

Amelia Hall's horse troughs



Amelia Hall was an English woman who arrived in Australia in the 1850s. Known best for founding one of the most exclusive boy's private schools of the time, Miss Amelia Hall's Private School at Waverley House, she also left behind a more tangible legacy.

Two pink granite horse troughs were donated by her to be erected at the gates of Waverley Cemetery, on the corner of St. Thomas Street and Trafalgar Streets. The troughs have a small semi-circular trough at one end, and would probably have had a metal cup attached to a chain for people to drink from. The troughs still stand today, minus their fittings, in their original positions.

There is no agreed date of when these troughs were donated, although after her death they were inscribed with 'Amelia Hall 1809-1891'. Her nephew, Thomas E. Hall, donated four more troughs in 1892 in her memory. At a Waverley Council meeting on 20 December 1892 it was resolved:

'that the thanks of the Council be conveyed to Mr. Thomas E. Hall for the munificent gift of four granite fountains erected at his sole cost in various parts of the Borough in memory of Miss Amelia Hall.'

One horse trough was installed in Spring Street Bondi Junction near the corner of Bronte Road. It was removed in 1963, and a year later was placed in Paul Street adjacent to Council Chambers. This trough is still functional and is now fitted with a bubbler. A second trough was installed in Victoria Street Charing Cross, near the Charing Cross Hotel. This trough was removed in 1964, and donated to the Lithgow Historical Society to be re-erected in front of the Esk Bank House. A third trough was located opposite the Royal Hotel on Bondi Road. It was removed in 1967 and donated to the Nielson-Vaucluse Park Trust for use in the grounds of Vaucluse House.

The fourth trough has disappeared. It has been suggested that it may have one time been located somewhere near the old Council Chambers in Bondi Road (which were just slightly north of the current Council Chambers); however there are no records of either the erection, or the relocation, of this particular trough. Indeed, there are no records of the original placement of any of the troughs, but it can be surmised that the locations from which they were removed were the original positions in which they were placed.

There were several other horse troughs in the area, though not associated with either Amelia or Thomas Hall. Three other troughs were in use throughout the municipality, but were of a different design to Miss Amelia's pink granite model.

One was located in Dover Road, near Old South Head Road, and when it was removed in 1964 was regarded as unfit for further use. It was taken to a salvaged materials tip in Bronte, and remained there until at least 1970. Mr. H. Archibald of Rose Bay wrote to Council in January 1965 describing the removal of the trough: '...suddenly, without warning, the whole apparatus was bulldozed out of existence.' Mr Archibald goes on to ask for the council to replace the trough with a drinking fountain with access to water for dogs. In March 1965, the decision was made to purchase a fountain, with an estimated cost of £43.5.0.

Another trough was located at the rear of the Denison Hotel, now the Mill Hill Hotel, on the corner of Denison Street and Oxford Street, but this was removed in 1961 at the request of the owner. In a letter written to the town clerk in 1960, Mr. F. Morrin, the hotel's proprietor, describes the trough as being 'in a very dilapidated condition' and that 'as there has not been a horse used [sic] this trough for 18 months firstly because there are no horses about- and secondly because cars are parked alongside the trough night and day, the facilities for horses are useless.' The decision was made to relocate the horse trough at a cost of £50.

The third trough was located at Six Ways, Bondi Beach and was moved several times within the intersection until it was finally removed in 1967.