



*Sutherland Shire  
Historical Society Inc*  
**Bulletin**



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# **“Kolara” Weir –Woronora**

## *The Real Story*



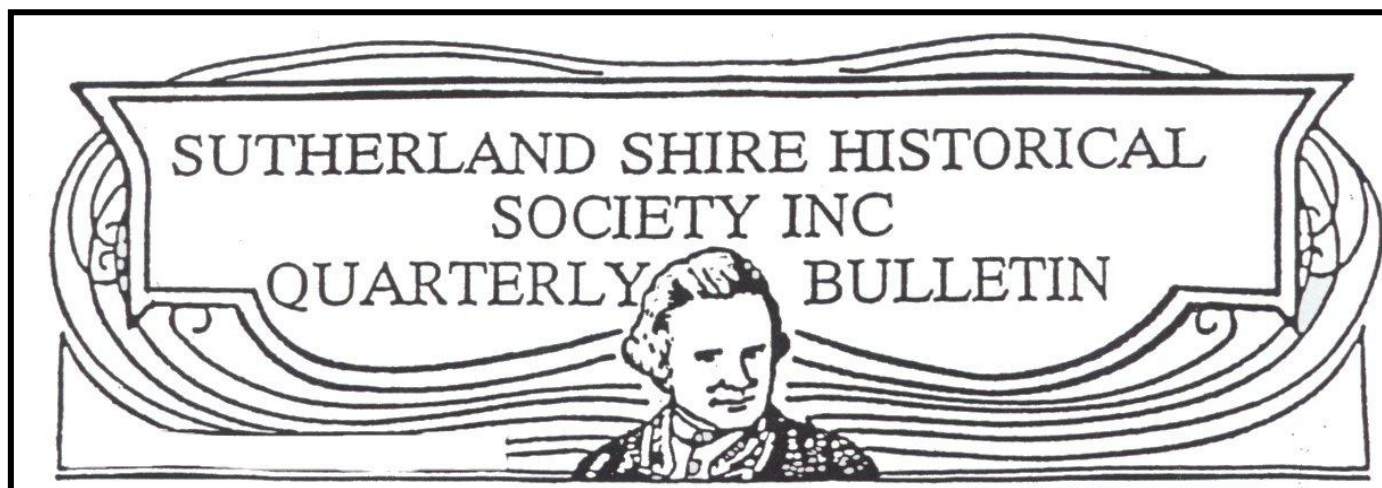
*I remember summer days when I took my family down to the weir next to the bridge on Heathcote Road. I doubt that we ever knew the name of the place, it was always just “the Weir”*

*The water was always clean and deliciously cold. There were underwater rock shelves to explore and there was enough water to make diving to the bottom a challenge.*

*In this issue of the Bulletin Garriock Duncan tells us the story of “the Weir” Garriock is a retired History Head Teacher from the Shire. His story informs us of some previously missed information. We have always referred to it as Kolara Weir However, its real name was Lake Kolara.*

*Continues page 11*

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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 Stapleton Centre, Stapleton Street, Sutherland.

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## **Disclaimer**

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



# *President's Report*

Season's greetings to you all! Historical societies always record and reflect on events, and as each New Year begins, we all respond with hope for a peaceful, trouble-free and pleasant year for ourselves, our friends and our families; then reality sets in with war outbreaks all over the globe, and we wonder as each year goes by--was this year any better than any other? But perhaps I'm getting older and cynical. How does it happen that every one of us wishes this throughout the globe--and yet uprisings, in the name of democracy, still occur! Orwell's "1984", a futuristic book at the time, now 20 years in the past, possibly pointed up the cause: some people believe they are more equal than others. However I do firmly believe that the more people you meet from other countries, and with whom you communicate--the more people will have the same ideals and goals and there really will be a chance for world peace ----but now perhaps I am being over altruistic. All I know is that as a result of travelling, we, ourselves, now have correspondents in England, Ireland, Wales, Norway, Turkey, Japan, USA, South Africa, New Zealand, and China and all over Australia who all write and say how much they desire peace.



*Cllr Dawn Emerson  
President*

Sutherland Shire Historical Society: New Year is the time to reflect on our resolutions for the year, and what we can do to improve the SSHS, and our historical society is like any other. What can we do to be more progressive in bringing the importance of recording history to the people of the shire? Our members are not getting younger,--and we are not encouraging young people into our midst. I sometimes feel we are running the society for the pleasure of its members only, which is I guess one of the reasons we all joined, but becoming very insular as a result, and even further removed from those others we wish to encourage to join us. Is the SSHS an anachronism; has it outlived its usefulness? "No!", I hear you fervently cry, but then you the members KNOW how important it is to conserve and preserve the history of our communities. For some reason our youngsters believe it is unimportant, as it competes with all the other exciting things there are to do in the world. How can we enthrall and capture them? There is a laconic motto, not particularly Australian which is pertinent here: "Catch 'em young, an' teach 'em!" What can we do to entice tomorrow's citizens into revering and protecting our history and our traditions?

Bulletin: Our Bulletin is a case in point, and I take our editor's words to heart. He must produce what the society wants, but what are our motives? What do we want? If we are only concerned with our members' pleasure then we must produce a bulletin in larger

print than useful, as older eyes prefer larger print so reading is more enjoyable. We prefer nostalgic stories: what it was like in the "good ole' days". I love these myself--but then I am in the older age bracket. We like the language of the old poets and storytellers, as it is "comforting", and we can relate to it, and the old familiar style of printing with lines running right across the page; and we like the old colonial pictures which we remember from our childhood. But don't you think we are being a wee bit selfish? No doubt children and teenagers think we are "quaint"----but have we opted out of the real world! This won't encourage our shire youth to join us, as we are marginalising ourselves as being irrelevant, and marketing ourselves as dinosaurs. Wake up! We are allowing ourselves to wallow in the torpor of the past!. A progressive historical society should be relevant to ALL sections of the community. What can we do to make this happen? Instead of telling our Editor what we want, how about we look at what we need--to keep our Society alive and vital to the community. Perhaps we should be more modern, with columns like a newspaper, showing we have moved forward, in keeping with our Shire's youth and that we need their input.

Younger Members: One of the suggestions we have had from a variety of people: Ed Duyker, Garriock Duncan, Marj Blackley, and Les Bursill is asking secondary students to do research for school history projects and ask teachers to pass on to us winning essays. Perhaps we could print a couple each bulletin and offer a free six month's subscription to our bulletin as a reward? What do you think? Is anyone willing to co-ordinate this? Once we get young people researching, and getting their viewpoints, then other young people will become interested. Perhaps we need a Children's centre double page: "His Story" (and "Her Story") from primary children giving us their slant on history and what is important to them. Providing a balance is kept then the SSHS Bulletin becomes more attractive to all. Any other ideas?

Photographs: What about you photographers out there? Both young and older. We use to have a photographic section each Heritage Festival: "Then and Now". How about taking a picture of modern building,--and showing us a picture of the building which previously was there, and telling us the story of its history? This would fit in beautifully with our theme this year for the National Trust, and our built heritage. We might even run a competition each issue. Our Local Studies Librarian is always willing to help unearth old photos. Also how about Grandma's old photo album, with pictures of the family's weekender: the favourite swimming hole, the old farm, first day at school, the school dances, the school Christmas Play, the day at the beach, the day we went to the mountains, our first car, the old shed, Christmas at home with the family, the old corner shop, the opening of the new shopping centre, the old horse and buggy, the new church. C'mon! You all have these! WE WANT these photos! And we want the stories that accompany them: who are the people, why are they there etc.

Our Menai Pioneer House Project- Replica of Owen Jones's home, the first in Menai: This project has gone exceedingly well, and every day people ring me and ask is it ready for viewing! I wish it were that simple! Thanks to the efforts of Tom Mc Mahon our designer/builder , and Allan McGrath and Jim Cutbush and the Museum

Committee's sterling band of helpers, our \$3,000 grant from Sutherland Shire Council has, like Peck's Paste, gone a loooong way! This is thanks to Tom who has improvised, modified, borrowed, wheedled, coaxed and "obtained" bits'n'pieces from everywhere. Tom has to itemise how the grant was spent to show the Council it was spent well--I don't know how he explains all the "good will" he has added to what he received monetarily by the grant! Thank you Tom! I know it became a labour of love, but we really appreciate all the "extra" you put into the job. Some of our Sutherland Shire council staff have also been on the lookout for heritage doors, windows, roofing iron etc and helped us amass the materials we required. Thanks, Fellows! Of course, a hearty thank you to the select few volunteers from the SSHS who spent days on end: sanding, painting, varnishing, cleaning etc. I felt quite inadequate as Cliff and I spent only a couple of mornings painting, and then went off overseas to Japan for council, but the rest of you powered on. Now Jim has the unenviable task of sorting out which furniture goes where, and then we start washing and cleaning these items, which have been stored for yonks, and putting them in situ in the various rooms. We still require: a fuel stove (our stove went missing after being on loan for a play) a brass double bedstead, kerosene lanterns, bedspreads, pictures, mats, and curtains. If you have any items which you think may assist Jim, please give him a ring on:9521 3721. Jim is going to give us a list of what is required so we can all start scrounging. We are looking for items from 1900-1920's (with a bit of artistic licence), which would have been used in a humble farmer's home at the turn of the century. Items handmade from butterboxes, kerosene tins, bags etc. may be useful as in those days people made do with what they had. We are constructing a representative pioneer home, as we don't have any photos of what was actually "in" Owen Jones's house, so forgive us if we use some imagination! I'm going to ask Les Bursill if he could take a photo of the unfinished house to give you an idea of its progress. We have to have it finished by 24th April for the National Trust's Heritage Festival, when it will be on show to the shire. This is our first project of this nature, and if we survive this one, we may think about what we can do next, which will (a) promote the SSHS and (b) inform our Shire residents of "life in the slow lane"--our history of the hard-working residents and the suburbs and communities they built to form our Shire. Come along to our meetings, as itemised below and bring some "Show and Tell" items for us to look at over a cuppa, after the meeting. I look forward to welcoming you, and meeting new members.

*Chr. Dawn Emerson,*

*President, SSHS*

*2004 Meetings:*

**Friday, 16th January:** Members' Night (Guests Welcome!) Our Suburbs: Aileen Griffiths, OAM: Cronulla; Terry McCosker: GyMEA; John Risebrow: Waterfall (to be taped for the Library).

**Friday, 20th February :** Cliff Emerson: Isambard Kingdom Brunel: Engineer Extraordinaire.

**Friday, 19th March:** Ron Scobie: Endeavour Paintings

**Friday, 16th April:** Keith Wrightson: Pidgin Force in WWII

**Friday, 21st May:** Angela BadgerThomas: Charlotte Badger, buccaneer

# From The Editor's Desk

It will be most obvious to our regular readers that the Bulletin has changed. Many members of the executive committee requested that I move away from the two column format of recent years which is more professional and use a single column format which was the only style possible in the days of typewritten material. Depending on the number of complaints or commendations this is how the Bulletin will be from here forward. You may also note



that the font size has changed as a number of people have asked me to increase font sizes to 14pt. Again, if this pleases this what will stay, if it displeases I will revert to the 12pt of the past.

Certainly single column type setting is very easy to comply with and 14 point type is very easy to read. The counter arguments are that professional Journals and Bulletins such as ours are most times done in two columns or more. The type sizes in most Journals are 9pt. The size of the type has a direct relationship to the size (pages) of the Journal, small type means fewer pages or more stories/articles and saving of trees.

Large type adds pages to the journals for no extra stories or articles. Teachers of reading tell us that 18 ems (7cm) is the optimal line length and our two columns were each about 7 cms wide. I do hope that this new Bulletin is suitable but I must say that I prefer two columns and 12 pts of the past. In the end, the Bulletin is for the readers not the Editor.

Bulletin content; in this edition we have several articles done as first person narrative with supporting research. This is, in my opinion, the ideal material for a local history Bulletin. Garriock Duncan's piece about Kolara Weir is a first rate historical piece and the Maianbar article is another example of the same genre.

I encourage all members to tell us now of their memories. Tell us of things you remember. You will live beyond your time by submitting articles for the Bulletin as the Bulletin is a public record that is forever archived in Canberra and will become the source for history of Sutherland and environs. Not only will your material become essentially immortal, each Bulletin is now published on the World Wide Web and is available for access anywhere in the world at any time ([www.suthshirehistsoc.da.ru](http://www.suthshirehistsoc.da.ru)).

*Les Bursill Editor.*

# Letters to the editor

**To:** Mrs.M.Whybourne. Hon.Secretary.  
Sutherland Shire Historical Society,

**Subject:** Bulletin November 2003

**Ref:** Heathcote Hall.

Thank you for the November edition which as in previous issues is full of interesting articles. My personal interest was the history on Heathcote Hall and the estate.

It would be amiss of me to not let your readers know what actions have taken place over the last five years in an effort to save the Hall itself failing into such a state that it would be impossible to refurbish or repair.

Firstly prior to 1999 the Victorian Society with Glenn Cowell a Heritage Architect and a member of the society, arranged working bees in conjunction with the Engadine Lions Club who supplied a truck, and labour to remove rubbish collected from the grounds. My wife, and I were also members, attended these working bees, and remember working with others through drenching rain one Sunday in mid 1999. Our allocated job this particular day was to clear the path ways, and gardens leading up to the house, and there under the overgrown grass, and weeds, we found paths had possibly the original Terracotta edging, and the gardens plants such as roses, old but still blooming.

The Victorian Society obtained enough funding during about a three year period prior to 1999 to carry out some obvious repairs that were a priority to stop further deterioration, and were also working on a Plan of Management for the site in conjunction with The NSW Heritage Council.

In September 1999 I was elected as an Independent Councillor into Sutherland Council, and one of my first priorities was to ask that a committee be established to address Issues on the Heathcote Hall estate. This request was accepted, and The Heathcote Hall Working Party was formed with myself as chair. Members included local residents, The NSW Heritage Office, Council staff, Heathcote Hall owners representative, (*Sutherland Historical Society members* **Ed.**) horse owners who stabled horses on the property, and interested Councillors. The new committee also took over working with NSW Heritage on finalizing the Management plan.

Issues included the excessive number of horses stabled on the property, which at one period was around twenty four, and the housekeeping associated with the waste from horses. Weeds and vermin were in part due to the keeping of the large number of horses, and finally the main issue the restoration of the Heathcote Hall for future generations to enjoy. Four years later there are only a maximum of four horses, with the suggestion that two be stabled. Most of the obsolete stables have been removed, the general area cleaned up, and generally well maintained.

The Heathcote Hall Estate with the help of The Working Party, and the Heritage Officer, recently obtained a grant of around \$160,000 from the NSW Heritage Office towards the



refurbishment of the Heathcote Hall. We realise this is not enough to make a significant impact on the repairs required, but it is recognition from The NSW Heritage Office that this Building is an Icon in The Shire.

It must be noted that the Estate is ' privately owned by the Farrelly family, negotiations, and plans must be handled with care, taking into account the needs of the family Looking at the suggestion that an organisation such as Sutherland Council could step in, and restore the building is a little simplistic, with the money required running into over a million dollars, and this is without even owning the estate or control of the grounds. This is not a criticism of the statement, but more to suggest the reality of the situation.

As chairman I recently decided The Working Party had satisfied the charter under which is was established, and with the peripheral issues now satisfied, and recognition from the NSW Heritage Office, the Issue would be better served through Council's Heritage Committee.

Thank you again to Sutherland Shire Historical Society, and Harold Warburton's article into the history of Heathcote Hall Estate. We need to keep the issue out in the public domain, and follow up on the work, firstly from The Victorian Society, and over the last four years by Councils Heathcote Hall Working Party that I chaired, and now support Councils Heritage Committee as they take up the challenge.

Thank you and regards  
Councillor

*George Hurley*

D Ward.

---

19 Palmway Crescent,  
Tuncurry, 2428,  
30th November, 2003.

Dear Les,

I appreciate the printing of my story in the recent Bulletin about my Dad but I want to point out that every time the name of our home was typed it was mis spelt from JENOLA to JENOIA. - The name has meant so much to me over the years that the mistake stood out for me. My daughter has the name on her home now at Miranda. I have passed onto her the importance of the name to me.

I did a bit of a giggle when I read the two letters missing on Dad's name on the index page. Dad always told me to pronounce and spell peoples' name correctly.

Now that I have complained I must add how I enjoy the Bulletin. The stories are always varied and interesting. The one on Heathcote Hall was very informative.

It is wonderful how the members keep sending in articles on interesting subjects. I have gained the position of Publicity Officer in our Great Lakes Historical Society -mainly because either others didn't want it or were doing something else. I have tried many times to stir the members up to write articles for our little Newsletter, on their families. We have so many members who have lived here all of their lives. I can't move them.

I'm sorry I have complained, Les, but I couldn't let the Jenola mistake go by.

I remain,

*Elva N. Carmichael.*

*Mea culpa (Ed.)*

*I know that our President Dawn Emerson has many times complained about my document scanning equipment but she had the temerity to be away and left me to my own devices. Evidently the scanner I use sees some fonts differently to others. The most common error is that it sees the letter "J", or "I" as "T" "1" or "i" and then of course when I run the spell check over the letters I have scanned the computer thinks "T" "1" or "i" is OK! The two pieces of equipment work hand in glove to defeat my efforts. So Mea Culpa to Elva Carmichael, her dad and the family home JENOLA.*

*As you are all aware JENOLA is an acronym of parts of the children's names Joy Elva and Norma, BUT it is also the name of a Shire sports ground at Cronulla, perhaps Elva can fill us in on a possible connection?*

*Les Bursill  
Editor*

# KOLARA/KOLORA WEIR AND RECREATIONAL RESERVE

*BY GARRIOCK DUNCAN*

## **Introduction**

In December, 1992, I took a group of Yr 11 students from Engadine High to visit the site of Kolara Weir and Recreational Reserve - the correct name is "Lake Kolora" (KF, 1971) - on the junction of the Woronora River and Heathcote Creek. They were taking part in Georges River Day, i.e. "A Day in the Life of the Georges River", which had been held in early November. The purpose of Georges River Day, organised by Margaret Simpson, then Principal of Sylvania Public School, included the study of any aspect of the river itself or any tributaries. So, both the Woronora River and Heathcote Creek could be studied. The plan was to carry out a "field survey" of the site to allow the students some practice in low level archaeological investigation.

The site was within a reasonable distance of the school and the access was relatively easy. Additionally, the site was well known and had served the local community for many years. The weir and accompanying buildings had been deliberately destroyed within the last few years (i.e. in 1985). I hoped that many of the parents of the students would be able to remember the weir. There was also the possibility that information on the weir would be readily obtainable in the local area, so that students could compare the current site with its former self.

## **The Question of Sources**

The whole question of sources turned out to be a great disappointment. I had expected reasonably abundant written sources, either in book form or in government or local government archives.

However, Shire "histories" contained little information on the building of the weir. Those published before 1985 would not, of course, mention its demolition. And disappointingly, there was no reference to the weir at all in Kirkby's substantial work (*From Sails to Atoms*, 1970). Local "histories" were a little more helpful. The first edition of the standard "history" of Engadine (published by Engadine Lions, 1956) contains a brief reference to the building of the weir but not, naturally, its destruction. However, the second edition, published for the Bicentenary in 1988, does record the demolition of the weir in 1985. However, more recent works, published post 1985 completed the story of the weir.

Both the Water Board, i.e. the MWSDB (now Sydney Water) and Sutherland Shire Council were approached to provide material. Both bodies had been responsible for the weir at different times. However, while officers of both had very strong memories of the weir, it proved impossible over a reasonable period of time, i.e. several weeks, to obtain any documentary material. The demolition of the weir had appeared on the nightly TV news for the appropriate date but none of Sydney's four TV channels were able to supply any archival material.

The only available source of material was the Kirkby File adjacent to the Local Studies Collection, Sutherland Central Library. The source is a fair size index card collection. You look up "Kolara Weir". The first entry for the weir dates to 1942 and the last 1985, the year of the final destruction of the site. Some photocopied material on the 1974 debate over the continued existence of the weir and further on the demolition in 1984 - 1985 was available in the Local Studies Collection. Copies of local papers were then (i.e. 1992) filed nearby. So a quick search was possible and it yielded a number of additional references. However, very few of the references in the Kirkby File were checked against the actual newspapers. No attempt was made to check any references to SSC material.

### **Brief History of the Kolara Weir**

The first twenty years of the twentieth century saw recurrent water shortages in the Sutherland Shire. So the decision was taken to build a storage dam, the Woronora Dam, to provide reticulated water to the inhabitants of the shire. Preliminary work began in 1926 but the works became a victim of the Great Depression and work was temporarily halted in 1935. The dam and all its infrastructure was not finally completed till 1941.

A tower to check the flow of the Woronora River had been built near the later site of the weir in 1924. By the early 1930's it was apparent that the dam was taking longer to complete than anticipated. So, in order to meet the demand the Water Board built Engadine Weir, i.e. Kolara Weir, as a stopgap measure. Two small pumping stations were built and water was pumped from the weir to the reservoir built on Engadine's highest point (approximately on the corner of the Old Princes Highway and Boronia Ave). From the reservoir, still there in 2004, water was pumped to Engadine residents. Heathcote residents still had to wait several years.

From 1938, because of progress on Woronora Dam, the weir was no longer needed as a water storage facility. In 1942 the Water Board was happy with leaving the weir standing to function as a swimming hole provided it was no longer responsible for it. It was quite content to hand the site over to the local council and the matter was then under investigation. The Kirkby File does not record the final transfer until 1958<sup>(KF, 1958)</sup>. Then, if not already, responsibility for the weir was transferred to Sutherland Shire Council:

in this way, Engadine...had a first class swimming pool under ideal river conditions, and within easy walking distance (Thompson, *Engadine*, Engadine Lions, ,1956, pp. 15-16)

The formal transfer to the SSC seems to have inaugurated the weir's golden age. There were plans for a significant development of the site to provide an alternative for locals to travelling to Cronulla (KF,1959). A permanent kiosk was to be built but perhaps never was. There are a number of references to the kiosk in the Kirkby File but none actually mention the building of the kiosk (KF, 1959). Lighting was even installed (KF, 1960). Some years later, the proposal for a mobile kiosk - clearly there was now no longer a permanent kiosk, if there ever had been one - was definitely rejected (KF, 1967). In 1970, the amenities block, in its final form, was built and a 527 Committee for the site was established (KF, 1970).

### **Demolition of the Weir**

Even in its "golden days" the site posed problems. Within a year, the most constant of the site's problems - parking (KF, 1958) - was exercising the Council's concerns and eventually restrictions were imposed (KF, 1960).

Safety was also a constant issue. Warning signs were erected as early as 1959 (KF, 1959) and the lighting, previously mentioned, was installed in response to a drowning. The "ideal conditions" had begun to tarnish. By 1974, there had been, in fact, a number of drownings at the site. At this time, the suggestion was made by the Sutherland branch of the Australian Labor Party to demolish the weir (KF, 1974). Local papers record the argument over the fate of the weir. While there appears to have been no great public outcry against the demolition of the weir the decision was made not to go ahead with its demolition (KF, 1974). New warning signs were erected and the weir survived for another ten years or so.

However, the parking issue, it seems, finally sealed the fate of the weir. The site had increasingly lost popularity with locals and the area was accordingly frequented by travellers from the west, who needed to park their cars (KF, 1980). The long standing parking issue worsened and my memory produces images of some parking chaos on both sides of the bridge over the Woronora River. Additionally, antisocial behaviour had increased and the Council was considering fencing off the area and providing a lockable gate. Indeed, the weir was now described as that "unsightly weir" (*Pictorial News*, 29/11/84, p.31). The fate of weir was apparently sealed in 1983. In June, the Council decided upon the demolition of the weir, because of the traffic conditions, and asked the army to carry out the work (KF, 1983).

A perfunctory search through the "Leader" file (the library did not contain copies of other local papers for that period of time) only revealed one voice of protest - the projected demolition was called an "act of vandalism" (*The Leader*, December 18, 1984, p.12). However, the breaching of the wall of the weir had already taken place before this one protest was even published. This initial demolition work was



carried out by the 17th Construction Squadron, RAAE, based at Holsworthy, on December 4, 1984.

The event was quite a media event (shown on evening TV) and Heathcote Road was closed for the occasion. The Klrkby File used to contain a memento of this preliminary stage (i. in 1992) - an unnotated photo (clearly taken in December, 1984) which shows the weir as having been breached to allow it to drain. The photo



contained a good shot of the amenities block with its very distinctive rooftop water tank. The

tank was fed by a gravity feed system from the weir - a fact of which my unnamed informant from Sutherland Council Engineers' Department had been inordinately proud. The photo had disappeared\* by 2003, when I began preparing this article.

*\*found by Helen McDonald of the Local History Section (Ed.).*

*Members of the 17<sup>th</sup> Construction squad discuss the next phase of demolition just after breaching the weir wall. Ammenities block can be seen at right rear. Photo courtesy of Sutherland Library Local History section.*

The demolition was spread over quite a period of time. The wall of the weir was destroyed in January, 1985. At some time, the ancillary buildings (the pump house and amenities block) were demolished - in the case of the amenities block to ground level. Demolition work was completed by April. 1985.

## **Access**

As stated in the "Introduction", the site was partially chosen because of ease of access. The following comments relate to December, 1992. I do not know if access is still as simple.

We used a Water Board access road off Beta Pl, Engadine, until we came to the pipeline. We then turned back towards Sutherland and walked along the pipeline until we came to a concrete "block house". There was a track off to the left. We followed this till it ended in a little ledge above Heathcote Road at the southern end of the bridge. We crossed the road and made our way down a steep slope to the site.

On our return, we crossed under the bridge and clambered up another steep slope till we reached the track. If I were returning to the site, I would not cross the road but take a length of rope, tie it to any appropriate tree and access the site by this “return” slope.

Since the demolition of the site, I imagine Sutherland Shire Council no longer retains authority over the site. It is now, I assume, part of Heathcote State (National? *Ed*) Park.

### **The Site**

The purpose of the excursion to the site was to examine the physical remains of the weir, pumphouse and amenities block. Since, there is no longer any regular human intervention at the site, natural processes can be assumed to be the dominant change agent now. I have not visited the site since December, 1992, and my only knowledge is what can be seen from crossing the bridge over Woronora River. The site now appears to be much more heavily vegetated than it was in 1992.

#### **(a) the Weir**

Our measurements indicated that the wall of the weir was approximately 30 m wide and 2.3 m high (measuring from the sand level on the northern side of the Woronora River). Since we had not taken any tools with us, we were not able to ascertain how far the wall of the weir extended below ground level. The line of the wall of the weir was clearly visible from what we guessed was the footings of the wall running in a straight line a few centimetres below water level.



*The mystery weir upstream*

Rather surprisingly, there is another weir (though it is currently quite visible from the bridge over the river). A couple of the students had worked their way several hundred metres upstream and reported a visual sighting of the other weir, though the wall may have only been about 10 cm high. This additional feature is not mentioned in the Kirkby File.



(b) the Pumphouse

The weir was for a while a functioning water reservoir and water was pumped from the weir to the reservoir in Engadine. Clearly, the pumphouse would have been a major structure and there are impressive remains of the structure. The holding tank, cut into rock, had a diameter of almost 10 m. The line of the tank can still be traced from the curve of the cut rock wall and the line of the concrete footings still visible. Slabs of concrete



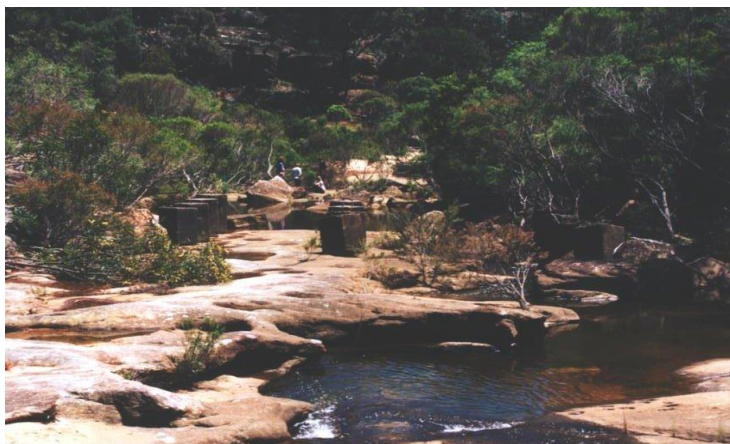
were used to block the water channel.



(c) the Amenities Block

The Amenities Block was built on a slight rise on the Liverpool side of Woronora River. The block was very effectively demolished and has been razed to the ground. The foundations are clearly visible. Some fragments of brick remain and there was one piece of several bricks, slate grey in colour with a roughened exterior side, still held together by grey mortar. However, without reference to

the photo in the Kirkby File, it was not possible to determine the appearance of the building.



There were fragments of porcelain still lying around - to confirm the ablutions function of the building. An aluminium sink was still visible in the water at the base of the sandy rise the block was built on.

(d) the "Tank Trap"

I am being slightly facetious, here. However, there was one "structure" which defied our attempts to guess

*The "Tank Trap" concrete blocks*

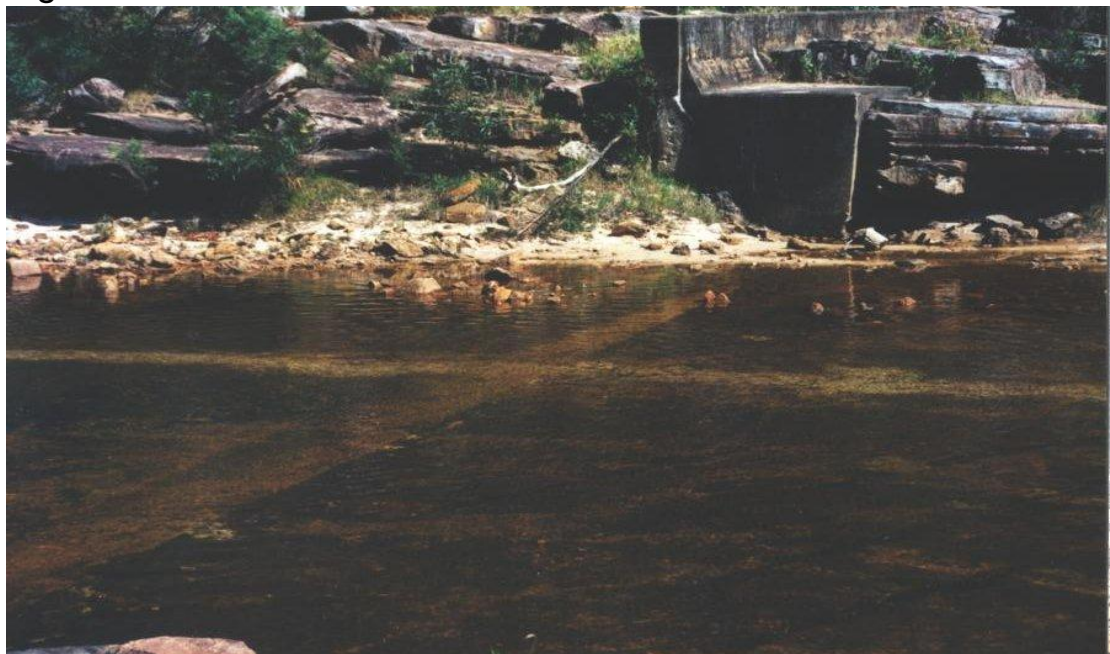


what purpose it served. On a rock ledge in the gully, which runs alongside the road and through which Heathcote Creek flows, were a number of concrete blocks. They did not appear to be attached to the rock shelf but had been carefully placed in rows. They reminded me of the concrete blocks used to construct antitank barricades. A left over from the “Shire at War”?

## **Conclusion**

The site represents a phase in the urban history of the Sutherland Shire. The close proximity of Heathcote Road with its ever increasing traffic and the total absence of any nearby parking will probably ensures the isolation of the area. However, the site might repay closer study; there probably are not too many local swimming holes, regardless of their current condition, surviving in the Sydney area.

Yet, the site was idyllic and it was easy to see why it would have been such a popular local amenity. While there was some building rubble lying at ground level and some rubbish, in spite of traffic noise from Heathcote Road, it was difficult to realise that we were only a few metres from a major road. However, in 2004, the road might be more obvious.



*A recent photo showing the weir footings.*

Garriock Duncan

## **Note**

*I have prepared two versions of this article. The other is a more formal presentation fully documented and can be found in the Local Studies Collection, filed under “Kolara Weir”, at Sutherland Central Library. However, I have included some references to sources in the text. The cryptic - KF, 1948 - would indicate a card in the Kirkby File, under “Kolara Weir”, dated 1948.*

# MORE WEIRS, DAMS AND LAKES OF SUTHERLAND.

LES BURSILL

There are a number of other Weirs and Dams and several bodies of water in the "Shire" On the following pages I have included some photos of the railway weir at Heathcote, more correctly "Lake Talooma" This man made Lake exists in pristine condition and let's hope some do-gooder never finds it and destroys it "for safety's sake".

I have also put in a photo of Lake Engadine though more properly with the lack of water at this time, we could call it "Engadine Marsh".



***Left: The Boiler seen in the foreground was used in times past to make steam for the water pump. Water was pumped up to the rail line about 1 kilometre above the "Lake".***

***Below are parts of the pump house at Lake Talooma.***





# LAKE ENGADINE



BELOW — THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE’S WATER RESOURCE  
“WORONORA DAM”



# THE YOWIE BAY STORY.

*By Merle Kavanagh*

There was a time when Aboriginals made use of rock shelters scattered around Yowie Bay, near places now known as Matson Crescent, Wonga, Attunga and Caringbah Roads where they feasted on the abundance of the bay's seafood. Today, however, man's shelters are much more than a rocky outcrop in the bush, and the fishing much less than a feast. It might well be said that Yowie Bay has been loved to death. But this unique bay, in its past life, was peopled by a kaleidoscope of characters, each of whom contributed to its absorbing story.

The European history of beautiful Yowie Bay began with the early explorers, the most adventurous being Matthew Flinders and George Bass who, with the boy Martin, braved some hairy coastal conditions in a small boat to finally arrive in and name Port Hacking. They may not have entered Yowie Bay, but at least they saw it during their two days in the port. Henry Hacking, for whom the port is named, was a quartermaster on the *Sirius* in 1788 and later a pilot. He, too, was an adventurer and it is said that on a kangaroo hunting expedition he discovered the port. Henry wasn't always a law-abiding citizen but managed to avoid any consequences for his unlawful behaviour, Governor King recording 'He is a good man but was lost here by the arts of a woman'.

In 1827 Assistant Surveyor Robert Dixon, having been instructed to survey Botany Bay, George's River and Port Hacking, camped on the western shore of Yowie Bay where the bay turns north west. On the map he prepared, he gave it the name of Ewey Bay which would have been a local native name, as surveyors were instructed to use these where known.



*Yowie Bay 1909*

There was little development over the next sixty years. The port was not suitable for shipping and Thomas Holt was running his pastoral empire on the more than 12,000 acres he owned of the Sutherland–Cronulla peninsula. The hand-punt had been operating over the Georges River since 1864 and the steam punt replaced it in 1879. The site of the punt near the present George's River bridge made Yowie Bay a preferred destination as the closest bay. Roads were terrible but that didn't stop determined fishermen, lovers of solitude and those with an eye for future profits. When the new Illawarra railway steamed through Sutherland in 1886, it brought passengers – and change. A wide range of people took up leases - Politicians, boat proprietors and builders, doctors, engineers, a valuer and funeral director, Mayors, businessmen, manufacturers, builders, coach proprietors and railwaymen. They all seemed to find their way to Yowie Bay as the 19<sup>th</sup> century rolled over into the new one.



*'Next door on the south the block was owned by Albert Wunderlich, a name which was well-known in the late 1800s for its elegant stamped metal ceilings, some of which were used in the Sydney Town Hall and in the piano showrooms of O.C. Beale and W.H. Paling. There were three Wunderlich brothers. ... The third brother was Albert, also involved in the family business and who bought the Yowie Bay site as his retreat. His eldest brother Ernest credited him with being a great public speaker, champion domino player, good fencer, sculler and swimmer. He 'had a grand bass voice and sang in the chorus of the Philharmonic Society' of which he was President from 1922. He also sang solo so it is no surprise to find his country retreat at Yowie Bay was called La Boheme.'*

There always seems to have been at least one boatshed at Yowie Bay, and in its heyday, more than one, and the name Matson was prominent amongst them, the family having first run the National Park shed, and at the same time, at the turn of the century, hired out boats on the south side of Wonga Road. When the tramway enquiry of 1908 investigated the need for a tramway from Sutherland to Cronulla, the boat proprietors were keen to lend their support.

*"Fred Matson, then operating the Pleasure Grounds at the head of Yowie Bay, mentioned in his evidence (to the Tramway Enquiry) that 'out of the twenty places at Yowie Bay eight are occupied by permanent residents'. Charles Diston, still operating the boatshed at the end of Wonga Road, had been involved in moves for a tramway six or seven years earlier whilst still in the coach business. At the time of the government tramway enquiry, Diston had been in the shire for 22 years and claimed it was a very healthy locality, saying 'we have starved out two doctors .. We have one at present, but I do not know how he manages to live.' As the shire valuator and an agent for the Holt-Sutherland Company, he was very much in touch with land values."*

The bay had a hotel for a few years, and it was a thorn in the side of William Judd, the first Sutherland Shire Council president, who lived next door. The Yowie Bay Hotel was in business in a wonderful sandstone building just north of Wonga Road from 1902 – 1918, and during the 1919 influenza epidemic the building was used as an emergency hospital. Some patients were taken to the hospitals by bus.



***Esplin's Yowie Bay Store 1917 (built in 1916)***

James Toyer, whose father began a motor bus service at National Park in 1914, recalls that during the epidemic the drivers wore masks and James drove round picking up victims and taking them to the emergency hospitals at Sutherland, Gynea, Tom Ugly's and Yowie Bay. Everybody in the community was at risk and many were afraid of contracting the disease. There was an undercurrent of suspicion and sometimes notices in the local papers showed that the discrimination generated by fear could affect people's livelihood."

The war years brought drastic changes to the idyllic life style at the bay, with wardens in launches patrolling to check that no lights were showing. The most unpopular action by the authorities was the taking of all small boats further inland to Wattle Flat at the National Park to prevent their use by the enemy, in the event of an invasion.

*"They were clinker built and so it was inevitable that they would dry out and leak. After the war the Yowie boats were brought back one Sunday by Herb Bryant, at that time running the Yowie Bay boatshed for the owner, Mrs. Quinlan of the General Store. Bryant had saved up enough petrol to go and collect the boats with a Chapman Pup, bringing back about 30 boats, including his hireboat fleet. All leaked, so his progress was very slow."*

It is impossible to write about Yowie Bay without mentioning the fishing, and there have been some good fish stories over the years.

*"One night my dad decided to go prawning and I went with him. It was very still, very quiet and dark – eerily dark! I was in my mid teens and began*

*to think it was a bit spooky Dad rowed around into the Ewey Creek arm of the bay, the oars making queer sucking noises and dripping phosphorescent beads onto the black mirror of the bay. As the boat slowed in its glide, he stood up with a knife in his hand! My imagination was working overtime and I croaked 'Wh-What's the matter, Dad!' I waited fearfully, my shivers sending ripples running off into the gloom. His answer echoed a little over the water. 'I'm deciding where I should cast the net'. My Edgar Allan Poe scenario collapsed in a heap. Dad cast the net several times, but caught only a few pieces of weed! We didn't go prawning again. I was glad!"*



*Yowie Bay Hotel (Courtesy of the Mitchell Library)*

Any history of Yowie Bay has to include tales of 'Tarzan', a character who did deliveries around the bay and also collected the sanitary pans by launch, but the bad news is that space has run out. However, the good news is that later in the year *Echoes from the Bay; The Yowie Bay Story* will be published and you will be able to buy a copy for your enjoyment. However, if you have any old Yowie stories, I would be pleased to hear from you very soon.

Anne Carrick & Lynne Christie have completed a History of Maianbar. Their book was published in November 2003 at Maianbar. The book is a great read and an up-to-date history of Maianbar's development into the vibrant village of today. The history reveals aspects of Aboriginal activity then European settlement from the first of two Crown Land grants that comprise the land on which the present village of Maianbar is situated. The first land was sold at auction for the sum of £75 to George Newcombe on 12 August 1840. *Maianbar* is available from shops in Maianbar and Bundeena & the Royal National Park Visitors Centre. **RRP is \$12.**

# The Histories of Maianbar

## ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Aboriginal people lived in and around what is now Maianbar for about 8,500 years prior to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. The Maianbar, Bundeena and Royal National Park area is, and was then, a place of abundant food and shelter and as a result the Aboriginal population was higher than in many other areas and was very stable over long periods of time. The one or two clans that lived here were part of the Dharawal/Tharawal<sup>i</sup> language group whose province extended from the southern side of Botany Bay, west to the Georges River and as far south as Nowra (***some linguist believe the language changes again at Woonona not Nowra Ed.***). It was estimated that there were between 1,000 and 1,500 people in the Dharawal language group at the time of European settlement<sup>ii</sup>.

Aboriginal society was then dependent on the custodianship and management of resources within the area owned by each clan. The clans, which numbered between 60 and 250 people, were made up of several related families (called Hearth groups). Their belief system bound them to the land they owned because it contained the sacred places that related to the birth of their 'spirit totems'. During the late spring and summer when Aboriginal people came to Maianbar the clan divided into smaller groups of 15 – 20 people, fishing, hunting and gathering food within their own areas. Even then resources required that they move regularly to new grounds. Occasionally, many clans would join together to take advantage of a beached whale or other particularly abundant food sources.

We know something of their lifestyle from archaeological evidence found at camping sites, rock shelters, tool grinding sites and shell middens in the Royal National Park and from reports written at the beginning of settlement. We know about their skill in developing tools for hunting, fishing and gathering and of their interest in plants and trees which they checked regularly, evaluating the progress of a future harvest or looking for the signs of a seasonal change. Traditional knowledge from Francis Bodkin, a Dharawal descendent<sup>iii</sup>, confirms how well they understood that seasons, migrations and flowering times are inter-related. The Dharawal recognised six seasons, set within an 11-year cycle; each heralded by subtle relationships between the time of flowering and the abundance of blossom.



They used fire to clean up the country, carefully managing the burn by torching small areas located between waterways or other barriers. The fresh young shoots that grew after the fire attracted more animals and provided an additional food source. Over time the effect was to remove the understorey and create areas of grassland with stands of tall trees that looked rather like parks.

Women and children gathered pipis, oysters and molluscs which they took up on to grassy banks to prepare for feasting. Clearly they returned to the same sites over many thousands of years because the discarded shells, now degenerated, are piled thick in middens located in dozens of places around Constable Point and Fishermans Bay. They also collected native bush foods that formed the largest part of their diet.

Men generally fished with spears and women fished from canoes using a hand line and jig hook made from braided hair and a sharpened piece of Turban shell that glittered as it was jigged. The clans also fished at night and used small torches made of bark to attract fish<sup>iv</sup>. The canoes were made from the bark of the Casuarina or Bangalay trees and were rough looking vessels bound at each end with vine and sealed with resin from the base of grass trees. However, they were seaworthy and lasted for many years; impervious to the weather and marine growths and capable of journeys at least two miles out to sea. A fire set on a base of clay was kept burning in the bottom of the canoe so that fish could be cooked as they were caught.

Spears were made from the flower stems of grass trees. Sometimes up to three lengths were joined, bound with vine and glued with resin to achieve the right length. Three sharp echidna spines were used as prongs to complete the spear<sup>v</sup>, which was balanced with clay weights. Shells were ground into tools for cutting and slicing and replaced the stone cutting implements seen further inland. Women carried the resin rolled up in their hair and prepared it for the men to use by heating it over the fire.

Les Bursill, noted Aboriginal archaeologist and anthropologist who has done extensive work in the Royal National Park area, says that hand axes were used by initiated men. Suitable stone blanks for these axes were not available in the Sydney Basin and had to be sourced from further south at Batemans Bay or Wreck Bay. Stone for other tools was obtained from the Nepean and Grose rivers in the foothills of the Blue Mountains and also from the Newcastle area. Blanks were ground into shape and there are numerous stone grinding sites in the area around Maianbar; most are found close to running water or seep holes. Bursill believes that each site may have belonged to an individual so that the number of grooves may reflect the extent of that man's tool-making activities throughout his life<sup>vi</sup>.

Although Aborigines had no written language they expressed important aspects of their lives in the engravings, cave paintings and hand stencils found throughout

the area. A male ceremonial site is located on the hill behind Maianbar. Two whales facing each other are featured on the flat rocky outcrops overlooking South West Arm. The male whale (*Orca orsinus*) has two lines around its middle, which may be a reference to male cutting (cicatricing)<sup>vii</sup> and is similar to the whale engraving at Jibbon. The second whale, a female, has additional lines drawn around the mouth area, which were previously thought to have been an error made during the engraving process. However, this is extremely unlikely because elders of the clan would have carefully supervised the process of engraving at an initiation site. The site once had an additional whale engraving which has since eroded; a process that has accelerated over the recent decades and is thought to be the outcome of increasing pollution levels and drought on the fragile sandstone<sup>viii</sup>. Whales were known to come into Port Hacking and this area would have been an excellent vantage point to sight them perhaps increasing the significance of the site to local clans.



*Dharawal engravings – Maianbar Hill – Royal National Park.*

Another engraving found nearby depicts a mythical figure sacred to men of the clan. The same figure is found only along a Dreaming track, which extends from Maianbar to Batemans Bay, the Murray Darling, Broken Hill and Alice Springs, where it divides with one track going north to Maningrida and the other dissipating in the Tanami Desert. These Dreaming tracks indicated the connections of clans with a shared spiritual heritage and are referred to as song lines because sacred stories were always conveyed through song.

The engravings were first made about 600 – 800 years ago and were last recut about 210 years ago. They were made by marking out the design then pounding or drilling a series of holes around the outline. A groove up to 2.5 cm deep was ground between each hole until the entire outline was etched in the stone. Engravings were recut whenever the ceremonies were repeated. Hand stencils in

caves and numerous other engravings are found throughout the Royal National Park and Bundeena. Some indicated the arrival of Europeans, which was to irrevocably change their lives.

Estimates of the number of Aborigines living in the Sydney Basin at the beginning of settlement vary between 2,500 and 5,000. Within two years this number was reduced to less than half primarily through the impact of smallpox and other diseases, which spread so rapidly through the clans in the region that some were decimated without ever having contact with white settlers. As numbers within

each clan dropped they were forced to amalgamate with other groups to survive, in the process distancing many from their land and the beliefs and traditions fundamental to their lives. Fifty years after the arrival of the First Fleet less than 300 Aboriginal people were still alive in the Sydney Basin.

To what extent, or rather how quickly, this affected the local clan is unclear but the distinctive shapes of metal axe sharpening grooves are found at 11 sites in the Sutherland area<sup>ix</sup> indicating that they lived in the area following the First Fleet's arrival. The full impact of this event may have been delayed in the south because the main thrust of settlement took place from Sydney Cove through to the Cumberland Plains. Nevertheless, a way of life was to end forever.

## **EUROPEAN HISTORY**

At the beginning of settlement in 1788, all land was deemed to belong to the Crown. In order to feed the fledgling colony, allocation of land began almost immediately - initially free to those prepared to farm it - and occurred primarily over the Cumberland plains to the west. Private ownership of land did not occur south of Port Hacking until 1826 when George Byrne made the first purchase of land, which was to become a large part of Bundeena.

Fourteen years later, the first of two Crown Land grants that comprise the land on which the present village of Maianbar is situated was sold at auction for the sum of £75 to George Newcombe on 12 August 1840. The sale of Portion 9, a 30 acre grant located at the head of Fishermans Bay, was finalised on 30 January 1841. Newcombe leased the land 10 months later to Edward O'Reilly and eventually sold it on 19 November 1881 to William Wallis. The property changed hands twice more before the turn of the century – to Nathaniel and William Moncur Wallis in January 1886 and then to John Cullen in April 1886.

The second piece of land, Portion 10, was sold to Marmaduke Constable (the State hangman) on 2 December 1858 for the sum of £36. The purchase of the 36 acre holding, which was sited on the headland that now bears his name, Constables Point, was finalised on 28 February 1859. There is no evidence to suggest that either George Newcombe or Marmaduke Constable ever lived in the area.

George Simpson purchased land, which became part of Bundeena and more particularly Bonnie Vale. Charles Lord, William Costen and Charles Gogerly all had land to the west of Maianbar. The New South Wales State Parliament dedicated the remaining unpurchased land as a National Park in 1879 and areas were added to it over the next 100 years including those owned by Costen and Lord.

## **1900s –1930s**

For the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Maianbar remained much as it had in the past. Local government arrived in 1906 with the founding of Sutherland

Council; the Fish Hatchery was being developed in Cabbage Tree Basin; and the sand dredging that took place during this period was to substantially alter the structure of the sandy spits and shoals that form part of our sea view.

European engravings found on rocks on the northern prominence of Constables Point are a record of early visitors to the area. It was probably fishermen who camped over a period of three months carved their initials and the dates October-December 1918 into the sandstone.

*The Bundeena Book* records another visitor - a Sydney criminal – who killed the Ashfield Stationmaster in 1925 and escaped to hide out in a boat shed at the far western end of Pacific Crescent. Locals had spotted a light in the hut and alerted the Police who arrived in a rowing boat to make the arrest whereupon they shot and killed him.

Marmaduke Constable's Portion 10 was subdivided and released in two stages. The waterfront properties were subscribed on 13 September 1923 and released for sale. The remainder, the 'Sand-spit Estate' was subscribed on 29 April 1924 but not released for sale until 1929.

George Newcombe's land, now owned by Leslie Victor King was subdivided and subscribed on 10 May 1926. 'The Fishermans Bay Estate' was offered for sale in 1927. The chainmen who measured out the estate were said to be two brothers who received blocks of land as payment-in-kind. The title deeds suggest this because brothers Eric and Roy Carter were recorded as the first to own a section of the subdivided land. Their two blocks - Lots 75 and 76 - and the Newcombe Street Reserve were transferred to Sutherland Shire Council, before the remainder of the land was sold to Wilfred Rees on 1 November 1927. Sales were slow - only 8 lots had been sold by 1937 - no doubt affected by the isolation and the lean times heralded by the Great Depression, which began in 1929.

As the full impact of unemployment hit, many people gravitated to the 'Depression village' that grew in the Bonnie Vale area. However, the first aerial photograph of Maianbar, taken in 1931, confirms that Maianbar as a village had not yet begun its life. Pacific Crescent had an unimpeded view of the headland because the sand spit that now extends from Bonnie Vale had not formed. It also showed that Fishermans Bay had extensive areas of deep water.

The Sutherland to Cronulla railway line was opened in 1939 and provided greater public access to Bundeena; Maianbar however, remained two subdivisions with few if any inhabitants other than the casual fisherman or camper.

## **1940s**

A long expanse of sand had formed a hundred feet or so from the waters edge along east end of Constables Point although Cabbage Tree Creek still meandered

its way out into Port Hacking close to Bonnie Vale. Because of this, pedestrian access between the villages was difficult and the walker had the choice of taking the long way around The Basin or fording the creek. The sand dunes that are now called Constables Point Reserve were sparsely vegetated with no trees or shrubs; areas of Deeban Spit were still vegetated with grasses.

The early 1940s saw the beginnings of the housing construction within the village. One of the earliest houses - still in its original form - stands on No 41 Pacific Crescent. Mr. Murphy purchased the land in 1940 for £40 and a second adjoining block was paid off at £1 per week. The house was built during the war and is clearly visible on an aerial photograph of Maianbar taken in 1947. Also visible in the same photograph are up to half a dozen small buildings further around the Constables Point headland. There are no obvious buildings or clearings in the Fishermans Bay Estate, however there may have been tiny huts used by fishermen.

Commercial activities in Maianbar village began on 17 September 1948 when Helen Dale purchased the land on which the shop still stands; Norm Williams built the store and he and Helen (known in the village as Mrs Williams) both ran the shop. The shop vehicle was a horse drawn sulky. Locals recall Mrs Williams



*Footbridge over the Creek at Cabbage Tree Basin*



standing in the sulky clutching the reins, her skirt billowing and bloomers showing as she charged across the sand flats.

Later that year on Saturday morning 18 December 1948 a fire started at the head of Fishermans Bay and burned through to Bonnie Vale threatening campsites and residences in Woodfield Avenue Bundeena. The arrival of a 'southerly buster' drove the fire back toward the campsites and then on to the Sand-spit Estate area, which was ablaze by 7.30 pm and provided an awesome sight for residents of Bundeena and must have been terrifying for the few people living in Maianbar. Local residents and volunteers arriving by launch extinguished the fire without loss of life or property, a feat that was regarded with awe.<sup>x</sup> One local resident - who as a child spent weekends at Bonnie Vale - recalls being placed under a table on Simpsons beach for protection as the fire raged.

The Bonnie Vale camping area was restructured in 1948; tent sites were reduced in size and the cost for rent increased to 10 shillings per week. Five families who had been frequent campers there since the early 1940s investigated the availability of land in the area and purchased five blocks on the high side of Pacific Crescent (now blocks No 6-14). Each family's block was decided by drawing lots. Men from these families - Messrs Gould and Eccleston - bush bashed a track, inching the vehicles through, roughly where the Maianbar Road is today, allowing cars into Maianbar for the first time! Despite having 'road access' tents and camping equipment and later building materials and furniture for permanent houses were brought over from Dolans Bay by barge or launch. Norm Williams Albion truck then delivered the goods within the village.

The Bundeena Progress Association began a push in 1948 for a vehicular punt from Woollooware to the sand spit in preference to establishing a 12-mile roadway through the Park<sup>xi</sup>. The decade's end saw the construction of the Maianbar ferry wharf which projected out from the sand spit into the deep water channel opposite Burraneer Point. It was built in 1949-50 for Geoff Mallam who owned the Cronulla-Bundeena Ferry Service and was part of his plan to develop tourist activities on the sand spit.<sup>xii</sup>

Reports in local papers suggest that Mr Mallam developed the Maianbar Ferry service as an act of 'bloody-mindedness' after disagreeing with the then President of the Bundeena Progress Association over the defunct Simpsons Bay service<sup>xiii</sup>. Whatever his motive, he failed to consider the dynamic nature of the sand shoals in Port Hacking.

This decade saw the demise of the coastal steamer *Maianbar* which was wrecked on Nobbies Beach near Newcastle. The *Maianbar* was built in Scotland and fitted with engines salvaged from a new ship *Minimbah* which was wrecked on the Manning river breakwater in 1910. The *Maianbar* was last owned by the North Coast Steam Navigation Company which partly financed the construction of an ocean wharf within Port Hacking. This was a failed attempt to promote tourism

and commerce in the area and to provide a maritime link with Sydney harbour. Steamers had found it difficult to negotiate the shallow waters and the wharf proved too exposed for use. Presumably the Maianbar was named after our village and was used on this service<sup>xiv</sup>. There is a painting of the *SS Maianbar* in the Australian National Maritime Museum.

### *1950s*

An aerial photograph taken during 1951 shows the beginning of the village, as we know it today. Bundeena and Maianbar were still effectively separated. Cabbage Tree Creek continued to flow out to Port Hacking via a deep-water channel close to Bonnie Vale and Geoff Mallam had requested the building of a small footbridge linking Bundeena with the sand spit<sup>xv</sup>. The road tracks forged by locals were very rough indeed and not viable for most vehicles.

Access within the town also presented some challenges. The nicely laid out roads that appear on the subdivision maps did not account for a number of steep cliffs that would have added a certain thrill to a car ride along a roadway constructed in the planned direction. No doubt the early residents were somewhat baffled and by July 1951 Council representatives had inspected Kara Karook Street, one of the problem sites. The resolution required the resumption of three blocks of land and a portion of eight others to form Bargo Street. Of course this didn't mean the roads were constructed - just that they could be at some future time. As with several other roads in Maianbar the locals probably 'did the job'.

The boardwalk connecting the Maianbar ferry wharf and the township was begun in 1950 and eventually ran from the sand spit, across Cabbage Tree Creek onto Constables Point Reserve and back toward the car park in front of the shop. Eventually the ferry wharf and boardwalk spanned a distance of one kilometre. The Cabbage Tree Creek section was completed in 1951.

A number of private wharves were built around the shore line and reflect the community's reliance on boating as a means of access to the village. The main ones were Campbells Wharf near the car park; Brownies at the end of the public access footpath off Pacific Crescent near Bargo Street and Stockdales Wharf which was around the point on the eastern shore of Fishermans Bay.

Many of the buildings being constructed during this time were small 'temporary dwellings' because of a scarcity of timber following the war. Some were modified army tents; at least one was a packing case which had been used to transport belongings from England. Others were 12 x 20 foot dwellings (garage sized) with two rooms - one for sleeping and one for living - and were made from hardwood frames bought prefabricated from Redi-cut Timbers at Engadine and shipped in by barge.

Around in Fishermans Bay Joseph(Harry) Henry Brunskill, a keen fisherman, was so taken with the name of the Estate that he purchased 23 blocks. He gave one, at the start of Cullen Lane to his brother Eric Brunskill who built a one room fibro 'cottage' to live in whilst he built a more substantial house. The hard yakka involved in the project gave the temporary dwelling its name, *Yakkaville*.

### **Aerial Photograph of Maianbar circa 1993**



The Progress Association had its first official meeting in 1953 as the locals pulled together to get the physical layout of the place in order and sort out a central meeting place. It was an outdoors affair, which included the Allens and the Clarkes along with Mrs Stockdale and Messrs Gould, Jones and Beutell, and other pioneering names in Maianbar. A working bee relocated President Gordon Clarke's fibro building, which stood on part of the resumed land (now Bargo Street) down to its present location close to the shop (*see Kara Karook Street Reserve*) ready to begin its new life as the Maianbar Community Hall.

Many of the same names were present at the inaugural meeting of the Fire Brigade, on 30 June 1954. The original nine-man brigade, then called the Maianbar Bushfire Brigade started their activities on foot with a second-hand pump, knapsacks, beaters, shovels, hoses and nozzles, all issued by Sutherland Shire Council. In 1958 after a fund raising effort they purchased an old truck to serve as the fire vehicle and equipped it with the already supplied tools and tank. Unfortunately this truck was extremely unreliable and often wouldn't go. During this period the brigade used an old shed located on National Park property near No. 34 Kara Karook Street<sup>xvi</sup> as a 'fire station'.

Commercial activities proceeded at the local store. As well as the shop Norm Williams had two boats and Ben Allen Jnr worked for Norm running a private ferry service from the small wharf on the sand spit to Dolans Point and on Fridays a shopping boat into Cronulla. Norm purchased the property from Helen Dale in 1955 although both continuing to run the business until he sold 'lock stock and barrel' to Edward and Patricia Clarke on 12 December 1957.

The ferry service from Cronulla to the Maianbar ferry wharf on the sand spit was still operational during the summer of 1955-56, however it was gone by the late 1950s. Few ventures fail so spectacularly – the wharf had lasted only few short years before a violent storm restructured the sand spit and left the wharf stranded on the sand.

People continued to park their cars at Dolans Point and came across the channel via the Maianbar store ferry service now in the hands of Mr Clarke. The disembarkation point was dependent on the tides. On a high tide passengers alighted in comfort at Brownies Wharf. However when the tide was out, the vessel only crossed the channel to the sand spit and passengers took a long and sometimes wet trek across the expanse of the sand flats.

The power supply arrived in 1956 with three lines strung from Woollooware across to the island (which was considerably larger then) and then to Constables Point near the car park. It continued up the hill in the direction of the eastern end of Pacific Crescent, although well before the road was constructed, and through to Bundeena. Street lighting was also installed as far as the last house and presented a rather strange picture of quite sophisticated twin fluorescent lights illuminating a narrow bush track.

The Bundeena and Maianbar Government Assisted Scheme for water supply was also commenced in 1956. Installation costs were jointly borne by the Water Board via rates and Sutherland Council via a local water rate levy. The water supply came from Loftus to the Maianbar Reservoir then toward the township of Maianbar. The pipes supplying water to Bonnie Vale came down the western slopes of The Basin midway between King Street and Bargo Street and over a causeway constructed across Cabbage Tree Creek. This blocked the twice daily tidal flushing of this fish breeding area and before long the water began to stagnate and fish died, creating a rather nasty smell at the eastern end of town. The Water Board ultimately rectified the problem by opening a portion of the causeway and installing a footbridge, which remains today. The flow of water, however, to and from The Basin was much more constricted than previously. Rock blasted from the hill leading up into Maianbar was used to construct the causeway and this quarry area can still be seen from the track today. Locals used the construction road, which led down to the bridge, for a while to access The Basin. The president of the Water Board turned on the water supply on the 21 June 1958 and the town celebrated because it had acquired not only piped water

but also easier pedestrian access to Bundeena and a graded Maianbar road, into the bargain.

During this decade Captain Brown for whom Brownies Wharf was named was lost to the community when he failed to return from one of his usual fishing trips. His dog Trixie stood a prolonged vigil to no avail and the fate of the Captain and his boat *Atlantia* remains a mystery.

In the late 1950s the Allen family, who had bought Stockdale's house, gave the jetty to the Maianbar Progress Association. Using timber from local turpentine trees members of the Progress Association extended the structure out into the channel thus creating the Maianbar Wharf, which provided access to the town on mid to high tides.

### *1960s*

During 1960s the sand spit projecting from Bonnie Vale had formed. Deeban Spit was breaking up and an island developed that hosted up to 100 people camping overnight during the weekends and holidays. Two very deep holes well out in the sand flats and one around the Maianbar wharf in Fishermans Bay were favourite swimming holes for children of the area especially when the tides were out. Shell grit dredgers had formed these and the deep-water channel out from the Maianbar Wharf. The section of boardwalk over Cabbage Tree Creek was still visible in aerial photographs taken in 1961 but had disappeared by 1965.

The Progress Association continued its work, however the concentration of effort on the Constables Point side of town at the expense of the Fishermans Bay community caused an amicable split in the progress association. Fishermans Bay residents formed their own group in the early 1960s and built the Fishermans Bay wharf located at the head of the bay.

Maianbar residents Richard and Nancey Swain purchased the store from the Clarkes on 27 April 1962. It was the Swains that obtained a liquor licence; an unusual concession to a shop of this sort and only the second 'off licence' to be issued in the State. The Swains also regularly hosted a barbecue with adults enjoying liquid refreshments on the verandah of the shop – a forerunner of the later Friday/Saturday night barbecues. Children played in the nearby picnic area under the watchful eye of their parents.

Running the shop - known then as the Maianbar Beach Store - also included running daily ferry services to get the local children across the water to Dolans Bay and up the hill to the Caringbah School. When siltation in the bay made this impossible by the mid 1960s Richie Swain provided the shop truck to transport the dozen or so youngsters to school in Bundeena. Weather and roads permitting of course!

The road out of town was being graded occasionally but the first deluge meant that the potholes were back. The gradient of Bargo Street was impossibly steep and slippery for some of the smaller vehicles in bad weather and the Hillmans belonging to some locals found the going on local roads very tough! Several sidetracks were in use to provide alternatives and the road itself took a somewhat different course via the reserve area.

Now that water and electricity were connected, the main thrust was to get the road into the village tar sealed. The Progress Association, which had divided into separate organisations so that each subdivision got its share of attention, reunited at the close of the 1960s to take up the battle to improve the road<sup>xvii</sup>. Pacific Crescent (east) however, was another do-it-yourself piece of roadwork when locals took to the grader in November 1965 to 'get the job done'. All households benefiting from the construction chipped in to pay for the cost of the grader.

In 1961 the electricity supply from Woollooware to Constables Point via the island was redirected to No 47 Pacific Crescent as the technology became available to run cables over longer spans. The installation must have been an exciting event because a rocket carrying a pilot cable was fired across the water to the headland where the power poles had been installed. The pilot cable was then used to haul the main cables across.

The introduction of post codes in 1967 indicate the continuing reliance on water access to the village and its separation from Bundeena. Mail was still being delivered via the Caringbah area and brought into the village by Maianbar Store boat whereas mail for Bundeena was transported by the Bundeena ferry service. The mailing address at the time was C/- Dolan's Bay/Port Hacking, 2229.

As the decade drew to an end the new fire station was built next to the Community Hall in Pacific Crescent and was opened in 1968.

## **1970s**

Aerial photographs taken over Maianbar show that a substantial part of the ferry wharf remained stranded on the sand spit until at least 1970 but was covered when the Cronulla ferry service had the channel dredged in 1971 to provide safer passage for its service. The dredging spoil was dumped directly onto the sand spit increasing its height by several metres in places.

After years of slipping, sliding and bumping over what was essentially a fire trail (likened to driving on porridge or in custard by the locals<sup>xviii</sup>) and 18 years of lobbying for a sealed road the village decided it had had enough. A media campaign focusing on the problems faced by children from the village getting to school was underway by 1974. A merry-go-round of decision-making involving NPWS, Council and the Lands Department began<sup>xix</sup> but eventually the community won the day and the road was sealed in the late 1970s.



Bushfire threatened the village again when early in the afternoon of 3 December 1976 a fire started at Loftus and despite a spirited effort by the local fire fighters to contain the fire at Maianbar Road it crossed in the area of the water tank and continued on to threaten the township of Bundeena.<sup>xx</sup>

During this decade several of the village's most active community leaders received awards. George McKay was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for his services to the community; recognition for his tireless activities in the Progress Association and Fire Brigade and Ben Allen Senior was given a Civic Dinner by Sutherland Shire Council; an acknowledgment for his long service to the Maianbar Fire Brigade.

At the community's request Harry Tierney became pastor for the Maianbar Christian Church conducting regular services and Sunday School for children and was also called upon to conduct funerals and dedications for the newborn.

Dawn and Billy Devers purchased the shop in 1976 and held it for three years, replanking the verandah and rearranging and renovating the shop in the meantime. They also built and moved into the house on No 52 Pacific Crescent next door to the shop. Until then the vacant block had served as an informal picnic area, with tables and chairs. Locals also recall various forms of bird life being housed in the same area; initially chickens, then an aviary of birds and finally a single Sulphur-crested Cockatoo that was known for its 'colourful' language. In 1979 the Braithwaites purchased the freehold and business, which they ran for a short time before leasing it.

## **1980s**

The Progress Association began the battle to have sewerage installed and continued its efforts to maintain the Fishermans Bay and Maianbar wharves. Fund raising 'theme' nights were the order of the day. Participants were encouraged to don the garb and take up the cultural behaviour of the chosen 'host country', to arrive at the appropriately decorated Community Hall and feast on a delicious meal. They must have been excellent affairs because by the time the Greek night arrived it was well and truly oversubscribed, Greek lamb was being cooked in spare ovens around town; the hostess Shirley-Anne Pengly was being stretched to her limit and the local Santa (Barry Weekes) arrived in religious mode as a Greek priest resplendent with a black covered bucket for a headpiece and a chain with a Coptic cross made out of a beer can around his neck.

The Maianbar Fire Brigade had the only remaining 6 wheel drive in the Sutherland Shire. Three successive families leased the shop during the 1980s – the Smithies, Ryans and then Kerry and Yvonne Knipe who introduced the Friday night sausage sizzle. When the lease ended the Braithwaites auctioned the freehold and business, which was purchased by Bob and June Cooke on 8 October 1988.

## 1990s

The store, its proprietors and the village suffered a terrible blow in the early 90s. Sutherland Shire Council had approved a substantial renovation, which was planned to take place during the winter months when fire gutted the building on the evening of 9 June 1992.

A series of articles in the *Village Voice* record the community's response as it swung into action in an attempt get the shop back into business. The 200 attendees at a public meeting held shortly after the fire resolved to assist with the demolition, raise funds to assist with reconstruction and to implement a number of strategies to assist those most affected by the loss. The shop continued on using the Community Hall, with June opening each day for several hours to sell newspapers, bread and milk, and to provide the vital Post Office service. Bob and June Cooke decided to close the makeshift shop midway through 1993.

The closure of the business also meant that mail was delivered to individual letterboxes for the first time – a significant event that generated mixed emotions. Although the convenience was appreciated, residents met each other less frequently than when they had had to drop into the shop to collect the mail.

Concerned by the loss of a central meeting place and the effect it might have on the strong sense of community enjoyed by the village, the Maianbar Progress Association arranged a Sunday morning meeting place in the Hall where locals could buy a paper and a Devonshire tea (or coffee) and catch up with one another. The community continued on without a shop for several years until the Cookes rebuilt: the result, a shop and restaurant on the ground floor and two apartments on the first floor, opened in September 1997.

By far the most threatening fire to effect the village occurred in early January 1994 when around 90% of the Royal National Park was lost and fire encircled the townships of Maianbar and Bundeena. The fire front threatening Maianbar reached the bus shelter on Kara Karook Street and burned there for some time until the Maianbar Fire Brigade finally extinguished it. Some residents were evacuated although many stayed with their houses to do what they could to preserve them. This fire was significant because Maianbar ran out of water in the hydrants whilst fighting the fire.

The final section of the boardwalk, which had connected the Maianbar ferry wharf to the car park at Constables Point had also provided easy access to the Reserve on a high tide was removed in mid 1994. It had been refurbished from time to time with timber from the destroyed sections of boardwalk however its progressive deterioration had made it unsafe. Sutherland Shire Council's plans to rebuild have been shelved.

## 2000s

The hot, dry Christmas Day of 2001 began another fire emergency. By afternoon with strong winds blowing, a fire started near Appin and quickly spread to Helensburgh where it destroyed houses before moving through to Waterfall. By next morning large areas of bush from Audley through to Waterfall were ablaze and resulted in Bundeena and Maianbar being isolated for several days. When the winds abated a back burn along the western side of Maianbar Road eased the situation and access to Bundeena was re-opened.

The long awaited sewerage system infrastructure was installed during 2001-02 and completed in 2002 after much agitation by the Bundeena/Maianbar communities. This simple historical statement of course masks many difficulties and disputes still in the process of resolution.

Down in the commercial heart of town the faces behind the counter at the local store changed again with the business leased to Jim and Margaret Tierney in December 2002.

The Fire Station was rebuilt during 2003. The central support column at the front of the building that had made parking difficult was removed, the roof was raised and a kitchen, shower and toilets were installed. A new siren sporting the magpie emblem completes the picture.

The Fire Brigade Chaplain, Harry Tierney, continues to conduct his non-denominational religious services every Sunday morning – a devotion he has maintained for 25 years.

The final note in a brief look at our history is the metamorphosis of the bus shelter near the entrance to the village. The interior of the shelter wonderfully captures a moment in time (2002-03) when residents placed their artistic mark upon the town and painted their houses on a map of the village. On the exterior of the shelter Fi Shewring whose creative spark initiated the project and gutsy energy followed it through until its completion, recorded in paint a collection of photographs from past and present residents. These snaps of times past record our history - a collective community photograph album - and make a statement about who we are!

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Some sounds in Aboriginal language have no equivalent in English and this is seen in the many different ways in which the name Dharawal has been recorded. Aborigines make an intermediary sound between 'd' and 't' which results in the following spellings: Dharawal, Darawal, Tharawal, and Turrawal. Jim Kohen, *A Dictionary of the Dharug Language: The Inland Dialect*, **Blue Mountains Dreaming -The Aboriginal Heritage** Edited by Eugene Stockton 1996

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- ii Although early writers estimated that there were approximately 1000 Dharawal at the beginning of settlement Les Bursill reports that recent estimates and dating suggest that the numbers must have been higher to have achieved the rate of accumulation of shells in middens.
  - iii Frances Bodkin, a botanical author, teacher and traditional storyteller of Dharawal descent is working with the Bureau of Meteorology and Monash University to record the Dharawal understanding of seasonal change and weather patterns.
  - iv Hunting and fishing practices in the Sydney region are discussed by J.I. Kohen and R Lambert, *Hunters and Fishers in the Sydney Region*, **Australians to 1788**.
  - v Hardwood, or sometimes shell prongs were used in other areas, however Les Bursill's research suggests that echidna spines were probably more common in the Maianbar area.
  - vi Les Bursill, *What a groove – they're everywhere*, discusses tool making in the Sutherland Shire.
- Village Noise** Issue 20 Winter 2003:
- vii Male cutting or cicatricing refers to a process of cutting into flesh and deliberately inducing it to heal with a scar. The chest and arms of male Aborigines were often decorated in this way.
  - viii When mosses and lichen dry out and die during periods of drought they dislodge from the surface and remove fine layers of rock reducing the depth of the engraving.
  - ix Les Bursill – *What a groove – they're everywhere*, **Village Voice** Winter 2003.
  - x *The Bushfire Menace*, **Bundeena Recorder** Dec 1948 p.7
  - xi Why not a Punt? A question raised in the Bundeena Recorder of August 1948 reported on the possibility of a vehicular punt rather than a 12-mile road through the Royal National Park. The idea continued to be discussed until at least June 1951 when a petition requesting the service was signed and present at a public meeting between local residents and Sutherland Shire Councillors called to discuss a number of proposals for improvements to the district.
  - xii A series of Council Minutes records Mr Mallam's dealings with Sutherland Shire Council. Meeting dates 25.9.50, 16.7.51.
  - xiii *A History of Bundeena Ferry Service*, published in **Village Voice** No 14 Final Quarter, 1993
  - xiv Ron Vale, the *Wreck of the Maianbar*, **Village Noise**, Issue 8, Winter 2000
  - xv Council minutes record dealings with Mr Mallam regarding Bundeena Jetty during the 1950-51 period and also refer to the request for a footbridge linking to Bundeena. Min No 520 25/9/50)
  - xvi *Maianbar Bushfire Brigade*, **Village Voice** No. 5 July 1992 p.13
  - xvii *The History of the Maianbar Progress Association*, **Village Voice**, No 10 Mar–Apr
  - xviii *Road access like porridge near Maianbar*, **Leader** 25 June 1975
  - xix *Storms upset school bus* discusses the buck passing by Royal National Parks, Lands Department and Sutherland Shire Council. **Pictorial** 1 July 1975
  - xx **Bundeena People** Dec 1976