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Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

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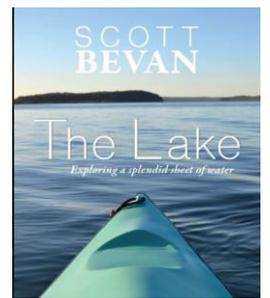
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STORIES OF THE LAKE – THEN AND NOW

**SCOTT
BEVAN
"THE LAKE"**



**STORY-TELLER
AUTHOR
JOURNALIST
ABC NEWS PRESENTER
MUSICIAN
KAYAKER**



Scott was born and grew up in Newcastle. He joined the Newcastle Herald as a cadet journalist, before moving on to work in radio as a news presenter. As opportunities arose he spent some 15 months in Japan, then joined Channel Nine as a reporter, enjoying a stint in Perth with Nine News. The next step was to move to the ABC in 2005 as a reporter for the 7.30 Report, before the next posting took him to Moscow as foreign correspondent in 2008. In 2010 he returned to Australia to become a presenter on ABC News, based in Sydney. Like many Novocastrians, Scott completed the cycle by returning to Newcastle in 2016; and the Newcastle Herald. His kayaking adventures along the Hunter River and Sydney Harbour have resulted in previous books. His latest expedition has been circumnavigating our own Lake Mac, resulting in the recently launched book "The Lake: exploring a splendid sheet of water". Local stories about our history, heritage and characters from our bays, villages and islands are shared. Meet Scott, hear about his travels and enjoy morning tea. (Gold coin donation)

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 10.30am

ST. PETER'S CHAPEL (behind ARTeas) 28 JOSEPHSON ST, SWANSEA
Brought to you by HELM. Bookings essential. 0438 665 019; helm2281@gmail.com



Scott Bevan 1
Louise Boon 2
Fishing The Lake 3-4

Scott will also be sharing his paddling journey at Lake Mac Libraries.
Thurs, March 5, Toronto, 5.30pm; Sat, March 7, Wangi Wangi, 2pm;
Sat, March 14, Speers Point, 2pm; Thurs, March 19, Belmont, 5.30pm
Fri, March 20, Charlestown, 5.30pm. Please phone your local library.



first national
REAL ESTATE | Andrew McGrath

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

**SWANSEA PLAZA ARCADE
NEAR COLES – Ph: 4972 1066
CHECK OUT THEIR FACEBOOK**

**LOUISE
BOON
1913 -
1997**



**STORY -TELLER
JOURNALIST
EDITOR'S SECRETARY
NEWCASTLE HERALD
PIANIST**

**"BUSINESS,
PLEASURE
AT LAKE"**

**Newcastle Morning Herald
and Miners' Advocate
(NSW: 1876-1954)
Sat 20 Feb 1954, Page 5**

".... One recent summer morning, before any cheeky nor'easter had had time to ruffle the serenity of Lake Macquarie, a small yellow seaplane swooped in from the general direction of Sydney. At first it seemed it was going by, but suddenly it circled, dipped into the water at "the step," and came in over Swansea Flats like a long-legged, inquisitive bird. "I know it's early in the day for visitors," apologized the pilot, when he knocked on the door of a friend who lived along the lake shore. "But I was on my way to Newcastle on business and thought I'd call in." Back in 1800 the first visitor's call was equally unexpected. In those days the aborigines called the lake Awaba and named the small green door-stop of an island off its entrance, Neritba. The entrance itself was not the wide, clear expanse of water we know today, but was merely a narrow passage near the rocks at South Head. The North Head was crowded in by a profusion of honeysuckle trees that stopped their wild rush, just in time, at the water's sandy edge. The channel, too, was something of a hazard, winding downstream into the lake around a myriad of minute, rush-covered islands.

The first visitor was the discoverer of Lake Macquarie – Captain Reid, after whom the South Head of the entrance is named. He had also been going to Newcastle on business – a cargo of coals. He saw Neritba, mistook it for Nobbys, and edged his small ship through the crack of the lake's partly open door. The aborigines were delighted to see them. Because of the white men's clean-shaven faces, they thought they were all women, though, and took some convincing that they were not. Showing good lake hospitality, and demonstrating the Lake Macquarie ability to mix business with pleasure, they sang and danced for the visitors, and there was a great deal of hilarity before they took the white men to a spot near the southern headland and pointed out where they could dig a cargo of coals.

In the years afterwards traffic of varied importance used this entrance – convict transports with their unhappy cargo; shallow draught supply boats for the aboriginal mission station that stood for a short period on the headland; the first span for the first Swansea bridge; a police station for Belmont. The police station was brought from the historic settlement at Trial Bay by one of the small coastal ketches for a freighting charge of 60 pounds. As in other coastal settlements, shipping played a major part in the development of Lake Macquarie. In the early days the small coastal traders not only maintained a supply line for the early settlers, but carried away cargo of all descriptions. There were shingles from Shingle Splitter's Point in the south-west; cockle shells from wherever the aborigines had left mounds after their lakeside cockle feasts; timber, fish, staghorns, gravel – all went out through the ocean entrance. And of course, coal. Although the coal discovered by Captain Reid was not exploited till many years afterwards, it eventually came into its own and today collieries, large and small, play a part in Lake Macquarie's industry and wealth. One of the oldest collieries is Wallarah, in the south-east corner of the lake shire. Wallarah has been in production for more than 60 years. The south-west corner of Lake Macquarie is rather barren of coal, but at Awaba, on the western side, collieries crop up again in earnest. Awaba State Mine, Northumberland No.1 and 2, Stockton Borehole, Cardiff Borehole and Rhondda are a few."



FISHING STYLES ON THE LAKE - KEVIN McWILLIAMS

My family moved from Killingworth to Bolton Point in the early 1930s when the Depression caused widespread unemployment in the coal mines and my grandparents built a small shack on the edge of the lakeside reserve. There was a community of about 6 houses there.....



Of course there was no sanitation, and drinking and washing water was from a galvanised tank which filled with water drained from the roof, and lighting was from a kerosene lamp on the table because there was no electricity. Ice would be delivered by horse and cart or a truck heralded by loud shouts and bells ringing. In many places around the Lake, Fridays would bring loud shouts of "Fisho, Fisho" and fresh fish and sometimes prawns would be available from his truck.

Our house interior was lined with brattice. A heavy type of bag material used in coal mines to funnel air - and which obviously had come from a coal mine - and on which was stuck old newspapers with a paste made from flour and water to keep draughts out. Heating, cooking and bathwater came from heating on an open fire in the kitchen and one of my afternoon chores was to walk into the bush and retrieve sticks and pieces of wood for the fire. Washing clothes was a family affair with a large copper tub set up outside my grandparent's house and stoked with wood.

The main reason we had moved to the Lake from Killingworth was literally to live a better life and eat better. Fishing became our main pastime and food source. I can remember walking into the Lake in the afternoons holding a baited wire netting fish trap above my head, and when I got out to where the water was up to my neck I would throw it out as far as possible, and go back and collect it next morning. It always seemed to have several leatherjackets trapped which were good food. Or walking the foreshore looking for blue swimmer crabs, or setting a crab trap - which consisted of long strands of hair removed from the tails of pit horses - and which was tied in a loop and fastened to an object such as an old bike wheel which was baited and left for unwary crabs to entangle themselves.



My family owned an old 16ft/5m sailing boat, and this became the mainstay of Lake fishing. We would dig bloodworms in front in the bay and use them for whiting, bream and flathead which were in abundance in the Lake or haul a net for prawns or venture down to the Channel. I can remember my father telling me that they would get boxes of big whiting or prawns with the aid of the either kerosene lamps or carbide lamps used in the mines. Sometimes they would have to row back from Swansea to Bolton Point when there was no wind. Whenever possible,

depending on the size and abundance of their catch, they would load up the horse and sulky and take the excess to the 2 hotels at Teralba on a Friday pay afternoon and get extra money - and probably of course discuss the ones which got away over a few schooners.

My father also told me that professional fishermen would also net huge shoals of salmon and keep them surrounded with their nets so as to keep them alive as long as possible waiting on a better price at the markets. Also, wintertime would bring out the old wooden boats with the single cylinder motor which would putt-putt their way slowly towards schools of tailor - which would be identified with crowds of seagulls diving and twisting among them - and a cord line would be paid out over the rear usually with red and white feathers attached to catch these voracious fish.

Of course, wartime laws required that all boats were confiscated and dragged ashore in the park at Bolton Point and I still remember 100s of these boats sitting on dry land in the park as I walked to school at Fassifern each day. It was decided to have the boats in one location so that in the event of an invasion during the war they

could all be burnt to the ground to ensure they did not fall into Japanese hands. Wooden boats which are left out of the water, dry out and deteriorate very quickly and become worthless. Our boat was never returned. Professional fishermen were also working the Lake for many years and could be seen setting their huge lengths of net and hauling in many fish and could always be identified by the large amount of birds flying around waiting to gorge themselves on the leftovers.

Another style of fishing which was evident in the Lake was used by the Air Force who had their large base at Rathmines. There they serviced and maintained their fleet of Catalina and amphibious aircraft. One of these type of Aircraft was called a "WALRUS" which was a very slow moving craft with pusher type propeller at the rear of the wings instead of at the front. Their fishing was not to land on the water and drop a line over the side of their floats but to drop a charge such as a small bomb or hand grenade in the water while flying over at low speed. The resulting explosion would bring fish of all shapes and sizes - obviously concussed - floating to the surface, and of course the plane would land, and they would scoop up sufficient for their needs and take off again. Being very young I have no knowledge of whether this type of fishing was frowned upon by the locals. I tend to think that getting fresh fish for "Our Boys" by any means was designated as a good deed for the war effort, and it certainly did not harm the fishing in any way because many stories are told of the great catches still being taken from our Beautiful Lake Macquarie. *Source: Share Your Story. LMCC Community History*



Australia's largest coastal salt water lake:

Covers 110 square kilometers.

Twice the size of Sydney Harbour.

24 kms in length.

Shoreline of 174kms.

Fish species: bream, whiting, flathead, luderick, mullaway, tailor, snapper, jewfish, kingfish.

Prawn runs: at night on a run out tide, 10 days after a full moon.

The Lake has a long history of recreational and commercial fishing. Commercial fishing industry expanded in the 1860s with Marshall's Fishery and Curing Factory at Brightwaters producing tinned fish for the Sydney market. Chinese fishermen leaving the NSW goldfields had operations at Belmont and Swansea. Without ice, fish spoiled on long trips to markets such as Sydney. Some preferred to fish for the Chinese who cured the fish by sun-drying before exporting an estimated 70 tons to Sydney, the gold fields and China. Technology changed the demand for tinned and cured fish – thermal insulation, manufactured ice, and rail transport could deliver fresh fish to Sydney and Melbourne. The increasing use of marine engines and powerful winches eventually contributed to the overfishing of the lake, and the decline of fish stock.

In May 2002 it was zoned a Recreational Fishing Haven, ending commercial fish netting, allowing the lake's fish stocks to improve. After lobbying by local anglers, fishing clubs, businesses and MPs, the lake was declared a trophy dusky flathead fishery in September, 2017; resulting in a tag and release program for large breeding sized flathead of 70cm and over; to help maintain stocks for future generations.

The ecosystem has benefitted by the recovery of species. Dolphins and seals can now also be seen to visit. "The key task for the future will be to manage this wonderful fishery to ensure it remains sustainable and abundant for future generations". *Sources: LMCC, Fishing World*

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Share your story at HELM for our future heritage!!!!