

THE MONTEREY AUTO PARK

The story of the Monterey Auto Camp began in 1953.

Bruce Elliott, hailing from a family of builders who already owned a modern auto camp in Lake Illawarra South, envisioned creating an even grander one – the largest auto camp in Australia. Backed by his family, he spent 18 months searching for the perfect location. Mannering Park, with its growing reputation as a tourist and fishing destination, attracted Bruce Elliot.

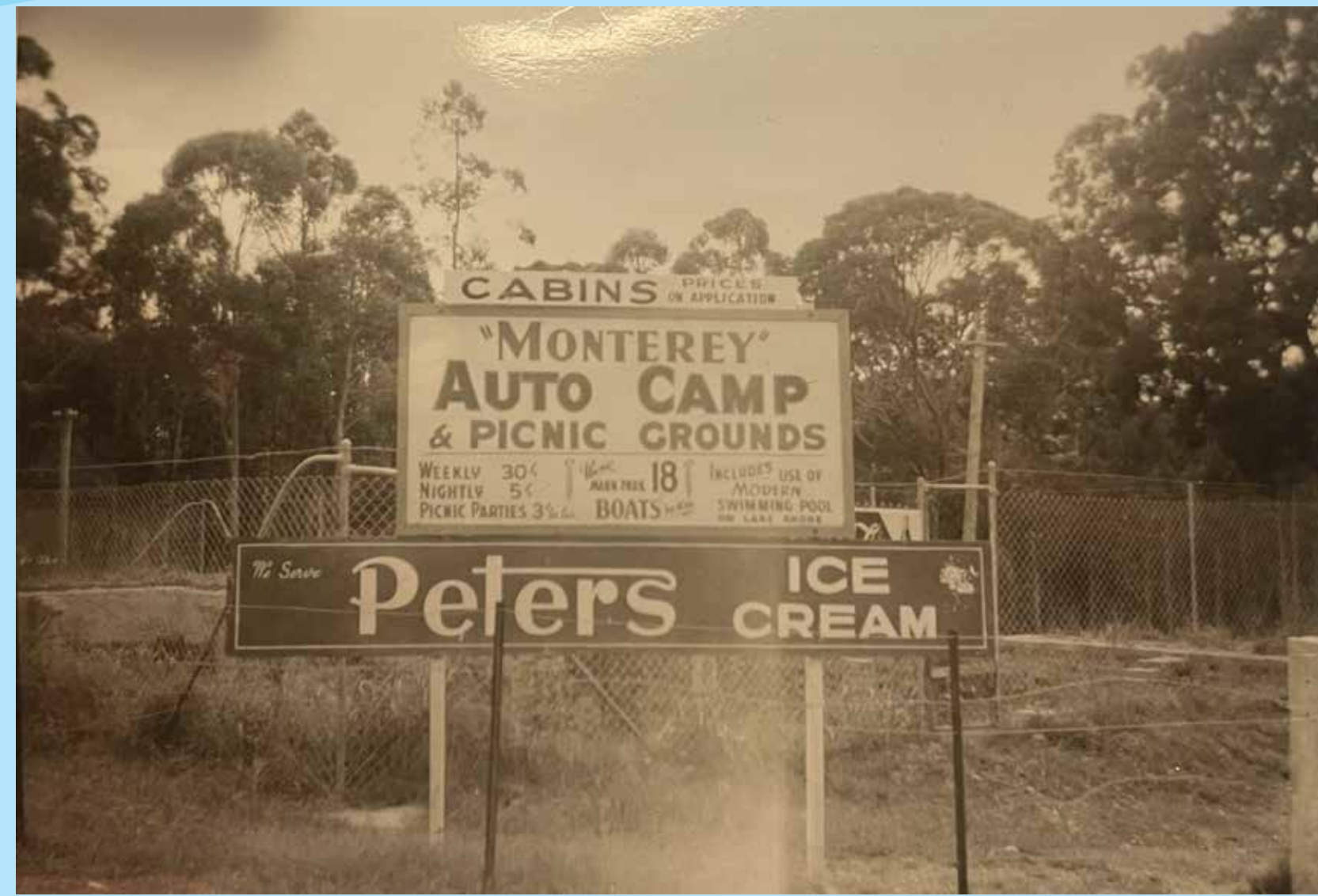


The shop being placed on site

Originally named The Monterey Auto Camp during its construction phase (1955-1957), the completed facility boasted an impressive range of amenities. Its 14 acres of transformed bushland offered a 500-foot (one foot is approximately thirty centimetres) frontage on beautiful Lake Macquarie with space for 450 tents and caravans plus 36 cabins. The camp offered every possible convenience for travellers and holiday makers, including two swimming pools, a combined dance hall and cinema, a boiler to supply camp-wide hot water, a generator plant, a modern general store, family cabins, septic sewerage, furnished tents and an electrical system that illuminated the entire area at night.

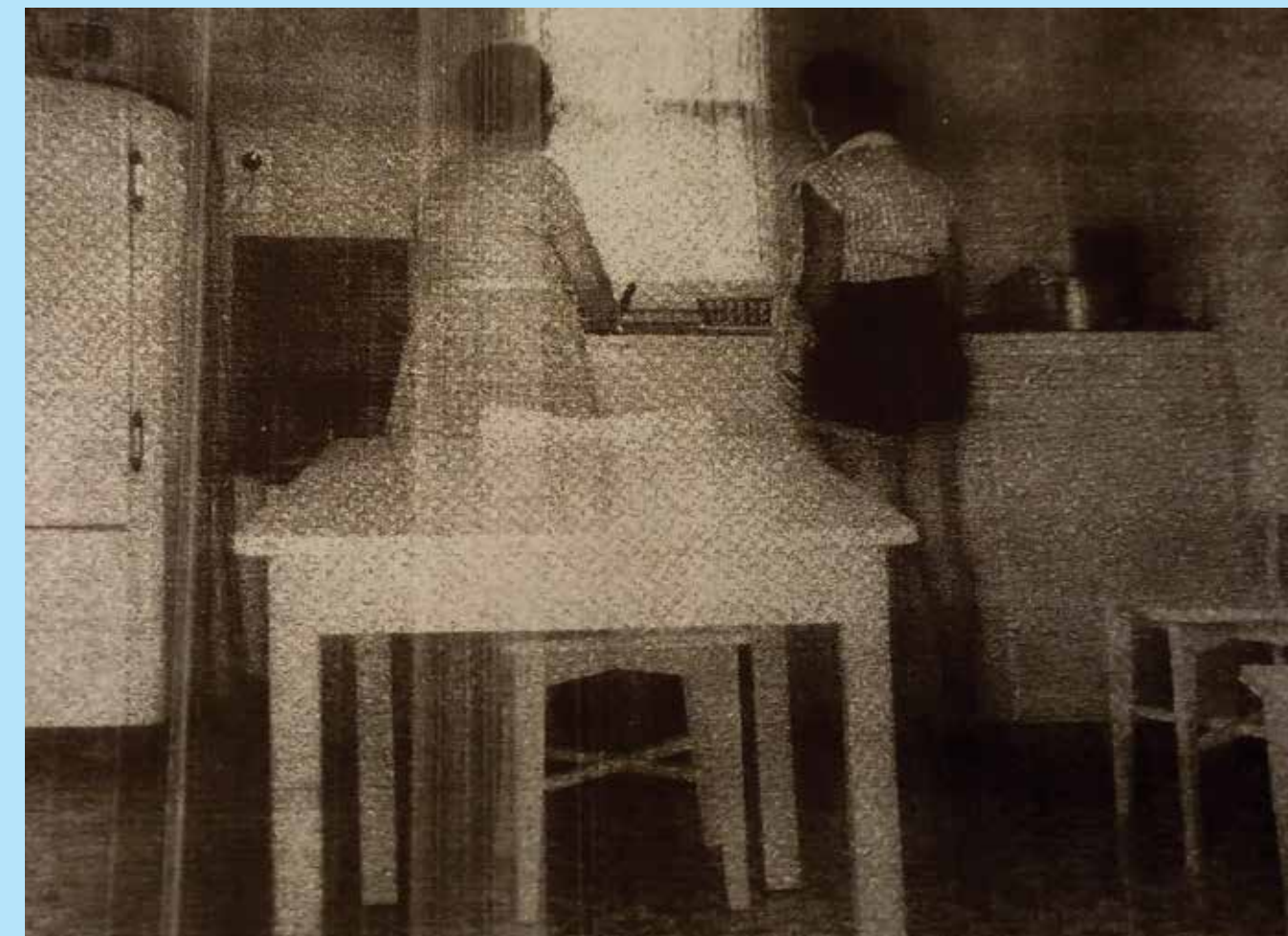


Shop at Auto Camp



Signage at Auto Camp

Each cabin held up to six persons, and the cost varied from only £4-10 (pounds) per week, depending on the time of year. Other features included a brick laundry with set-in coppers and spacious, well-maintained toilets. The camp had a reliable source of fresh drinking water from a 604-foot sub-artesian well. In addition, a reservoir holding a quarter of a million gallons had been built for showers and ablution facilities..



The interior of a cabin



'Kicking up their heels in the shop.' Ron Wendt and Jan Elliot

The centrepiece of the camp was the saltwater swimming pool, constructed by Bruce and Ron within a picturesque gum tree setting. Using a grader and a front-end loader, they carved out the pool, which held approximately 1,020 cubic metres of saltwater, pumped from the lake. This pool became a focal point, not just for the Mannering Park residents, especially the children, but for the whole northern part of the Wyong Shire. It served as a community asset, hosting swimming lessons and activities for the Mannering Park Swimming Club. It was an important and well utilised community asset.



Swimming Pool area



Inside the shop

The camp catered to a diverse clientele, welcoming picnickers, campers and permanent residents.

Bruce Elliot's initial investment grew from £25,000 (approximately \$50 000) to at least £35 000 before the project was completed.

Bruce Elliot also built a dozen small rowing boats for hire.



Early residents of Mannering Park in the shop



*Founders of the Monterey Auto Camp
Bruce Elliot playing marbles and Ron Wendt watching on*

In December 1953, Bruce acquired a 14-acre lot and began building the camp with his partner, Ron Wendt. Living in tents initially, they first constructed a boat shed. They cleared the land with readily available dynamite, creating hazardous situations at times.



Clearing the site, stump would have been dynamited

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Information taken from an article written in a Wheels Magazine in 1957, speaking to locals and a family member, Pat Whitbourne, nee Wendt.