

John Inglis Clark Cosh (Jack) (1873-1946)

John Cosh was the son of the Rev. Dr James Cosh, a Presbyterian and Professor of Pacific Languages, John studied medicine at the University of Sydney and at Cambridge. During the plague of 1900 he was made Sydney's temporary health officer.

In 1900 Dr Cosh married Louise Calvert from a Southern Highlands family with a long standing interest in botany, painting and history. The Coshes had one child, Janet Louise in 1901. On John's retirement in 1933 the family moved to Moss Vale. John died in 1946 and Louise in 1956.

Many of the paintings displayed here are of Gunnamatta Bay around the end of the first decade of the 20th century, when the area was a popular resort for picnic parties, for boating and fishing. Many of the water frontages on this side of the bay were sold at the first land auction in 1895. There were also boat hiring sheds and weekenders there, and as John Cosh obviously visited the area many times it is easy to imagine that his family holidayed there as well.

Paintings

Mouth of the Hacking River, c.1912

A sandstone monument to the explorers, Bass and Flinders was built in 1949 by Frank Cridland, a Cronulla businessman and historian. It stands at the southernmost tip of Cronulla on the Esplanade between Salmon Haul Bay and Oak Park.

View towards the sandhills, Cronulla, c 1908-1912

This artwork appears to be painted from a spot just north of Oak Park looking north towards the sand dunes at Wanda Beach.

Extensive sand hills, now mutilated by mining, once stretched from Wanda Beach to Kurnell. They were vegetated prior to white settlement, but early landholders, like John Connell and his grandsons, John and Elias Laycock cleared much of the peninsula for timber. When Thomas Holt bought the estate in 1861 he began grazing sheep and cattle on it. It proved unsuitable grazing land and by the 1930s these dunes were bare.

See 'Environmental Disasters' for more on the destruction of the sandhills.

Gunnamatta Bay Wharf

In November 1908. a Mr Blake of Kogarah successfully tendered from Sutherland Shire Council to build a wharf on Gunnamatta Bay. Inaugural trip of a ferry service to operate between Cronulla (Gunnamatta) and Audley was held on 1 December 1909. About thirty guests. mainly Council members and their families, celebrated beneath a tent on Gunnamatta Bay foreshores, on a seasonably hot summer's day. Later, Mr W. A. J. Hodgkinson, marine engineer, took them on a special trip to Audley aboard SS Pioneer. Contemporary photographs show Gunnamatta Bay

populated by yachts and dinghies. but few houses on the opposite shore. In December 1910. a second ferry *Advance* was purchased. A ferry service was also established from Gunnamatta Bay to Bundeena (Simpson's Hotel).

References:

- Rhys Pidgeon, 'Mr WAJ Hodgkinson – Ferry Manager', *SSHS Bulletin*, February 1996
- Les Clarke, '54 Years in Sutherland Shire, 1912-1966, *SSHS Bulletin*, February 2006
- <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cosh-james-3266>
- <https://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/cosh-janet.html>