

Taronga Subdivision

Pauline Cope and Myra Macey

The timeless sound of children at play rings out around Taronga Road where in the middle of last century the Brown's River Probation Station for convicts was situated. Handmade bricks lie scattered beneath the surface and the turf-covered outlines of building foundations can still be discerned. The land on which number 19 is built has sandstone foundations of at least two buildings. The one in front is a trim, flat area; the one behind had a solid timber hut built on it early this century and served as a storage shed for the "Acton" farm when the valley on the lower side of Taronga Road was used as pastoral land.

Mr Laurie Munyard, a Hobart resident, recalls his childhood days living at "Acton", where his family operated a dairy farm in the 1920s. With other children of his time he played cricket in the area and fished from the flat rocks on the shore. "Acton" appears to be the only house to survive. Building material from the old Station was gradually removed and used elsewhere. On what is now number 16, a house has existed for many years and Mr Munyard recalls it as the only other house in Taronga prior to 1950. The McGuinness family were the owners then.

The road was first described in 1919 in a Buckingham survey diagram as "Road to old convict station"¹. However, by whom or when it was changed to Taronga Road, which is a New South Wales aboriginal word meaning "beautiful view"², is not known.

Municipal records go back only to 1970, but the modern subdivision took place around 1950 when George Debnam bought 27 acres that would include number 16 to the end of the road. Mr Munyard recalls Mr Debnam living in the old farm hut behind number 19 when he first moved there and began building houses on the subdivision. The hut on number 19 served as his first home and it was burnt down in the bushfires of 1967. The present number 27 was the first house to be built, with at least five or six more following in the next two or three years. The Debnam family lived in some and sold others. The only continuous living links with this era in the road are the Nibbs and King families, still residing at numbers 26 and 39 respectively.

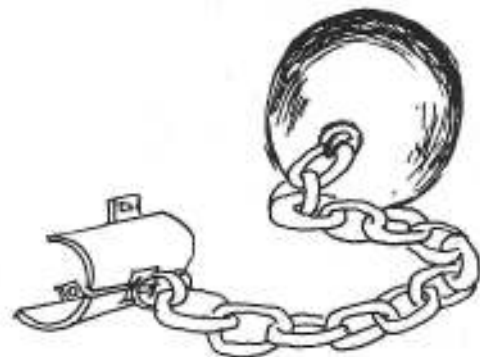
Trevor and Beryl Nibbs moved to number 26 in 1952. Their Dodge car had to be parked on the Channel Highway as access to Taronga was through a gate and down a rough, sometimes muddy, track. William and Valerie King moved in soon after the Nibbs. Gradually over the next few years houses were added within the 27 acres, till by 1964 there were sixteen. Water was by catchment tanks or purchased in dry seasons. There were no services at first, but gradually water, electricity and telephone have been supplied, but not yet sewerage. In 1967 bushfires came through, destroying one house, number 31 and the remains of old buildings, such as the old farm hut and of course much of the natural bush surroundings.

By 1974 there were twenty houses on the subdivision and during the 1980s the remaining few blocks along the road have been built on. More recent development of the valley below "Acton" has produced the newest three houses on the lower side of the road. These recent additions led to a renumbering of the properties and these new numbers are used in this article.

Taronga has managed to retain its quiet rural bush setting, while now being only fifteen minutes' drive from the city. It is surrounded by reserve land and enjoys one of the finest views of the estuary.

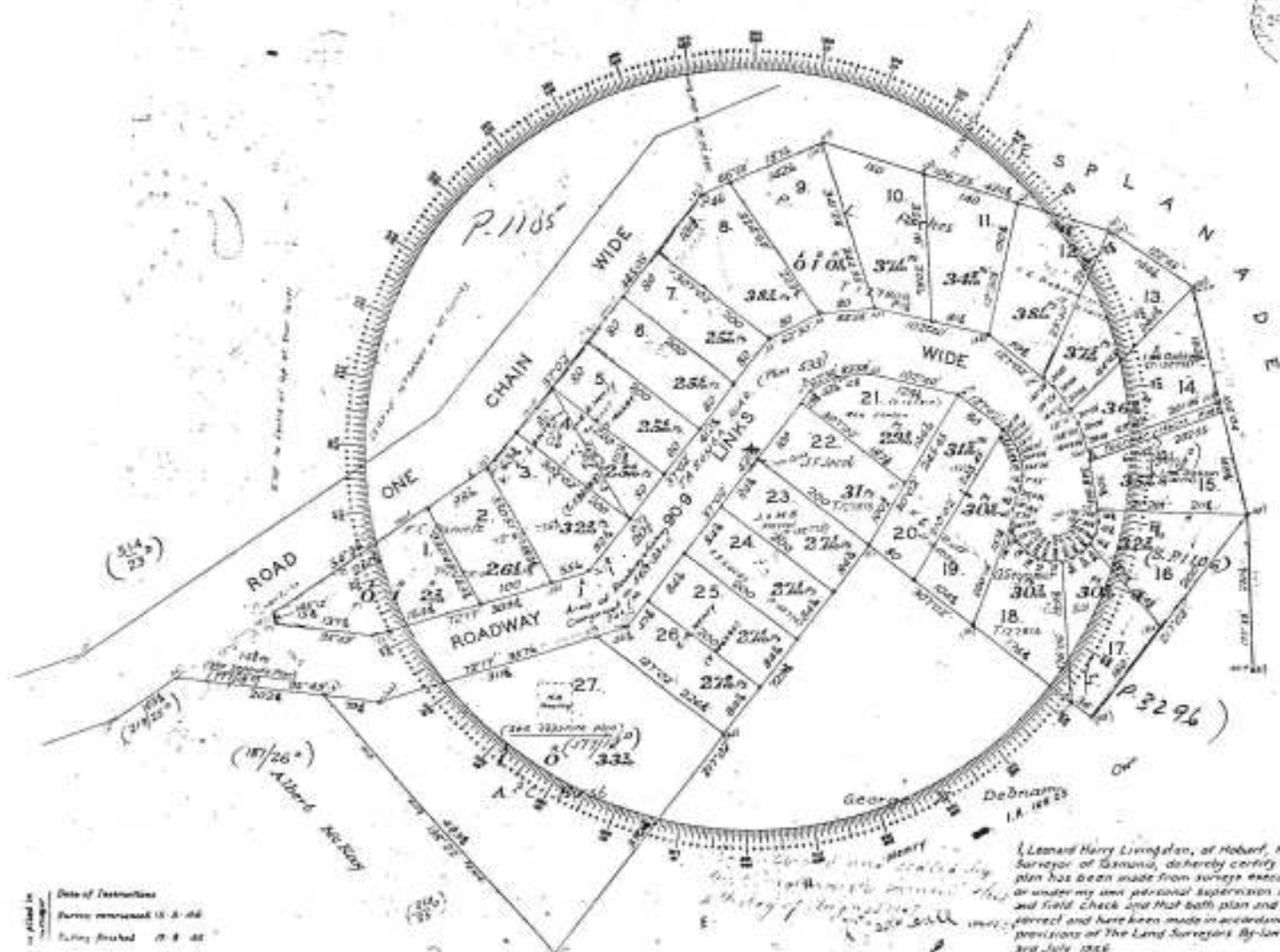
References

1. L.S.D. 115/20 Survey Diagram, A.O.T.
2. Tasmanian Government Gazette, 26.9.1962.



TARONGA SUBDIVISION

Part of 1000 Gt in Thos Matheson



Date of Testimony
 Survey commenced 15. 3. 1914
 Survey finished 17. 8. 1914

Leonard Harry Livingston, of Hobart, Registered Surveyor of Tasmania, do hereby certify that this plan has been made from surveys executed by me or under my own personal supervision inspection and field check and that both plan and survey are correct and have been made in accordance with the provisions of the Land Surveyors Act No 2 dated 3rd July 1914.

Sub-divisional plan of Taronga Road.

Subdivisions



Taronga Subdivision from the air, 1962.

PHOTO VERN REID