



Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Quarterly Bulletin

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY BULLETIN.

JULY 1969.

C/- 9 Animbo Street,
MIRANDA. 2228

Dear Member,

Arrangements are proceeding for the Shire Commemorative activities during 1970, Some of the activities should be of interest to visitors to the Shire as well as residents Amongst the activities being planned are:-

A presentation of the ballet "Corroboree" at Kurnell
An Historical Symposium
A Bi-Centenary Procession
A new Park to be dedicated to Banks & Solander
A night Water Festival on Gunnamatta Bay,
and many others.

The Bi-monthly half-day outing was held on Saturday 14th June last to Parramatta. The sites visited included St. John's Church and Cemetery, old Government House and Hambeldon cottage, Only ten members were present and they enjoyed the afternoon, but it is disappointing that so few members attend these outings.

The proposed excursion to Canberra has not attracted sufficient members, and it seems, will be abandoned.

Mr. J. Walker has kindly offered to the Society, the publishing rights to a book on the history of the area covered by the Shire, We would like to be able to take advantage of this offer, and we are seeking advice on the worth of the book for publication, and also the aid of other organisations in the Shire in underwriting the cost of printing, which would be outside the financial resources of the Society,

N. Horwood,

Hon. Secretary.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY BULLETIN.

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PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES FOR THIRD QUARTER, 1969.,

MEETINGS: Our General Meetings are held on the second Friday night of each month at 8pm in the Auditorium of the Sydney County Council Showrooms, Eton Street, Sutherland.

Friday, July 11th)	
Friday, August 8th)	To be advised
Friday, September 12th)	

EXCURSIONS: Saturday 9th August, 1969
 Half day excursion to Hunter's Hill

Saturday 11th October, 1969
 All day excursion to Blue Mountains



I wish to take part in the all day bus excursion to the Blue Mountains on Saturday, 11th October, at an approximate cost of \$

Signed

BACKGROUND TO ENDEAVOUR VOYAGE

It had been forecast in 1716 by the famous astronomer Edmund Halley that a transit of the planet Venus would occur in 1761 and again in June 1769, so he asked the Royal Society to make plans accordingly, although he himself would not then be alive..

In 1761 astronomers had been sent to the island of St. Helena in the Atlantic, and to Sumatra in the East Indies: the former observations were spoilt by heavy cloud, and the second ship was attacked by the French and so never reached Sumatra.

The original location for the observation was California, then a Spanish possession; and the British Ambassador in Madrid requested authority for a British ship to proceed to California. This was agreed upon by the Spanish Court provided that the astronomer was a "member of the Romish Church". This was conceded and an Italian scientist appointed.. The Spanish Ministry, however, refused to grant a passport for the British ship, stating they would not allow foreign vessels to enter Spanish waters unless driven there by necessity.

It was next decided to consider a location in the South Seas, which by then was to some extent known, and Otaheiti (Tahiti) was chosen. This decision was made only a few months before the anticipated date of Cook's departure, the location being selected. following the return of Captain Samuel Wallis in May 1768 after a two-year exploration of South Pacific equatorial waters with his discovery and report of "King George III's Island" (Tahiti) and his Pacific charts. "Thus cook and his party of scientists would follow known tracks to Tahiti for the much publicised Transit Observation --- which would mask the real purpose of this South Seas expedition; that is, after ascertaining if Tasman's "Niew Zeeland" was part of the east coast of Australia, then to seek this east coast and take possession in the name of King George III before the French (who were then actively seeking new possessions in the Pacific) claimed it -- or perhaps the Dutch. Subsequent events showed that the French were also interested in claiming the Australian east coast: and French and Dutch interests in the early 19th century came close to Claiming the South Island of New Zealand.

-- M.H.N.

"A neat aviary is building by the Surveyor General, Major Mitchell, at his new residence on the Woolloomooloo Hill, for the purpose of domesticating a considerable number of native birds. This is the first erection of the kind in the Colony"

---The Sydney Herald, 18-4-1831.

The "new residence" referred to was Craighend House -- Ed.)

Endeavour Farm was a small Hawkesbury grant of 25 acres, part of a larger grant made to Major Joseph Foveaux in 1799..

Endeavour, Schooner: a sealer active in N.Z. waters from about 1800.

Endeavour, Indiaman: (British East India Coy.) wrecked at Dusky Sound, N.Z., in 1806.

MENAI MEMOIRS ... A PIONEERING FAMILY

Many pioneering men and women lie in the historic cemetery in the shadow of St. Peter's Church of England, Cook's River. Among the graves are members of the Midgley family -- three children of Richard Midgley who operated a coach and buggy building business at St. Peters.

Richard Midgley was born in London; his wife, Fanny, in Luton, England, she being a member of the Toyer family who became well known in the Sans Souci district where a splendid nursery business was conducted until recent years. There were seven sons and four daughters of the marriage, which was consummated in Sept. 1874.

Business worries and ill health of Richard Midgley led to the family decision to leave Yelverton Street St. Peters, in the late 1880s and to settle at Miranda. The property was on the creek adjoining Kia-Ora Road and Kanimbla Road on the western side.

They farmed their land-under the Holt-Sutherland Company tenant system, which became the obvious reason why the family moved so promptly to Bangor (Menai) when the Government declared available ten homestead selections from 17 to 34 acres. The Midgleys selected the latter acreage on the day it was declared, December 10th 1896.

The only outlet for three years until Tom Price came to Woronora River in December 1899 with his row-boat ferry, was the hand-propelled punt across George's River at Lugarno.

A temporary shelter was erected while Richard Midgley and his sons cleared the virgin bush and dug a well from which the clay was made into bricks and baked for erection of the home, The house would have stood for generations but unfortunately was pulled down some years ago.

The hardships of carving out a living and making a fresh start on the harsh land proved too much for an already sick man, Richard Midgley dying on May 24th 1899. He was attended in his illness by Dr. Howse, who rode horseback from Hurstville.

George Midgley, the eldest son then aged 22, carried on his father's role and the family continued to work the land, sharing good seasons and drought.

With other settlers who came into the district they shared fellowship, helping each other in need and comforting in times of sorrow. Market days meant long slow journeys to Sydney by horse and dray with farm produce.

The home registered scenes of happiness as many of the family married beneath its portals; witnessed the hushed occasions as children and grandchildren were christened; sheltered the saddened hearts and tearful eyes as members of the family died there.

In the home of Fanny Midgley commenced the first Sunday School in 1901 and she taught smaller children the "Tree R's", until a provisional school came in Jones' home in 1902. She instigated the first service of Christian worship in her sitting room on June 3rd 1903, with the Rev. W. Marsh, a Congregational st, the preacher. On June 5th 1905, Richard Midgley carried into the home the first mailbag from Sutherland, thus establishing the. Post Office which remained at that centre for 35 years.

(continued next page)

The splendid orchards and cultivated land-are now grown over by the bush and trees from which it was gleaned three score and ten years before.

The old home is gone now -- nothing remains of it at all save treasured memories. A huge shale pit yawns deep and wide to where the back door opened and closed

Closed now a chapter of Menai's pioneering days.

-- A. Midgley

Mosque Memorial:

Broken Hill has an unusual memorial to the Afghan camel drivers who carted wool, chaff and supplies through the inland, particularly west of the Darling.

The Afghan Mosque has been restored by the Broken Hill Historical Society and is one of the-city's most interesting tourist attractions. It serves as a memorial to those men who opened up so much of the inland when no other transport was available.

The Mosque, no longer used regularly, is available for use by visiting Moslems as a place of worship. It contains many relics.

-- The Open Road (NRMA), 1-6-'69

"Babes in the Wood":

Most of us recall this sad nursery story, but perhaps few realise that it is a true event of the 9th century. A Norfolk gentleman on his deathbed left the guardianship of his two children, boys, to their cousin Egbert "King of the English" (827 A.D.), Egbert was persuaded that the children were potential usurpers to his throne, so he arranged to have them killed. They were taken to a place named Wayland Wood near Dover (colloquially called Wailing Wood), but one of the men refused to kill the small boys --- instead, he murdered his accomplice and then, leading the children further into the wood, abandoned them to die.

The nursery story is often recounted as that of a small boy and his sister, but This is not historically correct,

Death of a Young Lady:

"This young lady was only in her 17th year; and for the last twelvemonth had laboured under the disposition which has at length terminated her existence in the Very bud of youth. Her disposition was amiable; her manner gentle; and her patient resignation during the whole period of her affliction, was almost unexampled".

-- Sydney Gazette, 6-11-1808.

An old Norfolk Saying: "Lend anything within reason to a neighbour -- except your razor, your false teeth or your wife"

News Item, Sydney Gazette 30-3-1806: "A woman in the Back Row surprised a villain in the Very act of carrying off her bed, which he modestly threw down at her approach, and made off".

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The opinions expressed in this Bulletin do not necessarily reflect those of this Society.

THE ROCKS HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD SMITHY

In a quiet back corner at Millers' Point named Rodens Lane you will find perhaps. the last Blacksmith shop in the city area. Although it has a good historical background its greatest claim is that it has been in the one family since 1856, when a Scottish smith named Macdonald came to Sydney Town via New Zealand to carry on his family's trade.

The old shop was adjacent to where the present Macdonald still uses the same anvil, his grandfather used so long ago, but the business of, smithing has fallen Off in these modern times. In days not long ago the Blacksmith's trade was at its peak, making rims or wheels, parts for sulkies; waggons and drays; hinges, baskets, and a thousand other items so much a part then of everyday life.

To find a trade that has been handed down from father to son is the. hallmark of a true tradesman, with pride in his work and family.

Today young Macdonald still makes a product made by, his grandfather -- the hook, used by the farmer for wheat bales and by the sheepman for wool bales. The everyday carrier and the waterside worker also use a Macdonald hook.

A few days a week "Old Mac", eighty-odd, comes to the shop to do some work at his old forge, where he worked as a boy-- a fine old man who can tell many historical facts of Old Sydney and The Rocks, and Millers Point where he was born. Both the Macdonalds are very interested in most topics and people who lived in these areas of Sydney.

Whenever the opportunity arises I always spend a few minutes talking to either of these fine descendents of that Scot named Macdonald. I also have one of their hooks in my collection, dating back ninety years with, the nom, of Macdonald stamped on the side.

So, should you ever wander down into that part of the Rocks in the heart of Old Sydney, here you will find this little smithy in its unique historical setting -- recalling one of the oldest of traditional trades

-- Thomas J. Cosgrove

A "TOP-NOTCHER"

"It's a top-notch": "It's a topnotch job", Expressions such as these are still occasionally heard; meaning. an expert of the job in hand, and emanate from convict days.

In the early colonial days of pit-sawing, two convicts would operate a long and heavy double-handed "pit saw". A large log rested across the top of the pit, some 6 ft. deep; one man stood in the pit and pulled the saw in a downward out. The other convict stood astride the log, starting the cut, axed in the end of the log, guiding.. the horizontal line of cut, and dragging the heavy saw upwards. His was a job requiring both skill and strength and, being an expert he became known as the "topnotcher"

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SOCIETY EXHIBITIONS

Engadine Public School: this took place. in the beginning of May, the organisers being Mrs. M. Hutton Neve, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Cosgrove. Other exhibitors were Mrs. W. Mowbray (antique China) and Messrs. A. & F. Midgley (Photos.)

A large room was available, enabling items to be attractively displayed. The Cosgroves' unique and varied collection of 19th C. Domestic ware attracted much attention -- some, nostalgic recollections from elderly people, amazed amusement from teenagers. The Midgley collection of historical Photographs was concentrated on the western and southern areas of the Shire although other localities were included --- and evoked great interest. Assisted by Mrs. Mowbray and Mrs. Laurel Toulmin `the organisers explained the purpose of the Exhibition was to publicise pioneer settlement in the Shire, and answered many queries. The Exhibition as a whole was slanted to interest primary children and their parents.

We are happy-to report that judging from enquiries, several new members should result; and we were also offered donations of some interesting items.

Engadine High School: Mrs. Hutton Neve was asked recently by the Head Master to organise an Exhibition for this school's fete at the end of June, and this, is well in hand, This Exhibition will be slanted to interest especially the teenagers, so that some items have been varied. The Midgley brothers have arranged an illustrated feature: depicting the history of. the Old Illawarra Road – the "Great South Road" -- as it affected the local area; and this alone should prove most interesting.

All material exhibited is the personal property of the organisers-- most of it (excluding Photographs and China) belonging to the Cosgroves, to whom go my especial thanks for the time and trouble they have taken in transporting a car-load of heavy items as well as the packing and assembling of their display: also, to Mrs. Mowbray; for the time-consuming job of packing and transporting valuable China: and to the Midgley brothers, whose Photographic Collection, with explanatory notations, is a valuable and unique survey of Shire history.

-- M.H.N

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Illustrated Talks: the Hon. Research Officer continues to give talks on Shire history, illustrated by her large (and continuously growing) collection of slides both coloured and black-and-white, the latter being taken from old photos and sketches some of which date back over 100 years. Groups addressed have been both large and small. St. George and Hurstville Historical Societies have also been addressed, and an invitation has been accepted to visit Banks-town Historical Society,

Girl Guides: amongst the Merit. Badges to be earned: is that of "Local History". Two 12-year-old Cronulla guides passed their badge in May. Mrs. Hutton Neve was last year appointed Examiner for this Badge (for several years Mrs. Ivey Alcock has been local Examiner for the Guido Pets Badge).

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According to the March: 1969 records of the R.A.H.S., there are 115 affiliated Historical Societies in N.S.W., 37 of them in the Sydney area within the districts bounded by the Nepean, Hawkesbury, and Port Hacking Rivers. Of these latter, 13 Societies have been formed within their parent organisations, e.g. Churches, Military, Aviation, Teachers' Assn..

THOMAS HOLT AND "SANS SOUCI"

In the early part of last century a grant of 100 acres was talon up on the eastern side of George's River by a distiller named Robert Cooper. The block extended from the present Rocky Point Road Rockdale westwards to the SE end of Kogarah Bay.

It would appear that Robert Cooper's property was taken over about the 1850s by Thomas Holt, who called the estate "Sans Souci" and built thereon a large 2-storeyed. house which followed the Colonial form of architecture, based on a Georgian design with the addition of, a front verandah. The kitchen, laundry; scullery; stables; hen-roosts and other outbuildings were arranged at the rear of the premises, which faced towards the east and incorporated ,a circular shaped watch-tower in the design.

It can be assumed that. Mr. Holt was responsible for the planting of trees in the grounds around the house, namely Norfolk Island pine trees, Himalayan cedars, olives, aloes, and the purple pea-flowered polygala -- which latter spread in such profusion in the sandy locality that it became known locally as "The Sans Souci" plant. However, by all accounts Mrs. Holt was not enamoured with the-beauty of her surroundings or with the comparative loneliness of her existence at "Sans Souci". Consequently Mr. Holt transferred his attentions to a more elaborate home, known as "The Warren", which he had built on the eastern slopes of the hill which lies to the west of Tempe Railway Station.

At this juncture "Sans Souci" appears to have been taken over by a Mr. Dettman about 1865 and converted into a hotel.

-C. W. Napper,

St. George Historical Society Bulletin Nov.1968

(from "The Warren" Mr Holt later moved to Sylvania after the building of "Sutherland House" about 1870, --- Ed.).

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WINDSOR TOLL. HOUSE

A cottage considered to be one of the oldest buildings in Windsor is now open for inspection. The building is the Toll House, constructed probably between 1814 and 1816 for the collection of tolls for the crossing of the Fitzroy Bridge.

Tolls were collected until 1887 and the building, on the banks of. South Creek at the eastern entrance to the town, was designed to allow the toll collector a clear view of both approaches without having to open the door.

Hawkesbury Historical Society has restored the building and fitted it. with period furnishings and paintings.

-- The Open Road (NRMA) 1-6-'69.

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Heathcote Primitive Area: reserve of nearly 6 sq. miles, including most of the valley of Heathcote Creek and Woronora River. Proclaimed in 1943, it is a sanctuary for native birds, animals and plants. Cars may be driven to the Reserve where there are picknicking facilities, but cars are not allowed to be driven through the Reserve.