



CATHO CHRONICLE

CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HERITAGE VALUES OF CATHERINE HILL BAY



CATHO SLSC CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

This December marks the 100-year anniversary of the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Club, which was first established as Wallarah Surf Club in 1923. The club's name was later changed to Catherine Hill Bay, but it wasn't until March 1928 that fourteen members were awarded Catherine Hill Bay's first Surf Bronze Medallions and a clubhouse was established on the beachfront the next year.

Today the surf club plays an important part in the township of Catherine Hill Bay through the surf lifesavers who volunteer every weekend to keep beachgoers safe in the swimming season from September through to the end of April.

Nippers events – for under 6s to under 14s - start in October and typically run from 9-11am on Sundays, where they learn valuable surf skills that help to keep them safe at the beach in a fun, supportive environment. They can further develop these skills and become a surf sports competitor; the club has had some hugely successful nippers, achieving medals at National and State championships.

Upon reaching the ripe old age of 13, nippers can complete the Surf Rescue Certificate and become a patrolling member of Catho SLSC. Achieving the Bronze Medallion is the next natural progression from the age of 15, becoming proficient in water rescues, first aid, CPR, use of the defib, communication skills and how to work in a team.

SUMMER 2024 ISSUE...

RESTORATION OF FIRE TRAILS

CONSTRUCTION OF BEACHES STAGE 3 + VILLAGE PARK

LANDCARE UPDATE

HOW TO SPOT A RIP

NEXT MEETING at Catho SLSC Feb date TBA

Cover shot: Catho Jetty by
David Diehm Photography
www.daviddiehmphotography.com.au

Even for those that decide to become a life saver at a mature age, it's never too late. Catho SLSC has a dedicated team of trainers that will spend all the time you need to prepare for the bronze medallion course.

Anyone interested in becoming part of the Catho SLSC family is encouraged to check out the club website at www.cathoslsc.org.au. All Catho residents are welcome to join.



Restoration of Fire Trails by NPWS

A major civil works project to restore fire trails around Catho is currently underway. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) recently appointed a contractor for the works and a site for their plant and equipment has been established off Flowers Drive near the Catho Creek.

The works will extensively upgrade the trails in the bushland around Catherine Hill Bay. Not only will this help to mitigate the bushfire risk to our town, but it will also improve the bushwalking opportunities.

"These fire trails are a strategic asset to manage fire within the area and will also function as a fantastic opportunity for people to explore the bushland with improved walks and mountain bike access once the project is complete," said Central Coast NPWS Ranger Stacy Wilson. "The bushland and birdlife along these trails is beautiful, with the newly re-established Timber Trail a particular highlight."



The works are expected to be complete in February 2024

Bushfire Community Event and RFS Fundraiser

The Bushfire Community Event on the 17th October was a great success, providing important information for residents in preparing for the bushfire season, as well as raising \$1500 funds for the Rural Fire Service.

The CHB Progress Association and Community Alliance are planning a joint program to facilitate the installation of Storz fittings to residential water tanks, which will greatly enhance the firefighting capabilities of the RFS in our town.



Construction begins on Beaches Stage 3 and Village Park

Daracon recently started civil works for the final Stage 3 of Beaches, including reconstruction of Hale Street, establishment of the Village Park, and also the Headland Reserve and walkway. Works are expected to be completed in June 2024.

The Village Park will include a children's playground, bio-ponds, and walking paths. The design of the playground, which has been finalised, will consist of low key, "natural play" timber structures blended to the landscape, including benches and bike racks.

The Hale Street reconstruction will occur after Christmas and will be 9m wide with on-street parking, a footpath, and streetlighting on the western side. The T-intersection of Hale Street with Flowers Drive/Lindsley Street will to be constructed around April/May 2024.

Rose Group has prepared draft designs for the village shops, which is in pre-DA stage with LMCC.



Any concerns related to the civil works - such as noise, dust or erosion - should be directed to Rory Charlton of Daracon Engineering on 49749200.

The PA is looking forward to the completion of the long awaited village park and shops, however we believe they should be built in line with the approvals which were designed to protect the Heritage Precinct viewlines.

Landcare Update

Another successful year of keeping our two sites weed free, and some planting as well!

The Graveyard Beach site benefited from the Lake Mac Landcare Green Team visits and the Natural Areas Projects contractor, who thoroughly cleared the area between the cemetery and the arched walkway/carpark. It's now lantana, bitou bush, blackberry and morning glory free (many thanks to Wendy, Amy and Simon over at LML). Our team worked on the dunal slope below the carpark, and the lowest area once bare is now covered with pigface and snake vine, with banksias, tea tree and acacia sophorae gaining height.

At the south site, along Pat Slaven Reserve is now mainly weed free, so we focused on the Surf Club side of the beach road this year, weeding and planting. Council contractors have continued to plant in the sand over the erosion control rock wall, where the pigface is thriving. Thanks to Clarita, Jann, Dave, Lindsey, Jayne, Wendy, Fae, Neil and newcomer, Lea - every moment volunteering makes a difference to our community and nature!

We must also honour Garry Stewart, who passed recently, a great friend of Catho. Garry led us for the last renovation of the tennis court in Middle Camp, every Sunday morning for months until it was done! In his younger days, he'd worked for Newcastle Council's Parks & Gardens, maintaining clay courts, so he walked around the bush and brought a bucket of just the right clay to patch the court. He also mended the net, found us a winder, rebuilt the kid's square fence, and then the tank stand. (See the photo albums in the CHB Tennis Club Facebook page and the CHB PA website). Garry was also a great Landcarer, a founder of Lake Macquarie Landcare Volunteers Network, and a friend of our Catho Landcare Group. Over the years he came to our National Tree Days, and helped us with plant identification and advice. We recommend visiting his site on Lakeside Dr in Swansea (a local native botanical garden) and then walk on further to the raised track over the water around the point of Pirrita. Hope you're up there giving advice on bush regeneration, Garry! Rest in peace.



Hope to see you first Mondays of the month at Graveyard Beach and third Thursdays near the Surf Club from March onwards next year. All welcome at both sites. . Carmel (ph 0438 499636).

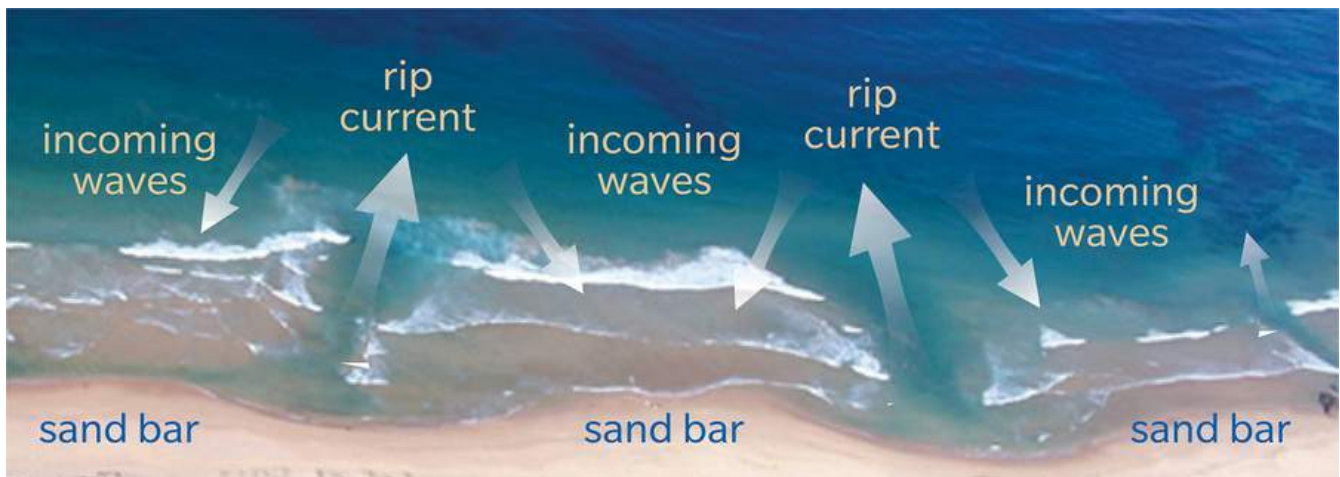
How to spot a rip

A rip current is a specific kind of water current that can occur near beaches with breaking waves. They often occur as a strong, localised, and narrow current of water moving directly away from the shore, like a river running out to sea. As water is pushed into the shore by the waves, rips are where all that extra water goes back out.

The danger with rips is they can often appear to be the calmest part of the ocean when viewed from the beach. However, rips are dangerous and inexperienced swimmers can get into serious trouble if caught in one, particularly if panic sets in.

There are four main characteristics to look for when identifying a rip from the beach:

- Darker patches of water,
- Fewer breaking waves,
- Rippled water surface,
- May be items floating on the surface out beyond the breaking waves.



The best way to avoid getting caught in a rip is:

- Swim at a patrolled beach between the red and yellow flags,
- If you are not a strong swimmer then stay in the shallows,
- Talk to the lifeguards before going in the water.

If you get caught in a rip:

- Try not to panic (as rip currents don't pull you under),
- Don't try to swim directly against the current but swim parallel to the shore instead, then swim back in once out of the rip,
- If you can't get out of the rip, then float or tread water,
- Raise your arm and wave for assistance.

Did you know ...

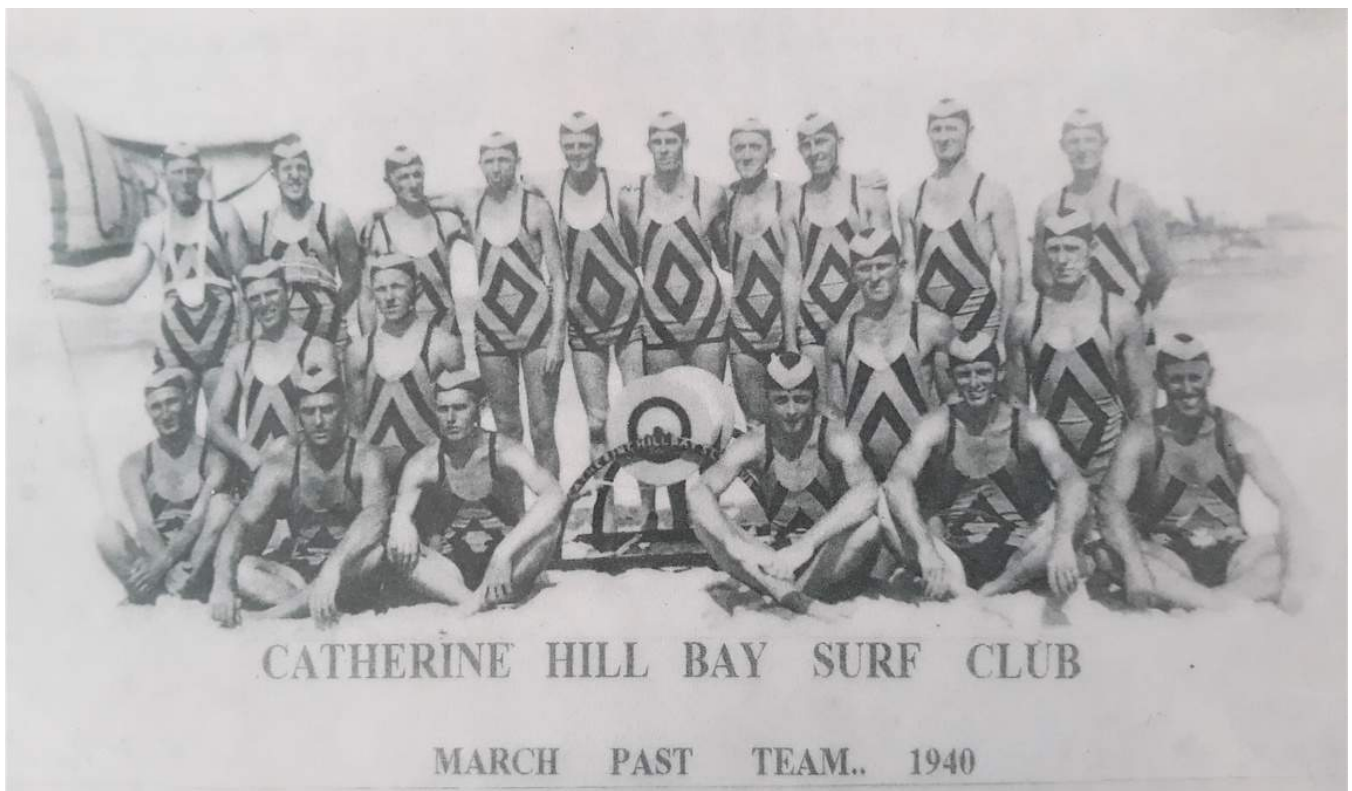
... Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club, the smallest surf club in Lake Macquarie, has a history closely tied with the community that shares its name.

In 1923 it was originally known as Wallarah Surf Club, reflecting the name of both the parish in which the township is known and the name of the second mining company that developed a working mine here. The Wallarah Surf Club was only affiliated for one season, then went into recess. However, there are indications the club continued to operate informally over the next few years with vigilant locals keeping the beach safe.

The club officially formed for the 1927-28 season as the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club by the efforts of Dr John McKenzie Woods (the town resident doctor) as the foundation President, Hugh Slaven as Secretary, and George Peach as Treasurer with the first clubhouse then being built. In 1930, Lake Macquarie Shire Council donated materials so that a dressing shed - which was erected by local volunteers - could be built. This in turn prompted the Wallarah Coal Company to donate timber to further extend the dressing shed and clubhouse. The extended clubhouse was well utilised up until the 1940s, but because of heavy layoffs at the local colliery many of the younger workers left the district in search of work.



Despite the challenges of being one of the region's smallest clubs, this didn't hold back Catho SLSC. In 1943 the club won the March Past at the Patriotic Surf Life Saving Carnival in Newcastle.



The club went into recess till the mid-1950s, before being revived again by an enthusiastic group of locals. When it reformed, the community spirit of the members was demonstrated when they assisted in the 1955 Maitland Floods (along with three other clubs from Lake Macquarie), taking their surfboards and boat crews into the floodwaters to help stranded families.



Sadly, a fire destroyed the clubhouse along with many records and photographs in 1958.

Between the time of its formation as Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club in the 1927-28 season and the 1957-58 season, more than 100 Bronze Medallions had been achieved by the club members. By the 1970s, the club had entered its first men's team in the Marathon Boat Race from Blacksmiths Beach to Nobbys Beach. The crew members were: Dennis Boyd as the sweep, Gary Price, Wayne Knowles, Grahame Mascord, and Frank McKenzie.

The clubhouse underwent extensions during the 1970s and 1980s, and a second storey was added in 1990. In 1991 the club won the Newcastle IRB Championship at Nobby's Beach as well as two of the five events at the Australian Inflatable Rescue Boat Championships in Wollongong the same year.

A new Wallarah at Catherine Hill Bay

A new "Wallahah" has appeared at Catherine Hill Bay and rapidly is becoming as familiar as its much larger and well-known namesake the "M.V. Wallarah".

The new version is an I.R.B. (inflatable rubber boat), or rubber duck, operated by Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club.

Barry Wiltshire, Secretary of the Club and a miner at Wallarah Colliery, said rubber ducks had become an integral part of surf life saving techniques providing faster and more efficient rescue and patrol services.

Peter Braun, Manager, Catherine Hill Bay Coal Preparation Plant, said the rubber duck had been donated to the club as part of the company's on-going commitment to the club and the local community.

The surf Club offered to call its IRB Wallarah in recognition of support by the company for the club over the years.

Two Wallarahs at Catherine Hill Bay. In the foreground the "rubber duck" used by the surf club with supporters (from left) Stacey Wiltshire, Arthur McKenzie, Peter Braun (Manager of the Preparation Plant) and Barry Wiltshire.

The team won gold, silver and bronze at the NSW State Titles in 1993 with team members Stacy Wiltshire as captain, Darren Knowles, Garry Brooks, Gary Kehane, Bruce Mascord, Jason Morgan, Danny Kehane, Arthur McKenzie, Darren Baigent and Greg Danvers.

The club could not exist without the many dedicated hard-working members who volunteered their free time to make the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Life Saving Club the great club it is today. With the planned construction of a new, expanded surf club building in the coming years along with the growth of the township and popularity of beach recreation, the future certainly looks bright for Catho SLSC.

(Acknowledgement to local resident Burt Errington for collating this history of the SLSC using records held by East Lake Macquarie Historical Society).



How to become a PA member

Would you like to become a member or friend of the CHB Progress Association?

The annual membership fee is \$20, or \$10 for pensioners. The membership form is attached to this newsletter email. Please email membership forms to accounts@catherinehillbay.org.au. Thank you to all our members and friends that have already renewed their payments.

To join the Catho Chronicle mailing list, please email us at newsletter@catherinehillbay.org.au

For more local news check the following websites:

**www.catherinehillbay.org.au or
www.chbcommunityalliance.org**

and the various Facebook pages for the latest news and great photos:

**www.facebook.com/CathHillBay
www.facebook.com/catherinehillbay
www.facebook.com/CathHillBayLandcare
www.facebook.com/cathoslsc
www.facebook.com/cathoboardriders
www.facebook.com/swanseaSES
www.facebook.com/Wallarah-Rural-Fire-Brigade-1014414335240696**