

History.

Prior to the establishment of what we now know as small bore the use of the .22 rifle for target shooting was referred to as miniature rifle and even then, was only in the prone position.

However, predating that was the .303 caliber range established in April 1915 and granted approval in June, the range was officially opening on the 10th of December the same year. The ranges approval and construction were supported by the Australian Government, clearly in an attempt increase the number of ranges available to train AIF troops. Best estimates show that the range was at Sutherland with the mound being alongside current day Rawson Street (Old Princes Hwy) near the little athletics track and the butts located in the National Park. The length of the range appears to be only 600 yards although the newspaper article indicate it was intended to be a 1000-yard range.

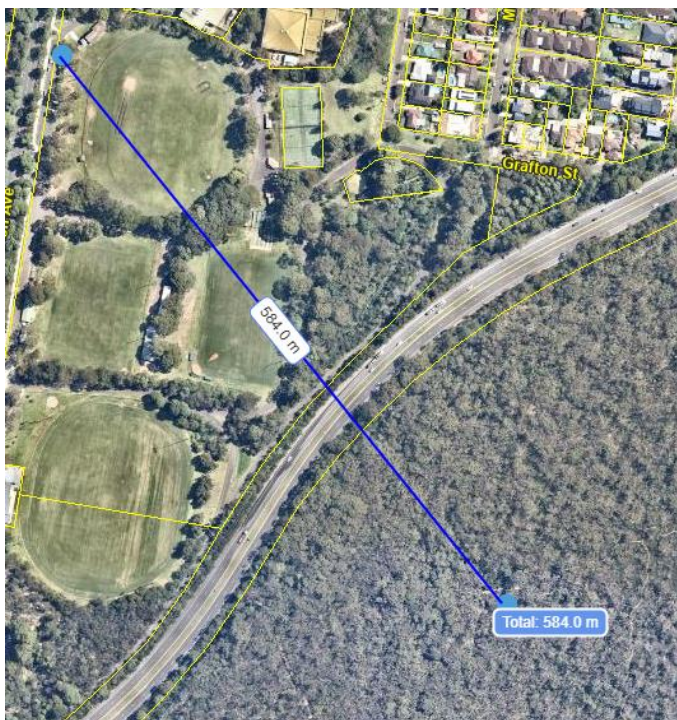


Photo indicating
approximate location of the
.303 caliber range.

Between 1915 and 1930.

The final days of the range are not clear but it appears it was well supported and used from opening until the late 1920's. There were also other plans around the same time to build a range on the

western side of Sutherland, but these seem only to have been briefly considered. There is no reference to any competitions being held at Sutherland by the 1930's and the Sutherland Rifle Club seems to do most of its shooting at ANZAC Range Malabar.

Around the same time permission was sought to construct another range at Cronulla, the mound being behind one the hotels and using the sandhills as butts 1000 yards away, this is no evidence this range was even constructed or used.

The original committee for this club included members of both Federal and State Parliament, local councilors and influential local businessmen.

The Sutherland Rifle Club during the period of 1915 until sometime in the 1970's was quite successful including a Queens Medal in 1959. Once Sutherland was abandoned the club used ANZAC range at Malabar, it does not exist today under that name.

SMALL BORE. (Miniature Rifle)

The original concept of miniature rifle shooting (Small Bore) dates back to Lord Roberts, Commander- In -Chief of the British Army during the Boer War in 1901 where Roberts noted the marked difference in marksmanship between the British and Commonwealth Troops and that of the Boer troops who were superior in that skill. The use of either .22 caliber or rifles fitted with Morris tubes was to allow citizens to gain the basic skills in marksmanship at a reduced cost to the .303 caliber rifles and the ability to shoot in areas such as basements and rooftop, including the Sydney Town Hall basement and the roof of the Water Board building in Pitt Street. The regulations originally declared that all rifles use open sights no "magnifying glasses, telescopes, or spirit levels" were allowed. Aperture sights by 1903 had already become very popular and improved scores. Membership of Miniature Rifle Clubs in NSW between 1901 and the grew to 1919 when there were 128 clubs with 5827 members. However, by 1937 membership had slumped to 14 Clubs and 385 members.

Sutherland Shire Miniature Rifle Club

Original Committee 1940

Horace Joseph Larcombe B England 1888 D Cronulla 1958 - Ice Manufacturer.

Edward Seymour Shaw Born 1895 Marulan Died 1968 Sutherland - Sutherland Shire President (WW 1 Home Service)

Charles Henry Crossman Born 1894 Kempsey Died 1967 Sutherland - Motor Driver. (WW1 & 2)

Donald James Moxham Born 1913 Lambton Died 1970 Caringbah – Engineer (WW 2)

William Thomas Victor Hoskins Born 1886 Petersham Died 1970 Picton – Storekeeper (WW1)

Bertram Charles Davey Born 1875 England Died 1943 Rockdale – Accountant (Boer War)

Alexander McPherson Porter Born 16 Feb 1891 Maitland Died Miranda 5 Mar 1964 Clerk (WW 1 & 2)

John Errol Pink Born 9 Oct 1910 Petersham Died 4 NOV 1983 Caringbah – Carpenter

John Henry Pink Born 16 Oct 1886 Petersham Died 20 Feb 1956 Miranda – Carpenter (WW 2)

The desire to establish a Miniature Rifle Club in the late 1930's in the Sutherland Shire can only be put down to the rumblings of war in Europe and the community wanting to be prepared should the war come to Australia. Why didn't these men just join the Sutherland Rifle Club that was still operating at this time, even though at this time they were not shooting locally either travelling to Long Bay (Malabar) or Liverpool.? It could have been distance of the difficulty of obtaining .303 Lee Enfield Rifles and ammunition? I suppose we will never know that answer to these questions.

What we do know is during the setting up of the committee and formally shooting at Fowlers clay pit shooting took place in a location then known as Penprase Brothers General Store which sold hardware and firearms, today that is location is a Medical Centre at 573 The Kingsway. However back in 1938/39 the men would use part of the store a range often with their legs out on the footpath and have the Saturday morning shoppers stepping over them while they fired at targets at the back of the store. The distance of the range was a lot less than today's 50 metre range by all accounts about 15 metres.



Clearly shooting in the Penprase Brothers store could not continue and did not allow the club and sport to progress. In 1940 Edward Seymour Shaw was the Shire President as well as the Rifle Club President. He used his influence and contacts to gain the use of the then unused Fowlers Clay Pits where Westfields Miranda is now located. David Moxham an engineer with Sutherland Shire council who was also a committee member used his expertise and connections to carry out the construction of the range in the old pit.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB.

At the general meeting of the Club the four remaining vacancies on the committee were filled and resulted in the representation being spread right through the Shire.

The complete list of office-bearers is as follows:—President, Cr. E. S. Shaw; Vice-President, A. M. Porter; Committee, Messrs. H. Pink, Miranda; H. Dew, Caringbah; J. Pink, Sutherland; H. J. Larcombe, Cronulla; T. Smith, R. Milner, T. J. Moxham, Sutherland; J. Burns, Caringbah; Hon. Treas., C. Crossman; Hon. Sec., W. T. V. Hoskins; Instructor, H. Pink; Asst. Sec., B. C. Davey.

Rifles have been purchased for the use of Club members, ammunition arranged for, and Sutherland Shire Council has granted permission to use the Karimbla Quarry as a Range.

The inspection of the site will be made by an officer of the Defence Dept. this week, and an early start made on the erection of the stop butt etc.

On Monday night, October 21, Preliminary instruction will be given in the R.S.V.D. Orderly Room, Kingsway, Miranda, at 8 p.m.

Intending members are asked to attend on this meeting night or communicate with one of the above officials.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB.

At the Committee meeting held on Saturday, March 8th, progress was made to the extent of finalising the Lease with Messrs. Fowler's Ltd., who

have been good enough to place the clay pit, Kingsway, Miranda, at the Club's use for a nominal rental.

This is the site for the out-door Range and Mr. D. J. Moxham, Officer in Charge of Construction, is already on the job with the preliminary work. To the President, Councillor Shaw,

must be given the credit of bringing the negotiations for the Lease to a successful conclusion, and, by the way, he has to be credited with top score at Saturday's Shoot with 79 out of a Possible 80.

Come along Monday evening or Saturday afternoon and keep in touch with

the activities of the club.

The use of slings and aperture sights are to be adopted in readiness for out-door range practice.

There is an old saying, "As fit as a Fiddler" but a much better measure of capacity is to be "As fit as a Marksman."

The Cronulla Observer 14 March 1941

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB.

Official Opening of Rifle Range.

The Miniature Rifle Range at Fowler's Pit, Kingsway, Miranda, will be officially opened this Saturday, July 5th, at 2.30 p.m.

A cordial invitation is extended to you to spend the afternoon with us. There will be an excellent programme in which local and visiting marksmen will take part.

The Garrison Brigade Band will supply the music and last but not least the ladies are providing afternoon tea. The small charge of 9d for the refreshments goes to the local Patriotic and War Fund.

The club continued to use the clay pit from May 1941, shooting every Saturday. The shooting continued until 1959, however the firms Myers and Farmers had intentions for the Fowlers Clay Pit with the construction of "Miranda Fair" shopping centre.

In early 1956 the days of shooting in the old clay pit was coming to an end, on the 5th of March 1956 the club wrote to the Sutherland Shire Council seeking appropriate land to use as a range. On the 19th of March a site at what is now Waratah Park was identified, this area was also an old quarry site. In April the same year Sutherland Council offered two other disused quarries as a range.

In June 1956, the council approved the use of Waratah Park which is followed in Nov 1957 with the Minister granting a lease at Waratah Park and on the 5th May 1958 the formal application to use Waratah Park is made.

Between May and November of 1958, a different location was identified by a club member and local councilor Kevin Skinner, this was followed by a lease application on the 17th November 1958. At this time the area was known as North Engadine, not Yarrawarrah. In the February of 1959 plans to lease Waratah Park was formally abandoned, this was followed by a request in March of 1959 to the council to assist in clearing the land and mowing an old army hut for use as a club house.

The location of the range today began its life in 1939, a clay and shale pit was opened by Austin (Dick) Harrington, of Harrington's Clay and Shale Pits, the pit was located at the bottom of the unnamed road later named Old Bush Road (1949) the pit was closed in 1958.



The range in 1961, the mounds are clearly seen.

Construction of the range and club house at Newlands Place Yarrawarra Circa 1960.



