

OATLEY SANDSTONE

Oatley Heritage and Historical Society

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S3 OATLEY SANDSTONE

- Basically started millions of years ago when the older rocks on the south western margin of the Sydney Basin were lifted up and a fast flowing river (or rivers) began depositing medium to coarse river sand in great thicknesses.



- This Hawkesbury sandstone, making up the bulk of the visible rocks of the Oatley area, formed when the sands were buried and cemented together to form rock.

- Subsequent erosion of the overlying shales exposed the sandstone and continued to erode them to give us the weird and wonderful shapes and patterns that we see today.

HOUSES

S4 Holtcraig 10 Russell St (local heritage listed)

- reputedly the first 'substantial' house built on Oatley Bay. **It was built about 1900 by Edgar Nicholas Williams**, an ironmonger, who had acquired just under two acres on the cusp of land granted to James Oatley in 1833 and Charles Cecil Griffiths in 1884.
- A grand Federation residence on a cliff above Oatley Bay baths, the house is on sandstone foundations with double brick walls, fibro shingle roof, bay windows, and verandah to the front



Stoneleigh 6 Rosa St.

- **built in 1902 for George and Louisa Howard** and in 1903 was still the only house between Wonoona Parade and Frederick Street.
- As most of the early buildings in Oatley were of weatherboard, Stoneleigh is a rare surviving example of a stone cottage from the turn of the century.
- Recently (2014/15) a garage has been added to the front left of the house and this has been clad with real sandstone to blend in with the rest of the house.



“Sutton Lodge” 1 Myrtle St (Oatley West immediately adjacent to Myles Dunphy Reserve)

Story comes from Mike Lazarus current owner.

- Building started in **early 1900s** The house was still being built in 1920s and 30s so was nearly a 40 year period.
- 3 bedroom house. All foundations, exterior walls and fences as well as garage are sandstone. Also has extensive sandstone drains.
- All stone used came from the site.
- Two brothers built the house. Lived in Glebe, owned building disposal business and came on horse and cart. They used whatever materials were available at the time so e.g. all house windows are different.
- They used a pulley system to drag the stone blocks up the steep sloping site.
- One brother (the stonemason who happened to be a deaf mute) was in an accident where a stone block fell on him. This may have been the cause for the long building period
- A Mr Greenway bought the house in late 1940s.
- Mike’s parents bought the house in 1956. Mike grew up there so knows the area very well.





← House
Garage →
Steps
↓



Garage → Steps ↓



Glenbrook - Clarendon - 92 Letitia St (local heritage listed)

- **Built in 1912 for Albert Ashbury**, the house overlooks the Charles Street Reserve and has a southerly outlook towards the Georges River.
- Glenbrook was renamed Clarendon in recent years. It is historically significant as it represents one of a pair of large Californian Bungalow semi-detached residences.
- It has many of the classic features of the Californian Bungalow
- Built on a stone foundation, the exterior was tuckpointed, bricks being of the 'liver' colour which was highly fashionable in Californian Bungalows and the tiled roof was finished with terra cotta ridging. Extending around two sides of the building was a broad verandah with a stone-capped brick wall.
- In recent years a new utilities area comprising kitchen and laundry has been added at the rear and features three stained-glass windows facing the reserve.





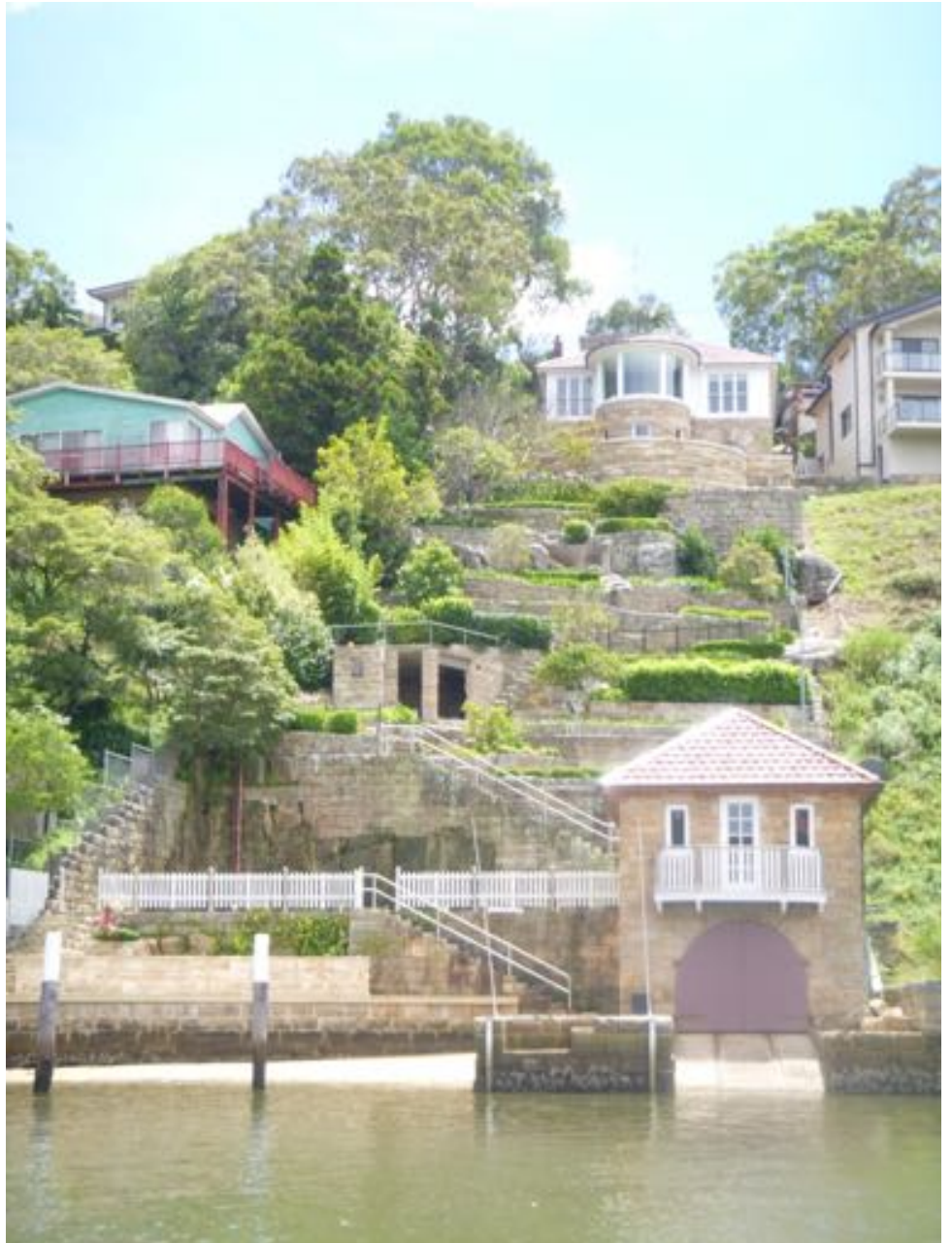
Abandoned Stone house: 20 Marine Drive

- **Started by Frank Naylor**, a stone mason from Hurstville, **in 1930**.
- All stone hewn from rock on site and dressed.
- Son Wilfred, a budding stone mason, started to help
- The depression hit the father badly and neither of them could afford the time
- Few more years later Frank's health was very bad, and son's interest waned, until his death.
- **Sold in 1944**, being about 60% structurally completed except for the roof, and has not been continued since.



“Nip” Telfers 56 Marine Dve

- land was **bought** by Roy Telfer, a contract painter **in 1932**.
- The house was named “Nip” which was the pet name Mrs Sue Latham’s grandfather used for her grandmother.
- During the construction of his own home at 20 Marine Drive, Frank Naylor was contracted to build a **stone boatshed** at 56 Marine Drive (constructed **in 1938**). (Alternate story – Roy Telfer built boatshed)
- Two (or 3?) Italian stonemasons who were Master Tradesmen were employed after they had completed their work on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
- The brothers brought all their tools from Oatley station each day, returning each night. They worked on property for >25 years - interrupted by WWII, during which the brothers were interned, because of the war with Italy.
- They cut the stone into blocks of the same size, “sparrow picking” each block into a fine texture, “keyholing” around the curved windows and “pintucking” the mortar.
- Built swimming pool, tennis court, house foundations and a garage at street level, and extensive landscaping
- (when one brother was killed by a train at the level crossing at Oatley, the remaining brothers called it quits??)





Street views



Chiswell's 23 & 25 Annette St and 92 Rosa St

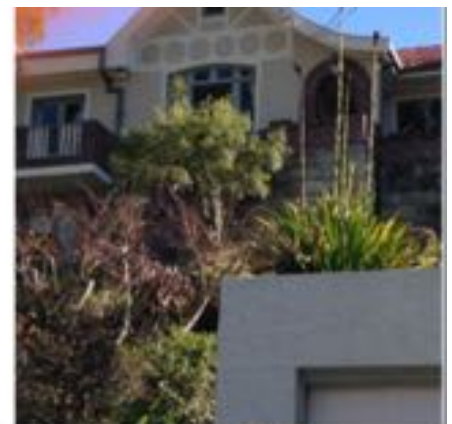
- The Chiswell brothers - Charles, James and Ernest, - were to establish themselves as leading manufacturers of high-quality furniture and as their reputation grew, they were commissioned to make the chairs required for the Queen's visit to Sydney in 1953.
- The brothers **commenced building** their homes **in 1928** and moved in in 1930.
- Ernest's house at 92 Rosa Street was delayed to allow building materials for the first two houses to be brought in from Rosa Street rather than hoisted up the cliff from Annette Street.
- Each house was small and built to its own individual design although the houses had some features in common, **stone foundations**, tuckpointed brickwork, terra cotta Marseilles roofing tiles and **stone fencing**.



25
Annette



23
Annette



92 Rosa



21 Annette St – old quarry?

The following story was related to me by James Chiswell who grew up in No.23.

When Annette Street was converted from a gravel road to tar in the mid 1940s, crushed sandstone was used as a base for the new surface. It was obtained by blasting from the rock face at the bottom of the hill [Neville Street end], shown on the left hand side of the attached photo.

I remember this clearly as I would watch the work - particularly if they were blasting. One day they let me push the plunger which set off the explosion. What experiences OH & S has robbed kids of these days!



old quarry?



38 & 38a Annette St - landscaping

- These photos were from the Jack Gray story presented to OHHS 30 May 2014
- Robert John (Big Jack) Gray, a bank manager with the Union Bank, and Berta Lydia (Bird) Gray purchased 38 and 38A Annette St with the existing houses in 1921. [They also bought 36 Annette St and 3 double blocks between Russell and Neville Sts].
- It appears most of the backyard right down to the water was terraced with steps and paths and walls.
- Stone was most likely cut on site.
- As they lived at 38 Annette St from 1921 to 1949 the work would have been carried out in **1920s and 30s**
- Doesn't seem to be there any more. John Whitbread?



9 Russell St (on local heritage register)

- **Built** by Clif and Peg Peir **in 1938** on land purchased from Jack and Bertha Gray c.1932/3
- has original textured stucco external wall finish and a rock faced sandstone base course (foundations).
- Garden has been described - "The tumbling rockery.. gives the impression of rising from the outcropping of rock on which it is built"
- The street boundary has an original low rock-faced sandstone fence.
- On the blocks to left of this house (No.s 1 – 7) are two duplexes that were built by Jack and Bertha Gray. These also incorporate sandstone foundations which was obtained from



the site.



NOTABLE BUILDINGS

S26 Silvester's castle - Yarran Rd Cnr Southern St

- Building started **before WWI (1914)**
- Difficult to get to so work was slow. To get to the job they would have to take the train to Como and walk back across the bridge to Silvesters. Stonemasons did not stay long.
- A tremendous amount of work had been expended on the estate, obviously over many years, with all the stone quarried on the site, and superbly cut, by Italian stonemasons.
- Mr. Silvester was considered eccentric -many theories about the purpose of the house - asylum for the mental or spy's lookout in case an enemy came up Georges River and landed troops to take Sydney from the rear.
- The stone was cut from the centre to form a quarry and the castle built around this. In this quarry was a weatherboard cottage, built on concrete piles, the only access by a plank across the ten feet drop of the quarry.
- The building never reached roof height as parts were built, demolished and re-erected to a different plan. Beneath there were tunnels and cellars and water tanks built like rooms.
- In the mid 1920s fire destroyed the wooden cottage. All fell into disrepair.
- It became an adventure playground for local children - many stories about this
- stones were scattered to the winds, some to reappear as foundations of houses and neat stone fences within the vicinity.

Ron Holmes
1940s ↓



So, continuing the Silvester thread we move to:



29 Southern St – built circa?

- Currently (2016) house is owned by Lesley Galloway – Optometrist who related this information
- Was built as a fishermans cottage - but do not know when
- House was owned by James Oatley's grandson
- Sandstone is only on the front wall – although piers under the house floor joists are rough sandstone
- **Sandstone came from Silvester's castle.** [Leon Davis (lawyer cnr Yarran and southern) told Lesley.]
- Doorways are low in height at the front of the house (set in stone)
- Was once the only house on the point. Houses below /nearby are old stables. No. 25 was the stable for No. 29. There is a big wagon wheel at the front of the house as a leftover relic of the stable days.



And further on the Silvester thread we move to:

14 Ada St - Built circa. ??

- From 1925 to 1928, **H. C. Silvester lived at 14 Ada Street.**
- His house had the familiar "Silvester Castle" sandstone foundation and fence.
- It also has side steps, side walls and the front verandah constructed of large chiselled sandstone blocks.
- Silvester's eccentricity can be borne out by two of our local citizens, Ray Stevens and Jim Nicholson who lived in Ada Street when Mr Silvester was in residence at number fourteen. He bought large quantities of goods at auction and stored them on his adjacent blocks.
- Telephone booths were the first item both men could recall, hand basins, old wooden cable drums, you name it he would have them stored in Ada Street.
- A treasure trove for children of the street to explore.



14 Ada St



Queens Hall - 30A Russell street.

- Its stories and reputation had been known for many years. But where was it?--- It was known to face Oatley Bay. Well Cliff Crane did some work and found it still intact and told us about it at a recent meeting.
- **Construction Circa 1905?** Story is that Richard Stibb's grandfather built it.
- The large heavy blocks of sandstone can be seen in the C.1905 photo and in the end wall of the 1910 photos.
- Why did it get the name Queens Hall. Queen Victoria had died in 1901--- perhaps a memorial?
- Queens Hall was an early community building in Oatley.
- Queens Hall was used as a dance venue--- Friday nights and 1/6 to enter. Ladies brought a plate of food. This was being held at least until 1922.
- It is today tenanted in 3 flats.



1910 →
↓



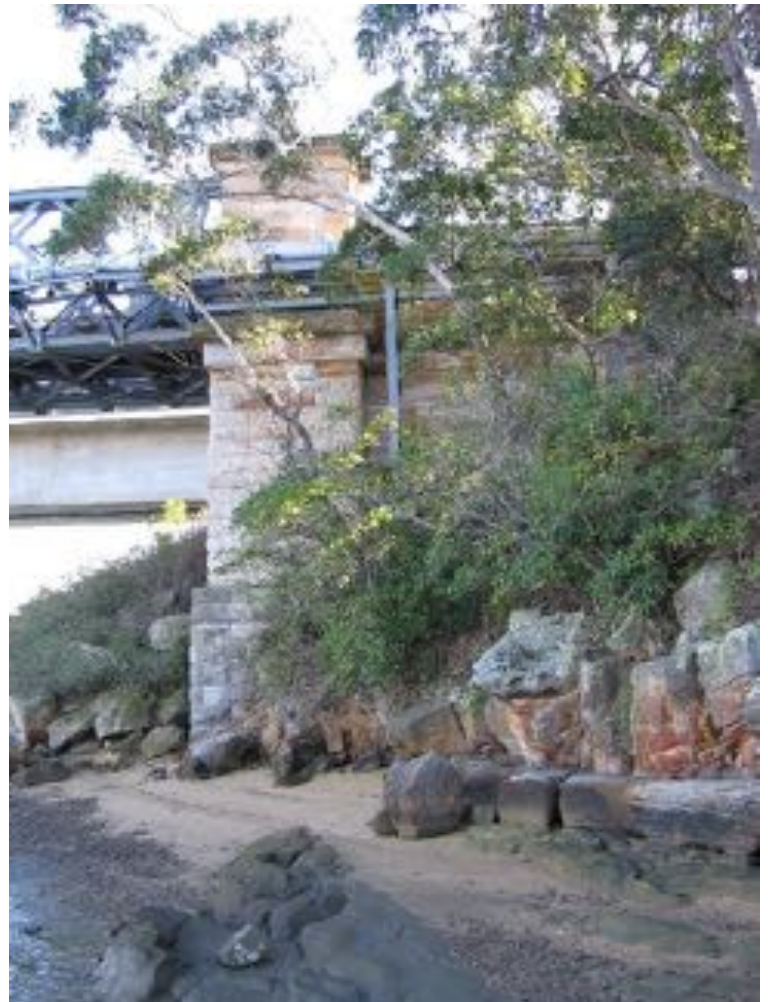
Modern day 2015 →



PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Oatley-Como Bridge - 1885

- The 1885 Como Rail Bridge is one of twelve prefabricated lattice truss iron bridges ordered by the noted Engineer-in-Chief John Whitton of the (NSW) Railway Department.
- a selection of masonry supports, earthen embankments and cast iron piers were used to support the bridge units. These piers are bell-shaped at the bottom and rest on the sandstone bed of the Georges River.
- The northern Oatley abutment for the bridge was constructed in sandstone quarry-faced *ashlar*. [Def: masonry made of large square-cut stones, used as a facing on walls of brick or stone rubble.]
- Also the northern rail entrance/ approach to the bridge is flanked by sandstone walls.



↑ Walls on northern approach



Mulga Rd culvert

- **Built 1888** as part of Mulga St construction by Hurstville Council.
- The sandstone culvert and abutments are visible only from the south side.
- Origin of the sandstone blocks not known but possibly from ballast quarry nearby?
- The surface of the early culvert is now covered and built up (presumably when Mulga Rd was upgraded and sealed?)
- Note tapered blocks at top to allow for road grades
- Interesting that the Road including the culvert was ~50% funded by (Ald) McRae by public subscription.

Reference articles

September 22nd 1888- Sydney Morning Herald

HURSTVILLE.

This Municipal Council held its fortnightly meeting on September 20. There were present the Mayor (Alderman Milsop), Aldermen Patrick, Gannon, Peake, Tidswell, Fripp, Humphrey, and M'Rae. , The finance committee met and recommended for payment accounts amounting to £127 6s. 10d. Correspondence :—From the Oatley's Estate Company, enclosing a further contribution towards Mulga-street of £80, and also drawing the attention of the council to the culvert on that road, complaining that it was not sufficiently strong to convey the immense volume of water. Moved by Alderman M'Rae, seconded by Alderman Humphrey, and carried,— " That the letter be received, thanking the company for their contribution, and the engineer to prepare a statement regarding the culvert to be conveyed to the company."

From the National Building Company, enclosing a contribution of £175 towards general corporate purposes.

Received with thanks. From Mr. Thomas Carey (contractor for Mulga-street), applying for an extension of time to complete his contract. The request was complied with, and one month granted.

November 20 1888- The Sydney Morning Herald

MUNICIPAL NOTES.

The Mulga-street—Oatley's piece of roadmaking undertaken by the Hurstville council has just been completed. Through the energy of Alderman M'Rae who raised by subscription almost half the cost, and, on the faith that the Government would give pound for pound endowment, the work was commenced and carried out by Mr. T. Cavey, under the superintendence of Mr. W. J. Thompson, engineer, at a cost of £1627. The road runs from Oatley's railway platform for a distance of 39 1/2 chains in the direction of Peakhurst, and is made across a valley 54.28ft. deep from the top end of the grade, on the side next the railway; this grade being 8 chains long, with a fall of 1 in 15.4; and on the opposite side having a grade 9 1/2 chains long, rising 1 in 14.38 made through a rock cutting on the side of the valley 12ft. deep. An embankment is made across the valley, 20ft. high, having a double stone culvert passing underneath. This embankment is enclosed by a retaining wall on either side, about 10ft. high, and then sloped up so as to make the roadway thereon 28ft. wide, with 5ft. footpaths, and having a strong two-rail fence on either side the full length of the embankment.



OATLEY PARK

The Castle (or Kiosk) 1936

- The Public Works Department, employing relief workers headed by Jim Lawrence (a ganger and stonemason), constructed the walls of the stone "castle" shelter shed (that we see today) in August 1935.
- The relief money ran out in September with the roof unfinished.
- Council, in order to complete the job, considered the costs of alternative roofs. Galvanised tin would cost £200, Tile £200, and reinforced concrete (which was accepted) £350.
- This job commenced in October, **finishing in May 1936**, with the addition of a stone parapet. [Hume 1989 p12]

On the other hand

- The plaque on the Castle states *“Oatley Park Kiosk - constructed by Mr Jim Lawrence a stonemason and ganger as part of the relief work carried out in Oatley Park by the Dept of Public Works in 1929 – 1933 during the depression.”* [Plaque on front wall of the castle - Historical Marker 3 installed by **Hurstville Historical Society and Hurstville Municipal Council**]

Photos



- Note in photos the light colour of the sandstone around the arches and the parapet



Steps to Sandy Bay baths

- The McNamara family have close ties with West Oatley, living first in Mi Mi Street and later in Oatley Park Avenue.
- Lorna McNamara's father, Selwyn Probert, was a stonemason and champion rower who helped build the stone steps down to Oatley Park's Sandy Bay Baths in late 1929.
- The steps were completed in January 1930.



Steps to baths 1930s



Seawalls around baths 2016

Seawalls around Sandy Bay to north east

- Approval for providing relief work for the extension of the seawall from the baths around to north-east Sandy beach was granted in May, [1934] as well. [Hume p12]
- Retaining wall at the north east end of the baths was built 1934.
- After the third baths were completed in 1935, George Prentice was employed by Hurstville Council as caretaker. Although absent during the war he was a much missed addition to the community. He was a real character with many stories told of his unusual behaviour. He did some of the stone work around the baths, despite kids floating his wheelbarrows in the baths, and other antics. [Hume 1989 p10]

Quarry Ogilvy St - possible source of sandstone for seawalls

- The stone for the retaining walls is reputed to have been barged in to the site from a quarry in Ogilvy St Peakhurst. Evidence of this quarry still exists. It is behind numbers 84A, 84B, 86 and 88. In fact all of these houses appear to have been built on the quarry floor to some degree or other.
- It has been assumed that the rock, once quarried was transported down the hill to Salt Pan Creek foreshore, where there is some possible evidence of a landing place, loaded onto a barge and shipped around to Oatley baths.



Possible barge loading sites
Salt Pan Creek



Other Oatley Park features

These include:

- retaining walls around the road edges at the 'crossover'
- steps up to the steamroller park
- an old fireplace/BBQ?
- the more recent addition of the ranger's hut – thankfully maintaining the look and feel of the park by using sandstone walls.

Other OP features



Other Oatley Park features

Road cutting showing drill holes

- The road cutting around the south side after entering via Douglas Haig St shows drill holes that were used to make the cutting.
- Opposite this cutting is a small retaining wall supporting the carpark at the lookout
- The last photo just shows the beautiful colour and forms of the natural sandstone formations that feature throughout the Park.

Oatley Park features

Road cutting showing drill holes



Oatley Bowling Club -Retaining walls

“As a result of a notice in the local press by E. Stanhope the inauguration of the Oatley Bowling and Recreation Club took place in Oatley Park on the 20th December 1959 at 10- 15 am. (hence the Club badge).

Progress was so rapid that the Committee was able to call a public meeting on 24th February 1960 in the local Swimming Club Hall of those desirous of becoming members of the Club.

The site required to be cleared and levelled but this work had progressed to a stage in May 1960, that it was possible to complete plans for the layout of the first green and its surrounds.

In July 1960 the Club was incorporated and became the Oatley Bowling and Recreation Club Limited, comprising 200 Ordinary Member and 100 Associated Lady Members.

By September 1960, **the retaining wall for No. 1 green had been completed** and the green itself laid in, the progress had been astonishing. Water was laid on and a sprinkler system provided. Fencing of the whole of the area followed and so the work progressed.

Meanwhile plans had gone steadily ahead for the **erection of further stone retaining walls** and the laying in of the second green. Large quantities of filling had been procured but each obstacle was met and overcome.”

I haven't found the source of the sandstone at this stage.

By September 1960, the retaining wall for No. 1 green had been completed and plans were well advanced for completing further sandstone retaining walls.



3 - Circa 1960





Lower no 2 green retaining wall.

Myles Dunphy Reserve

- Cave provides lots of adventure for local children
- Old sandstone retaining wall behind 36 Mimosa St

Myles Dunphy Reserve



Oyster farming

Laurie Derwent has related the following:

- Many tonnes of sandstone have been used by oyster farmers –my family started oyster farming from about 1913 and at that time it was common to cut stone slabs and place them on top of timber on the mud or as an extension of the natural rocky foreshores of Oatley as well as Illawong, Quibray Bay etc.
- There is plenty of this stone buried under mud at our Dinjerra Crescent waterfront. And plenty on the former leases at Neverfail Bay, Hurstville Bay and Lime Kiln Bar.
- ‘Pop’ Roelandts who lived at 47 Wyong St for many years was a stone mason who built sea walls. I think he did ours, but cannot confirm, as well as the retaining wall for the cottage at the bottom of our block .
- I learnt how to cut sandstone using a pick and gads (shaped like a blunt chisel) from my uncle Andrew William (Bill) Derwent in the early 1970s.

Oyster farming - Neverfail Bay



Wyong St seawall ↓



Gads →



Letterboxes

Just a selection from what can be seen just by walking around the streets of Oatley.

Letterboxes



Letterboxes



Fences

Just a selection from what can be seen just by walking around the streets of Oatley.

Click



Fences







Decorative /Misc

Some other ways sandstone has been used

Wishing well; corner stones in newish building; verandah post capstones

Decorative/Misc



Modern day

So are we losing this characteristic of Oatley?

I think not. It is not being used extensively in modern building but there are signs that people still appreciate its beauty and either retain it and incorporate within renovated structures or add new sandstone features to their new buildings.

Modern/recent



WATERFRONT TOUR

The accompanying slides take you on a tour of the Oatley waterfront starting at the boat ramp in Oatley Bay continuing around Russell St, past the Oatley Pleasure Grounds, along Annette St, around Oatley Point, along Algernon St and Dinjerra Cres, across Neverfail Bay to pass under the Oatley -Como old railway bridge, along Southern St and Llewellyn St, across to Lansdowne Pde, then Raymond St, around Marine Dve, past Jewfish Point, continuing around Marine Dve then across to Oatley Park baths to conclude the tour.

Note all the way the extensive range and variety of sandstone features:

Boatsheds, seawalls, swimming pools, retaining walls, steps, landscaping and pathways as well as the rugged beauty and interesting shapes and colours of the natural sandstone in situ.

See separate file