

MANLY CHUTE

(1903-ca. 1907) Built at Steyne Court, Manly, the Manly Chute water and amusement park was built in 1903 and operated over and beyond the summer months (ca. October - April) each year. While the feature attractions were the Canadian water chute and the Tobaggan, the management also provided various alternate entertainments, including variety concerts and film exhibitions. The park is believed to have closed down either in late 1906 or early 1907 after the managing company sold the land.



The Manly Chute

Source: www.panoramio.com (photo uploaded by Craig Tindale)

Situated at the corner of South Steyne and Ashburner Street, Manly, the Manly Chute was established in 1903 by a syndicate called the Manly Chute and Amusements Company. The land was purchased sometime around September/October that year. Shortly after it was incorporated on 6 November, the company's General Manager, Archibald Baird, struck with the previous tenant, Henry Bardolph, to purchase the building which had been used as a refreshment room for The Maze, a place of amusement which he had been operating for three years, beginning 1 May 1901. The deal included employing Bardolph, his wife and son, Donald, to continue on as operators of the Manly Chute's refreshment service. The company subsequently stocked the premises with wine and other goods (SMH: 12 Mar. 1904, 8; 19 Mar. 1904, 9).

After securing the rights to the building and permission to demolish the maze, the company set about erecting the water slides which were to be the park's main attraction. The Manly Chute's official opening, timed to coincide with the school holidays, took place on 14 December in the presence of Sir John See, members of the NSW Ministry and the Mayor and alderman of Manly. The first entertainment was presented by a military band under the conductorship of Mr L. De Groen. The *Sydney Morning Herald* indicates that the park was open at night, with illumination provided by "fairy and other lamps" (12 Dec. 1903, 14).

MANLY BEACH.

MANLY BEACH.
Five Promenade Decked Saloon Steamers leave
No. 3 JETTY, CIRCULAR QUAY,
for this Favourite Seaside Resort.
Hosts of Attractions, with the Latest Craze,
"SHOOTING THE CHUTES," etc.
Fares: Adults, 4d each way; Children, 2d each way.
See Time-table Wednesdays' and Saturdays' Daily
Papers.

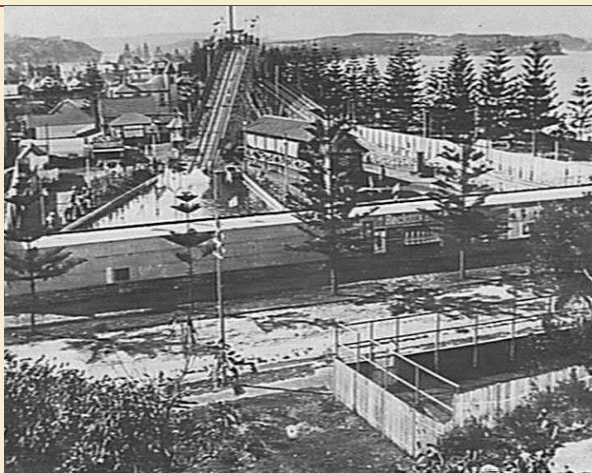
Sydney Morning Herald 4 Feb. (1904), 1.

One of the most popular attractions at Manly Chute from 13 April 1904 onwards was the sensational feat of shooting the chute on a bicycle. The first to do this was Bert Scott, with Professor Adrianna taking over in 1905.

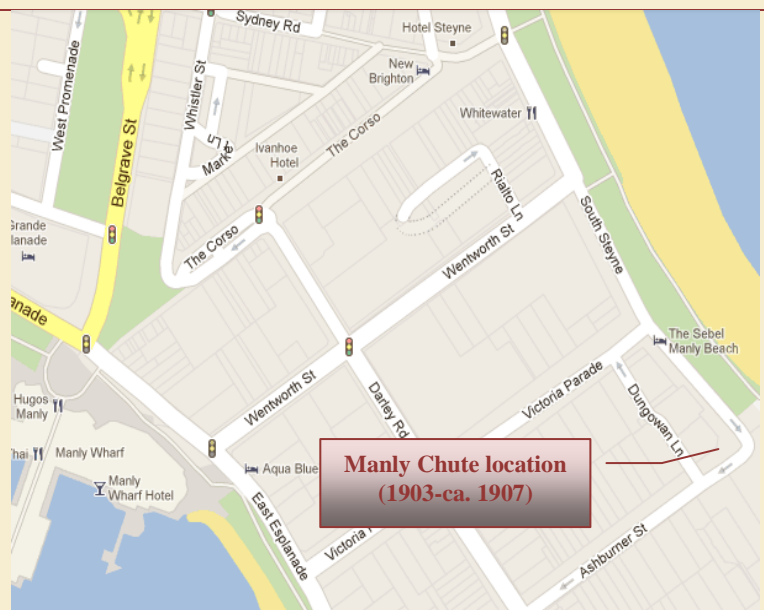
The musical entertainment offered to patrons varied from local bands, orchestras and military bands (including the Vice Regal Military band) to variety performers and film exhibitors. In late 1905 the management began presenting a series of "Continental." Among the artists and acts to have been engaged over the 1905/06 and 1906/07 seasons were The Golden Trio (1905), Charles Pope and his Georgia Cakewalkers (comprising "14 American negroes"), Blutch Jones (1906), Fred Davys (1906), Tom Edwards (1906), Master Leslie Holman (1906).

Although not reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, New Zealand's *Wanganui Herald* records that the park's bioscope caught fire one night in late February 1906 (possibly while the entertainment was under the management of Fred Davys). The writer notes that some £80 worth of film was destroyed in a minute (24 Feb. 1906, 7).

The Manly Chute is thought to have closed either in late 1906 or sometime in early 1907. While no record has yet been located to confirm this, advertisements for the park stop in late 1906. On 3 November that year the *Sydney Morning Herald* also records that two allotments on Ashburner Street (portions of the Manly Chute Estate) were sold for £552 (15).



Above: Photo courtesy of Michael Raynor



HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. Despite its immediate popularity with locals and the wider Sydney public, the new venture encountered some unexpected complications early on. Within three months of opening the park, the Manly Chute and Amusements Company was forced to take out an injunction restraining Henry Bardolph from occupying the refreshment rooms and from dealing with certain properties. The matter came to a head when Bardolph "refused to allow the managing director of the company or the acting manager to have access to the cash register or the money therein." The company subsequently gave them notice of dismissal, claiming that as employees they had demonstrated insubordination by disobeying legitimate orders given to them. The Bardolphs, however, were steadfast in their refusal to give up possession of the premises, the goods therein and the cash register.

The issues which led to the two parties ending up in court concerned payment to Bardolph for goodwill, the wine license (valued at £140) and the improvements he made to the original Maze (valued at £225) which had been demolished in order to erect the water slides. Bardolph's solicitor stated that his client and the company's General Manager Archibald Laidlaw Baird had agreed to several other conditions, namely a permanent position of employment, which Bardolph argued had been settled as a minimum of three years, and an increase in his wages after a specified date. Their argument was that the Manly Chute and Amusements Company had breached the agreement by instructing its solicitors to send a letter (26 Feb. 1904) demanding that Bardolph immediately transfer the license (to their nominated licensee) and give up possession of the premises. Bardolph further stated that no payment of moneys owed was forthcoming and the letter of demand breached the agreement made with Baird regarding permanency. It appears from the reports published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the disagreements between the two parties was the result of the promises made by Baird, whose employment had since been terminated, which may or may not have been made in accordance with the company's directives.

Although the Manly Chute and Amusements Company motion for the continuation of the injunction was granted on 22 March, with Bardolph ordered to abide by the ruling until the matter was heard in court, no details of an eventual court case have been located, suggesting that both parties may have eventually reached a mutual agreement without further legal proceedings. [See "Further Reference" section below for links to the *Sydney Morning Herald* reports on the Equity Court injunction.]

2. The Manly Chute management was faced with a further problem in 1905 when the local council made a complaint regarding employees of the Railway service accepting employment as musicians at the park. This forced the Railway and Tramways Commissioners to refuse permission for its members to compete against professional musicians (SMH: 22 Dec. 1905, 3).

MANLY WATER CHUTE.

The first appearance of Messrs. Charles Pope and Blutch Jones at the chute continental last Saturday night proved successful. Mr. De Groen has re-engaged them to appear at next Wednesday's continental. The toboggan races announced for tonight have been postponed for a few days, pending the completion of the special racing cars.

Sydney Morning Herald 19 Feb. (1906), 10.

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Equity Court (Before Mr Justice A. H. Simpson, Chief Judge in Equity), Motion to Continue Injunction."

SMH: 19 Mar. (1904), 9.

"Law Report: Friday March 11 - Equity Court, Motion to Continue Injunction." SMH: 12 Mar. (1904), 8.

See also:

OW: 25 Apr. (1906), 65.

SMH: 10 Jan. (1906), 4 • 15 Jan. (1906), 12 • 19 Feb. (1906), 10 • 19 Apr. (1906), 11 • 3 Nov. (1906), 15.

WC: 24 Feb. (1906), 7.