

Area 13 Iron Cove Conservation Area

Landform

A northwest facing shoreline area, running from Victoria Road along the back of the Darling Street commercial zone and the Darling Street ridge to Rowntree Street and Cove Street. There are some relatively steep shoreline areas providing views to the Parramatta River, and a central flat plateau area around Turner Street.



Figure 13.1 Iron Cove Conservation Area Map.

History

When sales of John Gilchrist's Balmain grant of 550 acres were resumed in 1852, Surveyor Charles Langley subdivided the remaining acres into 46 (later 47) sections. He used existing routes such as Darling Street and Birchgrove Road, and other contour-hugging tracks, such as Terry Street/Glassop Street to delineate the parcels. The sections were purchased over the next thirty years by wealthy investors, local speculators and builders.

A group of busy speculators, William Paling, FH Reuss, Alfred Hancock, John Booth, George Weston, Owen Evans and others bought up the tract of land that stretched along the waterfront from Cove Street to just beyond Bayville Street, and broadly bounded by Birchgrove Road and Glassop Street. These same speculators were also involved in land from Darling Street down to Rozelle Bay, including much of the very densely developed area now known as The Valley. The remainder of the area was bought up in a similar fashion and subdivision of the Iron Cove area stretched over twenty-four years from 1853 to 1877. By 1891 the streets that laced this precinct were largely built up. Some steep parcels of land, because of their deep water frontages, were taken up initially for small water-based industries, which expanded over the twentieth century.

A large area of Housing Commission flats was constructed near the waterfront in the early postwar years.

Sources

Information provided by Max Solling.

Significant Characteristics

- Contour hugging main access roads.
- Many irregular, narrow and wide minor roads.
- Stone steps providing public pedestrian access.
- Trees and street tree planting particularly noticeable along Glassop and Cove Streets and Macquarie Terrace.
- Elkington Park – mature trees, palm trees and Edwardian plantings.
- Irregular-shaped sections of subdivisions.
- Narrow allotments, with groups of allotments of uniform width.
- Buildings set back from the street alignment.
- Groups of shops along Darling Street with parapets and awnings.
- Corner shop buildings and other former commercial buildings.
- Garden space small, but a noticeable characteristic.
- Variety of housing:
 - terrace and semi-detached housing with groups of uniform development; and
 - some free-standing housing and Victorian villas.
- Landmarks: the Birchgrove Public School and the Elkington Park (with the Dawn Fraser Swimming Pool) are noticeable places within the area and visible from the harbour.
- Building materials vary:
 - plastered brick (generally pre-1890) and pockets of face brick (generally post-1890);
 - some timber cottages; and
 - occasional stone cottage or villa.
- Roofs of terracotta tiles, slate and iron.
- Fences – low or transparent fences: some iron palisade fences remain; early twentieth-century low brick fences contemporary with house.
- Sandstone kerbs and gutters, mostly uninterrupted by vehicular access.

Statement of Significance or Why the Area is Important

- One of a number of conservation areas that collectively illustrate the nature of Sydney's early suburbs and Leichhardt's suburban growth particularly between 1871 and 1891, with pockets of infill up to the end of the 1930s (ie prior to World War II). This area is important for

illustrating development particularly from 1870s-1910s, and this forms the major element of its identity, with later pockets of infill prior to World War II (ie pre-1939).

- Through the route of its main access roads, demonstrates the subdivision sections, closely related to the landform, drawn up by Surveyor Langley for the sale of Gilchrist's Balmain grant after 1852.
- Illustrates through its irregular small street layout, and varied allotment width and length (within a limited range), the many different groups of speculators and subdividers involved in the development of the area.
- Through the materials of its outer masonry walls, demonstrates the rapid advances in brick making in the Sydney area over the period 1870s-1910s.
- Through its now rare weatherboard buildings it continues to demonstrate the nature of that major construction material in the fabric of early Sydney suburbs.

Management of Heritage Values

Generally

This is a conservation area. Little change can be expected other than modest additions and discrete alterations. Buildings which do not contribute to the heritage significance of the area may be replaced with sympathetically designed infill.

Retain

- existing width and alignment of the streets: avoid chicanes which cut diagonally across the carriageways.
- All remaining sandstone kerbs and gutters, uninterrupted by access driveways.
- All pre-1939 buildings and structures, especially weatherboard buildings.
- All original plaster finishes to external walls (as a rough rule of thumb this will mostly apply to pre-1890s buildings). Reconstruct where necessary.
- All original unplastered face brick external walls (usually applies to post-1890s buildings).
- All original external architectural detail, and encourage replacement of lost elements, but only where evidence is available.
- Any remaining original iron palisade or low brick fences.
- All street planting schemes and park planting; reinstate individual trees where they have been lost.
- Green front garden space.

Avoid

- Demolition of any pre-1939 building, especially timber buildings.

- Removal of any plaster or decorative plaster to external walls, except where it is to remove more recent plaster/paint on face brick walls.
- Plastering and/or painting of original face brick walls.
- Removal of original architectural details.
- Second-storey additions to an original single-storey building, other than in a separated pavilion form.
- Alteration to the original roof form over the main part of any building.
- Additional architectural detail for which there is no evidence in the photographic record or on the building itself.
- Inappropriate fences such as high brick fences/walls, new iron palisades on high brick bases.
- Interruption of the kerb and gutter line for vehicular access.
- Development that encroaches upon the setting of important buildings/parks.