

# Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number  
4671004

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **Kellys Bush Park**

Location: **Nelson Parade & Alfred Street, Hunters Hill**

Address: Nelson Parade & Alfred Street

Corner:

Suburb / Nearest Town: Hunters Hill 2110

State: NSW

Local Govt Area: Local Government Area:  
Hunters Hill

DUAP Region:  
Sydney North

Historic region:  
Sydney

Property Identifier: Lot 1, 2 & 3 DP 549711

Boundary:

Item Type: Landscape

Group: Parks, Gardens and T Category: Reserve

Owner: Local Government

Owner Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Foreshore Reserve

Former Uses: Bushland, Smelting Works

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

**Statement of Significance:** Kelly's Bush Park is significant because it was the site of the first "Green Bans" imposed by the Builders Labourers Federation in response to community protest against unwanted residential development encroaching on public space. It was thereby associated with an important phase in the history of the conservation movement in NSW and Australia.

**Historical Notes or Provenance:** At the time of European contact the Kelly's Bush area was inhabited by the Wal Umedegal Aboriginal Clan who spoke the Guringai language. They lived primarily on fish and shellfish, supplementing their diet when necessary with vegetables, marsupials, birds and grubs. They were also frequently observed firing the scrub both to facilitate access to the foreshore and to flush out game. Very little is known of their social structure and religious beliefs.

Kelly's Bush derives its name from Mr T. H. Kelly who owned over 19 acres of land on the foreshore of Hunter's Hill. This area was bounded by the Parramatta River, Woolwich Road, Nelson Parade and Alfred Street. He established the Smelting Company on two acres of waterfront land in 1892, with the adjoining seventeen acres of bush to the north designed to act as a buffer to the residential areas and zoned "open space". The Smelting Company allowed public access to the foreshore for recreation, through all areas except the actual works area. The condition of the surrounding bush fluctuated, depending on the amount of timber being used to fire the smelters.

Almost 7 acres of the "open space" became known as Weil Park when it was purchased in 1956 by Hunter's Hill Council and the Cumberland County Council. The bush was cleared and a grassed oval created for sporting activities. In 1966 the Town Clerk wrote to the State Planning Authority stating: "There is insufficient area in the land held and known as Weil Park and Council feels that it is important to the interest of posterity that additional "open space" area should be acquired whilst the opportunity exists".

In 1967 the Smelting Company works moved to Alexandria and AV Jennings took a two year option to purchase the 12 acre site. They applied to Council seeking suspension of the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme Ordinance to enable the development of 147 home

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units, including three buildings of 8 storeys high. Council was opposed to the Jennings application and renewed its bid for State acquisition of the entire area as open space, however the State Planning Authority rejected the proposal. Jennings subsequently submitted a series of modified applications. The Hunter's Hill Trust strongly condemned the Jennings development. The SPA then arranged to buy from Jennings 5.6 acres of sloping waterfront bush and abandoned industrial reserve for a "foreshore reserve". In 1969 the Council agreed in principle to a suspension of the existing zoning to permit the development of 56 townhouses. This was subsequently reduced to 25 single dwelling allotments.

A group of concerned citizens had formed by this stage and called themselves "The Battlers". They met with the (then) Premier Robert Askin, asking him to intervene. The Battlers also wrote to the various unions asking for their support and were referred to the Trades and Labour Council. Despite the protest, in 1971 the Minister for Local Government signed the notice rezoning the land from Reserved Open Space to Residential. The President of the BLF met with The Battlers and went to the BLF executive, who supported them in principle. The trade union support resulted in the first "Black Ban" called for by the BLF over an area of land. Black Bans would later become known as "Green Bans" for their active pursuit of the maintenance of green space. Six hundred people attended a rally in August 1971 to demonstrate their support for Kelly's Bush. With the Union Green Ban in force, Jennings were eventually forced to sell the land to Hunter's Hill Council, however, by a narrow margin the councillors voted to retain the Residential Zoning.

In 1977 the new Premier, Neville Wran, announced that no development would take place at Kelly's Bush. The discovery of radioactive waste on the site raised serious doubts as to its suitability for residential development. A period of silence followed and then in 1983 Neville Wran announced that Kelly's Bush was to be set aside for full public access on a permanent basis. His press release read: "It represents a victory for environmentalists generally. The land will be used to give people access to natural bushland fronting Parramatta River" (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

## National Themes:

**State Themes:** Aboriginal post-contact

Environment

Industry

Land tenure

Law and order

Leisure

## Study Themes:

**Designer:**

**Maker / Builder:**

**Year Started:**

**Year Completed:**

**Circa:** No

**Physical Description:** Kelly's Bush covers 4.8 hectares of bushland on the lower reaches of the Parramatta River in the Sydney Metropolitan Area. It is part of a network of near natural open spaces on the

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Sydney Harbour waterway system and is the only substantial area of natural bush on the lower Parramatta River. Kelly's Bush is the largest area of near natural bush on the Hunter's Hill peninsula. It is linked directly to Weil Park to the north, Nelson Parade and residential areas to the west, the Parramatta River to the south and residential areas and Woolwich Marina to the east. Kelly's Bush lies on the southerly aspect of the major ridge line of the Hunter's Hill Peninsula, which runs in an east-west direction. There are five major vegetation communities found in Kelly's Bush: eucalyptus (dominant), heath/closed shrub, closed rainforest, banksia/low closed forest and closed scrub/weed areas (NSW Heritage Office, State Heritage Inventory, 1999.).

**Physical Condition:** Intact in its 1983 conserved form (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Modification Dates:** Some improvements have been made, including carpark, paths, foreshore park, and viewing platform (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Recommended Management:** Continue Bush Management regime to ensure weed control (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Further Comments:** Long term management of the site might be more effective if the site were to be included in the linked group of harbour foreshore reserves currently managed by NPWS. Weed control is not being effectively managed under present management and the long term survival of the reserve is dependent on effective controls. Handover to NPWS, or another appropriate management body, should be considered in any long term management plans (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Historical Significance:** (a) Kelly's Bush park demonstrates land alienation and naming patterns that occurred following European occupation, being named after T. H. Kelly, who owned a substantial area of foreshore land on which he established a Smelting Company in 1892. As the majority of the land to the north of the smelting works was to remain open and act as a buffer between the industrial site and residential areas, the land became known as Kelly's Bush, according to the common practice of naming areas after substantial land holders or activities carried out there.

The fact that part of the area has been continuously used as a reserve, despite some subdivision and conflict over its zoning, represents continuity of land use for public access to the foreshores of Sydney Harbour, and the provision of open spaces among residential areas for recreation, which has been an important aspect in the development of suburban Sydney.

(b) The Kelly's Bush area was once occupied by the Wal Umedagal Aboriginal people and is significant for its association with original Aboriginal land ownership and occupation, although no known physical evidence of this occupation remains.

The site is associated with patterns of development in urban areas, characterised by the reduction of open spaces to increase housing density, particularly during the boom in high density residential accommodation which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. It is also associated with community activism and political protest generated by such developments and which played a major role in the environmental conservation movement begun in the 1970s.

Kelly's Bush Park is particularly significant as the site of the first Black Ban, by the BLF over

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an area of land and was thus a landmark site in the "Green Ban" movement which involved co-operation between local communities and, at that time, the highly unusual coalition of affluent middle class women from the North Shore and building labourers and union activists, to oppose unwanted development and actively pursue the maintenance of open space. The Green Ban on Kelly's Bush Park was significant as the first action in what was to become a major political movement in the 1970s and beyond, shaping conservation and development policy in NSW.

**Aesthetic Significance:** Kelly's Bush Park has aesthetic significance as part of the network of open spaces on the Sydney Harbour waterways system. It is the largest area of natural bush on both the lower Parramatta River and the Hunter's Hill Peninsula (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Social Significance:** The site is socially significant because of the value placed on it by the local and wider community as demonstrated by their struggle over the years to preserve the site as a reserve for public use (NSW Heritage Office, 1999.).

**Technical / Research:**

**Representativeness:**

**Rare Assessment:**

**Integrity / Intactness:** The park is substantially intact as an area of remnant bushland.

References:	Author:	Title:	Year:
	NSW Heritage Office	State Heritage Inventory	1999
	Paul Davies Pty Ltd	s.170 Register DUAP	1999
	Travis Partners	Kelly's Bush Landscape and Management Plan Final Report	1986

  

Studies:	Author:	Title:	Number:	Year:
	Travis Partners	Kelly's Bush Landscape and Management Plan Final Report		1986

  

Listings:	Name:	Title:	Number:	Date:
	Heritage Act - State Heritage Register		01391	2/04/99
	Heritage Act - s.170 NSW State agency heritage register			11/02/99

**Custom Field One:**

**Custom Field Two:** Rosemary Kerr of Sue Rosen & Associates, Heritage Assessment And History

**Custom Field Three:** 5/09/2000

**Custom Field Four:**

**Custom Field Five:**

**Custom Field Six:**

**Data Entry:** Date First Entered: 03/07/2001 Date Updated: 18/08/2001 Status: Completed

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