

History of the Hill

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The area known as 'the Hill', wedged between Jubilee Oval and the Tramsheds, Forest Lodge, is a relic of an era when depositing waste in local infill tips was one of three methods of garbage disposal adopted by Sydney's inner-city councils. The use of infill tips was, in fact, the most popular method in the late 1890s. Sydney Council's refuse was disposed of on wasteland near Moore Park, and Glebe Council's at Allen's Glen, part of Toxteth Park estate.

With suburbs filling up with houses, people and industry, available tip sites were fast disappearing. From December 1886, calls for the resumption of Allen's Glen became more strident. A public meeting urged the reclamation of Allen's Glen and its dedication to public recreation, which, if implemented, would end Glebe Council's dumping of rubbish there and the health hazard it was seen to pose.

Lilliebridge Running Grounds was opened in January 1890 by John and Thomas Spencer for pony racing and professional athletics, but it also served as Glebe Municipality's main dumping ground for house garbage and refuse. Resident petitions in 1892 to stop garbage tipping fell on deaf ears. Over time, this precinct was variously known as Allen's Glen, Epping Racecourse (1904) and, in 1929, Harold Park.

The Public Works Department reclaimed Allen's Glen between 1893 and 1897, and Johnston's Creek stormwater canal was constructed between 1895 and 1900. Evidence of Aboriginal middens, especially shellfish, including Ark Cockle, Sydney Rock Oyster, Scallop and Mud Welk, were found in the narrow strip of remnant salt marsh at Johnstons Creek but much of the middens here were destroyed by extensive reclamation.

As the disposal of domestic garbage in local tips was poorly managed, councils began to turn their attention to alternative methods of garbage disposal. The bubonic plague epidemic from 1900 induced the City Council to acquire an incinerator in 1902, and councils at Petersham, Leichhardt and Annandale all acquired incinerators between 1899 and 1902.

In 1899, Glebe and Annandale Councils were created joint trustees of the reclaimed lands straddling their municipal boundary. In 1906, Annandale, by then disposing of its refuse by incineration, objected to Glebe's continued use of the new reserve as a house garbage tip. Relations between the Councils became strained, and the joint trusteeship was terminated in 1909.

In the years between 1906 and 1909, Glebe Council discontinued the practice of dumping house infill and set about planting gardens, shrubs and trees. The area became known in 1909 as Jubilee Park, celebrating 50 years of municipal government. At this time, Council also created and enclosed Jubilee Oval.

Glebe Council had first contracted McEnnally Brothers in 1901 to tow house garbage and refuse out to sea by punt for dumping, operating every alternate day. Nearly all Sydney councils had discontinued this practice by 1914, but not Glebe; in 1922, Glebe punted 90 tons of garbage weekly out to sea. In 1932, Glebe was the only municipal body still dumping

garbage at sea. This practice finally ended in July 1933, when Glebe's new incinerator in Forsyth St began operating. The incinerator, designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Eric Nicholls, was located next to the Council depot. The Glebe incinerator closed around 1946.

In 1926, long after the demise of waste disposal in infill tips, Glebe Council petitioned the NSW Government to have the Toxteth Estate, of which Epping Racecourse (Harold Park) formed part, proclaimed a residential area. The Council took this action due to the probable sale of the racecourse and the likelihood of factories and workshops being erected there in its place. This action was taken despite the area being declared unfit for residential purposes by the Board of Health – no buildings of any kind were to be built there. Glebe Council's health inspector, Mr Young, indicated that the rationale for this prohibition on building was that the racecourse, filled with refuse to a depth of 16 feet, was a former garbage tip and altogether unfit for building purposes.