

Snapper Island

Sense of place: what we value

This, the smallest island in the harbour, is part of a grouping with Cockatoo and Spectacle Islands, known in the 1820s as the 'Hen and Chickens', that contribute to the aesthetic quality of the harbour.

The levelling of the island in 1931 led to the creation of a unique collection of buildings constructed by the sea cadets and their instructors, and was largely the vision of one man, Leonard Forsythe. The sandstone sea walls were shaped like a ship and the buildings have carried through that theme, all with names relating to parts of a ship. Two cabbage tree palms planted then are now local landmarks.

The training depot, known as 'TS Sydney', was conceived as a memorial to HMAS Sydney by Forsythe. It was opened in November 1932 and became the headquarters of all Sydney's Navy League units for 45 years.

When HMAS Sydney was broken up in Sutherland Dock in 1932, many items were retrieved, beginning a collection of memorabilia on the island. The collection opened as a museum in 1952 and consists of ship's badges, flags, models, brass plates, photographs, etc. It is one of the most important collections in Australia and is very much related to the island, with areas being modified to house it.

Snapper Island remains, as it has for many years, a picturesque grouping of waterfront buildings in tin and timber, slipways, boat storage, gardens, flagpoles, a jetty – all in varying states of repair. The island, together with its rich collection of naval artefacts and memorabilia, are managed by a private company, Sydney Training Depot Snapper Island Limited.

Some planning ideas

We need to investigate how we can retain this extraordinary facility and interpret the island, its buildings, workshops and collection of artefacts.

Cockatoo Island and the boat-like Snapper Island

