

Newport Hotel

First hotel at Newport was built by George Pile and Charles Jeannerett in 1880. It was reached by coach from Manly or by boat. Day excursions from Sydney by steamer brought passengers to the Newport wharf. They would wander the bush and refresh themselves at the hotel. Gangs from Sydney, known as Pushes, used to rob the countryside until local resistance stopped them at the battle of Newport in 1892.

Sir Henry Parkes opened his election campaign here on 8 June 1891 with a speech in favour of Federation and mentioning that the Works Department would be erecting two wharves nearby and providing a public school. William Boulton, owner of the hotel since 1887, proposed a motion of confidence and William Bulfin, hotel licensee presided.

The hotel was rebuilt in brick in 1919. It underwent major alterations in the 1950s. In 1967 it suffered a serious fire and rebuilding was finished in 1971.

Reading

"Unfortunately by the 1890's the behaviour of these day trippers had deteriorated and orchards and chicken runs were being regularly stripped. The instigators were packs of rival youths, called Pushes who came from the inner Sydney suburbs of Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and the Rocks. They would drink bootleg grog from the moonshiners in McCarr's Creek and drunken riots and fights would break out between the gangs. The local residents could not contain the numbers arriving every Sunday and the police were too overworked and understaffed to come from Manly.

Finally an ex-policeman, Thomas Hodges who was manager of the Newport Hotel at the time, decided to make a stand. He hired an American boxer, Jack Castlemaine, as a bouncer and with the help of David Scott from Scott's Boarding House and two other hired boxers, Big Jim Bolton and a giant negro, Black Brooks, they were ready for anything. The showdown came on Sunday, February 14, 1892 when the paddle steamer City of Grafton delivered its usual load of larrikins onto the wharf. The defenders did not make a united stand at first and Big Jim and Black Brooks could not contain them as they raided Scott's orchard and sent rocks through the windows.

When the mob moved to the pub and started breaking glasses, Thomas Hodges and Jack Castlemaine called for order. They were laughed at and then it was on for young and old. When Big Jim and Black Brooks moved in from the rear, wielding large chunks of four-by-two, the gangs beat a hasty retreat to the wharf.

Once safely on board, the larrikins vowed to return and get their revenge the following Sunday. However, a week later, the weather was not good and a southerly blew up making for a rough passage. The sea sick louts were met on the wharf by the four defenders of Newport, stripped to the waist and with big clubs at the ready. Most stayed on board, the last

NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL

thing they felt like was a fight, but a few of the toughest characters came ashore proving to be no match for the boxers.

The gangs were not seen again, and family picnics became the order of the day."

Guy Jennings, The Newport Story 1788-1988, 1987.

Further reading

Newport Hotel History CD
Narrated by Grant Goldman.

Guy Jennings, The Newport Story 1788-1988, 1987.
Detailed history of Newport Hotel & Battle of Newport,

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

John Morcombe, "Making of a Landmark", Manly Daily, 4/11/2000.
Detailed history

Alan Sharpe, Manly to Palm Beach, 1983.
Detailed history