



*Sutherland Shire
Historical Society Inc*
Bulletin



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by Jan Etter idge

Port Hacking, Fishermans' Paradise –Circa 1940



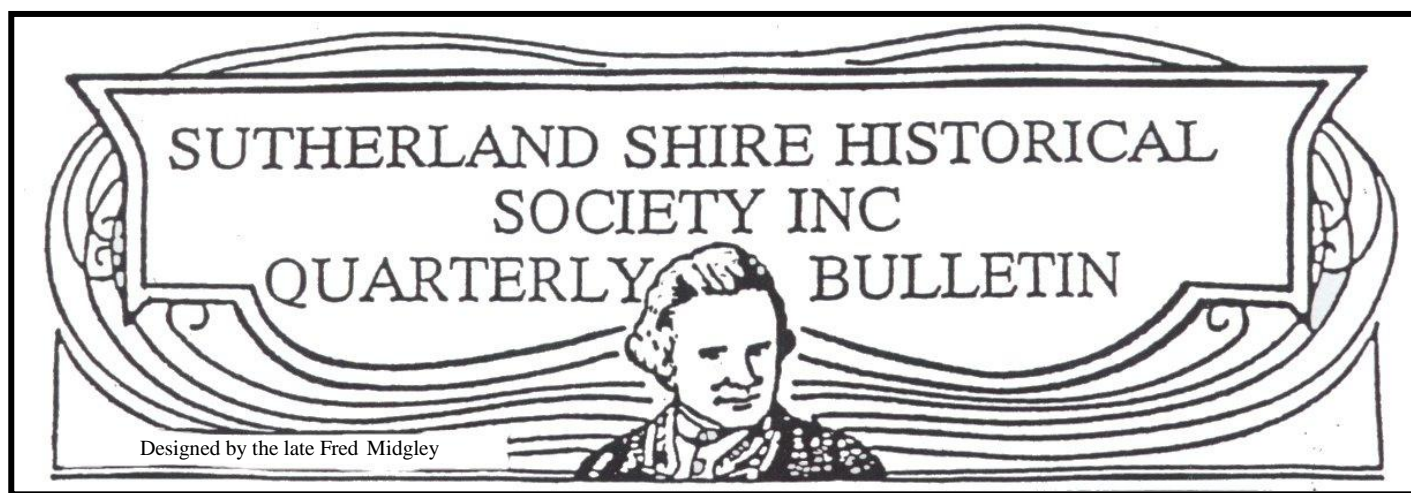
This picture of Port Hacking was taken in 1937 from Kitchen's property near Little Turriel Bay, looking downstream showing headlands on the northern & southern shores of the Hacking.

Port Hacking was, during the 19th and early 20th Centuries a “Fisherman’s Paradise” In this issue of the Bulletin we are privileged to see some of that marine bounty as brought to life by Jim Baker who has sent in his memories of the Hacking in the 40’s

Jim Baker was born in 1924 and lived at Blakehurst, on the Georges River, Sydney.

He spent much of his childhood roaming around the rocky foreshores and learned to fish at an early age. *Continued Page 7*

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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Meetings of the Society are held monthly on the third Friday at 7.45pm at the Multi Purpose Building, Flora Street, Sutherland. (Next to Council car-park)

VISITORS ARE WELCOME

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Obituary Notice

Barbara Ann Bursill passed away at 11am on the 30-1-03. Barbara had been fighting cancer for nearly two years and succumbed to the effects of invasive cancer whilst at St. George Private Hospital. She was 55 years of age, born 28th March 1947.

***Her passing is a loss to the world , she is deeply missed by her husband, her children, grand-children, relatives and friends. Barbara is buried in the Jacaranda Gardens at Woronora Cemetery, plot 189.
Rest In Peace.***

Disclaimer

The individual comment, articles and Office Bearers reports that appear in this Bulletin are the responsibility of the writer and in no way reflect the opinions or beliefs of the members or Executive of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society.

President's Remarks

Seasons Greetings! Happy New Year, and may 2003 bring peace, not war; with peace will come happiness, but no doubt with war will come prosperity---after it has caused a tremendous amount of suffering to many people. We who study history can show the trends, report previous outcomes which give us a portent for the future--but no one listens to the fact that history does, indeed, repeat itself. Why don't more people study history--especially our leaders!

Bushfire Tragedy Commemoration: Our hearts and prayers go out to the Gray's Point community commemorating the event in which three men gave their lives on 9th January, 1983 fighting a bushfire on Anana Hill which threatened their community. Keith Campbell, Gregory Moon and Thomas Bielecke showed outstanding bravery and on Saturday, 11th January, 2003 a large crowd gathered at the memorial to lay wreaths and pay their respects to these fine men, and then went up to the top of Anana Hill to place a flower at the site of their demise. From that tragedy we have learnt a lot about the functioning of automotive engines, the design of cabins with spray systems to ensure life preservation, and the operation of communications--- so that such tragedies can never occur again. From an historical point of view, I am curious as to how Anana Hill got its name. Any theories? It is a South Sea Island word meaning pineapple. Does the hill resemble a pineapple? We had South Sea Islanders diving commercially for oysters in Botany Bay in the 1870's. Curious.

Menai Celtic Heritage Festival – 7 to 9th March, 2003: The Council Website: parcmenaicelticfestival.com claimed 1,700 hits in the first six days of its operation, so we get the impression that it will be immensely popular with our community, and indeed with the whole of Sydney - and beyond! Book now: 97100999 if you want to attend the Celtic Sing-

along, and the Ceilidh with special dishes, followed by a Proms concert. There will be a



Clr Dawn Emerson

President; Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc.

Parade of Caedwads at the Parc Menai Cromlech as they walk the Candlelit Spiral, and the Kirking of the Ancient Sutherland Tartan. The Woronora Cemetery will be holding special walks, at 9.30am and 1.30pm on Sat. 8th March, identifying the graves of pioneer Menai residents. Our Society will be holding talks at Menai Library also on Sat 8/3/03: 10am David Overett: "History of Port Hacking Road"; 11.30am Helen McDonell: "History of Menai"; 1pm Aileen Griffiths, OAM: "History of Cronulla" 2.30pm Les Bursill: "History of the Aboriginal People in Sutherland Shire".

Owen Jones - Pioneer home, Menai: Our Society has also put an application in to council for a Community Arts Grant, to re-create Menai pioneer Owen Jones's early 1900's house and furnishings, inside the Sutherland School of Arts! We have a sketch from the Local Studies section of the Library, showing the bullnosed roofed verandah, the door to the hallway in the centre, and a room each side of the hall. (If you know the whereabouts of any bull-nosed iron, any condition,---we need it.) The first school was conducted inside this house, and we will try and re-create the schoolroom as the Menai children saw it, and the rooms furnished as they were in this period. We have been fortunate to have

donations of furniture of the times, and these will be displayed. As the council grant won't stretch far enough we would gladly receive donations of curtains, run up to fit the windows, pseudo kerosene lamps with electric bulbs, and timber, sash windows etc.. All donations by sponsors would be advertised prominently, and receive credit. We believe that this is one of the biggest projects we have undertaken, and hope to keep the display until 2006 when council celebrates its Centenary. The Menai House could then be dismantled and taken to a Menai location, for a further lease of life.

Annual General Meeting, Friday, 17th October, 2003: Just to refresh your memory, your Christmas present this year from the society was 6 months free membership. Renewals are due from May, and a renewal notice will be published in the May Bulletin. Our Annual Reports will be published in the August bulletin for the AGM in October. If you want continuity of membership, you must fill out the renewal notice in May, and accompany it with your fee for 2003-2004.

Pictorial History of Sydney and Suburbs, 1950+ I was fortunate to be contacted by Mrs. Gwen Rice, of Wedderburn, where I spent my childhood. She knew I was interested in local history, and she has given me several large cartons of 8mm films, and videos taken by Mr. Bill Taylor, who was an amateur photographer. I have only cursorily examined them, but whereas mostly they record life in Wedderburn, Campbelltown, Appin etc. they also range over many Sydney suburbs: Manly, Fairfield Liverpool etc and could be a treasure trove of social events and social life in Sydney's suburbs during the middle of the last century. The videos have sound, and may well be worth collating. As I knew the Wedderburn area and the old identities well, I may be able to provide commentary. I guess that this will be a project for me for the future, just in case time ever hangs heavily!

Members' Night- January, 2003: Our members' night, this month, is going to be an interesting evening; I admit I love these more than our structured evenings. We have David

Overett talking about traversing our Australian desert scenery, Betty Greentree talking about her trip to WA, and Andrew Platfoot, about his visit to Greenwich, and the Harrison clocks.

We also have some very exciting news! Our Deputy President, Mrs. Aileen Griffiths has received an award from the Royal Australian Historical Society and this will be presented on the night! Congratulations, Aileen! I look forward to seeing you at the meeting---I know it is getting harder to make the effort to come out at night, but if you need a lift, ring me, (Ph: 9543-1060) and I will see who lives near you (it may be me) who has a car, and I am sure they will collect you and return you home--that's what friends are for! We do enjoy seeing our older members as we need your memories to be able to date events, and places. YOU are our most important resource, and we value your attendance.

**2003 Meetings: 8pm In the
Multipurpose Centre, Flora St.,
Sutherland.**

Friday, 21st February: Brian Madden "Hernia Bay" accompanied by slides.

Friday, 21st March: David Campbell "The Celtic Council"

Friday, 18th April: Good Friday, and as the following Friday is Anzac Day, we go forward a week to :

Friday, 11th April: (Note 2nd Friday) Mary Small: Simpson and his donkey--how the book was written. *Venue will not be the MPC for this date.*

Friday, 16th May: Jim Cutbush: Royal Flying Corps

June or July: Canadian Consul speaking on James Cook in Canada.

Clr Dawn Emerson
President

From The Editor's Desk

What a breath of fresh air! I was just reading our President's remarks for this quarter and was so pleased to see her remonstrance to politicians to read more history.

I often hear people in the fields of ancient and historical studies lamenting that "if only they had a time machine, to go back and look at events as they occurred in the past". Then I make the same point to them that President Dawn has made, look to history for the past AND the future.

No matter how clever or technologically superior we are now or will become, unless we read history we are doomed to repeat the errors of the past. War is the greatest example of that. The more wars we have the less history is read and the more wars we have. We are now being led by people, who for whatever reasons, have not learnt this lesson and see war as an answer. War can never be an answer to anything. Imagine if every time you wanted your children or your partner or friends to do something for you and you resorted to violent action against them if they refused.

Families and friends/acquaintances have learned that discussion, persuasion, negotiation, conversation and support are the ways of success, (NOT WAR) in getting along with each other.

I have been told that Governments often have the characteristics of bullying children, keen only for their own outcomes and desires to be met. A bad Government has been equated with having a father 8 years old and running all aspects of the household and home.

In this time of "Law and Order" I see the same mentality expressed towards people who commit crimes and break the law. The present philosophy is "throw them in gaol where they will be deprived of liberty, assaulted by others and trained to hate the society that punishes them." Politicians see this as an answer to society's problems?



It is time for us as a society to look at what we do and perhaps rethink our approaches. At this very moment we are told hourly (on TV) that we are at "imminent risk of terrorist attack" We are adjoured to "be alert, not alarmed" "be on guard" perhaps we should look at how **we** may be contributing to the problem with this be alert not alarmed type of reaction. Perhaps now it could be appropriate to examine why poor people in other countries are getting angry with the rich Western World?

I spent some time in Bali recently and saw men, women and children living in absolute poverty. I spent some time at the home of my Taxi driver and his family. He was a man of some wealth and stature because he owned a car and had a business. He was proud of his home and success, by our standards he was living in a sewer, with no water or sanitation, a single power outlet and raw sewerage running in the gutters outside his door. He was a rich Balinese with a business. Can you imagine how the poor live in Bali or Indonesia?

There are plenty of historical examples of today's problems, the French, just a few hundred years ago overthrew the greedy regimes that held the common people in thrall. The people used Madame Guillotine to horrible effect. More recently Russia overthrew its Czars and later its commissars and Nazi Germany grew from oppression and depression. All of these overthrows lead to war that just re-instated the same old same old.

So let us all read history books and try to avoid another middle eastern war. And remember "bullies come to bad ends"

Les Bursill - Editor

Fisherman's Tales - From Port Hacking - *Circa 1940.*



The "Fishermen" at a reunion in 1988

The above photo was taken at the Georges River Sailing Club in 1988 Top: Aubrey Oxford, Jim Baker, John Hull and Milton Montgomery. Bottom: John Hull Snr., Les Appel, Bill Williams and Jim Bonus.

In this article Jim with the able assistance of his wife Maureen have put together some of the "fisherman's tales" from Port Hacking. And in simple verse has related some of the more poignant and amusing parts of Hacking history.

Jim Baker was born in 1924 and lived at Blakehurst, on the Georges River. Jim was apprenticed to the boot trade at the Betta Shoe Factory, Rockdale, where he returned after four years in the Army in World War II, to become a footwear designer and pattern cutter.

He spent much of his childhood roaming around the rocky foreshores and learned to fish at an early age. These were the Depression years when some fresh fish was always a welcome supplement to the food larder.

He had visited Cronulla and Port Hacking by public transport and was fascinated by the natural beauty of the waterway as well as its reputation as a fishing paradise. He and other mates from Betta Shoes were so keen to fish the Hacking that they initially travelled there, with fishing gear, on their pushbikes. Jim's mode of transport was then

elevated to a motorbike and finally shared car transport. "Fishing the Blue" became a regular activity from the 1940s to 1970s.

Having travelled to many parts of the world in latter years, Jim and his wife, Maureen, still considered that for natural beauty and high conservation value, the Hacking River, with much of its course within the Royal National Park, would be hard to beat. This inspired them to join with other members of the local branch of National Parks Association to become involved in environmental impact issues.

Jim and his family settled at Bexley and then Oyster Bay, in the Sutherland Shire, before retiring to Tuross Head on the south coast. He now spends his time fishing the Tuross Lakes, writing poetry and memoirs (such as *Tales of Hacking*), and helping his wife with local environmental and landcare activities.

Introduction:

The Port Hacking estuary has attracted many devoted and consistent fishermen from all walks of life through the years. The mateship and loyalty of these fellows was legendary, resulting in some first class stories of their activities. Some of these stories were passed on during drinking sessions at Caringbah Pub after a day of fishing. These chinwags over a few schooners added to the pleasure of the day's outing on the Hacking.

Sydney fishing enthusiasts were in their hey-day during the 1940s and 50s, when there were still plenty of blackfish, bream, flathead, whiting and garfish to be caught. To the credit of the earlier politicians a handful of estuaries were declared "off-limits" for commercial fishermen in the mid 1930s, mainly due to the destructive practice of haul-netting in sensitive fish habitat areas. Port Hacking became one of these havens for recreational fishing and each amateur 'fisho' felt he owed a debt of gratitude to those enlightened legislators.

It was quite a challenge in the early days just to reach the boatsheds of the Port. Before most fellows could afford a car they walked the four miles from Caringbah Station or some persevered using push bikes for transport. The effort involved is a good indication of the fishing rewards to be gained. Who would push a bike

out to the Port at 4 am on a bitterly cold winter's morning, with backpack heavily laden with tackle, bait, berley and assorted knick-knacks unless a worthwhile reward of good catches awaited at the end of the day?

Just as well we made the most of it because water skiing, a sport of the affluent, would take over during the 60s and 70s. Young men "buzzing the joint" in their aluminum 'tinnies' with powerful motors also contributed to the demise of paradise for fishermen. Opportunities for good fishing catches gradually declined with the onslaught of speed boats and other activities. Boatsheds where we had hired our rowing boats every week eventually became redundant and sold out to cashed-up home builders anxious to acquire a prime waterside block.

As the population and use of the waterway increased so the loss of habitat for the huge flocks of magnificent black swans. During the 40s and 50s these were a feature of the Port, on the ballast heap within Fisherman's Bay, where they liked to rest and gather food. The main cause of disturbance for the swans was their continuous harassment by local dogs.

Some of our recreational fishing friends had retired to the south side of the Port, at Bundeena and Fisherman's Bay because the prices for land or property were so much cheaper on the Royal National Park side of the river. They would have to face disappointment with the winds of change on the river as their fishing bonanza deteriorated. Many a good fishing tale from these old originals can still be heard at the Bundeena R.S.L. club, especially with the encouragement of a schooner or two.

The early anglers of the Port regarded it as an ecological wonderland. There was abundant fish habitat, with numerous reefs beside the channel and sea grass flats teeming with marine life. These flats bordering the channel held the system together, preventing slumping and erosion of the banks. The advent of speeding boats, especially at low tide, cut the vulnerable sea grass flats to ribbons, leaving a shifting, sterile mass of sand to block the channels. Many of the old-timers felt that the Port had been saved from commercial fishing activities only to fall foul of the speed-boat fraternity! Here we are in the next century

with all the advantages of scientific knowledge but still no political will to prevent such ecological disasters.

In the early days there were giant flathead, king-sized blue-nosed whiting, blackfish galore, both on the reef kellicks and the sea grass flats. The bream were also abundant but, as in other estuaries on the eastern seaboard, were the first to almost disappear once their habitat had been modified. The Bonnie Vale 'ribbon-weed flats' (now gone) also produced enormous numbers of 'beakies' (garfish) of excellent size.

From about January onwards the bronze whaler and schools of grey nurse sharks often made things difficult for the fishermen, pinching the hooked fish off the line with ease. Most likely these sharks came into the Port after the schools of kingfish, bonito and trevally.

The regular appearance of schools of porpoises into the upper estuary was always a good sign of fish in abundance and a healthy waterway. There were wobbegong sharks, large groper, and the odd sea turtle. In the summer, when no blackfish were biting, the boys turned their hand to catching large blue swimmer crabs. The Hacking was truly an aquatic wonderland.

The Regulars

One of the most prominent blackfish angling groups on the Hacking, after World War II was made up of fellows from the Betta Shoe Factory situated at Cairo Street, Rockdale. This was a solid family business begun by old Charlie Gray, a WWI veteran, and later carried on by his two sons, Keith and Ron. The tariff situation would eventually catch up with this business and similar enterprises in the boot and rag trade, leading to their demise in the 80s and 90s.

Betta Shoe in its heyday employed about 300 hard-working souls both male and female. Most of its employees lived close to Botany Bay, Georges River and Port Hacking. This led to the formation of two fishing groups, an ocean "outside" group led by Ken Austin and George Denmead, and an estuary "inside" group led by Bluey Baker and Milton Montgomery. Occasionally the estuary boys would join the outside group for a trip on the ocean waves. At the end of the day's fishing the visiting fishermen

from the estuary had to make sure they did not end up with all the inferior grey sweep and red nannygai fish as their share of the day's catch while the experienced outside boys took home the more valued snapper and morwong!

Most of the Betta Shoe workers were only too keen to be involved in outdoor activities at the weekend as a relief from the factory grind. This spawned not only fish clubs, but a cricketing team, a golfing group and a social club. Bluey had a number of estuary fishing mates during the years from 1945 to 1975, starting with Dave Pearce and continuing with George Boyd, Bill Williams and Milton Montgomery. Les Appel, John Hull and Ken Austin occasionally joined them.

The main boatsheds were Boffingers at Lilli Pilli, Diggers and Simpsons between Little Turriel Bay and Burraneer Bay, Alexanders and Bottles in Dolans and Burraneer Bays. The Diggers and Simpsons boatsheds enjoyed maximum patronage during the early days. There was no alternative but to order one's boat each week for the next weekend. Many had to wait until somebody dropped off the booking list (only usually happened when a fisherman died!) before getting a boat and gaining the exalted title of "one of the regulars". For comfort, most fishermen preferred a crew of only two, but on organized fishing carnival days they were obliged to fit three or four in each boat (*Ed. This was before Waterways inspectors obviously*).

There were probably only 30 to 40 boats available at any one time and all had to be rowed. The Diggers boats were painted white and Simpsons brown varnished. Being clinker built 12' or 14' rowing boats, they were sturdy but often leaked like sieves. Some of them were short on rope so it was essential to get to the sheds early or one would be landed with the leakiest boat with the shortest rope. Everyone had their favourite anchor or kellick and would get upset if someone beat them to it. Bluey Baker's Betta Shoe boys always had a cast iron link moulding, from one of the old Ramsden & Chaplain shoe clicking presses, to tie to the front anchor so that it would not shift in extra fast tides. This had to be carefully hidden after the day's outing or it would 'walk'.

Most of the regulars were good mates and would

help one another. Like all sports, however, the competition of the game was intense, and occasional squabbles and bad feelings surfaced from time to time. One incident happened at Ship Rock which was at the upstream western edge of Burraneer Bay. Nowadays the road above takes its name from the rock. When the fish were biting well on Ship Rock the proprietor of Simpsons boatshed tried to please his regulars by mooring their chosen boats up to the bank the night before. This way the fishermen could walk along the bank directly into the boats thereby beating all others to the favourite 'possie'.

Eventually the disadvantaged fishermen showed their righteous indignation one night by cutting the mooring ropes. This resulted in the boats drifting down with the run out tide, one boat making it all the way to Cronulla Beach, and another one lost to sea.

A great flurry of activity took place each Friday evening when the fishermen arrived for the weekend "sleep-in" at Simpsons boatshed, operated by Arthur Nissen. About a dozen fellows would settle down on bare boards in the upstairs storeroom of the corrugated iron shed. These primitive sleeping quarters caused them no worry as they were there to fish, drink and engage in riotous conversation in a typically male atmosphere.

Eric and Cecil, old Bill (old Cummo), Jacky (the wine-dot), and Jack Patrick are a few names that stick in the memory, also Dicky Green (Greenie) who drove the red and blue bus that still plies between Hurstville and Rockdale although Greenie is probably long gone.

The boat shed operator, Arthur Nissen had been very generous to the fellows because they had been good mates for many years. He was a keen fisherman himself and would occasionally join the fellows to fish for a few hours when things were quiet in the middle of the day. The amount of beer and other alcohol the fellows consumed during the weekend would eventually cause him much regret. Old Bill, who lived alone, treasured the friendship of his mates on these wonderful weekends but unfortunately he went berserk when drinking. His very bad language could be heard far and wide. This caused great consternation to neighbours living close to the shed - including Arthur's wife and family.

Eventually Arthur was forced to bar old Bill from the shed.

Being resourceful old Bill rented out a holiday weekender for the two nights at the Diggers boatshed property a little upstream from Simpsons shed. He could still row around the river and talk to his mates during the daylight hours but the conviviality of the night drinking sessions were forever lost to him.

‘THE BANISHMENT OF OLD BILL’

The boys would assemble on each Friday night
Simpson’s Boatshed, Port Hacking, their weekly
delight,
Heavy laden with tackle and arms full of grog,
Escape from the Missus and Sydney’s grey smog!
Russet iron boatshed, two stories tall,
Tie-ropes and anchors thrust into wall,
Clinker-built row boats gleaming with varnish
The old shed a relic of wear, tear and tarnish.
The fishing was great on Saturday and Sunday
Then back to the humdrum at first light on Monday.
The bottles were emptied and old tales retold
With night hours disurbed by cries of the bold.
Eric Berlin and Cecil, Jack Patrick as well,
Jackie the wine dot, Bill Cummins all tell
Of the bream and the blackfish, flathead and whiting
And just where to go to find them all biting.
Old Bill lived alone, on mates did depend
And his whole life revolved round his happy weekend
But his swearing and cussing was bound to cause
trouble
You could hear him a mile off and that burst the
bubble.
The birds would all scatter, the lizards take fright,
And even the fish would go right off the bite,
Bill Cummins’ tirade of language profane
Shocked Port Hacking ladies again and again.
The boatshed proprietor under pressure from wife
Told Bill to leave and so lessen the strife,
Bill took up his stand alone and dejected
At Diggers’ weekender just as expected.
Bill wasn’t so bad, he just got excited
The grog made it worse, in his mates he delighted,
But mateship is one thing and won’t take the strain
When a bloke looks for trouble there’s nothing to
gain.
Nor-Easter blows soft at the end of the day,
Clouds purple and crimson out over the bay,
Harsh words from Bill can be left quite apart
For he loved nature’s beauty right from the start.

The “Floating Bottle” Incident

A story remembered by all the fishing fraternity happened close to the downstream side of Simpsons shed. A quite senior fellow who couldn’t row very far, especially in fast tides, found a good little eddying possie just up from the gutter and the crack which in turn were just up from Ship Rock. He was an avid teetotaller which didn’t earn him much respect from the sleep-in gang. They had come back to the shed for lunch and a few beers, and were carefully watching his activities through the boatshed window.

These regular guzzlers had amassed a large number of empties. They decided to half-fill the bottles and float them down on the run out tide, so that they drifted downstream in an upright position, to end up in front of the old bloke’s boat. The bottles were all caught in the eddy where the old teetotaller was fishing and his boat was soon surrounded by bobbing dead-marines! His objections to his fishing being disturbed in this way were quite obvious but the hilarity of the situation was much enjoyed by the guzzlers. Of course, nowadays environmental aspects would have to be taken into account.

“The Dilemma of Jackie, the Wine Dot”

Jack was a rather sad case; he had become a solitary alcoholic. The other regulars at Simpsons enjoyed a few beers and a yarn, and formed friendships. Gordon, an occasional fishing mate, had lost patience with Jack because of his orgiastic wine craving. This set him apart, so much so that no one liked to fish with him.

The Ballast Heap Flats, upstream from Deeban Spit on the southern side near Fishermen’s Bay, was the preferred site for Jack’s fishing. Like W.C.Field, his gear always included plenty of grog. He wasted no time uncorking a bottle or two as the run in tide gathered strength, giving him the necessary one metre of water to catch his whiting and bream. His antics were well-known and predictable. In no time he would be well sozzled and would lie down in the bottom of the boat for a sleep.

He never allowed for the turning of the tide. By the time he would wake up again his boat would be high and dry on the ballast heap flat, with the channel possibly some hundreds of metres distant. Then would follow a scenario which had

become familiar to all who lived near the river, or were fishing.

“Hey, Gordon” he would bellow, or to anyone else who might be nearer, “Come and give me a hand to pull thisboat off!” No one was prepared to interrupt his fishing so Jack’s bellowing for help would become louder. His profanity and abuse of his mates would embarrass a bullock driver! He would be left to work off his drunkenness by using all his energy to pull the boat back into the channel himself.

One day Jack rowed over to have a yarn with the chap operating the shell grit dredge concession on the Flat. After much persuasion Jack managed to talk the fellow into having a drink with him. This was a grave mistake as the dredge operator soon realized that Jack was interrupting his work. He was at his wit’s end to find a way of getting rid of the old nuisance.

The shell grit extraction was very unpopular with the neighbours who believed that the remaining sifted sand was lighter and more mobile, thus filling up the channels. It was most likely to have been one of these neighbours who had left a large dead stingray in a hessian bag on the dredge. The stench was offensive in the extreme. The dredge operator decided to kill two birds with the one stone. He managed to hide the stingray in the bag under the seat in Jack’s boat. When Jack returned his boat to the boatshed the other men were very vocal about the stench. Jack was accused of soiling his pants – a suggestion he vehemently denied. When the rotten stingray was discovered they accused him of trying to sneak it home because he couldn’t catch anything better! So the last laugh was on Jack.

“Unusual Diversions at Kitchens Reef”

Kitchens Reef is an underwater reef on the upstream side of Little Turriel Bay. It took its name from a Federation-style brick cottage on the shoreline, supposedly built by the Kitchens Soap family. A focal point of the following story was the elaborate set of stone steps leading down to the rocky shore from the road in front of the cottage.

Milton Montgomery, one of the Betta Shoe boys, usually fished with Bluey and Ray. He had bought a 3 metre lightweight ply boat, able to take just three fishermen, that could be

transported on the roof of his Rover car. There was always great rivalry during the weekend to be the first onto Kitchens Reef, especially if the run in tide was in the morning. The sheds did not open until about 5.30 am. Milton reasoned that parking his car on the road above the Reef, and with the help of Bluey and Ray to man-handle the boat down the stone steps, would be a way of beating their rivals onto their favourite spot.

This tactic proved very successful. Milton and his mates could hear the wails of disappointment from the boys in Simpsons boats as they rowed past the corner at the Diggers and found the possie already taken. The next reef downstream, off the Blue Boatshed, would be second choice for the Simpson boys, where fish were aplenty in any case.

One sunny afternoon when Kitchens Reef was fishing well, three boats tied up together to fish the run in tide. Eight or nine fellows were all getting their share of fish. The stone steps were about 60 metres away and clearly visible. At about 2.30 pm a couple came down the steps to the foreshore, obviously very taken up with each other. They had probably come from one of the local clubs or pubs. They were busily looking for a quiet and sheltered love nook, but after some searching could not find a suitable place. Naturally all eyes offshore followed their every move. Some adolescents sitting on the railing of the baths enclosure nearby were also fascinated with the unexpected sideshow.

The kissing and cuddling of the couple was becoming more amorous by the minute. Finally they surrendered to their passion and found a flat rock to lie upon. Things progressed and as they say ‘Love cannot be denied’ or so the saying goes, but in this case, it was! A family of 4 adults and 3 children began moving down the steps. Startled by the sound of approaching intruders the lovers quickly resumed respectability. They pretended to be looking at the periwinkles and other marine life on the rocks, hoping desperately that the ‘spoilers’ would soon be making their way back up the steps. Perhaps this wish was shared by their audience! Soon enough the wish was granted. This time a very successful and uninterrupted conclusion was achieved.

The show now over the fishermen thought it appropriate to clap a hearty round of applause.

The applause in turn earned a solemn bow from the fellow followed by a giggle from the girl. Their departure left the fishermen to once again concentrate on their angling. The adolescents would no doubt recount this sensational incident to their comrades at the first opportunity.

“The Wall at the Hatchery”

The Fish Hatchery buildings are situated at the end of the Cronulla peninsula at Hungry Point. In Gregory's 1990 Directory the facility is referred to as the C.S.I.R.O. Marine Laboratory. Upstream of the peninsula is Gunnamatta Bay, a busy waterway carrying the Cronulla/Bundeena ferries and hosting numerous fine boats belonging to the yacht club members. Old maps show a public reserve at the end of the peninsula, joining up with Darook Park. Before World War II the reserve was taken over by Fisheries to erect the Hatchery buildings, including laboratories, and later Commonwealth Hostels squatted on the remainder of the land under special wartime legislation.

Although the public reserve had been alienated, fishermen were still able to access their traditional vantage points on the foreshore for a day out with their families. The end of this peninsula was regarded as one of the most important areas for successful shoreline fishing on the Hacking.

The area once gained notoriety with a spectacular and unexpected discovery. Regular visitors to these waters were the huge Bronze Whaler sharks, arriving during the summer months. A big Whaler was caught there and its gut contained a human arm. This led to the police being able to solve a very puzzling murder (Ed. Graphic detail of this murder can be found in the Police Museum at Circular Quay).

In the early days security at the Hatchery was very poor. On the weekend young boys would often be seen entering the buildings. Then the sound of breaking glass would echo along the foreshore. The mindless vandalism by a few led to loss of access for the innocent. The authorities, with typical heavy-handedness, constructed a concrete wall to join up with the existing wire fence. They also went to absurd lengths by using jackhammers at low tide to

destroy the foreshore rocks in front of the wall so that no one could get around to their fishing spots. A much more reasonable remedy to vandalism would have been to erect cyclone fencing topped with barbed wire, along the clifftop leaving the lower foreshore to the public. In those days the authorities were relying on public apathy and acquiescence. We now have a much better informed public who know their rights and would quite likely organize a successful protest. Recreational fishing is now recognized as the most popular sport in Australia. As such a great deal more effort should have been put into gaining the support of State and Federal parliamentarians, many of whom no doubt were also keen fishermen.

Once the Wall had cut off access, the boys began fishing the point from boats, but sometimes it was a long hard row against the tide. When big seas were running a wary eye had to be kept seawards in case a big wave flooded the boat. But when the big “white travellers” were biting it was well worth the effort.

It is still possible to fish the rocks downstream from the Wall at Hungry Point, near the beach known as Salmon Haul, and the old wooden wharf. These rocks, however, would never be as productive as the Hatchery ground which is forever lost.

The excellent A.B.C. television series “A River Somewhere” could have used the Hatchery ground for an episode, with a small adjustment to their gear to accommodate the greatest angling sport of all with a ROD, REEL AND FLOAT!

“Close Encounter of Bert and Titch”

Sometimes the weather would turn foul during the weekend fishing days, mainly Norwester spring gales or unexpected summer Southerlies. Reluctantly the men would return to the sheds and enjoy a yarn or two before making their way homeward. One of the favourite stories was about the amorous adventures of Bert and Titch. This story was highly embarrassing for Bert. It was only after many schooners at the Caringbah Hotel that he lost his reserve and intrigued his listeners with the full account.

When the blackfish went off the bite the anglers tried to figure out where the fish had relocated.

Several fishermen had successfully tracked down the fish, after much trial and error, into one of the bays of the Hacking. An estuary bay would not be the ideal place for blackfish anglers to use their rod, reel and float, as the game demands tidal movement to maintain drift.

Bert and Titch found a spot in one of these bays near a wooden jetty about 12 metres long. It was bordered by an affluent urban development of two-storied homes with well-kept lawns and gardens descending to the waterline. Due to the lack of drift, they were only catching the odd fish and had plenty of time to exercise their eyeballs watching a lady with her gardening activities. Bert suddenly realized that she was a girlfriend, from his youthful single days, one whom he had regularly taken on a Friday night to the Regent Dance Hall at Hurstville. Plucking up courage he spoke to her; the lady's response was one of genuine surprise and then obvious pleasure when she recognized her former boyfriend of long ago.

During their initial conversation Bert soon realized that she was one of Sydney's many keen gardeners and offered to assist. Bert's romantic ambitions became bolder each week when he was invited inside for afternoon tea and realized that his ex-sweetheart was one of Sydneys ever growing group of weekend sports widows. Apparently her husband travelled each weekend in pursuit of his love of golf. The wife left at home to spend her time in the garden which she enjoyed but found the more physical labours a little beyond her. She gladly accepted Bert's gallant offer to do some digging and weed removal. Titch wondered just what his mate's offer may lead to but continued to fish in the boat each week while Bert carried out his garden duties. Eventually the couple put aside any marital considerations as the old romantic flame had rekindled. Titch thus became the "Cockatoo". He had to keep an eye on the road above the house for the unexpected approach of the husband's motor vehicle. Too much of a good thing often has dire results. On this occasion Bert had been inside the house for about an hour when Titch was dismayed to see the car arrive and the husband get out to open the garage door. On later reflection they decided that a neighbour might have observed Bert's regular appearance and tipped off the husband.

"Red, Red!", shouted Titch, being their

prearranged danger signal. Bert quickly gathered his belongings and ran down to the jetty where Titch was waiting impatiently. Glancing back to the house Bert could see the anxious face of his lady friend watching from the window. At this stage her husband would not have seen what was going on at the jetty because the house and garden hid it from his view at the road. For one terrible moment or two Bert and Titch could not undo the knot of rope tied to the jetty. The tide had risen and the rope had caught in oyster shells on the jetty pylon. The tension was so great that their nervous efforts only delayed matters. Eventually the rope was undone, the front anchor pulled up, and the boat skimmed away, with Bert's rowing energy easily rivalling those of Olympic scullers.

On hearing this tale, a few of the fishing fraternity contemplated their own situation. After all, their wives were really "fishing widows" each weekend and might be just as susceptible to fellows like Bert who could rekindle an old love interest. Perhaps a classical case of "What the eye doesn't see, etc. etc."

"Paynie shows 'em how"

Loch Lomond Point, which lies on the upstream side of the Burraneer peninsula, is one of the many sites endowed with names referring to local resident families or features of the landscape. The shallow spot, only 3 metres deep, close in to the shore was called "Locky Point". The deep water spot, at least 6 metres deep was known as "Locky on the Rails", where the bank had been reinforced with old metal railway line. Other favourite kellick fishing spots carried the names of Bells, the Pole, Isaacs' Baths, and the Marbles. There was much rivalry for the best anchorage in these areas when the blackfish were shoaling there in large numbers, often in April and May.

The older experts knew exactly when to fish a certain "pozzie", run-in or run-out tide, or top or bottom of the tide, with the time of the day also playing an important part. Some partners in fishing became legendary - Big Carl and little Carl, Baz and Andy, etc. but the most remarkable and solitary fisherman was Alec Payne. He surpassed them all for fishing skills. Everyone who fished the port could tell a tale about Alec, quite often detrimental to themselves. Following is one of the favourite stories.

Some lucky anglers had managed to fish during the working week at the Port, taking home some wonderful catches from Locky Point. This information travelled like lightning resulting in at least six boatloads of keen men at dawn on the next Saturday, kellicking up parallel to the shore at Locky Point.

A somewhat cautious Alec Payne arrived later to tie up beside the end boat so that he could withdraw should the fish be off the bite. No fish; not a bite! The run-out tide had finished, nothing on the bottom slack, then no result on the start of the run-in tide. The luderick had copped a hiding and had sensibly departed. Enormous amounts of berley were being thrown in to lure them into biting but to no avail.

Some of the optimistic fellows thought it worthwhile waiting for the top of the tide in six hours time during the afternoon. Alec had no such foolish ideas. He quickly detached his white clinker-built boat from the others, and quickly kellicked up in deeper water on Locky on the Rails. His very first drift turned up a fine one kilogram "white traveller" luderick, and he had a good feed for himself in no time at all. Those in the other six boats, only a stone's throw away, were being treated to the usual embarrassing fishing lesson!

As expected several of the boat crews decided to swallow their pride and tie up to Alec. After much frustration getting anchors up and untangling ropes from each other, the crews eventually achieved the desired manoeuvre. By this time a fast run-in tide had progressed to full speed and the fish had moved on to more comfortable locations.

Once again the redoubtable and enterprising Alec detached himself from Locky on the Rails, leaving behind his dismayed and disgruntled rivals. Alec and a few others ruled supreme in the Locky Point to the Marbles shoreline, so less experienced fishermen left them to it. There were many other promising spots in the channel further up the river where they could enjoy the day without being exposed to unchallengeable competition! George Boyd also recalled another occasion where Alec's ability to respond quickly ensured a catch was not lost. Alec had reeled in a fish almost to the boat, when the fish threw the hook. As quick as a flash, Alec had the landing

net under it before it could escape.

'THE CHAMPION'

It's clear at Port Hacking, the day bright and breezy,

Warm sun on your back, slow tide makes it easy,
But a fisherman knows when the weather turns wild

Haste back to the shed, with your hopes all reviled.
So pull on the oars all the strength you can muster
Fearsome and swift blows the Southerly Buster,
Wild August Nor-westers can finish a day,
With jettisoned berley and bait thrown away.
At Simpsons and Boffingers, Alexanders and Diggers,

The boats all back early for the bailers and riggers,
The mob would start yarning back at the shed
Reluctant to leave with so much still unsaid.
Just who was the Champ, with the rod, reel and float?

Alec Payne, they agreed, all others take note!
Kenny Davis was second, that all-weather bounder,
Arthur Nissen was good, the best mixed all-rounder.

Old Man and his Marlin, Moby Dick and his Whale,
When folk get together there's always a tale
Whether legend or myth it's just one of degree
But it's dinkum re Paynie, that much we agree.
New chums would think, if they tied up to Payne,
That they'd catch all the fish and make a big gain,
But to fish beside Paynie would just break your heart,

He'd catch every blackfish before you could start!
Blokes often stay put for most of the day,
Catch next to nothing and give it away,
Paynie'd take over as soon as they went
And catch stacks of fish, as though heaven sent.
But Alec deserved to be known as the Champ,
Bad luck saw him injured when just a young scamp,
Life can be hard and the going real tough,
Good luck to a battler who's come through the rough.

(Ed. Our President's sister-in-law knew Alec and his wife Val. She and her husband were invited over to Maianbah for a days fishing. As usual Alec caught all the Blackfish, Ray caught nothing at the other end of the boat, and insisted that "Alec had put him off" by humming a tune the whole day long – thus preventing Ray from concentrating.

“The Nudist Confrontation”

The South West Arm as the name suggests intrudes into the southern reaches of the Hacking estuary, bordered by the Royal National Park. Many a reader will have fond memories of this beautiful protected waterway. Lovers through the years have rowed from Boffingers’ boat shed in Turriel Bay across to the Arm, making for the upper basin, where a freshwater creek enters it. The environment was one of peace and tranquility, with only natural sounds of birds and mullet jumping out of the water. “Old Boff” found the custom from young lovers was a welcome addition to his business when the fishing was poor and the fishermen stayed away in droves.

Even in the early days the hot summer climate of the Sydney area spawned the formation of many nudist groups. They were continually frustrated in their attempts to gain an official area of public foreshore for their gatherings. “Wowers” deliberately confronted the naked ones on beaches, demanding they leave or become respectable by covering up the vital parts with a costume the size of a handkerchief. Eventually common sense has prevailed and several secluded beaches in the Sydney area have been designated as nudist beaches. Australia in general has no shortage of such beaches and beautiful river foreshores so there was no reason to deny nudist groups the opportunity to use them. It was not surprising, therefore, that nudism enthusiasts sought out places such as the South West Arm to escape the righteous indignation of those hostile to their recreational activities.

A group of about 30 nudists, including some couples with children, decided to cool off one hot summer’s day by visiting the South West Arm and the Basin. They knew that it would be difficult to reach but felt it was worthwhile “giving it a go”. Leaving Boffingers boatshed very early that morning they rowed up to the basin, delighting in the scenery along the way. They wasted no time getting back to nature and were soon skinny-dipping in the clear tidal water to their hearts’ content.

Each weekend bush walkers would use the suburban rail system to reach Royal National Park to tramp along the many walking tracks. On this occasion a group of young boys, accompanied by their two leaders, one male and

one female, came overland to their favourite spot at the head of the basin. At first the sight of naked children splashing in the water nearby raised no alarm bells, but subsequently the leaders realized that a large group of naked adults were also reclining further along the banks. The boys, of course, were already showing great interest in the novelty of seeing the adult female form in all its originality.

The bushwalkers’ group were determined not to move away and equally the nudist group intended to stand their ground. Leaders from both groups confronted each other. A conference took place but no compromise seemed possible. While the discussion dragged on the young male bushwalkers could see their chances of a relaxing cool swim diminishing. The naked children wondered why there was a problem and beckoned to the clad ones to join them.

“Eureka!” In a flash the boys dropped their backpacks and quickly undressed. The basin soon echoed with the happy shouts of the uninhibited. The kids themselves had solved this great human dilemma for the adults. At first the leaders of the boys’ bush walking group were embarrassed and perplexed by this turn of events, but eventually decided that when in Rome do as the Romans do, and joined in the nudist activities.

“Wild Bobby Riley”

The Cronulla to Audley ferry trips from the Port to the upper Hacking became a feature of the river scene from 1945 to about 1970. Waves and greetings were exchanged as the ferry passed by the fishing boats along the way. Bawdy remarks were also swapped to the mutual enjoyment of both fishermen and ferry passengers. The time of day was easily gauged by the passing of these ferries.

Another pleasant interlude in the day’s fishing was the spectacular arrival of the surfboat from the South Cronulla Beach Surf Club. These young men made a fine sight as they rowed with perfect timing and obvious enjoyment in their exercise. Warren and Joan Buchan always took a great interest in the training and performance of the rowing crews. Warren at that time was a member of the managerial committee while Joan acted as treasurer.

A member of one of the crews, Bobby Riley, was

much admired for his stamina and physique. He was temporarily occupying a cave rumoured to be somewhere near Jibbon Beach. No one could ever remember seeing him wearing shoes. The soles of his feet were like leather with cracks in the skin of both heels. Bobby's great delight was mateship but his excessive drinking no doubt led to his hermit-like habitation in the cave. Bobby became very interested when a couple of his mates told him how easy it was to brew and bottle one's own beer. After acquiring the necessary equipment (perfectly legal) he became quite a good brewmaster. Unfortunately his sober periods became progressively rare. During a regular training row with his crew he had a brainwave. The summer day was a hot one and the men were very thirsty. Why not invite them all up to the cave for a glass or two of the liquid amber? The fellows needed little persuasion so they ran the surfboat up on the Jibbon Beach, carefully pulling the boat high up so that it would not be affected by the tide.

The half kilometre walk through the beautiful coastal heathland of this section of the Royal National Park only increased the thirst of the crew. When they arrived Bobby apologized for the bachelor untidiness of his cave retreat. His "furniture" boasted only one chair, so he conducted a frantic search for boxes and other items so his guests could sit down. He rummaged around in a cupboard and other nooks and crannies for enough glasses. His glassware was of a strange and unusual variety indeed. The largest was a quart jar which he kept as his personal drinking glass for "sentimental reasons". No arguments there, so out came the bottles of home brew in generous proportion.

Being a great humorist Bobby told the others to drink in moderation just as he did, as he had found a way of increasing the alcoholic content of the brew. After a couple of hours "putting them away", one of the younger crew members lay down in a drunken slumber and could not be reawakened. Bobby carefully gathered up the "dead marines" for the next rebottling session and kicking the pine box seats into a corner he suggested a return to the boat. Their walk back to the boat took somewhat longer as the fit ones had to take turns in carrying their "pole-axed" mate.

On arrival at the beach they found a number of

curious by-standers and picnickers wondering why a well-kept surfboat should have been left there. The Water Police patrol boat was also pulled in with constables worried about the fate of the crew. Although skeptical of the crew leader's explanation, considering the crew's appearance, the Water Police decided that no harm had been done and duly departed.

The crew had to reorganize their oarsmen using the sweep rudder man to take the place of their out-of-action colleague who slept peacefully through the voyage back across the Hacking entrance around to South Cronulla Beach. Fortunately for them a sweep was not needed as the sea was very calm.

Bobby's fame as a brewmaster spread far and wide in the surf club and his advice was eagerly sought. His mates retained fond memories of being guests at Bobby's Brew Party in its unusual setting. Training crews, however, were barred from future visits to his "Aladdin's Cave".

"The Perils of Prawn Poaching"

George Boyd was the youngest of Blue's "fisho" mates. He was both enterprising and innovative, always looking for a fishing opportunity which may bear reasonable exploitation. When some very scarce red cedar timber came his way he was able to build a sturdy launch with a 2 cylinder Chapman motor. This saved him the usual tiring and time-consuming effort of rowing during his fishing jaunts around Botany Bay and into Georges River.

Bluey and George had heard rumours over the years of large king prawn catches in The Basin just off Simpson's Bay, near the mouth of the Hacking estuary. The Basin, almost a closed lake, lay between the Bonny Vale cabins situated in Simpson's Bay, and the Maianbar spit on the downstream end of Fisherman's Bay. The Basin is sheltered by a fairly high ridge behind the Fisherman's Bay settlement.

Of course all netting had been banned in the Port since about 1935, so all netting of prawns (or shrimps to Americans) was clandestine and had to be done late at night. After a day's fishing the two mates decided to have a look at The Basin to sum up the possibilities. The Bundeena Drive via Audley in Royal National Park was the only way in so they parked their car about 1 km before the

Bundeena township. They began searching for a track to take them down the hillside, through the thick scrubby heathland. A way down was found to suit their purpose but it would be difficult. This only spurred them on, being young and enjoying the challenge.

They chose a night late in March with a quarter moon, making sure the weather reports were favourable. This would allow them reasonable light but would hide them from the dreaded fishing inspectors. The peak prawn shoaling months of January and February had passed but Bluey and George would not allow doubts to deter them.

One o'clock in the morning saw them scrambling down the hillside onto the sandy shores of the lagoon. George's father, a great fisherman and prawner himself, had lent them his prawn hauling net of about 7m in length. 'Not as easy with all this gear as we thought' remarked Bluey. 'No' replied George. 'We had better show a profit tonight, after all this effort'.

Two hauls in different parts of the lake turned up no prawns whatsoever, they began to fear the worst. Prawners all know that when they get amongst a big shoal, the little fellows are jumping in all directions in front of the net. Nothing like this was happening. There were plenty of small blubbers in the net and a few tiny whiting but not a single prawn. After one final haul they were examining the result with their torches when they were alarmed to see another group with torches approaching up the lakeside from Simpson's Bay.

'This could be the final disaster' said George. 'They could be inspectors who have seen our torches'. 'Better hide the net for a start' said Bluey. 'They can't pinch us without any evidence.' 'Yeah' said an agitated George. 'We'll hide the net and come back for it tomorrow. Let's get to buggery out of here!'

They quickly put on their backpacks and made for the spot they hoped would be the beginning of the track. Afraid to use their torches they blundered into a dead-end track through some impenetrable prickly grevillea. Hands, arms and legs had taken a hiding so they retraced their steps back to the lakeside. They were now fearful that they would be confronted by the inspectors but were relieved to find no-one in sight. 'Look for our footprints in the sand' said George. 'They

should show us where we came down from the car.'

The exhausted pair finally found the track and the car waiting for them. Bluey's green '53 model Holden soon had them out of the Park and home again for a few hours' sleep. The following work day seemed endless for both of them after a futile and exhausting night chasing the prawns. The lesson learned by the two mates has no doubt been experienced by many others. The simple fact is that sea creatures, like terrestrial ones, follow seasonal habits. The eastern estuaries and lakes of Australia see the prawns shoaling in catchable quantities during January and February. Some of the greedy fishermen try to catch them earlier when these prawns are still juveniles. This only results in the greedy few spoiling the chances for themselves and everyone else to catch mature prawns early in the New Year.

Several weeks later George and Bluey ended a day's fishing with a few drinks at the Caringbah Hotel. They were joined by some other fishing groups and mentioned the disappointing result of their prawning foray into The Basin. It was soon realised that one of the other fishing groups had been at The Basin on the same night. They had also made themselves scarce in a hurry on seeing Bluey and George's torches, thinking they could be fishing inspectors! "Let there be no panic unless it is organized" was the old army saying, but panic had been the name of the game that night, and shivers were trumps!

"Fishing Oddities"

Dave Pearce and his father had given Bluey his first blackfishing lessons at Port Hacking in 1946. Accordingly Bluey had great faith in Dave's fishing prowess and judgements.

In the mid 1960s Dave and Bluey decided to fish for blackfish on the bank at Bald Face Point, Georges River. Their lady companions came along as well with a picnic lunch. The two mates tried upstream and downstream but did not even get a bite. Bluey began grumbling and Dave apologized for his rash optimism. The weather was sunny with no wind so the four of them sat down on a square concrete block and enjoyed their picnic lunch. A couple of beers soon restored their good humour.

The concrete block had quite a history. During the 1920s it was the foundation for a large crane that was used to transfer sandstone blocks onto

barges. This stone was taken 2km downstream where it was used in the abutments for the steel bridge spanning the river between Tom Ugly's Point and Sylvania. Judging from the large amount of sandstone taken from this quarry at Bald Face Point, it seems likely that it was also used for other structures.

When the bridge was completed in 1929 it proved vastly superior to the old cable steam punts. The pioneers who lived in the Sutherland Shire, as well as those in Wollongong and further south, were delighted. The funds of the Sutherland Shire Council, however, were severely depleted by its contribution to the cost of the bridge.

From their vantage point at Bald Face the bridge brought back childhood memories for Bluey. He had spent his primary school years at the Sylvania school, even though he lived at Blakehurst on the Tom Ugly's Point side of the river. His caring mother, Daisy, thought he would receive better schooling there even though it was more distant. This wonderful new steel bridge with its 7 spans proved to be a great climbing challenge for the daring lads of Sylvania School during the mid 1930s. Bluey and his two mates, Jack Willard and Ken Anderson, took on its challenge span by span.

Firstly they tried climbing down to the underneath concrete beam between the two pylons where they could fish sheltered from rainy weather. Encouraged by this feat they decided to try the dangerous but exciting challenge offered by the uppermost steel spans. They chose a sunny day with no wind for their climb. Ken was the oldest so he led the way up to the horizontal beam which was less than a metre wide and walked carefully along its full length. They would then hurry down again to avoid being seen by passing motorists who might inform the police. Eventually they became proficient enough to cover more than one span at a time – and live to tell the tale. Measures have now been taken to prevent adventuresome boys from risking their lives in such a way.

Their lunchtime reverie at Bald Face Point also reminded Bluey of his very first fishing triumph there at the tender age of six years. Like other children living in that area he was accustomed to roaming the bushland and foreshores in a Huckleberry Finn lifestyle. He had walked a mile from his home down to the Point with his first

fishing line of about 5 m. wound on a cork. The only bait he could find was a periwinkle on a rock which he crushed and attached to his hook. Imagine his surprise and delight when a short time later he hauled in a large leatherjacket of about half a kilogram. Bluey was so proud of his catch that he immediately packed up and raced home to show his mother. Of course, if he'd stayed around he might have caught quite a few more.

Bluey was always looking for ways to put something free on the table. As a sole parent during the 1930s his mother needed all the help she could get. Hence Bluey's ingenuity and imagination provided them with the occasional mullet by the most extraordinary method of catching them. A small creek runs through to Kogarah Bay, on the southern side of Carrs Park. The creek ran past Blakehurst Dairy, then underneath Princes Highway and through the Chinese market garden at the intersection of Princes Highway and King Georges Road, to enter a ribbon weed tidal flat. Chinese market gardener, Jimmy Ti War, with his honest, hardworking fellow toilers, used water from this creek for their enterprise. Nowadays the market garden is gone and the area, including the tidal flats, has been reclaimed and converted to parkland.

During their many walks through Carrs Park, Bluey and his mother often noticed shoals of large mullet coming in to the creek in shallow water at the start of the run-in tide. How to catch them? A fascinating dilemma as they don't take a bait and are usually caught in nets. The problem was solved by using an ancient technique. Daisy joined in with Bluey to pick up the large sandstone gibbers bordering the pathway to simply bombard the unfortunate mullet. Some were stunned long enough to grab them. Whacko! Fish for tea!

“Wee Jasper Jinx”

Milton Montgomery was another of Bluey's great fishing mates, steady and reliable. He loved talking to his mates over a drink about his fishing experiences as a child on the Murray River. Over the years he had heard about Wee Jasper's reputation for trout fishing opportunities on the upper Murrumbidgee. It had become his lifetime's ambition to try some trout fishing with

his mates. This led to Milton and Bluey proposing a weekend trip to this rumoured fishing El Dorado at Wee Jasper.

Mid August was chosen as the appropriate time for the trip as apparently the trout moved into colder, deeper water after August. Milton had carefully worked out their travel plans; they would leave Sydney early on the Saturday morning, drive straight through to Wee Jasper and try a few spots. They would then return to Yass on the Hume Highway to stay the Saturday night which would be party time. Then up early on the Sunday morning to chase after the trout again before heading home late in the afternoon to the families and the boot trade routine again.

Money for their travel expenses was collected from the 8 would-be adventurers over a number of weeks and they soon had a tidy sum available. The married men had feared the response from their wives so did not tell them about their intended trip until almost time of departure. Down came the female foot! No way would the wives contemplate such a ridiculous and probably dangerous exposure to weather and accident. Bad luck, Milton, it was worth a try. Bluey, who had acted as treasurer, reluctantly returned the expense contributions to all participants.

This was only a temporary set-back as through the years the mates would share holidays at places well known for successful blackfishing such as Yamba, Nambucca Heads, South West Rocks, Port Macquarie, Laurieton and Tea Gardens on the north coast.

Many of the boys preferred the south coast during the summer months as the weather was usually cooler, although the nor-easters were troublesome at times. Some of the favourite spots on the south coast were Greenwell Point, Jervis Bay, Lake Conjola, Burrill and Tabourie, then points further south to the Victorian border, including Moruya Heads, Tuross Head and Narooma.

Bluey was able to retire to Tuross Head, where he could enjoy the panoramic views over ocean, lake and mountains. In 2002, Tuross Lake achieved the same status as Port Hacking, by becoming a Recreational Fishing Haven.

The mateship which fishermen value so much is well described by the late literary stylist, George

Bernard Shaw. When he was asked about what was most important to him he replied that he believed Friendship to be the best ship ever launched, because it demands nothing, but is prepared to give everything.

‘FISHING THE BLUE’

*Red gums and rose gums are heavy with
blossoms*

*The bush is alive with the birds and the
possums*

*Down the stone steps we pass through the
bracken*

*To the place that we love, and we know as
“Port Hacken”.*

*Dawn is a-breaking, oh such a hush
Only the fishermen are on with a rush
Now Carl prefers “Kitchen’s”, Alec likes
“Bell’s”,*

We’ll take the Hatchery and battle the swells.

*Black swans a-wheeling, black swans a-
wheeling,*

*They circle in thousands their beauty
revealing,*

*Beating and beating, upwards they soar
“Ballast heap” dawns bring wings’
muffled roar.*

*Milton and Ray, Bill, George and me,
We’re down in Port Hacking estuary
We’d rather be here than most anywhere
Fishing and rowing the day that we share.
Dave, Stacy and Jack will know what I mean
Waters so clear and hillside pristine,*

*It’s all as it was unspoilt for us all
Reviving and pleasant a day to enthral.
First clean the fish at the end of the day,
Then Caringbah Pub so let’s up and away,
We’ll only drink middies, each one gets a
shout*

*Then comes six o’clock and they kick us all
out.*

*Now my old mates are slipping out with the
tide*

*My thoughts are of sorrow I’m trying to hide,
Tackle and berley, find rod that is true
We’re all at Port Hacking, we’re fishing the
“Blue”.*

Jim Baker 1988

Where exactly was the Woronora Flour Mill?

ED: Frank Purvis – long time resident and amateur historian has done extensive research in trying to finally locate the site of John Lucas' Flour Mill. In the following article he argues the case that there is insubstantial detail to absolutely say where the mill was placed. Read his article and respond to his quest for more information. Frank would love to receive mail on this subject via the Editors Desk.

Records indicate that around 1825, John Lucas established a water mill for the purpose of grinding flour. Lucas built his mill on a parcel of land on the Woronora River. Sir Thomas Brisbane, the Governor of the Colony, granted an area of 150 acres on the upper reaches of the Woronora River, to John Lucas for the express purpose of constructing a water-driven mill. The mill was near the junction of the salt and fresh waters in the area known today as "The Needles".

John was a son of Nathaniel Lucas a Master Carpenter who was transported to Australia for "theft". Nathaniel and his sons constructed a number of windmills and numerous other timber buildings in New South Wales. John Lucas built his first mill at Harris Creek, Liverpool in 1823. The new Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane commissioned John to build the water-driven mill and as a reward, John was granted the 150 acres on the Woronora River in 1824.

The only access to the mill was by water; it is hard to image establishing a mill in such an inaccessible place nearly 150 years ago. The Woronora Mill was said to be capable of grinding one thousand bushels a week. Wheat for the mill was grown at "Five Islands" (Wollongong) and transported in shallow boats up the coast to Botany Bay and Georges River and then to the Woronora Mill. Hence they were able to avoid the harbour and wharf charges at Port Jackson.

John Lucas continued to mill without competition and it is not known how long the mill continued to function. In the late 1830's the mill burned down and was not rebuilt. The government stopped the ships coming in to the

Woronora River because they were avoiding the tariffs.

In March 1843 the "Sydney Morning Herald" advertised the sale by public auction of the Woronora Mill Estate. The advertisement goes on to say that "*the Woronora, tributary to George's River, is a perpetual stream of the purest water and vessels of light burden have discharged grain at the Mill, - returning with flour to Sydney*" "*the new Illawarra line of road is expected to pass near this property, in which case, as a land communication (also) with Sydney, it will be of important character*". The advertisement goes onto say..... "*the idea of establishing a woollen manufactory has been mentioned of – and there is no doubt from the improvement going in this article of commerce, but what very soon the China-man will look to Australia for his "Long-ells, "Supers" and "Wors'ters"*"

Sir Thomas Mitchell's new Illawarra road was completed in 1845 using convict labour, the road passing over the Woronora Ford at the "Pass of Sabugal" (named by Mitchell) near to the site of John Lucas's flour mill. Today there is no known evidence of John Lucas's mill, although in the past a number of people have tried to locate it. Frank Cridland in his book, "the Story of Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire" states that "several times the writer (Cridland) has unsuccessfully tried to find traces of the century-old water mill"

This writer has been researching old maps and records of the upper Woronora River area in an attempt to locate the old mill site, but like past investigators, the search has been unsuccessful so far. On modern day topographic maps there is a section of the upper Woronora River called Mill Reach. Is it possible that this part of the river may hold the secret to the site of John Lucas's flourmill?

**Frank Purvis
23 January 2003**

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