



Fact Sheet — History

Sydney Olympic Park's rich and colourful history, including the momentous Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has left a lasting legacy that can be witnessed in each pocket of this iconic location.

A rolling hill tells of a time where the site was a wasteland in need of remediation; bunkers now used as classrooms were once lined with armament, an expansive pit now a feature of the parklands echoes a past where men once undertook back-breaking work to fulfil Sydney's demand for bricks; and world-class venues were used to set records on a world-stage for the Olympic Games.

Aboriginal history

- Sydney Olympic Park is situated on the traditional lands of the Wann clan, known as the Wann-gal. The lands of the Wann-gal stretched along the southern shore of the Parramatta River between Cockle Bay (Cadi-gal land) and Rose Hill (Burrumatta-gal land).
- The estuarine ecosystems in the area provided the Aboriginal communities with food, clothing and other resources necessary to their lifestyle as well as a means of travelling throughout the region by water.
- Physical evidence of the usage of the Homebush Bay area by Aboriginal people has been found in the form of stone artefacts located nearby. Aboriginal shell middens (campsites where shellfish and other foods were consumed) were known to have lined Homebush Bay and the Parramatta River but were destroyed in the limekilns in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and subsequent alterations to the shoreline.

European Settlement

- When Europeans arrived in 1788, Homebush Bay consisted of extensive tidal wetlands and thick bush. The area was first known as 'The Flats', and was recorded by Captain John Hunter within 10 days of the arrival of the First Fleet. Although reports of the time commented on the Aboriginal people living in the area, there is little official history of the traditional owners of the land at Homebush Bay.
- In 1797, the first grant was issued for land at Homebush Bay. One of the earliest land owners was Samuel Haslam after whom Haslams Creek was named.
- By 1811, most of the land around Homebush Bay lay within two large estates: the Newington Estate to the north of Haslams Creek and the Home Bush Estate between Haslams and Powells Creek.

Newington Estate

- In 1807, John Blaxland, one of the first free settlers to arrive in Australia, acquired 520 hectares of land which he named Newington after his family estate in Kent.
- Blaxland brought an experienced salt maker with him from England, who laid out salt pans on the edge of the Parramatta River. By 1827, the Newington Estate was sending eight tons of salt to Sydney each week. The Blaxlands were associated with the estate until the 1860s. In that time a tweed mill and flour mill were established in addition to cattle grazing, logging and coal mining exploration.
- Newington House, the Blaxland family's home and the Chapel of St Augustine, the family's chapel, survive from this period. Built in 1832, Newington House still stands today within Silverwater Correctional Complex. The house is an excellent example of an early colonial, Regency-style villa.

Home Bush Estate and Racecourse

- D'arcy Wentworth, acquitted of highway robbery in England and sent to Botany Bay as an assistant surgeon, acquired 370 hectares of land between Powells Creek and Haslams Creek in 1810. He named the property Home Bush, and started Australia's first horse stud.
- D'arcy Wentworth died in 1827. In 1832, his son, William Charles Wentworth, was elected president of the Sydney Turf Club and in 1840 built a new racecourse on the Home Bush Estate adjacent to Parramatta River. With extensive training facilities, the course was the headquarters of Australian racing until 1859, when the Australian Jockey Club moved to Randwick.
- William is best known for crossing the Blue Mountains and the Bathurst Plains with William Lawson and Gregory Blaxland, brother of John Blaxland. Most of the estate remained with the Wentworth family until 1907.
- From 1879, parts of the Newington Estate were gradually purchased or resumed by the NSW Government for various uses including a gunpowder magazine. Newington House has served a variety of uses since the Blaxland era, including use as a boys' boarding school (Newington College), a Benevolent Asylum for Aged Women, a State Hospital and, since the late 1960s, an administration block within the Silverwater Correctional Complex.
- In March 1907, much of the land from the Home Bush Estate was resumed by the Department of Public Works for the establishment of the State Abattoir.
- Today, the Tennis Centre, Sports Centre and Hockey Centre stand on the former racecourse.

Newington Armament Depot

- In 1882, land to the east of Newington House was resumed for the establishment of a powder magazine. Operations started in 1897, with the magazine being manned by the NSW Military Forces. It was later taken over by the Australian Navy and became known as the Royal Australian Naval Armament Depot (RANAD) Newington.

- During World War II, the site underwent major expansion. Until the mid 1990s, the depot covered more than 250 hectares and featured 185 buildings, a wharf and a narrow gauge electric railway. Many of the buildings and facilities are historically significant.
- In early 1997, the armament depot became an armament transfer station and was consolidated to the north of the site to allow for the development of the Athletes Village.
- Today, this area is known as Newington Armory and Blaxland Riverside Park. Newington Armory is now heritage listed and has a Conservation Management Plan.

State Abattoir

- In 1907, the New South Wales Government established the State Abattoir on the Home Bush Estate. Situated on what was then the western edge of Sydney, the Homebush Abattoir was the major supplier of meat for domestic and overseas markets for many years. At its peak, the abattoir employed 1,600 people and had the capacity to slaughter more than 20,000 animals daily.
- In June 1988, the abattoir closed. Many of the old buildings have now been demolished to make way for new facilities. Constructed in 1920, the original Administration Building is a fine example of a Federation style commercial brick building which has been restored.
- The Olympic Stadium was built on the site of the former abattoir saleyards.

State Brickworks

- Early last century, increased building activity caused the price of building materials to rise. In order to control the price of bricks, the Government established the State Brickworks at the head of Homebush Bay in 1911. During the economic depression of the 1930s, the brickworks operated at a significant loss. In 1936, they were sold to private enterprise and closed in 1940.
- After World War II, the Government re-established the State Brickworks due to a shortage of bricks. Two large pits were created to provide the clay to make the bricks. The first pit was closed and filled in during the 1960s. Work in the second pit ceased with the closure of the brickworks in 1988.
- This pit is now an adopted home of the Green and Golden Bell Frog and a feature of the parklands.
- Today, this is the location of the award winning Brickpit Ring Walk.

Landfilling

- The environmental impact of wetland reclamation and landfilling has been significant. Over half of the existing land area, originally consisting of saltmarshes and wetlands, has been progressively reclaimed. The 1950s saw a huge push to create more waterfront industrial land. Dredging from the Parramatta River filled in large areas of mangrove forest.
- In the 1960s and 70s, Homebush Bay became the dumping site for much of Sydney's household and industrial waste.

1980s

- By the early 1980s Homebush Bay had become a large tract of neglected land, which was bypassed as Sydney sprawled westward. The area, now in the demographic heart of Sydney, was earmarked as a major urban renewal project, which began with the establishment of the Sports Centre, the Australia Centre and the opening of Bicentennial Park.
- Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games provided the impetus for one of the largest remediation projects ever undertaken in Australia. The restoration of this unique site and the construction of world-class facilities created a legacy of sporting and recreational infrastructure for the next century and beyond.

2000s

- Sydney proudly hosted the 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. These Games provided the world with some of the greatest sporting and entertainment events ever witnessed in the history of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Both Games were a great success and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games was declared as “the best Games ever” by IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch. The 2000 Games were known for the numerous Australian, Olympic, Paralympic and World records that were broken.
- Following the Games, the area became known as Sydney Olympic Park and an internationally admired example of sustainable urban renewal and development.
- In 2001, Sydney Olympic Park Authority was established as a statutory authority responsible for managing and developing 640 hectares of land that is Sydney Olympic Park.
- The Sydney Olympic Park Authority Act, requires the Authority to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that:
 - Sydney Olympic Park becomes an active and vibrant town centre within metropolitan Sydney;
 - Sydney Olympic Park becomes a premium destination for cultural, entertainment, recreation and sporting events;
 - any new development carried out in accordance with the Act complies with best practice environmental and town planning standards; and
 - the natural heritage of the Parklands is protected and enhanced.
- Sydney Olympic Park consisted of a town centre that included nine world-class sporting and entertainment venues, two hotels, commercial buildings for a growing business community and 430 hectares of parklands.
- In 2009, Sydney Olympic Park was officially designated as a suburb by the NSW Geographic Names Board and Master Plan 2030 was approved, guiding the future development of the Park

Today

- The Sydney Olympic Park Authority, as a legacy of the Games, has successfully integrated world-class venue and parklands to create a new community for workers, residents, students and visitors.
- Sydney Olympic Park has evolved into a vibrant specialist economic centre, with 220 organisations and approximately 17,000 employees. Commercial office development since the Games has included 11 office buildings adding over 120,000 square metres of gross floor area.
- Sydney Olympic Park will witness new property investment for commercial, retail, education, residential and venue-related development. Over \$1 billion of development projects have been approved since the Games at Sydney Olympic Park.
- Master Plan 2030 provides a blueprint for future urban development within the Park, providing for more than 31,500 jobs, 6,000 new dwellings constructed to house approximately 14,000 residents and 5,000 students while retaining major-event capability for up to 250,000 patrons and improving access to the 430 hectares of parklands.