



Local History Factsheet:

A brief history of the suburb Royal Park

During its early years, Royal Park was known as 'Piggery Park' due to the smell originating from the many slaughter houses in the district. Another early industry was sand mining and this resulted in the loss of the sand dunes that originally characterised Royal Park and surrounding areas. Housing booms following world wars one and two were predominantly responsible for transforming Royal Park from sandy, scrubby paddocks into a built up suburb. Many of the streets in Royal Park were named after trees.

When first subdivided in the early 1880s Royal Park was laid out in 'working men's blocks' measuring 12 metres by 30 metres. By 1935, Royal Park was well and truly the workers suburb it was intended to be with the census of that year showing local men were mainly employed as wharf labourers, drivers and building labourers.

Royal Park's football team defeated Albion four goals to nil in windy conditions at home in September 1881.

In July 1916, a large fox that had been stealing poultry was shot by the son of Mr Williams, bringing relief to local residents. Later that year, the Royal Park Floral Society held a flower show with proceeds going to the Royal Park Methodist Church piano fund.

A Royal Park home was destroyed by fire in December 1928. The house was unable to be saved as the Woodville Volunteer Fire Brigade was prevented from getting within half a mile of the home because of the sand hills and box thorns surrounding the property. October 1941, Pricker Bros joinery works on Tapleys Hill Road was saved from major fire damage by employees using a garden hose to fight a fire in a sawdust hopper.

The Osborne family was a prominent local family and owned ice works, a wood yard, a fodder store and bees. Royal Park Primary School is located on a former market garden owned by the Morley family. Royal Park High School opened in 1971. It changed its name to West Lakes High School in 1978 before closing in 1991.

Following world war two, Royal Park became popular for migrants ('displaced persons') from Europe. Many migrant men were initially accommodated at the Hendon Migrant Hostel and buying in the area enabled them to stay close to their places of employment. Additionally, land in Royal Park was cheap due to the smaller size of the blocks. However, land sharks were sometimes reported to take advantage of migrant's desperate need for housing by selling shoddy temporary shacks at 'deplorable' prices. In the early 1950s, there was some community debate about the temporary shacks constructed by migrants to live in while they worked to build proper homes. In January 1950 Councillor Osborn claimed that parts of Royal Park were being turned into slum areas because of the temporary housing. The chairman of the building and health committee described a motion put by Councillor Osborn to take action against the migrants as one of the worst to ever come before council. 'The Mail' newspaper, in investigating the claim of slums, reported on the joy 'new Australians' felt in being able to live together,

outweighing any disadvantages of their makeshift houses. The paper described the homes as 'neat little one and two roomed houses' built almost entirely from motor packing cases.

The Royal Park community was shocked in September 1951 with the discovery of a murdered man, Jan Politelo, in an isolated area of Crown Terrace. An acquaintance was later arrested.

Sources

Newspaper articles sourced from the digitised newspapers database at Trove: www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper
'A History of Woodville' by Susan Marsden, Corporation of the City of Woodville, 1977.