

# Heritage Walking Trail Catherine Hill Bay



Catherine Hill Bay  
Progress Association  
catherinehillbay.org.au

## CATHERINE HILL BAY VILLAGE (Main Camp)

Catherine Hill Bay or Main Camp was the first village in the locality, dating from 1889, and remains relatively unchanged. Uniform rows of small cottages line the roads under the watchful gaze of the Mine Manager's house on the hill. The key remaining buildings and sites in Catherine Hill Bay Village are detailed overleaf and shown on the map.



2 Clarke St



Aerial Main Camp



Courthouse, 3&5 Clarke St



Clarke St 1950s



First SLS  
Les McDougal

## MAIN CAMP Catherine Hill Bay Village



## MIDDLE CAMP VILLAGE BUILT BETWEEN 1908 - 1915

Middle Camp, known due to its location between Mine Camp, previously located to the north west, and Main Camp or Catherine Hill Bay village, has kept its village feel and streetscape. Rows of similar small cottages line the road, are consistent in size, scale and form, and were originally constructed of weatherboard. In the 1960s due to the age and condition of the houses, the mining company put each on a separate title and sold them for 400 pounds each, as they were relatively larger and newer than the houses in Catherine Hill Bay village, which were all sold for 350 pounds each. This was cheaper than fixing them.



Aerial Middle Camp

## MIDDLE CAMP VILLAGE



Historic Catherine Hill Bay played a key role in the development of Australian natural resources in the 19th century having strong associations with coal mining, organised labour and the early maritime industry in NSW.

Having State Heritage Listing, Catherine Hill Bay is an intact surviving example of a "Company Town". There is no comparable coastal environment in NSW that contains such an intact and compact representation of a 19th and 20th century coal-mining town. The first settlement of the area in 1873 was called New Wallsend. The New Wallsend Coal Company tried to establish a new subdivision called Cowper; however it failed as only six blocks sold. The first mining venture was abandoned in 1877 and any housing stock was removed. A few years later, the first jetty burnt down. In 1888-1889 the Wallarah Coal Company bought the mining leases, built a second jetty, railway and housing. Housing was built in response to need and location of pits. Some miners applied to the Mine Manager to build a house on company land and today eight of these houses remain in Slack Alley and Sawmill Camp.



Each house was known by the family who lived there, such as the "Wiggs" or "Outrams". Mail sent to someone residing in town was addressed with just the family name, Main Road, Catherine Hill Bay. Main Road was also called Sydney Road, as anyone travelling from Sydney to Newcastle had to pass through Catherine Hill Bay.

The company addressed many social issues and families were asked to move houses depending on circumstances such as the size of their families or sickness. So too jobs were varied, one miner was

taken out of the mine to work on the jetty so that he could be closer to his family after his wife died leaving a newborn and two other small children.

In the 1960s, a new coal company, Coal & Allied, bought the mining leases. Houses along the established roads were placed on new titles and sold to the miners and hence Catherine Hill Bay ceased to be a company town.

Mining continued until 2002 with many retired miners remaining in town.

The bush fire in October 2013 destroyed five important heritage buildings. Over the years fire, cyclones and mine tragedies have all had an impact on this small community.

The story of Catherine Hill Bay is the story of a community dependent on a single company for its growth and development.



Middle Camp



Flowers Dr



Sawmill at Middle Camp mine



Thank you to the families of Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp, past and present, the Lake Macquarie Library, Historical Society, Progress Association members and other sources for the supply of photographs and information that have made this brochure possible.

"The Heritage Walking Trails at Catherine Hill Bay project is supported through funding from the Australian Government's Your Community Heritage programme."



Assistance provided by



Design and Print by Lakemac Print 4921 0512  
EXT 14253

### 1 CATHO PUB

Originally built by R Talbot in 1875, as the New Wallsend Hotel, it became the Wallarah Hotel in 1889. The hotel along with the jetty are the only remaining structures which represent continuity between the New Wallsend Coal Company's first 1873 settlement at the Bay and settlement in 1888-1889 by the Wallarah Coal Company. In the 1960s Ted and Dorothy Wotherspoon, the first Aboriginal licensees in Australia, bought the lease and freehold. The Catho Pub continues to operate as a focal point of interest for locals and tourists alike.



### 2 POLICE STATION, RESIDENCE and LOCKUP

The former police station and residence have occupied this site since 1923. The station operated continuously until 1980 when it was sold as a private residence.

The lockup was built in the second half of 1890 by the Police Department in response to the unruly behaviour of some of the miners in the hotel. It was originally in Clarke Street behind the Courthouse, which was removed in 1937. The last occupant of the lock-up was Mr D'Arcy who quite enjoyed the time keeping a detailed list of every meal. Daily he would go home over the road, clean up and return to do a bit of gardening. The lock-up was unfortunately destroyed in the fire of October 2013.



### 3 TALBOT'S SHOP

The original shop was a substantial residence, store and bakehouse. It catered to most of the town's needs selling haberdashery, food and mining supplies. Henry Hawkes, injured in the mine in 1893 was offered the shop as compensation. His relatives, the Gillons, took over in the late 1890s and traded until 1932. This family lived a more elegant lifestyle than the mining families, employing serving maids. This shop provided the needs of the town seeing families through hard times and putting moneys owed "in the book" until they could be paid. It closed in 1959.



### 4 POST OFFICES

The original Post Office site was on the corner of Flowers Drive and Lindsley Street and operated as early as 1904. The second post office operated in Lindsley Street from the late 1930s until 1993 when it was closed due to rationalisation by Australia Post. The Post Office handled money orders, postal notes, savings bank deposits and acted as the electoral registrar and the registrar for births, deaths and marriages.



### 5 NURSE TURODE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL

Originally, a boarding house it became a Maternity Hospital run by Nurse Turode in 1934. Most of the women of the town had their babies here and some women from Swansea, whose husbands worked in the mine, also attended. The hospital closed in 1950 and the house is now a private residence.



### 6 SURF CLUB

The Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club was formed in 1928 with an initial membership of 27 which increased to 50 by October 1929. Even though the first clubhouse was a small wooden building, the surf club held great importance in the town. The Patron of the new club was Mr Norton, Wallarah Colliery Superintendent; the President was Dr J Mc Kenzie Wood, the local resident doctor, and the Vice Presidents were Mr Hudson, the Mine Manager and Mr Mc Laren, the local school Headmaster.



### 7 WALLARAH HOUSE

The Mine Manager's or Wallarah House was built on this site in 1889 at a cost of 700 pounds and was constructed in weatherboard and brick. It was the most important building associated with the Company. It was a spacious home with "well laid out grounds". The company town nature is reflected in the positioning of the Mine Manager's House on the top of the hill overlooking the jetty and the miners' cottages. This building was unfortunately destroyed in the October 2013 fire.



### 8 JETTY MASTER'S HOUSE

Although only built in the 1950s on this site, the Jetty Master's house was an integral part of the mining infrastructure of the company town. Once the mining skips were full, the miners could not work if the seas were too rough for the ships to berth. There was considerable pressure on the Jetty Master to allow the ships to come into the jetty. It was also unfortunately destroyed in the 2013 fire.



### 9 JETTIES

There have been three jetties. All positioned in the lee of a small peninsula to protect shipping from strong southerly weather. The jetties are important, as they are the reason for the longevity of mining in Catherine Hill Bay. With the destruction by fire of the Mine Managers House, Jetty masters House and the Winding House they represent the only key original structures associated with the Company.

The first jetty was designed and built by Mr Montefiore in 1873. The pile jetty was made from saplings and rope and ran into the mine workings in the cliff-face. Horses were used to haul the loaded skips from the mine onto the jetty where they were emptied into a chute loading the coal onto the steamer. This jetty became unstable and horses and skips fell over the edge resulting in the drowning of the horses. It disappeared after the first mining venture ceased operations in 1875, reportedly burnt.

The Wallarah Coal Company built the second wooden pile jetty in 1889. A railway ran from the mine 4kms north onto the end of the jetty. Only lightweight locos were allowed on the jetty and the coal wagons were purpose built; three sides were tapered with the fourth straight so it could be opened to release coal on to chutes directly into the holds of the ship. Vessels up to 3000 tons were able to load in good weather and the coal was shipped to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. In 1963 a 1000 foot retractable conveyor belt was installed making the operation profitable again as tonnage could be moved that exceeded what was achieved in Newcastle. In May 1974, a cyclone damaged the jetty.

The third jetty, a slightly longer steel and concrete jetty, was built within a year and mining continued until 2002. In October 2013, the original timbers of the second jetty were unfortunately burnt in the fire but the jetty remains. Mr Thornton, Jetty Master for 20 years maintained, "It was a wonderful place to work"



### 10 FIRST MINE TUNNELS

The two tunnels of the first mine dug into the cliff are visible at low tide to the south of the jetty. For many years, fishermen stored their boats in the disused tunnels but now they are bricked up.



### 11 WALLARAH COLLIERY RAILWAY

Remnants of the Wallarah Colliery railway are visible parallel to the road bridge. Built between 1889 and 1890 it ran for 4kms along the top of the cliff joining the jetty to the colliery and operated for 74 years, closing in 1963. Coal that is seen along the cliffs is not from a coal seam rather it fell over the years from the side of the modified wagons.



### 12 WEIGHBRIDGE, SIDINGS & WATER TANK (along the beach)

All coal wagons were weighed and their coal content calculated prior to loading onto the ships at the jetty. The sidings accommodated the wagons while they waited to be moved to the jetty. Larger locos hauled the coal from the pit to the seven sidings but then smaller, lighter locos took the coal onto the jetty. The railway became obsolete in the 1960s due to the closure of "E" pit. Unfortunately, the weighbridge and siding were removed during sand mining in the 1960s. The location however can be identified by the water tank which is on the hillside above where the weighbridge siding was located. The tank filled with water from Moonee Creek and served as a locomotive watering point.



### 13 OLD WINDING HOUSE

Originally this was the site of D Pit. The shaft was only operated for a year as there was too much water. When the poppet head and boiler were removed a house was constructed. Mr McDougall enlarged this "house" as his large family steadily increased. It was then taken over by the Company to house its Clerks. When Miss McDonald, one of the school teachers, married Mr Cameron who was the Clerk at the Weighbridge she moved into the house and for many years, it was known as "Cameron's". Mrs Cameron was a very popular teacher and students would vie to carry her books to and from the new school at Middle Camp. The house was destroyed in the October 2013 bushfire.



### 14 UNITING CHURCH HALL

After a series of halls and churches were built and demolished or destroyed, a hall was built in the 1950s by a local builder, which was used by the miners for Methodist services and weddings until the 1990s. It was then sold and is now a private residence. Most of the mining families were Methodists, which reflected the hierarchical nature of the company town.



### 15 CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This weatherboard building was originally located to the west of Clarke St in the Main village where it was also rented by the Education Department as a school. Notwithstanding, the Church kept the right to hold divine services there. This Church was later relocated to its present position on the hill between the two villages. It has been remembered at its present site since approximately 1919. It is also now a private residence.



### 16 CEMETERY 1891-present

Dedicated as a cemetery in 1891, the mining company reserved mineral rights under the land. The earliest headstone is that belonging to George Dunn who died aged 48 in 1896. He was buried in the Primitive Methodist section joined by his infant son one month later. Many names were never recorded or if they were the exact spot was not.

Many interesting anecdotes have been recorded in relation to the cemetery: - Andy having worked all day in the mine was asked to dig a grave by the following morning so used a hurricane lamp. Chalker Norman, another miner rather intoxicated after a visit to the pub was returning home along the railway tracks. As he came towards Andy, Andy yelled out "Hey Chalker, what's the time?" Chalker, startled misheard and replied, "It's not my bloody time" and raced away.



### 17 SCHOOL OF ARTS and RSL HALL

The original School of Arts building located on this site was a place where books and magazines were kept which people could borrow. Small meetings were also held there. After the Second World War, the returned soldiers asked the Mine Manager if they could have the land on which the School of Arts stood and extend the building to provide a place for the soldiers who had returned from the wars to meet (to be renamed the RSL Hall). The Company agreed and provided the materials and carpenters. In the 1990s, financial difficulties and disagreements led to the Hall being sold as a private residence.



### 18 BOWLING CLUB

Work began on the bowling club in 1952 with Pit horses being used to level the land. It was built by the community with more than 20 men involved. Money for the materials was raised by social evenings and raffles. Mr Pinfold, a builder from the lake and his brother-in-law directed proceedings. On 6 May 1961, Kate Northwood won the Newcastle Women's District Singles. This was a proud day for the town but as the clubhouse was not completed, celebrations were held in the tin shed. In 2012, Lake Macquarie City Council took the club over as a Community Hall/Recreation Club.



### 19 FOURTH CATHERINE HILL BAY SCHOOL and TEACHER'S RESIDENCE

This fourth school was opened in October 1915 with an enrolment of 115 students. The growing number of children in the town made it necessary to expand. The site was chosen because it was quite flat and was in the middle of the original three villages that made up the town of Catherine Hill Bay. One of the remembered rhymes:

Mr Darmody's a very good man, he tries to teach us all he can, Reading and Ritin and rithmetic, but he doesn't forget to give us the stick.

The school closed in the 1980s due to falling numbers and is now a private residence.



### 20 KNICKERBOCKER HALL (Site of)

The original Knickerbocker Hall, which was 80 feet by 30 feet, was built on this site by the Coal Company for the use of residents around 1910. The land is now occupied by the Rural Fire Station and the former shop next door. Going Away and Welcome Home celebrations for the men who went to the first and second World Wars were held here, as were wedding receptions, school events and 'frolics'. It was also the town's picture theatre. Films were shown here twice a week during pay week and once on the off week. "Everybody had their own seat, the school kids always sat up front, boys in the front row, girls in the second row, as you got older you moved back. The back stage was for people of importance". In the 1950s, it was demolished due to white ant infestation.



To get to the village of Middle Camp and the Cemetery you can go north along the beach below the railway or by road along Flowers Drive.

KEY	
	Main Camp walk, 600m (Catherine Hill Bay Village)
	1 to 8
	Beach walk, 700m (check tide chart for accessibility)
	9 & 10
	Link walk - along beach, 1 - 1.2km
	- or drive by road, 850m
	11 to 13 & 16
	Middle Camp walk, 1km
	14 to 20
	Parking
	Toilets
	Food
	Historic Sites or buildings of interest
NB Distances are approximate only.	