

# A history of RIVERVALE





Rivervale was known as Barndon Hill until 1884. Barndon Hill was named after Richard Barndon, who in 1843 ran an inn called the Brewers Arms which was built on the track towards Guildford. The rise on which the inn was built became known as Barndon Hill and the immediate area as Barndon.

Rivervale was first used as the name of a railway station on the Perth Armadale line, and was later adopted as the name of the suburb in 1924. It is a descriptive name derived from its location on the Swan River



*Regatta at The Springs (1926, M0002-05)*

## Rowing at The Springs

Cracknell Park, previously known as The Springs, had always been a popular bathing site for the people of Belmont. It had been used since before 1900, and bathing sheds were erected in early 1912 in time for the Burswood Swimming Club's carnival.

During World War I through to the 1930s, the area served as a social centre, for picnics, regattas, swimming clubs and competitions. Poles were embedded into the bottom of the river as distance markers for swimmers and the area was served by a makeshift jetty.

The first regatta was organised by the Rivervale Progress Association for October 1923. Despite the showery weather, it was a great success.

A large crowd gathered at the park, especially interested in the main event: boats with a crew of eight, racing for the Rivervale Shield. This was keenly

contested between the Swan River Rowing Club and the West Australian Rowing Club.

From an even start, the crews raced on level terms for the first quarter of a mile, but then the Wests gained a slight advantage. Rowing well together, they gradually increased this lead, and, although the Swans made several determined attempts, they could not make up the difference.

The facilities were upgraded in the 1930s, with the foreshore levelled. New swimming lanes were constructed in 1938 and an additional jetty added in 1955.

In 1964, it was resolved to change the title of the reserve to Cracknell Park in honour of a local family, including R. Cracknell who had served on the Belmont Council.



*Aerial image taken in 1953*

*Cover image: Great Eastern Highway shopfront (1940s, M0088-04)*





*Burswood Island filter beds (c.1910, SLWA 014069PD)*

## The smell of Burswood

At the start of the 20th century it was decided that the sewage from Perth, North Perth and Leederville would be piped to filter beds on Burswood Island, to be treated by a bacterial system before being discharged into the river. Work began in August 1906, but there were immediate problems, with the filter beds subsiding even as they were being built.

The treatment works started operating in January 1912 using 10 filter beds built on foundations of reinforced concrete and measuring 30.5 metres in diameter and 1.8 metres deep.

Although it had originally been known as Barndon Hill, in 1884 the future Rivervale became known as Burswood, and this was also the name of the railway station there. The residents of Burswood certainly knew when the treatment works on the island had opened. The smell was an overpowering nuisance from the very start. The particularly hot and dry

summer of 1921-22 heightened the problem.

When the area was subdivided in the 1920s, it was generally agreed that the association with the Burswood Island works meant a new name was needed for the suburb. So in 1923, Burswood became Rivervale, and the station changed name to match. After Burswood Resort and Casino was built, the name once again became Burswood Station in 1994.

Another long, hot summer in 1927-28 meant the nuisance again afflicted the public nostrils. The government finally acted, and in 1929 a new scheme was launched, discharging sewage into the ocean, while only storm water was to be allowed to flow into the river.

The Burswood Island treatment plant was finally taken out of commission from the metropolitan sewerage system in 1936.



*Corner of Surrey Road and Great Eastern Highway, Rivervale - originally Peachey c1940s, typical shop of the era with dwelling attached (nd, M0088-03)*

## Groceries, clothing and a haircut

Peter Larsen was a Norwegian who lived in a large house at the back of his store on the Great Eastern Highway, which was first opened in 1897. This was located opposite the former Congregational Church.

In his shop household goods were sold in addition to groceries. There were items such as scrubbing brushes, washing boards, axes, spades and shovels. The axe handles were made of hickory and because the heads were made by a firm called 'Kelly', chopping wood in Rivervale was referred to as 'Swinging the Kelly'. Another local term was that using a shovel was called 'Playing the Banjo'.

The shelves of the store were always filled with tins of jam, mostly made in Tasmania. Jam was a staple in the diet of most people in those days.

Larsen also rented out parts of his store to other local traders. Mrs Mulligan, who specialised in selling women's clothing, occupied one corner. She later ran her own store on the corner of Orrong Road and Great Eastern Highway. Meanwhile Cliff Cracknell ran a barber's shop in another part of the floor, until he built his own barber's at 27 Great Eastern Highway, Rivervale.

In the evenings, five nights a week, a four-wheeled covered wagon would stop in front of Larsen's Store while the horses had a meal of chaff and oats from a nose bag. These wagons, run by McGregor's Transport Service, would run from Perth to Midland transporting various goods. This service ran until 1920 when it was replaced by motorised vans.



For tens of thousands of years, the area now known as Belmont was inhabited by the Noongar Whadjuk People. They knew the Swan River as the Derbal Yerrigan, and the strong connection with Noongar Boodja (Noongar land) remains significant to Aboriginal people today.

**1829** Marks the beginning of the Swan River Colony with the arrival of the *Parmelia*, carrying Governor James Stirling and the first settlers

**1880** Robert Davy Hardey builds a two-storey house called Belmont House, later converted to the Sandringham Hotel in 1901

**1884** Suburb name changed from Barndon Hill to Burswood

**1899** First elections for the new Belmont Road Board (an early form of Council)

**1905** Congregational Church built on the corner of Gladstone Road and Great Eastern Highway

**1905** Eight acres of land was purchased by Belmont Road Board from Robert Davy Hardey with a deposit of five hundred pounds, leaving three hundred pounds owing. In 1906, the State government contributed 250 pounds towards finalising its purchase. The land was named Hardey Park and used as a recreational area and park from 1907 to 1991

**1907** Rivervale Primary School opens on Surrey Road. Known as Burswood Primary School until 1923, it closed in 1990

**1909** Control of Burswood Island transferred from Belmont Road Board to Victoria Park

**1912** Bathing sheds erected at The Springs (later renamed Cracknell Park)

**1923** First Rivervale Regatta held

**1924** Suburb changes name to Rivervale to avoid being associated with the Burswood sewerage treatment plant

**1934** St John of God Hospital opens near Swan River, and includes the large house known as Hill 60

**1935** Guildford Road changes name to Great Eastern Highway

**1948** State Housing Commission obtains 422 blocks in Rivervale for subdivision and building government-owned rental housing

**1960** Belmont Road Board becomes the Shire of Belmont

**1964** The Springs renamed Cracknell Park

**1979** Belmont becomes a City and the Council moves from Great Eastern Highway to new offices in Wright Street, Cloverdale

**1993** As a result of the widening of Great Eastern Highway, the 1905 Congregational Church was dismantled. The Belmont Historical Society ensured pallets of bricks and the stained glass windows from the church were stored for future use in replicating the church façade

**1997** Although first proposed in 1991, the Council recognised that the recreational use of Hardey Park was limited and initiated a proposal to exchange a portion of Hardey Park, equal in area, for privately owned land (at the same level as the river) situated at 132 Great Eastern Highway, Ascot. The State Government approved the land exchange in 2001 and the name officially transferred to the new location in 2007.

**2008** Jack Ring Park is officially opened. The park is situated on Surrey Road and named after John 'Jack' Ring in recognition of his efforts for the community as a Belmont Councillor for 18 years between 1966 until his retirement in May 1983

**2011** Cracknell Park undergoes major works, as part of the development of the surrounding Springs area

**2015** The area formerly known as Hardey Park is renamed *Bilya Kard Boodja Lookout*, to commemorate its Noongar heritage. *Bilya* means river, *Kard* means hill and *Boodja* means land or country

## Did you know...

If you live in Rivervale, you'll probably know many of the road names and those of the parks. But do you know the history behind those names?

Many of the street names come from Melbourne suburbs: Kooyong Road, Fitzroy Road, St Kilda Road and Armadale Road among them.

**Jack Ring Park:** Jack Ring lived in the family home in Gladstone Road from 1948 until his death in 1991. He served on Belmont Council, and was also a member of the ALP and RSL. He was a pioneer of greyhound racing in Western Australia and was a familiar figure walking his greyhounds around the Rivervale district.

**Newey Street:** Named after William Newey, who was actively involved in the community, particularly in the building of the Congregational Church and Riversdale Hall.

**Riversdale Road:** Named after a major road in Melbourne. Riversdale was also the proposed name for this area of the City of Belmont, before the Council finally decided on Rivervale.

**Rowe Avenue:** Bert Rowe was a pig farmer on the northern corner of Belmont Avenue and Alexander Road. He later became a Belmont Councillor from 1910 and Roads Board Chairman (equivalent to Mayor) from 1919.

1829 – 1909

1912 – 1993

1997 – 2015



*In the evenings, five nights a week, a four-wheeled covered wagon would stop in front of Larsen's Store while the horses had a meal of chaff and oats from a nose bag.*



*Each part of the coat of arms symbolises an aspect of the City of Belmont.*

*The kiln and stack represent brick making and the cog is a symbol for industry. The wings symbolise flight and the airport, while the horse is the racing industry. The green stands for public space; silver, the sky; and blue is the Swan River. The black swan is the State emblem, and the ducal coronet around its neck symbolises Belmont's relationship to WA.*

For further information please contact the Belmont Museum  
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