

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Edited by:
M. Hutton Neve

Bulletin No. 1,
September 1966.

Laycock Family of Burraneer Bay

The Laycock family -- father, mother and eldest son all. Have pioneer associations with the Shire.

Thomas Laycock sen. came. to N.S.W. in 1789 as a sergeant in the NSW Corps; In 1791 he was promoted to quartermaster., and later became deputy Commissary - general. He resigned this position in 1800.

In 1806 both he and his son Thomas (an Ensign in the Corps) were court-martialled for "using threats and language in. the public street's of the most mutinous tendency". Both were found guilty (and drunk at the time), and Laycock sen. was dismissed from the Service; the son was apparently censured and allowed to continue in the Corps, for he later became 'a captain in 1811. The court-martialling of Laycock sen. did not, however, mitigate against his later becoming a magistrate.

Laycock sen. died in NSW in 1808-9 while his wife was on a visit to England. On her return Mrs. Hannah Laycock petitioned Governor Macquarie' for a grant. of land -- she already had one grant of 500 acres on Cook's River -- and received 120 acres (today part of Bexley). The whole property she called "King's Grove", where she lived until she sold out to Simeon Lord in 1829. Simeon Lord also had connections with the Shire.

Thomas Laycock jun: In 1809 Thomas jun. married-Isabella Bunker at St. Phillip's Church, Sydney, 1/6/1809, his rank being given as Captain 98th Regt., Isabella was the' daughter of one "Captain" Bunker, master of a sealing ship -- who liked to be known as "captain"; and when someone sometime tacked on "RN." he did not deny the added glory:

Isabella died in 1817, leaving six children including a newborn infant; and the "bereaved" husband then married three weeks later (again at St, Phillips), by; special licence., Margaret, daughter of John Connell. The reason given for this strange marriage was the urgent necessity of a foster mother for the infant: Margaret herself did not have her first child until over 12 months later -- so all was well:

At the time of this second marriage Laycock was resident at his property "Kelvin", Bringelly.. After this marriage. he built a house for Margaret Laycock on ,the west side of Burraneer Bay. `The stone, for the house was quarried on the property and 'convict-built', It was. completed in 1821 and named "Fernleigh!", with the date, carved in Roman numerals (MDCCCXXI) over the front door. This is substantiated by a statement in the "Wentworth Papers"" (a Mitchell Library collection) that on Dec. 22, 1821, Laycock was assigned two convict servants ."for the sum of £4-11-0 due on Dec. 31, 1822".

Laycock had two children by his second marriage. He does not seem to have spent much time at "Fernleigh", leaving Margaret to look after them all. His Bringelly property apparently occupied much of his time, and he also had his duties as 'a local magistrate. I have not been able to trace any details of his life; at "Fernleigh"

After Laycock' s death 7/11/1833 at "Kelvin", Bringelly, his father-in-law John Connell was, appointed guardian of "the infant devisees" (Wentworth Papers). (N.B: until the Guardianship of Infants At 1886 no married woman could have the legal custody of her own children, the father's Will stipulating a suitable male guardian and trustee for his estate). Little, if anything, is recorded of Mrs. Laycock II and the children after the father's death.

(contd. over).

So far, I have not traced any Sutherland grants-of land to Thomas Laycock jun. -- his father had none in the Shire, although he owned land elsewhere. John Connell owned several large blocks, but I have not yet traced a definite grant at Burraneer Bay. At the time "Fernleigh" was built, all Connell's lands were held on "Governor's Promise". In 1827 Oxley, Surveyor-General, instructed Surveyor Dixon to survey Connell's lands "which that gentleman had occupied for many years and for which he held the. Governor's Promise". It is obvious that Connell must have owned land at Burraneer Bay (Or Laycock jun. did), especially as Connell was at this time in partnership with Simeon Lord in trading ventures; they owned several small sailing vessels which plied between Burraneer Bay: and Sydney with timber cut from the great cedar forest then covering the western hills rising above the. Bay.

Contrary to a story featured some time ago in the "Leader" about "Fernleigh", the Laycock family did not have a "crest of a running horse", as they Were not of the "landed gentry of England" nor is there any truth in their story that Laycock obtained his land by. riding a "fettered horse" around selected boundaries in one day.

"Fernleigh" is private property, having been purchased by Mr./Mrs. Errol Alcock nearly 30 years ago, together with some pieces of the original furniture. The home has been lived in continuously. since it was built, and so is in excellent preservation.; only a few minor alterations have been made to the property since 1821.

.....
BYEWAYS OF HISTORY

Sutherland/Cronulla Steam Tramway: August 3 marked the. 35th year of the end of passenger services on this line. The ,7 ½mile line was opened on 12 June 1911, and was the last such tramway built in NSW.. Although operated as a tramway, the line had been built to light railway .standards, thus enabling Government railway trucks to be conveyed to various sidings along the life -- an advantage to the market gardeners on the route. Unchecked competition from road transport led to the discontinuance of passenger services 3 August 1931, but goods services remained until . 12 Feb. 1932, when. the line was closed and the tracks dismantled. The route was from S'land Station via the Prince's Highway and Kingsway to Cronulla, then along Curranulla (now Cronulla) St., Waratah St. and Ewos Parade, terminating in a balloon loop in Shelley Beach Park.

Early Land Grants: When considering early claims to land, a clear distinction must be observed between the actual reception of the land and the of title. From the time of Governor Phillip, land was allocated to "free persons" on a "Governor's Promise"; the land was selected and roughly Marked out; and the portion noted in official records. This "promise" could sometimes be negotiated -- and often was -- although it was generally supposed to be a mandatory that the recipient occupy and improve it over a period of at least 5 years. It was many `years :before these "Governor's Promises" were surveyed and legal title granted to the land. James Birnie, the 1st known settler in the Shire, was. "promised' land.. by Governor Macquarie in 1815 (700 acres at Kurnell), but title was not granted. until 1844..

Kurnell/Curnell/Connell: The origin, of the name 'Kurnell' is thought to have been an aboriginal corruption of the name of John Connell, 2nd settler in the Shire. According to a record in the Mitchell Library (article by A.G.' Poster, 1924, Newspaper Clippings Vol. 165) "The aborigines pronounced Connell as 'Kurnell' and quite 'recently the Government secured the engraving of the old cottage, and it is interesting to note that at the time the drawing was made* the name was spelt "Curnell". This cottage stood on the present-day site of the house 'of the Trustees;' in 1841 Connell planted two Norfolk pines in front of his cottage --they still survive.

.....
*1842.

(Sutherland Shire Historical Society)

BYEWAYS OF HISTORY (contd.):

Some Shire Names: Cronulla is thought to be an European variation of the aboriginal, word "Kurranulla" -- "the place of the pink shells". Certainly, after heavy storms', the ocean beaches may be covered with a myriad of tiny pink-tinted shells;

GyMEA was named after. the tall, red-flowered native lily.

Engadine was named after an old local estate -- which took its name from a place in Switzerland.

Como was named after Lake Como in Italy-- the resemblance having appealed to an early settler.

Highfields is the old-time name for Caringbah; there seems to be no definite record as to when this original name was dropped.

Macquarie Obelisk: in Macquarie Place, Sydney, there is a tall stone obelisk, designed by the convict-architect Francis Greenway at the request of Governor Macquarie, and erected in 1818, From this point all public roads in the colony were measured.

1853 Watch House, Balmain: the recently formed Balmain Association is very fortunate in having obtained the use of this historical building as the head-quarters and community centre; It is a two-storey stone building, roofed with slate; it is at present in a dilapidated state, although structurally almost entirely unspoilt. The Minister for Lands (Hon. T.L.Lewis) has agreed to its - preservation, with the National Trust as trustees, and they in turn have agreed to lease the building to the Balmain Association; who will restore it to its original condition under the supervision of the Trust. There is a small block of land attached, and an adjacent area is being added, the whole forming a community reserve. The address of the Watch House is 179 Darling St., Balmain.

-- National Trust Bulletin, April 1966.

Aboriginal Relics of the Shire: at the August monthly meeting Mr. Ian Sim, of Guildford, gave a most interesting talk, illustrated with a selection of coloured slides, of some of the aboriginal remains in the Shire. There are some 10,000 rock carvings in the Sydney area, about half of this number being in the Shire. Besides the rock carvings, there are a number of caves and rock shelters wherein are coloured paintings, mainly in. red and yellow ochre. Many display the various types of animals and birds familiar to the aborigines; there are some hunting scenes, and a few varied patterns. There are one or two Shire sites where collections of stones, placed in certain patterns, suggest they were of tribal religious meaning. Most of this aboriginal art is several thousand years old; some of it is deteriorating with time; a good deal of it --especially the rock carvings -- has been destroyed by indiscriminate or ignorant building and road construction, and also by the inevitable vandal. Consequently, most of these sites of native art are now not made public, so that they may be preserved as far as possible.

We extend our thanks to Mr.Jack Price, one of our Council members, for organising this interesting evening.,

"The Parish at St. Peter's, Cooks River" (Church of England) was formed on May 27, 1835, and embraced the area between Cooks River and Parramatta, and included all the present-day area of Sutherland.

St. John's Cemetery, Parramatta: this is the oldest existing Cemetery in Australia; it has been in use since 1790, and occasional burials still take place. For about the first 20 years it was used as a general cemetery for residents of all faiths in the surrounding districts; but after that it was used as an Anglican cemetery only, The cemetery, about 3 acres in extent, was not officially granted to the Church of England until December 1857,

- Church of England Historical Society Journal, September 1966.

Editorial Memo: if members wish to keep these bulletins, it is suggested that they purchase a manila foolscap folder from the local newsagent; your Council has decided that a Society Bulletin shall be published each quarter.

(contd. over)

