



Preserving Our Heritage
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Mr Nick Tobin
General Manager
Hunters Hill Council

Via Feedback Form

Dear Mr Tobin

Clarke's Point Reserve Plan of Management

Introduction

The Hunters Hill Trust welcomes the opportunity to make this submission regarding the update of the *Plan of Management for Clarke's Point Reserve and Morts Reserve (Clarke's Point PoM)*.

In the 21 years since the *Clarke's Point PoM* was adopted, there has been significant legislative change that will bring about necessary revision.

There is also substantial historical material that should be considered in the review of the *Clarke's Point PoM*, which has been gathered in the time since the Woolwich based Foreshore 2000 group, along with other groups collectively known as the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores, successfully worked to convince the then Federal Government that former Defence sites around Sydney Harbour should be returned to the public, rather than sold to developers. We must be grateful to all those who contributed to the creation of Woolwich Docks and Parklands, which together with Clarke's Point Reserve and Morts Reserve, make up one of the most valued public assets in the Municipality and consideration should be given to recording this history in the *Clarke's Point PoM*.

The Trust supports that 'Council and the SHFT are jointly undertaking [various] studies to inform each respective PoM' but submits that cooperation with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) should also consider the *Cockatoo Island Management Plan* and the *Cockatoo Island / Wareamah Master Plan* because of the long historic connection of Woolwich and Hunters Hill with Cockatoo Island / Wareamah – a connection built on our shared maritime history and that so many Woolwich and Hunters Hill residents worked at Cockatoo.

The review should also bring about better explanation of some of the less understood history of Clarke's Point Reserve and Morts Reserve, which will add to the experience of the many who visit the area.

Moocooboola

In terms of material to be considered, most recently, in expert evidence given in the *Woolwich Marina Case* hearing, Adjunct Professor Craig Burton described the ‘waters and surrounding landforms comprising an area known as Moocooboola’ more broadly than is commonly understood, as:

the place where the waters meet. It was in pre - glacial times that the place was the junction of three drainage catchments: The Parramatta River system from the west, the Lane Cove River system from the north and the Long Cove drainage system from the south west.¹

Long Cove, better known today as Hawthorne Canal, drains into the river system via Iron Cove to the south of the three islands of this precinct, Cockatoo, Spectacle and Snapper.

Burton’s depiction of what he refers to as Moocooboola appears in Figure 1 below.

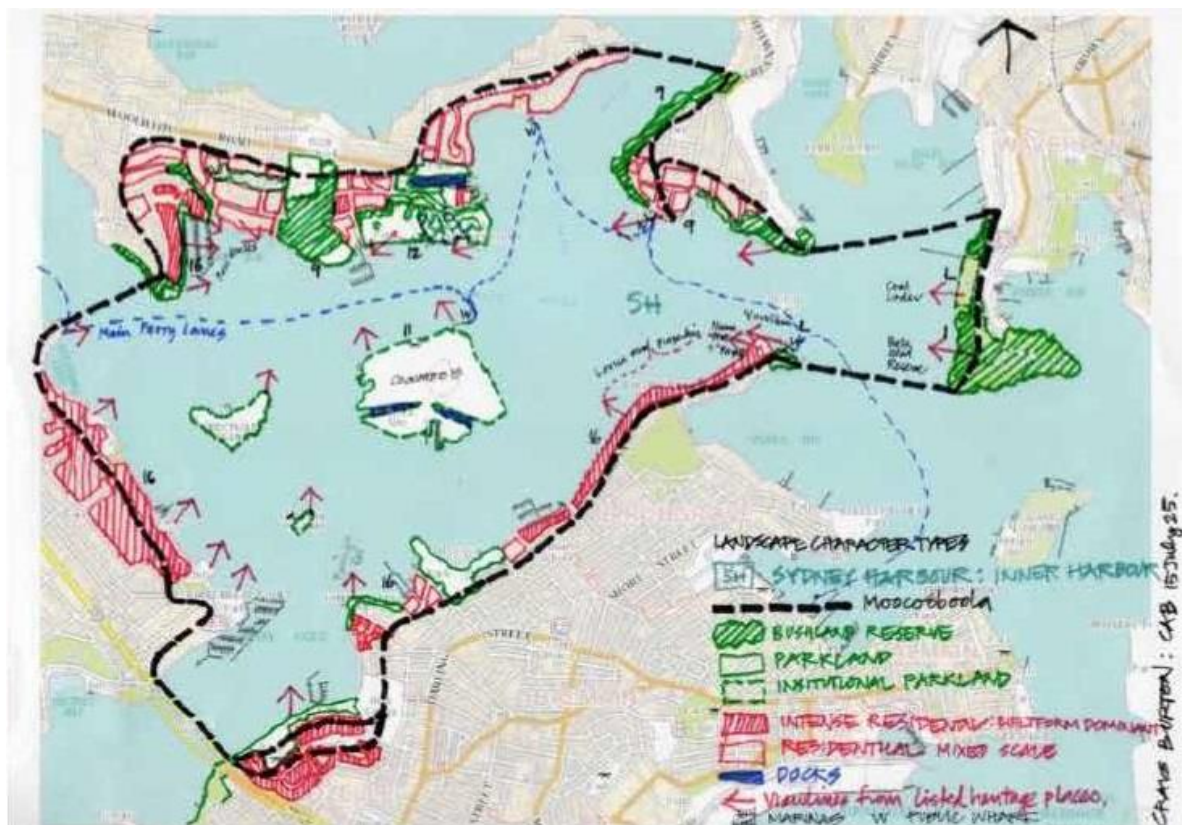


Figure 1: Moocooboola as place and its Landscape Character – Craig Burton 2025

The area Burton describes as Moocooboola is steeped in many layers of history: First Nations; convict; cultural, maritime and social.

¹ *Micheal Fountain Architects Pty Ltd v Hunter’s Hill Council and Others*, Land and Environment Court Proceedings No. 2024/130852, Joint Expert Report (Joint Report of Heritage Experts - 20 August 2025) 32.

Maritime History

As well as its significance in First Nations history, from the mid to late 19th century to the mid to late 20th century, the Moocooboola precinct was home to numerous maritime facilities, including:

Cockatoo Island, where maritime work commenced in 1857, following the construction of the Fitzroy Dock by convicts, with shipbuilding and repairs, continuing until 1992;

Spectacle Island, which from its establishment in 1865, served as Australia's first explosives storage and manufacturing site for both the colonial and later the Royal Australian Navy;

Morrison & Sinclair, which was founded in the early 1890s, were ship and yacht builders who moved from Johnstons Bay to operate at Birchgrove, immediately to the east of Long Nose Point Wharf, from 1923 to 1970 – their slipway remains part of what is now Yurulbin Park;

The Balls Head Coal Loader, which operated from 1921, transferring coal from bulk carriers to smaller vessels and local transport until operations declined in the 1970s but were extended to export coal to Japan before its final closure in 1992 – much of the fabric of the Coal Loader remains in its adaptive reuse as a Centre for Sustainability;

Woolwich Dock, which was built by Mort's Dock and Engineering Co between 1899 and 1901 is significant for its rich maritime industrial history as a private graving dock and its role in World Wars I and II for ship repairs and troopship conversions – today's adaptive reuse of Woolwich Dock respects this extraordinary maritime heritage.

Clarke's Point Reserve

Facilities within what is now Clarke's Point Reserve also made an important contribution to ship building with the slipways, established by Atlas Engineering Company in circa 1883, being operated by Mort's Dock and Engineering until the launch of the last ship from the slipways, understood to be in 1954.

An extraordinary number and range of vessels were built on these slipways, including cargo ships and a number of ferries including early Manly ferries – see Figure 2 below.

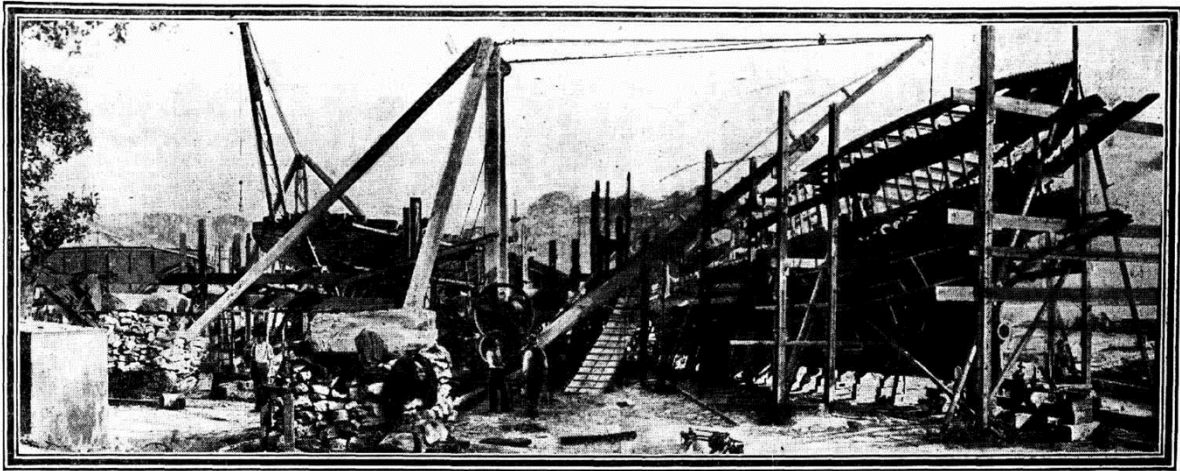


Figure 2: Ferries, including a Manly ferry, being built by Mort's Dock and Engineering Company in 1912 at the slipways to the west of Clarkes Point established by Atlas Engineering Company in c 1883. [*The Daily Telegraph* (21 March 1912) 1.]

Significant fabric of the slipways established by Atlas Engineering remains today, as do concrete blocks and other items associated with ship construction – see Figure 3 below. However, a great deal of debris has found its way on to the slipways.



Figure 3: Significant fabric of the slipways established by Atlas Engineering remains as do other items associated with ship construction such as the concrete blocks and other items seen on the foreshore beyond the western slipway. A great deal of debris has found its way on to the slipways.

Other items of heritage significance in Clarke's Point Reserve include the site of John Clarke's home Viewforth and the seawalls that were built using sandstone quarried during the construction of Woolwich Dock.

The site of the Atlas Foundry straddles the boundary between Clarke's Point Reserve and Morts Reserve and is recognised by concrete inset into in the car park, depicting the location of furnace and foundry.

Apart from this, there only appears to be one other sign in Clarke's Point Reserve that provides any historical information, which is located on top of a sandstone outcrop at the site of Viewforth. The inscription on this plaque is shown in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4: The Plaque Commemorating Australia's Bicentennial Year 1988 at the site Clarke's home 'Viewforth'

While the current *Clarke's Point PoM* provides a brief maritime history, apart from the recognition the site of the Atlas Foundry, there appears to be no site signage relating to the site's history beyond 1883, when the Clarke family sold the 10 acre eastern portion of their original 1835 grant to Davy and Co, later known as the Atlas Engineering Co Ltd.² This was the commencement the site's maritime history.

Viewforth was later used by Atlas Engineering as its works office – see Figure 5 below.

² Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, *Management Plan – Hunters Hill No.1: Woolwich Dock and Parklands*, (11 July 2007) 9.

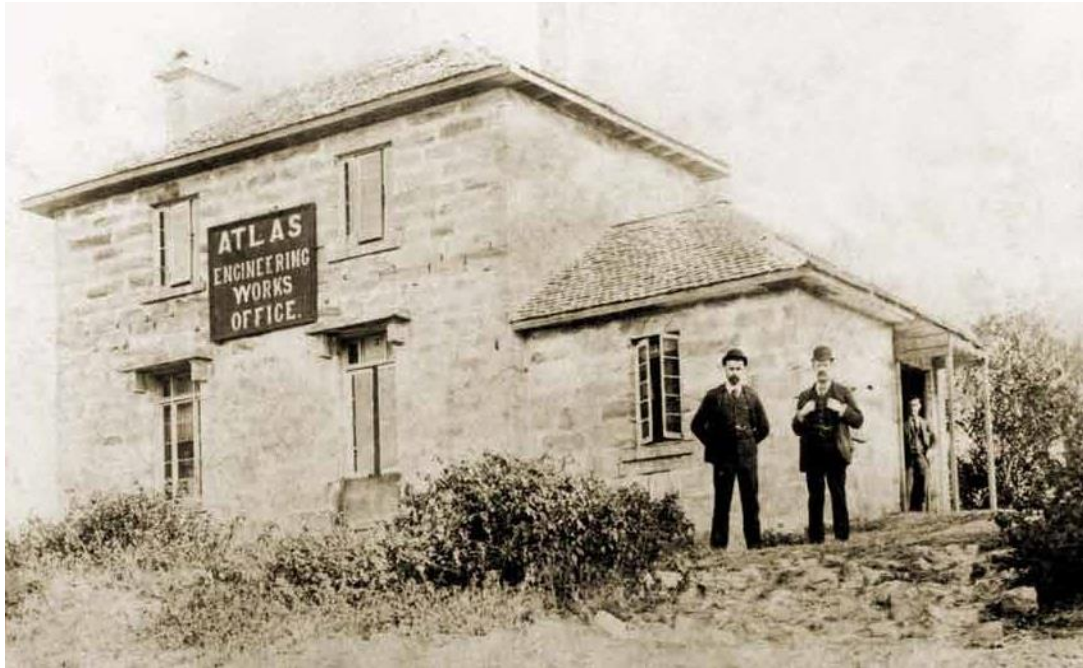


Figure 5: Photograph of Viewforth (c 1897), a house built and lived in by members of the Clarke family and later used by Atlas Engineering as its Works Office. [Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, Management Plan – *Hunters Hill No.1: Woolwich Dock and Parklands*, (11 July 2007) 11.]

Future Planning

Great care will need to be exercised to ensure work carried out in the park does not conflict with longer term plans, such as that to:

Support the SHFT's proposal to re-open the connection between the slipways and Morts Dock to improve interpretation of the sites [sic] former industrial usage and physical connection with the Morts Dock³

Development in this area must faithfully align with relevant objectives and provisions of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* and *Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Waterways Area Development Control Plan 2005* as well as avoiding the introduction of alien elements.

The SHFT will undoubtedly continue its work in the adaptive reuse of parts of both Cockatoo Island and Woolwich Dock and Parklands. Given the closeness of these SHFT managed public assets, in both proximity and maritime history, there should be greater connection between Cockatoo Island and the Woolwich site.

³ Hunter's Hill Council, *Clarks Point Reserve & Morts Reserve Plan of Management*, (September 2004) 46.

There is an opportunity for the adaptive reuse of the Clarke's Point slipways, similar to the proposal to use the Cockatoo Island northern slipway as a small boat facility,⁴ for 'non-powered recreational boating and kayaking'.⁵ We would also suggest the use of the Clarke's Point slipways be limited to small passive recreation craft to ensure there is no disturbance of remaining fabric. The SHFT's treatment of the Cockatoo Island northern slipway might be used as an example to guide restoration of the Clarke's Point slipways.

However, there is a significant body of research that should be examined to better understand the vessels that were built at these slipways and the equipment used in their construction. This should guide any restoration of the slipways to ensure their fabric is retained and debris removed and that all work respects the extraordinary heritage of the Woolwich working waterfront.

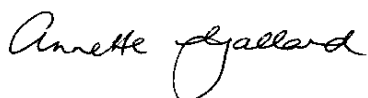
The Trusts recommends that strategies for management of the park should include the ultimate heritage listing of the slipways in their own right.

Also, the ultimate removal of the alien element of Woolwich Marina, which has little connection with this precinct, would among other things allow greater connection between the Woolwich Parklands and Cockatoo Island via small recreation craft, further improving access within this extraordinary heritage precinct.

The Trust also believes that it is essential that the maritime history of Clarke's Point Reserve, Morts Reserve and in particular the slipways be better explained by on site signage that is sympathetic to its setting.

In conclusion, the Trust looks forward to working with Council in drafting a revised *Clarke's Point PoM* and with future improvements to this extraordinarily valuable and historic public asset.

Yours sincerely



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⁴ Tyrrell Studio, Mott MacDonald for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, *Cockatoo Island / Wareamah Master Plan*, (August 2024) 59.

⁵ Ibid 9 [1.2].