

CABARITA AND BREAKFAST POINT WALK

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Acknowledgements

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If you have photographs of the local area that you would be willing to lend for copying we would be delighted to hear from you. We are able to make copies and return the originals to you.

The Wangal People - Indigenous Australians of the Canada Bay Area

The Canada Bay area, including Cabarita and Breakfast Point, was part of the traditional lands of the Aboriginal people of the Wangal clan (also spelt 'Wann-gal') whose name was derived from the word for their country. The Wangal were a clan of the Darug (sometimes spelt Dharug) tribe or language group. They called themselves the Eora, meaning 'the people'. The Wangal people gathered food from the harbour and its foreshores and are believed to have occupied the area for over 20,000 years. The Hen and Chicken Bay area was a major meeting place for Aboriginal people from Port Jackson and the wider Sydney region.

First contact was made with local Aboriginals of the Wangal Clan by Captain John Hunter who led an exploration of the Parramatta River. On the 5th of February 1788 while having breakfast he was met by Wangal at the location now referred to as Breakfast Point. The Wangal called the area Booridiow-o-gule. The name Cabarita is an Aboriginal word which is thought to mean 'by the water'.

Canada Bay and the Canadian Exiles

In 1837 and 1838 there were revolts in Lower Canada (now known as Quebec) by French Canadian patriotes opposed to British rule. Following the crushing of the revolts some of the rebels were executed while others were sentenced to transportation.

In 1840 the ship *Buffalo* transported 91 English speaking rebels to Tasmania and 58 French speaking Canadians to NSW. Originally the French Canadians were destined for Norfolk Island however, Roman Catholic Bishop, Dr John Bede Polding, interceded on their behalf and they were sent to the Longbottom Stockade located in the vicinity of present day Concord Oval and St Luke's Park.

The exiles were employed in timber getting, quarrying, shell-collecting and breaking stone for road building. By early 1844 all were granted free pardons and eventually all but three returned to Canada, two having died in exile and one married and remained in New South Wales.

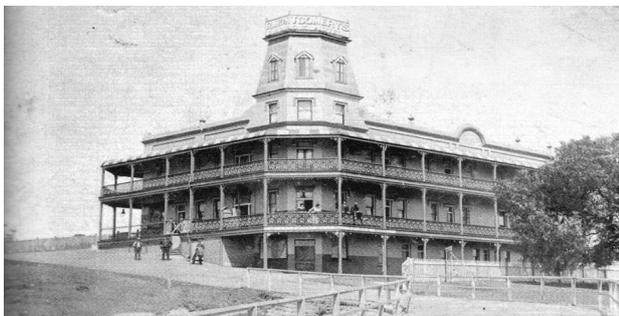
The story of the Canadian Exiles is remembered by the place names of Canada, Exile and France Bays as well as some street names.



The original Longbottom Stockade with horses

1 Palace Hotel, Tennyson Road

The original Palace hotel was opened in 1886, the same year as the opening of the AGL gasworks. It was built on the river at the end of Tennyson Road to cater for the gasworkers. Known as Montgomery's Palace, it was a distinctive building with verandahs and a tower and was a popular vantage point for the viewing of rowing events. This hotel was demolished in the mid 1920s and a new hotel, still named the Palace was built further up Tennyson Road, nearly opposite the entrance to the gasworks. The AGL entrance was also the Mortlake tram terminus. The hotel became a very popular watering hole for the thirsty workers and was one of the few of Sydney's early-opener hotels. This variation to the normal hotel trading hours was to accommodate workers coming off night shift.



The original Palace Hotel, known as Montgomery's Palace, located on the waterfront in Tennyson Road was demolished in the mid 1920s. Photo courtesy of the Concord Heritage Society.

2 Tennyson Road Shops

The establishment of the Australian Gas Light Company's works at Mortlake in lead to the rapid influx of people, along with the associated transport services, shops, churches and so on. Mortlake became a thriving, compact population centre. The shops on the corner of Tennyson Road and MacDonald Street date from the 1890s and the corner shop appears to have served as the area's first Post Office.

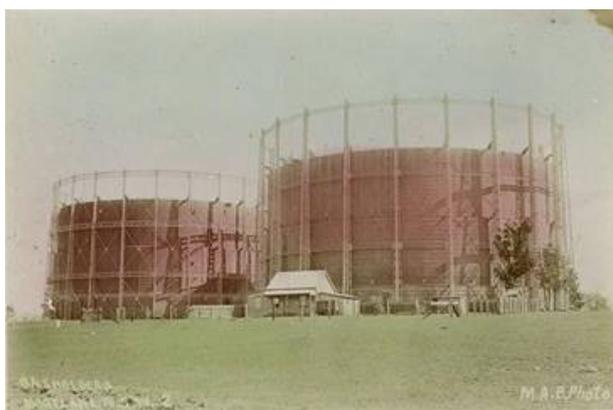
3 AGL Gasworks

Destined to be the largest gas manufacturing plant in the southern hemisphere, the Australian Gas Light Company's works at Mortlake opened in 1886. The site offered easy access to Sydney by land and water and was an expression of the height of the gaslight era.

The scale of industrial development changed the face of Mortlake forever. With AGL employing almost 300 workers by the end of the 19th century and support industries springing up nearby, the suburb grew rapidly. During WW I, two new retort houses were built on the site, improving the efficiency of the coal carbonisation process, and a third gas holder, much larger than the original two rose on Tennyson Road. By the outbreak of WW II, the increased demand for gas was met by further expansion.

The production of gas was diversified and by the 1950s petroleum products were used in the gas making process. By the 1960s Mortlake operated four houses of vertical retorts, seven water gas plants, two oil gas plants and one ballast gas plant. The workforce during this period peaked at about 2000.

Mortlake's original boundary fence was an iron-bark post and rail construction erected in 1883. The modernisation of the works in the early 1920s included formal entrance gates and a more substantial brick boundary fence. In consideration of the large number of workers from Mortlake who had joined the armed forces during WW I, the gates were dedicated as memorial Gates, with an honour roll unveiled in 1926 and the gates themselves being 'bronze sprayed'. The brick boundary wall was constructed in 1927 and this included new perimeter gates being built some 70 metres to the west of the Memorial Gates.



Gas holders at AGL Mortlake, ca 1910. Broadhurst Postcards, Mitchell Library.



The Gasworks Mortlake, Parramatta River ca. 1910 Broadhurst Postcards, Mitchell Library

4 Main Office No. 1

The main office building was the administrative centre of the complex during a large part of the 20th century. It is a long single storey brick building, with tile roof, inside and south of the main entrance gates. It was erected in 1913 to replace the original 1885 office.

5 Meter Reader's Office

This building was variously known as the 'Steel Mains Office', 'Pay Office', and 'Telephone Room'. Available evidence suggests that it was built in 1924 in its original form with three sections separated by roofed walk through bays. It has a residential quality in a late Federation style and is dominated by a large slate roof, with terra cotta ridge cap and extremely wide eaves.

6 Fitter, Machinists, Carpenters and Plumbers Workshops

This is a very long building along a sandstone retaining wall along in the centre of the northern part of the site. It has two storeys at its southern end and a long single storey section to the north.

It was built as part of the extensive building program that commenced in 1913. Furnished with a range of machine tools, the workshops were described as being well-equipped for all trades. By 1955 workshops on the site accommodated 750 trades people.

7 Blacksmith's Shop

The building now known as the Blacksmith's Shop was erected as a general workshop in late 1891. It was renovated in 1922 and is one of the few nineteenth century structures which remains largely intact at the former AGL site.

8 Power House

The major extension to Mortlake's carbonising power planned in 1910-11 incorporated very modern continuous vertical retorts which required electrically powered mechanised support services. At a time when electric power sources were stretched to their limit the importance of the Power House was vital. It is a unique and historically remarkable structure, representing a seminal phase in the development of reinforced concrete construction, laying the foundations for a future successful branch of engineering science.



Powerhouse of the former Gasworks at Mortlake



9 Breakfast Point

Breakfast Point was so named because it was here that Captain John Hunter who led an exploration of the Parramatta River, stopped to have breakfast on the 5th February 1788. On that occasion Hunter was met by members of the Wangal clan. Breakfast Point was one of the few place names included on Hunter's chart of the expedition and the name was in common use by 1799. The Wangal people called the area Booridiow-o-gule.

From 1886, the area was occupied by AGL's Mortlake gasworks. Today, the site has been redeveloped as a medium-density residential area and is again known as Breakfast Point (see photo above).

10 Site of Wharf

The Mortlake site offered easy access by water. A jetty was built to allow the direct delivery of coal. When AGL's plant was in full operation it used nearly 460,000 tonnes of coal per year. This was brought from Hexham on the Hunter River by colliers known as the 'Sixty Milers'. The last collier brought coal to Mortlake in 1971.

11 Mangroves

Throughout the 19th century and for the first half of the 20th century, extensive tidal mangroves and salt marsh flats were found at the heads of many of the bays and inlets of the Parramatta River. This vegetation depended on drainage and tidal inundation. The present shape of the foreshores and the existence of recreation areas around the bays are direct results of reclamation projects undertaken by Concord Council from the 1920s to the 1980s. Fringes of mangroves are still found in Brays, Yaralla and Majors Bay, while smaller pockets have survived on Kendall and Exile Bays.



The Mortlake Bank at the gaswork coal wharf



Cabarita Park before the free baths were built

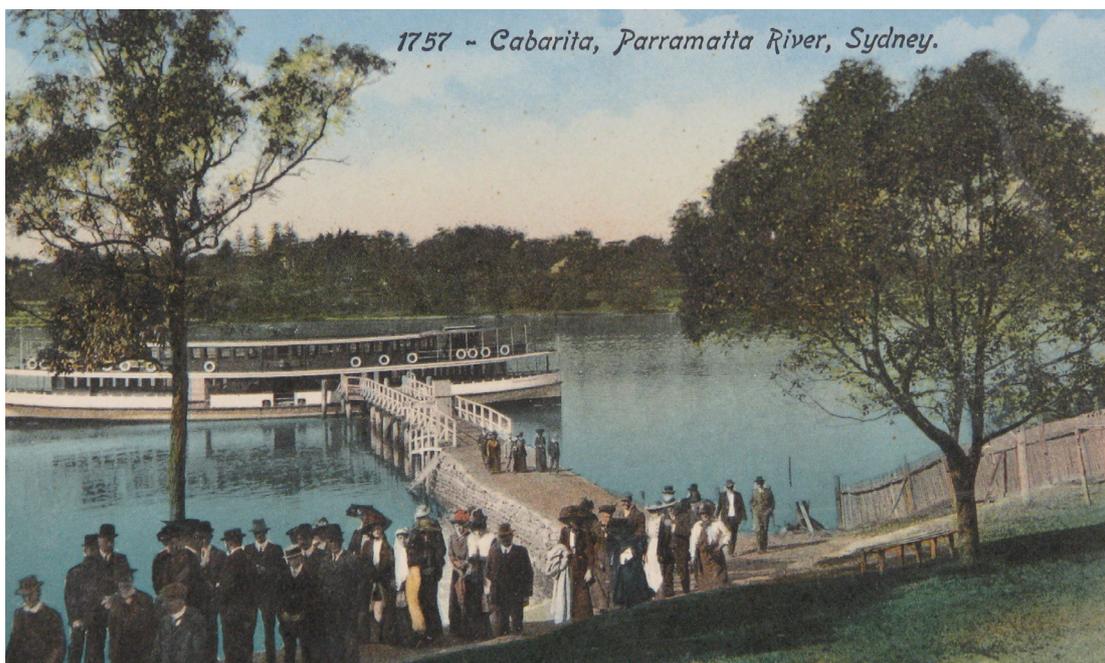
Cabarita Park

Before the arrival of settlers, Cabarita Point was a typical rocky outcrop along the shores of the Parramatta River. It was first sighted by new settlers in 1788. The Park was reserved as a recreation area in 1856 and was accessible by steamer in the 1850s. Early in its history, Cabarita Park was popular for picnics and for watching boating races on the river. The park was dedicated for public use in 1880. Cabarita was linked to Burwood station by tram. In 1931 fifty trees were planted in the park to coincide with the visit of the Duke of Gloucester.



Correy's Pleasure Gardens

From the 1880s until World War I, a pleasure ground operated on land adjacent to Cabarita Park. Correy's Pleasure Gardens had water frontages on both Kendall Bay and Hen and Chicken Bay. The pleasure ground was established by Thomas Obed Correy, who had previously owned gardens at Botany in the 1870s. Correy brought plants, flowers, shrubs and trees to Cabarita and provided swings, merry-go-rounds, a cricket field, a running track, summer houses, and in 1887 a dance pavilion, which was a great attraction for the many social and sporting clubs that held their annual picnics at the grounds. The dance pavilion could accommodate up to 900 people who would be entertained by a ten-piece string orchestra. Daytime dances were popular until gas replaced the kerosene lamps and evening dinners and dances became increasingly popular making the pleasure gardens one of Sydney's leading recreational resorts.



12 Site of Baths at Cabarita Park

Concord Council netted in a sharkproof swimming pool at the northern end of Cabarita Park in the early 1920s. It was a segregated pool with one half for men and boys, the other half for women and girls. Husbands and wives, as well as lovers, would lean on the dividing fence for a chat as the water swirled around their legs. On busy days between 400 and 500 people visited the baths.

13 William Beach Monument

In 1938 the William Beach monument was erected on the northern shoreline of the park. William Beach (1850-1935) was one of Australia's great international scullers and undefeated world champion. In 1884 he defeated world champion Edward Hanlon on the sculling course on the Parramatta River between Ryde Bridge and Henley Point. Beach went on to defend his world title successfully six times before his retirement in 1887.



A packed steamer and many smaller craft gather to watch the finish of a professional rowing race near Cabarita in 1910

14 Former Cabarita Wharf

Cabarita Park was little used and described as “undeveloped wilderness” until construction of the ferry wharf at Cabarita Point in 1880. It was a publicly owned ferry stop, providing access to the park and Correy's Pleasure Gardens.

15 Sanders Marina

Charles Sanders, son of a Mortlake gas lamplighter, established a boatshed in Cabarita in 1906, south of the existing marina buildings. In 1920 strong winds wrecked the boatshed and it was rebuilt at the point. Visitors to the nearby Correys Garden were attracted to the boatshed to try their hand at fishing or rowing. During the Depression Sanders ran a ‘ferry’ service taking gas workers in a rowing boat from the wharf at Looking Glass Point to Mortlake. The boatshed was destroyed by fire in 1992. D’Albora Marina continues today in this location.

16 Cabarita Bath

Construction of the Concord-Cabarita Coronation Baths was a project of the Depression years, providing employment for the local community. Work on the project began in 1930 but it was not until November 1937 that the saltwater baths were opened. Named to commemorate the coronation of King George V1 the baths were constructed at a cost of £10,230 using water pumped from the Parramatta River. About 3000 people turned up for the pool opening and in the first month 30, 000 people visited the baths. The baths were remodelled in 1961.



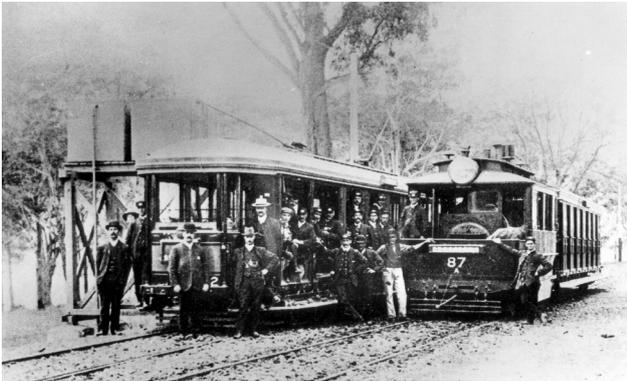
Opening day at the Concord-Cabarita Coronation Baths, 27 November 1937

17 Victory Coppice

In 1945 a small memorial was placed, and a row of trees forming a 'Victory Coppice' were planted in a ceremony on Arbor Day (25 August) along the southern road to commemorate those from the Concord Municipality who served and fell during WW II. The plantings are exclusively of species native to Australia. A similar planting ceremony was held the following year on Arbor Day.

18 Tram Turning Area

In 1907 the steam tramway between Enfield and Mortlake was extended to Cabarita. The present bus stop was the tram turning area. The tram made Correy's Pleasure Gardens even more popular. The ferry wharf became less important after the steam tram operated to the park entrance.



O-class on a trial journey to Cabarita prior to the introduction of regular electric services in February 1912

19 Federation Pavillion

The pavilion had been used for the signing of the Federation documents and the proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia at Centennial Park in 1901. Concord Council bought the pavilion for £60 and re-erected in Cabarita Park in 1903. Much altered, the simple wooden structure (see photo top right) is scarcely recognisable as the elaborately decorated pavilion of the Federation ceremonies.



20 Site of Former Kiosk

In 1923, a substantial kiosk designed by architect A. Ponton was erected. The kiosk and caretaker's cottage were damaged by fire in 1979 and demolished in 1981. In 1982, Concord Council constructed a large picnic shed on the site of the former caretaker's residence and kiosk.



Kiosk erected in 1923, destroyed by fire in 1979

Discover Cabarita /Breakfast Point Walking Tour

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Palace Hotel 2. Shops 3. AGL Gasworks Fence & Entry 4. Office No. 1 5. Meter Readers Office 6. Fitter, Machinists, Carpenters Workshops 7. Blacksmiths Shop 8. Power House 9. Breakfast Point 10. Site of Wharf (demolished) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Mangroves 12. Site of Baths (demolished) 13. Beach monument 14. Former Wharf 15. Sanders Marina 16. Cabarita Baths 17. Victory Coppice 18. Tram turning area 19. Federation pavilion 20. Site of former Kiosk |
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