

Munibung Hill

Contemporary history

Munibung Hill rises around 160 metres above sea level, and is characterised by steep slopes and gullies. It covers a large area of land bounded by the suburbs of Speers Point, Boolaroo and Warners Bay to the south and Argenton, Glendale and Macquarie Hills (Cardiff) to the north. There are several small caves and rock overhangs and a permanent spring on the hill. These caves were a favourite meeting place and recreation area for many local children over the years, and long-time residents tell of camping out on the hill and roasting potatoes on makeshift fires during their childhood.

Indigenous significance

Munibung has always been important to the Aboriginal community of Lake Macquarie. Its high vantage point and 360 degree views of the surrounding area made it a significant location, and there were once a number of stone arrangements on the hill linked to traditional stories of the Awabakal tribe. Threlkeld recorded that the hill was named '**Konakonaba**', and that it provided a source of ochre for the local people. The hill was believed to be a place where Aborigines communicated between mountains, and the site of a dreamtime story where a serpent brought water into the Lake - the top of Munibung Hill was a place where Aborigines watched Lake Macquarie fill with water 6000 years ago.

European settlement

Formal European occupation of the area commenced in 1828 when William Brooks selected 1,280 acres encompassing the present day suburb of Speers Point. Brooks operated a coal mine on the western side of the hill (near present day Hopkins Street) from 1843 - c1856. William Speer, a Sydney businessman and timber merchant, acquired the property in about 1870. The area was very isolated and sparsely populated in this time, and travellers made use of the spring as a reliable water source to obtain fresh water. Locals refer to this spring as □Pots and Pans□, as pots, pans and other utensils were left in the area permanently for the



use of people travelling between Toronto and Newcastle. In 1902, the first subdivisions were made around Munibung Hill extending from Main Road Boolaroo, to present day Thompson Road and east to Fairfax Road Warners Bay. Some of the remaining land was acquired by Mrs Mersie Hardy - wife of early Lake Macquarie alderman George Edward Hardy. Although she subdivided some portions of land the hilly area remained undeveloped. This area of Munibung - in the vicinity of Farm Street and Quarry Road - became known as Hardy's Hill.

Hawkins Quarry
The hilly part of Mersie Hardy's land was acquired by A G Hawkins who established gravel quarries to support road building activities. A sandstone cave apparently once existed on the south west side of the ridgeline of Munibung Hill (overlooking Lake Macquarie) but was destroyed by the quarrying. During the war, gravel taken from this quarry was used in the construction of Williamtown Air Base.

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The last major project for which this quarry was used was the building of the Speers Point Memorial Pool complex in 1963.

In May 1979 the first major dissent of residents via the Boolaroo-Speers Point Advisory Committee over the use of the quarry was reported in the newspapers

"It was devoid of vegetation, a visual pollutant and a threat to local residents through land movement and water seepage causing structural subsidence Mr Alderson said."

Newcastle Morning Herald, 8th May 1979

By November 1979 council was formulating plans to rehabilitate the quarry rather than open it to use.

From 1986 onward, Boral Resources Pty Ltd operated a gravel quarry on the site under an operating licence from Dekagra Pty Ltd.

The quarry licence was formally surrendered in 2014.

A second quarry operated by Lake Macquarie Council operated from a site very close to Hawkins Quarry. The entrance to this quarry was from the end of present day Hopkins Street. It is believed that a Mr Hopkins was the quarry manager.

The Caves

The caves on Munibung were a well known area for exploration for those growing up in the 1940s and 50s. The caves were a well-known area frequently visited by local children. Cooking potatoes, sausages etc. on fires lit outside the caves was quite popular.

The caves were usually accessed from third street and were known as The Three sisters, being two large caves and a smaller one. There was also a large rock there known as Lovers rock- with initials carved thereon! This was also the site for a two up school. Caves were also found on the Fairfax Road side - more along Quarry Road which over time were demolished by activity at Hawkins Quarry.

Acknowledgement: Selections from Lake Macquarie Library Community History Department.



Note : Livestock were introduced with cattle grazing across the ridges. Over the years there were also smaller holdings with stone fruit orchards on the eastern slopes.

Below: Gravel quarry,
Speers Point. 1973



▲ Munibung Hill: