



Images courtesy of Sydney Morning Herald, NPWS(NSW) and John Cann Collections.

# Happy Valley

**FREE ENTRY**

**27 March –  
2 August 2020**

## La Perouse in the Depression

Happy Valley features the amazing memories, experiences, photographs and treasures of the people who lived in La Perouse's unemployment camps, emerging along the coastline in the 1930s.

---

*When your hair has turned  
to silver*

*We will still be on the dole  
And we live in Happy Valley  
Where the boomerangs  
are sold*

*With a garden filled with  
cabbages*

*Down the sandy beach  
we'll stroll*

*When your hair has turned  
to silver*

*We will still be on the dole.*

*The Happy Valley song from the 1930s  
("Bread and Dripping" Wimmins Films, 1981)*

---



*Two little boys in front of a Happy Valley shanty,  
c.1932. Sydney Morning Herald Collection.*

**During the Great Depression in Australia, shanty towns or unemployment camps appeared on the outskirts of towns and cities. People who couldn't afford housing lived in makeshift huts in camps formed mainly south of Sydney Harbour at Brighton-le-Sands, Rockdale, Long Bay and La Perouse.**



*La Perouse camp looking towards Bunnerong Power Station, c.1935. John Cann Collection.*

La Perouse became the home for a sprawling 'village' of the unemployed and their families. There were three camps; Happy Valley (the largest and most organised), Frog Hollow and Hill 60.

---

***"We had freedom here, even if  
it was freedom to starve. If you  
wanted to swim or lie down for  
an hour, or to fish, you could.  
There wasn't a lot of ill health.  
We were getting plenty of  
sunshine and plenty of fish and  
vegetables."***

*Tom Galvin, from 'Weevils in the Flour', 1978*

---

The camps gave hundreds of people a refuge, a place to live, and community during a time of extended hardship and uncertainty. But they were unwelcome to many local residents, causing tension and conflict.

La Perouse Museum has curated Happy Valley, an exhibition that highlights some of the stories and experiences of the families who made Happy Valley their home during the Great Depression – these accounts are very moving, shocking and even funny.

---

***“You made up your own games in the camps...like rounders and drop-the-hanky. And there were plenty of places to hide because the homes were all so close together.”***

*Bob Tasker, Sydney Morning Herald,  
23 March 2010*

---

Visit Happy Valley: La Perouse in the Depression to:

- Experience a **replica Shanty Hut** and watch a rare film about women's memories of the camps
- Revisit ‘trash to treasure’ **Depression jewellery** made by some of the camp's residents
- See a gallery of **Depression-era images** recording how much La Perouse – and Sydney – has changed
- Visit another “trash to treasure” exhibition “Beach Couture – A Haute Mess” gowns and costumes made from beach trash by the artist Marina DeBris!

**Join a free Curator's Tour** of the exhibition, bookings essential by emailing [lpn@randwick.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lpn@randwick.nsw.gov.au)

**Saturday 9 May 2020, 1.30 – 2.30pm**

**Saturday 27 June 2020, 1.30 – 2.30pm**



*Line drawing of Shanty Gallery, Thomas Creative.*





# Beach Couture

A Haute Mess

27 March –  
2 August 2020

**FREE ENTRY**

To complement the 'making do' themes of Happy Valley, this small show features a selection of amazing gowns and costumes made from beach trash! Artist Marina DeBris began collecting trash as part of a growing concern about the health of our oceans, from which she has created stunning high fashion. The Museum will be hosting DeBris' creations as part of a national tour. Not to be missed!