

LOCAL HISTORY

Early Days of Empire Bay Ferry Services

In the early days, isolated pockets of Brisbane Waters were heavily dependent on water transport. In the Empire Bay neighbourhood, two highly competitive ferry services, the Orphanage Ferry service and the Growers Ferry service, fought for passengers and cargo.

The Sisters of the Order of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart had an orphanage for boys at South Kincumber since 1887. For the first 18 years, the Sisters had to rely on boys to crew their rowboat to get their farm produce to Woy Woy.

The Orphanage Ferry Service

In 1905, the Sisters introduced the first ferry service in the Brisbane Water by purchasing a motor launch, Maris Stella which was originally used as a produce carrying boat. It was 26 feet and had 5 hp Victor motor. The Orphanage ferry service became very popular as it included Kincumber South, Bensville, Palmers Lane, Shelly Beach Wharf, Empire Bay, Davistown, and Veterans Hall wharfs.

At the end of 1880s, railway opened the Empire Bay, Davistown, and Kincumber area as a holiday destination. Ferry transport of some kind was essential both for residents and visitors needing to get to their homes and holiday cottages. There was also farm produce to be transported to the railway. It soon became apparent that a bigger motor launch was in urgent need.

What had started out as one motorised ferry to carry produce soon became a passenger service carrying business of some size. Over the next 67 years, the ferry service increased its fleet to seven vessels.

In 1960, the Sisters sold their ferry service to Stan Smith (financially helped by the Woy Woy Chamber of Commerce), who continued to run the Kincumber ferry service until 1972 when maintenance costs and competition from the buses forced Stan to close it down.

The Growers Ferry Service

Early 1921, the local farmers had become dissatisfied with the Orphanage ferry service and decided to form a Kincumber Growers Cooperative Ferry service to carry their own produce. Their first ferry, Kincumber, was joined a few years later by Grower. By this time both ferry services were carrying produce and passengers. Competition was fierce.

Competing deck hands would be waiting at the Woy Woy station to grab the disembarking passengers to fill their respective ferries. Sadly, with wartime fuel rationing and maintenance costs, the Growers Ferry service closed in 1944.



MV Grower, part of the Kincumber Growers Co-Operative ferry fleet (1921-1944).

Brisbane Waters Ferry Service

With the closing of the Orphanage Ferry service in 1972, it was twenty years before another attempt was made to service Empire Bay. In 1992, Brisbane Waters Ferry Service (various owners Glen Davis, Warren Lane, and D Livingston), with the ferries MV Banksia and MV Corella, was established. The BWFS serviced the Empire Bay run, until costs and problems with the NSW Transport contract forced it to cease operations in 2001. There was an uproar by the locals, petitions signed and public meetings at Davistown, and with help from the local Members the service was put out to tender. It was almost 2 years before a replacement service was back in place.

Central Coast Ferry Service

In 2003, Jon Kirk established Central Coast Ferries (the Empire Bay – Woy Woy service) and in August 2003 the Saratoga ferry arrived with much fan fair. The Empire Bay ferry service was again open for business.

In 2006, George and Bets Conway (pictured below) took over the business. With their sons Toby, Mark and Tim involved in the business at times, they have run it as a passenger service ever since. Over the past 16 years George and Bets have added two additional vessels to the service. The vintage vessel, Kodock, and a charter vessel, Sorrento, bringing their fleet to three. In their heyday, the Conway's ferries carried up to 6,000 passengers a month and employed 2 full time and five casual skippers, as well as several deckhands.



The Conway's have faced numerous challenges, including Covid, the loss of their mooring at Empire Bay Marina, and an 11-year battle with Council to replace the Woy Woy wharf. Another ongoing challenge is the disparity between fares. "We can't accept the Opal card or offer pensioner excursions and the family travel incentives," said Bets.

Today the Conway's are taking things day by day, rolling with the punches and looking towards a more promising future, signalled by strong patronage of their ferry service during the festive season. It's still a viable business because of the government contract. Bets said "I think resilience is key to our success. We are very proud to be owners of this business and passionate about what we've done as a family."

We should all continue to support our ferry service; it is a unique asset at our doorstep and offers Empire Bay residents a special link back to our past.

By Robert Thompson

Sources: George and Bets Conway; *A History of Ferries on the Central Coast* by Gwen Dundon; *Central Coast Business Review*, February 2022; and *Ferries of Sydney* by Graeme Andrews.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you Robert Thompson, Jan Steele, Genevieve Page, Darby McNee and Catherine Arguet who have been busy organising the Empire Bay Fun and Food Fair. Bring your picnic blanket. Buy lunch from the food trucks and the artisans makers and bakers. Sip on wine, beer or cider while listening to the talent of our local musicians into the late afternoon. The Plant Fair will follow on Saturday 29 October.



Next year is the 100th birthday of the Empire Bay Progress Association. 100 years is such a rare achievement that it is time for celebration. There is a lot to work out to maximise the opportunity, therefore we are seeking ideas and input from members of our community to join us in this celebration. Volunteers are needed so please contact me.

Cheers Carolen empirebayprogress@gmail.com

LOCAL BUSINESS

Dancing with the Budding Stars

There is a quiet revolution in The Bay. Up to nine hours every week at the Empire Bay Hall, local children gather excitedly to strut their stuff on the dance floor.

Mikayla Holt is a passionate dancer and qualified RAD ballet teacher, with ten years teaching experience under her belt. Her classes have grown in popularity to the point where she now offers a range of dance styles, catering to children of all ages and capabilities and has recently added a class for "Mum's and Bubs", all at the Empire Bay Community hall.

The classes are run within a very nurturing environment where children are encouraged to shine and enjoy themselves, whilst exercising and improving their flexibility and coordination.

According to Mikayla, "There is nothing more satisfying than seeing children form lasting friendships, grow in confidence within themselves and as dancers and feel like they are part of a community with like-minded people. Such a positive experience."

MH Dance offers an inclusive environment. All welcome.

All enquiries to Mikayla on 0404 824 775



OUR SCHOOLS

Empire Bay Public School

Sustainability conversation—inform, inspire, invite

Recently our Sustainability Leaders joined Rumbalara Environment Education Centre and several schools from around the Central Coast, on an excursion to ARC Ento Tech in Somersby.

It was very interesting to see the innovation in biodiversity that is happening right on our doorstep! Our minds are spinning with ideas about new ways we can approach our organic waste issues. Demonstrations at the Somersby facility showed how organic waste is eliminated using soldier fly larvae and how remaining waste (plastic) can be processed into synthetic coal.

A fascinating example of engineers and entomologists working together to find solutions to a very real environmental problem.

Lisa Maddick

Web: www.sustainabilityatebps.com



Coast Christian School

School has finally returned to much more like normal. This is great news because assemblies, choir, representative sport as well as parents helping in classrooms have returned.

We are currently preparing for our musical, which involves every child from Kinder to Year 6 being on stage. There is a buzz around the school which is exciting.

Academically our Naplan results were again excellent, so well done to the students and staff for their quality learning and teaching.

Over the winter we built a new garden in which the children are now looking forward to growing vegetables during spring and summer.

Finally, our building program is about to commence with four new classrooms for next year.

Looking forward to being part of the Empire Bay Progress Association's Spring Fair. Do come down, and say hi.

Melanie Cullender

Tel: 4368 3377

www.coastcs.nsw.edu.au



VALE

Her Majesty the Queen will be remembered for her devotion and commitment to the Commonwealth for many years to come. We pay tribute to the Queen's 70 years of service.

The Queen's dedication to her work and, in particular, to supporting charities over her 70 year reign has been remarkable. She was the patron of more than 20 Australian charities and associations.

OUR COMMUNITY

Empire Bay/Bensville Rural Fire Brigade

The new Australian Fire Danger Rating System has commenced operating. This is a major change to the 1960s system from 6 levels of danger to 4. This is a much simpler system giving clearer actions that could save lives. It is time to revisit your Bush Fire Survival Plan and discuss what your actions are going to be as the fire season starts on Oct 1.

Get Ready Weekend is September 17 and 18. Our brigade will be holding ours in conjunction with the Empire Bay Food and Fun Fair on October 15. Come and meet our crew and obtain further information to be more informed.

Our team of volunteers have been busy responding to house fires, garbage truck fire, car accidents, trees and power lines down and backyard burning of waste. We have completed most of the prep work for a strategic hazard reduction burn at Daley Ave, Daleys Point. This will be completed with an appropriate weather window. We are still assisting with the Varroa Mite outbreak. Training and up-skilling the team is ongoing. We are definitely prepared.

Prepare, act and survive.

Central Coast District Office on 1300 060 807

or visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Cheers Rex Parker, Brigade Community Engagement Rep

Empire Bay Fishing Club

The weather is warming up and the rain seems to be more and more infrequent. That's good news for all of us who don't have webbed feet or gills!

It was a great weigh-in for September. Unfortunately I missed it, but I will be looking forward to the next one on Sunday, October 9 at the Empire Bay Tavern, 3pm. The curto will be on and members will be notified by text as usual.

Looks like Errol has come out of hibernation to present a few fish and seems to be trying a last push home to try and catch Gerry for the Luderick win. I don't think he will make it!

The date for our Christmas party / end of season awards is December 11 at the EBT. Details closer to the time, but circle the date in your calendar, dust off your clappers and re-sole your dancing shoes, you won't want to miss it.

Seniors: 1. George Foster: Total points - 890.6; 2. Gerry Summerhayes: Total points - 327.2; 3. Errol Baker: Total points - 113.0.

Juniors: 1. Ruby Powell: Total Points - 41.6.

Stay safe on and around our lovely waters, enjoy where we live and make the most of it.

By Scott Draper

empirebayfishingclub@gmail.com

EMPIRE BAY PLANT STALL

Saturday 29 October

Stalls from Empire Bay Public School and Blue Wave Retirement Care Auxiliary - homemade pickles, jams and cakes for sale



Our local RFS will be there with fire truck and Warwick will entertain with his pianola.

Please contribute plants for the stall as all funds raised will be donated to Empire Bay Public School and Empire Bay/Bensville Rural Fire Service.

Please contact Jan Consoli on 0402 246 427

Probus—Friendship and Fun in Retirement

November activities—*See How They Run* at Avoca Theatre, Melbourne Cup event at Ettalong Diggers Club and a Hawkesbury River Cruise in mid November.

Our Club has over 60 members, but is hoping more gentlemen will join. Probus offers male members an outlet to engage together, talk about similar interests and simply spend time with other men and women.

Monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday each month, at the Umina Club from 1.30pm. Time for excellent conversations and great friendships are made.

Visitors are always welcome. Come along and introduce yourself.

Contact Mary Gray, President on 0413 017 678

PET CORNER

Begging for food

Begging, looking longingly, drooling or other attention seeking food demanding behaviour can be a common complaint.

The good news? In almost all cases this is a human initiated problem. This means we have the ability to regain control over the situation. Many owners tend to think this behaviour is harmless like many dog's behaviour. The reality is that begging can lead to a more serious issue which can be more difficult to overcome.

How do I stop begging behaviour?

- ◇ Easiest way is to never feed your dogs from the table.
- ◇ If your dog begs at the table, just gently block with your body. This is how dogs manage personal space from other dogs.
- ◇ You may need to use several repetitions of this technique before your dog understands what is required, so patience is critical.
- ◇ Have a spot or space away from the table that you can direct your dog to.
- ◇ If he fails to comply you may need to resort to removing him from the temptation and try again at a later date.

It's important to set your dog up for success by not allowing him to practice begging behaviour.

Louise Harding - Author & Canine Behaviour

www.animaltalent.com.au/dog-training/

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Garry McNamara

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it is worth it!**

Join the Empire Bay Progress Association

Membership \$5

empirebayprogress@gmail.com

VALE

Ron Langley

Sher Close, Empire Bay.
Previously a long time resident of Davistown.
Will be sadly missed by wife Vicki,
family, friends and the Empire Bay Community.

HELP US CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF THE EMPIRE BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

The Empire Bay Progress Association celebrates 100 years in 2023 and we are seeking volunteers to help organise the celebrations. The volunteer spirit drives our community organisation so the contribution of all our volunteers, no matter what their role, is highly valued.

Email empirebayprogress@gmail.com



Bookmobile

Thursday Oct 6, 20 and Nov 3, 17

Bensville—near Kallaroo Road park, 12.45-1.30pm

Empire Bay—Kendall Rd near the wharf, 1.45-2.30pm

EMPIRE BAY TENNIS COURTS

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Back of Tennis Courts – 2nd Sunday of month from 9.00am

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Card games—All ages welcome

Empire Bay Hall

Monday: 1.30-4.00pm

There will be a variety of card games available and lots of fun, friendships and laughs.

Please contact Shirley on 4369 2034 or Jan 0402 246 427



EMPIRE BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION

Next meeting

Wednesday 23 November, 7.30pm

(Note: Nov meeting date changed)

The Hall, 1-3 Gordon Rd, Empire Bay

Diarise Feb 15 for next meeting & AGM

Further information email:

empirebayprogress@gmail.com

This newsletter is a community service by **EMPIRE BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION Inc.** While the honorary editor and the Association accept, in good faith, advertisements in this Newsletter and editorial supplied or comment made, we cannot provide any form of guarantee for the information or the goods or services advertised.

HALL TIMETABLE

MONDAY

8.15am-9.15am, Gentle Yoga with Julie
9.30am-10.30am Morning Yoga with Julie
1:30pm-4.00pm, Social card games for everyone
6.00pm-7.00pm, Yoga with Julie
7.00pm-8.00pm, PT Group Fitness Training with Tony

TUESDAY

9.00am-12.00pm, Scrabble, all levels
3:30pm - 4.30pm, MH Dance Academy with Mikayla
5.30pm-6.30pm, Tae Kwon Do Academy with Jo

WEDNESDAY

9.15am-10.15am, Tai Chi with Alain
3:30pm-5pm, MH Dance Academy with Mikayla
7.30pm-9.00pm, Empire Bay Progress Association (EBPA)
3rd Wednesday in February, May, August, November
(meetings now held quarterly)
7.00pm—8.00pm, PT Group Fitness Training with Tony
(on the night of the Progress meeting please contact Tony for details)

THURSDAY

7.45-8.30am, Walking exercise, from 20 October (free)
9am-midday, Inner Space Yoga and Life Coaching
3.30pm-6pm, MH Dance Academy with Mikayla

FRIDAY

9.30am-11.30am, MH Dance Academy with Mikayla
4pm-6pm, MH Dance Academy with Mikayla
7.00pm-8.00pm, PT Group Fitness Training with Tony

Yoga with Julie 0438 228 372: build core strength, become more aware of your body and mind and be calm.

MH Dance Academy with Mikayla Holt on 0404 824 775: RAD ballet, Jazz, Cheer, Acrobatics, Lyrical, hip hop, etc for 18 months- 25+.

Social card games for all members of the community. Contact Shirley on 4369 2034 or Jan 0402 246 427.

PT Group Fitness Training with Tony on 0466 303 700: for all fitness levels, over 16. Great social atmosphere while you get fit, burn fat.

Scrabble contact Shirley on 4369 2034: caters for all levels. Everyone is welcome.

Inner Space Yoga and Life Coaching contact Gail James Mob: 0422 052 346 www.innerspacewisdom.com.au

Tae Kwon Do with Jo Brannighan on 0422 278 081: increase your fitness, confidence, improve concentration and learn self defence.

EBPA, contact empirebayprogress@gmail.com

Tai Chi & Qigong with Alain on 0422 795 365: gentle form of exercise, described as meditation in motion.

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Check the hall booking calendar on the website to check date is available and then contact Sharon, Hall Booking Officer on EBHallbookings@gmail.com or

0457 650 955 9am to 5pm weekdays only.