



HELM



Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

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DEC-JAN

LAKE HOLIDAYS

2022/23

In 1971 Lake Macquarie Shire Council as it was known then invited people to visit the lake in a tourism brochure.

- This famous waterway is one of the largest lakes in Australia with 108 miles of foreshore whilst many miles of beautiful surfing beaches stretch along the coastline on the shire's eastern boundary.
- First class hotel and motel accommodation, recreational facilities include swimming, fishing, sailing, surfing, bowls, golf and tennis. Camping areas with conveniences are located around the foreshores.
- Whether it be to picnic, holiday or permanently reside, Lake Macquarie offers modern facilities in pleasant surroundings for your enjoyment.

While appearances have changed over many decades, those basic drawcard features have remained over time.



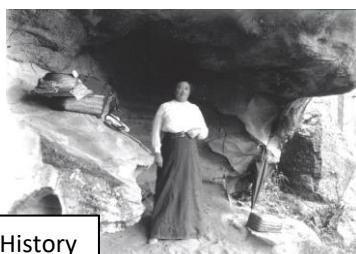
Swansea

"Swansea.... the front door to Lake Macquarie Shire..... is a popular tourist resort, beautifully situated at the lake entrance."

Swansea, Blacksmiths and Pelican offer the best of both worlds – the lake and the sea for holiday enjoyment. In the summer they are popular for camping, fishing, surfing and boating. "The rapidly developing area of Mawson , now boasts a fine hotel-motel.... The fine beach of Caves Beach affords the surfing and fishing enthusiast with good sport." At one point it was proposed to call the suburb after developer Art Mawson and his vision for Caves Beach area.



LMCC Community History



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1. Proctors coach builder employees and families arriving at Swansea Wharf on the "Maggie Johnson" for a picnic 3/3/1899.
2. Woman at Caves Beach for a picnic.
3. Sunstrip Caravan Park on the Pacific Highway north of Swansea bridge.
4. The Blue Pacific Motel advertised its proximity to 18-hole golf course; launches and boats for hire for anglers.

Thank you to Pat Conroy and staff, kindly supporting our community; and encouraging the preservation and sharing of our heritage.

Belmont

“.. the natural beauty of the area, modern recreational amenities, and excellent shopping facilities (along both sides of the Pacific Highway) added to the carefree lake atmosphere, complete the holiday recipe.” In 1971 there was plenty to boast about. The police station, courthouse, fire station, and technical college were all newly built. Due to the rapidly expanding population a new modern hospital was opened.

Not to mention many attractions which have proved to be popular over time.

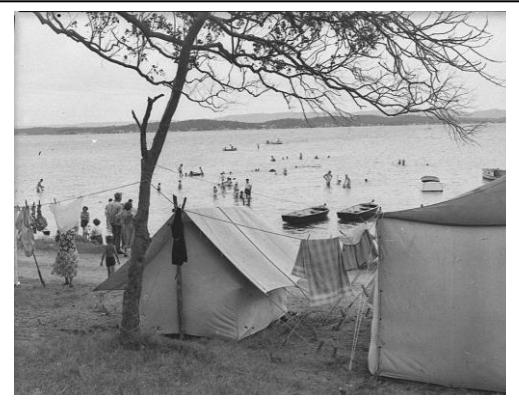
For many years **Belmont Baths** off Brookes Parade, was a popular bathing area “with dressing sheds, showers and toilets, as well as tables and eating accommodation for the convenience of spectators.” As a result of the superstorm in 2015 the pool lost its jetty and suffered damage. The baths reopened in Dec 2018 with a new jetty, netted enclosure and facilities, drawing people back to the foreshore; the nearby kids play area and shops.



“Belmont South Park is an ideal camping area and the foreshore reserve along the highway is a popular picnic spot. Boats and canoes may be hired. The shallow water is safe for children and fish are plentiful.”

“My family camped there for weeks at a time. Smelly canvas tent that one couldn’t touch during rain or it oozed. We even had two wardrobes in the tent. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, both maternal and paternal, spent time with us as well. Everything transported by an Essex Ute. Most of my family were coal miners and had a month off. We ate seafood nearly every night, caught, or picked off rocks. The ‘meat safe’ always went with us. Great memories from 1950 onwards.”

Photo: Flickr



“My father also was a miner, and the coal truck took everything out as we never had a car. The tent was a big canvas tent, the beds were out of Hessian. It was my mother’s first camping trip.... My poor mother hated it. Of course my dad had a lovely time fishing . We had to wait for the coal truck to come and pick us up.”

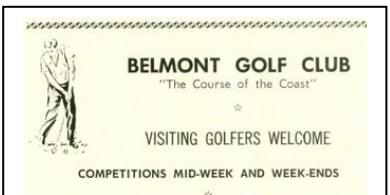
“Lake Macquarie Yacht Club is not only a landmark on the lake but is also one of the largest Yacht Clubs in the state. A novel feature of the Club house is that it is built on piles right out over the water at the end of Ada St.” In 1932 “The Old Stone Jetty” (c. 60-70 years old) was taken up by the club. Considerable restoration work was needed and a clubhouse was built at the western end. It opened in 1934 for the Easter Regatta. The current carpark was completed in 1966.



A specially equipped Holiday Home for children with physical disabilities was established in spacious grounds which extended from Walter St to the waterfront in 1952. Run by NSW Crippled Children’s Association, “**Weerona**” formerly belonged to John Christian Reid and family. It was demolished in 1979.

“Belmont is rich in sporting attractions and opportunities are available to suit all tastes, whether it be swimming, fishing, surfing, sailing, tennis, bowls, squash, football, archery, cricket or golf.

Source: LMCC Comm. Hist.



VALENTINE Some memories of childhood holidays, 1948 -1967.

"From 1948 my parents would take us by steam train from Sydney to Newcastle, where we would transfer to a double decker bus, destination Valentine. I recall very few passengers on the bus and when we got to about Warners Bay the conductor would cruise through, closing all the windows preparing for the very dusty road to Valentine where it stopped at the shop. It was a mixed business where the lady that served, apart from her counter duties, also had to duck over to what looked a small old switchboard to connect local phone calls, each time vigorously winding a handle on the right-hand side.

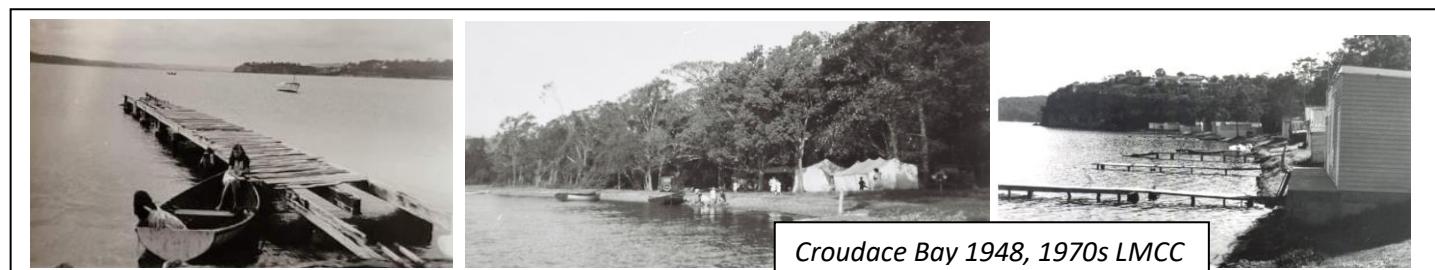
At the end of Krambruk Road, extending out into the lake, was a long jetty, quite dilapidated and very splintery, but still great for learning to dive!..... Bill Shepherd rented out open launches from his smaller jetty, and Leila had a small hut at the back, where she took bookings for the boats and sold bait and soft drinks. Bill also ran the local taxi. The Howes family had a house with a boatshed doubling as a holiday rental..... On the eastern side was 'The Shack', a large, corrugated iron barn like structure.....

A butcher drove around in his meat truck twice a week, fresh fruit was brought around weekly via the 'Fruito Truck', blocks of ice were delivered and of course regular visits from the 'Sanni Man'.

Cows were herded past morning and late afternoon for milking up somewhere towards Hartley Point.

If extra salad vegies were needed, the family (further along Dilkera) were always happy to oblige from their backyard garden, beautiful fresh tomatoes, lettuces, cucumbers, etc..

An occasional treat was when a movie was being shown at the Progress Assoc Hall - but as there was only one projector, there were many intervals while the projection reels were being changed...." *Source: G Harvey*



Croudace Bay 1948, 1970s LMCC

BLACKSMITHS BEACH



Wading 1920; Camping 1938; Fishing at breakwall; 11 year-old Mark Richards 1968. Sources: LMCC, Mark Richards

Memories of Summer School Holidays in the '70s.

"Dem was da days...between the ages of 14 and 17, my Summer Hols were spent pretty much like this.

Earning some extra pocket money by helping out in the family hardware store for 2 or 3 days, the other days spent at Blackies Beach. A group of school friends, we'd hitch or bus it to Blacksmiths, lay around talking about everything and nothing, getting a tan (using Baby Oil as protection...), and hitting the always "massive" surf for a spot of body-boogying.

Come lunch time it was across the road for a Pluto Pup, Pine-Lime Splice, and a Coke. Back to the sand for another bask and dip, and then time to head home... (or maybe sneak into the Orana for a "lemonade" and a session on Space Invaders)... then again hitch or bus it back to Belmont."

Source: W. Reid



Blacksmiths Beach car park 1963



THE ORIGINAL NIPPERS 1964



LOCAL CARAVANERS



Cec and Else Marks' caravan; "Debbie" – built in backyard at Middle Camp & still mobile 1980; Belmont Pines 1946.

In 1971, caravaners were spoilt for choice in our local area. **Wallarah St Swansea** offered hot and cold tiled showers, seweraged toilets and washing machines for \$5.60 weekly, \$8.40 with power. Privately owned **Sunstrip** added a playground, amenities hall, tv and swimming pool. **Blacksmiths** appealed to campers wanting to surf, swim and fish. **Pelican Flat** camping area was located along Soldiers Road and adjacent to Swansea Channel. Boats were available for hire; but showers only provided cold water. **Belmont South Park** availed 80 powered sites with a modern new amenities block at \$7.00 a week. A big drawcard was the shallow swimming area for children. **Belmont Caravan Park** off Ross St, near the lake foreshore had electricity for 100 sites (\$9.80 weekly) and a kiosk on the grounds. Another privately owned caravan park was the **Gaytime**, just south of Belmont Shopping Centre. **Thomas H. Halton Park**, **Croudace Bay** had essential commodities delivered. Featuring a launching ramp, it was a popular spot for speed boats, water skiing and sailing. Fees were 5.60 weekly or 80c a night. Another privately owned park was **Laceys Caravan Park, Belmont North** on the Pacific Highway, boasting a superior amenities block, heated swimming pool, childrens playground and barbecue.



SWANSEA CHANNEL

Swansea Channel is the marine gateway to Lake Macquarie, providing a scenic location for many holidays.



Grannies Pool was formed by a gap in the breakwall near Blacksmiths which allows tidal water from the Channel to pool in a sandy area creating a popular swimming spot. It was originally known as Chanty's Pool after Bert Chant, who looked after the area when it was a camping ground in the 1920s-30s. Over the years it has been renamed Grannies Pool, as the calm and shallow water made it a popular spot for grandparents to take the grandkids for a dip.

Always popular for daily picnics, pockets of land on both sides of **Swansea Channel** became a location for extended recreation, and holiday accommodation for families in the form of weekenders. The Crown land was leased in the form of "permissive occupancy" for a nominal rent and maintenance of the foreshore. As leases expired and residents left, houses were removed. The Roach house on the Swansea side was demolished in 1988. In 1994 the last resident left and the island known as "Coon Island" became a nature reserve. Recently renamed Pirrita Island, meaning oysters from the mangroves, LMCC has built a new boardwalk to showcase the attraction of the area.

Sources: G & N Boyd; LMCC Community History

