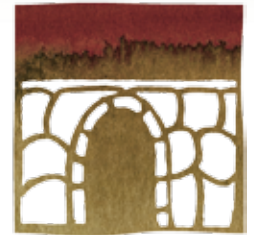


# 1. History of the Coal Loader



## Background Information:

The Coal Loader site demonstrates the layering of human history in Sydney and helps us understand broader changes in attitudes to the environment and place in Australia. An ancient Aboriginal rock carving of a marine creature, illustrating the relationship of the Cammeraygal people with their waterway, sits next to a coal bunkering facility which epitomises the culture of the Europeans who displaced them.

From the 1920s to the 1970s the Coal Loader was part of Sydney harbour's working waterfront. After it was closed in 1992, the Coal Loader became the focus for community opposition to residential development – like many other redundant waterfront sites. Today it is a showcase for sustainable technologies that provide an alternative to heavy dependence on coal and exemplify our attempts to tread more lightly upon the earth, like those that came before, in the face of climate change and pollution.

## Aboriginal Heritage

Aboriginal people occupied the Balls Head peninsula at least 6,000 years ago when sea levels stopped rising and Sydney Harbour, as we know it, was created. The local Cammeraygal people fished the waters around the headland. Natural rock overhangs provided shelter and a place to make tools and create art. At least one Aboriginal person was buried on the peninsula.

This world changed with the coming of Europeans in 1788. Some Aboriginal people fought the newcomers, others attempted to mediate with them. We know that the Cammeraygal man called Carradah befriended the naval officer Lieutenant Ball who had helped to survey the Harbour and explore the country on its northern shores. Whether Carradah showed Ball the area around this headland is not known but, interestingly, it was the Lieutenant who was immortalised by the European naming of the place – Balls Head.

The First Fleet was followed by another and then more ships. Thirty years later, without treaty or compensation, much of the land of the Cammeraygal had been divided up and given away to colonists.

*Read more in the 'Aboriginal Heritage' section.*



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## 1. History of the Coal Loader

### Henry Lawson

In the early 1900s, the remnant bushland on Balls Head was celebrated by the poet Henry Lawson. He criticised the construction of the coal loader in what was one of our first environmental protests. Lawson lived locally off and on for many years and he thought Balls Head was a bushy haven for the working class he mixed with around North Sydney. His poem 'The Sacrifice of Balls Head' was written in 1916 and reveals his resentment at the changes overtaking the place in the early 20th century.



### Coal Loading Operations

From the 1920's to the 1970's, the site functioned primarily as a transfer depot for coal from bulk carriers to smaller coal-fired vessels. The Balls Head Coal Loader was extremely advanced for its time, breaking records by delivering nearly 2500 tons of coal in under 20 hours.

In 1934, the lease was taken up by the Wallarah Coal Company which had a mine near Newcastle and a wharf on the coast at Catherine Hill Bay. They would operate the loader for nearly 40 years.

Work at the Coal Loader fell away until the 1970s when the place was completely refitted to supply export coal to Japan. Later the jetty was lengthened to accommodate larger colliers.

By the 1990s technology and social change spelled the end of operations at the Balls Head Coal Loader. The world had not lost its appetite for coal – in fact it had never been greater. But that meant exports directly from Newcastle in ships too large to dock at Balls Head. The ships took on their final load of coal in 1992.



### Caretakers Cottage

The state government leased the site in 1994 to a caretaker, who used the old powerhouse building as a base for their pioneering environmental remediation business, Environmental Earth Sciences. Founder Phil Mulvey also set up residence in the old caretaker's cottage, and lived there with his family for 14 years. The site itself was in need of remediation to remove toxic chemicals, so the new tenants set about this job. They turned an old oil tank site into a wetland.





## Community Action

The community battled to save the site from redevelopment and retain the land for public use. The protests and negotiations with the State Government announced that the Coal Loader, along with the nearby BP site and several other obsolete industrial waterfronts, would be dedicated to public recreation. It was a landmark announcement that was celebrated locally, and throughout Sydney.

There were public meetings and concepts were put up for comment. After nearly two years of negotiation a master plan for the whole Waverton Peninsula was adopted. The details still had to be decided and the money found to realise the great ideas. But work started at the BP site and the park was completed there in 2005.

Attention was turned to the Coal Loader and there were more workshops and exhibitions so that local opinion could be heard. Plans were approved in 2007. New life was going to be breathed into the Coal Loader by following the principles of sustainability – of living in harmony with our environment. The new ideas were reflected in a new name. The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability was going to be a ‘grass-roots’ place to visit, a place where you could meet others interested in new technologies and old eco-systems.

## The Present

At the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability the old infrastructure of coal that powered our economy for 150 years has been overlaid with new ‘clean’ technologies that reduce pollution and energy use. But just outside there is another overlay that has been removed. The road that covered the ancient carvings has been dug up to reveal what is left of a remarkable collection of images. When that happened in 2008 the Aboriginal community spoke about the discovery of ‘an old friend’.



The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability was officially opened in July 2011 with the motto “Learn from the past, embrace the future”. The Centre now enables hands-on learning about sustainability in everyday life, and serves as a community meeting point and hub for Council’s extensive range of environmental and sustainability programs.

### Curriculum links:



- ✓ Stage 3 English and Mathematics
- ✓ Stage 4 English and Mathematics
- ✓ Stage 5 English and Mathematics

See the Curriculum Matrix (Appendix 1) for more detail.

### For more information:

- Before your visit – watch the History of the Coal Loader three minute video
- Read the ‘Aboriginal Heritage’ section of the Coal Loader Sustainability Learning Guide
- Borrow or purchase the DVD “Return to Community: The story of Balls Head and its Coal Loader” from the Stanton Library
- Visit the North Sydney Heritage Centre at the Stanton Library
- Visit the Aboriginal Heritage Office or see their website [www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org)
- Download the Coal Loader Walking Map from [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/coalloader](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/coalloader)
- Follow the self-guided information signs throughout the Coal Loader site.





# Activity 1 – Using poetry for an environmental message or campaign

## Activity Summary:

This activity examines a poem that Lawson wrote about the area when coal loading operations were being introduced back in 1916. Lawson's poem was an early form of environmental activism. This activity is best conducted at the Coal Loader which will act as a muse for this activity. During this activity students will consider the issues important to Lawson, and use them as inspiration to write their own poetry.



## Aim:

To write a poem that builds upon the Henry Lawson poem "The Sacrifice of Ball's Head" and captures student's feelings towards the Coal Loader site.

## Outcome:

Students can use creative writing as a tool to capture feelings towards the Coal Loader site.

## Materials:

Each student will need a clipboard, writing materials and a copy of the Student Worksheet (this includes a copy of Henry Lawson's poem "The Sacrifice of Ball's Head").

## Preparation:

Before students begin the activity worksheet the teacher should read the 'Background Information' provided and engage the class in a discussion about how the site has changed over time and how you would have felt putting yourselves in the shoes of Henry Lawson, the local Cammeraygal people and the coal workers.



## Background Information:

Henry Lawson (1867-1922) is possibly Australia's best known poet. Along with Banjo Paterson, he presented 'the bush' to Australians at a time, in the late 19th century, when cities were growing but the national identity was linked to rural types such as drovers, shearers, farmers and graziers.

Lawson's portraits of life near the North Sydney waterfront are rare portrayals of working 'harbour people'. The span of Lawson's association with North Sydney coincided with great change. The local population grew from just over 12,000 in 1886 to 48,000 in 1920. During this time, North Sydney was at the forefront of flat development as people crowded around the foreshores to take advantage of regular ferry services to and from the city.

Around 1910 Lawson expressed his annoyance at the changes taking place around him. His poem 'The Sacrifice of Balls Head' was written in 1916 and reveals his ongoing concern at the changes overtaking the area in the early 20th century.

## Resources

Henry Lawson's 'North Sydney : a selection of Henry Lawson's North Sydney writings', edited by Olive Lawson for The North Shore Historical Society. Visit the Heritage Centre at the Stanton Library, 234 Miller Street, North Sydney to borrow this resource and for more information.



# Student Worksheet – Using poetry for an environmental message or campaign

## Introduction

The bush poet Henry Lawson lived around North Sydney off and on for many years. During this time he enjoyed visiting Balls Head which he described as a bushy haven for the working class. His 1916 poem 'the Sacrifice of Balls Head', reveals his concern at the changes overtaking the area in the early 20th century.

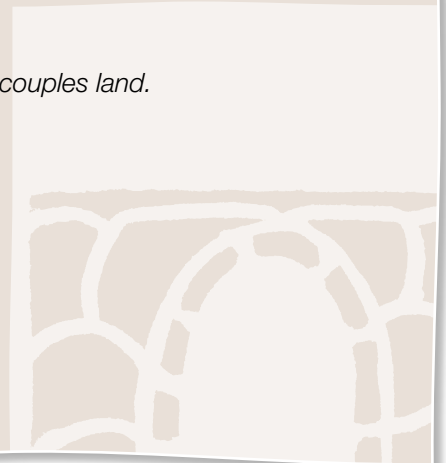
Read and reflect on Lawson's poem below. You will use it as inspiration to write your own piece of creative writing.

***The Sacrifice of Ball's Head***  
**Henry Lawson, 1916**

*'They're taking it, the shipping push,  
As all the rest must go –  
The only spot of cliff and bush  
That harbour people know.  
The spirit of the past is dead,  
North Sydney has no soul –  
The State is cutting down Ball's Head  
To make a wharf for coal...*

*And strings of grimy trucks shall run  
In everlasting trains  
And on the cliff where wild trees are  
Shall stand the soulless cranes  
To dump their grimy loads below,  
Where the great brown rocks are grand;  
And the deep grass and wild flowers grow – and boating couples land.*

*No more shall poorer families  
Give "Grandma" and "Grandad"  
A glimpse of nature's mysteries  
To make their old hearts glad.  
No more our eyes shall be relieved  
In the city's garish day –  
A sordid crime has been achieved!  
And none has aught to say.*



What do you think were the key messages Lawson was expressing in this poem?

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## Student Worksheet – Using poetry for an environmental message or campaign *continued*

Imagine Henry Lawson was still alive. What might he feel looking at the site today? Is there a connection between Lawson's preferred use of the site and the community action that took place when the Coal Loader was decommissioned?

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Use the Henry Lawson poem as inspiration for your own piece of creative writing. Try and capture your own feelings towards the site and write about that or think about some of the issues that Balls Head may face today and include in the poem. Don't forget to give your poem a title!

Draft your poem here

### Further Extension

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- Select an environmental protest song eg Midnight Oil's 'Beds are Burning' – what were the issues then, what was done about it, what is still to be done?



## Activity 2 – The Coal Loading System Materials Flow

### Activity Summary:

This activity will encourage students to use the information about the coal loading system provided to construct a materials flow diagram that will show how coal would have been moved on, around and off the site.



### Aim:

To increase knowledge and awareness of how the old coal loader system would have operated.

### Outcomes:

Students will be able to construct a materials flow chart to show how coal was transported to and from the site.

### Materials:

Each student will need a clipboard and writing equipment. Each student will also need their own copy of the Student Worksheet.

### Preparation:

Teachers are asked to hold a pre-excursion class discussion using the Background Information provided below.

### Background Information

The Coal Loader on the western side of Waverton peninsula is a very special site where many paths of history intersect.

The Coal Loader operated from the 1920's to 1990's primarily as a transfer depot for coal from bulk carriers to smaller coal-fired vessels.

Some coal was also distributed to the local market by road transport. It was a record-breaking facility, demonstrating state-of-the-art technology for its time.

In the 1920s coal was unloaded from large ships (colliers) and dumped on the platform above by



cranes that moved along the seawall. Chutes in the tunnel roof released the coal into elevated travelling 'feeders' which directed coal into skips below. When full, the skips travelled onto the adjacent wharf to discharge their coal onto waiting ships.

The facility consisted of 177m long wharf, which was 18m wide. In 1921, after only a year of operation, the Coal Loader was breaking records, delivering nearly 2500 tons of coal in less than 20 hours.

A high-speed conveyor was installed in the middle tunnels in the 1970s. It was one of the most advanced methods of coaling in Sydney Harbour and dispensed with the need for 'coal lumpers' to shovel fuel from colliers to receiving steamers while out in the Harbour. A 'coal lumper' was a person who was employed to load and unload coal from the ships.

The site operated for over 70 years before being decommissioned. It was dedicated as public open space in 1997, formally transferred to North Sydney Council in 2003, and opened as the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in 2011.



# Student Worksheet – The Coal Loading System Materials Flow

## Introduction:

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The Coal Loader is a former industrial site that operated from the early 1920s to the early 1990s. It functioned primarily as a transfer depot for coal from bulk carriers to smaller coal-fired vessels. During this activity you will use the information provided to draw a flow diagram that shows how the coal would have been moved around the site in the 1920's.

In the 1920s coal was unloaded from large ships (colliers) and dumped on the platform above by cranes that moved along the seawall. Chutes in the tunnel roof released the coal into elevated travelling 'feeders' which directed coal into skips below. When full, the skips travelled onto the adjacent wharf to discharge their coal onto waiting ships.

The facility consisted of 177m long wharf, which was 18m wide. In 1921, after only a year of operation, the coal loader was breaking records, delivering nearly 2500 tons of coal in less than 20 hours.

## Activity:

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1. Use the information provided in the Introduction to draw a flow diagram that shows how the coal was moved to, from and around the site
2. Use arrows to show the direction of the coal needed to travel
3. Include any other outputs eg fuel, water and noise etc

Draw flow diagram here





## Student Worksheet – The Coal Loading System Materials Flow *continued*

4. The Coal Loader was considered to be extremely advanced for its time. If it took 20 hours to load 2500 tonnes of coal, what would the time be if loading started at 6am\_\_\_\_\_, 12pm\_\_\_\_\_ and 4pm\_\_\_\_\_?  
(List your answers in both analogue and 24hr time)

### Extension Activity

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The history of the site tells an important story about the change from a reliance on coal fired power to a move towards renewable energy forms such as solar power. Research the alternatives to coal power, when were they discovered and how could they be used at the Coal Loader. The alternative energy unit in this Guide could help get you started.



## Activity 3 – Reconstruct the Coal Loader Timeline



### Take away activity – for home or back at school

#### Activity Summary:

During this activity students use the key dates and activities to reconstruct a historical timeline. Teachers should encourage students to make the timeline as creative and visually appealing as possible.

Essential to this activity is reading the pre-visit information ‘Coal Loader History’.

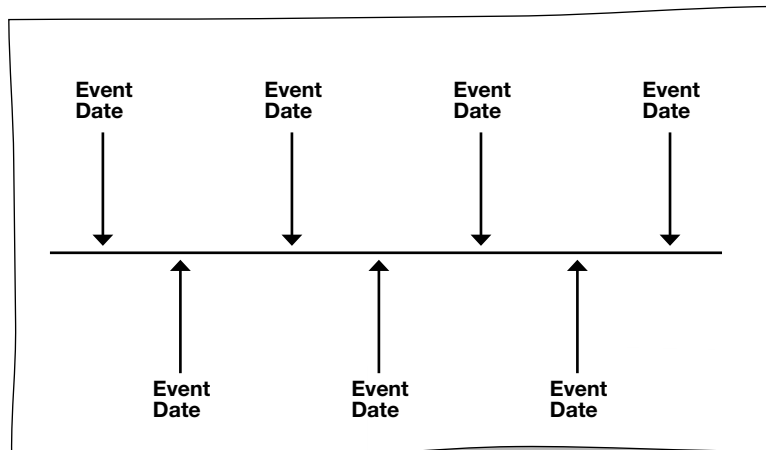


#### Aim:

To reconstruct the history of the Coal Loader site by placing key dates and events along a timeline.

#### Outcomes:

Students will be able to gather, select and organise information on the main historical events and activities that combine to form the story of the Coal Loader site.




#### Materials:

Students will require a clipboard, writing equipment and a copy of the Student Worksheet.

#### Preparation:

Teachers are asked to hold a class discussion using the background information provided in this ‘Coal Loader History’ chapter and the following sources:

- Watch the Coal Loader History three minute video 
- Borrow or purchase the 30 minute DVD “Return to Community: The story of Balls head and its Coal Loader” from the Stanton Library, or allocate time to watch the Coal Loader’s copy during your excursion
- Visit the North Sydney Heritage Centre at the Stanton Library
- Visit the Aboriginal Heritage Office or see their website [www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org)



# Student Worksheet – Reconstruct the Coal Loader Timeline

## Introduction:

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The history of Ball Heads is extremely varied and interesting. This activity requires you to research the key historical events that occurred at Balls Head and it's Coal Loader and reconstruct the timeline in a fun and creative way.

## Activity:

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1. Gather and record the key dates and activities that have occurred from past to present at Balls Head and the Coal Loader site. Plot them in chronological order (first to last)

Consider how you will present the timeline. Some suggestions include an animal's tail, circular spiral or a straight line. Also consider how you will represent the key activities eg drawing, symbol or icon

Draw timeline here



## Student Worksheet – Reconstruct the Coal Loader Timeline *continued*

2. Present your timeline to your class. Discuss any inconsistencies
3. Which time period would you have most liked to live through and why?

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### Extension Activities

1. The Coal Loader has had an interesting and varied past. Try and cast your mind forward 50 years. What would the site look like and how will it be used? You might like to paint, sculpt or draw your vision. Try and pay tribute to the Centre's motto "Learn from the past, embrace the future"
2. Consider submitting your artwork to North Sydney Council. Perhaps it will be shared on the Coal Loader Facebook page [www.facebook.com/CoalLoader](http://www.facebook.com/CoalLoader)