FOUNDATION OF SUTHERLAND SHIRE

The area new called the Sutherland Shire (1906) was officially founded. by Government Proclamation in 1835 and named. Previously, the area had been unofficially known as "The Southern Land" or "The Southern District"; and was one of several "Southern Districts" -- all unofficially recognised -- stretching as far as the Port Phillip District (now Victoria).

In 1817 Macquarie ordered a complete survey of the whole penal colony --wherein were a number of "Districts", all unofficially recognised. The following Governor, Brisbane, began some surveying, and the next Governor, Darling, had the work completed." The colony was divided into sixteen counties, and these were sub-divided along English lines, including the "hundred", this being an area of about 10 x 10 miles (i.e., a 100 square miles); and the hundreds were divided into parishes of varying size. Natural physical features, as streams and creeks, mountain ranges -- decided' the boundaries.

This area was divided into the Hundred of Woronora, this covering most of the present-day Shire; and below that; was the Hundred of Southend, which took in part of the southern extremity of the Shire. The Hundred of Woronora was divided into the Parishes of Southerland, Wattamolla, Heathcote and Bulgo -- and for a period the Ph. of Eckersly was added, but later transferred. The Ph. Southerland embraced all the area between George's River and Port Hacking River, with the eastern boundary the Kurnell-Cronulla coastline; and the western boundary the Woronora River. This was the "Southern Land", and below it was "The Southend". just before 1840 the name of "Hundred of Woronora" was changed to "Heathcote": the word "hundred" was never used, and was officially dropped in 1888. The original spelling of "Southerland"   (or "southern land") was retained on all maps until 1881. This area remained the Ph. of Southerland (or Sutherland) until the inauguration of the Shire in 1906, when the latter spelling was adopted;

In the writer's opinion (and this is supported by more knowledgeable research workers) this Shire was not called after Forby Sutherland, the humble sailor who died in 1770 and is buried in an unknown grave at Kurnell.

The association of the death of a humble sailor (the first known "White man" buried on the east coast of Australia) named Sutherland, and the original name of the Ph. of Southerland; makes a sentimental appeal; but unfortunately there is no historical basis or authority for the perpetration of this myth.

The late Mr. Frank Cridland in his book "The Story of Port Hacking,. Cronulla and Sutherland Shire" (1924), has helped to foster this myth, by erroneously stating on p. 107 of his book: " Many people associate the name Sutherland, in connection with the company (i.e., the Holt-Sutherland Coy.) and the town, with Mr. John Sutherland, at one time Minister for Works in NSW. The name comes from a much older source. Both titles are taken from the parish, which was so designated in. 1853 in memory of Forby Sutherland...." This is quite wrong, first, the date 1853 is incorrect; second, the name of Forby Sutherland was not known to Sir Thos, Mitchell, Surveyor-General, when the District was named and Mitchell was in favour of using aboriginal names wherever known, or otherwise the "popular" name for an area -- actually, new names (other than aboriginal placenames) were officially chosen by the Governor -- and the original correspondence in support of this may be seen in

the State Archives.

--- M. Hutton Neve.

<u>The Corrected Story of "FERNLEIGH", Burraneer Bay</u>

For the past 50 years or more, the story of "Fernleigh", the stone house on the western side of Burraneer Bay, has been ascribed to Thomas Laycock jun., of the NSW Corps -- built on land owned or given him by his father-in-law John Connell of Kurnell. Notes of several previous persons supported this, and the date of 1821 over the front entrance added to their belief; but there were certain points of construction in the house that were at variance with the 1821 period.

Further research established certain points: Thos. Laycock jun. had married Margaret Connell, daughter of John Connell (sen.) of Kurnell, in I817; John Connell sen. had obtained grants of land in Kurnell in 1821 (his son; also John, may also have been granted land, but he certainly purchased land at the first, land sales in 1856); John Connell did own land in the Burraneer Bay area; and Laycock did build "Fernleigh": BUT, previous writers had hopelessly confused these names, and in some cases had jumped to conclusions -- mainly because of the date of 1821 at "Fernleigh".

While examining old maps recently at 'the Lands Dept, I was shown the original map of the first Crown Land sales in the district the northern half was put up for sale in 1856, these continuing until 1858 (Cronulla land sales were not held until 1895).

It was John Connell (jun.) who bought land' in the Burraneer Bay area in 1856 -- his father having died in 1849; and it was the cousin of-this 2nd John Connell, named John Connell Laycock (son of Thos, Laycock and Margaret Connell), who bought the Burraneer Bay block of land on Which "Fernleigh" stands.

The land was described as being "the land proclaimed as Lot 13 on the 17th December 1855 and selected by the said John Connell Laycock Quit. rent of-One Peppercorn if demanded". The date of purchase was Dec. 16th 1858, and the. Title Deeds were granted May 9th 1859; the area was approximately 40 acres, for which Laycock paid £1 per acre. File Ref. R/G's Office = 59/602 (= 1859/602); Serial No. 150 Old Register No. 8: converted to Torrens Title Vol. IV, Fo.. 88.

John Connell Laycock had also bought other blocks of land in the vicinity, as had his cousin John Connell, cash being paid for all land bought,

J.C. Laycock built his house between 1859, and 1860, from stone quarried on the land; and it is believed that the cedar timber used in the house was obtained either from some trees on his property or from some cedar nearby.

To build the house Laycock needed. further finance, and so he mortgaged his land to John Thomas Neale, and also borrowed £3000, to be repaid plus- interest in 1863. By now Thos. Holt had arrived in the district, and was busy buying up all available Crown Land, as well as as much land as he could obtain from those who had already purchased. Two persons owning choice waterfront. blocks refused to sell -   Patrick Dolan and J.C. Laycock; and all attempts to persuade Dolan to sell failed<u>.</u>

Holt then approached J.T.Neale and bought the mortgage (and land-price) Laycock' s for £45, and Holt also took over the mortgage of £3000 from Neale. Holt-then found that Laycock had omitted to insure the buildings on the land (Lot 13); as this constituted a legal breach of the mortgage contract, Holt immediately foreclosed; and as Laycock could not meet the amount of the mortgage (and land-price) Laycock was forced to surrender. his lovely new home to Holt. All these details are noted in the Deed of Indenture dated 19/12/1861, wherein Holt acquired legal-title to Laycock's property. The mortgage of Laycock's property to J.T.Neale was dated 214/1860, Deed No. 587, Book 76 Old Register (= Torrens Title Vol. 1V . f o. 88. Holt lived in Laycock' s home for only a short period, and then apparently

sold it; after which the property changed hands many times, during which much if the property was subdivided.

It is doubtful if "Fernleigh" was the original name of this property: on an old District map of 1887 the house is marked as "York House". .Apparently some time after this, the house was renamed "Fernleigh",'and the road leading from Gannon's Road to the property was named Fernleigh Av. after the house.

The date of 1821 over the front door, is an unsolved mystery: John Connell Laycock may have placed it there as a sentimental gesture to his grandfather of Kurnell 1821; or an error may have been made in the Roman numerals -- 1821 is. MDCCCXXI; 1861 -= MDCCCLXI.

LOCAL HISTORICAL EXHIBITION: The Gymea Bay Primary School invited the Society to provide a Historical Display at the annual Gymea Lily School Fete on Oct. 14 -- and this was done with only 3 days' notice, thanks to the herculean efforts of Mr./Mrs. Cosgrove, who organised everything. A few members were contacted by telephone -- there was not time to do more -- and a really "super" display was produced. Material was provided by Mrs. Alcock, Mrs. Griffiths, Mrs. Mowbray, Mrs. Neve, Mr. Spencer, Mr. and Mrs. Cosgrove, the Midgley brothers, and the Shire Council. The numerous photographs of the early days of the Shire proved of particular interest. We were fortunate to have a large room, so that all exhibits could be easily and spaciously displayed; and all attracted a great deal of attention. It is estimated that, on a conservative basis, between 300 and 400 people, at least, passed through the Exhibition. Many compliments were passed concerning the attractive layout, and a great deal of interest was shown by many of the visitors -- some of whom it is anticipated will become keen members of the Society/.

BYE-WAYS OF HISTORY:

Settlement follows the Railway: "Railway making, so far as Como is concerned, will shortly be of the past .... The population is steadily moving up the line, and a continued increase from the 24-mile to the 30-mile (**) takes place daily. Consequently last pay night was dull at Como, and business, residents are also thinking of moving.   At the latter place, which is now called Heathcote, Mr. William Hanley has opened a hotel .... Mr. Stapleton now runs three butcher carts up the line, and even then can hardly meet the demands of his custumers, so that he will establish very shortly near the 24--mile".

-- Town & Country Journal, May 9, 1885.

** These are working construction sections or "stations" of the railway line: distances are measured from Central Station --then at Redfern. The "24-Mile" would approximate Loftus Railway Station; the 30-mile is Heathcote.

Governor Bligh's Tomb: this tomb of one of our early Governors, in the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Field, London, is in a very dilapidated and uncared-for condition; some $600.00 are required to restore it, and this is being arranged through the RAHS. This Society therefore decided to donate $5.00 to the Fund.

Sutherland Postal History: the first record of any postal service to this District was in 1880 when the Woniora P.O. was opened on the north side of George's. River, near Tom Ugly's Point. Residents in the Sylvania area had to cross the river on the Government punt to collect their mail, paying 1/-return fare. In 1883, following a petition by residents, an office was opened in Sylvania at "Mrs. Rice's store" -- no other details are known. In 1886 an

an office was opened at Sutherland township for the "Sutherland District" -- in 1886 this District (which then extended from Sutherland to Cronulla) numbered 200 to 300 population. It was not unusual for postal offices to be placed in charge of the railway station master at small centres; and on July 1, 1886, Mr. John Attwell, Station Master, was appointed "receiving office keeper" at £5-0-0 per annum, with a daily delivery from Sydney to the station. On Sept. 1 the office was raised in status to "post office", and Mr. Attwell's allowance was increased to £l0 p.a., A small iron letter-receiver and a set of pigeonholes were provided -- the former for "postings", the latter for holding letters from Sydney, the local residents calling to collect Mr. John Kell succeeded Attwell in 1887, Mr. Richard Burton 1891 (in June), and Mr. Jess Turner in Sept, 1891. The Postal Dept. then decided to erect an office on Railway property and to conduct it under official conditions. A wooden building with iron roof, 20 ft. by 12 ft., was completed in December 1891 at a cost of £100; and Mr. Charles H. Powell, then postal assistant at Bulli, was appointed postmaster on Feb. 5,1892, at £100 p.a, with rental allowance of £26 p.a..

         -- Extract - Sutherland Postal History, P.M.G.'s Department

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MEMBERS' NIGHT: October:

"The First Fleet and Botany Bay" : Mr. C. Law traced briefly events which led up to the decision to transport convicts to this newly discovered part of the world; The few days spent in Botany Bay before departing for Port Jackson; and referred to the unsuitable conditions of Botany Bay as a settlement -- lack of sufficient fresh water and shelter, the prevailing winds, and the low-lying and swampy areas; as well as lack of timber for building.

'Mary Reiby": Mrs. V. Edwards pointed out that there has been much historical confusion concerning Mrs. Reiby and a convict woman named Mary Catchpole; while the former was a renowned horse-woman, it was actually Mary Catchpole who stole a horse and rode it to London, where she was apprehended, convicted and transported. An early writer, having heard the stories of both Mrs. Reiby and Mary Catchpole, confused the two. persons and their "horse" stories so that it became generally accepted that Mary Reiby was transported for horse-stealing. Mrs. Reiby arrived in the Colony at about the age of 19, and was soon active in establishing a very profitable business -- the first woman in, Australia to do so.

"Forby Sutherland": Mr. H. Taplan produced some interesting facts: Sutherland was born in the district of Caithness, Scotland, and became A farm labourer. A tutor to the family of his employer discovered that the young man was unusually intelligent, and persuaded the employer to send him for marine-training. He was in the Orkneys when Capt. Cook was seeking crewmen for his South Seas exploration and Forby was one who volunteered. The exact location of his Kurnell grave is unknown, but according to Cook's logbook it was "near the Watering-place". He died May 30th 1770, at about the age of 31 or 32.

"The First Discoverer of Australia": Mr. E. Lukeman spoke about this subject --a disputed one. On definite records, Abel Tasman was probably the first to see the eastern and northern coasts; but other Dutchmen had previously explored the western coast and probably part of the north coast; and it is believed that Spaniards, Portuguese, and possibly Arabs and perhaps Chinese had also some knowledge at least of the Northern coastal areas, but so far there is no definite documentary evidence.

EARLY LANDHOLDERS IN THE DISTRICT

The first map of this area was Wells' 1840 Map ---and the only one of the period. This indicated the holdings of a number of early settlers --other than the Connells, Birnie and Lucas: in some cases only the surnames are given, but I have been able to trace further details of some of these.

Newton had.. a small block on Mill Creek (which flows into George's River) on the western side of the Great South Road. -- i.e., the "Old Illawarra Road". One of the Connells had small blocks of land at Bottle Forest (Heathcote), on the Woronora River towards Engadine, and in the Menai area; Thorpe had a block on the Menai side of the Woronora about where the Menai Primary School now is, known as "Thorpe's Forest"; behind this, David Duncombe and Spencer each had a block. West of Lugarno Ferry, at the mouth of Mill Creek, Wilkinson had 47 acres; At Weeny Bay, on Botany Bay, Maloney had a grant of 100 acres; Thomas Lawrence had about 80 acres at Kurnell, where he was bounded by Connell and Birnie.

David Duncombe had a large block of 700 acres called "Little Forest", running westwards from Mill Creek, then in the Parish of Holdsworthy. This was a promised grant of July 27th 1823, the Title Deeds being granted Oct. 19th 1831, after Dixon's survey.

Owen Byrne was another early landholder, with 60 acres at Wattamolla, on a promise from Macquarie of March 31st 1821 -- described as being in the vicinity of "Port Akin" -- a corruption of Port Hacking. He received the Title Deeds to this block on January 31st 1838. He also purchased 300 acres in the same area on May 16th 1825 -- Robert Dixon surveyed this land on instructions from Survey-General John Oxley (although Oxley quoted Byrne's land as 460 ac.).

Andrew Byrne, son of Owen, claimed that under a Government Regulation of 1823, he was permitted to select 500 acres in the same area, and later arranged to purchase it as it was not a grant, in 1825. He apparently obtained Deeds for the land, having seemingly paid only a small deposit, and then sold the land to James Wright, who then sold it to the Rev. Thomas Kendall. Apparently the Government Receiver did not press Andrew Byrne for the balance of the purchase price while the land was in his possession, but claimed it after the sale -- but Andrew Byrne, having handed over the Deeds, seems to have stuck to the whole purchase-price and referred the Government Receiver to Wright and Kendall for the balance of payment owing to the Crown. I went through all the original correspondence until 1842 but was unable to find out what happened in the end!

Andrew Byrne had also been promised 150 acres of land by Governor Brisbane on March 23rd 1825, in the Parish of Bulgo; this was surveyed and the Title Deeds granted October 19th 1831, the property being named . "Garrah", and described as being situate near "a beach called 'Garie' ".

Cornelius O'Brien was yet another early South Coast settler; Oxley, in his survey instructions to Dixon, described "O'Brien's Farm" as being about 6 miles south of Port Hacking; but so far I cannot trace any details -- O'Brien was farming the land when Dixon arrived in 1827, as Dixon made a temporary HQ there; about ten years later O'Brien apparently sold the farm.

Matthew John Gibbons seems to have been the first landholder at Wattamolla or "Bole", with a promised grant of 600 acres on August 13th 1824, with Title Deeds August 8th 1833.. Gibbons does.. not appear himself to have lived on the property, having applied for the land "as a grazing run" for his cattle.,

John Lucas, after whom Lucas Heights is named, received 150 acres "on an unnamed creek falling into George's River"; Dixon sailed up this tributary, the Woronora River, Which he named, being able to identify the grant from Lucas'

watermill then in operation, The mill was burnt down in the late 1830s and was not rebuilt.. but until then, it served the interests of the wheat growing; farmers in the: Illawarra area.

-- M.H.N.

RYDE HISTORICAL SOCIETY: the Shire Central Library recently acquired a most interesting little booklet "A Basic History of Ryde" (1966), published by the Ryde Society, and covering the period 1792-1964. Concentration is on the foundation or "basic history" of the district, many interesting facts being clearly stated, and providing an excellent basis for local historians to enlarge upon, The modern 20th century development of the district is only touched upon lightly. (Library ref. = 994.4 RYD).

CAPT. JAMES COOK, RN., F.R.S. and WHITBY: published by the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society, Eng. (1965); illustrated. Another interesting little booklet, reviewing in some detail Cook's background and his three round-the-world voyages; an excellently condensed booklet. (Library ref. = 994.01 COO).

Annual Visit of Schoolchildren to His Excellency:" On Monday last the Children attending the several Schools in the town of Sydney, with their respective Teachers, made their annual appearance at Government House before His Excellency, by whom the Pupils were separately examined, and ordered a Present of Cloathing. ---- While such a mark of attention must naturally suggest to both the Parent and Preceptor that the British Legislature is sincerely interested in the improvement of its Youth, it is to be hoped a sense of duty to their Country, their Children, and their God, will prevent any relaxation in the exertion necessary to the, desirable attainment of a moral and religious education, "

-- Sydney Gazette, Sunday, January 6, 1805,

"New Look"   for the Society's Bulletin: at the suggestion of some members, the Bulletin will now be printed in quarto size -- containing approximately the same amount of copy as previously. This will make the issues easier to file, and particularly easy to bind at a later date. Also, the quarto size follows the general trend of the publications of various other local Historical Societies.

The Bulletin Editor takes this opportunity to wish all members a Bright and Prosperous New Year: and hopes that the past issues of the Bulletin have helped to create a wider interest in the. activities of the Society.

"T o Be Disposed of: A Very handsome Parrot, whose vocal powers are uncommonly extensive, and is exceedingly well practised in the distinct delivery of four different tunes"

Sydney Gazette, Sunday, January 6, 1805.