

# Oatley Pleasure Grounds

A study presented to The Oatley Heritage Group by Cliff Crane and Rodger Robertson November 2010



## **1. Introduction**

This report outlines various aspects of the history and other information about the Oatley Pleasure Grounds.

Oatley Pleasure Grounds is 28423 square metres and was formed by the acquisition on various partitions of land. The largest part was purchased in 1935 from private owners.

It is now designated as Community land but its exact specification is unknown. ie General use, foreshore, park, bushland etc. Kogarah Local Environmental Plan 1998.

New toilets were built in 2010 at a cost \$180,000 and in 2011 new play equipment costing \$60,000 is proposed.

The report below has been put together from a wide range of sources and material. Acknowledgement to all those who assisted is gratefully given by the authors.

## **2. Time Line- Oatley Pleasure Grounds its social history.**

Pre 1788- local aborigines could have used the area for access to the water for fishing and oyster harvesting.

1861 Marriage at Condobolin of UK Born Paul Straney and UK born Louisa Mead. After Paul Straney's 1885 death, Louisa would remarry to Harry Linmark, apparently founder of the Oatley Bay Boatsheds and residence, and holder of first Australian Wine License at the venue.

1867 Frederick Thomas Hartland born Macleay River, parents David & Hannah. By not later than August 1922, he was running the Oatley Bay Boatshed and Pleasure Ground.

1885 Paul Straney dies Camperdown, aged 50 (from effects of sunstroke while working at Condobolin).

1886 Railway and the start of travel by rail and either bus or walking to the Oatley Pleasure Grounds. Previous to this the main access to the Grounds was by water.

12 December 1896 We know Harry Linmark by this date was running a boatshed - because of advertisement in Sydney Morning Herald - '*Houses for sale – apply H. Linmark, Boatsheds, Oatley Bay*'

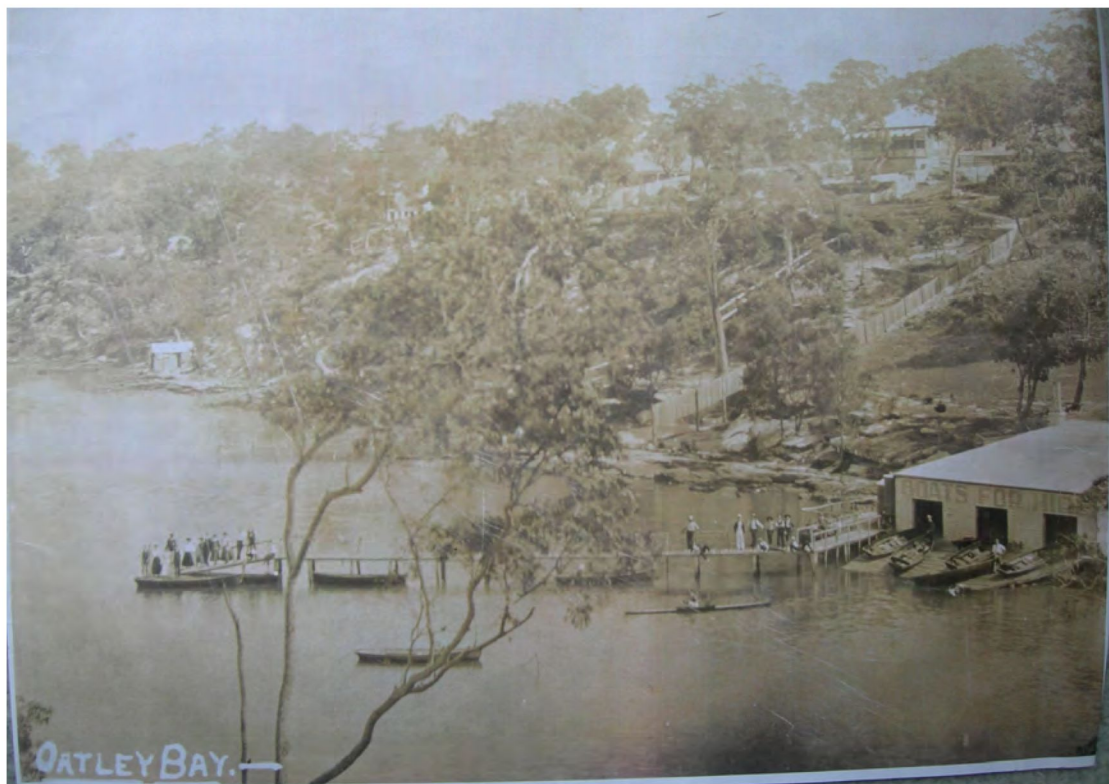
1899 Frederick Thomas Hartland (b. 1867) married Lillian F Keane at Bathurst

1899 Harry Linmark married widow Louisa Straney

1899 Louisa L Straney marries Henry E "Harry" Peasley at Condobolin/Forbes (she being daughter of the widowed Louisa Straney who married Harry Linmark in that same year, 1899 - Harry and Louisa Peasley would later take over the Pleasure Ground and Wine Bar)

27 January 1899 16year old Henry Lavers, of Arncliffe, drowns from a Linmark hire boat (off Oatley Point)

Oatley Pleasure Grounds looking towards Oatley Point- circa 1912



Oatley Bay circa 1906- note the rower in front.

The scenes below are probably near the Pleasure Gardens.

29 December 1906 We know that by now Harry Linmark - whether with or without formal license - is selling alcohol in the Pleasure Grounds because of a report in the Sydney Morning Herald of .... Harry Linmark (having been) convicted of supplying alcohol to 16 year old Harold Lean.

15 October 1908 Arthur Straney '*of Linmark's Shed*' vies for Georges River rowing championship.

24 March 1914 By now Harry Linmark certainly has a legal Australian Wine License for the Pleasure Grounds because Harry Linmark's Oatley Bay wine license is one of 6 in the area being reviewed with a view to reducing the total to only 5 - we

didn't locate the formal decision, but obviously Harry's was not the one that was discontinued.

26 February 1916 Harry Linmark was clearly dealing in boats other than small rowing craft for hire because in 1916 he advertised a '*Motor Launch for Sale, 30 passengers - Linmark, Oatley Bay*'



Sydney Long painting from Herbert Street area towards north. Circa 1915. Oil on board It sold for \$6,800 in 2004.

19 October 1918 Another for sale - '*Outrigger, with racing sculls, £5, bargain H. Linmark. Oatley Bay*'.

19 October 1918 Just when George Gough of Russell Street started his river tours with the *Cambewarra* wasn't discovered, but by 19 October 1918 he was advertising '*PICNIC PARTIES.-Top Deck Launch, Cambewarra, carries 72 and piano, for Hire; terms, 45 pass., £3 60, £4; 72, £3.\_G. GOUGH, Russell-st, Oatley.*'

1918 Just when Harry and Louisa moved up to 70 Rosa Street is not known but apparently by sometime in 1918 at the latest, where they lived until Louisa died in 1923. The Pleasure Ground, though, seems to have still been in Harry Linmark's name, because of the Council minutes recording that - '*.....Mr Linmark property that was occupied by Mr Piesley was described as unsanitary and council said it needed addressing*'

1918 10 19 NLA Oatley Bay, Linmark, Outrigger with sculls for sale

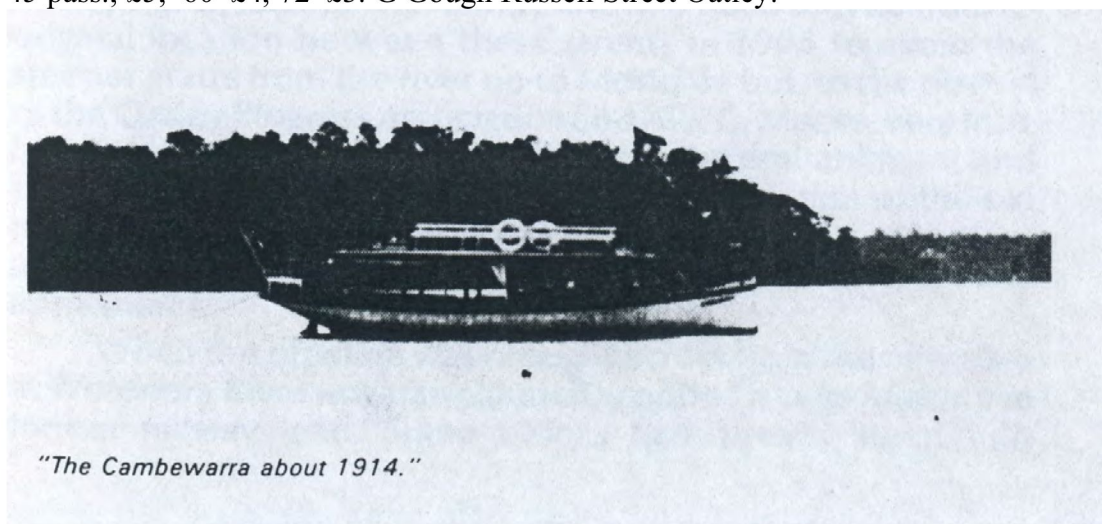
Saturday 19 October 1918 Sydney Morning Herald, , p.1

<http://www.trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/15807230>

FOR Sale, good Outrigger, with racing sculls, £5, bargain H. Linmark. Oatley Bay.\_  
Georges River

19/10/1918 SMH- advertising the 72 seat Cambewarra for hire.

Picnic parties Top Deck Launch Cambewarra- carries 72 and piano, for hire, terms, 45 pass., £5, 60 £4, 72 £3. G Gough Russell Street Oatley.



1916 – 1920 - Coral Piesley born in Oatley Pleasure Ground residence

25 August 1922        Sometime prior to 25 August 1922, and to meet whatever licensing requirement is not known, the wine license came to be in the name of an Ernest Keane. Ernest Keane would almost certainly have been related to Lillian F. Keane who married Frederick Thomas Hartland at Bathurst in 1899. Whether this Ernest Keane was the Oatley based builder Jack Keane, also the licensee of the 'Vauxhall Inn' Hotel at Granville, is unclear - if not, it is likely there was a family connection. Clearly, though, the Piesley period had finished and the Hartlands had moved in, because the Sydney Morning Herald of 25 August 1922 reported "*Transfer of Colonial Wine License Annette-street Oatley Bay, from Ernest Keane to Frederick Thomas Hartland*"

1922    Subdivision of lots 15/16 of Oatley Bay approved to owner Mr R B Chedgley.

18 June 1923    Death notice - '*Blundell.-at his residence, Cook-street, Arncliffe. Thomas Henry, beloved husband of Mary Jane Blundell, aged 64 years. At rest*' (Blundell's widow would remarry in 1925 to Harry Linmark)

1923    Death at her residence 70 Rosa Street, Oatley of Mrs. Louisa Linmark

1925    Re-marriage Harry Linmark to widowed Mary J. Blundell

February 1926        Council leases "Hartland's Wharf" for £20 per annum.

October 1926    Oatley Bay Rowing Club got Council permission for a Venetian carnival 16th Oct, procession from Railway Station to the Pleasure Grounds with band.

1926    Death of Mrs. Mary J. Linmark (formerly Blundell)

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February 1927    SMH announced "Oatley Bay Motor Boat club members races – 3PM.

10 January 1930 SMH page 19 - Advertisement of MOTOR BOATING HOSPITAL CARNIVAL in aid of the Peakhurst and District Hospital committee - at Hartland's grounds, Oatley Bay .... and at night there will be a venetian carnival at the Oatley Bay Motor Boat Club house (So, now we know there was a Motor Boat Club House – but not where it was located!). What happened to the proposed hospital?

1931 Death of Harry Linmark - Death Index showed parents as Gunders and Anna

12 March 1931 Public Notice in Sydney Morning Herald '*Probate Jurisdiction -In the Will of HANS EILERT GUNDERSEN LINNEMORK known as HARRY LINMARK late of Oatley In the State of New South Wales Boat Proprietor*'

25 November 1932 Death at 16 Annette St., Oatley - Frederick Thomas Hartland (This being the street address for the Pleasure Grounds)

28 February 1933 Grant of transfer of the wine licence .... at 104 Annette-Street, Oatley Bay, Oatley, from Frances Lillian Hartland, as executrix of the will of Frederick Thomas Hartland, to herself.

1934 Angela Mann, who started her rowing at Oatley Bay Rowing Club, skips NSW foursome to win Australian Women's Fours Sculling championship

27/10/34 Council resolved to negotiate with Mrs Hartland regarding purchase of land.



17/2/35 Mrs F.L. Hartland offered £2500 with £1000 deposit and £500 per annum over 3 years with interest at 4.5%.

18/2/35 Mrs Hartland countered with £3000 with £1000 deposit and £666/13/4 per annum at 4.5% interest. Council accepted this proposal. (The deal would finally close in September 1938.)

1/7/35 Alderman Moore proposed leasing of Grounds. Mr S Taylor offered £1 per week but in September Mr O V Richardson offered 30/- per week and this was accepted. The tender was “for the leasing of the Oatley Bay Pleasure Grounds- the successful tenderer to have the revenue from the undertakings, such as leasing and hiring of boats, launch moorings etc, tea room and confectionary etc, hire of summer houses, and from any other sources but no charge is to be made for use of the grounds in any way. All buildings and out buildings, boats and other equipment, grounds and baths and aviaries to be kept clean and in good order and repair. The lease is for a period of twelve months with the option of extension of another four years. Glenn Stevens knew the Richardson family from having lived opposite them in Hurstville for sometime. The Richardsons lived in the residence on the Grounds.

1/11/35 Mortdale Citizens band offered Sunday programs at the Grounds and asked for Council donation. The proposal was accepted without donation.

December 1935. The council debated fixing the shark-proof fence that was in some form of disrepair. £31 was put towards repair.

January 1936. Existing WC arrangements were replaced by 3 pan service for each sex. Costs born by the council.

1937 Coral Edna Peasley (sic) married Kevin Joseph Burns

1 December 1937 Shark-proof fence needs work.

1938 Richardson asked for gas stove to be replaced.

1 September 1938 The deal for purchase from Mrs. Hartland finally closed.

1939 Richardson applies to be special constable for Grounds.

20 January 1942 Thomas Frederick Hartland, born Bathurst 1915, enlisted at Oatley – next of kin Mona Hartland (neè Martin) (they had married St. Peters in 1935)

26 August 1942 Auction sale at Oatley Bay Pleasure Ground and Boatshed - for demolition and removal - 2 br weatherboard cottage, 24 X 12 ft, several rowing skiffs, piano, stoves etc. - good order; large wood and gal. iron boatshed, with several small rooms attached. Whether this was when the Wine Bar building was dismantled and removed is unclear – but Mrs. Rita Drake has told us she remembers the wine bar being removed and re-erected as a Wine Bar at ??? (CLIFF TO CHECK)

1 February 1943 Council investigates missing “goods” from grounds. These goods need valuation.

1945 O. Richardson dies. Arrears in rates of £3 and £108 due in rental is written off by the council as estate is unable to pay.

1949 Mr O Richardson ( must be son of-previous “O. Richardson” ) tenders for 5 years at 1/3 per pan per service for the toilets at the Pleasure Grounds. Mr J W Tomlin tendered 1/- per pan and won the contract.

### 3. Subdivisional plans 1883-1905

The opening of the railway line facilitated development and settling of the Oatley area. These plans show the area of the Oatley Pleasure Gardens.

**OATLEY BAY**  
**GEORGE'S RIVER**  
 NEAR  
**OATLEY STATION**  
 AND WITH FRONTAGES TO  
**OATLEY BAY**

FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION ON THE GROUND,  
 ON **MONDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1905, AT 2 P.M.**

**RAINE & HORNE**  
 AUCTIONEERS, 86 PITT ST  
**F. BROWN,**  
 HURSTVILLE

LETITIA STREET  
 ROSA STREET  
 ANNETTE STREET  
 OATLEY BAY  
 CHARLES STREET  
 HERBERT STREET  
 RUSSELL STREET  
 NEVILLE STREET

39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56

**LOCAL SKETCH**

**TERMS.**  
 10 PER CENT DEPOSIT  
 Balance in  
 20 equal quarterly payments  
 with interest at 5 per annum.

**TORRENS TITLE**

**CHATFIELD & BROWN**  
 Licensed Surveyors under R.P.A.  
 501 (CORNER) DUTCHMAN'S T. BRIDGE  
 & at Parramatta.

W. & A. G. 12 1/2 - SYDNEY

Note that the Pleasure Grounds are designated as blocks in Annette Street and Russell Street.



## **4. Wine bars Clubs etc Bands Dances Cambewarra etc**

We have not been able to discover when the separate wine bar building was constructed, or whether the Australian Wine License was originally applicable to the boatshed and tea room structure. A couple of people have said there were dances in the boatshed and tearoom structure, and dancing took place on part of the floor area over the water which was cleared for the dance events.

Norma Straney has provided a group photo of swimmers at, she believes in Oatley Pleasure Grounds –Norma has said organised swimming activities in Oatley commenced in Oatley Bay, but transferred to Oatley Park's Sandy Beach in the 1927. Paul Carson and Glenn Stevens told us their memories of "Pop" Stevens of Kitchener Street and Mr. Ernie Dickenson of Annette Street, who were natural 'floaters', lazily floating around the water surface on their backs and allowing children to push them under.

Several people, of various ages, down to some aged in late 50s and early 60s, reported large numbers swimming in the enclosure at times, with virtually no day on which the pool was quite unoccupied. Certainly lots of families used the Grounds for combined swimming and picnicking (with the mandatory blankets, of course), both during the day and often at evening time well through till darkness.

### **MOTOR BOAT CLUB**

There was an Oatley Bay Motor Boat Club in existence for a number of years, too, and many will remember the roaring of the boat engines. There are numerous newspaper references to OBMBC events, some referring to its Oatley Bay Clubhouse, and we'd be pleased to hear from any one who knows where the clubhouse was situated.

The earliest reference we have found to the OBMBC is in the Sydney Morning Herald in October 1927.

In January 1930 we were informed by the Sydney Morning Herald there would be a '*... carnival in aid of the Peakhurst and District Hospital committee will be held at Hartland's grounds, Oatley Bay, on Saturday, January 18, 1930, when four motor boat races, open to all boats in the State, will be decided on the Oatley Bay M.B.C. course...(and) ... and at night there will be a venetian carnival at the Oatley Bay Motor Boat Club's house*'

Jill McKenny (neè Gray) who lived as a girl in Annette Street, Oatley, remembers her father raced a motor boat named '*Phyllis*' in the OBMBC events.

The last newspaper reference to the OBMBC was in Sydney Morning Herald of 15 November 1934 – '*The Oatley Bay Motor Boat Club will decide an outboard motor*

*handicap in three heats of two miles each, and in four miles for B class boats, at Oatley Bay this afternoon.'*

A random selection of some of the contestants and winners of OBMBC events -

Bertha (W. Steber), Miss Oatley (O. Mason), Chev. (C. E. Small), Ironsides (T. Bryson), Vacuna (H. Gough). Too Right (J. Adams), Miss Phyllis (H. Solomon), Vision (G. Field), Goodo (P.Hartland), Alma (H.Sullivan), Mona (J.P.Hayes), Mena ( P.J.P. Coupland and W. Whittaker), Chris (H Gough), J.W.B. ( J.W. Birch), May ( M.Smith), and Cashmere ( A. Lawson).

Perhaps the OBMBC merged with the Georges River MBC – can anybody help ?

Oatley Motor Boat Club report in Local paper Propellor 1923 September.  
Source Hurstville Library records.

“Oatley Motor Boat Club.

Last Saturday the members of the Oatley Motor Boat club entertained their friends at a social evening in the Queens Hall Oatley bay. The hall was tastefully decorated with hanging Chinese lanterns and steamers with the club colours of blue and gold predominating. Mrs Makin’s fine contralto voice was greatly appreciated among the musical items and some clever step dancing by Miss Hilda Hamilton, and the sailors horn-pipe by little Winnie Davis contributed to the evenings entertainment. The supper was laid in the refreshment room under the direction of Mesdames Whittaker, Coupland, Hamilton and Romoldi. The membership of the club is steadily growing, and the ensuing season promises to be an even greater success than the last. The committee is presently engaged preparing the racing programme etc and preparations are well underway for the opening of the season.”

#### OATLEY BAY ROWING CLUB

We know there was focus on competitive rowing in Oatley Bay from at least the early 1900s. Louisa Linmark had seven (Straney) sons from her first marriage. They came with their mother to live at Oatley with their step-father, boat-builder and boat-shed proprietor Harry Linmark, probably in 1899. Rowing and sculling were important competitive sports then, and it is unsurprising that several Straney men became excellent participants in the sport and participated in rowing/sculling events throughout the greater Sydney Region, and further afield.. At least one grandson, Allan Straney, followed in his father Alf Straney’s foot-steps and became champion of the Oatley Bay Rowing Club –Allan Straney’s Gold Medals as winner of Points Score Champion of the Oatley Bay Rowing Club for the years 1924, 1925, 1926, 1928 and 1929 has been made available to be photographed, by his widow, Norma Straney, Just when the Rowing Club commenced, and ceased activities, was not discovered. Allan’s father Alf Straney rowed as a professional, for there are newspaper accounts of him having had championship match races on the Georges River for at least £50 a side stake.



Miss Emie Pickering Australian Lady Champion Sculler 1912

MEDALS WON BY ALLAN STRANEY



## SEA SCOUTS AND THE HALL.

The Oatley Bay Sea Scouts moved to Oatley Bay in 1941 as a breakaway from Mortdale Scouts. It was not until 1961 did they built the first stage of the construction at The Pleasure Grounds. This was the boat shed phase. The bricks were obtained from a demolition of a business in Hurstville Grove and the boatshed was finished in 1961 and opened by Vincent Fairfax( Chief Commissioner of the Scouts in NSW).



Six years later the upper part of the hall and facilities were opened by Ald D D Cross.

The two stages are clearly illustrated below. The picture on the left shows the base of the boat storage as very rough and odd bricks. The photo on the right shows the red brick of the hall stage.





The internal part of the hall is basic rough but adequate for the usage. On the walls hang a number of fading and dusty posters and photos of people and events in the scout's history. See a previous OHG study on the Seas Scouts for more details.

#### OATLEY SWIMMING CLUB

In mid 1920's a swimming club was begun at the baths at the Pleasure Gardens. However the limited swimming areas saw it move in 1927 to the current venue in Oatley Park. The photo below is at Oatley Pleasure Gardens showing a large turnout. Allan Straney late husband of Norma Straney, "Pop" John Stevens, John Stevens and Ray Stevens have been identified.



## 5 Miscel- trivia and stories

- Connellys rock



An intriguing mystery is the origins of a rough inscription on a large flat rock within Oatley Pleasure Ground, shown in the photograph above. After Jan and Cliff Crane discovered the inscription in the 1980s it featured in an article in *"The Leader"* seeking any knowledge of its origins.

Since then it has been learned that others recall having previous seen the inscribed rock back at least as early as the 1970s, some saying even then it looked very old. From those earlier observers and a few who responded to *The Leader* article, the main "understandings" by the few who know of its existence are variously that it marks the spot where a child was killed or where a policeman was killed – either while chasing a fugitive or while searching for a lost boy. The shield outline is roughly similar to the NSW Police Badge outline. One person even thought that the body of the deceased was still under the rock because having fallen on, and killed, the unfortunate, the rock was too heavy to be lifted! It is thought that suggestion can be discounted.

Jan and Cliff have undertaken exhaustive research for the year 1895 shown in the inscription, including death indexes, and newspaper accounts, and found no record of an appropriate death of a Connolly (with any of its variant spellings). They have also researched all BDM records of a W.H. Connolly

– thinking it perhaps a prank by a young person with those initials and name, but could’nt discover any “likely suspect”.

The origin of the inscription therefore remains, at this time, an intriguing mystery. Any reader who can contribute toward solving the mystery should contact the Oatley Heritage Group Archivist.

- Itinerants - rock shelters
- depression
- Bottle collector

Bushfire - ?1941?

### Sharks and the net.

The net was originally put in before 1934. In 1935 and again in 1937 the Council discussed and allocated moneys to repair the net.

In 1988 the article below appeared in the Leader. The outcome was for the Council to repair the net again as today it is working order.



The 1947 incident nearby is well known in Oatley history.

The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926-1954), Monday 7 January 1946, page 8

### **GIRL KILLED BY SHARK IN GEORGE'S RIVER**

**SYDNEY, Sunday.**  
Valma Tegel, 14, of Russell St., Oatley Bay, George's River, was killed by an 8ft shark in three feet of water at Oatley Bay, yesterday afternoon.

The girl had been swimming with her father, Walter Tegel, and her cousin, Barbara Warden, 12, at a small beach near her home.

She was horribly mangled and died a few minutes after being taken from the water by her father.

The girl's father fought the shark with his feet and fists, and forced it to release her.

Tegel said the two girls had been swimming in shallow water for about 25 minutes when the shark attacked.

#### **Two Sharks Sighted**

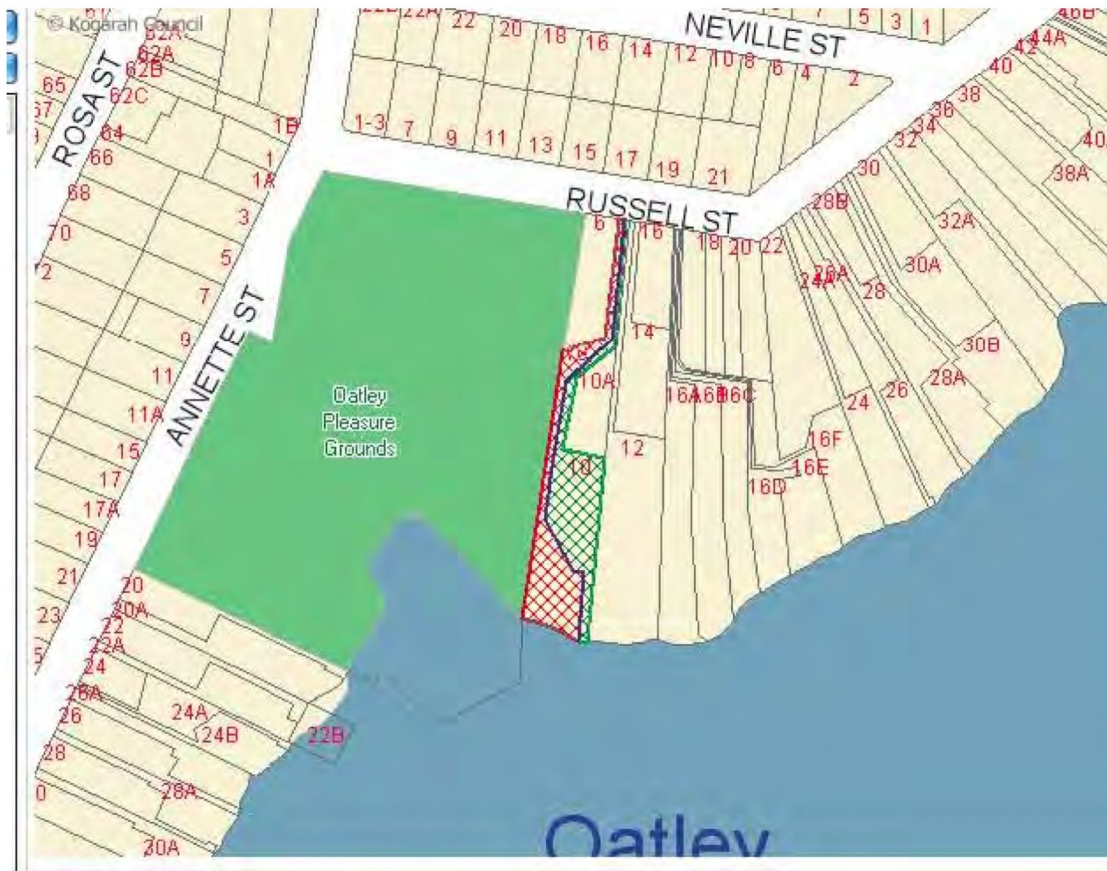
Two sharks were sighted to-day in Oatley Bay, George's River, near the spot where Valma Tegel was killed.

Despite a desperate and courageous effort by her father, Rudolph Tegel, who straddled the shark and fought it with his bare fists, the girl was horribly mangled (losing her left leg, and she died in her father's arms as he was carrying her from the water.

Fishermen spent the whole of to-day in search of the shark, which it is believed may be identical with one of two sighted to-day.

Fixed buoys have been dropped in the bay and a sharp look out is being maintained.

## 6. Maps and from above



Oatley Pleasure Gardens from the air.

The photos below show the Oatley Pleasure gardens in 1961 , 1981, 2001 and 2009.

1961



1981



2001



2009



Study and zooming show the following features.

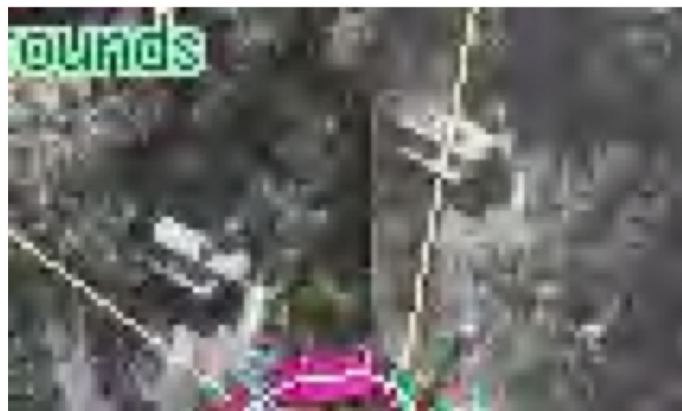
In 1961 the outline of the Sea Scouts Boatshed is clear. But the slipway is not clear. The parks boundary in the south is wrong and probably due to misalignment of the photos- this error is also shown in another error discussed below and due to the problem of trying to align lots of photos taken from the air as an aircraft sweeps across the area.

The netting around the sandy beach is clear in each year except 1981.

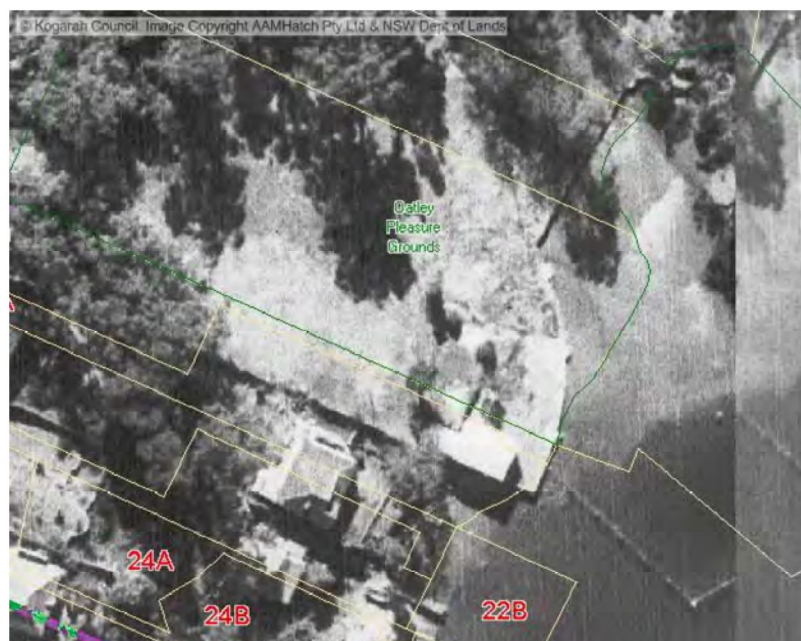
The bush has grown since 1981 but there are few clear differences in the last 30 years, except for some clearing of the Coral trees in recent years near the water.

There is some signs of the old car track to the “Holtcraig” house and residence in Russell Street.

The 1961 photo also shows two buildings about 30 metres from the water. But closer examination shows that this is due to the poor overlapping of the photos done from the air. There is only one building but it has been shown twice due to the error in construction of the photo.



Below is 1961 showing the Boat house for the Sea Scouts roof.



## 7. 1960-2010 Recent times- and as it is now

Below is one Leader Article and several photos of the Oatley Pleasure Grounds as they were in 2010. Perhaps there is more to say about this period?

Leader Thursday 30.3.00  
Page 20

### Grant some clean water

OATLEY Bay is set to benefit from a \$58,000 federal grant awarded to Kogarah Council through the Natural Heritage Trust's Coast and Clean Seas program.

The council will use the grant to install a gross pollutant trap (GPT), replace an outdated drainage system and plant native trees at Oatley Pleasure Grounds, Oatley.

Kogarah Councillor Graeme Staas, representing the Mayor of Kogarah, Councillor Sam Witheridge, accepted the grant from the Federal Member for Barton, Robert McClelland.

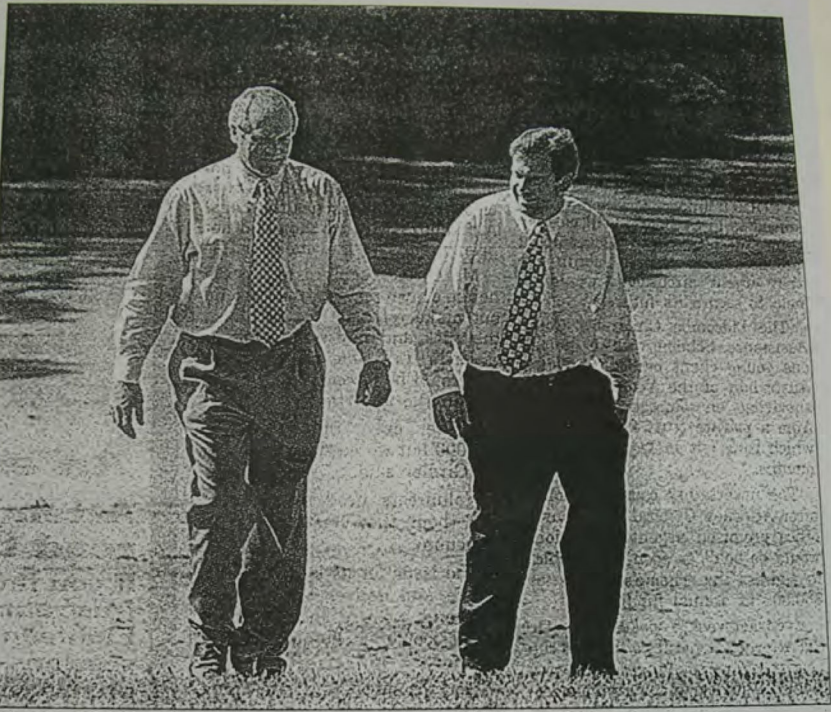
Councillor Staas, who said he regularly took his family water skiing near Oatley Bay, said that after periods of rain the water in the bay often turned unsavoury.

Cr. Witheridge said part of the regeneration scheme will also focus on educating the community about the effects of stormwater which would hopefully help identify the source of pollution.

"This grant will allow Kogarah Council, in partnership with the community, to significantly reduce the amount of pollution entering the bay," Cr Witheridge said.

"This is an education campaign as much as a pollution-control campaign."

Kogarah Council Stormwater Technical Officer Kylie Jamieson, said the planting of native trees would assist in the prevention of erosion at the foreshore of the bay.



■ STALEY PLEASURE GROUND DECREED: Kogarah Councillor Graeme Staas walks through Oatley Pleasure Grounds with Federal MP for Barton Robert McClelland.









## **REFERENCES**

Various personal interviews and material.

Current photos of Oatley Pleasure Grounds and Scout Hall from the authors.

Australian national Library for Subdivision plan and advertisement.

Elaine Howard's book "Oatley a Workings Man's Paradise".

Kogarah Council minutes and records.

Kogarah Council maps

Sydney Long painting from

<http://www.artistsandart.org/2010/04/sydney-long-1871-1955-australian-artist.html>

Oatley Swimming Club photo from Norma Straney.