AUSTRALIAN CONVICT SLANG

From — "The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux" (1819);   republished 1964

This is the extraordinary autobiography of a "flash cove", or educated underworld thief who lived by his wits and his "gentlemanly" speech and appearance. Vaux (said to rhyme with "Hawkes") was transported three times, under varying aliases. His autobiography is in itself of unique interest; but what makes it all the more unique is that his "Vocabulary of the Flash Language" -- the London underworld slang of the 17th/18th century -- is not only the first but the only record of Australian slang ever published. The book is edited by Dr. Noel McLachlan (1964), MA Melb. 1950, Ph.D. Lond. 1957: Senior Lecturer in History, Monash Univ., Victoria. The book is obtainable at S'land Central Library, ref. 994.02 VAU.

A brief selection is given of the "Flash Language" --these words having now passed into everyday Australian slang.

CASH	beat up a person
BLOW THE GAFF	expose (by speech) by way of revenge
BOB	shilling
BOLT	run away (from capture): "Bolter" =.runaway convict:
BOUNCE	threaten, bully
BOWLED OUT	found out (probably originated from cricket, a common village game in the 17th/18th centuries)
CROSS	on the cross -- illegal acts, unfair (opp. to "square")
CRACKSMAN	housebreaker
DO THE TRICK	accomplish robbery, etc., with success
FANCY (adjective)	much admired, selective -- "fancy rig", "fancy woman"
FENCE	receiver of stolen goods
FRISK ,	to search a person
LAG)	convict under sentence of transportation
Old Lag)	convict returned Home (Eng.) after sentence expiration
Lagged)	sentenced 7 yrs. or more to transportation
MUG)	face
Queer Mug)	ugly face
NIX	nothing ("nix to it")
PATTER	chatter, talk
QUID	£ 1
QUOD	gaol
RIG	outfit of clothes
SLAVEY	servant, M or F
SNITCH	betray
SNOOZE	sleep
SOUND	"sound a person" -- to pump for knowledge, usually of escapes, etc.
SPIN A YARN .	tell a good story
SPLIT	betray a person
SQUARE	"on the square" -- fair, above board (opp. to "on the cross")
STOW IT	warning to "stop it"
SWAG	bundle or package (usually stolen)
TODDLER	(1) infirm elderly person (2) infant learning to walk
TURN IT UP	stop it
WACK, WHACK	equal share
WEED	tobacco

(translate: Nix to it, my colly* --it's on the cross, but we'll fence the fancy swag and wack up).

*Golly was a slang name for convicts in their time -- particularly those at the Toongabbie Government farm.

Vaux was well educated, a voracious reader, a good and observant writer. His account of convict life seems to be obviously factual, and is one of the very few personal histories written by convicts.. Vaux well knew the value of the written word -- and realised there would be' a good market for his "Memoirs"; he does not seem to have "slanted" his story to enhance its market value.

"P.O.M.E" = Prisoner of Mother England – early convicts stamped P.O.M.E. when transported to Australia

HISTORIC HOMES AROUND SYDNEY: Some of these are open for public inspection at varying times; all are easily reached by car. The National Trust NSW has approved the buildings named below as being of historic interest and representative of their period.

"Denham Court". Ingleburn: on the Campbelltown Rd. about 7 miles south of Liverpool. The land was granted to Judge-Advocate Richard Atkins but was purchased (or taken for a debt) by Captain Richard Brooks in 1810; in 1812 he built a small cottage -- which now forms part of the main building -- this being enlarged in 1832-3, to make the magnificent building which it now is. After the deaths of Capt. and Mrs. Brooks, their eldest daughter Christiana inherited the property; and in memory of them she built over their graves the "Brooks' Memorial Chapel", later renamed the "St. Mary the Virgin Chapel". Christiana married Capt. Thos. Bloomfield, and they lived there until the 1850s, then let the house as a girls' boarding school. In 1860 the land was subdivided and sold, and the house itself was sold in 1884 to Mr. John C. Mayne. He married Maude Macdonald in 1901 (whose family had rented some of the land); he died in 1924, and his widow lived there until her death in 1957, when the property passed to Miss G.F. Macdonald, who now lives there and is restoring it to its former beauty. "Denham Court" may be visited on Sundays from 2 to 4.30p.m, an admission charge being made, this going towards the expense of restoration.

Nearby is "Macquarie Fields House", built by the emancipist-merchant Samuel Terry for his married daughter Martha Hosking, in the 1840s. After being threatened with demolition about 9 years. ago, it is now being restored by Mr. David Jamieson, who has leased it from the Dept. of Agriculture. To the North is "Glenfield House", built by Dr. Charles Throsby in 1817, and on his death it passed to his nephew Charles Throsby; and is still in the Throsby family. South of Denham Court is "Varroville House" , built by Dr. Robert Townson LL.D, about 1820. He sold it in 1829, since when it has passed through many hands, the present owners being Mr./Mrs. A.C.M. Jackaman, who are restoring both house and garden to their former beauty. In Lithgow St. Campbelltown (off the Menangle Rd.) is "Glenalvon", built in 1842 by Michael Byrne, one of the earliest local publicans. It is now owned by Mrs. H. Davidson, who has restored it to a charming home. Most of these old homes are privately owned and not open for inspection; but generally, they may be viewed from the roadway. In the "History of Campbelltown" by Wm. A. Bayley, published by the Campbelltown Municipal Council. 1965 ($2.70), are detailed descriptions of some of these lovely old homes, together with many attractive photographs.

Experiment "Experiment Cottage", Parramatta: Ruse St., off Harris St., not far from the railway station. It was built by Surgeon John Harris about 1798, and stands on the site of James Ruse's "Experiment Farm", where Ruse grew the first wheat. It is a walk into history to visit the cottage; open Sats. and Suns., 2-5 p.m., and certain weekdays. Charges = adults 30 cents, children under 14 yrs. 5 cents. It is owned by the NSW National Trust. In the P'matta area also, is "Elizabeth Farm House", built 1793 by John Macarthur (cnr. Alice & Arthur Sts.). Not open for inspection. Not far away' is "Hambledon" (or "Firholme") Cottage", built probably about 1828, as a home for Penelope Lucas, governess to the Macarthur children. It is open for inspection at weekends, and is delightfully and charmingly furnished. It is in Hassell St., between Harris and Cliff Sts..

Map of Historical Buildings & Landmarks: published by H.E.C.Robinson Pty. Ltd., 85 cents all booksellers: describes the history/location of over 200 places bounded by Camden, Springwood, North Richmond, Sackville and Palm Beach. This map shows the location of all the above homes.

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St. George Historical Society President -- Mr. Gifford Eardley: it was with much regret that we learnt of the sudden heart-attack suffered by Mr. Eardley at Christmas; he is now out of hospital, and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

"The Kogarah-Sans Souci Steam Tram": by G. Eardley. This booklet, profusely illustrated by both drawings and photos., is now available at 65 cents -- enquiries from our Sec. Mr. Harwood.

"Local History -- a Guide for Beginners" :. by Philip Geeves. $1.00. Available May.

This booklet has been written for the absolute beginner who is interested in undertaking the study of local history; and contains many simple and practical hints to help the novice in research. The `booklet is said to be the first publication of its kind in Australia.

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Members – Please Note: If you have any notes of historical interest, especially relating to the Shire, they will be welcome for the Bulletin; please supply source.

February Meeting: "SAMUEL MARSDEN-- SAINT OR SINNER?" A most interesting talk was given by Mr. Alex. Yarwood, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of NSW, at our Feb. meeting. Mr. Yarwood traced Marsden's life, outlined the period in which he lived and the background influences affecting him; and dealt in some detail on the various facets of the Colonial Chaplain's character.-- his total disinterest in evangelising either the aborigines or the convicts, but his sincere efforts to introduce Christianity to the N.Z. Maori; his religious beliefs, and his harsh and callous attitudes as a magistrate; his unique knowledge and success in farming; his bitter and vindictive clashes with Gov. Macquarie. Marsden appears so much a man of dominant contradictions that today the question more than ever is -- was he Saint or Sinner? In the future, Angus & Robertson will be publishing a biography of this title by Mr, Yarwood -- an event which all interested in Australian history will eagerly await.

Marsden Connection: One of our members, Mrs. Dorothy Cosgrove of Sutherland, is the niece of Mrs. S. Pantelle of Orange; Mrs. Pantelle was a Miss Marsden, and the great-great granddaughter of the Rev. Saml. Marsden. Through her relative, Mrs. Cosgrove has been extremely fortunate in being given a number of relics of this Australian pioneer, as well as a number of very old newspaper clippings relating to the Marsden family. The former include the watch-fob (black "watered" taffeta silk ribbon, doubled, with a horse's head in brass on it); a tiny silver pocket inkwell always carried by Marsden; a gold seal-ring belonging to George III and presented by him to Marsden; some specimens of wool from Marsden's 2nd clipping of his flock;, an exquisite watercolour miniature of Charles Mason Marsden, son of the Rev. Marsden; and several family letters --written over 100 years ago. Most of these were on display at the Marsden Lecture in Feb.; and we are most grateful to Mrs, Cosgrove for this opportunity to view them.

January Meeting - "THE GEORGE'S RIVER BRIDGE": a brief history of the construction of the bridge, which was officially opened on May 11th 1929 by the State Governor. Mr. David Kirkby, the speaker; paid a glowing tribute to the indefatigable efforts of the late Cllr. C.O.J. Munro in the building of the bridge. Copies of Mr. Kirkby's address were made available to members at the February meeting.

VISIT. TO "FERNLEIGH"- February   Field Day: Mr./Mrs. E. Alcock, Burraneer Bay, very kindly opened their home to members of the Society on Feb. 11th, members spending a delightful afternoon inspecting this old Colonial stone cottage the oldest house in the Shire.

BYE-WAYS OF HISTORY:

Heathcote Cemetery: a member suggested to the writer that there was "an old cemetery at Heathcote"; on inspecting and checking this, it was found to be the cemetery attached to the onetime Waterfall T.B. Sanatorium -- the cemetery was opened in 1911 and closed in 1946. The Waterfall buildings are now used as `a "rest home" for the chronically ill and aged.

Caringbah: originally called Highfield. "Caringbah", is an aboriginal word referring to the paddy-melon wallaby -- evidently plentiful in the early days.

Lugarno: said to have been named after Lake Lugarno, Switzerland,

Woolooware: an aboriginal word. for "a muddy track"; Surveyor Dixon named the bay he surveyed in 1827. This "muddy track" from the edge of Botany . Bay to approximately the present ,Burraneer Bay Rd. was later to become the. first "road" road of the earliest known routes of occasional communication between "the southern land" and the other side of George's River.

Tom Ugley' s Point: in the early days of settlement of the Sans Souci area a man named Tom Huxley lived there; the aborigines could not pronounce the "x", and the surname gradually became corrupted to "Ugly"

Illawarra Railway: the extension from Hurstville to Sutherland was opened in Dec. 1885, and extended to' Waterfall the following year

Cronulla and Transport: the first land sales in the Cronulla end of the Parish of Sutherland were not held until 1895; and with these sales Cronulla came into being as a small settlement -- mainly as a holiday and fishing resort. Captain Springall was actually the first in the area. for he held a lease on the waterfront (where the Hotel Cecil now is) from 1888 to 1892. About the beginning of this century a horse-drawn, coach service was run between Sutherland and Cronulla;   but this ceased with the introduction of the Sutherland-Cronulla tramway in 1911, and this finally ceased in 1932. Private buses then took over until the electric railway was extended to Cronulla in 1939. A special steam train tour was run from Sydney to Cronulla in 1962, creating very great interest.   (contd. over)

BYE-WAYS OF HISTORY (contd.):

"Holt's Bridge": in 1866 Thos. Holt purchased 180 acres of Crown land at Gwawley Bay (on Botany Bay) with the intention of commencing oyster-farming on a large scale, on the European principle.. He quite literally fenced his boundary line through the water from the Sylvania side to Sandy Point, using 40 ft. piles; the Sylvania end would be about midway along the waterfront of Holt Rd. and about opposite Smith St.. He then proceeded to construct his famous "oyster canals" on the Miranda side of the Bay; he spent over £10,000 on the scheme before finally abandoning it as impracticable for the Australian climate. The remains of these old canals were in existence until the construction of Sylvania Waters.

Timber Industry & the South: timber-cutting in the big forests which stretched from George's River to Wollongong was one of the most important industries in the early days -- and the search for and cutting of cedar trees was of the greatest value. So import-ant was this that by the 1820s a small settlement had sprung up at the "Five Islands" the original name of Wollongong -- both timber-cutting and farming; and in 1823 a detachment of soldiers of the 40th Regiment was sent south to preserve law and order, Communication between Sydney and the southern barracks and settlement was at first only by sea; then, in the 1830s, a "road" was put through from Liverpool, via Campbelltown, Camden and Appin, the Razorback, Cataract River, Bulli Pass and along the waterfront. T his road was so long, dangerous and difficult, that in 1840 a new line of road was surveyed by Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General, and finally the "Great South Road" came into being -- from Newtown via Rockdale and "Lord's Forest" (Hurstville) to the Lugarno Ferry, and through the western part of the Parish of Sutherland southwards --where today it forms part of our Prince's Highway.

Sydney Streets: when Governor Phillip planned the layout of the infant township, he did it systematically, but did not remain long enough to see his plans put into efficient action: and those after him did not worry,. so that soon the settlement was crisscrossed by a myriad foot tracks forming numerous short cuts to the focal points. When Governor Macquarie arrived, he showed extreme disapproval of the irregularity of the "streets" of his new capital. On Aug. 11th 1810 he issued a firm "Government and General Order"; and fatigue parties from the garrison were told off to create order out of the myriad tracks receiving. extra pay for their work. In brief, Macquarie's Order required: Every thoroughfare to be 50 ft. wide; paling fences in front of street allotments were to be of a uniform height of 4 ft., straight, strong and neatly constructed: houses in the way of realignment were to be removed, with or without compensation: no one was to build without the permission of the Government surveyor: barking dogs, straying pigs and goats were to be destroyed or impounded -- and the goats sold for the benefit of the Orphan Fund. Macquarie disapproved of the varying names of the main thoroughfare -- High St., Spring Row, Sergeant-Major's Row -- and named it George St., After George III.

April Date to Note: on April 30th 1770 (or April 29th, according to International Date line reckoning) Capt. James Cook sailed into Botany Bay in the "Endeavour"; and his report of the "great new southern land" solved the problem of what to do with the many thousands of England's unwanted lawbreakers --- transportation to "Botany Bay" in lieu of the east coast of America because of the War of Independence.

Old School Residence. Watson's Bay: a stone cottage at 333 Old South Head Rd., has recently been placed in the trusteeship of the Woollahra Municipal Council. The National Trust has classified the building as worthy of preservation, and as it is no longer needed by the Dept; of Education, it has, with the consent of the Minister for Lands, been proclaimed as a "reserve for preservation of historic sites and buildings". Believed built late 1830s..   .

- National Trust Bulletin, Feb. 1967.

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SOCIETY BADGES: The Executive Council of the Society has selected a very attractive design, in colour, for the Society's badge. The badge is fitted with a small pin, so enabling it to be worn either as a lapel badge or as a brooch, It is anticipated that a limited number may be available at the next monthly meeting, price $1.00 each.

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Kelso Holy Trinity Church (C/E), Bathurst: foundation stone laid 1834; Parish records go back to 1825 before the church was built -- when services were held in a barn, The Rectory was built in the 1860s from a design by Edmund Blacket, a prominent early Victorian architect. The Rectory is being completely restored, and the Church is having essential repairs done. Both buildings are recommended by the National Trust's Historic Buildings Committee.