

## North Narrabeen

North Narrabeen lies on the northern shores of Narrabeen lagoon, bounded by Warriewood to the north, Elanora Heights to the west and extends east to the ocean at Turrimetta Beach. Narrabeen is opposite on the southern shore of the lagoon.

The first land grants were made to John Lees, 40 acres, Philip Schaffer, 50 acres, and James Wheeler, 80 acres, along the south bank of Mullet Creek. Alex Macdonald was granted 80 acres at the beach in 1815 and west of this land JT Collins had 93.5 acres by 1857.

During the nineteenth century travellers had to ford the lake until 1883 when the first bridge opened. A second bridge at the mouth of the lagoon in Ocean Street was opened in 1928.

With the extension of the tram to Narrabeen in 1913 providing easier transport, the whole area around the lake became popular for holidays and camping. A large camping ground became established on the north shore of the lagoon.

In 1946 the Wakehurst Parkway was opened to North Narrabeen connecting the whole Pittwater area directly to Frenchs Forest and Seaforth.

The origins of the name Narrabeen are uncertain, possibilities are: Narrabin, a native plant growing near the lake entrance; Narrabine, an Aborigine girl; narrow beans eaten by early explorers. James Meehan mentions Narrowbang lagoon in his survey in 1815.

## Memories

### Enid Murray remembers North Narrabeen in 1920s...

"Narrabeen area, the scene of my childhood 70 years ago, where I lived with my parents, my brother, John, and two sisters, Thelma and Hazel. I was the youngest of the family by several years. John, the eldest in the family (14 years older than myself) helped my father build our home and grocery store at a place called Collingwood – approximately 1.25 miles north of Narrabeen terminus.

Our grocery store, a butcher and a bake house were the only vendors to begin with. Later there came a green grocer and eventually two more shops. There were great paddocks all around us to play and roam in, collecting mushrooms and blackberries in season. Wandering over to Narrabeen Lake to fish, swim or prawn were our main summer pastimes.

At Christmas and Easter the lake camping reserve was packed. Many people came year after year. As there wasn't any bridge connecting the reserve to the Peninsula all came across to our store. So many friendships were made. When heavy rains came the lake would overflow and flood into our area and often cut Pittwater Road in several places. When this happened the Council workers would have to dig an entrance from the lake to the sea to allow the excess water to escape. Children and adults would come from everywhere, with

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buckets, nets or anything available to catch the fish that were being swept from lake to sea. A great afternoon's entertainment.

...Each year a circus would come and perform on a vacant allotment near our store. We thought it was wonderful, but it would be considered very poor these days with all that is on offer to young and old, but I doubt if it was any less enjoyable. We certainly were not so easily bored back then.

...All deliveries were done by horse and cart and we had two such vehicles. Dad using one outfit to deliver to Mona Vale and an employee the other to do the Warriewood run. Orders were collected one day and delivered two days later. As there were no mail deliveries, the mail was sent out to our store each day with the papers from the Narrabeen Post Office and News-agent, owned and run by two brothers, Kinder and Archie McLean. People collected the mail from our store or Dad would take it along with their order.

...During these years no electricity came our way. When it did eventuate there was great rejoicing. In the meantime, however, we were more fortunate than most as we had a gas light in the shop and also one in our large kitchen-living room, plus a gas ring to use when too hot for the fuel stove to be alight. These were run by cylinders similar to those in use today, but a bit harder to manage. They had to have more things done to them to get them into use. ...We also had a petrol light as well for the verandah, which was a fully enclosed one. This had double mantels and gave a lovely white, bright light. I was not sorry though to see the electricity come on.

The Depression was in full force by this time and 80% of our customers were on the dole – a meagre seven shillings and sixpence for a single person and a little more for a married couple with extra for a child. This was not in the form of cash but a ticket stating what you could have for the amount....the Depression became so bad in our district, as well as all over Australia, it was no longer economical for our store to stay open, so it was closed and we moved away. A large petrol station now stands in its place. Main roads through Mona Vale and Warriewood cover our favourite blackberry and mushroom gathering patches. I find it hard to even pick out familiar landmarks anymore, it has changed so much. Such is progress I guess. However, all these changes cannot alter or take away my lovely, happy, childhood memories of those earlier days."

Nan Bosler, Memories of Narrabeen and its Public School, 1989.

## Reading

Eucalypts lift each gnarled limb,  
Stretching upwards to the high plateaux.  
The oval, (hilltops scalloping its basin'd rim)  
Where Wakehurst Parkway slithers to and fro.

Echoes of lapping lake, and pounding seas,  
Soaked deep into the weedy sodden dunes.  
Didgeridoo at NARRABEEN wails its silent pleas,  
Kookaburra and black swans sound rival tunes.

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Corroborees were danced here long ago,  
Kitchen middens, limed with long-left shells.  
Lichened caves hold haunting ghosts, we know,  
Of native tribesmen, weaving Dreamtime spells.

Wattles and waratahs near lakeside bowers,  
Rival the jewel colours (ruby, emerald, gold and blue).  
Banksia boughs, and bottle brush and flannel flowers,

Nannegai ... Wombal ... Gurian ...and Kurrawa, too!

Eileen Doris Dawes, Looking from Narrabeen, 1991.

## **Further reading**

Bill Barnett, Ken Brown, Bob Parkhill, The beach comes first, 2007.

Nan Bosler, Narrabeen, Memories of Narrabeen and its Public School, 1989.  
History of school and families in Narrabeen.

P. Gledhill, Manly and Pittwater its Beauty and Progress, 1946.  
General history.

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

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