

# ON THE STREETS WHERE YOU LIVE



## Blackman Park

Today's Blackman Park is a very different landscape to the original steep-sided Stoney Creek valley with its funnel shaped bay of mudflats and mangroves. Many local residents may remember the area as the site of the local tip from the 1950s through to the 1970s however the site is now a highly utilised recreation space. Over the past 12 months Blackman Park has been upgraded with the installation of synthetic sportsfields, new lighting, fitness and playground equipment and cricket nets. By the end of 2015 there will also be a new Scout hall and amenities building adjacent to the synthetic sportsfields.

Located in Lane Cove West, the area had previously been used for a quarry and was home to the Council's works depot (the depot is still on-site today). During the 1940s Lane Cove Council, in consultation with the Maritime Services Board, began planning for the reclamation and improvement of the area. Council records note 'the long term proposal now is to extend controlled tipping of garbage from the Council's former quarry along the line of Stoney Creek and eventually out to the tidal flats'. The proposal anticipated that the area would be filled and consolidated for recreational purposes.

Between February 1952 and March 1954 the controlled tipping of garbage started under the control of the Maritime Services Board, who had approved Council's plan in four stages. An extension of the tip was approved in 1967, and reclamation was finally completed in 1971 with a 1200ft long stone sea wall constructed to control pollution. The bulk refuse transfer station at Artarmon was in planning from 1972 and it reduced the Council's dependence on the tip. The tip was permanently closed on 28 January 1980.

During 1979 and the following years Council's consultant landscape architect, Harry Howard prepared preliminary layout plans and designs for the future development of the park, which included a range of sporting facilities, picnic areas, access roads and rehabilitation. Between 1979 and 1981 the sports fields were developed and gradually put into operation, with the first field open in 1979. Floodlighting was installed in 1981 when the last oval was completed.

The area was named Blackman Park for John Blackman, who served as a West Ward Alderman from 1949-1959 and was Mayor of Lane Cove in 1951-1952. John Harold Blackman was born in 1910 in Launceston, Tasmania. He was the third son of George Charles Albert Blackman and his wife Elizabeth. John's father, George was a veteran of both the Boer War and the First World War and at the time of his enlistment in August 1914 was employed as a horticulturist at the Launceston Cricket Grounds. He served as a Corporal with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Regiment in Gallipoli and Egypt before he returned to Australia in July 1915, dangerously ill with rheumatism.



**Mayor John Blackman and Mrs Jessie Blackman, at the official opening of Lane Cove West Public School, 17 March 1951** (Courtesy of Lane Cove Library/E. Kearney)

By the 1920s the family had moved to North Sydney and John Blackman commenced employment at age 16 with the North Sydney Gas Company as a clerk. He continued to work there progressing to accountant and senior management. In 1934 he married Jessie Lillian Donaldson at North Sydney. During the 1940s, John and Jessie settled in Yethonga Avenue in Lane Cove West and John was soon elected an alderman for the West Ward.

In retirement, John spent many hours researching and compiling the extended Blackman family genealogy. The Blackman family had arrived in Australia in 1801 and had been pioneer settlers in the Hawkesbury and Mudgee districts. John Blackman died in 1986, aged 75. In 1987 approximately 250 Blackman descendants held a family reunion at Blackman Park.



**Ventemans Reach, looking down on Blackman Park, July 1975. Photographer A.R. Ford**  
(Courtesy of Lane Cove Library/D. Ford)