



Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Quarterly Bulletin

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY BULLETIN JANUARY, 1970. Page 1.

C/- 9 Animbo Street,
Miranda. N.S.W. 2228.

Dear Member,

We all have been saddened by the recent death of our inaugural President, Mr. R.D. Harrison, and extend our most sincere sympathy to his widow and his family.

An election was held at our November meeting, and Mr. C. Law, a former Vice-President, was elected unopposed, as President of the Society. The vacancy of a Vice-President was filled by the election of Mrs. Teplin to this position, and Mrs. E. Carmichael was elected to the Committee.

Mr. D. Kirkby is now home after his stay in hospital, and is progressing towards a return to good health, which each member will be pleased to hear.

January marks the beginning of a new financial year for our Society, and all subscriptions become due and payable from that date. Prompt renewal is requested, as under the P.M.G. regulations, by which we obtain a reduced rate of postage for our Bulletin, our mailing list can only contain members who have paid their subscriptions. This means that those members who have not renewed their subscriptions before our next issue of the Bulletin, may not receive their copies.

I hope that full details of the Symposium to be held to mark the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary will be advised to all members during the next three months.

N. Horwood.

Hon. Secretary.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY BULLETIN - JANUARY, 1970.

Page 2.

Programme of Activities for the First Quarter 1970.

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

Friday, 9th January - Mr. N. Thorpe - "The Story of the Sutherland-Cronulla Steam Tramway."

Friday, 13th February - The Balmain Association - "Balmain and Early Sydney."

Friday, 13th March - Mr. James Waldersee, (Senior scientist tutor)

Lecturer in History, Sydney University. (To be confirmed.)

Excursions:

Sunday, 1st February - 3 p.m. Interdenominational Commemorative Service,
St. Philips Church, Church Hill, Sydney.

Sunday, 8th March - 2 p.m. Open Day at Balmain.

Saturday, 11th April - All-day excursion to Illawarra District. \$2 each excursionist. Bookings close 13th March, 1970.

JAMES COOK -- the Family Man

Generally speaking, little is known of Cook's early life, or his life as a husband and father. We know that Cook's grandfather was a Scotsman whose son, also' James, migrated to Marton in Yorkshire. The Yorkshire James married, and on Oct. 27th 1728 their second child was noted in the Baptismal Register as "James, the son of a labourer". We also know that after Attending the local village school for a few years James worked as a farm labourer, and then for a short time became a "grocer's boy". At eighteen he gravitated to the-seaport town of Whitby, where he became a seaman - apprentice on a coal ship. With the advent of the war with France, "Cook enlisted.. in the Royal Navy in 1755 -- and his maritime future was assured.

Most of his life was spent at sea, his time in port being always of short duration. At the - end of 1762, at the age of 34, he married the 21-year-old Elizabeth Batts at **Portsmouth**.

[*TRANSCRIBER'S NOTATION: James and Elizabeth were married on 21 December 1762 at St. Margaret's Church in Barking, Essex*]

They had little family life together, although he sired six children, three of whom died in infancy.

According to his widow, he was a "kind and-affectionate"-husband and father; conscientious and quietly religious. His widow survived him by fifty-six years, and "kept four days in the year of solemn fasting, during which she came not out of her room".

Cook's two elder sons took to the sea -- and both were drowned. Commander James Cook RN was drowned in 1794 while transferring from one ship to another; young Nathaniel had been drowned fourteen years before when only sixteen; and seventeen- year-old Hugh "died at Cambridge University the year before his brother James. Mrs. Cook's "four days in the year of solemn fasting" were in remembrance of her lost family. She lived in London for many years with her nephew "young Isaac" -- when he had become Admiral Isaac Smith RN Rtd..

Unfortunately for posterity, on her death Mrs. Cook willed that all her husband's personal papers and letters be destroyed, as she considered them "too sacred" for prying eyes.

Commander James Cook RN was unmarried at the time of his death, so that there are today no direct descendants. Capt. Cook, however, had a sister Margaret who in due course married; and through her line there are descendants of James Cook the Marton farm-labourer and later builder. One of these is Mrs. Heather Quinn of Westport N.Z., who on Oct. 11th 1969 gave birth to a son -- exactly 200 years to the day on which Lieut. James Cook landed on the east coast of the North Island of N.Z.. Appropriately the infant was christened Nicholas James -- "Nicholas" after the "Young Nick the-Captain's boy" who first sighted land; and "James" after the Captain himself,

--- M.H.N.

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Church Museums St. Johns's Church School-house, one of the first four buildings erected in Canberra in 1845, has been opened as an Ecclesiastical & Educational Museum.

THE AUSTRALIAN OPAL

There is no gem or stone in the world to compare in colour with the Australian Opal. This unique gemstone may be found from Queensland to New South Wales, and South Australia to the Northern Territory. At one time it was a real threat to the diamond, so much so it is believed that diamond merchants started the stupid rumour that the opal was unlucky to possess.

To hold a really good piece of opal is like holding a rainbow gleam! or looking into the glowing embers of a fire.

Opal was first found in Hungary about 1835, but it was so brittle and wet that handling it was extremely difficult, the warmth of the hand causing it to crack and break. Mexico has what it calls opal, with poor colours and very little fire; but the Australian "gouger" (the correct name for opal miners) would not class the Mexican stone as opal.

Australian Opal was first discovered in Queensland about 1865. Much of the Queensland Opal-belt contains ironstone, which ingrains with the opal and spoils-its value; but where the soil is free of iron-stone, Queensland opal is the most vivid and brilliant of all,

At Lightning Ridge the aboriginal legend is that a huge wheel of fire fell on the small local ridges and sprayed the Country for miles around with its wonderful colour. This field was discovered about 1912 when a few "road makers, looking for gravel, picked up handfuls of this beautiful stone. The opal is found at White Cliffs in knobbier and ball nodules, and other places in NSW.

The opal belt then swings to South Australian fields -- Coober Pedy; Andamooka and Tennant Creek. All these places have fine opal, in seams: I have seen a new-found seam 12 ft. by 8 inches a rainbow of lovely colour.

Years ago I recall talking to Jack Phillips, who was a co-finder of the magnificent opal "The Flame Queen" "- which he sold for £80 Today it is valued at over \$50,000! I asked him why he sold it so cheaply. He said that as he and his friends had been existing on bread and jam for three weeks the opal had to be sold quickly so that they could eat and live:

-- Thos. Cosgrove

(Mr. and Mrs. Cosgrove are enthusiastic amateur opal "gougers"-- Ed.)

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

WORONORA RIVER

Mr. A.H. Matheson MBE of St. George Historical Society, has mixed his facts in reminiscences of the early days of Woronora, in the October Bulletin", writes Mr. Fred Midgley, whose grandparents settled at Menai (then Bangor) in 1896,

"Tom Price, who was one of the pioneers of Woronora River, first came into the district in 1884, when he was employed as a labourer by a Mr. Walker. He was so attracted to the area that in 1899 he bought 150 acres, and moved there with his family the same year. The youngest son, Albert, when a boy of nine, was saved from drowning in the river by the combined efforts of Mr. Adams (Sutherland Railway Staff) and Mr. Gardner, a local resident.

"The Swain [*Swayne*] family were living on the property when Tom Price bought it, and they moved down the river nearer to Como.

"The cattle ford was near ' Mangrove Island' , where there was a large sandbar across the river; this was sufficiently clear-at low tide for the cattle; and people could also wade across the shallows.

"Brown's Greek was then known as Forbes' Creek, and in those days it was some 15 feet deep -- today it is a shallow creek almost silted up with sand in many places. A 'gnat track' led down the hill (now Woronora Cemetery) from Sutherland Railway Station to the mouth of Brown's Creek; and here settlers could row across the river, and then follow another track, on the Menai side, to the crest of the hill and the old Illawarra Road".

"Incidentally, the small tug which used to come up the river towing barges to collect sand, delivered the sand to Shea's (not Shen's) Creek Works on Botany Bay, All heavy goods, for house-building and such like, had to come up the river in the same way. Portable goods were 'humped' down the track from Sutherland Railway Station or the Sutherland shops."

- Fred, Midgley

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Menai Future Development: the Shire Clerk has invited the Cook Bi-centenary Citizen's Committee to submit names for locality subdivisions in "the future Menai subdivisions. Names already suggested for new suburbs that area are : Endeavour, Cook, Banks, Marton, Whitby.

Illawarra Historical Society Museum: 11 Market St., Wollongong; open from 2-5 p.m.; admission Nominal.

In Market Square Park is the Bass & Flinders Memorial tablet to mark the centenary of the first Europeans to land in Illawarra on 26/3/1796. The Sesquicentenary Tree (Red Cedar) was planted in 1966 to mark the 150th year since the first land grants were made in the district; nearby is the plaque erected by the Illawarra Historical Society to commemorate this event. On sale at the Museum' are various publications of the Society, as well as those by other members.

"THE UNKNOWN COOK": Cook was born in 1728, he sailed on his first circumnavigation in 1764, he died in 1779. Very little is known of Cook's first forty years ... Cook began to document his own life, at any length, only when he stepped on board the Endeavour. He had never really kept a journal before then; and as far as we can see, had written precious few letters. Yet we are not entirely ignorant. We can trace a succession of things done; we can picture the farm-boy, the collier's apprentice and North Sea sailor, the naval AB, the master's mate, the boson, the master in a line-of-battle ship, the master of a surveying schooner; Ten years in the rank of master alone. Strictly speaking, he was "Captain Cook" for just three and a half years. We can trace the succession; we can guess why he remained a master for so long. Lieutenants in the Navy were two a penny; but a really good master was a pearl beyond price. We may also note that as a master, on his wonderful Newfoundland survey, Cook did better financially than any lieutenant; and Mr. Cook the surveyor" led a highly respected technical life. ...

To understand the man that the farm-boy became we have to understand his age. Cook's age was the 18th century, and that takes enough understanding; in all conscience ... Let us be glad that, among all the crimes and follies with which men of-action have studded every century, there are, so far as we can see, no crimes and few follies among the-actions of this one.

-- Dr. J. C. Beaglehole, writing in
the Bicentenary issue of the N.Z.
Listener, Oct. 6th 1969,

SIR JOSEPH BANKS: as Naturalist on the voyage of the Endeavour, he deserves special credit for the 18th century innovation whereby ages-of superficial exploration became scientific expeditions

Banks' special distinction was that he puts not a single naturalist, but a team aboard the Endeavour, using vast quantities of money, charm and persuasion to this end. Only a group of scientists and artists, collecting and describing and illustrating the discoveries of the new lands, could have achieved the profound impact that Cook's first voyage had on Admiralty and Government; leading to a policy of exploration and research Cook's scientists were primarily botanists and zoologists; they would collect any "natural curiosities" --rocks and minerals, shells, sea-creatures, native-clothing and weapons of war, data on temperatures and pressures; and of special consequence, data on mankind.... Cook's scientists were a product of the Age of Reason, and everything they did was part of a hunger to know the world.

-- extract from Editorial, Bicentenary issue
N.Z. Listener, Oct. 6th 1969.

Royal National Park: Although the raging bushfires of November 1968 caused tremendous destruction of both plant and wildlife in the Park, a check made towards the end of last winter not only revealed a remarkable recovery of flora but also showed some interesting fauna. Besides the small-herd of deer (confined to Maianbar), bandicoots and three types of possum-were seen, as well as several wallabies and foxes, and even a few koalas. Most of the native birds are again breeding -- but the, callous dumping of female cats and kittens is still a threatening problem, Dogs --- mainly bitches, often in whelp, are also dumped." These and their pups usually die of starvation, but most of the tats survive; and the feral cat -- the domestic cat gone wild lives off the birdlife of the Park.

-- Extract from a Royal National Park Wildlife check 1969

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George's River Parklands Trust: This Trust was formed in 1961. Since then over 50 acres of foreshore mudflats have been reclaimed and turned into picnic areas. Yerambah Lagoon at Picnic Point was-created from mangrove swamp and turned into a sanctuary for water birds. The Trust also plans to have parts of the Woronora River frontages in-eluded either in Royal National Park or in the Heathcote Primitive Reserve. In March of this year Councillor Benn was elected President of the Trust for the ensuing twelve months.

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Cronulla Fish Hatchery: this was established at Hungry Point (South Cronulla) by the N.S.W. Fisheries Dept., who brought a Norwegian Fisheries expert out to advise them -- H.C. Dannevig. Here were built numerous spawning and hatchery ponds, for the breeding and study of marine fishery knowledge. After only four years the venture closed down in 1911.

Oyster Bay: this name did not originate from the Holt period of 1860 - - 1880, as some people surmise. The name is of far earlier origin, and appeared on Surveyor Wells map of 1840.

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The "Village of Sutherland" was gazetted the Township of Sutherland in 1921; and at the same time Miranda and Caringbah were proclaimed as Villages. In 1956 Botany Bay was declared and gazetted a Port, with a Harbour Master.

National Park was a popular holiday resort some 60-70 years ago, and to cater for the holiday crowds arriving from Sydney by passenger steamers a wharf, together with a large boatshed, was built at South Cronulla adjacent to the old Fisheries. A few pieces of broken piling are still evident today.

Esk Bank House, Inch St., Lithgow: this sandstone house built in 1841 has recently been opened by the Lithgow City Council as a museum. It has been restored and furnished in the manner of its original owner (Thomas Brown, 1813-89). It is open daily, except Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, and 2.0 to 4.0 p.m.; adults 25 cents, children 10c, The large-courtyard has been set up as a folk museum displaying items of everyday pioneer use,

Glen Innes Folk Museum: a folk museum and craft centre will be officially opened by the Glen Innes & District Historical Society on Saturday January 24th as part of the district's Captain Cook Bicentenary celebrations. They will be housed in the old Glen Innes Hospital which it has been the Society's-great good fortune to acquire. Because the building and grounds are so large it has been possible to plan four Victorian rooms with some-interesting period furniture. A slab hut furnished with personal possessions of a settler will be re-erected in a big former ward.

-- R.A.H.S. Newsletter Nov. 1969.

Sabbath Observance 1803 (Sydney): "The inattention of the -lower orders to the duties of the Sabbath has-lately been such as to render coercive measures necessary. Persons in all quarters of the town have openly employed themselves in their customary Weekly avocations, and others have preferred strolling idly about the streets to attending Divine Service, A number or these were on Sunday last-taken in-to custody by order of the Magistrates; but were afterwards reprimanded and discharged, upon a promise of amendment".

-- Sydney Gazette 3/7/1803

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PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS:

Kurnell: Birthplace of a Nation: by M. Hutton Neve: 60 cents

Bye-gone Days of Sutherland Shire: by, M. Hutton Neve: \$1.00

Pictorial History of Sutherland Shire: written and illustrated by Fredk. Midgley \$1.25

200 Years in Retrospect: 1770 to 1970 by John Walker \$1.50

"In consequence of repeated Thefts. having been committed in my Garden in the Town of Parramatta, "I do hereby offer a reward of TEN GALLONS OF SPIRITS to any person or persons who will render information whereby the offending parties may be brought to justice".

-- Sydney' Gazette 31/8/1806