



Bogey Hole

The Bogey Hole was constructed by order of Commandant Morisset in about 1820 for his own personal use. There is no exact date for the commencement of construction nor is there a record of how long it took. Morisset was Commandant of Newcastle from 1819 to 1822. It was originally known as the "Commandant's Baths". The name "Bogey Hole" was applied afterwards and comes from the indigenous word meaning "to bathe".

The Bogey Hole is situated at the foot of Shepherds Hill, or, as it was known in the 1820s, "sheep pasturage hill". Geologically, the rock in the area is sandstone/conglomerate and is considered reasonably hard. In 1863 the baths were handed to Newcastle Borough Council for public use. The baths have been enlarged since that time, most substantially in 1884, and a collection of changing sheds and other facilities has come and gone.

The Bogey Hole is located beneath a headland and gets battered in heavy seas. Local dare-devils often tempt fate by climbing the cliff and jumping into the Bogey Hole. Another local thrill is to grab the barrier chains on the seaward side of the baths in a moderate swell and hang on tightly when a wave breaks. Audley Reay remembers that *"The Bogey Hole was the best place for a dip, but dangerous in bad weather. When the tide was very high and weather rough it was a most delightful place if you could get safely in and out - to a moderate or indifferent swimmer it was hard to get out without a few scratches.* (Memories of the Hunter and Newcastle in the 1880's by Audley Reay p8)

The Bogey Hole remains a popular spot, particularly for inner city dwellers who don't like getting sand in their shoes, and still becomes very crowded on warm summer days.

It is also a place of religious significance for the city's Greek Orthodox parishioners who celebrate the festival of Epiphany each January by throwing a crucifix into the waters. The young men of the parish dive into the water and the one who retrieves the crucifix is said to be blessed with good luck for the coming year.

The above information is courtesy of the Local Studies section of the Newcastle Region Library. More information on the history and development of Newcastle and its local council is available from www.ncc.nsw.gov.au/discover_newcastle/local_history