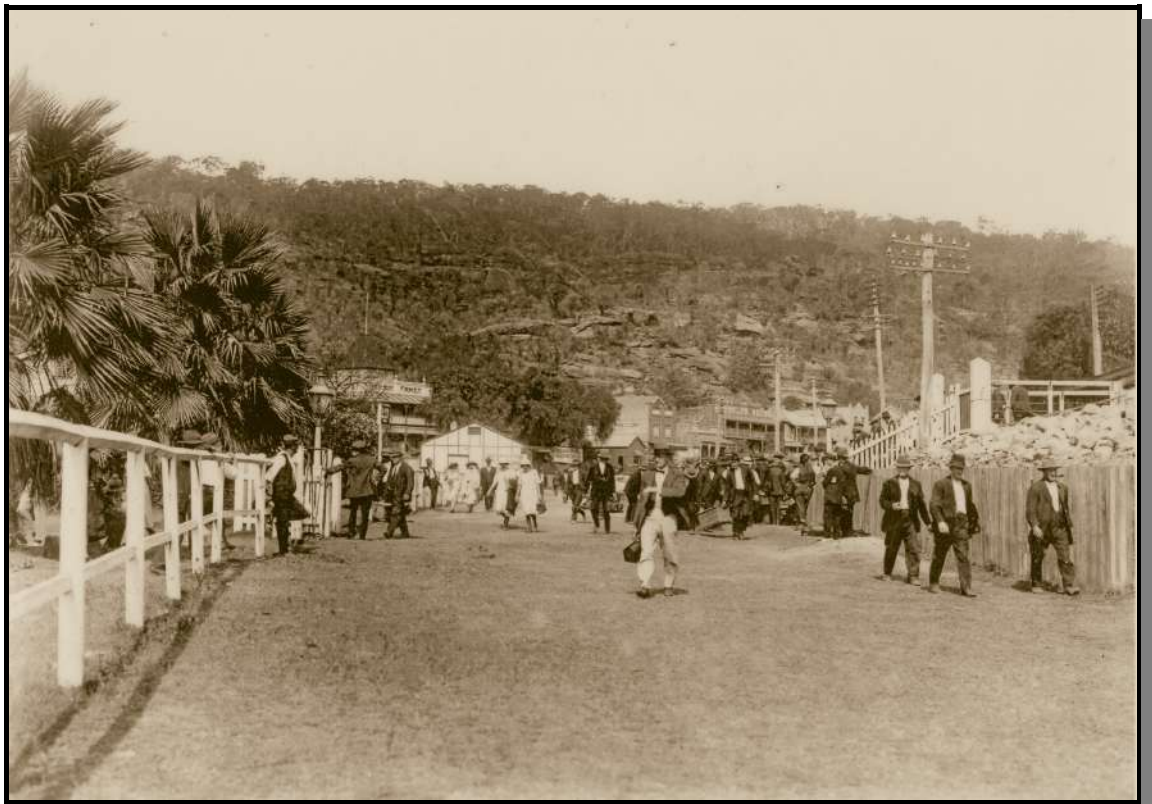


WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO OUR TOWN?

A submission requesting that some of the alleged planning expertise for which we pay rates and taxes be applied to the planning disaster that Brooklyn has become.



A scene from the 1920s, as visitors arrive to enjoy a day out at Brooklyn, then a popular day tourism destination in its own right.

WRITTEN AND PREPARED BY TOM RICHMOND, OAM, BROOKLYN, 2012

WHAT HAS GONE WRONG?

Cr Charles Somerville, one of the great civic leaders to have distinguished himself on Hornsby Council, wrote in a President's minute in September, 1951, that, "Brooklyn is second to none as far as a holiday resort is concerned because the close proximity of the trains gives ready access."

Central to this claim was the popularity of Brooklyn as a one-day tourist destination. People could bring their fishing lines, don their walking shoes and climb onto a train which would bring them to a beautiful riverside setting, far from the cares of city life.

Half a century later, of course, not everyone travels by train. People use their cars and this means that there must be provision for parking. There the frustration begins. On each weekend cars stream down to the McKell Park area, circle around searching for parking and then withdraw, rarely to return.

Brooklyn has lost much of its former role as a day-tourism centre. With that loss has come the loss of local facilities. Over the last three decades, our shopping centre has lost a chemist, a hairdresser, a medical general practitioner, a butcher and several other stores. Restaurants and takeaways have come and gone. Specialist tourism shops such as an ice-cream bar and souvenir stores have also closed.

In their place, we have a parking problem. Local residents who live beyond walking distance of the shopping centre have little or no chance of accessing shops at busy periods.

I SEE THE CARS, BUT WHERE ARE THE PEOPLE?

Some years ago, Hornsby Shire Council employed a consultancy to make recommendations with regard to a Catchment Plan for the Brooklyn area.

Bob Davis and I agreed to meet the consultants to discuss problems that had found expression at our Brooklyn Ratepayers' Association. Over a cup of coffee at a McKell Park restaurant, I began by raising the question of parking.

One of the consultants interrupted me by saying, "We have already noticed how strange this is. We are sitting here amidst a large number of cars, but we haven't yet been able to locate the people who came in them."



The eastern end of McKell park at about the time we spoke to the consultants. The situation has since worsened considerably.

It had taken two consultants less than five minutes to perceive that the presence of cars in McKell Park bore little relationship to the health of one day tourism. Rather than carrying customers, clients or pleasure-seeking tourists, the cars were blocking these people from coming by occupying parking positions.

We awaited the report from the consultants with great interest, knowing that a section on parking would be included. Much to our dismay and disgust, the section was eliminated from the report before it was presented to the Council. In a way, we possibly should have expected this because our experience at Brooklyn has frequently been that under-cover influences by those with vested interests often transcend the type of neutrality expected of a consultancy.

“PARKING” OR “CAR STORAGE”?

During the period 2002 to 2005, the Brooklyn Ratepayers’ Association monitored the parking in McKell Park closely. At an early stage, we decided to separate two uses, describing them as “parking” and “car storage”.

We defined “parking” as the use of space on which a person could leave a vehicle while undertaking an activity in the area, or while connecting with public transport to an activity more distant. “Parking” has, as its nature, the concept of a reasonably temporary use of space. In normal parking situations, there is a turnover of vehicles as people come and go to their activities.

We defined “car storage” as the use of a space on which to leave a vehicle until it is needed at some future stage. While parking usually involves a turnover of spaces, storage has infrequent turnover and spaces are occupied for prolonged periods. Vehicles can be stored for days, weeks or even months on end.

The Hornsby Advocate ran the following article on 1st September, 2005. Subsequently, a small number of timed spaces was introduced. The problem, however, still remains. Vehicles are stored for prolonged periods, taking space that could be used for more appropriate parking requirements.

ANDREW TILLET

A CAR seemingly dumped at Brooklyn in October can’t be booked or moved because it is parked legally, contributing to what residents say is a shortage of parking at the popular riverside village.

The red Holden Camira was left in the car park near the public wharf at McKell Park.

Its number plates are missing and the interior has been stripped, including the radio.

But it is parked within the lines and no time limits apply to the area, so it has not been fined or towed away.

While the dumped car was an extreme example of the problem, cars parked long-term in the village effectively shut out others from parking, Brooklyn Ratepayers Association secretary Tom Richmond said.

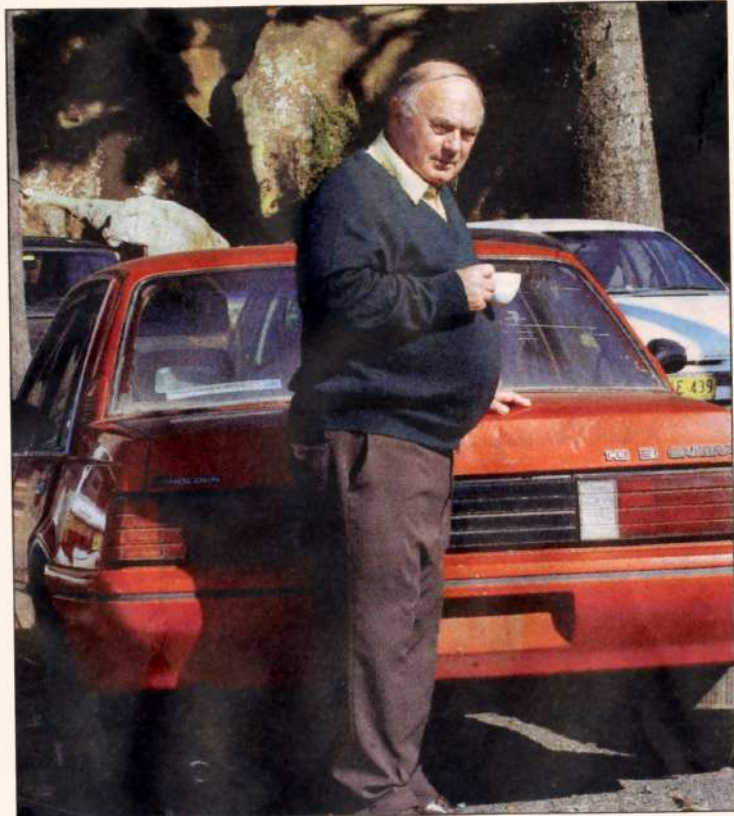
Mr Richmond said a big problem was people parking for a week at a time while they holidayed on the river or at the Broken Bay Sport and Recreation Camp.

When combined with the regular influx of daytrippers, it made it difficult for locals to find a park in their own town.

He said parking restrictions were required for Brooklyn so there would be a regular turnover of parking spots.

Failing that, he agreed with Cr Garry Whitaker that some form of preferential treatment for locals would help.

“You couldn’t think of a more prime location than where this



Tom Richmond with the abandoned vehicle at Brooklyn car park.

Picture: CHARLIE STEEL

car is parked,” Mr Richmond said.

“Commuters from Dangar Island don’t affect the parking much because they are usually gone in the morning and come back in the evening.

“At the moment the main problem is people parking here

for weeks, not hours,” Mr Richmond said.

“With all the parking here, they could make some of it timed.

“What we’re asking for is the council to get together with the locals and listen to what we’re saying.”

WHO STORES CARS IN MCKELL PARK?



COVE COTTAGE ON DANGAR

\$840.00 for two per weekend

Easy Living Beach Front Weekender

TRANSPORT

Just a reminder that 'COVE COTTAGE ON DANGAR' is boat access only. There are absolutely no roads to the property, which does make getting there part of the adventure!

From SYDNEY travel north along the Pacific Highway to Wahroonga & F3 FREEWAY, crossing the Hawkesbury River & immediately take the Brooklyn exit. Come back over the river a second time, on the PACIFIC HIGHWAY & turn directly left in to Brooklyn Rd & drive approx. 4 km to the pub & turn left, following signs to Ferry Wharf, for your water taxi /ferry. Allow an hour & a half by car from Sydney, and in peak periods add 30 minutes.

Water Taxi \$20.00 each way , up to 2 guests, phone 0448 101010, advance bookings essential, best to also pre book return trip in advance , pick up at BROOKLYN. Unload belongings at the wharf, and then park your car. Parking in Brooklyn can be a challenge during weekend & holidays, but you will always find a spot up near the pub

Ferry departs from 'Ferry Wharf' in Brooklyn (next left after Kangaroo Point) Travel approx, 5km along Brooklyn Rd, turning left at the pub, & drive towards the River Boat Postman office. Here there is a small single lane road to the left, next to the train line. Just 100m along that road is the Dangar Island Ferry Wharf Unload your belongings & then park your car. There are no parking fees in the parking areas nearby. Note that last ferry is at 8.00pm Mon-Fri & 6.00pm weekends & Public Holidays. No bookings required. \$5.50 pp each way. Call 0415 274 020 to check times with driver.

Hire of Self Drive Runabout definitely not suitable

Own Boat not suitable unless prior local knowledge of Bradley Beach & surrounding tidal area

The use of prime deep-water frontage in a public park as a car storage area is an absolute outrage against all decent principles of town planning. How could such a situation possibly have been permitted and why does it continue to be allowed?

The following sources of the car storage problem can be identified.

- ☞ **Car Owners who Live on Dangar Island.** Some Dangar Island residents act with great responsibility with regard to mainland parking, but others treat it as their right to dump their vehicles in prominent waterside positions, especially with handy access either to the ferry or to the Dangar Island mooring facility. It should be stressed that residents on Dangar Island have expressed their total opposition to the presence of vehicles on the island. The practice of barring vehicles from the island but inflicting their own vehicles on prime mainland waterfront can only be described as breathtakingly hypercritical.
- ☞ **Car Owners who Live at Wobby.** These people fall into a similar category to those on Dangar Island. There is, however, an important difference. People who live at Wobby are residing outside Hornsby Shire. They pay no rates to the Shire but seek to use its infrastructure. Ironically, residents of Brooklyn are not permitted to use the mooring facility.
- ☞ **Commercial Accommodation Hirers.** One estimate puts the number of houses, cottages, flats and accommodation curiosities as being in excess of a hundred between Bar Point and Wobby. It is extremely doubtful whether many of these businesses have actually received development application approval. It is even more doubtful whether any of them have been asked to provide details of parking provisions. On the left is an edited advertisement for one of these holiday provisions, taken from the Internet. There are numbers of similar ones.

It can be seen that the owners of the cottage on Dangar Island give instructions as to how to reach the water taxi and ferry at Brooklyn. This one even suggests that patrons occupy parking in Brooklyn outside McKell Park. Given the extraordinarily expensive nature of some of these facilities, it would not be unreasonable to suggest

that secure private parking should be provided as a condition for approval.

It should, perhaps, be noted that some of the facilities up-river from Brooklyn list Kangaroo Point as a parking area. This has helped cause that marvellous landmark to degenerate into car storage as well.

☛ Sport and Recreation Camps at Broken Bay and Milson Island.

The NSW Office of Communities, Sport and Recreation, has camps at both Broken Bay and Milson Island.

The Broken Bay Camp has accommodation for over 200 and the Milson Island Camp has room for about 175.

These camps are used for school groups during school term time, but are also available for private hire.

While the schools uses can cause some congestion with the arrival and departure of buses, the private uses are a disaster as far as car storage is concerned. The facilities are most commonly hired out on weekends and holiday periods, when visitors are seeking parking positions. As can be seen

from the advertisement pictured (from the Internet), the use of rail transport is not even suggested. It is understood that the Department owns land at both Brooklyn and Mooney Mooney, but the preference appears to be allow the use of prime waterfront park land.

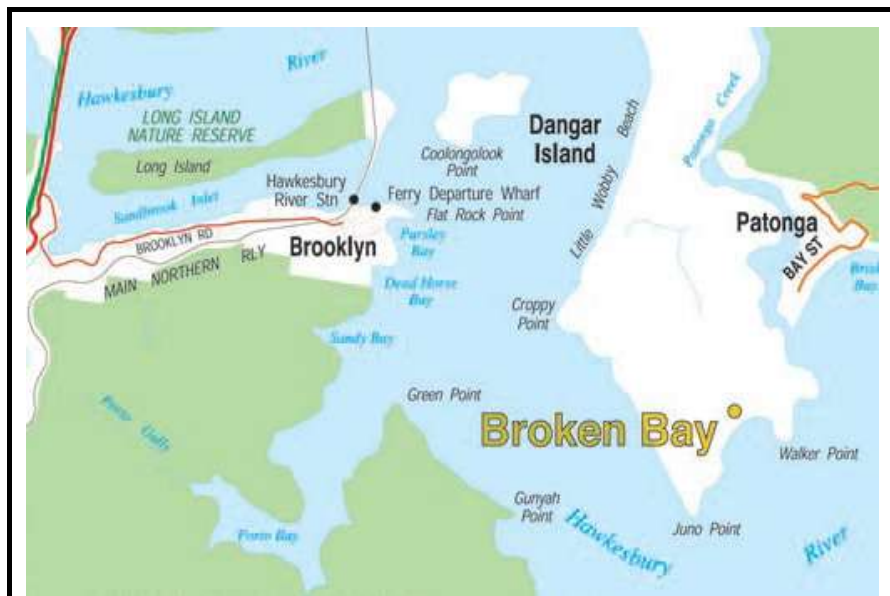
It should be noted that no directions are provided to access the camp from Patonga, which is closer, or from Palm Beach, the base for the ferries that service the camp.

On one recent occasion on which the camp was hired out, over seventy cars occupied spaces in McKell Park, stored for a full weekend while their owners attended the camp.

WHAT CONTROLS EXIST OVER CAR STORAGE ?

It may reasonably be expected that local councils would attempt to exercise some control over widespread use of public land for car storage. This, however, has not been the case. The following comments apply:-

☛ People who have built on properties on Dangar Island and Wobby have not been asked to indicate vehicle



Brooklyn by road from Sydney

- Head north on the F3 (main freeway to Newcastle)
- As you cross the main bridge over the Hawkesbury River take the left hand exit to Mooney Mooney and Brooklyn
- Go straight through the roundabout, under the Freeway and head to the old Pacific Highway
- Turn right on the Old Pacific Highway and cross back over the Hawkesbury River
- Take the second turn on the left and head all the way to the end of Brooklyn Road where you will see the wharf (opposite train station).

storage arrangements. Instead, they have simply been permitted to occupy prime waterfront land in what was an iconic public park, without any consent being required. When time limits have been applied to parking spaces, only a very limited number of spaces have been regulated. By permitting unlimited vehicle storage periods, Hornsby Shire Council has contributed heavily to the problem, to the point where off-shore residents now regard the storage of cars in a public park, remote from their own properties, as a “right”.

- ☞ Hornsby Shire Council appears to believe that it is under some compulsion to provide car storage for people without road access. Gosford City Council appears to have adopted the perfectly logical belief that people who live in areas without road access, and who want to drive cars, have a problem whose solution should have been sought prior to the purchase of the property. Logic would suggest that it is not the role of a council to provide free vehicle storage space for anyone, anywhere, let alone on prime waterfront parkland.
- ☞ It is suspected that the great majority of accommodation providers have not sought council approval to operate these businesses. A development application for a business would, if properly completed, be required to define the parking arrangements and this obviously has not been done. The existence of these accommodation providers is transparently evident from a simple perusal of internet advertisements. A simple observation of the fees being collected for hire of these amenities would suggest that private car storage areas could well be provided on the mainland.
- ☞ The State Government is a major contributor to the car storage problem. The Broken Bay Sport and Recreation Camp attracts vehicles in such quantity that parking in Brooklyn is virtually paralysed. Sport and Recreation makes no attempt to provide car storage spaces and simply directs clients to the McKell Park area. It is suspected that no consent is sought from any local government authority. Clients are not encouraged to come by train and alternative car storage venues have not been sought at nearby Patonga or at Palm Beach, which provides the ferries.

The question of who provides control over car storage in McKell Park may be answered quite simply. No-one controls it. The State Government ignores a problem to which it contributes hugely, while the Council places its head firmly in the sand. Residents of Brooklyn and other potential users of riverside attractions deserve much better than this.

There can be no excuse whatsoever for taking an iconic park area and giving it over as a yard for people to store motor vehicles. It represents planning incompetence beyond belief.

WHO PARKS CARS IN MCKELL PARK?

In this study, car storage has been treated differently to car parking. Parking is a much more legitimate use of public land than storage. Parking has been defined as the use of space on which a person could leave a vehicle while undertaking an activity in the area, or while connecting with public transport to an activity more distant.

By its very nature, parking provides a more fluid situation than storage. Vehicles come and go, allowing for a turnover in spaces and creating availability of parking for everyone. Nevertheless, the demand for parking in Brooklyn is enhanced by a number of factors, best explained by outlining the principle uses.

- ☞ Commuters who Live on Dangar Island. Obviously, people who live on Dangar Island, and who go to work in their vehicles on a daily basis do not create a major week-day problem. Cars are parked in public spaces after the peak evening period and removed before the peak morning period. On the weekends, however, car parking converts to car storage. Vehicles are left in McKell Park from Friday evening to Monday morning, sterilising parking on days when local tourism depends on it. It should be noted that the term “commuter” is sometimes used loosely and applied to all of the people leaving vehicles in McKell Park. Some people actually store vehicles in the park and catch trains to work.
- ☞ Commuters who Live at Wobby. These people are similar in pattern to the commuters from Dangar Island. They provide few problems on weekdays but major ones on weekends and holidays. On these days, the problems related to both Wobby and Dangar Island are sometimes exacerbated because visitors come to stay



Parking problems. Many of the cars at the western end of McKell Park belong to railway commuters. Others have owners who have gone on cruises. Little parking remains for genuine local tourists to Brooklyn.

for weekends and multiple cars are stored.

- ☞ **Railway Commuters.** There is no formal railway car park and numbers of train users choose to park their cars in McKell Park. Unlike the off-shore residents, these people often leave their vehicles for the whole of a working day and totally sterilise the parking during that period. Vehicles are parked by people from more distant parts of Brooklyn, Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point. There are some commuters from the Kariong end of Gosford who find it more convenient to travel to Brooklyn than to Gosford or Woy Woy. The number of vehicles parked by railway commuters is significant but not huge.
- ☞ **Cruise Passengers.** There are a number of cruise operations from near the Hawkesbury River Railway Station. In recent months, the numbers of cruise passengers appears to have increased as the result of aggressive advertising. The people coming on these cruises park their cars and move directly to the vessels. They are there to enjoy a cruise on the river, not the attractions of the mainland. They contribute very little to the local economy and the parking places great pressure on other uses as the cars are in position for several hours.
- ☞ **Commercial Customers.** A large marina occupies a considerable percentage of the total space in McKell Park. A general store and restaurant appear to be the main attractions for local residents and visitors. Other restaurants provide meals and refreshments for local residents and tourists. These commercial uses involve relatively short term parking and are connected with the central function of the park area. Of course, delivery and service vehicles must also gain access but parking times are brief.
- ☞ **Tourists to Brooklyn.** McKell Park has a tidal swimming baths and a children's playground. Visitors can walk around the shoreline to Parsley Bay or fish from the rocks. An historical display attracted considerable interest but its design was ill-conceived and it has been subjected to vandalism. People who want to drive cars to the area need parking places to enjoy the attractions. It should be noted that many older people complain that train travel is out of the question because of the ridiculous railway staircase. They also complain that parking problems virtually rule out visits to Brooklyn in any case.

THE VISION OF EARLY PLANNERS.

Cr Somerville's minute of September, 1951 stated that, "Brooklyn is second to none as far as a holiday resort is concerned because the close proximity of the trains gives ready access."

The arrival of the railway in 1887 brought a constant stream of visitors. By 1906, the Cumberland Argus could report:

The site of the village is really a valley on the shore of the famous Hawkesbury River at the point where this magnificent stream is spanned by the renowned Hawkesbury River Bridge, one of the world's triumphs in engineering skill, to say nothing of the beauty of its architecture, or the magnificent splendour of the surrounding scenery. The surroundings of Brooklyn, which nature has endowed so lavishly with her choicest gifts, are its chief charm, and the inhabitants . . . lay themselves out to provide the best possible facilities for visitors to enable them to enjoy to the fullest extent the innumerable pleasures and health-giving resources of this beautiful region. Indeed, it might be said without fear of contradiction that in no place are better or cheaper facilities afforded the pleasure-seeking public than at Brooklyn.



Boatsheds on the reclaimed area that is now McKell Park. This postcard dates from about 1918. Boat hire was a major tourist industry in those days. The area was owned by the railway and was a popular camping site.

In 1909, the Town and Country Journal reported that, "Another great improvement to the railway property here now receiving the finishing touches is the reclamation of what used to be, at low water, an unsightly mud bank between the railway embankment at the Station, and Flat Rock."

The reclamation gave shape to the future park. Much of the fill had been provided by the dredging of a mud bank adjacent to the railway station. Prior to this, deep water access was obtained at Long Island. Now, large vessels could reach the railway by means of a channel through the mud bank.

It is interesting to note that the principal purpose of this dredging operation was to create a river port for farm produce along the river. Boats could tie up to a wharf adjacent to the railway station. As the railway operation expanded, a substantial goods shed was constructed in the railway yard and a siding was provided for the convenience of moving cargo from the boats to the railway line. A proper understanding of the way in which the port facility was designed, and its purpose, is essential in considering the way in which the area should now be managed.



This Broadhurst postcard shows the Railway Reclamation Park in about 1918. The park extended to where the current Health Centre now stands. Opposite the station, on the eastern side, the shelter shed for the park and camping area is visible. The railway provided an official to supervise. With powers of a special constable.



Another Broadhurst postcard shows the location of the wharf, with the Patonga Ferry moored to it. In the days before the common use of motor vehicles, the ferry was the principal means of reaching Newport, Palm Beach, Patonga, Wobby and Dangar Island.



Left: Modern photograph of the historic Reclamation Reserve Shelter. The building is probably unique, in that the railway did not usually involve itself directly with the management of tourism in this way. Its use as a car storage area by off-shore residents poses questions as to the nature of permissions and rentals. It has been suggested that the shelter be moved to a more appropriate position and preserved as part of the ambience of the area.

A secondary purpose of the port was to provide access to a vessel that operated as a ferry. The Phoenix, during the 1920s, operated regular services to Newport, Palm Beach and Patonga. This was during a period when road access to Patonga was primitive and vehicular access to Palm Beach was limited. The vessel performed a vital service that continued into the 1950s under various operators.

Thus, the following comments could be made about the original vision for Brooklyn:-

- ☞ The place was seen as a venue for day tourism, with a railway connection.
- ☞ There was widespread local involvement in the hospitality offered. Local boatsheds, for example, offered boat hire.
- ☞ Port facilities were provided as an inter-connection with the railway, so that fruit and other farm produce could be taken to Sydney by rail.
- ☞ A wharf near the station was used as the departure point for a regular ferry service to Patonga, Palm Beach and Newport. The ferry service to these places was essential because of the limitations of vehicular access to them. The easiest way to travel from Sydney to Patonga or Palm Beach was by rail to Brooklyn and steamer to the destination.
- ☞ The wharf and the channel leading to it were provided for cargo vessels and ferries, not cruise vessels.

THE VISION OF THE 1960s.

For many years, Brooklyn attracted tourists in large numbers. The boatsheds did brisk business and the Railway Reclamation Reserve was a popular camping area. Charges were still made until the late 1960s for people taking motor vehicles into the McKell Park area. By the 1960s, however, the place had taken on an untidy and “worn” look.

Max Ruddock, MLA, one of our more distinguished past councillors and the father of current Federal member, Philip Ruddock, called, in March 1966, for a clean-up of the Brooklyn shores. The Hornsby Advocate reported:



Scene from 1959, showing the deterioration of the old sheds. Note, too, the prawnier at work in the foreground. The McKell Park area has always been a river working area and that is part of its interest.

Mr M.S.Ruddock, MLA said that the need for improvement had been recognised by the Hornsby Shire Council, which had set aside a special fund for the purpose.

Establishment of the fund has been approved by councillors representing all shire ridings, which indicated that the council was not adopting a “parochial” attitude.

Mr Ruddock said he agreed with visitors from overseas who had described the Hawkesbury as the “Rhine of Australia”.

By then, of course, electric trains had taken over from steam and travel to Brooklyn was now speedy and reliable. The working railway yard had virtually disappeared, adding to the potential beauty of the area.

The Advocate of 6th April, 1966, reported that plans were in hand to demolish the last of the old boatsheds. New

