



# A History of BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park



# From cows to caravans, BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park has come a long way...

## In the Beginning, There Were...Cows

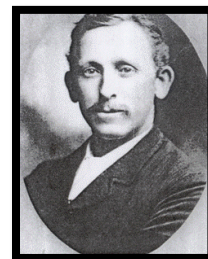


Elizabeth East

Before BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park became the thriving resort it is today, it was a dairy farm; home to the cows and also Thomas and Elizabeth East.

Thomas and Elizabeth East arrived in Australia in 1841, after a long six months on the ship "Earl Grey". Then, in 1852, Thomas became the first in the area to purchase his own property, which was then known as "Prospect." Together with their six boys and six girls, the family worked hard, milking the cows and selling hand made butter for 5d. a pound. Thomas and Elizabeth met day to day challenges with strength and determination carving a reputation as a highly respected family whilst creating a legacy for future generations.

Although renowned for its dairy industry, by 1893 Kiama was drawing the crowds with its spectacular natural beauty. Whilst these early tourists flocked to see The Blow Hole and the glorious beaches, George East was busy running the family farm and caring for his now elderly mother, Elizabeth. In 1901 George married Nellie Rogers and together they had one daughter and two sons. Their youngest, Bruce, began to help his father manage the estate.



George East



Nellie East

## And Then There Were Campers

The East family worked hard to keep the farm running smoothly, making butter, cooling it with water and then sending it off to the ships for export to Sydney. When the opportunity arose for some leisure time the family would take the buggy to visit friends and attend picnics where everyone would dance, swim and have a good time.

By the time Bruce took ownership of "Prospect" visitors began to come over the hill to gaze down at what is now known as Easts Beach. After a time, men carrying tents on their back were asking if they could set up camp and Bruce was happy to oblige. With Australian hospitality at its best, it wasn't long before others found their way to the secluded lagoon. The family dairy remained fully operational with campers and cows sharing the land in harmony.



East's Beach in the 1930s

# Bruce East



**Bruce East**

Bruce began to see the commercial value in camping and soon people were paying 5/- week or 1/- a night to stay at the park. Even in the very early days the park was maintained to a high standard with pit toilets and cold showers provided for the guests. There was even a field boiler for clothes. And guests were also treated to fresh milk and butter, courtesy of the East family and their dairy herd.

His life changed forever on the Christmas of 1935 when William Fuller and his family broke down just along the way from Prospect. Bruce offered the Fullers a place to pitch their tent for the night and they ended up staying for the rest of their vacation, becoming some of the first campers at Easts Beach. Cupid was at work that night and Bruce began to fall for William's daughter, Bessie. A courtship began between the two young lovers and Bruce would travel to Sydney to visit his sweetheart. The distance proved to be tricky as it would take all day to travel by road and up to four hours by rail. But ever the intrepid young man, Bruce became acquainted with Dr Hayden, a gliding instructor for the Sydney University Gliding Club and it wasn't long before Bruce was flying up to Sydney in a Tiger Moth! Destined to be together, Bruce and Bessie were married in 1940 and went on to have three sons—Robert, Alan and Phillip.

With three young sons and the park now open to the public, Bruce and Bessie had to work hard to keep up! But they managed and gradually the park's reputation grew, becoming popular for its natural beauty, facilities and cleanliness. As well as looking after the park, Bruce and Bessie were heavily involved in the community with Bruce president of the P&C and Bessie president of the CWA. Then, in 1964, Bruce was elected to Kiama council before becoming Mayor from 1971 to 1974.

When Bruce and Bessie finally retired they moved to Bright in Victoria and the management of the park was overseen by Robert and Alan. Bruce and Bessie were aged 91 when they lost their first born son, Robert, aged just 63 and within a matter of months Bruce was left a widower having lost his beloved Bessie.



**Bruce and Bessie**

In October 2009 Bruce passed away at the age of 95, his departure marking the end of an era. The holiday park meant the world to him and he played an integral part in its history. He is greatly missed but fondly remembered.

## The East Family

On leaving school both Robert and Alan made the decision to stay in the family business while the youngest son, Phillip, trained to be an electrician. Robert married Judith Blow in 1966 and lived at "Valley View" in Jamberoo for ten years, managing the dairy farm by day and working at the holiday park by night. During this time Alan lived and worked with his parents managing the caravan park. The dairy farm at Jamberoo sold in 1974 and Robert and Judith returned to Easts Beach to live.



**Early Campers**

In 1980 the decision was made to extend the business and the East family purchased Fountain Caravan Park at Eden, where Alan and his wife Sandra moved to manage it. This property has now been sold. In 1985, Phillip was asked to rejoin the family business and after marrying Dianne Coffill in 1969, took up management of Lane Cove River Van Village. This park was later returned to the National Parks. Today both Alan, Phillip and their families own parks on the mid North coast and South Coast of NSW.

# Robert East



**Robert East**

Robert East was born in 1942 and grew up on his parent's farm and caravan park. He was helping out on the farm from a young age and on returning from school would be milking the cows and digging fence post holes by hand. Robert was known as a daredevil and a prankster, relishing in playing tricks and having fun. From the age of 16 Robert spent 5 years in the Volunteer Citizen Military Forces. He also drove taxis in Sydney and played Rugby Union in the South Coast competition before retiring with an injured knee.

In 1966 Robert married Judith Blow and the couple lived together at "Valley View" in Jamberoo for almost ten years. The dairy farm eventually sold in 1974 and Robert and Judith returned to East's Beach to live. There they raised three children, Leanne, Darren and Jennifer, whilst both working long hours at the caravan park. It was hard work but their efforts were rewarded with a successful business.

Like his father before him, Robert became an active member in the community. He was elected to Kiama council in 1999 before becoming Deputy Mayor in 2004. He served on numerous council committees including the Council/Dairy Farmers sub-committee and the Kiama Tidy Towns committee. He was also a member of the Kiama Rotary Club, joining in 1977 and then becoming club president for 1982 and 83. In 1987 Robert was made a Paul Harris Fellow, Rotary's highest honor and in 2005 he received a Paul Harris Sapphire Pin for over 25 years of exceptional and continuous service. Robert was heavily involved in fundraising for various organizations and has helped raise a good sum of money for charity.

Robert was a member of the NSW Caravan and Camping Industry Australia for 35 years and president of the Park Division for 4 years. In 1982 Easts Beach joined Big4 and Robert became an inspector for parks who also wanted to become part of the group. Robert was also a director and president of Kiama Tourism and was a member of the Olympic Games Committee in Wollongong.

Whilst Robert loved his work and devoted a lot of time and energy to different projects he also had a passion for cars, Peugeots in particular. He was a member of the local Vintage Car Association and the NSW Peugeot Car Club. His pride and joy was a restored 1954 Peugeot 203. As well as cars, Robert had a soft spot for horses. He owned a Piebald horse at the farm in Jamberoo and then a Draught horse called Phillip. One of Robert's hobbies was to collect and restore old horse drawn carts.



**Tourism Industry Awards**

In 2001, at the age of 59, Robert was diagnosed with bowel cancer. After surgery to remove the tumor and bouts of chemotherapy the cancer then returned again in 2003, this time in his liver and under his stomach. Though he was only given 6 months to live Robert faced his illness with courage and determination, refusing to let the cancer get him down. In the September of 2003 Robert was dealt another blow when he suffered severe burns after being sprayed with superheated hydraulic fluid from a tipping trailer. Robert spent 3 weeks in hospital where he had over 140 visitors and 500 get well messages and cards.

Sadly, Robert passed away on the 13th of January 2006 at the age of just 63. His funeral was attended by an estimated 1000 people. Robert was to be awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia and had wanted to hear the announcement of his OAM among the Queen's list of Australia Day honors but unfortunately was unable to make it. The OAM was bestowed to Robert posthumously on 26th January 2006 in honor of his charitable work through Rotary International and his community work for Kiama.



**Robert East**

Robert was known as the Mayor of Easts Beach, a larger than life character who was always laughing, joking and generally enjoying life. He was described as being hugely enthusiastic and a hard worker who brought light and warmth into the lives of those he touched. His memory will never fade and his legacy will forever remain here at BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park.

# East's Beach Today



**Judith, Leanne, Darren & Jenny**

Today the park is run by Leanne, Darren and Jennifer, all of whom hold the same strong work ethic as the generations before them. The three siblings immerse themselves in the work of the holiday park, each playing an essential role in the smooth running of their business.

When they first came to the park, Leanne and Darren spent four years living in a caravan with their parents before moving into the new house on the hill just after Jennifer was born in 1977. The holiday park offered the young East's a wonderful playground, especially during the holidays when the flow of campers and guests would bring new friends and new adventures. Living on the park whilst their parents worked the children would enjoy playing and fishing in the lagoon,

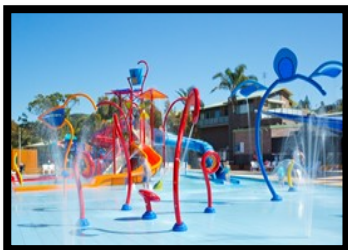
exploring the creeks, having rides on the horse and cart with Robert and attending various events such as Miss East Beach and Country and Western nights.

Like their father before them, Leanne, Darren and Jennifer began helping out on the park from a young age. They initially started by doing the milk run, getting up early and riding on the back of the ute to help Robert distribute milk to the campers. From there they moved up to running the ice cream van before finally gaining more responsibility with Leanne and Jennifer working in the office and Darren in the grounds.



**Overlooking the Beach**

After each going their separate ways to study and explore the world, they all eventually returned to the holiday park to work at the place that had created such fond childhood memories. Darren came back to the business in 1994 where he began to learn the ropes. After several years in the hotel industry and with a diploma in Hospitality Management, Leanne returned in 1997 and then Jennifer rejoined in 1998 following the completion of her diploma in Travel and Tourism. Leanne, Darren and Jennifer now share a unique working relationship, a special bond that allows the three to work harmoniously, ensuring the park is run smoothly and efficiently.



**The Waterpark**

The three now have families of their own and there is a new generation enjoying life at the holiday park. Leanne married Jamie Williams in 1997 and they have two children, Jessica and Jackson. There were two weddings in 2000 with Darren marrying Michelle Edwards and Jennifer marrying Rob Drummond. Darren and Michelle now have three children, Micaela, Ethan and Brandon and Jennifer and Rob have Bailey and Chloe.

Judith still keeps a watchful eye over proceedings but is taking things much easier these days. Having worked hard for many years, she certainly deserves the rest, though with seven grandchildren she can still have her hands full!

BIG4 East's Beach Holiday Park is one of the largest and oldest parks in the country, boasting over 550 sites and a wide range of accommodation. Today we have an awesome waterpark complex, along with playgrounds, jumping pillow, games room, massage studio, café and the function room. We have a range of accommodation powered and ensuite sites right the way through to fabulous waterfront villas. With top of the range facilities combined with stunning location, the holiday park attracts guests from all over the world.

From a dairy farm back in the 19th century, East's Beach has grown into a glorious tourist destination that sees loyal guests coming back again and again. The holiday park was built on strong foundations of hard work, determination and a passion for the industry. Several lifetimes worth of work have gone into creating a reputable establishment that strives to give guests the best possible experience. No doubt the holiday park will continue to excel and remain a treasured part of Kiama for many more years to come.



**East's Beach Today**

# Carry on Camping...

**With 3 generations of campers, the Breusts have been regulars since 1957. Allan Breust has been holidaying here all his life and has kindly taken the time to offer an insight into his family's history here at BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park...**

Keith and Merle Breust were the trendsetters, selecting Easts as their holiday spot with a ruler, map and a desire to head to the coast. Their first visit to the holiday park was in January 1957, back in the days when after you pitched your tent you then put up your fence to keep the dairy cows from standing on the guy ropes! The Breusts would travel with their family from Temora, which usually meant an 8 hour drive; a long trip, especially with young children in the back.

In the late sixties the coast became very dry leaving Bruce East short of fodder for the dairy herd. With a good season at Pine Hill, Keith was able to come to the rescue with a supply of hay to sell. Keith was very passionate about Clydesdale horses and it wasn't long before his love of these big animals rubbed off on to a young Robert East. Over the years the families became close and a strong friendship grew.

The Breusts continued to holiday at BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park and in 1975 Allan Breust even stepped in to work over the Christmas and New Year period due to a shortage of staff. Then, in March 1981 Allan Breust married Denise Barrett and a new generation started to enjoy their holidays at the holiday park. Rebecca, Mark and Luke are now adults but still look forward to the annual family holiday.



**The Breust Family**

Keith and Merle continued to be regulars until sadly Keith passed away in 1998. Health permitting, Merle still likes to holiday at Easts Beach even though she is now in her eighties.

*"In January 2006 our holidays changed forever following the passing of our dear friend, Robert. His loud voice and infectious laugh echoing from our caravan will always be missed."*

*"We have seen many changes over the years and the current facilities at the park are among the best along the South Coast. It's a credit to the East family and we look forward to enjoying many more holidays to come at BIG4 Easts Beach Holiday Park."*





***Where great memories  
are a holiday away”***