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The seaside holiday

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The seaside holiday

Abstract

Local folk from the Camden district have been going to Wollongong and the South Coast for beach holidays for generations. It is a time to relax, chill out, slow down, drop out, and generally escape the hum drum of daily existence of home and work.

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Wollongong Lighthouse is located on the breakwater at Wollongong Harbour which has a popular spot called Brighton Beach.

Local folk from the Camden district have been going to Wollongong and the South Coast for beach holidays for generations. It is a time to relax, chill out, slow down, drop out, and generally escape the hum drum of daily existence of home and work.

The seaside holiday has been more than that. The development of the beach holiday owes much to the Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s and the shorter working week and increased wages of ordinary workers. Australian's copied the English Victorians and their interest in health and well-being and particularly cold-water bathing. The scourge of diseases like tuberculosis (or consumption as it was known) were constant threats to health and well-being of people. The inter-war period (1919-1939) saw the added influence of modernism, consumerism, movies and tourism on the mobility and spending patterns of people. All these contributed to the attraction of the beach.

Camden aquatic sports and swimming

Camden folk were influenced by all these social and cultural trends. Swimming had become popular before the First World War as Peter Mylrea found in his history of swimming (Camden History, March 2006). The Camden Aquatic Sports were held in the Nepean River in 1909 and the foundation of the Camden Swimming Club in the 1920s. But for young people the beach provided the lure of the exotic when compared to swimming in the Nepean River.

The beach attracted the attention of Camden families particularly during the Inter-war period. Local marriages were consummated with a honeymoon to Manly Beach for the weekend. Manly was accessible by steam train and ferry, and was far enough away to seem like another world for a newly wed farm labourer and his sweet-heart. The railway also provided easy access to Wollongong beaches, particularly localities like Kiama. The motor car provided mobility and the South Coast provided an escape to stay in a boarding house or camp.

Motoring

After the Second World War the boom in the motor car travel meant that Camden families could drive further for a beach holiday. One ever popular location was Kiama. Other beach localities started to draw the attention of Camden families, particularly Jervis Bay and St George's Basin.



Stuart Park is behind North Beach Wollongong which is lined with Norfolk Pines like many other beaches in New South Wales

Stuart Park Wollongong

Geoff McAleer reported that in his youth in the 1940s and 1950s on the annual Christmas holiday at the beach in Wollongong. The beach was Wollongong's North Beach and the McAleers holidayed at Stuart Park Caravan Park. The McAleers were joined on the Christmas beach holidays by the Holyoakes, Dunks, Williams and the Cliftons. It was a popular location with Camden families because, according to Geoff, 'it was close to Camden, only a 40 minute drive and it was good body surfing spot.' There were no surf boards then according to Geoff. That would come in the 1960s. On occasions Geoff and his Dad, Hubert, would have a boys weekend away at Stuart Park. Geoff took his sweetheart, later to be his wife, Olive there for Christmas holidays with the family in 1949. The popularity of Stuart Park owed much to the presence near North Beach Wollongong. The beach was popular for swimming and surfing from the 1920s. Unfortunately for patrons the caravan park was closed in 1964 but under public pressure was re-opened in an adjacent location in 1966. It was eventually closed permanently in 1970. The park had a kiosk as well as a camping area and was popular with day-trippers for picnics.

Cheryl's seaside holiday at Bulli Beach

Wollongong beach-side caravan parks have come under pressure to be closed and caravans evicted in recent decades. One spot where Camden families still have a beach caravan holiday is Bulli Beach camping reserve. Cheryl, who has a caravan at Bulli Beach, along with a number of other Camden families enjoy the escape it provides from 'the rat race'. She says that a number families have had permanent vans at the park, which have been passed down between the generations. They all escape Camden on Christmas holidays and long weekends. It is a great spot for all sorts of recreation.

Steve's holidays at Erowal Bay

Steve recalls as a child fond memories

“ Like our family holidays to Killarney, Erowal Bay on St Georges Basin in the 1950s. Before we had our own car Mum and Dad and six kids used to travel there in and on the back of Uncle Mel Peats work truck and stay in his house right on the water with its own jetty, boat house and row boat. Whitemans and Ricketts were a couple of other Camden families I can remember who had houses there also. What great holidays they were. Might even be able to find a couple of photos.

John and Julie recall Gerroa holidays

John and Julie fondly remember seaside holidays at Gerroa on the South Coast.

“ In the late 1960s John and I went for holidays at Gerroa. We stayed at a simple beach cottage which had been built by hand in the 1950s by our parents' friends. The cottage had no fridge, just an icebox, but it had great views of 7 Mile Beach and you could walk to the beach for a swim. The cottage has long gone and been replaced by a brick home.

For many years from the 1970s the painter Alan D Baker spent family holidays at Gerroa. We have a painting that Alan's son, Gary Baker, did of Gerroa Point, which reminds us of holidays at Gerroa 40 years ago.

Where do you go to the beach?

Beach holidays have always been important for Camden district families. Do you have memories of holidays at Wollongong, Kiama, Gerroa, Shoalhaven and the South Coast. Has your family had a beach holiday in the same spot for generations? When you go to the beach? What did you do? Where did you go? How did you fill in your time? What was your favourite spot?

Facebook Replies

[Peter Hammond](#) Camden 9 January 2016 For all my primary school days we had 2 or 3 weeks at Thirroul in January, the only dampener were the back to school sales.

[Karen Burgess](#) All along the coast. Fave spot. You can't beat the beautiful Gerringong. (30 January 2016)

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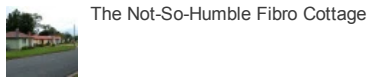
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