

Fiona McEwan

Tuesday Afternoon Group

Regional History Research Paper

GREEN POINT - BELMONT

OPEN FOUNDATION AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Green Point, an attractive area of largely native bushland on the foreshores of Lake Macquarie could be described as Belmont's first industrial area. Logging, sawmilling, boatbuilding, coal mining and quarrying have been carried on here over the years. Today, Green Point is amidst controversy concerning development for tourism and housing or rehabilitation as a natural bushland park.

The area comprises about 220 hectares of land between the suburbs of Valentine to the north and Belmont to the south east. It is bounded by Croudace Bay Road on the north east and the three kilometre foreshore of Lake Macquarie. In the Parish map of Kahibah it is comprised of portions 35, 36, 37 and 38. Adjacent to this, on the Belmont side, are the portions 33 and 34, the residential area that is today known as Lewers Estate. This parcel of land is included here as it is linked historically with the Green Point area.

Two points are prominent on the foreshore, Hartley Point to the north, adjacent to Valentine and Cardiff Point overlooking the lake to the south west. Black Jacks Point is a smaller rocky ledge jutting into Belmont Bay to the south. Mill Creek, a natural water-course has two tributaries joining together near Croudace Bay Road and flowing to the lake under the Belmont 16' Sailing Club.

The area is hilly and quite steep in parts, covered with mainly dry sclerophyll forest. A small casuarina swamp and pocket of rain-forest lie to the Valentine end of the area. Native fauna consists of the smaller mammals and reptiles. A large bird population is evident and numbers of cockatoo, lorikeet, rosella and currawong are supported.

Between Hartley Point and Cardiff Point, an Aboriginal midden is to be found. Archaeologists report it to be at least 20,000 years old in in undisturbed condition.

This part of Lake Macquarie was inhabited by the Awabakal Aborigines. The Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld, missionary to the Aborigines, chose Belmont for his mission station and reported large numbers of Awabakal natives living in Lake Macquarie district. Threlkeld established his mission in 1825 and called his station house "Bahtahbah", which means "a hill by the lake". Ten thousand acres had been allocated to Threlkeld for his mission. He cleared about twenty five acres and with the help of the Aborigines planted corn and maize and kept cattle and sheep, pigs and horses. He built a six room house overlooking the bay and lived with his family and several convict servants.

There is some conflict over which end of Belmont Bay the site was located. Some local historians believe from Threlkeld's description that the site may have been the Lewers Estate area. (1) This area would have had the advantage of freshwater at Mill Creek. Threlkeld certainly had significant knowledge of local coal deposits at Green Point.

Threlkeld's aim was to translate the bible into the Awabakal language, but having run into financial difficulties, the "Bahtahbah" mission was abandoned in 1830 and the land grant reverted to the Crown. Threlkeld moved to Toronto to continue his work, but sadly the Awabakal people disappeared. The house stood empty for a few years until it was reported that runaway convicts were using the house for shelter, and so the house was demolished. (2)

L. Nilsen Ed. Lake Macquarie: Past and Present. Lake Macquarie City Council. 1985 p 16

W.S. Parkes Belmont, Lake Macquarie 1825-1974. Belmont Public School. 1974. p36-40

Belmont lay abandoned for about thirty years until a George Alfred Lloyd, who happened to be Threlkeld's son-in-law, requested a survey of land at Belmont in 1861. The survey plan included reservations for tram lines and roadways that seeminly<sup>3</sup> led nowhere except to the portions later acquired by Lloyd. He purchased lots 33, 34 and 35, with mineral rights and water frontage without the usual intervening reservations. Even before the survey was commenced, Lloyd had formed a syndicate called the Cardiff Coal Company. Obviously Lloyd envisaged a coal mine and a jetty for transporting the coal out. (3)

At this time, Swansea channel was very shallow and dangerous. Threlkeld (who owned a coal depot at Reid's Mistake - Swansea Heads, as well as his own coal mine at Toronto) and Lloyd pressured the government for dredging and deepening of the channel so that larger ships could be utilized in the transport of coal to Sydney. However, this work was not forthcoming and seems to be the reason for the failure of the Cardiff Coal Company around 1865. Belmont coal could not compete with Newcastle coal due to the extra transport costs of shipping coal through the channel. Lloyd is reputed to have lost ten thousand pounds in the venture although he was a wealthy businessman and later became a Member of Parliament for Newcastle and served as Minister for Mines. (4)

Two other ventures were set up about the same time. Hartley Coal Company at Hartley Point and Green Hills Coal Works north of Belmont Bay. Both ventures failed after a short time due to financial difficulties. Hartley Coal Company lost two schooners at Swansea Heads, one wrecked while negotiating the bar and the other blown ashore by a gale. (5)

(3) A.C. Gray. Early Settlement of Belmont. N.S.W. Sydney. 1985 p2-7

(4) K.H. Clouten. Reid's Mistake. Lake Macquarie Shire Council 1967 p182

(5) Ibid p 183

The hills of Belmont were once described as having vast quantities of first class timber. The first sawmill of Lake Macquarie was built at Cardiff Point in 1872. It was a steam sawmill and had facilities for boatbuilding. (6) Another sawmill is said to have been between Ross Street and the banks of Mill Creek (which acquired its name from the sawmill). (7) Logging was an important early industry for the area and with the growth of coal mines, timber for pit props and railway sleepers was in much demand.

In 1868 a boatbuilding business was begun on land belonging to Lloyd near Black Jacks Point. It was initiated by the Moynahan family, who built large barges for the carrying of pit props as well as larger sea-going schooners that could only navigate the channel after the high rain tides. (8)

Part of Lloyds holding, portions 33 and 34, were sold to the Bank of New South Wales and again in 1910 were sold to Robert D. Lewers, the Sydney Manager of the Bank of London. It was intended to mine here, but when transport problems to Belmont were solved by the rail link up, land values rose and it was subdivided in 1919. The area was popular due to the lake views and became known as Lewers Estate. (9)

During the depression a squatters camp sprang up on the banks of Mill Creek at Lewers Street and along the foreshore at Ross Street. Families built white washed houses out of bush timber and hessian bags. Men were employed on the road to Croudace Bay (previously a bullock track) and supplemented their dole rations by fishing and hunting rabbits in the hills between Belmont and Valentine.

(6) Ibid p 183

(7) N.M. Clout. The Child of Bahtahbah. Belmont. 1947 p65

(8) Ibid p 13

(9) Ibid p 31



A number of mines developed at Green Point over the years. With the building of a breakwater and dredging of the channel at Swansea, Lloyds ideas for Green Point came to fruition after his death. The pits of Green Point mined the shallow Great Northern Seam of coal. They were not operated with shafts like most mines but were simply tunnels dug into the hillside.

One mine was known as Shaggy Pit and was located on the waterfront on the site of Lloyd's Cardiff Coal Company venture. A steamship operated there until the early thirties when dredging of the channel stopped. By that time Belmont had been linked to Newcastle by rail and the coal was trucked to Belmont station in lorries. This pit was sometimes known as the Golden Egg and caught fire and closed in 1955. (10) (11) (12)

Belmont Colliery originally opened in 1925 and was sited in a gully to the north of Lewers Estate. It was closed during the post World War II recession, but was taken up by R.W. Miller in the 1960's. This was quite a large concern with full scale mechanization and an output of two thousand tons per day in the 1970's. The mine was closed in 1980 but the coal washery continued until 1984. (13) (14)

Currently a gravel quarry operates in a pocket of land at the north east corner adjacent to Croudace Bay Road. The owners have a ten year lease and supply gravel for road building.

Belmont Hospital stands on a ridge behind Lewers Estate. It opened in 1968 and serves the population of Lake Macquarie.

(10) Ibid p 29

(11) A.C. Gray. Early ..... p 7

(12) L. Nilsen Ed. Lake .... p 17

(13) Ibid p 17

(14) W.S. Parkes. Belmont ... p 87

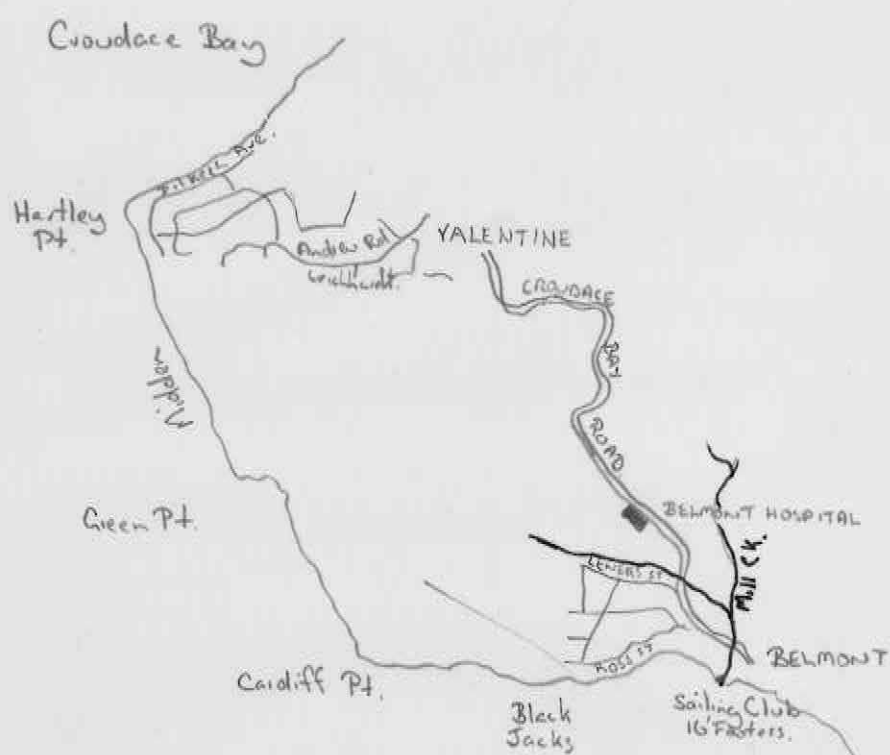
Today Green Point is marking time. A few scars of disused quarries and mine sites remain, but it is on the whole, a large area of natural bushland. Several submissions by developers have been made for tourist complexes and housing estates, but as Green Point is the last remaining area of undeveloped lakeside land in the north of Lake Macquarie, these proposals have been strongly rejected by locals. Local residents and community groups are currently petitioning Lake Macquarie Council for allocation of Green Point for a national park or reserve, such as the one at Blackbutt. A request for a park was made to Council as far back as 1929 and in 1956 Council itself advocated reservation of the site as a national park. Lake Macquarie Council recently acquired some 41 ha of the area but funding would need to be found for further purchases even though ownership of the rest of the area is in legal dispute. Consultants are currently preparing assessment of the land use proposals.

Early settlers and tourists, although they described Belmont and her Green Point as a place of beauty, valued more her commercial resources; timber, coal, gravel and fish. It is to be noted that none of these resources are now left in any quantity. Green Point was developed for her resources, not her attractiveness, but fortunately remains largely unspoilt by previous activities and certainly in worthwhile condition for rehabilitation.

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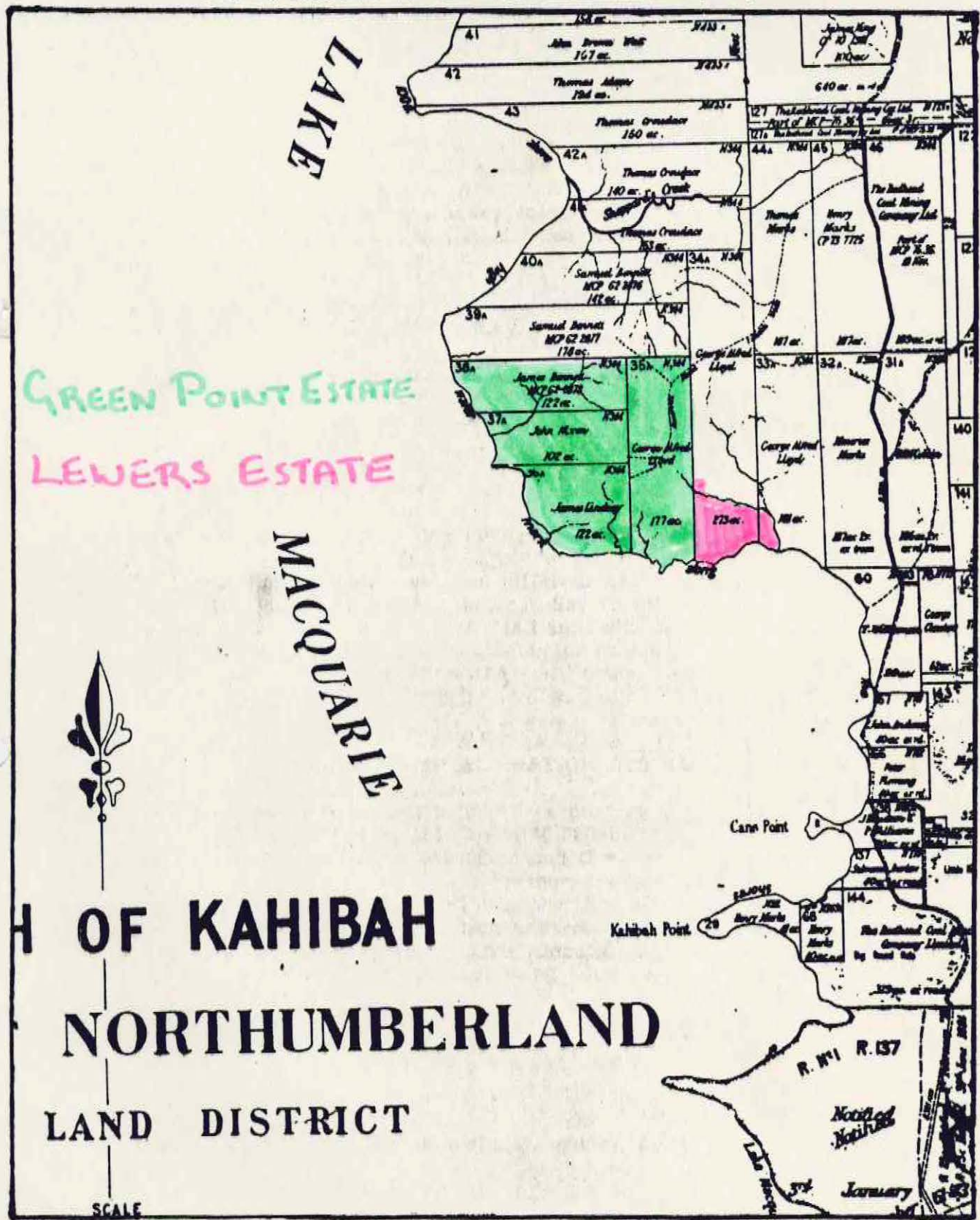




Belmont Bay

Early Settlement of Belmont NSW  
by A.C. Gray. Sydney 1985

Map by courtesy of the Mitchell Library, Sydney



1885 Map of part of the Parish of Kahibah showing Portions of Crown Land alienated at Belmont.

INTERVIEWEE: Duncan McEwan  
INTERVIEWER: Fiona McEwan  
SUBJECT: Green Point - Lewers Estate  
DATE: 6th September, 1989.

F. This is Fiona McEwan interviewing Duncan McEwan at Lewers Street, Belmont on the 6th September, 1989 about the Green Point area of Belmont.

Duncan, when did you come to live at Belmont?

D. 192.. just on 1929.

F. And how old were you then?

D. 10

F. Why did your family move to Belmont?

D. Well, my father had five sons, and he thought if we didn't leave up the country, we would all be drovers.

F. And what was your family business?

D. Bakery.

F. What are your memories of the Green Point area as a boy?

D. Well, when I first come to Belmont there was no one up in Green Point, there was a street where you are,

F. Lewers Street

D. Lewers Street, and a street going over to the mine,

F. Ross Street

D. Ross Street. I remember there was a pit, the Golden Egg, and they had a big wharf there, big jetty, and the Kurri Kurri and the Idant, 60 milers, used to come in and cart the coal to Sydney and after that, two b<sup>o</sup>rthers, Proudlocks from Wallsend, brought two thorncroft lorries and they started to cart the coal through to Belmont Railway Station, and that went on through the depression.

They used to take the coal out in skips and tip it straight into the boat, from down the hole, the pit was a hole in the hill and they used to bring it out and tip it straight in to the boats to go to Sydney.

F. What was this Lewers Street, Green Point area like during the depression?

D.



- D. Well, during the depression a lot of coal miners come down from Aberdare and I think Kurri Kurri, and they built houses along Lewers Street, well they weren't houses, they used to build the frame out of a lot of bush timber stuff and they used to get bags from the bakehouse, put them on the walls of the house and throw cement, get cement and water and mix up and make them waterproof. There was, I remember I think, the Wises, and the Druerys and there was a Duncan Ross, and his family come down. The men used to fish and help the fishermen, and I remember the, when they used to pull the nets in they'd get down there with great big little round baths, you know what they used to use, they used to get full of yellowtail, the fishermen used to give them to them, they take them home and cook them.
- F. I understand you used to deliver bread with a horse and cart.
- D. Well, during the, we used to, well the two brothers, well the brother three years older than me, and we used to deliver the bread up to these places with a horse and cart. I can remember coming one day round into Lewers Street, and one of our horses that we had let out to graze, Jean I think her name was, and we caught it and put it in the cart, and it bolted up Lewers Street, and I grabbed one reign and my brother grabbed the other, and it bolted up the street, and my brother said let the reign go, and I let it go and we run up on that bank over there, and the cart tipped up, bread every where and broke the shaft and left us laying on the road.
- F. And what was Mill Creek like then?
- D. Well, Mill Creek was fairly wide down the bottom, and there was a bridge, an old wooden bridge over it and it run under where the 16 Footers is today, and I can remember there was a lot of stones and that, and builders used to come and use the stones for cementing, there was no slag in them days. But the Mill Creek was a pretty clean creek, you know, not like it is today.
- F. Was it deep?
- D. No, it wasn't very deep, no, it was never very deep.

- F. Were there any timber mills here then?
- D. No, there was an old building where it used to be, down there, near the bridge, but that was before my time and I never remembered it working.
- F. Would that be down near the 16 Footers Club.
- D. Yes, there was one down there.
- F. And were there any boat yards?
- D. Ah, further up from the 16 Footers, there was always a slip there where they used to slip their boats.
- F. There's a slip there today.
- D. And the slips still there today.
- F. And what was the fishing like?
- D. Fishing in them days was really good fishing. We used to come up and fish off the jetty and you could get 60 to 80 squire, and you'd get flathead, and taylor, all legal length in them days. The fishermen used to pull the nets in at around about the 16 Footer and Belmont Bay and they used to pull the nets in, sometimes twice a week and you could go down and get a basket of fish for four shillings.
- F. What was the condition of the lake?
- D. The lake was very clean. You could drift in a boat from Belmont Bay to the end of Marks Point and you wouldn't get a bit of weed. There was no weed here off from the jetty. All that weed, I think started when the council started to drain the gutters into the lake and there used to be reeds all around the lake, which acted as a sieve and when they took all these reeds away, all the mud and stuff went into the lake, and seaweed won't grow on sand, and all this mud that they run into the lake, was the cause of the seaweed and thats how the lake is so polluted around there today.

INTERVIEWEE: Pauline Keating. President of Green Point  
Action Committee. (G.P.A.C.)

INTERVIEWER: Fiona McEwan

DATE: 6th September, 1989.

SUBJECT: Green Point Estate

F. This is Fiona McEwan interviewing Pauline Keating at Belmont on  
6th September, 1989 about Green Point.

Pauline, what are the aims of the committee?

P. The aims of the committee are to work towards acquiring the whole  
of the Green Point area as a bushland park..

F. How would the committee like to see this area?

P. Well, a bushland park, something along the lines of Blackbutt with  
a lot of natural areas, probably as few roads as possible, car  
parking on the perimeters, and we want established bush walking  
trails, opportunity for people to fish, possibly camping. The  
ideal originally, one of our aims really is, we feel the option  
would be to have a state recreation area there.

F. And what is the Councils position?

P. I can't speak for the Council except that there was a rezoning  
proposal put to them before Christmas involving housing development,  
because of the public pressure that was brought to bear they  
decided to vote against that, then in February they decided to,  
they felt they should commission a study which should look  
at resolving the delineation of the boundaries for the park. At  
the meeting, the spirit of the meeting was that the majority of  
the area, at least, should be a park, possibly all of it should be  
a park, but in case there were areas which would not be suitable  
for inclusion in the park, then an independant study should be  
undertaken, so they've made steps, but at the moment that report  
hasn't yet come back, so they're waiting on that to make their  
decision., and I feel, I've been led to believe, despite the  
statement that have been made by the Mayor, in the press, I've been  
led to believe by other aldermen that they're attitude still hasn't



changed, they are prepared to follow the intentions of the report, and when the report comes back, to put that back to the public again, for further submission, further discussion and then make a decision after that.

- F. What was the reaction to the recent acquisition by Council of a portion of the land at Green Point?
- P. The committee was delighted for several reasons. Originally we had talked about the possibility, when Council had explained the problem with funding, it became obvious there was a problem with funding, we felt it was possible perhaps to acquire different parts, because its not all owned by the same people, so we felt that it would be possible to acquire different portions of the land as the Council could afford them. However, at the time, there was one owner who was representing all the owners, and he made it clear that, he told us in person, that it would be all or nothing, that there would be no breaking up of the it, it would be an all or nothing situation, which put a lot of pressure on Council and State Government to find money for all of it in one hit, but now obviously one of the owners has decided, well, the people who own one of the portions, to be more accurate, have decided that they don't want to be in that situation anymore, and so they've decided to sell up their portion which means the situation now has changed. The pressure now to find the funds, money for all of it, is no longer there. Council can, well, whoever is going to acquire it can take their time, we can take our time, and investigate all the funding options and acquire the land as it becomes available. Another point here is that out of what is remaining, this portion that has been bought, is only roughly 43ha out of the 220. There are two further portions which amount to roughly 120ha which, whose ownership is in dispute, yes, you could put it that way, the ownership is in dispute, and while that is in the courts there is no possibility of anyone being able to negotiate, even if they wanted to purchase those two portions they would not be permitted to negotiate. Legal proceedings are only just beginning; this could take quite some time so there is no reason for Council at this stage to even consider development, there is no reason why they should say we must have development in order to buy it because, they

couldn't buy it, then in the mean time that gives them plenty of time, it could be two or three years, who knows how long legal action will take, it would give plenty of time perhaps to put pressure on the State Government, corporate funding, public sponsorship or even put away, invest some money themselves, so that when it becomes available, they might be able to purchase it.

- F. How does the committee feel about the Mayors proposal to make cul-de-sacs at the end of the existing residential areas and go into Green Point that way with residential housing?
- P. Well, we were not really surprised because he has been putting forward that idea for quite some time. It wouldn't. we feel, we would be very surprised if the report would, will come forward backing that idea because when you read through the studies that have already been done, there are areas that have been severely damaged, housing has been severely damaged by mine subsidence. For instance, Leichhardt Road, there are quite a number of houses that have had to be completely rebuilt and having talked to the owners of some of those houses, they were told by the mines subsidence people that they were only on the edge of the problem, the problem was further out, well off the end of the street, into the bush which is precisely the area that would be developed, so there are major mines subsidence problems on that side plus from that side, if you look at the drainage patterns on the maps, that area drains directly down into one of the main creeks that flows down into the lake and its a very steep area, so there would be a lot of problems with erosion. There are problems now with erosion because of the tracks, those dead end streets have been used for access by bush bikes, walkers and horses and so on and just that much use has caused a lot of the erosion and that inevitably ends up as siltation in the lake, so it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to stop the problems of siltation in the lake. It also drains into the very important casuarina forest and the rare rainforest

area there which has been stipulated as being very unusual with a very large number of specimens of trees for the small area that there is. On the other side, if you go off Ross Street, again the people who, well the squatters as they're called, have also indicated that they've, experienced lots of problems with mines subsidence there, and further back it becomes very steep again, so again you have the problem with removal of trees which indicates again the, that your going to have problems with erosion and then off, if you go off the top end of Jean Street, there's not actually a road in there, there's an access there with a gate on it that actually is a building block, but presumably if you go into the area where the mine used to be, that area there is the chitter, where the chitter dumps and so on for the coal mine, so we would imagine that there would be instability there and also possible problems with spontaneous combustion.

F. How does the committee feel about the existing quarry that is working at the moment.?

P. Well, thats a good point because again that quarry has a ten year lease, so again that is an area that no one needs to try and worry about acquisition of at the moment. No one needs to acquire it, that quarry according to the open space study, is not having any adverse ecological effect on the surrounding environment, so it could be continued to work, see its life out, which again would give ten years before there's a need for money to acquire that particular area, thus, or alternatively if its acquired, then you'd be getting money back, the money return from the lease. A couple of suggestions for that area are to have some of the car parking in there in the future. Another suggestion at the moment is that it could be used as a natural amphitheatre as well, as part of the park, as we feel that the park, there are a lot of possible uses for the park.

F. Why does the committee feel that the need for 100% acquisition of the park?

P. Well, for one thing, car parks and so on will need to be within the park. There is, if you look at the surrounding area, there is the residential area of Valentine, which there is no area at

all outside that area that would be suitable for car parking, so some of the area is going to have to be used for car park and so its going to be lost virtually to the bushland park concept. Then secondly, no matter, if any percentage is taken away for housing, even say 10%, there is the natural tendency to extend that actual boundary. The effect of the boundaries is not actually 10% because people tend to put swing sets or BBQ's or the gate in the back fence and so on, so there's a greater impact than just the 10% and nature, the ecology is already in the balance, with the existing boundaries, so the ecology is going to have to readjust if new boundaries are introduced. Then, it's not much smaller than Blackbutt.

Blackbutt is roughly 182 ha and the Manager of Blackbutt, for example, and we agree with him, feels that this area would have at least double the usage of Blackbutt and as everyone knows, Blackbutt is suffering from overuse and Newcastle City Council is having to find new use areas that now have been utilized, in fact, it was two or three years ago now that the Manager of Blackbutt actually at the opening of the nursery, he spoke to the prominent people that were there and begged them to set up a new bushland park, preferably on the foreshores of the lake. Another reason, we feel, with the freeway going through, its very close to Sydney and would get a lot of use from people from the Central Coast and Sydney, Its quite close to the northern shores of Sydney. Being on the lake, it would be heavily used by people from the other side of the lake and the southern side of the lake who would come this short distance from their areas by boat. We feel also, we don't want to cut down on the range of uses of the park because not everybody wants to do the same sorts of things in such a park. We feel, obviously we would need to set up a management committee, probably and decide on the uses which would be both practical and not harmful to the ecology and the aims and objectives of the park but such as an adventure playground have been suggested and an area, similar to the area at Richley Reserve, where people can play a few ball games and so on and the possibility

of camping, we also feel that that should be considered as well, and if you start cutting down on the size then your'e obviously going to have to cut down the possible uses and last, but not least of course, is the fact that there is no more possible room for possible future expansion. What we end up with now is what we end up with forever, it cannot be expanded later.



## SUMMARY OF TAPED INTERVIEWS

Interview 1. Duncan McEwan - 7 minutes

Interview 2. Pauline Keating - 14 minutes

Total 21 minutes.

This tape consists of two interviews. The first interview is of seven minutes duration and is a few reminiscences of Duncan McEwan (my father-in-law) who came to live in Belmont in 1929 at the age of ten. His family were well known bakers of the Belmont district. He remembers Green Point area to be largely bush with gravel roads leading to coal mines out at the Point. He especially remembers Shaggy Pit (Golden Egg as he calls it). This pit was on the foreshore of Cardiff Point and had a long jetty at which steamers would moor to collect coal for transport to Sydney.

Duncan and his brother used to deliver their fathers bread in a horse and cart and Lewers Estate was part of their round. One particular day the horse bolted and they were left lying on the road, bread everywhere and a cart with a broken shaft.

During the Depression, when squatters camps sprang up on Lewers Estate, Duncan tells of the squatters collecting the flour bags from their bakery for building of their huts.

A keen fisherman, Duncan clearly remembers fishing off the Shaggy jetty as a boy and the large amounts of fish being caught then.

He can remember Mill Creek being clean and wide and also the lake as clean with a sandy bottom. His theory on the pollution and growth of seaweed in the lake is that there used to be natural reeds which grew along a lot of the foreshore. These reeds acted as a sieve and kept out the silt and mud. The reeds disappeared



at the time when drainage works were being carried out.

The next interview is of Mrs. Pauline Keating , who is the spokes-person for the Green Point Action Committee, a local community group committed to seeing the Green Point area as a natural bushland park.

Pauline sets out the aims of the Committee and how they would like to see the area and her opinion of the Council's position. The Committee acknowledges that there is a problem with funding and suggests that as some of the land ownership is in dispute and some under lease for quarrying, there is no hurry for Council to require development for funding. They could take the time to investigate state funding, corporate funding, public sponsorship and investment. The Committee was delighted to hear of the recent acquisition of a large portion of the area.

The Committee feels that housing development of the area would be difficult and unsound due to mine subsidence, drainage problems, ecological balances, etc.

The quarry that is currently working does not seem to be environmentally harmful and the Committee has no objection to its lease. Future uses for the area though, could be a car park or amphitheatre.

The Committee stresses the need for 100% acquisition on the grounds that this is the only land available, "what we get now is what we end up with forever".

On acquisition of the park a management committee would be set up along the lines of Blackbutt Reserve, to decide the uses of the park that would be practical and environmentally sound.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

1989.

I, Pauline Keating give my  
permission to Fiona McEwan

to use this interview, or part of this interview, for  
research, publication and/or broadcasting (delete one of  
these if required) and for copies to be lodged in  
the Newcastle University Library.

.....  
for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed 7.9.89 P.M. Keating

Date 7.9.89

Interviewer Fiona McEwan