

CLOVELLY WATSONS BAY



Clovelly c1870

Robertson Park in Watsons Bay was the site of the house *Clovelly*, a property which could probably boast one of the proudest histories of occupation in the area.

The original house on the site was a six room dwelling built by Thomas Watson on land he was granted in 1834. By 1838 it had been leased to Hannibal Hawkins MacArthur, a nephew of John MacArthur, and his wife Anna Maria, the daughter of Governor King. By 1840 the MacArthurs had purchased the home and had named it *Clovelly* after the coastal village in Devon from which their family had originated.

Financial difficulties during the 1840s forced MacArthur to sell *Clovelly* in 1848 to Henry Watson Parker for £450. This, however, did not sever *Clovelly's* ties to the MacArthur family, as Parker was married to John MacArthur's daughter Emily.

During his time at *Clovelly* Parker greatly altered the dwelling, resulting in a house which included five bedrooms, two dressing rooms, drawing room, dining room and library.

The link between *Clovelly* and the MacArthur family was strengthened during this period, as it was here that Elizabeth MacArthur chose to spend her final summers from 1847 until her death, at the house in 1850.

The Parkers owned *Clovelly* until 1860 when it was sold to James Flood.

In 1878 the house once again became the home of a prominent person. It was in this year that Sir John Robertson, five times Premier of New South Wales, purchased the home.

Robertson lived in *Clovelly* until his death in 1891 and during that period became closely associated with the daily life of Watsons Bay.

After his death *Clovelly* remained unoccupied and in 1902 the Vaucluse Council declared it unfit for human occupation. In 1903 the house was demolished.

Discussion had been held since 1898 on the future of Robertson's estate, a public park being the most popular suggestion, however it was not until 1906 that the land was resumed by the Council for this purpose. Originally known as Clovelly Park, the decision was taken in 1909 to rename it Robertson Park after Sir John Robertson.



Robertson Park today

From *Maps and Mansions* by David Stanley
Local History Centre
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