

## CANONBURY DARLING POINT

The northern tip of Yarranabbe Point has a long history of European occupation. The north eastern portion of the point was originally granted to James Holt in 1833, he in turn selling it to the Colonial Secretary, C.D. Riddle in 1834. Riddle then embarked on the construction of his fine mansion *Lindesay* and the establishment of its extensive gardens.

By 1834 part of the *Lindesay* estate had been subdivided and three allotments of this subdivision were later combined to form the site of *Canonbury*.

In 1846 this land became the property of Mrs Brackenbergh who erected a small cottage, later named *Lansdowne*, on the site. Sold again in 1850 to Mr Arthur Dight for £8000, the house was extended and an upper floor added.

Between 1850 and 1904 *Lansdowne* was tenanted by many people, however in 1904 the house and grounds were sold to Harry Rickards, a successful vaudeville actor and producer, for £5000. Rickards proceeded to demolish the majority of *Lansdowne* to enable him to build a new home, *Canonbury*, which he probably named after the London suburb where he was born. *Canonbury* was a large, gothic style brick and cement render home with slate roof and from all accounts, it dominated the tip of Darling Point.

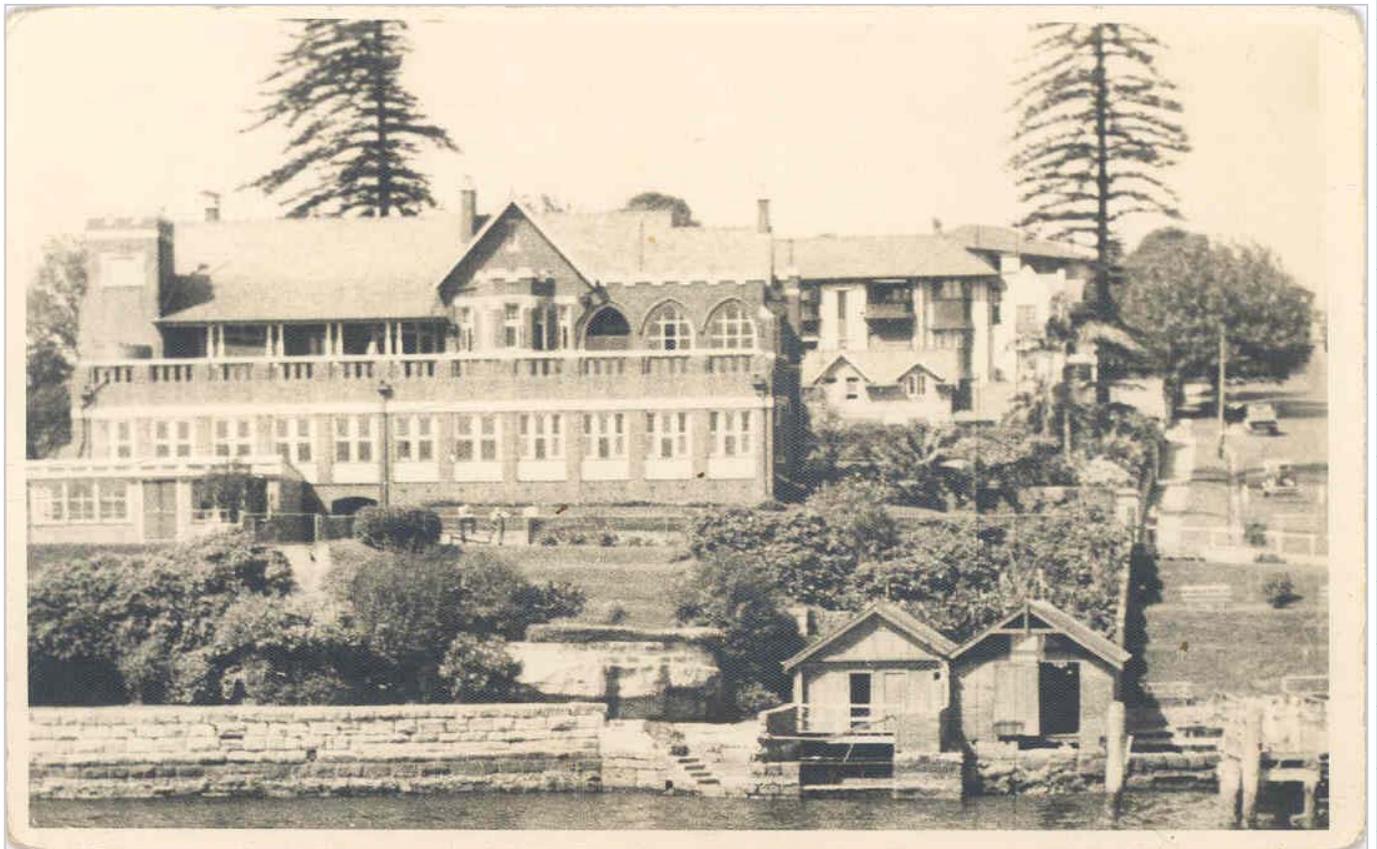
Rickards lived at *Canonbury* with his wife and daughter until his death in 1911. The house remained in private hands until 1919 when it was sold to the Australian Jockey Club who used it as a convalescent hospital for returned servicemen. It then passed to the NSW State Government and was used as an annex to the Crown Street Women's Hospital.

By the late 1970s the building was becoming surplus to the Hospital's requirements and the decision was made to sell the site for redevelopment. This plan was bitterly opposed by both the National Trust and the general public.

After much debate the NSW State Government transferred the site to Woollahra Municipal Council in 1983 for use as a public park. This sealed the fate of *Canonbury*, and work began almost immediately to demolish Rickard's house, by now much altered with unsympathetic additions made during its period of public service.

On 17 February, 1985 the area, now known as *McKell Park*, was officially opened as such by the Hon. L. J. Brereton, the Minister for Public Works. However, not all of *Canonbury* and *Lansdowne* were lost, as incorporated into the park design were the remains of part of the foundations of the two houses. At the opening ceremony the then Mayor of Woollahra, Alderman J. M. MacCallum unveiled a plaque to dedicate the park, and invited residents to take time to wander through the area, stating *"I believe it will soon be accepted as one of the most magnificent harbour locations in Sydney"*.

The creation of the park had not been without controversy. Disagreements arose regarding, amongst other matters, the naming of the site, with representations being made for the retention of *Canonbury*. However the choice of *McKell* prevailed, thereby honouring Sir William McKell, a former Premier of NSW and Governor-General.



*Canonbury from the Harbour c1920*

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