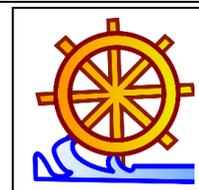




# HELM



## Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

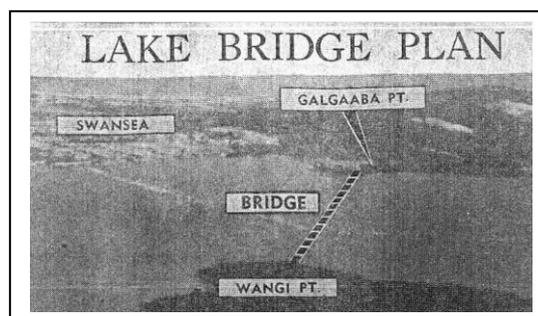
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**OCTOBER 2019**

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### LOOKING WEST

In Celtic symbolism, the West direction is associated with water and movement. When we look West towards Wangi Point, we often see magnificent sunsets over the waters of the lake. As the crow flies, from Galgabba Point to Wangi Point, the distance of about 1.6km becomes nearly 45km south by road; taking nearly an hour. In the 1960s there was serious consideration given to bridging the lake by proposing a transport link between the east and west side of Lake Macquarie at its narrowest, shallowest, most viable point. The plan was to build a bridge of elevated design, which could be cleared by sailing craft; without adversely affecting marine activity. From Galgabba Point approx. 2/3 of the distance was very shallow – some 1.5 metres deep; the rest ranging from 6 to 12 metres. The aim was to improve transport for future residential and industrial development. Plan A proposed a road bridge. The more ambitious Plan B provided also for a foot bridge and rail traffic. There was increasing support to extend rail services to the eastern side of the lake from Morisset or through Awaba, to lower Swansea; then to link up with Wyong and the main Sydney line. It was a potential solution to increasing traffic problems, which were emerging with new and expanding townships; new power stations and collieries; remembering that Swansea only had the 2-lane -one each way- third bridge at this stage until 1989. Another scenario was to extend the private rail line which terminated at Belmont to Swansea, crossing the channel when bridge number 4 was eventually built. *Source: Newcastle Herald, 1964.*



Further pressure came from Mawson Pacific Ltd. Another version of the plan was to link East and West by a causeway and ferry. This proposal was opposed by Council. Huge expenditure by council would be required to build and then maintain the causeway and the ferry. The causeway would have adverse effects on fishing and marine life; and the environment by causing silting. Higher flood levels in the southern section of the lake would result. Yet another possibility of building a multiple span bridge was estimated to be \$1.5 million for the bridge itself in 1969; road approaches would be an additional cost factor. It was considered that other services and facilities could be provided for the community, with greater benefits. *Source: Newcastle Herald, 1969.*



**NEWSFLASH!** The original St Peter's church, Josephson St, Swansea in ARTea's community hub has been amazingly restored. Home to "Heritage of East Lake Macquarie", you can take the opportunity to see and share the pictures, items, and stories of our proud past. Currently open: Fridays, 10am – 2pm; and events; with plans to extend. We would love you to visit!!!

- Lake Bridge Plan 1
- James L. Boyd 2
- Pulbah 3
- Lake legends 4



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

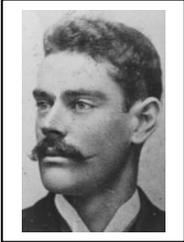
**4972 1066 - NOW AT SWANSEA!  
SWANSEA PLAZA ARCADE  
CHECK OUT THE FACEBOOK PAGE!**



Sources: George L. Boyd;  
LMCC Community History

The reserve adjoining his former shipyard at the end of Lake Rd is named after **James Lewis Boyd**, the well-known Swansea boat builder. During WW2 the shipyard built 24 vessels for the allies. Boyd was a local identity and a founding member of the Belmont 16 Footers and Caves Beach Surf Lifesaving Club. He died at the shipyard in 1951. The Boyd family has a long history in the area. The name was gazetted in 2006 (Source: Lake Macquarie News, June 1, 2006).

3 generations of the Boyd Family worked at the Lake Rd shipyard - 1920 to 1953 – James, Claude and George. James after attending Galgabba School, became a dredge master in Sydney, then Ballina. After marrying he returned to Swansea with his family in 1900 and began building boats at Black Ned’s Bay and the Channel. He also operated the Swansea General Store with his wife, Mary, for a number of years until she died. He then established his last ship building yard at the lakeside site. Over a 50-year span, more than 200 boats were built in Swansea. The busiest time was during WW2 when 150 men were employed to fulfil the contract to supply 24 boats up to 85 ft long, for the American Army’s small ship fleet. They felled timber, milled logs, constructed the ships and dredged a channel for the vessels to reach the deeper parts of the lake. In recognition of his contribution, sketches of James and his shipbuilding are displayed at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. In the early days, the wooden hulled ships were all crafted with hand tools – pit saws, broad axes, adzes, hand planes. To make life easier, in the 1930s James created a circular saw driven by an old car engine. (It wasn’t until the 1940s that electrical tools became available.) When it came time to launch the first large vessel to be built at Lake Rd in 1929– the ferry, “Jocelyn”, a grab bucket on a punt had to be used to create a hole in the shallow waters of Swansea Flats. This exercise had to be repeated several times for the launching of large ships and the spot became known as “Boydies Hole”, a name still used today.



1943 saw the shipyard become J L Boyd & Son when Claude, the youngest son, became a full partner in the business. Many more boats of varying sizes, including surf boats, were built until 1951, when James passed away as the “Red Fish” was being fashioned out of ironbark and blue gum. This construction was completed by his grandsons, Peter Wilson and George Boyd. In 1953 Claude closed the shipyard and moved to Caloundra. It signalled the passing of an era.

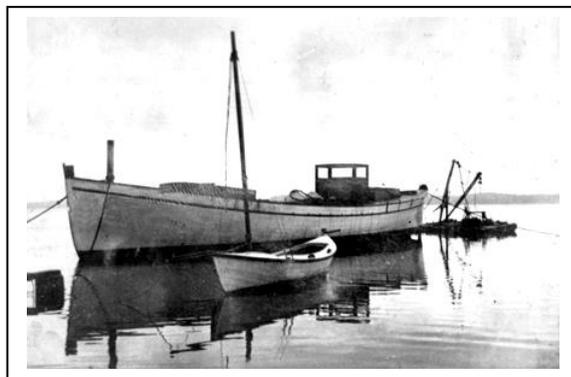
Author and local historian, George Lawrence Boyd, was born in 1935 and assisted his grandfather at the shipyard after leaving school. Work soon began on the trawler “Red Fish”, and George continued working on the project until it was completed after James had passed. Afterwards, George entered the building trade, and then moved into the local mining industry until retiring. George continued to build several small craft for friends and local fishermen as a hobby.



Boydies Hole looking West to Pulbah Island; shipyard; WWII consignment – 9 boats in frames being constructed.

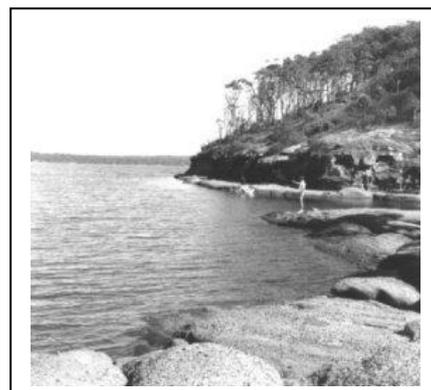
## A COLOURFUL CAREER – “PULBAH”.

The “Pulbah” was a 55ft ketch built at Boyd’s Lake Rd yard in 1936 for Erland Dedman (Master Mariner - Stockton) & Joseph Cleaver (Master Mariner - Swansea) for lobster fishing.; and named after the island in the background. A 1941 refit saw her trawling at Eden on the South coast sporting a new name – “Maiala”; before taking on wartime duties for the American Army at Townsville carrying supplies, water, mail, and the bodies of deceased servicemen. After the war she resumed lobster fishing in Hobart. Yet another refit saw her emerge as “Flying Cloud” – a schooner ready to race in the 1988 Bicentennial Tall Ships race., where she performed very creditably, coming second in her class and 17<sup>th</sup> overall in a fleet of 200 ships. After the race she paid a visit to her home town of Swansea after 55 years, before setting sail for warmer waters to be chartered for cruises in the Whitsunday Islands.



## PULBAH ISLAND.

Looking westward from Boyd’s domain and the reserve along The Esplanade, Pulbah Island sits prominently in the view. It is the largest island in Lake Macquarie, -1.6km long; 70 hectares in area. Shallow beaches feature on the northern side, while the southern side reveals rocky sandstone outcrops and steep cliffs. The habitat was an open woodland with grey gums, scribbly gums, stringy barks, yellow box and native grasses. The Aboriginal people called it Boroyirong; and regarded it as the home of Wau-wai, a monster fish which they feared; and Naruta-Ka-Wa, the Great Sky Lizard of Pulbah. It was also known as Bulba – Aboriginal for island; a place where corroborees were held; and shell middens found. On an 1834 map, the name had morphed into Pulba, later the “h” was added. In 1919 it was renamed Edden Park after the Minister for Mines, but the name was never used. Before 1917, the island was Crown Land and leased for grazing. The Society of Patriots wanted it made into a reserve for native plants and animals. In 1920 a trust was set up and ferns, flowers and orchids; along with kangaroos, koalas, wombats, wallabies and emus were brought to the island on Jack Richardson’s launch - (Fishe Jack). After only 3 years there were concerns that animals were dying of thirst; and the island being overrun by rats (identified as Australian marsupials). As the 1920s rolled on, there were still reports of animals dying of hunger and thirst, so a caretaker was employed; and a cottage and wharf were built. 12 acres were enclosed with a wire netting fence; and a launch supplied. In 1929, Pulbah was declared a reserve,- dogs, cats, ferrets, foxes, fires and firearms were banned.



The 1930s saw steps forward – concrete tanks to store water; visitors coming from Toronto to see the animals. Two emus – Emily and Marie, used to swim out to meet the visitors. A new caretaker – Thompson Noble, loved nature and the animals; and the Trust had plans to provide better sanitation, baths, picnic areas, a pavilion and a windmill to pump water. After Noble left, the sanctuary went into decline. By 1940 the RSPCA were raising money for food for the animals. During the war a caretaker could not be found, and so the animals were relocated from Pulbah to Wangi and the Wattagans.

*Source: LMCC Community History; FM 97.3*



## HOW WAS THE ISLAND USED IN EARLY YEARS?

Many fishermen and hunters camped. The shallow northern waters were very productive for netting fish. Rabbits were introduced in the 1870s for hunting parties; but they ran wild and destroyed native vegetation. Hunting quail and other game birds was a profitable sideline for local fishermen.

1870s timber mills were set up to process spotted gum and blackbutt trees then sent to Wangi, Wolstoncroft. As land was cleared, grasses thrived; stock was swum across or transported by boat for grazing.

Shells were harvested for the production of lime.

A small, secluded cave was the location for a two-up school, when things became too hot on the mainland. Cape gooseberries were gathered by local housewives to make preserves.

## LAKE ISLAND HAS ITS LEGENDS

by LOUISE BOON

"....The old people of the lake cling stubbornly to the name "Bury-your-own" when they refer to the island. There are two versions of the story concerning the origin of this latter name. One is that in the days when aborigines peopled the lake shores a white woman and her invalid husband lived on the island, the woman tending the garden in which she grew their meagre food supply and looking after husband in complete isolation. The husband died, the story goes, and the woman buried him there on the island as the last act of her unselfish devotion.



The second version concerns the erring wife of a fisherman who ran away with another man. They took refuge on the island, believing themselves safe from pursuit, but the husband followed them there and a fight ensued in which the woman was fatally shot. Some say it was the husband, some say the lover, who rowed away from the island, telling the other grimly to "Bury-your-own". Some, however, claim both stories to be fallacy, describing the name as another corruption of the old native name for the island, "Boroyirong".

... With most of its 156 acres heavily timbered, and with good timber yielding species such as spotted gum and black butt, it was inevitable that axemen and their teams would have their day. The bullocks were taken across by punt and they hauled the timber from the various parts of the island to the landing stages where, it too was taken off by punt. Some of the island timber was used in the local shipbuilding industry, but most of it was cut for timbering for mines and went to the rail-head at Cockle Creek. Cattle were taken to the island to fatten, but unlike the working bullocks generally made the half-mile crossing from Little Wangi... now called Point Wolstoncroft... to the island with a rope tied about the horns or head, swimming slowly behind a boat. Once a very large steer and a man in a small rowboat made the journey. The man finished up high in a gum tree on the island shore with the steer, wearing the broken shell of the rowboat like a garland, prancing angrily around the tree on the ground beneath him. All because the man had not been smart enough in getting the rope untied from the steer's head when the beast's hooves had touched bottom at journey's end. This man, too, might have become an island legend if a passing fishing party had not answered his anguished calls for help.

...The queen of this period was undoubtedly Emily, the Emu, a bird with a prodigious appetite and the ability and stamina of a channel swimmer. Local fishermen found it paid to take a few extra titbits along for Emily, but many a newcomer hauled up anchor and fled at the sight of Emily's long blue neck and hungry head steaming through the water towards them.

Australian birds and animals of all kinds lived on the island then but all that remains these days is some scampering paddy melons and hordes of furred water rats. *Source: Newcastle Morning Herald, Feb 21, 1953.*

### Disclaimer

: 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!!!