The Wollongong Municipal Council began investigating a more secure power supply and considered a number of alternatives including supply from coal mining companies and from PWD. Street lighting continued to be by gas and that system continued to be extended.

From Council meeting minutes it appears that at some time prior to December 1916 the Wollongong Electric Light Co. ceased operations. We have been unable to find any references to date of anyone else taking over the supply. Power was not made available to Wollongong from the PWD system until November 2, 1921.

We are keen to hear from anyone who has knowledge of what happened in the intervening five years. Surely Wollongong was not without electric power for that period?

We are not sure where Christensen built his power house. From the scant mentions in the press we presume it was on the north side of Burelli Street somewhere between Gateway and the RSL Club.

We would be very pleased to hear from anyone who may be able to help us in our research.

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THE BIRTHPLACE OF WOLLONGONG
THE BRIGHTON BEACH
AND
WOLLONGONG HARBOUR PRECINCTS
Archaeological and Historical Significance

In the light of the present developments proposed for the area opposite Brighton Beach, near the junction of Cliff Road and Harbour Street, it is felt imperative that the historical and archaeological significance of this area be brought to light.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area in question is the site of the first commercial and public buildings to be erected in Illawarra (circa 1829).

The earliest buildings to be erected in the Illawarra, apart from isolated farm houses and slab huts, were centred around Wollongong Harbour. These buildings included:
* Charles Throsby's stockman's hut, built about 1816, near the corner of present-day Smith and Harbour Streets.
* The wooden house, barns, and shed of Charles Throsby Smith, built around 1823 when he settled in Wollongong with his family. Smith's buildings were in the vicinity of the stockman's hut, close to Brighton Beach, and were the only buildings in Wollongong in 1828 when Alexander Stewart arrived.
A brick bond store which was constructed by C.T. Smith sometime around 1829, just to the north of his house and opposite Brighton Beach, at the corner of the present-day Cliff Road and Harbour Street. This bond store - variously known as Waterloo Stores, or Brighton Stores - later became the Brighton Hotel. It is on this site that the current hotel and tourist complex proposal is located.

The Military Garrison and Stockade which in 1829 was transferred from its temporary headquarters at Red Point, to buildings specifically constructed at Wollongong Harbour in 1829-30. This Military Establishment was located opposite, and to the east of C.T. Smith’s buildings, in the area of the present-day Drill Hall. It included Wollongong's first Barracks (to house soldiers and later police), Court House, Magistrate’s residence, Police cells and a second Post Office. The house now upon part of this site is currently being offered for sale.

These buildings (Waterloo Stores and the Military Garrison complex) formed the commercial and administrative centre of the Illawarra region throughout the 1820’s and 1830’s, and are of major importance to the early history of the district.

The Brighton Hotel was demolished in 1921 and the Military Garrison complex in c.1926.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

As the location of the first commercial building in Illawarra, the Waterloo Stores site is of immense historical and archaeological significance to the Illawarra area.

Wollongong was founded around the harbour, and the Waterloo Stores played a major role in supplying the regions first settlers with provisions, and despatching their goods to the Sydney Markets. Until the 1980’s Wollongong Harbour was the main link between Illawarra and Sydney, due to problems of access by road over the Illawarra escarpment, and the Waterloo Stores would have been the commercial hub of the district.

Also, the area to the east of the Waterloo Stores site - i.e. from Harbour Street, east towards South Beach, and fronting Brighton Beach - where the first Military Garrison and public buildings were erected in Wollongong during 1829-30, is of equal historical and archaeological significance to Wollongong and the region in general. From within these buildings the convict system was administered, land grants and surveys were carried out, and the early harbour works co-ordinated.

These two sites should, upon archaeological investigation, reveal artefacts and relics from the period 1816 onwards - encompassing the earliest days of white settlement in Illawarra. Items relating to early farming and commerce, shipping and convict relics, may all be located.

As the area is presently covered by single storey housing, the sites should be in a relatively pristine condition. The proposed motel development will undoubtedly completely destroy the Waterloo Stores site, as the bedrock in that locality is to be excavated, perhaps for the first time.

The transfer to the commercial centre of Wollongong from the shores of the harbour to Market Square in the 1840’s, and later to Crown Street in the 1850’s, has helped to preserve this area from major development and destruction up until this point in time (1989).
Though the majority of the original buildings - such as the Waterloo Stores/ Brighton Hotel, and Military Garrison complex - were demolished in the 1920's, subsequent development on the area has been relatively slight. High rise housing is, however, gradually closing in on the sites. The proposed motel development would bring catastrophic change to any remnant building foundations, refuse sites, wells, etc., on the Waterloo Stores site.

CONCLUSIONS

Any large scale development in the precinct indicated above should consider the historical heritage of these sites, and take the necessary steps to instigate archaeological investigations prior to, and during any major earthworks.

Future tenants of the sites should be made aware of their heritage significance, and The Illawarra Historical Society would call on the Wollongong City Council to allocate appropriate zoning controls to protect these areas. As they form sites of the first public and commercial buildings in Wollongong, this historic, archaeological, and cultural significance of these areas is beyond question.

When the foundations of Newcastle’s first convict stockade were recently discovered and excavated, the news made the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald, such was the importance of the find. Illawarra possesses an equally rich historic heritage and should be prepared to utilize these assets when ‘discoveries’ are made, and/or money and resources becomes available.

Finally, it should be pointed out that according to the Heritage Act of New South Wales, 1977, the Heritage Council of New South Wales controls, and provides legal protection against:

“damage to or despoliation of relics, places, or land; development of land on which buildings, works, or relics are situated; and alteration of buildings, works or relics - where a “relic” is defined under the Act as any deposit, object or other evidence of non-Aboriginal culture which relates to the settlement of N.S.W. and is more than 50 years old. This includes items such as wells, foundations, machinery etc.”

The above sites are therefore highly likely to be, according to section 4 of the Heritage Act, items of significant “environmental heritage”, warranting if needs be, protection.

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