Newport

Some of the earliest European settlers farmed in this area. By 1823 John Farrell and by 1833 Martin Burke both had farms adjacent to the ocean. Beside the shores of Pittwater were James Macdonald, Robert Melville and Richard Porter, between these two groups, was Robert Henderson. By 1881 Farrell's grandson, Johnny Farrell, owned 280 acres at Newport.

The area came to be called Newport from about 1880. Charles Jeannerett and George Pile built a wharf, the Newport Hotel and subdivided land for sale. They gained the mail contract and all goods for the area would be unloaded at the wharf. Jeannerett also encouraged day trips to Newport either by coach from Manly or by steamer from Sydney, refreshment being provided at the hotel. In 1881 he hosted a visit by the royal Princes, Albert and George, who came overland from Manly and then went aboard at Newport to travel down the Hawkesbury River. Nearby Bayview House, later Scott's guest house, provided accommodation and recreation.

As road transport improved and beach holidays became popular so Newport expanded, particularly on the ocean side. In the 1920s and 30s it was still largely a holiday location and many houses were empty for much of the year.

Since the 1950s the area has become a residential suburb of Sydney.

Memories

Nancy Bluett remembers her holidays

"There was a lagoon at Newport, where the bowling green is now was all lagoon. We walked over a bridge to get to the beach, and the water was filled with eels. We swam frequently in the water and my mother was a great supporter of the lifesavers. They used to come round and collect donations to keep the society running.

Our swimming costumes were made of woollen material, they were backless in the 20's or 30's. We always wore sandshoes and used to clean them with Bon Ami and pin them on the line to dry. My mother usually got a girl from Manly to help around the house, as there was no water, it was all tank. Our stoves ran on fuel, and there were stoves called blue flame stoves and primuses.

The cottage we stayed in for weekends had a verandah that wrapped right around the house, and we would sleep outside under mosquito nets. One cottage had a piano and we would sing around it. Mother was quite musical. When we were older we went to the Pollock's house that was near the beach, our aunts taught us to play pontoon and bridge for match sticks or for ha'pennies.

We danced on the veranda to the wind-up gramophone, which used to run down and had to be wound up halfway through a song.

We usually went for a walk up to the lighthouse, when it was occupied. We went for picnics around at Bilgola Beach. No one ever swam at Bilgola Beach, it was considered far too dangerous. There were no lifesavers and one boy had died there in a rip."

Nancy Bluett, oral history, 1984.

Reading

"The town of Newport extends right from the main road to the shore of Pittwater about half a mile. It has been laid out on a grand scale, the allotments being mostly half an acre to three-quarters of an acre each. The main street (the Queen's Parade) is one hundred and thirty-two feet in width, the other streets one chain. The deep-water channel of Pittwater passes the property right alongside the shore, and ends just above. The largest steamers can lie alongside the wharf at low tide. A spacious hotel has recently been built, the roads have been formed, and the steamers for the Hawkesbury and Brisbane Water make it their head quarters. Arrangements have been made to establish a Public School. A central site has been reserved for a post and telegraph office. A considerable trade has already sprung up, and as it is even now the centre of a very considerable population, the terminal point of an extensive system of river traffic, a favourite fishing locality, and a favourite place for yachting, and being more-over close to the ocean beach, Newport cannot fail to become very shortly a favourite watering place, and a town of considerable importance."

Mills, Pile & Gilchrist, Description of Newport, Pittwater and Hawkesbury Lakes, c. 1881.

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