

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Edited by:
M. Hutton Neve

Bulletin No. 4,
June. _____ 1967.

From "HIGHFIELD" to CARINGBAH

The mystery of the oldtime name of "Highfield" for Caringbah has been solved -- thanks to the co-operation of the Research Department of the G.P.O.; and thanks, too, to our Archives Officer, Mr. Sargeant (Shire Council Librarian), who advised the Bulletin Editor that he had just received a booklet from the Department containing the history of the Sutherland Post Office.

The first "postal receiving depot" was opened in the Sylvania district in 1883, and a similar depot was opened in Sutherland township in 1886. By the beginning of the century, the southern part of the present-day Shire (Caringbah to Cronulla) was beginning to have scattered settlement. In 1911 the Sutherland-Cronulla tramway was established; and one of the stops was "Port Hacking Road", at the junction of this road and "Cronulla Beach Road"-- now the Kingsway, from Caringbah to Cronulla.

At this junction, Mr. S.E. Mansfield had built a store, and he petitioned the Postal Inspector of the P.M.G. for permission to establish a Postal Receiving Office at the store. For a short time previously Mr. Mansfield had had a Postal Receiving Depot at his house (presumably in Mansfield Av.) where he had been conducting a small business; but he later advised that he was building a general store at the above road junction, and then applied to operate the Receiving Office. Permission was granted, the R/O was opened about September 1912, after a name had been decided upon for the Postal Office.

When Mr. Mansfield first applied to the P.M.G., he gave his address (letter 5/2/1912) as "Highfield", but in July 1912 he advised the Postal Inspector that the correct name for the whole district was Bindarar, although the locality at the road junction was apparently known locally as "Highfield".

A P.M.G. regulation is that the name of a new P.O. must not clash with one already in existence, and they objected to "Highfield" for two reasons -- the main one being that there was a P.O. named "Highfields" in Qld.; secondly, that the name was a localised one. It is not known if the district name of Bindarar was suggested, but if so, this would probably have clashed with the Qld. office of Bindaree.

According to a record by the then Acting Postal Inspector, dated 30/8/1912, he received a suggestion from the Sutherland Shire Clerk, Mr. J.W. Macfarlane, that the name of a nearby street be adopted for the new post office, this being a native name that would not clash with any other PMG names, viz., Caringbah. The Lands Dept, was consulted and their approval obtained in a letter to the Postal Inspector dated 19/9/1912.

Naturally enough, as settlement increased in this area, it took on the name of the Postal Receiving Office of Caringbah, and this gradually became the official name of the township -- today a thriving and progressive business centre.

It is of passing interest to note that the then Shire Clerk was personally responsible for the naming of Caringbah township. It is not recorded in the Council Minutes of that time (according to Mr. David Kirkby, who is engaged in writing a history of the Shire Council), so that it was not an official decision of the Council -- perhaps it was not considered of sufficient importance to be brought before them. Therefore, to Mr. Macfarlane must go the honour of naming the township and district of Caringbah, the "birthdate" being that of the official acceptance by the Lands Dept. and PMG of 19/9/1912.

Note: There is no road in the Shire named either Bindarar or Highfield: perhaps this may be a suggestion from the Society for future note. by the Shire Council?

(The Bulletin Editor -- the Society's Research Officer -- has written to the Research Office PMG for further information concerning the establishment of postal services throughout the Shire, and at a later date anticipates having full details for historical records.

Bankstown Historical Society announces that it has just published a booklet "Historical Tour of the Bankstown District"; it is "presented in the form of a half-day tour, beginning at the site of the 'bark huts' a map with each point of interest numbered makes it easy for visitors to follow" Price 27 cents posted; obtainable from the secretary, Mr. R. Daniel, 29 Gleeson Av., Bankstown.

WORONORA DAM: the first water supplies for our earliest pioneers were of course, the nearby creeks; then came wells, and later tanks, to catch the roof rainwater. Today, the Woronora Dam supplies the whole Shire, as well as some adjacent areas.

A motor drive to the Dam is an easy and picturesque afternoon trip. About a mile from Waterfall Station on Prince's Highway the road branches off to the right -- a cemented road of 4½ miles. The Sydney Water Board welcomes visitors, and has provided picnicking facilities, with free hot water and wood.

The history of the Dam commenced in 1907, when the Water Board considered the Woronora catchment area as a possible future source of supplementary supply to the Nepean system. Work was started in 1927, and the Dam opened in November 1931, but owing to the depression period, plans had been drastically cut to a 45 ft. wall to impound 180 million gallons of water to supply the Sutherland—Cronulla area. Construction was recommenced in 1935 and completed in 1941 at a total cost of £2,169,000.

The lower sections are of cyclopean masonry, built from sandstone blocks quarried on the site, but the main portion is mass blue metal and gravel concrete. The upstream face is of blue metal concrete, 4 ft. thick; the downstream face is 3 ft. thick; the wall of the Dam is 217. ft. high and 1,350 ft. long at the crest; it is 185 ft. thick at its base, tapering to 20 ft. at the crest; there are two inspection galleries within the wall. Transport of materials to the site was by road from the railhead at Waterfall.

At full supply level (553 ft. above highwater mark in Sydney Harbour) the area of the lake impounded by the Dam is 937 acres, storing 15,792 million gallons of water. A spillway channel to provide for a maximum flood of 36,000 cu. ft. of water per second has been cut through a spur to carry overflow water round the Dam and to discharge it into the Woronora River about ¼ mile downstream. The channel is 1,250 ft. long and 30 ft. wide at the bottom, with a maximum depth of 150 ft..

Supply is taken from Woronora Dam by a 16 mile long 48 inch pipeline leading to service reservoirs at Penshurst, whence it is distributed to some of the suburbs immediately north of George's River. It thus links with the major metropolitan supply drawn from the Upper Nepean catchment and from Warragamba. The great advantage of the Woronora system is that it provides an entirely independent supply capable of being distributed over the larger part of the southern metropolitan area. In emergency the system for a short period could distribute up to 32 million gallons a day to the southern suburbs, although it is intended that the Woronora supply will eventually be reserved for the area south of George's River. As well as supplying the main centres of the Shire, Woronora water also goes to Helensburgh, Stanwell Park, Lucas Heights and Bundeena. - Sydney Water Board leaflet.

.....
NATIONAL TRUST & HISTORICAL BUILDINGS: The Trust has recently recommended five more buildings as of "A" classification value -- i.e., for priority of preservation as being of historical significance and architectural value.

- (1) Dept. of Lands, Bridge St.; commenced 1877, Renaissance style.
- (2) St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney; commenced about 1840, completed 1846; consecrated 1868.
- (3) St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney; land granted to Father John Joseph Therry by Macquarie in 1820; the Cathedral began building 1866, and is a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture on a grand scale, with a particularly fine interior.
- (4) St. Stephen's, Newtown (C/E); designed by Edmund Blackett and completed 1874, this is another very good Gothic Revival building. The old cemetery, adjacent, dates from 1849.

.....
"Local History: a Guide for Beginners": by Philip Geeves. \$1.00. Mr. Geeves has advised that the booklet has just come off the press. Members who are interested in undertaking some amateur research in their district -- but who do not know how to begin -- will find this little booklet of the greatest help. It is anticipated that a small supply may be available for sale at the July meeting: Will also be obtainable in due course from leading booksellers.

St. George Historical Society meets on the third Friday of each month, in the Council Chambers, Rockdale Town Hall, 8.0 p.m. Visitors are always welcome, especially Historical Society members. Some talks would be of general interest to our Society members -- others are more localised. Further information may be obtained from Mrs. M. Hutton Neve, who is also a member of St. George Historical Society (521-2578).

INFORMATION WANTED:

(1) Old Buildings in the Shire: The Bulletin/Research Officer recently had a telephone call from a schoolchild whose 2nd year class is undertaking a project concerning the existence today of Shire buildings erected prior to 1900. Throughout the Shire there are doubtless quite a number, some in good condition, others (particularly wooden buildings) deteriorating. Several private residences are known (all in good condition, especially the stone or brick buildings) to the Society, but doubtless there are other buildings that are unknown. It would be appreciated if any member knowing of such a building (home, shop, stables, storeshed, etc.) would notify the Society's Research Officer (Mrs. M. Hutton Neve, 26 First Av., Loftus), with the name of the owner if possible, address, and any other relevant details. Arrangements will then be made to photograph the building and to obtain all essential historical data. This is a job which the Society should undertake as soon as possible.

(2) Woronora Cemetery Tombstones:

- (a) engraved: Sacred to the memory of Robert Ritchie, who departed this life at the Nepean River 19th November 1849 aged 89 years". ... and his wife ... "Ann Ritchie, who departed this life 1st January 1865 aged 68 years".

This indicates that the old man was born in 1760, and his wife was 37 years younger. The tombstone is a large solid slab, about 6 x 3 ft., in the Old Presbyterian Section. The appearance of the tombstone suggests it was a removal in 1901 from the old Devonshire St. Cemetery at Central Railway.

- (b) Pedestal stone of the Seaton family: the only actual interment here is of Mary Seaton, died, 1915, the wife of Jacob Seaton; the pedestal is engraved with "In Memoriam" of the deaths of their twelve infant children, from 1872 to 1888. The grave is in the Old C/E Section. (Woronora Cemetery was not opened until 1895, hence the infants must have been buried elsewhere)..
- (c) Morley family: Old R/C Section: Joseph Morley died 1838 at 72 (born 1766); Mrs. Charlotte Emma Brown, died 1917, was a granddaughter, and the daughter of Anthony George Morley (b. 1810). The Morley family were connected by marriage with Doyle, Gold, Driscoll and Brown -- according to "In Memoriam" engravings on the tombstone.

When the Woronora Cemetery was opened in 1895, it served mainly the St. George district; but by then there was a growing area of settlement within the Shire boundaries from Sylvania to Sutherland township. The Bulletin Editor would be interested to know if members recognise any of these names as those of early Shire settlers; and would particularly like to know if anyone can supply information concerning Robert and Ann Ritchie.

.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS - WINDSOR/RICHMOND: The State... Planning Authority of NSW has recently published a most interesting little book describing a number of historical buildings, both public and private, in this area. The booklet is well illustrated with photographs, line drawings and maps, and is priced at 50 cents (plus postage, say 5 c.); obtainable from the State Planning Authority NSW, 302 Castlereagh St., Sydney; or the National Trust NSW, 115 Pitt St., Sydney.

Map of Historical Buildings & Landmarks: published by H.E.C. Robinson Pty. Ltd.; 85 cents all booksellers; covers area bounded by Camden, Springwood, North Richmond, Sackville and Palm Beach. Most of the above buildings are shown on this map;

.....

Research Officer: at its meeting in May, the Executive Council appointed Mrs. M. Hutton Neve as the Society's Research Officer; approval for this appointment was given at the May monthly meeting.

.....

SOCIETY ACTIVITIES:April Meeting: Members' Night:

Mrs. V. Edwards -- "Mrs. Louisa Lawson" (1848-1920). Mother of Henry Lawson the writer; she was the first woman to speak in public in Sydney, addressing audiences on the question of "Women's Rights" which she ardently supported; she became a fluent writer, 'and was active in all aspects affecting social welfare and women's rights in general., and supported the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Mrs. V. Connerton - "Sylvania School"; this was the first public school opened in the district, in 1884, catering for about 30 or more children. It served the area for 3 years until a school at Sutherland was opened. in 1887, when the Sylvania school was closed. Children then either rode their horses to school, or were transported by special "horse buses". It of course catered for a primary syllabus only.

Mrs. Griffiths - "Sutherland District: Hospital"; the Hospital Board was incorporated 1944, and elections held for the Board of Governors. Auxiliaries were formed, and a tremendous amount of "spade work" done. Mrs. Griffiths, who was associated with the Hospital for many years, traced its history from the . first steps to its completion.

April Excursion: On Apl. 15 a most interesting and delightful tour was made of the historic Victoria Barracks at Paddington. Built in the 1840s, the Barracks have been continually in use since, and the magnificent. buildings are a silent but perpetual memorial to the excellence of the stonemasons of the period.

May Meeting: Mr. Seymour Shaw, an ex-President of the Shire, gave a most interesting and informal talk concerning his various reminiscences of Shire life, dating from boyhood memories from about 1912 to his numerous Council activities over the past 25 years.

June Meeting: Mr. Philip Geeves - "Some Early History of the St. George District";

The Society were very happy to. welcome Mr. Geeves again -- for he was the speaker at the inaugural meeting in March 1966. Mr. Geeves traced some of the early history of the St. George district, explaining how some of the localities received their names, and referred to some of the early settlers.

A resume of Mr. Geeves' talk will be available at the July meeting.

Coming Events:

Members are reminded that the July Meeting is "The Story of the South Pacific Railway" -- in National Park, at the Loftus /Prince's Highway crossing:

August Meeting: "The Story of Fort Denison":

September Meeting: address by the Principal Librarian Public Library NSW (Mr. G.D. Richardson), concerning the "Histories Records in the Mitchell and Dixon Libraries and the NSW Archives Office".

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, RECORDS, etc., of the Shire: Members are reminded that the Society is anxious to obtain either originals, or to arrange for copies of old photos. to be made, for the Society's Historical Records. Please advise the Secretary, Mr. N. Harwood, if you can assist in this way.

.....