

### *The Township*

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As the mine developed, more workers were attracted to the area and by 1894 the population had reached about 440. Some thirty families lived in four-roomed weatherboard cottages with individual yards, which had been built by the company. Large numbers of miners, however, built huts or shacks near the various tunnels, deterred from living in the village by the 2½ mile walk to the mine and possibly by the rental – on "easy terms" - charged by the company. A plan of the town drawn in 1891 shows the development of three separate settlements at Catherine Hill Bay – the main township, Middle Camp and Mine Camp. (Dept. of Education Plan)

Four stores, a hotel, two butchers' shops and a bakery had also been established in 1894 as well as a post and telegraph office. Residents had been pressing for the construction of a school on three acres of land which the Dept. of Public Instruction had purchased from the mining company, but no action had been taken due to lack of funding. Consequently, lessons for the town's 100 children were held in the Primitive Methodist Church. The school was finally completed at the beginning of 1895.

Another grievance, reported by the local newspaper, was "the want of a cemetery – for deaths occur at Wallarah just as in other places." Although the company had given three acres of land for the purpose in 1892 (retaining rights to the minerals beneath) no further action was taken and burials had to be carried out at Belmont, 12 miles away.<sup>72</sup> In 1894 the local Member of Parliament applied for a grant to fund clearing and fencing of the cemetery, and trustees for the various denominations were subsequently appointed.<sup>73</sup> The oldest remaining gravestones in the cemetery are those of George Dunn (February 1896) and his infant son, who was buried with him one month later.<sup>74</sup>

Journalists visited the Wallarah site from time to time, reporting on the mine and the village but also commenting on the "eminently picturesque" qualities of the area, the "rugged nature of the country" and the "luxuriant vegetation with which it is clothed".<sup>75</sup> Over a hundred years later, these descriptions still apply to the landscape at Catherine Hill Bay.

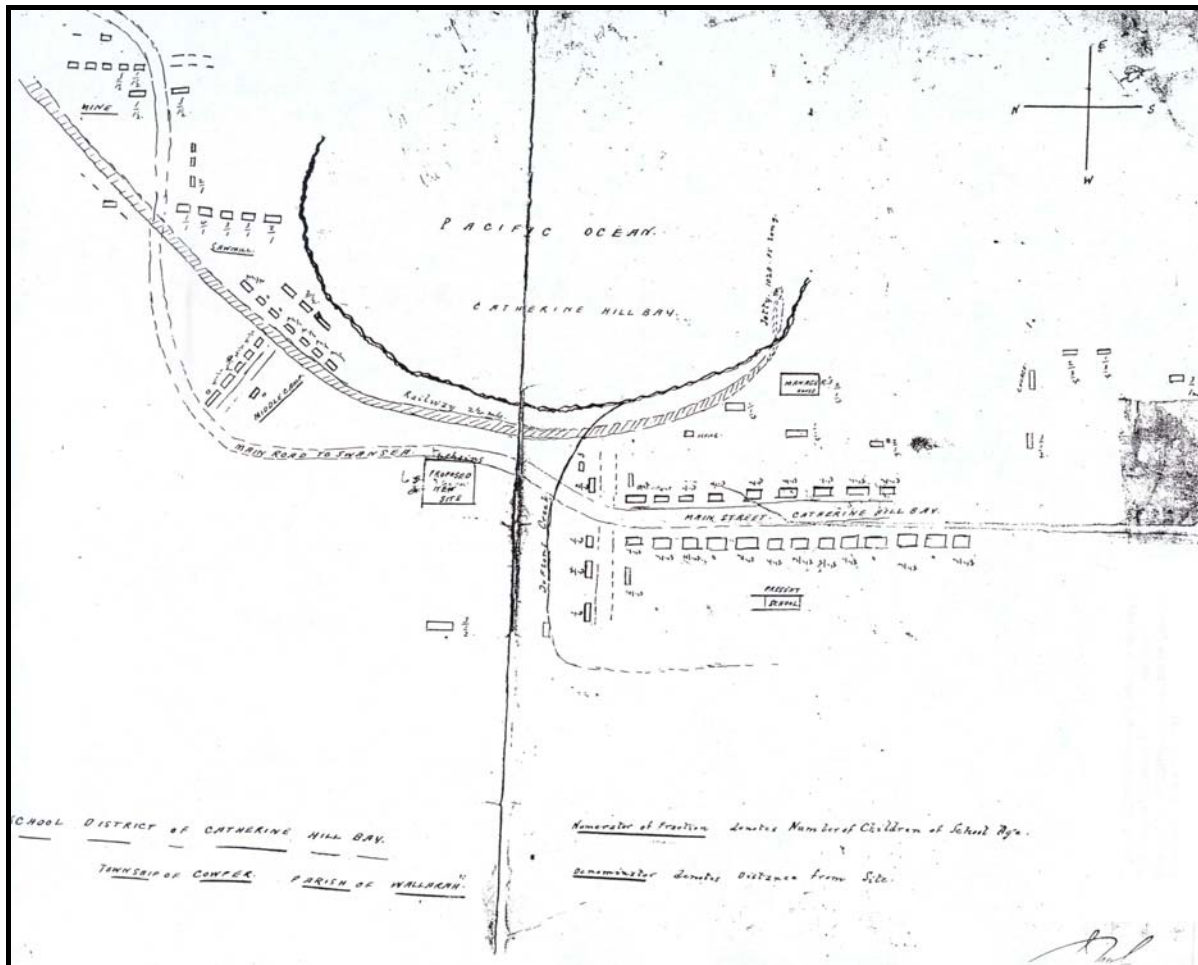


Plate 17: School District of Catherine Hill Bay. *Township of Cowper, Parish of Wallarah.* (Drawn by J. McCormack, Inspector of Schools, Newcastle, from M. Martin, "Catherine Hill bay: a development history")

## 1900- 1920: CONSOLIDATION

In 1912 the colliery site was significantly increased with the purchase from Charles Parbury of a large area of land known as the Beulah Estate. Located to the south and west of the Wallarah Estate, it was previously held by Messrs. Pop and Hardy

Of the five small mines, named "A" to "E", which were opened between 1889 and 1906 only two, "B" and "E", were being worked in 1906.<sup>76</sup> Plate 18 (below) shows the location of these two mines. The underground workings of the two pits were connected, but most of the plant was situated at the mouth of the "E" pit, north-west of Middle Camp. According to local folklore and research carried out by Sean McDonnell, the winding engine room for "D" shaft later became the residence of the Chief Clerk.<sup>77</sup>

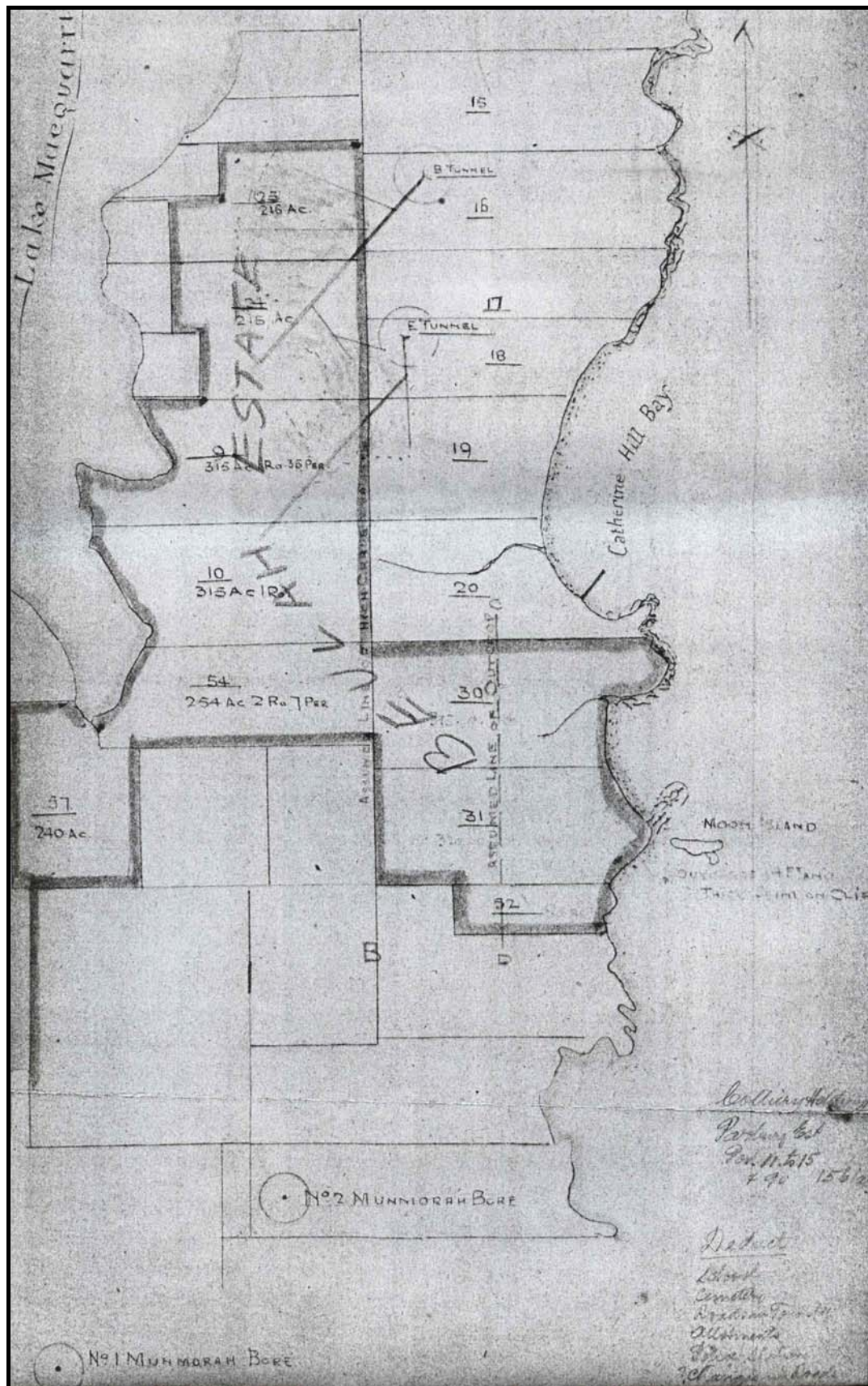


Plate 18: Plan of Wallarah Colliery holding showing Beulah Estate, 1912.

(J & A Brown-Coal & Allied Archive, A7663(x), University of Newcastle)

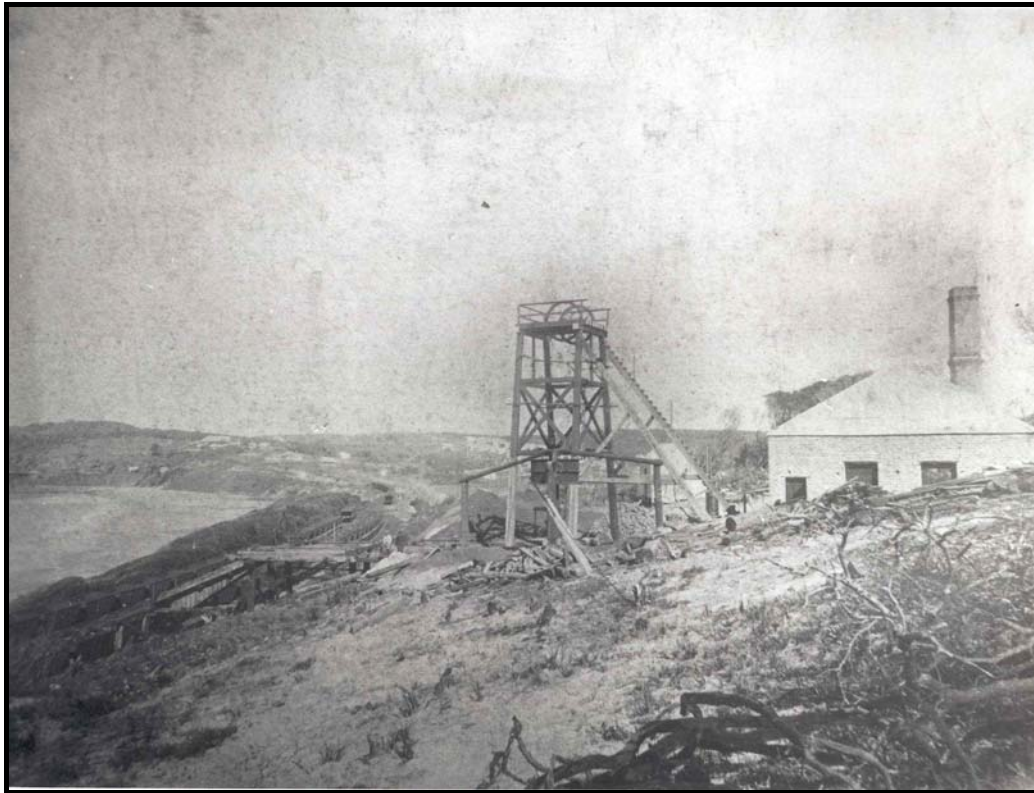


Plate 19: "D" Pit in 1894, showing engine winding room (left) and manager's residence in the distance (middle right)

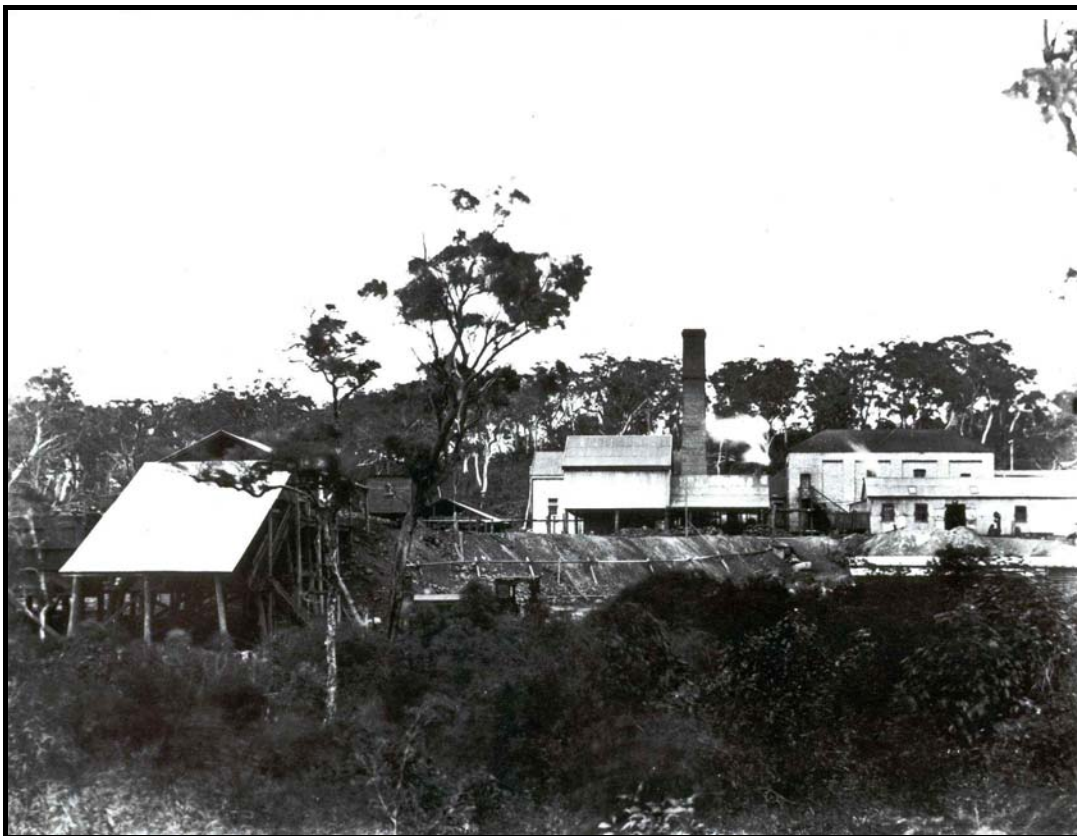
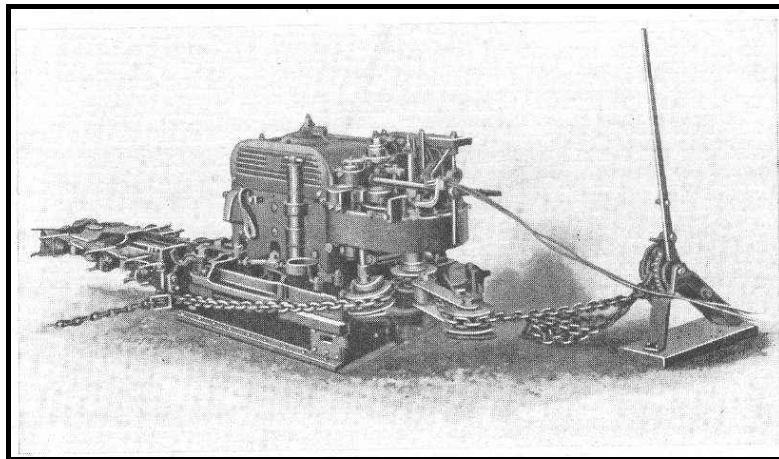


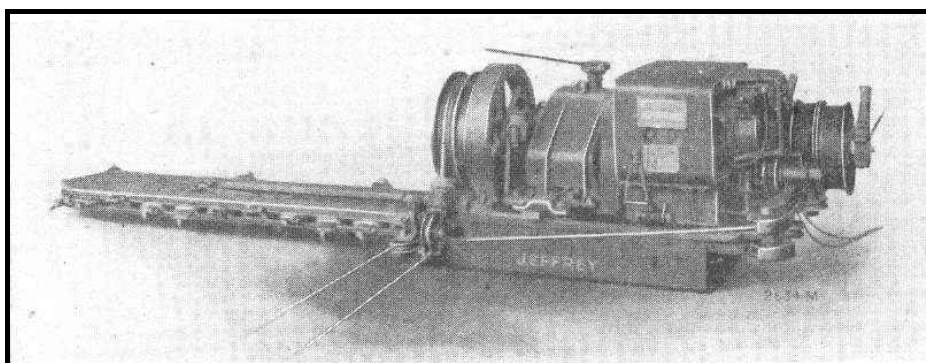
Plate 20: "E" Pit. c. mid 1890s. (*Dept. of Mines via E. Tonks*)

In 1906 the workforce at the colliery had reached about 320 and the output was about 1000 tons per day. Most of the coal was being sent to Sydney for ships bunkers but some was also being shipped to South Australia. Joseph Sperring, who had been brought out from England as the first Undermanager, became manager in 1902 and under his direction the "E" tunnel was developed. By June 1906 three boilers were in use, a new Babcock and Wilcock boiler having lately been set in, while two other boilers were in operation at "B" tunnel. In addition it was reported that;

*Four coal-cutting machines, driven by electricity, are at work in the new tunnel, and they have given so much satisfaction that others will be put in as development proceeds. The types used are the Sullivan, the Jeffery and the Goodman. The mine is entirely free from gas, and naked lights are used. There is a thickness of six feet of good coal in the seam, and this is so clean that it can be tipped straight over the screens from the skips. No handling or cleaning is necessary. It is the intention of the company to erect additional screens, and an endless rope will be affixed for drawing the skips out of the mine. The tubs will then be clipped on, as is done in other mines where similar ropes are at work.*



**Plate 21:** Sullivan electric chain machine, used for mining coal at Wallarah. It was a relatively heavy machine which was operated by three men and moved through the mine on a horse-drawn trolley. (*F. Danvers Power, Coalfields and Collieries of New South Wales, 1912*)



**Plate 22:** Jeffery shortwall coal cutter, which made a cut 6 feet deep across the face. It was mounted on a self-propelling trolley. (*F. Danvers Power, Coalfields and Collieries of New South Wales, 1912*)

Tenders were being called for new and larger hauling engines and a new siding was being built, leading up to the workshop to improve materials handling and shunting facilities. All skips used in the colliery were made and repaired at the workshop.<sup>78</sup>

In his study of Australian collieries published in 1912, geologist F. Danvers Power described the mining process at Wallarah:

*The coal was worked by bord and pillar. Bords worked by pick are 8 yds. wide, the pillars between being 12yds. wide; but those worked by machine are 12 yds. wide, and the pillars between 14yds. Very little pillar extraction has been carried out, as there are so many places on the surface where water flows, and the workings being shallow, should the roof cave in, the amount of water admitted to them might cause considerable inconvenience and expense.*<sup>79</sup>

Buildings associated with colliery operations included:

*the fitting shop with two lathes and machines for shearing, punching, drilling and shaping; the blacksmith's shop [with] two forges, the air for which is supplied by mechanically-driven blowers; also a steam hammer. In the carpenter's shop is a band saw, drilling and morticing machine, and a lathe. In the wagon repairing shed, portable electric drills are used for drilling rivet holes in the plate iron. These are convenient to handle, easy to take apart and all parts being completely covered they are suitable for outdoor work. ... A saw-mill is in course of construction, and a spacious store has just been completed.*<sup>80</sup>

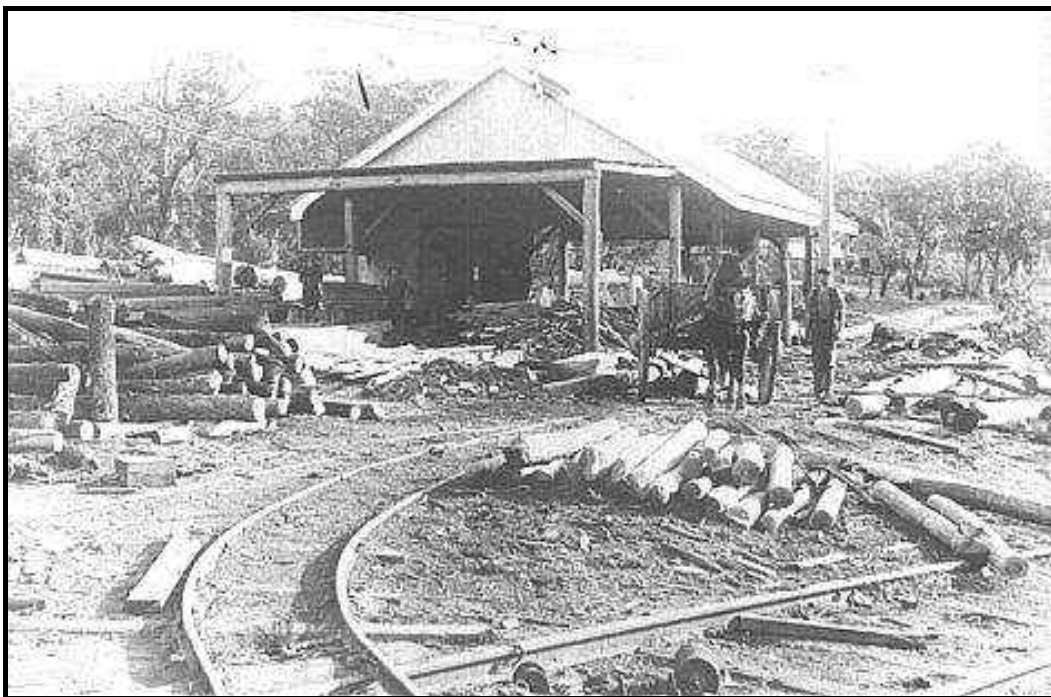


Plate 23: Sawmill at Middle Camp, 1914 (Lake Macquarie City Library Collection)

A brickmaking plant, located near the "E" Tunnel, came into production at about this time. The claypit and brickworks were connected with the colliery by a small rail line.<sup>81</sup>

Four shoots were in service at the jetty and night loading was made possible by the provision of electric lights which were powered by a steam driven Siemen Bros. 250 volt 0-20 amp and 400-475 rpm dynamo.<sup>82</sup> In 1921 the jetty was:

*1154 feet in length including approach spans constructed of hardwood framing on turpentine piles. Equipped with 4 movable coal shoots, 3 ton jib crane, vertical boiler and warping winch, 4 hand winches, 1 direct coupled engine and generator for lighting, store room, 3 inch water piping from tanks, windmill pump and tanks, boat davits and boat hawsers and moorings for (a) large steamers, (b) small steamers. Two railway lines on main jetty, one line on shore end. Valued at £35,000.<sup>83</sup>*

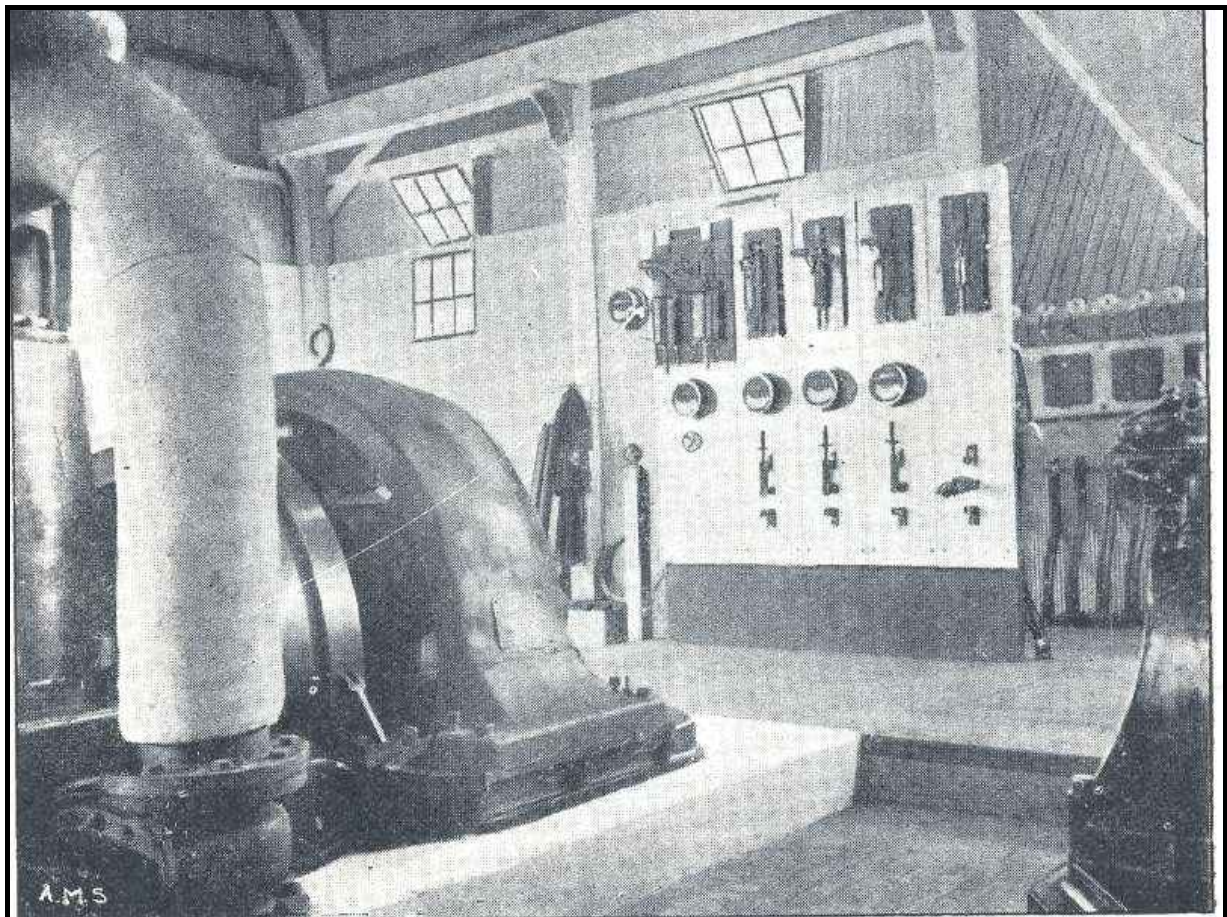


Plate 24: Wallarah switch board, 1912. (*F. Danvers Power, Coalfields and Collieries of New South Wales, 1912*)

By 1924 workings extended a considerable distance from the mouth of the tunnel, requiring the sinking of a ventilating shaft.<sup>84</sup>

### *The Township*

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By August 1900 there were five distinct settlements at Catherine Hill Bay. According to a report associated with the provision of postal services, there were 60 households at the Catherine Hill Bay township, 20 at Middle Camp (a mile distant) 16 at Saw Mill Camp (about ¼ mile further on) and 60 at Mine Cap (about ¾ mile further on).<sup>85</sup> There was also a settlement on the shores of the lake. This scattered arrangement was seen by a contemporary observer as a reason for the area's failure to show "those signs of progress exhibited by some of the younger mining townships in the district":

*The township at the bay is most important, and the principal buildings are there. If all these groups of dwellings were in one centre, the town would be one of some importance, business would be facilitated, and there would be that strength and vitality which come through concentration in communities as well as individuals.*

*An excellent position for the town would have been at Middle Camp, and if an area there of, say, 100 acres had been cut up into allotments and sold to the people to make homes for themselves, the population of the locality would probably be double what it is today, and the town, by whatever name it was called, far better known to the people of Newcastle. As it is, many Newcastle residents have a very hazy idea of the position of the bay and the condition of the settlements there; and know as little, too, of the work of the colliery.<sup>86</sup>*

Also mitigating against the social cohesion of the Catherine Hill Bay community was the transient nature of the inhabitants, half of them being "birds of passage". Tenants of the company-owned houses were required to sign an agreement to leave at seven days' notice, a condition which did little to encourage the development of community spirit.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps this situation led to the demolition of the court house at Swansea in June 1906 and its relocation next to the police station at Catherine Hill Bay. According to the *Newcastle Morning Herald*, this move had been made because "the greater part of the work arises" at Catherine Hill Bay. Following completion of the work, it was proposed that the court would sit every fourth Friday.

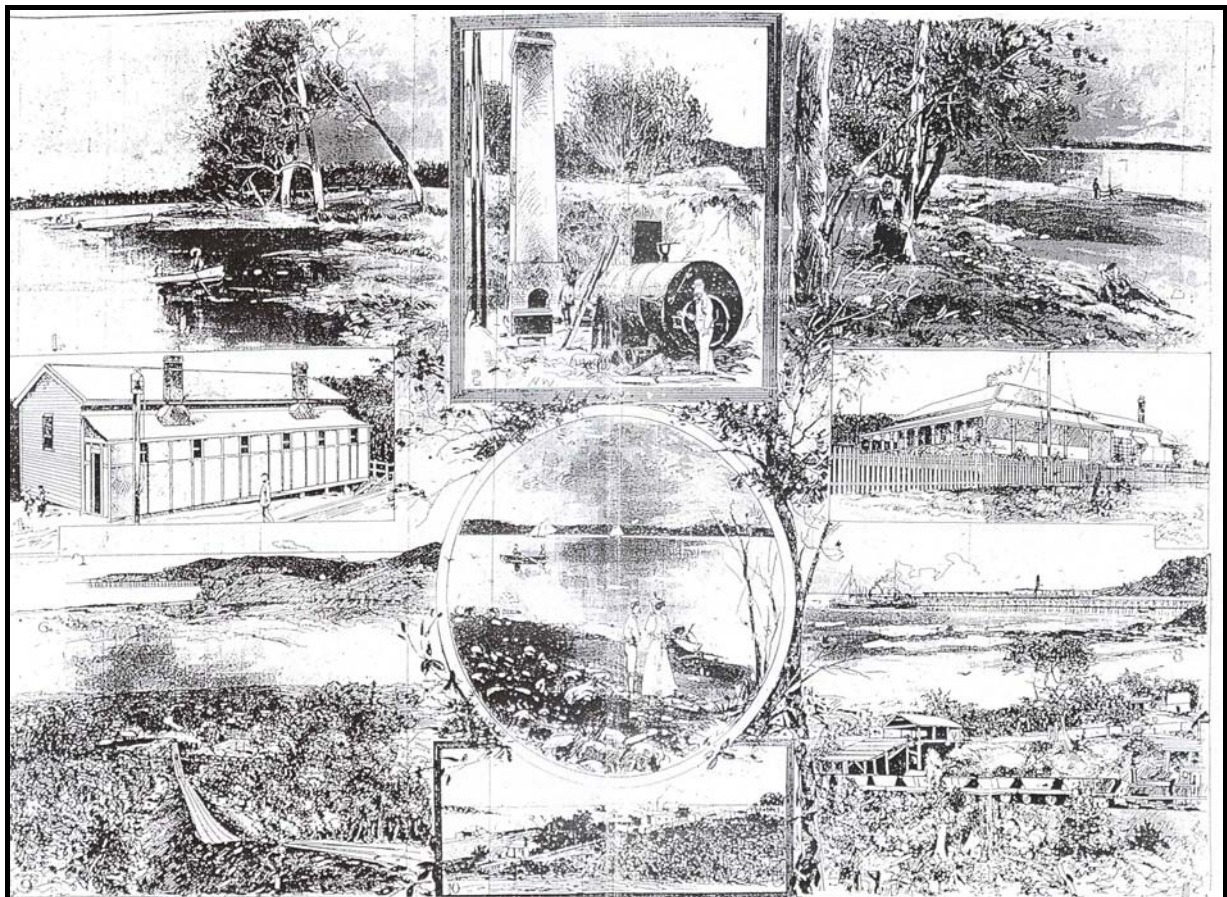
On a more positive note, the school was well attended, with between 100 and 125 children on the roll. The School of Arts, "a 2-roomed house rented from the company" was "in a fairly prosperous condition" with nearly 50 members. The library held about 700 books and there was always a good selection of papers, periodicals and magazines on the reading room table. A games room was supplied with a billiard table and games such as chess, draughts and cribbage. The building also served as a social venue, and members were hopeful of extending the building to allow for the provision of greater facilities.<sup>88</sup> This eventuated in 1910, with the construction of a new meeting hall and concert room, which the manager hoped would "prove of great benefit to the Company's employees"<sup>89</sup>.

A post office was built in 1904 near the centre of the township, but its precise location is unclear.<sup>90</sup> Also provided by

the company, in 1922, was timber for the construction of a Methodist church cottage.<sup>91</sup>

While many visitors spoke of the town's failure to thrive, few failed to comment favourably on the area's scenic qualities. As motor cars began to appear, a drive to Catherine Hill Bay became popular and the Wallarah Hotel underwent improvements "to meet the tourist needs"<sup>92</sup>. The natural beauty of Catherine Hill Bay and its seaside location led one reporter to comment on its undeveloped potential as a health resort:

*Favoured by its excellent situation, the sandy nature of the soil, and the fresh breezes which blow from all points of the compass, the bay is a very healthy spot... For children, and for those in need of change and rest, or in search of health, a more ideal spot would be hard to find; and if the place and its attractions in this respect were made known to the public there would be many visitors to the bay.*<sup>93</sup>



**Plate 25:** Catherine Hill Bay – a picturesque township near Lake Macquarie (*Town and Country Journal* 11 December 1897 p. 28)

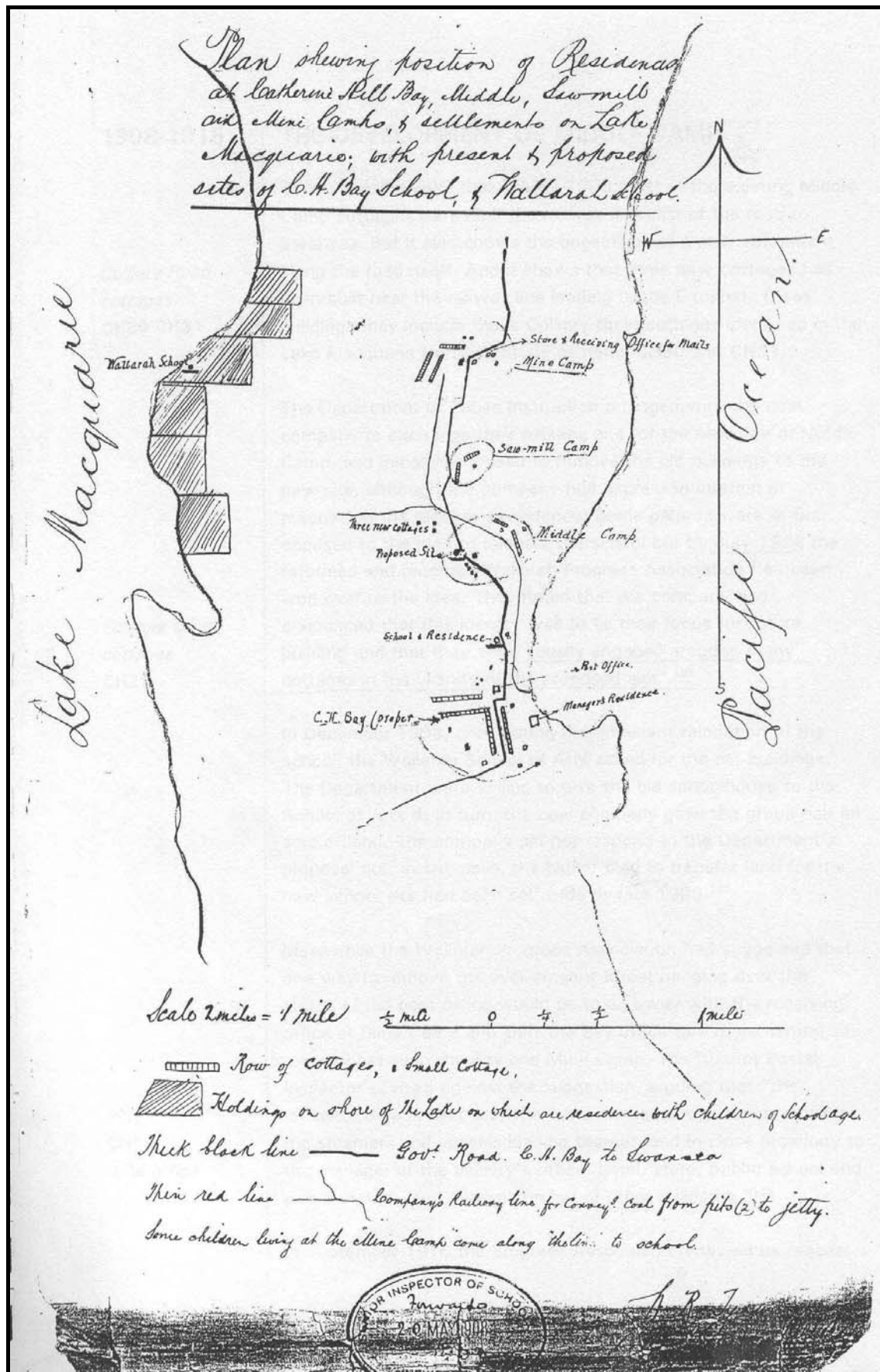


Plate 26: Plan of Catherine Hill Bay showing various villages, 1908 (Cited in M. Martin, Catherine Hill Bay: a development history, p.34)

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- <sup>72</sup> Wallarah Coal Company Ltd., Minute Books, Local Board, Sydney, 24 August 1892. ML MSS 3876/12
- <sup>73</sup> *NMH* 7 March 1894.
- <sup>74</sup> M. Martin, "Catherine Hill Bay: a development history", 1996, p.25.
- <sup>75</sup> cited in *ibid.*, p.26.
- <sup>76</sup> G.H. McNally, "Two Centuries of Coal Mining on the Swansea Peninsula: a History of Wallarah and Wallamine Collieries", in Thirty First Newcastle Symposium on Advances in the Study of the Sydney Basin, Dept. of Geology, University of Newcastle. undated. p.31.
- <sup>77</sup> S. McDonnell, "Search of Old Collieries in the Catherine Hill Bay Area", 14 May 1999
- <sup>78</sup> *NMH* 9 June 1906
- <sup>79</sup> F. Danvers Power, *Coalfields and Collieries of Australia*, Melbourne, 1912, p.245
- <sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p.257.
- <sup>81</sup> M. Martin, "Catherine Hill Bay: a development history", p.37.
- <sup>82</sup> F. Danvers Power, *Coalfields and Collieries of Australia*, Melbourne, 1912, p.257
- <sup>83</sup> "Valuation of Colliery Plant, equipment, etc.," Wallarah Colliery, 1921, J. & A Brown Records, University of Newcastle Archives, A7662 (vi), ZA7662 (vi)
- <sup>84</sup> Wallarah Coal Company Pty. Ltd., Proceedings of 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary General Meeting, 11 June 1925. ML MSS3876/10,11.
- <sup>85</sup> M. Martin, "Catherine Hill Bay, a development history", p.28.
- <sup>86</sup> *NMH* 9 June 1906.
- <sup>87</sup> *NMH* 4 February 1908
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>89</sup> Notes on the history of the Wallarah Coal Company by Mr. Shaw, Company Secretary. MSS 3876/1
- <sup>90</sup> M. Martin, "Catherine Hill Bay: a development history", p.32.
- <sup>91</sup> Wallarah Coal Company Ltd, Ledger, Sydney Office 1922-3, ML MSS 3876/14
- <sup>92</sup> M. Martin, "Catherine Hill Bay: a development history", p.37.
- <sup>93</sup> *NMH* 4 February 1908