



# Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc Bulletin



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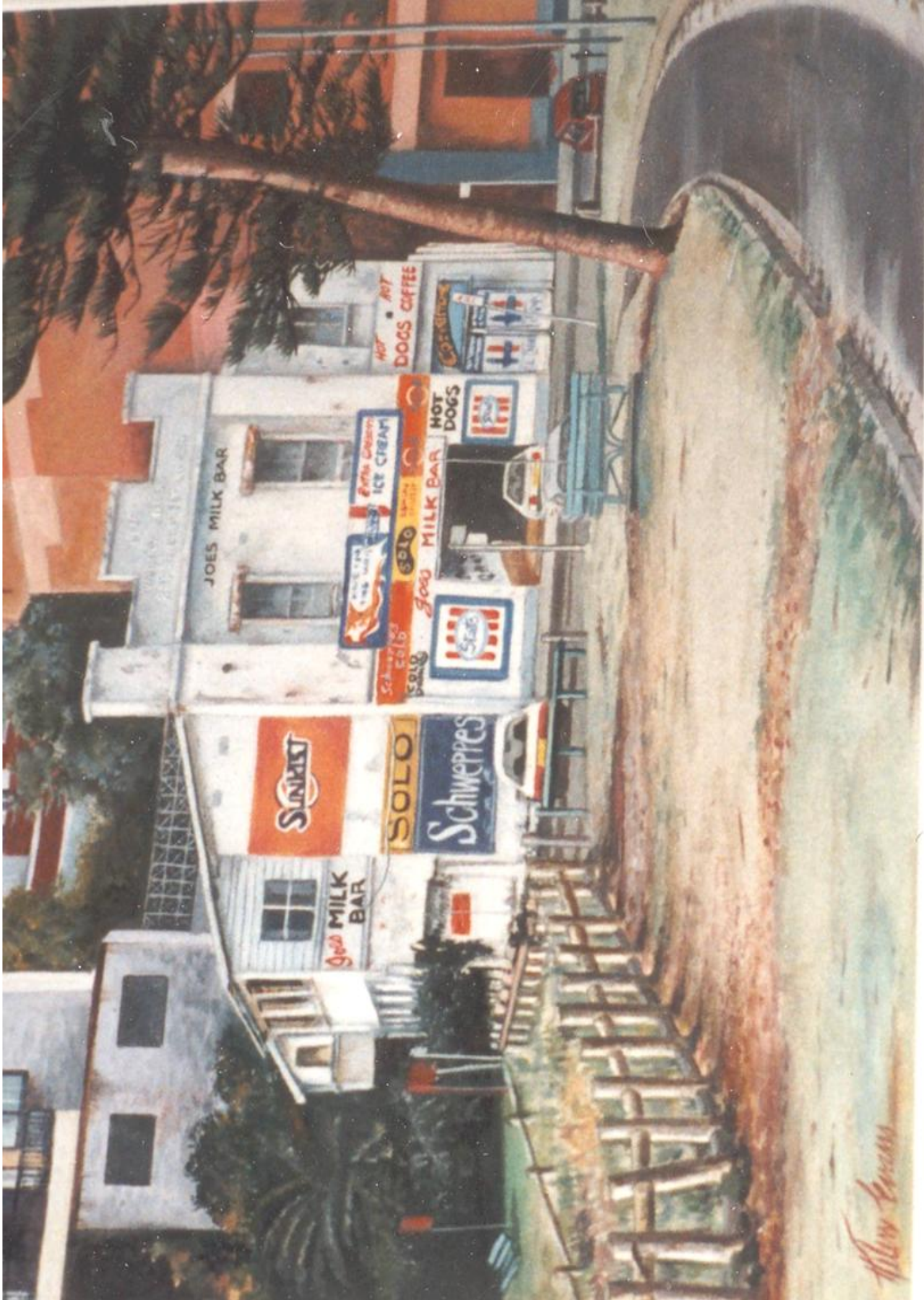


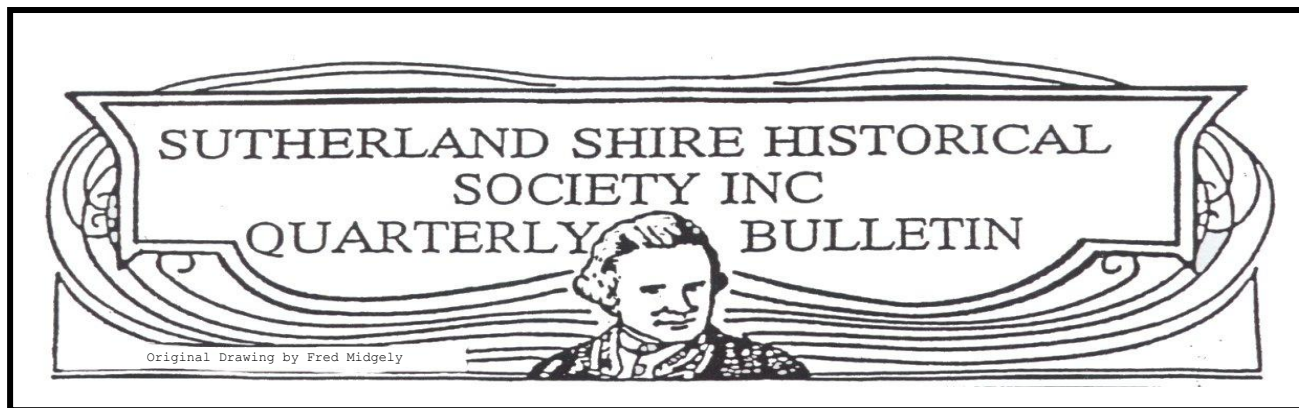
Beach side stall. Joe's girls trained here before serving in actual Milkbar.  
Joe's niece Barbara behind counter

Joe's Milkbar was an institution at North Cronulla for 50 years. This kiosk was on a vacant block next to Joe's at the end of the Kingsway. Memories of a simpler past!

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# SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Bulletin copies are supplied to all branches of the Shire Library; to the Mayor, General Manager and all councillors; the Royal Australian Historical Society; National Trust (NSW); State Library, NSW; National Library, Canberra; University of Sydney and UNSW; State Rail Authority; Australia Post Archives; Sydney Water Board Historical Research Unit.

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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.

## VISITORS ARE WELCOME

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be addressed to*

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## *Index:*

	<b>Page</b>
Outside Joe's Milkbar	1
Painting – Joe's Milkbar	2
Office bearers	3
Disclaimers and index	4
President's report	5
Editorial	7
Joe's Milk Bar	8
54 years in the Sutherland Shire	11
Bellingara plane crash	18
Museum report	19
Who was Catherine Connell?	20
Beautiful Burraneer Bay	23
Wartime preparations	25
Victa	27
Sea Cliff Bridge	29
Book review	32
Membership renewal	33

### **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

## **SSHS Member becomes Fellow of the Australasian College of Biomedical Scientists**

Congratulations to our Archivist and Research Officer, Mr. Les Bursill on receiving the above award this month. Les has been a prolific contributor to many academic research journals, and we are very proud that he has been accorded this honour. Well done, Les! Best wishes from all the members of the SSHS.

## **Director of the Woronora Cemetery and Crematorium**

On 3rd February, 2006 the NSW Government Gazette recorded that I had been elected to the Board of the above institution as a member until 2011. I have been involved with the Cemetery for many years with our Heritage Festival Committee, and through doing the Cemetery tours assisting the Lioness Club, and I am pleased to have a managerial role at this important Sutherland Shire facility. It has such historical heritage links for many of our members and I am one of only three women to be appointed to this facility, as all previous trustees/directors have been men.



## **Cook Award Recipient**

We were delighted to nominate our Museum Curator and Vice-President, Mr. Jim Cutbush for a Cook Award, and then attend the ceremony conducted by Mr. Bruce Baird, MP to see Jim receive his award. Jim has served the Society for many years as Assistant Curator under Allan McGrath's able leadership, and then when Allan's health deteriorated, Jim stepped into Allan's shoes. Jim has been Deputy President, representing the Society at many functions and it is a fitting tribute to Jim's long apprenticeship that he receive this award in recognition for the many hours he puts into the Society displays and exhibitions. Congratulations Jim!

## **Sutherland Shire Citizens' Heritage Festival Committee**

Last year Council disbanded its Heritage Festival Committee which had been running for over 20 years and there was no longer any co-ordination of events amongst the members. I had chaired it for 13 of those years and former Clr. Hazel Wilson had chaired it previously for 8 years, and then last year Clr. Jan Forshaw had been the able chair. All the organizations involved felt its absence keenly. Then last February, thanks to Mr. Ivan Webber, General Manager of the Woronora Cemetery granting us the use of his boardroom, we began a Sutherland Shire Citizens' Heritage Festival Committee. I was again elected chair. We acquired a new member organization, the Lioness Club of Sutherland Shire. Helen Rae, has been organising the cemetery walks each Heritage Festival, but had not yet been a formal member. Welcome aboard, Helen! We were now back on track and co-ordinating events. Council staff representative, Tina-Marie Shiels attended, and assisted with bookings, payment of halls, printing of tickets etc for our various events and pamphlets advertising the events. Thank you to Council for this assistance, which was much appreciated.

## **Heritage Festival, 2006**

Industrial Heritage As this year's National Trust theme was 'Industrial Heritage: our working lives' our Museum Curator, Mr. Jim Cutbush arranged a superb display featuring photos of the various industries in the Shire: boatbuilding, fishing, oyster farming, shell-grit collecting, limeburning, seaweed collecting for food thickeners; farming and orcharding, grape-growing and wine-making, honey-gathering, grasstree cutting for waterproofing munitions, timber-getting and many others. These photos and information about the industries were displayed in the foyer of the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts, and were very well-received and excited much comment.

Centenary of Sutherland Shire 2006 is Sutherland Shire's Centenary of Local Government, and the small exhibition room at the Museum has been entirely devoted to the Council's history of the Shire. On display are the Shire President's wig and gown, the latter being black and having floor length sleeves and a white shirt --- very different to modern mayoral gowns---and with shaved heads these days with nary a hair showing the ornately curled grey-haired wig looks very old fashioned! We also have on display the first tape recorder used to record council meetings many years ago!

Brinsley's Joinery Although closed for some years, since the last lessees left, the new lessee, Gary Waller is delighted to participate in Heritage Festival and opened up the joinery again to tours by the public which I conducted. Gary then happily demonstrated some of the machinery to the enthusiastic crowd, who were dutifully wearing their ear plugs. We look forward to having displays of photos of heritage homes that have been refurbished and restored by Gary, showing his artistry, when he gets settled.

Don Godden Cocktail Reception. Don after a little hiccup with his computer programme, which was resuscitated by Sue Duyker, gave a most comprehensive talk about the industrial heritage of Sydney: its power stations, wharves, old buildings, old factories etc. to a packed hall. The audience was spell-bound at his depth of knowledge about many of our lost landmarks. Thank you to all the wonderful members who provided a magnificent supper, and we sipped good quality bottled wine and champagne so the reception went extremely well. Thank you once again to Doug and Betty for their excellent tea and coffee which ensured members could drive home safely after imbibing.

Cemetery Tours. Helen Rae and the Lioness Club ladies outdid themselves, clad in period costume, and after I did an overview of the Woronora Cemetery's history, they then took us to individual graves of past Shire Presidents: W. Judd, C.O.J. Munro, Robert Cook, Jean Manuel, and a few other historic graves. The Lioness ladies (and one gentleman) did an excellent job, and the tours were well attended. I apologise to them that the Leader featured the Historical Society as being the bevy of beauties at the Tramway Museum in historical costume—but no it was the Lioness ladies, again, in their 1906 Sunday best. Sorry—we wish it *had been us*!

Pates Pottery: Cliff and I tried to get to other Council's events and one was a talk at Canterbury Library on Pate's Pottery. Mr. Pate. Snr. former Mayor, told the story of his company's works, and there were many pieces on display. One piece he held up and asked could anyone identify its owner, or the worker who made it. It was a small jug, and written on the side in copperplate handwriting in pencil, but then glazed, were the words 'Gymea Bay'! So we think there must have been a Sutherland Shire resident working there, who "personalised" a piece for himself! We also tried to attend a function at the Records office at Penrith, but as the traffic was so bad we were an hour late and missed the talk—we ended up at the Go-Shu Sake factory instead—and had a most pleasant hour there instead---wine for the body not wine for the soul, I am afraid!

Do make sure you get along to the following special series of Society meetings, which are being held to showcase our Shire's history, and told to us by the very people who guided the Shire at its helm throughout those years. I look forward to chatting with you over a cuppa after the meeting!

*Dawn Emerson,*

Dawn Emerson,  
President

### **Meetings, for 2006: Venue: Stapleton Centre, Stapleton St., Sutherland at 8pm.**

Friday, 19 <sup>th</sup> May:	Mr. John Rayner, General Manager, Sutherland Shire Council: The future for the Shire
Friday, 16 <sup>th</sup> June:	Mr. Doug McNeil, former Shire President: Some history of the Shire
Friday, 21 <sup>st</sup> July:	Mr. Alf Bridges: Almost ninety years as a Shire resident
Friday, 18 <sup>th</sup> August:	Mr. Michael Tynan, former Shire President: More history of the Shire
Friday, 15 <sup>th</sup> September:	AGM and Mr. George Heavens' film on Sutherland Shire in the early 1950s. Venue: Multi-Purpose Centre.
Friday, 20 <sup>th</sup> October:	Mr. Don Carter, former Shire President: Further history of the Shire
Friday, 17 <sup>th</sup> November:	TBA
Friday, 15 <sup>th</sup> December:	Members' 'Show and Tell' party night, ( <u>each member</u> to bring along an historical item (yes, in <u>addition</u> to your husband!) with a little note about its origin etc. to place on the table beside it. Please also bring a plate (yes, with food on it!) and we will have a glass of Christmas cheer to say a cheery goodbye to a most successful year!

# From The Editor's Desk

The editor's role is both as an entertainer and an informer. A publication that is not visually interesting and contains tired old stories is not serving the needs of its members. For many who cannot attend the wider functions of the Society, the Bulletin is the face of the organisation. Its content reflects the philosophy of the organisation. We live in a society that is constantly bombarded by sight, sound and print stimuli and we expect that our media exposure will be entertaining. Whilst our bulletin will become an historical document in itself, for most of us we simply want to be entertained now. I am committed to providing an interesting and stimulating read and I invite all of our readers to consider submitting materials that will add to the quality of our publication.



The other role is informational and involves sifting through the vast range of data that can loosely be called 'history' and presenting snapshots in time that add to our understanding. Aboriginal lifestyles and culture, pre-Cook explorations, colonial settlement, maritime, agricultural, industrial and urban developments, wartime preparations, waste management and environmental issues are a few of the themes that we need to explore.

The Shire has a rich history however most of the development and much of this history has been taken place in the post – war period. Take a look at the list of up coming guest speakers. Several of them have been highly influential in shaping how the 'Shire' is today. All of the secondary schools, most of the roads, shopping centres, sewage, nuclear power and industrial capacity are a development since the 1950s. Much of this story is yet to be told. Indeed, we owe it to future residents to inform them about these aspects of the Shire's development.

In the museum is a Kreisler television set which was manufactured here in the Shire. Many of the Sydney to Hobart Yachts were built at Taren Point. Several films including Forty Thousand Horsemen, Puberty Blues and Long John Silver have been made here. These are the stories that need to be told.

This bulletin contains some riveting stories. The cover contains an image that deserves to be shown. It represents a simpler and more carefree lifestyle before high density development changed our beaches and suburbs dramatically. The painting of Joe's Milk Bar by Helen Evans (now in the Council collection) records an iconic building. I would like to thank Helen for allowing us to use this image. I would also like to thank Sue Lainson for allowing us to use the cover image and that of Joe Santamaria on page 9 and for information used in the 'Joe's Milkbar' story. Thanks to Aileen Griffiths for the image featuring Gough Whitlam. At the time he was the local member for Werriwa. He later became Australia's Prime Minister. Les Clarke's story continues to trace some of the big developments in the 1920' to 1940's including the building of Tom Ugly's bridge, the depression years, trams and trains.

A never before published account from Council records shows the level of planning and preparation in the event that the Shire was invaded during the Second World War. I would like to acknowledge the assistance that Elva Carmichael (a foundation member) has given in providing this and other material. (Reg Dallimore noted in this article was Elva's father)

I commend this edition of the Bulletin to you.

**Members are reminded that membership renewals are due as of 1/7/2006**

*Bruce Watt*  
*Editor 2006*

# *Joe's Milk Bar*

The cover and inside page feature beach culture in Cronulla from an era that is now past. The image of Joe's Milkbar was painted by Helen Evans and is being used with her permission. The painting is now in the Sutherland Shire Council collection.

'Whitby Cliffs', the later site of Joe's Milkbar was built by John Dodson in 1926 as refreshment rooms with some flats attached. In 1932, John Dodson leased 'Whitby Cliffs' to Dorothy Irene Brown who sold Devonshire teas there until the mid 1940s. On the lease, Dodson, a prominent local resident was described as a 'gentleman'.

In 1945, a young debonair chap went to Randwick Race Course and placed a bet on the daily double. The two horses that he chose were 'Blue Legend' and 'Coredale'. The two horses won and with the winnings, Joe Santa Maria, an Italian migrant, purchased Whitby Cliffs and changed its name to 'Bluedale Café' after his winning horses. Joe and his wife Norma operated the well-known venue for nearly 50 years. It was colloquially known as 'Joe's Milkbar'.

Joe's became somewhat of a local icon. Being at the end of the Kingsway, it was a local hangout for surfers who surfed the "Alley" off North Cronulla. During the 1970s, the movie 'Puberty Blues' used Joe's for interior scenes as well as the beach area from the Alley to Wanda. During the 1970's the sit-down cubicles were removed and pin ball machines installed.

Pauline Curby, a local historian recalls: 'Several years ago, Joe's friend George Tarlington shared his memories of Joe with me. George recalled that Joe was 'never up to date with anything' and how equipment such as pie ovens were used until they practically fell to pieces. Apparently Joe and Norma only ever had one holiday when they went to the Gold Coast and Noosa in the 1960s with George and his wife Joy'.

Joe and Norma both passed away in the early 1990s. The building stood vacant and eventually vandalized before developers moved in. Joe's Milk Bar was gutted by fire in 1995 and demolished in 1997. Sea Level Restaurant is now located on the spare block of land adjoining Joe's (where the kiosk photo was taken) and partly on the café site. It displays 'Joe' memorabilia and nearby Joe's Fish Bar keeps the well-known name alive in Cronulla.

## **A mystery?**

A curious set of circumstances surround the location of Joe's milkbar. Perhaps readers can explain this more fully. The building was constructed in 1926 by Mr Dodson. It was named 'Whitby Cliffs'. Whitby is the fishing village in Yorkshire, England where James Cook was apprenticed in a draper's shop. He left to take up a working life on colliers plying the east coast and from which he developed his seafaring skills. Whitby harbour is surrounded by cliffs. Whitby Abbey is located on the top of these cliffs The Abbey dates from mediaeval times.

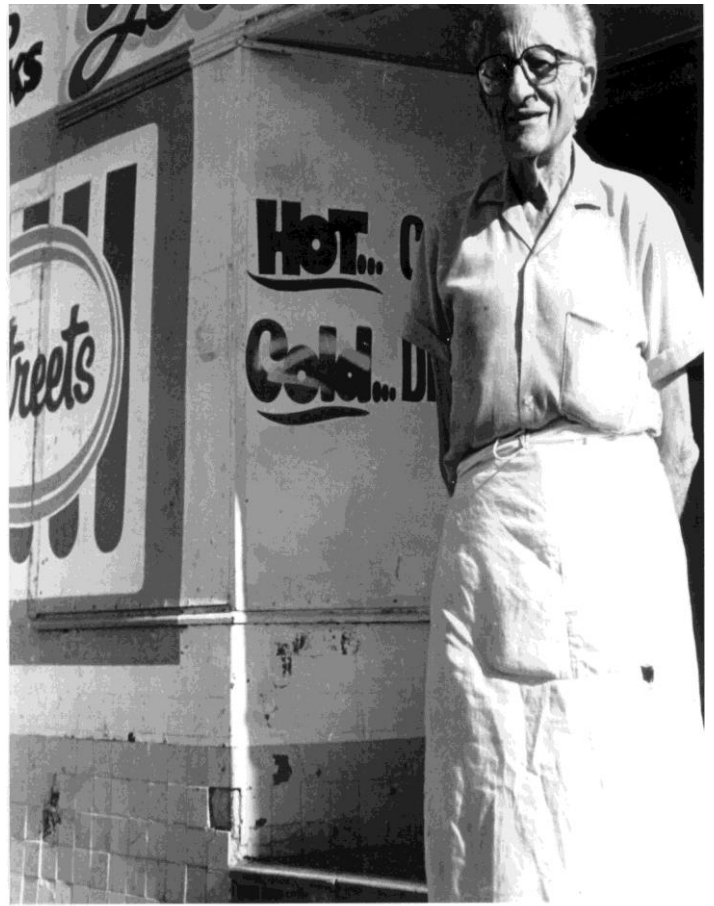
Credited as the first English poet, was an illiterate monk who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. His name was Caedmon and he lived at Whitby Abbey. Awakening from a dream one night, he recounted a poem that was written down by a girl cow herd.

Still today, despite massive development on this site, the name Caedmon is preserved in bold relief on the wall along the Esplanade in front of the Sea Level restaurant.

Caedmon lane is also the name of the access laneway off Croyden Street that runs behind Triple Bull and the shops along the Kingsway (though no such signage exists at the moment).

*What link exists between Cook, Whitby Cliffs, Caedmon and Dodson's refreshment rooms?  
Can anyone shed light on this matter?*





*Gough Whitlam (centre) opens the Worker's club next to Joe's in 1967. Joe outside the milkbar.*



*Filming Puberty Blues inside Joe's.*



*Joe and his wife Norma. Below is a still from the filming of Puberty Blues*





# 54 YEARS IN THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE

## 1912 - 1966

By **Les Clarke.** Serialised in B.B.C. NEWS\*

1968 & 1969

*Note: this is the second instalment of Les' story. The first part was published in the February edition. The photograph of Les Clarke was taken about 1989. \*BBC stands for Miranda Builders and Businessmen's Club. Headings have been added to Les' story.*



### Local attractions

The National Park which forms the Southern boundary of the Sutherland Shire was dedicated as a park in 1879 by Lord Loftus who was the Queen's Representative in N.S.W. at that time. The prefix 'Royal' was added after the visit of Queen Elizabeth II. [1954 ]

Until a few years ago the Park was one of the most popular holiday resorts near Sydney. Thousands of visitors would travel by train and coach to Audley and regular Tourist trips were run from Sydney daily. A large Guest House provided accommodation and meals and was very popular with honeymooners.

Woronora River was also popular as a fishing and pleasure resort, because of easy access from Sutherland Shire Station.

The commencement of the steam tram from Sutherland to Cronulla encouraged many more people to visit the many beauty spots scattered throughout the Shire and a large number of visitors were so taken up with the District that they purchased land and made their homes in the Shire. The influx of new settlers was interrupted in 1914 by

the declaration of World War 1 and it was not until the end of the War that any great change took place in the Shire.

Things were almost at a standstill during the 1914-18 War as most eligible men had enlisted and gone overseas to fight and those who remained were engaged in some type of war work; as were the women. Practically every family in the Shire had a representative in one of the services. The number of names on the War Memorials throughout the Shire will indicate how the men responded to their Country's call.

### Taren Point punt

In 1912, plans and specifications were prepared for a proposed ferry crossing at Taren Point. Work was proceeded with and the Taren Point punt commenced operation in March, 1916. A short time later a bus service from Cronulla to Rockdale via Taren Point Punt, was inaugurated by Hunter's Bus Service. This continued for many years.



### Electricity

The first electricity supply in the Shire was owned and installed at Cronulla by Mr. A. T. Robinson. The power station was built on the corner of Nicholson Parade opposite the R. C. Church in 1915. The power was generated by three suction gas engines and was reticulated over the whole of the Cronulla Peninsula up to and including Woollooware Road. Six hundred customers were provided with electric light only, there being insufficient capacity for cooking etc. Street lighting was supplied over the reticulated area until midnight, when the engines were stopped.

There was only one electric motor in use in the Shire at this time, at A. J. Hands Timber yard at Cronulla, (right where Cronulla Station now stands) and this motor was only allowed to be used when the generators were running. The power used was 240 volts D.C. When the Shire Council installed electricity throughout the Shire in 1926 this privately owned plant was taken over and ceased operation.

In 1926 the Sutherland Shire Council completed the Electricity supply to the Shire. This was an important step in the progress of the Shire, as up till this time oil lamps were the main source of illumination. The supply was reticulated and conducted by the Sutherland Shire Council until July, 1955 when the electricity under takings in the Shire were taken over by the Sydney County Council, the present suppliers.

### Tom Ugly's punt

In 1917-18 the need for a relief punt at Tom Ugly's became very urgent and the Government Dockyard was commissioned to build a new punt similar to the one at Taren Point, having a hull length of 60 feet by 31 feet wide and a roadway of 16 ft. 6 in. The punt was completed and put into service in 1919 at a cost of £4,500. No sooner was this addition in service and it was found insufficient to cope with the increasing traffic across the River and approval was given to construct a larger steam driven punt with a steel hull and the following dimensions: Length 128 feet, moulded width 36 feet, moulded depth amidships 8 feet 5 inches, width of carriageway 21 feet 6 inches. This punt was put into service in 1921. With this addition the flow of vehicles across the river was increased to 144 vehicles and 1,000 foot passengers per hour against 60 vehicles and 400 foot passengers. Traffic continued to increase considerably and it was necessary in 1925 to bring a large punt from the Spit.

The Georges River Bridge was under construction at this time and owing to unforeseen difficulties in obtaining footings, the completion of the bridge was delayed, necessitating a larger punt to cope with the traffic. In 1928 the Government Dockyard built a punt to carry 24-30 cars per trip at a cost of £21,823. This was immediately installed and operated until the opening of the Georges River Bridge in 1929.

### The 1920s

The end of World War 1 in November, 1918 created new interest in the settlement of the Shire and large numbers of returned soldiers and their families took up land and made their homes here. Many started poultry farms and market gardens and new businesses were opened up throughout the Shire. Building increased considerably; new homes were being built everywhere and many people who had weekenders converted them to permanent homes. Large areas of leasehold land were converted by the lessees to Torrens Title and subdivided into building lots, averaging 50 ft. to 65 ft. frontages, these were sold at approximately £1 per foot. Many new shops were built, mainly in Cronulla and Sutherland. By the year 1929 the population of the Shire had increased to 9,800.

### Tom Ugly's bridge

It is apparent from the records of the Shire Council that there were some far-seeing citizens in the Miranda Progress Association in the early days, as it is noted that the first movement to have a bridge built at Tom Ugly's was originated in the Miranda Progress Association in July, 1909. The Council of the day agreed to co-operate for the provision of a bridge, due to the increase of traffic over the punt. Councillor C. O. J. Monro who was elected to the Council in 1914 and was elected President in 1917-18, organised a Committee to influence the Government to build a bridge across the Georges River. He co-opted influential representatives of transport, chambers of commerce, local government and other progressive groups on both sides of the river to agitate and put proposals to the government. Hurstville

Council endeavoured to have alterations made to Como Railway Bridge to enable vehicular traffic to use it. This proposal was turned down and the Public Works Department fixed the site for a bridge to be built at Tom Ugly's in 1921. The fixing of a site caused increased agitation to have the work commenced and in 1922 a sub-committee, including Councillors C. Monro and R. W. S. Harris of Sutherland Shire Council, drew up a report of the financial proposals of the bridge.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1923 a large and representative deputation waited on the Minister for Public Works, requesting that the Council be authorised to build a bridge across the Georges River from Tom Ugly's Point to Sylvania, the cost of which was to be paid by tolls collected from the vehicles which crossed.

The Minister was impressed with the proposals put forward and the State Government prepared the Georges River Bridge Bill 1923, which contained the following provisions:

1. It authorised the Council to construct the bridge across the river at Tom Ugly's Point to plans and specifications to be supplied by the Minister.
2. The Sutherland Shire Council was authorised to acquire land for approaches on both sides of the river. To borrow the required money with the approval of the Governor.
3. To levy tolls and charges for the use of the Bridge. The proceeds of the toll to be applied to meeting interest charges on the loan raised and half yearly payments to a sinking fund to redeem the loan in twenty years, from the date of the opening. The proceeds of the toll to be lodged in a separate bank accounts and to be used for meeting the cost of collecting tolls, maintenance, repairs, interest and sinking fund. All items of income and expenditure had to be kept separate and distinct and could not be used for Shire purposes.
4. When the Council satisfied the Governor that all loans and liabilities had been paid and discharged the bridge was to become the responsibility of, the Government. The Sutherland Shire Council approved the proposed legislation by a vote of 5 to 4. The Authorising Act was passed in late 1923. On the 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1923, Councillor Monro, at his own expense, left for England and America to investigate local government and particularly matters relating to the Georges River Bridge. He was away six months and returned with valuable information, including an estimate from the Cleveland Bridge Company of America for a bridge 40 ft. wide to cost £225,000.

The Chief Engineer for National Works attended a Meeting of the Council on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1923 and considered that a 30 ft. carriageway with a 6 ft. footpath for pedestrians on one side was sufficient. This was agreed to by the Minister for Works, the Hon. R. T. Ball and plans prepared.

The State Government undertook to guarantee a loan of £225,000.

The Foundation Stone was laid by the Hon. R. T. Ball, Minister for Works, on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1923. Immediately after the ceremony, a special Meeting of the Council was held and authority given to call tenders for steelwork and bridge construction. Mr. Percy Allan, Chief Engineer for National Works was appointed Supervising Engineer.

In November, 1924 Messrs. Armstrong Whitworth of England, were awarded the contract to supply the steel work for the bridge for the sum of £80,320 and the State Monier Pipe Works were awarded the contract to build the bridge for £109,731.

#### Council guarantees loan

The Sutherland Shire Council was authorised to borrow £225,000 issued at a discount of £1.10.0 per £100 in London, interest at the rate of 5½% per annum, payable half yearly at Barclay's Bank, London. The sum of £2,984 to be set aside yearly in a sinking fund, to earn 6% per annum, to be compounded to yield the amount of the loan in 20 years. The authority to borrow, was given by the State Government, which

passed the "Georges River Guarantee Act, 1925." Work commenced on the bridge in January, 1925, and Mr. Spencer Dennis took over as Supervising Engineer.

The estimated cost of the structure to plans prepared by the Public Works Department was £200,000, and it was estimated that the bridge would be open to traffic on the 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1927.

Considering that in 1923 the population of the Shire was 8,190 and the Council's revenue from all sources was £31,300, the Council of the day showed great confidence in the future development of the Shire in accepting the responsibility of undertaking such a large commitment of financing and building the Georges River Bridge.

#### Construction methods

The construction of the concrete piers necessitated the use of air-locks, which are large steel cylinders divided into chambers which are erected on the actual position of the pier, and excavation of the foundation is carried out from inside the cylinder under compressed air. The top chambers of the cylinders were used as decompression chambers for the men working inside, before they were allowed out into the atmosphere.

The deepest pier is resting on solid rock, 110 feet below high water mark. All the piers were excavated to solid rock with the exception of the northernmost set, on Tom Ugly's side. Solid bottom could not be found here and necessitated the redesigning of the pier. This caused considerable delay. The method adopted was to drive timber piles each 45 feet long, deep into the mud, to construct a platform. (266 piles were used.) This platform was used to support a concrete raft footing, on which the piers were then constructed.

The change of design caused considerable delay in the completion of the piers, and had a serious effect on the funds from which the bridge was being financed, as interest had to be paid during the period of construction.

The financial position was reviewed in 1928. A new estimate was prepared, and a fresh date fixed for the opening of the bridge. The lenders agreed to lend an additional £80,000, provided it was guaranteed by the State Government. The Georges River Bridge, (Further Guarantee) Act, 1928, was assented to on the 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1928.

#### Bridge opens

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1929, The Georges River Bridge was opened for traffic, it then being the longest road bridge in the State, being 1,639 feet in length. On Friday night, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1929, the bridge was closed to traffic between 8.00 p.m. and midnight to allow a dance to be held on the bridge to celebrate the official opening, which was conducted by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Dudley de Chair, on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1929. The Shire President was Councillor A. J. Hand. The proceeds of the dance were divided between the St. George Hospital, and the St. George Ambulance.

The bridge replaced two large vehicular ferries. The ferry approaches are still in existence on the south end of the bridge, and are now used extensively for launching ramps by private boat owners.

The final cost of the bridge was £307,601. £305,000 was borrowed in London, and £2,601 was charged by the Public Works Department for preliminary borings and investigations.

In accord with the provisions of the Georges River Bridge Bill, 1923, the cost of the bridge was to be repaid by the levying of tolls for the use of the bridge. The scale of toll charges were, for cars, 1/- on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, and 6d. on weekdays. There was a varying scale from 1d. for bicycles to 1/6d. for lorries.



### Controversy

At the official opening ceremony, the Hon. R. T. Ball, Minister for Public works was presented with a gold pass. The Council issued to each past councillor, and the members of the Council, a small leather pass to commemorate the occasion. They were issued on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1929. The Council basked in the limelight of a most courageous and exceptional achievement.

The issue of these passes was to cause considerable upset later on, as it was taken up by "Smith's Weekly", a Sydney weekly newspaper with a large circulation, which had criticised the building of the bridge, and particularly the delays in construction over a long period.

On Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1929, "Smith's Weekly" published an article with large headlines, "Sutherland Shire Council Sensation. Issue of Free Georges River Bridge passes to Councillors." . . . "Amounts to Public Scandal." It stated that the ratepayers of one of the largest outer metropolitan councils were now without a Council. That the Council has committed an act of aldermanic greed and stupidity. That for the sake of a sixpenny toll, the Council had put themselves out of office.

At that time the Council met on Wednesday nights. It did not meet that night (21<sup>st</sup> August). The Minister for Local Government was interviewed, and the opinion of Senior Counsel obtained.

### Council in crisis

On Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1929, two days after the appearance of the newspaper article, all nine Councillors tendered their resignations, and the accounts showed the following deficits. 1930 deficit £4,561, 1931 - £9,694 1932 - £11,272, 1933 - £11,272, 1934 - £10,337, 1935 -£5,698.

These happenings created a furore in the Shire. Everywhere it was the subject of conversation. "Smith's Weekly" published another article the following week headed "Sword of Damocles hangs over Sutherland". 'Free Pass Gentlemen Resign.' 'They still have a more soft bridge to cross.' 'Six months of Suspense.' That even though re-elected, a councillor was still liable to prosecution within six months of the passes being issued. That the Shire Clerk would have to reject the nomination of any councillor until litigation was over.

Councillor Hand issued a press statement and stated that Councillors had had Councillor's passes for over 15 years, and that this had been taken as a precedent. That four of the Councillors did not drive motor vehicles, that those secretly meeting to prevent his re-election were invited to go their hardest. The whole Council were not ashamed of what they had done. They sought re-election as a body. They would be re-elected as they had great faith in the sense of fair play of the electors.

The challenge of Councillor Hand did not go unheeded. Public Meetings were held throughout the Shire. On 6<sup>th</sup> September, 26 candidates were nominated. 8 in A. Riding, 5 in B. Riding, and 13 in C. Riding.

During the same week, Mr. James Fox, of Evelyn Street, Sylvania, took out nine summonses against the nine Councillors. The charge was that they acted in civic office whilst subject to a special disqualification.

The cases were set down for hearing on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1929. Just prior to that date, all summonses were withdrawn, except that of the President, Councillor Hand. The date of the election was set down for 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1929.

### Peace restored

The result of the Election left no doubt of the confidence of the electors. All ex-councillors were re-elected with large majorities. Councillor Hand was re-elected President, with Councillor E. S. Shaw, Deputy President.

The case against Councillor Hand was dismissed on the grounds that no evidence was given that the pass was ever used. On Eight Hour Day, 1929, 10,551 vehicles crossed the bridge, and paid £489/17/6 in tolls.

In eight months of 1929, the toll takings and season tickets amounted to £29,330, and there was a deficit of £1,503. An effort was made to collect tolls from Government Vehicles, but this failed, although the building of the bridge relieved the Government of the cost of running the ferries, £6,000 per annum.

In 1930 the State Treasury was advised of the Council's inability to meet its commitments, and called on the State Government to give effect to its guarantees. After investigation this was done.

#### The depression

The economic depression during the years 1930-35 had a serious effect on the tolls collected. In 1930 the toll amounted to £27,353, but for the next five years only averaged £24,000 per annum. To make matters worse, the Australian Currency was devalued in 1931, and this added £4,353 per annum in exchange to the interest payable in London, to bond holders.

The State Government passed the Interest Reduction Act in 1931, this had the effect of reducing the interest earnings of the sinking fund to less than 6 %, but did not reduce the interest payable to bond holders in London. The result of these events was that the Georges River Bridge accounts From 1935 to 1939 the amount of tolls collected increased, until in 1939 the tolls amounted to £40,353.

#### The war years

The 1939-45 World War 2 was another serious setback, as by 1943 the amount of tolls had fallen to £14,950, this was caused by petrol rationing and other restrictions imposed during the War. There was very little reduction in expenditure.

In 1944 the State Treasury was advised that the loans of £305,000 were payable in London on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1947; that it would cost £76,000 in exchange, and that the sinking fund was estimated to be £30,000 short.

The Treasury informed the Council that the Crown Solicitors had advised that the State Government was only liable to pay interest; that the repayment of the principal was a matter for the Council.

Negotiations were conducted with the then Under Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. A. K. Weir, who was very sympathetic.

The Council submitted a sound case, and claimed that it had saved the Government £6,000 per annum for ferries, and that the estimates of income had been adversely affected by:

- 1 . Devaluation of Currency- Exchange. £152,614.
2. Interest Reduction Act - Loss of Earnings in Sinking Fund. £39,450.
3. Reduction in Tolls - due to Depression. £11,683.
4. Reduction in Tolls - due to War. £120,000.
- TOTAL                      £323,747.

The Premier, the Hon. W. J. McKell, agreed to meet all deficiencies and repay the lenders in London; to keep the toll on to repay the State Government. The Main Roads Dept. to take over the maintenance of the Bridge until the Treasury debt was discharged. All this was arranged in 1944, three years before the loans were to be paid in London.

During the period 1944-1947, Mr. McKell became Governor-General, and Mr. McGirr took over as Premier; Mr. Weir, Under Secretary to the Treasury had been promoted to the Public Service Board.

When the file with the draft legislation came before Mr. McGirr in May, 1947, he took the view that the tolls paid should have been sufficient to enable the Council to meet its obligations. On a Friday morning

in June, 1947, a senior official of the Premier asked for a statement to be prepared and laid before the Premier on the following Monday morning, showing how much had been collected in tolls and other income, and what had become of it. The statement was supplied which showed that to 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1947, £497,600/11 /5 had been collected in tolls, and £30,994/0/7 paid for season tickets. This satisfied Mr. McGirr.

#### Loans repaid

The loans were repaid on the due date, 6-11-47, and the amount owing to the Treasury was £276,690/10/8. The cost of the bridge was £307,601.

The toll continued until 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1952, when at a representative gathering arranged by the Council, Councillor C. O. J. Monro, who had done so much to get the bridge built, paid the last sixpences in toll and received the last toll ticket issued.

The total amount of tolls collected from April, 1929 to May, 1952, was £889,551 /6/ 11.

The Georges River Bridge is now the responsibility of the Department of Main Roads.

#### Depression hits Shire hard

The economic depression 1930-1935, and the devaluation of the Australian currency in 1931 had a serious effect on the development of the Shire. Loan money was unavailable and building in the Shire practically ceased.

Unemployment figures grew at an alarming rate. At this time there was very little industrial development in the Shire and many residents who worked in the City were laid off.

A very large percentage of the workers of the Shire were forced to live on the 'dole', a mere pittance handed out by the Government in the form of orders for bread, groceries, meat and milk, this amounted to goods to the value of 21 shillings per week for man, wife and three children.

It was during this period, that the Metropolitan Water Board, after continued urging by the Council, commenced work on the Water Reticulation of the Shire and the construction of the Engadine Weir.

The work was done as relief work; there being too many unemployed in the Shire, the work was rationed and each man registered at the Dole Office got one weeks work in four, digging trenches, laying pipes, or concrete work on the Weir; the work was hard and men of all professions and trades were given the same type of work - mainly pick and shovel. Water was turned on in the Shire in 1931 .

The opening of the Georges River Bridge in 1929 together with the Water Reticulation in 1931, gave promise of much development in the Shire. 1931 also saw the end of the Cronulla-Sutherland Steam trams and the inauguration of bus services throughout the Shire.

With electric light, water and improved road access, together with quicker bus transport, the population of the Shire grew very quickly. By 1939 the population had grown to 19,500, an increase of almost 10,000 in 10 years.

Even through the war years the increase continued and the census in 1944 showed a population of 27,000 and in 1949 it had increased to 36,000. The last census taken in 1966 showed a population of 132,000 and it appears to still be increasing.

**This is the end of part 2 of Les Clarke's story. The final section will be published in the July edition.**



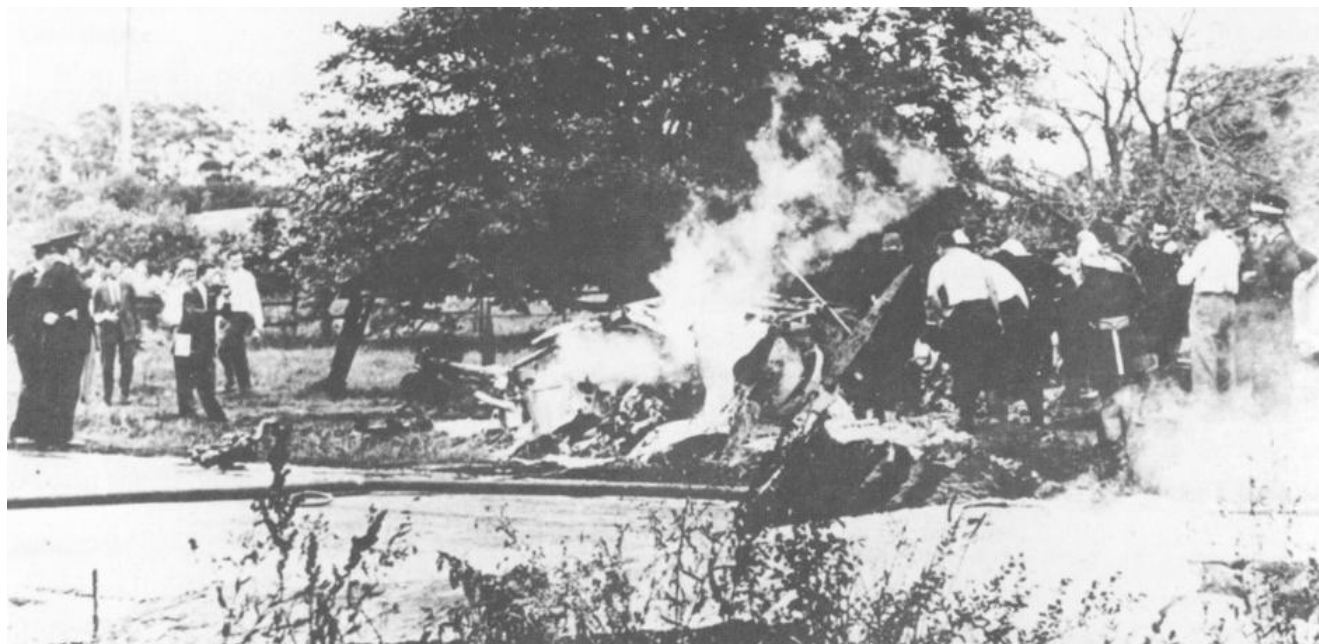
# Bellingarra plane crash

30.1.1959

Daphne Salt

I went to Sutherland High School; it was an old school, my Mother and Father went there too. In January 1959, my Intermediate Certificate year, the entire Sutherland High School packed up and moved lock, stock and barrel to this brand new school at Miranda – Port Hacking High School. Miranda Fair didn't exist then – it was the brickyards – and we took a short-cut through the clay pits to the station. Port Hacking High School took its name from the river Bass & Flinders rowed into in on April Fools Day in 1796.

During the second week in this new school - It was about 1o'clock on 30th January 1959; we had just gone back in after lunch. I was sitting in a geography class on the top floor of the block nearest the Kingsway, the windows in our room faced north – while the teacher was extolling the virtues of topographical maps, a few of us were gazing out of the window (*as you do to enhance your concentration*). We heard the spluttering of a failing prop airplane engine followed by an explosion! Everyone rushed to the windows and we watched in silence as a Fairey Gannet plane fell apart in the sky - the tail dropped off and the engine exploded!



We had a grand-stand view! No-one spoke – it was the quietest that the class had ever been. We saw no parachute! We were gob-smacked! It looked like it was all happening in slow motion. We heard another explosion and saw a column of black smoke and flames across the park just down the road from us.

We heard on the wireless later (transistor radios were still in the future) that the pilot took off from Bankstown Airport in the recently serviced Naval Fairey Gannet four minutes before the crash. As it broke up around him, he stayed with the plane to guide it away from this school and homes that were in its inevitable crash path. I have no idea how he managed to do that – the tail was gone, so he had no rudder. The fuselage crashed nose first into the ground in Bellingarra Road, beside the Caravan Park and burnt fiercely. There was only one fatality - the pilot! People from the caravan park were treated for smoke inhalation and shock. The wreckage, bits of the plane - like the tail section that we saw fall off in mid air - was scattered over about a kilometre. The pilot knew that if he stayed in the plane he would die; but had he bailed out of the aircraft there would have been a tremendous loss of life – maybe I wouldn't have been here to tell you about it! I can still see it in my mind.

You have probably never heard of the Fairey Gannet. It was called the ugliest aircraft in the world and pilots said it flew like a sick seagull with a broken leg. They were designed and built in England in 1950 as a carrier borne long-range, anti-submarine aircraft. The pilot sits in a bubble over the engine and behind two contra-rotating propellers – that's 2 sets of props, one behind the other on the nose – turning in opposite directions! The Gannet was the first aircraft with double airscrew turbine props in a single engine configuration. The wings folded up in a Z shape so they could store the plane in aircraft carriers. Gannets could carry torpedoes and depth charges in the bomb bay and 16 rockets under the wings.

In 1955 our Navy replaced all their planes with these Gannets which stayed in service until 1969 when most of them were destroyed as fire fighting dummies or as targets for live weapons training. There are only 5 left in Australia in museums.

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## ***Museum Heritage Festival Report 2006*** *Jim Cutbush, Curator*

This year's Heritage festival theme was 'The Industrial and Commercial Heritage of our Shire'. It was the biggest exhibition we have ever attempted to date and it filled the foyer of the School of Arts, Sutherland. The exhibition included many (new) donated photographs of the past such as the fish hatchery Cronulla, yacht and boat building and farming, to name a few, which have now been added to our collection which is held in the local studies area of the Sutherland Library. The Society also purchased a new TV with built in DVD player, and with thanks to the resources of our Vice President Daphne Salt, we were able to show a number of DVD's featuring old photos of our Shire. The DVD's included 8mm movies from past member George Heavens, taken over many years. They are a delight to see and will help future generations see how it all began.

This year, 2006 is also the Centennial year of the Sutherland Shire Council. We have an exhibition in our second room featuring photos, maps & memorabilia. A past member and historian Fred Midgley's book "Illustrated history of the Sutherland Shire, Birthplace of a Nation" was used as a theme. This exhibition (the only one on the Council's Centenary) will continue for the rest of this year and can be viewed on the Museum open days which are the first Saturday of the month from 10:00am to 3:30pm or by prior arrangement for groups - contact 9521-3721.

The Owen Jones replica home-Menai 1895, will continue to be on display and will be advanced in time by 20 years which will take it to the 1915 World War I period.

Heritage Festival visitors totalled 783 with lots of favourable comments and donation of item's for the Museum.

A big THANK YOU must go to Daphne Salt & Helen McDonald for help with copying and laminating photos and DVD presentations.

Thank you also goes to the volunteers that manned the exhibitions – Dawn, Cliff, Terry, John, Maurie, Frank, Ruth, Mina, Norma Jean, Angela, Betty, Mary and Marj Blackley and Marj Cutbush.

All in all it was very successful Heritage Festival for our Museum.



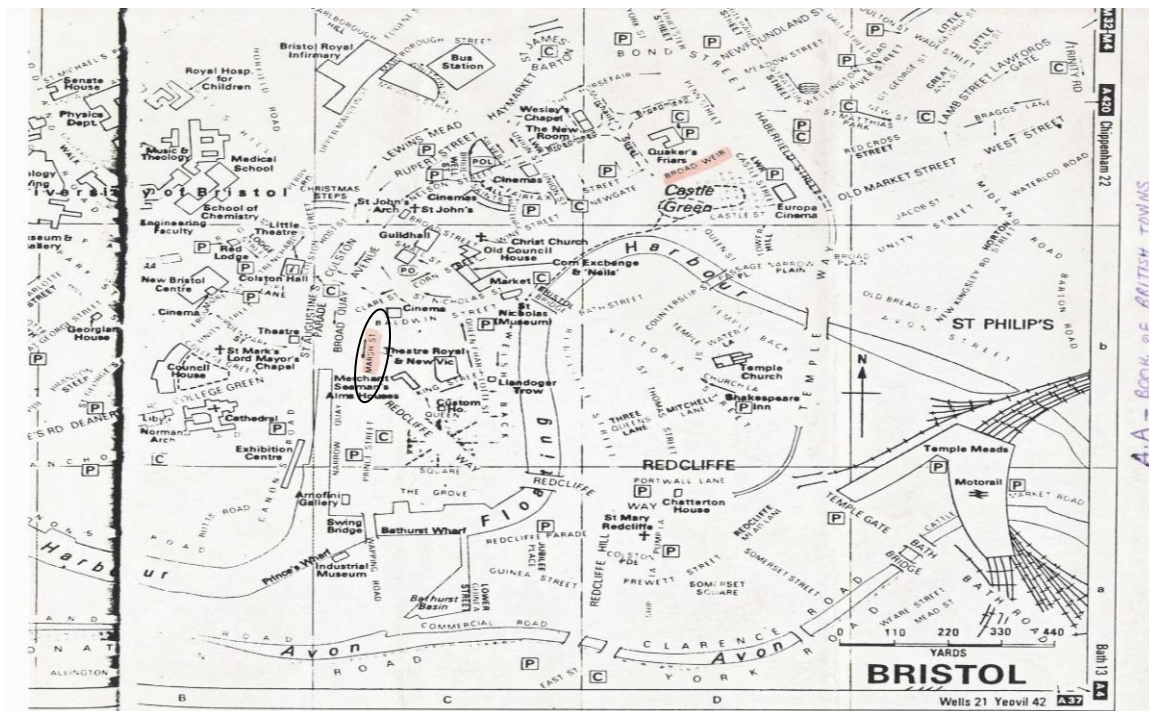
# WHO WAS CATHERINE CONNELL?

DAPHNE SALT

Who was Catherine Connell? We have heard the name – she was the convict who married John Connell – the man who was granted a lot of shire land in the 1820s and 30s – before Thomas Holt consolidated what is now the Sutherland Shire. But who was she, and how is Catherine the convict connected with the history of Australia? Let us now get her into perspective!

Catherine, daughter of Thomas Donovan and Honora nee Donagan, was born in Bristol 1761. She was baptised and confirmed in St Stephens Anglican Church, Ullswater Rd Southmead, Bristol, BS10 6DP, United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Catherine Donovan married store-keeper John Connell in Bristol.

Catherine and John had three, possibly four children – son John and daughters Mary (born 4<sup>th</sup> May 1793, Baptised 9<sup>th</sup> June 1793 in St Stephens Church Bristol)<sup>2</sup> and Margaret (born 1797) it is thought that there was another daughter, Ellen. They lived in a residence adjoining their shop in Marsh Street in the parish of St. Stephen<sup>3</sup> quite close to the River Avon in Shakespeare territory. The shop was what we refer to as a Mixed Business, and John also had a metal workshop/iron foundry nearby.



On Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December 1798, while 51 year-old John was sitting in “a small room adjoining behind the shop”<sup>4</sup>, 37 year-old Catherine was visited in the shop by Sophia Pember and John Evans. They had been with 10 year-old William Hill at about 5.30pm that same evening, when he broke the window of George Sargent’s shop on Broad Wear, a street a few blocks away, and stole two pairs of women’s shoes and two odd shoes [total value = 14/6d] which he handed to Sophia who “concealed them in her apron and carried them away”. Catherine paid Sophia Pember 2/6d for the Shoes then asked where they obtained them, and was told that they took them from a shop, to which Catherine said she hoped there was no danger<sup>5</sup>.

Sophia Pember, recorded in the trial as the informer, must have gone straight to the police because Catherine and John Connell appeared in court alongside John Evans and William Hill on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Register of St Stephens Church, Bristol 1793

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Bristol Quarter Sessions Records 1798

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> Bristol Quarter Sessions Records 1798



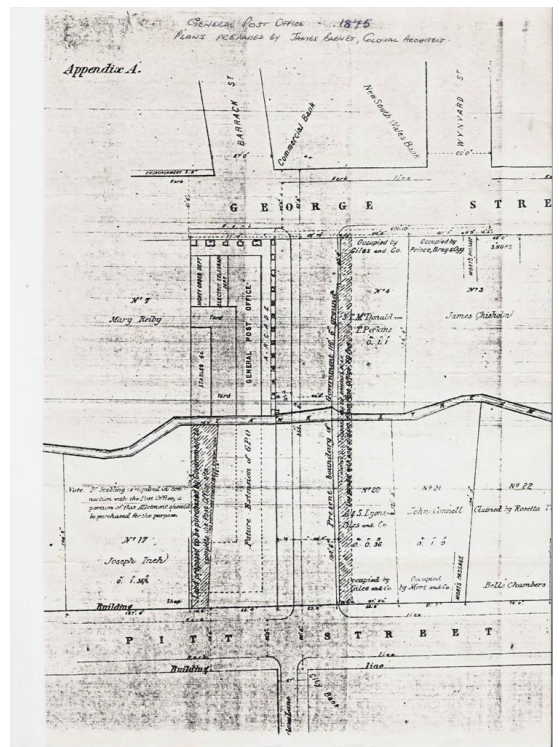
December 1798.<sup>6</sup> At their Trial on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1799, William Hill was sentenced to jail for seven days and fined 1/-. Catherine Connell was sentenced to 14 years transportation for receiving the shoes knowing them to have been 'feloniously obtained'. John Connell was acquitted<sup>7</sup> of being a receiver.

What a devastating outcome for this family. Catherine was incarcerated until her transportation. In the interim John got their affairs in order, sold up the businesses and arranged passage for himself and their children as free travellers onboard the same ship, *EARL CORNWALLIS*, sailing on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1800 and arrived in Sydney on 12.6.1801.<sup>8</sup>

John, now 54 years old, bought land between Pitt and George Street, Sydney, on the site of what is today Wynyard and he set up an iron foundry where Australia Square now stands. He built their home near the corner of what is now Martin Place. Catherine was assigned to him so long as she didn't leave the colony. By this means the family managed to remain together.

John was quite a public figure in Sydney, he became a prominent merchant in Pitt Street and also obtained grants for large tracts of Colonial land. Of their children, John Junior was involved in his father's business and land acquisition, managing some of his father's estates as well as obtaining grants in his own right. 19 year-old Mary was married to 22 year-old James Cox on 10th June 1812 at St. John's Church Parramatta by Samuel Marsden. James father, William Cox, was the Hawkesbury District Magistrate and a successful sheep and cattle breeder on his property named 'Clarendon'. James went to Tasmania where he selected his South Esk River-frontage grant in the Evandale region then brought his bride to her new home on the Colonial Cutter *ELIZABETH* on 13th December 1813. James and Mary lived on their Van Diemens Land 'Clarendon Estate' until James bought Staffordshire House in Charles Street, Launceston where he commenced trading as a merchant whilst retaining and managing Evandale, his property. James was to become a Magistrate and an M.L.A and was active in the establishment of many community and sporting ventures. He imported hounds for the Hunts held on his 16,000 acre Clarendon which is now classified by the National Trust.<sup>9</sup>

Margaret Connell married Lieutenant Thomas Laycock Junior of the New South Wales Corps who had come with his family on board the *GORGON* in 1791 when his father, Quartermaster Thomas Laycock Senior of New South Wales Corps, was posted to the colony. Laycock Senior was born in Yorkshire on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1756 and stood 6 foot 8 inches tall. He joined NSW Australia Police Corps in 1789 and was promoted to Quartermaster on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1791. He was Deputy Commissary-General and second in command of the troops in the 1804 Castle Hill Rebellion which became known as the Battle of Vinegar Hill, for which he received a Commendation. He was a magistrate on the Court of Criminal Judicature and served on many Court Martials. This Laycock was the recipient of numerous large land grants including Bringelly where he had assigned female convict servants and convict teams clearing his land. On 25 February 1793, he received a Crown Grant of 80 acres which became the Vacluse Estate - the earliest acquisition of land in the region – and he was also the first recipient of a land grant in the Homebush Bay area where he acquired 40 hectares in 1794 and a further 40 hectares in 1795. By 1803, this Laycock estate which was to become his home, totalled 318 hectares. He named it Home Bush. Thomas Laycock snr died on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1809. His widow Hannah Laycock (1757-1831), a shrewd business woman and matriarch to her family, had been procuring land grants in her own name. Hannah Laycock was the first to be granted land in the St George district. In August 1804 Hannah received a 500



<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> Trial of Catherine and John Connell

<sup>8</sup> On list of convicts on board the Earl Cornwallis (Reel 6028; 2/8283 p.30)

<sup>9</sup> Clarendon and it's People

acre (202 hectares) land grant from Governor King which she called King's Grove Farm.<sup>10</sup> Hannah Laycock died in Sydney on 12 May 1831.

In 1807 Lt Gov. William Paterson sent young Lieutenant Thomas Laycock Junior to find an overland route south from Launceston. Laycock discovered and explored the Clyde River, camping along its banks. It took him nine days to reach Hobart from his February 8<sup>th</sup> Launceston starting point. On his father's death Thomas Laycock Jnr took over the Bringelly property. It was from here that he married Margaret Connell on 8 July 1817, St Phillips Church, Sydney.

**CATHERINE CONNELL** d.1811 Sydney aged 51. The Sydney Gazette states that John gave her a large Masonic funeral.

Connell friends - Campbell and Simeon Lord, had connections to Marsden and Wentworth

~~~~~

**Anyone travelling to the mid north coast should not miss the opportunity to visit the Wingham Historical Museum. This truly remarkable local museum is open daily from 10am till 4 pm and is located in Farquhar Street. (admission \$3) The museum is in a large building that was a former general store so there is adequate room to display a very large range of historical items.**

**Wingham is a heritage town proclaimed in 1844 and located about 12 kilometres inland from Taree. It was originally a major port and the district supported rural and cedar cutting activities. Many of its historic buildings remain intact.**

**Wanted:**

**Our historical society is seeking books for display in its museum. Local history or period books for a bookcase display would be appreciated. Editor**

**Members are reminded that membership renewals are due as of 1/7/2006  
Refer to the application form on page 33.**

<sup>10</sup> Macquarie University - Journeys in time



# Beautiful Burraneer Bay

NEAR CRONULLA BEACH

# BURRANEER BAY

## ESTATE

## PORT HACKING

For Auction Sale on the Ground

### 8 HOUR DAY MONDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> OCT. 07 at 2 O'C.

### HENRY F. HALLORAN & CO.


Auctioneers &c 82 Pitt St Sydney  
Open Mondays till 3 p.m.

From Sydney & Suburbs

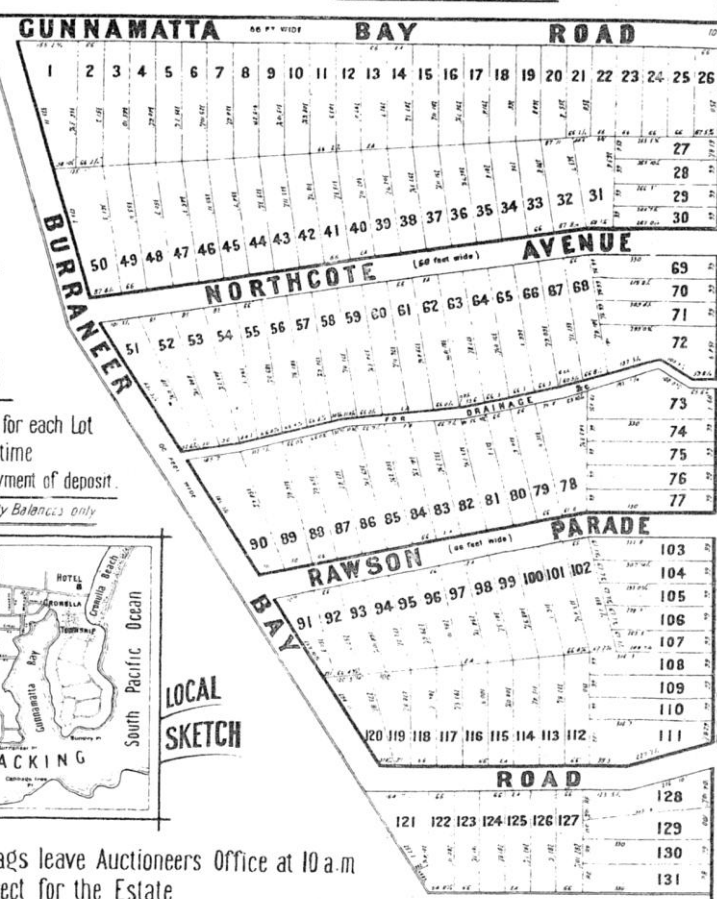
## TORRENS TITLE

## TERMS

£1 deposit & 10/- Monthly for each Lot  
Right to pay off at any time  
Immediate possession on payment of deposit.  
*Interest 5% per annum on Quarterly Balances only*



Special 4 horse drags leave Auctioneers Office at 10 a.m.  
on day of Sale direct for the Estate  
Return fare only 1/6, secure your ticket early.  
Illustrated Booklets free on application. Every Lot offered will be sold.



PUBLIC SCHOOL  
Dominic St  
Mervale  
Mr Smith's Residence  
Water St

LOCAL SKETCH

10 Burraneer Bay

ATTKINS MCQUITT & CO 274 ELIZABETH ST

Early last Century, many land sales took place as large tracts of land were sold off for week-enders. One particular selling feature of Shire land was the abundant fresh air and healthy lifestyle.

Henry Halloran, Auctioneers conducted the sale of this estate in 7<sup>th</sup> October 1907. Note that Burraneer Bay Road is today Saunders Bay Road and Gunnamatta Bay Road is Burraneer Bay Road.

The sales brochure was actually quite a substantial booklet with several photographs of the Shire. Included amongst those was the 'Old ruins on the Estate'. It states that they are of the first residence built in the district and erected by Patrick Dolan. It appears to have been quite a substantial structure.

Patrick Dolan purchased about 400 acres of land around Burraneer Bay in 1856. This makes him just about the earliest land holder in the Shire.

At about this time, (1862) Thomas Holt began acquiring all the vacant crown land between Botany Bay and Port Hacking for the purpose of forming a sheep and cattle station. He bought out nearly all the private land owners in the district.

Frank Cridland in his book 'The story of Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire' (1924) states:

'Dolan was one of the early identities in the district, and the only land-owner in the Shire who refused to sell his land to Holt. Rumour has it that Dolan refused very tempting offers for his property. As generally happens when a 'squatters run' embraces a small holder within its boundaries, a feud sprang up between the respective owners, especially as one was of Celtic strain, and there were many disputes between Dolan and Holt's overseers in regard to straying stock and rights of ingress.' p49



*Old ruins on the estate*

*'Near yonder copse where once the garden smiled  
And still where many a garden flower grows wild'  
Goldsworth*

# Minutes of a special Sutherland Shire Council meeting regarding war preparations.

Council Chambers, SUTHERLAND.

23rd March, 1942.

## SHIRE CLERK'S REPORT NO. 16/42.

The President,  
Council of the Shire of Sutherland.

Dear Sir,

### Civilian War Emergency Aid Service.

(1) With reference to the circular from the Minister dated the 16th March, asking that this Shire be organised along the lines indicated by him, I have taken the liberty of preparing this report, which may be used as a basis to achieve the end desired.

Summed up, the Minister has asked the Council to look to the arrangement, so that in the event of this district being subject to aerial attack, or enemy action, provision will be made for the victims by providing:-

- (a) Communal feeding.
- (b) Temporary housing.
- (c) Temporary rest centres and shelters.
- (d) Emergency clothing.

It is apparent that to successfully organise the Shire along the lines outlined by the Minister, it will be necessary to have the active co-operation, support and assistance of every section of the community.

(2) Buildings to be used for the purposes mentioned. The circular asked that the Council should make a survey of the halls, schools or large empty residences that may be available, so that they may be requisitioned as needs arise. The following buildings might be considered suitable: -

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Como.</u>           | Public School; Bryant's Boatshed; Como School of Arts.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <u>Oyster Bay.</u>     | Church and Hall.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <u>Jannali.</u>        | Scouts' Hall; Congregational Church.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <u>Woronora River.</u> | Schofield's Boatshed; Anderson's .Boatshed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <u>Sutherland.</u>     | Public School; School of Arts; Lobb's Hall; (if needs be, the Picture Theatre); the Church Halls of the Congregational, Church of England and Methodist Churches; and by arrangement with the National Park Trust as a rest centre, Allambie House, Audley. |
| <u>Engadine.</u>       | Public School; School of Arts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <u>Heathcote.</u>      | Public School; Heathcote Hall.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <u>Waterfall.</u>      | Public School.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <u>Miranda.</u>        | Public School; Miranda School of Arts; Quinlan's Boatshed, Yowie Bay.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <u>Sylvania.</u>       | Public School; Boomerang Rail; Bill the Oyster King's premises.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <u>Taren Point.</u>    | Public School; Welfare Hall.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <u>Caringbah</u>       | Burns' Hall; Public School; Methodist Church; Church of England Church.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <u>North Cronulla.</u> | North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club building.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <u>Cronulla.</u>       | Cronulla Public School; Masonic Hall; Worry's Hall; Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club premises; the Cecil Cafe.                                                                                                                                                |
| <u>Bundeena.</u>       | ?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <u>Kurnell.</u>        | Public School.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

In emergency, the shelter pavilions on Gunnamatta Park and Cronulla Beach could be closed in end used, if only for emergency feeding.

From among the buildings sot out above, I feel that accommodation could t be selected which would be suitable for communal feeding, housing and temporary rest centres for the whole Shire.

It is unlikely that with a Shire consisting of some hundred *Square* miles, excluding National Park, that the whole of it would be the subject of aerial bombardment at the one time.

(3) Temporary housing and accommodation. To obtain facilities *for* sleeping, I suggest the following:-

(a) That residents with spare stretchers, camp stretchers, beds, bedding and clothing, be invited to donate them to the Council, to be used for the purpose.

(b) That hessian be purchased and volunteers invited to make hessian palliasses, similar to those used in the Army. In emergency these palliasses could be filled with straw. That straw be procured for the purpose.

That rough camp stretchers be made of bush timber on which to put the palliasses.

(d) To obtain household linen, towels, eating utensils - that residents be invited to make some small contribution from their household stocks. There are a large number of homes in this Shire from which could be given, without loss or inconvenience to their owners, tea towels, towels, a few knives, forks, spoons, plates etc. and even perhaps blankets and rugs.

(4) Communal Feeding. During the depression a number of citizens in Sutherland conducted a soup kitchen and provided a bowl of soup for children attending the Public School, Sutherland. No doubt similar arrangements could be made at each centre established and warm drinks, soups and similar light foods prepared in portable coppers, which could be purchased for that purpose. The requirements in each centre would depend on the size of the locality to be served.

(5) Mobile Canteens. A suggestion was made to me by Councillor Dallimore that possibly caravans could be obtained, fitted up in readiness and when required, taken out behind a Council truck to the locality in which they were to serve.

It will be noted that the Minister has stated that it is desirable to have a fleet of mobile canteens to be sent by a centred authority to any area and that Councils should help to provide these.

We may have in this Shire residents who have caravans who would be prepared to make them available for this purpose, on the understanding that they would be returned at the termination of the war.

Urns, insulated food cans and suchlike, which would be required for the mobile canteens, I think will have to be specially purchased, as it *is* unlikely that these could be obtained by donations.

(6) Personnel to look after and conduct activities, as organised by the Council. As previously mentioned, to successfully conduct the organisation, it will be necessary to have the active assistance of committees of citizens.. I therefore suggest that an endeavour be made to enlist the aid of citizens prepared to form themselves into a Civilian Aid Service, such committees to be formed in the centres of the Shire outlined in paragraph (2) of this report.

In turn, each committee to be divided into subcommittees, whose duties will be to look after the (a) feeding (b) clothing and (c) accommodation sections of the activities.

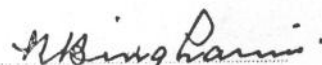
Public meetings could be convened in each centre of the Shire, when the objects could be outlined and committees formed forthwith; all organisations (See Over)

This is page No. 18 of the minutes of the SPECIAL meeting of the Sutherland Shire Council held on 25/3/42.

*Article supplied by Elva Carmichael (nee) Dallimore.*



Shire Clerk.

  
President

# Victa. Turning grass into lawn.

**Bruce Watt**

The Victa lawnmower is an Australian icon, forever associated with the suburban lifestyle and yet, beyond the short one or two paragraph descriptions sometimes written about it, its development has not been widely described.

It was not the first motorized lawnmower, however it hit the market at a time when people had big back yards and it captured the imaginations of many Australians. It went on to sell millions and to be distributed in 52 countries throughout the world.

The Victa lawnmower began its life in a suburban garage in Concord NSW in August 1952. Mervyn Victor Richardson was 56 years old and had been experimenting with a mechanized lawnmower as his son Gary had begun a lawn mowing run to pay his way through University. Unlike most mowers of the time which were reel types i.e. a revolving drum with blades to cut the grass, Richardson's design used blades mounted under the machine to cut the grass in a rotary manner. The proto-type was a very basic machine that used an imported Villiers motor bolted to a metal frame with cast iron wheels.

The proto-type was referred to as the 'peach tin' model. - the fuel tank was an old peach tin. (See the photograph far left – this can be viewed in the Powerhouse Museum)  
It wasn't the first rotary mower; he had seen one demonstrated in 1948, but it was lighter, cheaper and easier to use.

Richardson began selling them from home by placing advertisements in the local newspaper. Soon he couldn't keep up with demand. He sold 30 in the first three months. His most successful sales technique was direct demonstration. Richardson would make them in his garage and on the weekends, would demonstrate how it cut the grass in his backyard. This is the advertisement that he would place in the weekend paper.



FOR SALE. Victa 18 inch rotary mower. 1hp petrol engine. Cuts to fence and any height grass, weeds etc.  
Safe for 10 year olds. £39.16.0 plus tax £4.19.6 UF3093

It is interesting to note that £40 in 1953 would be equal to \$2800 in 2006! A Victa today costs about \$500! The name Victa was a shortened version of Richardson's second name, Victor.

The safety claim was open to question. The early Victa's were often referred to as 'toe cutters'. As there were no base plates to protect the feet, many users lost toes as a result.

They were remarkably robust and were often used to cut more than grass. They could clear small saplings and other undergrowth. No doubt some of the Shire was tamed in this way!



Nine months and 358 sales later the company had outgrown the suburban garage and it moved to a factory in Concord. However it quickly outgrew this too and moved to a new factory on Parramatta Road Concord and later to a purpose built factory at Milperra.

The company expanded rapidly by introducing new models such as the Rotomo and the Special in 1957. Victa advertised widely, developed slogans, posters and pioneered TV advertising and used newspapers, magazines radio and cinema advertising.

A very successful advertising slogan developed later was **‘Victa, Turns grass into lawn’**.

They developed an extensive dealer network throughout Australia and in other countries.

In 1960 they branched out into plastics, housing, aviation and factory buildings. The national credit squeeze of 1961 saw the plastics, housing and factory buildings sections close. Another innovation was the Victa Red Public Telephone which became too successful and was nationalized in 1974.

In 1962 they introduced the first rear catcher with the Ambassador and Viceroy models.

In 1970, Merv Richardson retired and Victa joined the Sunbeam Corporation. Today it is owned by GUD Holdings.

Victa’s iconic status was cemented when in the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony, the Victa lawnmower was used to illustrate aspects of Australian culture.



Victa has now produced 7 million lawn mowers and exports to over 30 countries. The photo on the left is of Bev Reece, who worked for Victa from 1954. This photo was used in a promotional shot. Bev is a Shire resident.

Some time ago I bought a very early model Victa (a Rotomo similar to the one pictured) and was interested in researching the company. I was surprised to discover that very little has been written about (it although the PowerHouse Museum has a lot of material.) However after much searching, I tracked down John Mason who now lives in Melbourne. He was the Marketing Manager for Victa from 1955 -1970. He is now in his 90s.

John has written a detailed account of the Victa years called ‘The Victa Story. Turning grass into lawn’. It is ‘a fascinating insight into the history of one of Australia’s greatest backyard inventions and the company it created. A story of how an inspiration became an Australian icon through engineering excellence, skilful production, brilliant

marketing and expert salesmanship’. I can vouch for that.

He was not able to publish it – GUD Industries, the present owners of Victa showed no interest! I was able to purchase one of the 25 copies that he produced and I treasure it as the only detailed account of this remarkable invention.

Are there any old Victa’s out there or people with anecdotes to tell?

# The opening of Sea Cliff Bridge

John Risebrow

There is nothing ambiguous about the name of the place, COALCLIFF, where the Illawarra escarpment plunges more than 300 metres into the Tasman Sea.

During February 1797 the 'Sydney Cove' was wrecked on Preservation Island near what is now Clarke Island in Bass Strait. 17 of the crew set off in the ship's longboat to seek help but on March 11<sup>th</sup> it was wrecked near Point Hicks. From there they made their heroic trek along the coast.

In May, William Clarke the cargo superintendent of the 'Sydney Cove', found loose coal near the foot of the cliff and saw the seam from which it had fallen. He and the other two survivors of the wrecks were rescued by fishermen a few days later. When they had recovered from their ordeal, Clarke accompanied George Bass when he was sent down the coast from Sydney to investigate the discovery. Bass surveyed the coal seam which he said extended for some eight miles.

The coal was there, the demand was there but the mining was retarded by lack of access, (Newcastle's coal was more easily available so they supplied it to Sydney) and the difficulty of getting Coalcliff's coal moved because of the lack of an adequate road. There were tracks from Stanwell Park and Bulli, much of them on the beach. A new road was begun in 1865 but by 1871 the north and south sections remained separated by the coal cliff.

The NSW government allocated £1,500 for a 25 feet wide carriageway from Bulli to Stanwell Park in 1878 but frequent landslides delayed its completion until 1886, the year the railway was on its way to Helensburgh. It bypasses the problem with a tunnel almost a kilometre long. Meanwhile the coal was being transported by sea via a jetty some 350 feet long. Most of the materials were lowered 15 feet from what road there was to the foot of the cliff by a timber slide, which was also used to convey the workmen to and from the site. Other material would have been delivered by boats to the beginnings of the jetty and rock falls onto the road were shifted as a matter of course. One of the first reported was on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1879. It described a "Landslip of considerable dimensions near the Coalcliff Jetty. About 200 tons of earth, stone and other material fell near some of the workmen who were concerned that the fall might take the coal pit mouth and some of the jetty. The Lower Coast Road as it was then called was in the news again in the 1880s when a large crack appeared above Clifton, - the village built for the mineworkers - but the fears were poo-pooed by the locals and the engineers. Six weeks later the Clifton Public Hall stage was "leaning as if about to topple over" and an embankment had moved 1 ½ yards twisting a railway bridge.

There were major falls in 1921. 100 tons of rock fell onto the road, and more in 1922. In 1936 there were plans to rename the whole stretch of road from the Princes Highway at Helensburgh to the bottom of Bulli Pass the "Hargrave Coast Road". In 1939 the road was re-routed to make use of part of the disused railway track at Stanwell Park and the Council wanted to name it 'Hargrave Coast Drive' but the department of Main Roads demurred. They wanted to name it for someone to do with the discovery or original survey of it. During 1946 there was another major slide. Persistence won out and in 1947 the name was changed from 'Lower Coast Road' to Lawrence Hargrave Drive.

1949 was a bumper year for incidents. A furniture truck was hit by a relatively small rock. A 65 ton rock fell into the sea, and a 50 ton one on to the road. Then the road was blocked by landslides.

Dedication of the road as Lawrence Hargrave Drive was set aside until 1950 to mark the centenary of Hargrave's birth. Incidentally, Lawrence's father, Judge Hargrave had large stock holdings in the local coalmining ventures.

Her Majesty the Queen toured the south coast on her 1954 visit and was to drive through the National Park, which would then merit the prefix 'Royal', via Lawrence Hargrave and Lady Wakehurst drives, but the DMR, apprehensive of a rock fall, banned the Queen from using the road. So she was taken back to Sydney via the Princes Highway. So; is the National Park truly Royal?

But those rocks didn't fall until 1958 when first 7 tons of rock fell 300ft on to the road, then later on, 150 tons caused a blockage 22 feet long and five feet high. Spare a thought too for the DMR / RTA workers employed removing and repairing the blockages and cracks. How much can a hard hat stop? Miraculously only one fatality has occurred. Robert Poole, 33, of Coal Cliff was going home through heavy rain in June 1963 when at a sharp left hand bend, the road shoulder had shifted seaward and his car slid on the loose gravel, across the road, crashed through the safety fence and down into the sea. By this time of course the railway and advanced technology meant the coal was being mined from 270 feet above sea level about half a mile away; but the road was now established as the thoroughfare between Stanwell Park and Bulli and all the townships between. However, geological re-distribution continued to interfere with this connection link.

1968 saw a rock fall close the road. Three to four tons of rubble blocked it again. Then a six ton boulder just missed a car. \$6 million was spent to consolidate the cliff face while the road was closed for more than six months, much to the disappointment of the local traders and residents. For the following twenty years only occasional small falls happened, and various schemes to solve the problem were proposed. One of these was the building of an offshore bridge but that was rejected on grounds of cost. But the forces of nature, the fractured sandstone clay, shales, gravel, conglomerate mud and water from above and the sea were busy fretting away at each other, until in 1988 a terrific storm and downpour blasted the coast. A great fissure split the road. Large sections of it lumbered down to the beach and rocks, gravel, mud and trees shifted from the cliff above to the stretches of road which remained. This was possibly the worst damage to have ever occurred. The road was closed again for six months while \$9.5 million worth of reconstruction and repair was done.

The fatal 1997 Thredbo landslide brought a new element into the equation for governments; the huge potential cost of liability and litigation. Between then and 2003 more than 50 rock falls were reported so the decision was made in August 2003 to close the road for 2 ½ years and build that offshore bridge at an estimated cost of \$50 million, to be completed early in 2006.

The selected design was for connected bridges. A 210 metre incrementally launched northern one adjoining a southern curved balanced cantilever 455 metre bridge. In total, 665 metres of bridge, plus more than 500 metres of new road at the approaches. Part of the bridge was to be 35 metres above sea level and 45 metres out to seaward of the old road and well clear of unstable areas of the cliff line.

The construction went more quickly than expected so on Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup> 2005, accompanied by about 9,998 other citizens, Betty Lynch and I strolled the 3 kilometres from Coalcliff to Scarborough along the new coast road connection. We were more than impressed by the majestic S shaped sweep of it, by the helpful courtesy of the Rail and RTA folk who conducted the walk. The massive cliffs, which made the bridge necessary and hitherto were only glimpsed in passing because they were too close and we travelled too fast to see them properly, since, as the signs said "Falling Rocks Don't Stop". The large expansion joints, like interleaving fingers, allow for 200 mm (8 inches) of stretch and contraction caused by temperature changes.

There were rescue boats and surf skis on the waves. Airplanes, ultra lights, helicopters and a white-bellied sea eagle above. On our level there were police, RTA, and ambulance vehicles. The old coal mine and adit and jetty site can be seen from the pedestrian path.

I don't expect that fishing will be permitted but the bridge goes far enough out over the water for it to be feasible [with a VERY long line]. Everyone was smiling and smiled even more on arrival at Scarborough Public School where a sausage sandwich and drinks awaited us.

The Illawarra numismatic society was selling medallions especially struck for the occasion.

The 'Mercury' newspaper gave away souvenir editions.

We enjoyed each other's company and that of the other few thousand and we met some of my ex-work mates still employed with the RTA.

Bureaucratic controversy about the name was deftly avoided by holding a competition among the local school children. It was won by an 11 year old girl, Makenzie Russell of St Brigid's who with Premier Morris Iemma cut the ribbon and named it the SEA CLIFF BRIDGE and there's nothing ambiguous about that.





*New Bridge. Footings of old wharf in foreground*





# Book Reviews

One of our guest speakers last year was Lieutenant Keith Wrightson, a veteran of the WW2 Australian Corps of Pigeons Service. He gave a fascinating but little known story of the role of Australia's messenger pigeons played during Australia's critical confrontation with Japan's advancement through New Guinea, particularly the Kokoda Track during 1943.

The ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, based in Brisbane, publishes various teaching resources that particularly concentrate on meaning of ANZAC for primary and secondary students. In 2001 three new books were published, two of mine and the other by my friend Vashti Farrer who lives in Paddington.

My book, **The Unknown Australian Soldier** is a time switch story where two children, wondering about the significance of the burial of the Unknown Soldier in Canberra on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1993 are transported back in time by the spirit of the soldier to witness for themselves significant aspects of WW1. It is an action based story, not a story based on memories.

My second book, **Simpson and Duffy**, written for younger children tells the heroic story of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey on Gallipoli shortly after the landing on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915. This book won an Australian Award for Excellence in Education Publishing.

Vashti Farrer's book, **Whalers go to War**, tells the story of the thousands of horses shipped overseas to participate firstly in the Boer War then later in Palestine during WW1. Vashti's story was particularly difficult to tell because, due to the strict quarantine regulations, the horses did not return to Australia and had to be shot. Only one came back. His name was Sandy. His master, Major General Bridges had been killed on Gallipoli and Sandy was brought home to take part in his funeral procession. (Outside the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney is a memorial dedicated '*To the horses of the Desert Mounted Corps*'

In 2002 Dianne Burke, editor for the ADCC suggested that Vashti and I could research then write a story about the messenger pigeons used in New Guinea by the Australian soldiers during WW2. We contacted Keith Wrightson and his wife Norma who live in Carlton for first hand valuable information. The result after this interview and more research for accuracy, resulted in **Feathered Soldiers**. *An illustrated tribute to Australia's wartime messenger pigeons* published earlier this year. As with my book, Simpson and Duffy, Feathered Soldiers is available as a small book or particularly for schools, with a Big Book edition and a CD Rom for teachers.

For more information, the ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee can be contacted on

[www.anzacday.org.au](http://www.anzacday.org.au)

email: [admin@anzacday.org.au](mailto:admin@anzacday.org.au)

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# Sutherland Shire Historical Society

## Membership application –New and / or Renewal - 2006/7

*The Society's year commences 1<sup>st</sup> July each year and concludes on the 30<sup>th</sup> June of the following year.*

In accordance with the above, new and renewal memberships are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> July each year.

Applications should be completed and handed to the Honorary Treasurer at the monthly general meeting or posted to the Society using the address shown on the renewal form. The new / renewal application should also contain the appropriate subscription fee.

**General enquiries regarding the Society to: The Secretary, Mrs Angela Thomas ph 95286251**

**To assist with accurate record keeping each member is required to complete an individual renewal form. It should be noted that a failure to pay the membership fee within three months from the end of the financial year will result in a lapse of membership.**

**RECEIPTS:** -may be collected from the treasurer at monthly meetings. If you wish to have your receipt posted to you, a stamped self addressed envelope must be included with your renewal form.

-----  
**This membership application is a** **-Renewal** †  
**(please tick)**

**or** **-New Membership** †

TITLE: Mr, Mrs, Ms

Family name: -----

Given name: -----

Postal address:-----

-----Postcode-----Tel. No.-----

**Please find subscription for 2006/7 enclosed**

**Annual adult subscription = \$22 junior member / full time student = \$11**

Signed ----- Date -----

**Post to –** Treasurer, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, PO Box 389, Sutherland NSW 1499  
This becomes a tax invoice on payment of the subscription.

**ABN No. 17 083 299 57 Note: This organisation is GST exempt.**

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**This membership application is a** **-Renewal** †  
**(please tick)**

**or** **-New Membership** †

TITLE: Mr, Mrs, Ms

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