

Not more than a few hundred metres east of Batemans Bay CBD on Beach Road is a smallish tract of land frequented by locals and visitors as a rest stop with a pleasant outlook over the river,

It carries the name Albert Ryan Park. But who was Albert Ryan?

The Ryans have a rich history in Batemans Bay with many descendants still residing here today.

Albert's father, Michel, was one of an extended family of Ryans who settled at East Lynne and Cullendulla in the mid 1800s.

The Ryans were timber cutters, saw millers and farmers. Hard work and an independent attitude are characteristics shared by all the Ryans.

Michael Ryan was a resident of Cullendulla and established a sawmill at what is now Longbeach. Later he joined cousin George at East Lynne and operated his second sawmill until it burnt down 15 years later.

Sons Albert and Harry preferred to live and work in Batemans Bay.

Albert Ryan worked on the Clyde River as an oyster farmer, eventually selling his leases to Kevin Connell whose family still work the leases today.

Albert Ryan purchased a block of land fronting Pacific Street, extending further up the hill to what is now High Street. The area was then commonly known as 'Snob Hill'.

Albert set to work constructing a grand accommodation and guesthouse he called 'Ocean View House'. His choice of hardwoods is vindicated by the continuing quality of the timber today. Albert employed workmen that had recent experience with the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

During the second World War, Ocean View House was used by the RAAF as a watchtower and accommodation for air force personnel. The Ryans were to remain in the house for 37 years.

Ocean View House was sold to Merv and Robyn Innes in 1967.

Albert Ryan himself served on Council in the 1950's and passed away in 1970 at the age of 82. He left Albert Ryan Park for the use and enjoyment of the people of Batemans Bay.

Council claims that this park is underused. Not so, according to the locals. I myself often stop off there and have lunch. Last week I observed a number of tourists with caravans, campers and motorhomes frequenting this park, as do Council workers themselves as well as many locals as they walk to and from town.

The overwhelming majority of the residents in Batemans Bay do not want to lose Albert Ryan Park and wish it to remain as is. This is evidenced by the large groundswell of support that has made itself known by way of submissions to Council as well as hundreds of signatories to a circulating petition throughout the Shire. Councillors have stated publicly that they will 'listen to what the community wants'. I believe they have spoken.

A simple online title search of Lot 10 DP 236342 reveals Council does not own Lot 10 and is in fact in the ownership of the Department of Main Roads or RMS as it is now known. I am informed by the RMS that council cannot deal with this land whilst it does not belong to them. I am also told by the RMS that a spokesperson from Council told them that this matter would probably not proceed as council had already received a large volume of submissions opposing the proposed rezoning/reclassification.

According to Tom Slookee, Aboriginal Elder and former councillor, the area known as Albert Ryan Park is a traditional camping and resting place for the Walbunga Aboriginal community although this is not registered.