

The history of Mount Druitt

Entry for Mayoral History prize, 2018

If ever a suburb had ideas above its geographical station it must be Mt Druitt. In the middle of the western suburbs plain, there's no mountain, hill or barely a hump. Yet that's not to say the suburb isn't one of the high points of Blacktown.

The formation of Mount Druitt

To begin, Governor Macquarie granted Major George Druitt 2,000 acres in the area. He named his grant, where he died in 1842, Mount Druitt. The suburb began to form on 19 August 1881 where Rail services to Mount Druitt commenced. Between 1885 and 1918, the railway station operated as the post office. The station had two platforms and a level crossing at the western end and included small goods yard, servicing a small mill. A railway gatekeeper's lodge was built circa 1867, and was later converted to the stationmaster's cottage. It was later sold and converted to commercial use.

Electric train services to Mount Druitt commenced in 1955, at a service presided by Premier of New South Wales, Joseph Cahill. In 1975, the railway station was relocated approximately 500 meters east to service a new shopping center that was locally known as "The Great Western" and is now owned by Westfield. The old railway station was demolished almost immediately, although the level crossing remained until a road bridge carrying Carlisle Avenue over the railway line was completed. A footbridge was also built for pedestrians.



Mount Druitt Railway Station - image accessed on dailytelegraph.com.au

Queen Elizabeth II opened Mount Druitt Hospital in 1982. The 200-bed hospital was opened following significant fundraising and political agitation from the local community due to perception that the community was unable to access medical services at either Blacktown or Nepean Hospitals.



Image of Mount Druitt Hospital, first opened in 1982 by Queen Elizabeth II

In 2006, the state member Richard Amery announced extensions totaling 10 beds spread throughout various units within the hospital. This included aged care rehabilitation and emergency care.

In 2012, the NSW Government announced the Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital Expansion Project, stage 1. At Mount Druitt Hospital, projects included an expanded Dental Unit with 8 additional dental chairs, a new Urgent Care Centre, main entry refurbishment, new ambulance bay, sterilising facility upgrade and expanded rehabilitation facilities. The Stage 1 Expansion projects were completed in 2014.

In 2017, stage 2 expansion delivered a new facility for addiction medicine, expanded surgical facilities and more imaging. A new community dialysis center is due to open later in 2017.

On 14 March 2018, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian officially opened the new Community Dialysis Centre at Mount Druitt Hospital, marking the completion of the stage 2 hospital expansion which included a new Centre for Addiction Medicine, Pre-Admissions Clinic, expanded Recovery Unit for operating theatres, and a digital theatre.

The new Community Dialysis Centre has 12 treatment spaces for dialysis and was co-designed with patients, carers and staff to provide dialysis treatment closer to home in response to increasing demand for services.

Architects Jacobs designed the expansion projects.

Major George Druitt

Once the home of Major George Druitt, he was granted 100 acres from the government's Rooty Hill domain. He was colonial civil engineer, looking after improving the roads and other important government building projects. After building a grand home, Druitt died in 1842 and the house burned down in 1849. However, even after any decades, people could still see the original footings of the home and land.

While you can no longer enjoy hospitality at his house, the Village Hotel is now there to oblige. Built just behind where the house once stood, the Village Hotel underwent a major refurbishment in 2008 and turned from a slightly seedy pub into a family friendly hotel and restaurant that still honors him to this day.

Moreover, Mount Druitt Hall also plays a significant role in the history of Mount Druitt. The hall once played the role of a cinema and was built in 1925. The hall's building progress was supported by the local community and raised donations for its building process. According to the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, "it is a significant architecturally ornate building, built by the Advancement Club for community use." After WW2, the hall became a local community sensation after Dick Simpson transformed the hall as a picture theatre. However, it was also a key meeting place for Aboriginal communities resettled in Blacktown during the 1960's and 70's. During its time of creation, the land was a farming community; different to the suburban area it is today. Powell "as an ornate single story structure with neoclassical motifs describes the building. It includes decorative features and Corinthian pilasters, a balustrade parapet and pediment over the windows, with ceremonial doors to the street frontage.

An old member of the Mount Druitt community, Mary-Anne Farrugia, once attended the theatre back in the day. She states, "I remember waiting in line during the 50's to watch GREASE. I was with my family at the time." She also states that "Before an age of Internet downloads and digital devices, the cinema was a major magnet for not only Mount Druitt, but the suburbs around it." Luckily, the hall still stands today, upholding all its memories.



Mount Druitt Hall - image accessed on [dailytelegraph.com.au](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au)



Mount Druitt Theatre - images accessed on dailytelegraph.com.au

Amid the year 1925, Druitt (the first founder) was one of the first pioneers and leaders of the early network. The Druitt estate began in 1821 with the giving of 1000 areas of land to Druitt. An estate was worked in 1822. The main portals remained set up until the point in 1872 when they disintegrated. The site is separate by a plaque posting the names of neighborhood individuals who served in WW1 inside the hall.

Significant changes

Throughout the 70's, Mount Druitt went through a drastic amount of change. For example, in 1973 "Old Mount Druitt" shops had a brand new change - The Great Western. As the new center of attention, the big bold shopping center shifted the focus of the suburb. Moreover, the level crossing closed, and a larger and shinier new train station opened next to the center. What is now known as Westfield Mount Druitt, was once known as 'Mount Druitt Market town' and 'The Great Western'.

Education

Mount Druitt High School was established in the 1960s. The school later became known as Chifley College Mount Druitt Campus, educating years 7-10 and is located in Dharruk.



The start of the wheelbarrow race, which started on the Great Western Highway and traveled along Mt Druitt Rd. This picture is from the 1935 race. The race traveled down to Mt Druitt train station. From left, Fred Watkins, and Norm Spargo pushing Dick Wallace. Picture courtesy of Mt Druitt Historical Society. - image from dailytelegraph.com.au

Demographics

In 2001, the City of Blacktown Social Plan identified that a high portion of Mount Druitt residents are migrants from non-English speaking nations. These statements are backed up by the 2011 census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The most common occupation categories were tradesmen (17%), retail workers (15%) and government workers (15%)

Aboriginal impact and heritage

The Aboriginal people of Mount Druitt are part of a living and vibrant culture that has adapted to the invasion and occupation of the region by people from other cultures. Their twenty-first century cultures have their own practices and identities, and their own remembrances and histories of their interactions with other peoples. The Dharuk and Gandangara peoples arrived about 40,000 years ago. The earliest evidence of them in the area of Mount Druitt dates from 28,000 years ago according to physical evidence found in the gravels of the Penrith-Castlereagh area. They utilised a range of tools to manage the landscape to their advantage. These included spears of a number of varieties for different purposes, woomeras, stone axes, and boomerangs, as well as fishing gear. Technical improvement in their tools in later years included the adoption of the woomera and the introduction of edge ground axes, which appear only about 5,000 years ago in western Sydney.

The waterholes supplied water to the early settlers of Mount Druitt and travellers along the Great Western Highway. The Remembrance Gardens were established in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. The waterholes are a natural feature forming part of Mount Druitt's natural heritage, which

was utilised by colonial settlers. The commemorative gardens are a formal design of masonry, vegetation and furniture.

Furthermore, Mount Druitt and its historical legacy created a fundamental part in Blacktown and the regions of Western Sydney. Many memories linger within the suburban streets and maintain the historical value of the land and its original owner.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Article title: Mt Druitt: a history in pictures

Website title: Dailytelegraph.com.au

URL: <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/toplists/mt-druitt-a-history-in-pictures/image-gallery/6960f69842124302786fc9c4dff528ce>

Accessed: July 20 2018

Article title: Mount Druitt

Website title: Wikipedia

URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Druitt

Accessed: July 20 2018

Article title: Mount Druitt Hall

Website title: NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

URL: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=1140042.

Accessed: July 22 2018

Article title: Brian Kelly, "Sydney's lost cinemas: Ten of the best which enchanted audiences before biting the dust,"

URL: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/sydneys-lost-cinemasten-of-the-best-which-enchanted-audiences-before-biting-the-dust/news-story/7298b65c6f0e482c0ae1c0005e88997d>

Accessed: July 22 2018

Article title: Danielle Jarvis, "Mt Druitt bids farewell to Uncle Dicky the picture show man,"

URL: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/west/mt-druitt-bids-farewell-to-uncle-dicky-the-picture-show-man/story-fngr8i5s-1227053559078>

Accessed: July 20 2018

Article title: David Powell, "Mount Druitt Hall"

URL: http://www.estes-eastes.org/history/rooty_hill/mtdruitt_hall.html

Accessed: July 20 2018

Article title: State heritage register project

Website title: Western Sydney Thematic History

URL: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/ThematicHistoryWesternSydney.pdf>

Accessed: July 21 2018