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Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Quarterly Bulletin

APRIL 1970

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY BULLETIN - APRIL 1970

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

Dear Member,

The Shire Bi-Centenary Commemorations are now proceeding and many activities are planned for the coming months.

An historical Symposium is to be held in the Council Chambers from Friday evening 1st May to Sunday 3rd May 1970. A small display of historical material will be on display and the programme will include papers delivered by Professor J.B. Beaglehole who is coming from New Zealand for the Bi-Centenary and is the guest of the Shire for the occasion; as well as Professor R. Carolin, Professor R. Barber, Vice Admiral Sir John Collins, the Swedish Consul, Mr. J.V.S. Megaw, and Mr. Robertson, the Assistant Astronomer. Excursions will also be held, on the Saturday afternoon to Kurnell, and on the Sunday afternoon to Collins Point, near Bulli. In addition the proceedings will be printed and made available to participants.

All members should receive full details and we hope that members will participate in this week-end.

Following the discovery of James Birnie's tombstone and its restoration by Botany Cemetery, the Society has asked the Shire Council to erect a memorial at Kurnell to his memory. We hope that this will be agreed to by the Shire Council.

H. Horwood
Hon, Secretary

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Perhaps it is in some ways appropriate that this, the first Presidential message to appear in the Society's Quarterly Bulletin, should reach members as the Bi-Centenary Celebrations are approaching their climax. The April 1970 publication surely should be of historic importance because it will circulate to members in that month.

The great significance of the 200th Anniversary must mean much to all Australian historical bodies but surely not so much to any of them as to ours here in the area of the Nation's birth.

Members no doubt will have noted that the Society, as is right and proper, is endeavouring to play its part in the various activities planned. Our Honorary Secretary, Mr. Horwood, is responsible, in his capacity of convenor of the Bi-Centenary Historical Sub-Committee, for organisation of the Cook Symposium, to be held in the Shire on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd May. Indeed, the Symposium idea came from him, This function, which will be addressed by Professor J.C. Beaglehole who is probably the world's outstanding authority on the great British Navigator will, we believe, be a real highlight of the Celebrations. There will be other speakers of distinction and eminence at the Symposium. This Society is especially proud of Mr. Horwood's outstanding efforts and sterling work in such an important part of the Bi-Centenary observances. Much more will be said and written of the Cook Symposium.

The second part of this message addresses itself to a theme often previously brought to members' attention. The Council of the Society is always conscious and concerned that members at large lack opportunities to participate in management and policy of the organisation. This situation seems to be inherent in the nature of such a body.. In the circumstances therefore let me appeal on behalf of the Council, to members to avail themselves of the facility of general meetings to voice their views and ideas pertaining to the activities and general management of their Society. All may be assured that, as President, I seek and welcome any comments or suggestions they may feel disposed to make at any time.

C. Law

President

This Bulletin has been prepared by an Editorial Board consisting of Messrs. J. Walker, N. Horwood and. M, Taplin, Mrs M. Hutton-Neve having tendered her resignation as Editor, The Editorial Board thank Mrs. Hutton for the work she has performed in that capacity.

Members are cordially invited to submit items of historical interest for inclusion in future Bulletins. Opinions expressed in the Bulletin; are those of the contributor and not necessarily of the Society.

Shire Pioneer's Grave Discovered.

I have recently discovered the grave of James BIRNIE who was the earliest of the pioneers in the Shire. The grave of James Birnie, and of his wife Martha Matilda Birnie has remained unknown and unrecognised for untold years, until I was able to trace its location.

James Birnie held a grant of 700 acres of land known as 'Half a Farm" approximately on the site of what is now known as the Captain Cook Landing Place and Kurnell township.

James Birnie or Captain Birnie as he was known, died on 14th July, 1844, and was buried in the Presbyterian Section of the Devonshire Street Cemetery. Martha Matilda Birnie passed away on 12th November 1851 and was buried with her husband.

The old Devonshire Street Cemetery was needed to build what is now Central Railway Station, and the remains of those interred there, and the headstones, were moved in 1901 and the remains re-interred in either the Bunnerong Cemetery or the Rookwood Cemetery. The Government has released their plans to once again move the headstones and make the Bunnerong Cemetery into a Memorial Park,

The headstone of James Birnie's grave is in the Bunnerong Cemetery and was laying face up, and very appropriately on a slope overlooking Botany Bay and just across the narrow entrance from where his land was situated.

The inscription on the headstone was fully exposed to the weather, but is still mostly readable and in a fair state of preservation.

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The authorities at the Cemetery have upon being advised of my discovery moved the headstone to a site near the entrance and preserved it for an honoured place in the proposed Memorial Park.

The inscription on the headstone reads:-

To the Memory of
James Birnie
who departed this life
July 14th 1844
aged 82 years,

Also

Martha Matilda Birnie
relict of the above
who departed this life 12th November 1851
aged 76 years.

The Society has decided, at my suggestion, to ask the Sutherland Shire Council to consider erecting a memorial to James Birnie at Kurnell

We note that our member Mrs. M. Hutton-Neve will read a paper entitled "Captain Cook and his Association with Kurnell" at the .R.A.H.S. meeting on 14th. April, 1970.

J.T.W.

This Bi-Centenary Year has produced a galaxy of historical writings by members of our Historical Society which is an indication that the organisation is amply filling one of its primary functions.

Already in print we have:

"First Fifty Years of Sutherland Shire, 1906-1956" - David R. Kirkby

"Kurnell - Birthplace of a Nation" - M. Hutton-Neve

"Pictorial History of Sutherland Shire" - F. Midgley

and my humble contribution -

"Two Hundred Years in Retrospect : Kurnell-Sutherland 1770-1970" - John Walker

Mrs. Hutton-Neve and Mr. F. Midgley have indicated that other works from their pens will be forthcoming in the near future and I have a slim, topical bi-centenary booklet in the printer's hands.

Mr. N. Horwood has also made a notable contribution with his scholarly extracts from the diaries of Cook and Banks, which are published in the "Leader" weekly.

I extend hearty congratulations to my contemporary scribes on their initiative, drive and courage. Through experience I well know the travail that besets the amateur historian and that feeling of elation which is his reward when his brainchild is born. Verily, in the words of Faith Baldwin: "If one sentence you write opens a door for another human being, you gain a sense of fulfilment no other work can bring you".

John Walker.

Candid Comments and Self Criticism

Hereby I confess that a few small errors, inadvertently crept into my book. The following jottings, or explanations are calculated to make amends as well as providing interesting facts.

A descendant of Paul Bucholz informed me that his great grandfather opened the Como Hotel in 1890. I assumed and stated that he erected the building in that year. Imagine my consternation when our interesting guest speaker, Mr. N. Thorpe, during his discourse on the Sutherland-Cronulla Steam Tramway, threw in a few extra slides for good measure, including one of the Como Railway Bridge under construction in, or prior to, 1884. The hotel building in question stood squarely in the foreground. Further research revealed that the hotel building did precede the railway. First utilized as an exclusive club where the German Consul and others spent weekends

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and consumed large quantities of imported Bavarian beer, it degenerated into a well kept sly-grog shop to cater for the thirsts of navvies employed on the railway construction jobs. Paul Bucholz converted the building to a licensed hotel in 1890.

Deletion of full details (to conserve space) made La Perouse appear to vanish without trace. In my days every schoolboy knew that La Perouse (or Laperouse as he appeared to favour when writing his own name) lost his two ships (La Boussole and L'Astrolobe) in storm swept seas at the Tucopia Islands Group (between the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz) probably only a few weeks after quitting Botany Bay on 10th March, 1783, His fate is unknown as he could have

- (i) gone down with his ship
- (ii) been drowned in the surf when attempting a landing
- (iii) landed and been killed and perhaps eaten by cannibals,
or
- (iv) according to rumour recounted by the natives built a
boat or raft from the wreckage and journeyed away to
an unknown fate.

Likewise we were informed that Laperouse had left Brest in August, 1875 on a voyage of discovery intended to embrace both the North and South Pacific. Thus he had spent two years and five months on his mission before reaching Botany Bay in January, 1788.

The Australian Encyclopaedia, edited by the redoubtable Alec. H. Chisholm, assets that although Laperouse carried in his cargo copper plates bearing the Royal Arms to take possession of unappropriated lands in the name of the King of France he had no such designs on the east coast of New Holland. Laperouse was conversant with the voyage of James Cook and recognised England's claim, staked there in 1770. His entry into Botany Bay was simply a courtesy call and not a French invasion. In fact when visiting Kamchatka, early in his voyage; Laperouse heard of Arthur Phillip's proposed expedition to establish a settlement at Botany Bay and was surprised not to find a town when he sailed into that port in 1788,

The French Priest who died and was buried on the northern shore of Botany, Bay in 1788 was Abbe Louis le Receveur.

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Dating back to the days of the Norman England, counties were divided in Hundreds (a large division having its own Law Court) and Parishes (a sub-division of a Hundred or County - distinct from a Church parish). The term Hundred was never popularly recognised or used in Australia. Under instructions of the Earl of Bathurst the County of Cumberland was subdivided between the years 1825 and 1835. In the Government Gazette dated 16th May, 1835 the Botany Bay-Port Hacking region was declared in "Hundred of Woronora and Parish of Sutherland". (The grave of Forby Sutherland was near Point Sutherland in that area).

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When stating in error that James Birnie made his Sydney debut as master of the vessel "Commerce" I was in good company. Crumpston in his compendium "Shipping Arrivals and Departures Sydney 1788-1325" made the same error but later recorded a correction. Birnie came to Sydney with the "Star".

Some confusion was created when by mischance a couple of dates became jumbled. To put the records straight - Cronulla Peninsula was not incorporated in the Holt Sutherland Estate because it had been reserved for defence purposes, although apparently never used in that way. Some of that area was released in 1895 and the Village of Gunnamatta established. The name was officially changed to Cronulla in 1908 because of its nearness to Cronulla Beach. Apparently Cronulla was a re-interpretation of the original Aboriginal name Kurranulla Beach and in use prior to 1903. In fact the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club was formed by Neville Cayley Junior in 1907.

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As penance for my failure to read my proofs carefully I have used up numerous biros pencilling in thousands of corrections. A buyer holding one of those hand corrected versions is advised to guard his treasure carefully or if not already fortunate hurry to secure one. Who can foretell its value in 2070 as a collector's piece. We are already scraping the bottom of the barrel to sell the final batch of the First Edition. I assure you that these corrections will be unnecessary in the Second Edition due later in 1970..

John Walker,

Vale!

Mrs. Emily Simpson who passed away on 19th February, 1970 aged 93 was a pupil of the first school established in the Sutherland Shire.

When William Simpson came to the Sutherland Estate in 1863 as one of Thomas Holt's overseers, his father George Simpson secured a grant of land on the southern shore of Port Hacking and on it built a hotel at Bonnie Vale (near present day Bundeena). A governess or schoolmistress was employed and a school conducted in a room in the hotel. There is no record of the number of children enrolled but for a number of years youngsters of the Simpson

families and a few others received their education there. In the eighteen eighties Emily Simpson (I have found no record of her maiden surname) was one of those pupils. Apparently music figured in the curriculum as the grand old lady was an accomplished musician.

John Walker

Cronulla Lad's Colourful Career

Alan Lovell on whose reminiscences I have relied for many of my facts when writing of Cronulla in the second decade of the twentieth century, although not born in that district, came to the area in 1911, in his ninth year.

On the death of Alan's father, his mother, a former school teacher, resumed her teaching career. Appointed to the Cronulla School, opened by Mr. H.L. Tonkin in 1910 on grounds now occupied by Monro Park, she brought Alan and his brother and sister to reside in the then small seaside village.

Psychologists in those days had a rather different approach to school discipline to those in vogue in present day methods. So that the beneficial efforts of discipline would not be nullified by the presence of their mother the Lovell children travelled to Miranda each day, (The next school on f ran the Cronulla School where their mother was employed).

Alan recalls Laycock's shop, near the site of today's. Cronulla railway station where he frequently went to purchase newly caught Port Hacking fish and locally produced honey.

Vividly he remembers the crossed sculls used as interior decoration in the shop, The Lovell boys gazed with admiration and awe upon these wonder::; sure that Mr, Laycock had used them to win "the World Championship". (Elias haycock, a descendant of Thomas Laycock and Margaret Connell, was the professional sculler who trained on Port Hacking, to win the Championship of New South Wales in 1875 and again in 1879 and claimed the championship of England when Trickett, the holder, refused to meet him in a match race).

The youthful Alan's first employment was at Jackson's dairy in South Cronulla, near the tram terminus.. For rising at 1.00. a.m. to milk innumerable cows before setting forth on the dawn milk run he received one pound per week. Such a high wage was paid to a boy because of manpower shortage. (World War 1:. repercussions were felt even at Cronulla)

Strange today even to think of large herds of Jerseys pastured at South Cronulla.

After the cessation of hostilities the mandated Territory of New Guinea called to Adventurous Youth and our hero went there connected with the trading ventures of Burns-Philp. Later he transferred to Guinea Gold and Placer Development and spent a life-time in remote areas during which he became a legend in the immense island immediately to our north.

The only break in his New Guinea adventure was during the Japanese occupation but then he was otherwise engaged, serving with the A.I.F. in the North Africa and Middle East Campaigns. On discharge from the Army he returned again to his adopted land (Bulolo in the highlands of New Guinea).

On returning to Cronulla in 1966 Alan Townsend Lovell was astounded at the changes the years had brought, Even Sylvia Street where the Lovell home was located had disappeared,

Have we other stories of Cronulla boys who left their mark in far off fields?

John Walker
