



*Sutherland Shire
Historical Society Inc*
Bulletin



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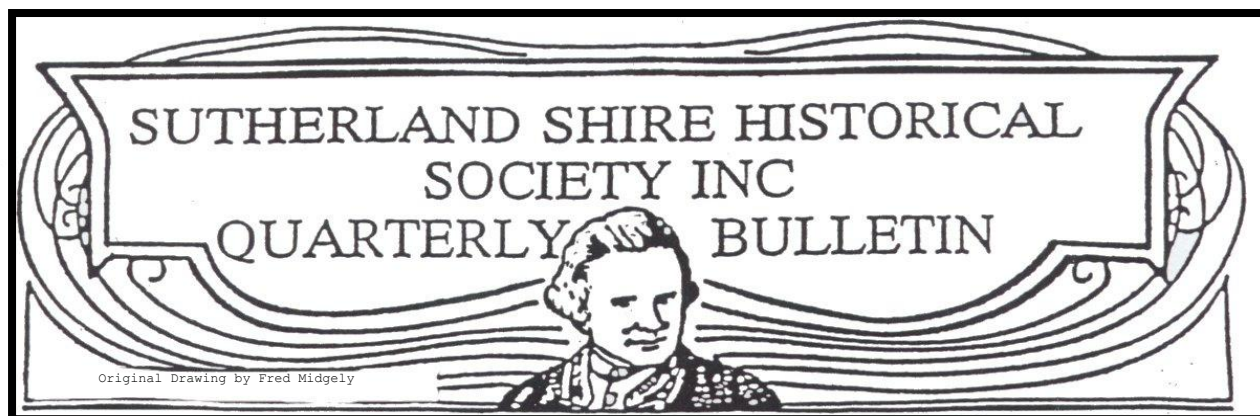
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Anniversary edition**

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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.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME

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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

Congratulations to our new Mayor, Councillor David Redmond and our Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ken McDonell who were elected by their fellow councilors to these positions last September. Mayor Redmond has also been elected by SSHS as co-patron with Mrs. Aileen Griffiths, OAM, who is a founder member. We look forward to working with our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor during the coming year.



The Future of the Society

Thank you once again to Mina Whybourne for running our AGM, as Mrs. Aileen Griffiths, OAM our patron was in ill-health and our co-patron, Mayor Schreiber was unavailable. Once again I am in the saddle as your President, and whilst I am cognizant of the honour you do me, I am also aware of the great responsibility of leading the Society in these difficult times. We have advanced no further forward in gaining a home of our own over the last twelve years, but we do congratulate the Botany Bay Family History Society in their achievement of this aim, and their new home at the Community Centre in Gannon's Road, Caringbah. Well done! Having seen the photos of their premises and the furnished research rooms of the BBFHS it makes us realise we must work harder in lobbying our councillors and members of Parliament, and that we must fundraise more if we are to gain and furnish any area offered to us. We have been diligent in recording and celebrating our heritage, helping Council and other organisations by arranging displays etc. as requested, but we are neglectful of our own interests in not lobbying and demanding our own premises, so we may increase the depth and extent of our work.

Bulletins: We wish to record how grateful we are to Council for assistance in getting out our Bulletins each quarter. This magazine is highly regarded and read avidly. Does anyone have a spare complete set of the Bulletins they could give me? I frequently get phone calls requiring research, and *I, the President, do not have a complete set of our own Bulletins!* I have to ring the Library for information, and I should not be worrying them when I should have this resource myself. I have most of the ones since I joined the Society, but none of the earlier ones. Can you help? Have you a set stored in your garage, or the spare room that you are not using or that a deceased relative has left?

Museum: Our excellent Museum Curator, Mr Jim Cutbush, was again elected to this position and is commencing our own library and photographic collection, so we may have access to our own resources at any time and our members are looking forward to taking tuition in using a Museum computer software package which we will have to buy ourselves. The Council grant was insufficient to cover its cost, let alone fund the tuition of the users. We have been trying to preserve our funds for the great day when a building is allocated to us so we may furnish it. Whilst we are grateful to Council for any assistance, this Museum project was our most urgent and most important but did not attract attention from Council for its full funding. It also did not attract funding from the RAHS. We are getting desperate. We must record and photograph our Museum memorabilia; the previous method of using an accession book is ineffectual and some have been lost or mislaid over the years so we have to start the task afresh. No one, it appears, realizes the dire straits of our Museum collection, and our lack of storage and a permanent home, except the committee. Members have items stored all over Sutherland Shire in garages, under beds, in spare rooms, roofs and attics which are deteriorating without air-conditioning and proper custodianship.

Council support required: It seems that whilst we have been patient and well-behaved waiting our turn, perhaps we should be working on the "squeaking door" principle and be more militant. Yes Council has given us a portion of the School of Arts to use as a Museum, for which we are grateful, but it is not adequate, and we have nowhere of our own for meetings. Most of the museum items given to us are stored in the SSMSA stage, and are open to the elements in its garage. Only a few of our possessions are stored in the safety of the old Billiard Room or the small exhibition room. We were established *forty years ago* and have advanced no further than we were then! Fifteen years ago we were able to have our monthly meetings free of charge at the Council chambers! Now we have to pay for a hall each month,

funds which we can ill afford. Bankstown Council provides a meeting room free of charge at their town hall for its Historical Society members to meet and hold functions, and Campbelltown City Council, has employed a full-time Curator to run their Historical Society Museum, as well as providing them with premises for a museum and hall, so they can have meetings and functions. We are not ungrateful for the support Council has given us over the years, but as the second largest Council in NSW, and one of the largest in Australia we believe it is time Sutherland Shire Council did more to support its Historical Society, especially as the Sutherland Shire is the Birthplace of Modern Australia, and the first landing place when Cook first visited our shores and met the first Australians. Why have we no Museum honouring our Dharawal people and the various Aboriginal clans and groups of the Shire, and recording their social history before it is lost completely? We have members in our society who could help with this recording, and its presentation. The problem of being your President and being on Council as a Councillor was that I had to always declare an interest and could not speak in debate on your behalf, seeking assistance for you. Come on Councillors and all you local Members! We have been dutifully patient and done our apprenticeship in serving the Council, and the people of the Shire ably and well all these years. Please help us. We need your help NOW!

Christmas “Road Show” Meeting

We have decided that as members have not been supporting our Christmas meeting over the last few years, if we had a party, (possibly as they were “partied out”) then we would have a function similar to our January members’ meeting but make it a Show and Tell, a bit like an Antique Road Show! Please bring along an item of interest and write a few words about it, and we will place them on a table at the front of the hall and invite members to come forward and talk about their item. If you’d rather not come to the microphone then you might like to hover near the table when we adjourn for Christmas refreshments, and tell bystanders about your piece. It is just a fun night with interesting things to look at, and a chat with good friends!

Cliff and I wish you all the brightest of Christmases, a most enjoyable Festive Season, and a safe and healthy New Year. Merry Christmas!

Dawn Emerson,

Our Xmas “Road Show” meeting: Friday, 15th December, bring an item to display and write a few lines about it to put beside it. Also bring a plate.

2007 Meetings - Friday at 8pm, Stapleton Centre, Sutherland:

January 19 : Members’ night: Short talks by Angela Thomas, Doug Archer and Mary Small
 February 16 : M. Ken Humbley: “Woronora” (Last of the Centenary series about Sutherland Shire)
 March 16 : Mr. Greg Bond: La Perouse Museum
 March 23 : Heritage Festival. Mr Gary Waller: Places in context. Our built heritage. SSMA 6.30
 April 20 : TBA
 May 18 : Deputy Mayor Clr Ken McDonnell: Council’s centenary



From The Editor's Desk

It is satisfying to conclude this centenary year edition of the bulletin with a variety of interesting articles. Our cover features 'Fernleigh', one of our oldest residences and it reminds us that whilst the Shire is relatively young, there were pioneers putting down substantial roots from the very early days. Apart from its significant heritage value, Fernleigh deserves a special place in the development of the Shire's cultural history. The Alcott family called it home for 60 years and their activities and at times eccentric behaviour, helped to shape our identity. Ivy Alcott was granted life membership of Red Cross for her tireless work over many years. I leave it to the reader to explore the article on Fernleigh and to discover some of its fascinating history.



The November 2006 bulletin is symbolic. The account of the formation of the first Sutherland Council is a centrepiece in our celebrations of Council's centenary. The election of the first council occurred on the 24th of November 1906 and the first meeting took place on the 5th December. Controversy surrounded the location of the administrative centre. As it was to be known as Sutherland Council, the site of Sutherland seemed appropriate. However, as Miranda was by far the more populous and prosperous location, a bitter debate ensued about the Council's preferred location.

Shire President, John Rayner revealed an intriguing historical aspect about our Shire Council at a recent address to the Society. In 1993, proposed changes to the Local Government Act meant that there would be no more Shire Councils or City Municipal Councils, only City Councils or just Councils. So the word 'Shire' was to be dropped from our name. As any local knows, there is only one 'Shire' and to announce that one is from 'The Shire' is to be instantly recognised. There was also a more practical aspect. So many local businesses have the word Shire in their names and they would need to change them. After much debate, sanity prevailed. A special Act of Parliament was enacted on the 30th June 1993 to officially name the area 'The Sutherland Shire'. Henceforth, the Council could then be named the 'Sutherland Shire' Council. We are indebted to former Shire President and our patron, Cllr Ian Swords for his lobbying to retain our name, supported by our President, Dawn Emerson, who was then a Sutherland Shire councillor.

I have recently spent five weeks touring the United Kingdom and Ireland. The record for the hottest and driest year for over 200 years was set during my last visit in 1976 and 2006 was similar; a real bonus for site seeing. In the 1970s the UK was at an economic crossroad with some dire predictions about its future. The Australian dollar could buy twice what it can now against the pound. Today, the UK is economically strong and Ireland, once an economic backwater, has the highest per capita national income in Europe. History and heritage surrounds you almost everywhere you go and there is a strong commitment to preserving it. To visit great palaces, cathedrals or the many little villages with stone and thatched cottages is a delight. Retaining heritage is clearly good for business and they have also avoided much of the ugly advertising, mismatched development and ugly ribbon development that so often straggle out along the approaches to towns and cities in other parts of the world, including here in Australia.

Congratulations to SSHS member, Pauline Curby on securing a grant to complete our oral history project, 'Telling as it was' and on its recent successful launch. It is a reminder of how fortunate we are to still have residents who recall the very early days of our local history.

2007 is the centenary of the surf life saving at Cronulla. Anyone with surfing memorabilia that could be loaned should contact Jim Cutbush, our museum curator. A World War 1 uniform or military regalia is also sought. We also seek information for an article on Kriesler Televisions manufactured in the Shire. I wish members and readers a happy end of year and look forward to bringing you the same high standard bulletin in 2007.

Bruce Watt

EVOLUTION OF THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Researched by Daphne Salt

The Municipalities Act 1867 allowed for the proclamation of a municipality on the petition of at least 50 adult landholders in the district – provided there was no objection by a greater number of people in the district. The petition, outlining the proposed boundaries, population etc was presented to the Governor requesting that the district be constituted a Municipality. This petition was then posted in the *Government Gazette* to allow others the opportunity of objecting.

Once the municipality was proclaimed there were elections to elect - for a three year period - between six and twelve aldermen who would in turn elect a president, the mayor.

This council would have the power to raise revenue by rates on the land and be able to use these rates to create and maintain roads, other than main roads, within their municipality, control residential and business development and tend to some kind of health and welfare needs of their community.

1871	13 th January – West Botany
1879	17 th March – Canterbury
1885	23 rd December – Kogarah
1887	28 th March – Hurstville
1906 –	Sutherland

As far as local government goes – the Sutherland Shire is a relative new-comer, but it embraces a larger population than the entire Northern Territory and is the second most populous municipality in Sydney.

Background of the Pre-Shire —

In 1817, 29 years after the First Settlement Governor Macquarie decided that it was now time to evaluate the Colony and to get it into some sort of order, so he ordered a complete survey of all of New South Wales. This was begun by Dixon in 1828 and completed by Surveyor-General Major Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, and presented to the Legislative Council in April 1835. It was a long and tedious process. The *Nineteen Counties* were then proclaimed. County No. 12, bounded by the Pacific Ocean, Woronora River, Hacking River and the Georges River became the County of Cumberland.

The Nineteen Counties were each divided into *Hundreds* (10 miles by 10 miles, totalling 100 square miles each) — a system dating back to feudal Anglo-Saxon times when clusters of outlying villages in Medieval England were combined for convenience of reckoning. The *Hundred of Woronora* had four *Civil Parishes*- Bulgo, Wattamolla, Heathcote and Sutherland and a population of 1000 residents.

Sporadic pockets of settlement developed south of the Georges River after the surveys and the installation of the punt crossings despite the fact that three quarters of the pre-shire was tied up in private ownership first by the Connell clan and then by Thomas Holt and the Holt-Sutherland Estate Company.

By 1888 trains were running to Wollongong and there were well-established communities at Heathcote, Cronulla, Kurnell, Sylvania, Miranda and Sutherland. By the turn of the century Miranda was a leading agricultural community with a Progress Association (the first in the Shire and one of only two in Sydney). It had a Co-operative Society, shops, a school, a mounted policeman (Australia had mounted police before the Canadian Mounties came into existence); recreation facilities, a library and a purpose built School of Arts.

In 1905, all areas that were not Municipalities were encompassed by the proclamation of the Local Government Shires Act 1905. At this time the Progress Association of Miranda became aware that the old *Hundred of Woronora*, now with a massive population of 1500 residents was destined to be part of Bulli Shire and its members protested to the Government. So successful was their fight for recognition as an area having a distinct local identity that less than one year later, On 6th March 1906 the Shire of Sutherland was declared. It was proclaimed on March 7th 1906 in the Government Gazette No 121. - see attachment for proclamation

On 15th May 1906 The Governor appointed a Temporary Provisional Council of five members:-

John Atkinson Esq. of Cronulla Beach
Edwin Best Esq. of Sutherland
William G. Judd Esq. of Yowie Bay and Arncliffe
Charles McAlister Esq. of Heathcote and Cronulla
Edward Thacker Esq. of Miranda

The Provisional Council was given six months to do the groundwork for the formation of the first official Council. It was responsible for creating the electoral roll, organizing the first election and finding suitable premises for Council Offices. The selected five held their first meeting in Miranda School of Arts on 18th June 1906, on the corner of Kiora Road and the Boulevard at the 6 Ways Miranda on the [current] site of Tynan's Prestige Car Sales Yard.

To prepare the electoral rolls they obtained the names from the Department of Works, the Holt Sutherland Company (who charged them £2 /10/- for their information), and the 2 local policemen. Mrs LeHane leased them a shop with residence on the Princes Highway at Sutherland next door to the Commonwealth Bank for 15/- per week. The Shire Clerk paid 5/- per week from his salary of £1.10.0 for the residence.

Conflict and bitter debate followed the selection of Sutherland as the site of Shire Administration. Miranda Progress Association argued that it was only because of their efforts that the Sutherland Shire was actually proclaimed and that Miranda was the centre of agriculture, business and finance. Miranda had the Central School that the shire children attended. Miranda was an older established village with better facilities. It was central in the shire therefore Miranda should be the seat of council.



Mrs LeHane's shop served as the first Council Offices

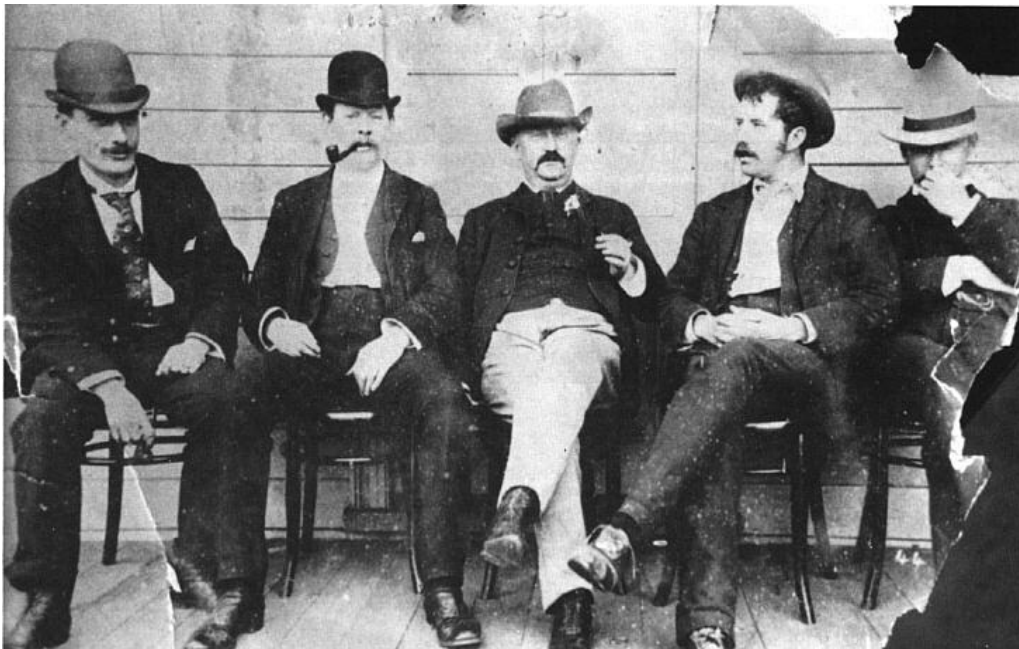
But because the Shire was named Sutherland Shire by the Governor, the railway passed through Sutherland making it more accessible for all people, land was available on which to build Council Chambers, and the Government nominated Provisional Council, acting on instructions from the Governor, had selected Sutherland as the seat of Local Government, Sutherland became the Shire headquarters.

In addition to their appointed duties the Provisional Council proposed the preservation of the foreshores of Botany Bay, Port Hacking and their tributaries and the Pacific Ocean beachfront so people could always enjoy access to the waterways and Nature would not be despoiled. This was against the Minister for Lands wishes to alienate the foreshores for private use. With extraordinary foresight they also dedicated a road from Cronulla to Kurnell.

THE CHOSEN FIVE

The first Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company signed a lease with Thomas Holt in September 1881 immediately prior to his final departure from Australia. The 13000 acres that had been locked in the Holt Estate were finally released. This resulted in an influx of settlers attracted by the low lease payments, the option to purchase and the beauty and potential of the area. Those men selected as the Provisional Council and the later councillors had taken advantage of the land sales. They were financially quite comfortable and were men of property and enterprise and intended to do whatever they could to expand, promote and improve their Shire. They were all Independents. None was affiliated with a political party.

(The descriptions of these gentlemen in bold print following their names were bestowed upon them during their lifetime.)



This could be a scene from *GUNSMOKE*, but it is actually the only known photograph of the Provisional Council. [Councillors Hyndman, Hill, Lehane and McAllister photographs are in 'From sails to atoms p64. Ed.]

Ted Thacker, 'Patriarch of Miranda'

During the first of these land sales, Ted Thacker, 'the Patriarch of Miranda', bought the Blaxland 'Old Farm' and lived on the central portion of it where the theatre section of Miranda Fair now stands. At that time there was no road, only rough tracks from the Sylvania punt. Thacker, who allotted part of each day to community projects, considered it his duty to see that his neighbours prospered and improved their lives as he intended to do.

In 1892 Edward Thacker, John Macfarlane, Edward Lye and Mr. Berger formed pre-shire's first community co-operative organization - the Holt-Sutherland Horticultural Society which had the revolutionary acumen to pool their resources and buy supplies in bulk to save on freight. Their collective buying scheme was in operation for about one year when Edward Thacker realised that it was not the pooling of orders, but the pooling of funds that was needed. A committee was formed to carry the co-operative scheme further and Thacker gave it money to sustain it through its early stages. Trade interests opposed them bitterly but Thacker led the successful fight for permission from the Government for their Co-operative enterprise to survive and the Horticultural Society became the Miranda Agriculture Bureau then the Miranda Co-operative Society with an effective discount system. As a result of their activities the poultry farmer in this district was in a better position than anywhere in NSW.

Edward Thacker was also an early President of the Miranda Progress Society, which had its first meeting 7th November 1898. Their School of Arts was a small corrugated iron room at the rear of the old Congregational Church that stood where the eastern Kiora Road entrance to Miranda Fair is today. In July 1904 the School of Arts moved into its own new building on the corner of Kiora Rd and The Boulevarde (near to the five ways traffic lights). Thacker supplied the land, some of the building funds and his personal labour in its construction.

John Atkinson, 'Preserver of Cronulla Foreshores'

Born 1843 on the Manor of Richmount, Armagh, Northern Ireland, John immigrated to Brisbane with his family. The Atkinsons moved to Balmain where John became a carpenter and shipwright at Balmain. There he married, fathered a family, was widowed and remarried. Here he also made the acquaintance of the Hon. E. W. O'Sullivan, the Secretary for Works and they became firm friends.

Still in his early 50s, John Atkinson procured 11 acres of leasehold land on Paraweena Road Caringbah (now occupied by Parke Davis and other factories) where he established a dairy which his daughter Olive and her family continued to operate after John built 'Richmount' at Cronulla.

He had a great confidence in the prospects of the region. With two other Cronulla pioneers, Wilshire and Windsor, Atkinson successfully urged the government to set aside land for a park between Nicholson Parade and Gunnamatta Bay. Gunnamatta Park was proclaimed on 6th September 1895, less than one week before the Crown Land Auction. On 11th September 1895 Crown Land in Cronulla was put up for auction and John purchased his 2-acre Nicholson Parade allotment for £16.0.0.

Atkinson built a commodious 10 roomed establishment on what is now the corner of Richmond Street and Nicholson Parade at Cronulla and named it 'Richmount' after his family seat in Ireland. He was adamant that it was not a guesthouse though he did cater for elite boarders. E. W. O'Sullivan (Ewos Parade in Cronulla is named after him); and Peter Dodds McCormick - the man who wrote *Advance Australia Fair*, were known to have frequented Richmount and were friends of the family.

John Atkinson helped to establish the South Cronulla Progress Association and as its President on 21st March 1903 formed a Committee which built of the Cronulla School of Arts. Atkinson was amongst the founders of the Ratepayer's Association, formed to promote the interests of Cronulla and its neighbourhood. [Note: Our current patron, SSHS foundation member and former president, Mrs Aileen Griffiths, is the daughter of John Atkinson. Ed.]

So great was his love of the tranquil waterways which surrounded the Cronulla Peninsula that Atkinson implored the government to use foresight to preserve all of the foreshores as reserves for the people for all time. It was through his efforts that the Cronulla Esplanade, Darook Park and Gunnamatta Park were dedicated.

Edwin Best 'The Lumber Lord'

On the early electoral rolls Mr. Edwin Best lived at Sutherland and was recorded as a "Settler". He was a foundation member and vice-president of the Sutherland Progress Association. Best took advantage of the increase in the numbers of settlers and began a sawmill and lumberyard near the corner of President Avenue and the Highway. There is a block of units there now.

Charles McAlister, 'The Father of Heathcote and Prince of the Riviera'

As a young man he spent many years pursuing the pearling industry around Thursday Island before settling in Sydney where he was a prominent businessman in the grocery trade for nearly 30 years.

When Crown Lands were released and put up for auction in 1886 Charles McAlister bought heavily into both Heathcote/Engadine and Cronulla. He invested in several waterfront blocks at South Cronulla. He built the first brick house in Cronulla which was to be his holiday retreat. His occupation is listed on the early electoral rolls as "gentleman".

During the 1890s Mr. and Mrs. McAlister lived in a 4-roomed home, 'Sunbeam Cottage' on the corner of Woronora Road and Fairview Avenue Heathcote. He enlarged cottage and re-named it 'Homelea'. In 1900 he subdivided and sold much of his Engadine Estate, encouraging settlers to the district. McAlister was a man of the times, he bought one of the first cars in the shire and the *St George Call* reported that he had been seen speeding in his car towards Heathcote and covered the distance from the National Park gates to Heathcote station in only 11 minutes.

William George Judd, 'The District's Grand Old Man'

William George Judd was born in 1847 on the site of the Sydney Hilton in Pitt Street. His father went overseas to make his fortune on the American goldfields, he was shipwrecked, picked up by a passing ship and dropped off on an island where he sat for 4 years before he was rescued and returned home. Mrs. Judd opened a Laundry business to support young William and herself.

When he was 5 years old William was kidnapped and one of his mother's laundry employees retrieved him and administered a sound thrashing to the kidnapper. He was working at the age of 7 years amongst the old handmade sandstocks at St. Peters, attending denominational schools intermittently and later night school where he derived his chief education. Then having mastered his brickmaking trade Judd established himself as a storekeeper.

After 13 years he sold the business and built a comfortable home, "Athelstane", at Arncliffe where he laid out a fine orchard and provided a cricket ground for the local enthusiasts. Athelstane is now a private

school. 1882 he was elected an alderman to the newly founded West Botany (Rockdale) Council and later to the St. Peters Municipal Council where in 1885 he became Mayor.

During the push for the railway extension from Redfern to Hurstville Judd and some friends paid for a trial survey of a route running from Baldface to Kangaroo Point, thence through Sutherland to Port Hacking River. Had that route been adopted it would have avoided the expensive steep gradients and would have revealed greater scenic beauties than the existing line.

1885 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly and later elected vice-president of the Local Government Association. Judd established the Hurstville Steam Brickworks (Judd's Brickworks) at Mortdale. He was instrumental in establishing the new St. Peters Brickworks and retained the post of chairman of Directors for 45 years until his death. Judd had his fingers in many pies and amongst his private enterprises were extensive mining ventures at Broken Hill and other places.

William George Judd acquired property in the Sutherland Shire at Yowie Bay and threw himself into the betterment of his new environment. He established himself firmly in his chosen new territory though he did not give up his Arncliffe residence. [an excellent photo of him is in 'From sails to atoms' p48ff ed.]

He was one of those responsible for the construction of the Cronulla-Sutherland tramway - in fact he promised to make up any deficit that might arise from the tram.

Sutherland Shire's first elected Council

The culmination of the preparatory work of the Provisional Council was election of the Shire's first Council. It was held on 24th November 1906 and voting was by personal voting - "first past the post", not preferential. The entitlement to vote was restricted to the owner-occupiers of land, the ratepayers only, and therefore did not apply to all the adult population.

St George Call 1/12/1906 reported -The election of Shire Councillors was disposed of last Saturday 24th November 1906 and there was no great excitement.

***A Riding**, Hyndman 104; Lehane 71; Diston 57; Thacker 40; Roberts 24*

***B Riding**, McAlister 87; Hill 68; Atkinson 15;*

***C Riding** Cook 101; Judd 94; Best 68.*

Of the Provisional Councillors only William George Judd and Charles McAlister were elected to the new council.

Monday 3rd December 1906 the Provisional Council handed over to the elected Council. Wednesday 5th December 1906 the formal Council met for the first time and elected William George Judd as the Shire President (now termed Mayor). He was the only one with administrative experience. Mr. William Charles Danne was appointed Shire Clerk with a salary of £11/10/- per week. His duties included Inspector of Nuisance and Cattle Slaughtering Inspector. The entire council was to be the Health and Works Committee. They immediately authorized two competent valuations on all rateable land within the shire. The Seal of the Council, designed by the Sydney firm of John Sands was received at the meeting of 14th January 1907. The Captain Cook central figure had been chosen by unanimous agreement because of the significance of the new Shire of Sutherland as the Birthplace of Australia.

All of the newly elected councils had little more than a year to run as the Government had scheduled elections for February 1908 to coincide with the triennial municipal council elections, creating a situation where all local government elections in New South Wales were held at the same time.

We had the first Council By-election in New South Wales!

On January 28th 1907 - less than 10 weeks after the election - Councillor John Hill resigned. Nominations for the extra-ordinary vacancy were received up until 6th February 1907 and the polling day was fixed for Saturday 16th February 1907. Though no reason was given for Councillor Hill's resignation, it was discovered that he was **not** on the electoral roll and therefore he had been ineligible as a candidate for the shire election of the previous November.

PIONEERS OF THE SUTHERLAND COUNCIL

Official



Clr. C. McAlister.



Clr. E.W. Hyndman.



Clr. John Hill.



Clr. W.G. Jedd.



Clr. R.W. Cook.



Clr. Thor Lehane.



The Clerk, J.W. MacFarlane

The FIRST MEMBERS

OF THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

1907

St. George Call referring to the resignation reported *the vacant chair (of John Hill) was occasioned by the Police Court proceedings of the previous week. ... Whatever the reason for his resignation, they no longer applied by 6th February 1907. ... In the resultant by-election John Hill was returned unopposed.*

During the first year of the Sutherland Shire Council

In 1906 the new Council took over miles of unmade roads, bridges and tracks in Holt and Crown subdivisions. Councillors were allowed 6d per mile travel allowance.

At the February 1907 meeting *as a matter of urgency* the Council authorized the purchase of an Accounts Ledger, other Official Records Books and Works Department tools (picks, shovels, wheelbarrows etc.).

March 1907 the Council held its first Field Day. The Councillors travelled by train to Waterfall where inspections were carried out with borrowed horse transport arranged by Charles McAlister. They then went to Heathcote where Mrs. McAlister provided refreshments at 'Homelea'.

It was in April 1907 that Council instigated the *regulation of the erection of buildings as to height, design, structural materials, building line and sanitation*. They also decided to regulate subdivision of estates with the aim of an access way to each and every property. The construction of new roads such as that from Sutherland to Como had begun.

By this time there already existed several very active local interest organizations. Miranda and Cronulla had

Schools of Arts, Miranda and Menai had Progress Associations. Menai Progress Association discussed with Council their detailed proposal of a bridge over the Woronora River and the Tramway League was pressing for a tram link from Sutherland to Cronulla.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE IN BRIEF

- * 1817 Governor Macquarie ordered survey of New South Wales
- * 1828 Survey begun by Dixon - completed by Mitchell 1934 - presented to Legislative Council in April 1835
- * 1867 Municipalities Act
- * *Nineteen Counties* proclaimed & divided into *Hundreds*
- * *Hundred of Woronora* - four *Civil Parishes*- Bulgo, Wattamolla, Heathcote and Sutherland
- * 1905 Local Government Shires Act
- * 1906, 6th March. Shire of Sutherland was declared
- * 1906, March 7th Shire of Sutherland proclaimed in the Government Gazette No 121
- * 1906, 15th May Governor appointed Temporary Provisional Council – Gazette 161
- * 1906, 24th November election of the Shire's first Council
- * 1906, Monday 3rd December the Provisional Council handed over to the elected Council
- * 1906, Wednesday 5th December the formal Council met for the first time - William George Judd - Shire President
- * 1907, 14th January Captain Cook Seal of the Council accepted
- * 1907, 16th February Sutherland Shire had first Council By-election in New South Wales
- * 1908, 8th February -all local government elections in New South Wales held at the same time.

Magnificent Fernleigh

Bruce Watt

‘Fernleigh’, the stunning sandstone residence in Fernleigh Rd Caringbah has been in the Alcott family for 60 colourful years. The home is one of the oldest residences in the Shire. (1) Over the years Fernleigh has acquired a number of legends, myths and folktales which add to its mystique.

An often repeated myth is that Fernleigh was convict built in 1821. Metal Roman numerals above the front door (MDCCCXXI) seem to support this. However, family tradition says that this was added by Ivy Alcott in the 1950s. There was virtually no settlement in the Sutherland Shire in the early part of the nineteenth century except for a land grant at Kurnell to James Birnie in 1815. Registered, probably by an illiterate clerk as ‘Half a Farm’, it was indeed ‘Alfa’ or first farm. Gregory Blaxland was granted 1000 acres at Miranda at the head of Gwawley Bay for his efforts in crossing the Blue Mountains although he never took up the lease.

The land around Burraneer Bay where Fernleigh is located (noted as ‘Burrameer’ on early maps) was offered in the first Crown land sales from 1856. The 40 acres that Fernleigh originally stood on was purchased by Thomas Connell Laycock on 16th December 1858. (Laycock was the grandson of John Connell, an original settler at Kurnell. Indeed the name Kurnell is acknowledged as a corruption of their family name) The title deeds were granted on 9th May 1859. The area was approximately 40 acres for which he paid £1 per acre. (file reference at the Register General’s Office:

59/602 (1859/602); serial no. 150 Old Registers no. 8: converted to Torrens Title Vol 1V, Folio 88 Laycock owned a considerable amount of property in the colony and both he and Thomas Holt were members of the Legislative Assembly. It was through him that Thomas Holt was first acquainted with The Shire. Laycock and his son escorted Holt around his Shire properties and Holt liked what he saw. Laycock owned the Prince of Wales theatre in Sydney which burned down. Holt had purchased Laycock’s mortgages. Laycock was uninsured which was a breach of his mortgage requirements and Holt was able to seize Laycock’s considerable property portfolio. Holt began acquiring as much land in the Shire as he could and eventually controlled most of it, including the land where Fernleigh is located. The date on which a large portion of his Sutherland Estate was acquired was 31/12/1862. [Register book 1V folio 80]

In 93 separate parcels he received a total of 10,320 acres. Parcel number 58 was the 40 acres one rood originally granted to Laycock in 1858, parcel number 67 was the 860 acres originally granted to James Birnie in 1815 and lot 84 was 1000 acres originally granted to John Connell in 1835. This was the land originally granted to Gregory Blaxland for his work in crossing the Blue Mountains but which he never took up. This was the ‘Old Farm’ at Miranda.

Controversy

On the matter of just when Fernleigh was built, there is considerable conjecture. Apart from the 1821 assertion of its construction date which can be ignored, several accounts have stated that Laycock built the house around 1859 – 1860. Marjorie Hutton Neave, a respected Historical Society member and author asserted in SSHS Bulletin No. 6 January 1968 that it was built by Laycock in 1859 – 60 although an April 1974 story on York House by Mrs Neave states its building completion date by Charles York as 1875. The Sutherland Shire Heritage Study report commissioned in 1993 and presented by heritage consultants, reports the date of 1859 as when it was constructed.

It is also interesting that the NSW State Heritage Office which holds Fernleigh on its State Register, lists its age of construction as 1821 although it later contradicts its report by stating that the land was sold by Thomas Holt to Charles York in 1873 and a stone cottage called ‘York House’ then built on it.

(1) Gogerly’s cottage in the Royal National Park on the Port Hacking River is an older structure. It was occupied by Charles Gogerly from 1854 but possibly built by convict labour employed by Simeon Lord 30 or so years before. It has not been inhabited for many years and is in a near derelict state although NPWS has recently restored its exterior. George Simpson’s substantial four room sandstone cottage at Bonnie Vale was built sometime between 1864 and 1867 and is still occupied.

Original sources

In 1868, whilst Holt was overseas he commissioned a report on his large estate. The hand written report by his property manager, R C Walker provides a comprehensive overview of the landform, vegetation and improvements undertaken at that time on Holt's Sutherland estate which covered approximately twelve thousand five hundred acres, or virtually all of the present day Shire.

A hand drawn map (page 17) clearly shows the 40 acres paddock where the house was later built. The Walker Report, completed on the 14th April 1868, (copy held in Local Studies section of the Sutherland Shire library) describes it as:

40 acres on east side of Dolan's Bay, in Burrameer Bay. [note spelling. Ed.] This is a block of very thickly timbered land, with a great deal of scrub on it. Nothing has yet been done to it either in ringbarking or scrubbing. The soil is ironstone clay and sandy soil but very rocky. There is a fine view of the Port Hacking River from it and it would make a good building site.

This is comprehensive proof that a substantial house such as Fernleigh had not been built at this time. It would have been mentioned.

It is a little unclear as to why Holt sold the parcel of land that Fernleigh occupies. However, it has been suggested that the Walker report was written as a prospectus with possible sales in mind. The description of this site as a potential 'good building site' may have prompted the sale. For whatever reason, Holt sold this parcel of land consisting of 40 acres and one rood [old Scottish measurement for a quarter of an acre] to Charles York on 25/8/1873. The property was portion 38 in the Parish of Southerland and County of Cumberland. [Sutherland is another variation of the spelling used at the time] A locality sketch attached to the certificate of title does not show any improvements on the land at this stage. York bought the land for a 'country retreat', taking perhaps one or two years to complete the building and he lived in it until his death in 1880. It was originally named 'York House'. When the National Park was dedicated in 1879, Charles York was one of the foundation Trustees of the Park's Board and continued until his death on October 28, 1880. Listed on the original certificate of title are some subsequent transfers. Application to transfer title was made by his wife, Emma York of Glebe, widow on 22/10/1881 and subsequently to Thomas James York of Pymont Bridge on 3/3/1883. On the 3/4/1883 it was transferred to John Robert Smith. He transferred it to William Gannon, gentleman, Sydney on 11/1/1888. Mrs Gannon is listed as the vendor of the estate on the auction brochure in 1905, (see page 20).

On the following page is a map from the Walker report. The 40 acre lot at Burraneer Bay is adjacent to Patrick Dolan's land. Dolan refused all attempts by Holt to buy his land – even at prices well above market value.

Apart from the waterfront access, land access was quite rudimentary. Visitors would cross the Georges River by punt and follow a track from Horse Rock Point (Sylvania) along present day Port Hacking Road to Caringbah, (not yet in existence), along the road of present day Saunders Bay Road towards the waterfront.

Another interesting anecdotal story was published in the May 1977 edition of the SSHS bulletin.

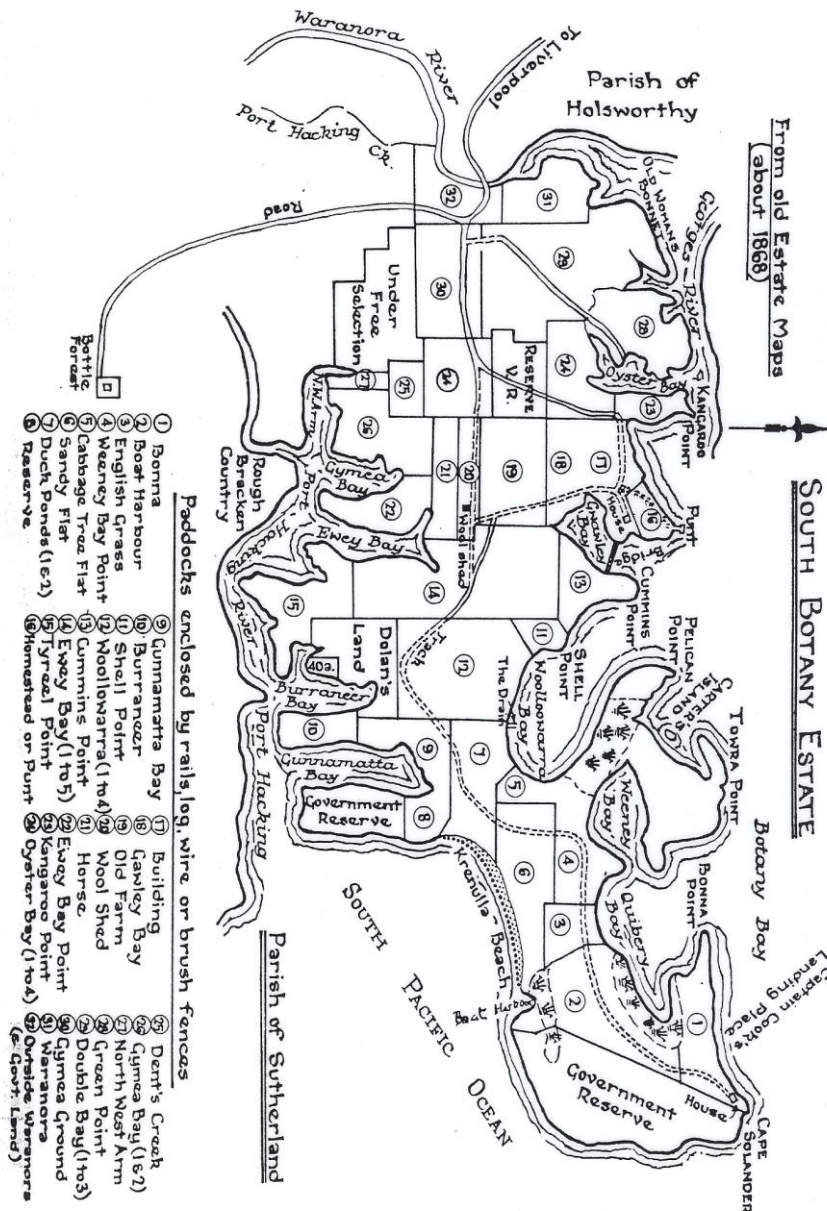
The old joke – York House

George Heavens

It was during the week before 'black Saturday' in 1939 when we were having a patch of extremely hot weather. I was working as a carpenter in the vicinity of Woollooware Road for a man named Harold Johnson, the secretary of the NRMA at the time. The depression was just coming to an end and a bit of work was available.

It was lunchtime; we were hot, so we went down to the seashore to get the breeze while we ate our lunch. The brickies decided to have a quick swim but I wasn't in that – too many sharks in Burraneer Bay for my liking – so I sat with my feet in the cool water and dined with my mates from the job.

We were all talking when a very old man came along from next door where he was repairing the stone retaining wall. He was foreign and I learned later his name was Otto and that he was a Swede. He had



Map from the time of the R C Walker report showing the paddocks. Holt's Sutherland Estate 1868

been a first class mason but was now too old to work at his trade so he did odd jobs like the one he was engaged on.

He had lived most of his life around these parts and pointed across the water, indicating two houses he had worked on as a boy. 'They are the two oldest houses in the district' he said. 'We built one for a man named York and the other one about the same year for a Mr Kinsella.

Someone immediately knew about these houses, especially the one 'that was built in 1821'

'No it wasn't' said Otto. 'I wasn't born in 1821! It was built about 1874 if I remember rightly'

'But it's got the date over the door – 1821' replied one of us.

'I know that' said Otto, but it's not right. When we were working on the sandstone foundations a couple of loads of old building materials from a demolition job in the city were sent out by dray and that date was on a lintel. The boss-carpenter put it up over the front door for fun and it's been there ever since. Mr York didn't object – it was a good joke and it's fooled a lot of people'

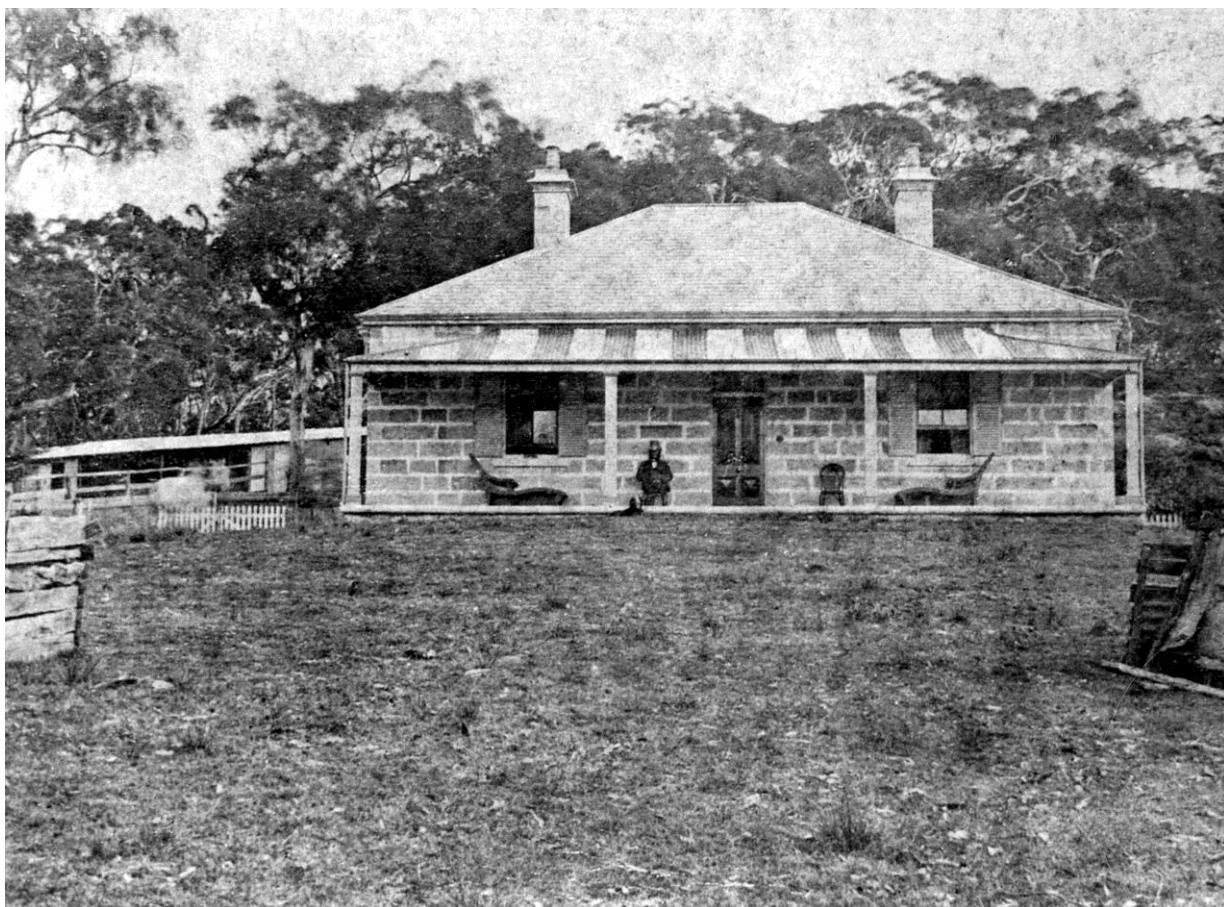
This story needs a little further investigation. I can say that I have looked carefully for the lintel with the Roman numerals above the front door and I haven't seen it, only the metal Roman numerals. (editor)

Dating by style

Architectural and other supporting evidence suggests that the house dates from around 1874. Mike Fursland, Sutherland Shire Council heritage officer and Don Truman, heritage consultant, recently examined the house to gauge the age of construction. Locks, doors and window frames date from the 1870s period although the rectangular layout is somewhat Georgian in style. This is sometimes evident when styles from a previous period continue on or overlaps later styles, especially when it takes some years for new architectural styles to filter down from Europe.

The date of 1874 places it in the early to mid Victorian period. Fernleigh doesn't display any of the architectural characteristics of the 'boom' or 'Italianate' style that was about to sweep the colonies in the wake of the vast wealth created from gold and wool. From the late 1870s to the end of the 1880s, buildings displayed characteristics which reflected the euphoria of the times. Extravagant use of decorative cast iron, leadlight and flourishing roof lines marked this period. Heathcote Hall, built in 1887 by Isaac Harber, a wealthy brick maker, displayed many of these stylistic features. A deep economic depression at the end of the 1880s brought a sudden stop to this extravagance. Heathcote Hall itself had to be abandoned to his creditors as Harber had made heavy losses in connection with building the Imperial Arcade in Sydney.

Fernleigh shows evidence of considerable alteration. When it was originally built, it was single storey and the veranda only extended across the front. A photo taken in 1878 shows this. Deep slanting scores in the sandstone on either ends of the veranda at the front show where the iron roof originally was chased into the stone for waterproofing. The iron roof was painted in alternate bands of colour.



Fernleigh

York House then passed out of the York family. A Raine and Horne auction brochure (page 20) advertises Mrs Gannon's Fernleigh Estate Burraneer Bay, Port Hacking for sale on Thursday 26th January 1905. Terms were 10% deposits and 12 quarterly instalments at 5% interest.

The house has had significant alterations from this period. The veranda was extended down the southern and northern sides using corrugated asbestos sheeting. Horse stalls at the southern side rear were removed and the servant's quarters which were originally a separate building were roofed over and joined to the main building, creating a large living room. Dormer windows were added to the front of the house to create two small attic bedrooms.

The main living room has had a 1920's makeover and the main bathroom was 'modernised' in the 1930s or 1940s.

The layout of the main part of the house follows a typical square Georgian format. There are four rooms divided down the middle by a wide hallway. Originally the two rooms on the southern side were bedrooms and the two on the northern side were dining and sitting rooms. Walls are constructed from 18" (45centimetre) hand hewn sandstone blocks. The slate roof is original. Chimney pots also are Victorian.

The Alcott era

Fernleigh was purchased in 1946 by Errol and Ivy Alcott for £8000, a considerable sum of money, however the land then stretched from the top of Fernleigh Road to the waterfront. It is said that Errol Alcott bought it at first sight having spotted it from the water. He strode up the front lawn and made an offer to the current owner – a local legend named Harry Peel who was sitting on a rocking chair on the front verandah.

Errol was a practical man. He was a sailor and had owned a service station at Auburn after he and Ivy moved from their home town of Bega. He operated the marina which was on the waterfront and known as 'The Three Pines Marina'. This was later sold and it now trades as the Burraneer Bay marina.

Fernleigh still retains a waterfront right of access at the right hand side of the marina. Part of the land holding including the waterfront and blocks at the rear were subdivided in the 1970s. Today, it still occupies a large holding of 3224 square metres.

An icon

Many epic and ground breaking events took place during the next 30 years.

Ivy Alcott was an eccentric character. Fernleigh was one of only two private zoos in Australia and was home to many animals including Macaque monkeys, kangaroos, emus, bats, Shetland ponies, dogs and snakes.

Tarzan was Ivy's first monkey and as Ivy developed a reputation for caring for animals, the zoo would also send her animals. It seems that the local council turned a blind eye to this. She also kept two large bats – Count Yorga and Dracula and these would be let out each night and they would return by morning.

Ben Alcott, Managing Director of 'Black Sheep Productions,' a film production company, has fond memories of growing up at Fernleigh around his grandparents. 'Ivy was a one man publicity machine. She was always fund raising and attracting publicity in newspapers and on television'. At the age of 10, Ben had appeared on all the television networks and was gathering skills that later lead him into the media industry.

Ivy was a tireless fundraiser and charity worker as well as an honorary member of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Ivy and Errol are the only married couple to receive the same award from the Queen for exemplary community service. The British Empire Medal was awarded to Ivy in 1973 and to Errol in 1974.

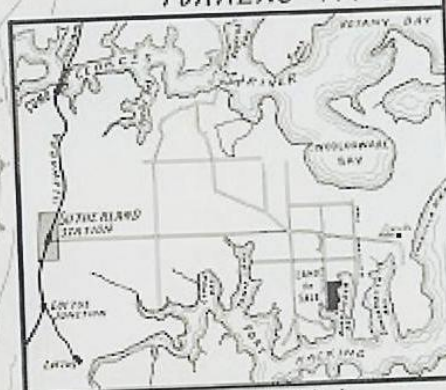
Errol was a ham radio enthusiast, operating out of the attic at Fernleigh. He would receive a lot of distress calls from boating people. As there was no Coast Guard then, the police would be contacted first and they would notify him. Errol would conduct rescues at any time of the day or night using his boat 'Ivy' and bring them back to the marina at Fernleigh. He is credited with having saved 113 lives. He was never paid for his efforts however his British Empire Medal was a just reward.

Their high media profile ensured a constant flow of visitors from overseas who were brought there to see the wildlife.

2192

BY
**RAINE &
HORNE**
AUCTIONEERS

TERMS
10 per cent deposit.
Balance in
12 equal quarterly instalments
with interest at 5 per cent
per annum.
TORRENS TITLE



Local Sketch

FISHER, NOTT & NELSON.
 Licensed Surveyors—S. P. A.
 85 PITT ST., SYDNEY.

The fledgling television industry viewed the exotic location and eccentric characters with interest. The first ABC outside broadcast was filmed on the front lawn of Fernleigh and episodes of the Mike Walsh show, Simon Townsend's *Wonderworld* and *Playschool* were also filmed on site. On one memorable occasion, Candy the monkey ripped Mike Walsh's toupe off when live filming. Jeannie Little was another madcap personality who would appear on these broadcasts.

The iconic movie 'Around the world with Dot' by animation legend Yoram Gross was filmed here and several female kangaroos from the cast of the 1960s TV series 'Skippy' lived at Fernleigh.

Rolf Harris was a regular visitor and launched his iconic song 'Tie me kangaroo down sport' from Fernleigh. In the family collection of memorabilia is an original 'wobble' board, painted and signed by Rolf. Many middle aged adults in the Shire recall visiting the zoo as children on a Sunday to feed the animals.

Errol and Ivy's son Kevin Alcott was a well known medical practitioner in Cronulla for over 40 years. He resided at Fernleigh on and off after the death of his parents in 1984 and 1986.

Layout

(refer to the plan on the following page)

The frontal orientation as shown on the bulletin cover is at the bottom of this diagram. North is to the right side. The square Georgian layout of the original front rooms of the house, divided by a central hallway is evident.

The original house had servant's quarters and a kitchen at the rear, separated from the rest of the house, as was the custom of the time. This was done because of the fire hazard presented by an open fuel stove. The breezeway between the original servant's quarters at the rear was covered in at a later date, creating a living area. The materials used and the style of construction in blocking this off do not match the quality or style of the much more solid original construction. Much of the timberwork in this area is either suffering from wood rot or termite damage and would need to be replaced. It is also largely fibro on either end and other materials from a later date, possibly the 1920s. The timber flooring in this section, the formal living area and sunroom adjacent has collapsed due to lack of ventilation and needs replacing. At the rear left of the building is a stucco shed that was used as a kiosk when the zoo was in operation. It was constructed as a 'grotto' from concrete sprayed on a wire netting framework. Ben Alcott recalls stories of massive parties held around this area. Actual pen enclosures for animals are still in existence at the right hand side rear.

The upstairs elevation is shown at the bottom of the diagram. This area is in very original condition and has evidence of termite damage to sections of the floor. Access is by way of a narrow stairway leading up from the hallway near the pantry and bathroom. Two to three bedrooms or living spaces exist under a sloping roofline. There is no evidence of restoration or maintenance work having been undertaken in the upstairs section of the house. The writer of this article remembers many years ago knocking on the door to enquire about its history. Ivy Alcott graciously and proudly showed me through the house. In the upstairs attic was a skeleton which was affectionately referred to as 'Basil bones'. One story has it that 'Basil' was a convict dug up in the front yard complete with leg irons, however this is almost certainly another fabrication to add to its mystique. Sadly after her death in the 1980s, much of the original furniture and artifacts were disposed of at a clearance sale held on the property.

Some improvements to the house have been undertaken in recent years and termite treatment has been undertaken. The three rooms in the rear servant's quarters have had improvements or restoration. A bedroom on the left hand side has had floorboards replaced and a relatively new bathroom and kitchen has been added in each of the other two rooms. There is no laundry within the house. A fairly poorly appointed open workshop area outside the breezeway to the north would serve as a laundry.

Considerable repairs would need to be undertaken to bring the house up to acceptable standards of habitation.

Some of the original Victorian garden layout is evident on the northern side and at the front. Victorian earthenware garden edging tiles are still in place along the pathway borders at the front of the veranda. These verandahs are paved with large slabs of sandstone. The veranda supports are of a later date. Their style is Edwardian and would most likely to have been erected in the early twentieth century when the verandahs were extended.

In the courtyard immediately to the north of the breezeway, the concrete is caving in. An original well is said to exist below this.

Today

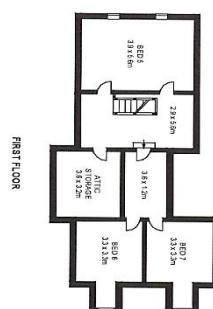
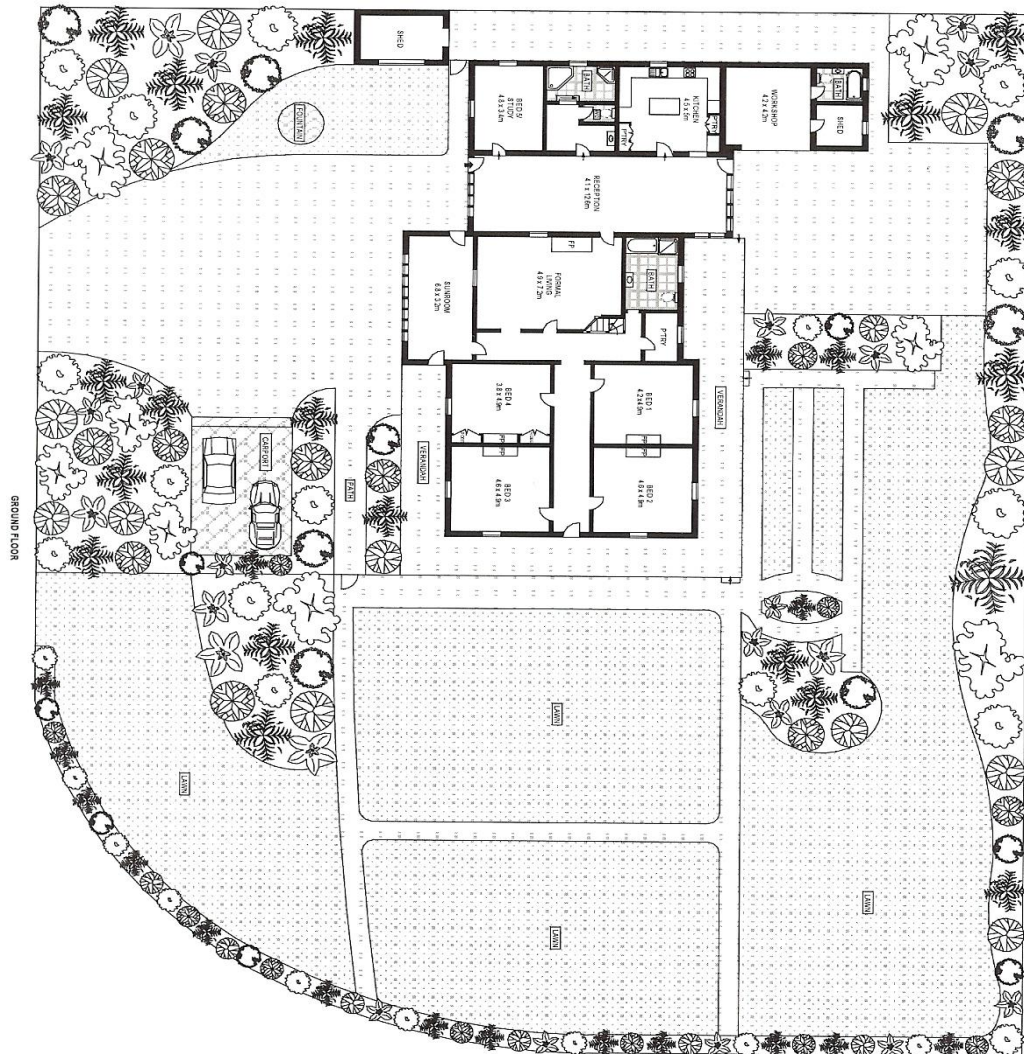
Over the last 20 years, Fernleigh has fallen on harder times because it has not been permanently occupied. The most damaging aspect has been significant termite infestation. In the rear rooms there is a lack of sub

floor ventilation and external drainage off the slope behind is inadequate. Roof leaks have damaged many of the ceilings and the building now requires substantial repairs. However, it still retains a great charm and is fairly unique in having retained a significant curtilage that buffers it from surrounding development.

Fernleigh has a State heritage listing which recognizes its significance to a community much larger than the Sutherland Shire. Hopefully this listing will help to protect it from unsympathetic development in the future.

GROUNDPLAN - FERNLEIGH :

north to right of page



On this day. Some significant Shire dates

Bruce Watt

January

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 15 | 1938 | Stunt plane crashes at the first surf carnival at North Cronulla beach |
| 18 | 1788 | Captain Arthur Phillip enters Botany Bay. |
| 13 | 1965 | Wanda Beach murders |
| 18 | 1788 | First fleet anchors off Botany Bay |
| 25 | 1919 | Cronulla wharf (Salmon Haul) opened. |
| 30 | 1959 | Gannet aeroplane crashes in Bellingarra Road Sylvania killing pilot |

February

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 7 | 1915 | Hawaiian, Duke Kahanamoku demonstrated surfboard riding at Cronulla Beach. |
| 19 | 1950 | James Peryman, North Cronulla Surf Club Captain drowned during a rescue. |

March

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 7 | 1906 | Sutherland Shire was proclaimed. |
| 30 | 1796 | Bass and Flinders sail into Port Hacking. |

April

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 14 | 1868 | Holt Sutherland Estate report published. |
| 15 | 1966 | First general meeting of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society. |
| 16 | 1879 | National Park (later Royal) proclaimed. |
| 26 | 1929 | Georges River Bridge opened |
| 28 | 1770 | Lieutenant Cook lands at (Kurnell) |

May

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 1 | 1770 | Forby Sutherland buried at (Kurnell) |
| 11 | 1854 | Charles Gogerley granted 20 acres at Port Hacking. |
| 11 | 1929 | Georges River (Tom Ugly's) Bridge opened. |

June

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 12 | 1911 | Sutherland – Cronulla tramway opened to traffic. |
| 18 | 1906 | First meeting of provisional committee for Sutherland Shire Council. |

September

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 2 | 1922 | Henry Lawson (a long time resident of the Shire) dies at Abbotsford. |
| 5 | 1888 | Thomas Holt dies in Kent, England. |
| 11 | 1895 | Crown land sales of South Cronulla peninsula. |

October

- | | | |
|----|------|--|
| 9 | 1926 | Clubhouse at North Cronulla surf club opened |
| 24 | 1942 | Heavy seas wash out tank traps on the esplanade destroying the esplanade |
| 27 | 1728 | James Cook born |

November

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 10 | 1924 | Steam tram derails at Miranda killing driver. |
| 14 | 1814 | Thomas Holt born, Yorkshire, England. |
| 14 | 1931 | Water reticulation in Shire officially turned on. |
| 18 | 1840 | Last convicts arrive in Sydney |
| 25 | 1899 | Naming of the village of Gunnamatta. |

December

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 5 | 1906 | First meeting of Sutherland Shire Council. |
| 16 | 1939 | Cronulla railway extension opened |
| 17 | 1918 | Holt Sutherland house burnt down. |
| 26 | 1885 | Illawarra rail line opened for traffic to Sutherland. |

Betty McGrath – Life Member

Betty and Alan McGrath were life members of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society. Sadly Alan passed away in 2006. This thumbnail account is adapted from an oral history project by students at Peakhurst High School on five citizen's memories of the 1940s at war and on the home front and it is restricted to that time. Betty remains active in the Society. She is the booking clerk and member of the Executive.

Betty's story

Betty was born on the 1st January 1926 at GyMEA and has lived most of her life in the Shire. She attended St Patrick's School at Sutherland and was 13 when war broke out. She started work at 14 as a dressmaker and finished her apprenticeship when she was 18. 14 was the normal time that people left school. In those days the Merit or QC (Qualifying Certificate) was the exam at the end of 6th class and at 14 you were apprenticed. Betty became a dressmaker, her sister a milliner and another sister, a hairdresser. 'I took on dressmaking because my cousin was one. I could have been an office girl because I could spell and write.'

The wartime years

Whilst too young to take part in the war, she recalls the swarms of American and later British servicemen in Sydney. Betty grew up on a mixed dairy and chicken farm and orchard. Whilst others suffered during the war years, they were self sufficient so there wasn't a lot of hardship. Horse and cow manure was dug back into the gardens so the family grew their own vegetables. 'We had a well and water tanks so we didn't have to pay for water and we didn't use much electricity. We used flat irons off the stove for ironing and we cooked our toast over the fire'.

Barbed wire was strung along the beach at Cronulla to repel a Japanese invasion. This meant that for 4 years she couldn't go to the beach. Betty's dairy farm at GyMEA was not far from where Sutherland hospital is today. During the war there was a detention camp for prisoners of war where the hospital is now and the guards would often come to local dances.

The price of things didn't really go up during the war however some items became very scarce. Being a dress maker Betty would make all of her own clothes on a treadle sewing machine. She would use scraps of materials that were left over at work. The style of dresses was pulled in waists and big shoulder pads and beaded crepe dresses. 'We had a new dress for every time we went out. We made them. We never went out with a boy with the same dress on twice. And my sister would make another hat'. Betty's first pay packet was nine shillings a week (90 cents). From this she paid two and ninepence for her train ticket and three shillings board which left three and threepence for herself.

Betty met Alan after the war at the RSL dances held every Saturday night in the Cecil Ballroom. 'They'd open the windows and all the breezes would come in. It was beautiful'. The dances were the Pride of Erin, the Jazz Waltz and progressive dances. After the war Betty and Alan were married and bought a block of land at Loftus. It cost 64 pounds. When they first built their house there was no telephone or sewerage 'but it didn't matter'.

Betty, resplendently dressed during the wartime years.



The Waratahs

Bruce Watt

I wish to acknowledge Alan Clarke's book, 'The Waratahs South Coast Recruiting March 1915' as the inspiration for this article. The sections, 'Day 16 Helensburgh to Sutherland' and 'Day 17 Sutherland to Hurstville and Kogarah' are reproduced with his kind permission.

In 1914 at the outbreak of the Great War, Australia's population was about 5 million. About 400,000 men enlisted, or a little less than 10% of our population. Of these, 60,000 were killed and 157,000 were wounded. Australia suffered the highest per capita casualty rate of any allied forces. To put this in perspective, today it would be equivalent to losing about the entire population of the Sutherland Shire. If all wounded are included, it would equate to about one fifth of Sydney's population being affected. Euphoria surrounded the first few months of the Great War. Recruits rushed to sign up for the great adventure which many thought would be over by Christmas. However, after Gallipoli and the great losses of life in France began to filter home, recruitment fell. Indeed the matter of whether the army would consist of volunteers or be supplemented by compulsory conscription split the nation and fractured the political system. A referendum was held on the matter in 1916.

Much has been written about the Coo-ee March. This famous recruitment drive captured the imagination of Australians and entered into popular folk law. It left Gilgandra in New South Wales and wended its way through country towns to Sydney, gathering recruits and making popular folk heroes of the men who joined in in defence of the Empire. The Coo-ee March was a patriotic call to arms of New South Wales country people. Starting with 20 volunteers, it picked up 233 along the 320 miles to Sydney in October and November 1915.

Other recruitment marches soon followed and though they raised only a little over 1,500 recruits, the impact on the Australian population was significant. In December 1915, the Waratahs travelled from Nowra to Sydney, the Kangaroos from Wagga Wagga to Sydney and the Wallabies from Narrabri to Newcastle.

An enthusiastic crowd of about 2000 farewelled the Waratahs at Nowra on Tuesday November 13 1915. Along the way they were given gifts, fed along the way and greeted as heroes.



Banner carried on the march

We pick up the story on **day 16. Helensburgh to Sutherland. Wednesday December 15, 1915.**

Rain was pelting down when the Waratahs left Helensburgh and a strong southerly gale made conditions difficult, but the men made light of the weather as they proceeded to Waterfall. A break was had there with the matron and staff of the sanatorium serving light refreshments, while the patients gave a cheer to the marchers. As they passed the railway, they were greeted with tooting from half a dozen locomotives

in the shunting yards, and railway men cheered the marchers, encouraging them as they trudged through the rain and mud.

Although Heathcote was only a small township, it provided a warm welcome, which was a credit to the committee comprising Messrs J C Woodward (secretary), R L Brown, P Bryant, J Hall, P Hanlon, C McAlister, C Trevenor and C Woodward. It had been planned to serve lunch under the trees, but when the boisterous weather eventuated, Mr Brown made his Heathcote Hall available for the meal. Despite the rain, a collection of £16 was made during the journey from Waterfall to Heathcote.

On the road to Loftus, Mrs Hanlon of Yarrawonga presented the Waratahs with a puppy which became the third animal mascot. The kitten had been with the marchers from the start, while the other was a possum. When they reached Loftus, the Waratahs were met by the Sutherland Shire councillors and welcomed by the President, Cr E W Hyndman. Speakers at the centre also included the organising secretary, Inspector William Anderson, parliamentarians George Burns and Mark Morton and the Rev. I D Armitage.

Sutherland township had been decorated for the occasion and when the contingent arrived, the locals provided an enthusiastic welcome. The Waratahs were praised by Cr Hyndman for arriving punctually at 4.30pm, despite having encountered bad weather for perhaps the longest day's march, a distance of some 16 miles. All costs of the stay had been met by the council, which had allocated £50 for the purpose. A reception banquet was served at Boyle's Hall and this was followed by a recruiting meeting during the evening. Cr Hyndman acted as chairman and he mentioned in passing that he had volunteered for active service, only to be rejected. Mr Burns said that indirectly, these marches did much good. Without reinforcements, the Australians at Gallipoli would have to retreat and would mean the demolition of the Australian Army, he added.

Captain Samuel Toombs, MLA, gave a rousing speech, as did Corporal Galkie who had been involved in the April 25 landing at Gallipoli, and after they had spoken, several recruits came forward. [The identity of these local volunteers is not clear]

Day 17: Sutherland to Hurstville and Kogarah. Thursday December 16, 1915

After camping the night at Lobb's Hall, the Waratahs enjoyed breakfast and a further snack before they left Sutherland at 10:30 am. Cr Hyndman farewelled them and a quarter of a mile out, each of the men was presented with a bag of fruit from the orchard of Mr W Gilmore. The goodwill continued, when Miss Munro handed a half sovereign to Captain Blow for the purchase of cigarettes.

The first break was at Tom Ugly's Point around noon where the marchers were met by Kogarah Mayor, Ald. J Crawley and other leading citizens. A feature of the decorations at this point was a boomerang on a white background, stretched across the roadway. It contained lettering which formed 'Maroomba', an aboriginal word meaning 'good luck'.

The ladies of Sylvania and Tom Ugly's Point – Mesdames R Cook, H Hayward, and J W Reed – served refreshments, after which the pupils of Blakehurst Public School, under teacher Mr T Dunlop, sang a bracket of patriotic songs.

This is as far as we follow this march.

After a public reception in Macquarie Street, the Waratahs travelled by train to Liverpool for 3 months military training. On Saturday, 1st April 1916 more than half of the Waratahs embarked on board the SS Makarini as the 16th reinforcements for the 1st Battalion.

As part of the 1st Battalion, the Waratahs arrived in France as some of the bloodiest fighting was taking place. They began active service at Pozieres. On the 1st July, having pounded the German fortifications day and night for some time, the British ceased fire and, having presumed that the Germans would not have survived, sent their troops over the top. 60,000 soldiers were either killed or wounded. No ground was gained. German machine gunners from strategic positions slaughtered troops crossing no man's land. At Fromelles, Australian troops began an attack and initially gained ground but were forced back. Many Australian soldiers are buried around Fromelles. Largely forgotten or overshadowed by the Gallipoli tradition, the fighting at Fromelles, Bullecourte, Pozieres, Passchendale, Villers Bretonneux, the Somme, Ypres, Flers and other western front battlegrounds were much bloodier.

Of the original recruits at least 27 died on the battlefield in France or Belgium. The average age of those killed was 24. Two however were 39 and 40 and 6 were only 19. Of the 83 Waratahs profiled in the book, the occupation of 40 of them was listed as 'labourer' and 19 as 'miner'. Their height on average was about 5' 7". The loss of so many workers would have been a big drain on local communities.

Our Visitors' Book- by Dawn Emerson

Whenever I attend a venue which has a Visitors' book to sign, I delight in signing as a representative of our Society, and then flip back the pages to see whether any "notables" have signed, and from whence they came, as well as their comments. I once found the name of a fellow primary school friend who had attended the same one-teacher school as I had, and had signed a Visitors' book at Willandra National Park, with his current address—and I was able to correspond with him, catching up on his life and activities over the last 50 years!

Our Japanese student living with us delighted in signing the Visitors' Book at Cameron's Corner at the intersection of three Australian states, proudly noting that hers was the only Japanese name in the book! Allan McGrath, Jim Cutbush, Terry McCosker and the Museum sub-committee have spent a lot of time re-organising our displays at the Museum, and setting up new exhibitions, and we spent a Council grant providing the replica 1900's Owen Jones's house in Menai.

How do you evaluate the success of such efforts and do people really appreciate such displays? One can put out questionnaires, but rarely do people have enough time to complete them, so an easier way to evaluate is by reading the comments in the Visitors' Book.

Have you ever looked back at the pages of the Visitors' Book at our Museum in the Sutherland School of Arts? The current one which dates back to August, 1993 (and we have several books before that!) is a fascinating record. Some of our better known visitors in recent times were: Dr. M. Larkin and her husband, Tony: "Great asset to the Shire", Allan Russack of the Russack car fame: "Memories!" and Miss M. Farrelly, from Heathcote Hall, who thought it "Lovely!" and made us very proud. Mr. Barry Collier, MP, Member for Miranda recorded, "Wonderful display. Loved the red rattler entrance!" When we did the Sixtieth Birthday of the Cronulla Sutherland Railway, and I was amused to see that at the same exhibition I had quipped about Allan McGrath, when I signed as a councillor: "Our Curator trains historians!" Later in the book when we did our "Heritage Sports in the Shire" I had noted: 'Great display, Allan. You played hard and done good!' with apologies for the football quote. However sad to say, only five of our current councillors have ever visited our Museum, despite our frequent invitations. (You will never never know if you never, never go! We would LOVE to see you!)

Overseas visitors show their appreciation with comments such as "I am from the USA and it is good to see antiques like this. It helps explain Australia's home." Another wrote: "Nice displays. Good collection of kitchenwear (sic)." There are encouraging comments like "Keep up the good Work!"; 'Great show; gets better every year!'; 'Par Excellence'; 'Impressed by the thorough and meticulous display'. Others waxed lyrical and wrote "Heritage and traditions are the only things worth keeping!"; 'Congratulations on maintaining our historic links!'. 'A salute to Australia!' 'Excellent exhibition. I'm very glad the Society is keeping a record of our past to hand on to our families!' and 'Pages in time' or 'Very pleasant trip back in time!'; "Eye-opening; inspirational!"; 'Revisiting yesteryear!' 'Insightful!'; 'Breath-taking!'; 'Stimulating stuff—thought provoking!' and 'Pleasing to know that our heritage is in good hands'; 'Obviously a lot of work done to make a great flashback in history!'. Some were more wistful: 'Hope you preserve the old papers!'

Others have found relatives, such as S Conibear (nee Thompson) who wrote 'My cousin Hilda Hancock married Dave Kirkby' and E. Torpy wrote 'Surprised to see photo of relatives here; we were (sic) related to B.Beach, World Championship Sculler!' We also had K. & D. Coughlan, descendants of the Derrey family, and S. Gardner who 'found family photos!'. Rita Fitzgerald wrote that she had been very lucky to see Owen Jones's replica home and that she was 'on my way to visit Gwen Mayman, Owen Jones's daughter. Will tell her what I saw!'

Obviously however some visitors think that their own museum is better with comments like: "Go to Braidwood!" and some were not so impressed with our house-keeping, and wrote:

'Very interesting—and dusty'. Others expressed themselves in the vernacular with 'Sicko' and 'Pull in a Bazza!' which puzzles we older folk as to the exact meaning, but "130 kids had a good time" was a little more explanatory, as was: 'Heaps good!'; 'Legendary!'; 'Absolutely fabulous!'; 'Terrific!'; 'Super!'; 'Spectacular!'; 'Fantastic!'; 'Wonderful!'; 'Unreal!'; 'Magical!'; 'Superb!'; 'Brilliant!'; 'It was fun!' and 'Before my time' whilst 'Very old' did seem a bit of over-kill, but some found difficulty in expressing themselves and resorted to 'Mmmm, 'Aaaah' and 'Oooh' written out just like that.

Nostalgia often came to the fore: 'A blast from the past!'; 'Nostalgic!'; 'Into nostalgia!'; 'Loved the bell and school!'; 'Loved the schoolroom!'; 'Wonderful—evokes memories of my past!' Some of our visitors

became quite excited: 'I saw the wooden bridge at Woronora for the first time!'; 'We have the same baby bed!'; 'Worth coming to see'; and 'I loved it!' A few were glad to share their new-found knowledge: 'Did not know that Botany Bay was Sting Ray Bay!' St. Patrick's Primary School classes Years 3B and 3G commented: 'We have learnt so much more about our community and lifestyle of the past, thanks to you!'. Of course we have lots of items not on display stored all round the School of Arts, as we are very short of space and some areas are open to the weather. One of our own members, Maurie Beaven, signed and made a comment dear to our hearts: 'We need a bigger building!' and another member, Betty Greentree who has now passed on, wrote: 'Pretty good considering we have no space!' A visitor from Como echoed these sentiments saying: 'Fantastic collection. It deserves a heritage house to preserve this history and artefacts!' (Dear councillors---please note and help!) Mrs Stella Ericsson, a former member, who came on every excursion which we organised, and passed away a while ago wrote: 'Reminds me of my childhood', and Pauline Curby concurred with satisfaction, that it was 'Wonderful!'.

We think the church lectern with its outspread arms, like wings, to take the large bible caught one child's eye as she recorded: 'I like the bird!' Perhaps one of the perfume bottles were opened and sampled as one child recorded: 'Very nice atmosphere!'

We are not sure how some of our regulars take our efforts to change display' It is interesting that in 2000 a visitor recorded his satisfaction that we had no interactive displays with 'No computers! Great!'

Meantime we have realised that although we are an historical society we have to get into the 21st century and be pro-active with our displays. Perhaps to that visitor's disgust when next he attends, he will find we have now bought a computer and now use DVD's to show our historical film clips to advantage as we did during our last Heritage Festival. Many thanks to our member, Daphne Salt who provided the material shown and to Council for providing money from a grant to make this possible during our Centenary Year. Apparently not many people are aware that the Museum is open on the first Saturday of every month, or during the week when Heritage Festival is being held April-May each year, and enter by accident when strolling around Sutherland. One lucky visitor found it open during Heritage Festival saying: 'A lucky find on a Sunday walk!'

Have you visited our Museum lately and recorded a comment in our Visitors' Book? Why not call in to the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts and tell us what YOU think of our Sutherland Shire Historical Society Museum?

Setting the record straight

Bruce Watt

It is often said that Captain Cook raised the Union Jack at Botany Bay when he discovered Australia in 1770. This contains quite a few errors or misconceptions.

Cook was given the naval rank of Lieutenant when he left England to make the epic voyage to the Pacific. He was not promoted to the rank of Captain until his return to England. The flag that England had at the time was the 'Jack' which consisted of the blue cross of St Andrew of Scotland and the red cross of St George of England. It was not until the union with Ireland in 1803 that the diagonal red cross of St Patrick was added to the 'Jack'. It was the Jack that Governor Arthur Phillip hoisted at Sydney Cove on the 26th January 1788. This date is celebrated as 'Australia Day'. Cook did not take possession of the east coast of 'New Holland' until late August 1770. Much of the rest of the Australian coastline had already been 'discovered' and chartered by the Portuguese, Dutch or Spanish. Near the tip of Cape York Peninsula, towards the end of August 1770, on 'Possession Island' he hoisted the colours and in the name of King George the third took possession of the whole east coast by the name of 'New South Wales'.

Botany Bay was initially referred to as Stingray Bay on account of stingrays that were caught and eaten there. In the official ship's journal it was alternatively named Botanist's Harbour/Bay but crossed out and changed to Botany Bay. Joseph Banks was a wealthy young adventurer who had paid to go on this exciting voyage of discovery and with Daniel Solander, collected many botanical specimens. (Cape Solander at Kurnell is named after him) Later given a knighthood, he was influential in the decision to have Botany Bay established as a penal colony.

On old maps before Cook's time, our continent was referred to as 'Terra Australis incognito'. This literally means unknown south land. It was Matthew Flinders, renowned for circumnavigating Australia and charting it in 1803 and for the discovery of Port Hacking in 1796 who pushed to have the name 'Australia' recognized as the name rather than New Holland. From about 1815, the name 'Australia' came into general usage.

What is it – AlexandraLand or The Northern Territory?

This map of Australia is unusual. It shows most of the Northern Territory as AlexandraLand. It is not incorrect, however, it also never eventuated.

The map is from the Chambers Encyclopedia (1874).

John McDouell Stuart was a Scot who made several pioneering expeditions into Central Australia from South Australia. This included a south – north crossing of the continent in 1861 – 62. As a result, a route for the overland telegraph line was established and the first telegraph communication was established with England. In 1863, Britain added the whole of the Northern Territory to South Australia.

In 1863, Bertie, son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, married Princess Alexandria, daughter of the King of Denmark. [It was said that he was the father of Europe as many of his children married European royalty.] After a long wait; Queen Victoria had a 64 year reign, he was to become King Edward VII (1901 – 1910), the period being known as the Edwardian era. Alexandria was slim and beautiful and well liked by Queen Victoria. She would later become the Queen mother under her son's reign - King George V. The Sutherland Shire Historical Society museum has a large framed print of Alexandria on display.

Stuart wanted the Northern Territory named AlexandraLand although it never achieved much acceptance. This may be one of the few maps showing it.

In 1940, another attempt was made to name it ChurchillLand and again 1954, there was a call for it to be named ElizabethLand. Perhaps it is as well that these attempts failed.

Bruce Watt



The Story of the Creation of Sutherland Shire

As an Historical Society we are always looking at aspects of the past. I have been thinking about that and imagining just how far back in history can we go?

As an Aboriginal member of the Society I felt that I was at some disadvantage in my search as my culture is deemed to be a non literate culture, an oral culture. However, what I have found in fact is just the opposite.

Aboriginal people have always sung or told their history as stories. To support those history/stories they drew, painted and engraved the caves and rock shelves of their country with pictorial reminders of the history elements.

So using these pictures as a basis for the stories what can I learn? Well the first thing I learned was that stories were told and retold and those same stories were then passed onto other groups and retold there with changes that reflected the local culture and ideals.

What did these stories tell about? Some were stories about fishing or hunting, some were about the Lore/Law but many of the stories retold historical events; stories about contact with Europeans, drawings in the Shire of Portuguese, Spanish or English ships.

These stories about visitors from Europe can be tied to other evidence, such as the discovery of Spanish and Portuguese artefacts in and around the Georges River. The interesting thing comes from those connections is that we can get an idea of the age of the drawings from dating the artefacts.

Other drawings and engravings are not so easy to trace and to establish any age, but one such group of images appears to date from the very beginnings of Port Hacking. In fact they appear to date from the first arrival of the people of this area, the Tharawal.

This story is so widespread and so well known that it has been relatively easy to trace . By searching throughout Australia I have been able to piece together this Dreaming story and its relevance to the Sutherland Shire.

In some parts of Australia this story is called the Wawalag Sisters Dreaming, but in this area it is called the “Djurwali Sisters story” This dreaming story tells about how the first people came into the area of Sutherland and connects many parts of the Shire together.

The first part of the story to come to light was that of Yurlungur the great dreaming serpent. You might know this character as the “Rainbow Serpent”. The drawing of our own Rainbow Serpent can be found in the highlands of Waterfall above Uloola Falls.



In this photograph we see the representation of Yulungur as he is portrayed here.

In some parts of Australia the Rainbow Serpent is also called Yulunggul. Here are some of those representations.



The story of the Djurwali Sisters is one about love and childbirth. The two sisters meet two men, the Lightning Brothers, and they have a relationship with those men. Because that relationship is not approved when the children are born of the relationship then Yulunggul comes after the women.

The two lightning Brothers run away and leave the women to face the serpent by themselves. Below are drawings of the Lightning Brothers. One drawing is from here in Sutherland and the other comes from Kakadu in the north of Australia.



The figures on the left are the Lightning Brothers from Sutherland Shire

After the brothers ran away the two women and their children are left to fend for themselves. The snake quickly catches and swallows the sisters and their children. But because the women are sky gods the snake cannot digest them and is forced to regurgitate them. The women then run away and fly back to their homes in the sky.

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The two children are still inside the snake but because they are half gods he is having trouble eating them and they are passed through the snake. They revive and become the founders of the Aboriginal population in Sutherland.

Below here is the carving showing the two women. If you look very closely you may notice they have duck bills and that one has webbed feet. The children are carved on the rock to the left of the women.



The drawing above is of the Djurwali Sisters and below is their home in the Pleiades Galaxy



MUSEUM REPORT

The November open day for the Museum turned out to be a very hot, unsettled one and we had 7 visitors in total for the day. We also opened the Museum on the night of Tuesday 21st November for another successful project celebrating 100 years of the Shire 1906-2006 – “Telling it as it was” oral history. Our Mayor Councillor David Redmond did the presentations of CD’s and indexes to those that had participated. The evening concluded with our “thank you” cocktail reception in the Sutherland School of Arts, where over 100 guests toured the Museum, and we thank them for their kind donations and comments.

I would like to thank all of my committee for help given this year, along with Council & the Entertainment Centre management and staff and the public for some fine donations to our Museum. May you all have a happy and healthy Christmas 2006.

Jim Cutbush
Curator

THE WILLIAM COSSAR

Jim Cutbush.

This was a boat and it was built at the Government dockyard at what is now part of Circular Quay, Sydney. She was one of 28 Government boats built in this period for various employments around Port Jackson. The last duty she performed was to bring wood from Hen & Chicken Bay to H.M. Lime Kiln Bennelong Point. It was one of several boats named after members of the Government dockyard, in this case master builder William Cossar. The story continues:

THE SYDNEY GAZETTE
GOVERNMENT NOTICE

12TH JULY 1817

“Piratical seizure of the William Cossar “

Whereas

On Sunday night last, or early on Monday morning, The William Cossar, belonging to the Government, was cut from her moorings by some pirates, and the following persons being missing and supposed to be connected in the above piracy. All constables and others are hereby requested to apprehend and lodge them in any of the gaols of the colony, viz:

Joseph Graves, per Atlas, aged 34, 5 feet 10 inches high, fair complexion, hazel eyes and sandy hair.
William Smith, per Fame, aged 24, 5 feet 3½ inches high, fair complexion, hazel eyes and brown hair.
William Smith, per Fame, a gipsy, aged 25, 5 feet 7 inches high, dark complexion, black eyes, black hair, forefinger of right hand missing.

W.M. Hutchinson
Principal Superintendent

William Hutchinson as Superintendent of convicts had the duty to publish the names and particulars of all convicts absconding from Sydney.

The William Cossar had been safely moored by the Government stores at 2am on the 7th July 1817, and at 3am she was reported to the coxswain as missing by some men returning in a wooden boat.

From governor Macquarie’s diary for this period.

Monday, 7 July 1817.

This morning between the hours of 2 and 3 o’clock, some unknown persons piratically cut out and ran away with the Government large long boat, the William Cossar, from her moorings close to the King’s wharf. The moment she was missed Capt. Gill, then acting engineer, in the Government barge with a party of soldiers set out in pursuit of her. He set off at 4 o’clock direct for the Heads, and after going out to sea and sailing for a few miles to the northward, returned within the heads to search all the different coves and creeks of Port Jackson harbour, but all further search was fruitless as nothing could be seen of her either without or within the harbour. Captain Gill and his party therefore returned to Sydney, where they arrived about 1 o’clock in the afternoon.

There being some idea that the Cossar had been carried away by the pirates to Broken Bay to supply themselves with provisions and water there for their voyage, I dispatched the Government barge under Williams, the Government Coxswain and a party of soldiers in her to that place at 4 o’clock this afternoon, supplied with 4 days provisions, with orders to search Broken Bay and adjoining creeks for the Cossar. Another boat with 6 soldiers rowed guard all night between the heads to prevent the Cossar setting out in case she may not yet be gone.

Tuesday, 8 July 1817

Intelligence having been received at 2 o’clock this afternoon from Mr W Allan of Botany Bay, that the Cossar had been seen passing that port to the southward yesterday afternoon, steering apparently for Port Hacking, I had Mr Birnie’s long boat immediately fitted out under the command of Mr Milton the Harbour Master, with a party of soldiers, supplied with 4 days provisions, to go in pursuit of her to Port Hacking, and to search all the coves and creeks in that neighbourhood for her. [Mr Birnie was the first landowner - “Alpha Farm”, at Kurnell”] This expedition set out at 5 o’clock this afternoon.

Wednesday, 9 July 1817

The Government barge returned this evening from Broken Bay without any tidings of the Cossar.

Thursday, 10 July 1817

In the possible event of the Government boat WM. Cossar having gone to Port Stephens, I this evening gave orders to Mr Whyte, master of the Government. Brig Elizabeth Henrietta (now careening) to proceed in the colonial hired schooner Mary, with a small party of soldiers, this evening direct for Port Stephens, in order to search that port for the Cossar, and retake her. The schooner Mary accordingly sailed this evening for Port Stephens with a fine fair wind.

A vessel that arrived on Monday night 14 July from Hunter's River reported that a small two-masted vessel, answering the description of the William Cossar, had been seen off the mouth of that river and a Government schooner which was held in readiness weighed anchor and with all sail set, went out to try to intercept the missing vessel.

The William Cossar had been taken out without a jib or anchor and was not decked. It was thought at the time that she would proceed toward Port Stephens and try to surprise a small colonial craft and if this failed they would probably fall into the hands of ferocious natives when they beached the boat to get water as they would have no hope of getting her off again.

Barnard Williams in the Government barge was no more successful than Captain Gill and they all returned to Port without sighting the William Cossar.

Nearly two years later, in May 1819, H.M. Colonial Brig Elizabeth Henrietta arrived from Port Stephens with William Smith, the gipsy, on board. He was the only survivor of the William Cossar, which had been wrecked on the coast there shortly after her departure from Port Jackson.



From a painting of Sydney Cove 1803. The vessel under construction was to be the Portland. It was eventually launched in 1816 as the Elizabeth Henrietta and was the boat that discovered the sole survivor.