

3

the peninsula

3. THE PENINSULA

3.1 BURSWOOD PENINSULA PAST

The history of Burswood Peninsula has been variously documented by historian and author Michael Nind (*Henry Camfield's 'Burswood' and What Became of It*, 1987), the Town of Victoria Park (Victoria Park Library Local History Online), and Dr Geoff Gallop (*Know Your Suburb* series). The following summary of key historic periods has been sourced from these works.

3.1.1 Aboriginal History

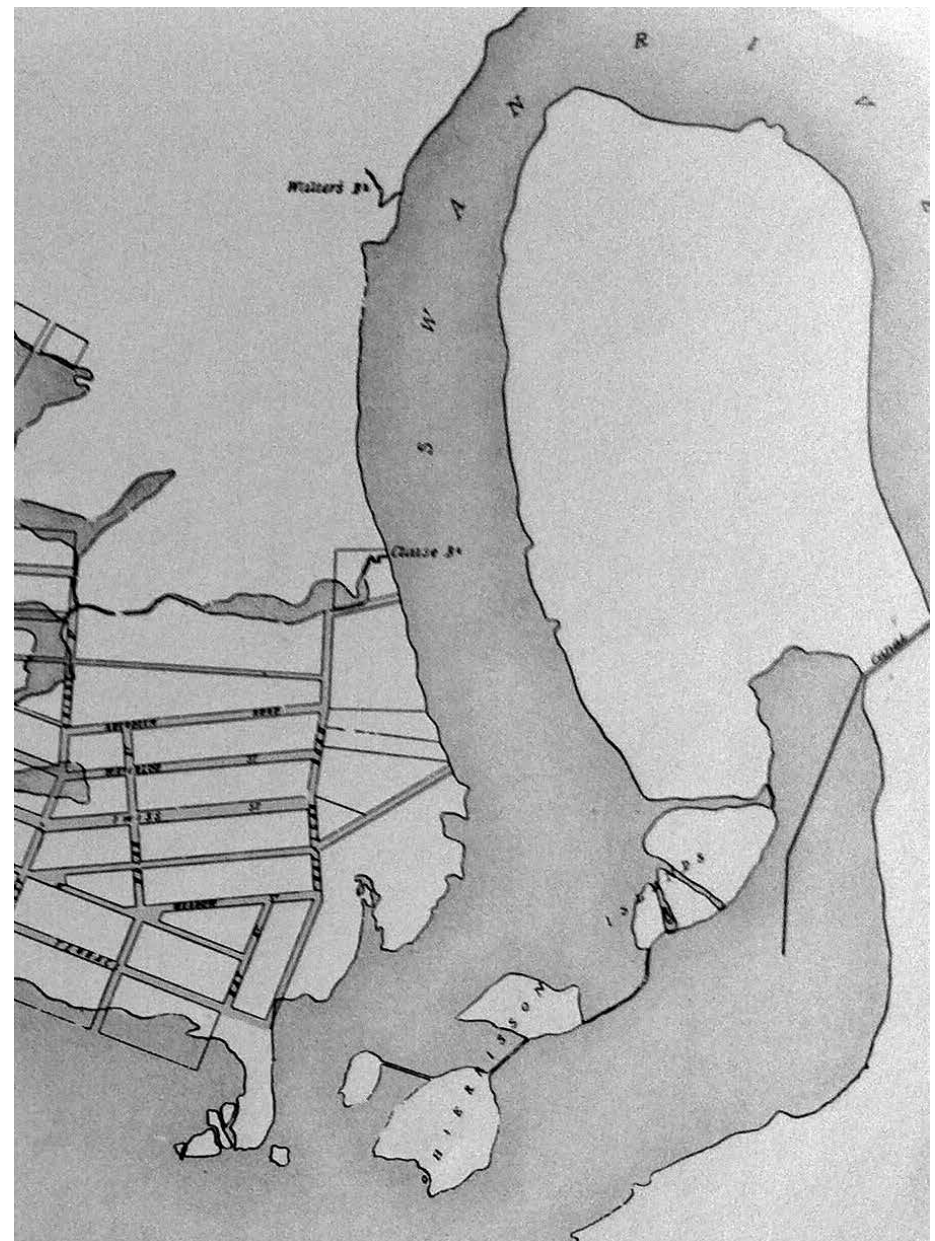
Burswood Peninsula forms part of what was known as Beeloo, an area bounded by the Canning River in the south, Melville Water in the west, the Swan River and Ellen Brook in the north and the Darling Range to the east. Records of Aboriginal activity in the area are limited, however, a name census taken by Francis Armstrong in 1837 recorded 32 individuals as part of the Beeloo tribe - 27 adults and five children. Munday was the acknowledged leader of the Beeloo in the early days of the Swan River colony. In nineteenth century reporting there is occasional reference to an aboriginal camp at the Victoria Park end of the Causeway, from which forays were made into the South Perth district. The first settler of Burswood, Henry Camfield, also makes reference to encounters with Aboriginal people on his property in the north eastern corner of Burswood.

A search of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal Heritage Register has identified five heritage sites within and immediately adjacent to the Burswood DSP area, including the Swan River which has particular significance in Aboriginal culture and mythology.

3.1.2 Swan River Colony

Among the early arrivals at the Swan River Colony in 1829 was 30 year old Henry Camfield from “Burrswood” Estate in Kent. Camfield was granted 1,000 acres of land opposite Claisebrook, which included the Burswood Peninsula and parts of contemporary Rivervale, Lathlain and Carlisle.

The Peninsula was described as being “low lying but its isthmus led back to a ridge and then up a large, steep sandy hill to scrubland beyond”. He named the area “Burrswood” after his father’s estate, however, by the 1840s it was being referred to as “Burswood”.



Source: Battye Library

Camfield attempted farming the land, but crops of cabbage, wheat, Indian corn, swede and potato all failed in the first three years of the colony. The Burswood Park Board has erected a bronze statue to the memory of Henry Camfield as part of its Heritage Trail. The plaque reads:

Henry Camfield was the first settler in this area, in 1829. He symbolises the struggle of the typical English Gentleman to survive the totally different environment experienced in the early days of the 'Swan River Colony'. He named the area "Burswood" after his family home in Kent, which he was never to see again. He endured great difficulties and when his first three crops failed he faced starvation. The pose of the sculpture in which Henry leans on his spade, wiping the sweat from his brow, was inspired by an excerpt from a letter home:

"We are told we shall get our subsistence by the sweat of our brow, but I never read we shall SWEAT, strive to get on honestly and STARVE ... how many have suffered out here; many more may, perhaps, myself among the number."

Prior to his death in 1872, Henry Camfield served as the Collector of Colonial Revenue in 1842, Postmaster General in 1845, and Resident Magistrate in Albany from 1848 to 1860.

3.1.3 Burswood Canal and Railway

At the time of the Swan River Colony, the river environment from the western edge of Burswood Peninsula to Point Fraser consisted of a series of small islands connected by extensive mudflats. These were the major obstacle to navigation of the Swan, even for flat bottomed boats which had to be manually dragged across the flats.

The northern extent of the Peninsula itself also added time to the journey. In 1831 a canal was constructed through the narrowest section of the Peninsula, significantly shortening the trip to Guildford. Michael Nind makes the following reference to the project:

"Tenders were called in February 1831 for the 275-yard cut. It was to be 12 feet wide and range in depth from five to eight feet. By April substantial progress had been made but in June the contractors, John Crane and Co, went on strike. Through their miscalculation of the distance of the cut they found themselves liable to cut an 'extra' bend. The Lieutenant-Governor refused their request for compensation and they returned to work, completing the project by August 1831".

The railway line was constructed through the area in the early 1890s with a station at Goodwood (now Belmont Park). Maps in the 1950s still included the Burswood Canal and showed Burswood as an island. The area became known as Burswood Island.

3.1.4 Golf and Racing

Records indicate that there were failed attempts to subdivide parts of Burswood Island in the early 1890s and develop it as a residential suburb. In the mid-1890s, however, the island became famous for two activities - golf and horse racing. In 1895 Western Australia's first golf course was opened on Burswood Island. When a race course was opened four years later, golfers had to pause to allow the horses to gallop past. In 1908 the course was relocated to South Perth to become the Royal Perth Golf Club. A second race course was later established between the first course and the canal. The Western Australian Turf Club bought both tracks in 1943, selling the second track to the State Government and retaining the first which later became Belmont Park.

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3.1.5 Sewage and Landfill

Between 1906 and 1912, 22 acres of Burswood were resumed to establish filtration beds for sewage siphoned from Claisebrook under the Swan River. After many years of complaint and argument about the pollution the beds were finally closed in 1934. Dr Gallop writes that *“The odium attached to Burswood from the sewerage system so offended the locals that they demanded a name change. ‘Riversdale’ had been used by developers offering land for sale in earlier years, but “Rivervale” was chosen to replace Burswood as the name for the railway station in 1921”*.

After the Second World War the area was used as a rubbish dump which took refuse from 1946. Domestic fill ceased in 1972 but other fill continued to be dumped until the early 1980s. Car bodies, building rubble, household garbage, cinders, clay, bitumen, curbing and used reinforced steel all found its way to Burswood. This began the long process of reclamation of the mudflats between Burswood and Point Fraser. To complement this, the banks of the Swan River were properly walled in from the western edge of Burswood Island to the new Causeway in the 1950s.

3.1.6 Industry

Light industry came to the area early in the twentieth century with the furniture trade and a brewery. The Redcastle Brewery was opened in 1912, specialising in heavy stout. In 1952 it was acquired by the Swan Brewery and had its name changed to the Stirling Brewery, but was eventually closed.

The main industry to occupy the Peninsula was Swan Portland Cement (originally the Western Australian Cement Company) which also opened in 1921. The primary raw material for manufacture of the cement was decayed shell dredged from the floor of the Swan River. Dr Gallop writes that *“from 1927 a familiar sight in Perth was that of large barges filled with oyster shell being towed along the Swan to the cement works”*. The 19.1 hectare site was eventually sold in the late 1990s and subsequently remediated for development of The Peninsula residential estate.

3.1.7 Burswood Resort and Parklands

In 1985 the State Government granted Western Australia’s only casino licence to Burswood Property Trust, a joint venture established by Perth entrepreneur Dallas Dempster and the Malaysia Genting Group. The State also entered into the Agreement Act, which was ratified by Parliament in March 1985 and provided for the development of the “Resort Complex”, including hotel, convention centre/theatre, restaurant, exhibition centre, recreation facilities and Burswood Casino. The Burswood Island Casino (as it was then known) was opened in December 1985, followed by the Burswood Dome in August 1987, the 417 room Burswood Island Hotel in October 1987, and the Burswood Convention Centre in November 1987. The land surrounding the resort was redeveloped into public parklands and an eighteen hole public golf course.

In 2003, Burswood entered into a deal with Mirvac Fini to develop a residential estate on the former Swan Portland Cement site, originally marketed as Burswood Lakes Estate and subsequently rebadged *The Peninsula*. In 2004, Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL) acquired full control of the Burswood International Resort Casino and in 2005 rebranded the site “Burswood Entertainment Complex”. In August 2005, a second hotel, the 4 star 290 room Holiday Inn Burswood was opened on the site to complement the 5 star Burswood Intercontinental Hotel. In 2012, the site was again rebranded as Crown Perth.

3.1.8 Graham Farmer Freeway

The Graham Farmer Freeway was constructed between 1996 and 2000, connecting Orrong Road to the Mitchell Freeway via the Windan Bridge and Northbridge Tunnel. The long planned Freeway bisects the Peninsula and provides a secondary southern crossing of the Swan River to and through the city, significantly reducing traffic pressure on the Causeway.

*Burswood Peninsula circa 1985 »
Source: Battye Library*



Old Bunbury Railway Bridge

Belmont Racecourse

Burswood Golf Course under construction

Burswood Hotel and Casino under construction

Swan Portland Cement

Great Eastern Highway

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3.2 BURSOOD PENINSULA PRESENT

Since the 1980s, Burswood Peninsula has developed a character defined primarily by entertainment, recreation and sporting activities. Crown Perth, the former public golf course, the State Tennis Centre, Belmont Park Racecourse, and the Burswood public parklands have contributed to this character and identifiable sense of place.

With the introduction of the new Perth Stadium and expansion of Crown Perth, this character and sense of place will be further reinforced. However, residential developments like the Peninsula and The Springs, and proposed transit-oriented development at Belmont Park and Burswood Station will enhance the existing character of the area by providing a more diverse range of opportunities, activities and experiences for locals and visitors.

The aerial photograph on the opposite page illustrates the extent of change currently planned or underway at Burswood Peninsula.



Burswood Peninsula present »
Source: Western Australian Planning Commission



Belmont Park Racecourse - planned for major redevelopment

The Peninsula residential estate - substantially complete

Burswood Dome - Demolished 2013

Crown Perth - major expansion underway

Former Burswood Golf Course - under redevelopment for new Perth Stadium

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3.3 BURSWOOD PENINSULA FUTURE

Burswood Peninsula will become an increasingly important destination for sporting, entertainment and recreation activity. It will complement central Perth and Kings Park as one of the most popular attractions for national and international visitors to the State. Millions of people a year will be drawn to the area to experience a range of sporting events and performances at the new Perth Stadium, together with the enhanced tourism and entertainment offerings at Crown Perth.

The landuse character of the Peninsula will become more diverse with the introduction of two new mixed use centres at Belmont Park and Burswood Station. These centres will offer a range of new housing, shopping, entertainment and employment opportunities, and will complement the existing and emerging residential neighbourhoods at The Peninsula and The Springs.

The landscape and riverine character of the Peninsula will be retained and enhanced by extending the existing public foreshore reserve around the entire Peninsula, creating additional parklands and publicly accessible sporting grounds, and extending the existing network of pedestrian pathways and cycleways throughout the expanded parkland setting.

These initiatives will transform the Peninsula and make the area more accessible and useable for locals and visitors. Key developments such as the new Perth Stadium, Crown Towers hotel and Belmont Park redevelopment are being planned and implemented now, while other parts of the Peninsula will be planned and developed over the longer term.

The long term vision for Burswood Peninsula is conceptually illustrated on the opposite page.

*Burswood Peninsula future »
Source: Western Australian Planning Commission*



New pedestrian bridge



Belmont Park - residential, sporting and commercial

The Springs - residential and commercial

The Peninsula - residential

Burswood Station West - residential and commercial

New Perth Stadium - sporting and entertainment

Burswood Station East residential and commercial

Crown Perth - tourism, hospitality and gaming

