 6.30 that eve, that we took our two boats to Church Point to get some news, there we met the secretary of our local Fire Brigade who said that she'd just received news that we could return to the bay. What a strange feeling it was as we made our way up the pathways, strewn with leaves and broken branches and through the smoke see our house, solid and upright. It was just like coming out of a dream and I must admit that as I crossed the threshold, the feeling the deepest emotion that I had felt all day. We went up to the road, the boundary between our garden and the blackened landscape beyond, and found a small group of exhausted characters, charcoal-covered men. Nicola and I tried to thank them but in typical Aussie fashion it was just received with a pat on the shoulder and a shrug."

Elizabeth Franklin, oral history, 1994.

Reading

"In 1894 the Ku-ring-gai Chase, a National Park for North Sydney, was established when 35,300 acres (14,285 hectares) of bushland encompassing an area stretching from Hornsby to Pittwater and bordering the waters of Cowan and Broken Bay were reserved and dedicated for public recreation. It owes its existence to the persistent and foresighted efforts of Frederick Eccleston Du Faur. He envisaged the land being set aside as a reserve for public recreation and a sanctuary for fauna and flora of this part of the State, to be protected from increasing urban sprawl and activities such as logging, hunting and wildflower picking.

The Trustees quickly set about attracting holiday makers and excursionists to the Chase for recreation. The foreshores of Pittwater received their special attention and a considerable amount of work was effected there. Their early efforts included establishing walking tracks, building wharves, the employment of Pittwater staff, advertising the Chase and letting a cottage at Towlers Bay, acquiring foreshore reservations, and acquiring Jackson's Estate (Portion 14) at The Basin.

NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL

...In 1895 men were employed by the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park Trust to work at Lovett Bay. A stone causeway and wharf were built in the bay and several miles of pathways were constructed. One track led from the causeway on the north side of the bay to the waterfall at Salvation Creek at the head of the bay and then continued round the south side of the bay towards Ventnor Peninsula. Another track, zig-zagging up the hill on the north side of the bay, led to the 'Lookout' at the Flagstaff (152 metres high) and to 'Flat Rocks'. A map of the Ku-ring-gai Chase dated 1896 showing the wharf, causeway and walking tracks at Lovett Bay was published in the 1899 Dymock's Guide to Sydney and N.S.W.

The Trustees acquired an ordnance reserve of just over 3 acres (1.2 hectares) on the northern shore of Towlers Bay in 1900. Upon this land were two cottages, a boatshed, workshop and timber jetty. This area together with a Powder Hulk moored in the bay had been the depot of the Explosives Department. One cottage became the residence of the Pittwater staff employed by the Chase Trust and the other cottage became a holiday cottage available to the public but it was mainly used by the Trustees. Also in 1900 a launch was purchased by the Chase Trust for use in Pittwater. ...The jetty at Towlers Bay was extended in 1905, a bathing pool was built in 1906 and a slipway for launches was erected in 1909. The timber jetty was replaced by a stone jetty in 1911.

On Saturday 17 December 1904 the Trustees placed advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald and Telegraph drawing public attention to the Northern National Park of Ku-ring-gai Chase. It was described as 'a Water Park within easy reach of Sydney embracing some of the most beautiful scenery in the state'. The means of approach to Pittwater was explained, 'Pittwater side is approached by Steamer to Manly, thence by coach to Church Point (a very enjoyable drive), thence by boat or launch'. The furnished cottage at Towlers Bay was offered. In 1905 the Trustees recorded at a meeting 'there is no doubt that with increased facilities of getting to Bayview and Newport by means of motor omnibuses the popularity of this part of the Chase as a pleasure resort will be greatly increased'. In the following year the first motor coaches were operating to and from Pittwater."

Sue Gould, Coasters Retreat, Pittwater: Recollections and historical notes, 1993.

Further reading

G & S Champion, Manly Warringah & Pittwater 1788-1850, 1997.
Lovett, Oliver family.

G & S Champion, Manly Warringah & Pittwater 1850-1880, 1998.

Sue Gould, Coasters Retreat Pittwater, 1993.
Historical notes

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

Jim Macken, Coasters Retreat, 1991.
Historical information.