

CATHO CHRONICLE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHERINE HILL BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION
ESTABLISHED 1901



HUNTER GROUP SELLING LAND AND CATHO PUB

Property developer Hunter Group has flagged its intention to sell all landholdings in Catherine Hill Bay through an expression of interest (EOI) process.

The sale comprises the approved 221 lot development north of Middle Camp as well as land in the heritage village. This land is behind the houses on the eastern side of Flowers Drive and behind the oval at Middle Camp. Also included is the historic Catho Pub.



Expressions of Interest were required by 10 June 2026 and the developer and its real estate agent are currently working through the bids. They have not specified a timeline for this process to be completed (continued over).



47TH CATHO CLASSIC

LANDCARE NEWS

PREPARE FOR BUSHFIRE SEASON

HISTORY OF THE WALLARAH HOTEL

NEXT PA MEETING at Catho SLSC on Sun 26th July at 3pm

Cover shot: Snapper Point in Munmorah SCA (photo by Bruce Felton Images). A Master Plan is being prepared for the Caves Beach to Budgewoi Coastal Trail (story page 2).

Hunter Group selling land and Catho Pub (continued)

A community meeting held in Swansea Library in late May was attended by some 50 residents and at that meeting there was strong support for community ownership of the Catho Pub. A steering committee has been formed which is working towards that aim. The group submitted an EOI within the deadline and is currently working towards defining the structure of a community organisation as well as considering avenues for raising the funds for the purchase and the initial operations.

If you are interested in these developments, including investing in a community-owned pub, please register your support by completing the form at this link: <https://forms.gle/SXAiFbwNmWNOvWYR9>

Caves Beach to Budgewoi Coastal Trail

The NSW Government is creating a master plan for a continuous coastal trail from Caves Beach to Budgewoi (via Catherine Hill Bay) that promotes safe and sustainable nature-based recreation for local communities while protecting environmental and cultural values.

The draft master plan is now on public exhibition for 5 weeks from June 12 to July 17, 2026. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is encouraging the community to provide feedback.



We encourage members to have their say via an online submission or by attending one of the NPWS drop-in sessions. For further details and updates, including access to the project website and the Have Your Say page, please see the links below.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say/caves-beach-to-budgewoi-coastal-trail>

Demountable building on Catho Headland to be removed

After a campaign led by local residents which culminated in an NBN News story, the demountable building on the visually sensitive Bin Building site is to be removed under the orders of Lake Macquarie City Council. This is due to the failure of the site owner to obtain DA approval for the development.



The demountable building on Catho Headland is to be removed

47th Annual Catho Classic Surf Contest

In a historic move, the 47th Annual Catho Classic was run and won over the June long weekend at the South End of Catho. Traditionally the contest has been held at the beloved North End, but with the swell and weather charts predicting a 4 to 5 metre south swell and winds, officials made the call to move to a more protected stretch of the beach.

It proved to be the right choice. Friday, Saturday and Sunday had perfect sunny winter weather with over 120 entrants taking part from Dudley Beach in the north to Norah Head in the south. The numbers were down a touch on last year, possibly because some would-be entrants had travelled away for the June long weekend. But with the great surf conditions this time around, the June long weekend is looking good for next year as well. It works very nicely!

Day 1 - The Friday was supposed to be an 8am start, but unfortunately the swell hadn't yet arrived. We had the next call at 10, then 11, then 1pm for a 2pm start when (thankfully) the swell finally arrived and the Over 50's category started the 47th Annual in a flurry. And these old boys were frothing with the first heat surfers getting 37 waves in 20 mins! Four First Round heats of Over 50s and three of Over 60s was all we could fit in before sundown, leaving the Semis for the 50s and 60s to be 'double banked' the following day without interrupting that day's schedule.

Day 2 - On Saturday the swell kept rising overnight and we had perfect 2 to 2.5m waves with offshore winds for the rest of the Classic. Saturday saw the Men's Open, Women's Open, Men's Over 30s, Over 40s, Under 18s and Under 15s first rounds completed along with the Semis for the Men's Over 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s.

Day 3 - Sunday was the Finals Day, and these guys and gals were serious. So were the waves with some sets still a solid 2m and pristinely perfect. Awesome surfing went down in all divisions.



A big shout out and thankyou to all our sponsors. You'll again see 'em all proudly displayed on the back of all the CC47 2026 tee-shirts in the community and at the beach. A great full colour Dan Joyce image of our recently passed 40 years Catho Boardriders Club Treasurer Baz is on the front, captured perfectly. Check out Swansea's Wholelife Chemist southern brick wall for another example of Joycy's amazing work. Can't thank him and a multitude of other businesses enough for getting behind this long-running event and enabling the blue ribbon Mens Open Champ to win a 10 night stay at the Telos Island resort and \$750 prizemoney. Other prizes included 3 x AJ Surfboards along with other cash prizes, vouchers for wetties, travel gear, clothing etc etc for the multitude of finalists and other award winners.

Lastly a big shout out to the Munmorah, Catho, Caves Beach, Frenchmans, Redhead & Dudley crews for their involvement and participation, and of course the (almost entire) Moore family (there in droves) for their much-appreciated ongoing help before, during and after the event.

47th Annual Catho Classic Surf Contest (continued)

Contest results are as follows for all categories. See social media pages for more photos.

Under 15s 1st Jai Fulton, 2nd Bede Davidson, 3rd Will Potts, 4th Koby Field Under 18s 1st Jackson Woolnough, 2nd Phoenix Visscher, 3rd Chase Puttergill, 4th Hudson Lutterbey. Men's O/30s 1st Reece Menzies, 2nd Kaine Watts, 3rd Bede Clarke, 4th Tyler Williams Men's O/40s 1st Reece Menzies, 2nd Justin Lee, 3rd Josh Moore, 4th Aaron Moore Men's O/50s 1st Scott Myers, 2nd Justin Lee, 3rd Ged Cook 4th ms Dale Thomas Men's O/60s 1st Ged Cook, 2nd Luke Mullins, 3rd Rob Mitchell, 4th Steve Chapman. Open Women 1st Sienna Pitt, 2nd Amira Rankin, 3rd Kanari Zukoshi, 4th Ava Moore Mens Open 1st Dom Thomas, 2nd Cooper Puttergill, 3rd Tyler Williams, 4th Corey Robards.

Specialty Awards - Best Cut-back Non Finalist Rio Messiter U/18 Round 1 H4. Best Re-Entry Non Finalist Troy Skillin Mens Open Rnd 1 H2. Best Tube Reece Menzies Mens Open Rnd 1 H3. Highest Scoring Wave Perfect 10 off the entire Judging Panel, Dom Thomas Mens Open Semi 1. In this heat he also took out the Highest Scoring Heat award with 18.4 out of 20. Best Overall Manoeuvre Corey Robards Men's Open Rnd 1 H6 high, full rotation air reverse with a beautiful clean landing, Worst Wipeout Alahni Moore Ladies Rnd 1 H2.**

** Note of interest - Dom Thomas actually had the two highest scoring heats of the contest, with neither in the final. Similarly Sienna Pitt - last year's Women's Runner-up and this year's winner - got the third highest heat score of the entire contest (a 16.8 in her semi) which she smashed!!

We'll be back next year for our 48th Catho Classic for sure. What a paradise this place can be for surf, especially in winter!!

Yours in Catho,

Mick McCall - Foundation Member Catherine Hill Bay Boardriders Club.



Dom Thomas - 2026 Catho Classic Open Champion (surf photos courtesy of Right On Photography)

Landcare News

Content by Carmel Brown - CHB Dunecare Team Leader

Catherine Hill Bay's Dunecare volunteers have had another productive few months over Autumn and early Winter, with restoration work continuing at both Graveyard Beach (North End) and Pat Slaven Reserve (South End).

At the **Graveyard Beach site**, Lake Macquarie Landcare's bush regeneration team (with Crown Lands funding) worked in March, tackling invasive weeds including Bitou Bush, Lantana and Morning Glory. These introduced species outcompete native plants and weaken the natural dune ecosystem that protects our coastline. Later in April, We found that our 2025 plantings were unfortunately removed by whipper snipping (campers?), so Carmel just planted around the wooden Dunecare sign.

In May, Dave weeded further down the eroded path and Wendy and Carmel tentatively planted just a small area of Westringea, Correa and Lomandra at the top edge near the carpark to reduce erosion. These native species help stabilise the sand, reduce erosion and provide habitat for local wildlife such as the blue wrens, echidnas and lizards that we see there.

In June, Mina and Carmel found the carpark edge plants had been whipper-snipped again, so we just planted in the walkway area – Tea Tree, Banksia, Correa and Guinea Flower.



Lake Macquarie Landcare's Bush Regeneration Team at Graveyard Beach (North End) site.

At the **Pat Slaven Reserve site**, ongoing weed control has produced encouraging results. Volunteers have been particularly pleased to discover many naturally regenerating Banksia seedlings across the dune slope, a sign that restoration efforts are helping native vegetation re-establish itself. Carmel removed Turkey Rhubarb in March, and Zak and the LML team attacked this, Bitou bush and Morning glory in April. Mina and Carmel returned in June – still the Turkey Rhubarb persists!

Volunteers received certificates at the Lake Macquarie Landcare's Volunteer Week celebration and learned about the local research into the Green and Golden Bell Frog.

All this incredible work would not be possible without the ongoing commitment of our local volunteers. Team leader Carmel has been joined throughout by regular Dunecarers including Wendy, Mina, Dave & Lindsey, while the Lake Macquarie Landcare Bush Regeneration Team— led by Zak with Joel, Ray, Edward, Will and Loni—have made a major contribution through their weed control and restoration work.

Landcare News (continued)



LML team at the Pat Slaven Reserve (South End) site.



Mina and Carmel

Every native plant established, weed pulled out, and bag of seeds and berries removed helps to improve the health and resilience of Catherine Hill Bay's unique dune system. The group is always keen to welcome new volunteers, whether you can spare a few hours occasionally or become a regular participant.

Join us on the *SECOND Monday of the month at the north site (Graveyard Beach), and FOURTH Thursday of the month at the south site (near Surf Club). Pop these remaining winter dates in your calendar: July 13 and 23, and August 10 and 27, when we will be moving to an hour earlier, from 1-3pm. All are welcome at both sites for the whole session or any part that suits you. If you're a new starter, call Carmel on 0438 499636 for a brief induction. Bring a drink, gloves and your favourite weeding and pruning tools, otherwise we also have some. Wear long sleeves and long pants and always be sunsafe.*

Prepare for bushfire season

With predictions for a "super El Nino" later in the year, winter is a good time to prepare your home for the coming spring and summer bushfire season. The RFS has some great information on their website here: <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/bush-fire-survival-plan>

The recommended bushfire season checklist includes:

1. Discuss among household occupants what to do if bushfire threatens your home and make plan,
2. Trim trees and shrubs overhanging your home,
3. Mow grass to keep it low and remove the clippings,
4. Remove items from around the home that can burn (wood piles, mulch etc),
5. Remove leaves from gutters and install metal gutter guards,
6. Install a sturdy hose that will reach around your house and ensure water tanks are full.



Did you know ...

.... that the building we all know as the Catho Pub has had a remarkable and resilient life?

In the early days, when it was known as the New Wallsend Hotel, it was frequented by the miners who worked in the nearby mine. Built in the 1870s by Robert Talbot, it witnessed the first coal mining venture in Catherine Hill Bay. It seems that these early miners were a fairly rough lot causing the Chairman of the New Wallsend Company, Jacob Montefiore, to call for police protection claiming that "scarcely a day passes without some violation of the laws against person or property" in and around the hotel. It was reported that the publican had been kept up two or three nights in a row by miners refusing to leave the pub. He was obliged to attend to the miners at all hours, and "if he refuses or hesitates, they break his windows or destroy his door."

This problem was solved by the closure of the coal workings in 1877, with all houses and miners being removed. But the pub remained in place.

The town was resettled in 1888-1889 by the Wallarah Coal Mining Company. Mr Michael Tobin was the new licensee for the renamed and improved Wallarah Hotel. Behaviour in the Hotel greatly improved when the Police Department erected a wooden cell in 1890. A police constable was stationed at Catherine Hill Bay and in 1896 a courthouse was removed from Swansea and rebuilt in the Bay "since nearly all the court work came from there."

There were also improvements to the hotel building. In 1909 a newspaper advertisement for the hotel read: "Under new management-C McVay proprietor. Best attention given to the cuisine department. The travelling public specially catered for. Excellent stabling accommodation...Tariff: 4s per day or 20s per week. Telephone number 4".

Further improvements to the hotel were made over the years. In 1923 residential accommodation was provided with plunge and shower baths and electric light was installed throughout. The Hotel had become a meeting place not just for the locals but also a destination for travellers. The hotel was interwoven with the daily life of the town.

In 1941 the Wallarah Hotel ran out of beer catering to the demand from the supporters and picketers who were staging a protest sit-in on the matter of penalty rates. In 1958 Wallarah miners staged a longer sit-in strike to protest the impending dismissal of 200 men from the colliery. This strike lasted 203 hours. When the strike ended, the strikers and their families held a celebratory dinner at the Wallarah Hotel. A free keg was laid on by the publican.



The hotel has also featured in a number of films. Mel Gibson starred in his first film *Summer City* in Catherine Hill Bay. An English-made TV serial *Soldier Soldier* also came to town to film. Special additions were made to several houses for the purposes of the film set and the pub even got a new wrap-around verandah (which all the locals loved). However all these additions quickly disappeared in the fictional "cyclone" which came through and destroyed the town.

History of Wallarah Hotel (continued)

The Wallarah Hotel had another first in the 1970s; It became the first hotel in Australia to have an Indigenous licensee. Teddy and Dot Wotherspoon (pictured below) bought the hotel from Tooths Ltd after leasing it for six years. Mr Wotherspoon was a successful professional boxer who fought in two divisions in his career, he was ranked second in the Australian featherweight class and third in the lightweight. He won 52 fights straight in one year.

According to his wife Dorothy, he had always wanted to own a hotel. He drove her to Catherine Hill Bay one rainy winter's evening to show her the Wallarah Hotel, and she was not impressed. When Teddy took the keys in 1977, he turned on free beer for all the patrons. They raised their family there, but sadly Teddy died at just forty-nine years old.

Dorothy Wotherspoon continued to own the hotel for many years, leasing out the licence until sold in 2004. The Wallarah Hotel became the Catho Pub, as accommodation was no longer offered.



Once the town ceased to be a Company Town, life in the pub also changed. People who were not miners could own property; surfers in their wagons came to Catho to enjoy the remarkable waves as well as to sit on the pub verandah looking down at the bay. The Catho Pub became a renowned 'must see' coastal pub and the food was pretty good as well. Live music on the weekend was also a feature in this friendly atmosphere.

We nearly lost the pub in the 2013 bushfire. The fire raced through so quickly that while some of the RFS firefighters were putting out the flames at the door of the pub, the fire had reached the crest of the hill to the north. We will be forever thankful to the brave firies who saved our pub and our town on that fateful October night.

Since the demolition of the Bowling Club, the pub has hosted the ANZAC Day 'Catho reunion' and the RFS celebration after Santa and the trucks have been through town.



The Covid Pandemic caused an extended shutdown of the pub, and in the years since the building has suffered from a lack of care and maintenance by the owner. However a community-led revival is in the making; the Catho Pub, along with the jetty, is the most important historical structure in the town and it's vitally important that it continues to be our much-loved community gathering place for many years to come.

For more information on the history of Catho houses, go to the PA website here:

<https://social-history.catherinehillbay.org.au/>

Survey questionnaire on impacts of new developments in CHB

A Year 11 student from San Clemente Catholic College is doing a geography research task on the impact of new developments on the culture and lives of residents of Catherine Hill Bay. They have prepared a survey questionnaire to gain an understanding of the demographic makeup of Catherine Hill Bay and perceptions regarding the impact of the new developments.

It would be greatly appreciated if PA members could complete the short survey questionnaire at the following link:

[Catherine Hill Bay Resident Survey – Fill out form](#)

Catherine Hill Bay Business Register

The CHB Community Alliance invites local businesses, trades, and service providers to be included in the Catherine Hill Bay Business Register. Its purpose is to highlight the skills and services available within our community, making it easier for residents to support local businesses and access services close to home.

If you operate a business based in CHB or live in and service the CHB community and would like to be listed, we would love to hear from you. Being included is a simple way to advertise your services to your neighbours and strengthen local connections. To join the register, please email us at CHBCommunity@outlook.com with your business name, a brief description of your services, and your preferred contact details.

You can view the current Business Register here:
<https://www.chbcommunityalliance.org/businesses>

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 can be found at www.catherinehillbay.org.au. Please email completed forms to accounts@catherinehillbay.org.au. Thank you to all our members and friends who have already renewed their membership. To join the Catho Chronicle mailing list, please email us at **newsletter@catherinehillbay.org.au**

For more local news check the following links:

www.catherinehillbay.org.au

www.facebook.com/CathHillBay

www.facebook.com/CathHillBayLandcare

www.chbcommunityalliance.org

and the various other Facebook pages related to Catho:

www.facebook.com/cathoslsc

www.facebook.com/cathoboardriders

www.facebook.com/swanseaSES

www.facebook.com/Wallarah-Rural-Fire-Brigade-1014414335240696