



The Cammeraygal People: The Cammeraygal people of the Guringai nation lived in the Willoughby area until the 1820s and are recorded as being in the northern parts of the Sydney region for approximately 5,800 years. By 1830 there were no Aboriginal people following a traditional lifestyle in the area.

Geography: Castle Cove is a suburb on the lower North Shore of Sydney, in the state of New South Wales, Australia 11 kilometres north of the Sydney central business district, in the local government area of the City of Willoughby. Castle Cove is situated on the western side of Middle Harbour and all three peninsulas rugged, rocky yet heavily timbered terrain and relatively inaccessible until the early 20th century.

Demographics: According to the 2011 Census, there were 2,523 residents in Castle Cove. 59.4% of people were born in Australia. The most common other countries of birth were China 5.4%, England 4.7%, Hong Kong 3.7%, South Africa 1.9% and Italy 1.2%. In Castle Cove 68.0% of people only spoke English at home. Other languages spoken at home included Cantonese 9.2%, Mandarin 3.5%, Armenian 3.1%, Japanese 1.8% and Italian 1.2%

Name: Originally Castle Cove was referred to as "Middle Harbour" as well as "Little Sugar Loaf Peninsula", the land in this area remained largely undeveloped until the 1950s. Walter Burley Griffin named the area Castlecove (one word) in 1920 due to the prominence of Innisfallen Castle it was only due to a ballot in 1995 when the name Castlecove received a resounding 144 votes. It is named after the estate of Hon. Henry Hastings Willis, a prominent member of the Parliament of New South Wales at the time and his wife Annie Louisa and their family. Innisfallen Castle was his Gothic style house built over 18 months from 1903-1905 using sandstone quarried on the estate. Situated on the ridge of Castle Cove, the building overlooks Sugarloaf Bay and the area became Castle Cove (two words) in 1987 when named as such by the Geographical Names Board. The house was not connected to the town water supply or electricity grid until 1967.

Early times: Governor Phillip explored the area in 1788, but the rugged terrain did not attract him. The area was inhabited until 1820 by the Cammeraygal people, an Aboriginal family group.

Pioneers: The first grant purchase was in 1858, by Dr. H.G. Alleyne. By 1878 almost all the land on the peninsula had been sold except Yeoland Point Reserve. In 1886 most of the area had been resold to Andrew Armstrong who formed the Cammeray Estate Land Company with a view to developing the area, but with the depression of the 1890s the Company went into liquidation in 1893.

Willis Family: The first permanent residents of Castle Cove were the Willis family who acquired 52 acres from a default mortgagee Dr Haynes Gibbes Alleyne in 1858. He was a prestigious medical practitioner, honorary physician to the Sydney Infirmary in 1855-73 and honorary consulting physician in 1875-82. He was a member of the Medical Board in 1854-82 and its president in 1877-82, served on the Immigration Board in 1852-82 and as its chairman in 1879-80, and was president of the Pharmacy Board in 1877-81.

In 1903/4 Willis built "Innisfallen Castle" a grand, castle-like house. Innisfallen is Irish for "Isle of the fields." The family engaged in some light farming in the early years and lived under relatively primitive conditions until the 1960s. It was not until 1967 that the house was connected to town water and electricity. Henry Willis (1860-1950) was the Member for Robertson in Australia's first three Parliaments (1901-1910). One of his sons Dr Henry Willis was an Alderman on Willoughby Council from 1938-53 and Mayor in 1943 and 1944. In the 1960s the Willis land, with the exception of the house, was sold to Headlands Developments. Dr. Willis died in 1973. The property has NSW State Heritage status.



Development from the 1950s to the 1970s: The Greater Sydney Development Association (Walter Burley Griffin's company) which had owned most of Castlecrag, Middle Harbour and Castle Cove, had not developed the Castle Cove area. In 1958 the Hooker Corporation bought a controlling interest in the Company. From 1956 to the 1970s Headland Developments and Hooker-Rex Estates developed Castle Cove. Water and sewerage were installed by the developers.

Parks and Reserves: Parks and reserves in Castle Cove include H.D. Robb Reserve and Explosives Reserve the last of which was originally established as a buffer zone for the explosives magazines at Bantry Bay, this 31.4 ha reserve features some of Sydney's most untouched bushland areas. H.C. Press Park commemorates Henry Christian Press who purchased land on Middle Harbour in 1909 with the intention of building a house and farm but his wife, Annie was very reluctant to give up her city residence in Darlinghurst. Press operated boat sheds around Sydney harbour and the Sutherland Shire and he began his Castle Cove operations around 1912 with three sheds, picnic grounds and tables with bench seating. This later expanded in 1939 to include a wharf, swimming pool and dressing sheds which Press called the Palmer Pleasure Gardens.

Willis Park is named after Dr Henry Hastings Willis the owner of Innisfallen Castle.

Castle Cove Park was created by dedication and by purchase when Council approved the Deepwater No 6 Subdivision in 1953. The park pavilion is named after Laurence Frederick McGinty MBE (1921-91), local resident activist, Middle Harbour Ward Alderman 1957-68, Mayor 1960-67 and Member of Parliament for Willoughby 1968-78.

Headland Lookout is named after the roadway that encircles the north-west promontory of the Castle Cove headland. The reserve was acquired in 1961 and 1968 from Headland Developments Pty Ltd. when the land was subdivided into large housing blocks. Denawen Park is named after the aboriginal word meaning 'to barter'. As the main land developer of Castle Cove, the Hooker Corporation elected to highlight the Aboriginal inhabitation of the Lower North Shore by choosing Aboriginal names for the new street names in each new housing subdivision in Castle Cove. The land was given to Council in 1979 after many years as a playground associated with the former baby health centre.

Schools: Castle Cove Public School, Kendall Road, opened in 1952 as Roseville East Infants School with 75 students and 300 by 1956. It was renamed Roseville East Public School in 1953 and became Castle Cove Public School in 1957. A new school hall was built in 1999 and new library in 2006.

Churches: The Catholic church of St Paul the Apostle was opened in Deepwater Road in 1953. Castle Cove Anglican Church began in 2009.

Library: Watermark Castle Cove is the first facility of its kind to have a Community Library on the premises. Residents are privileged to have a brand new Library operated by Willoughby Council. The Library stocks in excess of 6,000 items with collections including fiction, non-fiction and AV material

Castle Cove Country Club: This golf course was designed and promoted by Walter Burley Griffin in 1924 as a centrepiece of the Castlecove Estate. While the development of the Castlecrag Estate remained the priority, Griffin began drawing up plans for the golf course in 1928 and work commenced in 1930. By this time the Depression had severely impacted on the finances and prospects of the GSDA, but development of the nine-hole course continued. It opened on 12 April 1932. Griffin designed the small 'shelter shed' in 1931 which featured a shallow reinforced concrete domed roof and distinctive French doors. The clubhouse was subsequently enlarged, but the building was destroyed by fire in 1957. A new clubhouse was opened in 1965 by Laurie McGinty, Mayor of Willoughby.

Further reading:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CASTLE COVE & MIDDLE COVE by Esther Leslie 994.411 WIL

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