

Monday 22nd April 2024

Callan Park

Heritage Council of New South Wales Plan under the Heritage Act, 1977



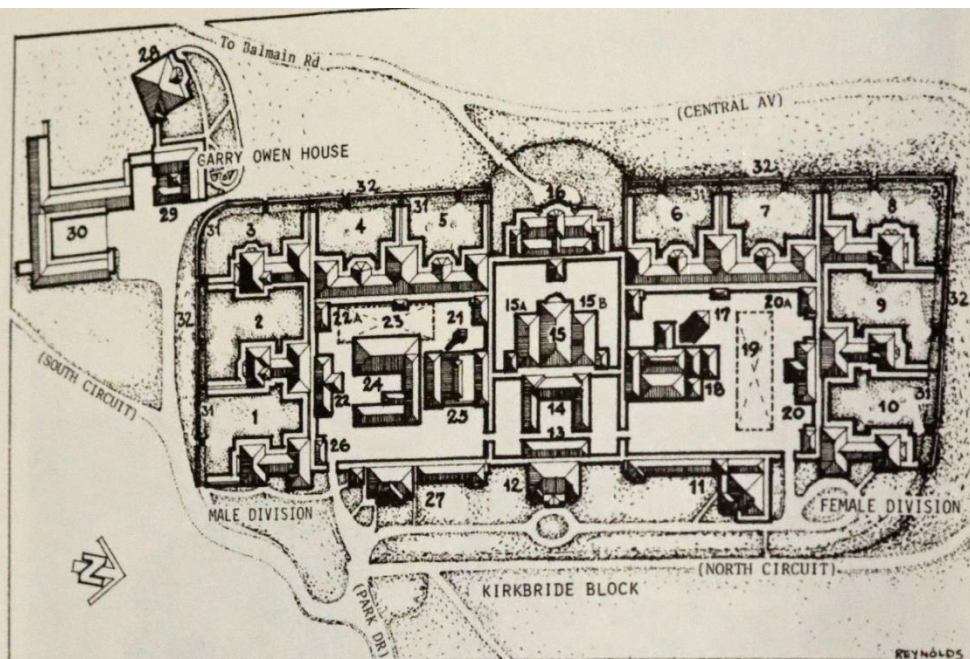
State Heritage Register

0 50 100 200 300 400 Meters

Scale: 1:8,000
Produced by: Ric Bolzan
Gazetted Date: 2 April 1999

Legend

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| SHR Curtilage | Land Parcels |
| Historic Regions | Water |
| LGAs | Roads |
| Suburbs | Railways |
| | NSW Reserves |



6. Map showing the layout of the wards at Callan Park, including the private ward for men at Garryowen House. The private female wards, which were located just off Central Avenue, are not shown on this map

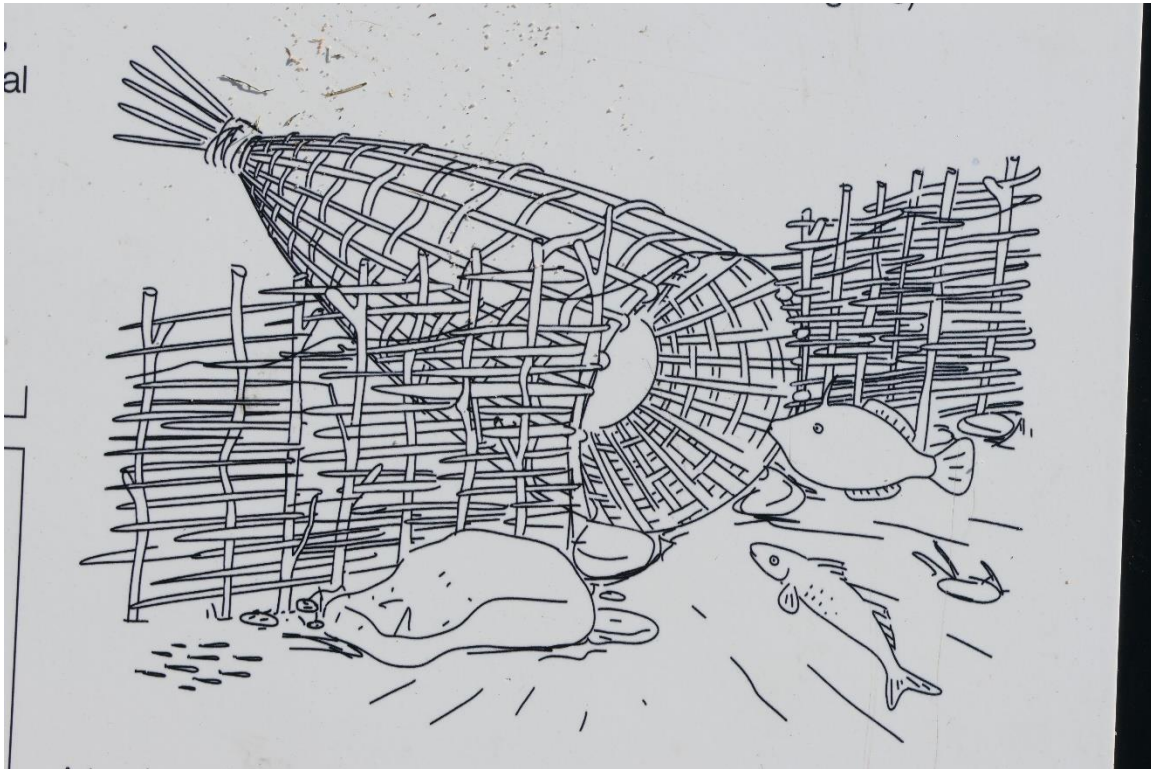
Key:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Ward One (for convalescent men) | 18 Laundry |
| 2 Ward Two (for violent and refractory men) | 19 Underground tank |
| 3 Ward Three (for intermediate men) | 20/20a Planned female bath house site / actual site |
| 4 Ward Four (for admissions and acute men) | 21 Boiler chimney stack |
| 5 Ward Five (hospital ward for men) | 22/22a Planned male bath house site / actual site |
| 6 Ward Six (hospital ward for women) | 23 Underground tank |
| 7 Ward Seven (for admissions and acute women) | 24 Stables and workshops (now demolished) |
| 8 Ward Eight (for intermediate women; contains a basement underneath the ward) | 25 Boiler house and engine room |
| 9 Ward Nine (for violent and refractory women) | 26 Mortuary (demolished) |
| 10 Ward Ten (for convalescent women) | 27 Dispenser's residence and chief attendant's residence |
| 11 Medical superintendent's residence | 28 Extension to Garryowen House for private male patients |
| 12 Administration block | 29 Garryowen House |
| 13 Store | 30 Temporary weatherboard wards (demolished) |
| 14 Kitchen | 31 Boundary of airing courts, including ha-has |
| 15 Recreation hall / chapel | 32 Perimeter wall |
| 15a Male dining hall | |
| 15b Female dining hall | |
| 16 Medical Officers' Wing | |
| 17 Water tower | |

Today's NPA SSB field trip took us to The Callan Park Hospital for the Insane (1878–1914), a delightful name of historic import. In 1915, the facility was renamed as the Callan Park Mental Hospital and, again in 1976, to Callan Park Hospital. Since 1994, the facility has been formally known as Rozelle Hospital. In 2008 all remanning patients or inmates were transferred to Concord Hospital.

Then began the struggle to determine what would happen to the 61-hectare site. By 2015 it was decided that the land would stay with the Government of NSW “pending the establishment of a trust to manage the site's ongoing use as a wellness sanctuary, encompassing health, community and educational uses.”¹ The Master Plan that was released is accessible.²

Having assembled the cats (no, I did not try herding them – an impossible task), we headed off from King Georges Park, around the foreshore and discovered the fish traps!



¹ [Callan Park Hospital for the Insane - Wikipedia](#)

²

http://www.callanparkyourplan.com.au/downloads/2013/SU208_FinalReport_Book_Low_res_RevF.pdf



Art work by Edwards Clarke (2019)



Note how eagerly they listened

Up the steps, towards Point Road Park, it was impossible not to see the midden. Equally impressive were the series of rock engravings.

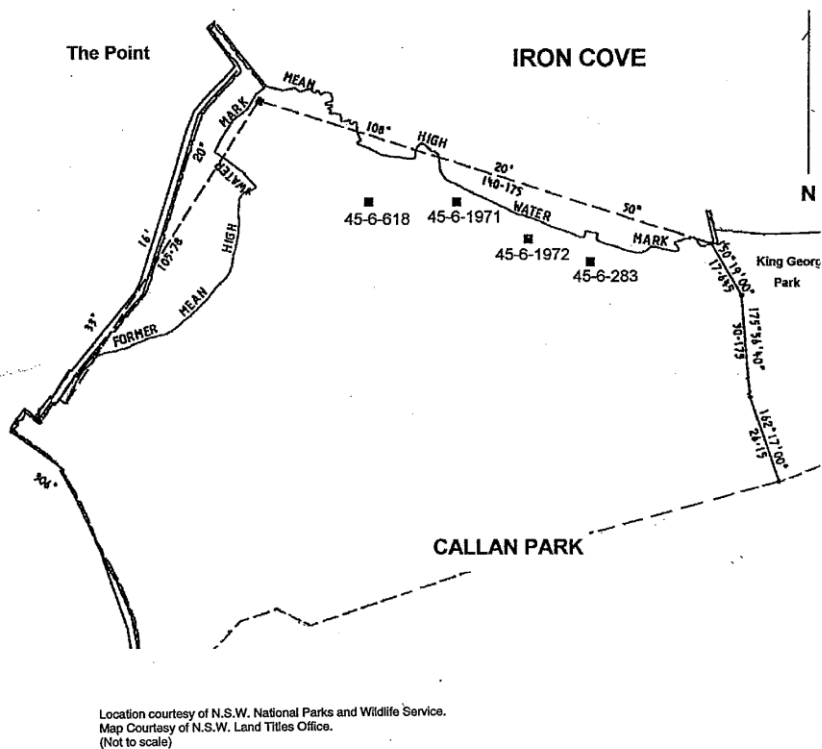


The rock engravings are located on the edge of a parcel of land known as "The Point", on the shores of Iron Cove (Parramatta River). Their origin is contested. Certainly a few were indigenous but who did the other, probably nautical, engravings is complex³.

4.0 Maps

4.1 Location of Aboriginal Middens

Map showing the location of Aboriginal Middens at The Point



³ J Clegg, Michael Barry and George Susino – Callan Park Rock Engravings Survey Project – First Report



Clegg et al say that:
“UNFORTUNATELY, no one has been able to explain definitely the origin of those incredible rock carvings and cryptic inscriptions re-discovered by Column 8 at Iron Cove

and reported last Thursday. But scores of readers are convinced the sculptor was trying his illiterate hand at French. Take JAMHAMBON, for example. Jambon in French is ham. Ham in English, ham in French - a ham sandwich? The word inscribed on what we thought was a shark - BALENEDLAMR - could also be interpreted as Romanised French for whale of the sea. Baleine de la mer. But WOUHUROPEFRAHIINSE? Europe and France, yes, but what of the remainder?"⁴

As for that blogger, David Noble, the one lying in his sick bed today, he supports another conjecture from the same report:

MR R. Black, 89, of Waitara, believes the man who carved and inscribed the rock bluffs at Iron Cove was a crazy old recluse. Everyone was afraid of him and no one knew his name.

Mr Black says: "As a young boy I remember him living on a houseboat below the point at Callan Park. About 60 to 70 years old, he always wore a seaman's cap and shunned the public. Everyone said he was a sea-captain, either French or German. Nobody was allowed aboard his boat, which he seldom left. School children said he could draw good pictures. I don't know what happened to him."

If Mr Black, 89 in 1974, was a young boy – shall we guess 5-10 years of age? – when he knew our artist, it must have been somewhere around 1895 to 1910. Again, if Mr. Black's estimate of the artist's age is correct, 60-70 in 1895 – 1910, he was 69-79 in 1919, the latest date (if it is a date) and in 1855, the earliest, he was 20-30. This all seems quite feasible.⁵

Whatever, it was fun exploring them.

But more awaits, so we walked down, west, along the water's edge, and looked west towards Rodd Island⁶.

⁴ You can download the report from [\(47\) Callan Park Rock Engravings | George Susino - Academia.edu](#)

⁵ [Callan Park Visit – 9 March 2023 | David Noble Blog \(david-noble.net\)](#)

⁶ Rodd Island is a 6,700-square-metre (0.67 ha) island on the Parramatta River in Sydney, Australia. It lies in the centre of Iron Cove, between the suburbs of Drummoyne, Russell Lea, Rodd Point, Haberfield, Lilyfield and Leichhardt. It is located west of the Sydney Harbour upstream and the Harbour Bridge. Today the island is uninhabited, and forms part of the Sydney Harbour National Park

Between 1888 and 1894, the island was used as a laboratory by scientists working for the Pasteur Institute, who were researching the use of the chicken cholera microbe to control Australia's rabbit population. Louis Pasteur sent his nephew, Doctor Adrien Loir to conduct the experimentation in Australia and facilities were constructed on the island. Pasteur was interested because he had been conducting similar research in France and Henry Parkes had offered a 25,000 pound reward to anyone who could solve the rabbit infestation problem. However, the research received an unfavourable report in 1889 and from June, 1890, the facilities were used to manufacture sheep and cattle vaccines for anthrax and pleuro-pneumonia.

[Rodd Island - Wikipedia](#)



We then looped back around in an arc to walk around the Kirkbride part of Callan Park. This is the centre of what was the old 19th century hospital for the Insane under Manning (ex-resident of Rothersthorpe, the village we lived in during our exchange year of teaching in England).

Callan Park was originally built to alleviate overcrowding from the nearby Gladesville Hospital for the Insane — a name the medical superintendent Dr Frederic Norton Manning gave it to help eliminate public prejudice and indifference towards the patients.

Mind you, despite Manning's reputation as a humane man, he and others at the time still believed that many cases of lunacy (he preferred insanity to avoid the concept that it was brought about by the influence of the Moon) were the result of masturbation and alcoholism. That many were suffering from syphilis did not seem central to their diagnosis. They treated it with mercury! I am not sure if that was considered part of Manning's "Moral Treatment"!

The Kirkbride Plan was a system of mental asylum design advocated by American psychiatrist Thomas Story Kirkbride (1809–1883) in the mid-19th century.

The structural features of the hospitals as designated by Kirkbride were contingent on his theories regarding the healing of the mentally ill, in which environment and exposure to natural light and air circulation were crucial. The hospitals built according to the Kirkbride Plan would adopt various architectural styles,[1] but had in common the "bat wing" style floor plan, housing numerous wings that sprawl outward from the center.[2]

The first hospital designed under the Kirkbride Plan was the Trenton State Hospital in Trenton, New Jersey by John Notman, constructed in 1848.[3] Throughout the remainder

of the nineteenth century, numerous psychiatric hospitals were designed under the Kirkbride Plan across the United States. By the twentieth century, popularity of the design had waned, largely due to the economic pressures of maintaining the immense facilities, as well as contestation of Kirkbride's theories amongst the medical community.⁷



⁷ [Kirkbride Plan - Wikipedia](#)



Even more significant, however, because it predated the building of the Kirkbride at Callan Park, is Gary Owen House.

Callan Park was initially a combination of purchases by Crown Solicitor and Police Magistrate John Ryan Brenan. In 1839 he bought what he then named the Garry Owen estate.

His residence, Garry Owen House, built about then and possibly designed by Colonial Architect Mortimer Lewis, was on an elevation overlooking the Parramatta River, with a tree lined avenue (part of which survives) from wrought iron gates on Balmain Road through spacious gardens. In 1841, Brenan bought an additional three acres west of his estate and built Broughton House, which he sold with its extensive grounds in 1845.⁸

It was that building that became the first ward to take the better-behaved patients from Gladesville. They were men. It was used for many years but later became a nurses training School. Now, of course, it is a Writers Centre! Indeed, Judith writes there and Derek's ex-wife has had a book launch there.



⁸ [History - Friends of Callan Park](#)



Derek reliving that book launch





But we need to look at some more of the Kirkbride site!







And then a wander around some of the more recent (and according to Deb, eyesore) buildings!



Along with the biggest industry operating here on this site now!





Leaving us to head to Balmain Road where we scattered like the winds, though the alcoholic ginger beer at the Garry Owen Pub was more than nice! The party was, well, in Sue's words, a "Mad Hatters Tea Party!"

For more information, see

Sarah Lule – Callan Park: Hospital for the Insane

Callan Park: Compassion and Conflict in The Asylum by Roslyn Burge

Using images – some never seen publicly before – and oral history interviews (including the Rozelle Hospital Oral History Collection) historian Roslyn Burge has created a fascinating insight into the former mental asylum, capturing the stories of patients, residents, staff, the community, the landscape and Callan Park's importance as a place of refuge and conflict.

The book is available for \$15 = \$10 book plus \$5 for postage and handling and I think one of my previous staff members, dear Ouranita Karadimas, was heavily involved in that project.