

## Palm Beach

Southern end of the ocean beach is marked as Cabbage Tree Boat Harbour on a map of 1832. Palm Beach was later named after the Cabbage Tree palms *livistona australis*.

Palm Beach, Barrenjoey and most of Whale Beach (400 acres) was granted to James Napper in 1816. During the nineteenth century a few European and Chinese lived at Snapperman Beach catching and drying fish.

In 1900 all the land, except Barrenjoey Headland which had been purchased by the government in 1881, was divided into 18 large blocks, listed as good grazing land, and offered for sale. None sold.

1912 the land was offered again in smaller residential blocks, offering fishing, sailing, golf and rowing. All sold.

Most houses were built from local sandstone, other materials were shipped in. Some were guest houses but most were second homes for those who could afford them.

Palm Beach wharf was the terminus reached by boat from Newport or Bayview.

Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club established in 1921, now has four houses on the beach front.

Since World War II the area has become more residential but still remains a secluded peninsula at the northern point of Pittwater.

## Memories

"When I first went to Palm Beach with my Aunt Amy there was no through road. We took trams to The Spit, to Manly, to Narrabeen, then a primitive bus over terrible roads to Newport harbour and a launch across Pittwater to Palm Beach, landing at Gow's Store, below Four Winds. The journey took hours but it was beautiful. I still remember Pittwater that day, the utter calm of its surface in great heat, the faint low mists through which you glimpsed shining satin that stretched on and on. The hills were untouched and silent and the sound of our launch echoed round us and back as we moved.

...Life was simple and unsophisticated. When not on the beach we were plodding up hills in the heat.

...During the week we surfed on an almost deserted beach but as time passed and the road from Narrabeen was built lorries came at weekends, bring people and beer. We saw little of them for my father was down from town and our lazy beachcomber life changed. We surfed very early and spent the rest of the day in strenuous walks to the lighthouse at Barrenjoey and expeditions across Pittwater to Scotland Island or the Basin or other remote beaches.

Barrenjoey was inhabited by a lighthouse-keeper's family and a few goats. There was only a rough steep track and you had to scramble and crawl over stones and crevasses. The view

at the top, though magnificent, was rather frightening. As we stood, hot, scratched and panting among those formidable rocks my father would wave at the Manly ferryboat taking day-trippers to Broken Bay."

Nancy Phelan, *Setting out on the Voyage*, 1998.

## Reading

"To that point [Avalon] vehicles may proceed without difficulty; from thence to Barranjoey it is only a bridle track over a mountain, rugged with broken rocks and gnarled trees, but as you progress, magnificent views of Pitt Water harbour and the opposite shore of Broken Bay are obtained, while not the least striking feature is Lion Island, the outline of which is an almost exact resemblance of that noble animal lying with its head erect, as if guarding the entrance to the Hawkesbury. The 'inclines' on this mountain track are somewhat startling to the novice in bush travelling, the descent into what is termed the 'Dark Gully' being not unlike some of those represented by Dore in Dante's journey to Hades – though the immortal Italian never tried it on horseback. At the south [north?] end of this mountain is Barranjoey, a dark oblong mass, presenting on all sides a rugged front, and joined to the mainland by a narrow isthmus of sand, over which the sea once broke, but now it is covered with a carpet of green, with a ridge of low brushwood along the centre. Just under Barranjoey is the pretty cottage of the Customs Officer, Mr. Ross, and the residences of those connected with the Customs Station. There is evidence of taste in the gardens and the other cultivated ground around the station, and an air of peaceful comfort quite refreshing to those engaged in the turmoil of city life. From the station to the flagstaff on the top of the mount, the ascent is by a pretty walk, which must have taken considerable time to make, and on either side are various shrubs so planted as to throw an acceptable shade over the road. The view from here is a fitting climax to those on the journey down – to the south-west is a harbour that would hold the fleets of Great Britain, to the west the mouth of the Hawkesbury, to the north Pyramid Island and the entrance to Brisbane Water, and the innumerable inlets that dent the land stretching far into the sea and forming the South [North?] Head of Broken Bay, and on the east the unbroken curve of the Pacific. On the eastern side of Pitt Water, between Barranjoey and the farm of Mr. Collins, there is a fishing station, of Chinese and Europeans, and even here the neatness of the huts and the care bestowed on the cultivation of flowers are really pleasing to contemplate. The hut of the European is literally covered with foliage, and surrounded with bee-hives, on which he bestows much attention. The Chinese cure the fish caught for exportation, and their establishment is a perfect pattern of order and cleanliness; and like the hut of their neighbour, is in the midst of flowers, many of a rare description".

From *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22/3/1867 in Shelagh and George Champion, *Manly, Warringah and Pittwater 1850-1880, Volume 2*, 1998

## Further reading

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# NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL

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