

3. THE SUBURB OF DACEYVILLE



The suburb of Daceyville is located in the north-eastern corner of the former Botany LGA (3).

At the turn of the century Sydney was riddled with slums and disease. In 1909 a Royal Commission was called to investigate methods of fulfilling social and hygienic needs by relocating workers into detached, greened suburban houses. In 1911 John Rowland Dacey (1854-1912), the local State Member and NSW Treasurer, introduced enabling legislation for a 'model suburb' to be constructed at State Government expense to create healthy, affordable housing to serve as standard for municipal councils and as a monument to the social conscience of the first Labor Government of NSW.

The Housing Act was passed on 24 April 1912, in effect allowing for the first time the State Government to act as both constructor and landlord of housing. The Housing Board of NSW was established to oversee the work that would be carried out in response to the Act. The NSW Labor Government was the first in the world to secure a site for an entire garden suburb that would remain under government management.

The site chosen for the experiment was a large portion of land excised from the abandoned Church and School Estate scheme at Botany. Designed to be the complete opposite of Sydney's inner city slums, Daceyville's planners took a very modern and scientific approach to developing the suburb. The ideals of the British Garden City Movement were a major source of inspiration, as shown by the suburb's

alternative name – Dacey Garden Suburb.

Born out of the ills of the 19th century industrial city, the ‘garden city’ movement sought to merge the best elements of city and country life. The suburb was planned to be spacious, with wide avenues resembling tree-lined boulevards that radiated outwards from an inner ‘hub’. The entrance to the suburb was ideally a garden setting, surrounded by a circular parade of shops and community buildings. Houses were to be set far back from the street to allow for large gardens (where residents were encouraged to grow their own food) and front fences were abolished in favour of wide open greenery. The distinguishing feature of all garden suburbs was its patterns of parks and gardens which linked streets and spaces along wide sweeping avenues.

Even though the self-sufficiency of the British Garden City model intended for Daceyville was not achieved, the layout of the suburb certainly aligned with the overarching philosophy; a range of cottage designs of sizes and arrangements of rooms, no front fences, vistas created by curved residential streets whilst connecting roads were straight, allotments wedge shaped at the street corners and incidental green spaces interspersed among the housing.

Daceyville was not merely a residential attachment to the metropolis of Sydney; it was to be a self-contained community with its own sense of civic identity. The significance of Daceyville as a suburb is foremost in its pioneering philosophy of self-sufficiency and self-containment within a healthy and spacious setting.

Atypically to development of that time, there were to be no back lanes or pubs (being synonymous with ‘slums’). The deliberate absence of a licensed pub in the suburb was indicative of the Government’s agenda for social and moral reform, instead advocating the improvement of morality, health and respectability of citizens by providing them with a model environment of ordered streets, abundant nature and single-family homes.

The planning of Daceyville was an evolving process. The original proposal was grand in scale, extending to the shores of Botany Bay and was socially sophisticated, including a maternity hospital, three schools, a technical college, School of Arts, four churches and over 40 shops. Dedicated accommodation for bachelors and spinsters was

proposed to prevent the overcrowding that occurred when taking in single people as lodgers, along with extensive parks and gardens laid out by the Royal Botanical Gardens' Director, Joseph Henry Maiden.

At the time of its main development between 1912 and the early 1920s, Daceyville was not merely being advertised as a new suburb, but rather as a 'model' one. Daceyville was an advertisement in itself; an ideal town plan built in real form that the Housing Board hoped Sydney's private developers and councils would see the benefits of and replicate.

The scale of the project was reduced in its second iteration which was designed by esteemed architect and pioneering town planner John Sulman with his partner John Hennessy. Although the communal garden ideal of self-sufficiency did not take off in Daceyville, the plan to have 'everything one could ever need' (bar a local pub) was certainly implemented: A School of Arts and Community Hall (1916) was constructed at Cook and Banks Avenues, a police station (1920) and a row of six shops at 1-11 General Bridges Drive (with residences above). A baby health centre was constructed at 3 Wills Crescent (1918-1919). The Daceyville Public School was constructed in 1921 at Joffre Crescent. Churches however were required to find their own sites on the periphery of the development.

Rising building and labour costs, combined with a lack of funds, slowed construction. Government architect, William Foggitt, redesigned Daceyville's street layout midway through the process. By June 1920, eight years after initial work began, just 315 of the intended 1473 cottages had been built. The suburb was by no means deserted however, and it continued to have good population growth for decades after it was 'finished'. Today, one can stand at Cook Avenue, facing away from the Kingsford roundabout, and see Sulman and Hennessey's plan to the right while Foggitt's revised plan to the left. Colonel Braund Crescent, reputedly Australia's first planned cul-de-sac, was constructed out of Foggitt's amended plan. A particularly beautiful remaining example of the original Daceyville plan is the Dacey Garden Reserve and Substation at General Bridges Crescent.

Daceyville on the whole was considered a great success for public housing and before it was even completed a second Daceyville was already being planned. Originally named 'Daceyville No.2', the new

housing scheme aimed at easing the wider issue of housing shortages in Sydney after World War I. The Nationalist Party, which by this time held power in New South Wales, introduced a new housing policy that provided financial assistance to those who wanted to buy an existing home or purchase land on which to build one.

Because of this policy, Daceyville's southern end, now part of Pagewood, was subdivided and offered for private sale.

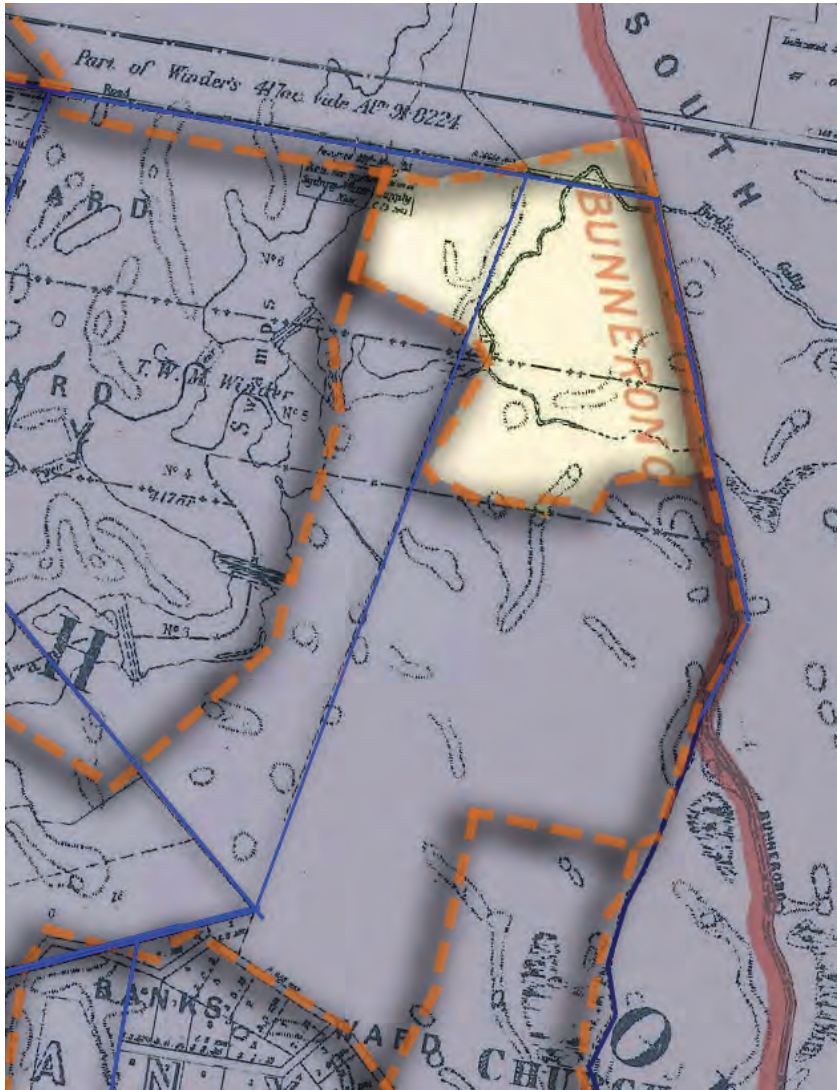
By the 1960s Daceyville was no longer the 'model suburb' it was designed to be. The suburb's once healthy abundance of green space became overgrown and was casually used for off-street parking. Furthermore, many of its buildings were in dire need of modernisation. These issues, combined with the suburb's prime location in the eastern suburbs between the city and growing job markets like Kingsford Smith Airport (and eventually Port Botany), made its redevelopment seem imminent.

Daceyville was particularly threatened in the 1970s by the proposal of an extension to the eastern suburbs railway from Bondi Junction to Kingsford. The Housing Commission saw this as an opportunity to propose bulldozing the entire suburb in favour of walk-up apartments that were in vogue at the time. The residents who lived in the 315 homes in Daceyville protested fiercely against this and created the Daceyville Preservation Society to fight the proposal, supported by the Builders Labourers Federation (well-known for their 'Green Bans' at Woolloomooloo and The Rocks). Ultimately the railway proposal was cancelled and redevelopment plans were scrapped.

Daceyville again came under the eye of developers in 1979, however the National Trust had officially recognised Daceyville's historical significance in 1978 and in light of this, in 1982 the Commission initiated a plan to conserve Daceyville's most historically significant streets whilst also renovating and a (limited) redeveloping of its housing stock through infill development at the centre of the street blocks. Today, Daceyville exists as a finished suburb that has preserved its social housing beginning and, most significantly, has retained its identity as a secluded and peaceful suburb in the midst of the hustle and bustle of Sydney.

For further reading the following publications are highly recommended: 'Dacey Garden Suburb: A Report for Daceyville

Heritage Conservation Area within its historical context' by Susan Jackson-Stepowski (2002) and 'Audaciousville: The story of Dacey Garden Suburb, Australia's first public housing estate' by Samantha Sinnayah (2012).



Development of Daceyville did not commence until 1909 on the still-undeveloped sand dunes of the Church and School Estate.

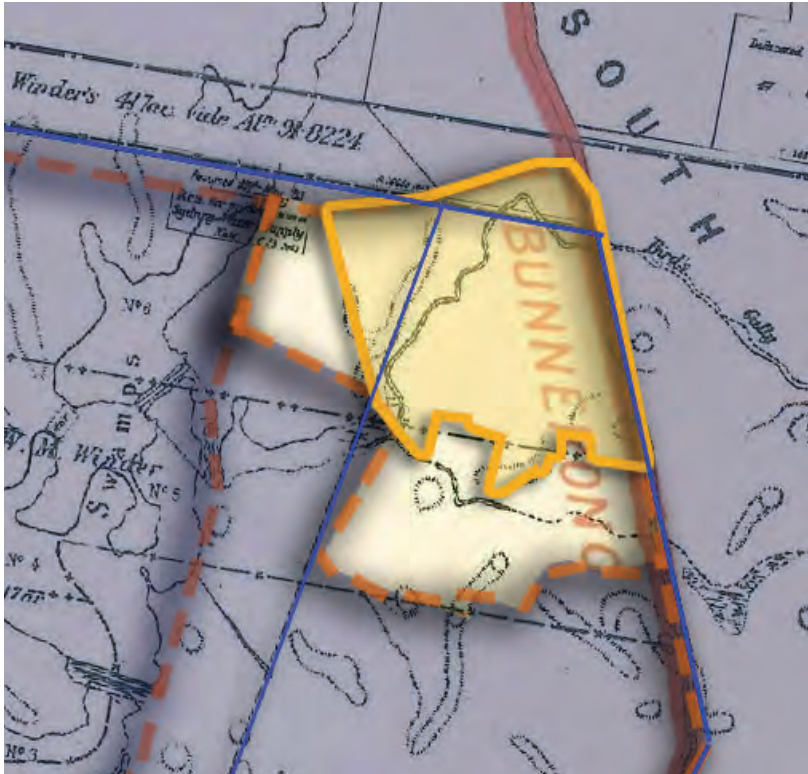


By 1943 the development existed in close to its current form. The school and St Michaels Church and school were built, although landscaping remained in its natural, barren form, with large areas of sand still visible. The first stage of the Torrens-Title Daceyville 2 to the south can also be seen to the south of the highlighted area.





The first release of the Dacey Garden Suburb was laid out in a traditional plan.



The second release established the radial plan proposed for the whole development.

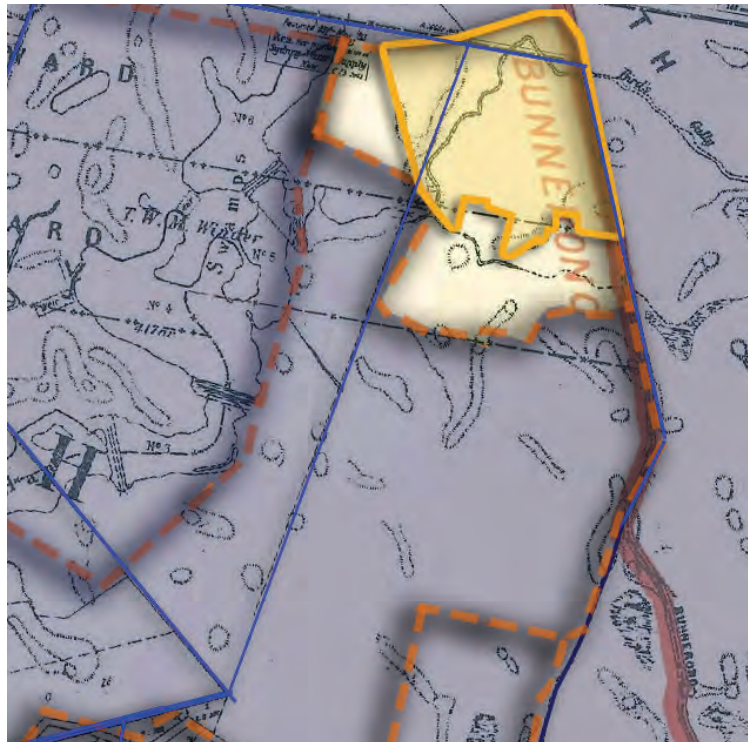




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The second stage of the Dacey Garden Suburb established the radiating street pattern linked by rings of roads designed by William Foggitt 1915-1919. It is distinctly different to the more traditional character of the street layout proposed in the 1912 Sulman and Hennessy plan on the facing page.



4. THE SUBURB OF EASTGARDENS



The land now established as Eastgardens suburb ([4] on the aerial photograph above) was once originally part of the Church and School Estate – a large reservation of over 4000 acres of land in the Botany Bay area (largely between the Botany wetlands and Bunnerong Road) which was set aside by Governor Darling to subdivide and sell in order to provide revenue to pay for the Anglican clergy and parochial schools. By 1833 the Scheme had been abolished and the land returned to Crown Land status. It remained more or less vacant for many years until it was slowly subdivided and sold off throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. Both Eastgardens and Hillsdale sit on a small portion of this original Estate, however most of the reserve went to building the Daceyville and Daceyville No.2 (now Pagewood) housing developments.

Eastgardens is a small suburb that was created in 1999 by combining small portions of two already established surrounding suburbs – Pagewood and Hillsdale. Eastgardens' creation was prompted by the construction of the large Westfield Eastgardens shopping centre which was built on land originally on the outskirts of Pagewood. The complex was built in 1987 on the corner of the junction between Wentworth Avenue and Bunnerong Road – a site which had a history of commercial use already.

The National Film Studios opened at the site (then in Pagewood) in late 1935. It was a raw-brick building situated where Westfield Eastgardens stands today. Part of its site was taken over by General Motors (see below) in 1939. Many Australian films were made at Pagewood Studios over the years, however none

were considered commercially successful. The Studio eventually closed in 1952.

In 1939 General Motors obtained 52 acres of land between Banks Avenue, Heffron Road, Bunnerong Road and Wentworth Avenue, 33 of which it owned and 9 it leased from the State Government. Within the parcel General Motors leased from the government sat an additional 8 acres of land retained by the government for use as a bus depot. This remained a bus depot until the 1980s when the site was purchased for the new Westfield Eastgardens shopping centre.

General Motors began importing cars prior to World War I, and in 1926 they entered into an agreement with Holden which allowed for Holden to produce car bodies for GM vehicles. At this time General Motors became General Motors Australia and established factories in the capital cities of Australia (Sydney's was on Carrington Road in Marrickville's industrial precinct). In 1931, General Motors Australia bought Holden's body building operations, leading to its final name change of General Motors Holden (G.M.H.). By this time the Marrickville premises was deemed inadequate and so the Pagewood plant was opened in 1939 (by Robert Menzies).

Built in 1939, apart from its beginnings during World War II where it manufactured refrigeration machinery, the G.M.H.'s Pagewood plant mainly served as an assembly and holding plant for its cars (however some sources have stated that manufacturing occurred there also). In the early 1960s GMH purchased the adjoining old Pagewood Film Studios site. Despite the expansion and acceptably busy output, the Pagewood GMH was generally considered to be the weakest of G.M.H.'s four plants, and in 1980 the decision was made to shut it down.

In 1982 (and amidst some controversy) Westfield obtained from G.M.H and the Government a merged site which included part of the old Pagewood Studios site, the closed G.M.H assembly plant and the State Government bus depot. Westfield Eastgardens was built upon the site at an expected cost of \$84 million. Upon its completion Westfield Eastgardens briefly held the title of Australia's largest shopping centre (it being shortly overtaken by Chadstone Shopping Centre in Melbourne).

The complex was not long established however before concerns were raised by Westfield about the image the Pagewood site presented to the community. "Pagewood's past and the significance of the GM-H (sic)

site in the industrial history of the city were ill-matched narratives for the contextualisation of their 'shopping paradise'. (Bailey, Matt., *The industrial plant and the 'shopping paradise': General Motors-Holden and Westfield Eastgardens*, in *Green Fields, Brown Fields, New Fields: Proceedings of the 10th Australasian Urban History/Planning History Conference*, p.22) Although Pagewood, unlike Daceyville, was a housing shortage scheme rather than a welfare one, there were fears that the suburb retained connotations of an industrial working-class area.

In 1989 it was proposed by Westfield to change the name of the immediate surrounding area from Pagewood (and parts of Hillsdale) to 'Eastgardens'. The proposal was met with debate and protest, however by 1999 the change was eventually accepted and the new suburb of Eastgardens was gazetted.

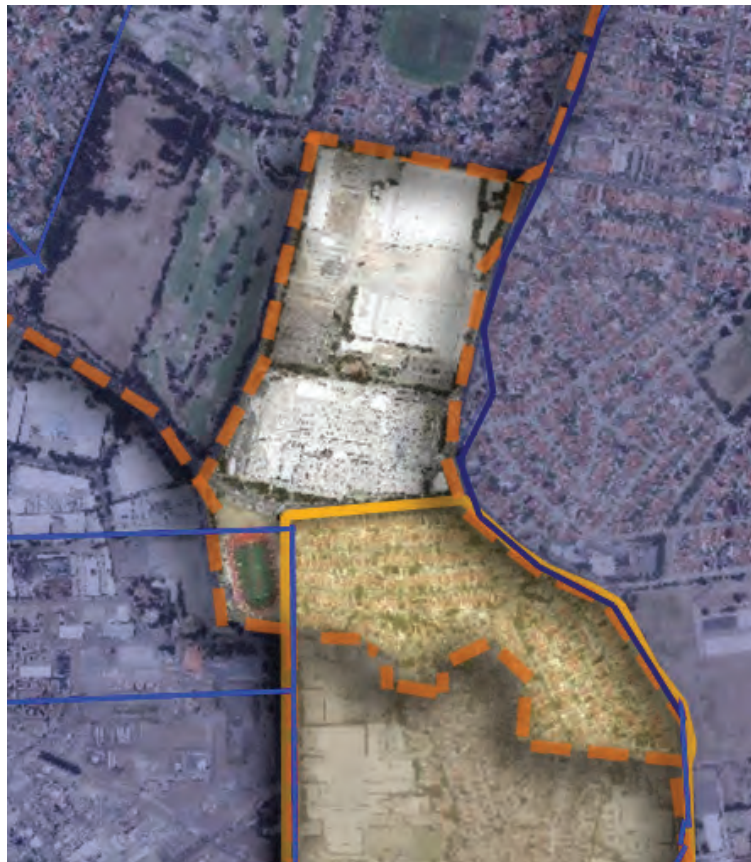


Eastgardens remained undeveloped for most of the 19th century. This image shows the status in 1909, with only the southern part subdivided into large lots by the Crown. The south-western corner is within Lot 1 of the Veterans' subdivision.

(top) The only significant development in the Eastgardens area by World War II was the GMH plant at the northern end.



By 2014 (below) most of the area had been redeveloped for a major shopping centre, with the former GMH site being redeveloped in 2017 for high density housing.




The extract from the 1880 Higginbotham and Robinson Map of Botany (opposite) shows clearly the generally undeveloped character of the area, with most of the lots optimistically marked on the plan not occupied.

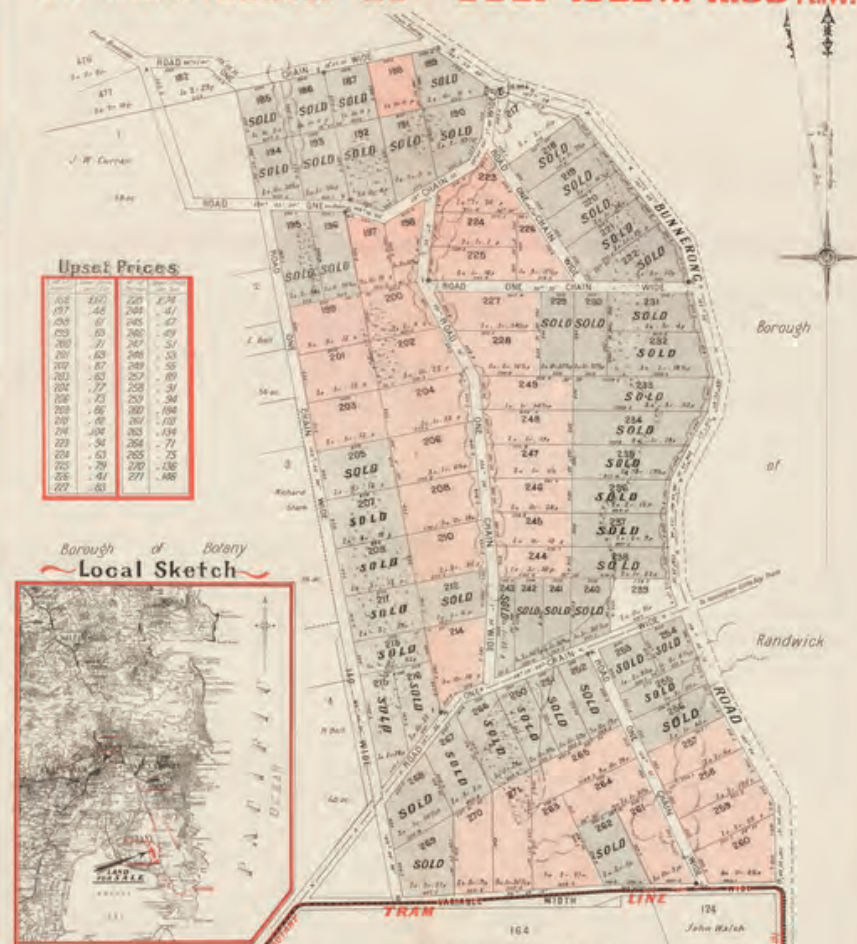
The Church and School Estate was originally quarantined from development to fund the Anglican clergy and schools, but this scheme was abandoned soon after its establishment and the land reverted to the Crown, who did little with it until the latter decades of the 19th century. A series of land releases and auction sales then followed, but take-up remained slow and later plans reveal few lots sold.





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SUBURBAN LOTS
AUCTION SALE  **CROWN LANDS**
ON THE TRAMLINE FROM
BOTANY TO LITTLE BAY
AND THE BUNNERONG ROAD
AT THE ROOMS OF MESSRS.
HARDIE & GORMAN
133 PITT ST. SYDNEY.
ON WEDNESDAY 23RD JULY 1902 AT 11.30 A.M.



Upset Prices

54	160	221	674
57	48	244	47
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