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Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Quarterly Bulletin

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THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

BULLETIN – OCTOBER 1971

C/- 9 ANIMBO STREET,
MIRANDA. 2228.

Dear Members,

The full day Harbour excursion set down for Saturday 16th October, 1971, will have, the following itinerary:- Leave Circular Quay at 9A.M. thence to Vaucluse to inspect the Wentworth Memorial Chapel, the Wentworth Mausoleum and Vaucluse House. Lunch will be taken on Shark Island, (excursionists to provide their own picnic luncheon). Following lunch, will travel by launch to Watsons Bay and inspect the Military and Naval Establishments at South Head, guided by Colonel J.E. Hendry M.B.E., returning to Circular Quay approx. 5 P.M.

Permission to inspect Cockatoo Island, could not be obtained but I am sure the visit to South Head will be no less interesting.

Mrs Edwards has returned from her overseas trip and no doubt will be able to tell us of the interesting and historic sites which she saw whilst in England and the Continent.

N. Horwood

Hon. Secretary

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER, 1971

MEETINGS:- Our General Meetings are held on the second Friday evening of "each month in the Auditorium of the Sydney County Council 'showrooms, Eton Street, Sutherland at 8 P.M.

Friday 8th October - Members night - short papers delivered by Members of the Society.
Mr. C. Law. Mr. G. Sherline. Mr. E. Jehan

Friday 12th November - An address by Dr. Bergman of the Jewish Historical Society.

Friday 10th December - An address by Mr. Sainty of the Society, of Genealogists. (to be confirmed)

EXCURSIONS

Saturday 16th October, 1971 - Full day Harbour excursion calling at and inspecting Vaucluse House, Shark Island and South Head.

Saturday 11th December, 1971 - Afternoon visit to St. Andrews Cathedral and St. James, King Street.

This Bulletin has been compiled by an Editorial Board consisting of Messrs. J. Walker, E. Lukeman and N. Horwood.

Members are specially invited to submit items of historical interest for inclusion in future Bulletins.

Opinions expressed in the Bulletin are those of the contributors and not necessarily of the Society.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

No doubt it often occurs in members thoughts, as it does in my own, that a Society of this nature needs a domicile or a place of its own. It does seem clear that without a location where- it can maintain and display items of historical interest and importance, your Society is not properly performing its intended and essential function. Indeed, it could hardly be fulfilling its normal objectives and purposes should it not have some sort of permanent premises at its disposal. Furthermore an address which should be well known publicly, seems to be a requisite in achieving proper identification and recognition. With acquisition of a suitable building, the Society. could properly undertake the task of creating and developing a historical library and reference facility. In time, too, a museum could be built up. In regard to the former function it is well to mention here that many books, journals, papers etc., are already in the Society's possession, but are not conveniently available to members for their perusal and use. This is largely because we lack a central location and, consequently, a reading place or room. In addition, should large articles, appropriate as museum pieces, be offered to us, we could experience difficulty in acceptance due to our inability to house or store such things in present circumstances.

The most appropriate and suitable, even perhaps natural location for the functions mentioned, as well as the general activities of such a body as a Historical Society, would seem to be a Local Government or Shire Council building. In fact, most kindred societies are readily given these facilities.

Recently the Sutherland Shire President in discussion with this Society indicated sympathetic interest in our needs in this direction. He expressed the view that while the Shire Council had no space available in its council Chambers, it would be likely. to assist the Historical Society in acquisition of premises.

Such assistance could probably take the form of rental payment or reimbursement, he believed.

This subject is brought to the attention of members, and in fact any other readers of the Bulletin. Accompanying it is an invitation to offer any suggestions, advice or recommendations pertaining to possible.. achievement, of the objective mentioned in this message.

C. LAW.

- EXCELLENT CITIZENSHIP -

"This. Park was dedicated to the memory of Henry Tonkin first Headmaster of Cronulla Public School 1910.- 23. He gained the affection of all, working untiringly for the welfare of his pupils and the community, inspiring in them a true spirit of citizenship and an appreciation of the wonders and beauty of nature."

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Excellent Citizenship - continued.

The above inscription on a monument in the Henry Tonkin Memorial Park at the head of Gunnamatta Bay, tells in a nutshell the story of the good man in whose honour that Park was named.

A whole volume could well be written on the life and work of Henry L. Tonkin and the impact of his Stirling Character on the growth of Cronulla, the centre that he never ceased to love and serve. Many of his former pupils tell, with pride, the influences that his teaching and example exerted on their lives.

J.W.E. ("Bud") Tonkin, one of his sons, has supplied the following facts dealing with the life of his beloved father.

Prior to 1910, Henry Tonkin was principal of the large school at Hillgrove, then an important gold mining town in the New England. Far and wide he was renowned for the extent and quality of the Hillgrove School garden.

Because of a breakdown in health at the end of 1909, the Education Department appointed him to open a new school at Cronulla Beach. (Cronulla's first school).

Arriving at Sutherland in January, 1910, the Tonkin family of seven monopolized the whole Of one of Gidding's horse drawn coaches, (the steam tram did not come into operation until 1911) for their first trip to Cronulla.

The new school, built where Monro Park stands today, opened at the beginning of the school year with sixty pupils. By 1911 the enrolment had increased to eighty four and an assistant teacher was appointed. The school served the whole of the Cronulla Peninsula and surrounding areas. The nearest neighbouring school was at Miranda. The Cronulla headmaster's residence, the home of the large Tonkin family, was on the site today occupied by the Rural Bank.

Under Henry Tonkin, the school was famous for its beautiful school garden (no town water supply in those days) and for the work that the children did for The Gould League of Bird Lovers. Nature study was a practical subject for all pupils.

Henry Tonkin stayed on as headmaster at Cronulla until he reached retiring age in 1923. Fortunately his health had improved and he continued to live in the fast growing seaside suburb and worked on as Secretary of the School of Arts, (also as Secretary of two local Lodges)

The School of Arts library, which he helped to establish in his teaching days, was ever one of his foremost' loves. Meticulously he watched over the issue, return and care of the precious books and when an efficient cleaner could not be found he did not scruple to remove his coat and do the menial chores.

When the well loved Schoolmaster passed away in 1947, his funeral was one of the largest ever seen at Cronulla. A highlight was the guard of honour formed by the local school children. '

The present day Cronulla Public School is built on land purchased by the Department of Education from Mrs, Walsh, who owned a city hotel. The purchase was recommended by Mr. Tonkin.

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Henry Tonkin also advocated (and secured the building of the seawall which prevents tidal water flowing onto the present day 'Henry Tonkin Memorial Park.

Briefly this is the story of a good man who in the words of the poet Longfellow left behind him "footprints in the sands of time".

Incidentally, "Bud" Tonkin, well known locally, who supplied much of the subject matter for the foregoing article, retired a few years ago after a career as a teacher of Mechanical Drawing in the Technical Education Department at now lives at Wollstonecraft.

F.R. SHAW.

THE ORIGIN OF "JENOLA"

"The name has become well known by its display on the main road. Many have asked if it is. of Aboriginal origin whilst others are equally sure it must be the name of one of the many species of native flora, and still others think it has been taken from the name of our famous caves.

As it happens it comes from none of these sources. Thirty years ago we had as our house name, the Aboriginal name of a northern town and liked it until someone told us its Aboriginal meaning. The Aborigines were very candid when selecting place names, and as this particular one had an obnoxious meaning, we decided to change it. The question was, what could we select as an appropriate alternative?

We approached the problem in a novel way and, taking a consonant and a vowel from each of our daughters first names, and applying a little phonetic value thereto, this is what we got:-

From JoyJ O

From Elva E L

From Norma N A

Then reading these letters downwards, and in the columns we got J E N O L A, and that's how it happened.

It became the name of our home and, catching on, was. attached to a public thoroughfare, the group of shops known as "The Jenola Centre of Service", a business in that group, the adjoining Service Station, the Park opposite, a Golf Club and District thereabouts."'

ELVA CARMICHAEL..

 Mrs. Carmichael has kindly promised us an article, for a future issue, dealing with the life and work of her father. The late Reg. N. Dallimore was a local Shire Councillor from 1942 to 1950 and for even a longer period a prominent citizen who worked tirelessly and fearlessly for the advancement of the Sutherland Shire.

J.T.W.

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OUR JOURNAL

In the last issue of the Journal, an article headed "Our Journal" contained the following:-

"that we can afford space only for OUR OWN history. - devoted to a chronicle or narration of the past days of the South Botany Bay - Port Hacking region - "

I find I hold differing views to the above contention. Certainly our main efforts should be directed to research into the early history of the Sutherland Shire, but to do this at the exclusion of other aspects of Australian History would be a grave error.

Our Constitution covers this better under the Objects clause - by including both local and Australian History as worthy objects of our attention.

I therefore could not agree with the premise as set out in the contribution mentioned which appeared in our last Bulletin.

N. HORWOOD

NAMES OF OUR RAILWAY STATIONS

The following extracts from "Railwayman House Paper" published by the Railway Historical Society explains the origins of the names of two of our local railway stations:-

SUTHERLAND:-

Point Sutherland was named after one of Captain Cook's seamen (Forby Sutherland) who died on 2/5/1770 and was buried on the South side of Botany Bay."

WATERFALL

"After a waterfall near the station."

ERIC JEHAN.

THE ROCK. WARBLER (origma Solitaria)

Along with its picturesque waterfalls the railway township of Waterfall has another claim to fame. Ornithologists from all over the world know the headwaters of the Port Hacking River and the numerous creeks forming its tributaries as one of the favourite haunts of the rare Rock Warbler.

Species of the vast family of eighty three Australian warblers range from the lovable little Blue Wren and Yellow-tailed Thornbill (Tom Tit), well known in our home gardens, to the rare Eyrean Grass Wren found only on the lower Macumba River near Lake. Eyre and Gibber Bird of Central Australia may be found distributed throughout the length and breadth of our Continent. However the specific one under review (Rock Warbler) is to be seen only in the Hawkesbury Sandstone basin surrounding Sydney and adjoining limestone areas and nowhere in such numbers as in Royal National Park, close to Waterfall.

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This ashy-brown sprite, with rufous abdomen (also slight touch of rufous on rump) and greyish-white throat, (also known as Rock Robin, Cave Bird and Cataract Bird) is usually found in rocky gullies, boulder strewn creek beds and rock studded hillsides, but never far from water.

Arnold R. McGill, in "Australian Warblers" described it as follows;-

"A very active bird, mostly hopping over rock-strewn creek sides and adjoining sandstone escarpments. Its restless movements soon reveal its presence; otherwise it might remain undetected, because its colouration blends closely with its surroundings. Although strongly terrestrial it does at times move through low branches of trees and shrubs and I have seen it cling to tree trunks, like a tree-creeper. There is a continual sideways flicker of the tail, whilst the body and wing movements also express its activity."

While this five and a half inch in length avian forager, at times, eats a few small seeds it is mainly an insectivorous bird. Prey is probed from crevices in rocks, (often on precipitous cliff faces), or plucked from low leaves and occasionally it captures insects on the wing, while hovering.

The globular shaped nest-composed of root-and bark fibres, moss and grass (all bound together with cobwebs) is a unique feature encountered in a study of the Rook Warbler. This structure with an entrance at the side, and lined with soft, fine grassy plant down and feathers, is suspended, by spiders' webs, to hang from the roof or walls of a cave or rock shelter. Often a site is selected which is screened by a waterfall or cascade, (hence the name Cataract-Bird). Nests are now frequently found under road culverts and also in mine shafts. I have even seen one attached underneath the wire mattress of a bunk, in a disused hut.

The normal clutch is three white eggs with very faint blackish markings. The breeding season extends from August to December.

My reader will probably ask, "How does the Rock Warbler warrant a place in a historical journal?" History in its broadest sense embraces the story of all natural phenomena. Australia can proudly claim many unique plants, animals and birds found in no other part of the world. Our little feathered friend is one of those. By the slow process of evolution, over countless generations, it adapted itself to a way of life to fit in with the sandstone region in which it may still be found. Stretching from the dim ages of the past, this period was suddenly changed by the invasion of the white man in 1770. Probably at that date Cave Birds were numerous, wherever suitable habitat existed, throughout the length and breadth of the area we now know as Sutherland Shire. White civilisation with its accompanying settlement and development, has now confined this bird to remote pockets of the Royal National Park. For thousands of years the Rock Robin had lived beside our dusky predecessors, who on occasions have eaten a few of its tiny eggs, but in a true spirit of conservation, enforced by strictly observed taboos,"

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Studiously avoided the complete destruction of a species or any environment.

Long may the interesting Rock Warbler survive to give enjoyment to the white strangers who despite lip service to the now fashionable word conservation continue to pollute their environment at an alarming rate and apparently take delight in the destruction of our national heritage.

On the credit side I hasten to add that we are fortunate that our forefathers had the foresight to reserve the large domain of bushland which we now know as Royal National Park. Dedicated and proclaimed as a National Park in 1879 it still provides practically unspoilt bushland where those who wish to commune with nature may see glorious arrays of native flowers including the stately waratah and Gynea lily or observe rare avifauna including the shy Menura (Lyre-Bird), the artistic Satin Bower-Bird, the rare Rock Warbler and countless other indigenous Australians. All may be seen to full advantage in a natural netting.

The title Royal National Park was adopted after the visit of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, in 1954, who graciously gave her consent to the use of the prefix Royal.

Finding the nest of a Rock Warbler in a cave near Otford, which also housed an example of a primitive Aboriginal's art prompted the Naturalist - Poet Milton Trudgeon to pen the following lines:-

"Rock Warblers at Otford."
by Milton Trudgeon.

At Otford the Cavebird, Origma
Has cobwebbed a nest to the roof,
Surrounded by walls of enigma,
Corroboree - like and aloof.

This bird of the Hawkesbury sandstone,
Rock Warbler in rufous and fawn,
Has sung from the caves in the cyclone
And gazed on the Dreamtime, at dawn.

The secrets of ancient Australia
The Warbler now sees in the art
The motifs and ochre regalia
At Otford in caverns apart

JOHN WALKER.

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JULES FRANCOIS ARCHIBALD (1856-1919)

From Lifebuoy's - "Australian Do-You-Know Book," published in 1934, I have gathered a few facts relating to the above named gentleman: (Off course we all know "The Archibald Fountain" and that Archibald was a journalist and philanthropist and donor of the Archibald Prize for Australian Art).

"Jules Archibald was born in Victoria and after serving on many newspapers in that State came to Sydney, where he founded "The Bulletin." Archibald took complete charge of the literary side and the publication owed its success to this brilliant journalist. Around him he gathered an illustrious group of young writers and assisted amongst others Lawson, Daley, Paterson and Steele Rudd. Archibald's will provided legacies for distressed journalists, hospitals, cancer research, an annual prize for a 'portrait by an Australian artist and also a fund for the construction of the open-air War Memorial, which has been built in Hyde Park. (Sydney).

ELVA CARMICHAEL.

Archibald's link with the Sutherland area is provided by his sponsorship of Henry Lawson, the writer and poet, who, prior to his death in 1922, resided at Como, where he was a well known identity, at the historic Como Hotel. By contemporary drinkers. Lawson is remembered as a man, closely akin to his fellow men and yet remote and lonely as a genius is wont to be.

The editor of the Bulletin recognised the talent of the author of "While the Billy Boils" and creator of poems ranging from delightful bush ballads such as "Reedy River" to the profound philosophy and genuine patriotism of "The Star of Australasia" and the Championship of the underdog in "One Hundred and, Three." Furthermore Archibald demonstrated his interest in a practical way not only by publishing Lawson's work, but whenever "hard times" afflicted to the poet (a regular state of affairs) paying for contributions in advance and humanely, if ill-advisedly, slyly slipping a shilling into his palm to alleviate a burning thirst.

Another who befriended Lawson was the late Tom Mutch, M.L.A. (later Minister for Education). Saddened by the sight of the man of letters squandering his genius, Mutch, in the best tradition of mateship, frequently took Lawson away from the temptations of the City, for tramping and camping holidays in the bush of the Far South Coast or even down into Gippsland in an effort to revive the creative urge which seemed to elude the semi recluse in his favourite corner of the bar of the Como Hotel where he brooded (in his own words) with

"The ghost of the man I might have been."

JOHN WALKER.