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Uncovering Carrington

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Uncovering Carrington

Abstract

The first part of this chapter examines Carrington's place within Newcastle, its separation from the rest of the city, its reputation, and its internal differentiation. The second part of this chapter considers the collective memory of Carrington as a stigmatised and dangerous industrial and maritime space with its own internal social and spatial divisions.

Keywords

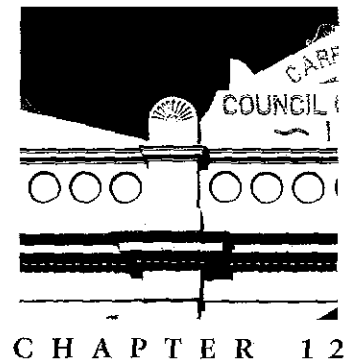
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Uncovering Carrington

Hilary P M Winchester, Kevin M Dunn, Pauline M McGuirk

UNCOVERING PLACES AND COMMUNITY

Urban researchers interested in expressions of community and place are faced with the perennial problem of uncovering the identity of cities. The search for identity requires looking beyond the obvious landscape inscriptions to an examination of the city as it is lived. Observers may recognise Paris from an image of the Eiffel Tower or Sydney from a picture-postcard of the Opera House, but such architectural icons tell us little about the lived city. In Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo tells Kublai Khan that the city of Zaira can not simply be read using the obvious aspects of the city's physical morphology. Zaira, he argued, must be described with studied reference to its past. The reading required for such description must involve the landscapes and the people who are too often considered banal, not important, or 'insignificant'.

The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.¹

In order to engage with the lived city, the depictions of place found in creative and official literature need to be supplemented with the 'everyday' articulations of local community and places. The lives of a city are often etched on the landscape and found in the words of residents in ways which are informal, unrecorded and unofficial. The digging and sorting through documentary and ethnographic material distils a sense of identity and community. Such a distillation may, however, result in an identity which is narrowly defined by the resources available. Places and communities may be artificially constrained to a unitary identity which is limiting and inflexible in coping with internal heterogeneity. The story of Carrington from the unofficial sources used here, although providing a sense of place and community, is itself a partial construction. Although it reveals hidden histories, it may further mask others. Other spaces and people who fall outside that new unitary determination of identity become, or remain, hidden. As the editors of this book have claimed, the urban researcher must attempt to "uncover hidden, misunderstood, or merely forgotten, fragments".² In this way more progressive and inclusive articulations of place identity are made possible. Forgotten people and landscapes are unearthed, valorised, and perhaps incorporated. 'Lost' fragments are assimilated, in what becomes a constant process of urban redefinition. However, in discovering hidden histories of place, it is essential to be constantly aware of their partial nature and of the aspects which have remained hidden or, indeed may have been hidden by the processes and sources used by the urban researcher.

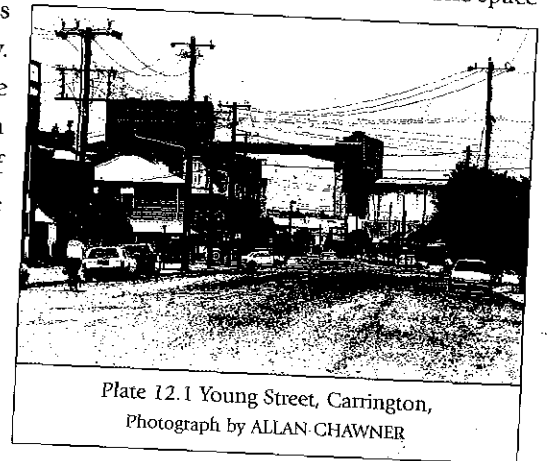
UNCOVERING NEWCASTLE/COVERING CARRINGTON

The public re-definition of Newcastle has been in many ways a laudable project of community assertiveness. It has been a largely defensive agenda, aimed at correcting a set of negative imagery associated with smokestack industry; with its attendant pollution, decline and problematic industrial relations.³ The 'Best city' identity which was chosen to replace these negatives was a package of post-industrial images.

The Best city identity for Newcastle, NSW, represents only part of the landscape and only part of the population, predominantly the middle-class, the Anglo and the male. The material reconstruction of the built environment preserves and commodifies only part of the landscape heritage and denies the indigenous, convict and industrial in favour of the commercial and post-industrial.⁴

The city's decision-making elite initially decided to represent Newcastle through images of consumption-based activities, and emphasised the beach, the vineyards, and commercial foreshore redevelopments. The people presented were white, middle class, heterosexual Australians. They were white-collar consumers of Hunter Valley wine and fine seafood. Blue-collar workers were being dispossessed, as the indigenous Awabakal people had been, as other non-Anglo Novocastrians and working women were. The working class and their spaces, which figured so prominently in the earlier identities of Newcastle, were being 'written-out' of the city's public presentations. Omission from local identity constitutes omission from local citizenship. The new post-industrial middle class representation of Newcastle, even more than the old, appears to dispossess the people of Carrington of their identity and hides their spaces. The people of Carrington, formerly hidden among the estuarine flats and the smokestacks of industry are, in the 1990s, more deliberately concealed behind a generalised facade and discourse of consumption and leisure for the city. However, the people of Carrington are claiming their space and defining their own identity through a collective memory of a community based on maritime and industrial work. The space they are claiming may be unitary and thereby partial and sanitised, but is nonetheless becoming visible in the streetscape and discourse of the city. "Carrington's renaissance" screamed a major feature headline in the *Newcastle Herald* late in 1996.⁵ Its rebirth is indeed an emergence, an uncovering of one of Newcastle's hidden spaces. It was this context of changing communities in an era of profound industrial and image restructuring which initially precipitated the wider project of which this work forms a part.⁶

The residents of Carrington, and the suburb itself, have long occupied a hidden space within Newcastle. In the creative literature about Newcastle the suburb is dwarfed by some of the dominant industrial icons of Newcastle; the BHP smokestacks, the abandoned State Dockyard, the wheat silos.



Seeing the whole city spread out below him, he was filled with a sense of exaltation: the harbour sparkling between the winding shores of the estuary, ... the twin arms of Nobbys and Stockton enclosing it like the pincers of a giant crab; the huddle of buildings along the water-front; the scatter of suburbs, ... the innumerable factory chimneys, ... His gaze wandered over the harbour, from the bar where the tide splashed against the breakwater, over Nobbys, up the muddy channel of the river, over the crowded city to where the enormous stacks of Southern Steel and B.H.P. rose from the flat foreshores, belching forth smoke and steam in silver-white-lined clouds that drifted and lay in a grey pall over the whole city.⁷

Carrington has always been reduced to part of the amorphous foreshore flats, "the huddle of buildings". Residents of Carrington live in the hope that they will be recognised if the towering smokestacks are removed.

Resident: *Eventually [the industries] will go. You are probably talking about twenty or thirty years. When Carrington becomes part of the city, when they've got the ferries running across ... That is the future. Carrington will be incorporated, like a mini-Manhattan type ...*

The city icons, whether natural features such as Nobbys, symbols of Newcastle's Victorian past such as Christ Church Cathedral, or beacons of the promised post-industrial era such as Queen's Wharf, draw attention away from Carrington, asking observers to turn their backs on industrial landscapes and the suburbs huddled beneath them along the "muddy channel".

Closer scrutiny reveals that Carrington is far from featureless, and is remarkably distinct from the "scatter of suburbs" around it. People from 'Carro' recognise a vernacular territory, with shared histories and agreed upon but invisible boundaries. These unitary histories make constant reference to work in the coal export industry, to maritimers and their drunken exploits, and a foreshore composed of foreign soil and rock which came as ballast. Community generating institutions and events like the church, dances, bingo and fairs reproduce and help maintain a coherent sense of identity, although the sense and elements of this community spirit are considered in more detail elsewhere.⁸ Carrington's boundary is partly a product of the suburb's 'island status', as a place apart from the rest of inner city Newcastle. Importantly, other Novocastrians recognise Carrington as different. 'Carro' people have been stigmatised, and the place pathologised as a dangerous and marginalised space. However, just as the refiguring of Newcastle has continued the elision of Carrington, the

uncovering of Carrington has hidden other spaces and people. Some of these are revealed below, such as the north-south divide of Carrington where the north, with its tin shanties, is colloquially referred to as 'Texas'. Other divisions within the workspaces caused by social hierarchy and gender are hinted at if not made explicit.

This chapter focuses on two main themes, one being Carrington's place within the city, the other being its self-definition as an industrial and maritime suburb. In re-creating this history of Carrington as a place apart, as a self-defined industrial suburb, we are using predominantly the oral histories of local residents carried out in 1995, as well as a video of the Carrington community made in 1996 where residents also speak.⁹ We also use as context some of the creative/fictional literature which focuses on Newcastle more generally. We recognise, however, that in reinscribing the space of Carrington, we are ourselves leaving out of the picture some of the groups most often marginalised in Australian society; the poor, working women, children, as well as the indigenous and foreign-born population. The oral histories of long-standing residents are themselves only partial in the telling of a community of generations, which to some extent excludes the transients, the seamen and the foreigners who, like the ballast from foreign shores, were perceived as different from the residents but nevertheless contributed significantly to its identity. This picture of Carrington is therefore not intended as definitive but rather as one story amongst many.

A PLACE APART

The first part of this chapter examines Carrington's place within Newcastle, its separation from the rest of the city, its reputation, and its internal differentiation. Despite the fact that Carrington was often represented as a nameless, undistinguished part of the 'flats' and industrial landscapes of the inner city, historically it was nevertheless a place with a distinct identity. This identity is expressed in the 'island mentality' of Carrington residents, in their understanding of their suburb as a unique location that is 'a place apart' from other parts of Newcastle, and in their sense of what it means to be a Carrington person.

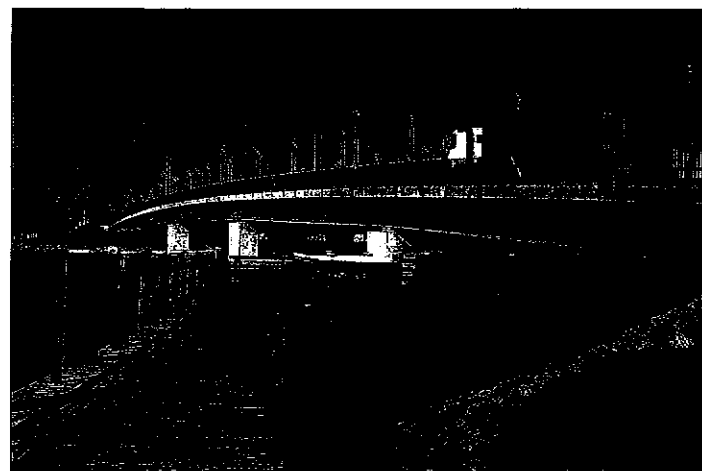


Plate 12.2 Carrington Bridge, Photograph by JO HANLEY

Carrington is a peninsula jutting into Newcastle harbour, at the heart of the city and in the midst of its industrial core. The major access route is across a bridge from the wharf-side, that leads only to Carrington. The bridge is a symbolic entry and exit point to and from the suburb. Local people regularly refer to 'outsiders' and speak of the peninsula suburb as an 'island' with strongly identified boundaries between their place and the rest of the city.

The 'island' was, for many, the boundary within which their daily lives were lived, it was their home, their workplace, the place where they socialised. Many recollect only rarely venturing off Carrington, and then on well remembered outings for special events.

Interviewer: Did your mum go off Carrington for anything?

Resident: Not a thing.

Interviewer: She stayed on Carrington? What about your dad?

Resident: The only place he went was into town to work ...

Interviewer: What else do you remember as a kid going off Carrington for anything — other than, like we've said the beach, and dancing classes?

Resident: No, not really, only for different, if you had relatives off you went to visit them, but we used to go to picnics.

Interviewer: Did you go off Carrington for very much? Other than to go to the beach?

Resident: No, that was the only time we went off the island at all.

Some of this insularity was born of the fact that this was an industrial community where people lived close to their places of work in the many industries located around Newcastle harbour. In this workingclass community, an overwhelming recollection was that past times were hard times when the community 'did it hard' and when few families would have been able to afford leisure trips off the island.

The boundaries around Carrington were not simply a result of its physical isolation 'across the bridge' nor of the insularity of the community. They were also defined by external views of the suburb. Just as Carrington people viewed their place as a place apart from the rest of Newcastle so did 'outsiders'. It was a place to which they almost never ventured.

Resident: It's a separate entity to the rest of Newcastle. If people want to come to the island, they have to make a special trip over here. You don't just drive through Carrington.

Resident: I was at the barber's when someone was talking the other week. The chap said: "When I was young, you wouldn't put your foot over the bridge in Carrington".

Resident: But on Carrington, you just never thought about it, you just, like I went to Girl's High. There were only three of us out of my class went to the Girl's High, the rest went to Wickham. And when I said: "I come from Carrington", it was "Oh, Carrington!" As if you come from another planet, because there used to be talk that people wouldn't cross the bridge. I don't know what they thought they thought we were going to do to them.

The final quotation listed above shows the effect not only of physical isolation but of social stigma. The distinct and unflattering social identity that was generated for the suburb among other Newcastle residents no doubt contributed to their reluctance to go on to Carrington. It was a suburb viewed as dirty, polluted and rough; its reputation was enough to keep others away.

Resident: People'd say "Carrington, oh yuk!"... People who live outside of Carrington think it's a dog hole.

Resident: Well out of Carrington, it was very bad, because Carrington had a bad name. Give a dog a bad name and it sticks.

Resident: A lot of them still think Carrington's a dirty place, you know, full of dust and everything else. It had a reputation if there was football on that we would drive them off the beach ... and there was a reputation of, er, sort of thuggery, when it wasn't. And it's still got that. People still curl their nose up when you say Carrington but now they come over and have a look.

The stigma attached to the place and the people was thought to make Carrington a dumping ground where unwanted urban facilities could be relocated. Facilities such as hostels for groups in need may be more easily relocated to areas such as Carrington which are zoned for mixed land use, where land prices and rents are cheap, and where residential opposition is muted, than to more expensive suburbs elsewhere.¹⁰ The use of Carrington as a dumping ground was mentioned by several residents.

Resident: I think it got to the stage where it felt as if no-one else wanted to push them [hostels, Salvos etc] over the bridge, then Carrington would put up with it, and we'll accept it.

Resident: If they don't — can't — put them anywhere else, they dump them on Carrington.

Resident: And they use Carrington, they think they can get a foot in here, because it's a working class area they can get away with it ...

The accumulation of welfare services, hostels and their associated service-dependent populations did nothing to enhance Carrington's reputation among disparaging 'outsiders'. More revealingly, Carrington was also a place perceived as threatening and even dangerous. Its industrial and maritime history made it a place that threatened both physical danger and social, even moral, disorder. Carrington people were eager to disassociate themselves as residents from the street-fighting, drinking and generally violent character that was part of the suburb's maritime identity.

Resident: A lot of trouble was on Carrington was from strangers, not actually Carrington people. See what happened here, a lot of ships would come here ... They was them Liverpool Irishmen and that and they used to get out ... and have fights ... Then Carrington got a bad name.

Resident: It was a seamen's, um, community or town or whatever, you know. And you had a pub on every corner. That's what it was, Carrington.

Resident: Sin city, as they call it ... Oh I think in the early days there was a bit of erotic things might have gone on with the seamen ... we didn't contribute towards the Sin city part of it.

Indeed, Carrington people are often described as having unique qualities born of their common home and histories. For many Carrington 'insiders', the stigma of being from Carrington — a place apart — was balanced by the comfort and generosity of its 'people apart'.

Resident: I remember a lot of times, meeting with a lot of outsiders, a couple of people have said "Carrington!". I've said "don't worry about it, they are better than you will find anywhere else".

Resident: If you got burnt out you could guarantee a fortnight later you'd have all your money back and it's only through the people on the island dobbing in to help you.

Resident: It's unique. It gets into your heart. It gets into your being ... You feel that you're proud to live here.

So on the one hand, Carrington was a hidden, nameless place amidst the greater mass of the city's industrial icons and the major icons of the prosperous Victorian era. Yet on the other hand, it was simultaneously a suburb unlike other suburbs, physically isolated and clearly bounded, perceived as an island, and set apart socially from the more 'respectable' suburbs of the greater Newcastle area. One resident, whose father had been a coal trimmer, commented that her daughter and grand-

daughter now lived in one of Newcastle's most prestigious suburbs, Merewether Heights. She had an ironic view of that suburb's presumptions to status, reflecting that "you don't have to scratch far before you reach the coal dust". The recognition that Carrington was 'a place apart' therefore operated from both within and outside the suburb, and was played out in the lived experience of the city at a number of different levels.

INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION

Any representation of Carrington as internally homogeneous, although 'a place apart' from other suburbs, is entirely misleading. In presenting a view of Carrington as 'a place apart', there is a risk of covering up the internal differentiations in this place, and of presenting an entirely unitary view of Carrington's history which masks the multi-faceted complexity of its lived reality. Within Carrington there were boundaries that existed in the lived spaces of its residents. Though invisible, in the sense that they did not take a physical form, these boundaries were social divides which were influential in shaping the lives and social patterns of residents. Though barely two kilometres in length from its southern to its northern tip, Carrington was divided into a northern and a southern end. The northern end was 'Texas' or 'the top end'. Residents recollected 'Texas' as a place where people were poor, and lived in simple, small cottages and tin shanties with few facilities.

Resident: *They called that part — that was all crown land — and that was called 'Texas' and they was all little cottages ...*

Resident: *Up there, there was no lights; there was no running water and there was no sanitary, no toilets ...*

Resident: *It was an unemployed sort of settlement ...*

Resident: *Other people might not have thought they were very lavish, but what they had, they owned or they were buying.*

The boundary between 'Texas' and the rest of Carrington was clear cut and in the eyes of the residents was a determining influence on their patterns of social interaction.

Resident: *There used to be a top and a bottom then. [She] was born in the bottom end of Carrington. I was born in the top end. The line was at the school there. One was the bottom and one was the top.*

Interviewer: *But that didn't mean very much did it?*

Resident: *It used to mean a lot in those days!*

Interviewer: *What did it mean?*

Resident: *Well, that you was born in that end (points) you stayed that end. We were born this end (points) we stayed this end. You don't come across the line or Lord knows what'd happen to you, particularly if there was a woman in it.*

Resident: *Because we lived up the top there, ... down the bottom end and, that was it, there was a line in the middle.*

Resident: *... as if 'Texas' was like another country ... another race or something ...*

The one thing that did draw people from the bottom end into 'Texas' was sporting activities. Here was open space used especially for cycling, cricket and football. However, trips to the cycling velodrome or to the oval are spoken of as visits to another place.

Resident: *On the top of Bourke Street there was a bicycle velodrome, and there was also an oval or football oval, behind that. That's back this way. 'Texas' went straight up Scott Street, you went into 'Texas', where the houses were ...*

Interviewer: *My grandfather used to come over ...*

Resident: *I had uncles riding there ...*

Interviewer (herself a Carrington resident): *I think my grandfather used to come to Carrington to ride ...*

The separation of spaces within this bounded 'place apart' is revealed further in the memories of Carrington as an industrial and maritime suburb.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: INDUSTRIAL AND MARITIME CARRINGTON

The second part of this chapter considers the collective memory of Carrington as a stigmatised and dangerous industrial and maritime space with its own internal social and spatial divisions. Carrington, because of its harbourside location under the shadow of the steelworks, we have argued, has been seen as an amorphous part of the flat featureless foreshores, "the scatter of suburbs"¹¹ occupying the interstitial spaces between the natural, Victorian and industrial icons of the city. However, the name of Carrington carried overtones as a dangerous but isolated space: 'across the bridge' anything might happen, with drunken seamen fighting and marauding down the streets. As such, the space was marginalised within the city, painted with the perceived character of its inhabitants from the dangerous labouring classes.¹² Its identity as an industrial suburb, albeit of a particularly dangerous sort, forms part of the wider hegemonic view of Newcastle as an industrial city; the city of "mud and steel" portrayed by Metcalfe.¹³

The coal, steel and maritime industries of Newcastle are ingrained in the public image and formal history of the city.¹⁴ Fictional representations depict this mixture of heavy industry as monstrous and grimy, with overtones of pain and death and violence.

*Taffy[singing]:
I've been here from the start,
Built the first open hearth.
I've watched it rise out of the sea,
This monster, BHP.¹⁵*

J. O'Donoghue

*First day, by the open window,
He sits at a table to write,
And watches the coal-dust settle
Black on the paper's white.*

*Years of breathing this grime
Show black in the lungs of the dead
When autopsies are done;
So at least it is said.*

*Sunset over the steelworks
Bleeds a long rubric of war ...¹⁶*

J. McAuley

*The steelworks' vast roofed debris unrolling falls
of smoky stunning orange, its eye-hurting slump walls¹⁷*

Les Murray

It's so often dirty up the top end of town, ships at the wharves raising steam, although there's nothing much moving today, and the locos choofing through and the railway power house spreading soot and cinders from those short stacks. They must pray for a southerly here at times ...¹⁸

Thus Beasley described Newcastle in the late 1930s. Even the harbourside, here seeming momentarily romantic in the words of Halligan, is brought down to earth with a bump when the cargo is mentioned.

Here they were moored several deep to the wharf. Graceful boats, with curving prows and strong bowsprits: George would have known the names, barques perhaps, barquentines, schooners, windjammers, and their cargo: it was coal, wasn't it.¹⁹

Carrington was undeniably an industrial suburb. The suburb reached its twentieth century population peak of approximately 3500 in the 1930s when the coal, steel and maritime industries employed large numbers of men. Its present-day population, roughly half that total, has still a high concentration of industrial workers, although unemployment rates are now amongst the highest in the region. Carrington male residents worked predominantly in this mix of heavy industries, but talked about them in much more prosaic terms. Residents listed the range of occupations.

Resident: *Men worked at BHP, wharf labourers, coal trimmers, railway. Dad was on the railway. And a lot of seamen lived on Carrington.*

Another resident, who had been actively involved in industrial action and Green Bans, made this comment about jobs being just a way of earning a living rather than implying that they were a way of life.

Resident: *All had jobs, all were wharfies and dockies and ... good paying jobs, they didn't care.*

Other residents talked of people migrating to Carrington primarily for the work opportunities that were there.

Resident: *Dad worked at the time on the Railway, and he moved with work ... They rented a house to begin with ... a gun-barrel place ...*

Resident: *It was a place where men that come from all parts of the world ... you know ... it was the port of call sort of thing ...*

Resident: *They migrated in 1950 from Scotland. Under the Dockyard Scheme, when they brought the workers out to the dockyard, and they had flats, down near the dock. They brought the English people there, boilermakers and shipwrights, and the dockyard has*

this accommodation, they looked like Nissen huts, to look at ... But Jimmy was only fifteen when he came ...

Unlike many of the literary representations, Carrington residents recognise their maritime and industrial past as a source of change and activity, with seamen visiting the area on a regular rotating basis.

Resident: *It's called tramping, they don't have a set contract for so many years. Like when I was young and went to the mission in the late forties, early fifties, there were ships out here on contract from England, three year contract, and they did the 'Black and Tan Run'. They were black going down to Melbourne and they were red coming back from Port Pirie. They took the coal to Melbourne or Adelaide and they were black, they ... picked up the iron ore from Port Pirie, they were red. They were on contract for three years ... And they were in here every three weeks, because it took three weeks to do the round trip. And the Seamen's Mission in those days was nothing to having a hundred and fifty at the dance there. Because the port was so much, there were so many more ships coming into the port. I mean there was tremendous amount more seamen here coming into the port than what there are now.*

Carrington was seen as an industrial space, but one which had its own divisions, socially and spatially. The maritime work provided numerous job opportunities which had their own spaces, divisions and dangers. Residents recall real residential separation between stratas in the workforce, and a highly significant gender-based separation between the public space of the workplace and the pub on the one hand and the domestic space of the home on the other. Each in its own way held dangers, whether the hazards of work or the perceived threat of (male) violence.

The Pin Bosses were in charge of the loading of coal on the ships and occupied distinctive residential space commensurate with their status as foremen.

Resident: *This street [Darling St] was called 'Pin Boss Alley' because all the Pin Bosses lived in this street. And the Pin Boss was the chap in charge of the coal, he knocked the pin out of the bottom ... this was called 'Pin Boss Alley' when I was a kid.*

Their status as bosses did not however relieve them from the hazards of their work environment.

Resident: *He'd knock the pin out of the bottom and the bottom would come out of it, and the coal would fall down, I've heard of a few men falling down the hatch too, poor souls, and been killed.*

Other working conditions, for example at the BHP, implied violence and danger. Beasley's fictional representation of the steelworks in the 1930s and its impact on a young worker reiterates the theme of the living monster.

... the omnipresent thump of the bloom mill, year by year moving closer ... It was the only steel works in Australia and it was an intimidating place for a fifteen year old in the middle of winter ... You discovered the home of the minotaur whose crashing thumps had been a menacing accompaniment to your whole life, the mill where the giant blooms came, red hot from reheating after gestation in the blast furnace and open hearth, to be battered into more manageable shape.²⁰

The men who laboured at coal loading on the ships were known as coal trimmers. Lower in the hierarchy than the Pin Bosses, theirs was the labour on which the export of coal was built.

Resident: *A lot of the men, at the time, I remember, were coal trimmers.*

Interviewer: *Do you know what a coal trimmer was?*

Resident: *Yes, he worked on the boats, trimming the coal in the boats.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean trimming?*

Resident: *They used to pour the coal into the hole of the boat, and as far as I know, the trimmers were there to level it off. They were the coal trimmers.*

The heavy industrial workspaces at that time were almost exclusively male and it was an environment in which male identity could be forged in male spaces. The coal trimmers and other dockyard workers had their own male spaces which one now-elderly resident recalled as a place she was afraid of as a little girl.

Resident: *It used to have, what they called the Trimmer's Shed, and the men'd sit there and play cards and things. And my father would say to me "Go down and have a look at what the number is on up". He'd know if he was going to work, see ... the miners used to go on strike, and of course there was no coal coming down, there'd be no work for the trimmers and others. They'd work on a roster ... walk down the street, the trimmer shed was right down the end of the street, I didn't used to like down there ...*

The exclusionary male spaces were not only work-based but also included the pubs. The pubs were appropriated as male spaces, and could also be places to be feared because alcohol could induce or exacerbate violence.

Resident: *I mean, the hotels, the men used to sit on the steps of the hotels and talk, because there were six hotels on Carrington ...*

Resident: *... the trouble was the sailing ships would come in and the seamen would come ashore, and they'd been on the ships a long time, and they'd head straight for the boozier. And they'd get into the booze, and they'd get into the booze and the trouble is, when the booze is in the wit is out. And there'd be brawls and fights, that's what grandma used to say ...*

The separation of male and female spaces is predicated on a very deeply-rooted structural division between men and women, with men categorised as the breadwinners and women cast into the reproductive and supportive roles.

Resident: *I was in the marching girls band ... for us to go away we depended on the men that worked on the wharves; the coal trimmers, the pin bosses and the wharfies ... They used to sit on the corner. That was their place of congregation you know, where they sat around and talked and that sort of thing. All the old timers that were retired that was their place on that corner.*

The comment above and the two following portray women and girls both dependent upon and servicing the needs of their menfolk, implying a gender-based separation of domestic and public space, which many of the older residents remembered fondly.

Resident: *The kids used to come and have to go home from school at lunchtime and have to take their fathers', the coal trimmers and the wharfies, lunches down to the ships. They had to go home at lunchtime pick up the plate, tied up in a tea-towel and carry it down to the ship.*

Resident: *It was a better world, I think. Dad brought home the bacon and Mum stayed home and cooked it.*

CARRINGTON UNCOVERED

This chapter has uncovered some of the hidden spaces and multiple layers within Carrington. Carrington has been revealed as a hidden space within the estuarine flats and industrial suburbs of the traditional Newcastle and as a marginalised space within the definition of the new post-industrial 'clean and green' city identity. The sources used here reveal an identity as a particular type of maritime and industrial space, 'a place apart' from the rest of Newcastle, dangerous and pathologised, a place both to be avoided and used as a dumping ground for the rest of the city. However, this space was historically by no means homogeneous but was internally differentiated; by status, between 'Texas' and the rest, between the Pin Bosses and the coal trimmers and by gender, between home and workplace.

The view of Carrington presented here, drawn essentially from the voices of long-standing residents, tells us one of many stories of Carrington. In uncovering this identity, we present an almost unitary picture of the suburb which emphasises its maritime and industrial nature. Elsewhere in more detail we have examined the long-standing community where 'everyone knew everyone'.²² This portrait of a place-based industrially-defined community hides numerous other views. In particular, the voices not heard here include two very significant groups. The first excluded group are the transients and seamen who are stereotyped as drunken rowdies, the people from foreign shores who gave Carrington a bad name, who indeed formed part of the identity of Carrington. They are difficult to trace and difficult to identify; they remain as convenient scapegoats with no opportunity to speak in their own defence. The second group are those women who worked outside the home, whose paid work in a variety of occupations supported families and industries but whose contribution goes largely unrecorded. This unitary identity of Carrington, even though often spoken of through older women, casts the suburb as an almost exclusively male space with women occupying the walk-on and supporting roles. The contribution of working women to the identity of the lived city remains blurred in this analysis.

The unitary identity of Carrington is one that has to a great extent been adopted by the local residents. This is clearly seen in the banner from the 1996 Carrington Fair which depicts the island and the bridge, signifying 'a place apart', and a community identity built on a maritime and industrial past. The recent street improvement program has also resulted in the adoption of maritime icons in the landscape, ranging from bus shelters to litter bins. These local icons identify Carrington as a particular space within the city although without the perjorative overtones of a pathologised and dangerous space. As Calvino points out, this new identity is literally being inscribed "in the corners of the streets" and "the poles of the flags". Carrington is no longer hidden in Cusack's "huddle of buildings" and "scatter of suburbs", but at last is being uncovered, even if its new-found identity is a sanitised and partial one. As one resident commented, eventually the industries will go and Carrington will become "part of the city".

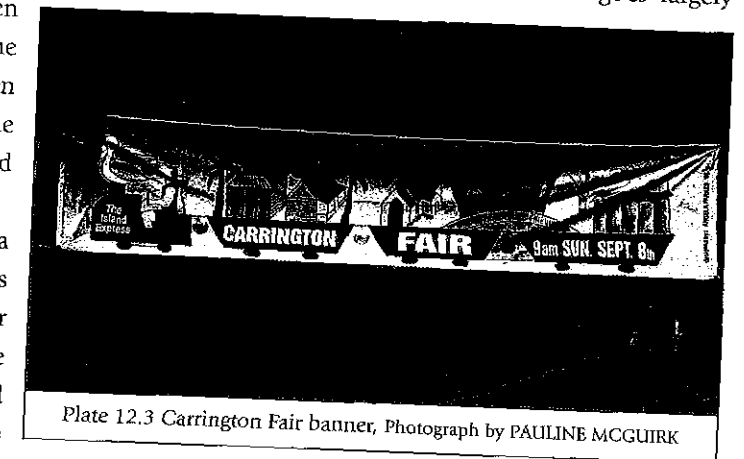


Plate 12.3 Carrington Fair banner, Photograph by PAULINE MCGUIRK