



HELM



Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

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SUMMER HOLIDAYS

In 1963 Cliff Richard could have been singing about having summer holidays in East Lake Macquarie. "No more working for a week or two; .. going where the sunshines brightly...where the sea is blue...doing the things they always wanted to...". For many locals and visitors this was indeed an ideal part of the world for holiday fun. The lake, beaches and surrounding bushland provided the perfect setting for picnicking with family and friends.



Far left: Picnic on Swansea Channel
Photo: George and Noelene Boyd
Left: Picnic by the lake c. 1952.
Potts family of Windale. Len Potts is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and tie.
LMCC



Far left: Picnic party heading off to Caves Beach on Cain's bullock wagon about 1918. *Photo: George and Noelene Boyd.*
Left: Caves Beach picnic. LMCC

"Caves Beach, with its natural beauties enhanced considerably by the large limestone cave at the southern end of the beach, has always been a popular place for picnics. Once picnic parties went there in bullock wagons and buggies, after spending at least one whole day beforehand baking and preparing large quantities of food, and starching and pressing Sunday best garments especially for the occasion." *Louise Boon, Herald, 1953.*



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We are now on **FACEBOOK!** Check us out at:
HELM (Heritage of East Lake Macquarie).
Help to keep our heritage alive!
Many thanks to Keith York for sharing his story - p2!



Kindly supporting the community – including Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club; this edition of HELM newsletter.

4972 1066 - NOW AT SWANSEA!
SWANSEA PLAZA ARCADE
Near Coles and Blondies.

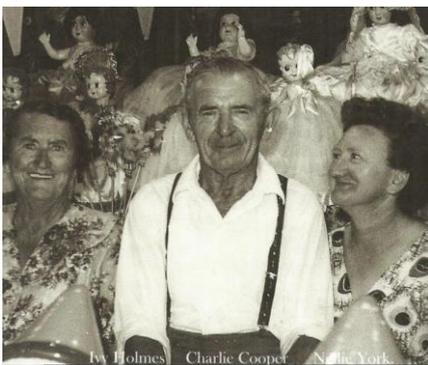
“CHRISTMAS FANCY FAIR” IN SWANSEA.

‘Twas a couple of years after WW2 when a young bloke by the name of Don Uppman migrated to Australia from his home country of Sweden. He had tried his luck as a photographer at the showgrounds, but, was not very successful. When the sale of a merry-go-round and an aeroplane ride came up, he bought them and so started his career as a “Showie”.

A chance meeting with Arthur Thomas York in the main street of Swansea on a Saturday afternoon led them to having a beer or two at the local hotel. Tom and Don hit it off and met again at the local the next day. There began a friendship that lasted many decades. In fact, they would often introduce themselves as brothers. Don needed somewhere to spend his Christmas as there were no carnivals operating in the area over the holiday period. As he was spending this time with Tom and his wife Nell, they decided to put the rides up in the spare paddock in the main street of Swansea; where the Caltex servo is now located. That was the beginning of the Christmas Fancy Fair as it became known.

Tom was a staunch member of Swansea Caves Beach Surf Club, so Don decided that he would donate his profits to the club. Some of Don’s mates joined him the following year. Charlie Cooper had a laughing clown joint. Bill Grey set up the shooting gallery. Muller provided a little swing-out horse-o-plane ride as well as a boat ride for the little ones. Rocker Fox worked the Doggies race game, which was quite often the last thing going when everything else had closed. Tom was the spruiker, and Nell was in charge of the chocolate wheel, while members of the surf club sold the tickets.

When the paddock was sold to Caltex, Don and Tom approached the Council and got permission to relocate to the park across the road. At the time, the Pacific Highway consisted of only 2 lanes, (1 north and 1 south bound adjacent to the shops), then the park, followed by Bowman St on the other side. The carnival survived here for many years. As there was more room here others joined in, and it became a much-loved place for local and visiting families to gather over the holiday period. Clive Evans brought the fairy floss and toffee apples; and oh, those waffles were to die for. A rotunda was located in Peel St, at the northern end of Talbot Park and McEwens’ Scottish Pipe Band would play there, along with the Highland Dance exhibitions. As the years went on the carnival grew in size with the introduction of Dodgem cars, the Octopus, Whizzes and a few other rides. Swansea was and still is a very popular destination for folks to spend their summer holidays. It is a shame the carnival is no longer here to add to the holiday excitement and atmosphere.



1. Tom York and Don Uppman
 2. Tom and Nell York
 3. Boat ride
 4. Ivy Holmes, Charlie Cooper, Nellie York
 5. Chocolate wheel
 6. McEwen’s Pipe Band, rotunda, 1962
- Memories and photos of the carnival generously shared by Keith York.**

HOLIDAY MEMORIES OF BELMONT BAY (BELMONT SOUTH) by Mary Boyes. 1920's – 1940's

After arriving by train and walking to grandmother's house carrying luggage; beds were aired and sorted. Then it was off to explore the shops. A fancy goods shop opposite the fire station sold printed doilies and runners to be embroidered in spare time. Every few days the butcher was visited to buy some meat which was kept in an ice chest or a hanging wet bag safe. Any supplies that were wanted were purchased from the grocery shop in Belmont Bay, where the service station now stands. A visit there was also a time to get the daily supply of sweets – threepence (2 cents) worth – favourites being "Lamp Posts" (large toffee lollies shaped like gas lamps) and all day suckers. Daily visits were also made to Thompson's Bakery on the corner of Beach St. to bring back fresh bread loaves which were sliced and eaten with butter and Cocky's Joy (golden syrup). Cooking was done on a fuel stove (with lumps of coal washed up on the waterfront from the mines and coal boats); or a primus stove using kerosene. Crabs and lobsters were cooked in a kerosene tin on a backyard wood fire. Days were spent swimming, rowing, or fishing with hand lines - "cat gut" was wound around corks that would float if accidentally dropped. Some nights were spent prawning, walking in a long row carrying kerosene lanterns. [Belmont Lagoon was a popular spot to fill buckets because the prawns used to make their way up Cold Tea Creek to spawn in the lagoon.] There were many ways to pass the time - listening to stories about the past; singing along to old records; playing dress-ups; picking flowers, collecting shells to make necklaces. Games were always high on the agenda – rummy, euchre and matchstick bridge; charades; cricket and tennis. *Source: LMCC.*

The iconic **BELMONT BATHS** were in their heyday in the 50's and 60's. The sandy beach was packed during the holidays, a hub of community activity, with people relaxing, enjoying the sun and the saltwater swimming; whilst others sailed nearby or paddled hired canoes. Sadly the super storm of April 2015 caused significant damage to the structure, resulting in removal. A concerted effort was mounted by residents to have this facility rebuilt. The construction of the new baths was completed by Council; officially opened on Sat, 22nd December, 2018.



30s



60s



2015

Ernie Cox, long-time resident of Belmont, who has shared many memories of earlier days, remembers the baths being popular amongst local fishermen. He would go down in the mornings, back in the 60's, and could walk completely around the baths. The left side walkway was much narrower than the rest (c. 60cm wide). The end and right side return to shore were much wider. At the ends, and in the middle were 3 diving platforms with ladders. The experienced fishos would help with advice and hints, helping to teach the younger enthusiasts.

GRANNY'S POOL, a lagoon on Swansea Channel at Blacksmith's, has been a favourite with swimmers for many generations. A gap in the breakwall on the natural tidal waterway created a clean, sandy and safe area for swimmers. Originally known as "Chanty's Pool", after Bert Chant, who looked after the area when it was a camping ground in the 1920s and 30s. It became known as Granny's Pool because of its popularity amongst

many parents and grandmothers who would take their small children there to swim, and enjoy the calmer, shallower waters compared to Blacksmith's Beach and the Channel. Families enjoyed the tranquility and the magnificent views of the lake entrance. In 2017, Council recognised the pressure by the local community to improve access by the dilapidated wooden stairs. Now a sealed road, shared pathway and viewing platform have been installed. *LMCC*





BLACKBERRY PICKING expeditions to forage for the fresh local fruit as they ripened from green to red to black were great fun and a favourite pastime. The wild tangles of thorny brambles grew in many places but especially around the pits where Belmont Hospital is now; Belmont railway station and along the railway line to Redhead. Catherine Hill Bay was famous; and Blacksmiths had a plentiful supply of plump, delicious berries. Some groups of pickers became very territorial and would not let others transgress onto their patch. Fruit pickers had to be very careful not to be stabbed or scratched by the thorns in their hunt for

the black treasure. It is doubtful that the nutritious aspect of having healthy antioxidants and rich in vitamins ever sprang to mind. Often it was a case of “one for me, one for the bucket”. Parents always knew if children had been hunting and gathering because they came home with purple teeth, smiles and fingers; and hopefully not with stained and torn clothes. Old kerosene tins were made into buckets by adding wire handles for containers. The more experienced had worked out that a number of smaller containers were better than one big one – fruit did not get squashed; and if they fell their losses were minimised. Berries around the perimeter were easy enough to collect, but the biggest and plumpest were in the middle of the bush and out of reach. With a bit of improvisation old fence palings, planks and sheets of corrugated iron were laid over the top of the canes to gain access. This was a dangerous exercise, as you could slip off and into the thorns; even on the ground you could stumble over a hidden animal hole into a thicket. The proceeds of this exercise were taken home so that their mothers could make pies and jams. The serious collectors would sell their booty by the jug for a shilling (10 cents); this would then enable them to go to the pictures in Belmont for sixpence (5 cents) and buy an ice cream as well.



[Memories of Keven and Joan Harman]

In the 1800s this prickly fruit-bearing shrub was brought out from Europe for the purpose of making teas, medicines, pies and jams. In spite of these positive qualities of wild blackberries, the plants are an invasive, noxious, thorny weed. It was soon realised that they aggressively develop into great thickets, spreading by natural layering when tips touch the ground; and birds eat fruit and spread seed. They crowd out native vegetation, pinch the water supply and promote soil erosion; and to make matters worse they provide food and shelter for some of our feral pests like foxes. Herbicides and toxic chemicals are now sprayed on the plants in bushland, parks,



pastures, orchards or beside the road, in measures to control them. You need to take great care and make certain from councils, national parks and other authorities whether it is safe to eat in certain areas or whether they have been sprayed with poison. Best to stick to cultivated bushes in farms – new varieties have now been developed without thorns – how good would that be?

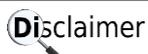
Some Interesting Facts:

The blackberry is a member of the rose family.

The leaves of the blackberry plant were used in England in the 17th century as a hair dye.

The ancient Greeks used blackberries as a cure for mouth and throat diseases and as a preventive treatment against gout (an inflammation of joints, especially of the big toe.)

[Better Health Channel]



: Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this newsletter, however, the accuracy of statements or opinions expressed in articles cannot be guaranteed.

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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS FOR MORE HERITAGE STORIES!!!