



Sutherland Shire
Historical Society Inc
Bulletin



VOL. 10 No. 2

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PRESIDENT:

Mrs Dawn Emerson, B.A. (Lib Sci), Litt. B.(Soc), AALIA., D.Ua, JP . Ph: 95431060 Fax: 9543 0191

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Mr Terry McCosker

PUBLIC OFFICER

Mr Andrew Platfoot

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Mr Jim Cutbush, Mrs Daphne Salt

HON. SECRETARY:

Mrs Angela Thomas P.O. Box 389, Sutherland, NSW, 1499 - Ph: 9528 6251

ASSISTANT SECRETARY:

Mrs Mina Whybourne Ph 9521 5752

HON. TREASURER:

Mr Maurie Beaven 9521 6360

RESEARCH OFFICER & ARCHIVIST:

Mr Les Bursill, AIM. J.P. B.A. (Arch) MLitt, (Anth). FACBMS Bus 92891457 a.h. ph 9520-7394 Mob 0419 298 018

BULLETIN EDITOR:

Mr Bruce Watt, B Com. Dip Ed. Dip Ed Stud. (UNSW) Ph 9523 5294, fax 9527 5294 e mail watto5l@optusnet.com.au

MUSEUM CURATOR:

Mr Jim Cutbush 9521 3721

DEP. MUSEUM CURATOR:

Mr Terry McCosker 9543 1160

EXCURSION OFFICER:

Mr Terry McCosker 9543 1160

BOOKING CLERK:

Mrs Betty McGrath 9521 2227

PUBLICITY OFFICER:

Mrs Marj Blackley 9521 1343

CO-PATRONS:

1. Clr David Redmond Mayor of Sutherland Shire Mrs Aileen Griffiths. O.A.M.

2.

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR:

Dr Edward Duyker O.A.M., B.A. (Hons), Ph.D. (Melb), FLS, FRGS, FRHistS, J.P.

COMMITTEE

HON SOLICITOR::

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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 All correspondence should be addressed to

The Honorary Secretary

**Sutherland Shire Historical Society
PO Box 389**

Sutherland NSW 1499

Society Publications are registered with the National Library, Canberra, in accordance with International Standard Serial Numbering. The Society's occasional publications carry an ISBN number.

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President's Report

Heritage Festival Launch

What a superb display our Museum Curator, Mr. Jim Cutbush and his wife Marjorie organized at the Sutherland School of Arts for the above Festival, along with some of our Museum sub-committee members! Our Sutherland Shire Citizens' Heritage Festival committee organized 27 events throughout the Shire, which I believe were more than any other group arranged in NSW! Unfortunately our SSHS launch coincided with the night before the State elections, so we only had about

60 people attending this function, and mostly only SSHS members, plus a couple of ladies from the Spinners and Weavers who plied their trade to the interest of everyone. We were pleased to see Ms.



Danna Vale, MP, Federal Member for Hughes, and former mayor and councillor, Mrs. Lorraine Rodden who also attended. Our Mayor, Clr. David Redmond, gave all a very hearty welcome and launched the Festival. The launch was followed by an excellent talk on renovating and refurbishing heritage buildings by heritage specialist, Mr. Gary Waller illustrated by slides, and we were all amazed at how even such items as a door which has had some panels broken, can be repaired so that some of the original timber remains, thereby retaining its claim to historical preservation.

Heritage Festival Events:

The cemetery tours and walks, the symphony on the beach, the Sutherland Music Club concerts, the walks around Cronulla, and the Botany Bay National Park at Kurnell, plus the day organized at Como by the Anything Goes artistic group were all well attended, as was the opening of the Botany Bay Family History Society premises in Gannons Road, at Caringbah by Mr. Bruce Baird, MP, Member for Cook. We know we need the rain, but the Parc Menai Celtic Festival and its Caedwadd Investiture was launched in the midst of a tropical thunderstorm! Every time we mentioned the Lord in our ceremony, He became very enthusiastic and applauded with a flash of lightning and a loud roll of thunder, so it really went with a bang! However, the rain did not dampen the spirits of the Celts under cover at the rotunda. The children lit candles for the Candlelight Ceremony, and the haggis was piped in at the Menai Community Centre next door, and a toast was drunk from the Quaiche. Next day was bright and sunny at Menai, (whilst it rained elsewhere in the Shire, so we think He was feeling sorry for us!) We had over 300 people attending at any one time, and over all it is believed that an estimated 900 members of the public attended the concert, joining in some of the dances, and hugely enjoying the many singers and musicians from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany, and the Isle of Man. Only a few stallholders attended, as there were apparently competing attractions at Bundanoon, and other venues, so we did well with our local crowd. In 2008 we will try and avoid this clash by holding the Parc Menai Festival on the last Saturday in March, on the 29th, thereby making it a permanent fixture for Heritage Festival each year.

Attending Other Societies

One of the delights of being your President is attending other societies and enjoying their events and listening to their guest speakers. During Heritage Festival we attended a boat tour which was sponsored by the Engineers' Society, on the Parramatta River and Sydney Harbour, looking at the industrial heritage; visited a library display at Blacktown Public Library on other cultures; attended a talk on Italian heritage at the Archives Office at the Rocks; and a talk on the history of Parramatta at Hambledon Cottage. When visiting the North Coast of NSW we called in to Lismore Historical Society and gave them a movie film of Lismore, Alstonville and Murwillumbah taken over 40 years ago by Mr. Fred Stringer of Carlton, and also called in to the Macleay Valley Museum at Kempsey and gave them a similar film by Fred, taken around Kempsey and South West Rocks for their collection. We also called in to the Lawrence Historical Society Museum, near Maclean, and were very impressed at the splendid display organized by such a small community of only about 2,000 people. They have their own Museum, a building which was given to them by the Maclean Shire Council, and you cross over the Clarence River to it by a car ferry. They even have a Research Room with Newspaper microfiche, and many valuable older historical texts. What a lesson for a large population such as the Shire with 220,000 people, as we still have no building of our own, and have run out of space where we can store our valuable items for display. However we do have two rooms at the Sutherland School of Arts in which we valiantly try and

change the displays to make them interesting to the public. If you haven't visited us yet, do come along on the first Saturday of the month, between 1 Oam and 3pm and we will delight in showing you around.

Cook Anniversary

Unfortunately this year due to a death in the family I was unable to attend the 237th Anniversary of the Cook Flag-raising at Kurnell this April, but Mr & Mrs Jim Cutbush, and Mrs. Daphne Salt, who attended in my stead, tell me that numbers were down on previous years and not many children attended. It is important we keep this flag flying, and that we remember the Meeting of Two Cultures and celebrate this momentous occasion. David Overett, Cliff, and I had the opportunity to attend the launch of the book by Georg Forster, the botanist who accompanied Cook on his 1778 expedition in lieu of Banks, at the Australian National Maritime Museum last week. It has been translated from the German, and is published by Hordern House. However we won't be buying too many for Christmas presents, as even the cheaper edition retails at \$345, whilst the fully bound kangaroo hide edition costs over \$900.

Nevertheless it is a superb collector's item and we were thrilled to have a look through it, and do hope our library will obtain a copy for the Local Studies collection.

Excursion

Our thanks to Terry McCosker who arranged the tour of St Stephen's Presbyterian church in Macquarie Street, last week. We learnt of the Iron Church, near the State Library, which had preceded its construction in 1930, and were amazed at the beautiful stained glass windows hidden away in this beautiful sandstone building. Unfortunately with all the large buildings around it overshadowing it, the windows are not shown to their best effect, but the colours and designs are spectacular. We were also very fortunate to be given a brief organ recital on their magnificent organ, and thoroughly enjoyed our tour. We then visited the State Library for their exhibition commemorating the David Mitchell bequests, and the many items that have been purchased from these funds. A trip to their book shop where I always buy a few presents for friends, and then some members left for a picnic lunch in the Botanical Gardens. Well done, Terry!

Guest Speakers

We have been delighted to gain a few members from our advertising of our speakers in the Leader, and Council newsletters. We always look forward to having guests or visitors, so do introduce them when you bring friends along to a meeting so we can make them welcome (and they might join as well!). I look forward to having a chat and a `cuppa' with you after the meeting, and don't forget that if you can give another member a lift it saves them having to catch the train, or a bus and it is so nice to have someone call for you!

Best wishes,

Dawn Emerson

Guest Speakers for 2007:

Friday, 15th June: Antarctica

Friday, 20th July: Clr Ken McDonell: Sutherland Shire Council's Centenary and some historical events during that time.

Friday, 17th August: Mr. Ivan Webber, General Manager, Woronora Cemetery and Crematorium: (A grave tale with several plots?)

From The Editor's Desk

2006 marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society and small number of foundation members is still with us. Sadly however the age profile of most local historical societies reveals an older membership with little interest in or participation from younger people. All of the executive of the Waverley Historical Society I believe are octogenarians and it was with sadness that we noted the recent closure of the Hurstville Historical Society. It would be a tragedy if this trend was to become more widespread.



In recent times, Australia has shaken off the 'cultural cringe' bogey that inflicted us up until about the 1980s. 'Our history was British, nothing

much happened here and anyway it was boring'. The post war era marked a fundamental break from the past. Technology and new lifestyle trends changed our homes and the way we lived and worked. One reaction was to get rid of the old fashioned furniture and appliances and replace these with new items. Bicentennials in 1970 and 1988 reinforced the desire to preserve aspects of a passing era and many folk museums and historical villages were created around the country. Sadly many of these have closed. Once you've seen them there is little need to go again. The way we learn and are entertained has also changed. Larger museums with bigger budgets and more expertise have responded by providing interesting resources, changing displays and interactive exhibitions.

By comparison, local museum curators are largely untrained in cataloguing and processing materials and as volunteers, receive no payment for their work. Museums are opened for limited hours and can't offer a variety of experiences.

What we see is a microcosm of society in which 'time poor' people are less willing to contribute to community organisations. School canteens, once staffed by volunteer Mums, can't get enough helpers because the Mums are working. The pace of life is much quicker. We are bombarded with information from the media, entertainment sources and the internet. Families lose inter-generational connectiveness because they are more mobile and spend less time with the extended family. In the past 'elders' passed on collective wisdom to the young.

As an organisation we need to be sure that we continue to speak the same 'language' and that our message is one that others want to hear. The Society needs an infusion of younger members who can have an input.

This year marks the centenary of both Life Saving Australia and Cronulla Surf Club. Our Bulletin cover features an early view of the Cronulla beaches with the title 'The Surfer's Paradise' long before its famous neighbour to the north assumed this name. The image, advertising the land sale, is from the Local Studies section of the Sutherland Shire Library. Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club was amongst the first such clubs to form. We hope to feature a story covering its history in the next edition.

Our Vice President, Daphne Salt has compiled a DVD entitled '100 years of Cronulla surfing' from old photographs and film footage to commemorate the occasion and this will make a permanent addition to our digital history collection.

Our well wishes go to Aileen Griffiths, our patron, foundation member of our society and one of the 100 2006 'Faces of the Shire' who is currently in a convalescent hospital.

Bruce Watt

Museum and Heritage Festival Report 2007

This year's Heritage Festival theme was "places in context". Once again we had a large exhibition consisting of three separate displays. The large foyer display, "click go the years", showed a collection of photographs of various parts of the shire complemented with a large collection of old cameras that took them. Our small exhibition room was, and still is, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Cronulla Surf Lifesaving Club and Surf Lifesaving Australia, along with a small area to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The large exhibition hall still contains the replica of the 1896 Owen Jones home, Menai, which has been brought forward to the 1st World War period with lots of mementos, scattered within each room. The model representing Owen Jones is now dressed in an original artillery man's uniform. Thanks to Mr David Collins for the kind loan from his military collection. The total number of visitors for our 2007 heritage festival was 837.

Once again we have been given more donations for the museum, which is now bursting at the seams and lacks a proper storage area; a solution is urgently needed! Thank you to all those people who donated items recently.

A special thank you to Daphne Salt for the very special DVD she made for our Cronulla SLSC 100th celebrations, which I believe the club has requested a copy of to show at their celebrations. Thank you to our members who manned the exhibitions — Dawn, Cliff, Terry, John, Maurie, Mina, Norma Jean, Merle, David, Pat, Doug, Marjorie "B" & Marjorie "C" and anyone I may have overlooked — who helped make this another successful heritage festival for our museum.

Jim Cutbush
Curator



Early Cronulla bathers from a hand coloured postcard

THE SUTHERLAND-CRONULLA TRAMWAY ENQUIRY

"And Thereby Hangs a Tale"

(Shakespeare 'As you like it', Act 2)

Merle Kavanagh

'To be, or not to be; that is the question;' Shakespeare was clearly not referring to the current debate in the Shire regarding a cross-shire motorway, the F6. Nor indeed was he thinking of the Tramway enquiry of 1908. But both of them fit perfectly into his concept of 'a sea of troubles' of which he wrote in Hamlet, Act 3.

Almost one hundred years ago the small population of the Shire was awaiting the outcome of an enquiry for a proposed tramway across the Shire. Since 1900 when a 'numerously signed petition' had been presented to the local Parliamentary Representative, there had been agitation for and discussion on a tramway from Sutherland to Cronulla Beach. However, Mr John Kneeshaw, the Tramway Superintendent had conceded 'Some of the residents are rather afraid of the tramway bringing a larger population there.' (Cronulla).

There were a number of proposed routes –

- o Sutherland to Cronulla, via Woronora Road (President Avenue)
- o Sutherland to Cronulla by way of Malvern Road (The Kingsway)
- o Kogarah to Cronulla, via Tom Ugly's Point
- o Sans Souci to Cronulla by proposed bridge from Rocky Point
Road across Georges River to Commins Point (Taren Point)

There were other suggestions during the taking of evidence and these included –

- o Kurnell to Cronulla, with steamer across Botany Bay
- o Railway from Como to Cronulla

This last suggestion came from a retired pharmacist, Charles Butcher, living at Cronulla. His plan would serve Sylvania and Miranda with a station at Highfield (Caringbah) for Port Hacking and this, he pointed out, would cut out the ascent of 400 feet to Sutherland by train and the corresponding descent to Cronulla. He felt certain that if a tramway were built from Sutherland to Cronulla 'it would become obsolete ... within the next five years.' He was at least 15 years out!

At that time there were five lines of horse coaches transporting 4,400 passengers per month between Sutherland railway station and the 'pleasure resorts of Cronulla, Port Hacking and Yowie Bay', making three trips daily, and using forty horses and twelve licensed drivers. Albert Giddings, running coaches between Sutherland and Cronulla, advised the enquiry that they had more passengers than the coach could carry about three times a year and added 'Of course, we could not take as many as we would like or would be able to take if the traffic police did not interfere with us.' Passengers left behind had to wait an hour for the coach to return.

Elias C Laycock, boat proprietor of Cronulla thought Giddings' small estimate of stranded passengers was 'far fetched' and revealed that he had to stop at Sutherland all night sometimes and that others 'had to go back to Sydney or camp in the hotel'. His complaints covered the 'miserable coach traffic' and the 'poor old broken down horses'. He spoke of the safety of Cronulla Beach – 'There has been nobody drowned here, or nearly drowned, except a lunatic or two, who went right outside the breakers, and could not swim back again.' Every witness had their own preference, but of course the routes across the river involved ferry crossings or ideally a bridge. These routes were not advocated by Laycock – "When people cannot get a bridge over to North Sydney I think that other people are asking for a big item when they ask for a bridge over George's River." Surprisingly the bridge over the Georges River to the shire was eventually built in 1929, three years prior to the Sydney connection with the north side over the Harbour Bridge.

William H. Carrick, who ran a large store at Sutherland, also drew attention to the numbers of intending coach passengers who were unable to get away', adding that he 'took £10 over his counter on the Thursday before Good Friday, from passengers who were stranded'. He had also compared the length and time tables for similar tramways, arriving at an estimated time for the Sutherland-Cronulla journey as a comfortable 35 minutes. He thought that the

tramway would increase population which would be much better for him than the few pounds he 'might reap from stranded excursionists.'



The Cronulla Sutherland tram service operated between 1911 and 1931. However, competition from private bus services such as Newlyn's motor-bus service shown here in 1926 meant that the service was unprofitable and hastened its closure (ed.)

Robert W. Evans, a retired civil servant living at Cronulla supported the tramway from Sutherland scheme, agreeing with his questioner that 'It takes a strong young man to stand a journey to Sydney and back.' John F. Macguire, a general dealer, also of Cronulla, gave evidence that he had 'seen people pushing the coaches up the hill because the horses had sore shoulders and were unable to draw them up.' With hindsight and history, we now know that even the tram needed to be 'assisted' up the hills by passengers alighting and lessening the load.

Frederick Matson, jnr, Pleasure Ground and boatshed proprietor of Yowie Bay provided evidence in the form of a number of letters from companies regarding poor transport for their annual picnics at the Yowie Bay Pleasure Ground citing the— 'insufficient and inadequate line of coaches', 'the unsuitability of drags or coaches' and 'the risk and trouble'. However, despite increasing numbers of people visiting the Pleasure Grounds by horse coaches, difficulties arose because 'when the weather was fine everyone wanted to ride on top, whereas, if the weather was wet on the home journey, everyone wanted to get inside.' Matson added that should the tramway pass close to the head of Yowl Bay, they proposed to run a launch service down to the Deer Park, south of the bay.

Charles Diston, boat proprietor of Yowie Bay, and previously in the coach business, favoured the Sutherland-Cronulla route. He had been 22 years in the district which he said was 'a very healthy locality' and added 'we have starved out two doctors'. Having taken the census in the area in 1891 and also in 1901 he gave evidence that in the earlier year the population was under 500 but had doubled by the later census. He now estimated the present population to be about

4,000. When asked if the tram would pay he agreed, stating 'At present a good many people walk to the train in the morning, because certain means of conveyance are not convenient.'

Robert W. Cook, coach proprietor, Sutherland, had been driving coaches for sixteen years and then had the Yowie Bay run. He recalled that at the time he first started driving to Cronulla 'there was only one house outside the hotel; now there are 140.' He stated that 'Each holiday has brought to us more passengers than we could carry' and agreed that the greatest increase had 'taken place during the last two years, owing to the popularity of surf bathing'.



Tram crew and Miss Mallet, Cronulla terminus, c1928

Charles McAlister, then a property-owner at Cronulla, having built the first cottage in Cronulla fourteen years previously, gave evidence, making it clear that he supported the Sutherland route. One of his reasons for this was the probability that the "push" would not go right out there for the purpose of continuing their orgies at Cronulla Beach.' The type referred to were those 'who travel for holiday-making only' and he did not want that class with their 'modes of enjoying themselves'. McAlister asserted that 90% of Cronulla people preferred the Sutherland route and he would be willing to resign his seat on Council and contest it on those grounds.

Edward Thacker, a Miranda gardener, previously a president of the Progress Association there, did not think that long distance tramways were successful and considered the tramway a 'temporary convenience'. He advocated a 'deviation of the railway line from Kogarah to Sutherland' but if it had to be a tramway, then the Tom Ugly's Point route was his choice 'because all the development has taken place at this end of the shire.'

A Clergyman then living at Sutherland, the Rev. Thomas H. Taylor answered questions 'without bias' and asserted that any tramway should pass the Miranda School, the 'centre of education' for the area. When asked if the tramway might increase Sunday traffic, he answered that it would probably be a better class of traffic. 'When I have been driving to Sylvania I have seen a dozen huge "buses conveying crowds of men of such a class that they would be of no good to the district.'

John Atkinson, a dairyman living in the Parraweena area favoured the link with Sans Souci route, suggesting that a section of the Georges River be filled, leaving the channel flowing and building a span or bridge over the channel. He supported his idea by quoting the large number of traps and other vehicles waiting for the punt at busy periods.

Mr. William G. Roberts, a Miranda fruit grower, poultry farmer and President of the Progress Assn. there advocated the Tom Ugly's route and was given a very hard time when questioned by the Chairman of the committee investigating the Tramway proposal. Roberts had intimated that the 'Minister' was favourable to a bridge being built and when

pressed, had to explain 'Mr. Downes, our local member, told us that our troubles would never cease at the river until such time as we obtained a bridge'. He was further diligently questioned about the number of residents he represented as President of the Progress Association and agreed that the number was 200. However, when asked how many were present at the last meeting of the Association he answered 'Nine, but the night was a very bad one.'

Another Miranda resident, Thomas B. Mowle, horticulturist and accountant, was also in favour of the Tom Ugly's route. He regretted that people heading home to Sutherland Shire late at night had to catch 'what is commonly called in vulgar language, the "drunks" train to Sutherland.' He lent his support to the previous speaker (Roberts), both of them suggesting the bridge at Tom Ugly's could be used for taking troops out to meet the enemy. 'An enemy could come along with soldiers landed from their men-of-war, and whilst our military authorities were thinking of taking **our** soldiers by train to Sutherland, the enemy could go straight to Sydney.' The Chairman commented pointedly 'The bridge would also be handy for the enemy to cross over too.'

Kogarah residents, also, were keen on the Tom Ugly's route, though Thomas A. Wearne, council clerk from there, suggested that, failing a bridge, the tram lines go to the water's edge and tramcars proceed onto the punt or pontoon of the river crossing. He also conceived that the pontoon might have two decks – one for the accommodation of passengers and perhaps bicycles, and the other for ordinary vehicles and tram cars, though tramcar passengers could retain their seats on the trams.

The Cronulla Progress Association also gave its support to the Tom Ugly's route, partly because of the frequency of trains at Kogarah (the northern terminus of the proposed tram on that route) as compared to the frequency of trains at Sutherland. However, questions to the witness, Otho H Windsor, Joint Hon Sec. of the Cronulla Progress Association and also an inspector at the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage, revealed that a unanimous vote for the Tom Ugly's route was taken at a meeting called by circular which read 'All in favour of the direct route are invited to attend and assist in the movement'. However it did not deter those against the proposal from attending. There were

apparently two meetings held at Cronulla and the press (*The Citizen*) reported on these - 'The meetings held recently remind us of the old Protestant Hall gatherings, in the matter of lively interest.' Evidence also suggested that a meeting at Cronulla was interrupted by a band of 'enthusiastic supporters' from the Sutherland Tramway League but the paper reported that the Sutherland Tramway League were not responsible for the interruptions.

Another group keen to be involved was the Kogarah and Cronulla Tramway and Bridge League which had been formed about six months previously. Mr. George B Holt, a builder and contractor and secretary of the League, reported on his League's involvement at these meetings, being keen supporters of the Tom Ugly's route. They were told by the local member that combining with Sutherland Shire for the proposed tramway via Tom Ugly's, might be an advantage to their own request for a tramway from Kogarah. George Holt had built the second hotel at Sutherland more than 20 years before and thought the population had 'very slightly increased' since that time. When asked how many of his group had attended the second Cronulla meeting he reported two coaches and 10 people from Kogarah with pick-ups at Sylvania and Miranda.

Charles McAlister gave his version of two meetings of the Cronulla Progress Association., intimating that the second meeting was stacked with Kogarah people who were 'waiting on the beach all the day ... until the meeting took place. Afterwards a coach load came out, the party including the mayor and aldermen of Kogarah'. Much of his report on the contentious meetings was disputed by the joint secretaries of the Cronulla Progress Association, Messrs Charles Fry and Otho Windsor who had collected signatures on a petition for the Kogarah route proposed.

Most Kogarah people who gave evidence on this route were men of influence and standing – the Mayor, a solicitor, an architect, a police constable and James McClenahan, retired puntman, who spoke of adverse weather conditions on the river – 'If there is a gale of wind that bridge (Sans Souci) will be blocked by the water that will be blown on to it ... I have seen the water come slap bang down the river and over the punt at Tom Ugly's Point and it will be worse at Sans Souci.' During his questioning George Holt also gave his views on the inadequacies of the punts and the effect of

weather conditions on the service – 'It is only a few days ago that nearly a whole day passed without people being able to cross the river ... The punt was out of action ... the wind was so strong.'

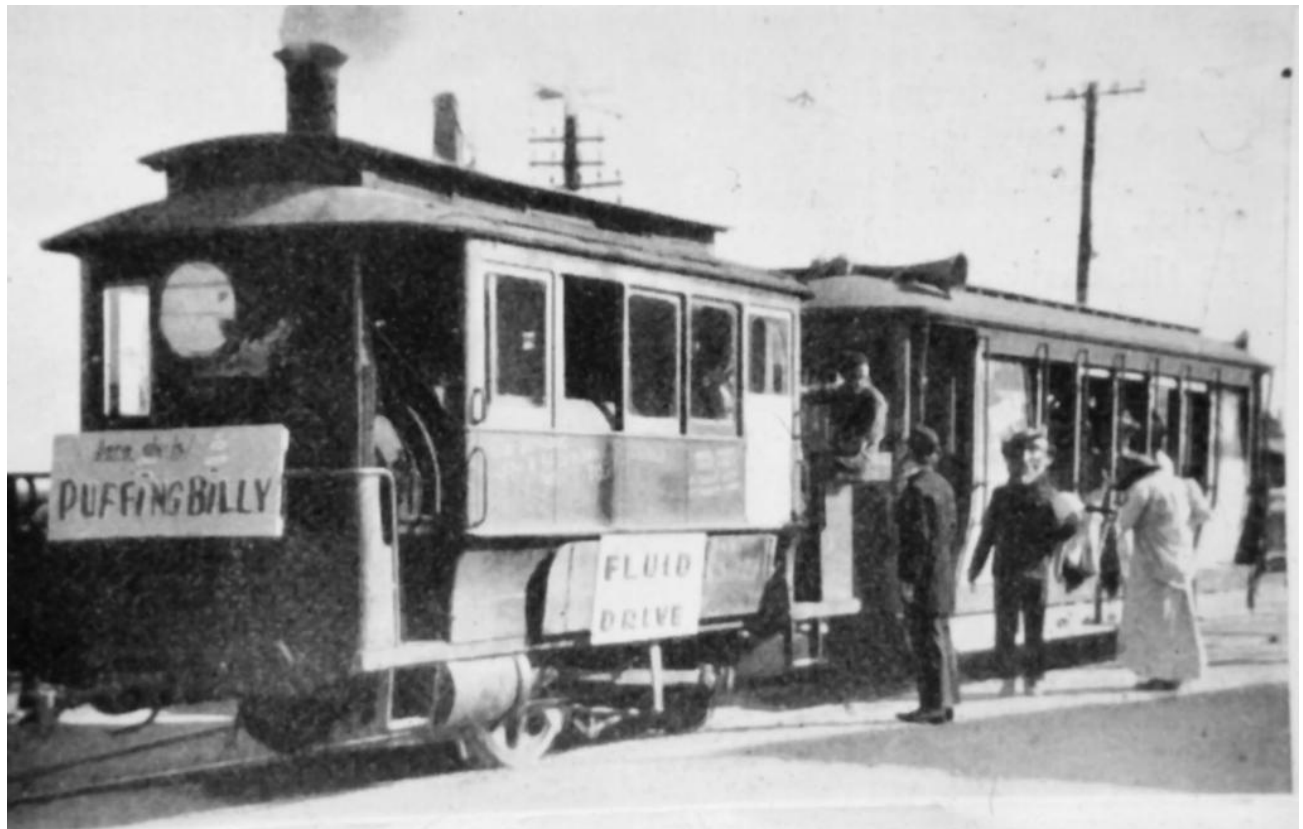
Charles McAlister also spoke of the 'drain' scheme which had been part of a previous attempt to improve transport in the shire. The 'drain' referred to the old canal that was cut by Thomas Holt many years ago 'to a saw-mill at a

shallow bay opposite Sans Souci'. Soundings were taken to see if it could be dredged or drained but the plan never reached fulfilment. McAlister explained - 'The tide comes up on the swamp where the drain comes in, and you would have to reclaim acres of ground before you could get there.' Edward Thorne, another property-owner of Cronulla added that there had been a scheme to dredge Woollooware Bay and also plans to use the 'drain' for the conveyance of building material. Nothing eventuated.

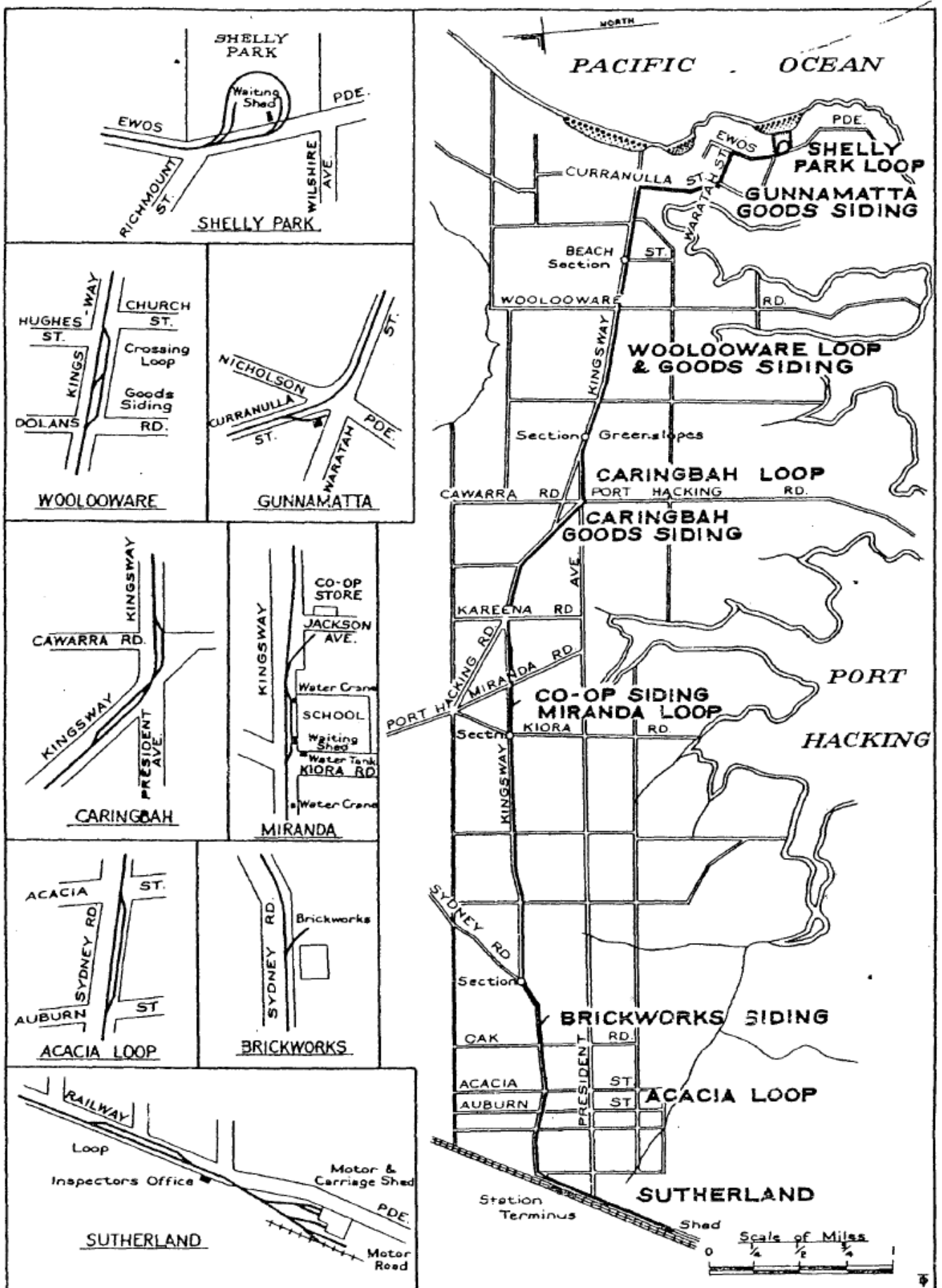
Prior to the 'drain' scheme the then Minister, E.W. O'Sullivan, had been behind a scheme for a tramway, ordering a survey from the goods shed at Sutherland along the old Woronora Road (President Avenue). The plan was to construct the tramway in sections to avoid placing it before the Public Works Committee. But this was abandoned, McAlister reported, because of opposition to the route by 'Miranda people', though he did admit that he had no evidence of this.

William J. Wilshire, property owner of Cronulla, objected strongly to routes across the Georges River, commenting 'a punt is only one degree in evolution beyond the blackfellow's dugout'. He pointed out that the transfer to the punt would not be a picnic - 'This punt is open to carry any and every kind of vehicle and crawling thing that chooses to go on board it' and that passengers with their 'impedimenta' would be 'mingling in a general tumult of horses, cows, motor-cars, manure carts, timber and brick drays, dogs, buggies, pigs, goats and vehicles of every description.' When William Wilshire was asked about the evidence given to the enquiry by his son, Claude, in favour of the Kogarah route, he admitted to being 'staggered' to find he was giving evidence and commented 'My son's impressions are not worth much. It makes me laugh to think of his having an impression about a matter of that kind.' Then perhaps to lessen the impact of his negative remarks or to give credit where due, he added 'He is a splendid insurance agent.'

Questioning generally revealed that money saved by not travelling on by train from Kogarah to Sutherland, would be more than expended on crossing the Georges River in whatever manner. If a bridge, then the difficulty might be locating firm foundations at Sans Souci or Tom Ugly's Point as was found when the South Coast railway was proposed twenty years earlier. They had finally been obliged to site the rail crossing at Como.



Steam tram, Cronulla



The Holt-Sutherland Estate Company had agreed to contribute £75 for three years in respect of any loss if the line was constructed from Sutherland. If 10, 20 or 30 acres were needed they would not make any claim for it. Michael Maloney, the Secretary, also noted that the Sutherland-Cronulla Tramway would not be of great benefit to them, but an extension to Kurnell would be. Mr. Edward P. Simpson, Solicitor and director of the Holt-Sutherland Estate Company also favoured the Kurnell line, though he thought 'the land out there is the hungriest you could imagine ... It is the most useless, rotten looking country that ever you set eyes on.'

Frank Farnell, Chairman of the National Park Trust was in favour of a tramway to Kurnell. He also believed that the Sutherland-Cronulla route would open up more opportunities for people to come by boat from the shire bays to Audley, especially if the line was laid as close as possible to the heads of the bays. The steep approach to Audley by land was a deterrent to visitors.

Varney Parkes, M.P., like a good politician, spoke positively about schemes such as putting another deck on the rail bridge at Como, perhaps one for trains and one for trams and vehicles. When asked for an estimate of the period for which the Sutherland-Cronulla route might meet future community transport requirements, prophetically he replied 'For twenty years to come'. He also dealt with the steep hill at Miranda by suggesting that cuttings on each hill could reduce the grade. Or alternatively a detour towards Yowie Bay might serve the area better.

The enquiry had taken place over nine months, from 23 January to 4 September 1908, and evidence had been given by 60 witnesses. Each route had been examined closely, the costs thoroughly scrutinized and each outlandish scheme thrown in the waste bin before the final decision was made. The Choice? As usual, it was all about money. The Sutherland-Cronulla line along the Malvern Road, straight as an arrow in most parts, no cuttings on the hills, minimum deviation to the heads of the bays and certainly no great river to cross. Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth, Act 4 'Be bloody, bold and resolute' – and they certainly were!

Ref.

Report together with Minutes of Evidence and Plan relating to the Proposed Tramway, from Sutherland to Cronulla, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Legislative Assembly N.S.W. No. 9 Report, 15 October 1908

BOTANY BAY FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

Merle Kavanagh

This Heritage Week event was held on 31 March 2007 at the Family History Society's new Research Rooms at the Community Centre in Gannons Road, Caringbah. Merle Kavanagh and Daphne Salt manned a stall for the Sutherland Shire Historical Society amongst other stalls representing book sellers, transcription agents, scrapbook specialists, software suppliers and a display of bonnets. A publication produced by the Family History Society, *Sutherland Shire, Some Early Residents*, was launched by Ken McDonnell and the Research Room was officially opened by Bruce Baird, their Patron.

We had a display of old photographs on the wall behind our stall and DVDs playing on the TV screen. A handout sheet of *Some Local Resources for Family Historians* was given out (28 copies) and five Society membership forms. Two enquiries on local history were taken and letters sent in reply. Some local history books, (Kurnell, Yowie Bay, etc.) were sold and five copies of *The Bulletin*. The Sowden Index to *The Bulletin* and indexes to some local history tapes, were available for checking. It was a very busy morning but things quietened down later in the day.

Australia's Worst Maritime Disaster — the Drowning of Lark Force.

Garriock Duncan

The period, February-March, 2007, was a good time for Australian maritime disasters. The *Sun Herald* (February 11), in a short article buried deep in the paper, announced the results of pathology tests conducted on the only body recovered from the loss of HMAS *Sydney*¹. The March 27 episode of *Foreign Correspondent* (ABC TV) announced probably the solution to a ninety year old disaster, the disappearance of Australian submarine, AE1.

AE1 and AE2 were Australia's first submarines. Modified versions of the English E class overseas service submarine, both had been ordered in 1910 and joined the fledgling Australian fleet just prior to the outbreak of World War 1. Both submarines took part in the New Guinea Campaign of 1914 and on the morning of September 14, 1914, AE1 left Rabaul Harbour on patrol and disappeared. AE2, of course, went on to win glory in the Gallipoli Campaign in the following year².

Bad as the loss of AE1 was after only barely a fortnight of war, the loss of HMAS *Sydney* (November, 1941) was infinitely worse. The *Sydney* was the "pin-up" ship of the RAN and its loss, virtually without trace, at the hands of militarily a lesser vessel was hard to accept³. In order to satisfy the national need for an answer to the disaster, the involvement of a third party was invoked. This third party was a Japanese I class submarine, which (some weeks before the actual outbreak of the Pacific War, December 7/8) had machine gunned the survivors of *Sydney* in the water. Hence the reason for the pathology report on the body of the seaman to see if his injuries were consistent with the Japanese submarine scenario. In fact, they were consistent with a large calibre German shell⁴.

In his brief article, Walker managed to commit a grave historical error. He commented that the loss of the *Sydney* was "Australia's worst wartime disaster". Of, course, he meant "worst wartime (maritime) disaster". However, he is wrong. That distinction belongs to the loss of the SS *Montevideo Maru* of the Mitsui-OSK Line on July 1, 1942, at the hands of the American submarine, USS *Sturgeon*.⁵ The *Montevideo Maru* was carrying the bulk of the survivors of Lark Force to the island of Hainan.

Lark Force was an element of an ill-conceived and ultimately doomed strategy to defend the approaches to northern Australia should the Japanese bypass the "impregnable" fortress of Singapore. When the 8th Division, AIF, was sent to Malaya, the 23rd Brigade was detached and the three battalions that made up the Brigade were posted to three vantage points to the north of Australia. Sparrow Force (2/40th Btn.) was sent to Timor⁶; Gull Force (2/21st Btn) to Ambon⁷; and Lark Force (2/22nd Btn.) to Rabaul⁸. Their principal objective was to deny the Japanese access to the various airfields on these islands, since mainland Australia was within range of aircraft operating from these fields. As ill conceived as the overall strategy was, there was some point in this since the devastating attack on Broome (March 3, 1942) was launched from the airfield at Kupang, in west Timor⁹. Sparrow Force was meant to deny that airfield to the Japanese.

1 ' F Walker, "Tests reveal sailor may have taken days to die", *The Sun Herald*, Sunday, February 11, 2007, p. 28.

2 See: AE1 and AE2 homepage ([www.anm.gov.au/encyclopaedia/WW1 \(_navy/ae1_ae2.htm\)](http://www.anm.gov.au/encyclopaedia/WW1/_navy/ae1_ae2.htm))

3 For details, see: "National Archives of Australia, Fact Sheet 111 — the Sinking of HMAS *Sydney*" (www.naa.gov.au/fsheets/FS_111.htm)

4 Similar tests, with the same result, had been carried out previously on the Carley life float, in which the sailor's oddy had been found: J Ashton, *The Scientific Survey of a Carley Float*, Technical Papers of the AWM, no. 1, November, 1993.. A summary of Ashton's results were published in the press: L Dayton, "New clue to the fate of HMAS *Sydney*", *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 27, 1995, p. 12.

5 See my response to Walker's article under the heading, " Maritime claim sunk" in the *Sun Herald*, Sunday, February 18, 2007, p. 30. I briefly discussed the loss of the *Montevideo Maru* in : Australian Submarine Heritage", *SSHSQ Bulletin*, 6(4), November, 2003, p. 12.

6 a See: "Fall of Timor — Overview" (www.ww2_australia.gov.au/japadvance/timor.html)

7 See "Fall of Ambon — Overview" (www.ww2australia.gov.au/japadvance/ambon.html)

8 See: "Fall of Rabaul — Overview" (www.ww2_australia.gov.au/japadvance/rabaul.html)

9 See my brief discussion in "Diving Deeper into Shipwreck Detectives", *SSHSQ Bulletin*, 7(2), May, 2004, p. 30.

Unbeknowns to the men of these units, the decision had been made that there would be no reinforcements and no withdrawal once the Japanese attacked – it would have been too dangerous. The attack on Rabaul (by about 20 000 Japanese) began at midnight on January 23, 1942. The 1400 men of Lark Force were initially ordered to stand and fight but after only about eight hours of fighting, the men were ordered to disengage and make their way to Australia, if they could. Eventually, about 400 managed to evade capture; the other 1000 were not so lucky. However, there were not only service personnel (including some nurses) on Rabaul. The civilian administration had virtually been captured intact and there were plantation staff, missionaries and the general European population of Rabaul

The fate of Lark Force was repeated on the other islands. Ambon came under attack on the night of January 30-31, and Gull Force surrendered on February 3. Sparrow Force fared no better. The attack began on the night of February 19-20 and the surrender occurred on February 23. Some five thousand Australian servicemen had been lost in a futile attempt to stem the Japanese advance.

The **Montevideo Maru**, judging by surviving photos (none in colour) was just a medium size passenger/cargo steamer¹⁰. Presumably with a hull painted black, there was a large squat superstructure midships with one tall funnel. There were cargo booms fore and aft. The ship belonged to the Mitsui-OSK Line and regularly sailed the route to South American¹¹. A sister ship was the **Buenos Aires Maru**.

On June 22, 1942, the Japanese ordered 845 POWs and 208 civilian internees to board the Japanese ship, **Montevideo Maru**, for transport to Japan. The ship bore no markings to indicate that it carried POWs. The POWs were members of the 2/22nd Battalion AIF, New Guinea Rifles, an Anti-Tank Battery, an Anti-Aircraft Battery, Coastal Defence Battery, a RAAF group and a detachment of the 2/20th Field Ambulance. (Uniquely, the members of the 2/22nd Battalion Band were all members of Salvation Army Bands)¹².

We are all familiar with the violent submarine warfare of the Battle of the Atlantic but we are less aware of perhaps an even more damaging submarine war in the Pacific. The only difference is that the submarines were on our side. On 1st July 1942 an American submarine, the USS **Sturgeon**, attacked and sank the **Montevideo Maru** unaware that more than 1000 POWs were locked in its holds. There were no survivors. No indication of its sinking or of the tragic loss of life was given by the Japanese Government¹³

This inactivity on behalf of the wartime Japanese authorities has given rise to the theory that the men, or at least the vast majority, were not on the **Montevideo Maru**¹⁴. Presumably, they had been massacred by the Japanese and the ship scenario was a device to cover up the crime. Such crimes were known to have been committed by the Japanese. The defenders of Laha Airfield on Ambon, some 300 Australian troops, suffered such a fate. Indeed, 180 Australian prisoners are known to have been massacred at the Tol Plantation on Rabaul itself

There is still no definitive statement on the fate of the missing men. However, testimony from a surviving member of the crew of the **Montevideo Maru**¹⁴ proves that the men were on the ship. Their Japanese captors fared no better in the sinking. At least 71 Japanese died and of those who made it to shore, the majority were killed by Filipino guerillas¹⁵

10 See: "Montevideo Maru" (www.montevideomaru.info)

11 " On the Mitsui-OSK Line, see: www.timetableimages.com/maritime/images/osk.htm.

12 Some indication of the conditions on board the **Montevideo Maru** can be gained from Terry Kelly's story. Kelly was a RAF pilot shipped to Japan in the SS Dai Nichi Maru in 1942 (T Kelly, *By Hellship to Hiroshima*, Pen & Sword, 2006, pp. 26-45). "

13 The few members of Lark Force, who survived captivity, including the nurses, were later transported to Japan in the SS **Naruto Maru**, see: www.w2.australia.gov.au/japadvance/yokohama.htm.

14 "For a long discussion, see: www.montevideomaru.info/montevideo.html/Montevideo%20Maru.htm.

15 15 "Remembering 1942 – the Sinking of the **Montevideo Maru**..." (www.awm.gov.au/atwar/remembering1942/montevideo/)

Unfortunately, the sacrifice of the men of Gull, Lark and Sparrow Forces was virtually in vain. These units had casualty rates higher than Australian units on the Western Front in World War 1. They were betrayed not only by a flawed strategy but also by a country which only likes to remember defeats it can turn into victories. Unfortunately, there is no victory in drowning when trapped in the shattered hull of a sinking Japanese transport. In fact, sections of the RSL even denied these men any remembrance¹⁶

The battlefields of Gallipoli and the Western Front in World War One are not the only repositories of Australian values. Stories like the fate of Lark Force deserve to be told¹⁷.

THE MAD MAX AEROPLANE

Terry McCosker

I saw all the Mad Max films and was fascinated by the strange looking aircraft used in the third film, 'Beyond Thunderdome.'. At the time I had no idea that I would be very much involved with it some months later.

I had a private pilot's license and flew regularly from a club at Hoxton Park. Another pilot who also flew from the same club was called Neal. Neal was a test pilot for Transavia, a company at Seven Hills who manufactured crop dusting aircraft called "Air Truck " and later "Sky Farmer". The first time I saw Neal fly one of this type of aircraft into Hoxton Park I recognized it as the Mad Max plane, although it looked much better in its original colours of white and orange.

The Sky Farmer is a very unusual aircraft capable of lifting one ton of either solid or liquid material for spreading over crops. It has two wings, the larger on top and the smaller on the bottom. The pilot's cabin is raised above the top wing. The body is very narrow and shaped like an angel fish. The load carrying hopper is behind the pilots cabin and behind that down low is a small passenger cabin to carry workers to the loading site, Protruding rearward from the top wing, one on either side are two spars and on the rear of these are rudders and elevators. The hopper is filled by a front end loader, with special scoop, moving in between the spars and tipping the load in.

Neal's job included testing all of these aircraft prior to sale. When they were completed to a point that they were airworthy, Neal would fly them from the car park at the Seven Hills factory to Bankstown where the finishing touches would be added. They were then further tested and when Neal was satisfied that they complied with regulations they would be sold.

One day at Hoxton Park, when Neal had a new "Sky Farmer" there, he said that he wanted to endorse someone on this type of aircraft to help him during a sales campaign which he was running for members of the Chinese Government who wanted to replace their aging fleet of Russian built crop dusters at Shanghai. To my great surprise and to the disappointment of other club members he asked me if I was interested. Naturally I leapt at the opportunity.

The endorsement, which was really instruction on the type of aircraft involved, followed by a test commenced almost straight away. After familiarization with the aircraft and controls Neal suggested that I get in and taxi it around on the grassed areas beside the main runway. As it was a single seat aircraft, all instructions were given from outside prior to execution. Unlike the aircraft I was used to flying, this type was controlled by a joystick whereas most modern day craft have a steering wheel type of control column. I was endorsed on a Tiger Moth, which also had a joy stick but before I had done much flying in it the owner took it with him to a country airport so I never saw it again.

After about ten or fifteen minutes of taxi work Neal called me in and suggested that I now run up the side of the runway on the grass with the front wheel off the ground. This situation occurs just before take off. Neal further stated that if the aircraft did take off I was to fly a normal circuit and land again on the grass.

16 A Ramsay, "Mick and Bill and the others remembered", in News Review, p. 33, in the Sydney Morning Herald, Weekend Edition, January 26-27, 2007.

17 For the latest telling, see: C Johnson, ed., Little Hell — the Story of the 2/22 Battalion and Lark Force, History House, 2004.

Well as you might have guessed it did and I did the circuit and then made one of the best landings I have ever made. Neal was satisfied and I was endorsed. I flew to and from Camden during his sales promotion and the Chinese Government eventually purchased 5 of the aircraft.

Very soon after this Neal asked me to meet him at Bankstown where he took me to a hanger on the airport grounds. Inside was the roughest looking aircraft I had ever seen. I recognized it as a "Sky Farmer", but it was much older so it was really an "Air Truck." I could not believe that it would fly in such a condition until Neal told me it was the Mad Max plane from "Beyond Thunderdome". Kennedy Miller had paid a commercial artist a large sum of money to paint it in dark, rusty colours to make it look as though it had been rebuilt from scrap. The artist had done a good job. Neal then said that Kennedy Miller wanted to sell it and he had advised them that they would have a much better chance of doing so if it was flying I was offered the job of flying it anywhere I liked as long as I carried a For Sale sign and displayed it wherever I landed. As far as fuel was concerned I just had to send Kennedy Miller the bills. Once again I leapt at the offer.

As the aircraft had been standing for some months there were squeaking noises when the propeller was turned by hand so the first thing I had to do was squirt oil into the spark plug holes and keep turning the propeller until the noise stopped. Doesn't sound like much, but it took me three hours of turning to get rid of the noises. I then attempted to start the motor and it fired straight away so I took it out for a circuit at Bankstown and it flew beautifully.

For about 2 years I flew the Mad Max plane to air shows and country airports. People who saw it were, like me, unable to believe it could fly. It was a pity that, because of copyright laws it could not be advertised at air shows as the Mad Max plane, as it would have been a draw card, but everybody recognized it anyway,

One morning, I was contacted and told that the plane had been sold and I was asked if I could fly it to Tamworth that day. As luck would have it I was not working and said that I could. The next phone call was a little more challenging. Due to the same copyright laws it could not be sold as it was, recognizable as the Mad Max plane, and could I paint it. I quoted \$100 to make it unrecognizable. This was accepted so with a 9" roller and a can of white plastic paint I made it unrecognizable as the Mad Max plane and almost unrecognizable as an aircraft. All of this took me into the afternoon which meant that I was starting to run out of time to get to Tamworth before last light. I knew that because of the small fuel tanks I would have to refuel at Cessnock, so off I went.

The flight to Cessnock was uneventful. There is a flying school at Cessnock Airfield which caters for Asian pilot training and as I was refueling a class came out for a break. They were stunned to think this ugly, unusual aircraft had actually flown in and was going further on. They were all over it, but I couldn't stay and took off for Tamworth. As the aircraft had no navigational aides, except for a compass, I had planned to follow the railway line to avoid getting lost. About half an hour out of Tamworth, the air traffic controller there, contacted me and suggested that I fly a more direct route due to the time remaining before last light. When I informed him of my lack of navigation aides, he agreed that my original plan was the safest, so I continued on following the railway. I knew that at a small town called Duri, I was to turn left 90 degrees and that would take me to Tamworth airport. Just before reaching Duri, I was again contacted to see if I could see Tamworth or the airfield. I answered in the negative. The air traffic controller then said "We have put the rotating beacons on, can you see them?" Again I replied in the negative as by this time it was getting late and I was looking west, towards the setting sun, for the airport. They then said. "Don't worry, we can see you and we will tell you when to turn left. When you do you will be on a six mile final for the airport". I turned when directed but flew a couple of miles before I saw the airport and I continued in and landed safely.

The purchaser met me and put me on a commercial flight back to Sydney. It was a sad day for me to realize that that was my last flight in the Mad Max plane but I had plenty of happy memories. It was even sadder to hear about three months later that a crop dusting pilot had crashed the plane near Tamworth and killed himself, closing the chapter on the Mad Max plane forever.

"His world was our oyster"---

Albert Russell Emerson, 1840-1885

(Talk presented on Members' Night, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, Friday, 15/1/1999, - by Clr. Dawn Emerson, President, Sutherland Shire Historical Society. Revised 31/1/2007)

Introduction

We have frequently been informed that Sir Thomas Holt was the founder of the oyster industry, but it is a fact that the contribution of Albert Russell Emerson and his brother John, to our oyster farming industry and its history has been sadly overlooked. They showed it was possible to grow commercial oysters successfully, by placing oysterlings in a suitable situation in the river with regards to salinity and temperature, and bringing them to maturity. They publicised and promoted the excellence of the Georges River oyster daily, by exhibiting them as delicacies, and making them available to all, in the dining rooms at the Sea Breeze Hotel, at Tom Ugly's and in the fish shops and "oyster saloons" of Sydney.

Researching the Emerson History

It is difficult to research an ancestor's history if they die at an early age, and when you have three ancestors in succession who die before their 46th birthday, it is very difficult obtaining information from the children. This is the case with Albert Emerson who died at 45, his wife at 39, and his son John Jr., died at 43. John Jr. was my husband's grandfather. Usually children learn the family history from their grandparents, as the older people have the time to hand down the family legends. Now when ancestors don't live long enough to pass on these stories to their grandchildren, or even to tell their children, then family history becomes very difficult to trace. There are also few if any letters which could explain their actions. Fortunately John Jr.'s son, Allan, who was my husband's father, lived to 71 years of age, and Cliff, his son and my husband, who is now also 71 says he feels fine!

So you can imagine how difficult it has been to reconstruct the life of Albert Emerson, and I am indebted for my research to my husband's uncle, Colin Brinsley Emerson, of Gerringong, who is now deceased, and to June Lane of Penshurst, from the Hurstville Family History Society Inc., researching the St. George Anglican Church graveyard records, (although she attributed wrong children to Albert in her book) and Merle Kavanagh, our SSHS member, who was able to access some shipping records for me.

Oysters first prized for their Shells not their Meat

Oysters were a favourite food of the Aboriginal population, who devoured them after placing them on hot rocks until they opened. There were middens in many locations including Oatley Point and Cans Park to evidence this, and carbon dated to 6,000 BC.[4] There were reports of a small old half-caste, called "Coal-Eye" who delighted children by opening oysters with his teeth. [26:38] We first hear of the oysters of Botany Bay when on the 2nd May, 1770 Mr. Gore was sent up to the head of the bay to "drudge for oysters" by Lieutenant James Cook. {29:3} In actual fact oysters were probably harvested from the time of the discovery of the Georges River, or the settlement of the colony, by the taking of oysters from Port Jackson. There were recorded claims that oysters had been harvested from the Georges River by the settlers as early as 1812. [26:38] However originally the oysters were not prized by the European population for their succulent flesh, but for their shells! The early years of the settlement at Port Jackson had problems with building with sandstone or bricks, through lack of lime for mortar. In 1809 John Alford, a former convict, was a convict superintendent on Robert Campbell's farm at Canterbury, and in 1831 Alford, after whom Alford's Point was named, supplied lime for the construction of the Lansdowne Bridge, which was obtained from Lime Kiln Bay, by burning the oyster shells in a kiln until they broke down into lime.[5] In 1855 shell was carried from Weeney Bay for lime to the Cooks River. Only later did oysters become a favourite food of the European settlers. This seems strange, as the British are noted for their love of shellfish: cockles, mussels, and winkles. Perhaps the mud oyster and the rock oyster looked a bit outlandish by comparison to these familiar delicacies, but large shell oysters flourished in Whitstable in Kent, and still do so today, so were not unknown to them.

Albert Emerson's Birthplace.

Family lore had it that Albert was born in "Lyn, Hampshire, England" but Albert Russell Emerson was born in Lyn, Norfolk, England to Richard D. Emerson who was recorded as "a gentleman", and Mary Ann Shorter in 1840. However we now know it was King's Lyn, which is by the sea in Norfolk, and was the third largest port in England. The town was previously known as Bishop's Lyn, until Henry VIII confiscated the Bishop's land, and it was thereafter known as King's Lyn. It is understood that residents, who were not royalists and were annoyed by this action, deleted the first word of the town's name, hence its truncation to "Lyn". Richard Emerson, Albert's father, was born in 1808, and his mother was born in 1811.

John Emerson Snr

Apparently John Snr was already here in Australia when Albert Emerson [1], recorded as a "mariner" worked his passage out on the "Eagle" from overseas, stopping at Hong Kong, arriving on 26th April, 1860. Albert is listed as one of the crew, 20 years of age, and British. There were also 500 Chinese [2] passengers on board, possibly going to the goldfields. A "Mr (John) Emmerson" [3] had also come to Sydney from another part of Australia on the "Clarence" on 28th March, 1860. We presume that this was Albert's brother, John, and they had arranged to meet in Sydney. We presume that Richard and Mary Ann must have followed their two sons to Australia, between 1860 and 1864. These records have yet to be checked.

Albert's brother John, had an oyster lease in the Georges River, from 1861, and to which John, himself, attested before the Oyster Culture Commission: report of the Royal Commission, in 1876, where he was called as an expert witness. [24:7] This would have been a lease to harvest oysters, not to cultivate them, as Albert was granted the first oyster lease for the whole of Botany Bay in 1873. (It is believed that the records pertaining to these leases were lost in the fire at the Garden Palace Exhibition, opposite the now Mitchell Library, in the Sydney Botanical Gardens in 1882.) As Albert had arrived in Sydney in 1860, possibly he assisted John on his lease. In 1864 Richard Emerson had oyster saloons at 68 Market Street, 559 Stanley Street, and 116 King St. Apparently John also traveled between Australia and New Zealand, [24:7] because he is recorded as arriving in Auckland from Melbourne in the barque "Chance" on 12th May, 1864. This ship was skippered by a Captain Dale. (Ref. APLS1 1017,25; Ref 1091,25) In 1866 according to the Sands Directory, a Mr Richard Emerson, fishmonger lived at 116 King Street. A later entry gives the addresses for Richard Emerson as: 188 King St., and 66 Market Street, Sydney. One presumably was a fish shop, and the other his private address.

Albert and Ellen (Nell) Emerson, Oyster Saloon Proprietors

In 1870 A.R. Emerson, had an oyster saloon at 631 George St., Sydney and Mrs. E. Emerson had an oyster saloon at 128 King St; this presumably was Ellen, (Nell) Albert's partner. Richard Emerson lived at "Norwood" Marrickville. We presume the reason these oyster saloons were established were because John had an oyster lease and was an "oyster merchant" [24:7] and later, Albert became involved as oyster salesman, because their father had a shop. Albert and Ellen (Nell) later had a fish shop and they, were the outlets for the oysters gathered, by marketing them. We know that John Emerson, Snr sent oysters to the Melbourne markets, to his agent Mr. Brooks, gaining 27s to 30s per bag for good oysters, whilst inferior oysters only brought 3s. per bag.[24:1] Was this the reason John later built the Seabreeze Hotel, because he had a ready supply of fish and oysters and needed more markets? It is known that John roved all over Port Jackson, as well as Middle Harbour, examining the oyster beds, and also visited New Zealand. [24:7] [30.25]

According to family legend, Albert Russell Emerson met Ellen (Nell) Williams, from Hobart Town and they were married in New Zealand in 1866. However, the Tasmanian Archives Office has **no** record of Ellen Williams's birth there. In a letter to me they said that if she were of convict birth, records were not kept of these children, and we have been unable to verify the marriage in New Zealand. Nevertheless

June Lane has been able to trace a Russell Emerson, same age as Albert **Russell** Emerson, 30, marrying an **Ellen** McDivitt (same Christian name and same age 23 as Ellen Williams, 23) from Norfolk Island on 28/11/1870 in Sydney. Why did Albert and Ellen obfuscate and tell their children they were married in New Zealand? Were they embarrassed that they had not been married before and actually had five children born before they were married, which did not fit in with Victorian morals?

Dredging for Oyster Shells halted

Between 1860 and 1870 deep dredging of oysters for their shells, threatened the livelihood of the oyster farmers.(6) The Government cancelled all oyster harvesting to prevent the extinction of the beds due to lime-making and holiday-makers stripping all the accessible rock-oysters. The exact date of this prohibition is unknown. All the papers pertaining to this were lost in the Garden Palace fire in 1882. However it has been asserted that it was about 1870. [27:4] Limestone beds had been discovered in Van Dieman's Land, but the limestone had to be carried to the colony by boat, so it was cheaper to burn available shells. It is believed that about 1876 the Government took a stand against those dredging oyster shells for lime, and it is from this date that many of our historic aboriginal shell middens disappeared, as these were used as the alternative.

In 1871 A. Emerson, had an oyster saloon at 631 George St.; John had a fish shop at 187 Kent St, and Mrs. E. Emerson had an oyster saloon at 128 King St; but Richard Emerson lived at Cooks River Road, New(town?) Marrickville (an area previously known as: "Devine's Farm"). [29:25] In 1872 Richard D. Emerson died and was buried at St. George Anglican Church, (No. 2656) a year before his grandson John was born, and in the same cemetery where Albert and his wife were later interred.

Albert and Ellen's (Nell's) Family

Albert and Ellen (Nell) were both living in Sydney at the time, and this is the place of residence for each recorded on the certificate. **Albert Russell** Emerson and Ellen (Nell) Emerson were living at 131 George St., in 1873 when John Albert was born, and his birth certificate also shows there were 5 other children, living, born before him, 4 males and one female: Richard Russell (Russ) (1867), Albert Ernest

(1869); (what ever happened to Albert; the grandchildren do not remember him?) Amy (deceased) Phillip, a "foster son" (no one remembers him), Ann Margaret (Sissy) (1871), and Joseph (Joe) (1872) a foster son (Colin Emerson, John Emerson, Jr.'s youngest son, says he did not know Joe was a foster son, and thought he was a brother to his father, John Jr.) After John Jr., further sons were born: Arthur (Art, also known as Nobby) (1874) who fought in the 1914-18 War in France, and whose name is on the Sutherland War Memorial in Peace Park. Sydney (born 1876; died in 1879) and Percy Marryat (1880) (also no one knows of Percy). Cliffs father, Allan Russell, 2nd youngest son of John Jr., has now passed away, as have Jack and Charles, (John Jr.'s other elder sons); but Cliffs uncle, Colin Brinsley, John's youngest son, never heard about a Sydney or a Percy. We know Sydney died young, but what happened to Percy?; Strangely enough, although recorded in his grandfather's will, Colin had never heard of the foster son Phillip, and thought that Joseph was a son, not a step-son or foster son. On John's birth certificate, in 1873, his father, Albert is recorded as being "an oyster salesman".

Mud Oysters become Extinct

It is a sad fact that due to this dredging, the large and succulent mud oyster has now disappeared from our waters, and only occasionally now are the huge shells, remnants from the past, found in the sediments of Botany Bay, or over on the beach at Towra. John Emerson, Snr stated that 'the mud oyster was a different species to the rock oyster. The stock of the rock oyster is on the left side, but in the mud oyster it is in the centre. There is a difference also in the shell,---the shell of the rock oyster is a flint, and that of the mud oyster is like a cuttle-fish, quite soft.' He showed a sample of the mud oyster, at the Royal Commission, which was "of a rare species, now nearly extinct." (1876)[24:6] John Emerson was obviously well-travelled as he said: "The strangest thing with regard to the mud oyster is, that if you go south of the 39 degrees latitude in NSW, and across to NZ and right through that Colony and to the south of it, you will not find the rock oyster---they are all mud oysters. In Auckland, NZ the shell is of a flinty description...but they do not keep." John goes on to say that when the mud oysters have been thirty-six hours out of the water they "open their mouths, whereas I have known rock or drift oysters to lie exposed for a period of six weeks." [30:25] He was later asked if he had had experience of oyster culture in England, but he said : "No." [24:7] So we presume, because of this question, although John, too, was born in Norfolk, England as was Albert, he did not learn his experience in the oyster industry in England. His knowledge was acquired in Australia.

Thomas Holt attempts Oyster Cultivation in Botany Bay

In 1864, on the 25th June, Thomas Holt bought one and a half acres of land known as Tom Ugly's Point.

He also bought Weeney and Gwawley Bay (now Sylvania Waters) that year from the Government for the purpose of oyster culture, and he had millions of oysterlings sown. He was appointed President of a Royal Commission set up to enquire into and recommend the best way of cultivating the oyster and of utilising, improving and maintaining the natural oyster beds of the colony. Unfortunately he did not have much success, so it is ironic that he has been regarded as the "father of the oyster industry". John Emerson, Snr in evidence, to the Royal Commission (1876) says that he (John) has experience in oyster culture, breeding and fattening oysters and "cultivating them on purely naked ground...for not less than five years." [24:5] In April, 1874, John Emerson said he had some oysters that he had put down two years and eight months ago, and they were "thoroughly marketable and fit for food but they ought to remain for two years more. They were two months old when I laid them".

Oyster Cultivation unsuitable in Botany Bay according to Royal Commission

Holt tried various methods. Firstly large rocks were carried into the river bed to support the oysters just above low tide level, called the "hard bottom method" but this was very arduous work, so not satisfactory. Cut slabs of rock were placed on top of the ballast and carried backward and forwards along the river from wherever the oysters were spawning. This method is apparently still used in France and Portugal. (7) In 1872 Thomas Holt established claires (ponds) in Gwawley Bay, but this technique did not adapt to local conditions. In 1929 the 100 metre long raised beds of mud, and their associated ponds, built for Holt as oyster beds were still visible in the mangrove swamps west of Taren Point.[31:3] Unfortunately the salinity of the river in these bays and "red tide" decimated the oysterlings.(8) The government appointed an official Inspector of Oyster Beds, Mr. William Langham. After Holt's experiences, The Royal Commission concluded that Botany Bay and the George's River were totally unsuitable places for oyster culture. This conclusion brought a flood of scorn from Albert Emerson. (9)

First Oyster Lease of Whole of Botany Bay and Tributaries, 1873 to Albert Emerson

In 1873 Albert Russell Emerson of O'Connell's Bay, tendered successfully 131 pounds per annum and obtained the first oyster lease for the "whole of Botany Bay and its tributaries". (10,11) At this time Albert was a fishmonger at 631 George Street, whilst his brother John, had an oyster saloon at 187 Kent Street, and was recorded as an oyster merchant at 241 Pitt St, whilst his private residence was at Shepherd Street, Darling(ton?) [Shepherd Street, off Cleveland St., Darlington behind the University of Sydney.] Their mother, Mrs. Mary Ann Emerson lived at Westmoreland St., Glebe. Their father Richard lived at Cooks River Rd., New(town?). It is not known why they had separate addresses and had apparently parted.

Oyster Gathering

This was the era of gathering oysters as opposed to growing them. Albert Emerson employed men to gather oysters from the foreshores above the waterline. Fine shore oysters brought 4s. a bag, but the deeper oysters, brought 6s a bag. As the foreshore oysters disappeared, long handled tongs were used from a boat to prise the oysters off the rocks in 5-15 ft of water. As the oysters in shallow water disappeared, Albert next employed South Sea Islanders, to dive for the oysters, into water up to 15ft, as they could hold their breath for a considerable time. (12) Finally when these oysters gone, Albert used a diving suit with a pumping apparatus mounted on a punt, to gather "mud" and "rock" oysters as tongs were unsatisfactory, and not long enough and the workers could not stay underwater at these depths to collect enough oysters. By using a diving suit he was able to collect oysters in any weather. (13,14) Albert Emerson then realised that it may be profitable to seed an area with spat and cultivate them, waiting for them to grow large enough for market. In 1871 he experimented growing them on a level sandbar, with his brother.

Mr. William Langham, the Inspector of Oyster Beds, then told the Royal Commission he had inspected George's River from Salt Pan Creek to the river mouth, where it was under lease to a Mr. A. Emerson, and that most of the river was suitable for oyster farming. Mr Langham, said in his 1874 Fisheries report, (14) that he "should not omit to give a special mention to an effort made by Mr. Emerson to improve the already naturally great oyster-bearing capabilities of this water [Georges River]. In the bay fronting his [Mr. Emerson's] residence he has stocked an old natural bed with brood he obtained from Port Hacking and Cowan Creek, about two and a half years since. The bed is about a quarter of a mile in length by 150 yards in breadth, and on it was deposited several thousand bags of brood. This brood has now developed in a comparatively short space of two and a half years into fine large well-flavoured oysters. I can speak

with confidence to the fact, inasmuch as I had the opportunity of seeing the brood soon after it was laid down, and a more misshapen unpromising article it was almost impossible to conceive... The oysters are a fine sample, one of the finest brought to market. They are very prolific, exhibiting an unusual growth in a given period". (15)

Oysters Imported from Brisbane: Winter Mortality in the Clarence River Oysters

In 1875 John Emerson, Snr bought oysters from Brisbane. Why? What had happened to the Georges River oysters? Were they depleted, and was John waiting for Albert's cultivated oysters to mature? He apparently refers to winter mortality phenomena in the Clarence River, but gives no date, and notes that it had been a cold winter, and they had been unable to obtain any oysters for fifteen months. John says he: "paid the Brisbane Oyster Company 18s a bag for all their oysters, and that with freight and costs mounted up to 21s when they landed in Sydney, and if they had not been good oysters, I should have lost money by them."

Albert Emerson vs. William Carrs, Carrs Park

In January, 1876 Albert Emerson wrote a letter of complaint to the Under Secretary for Lands. It appears that Mr. William Carrs of Kogarah Bay (Carrs Park, Blakehurst) had, a few days previously, stopped one of Albert's employees taking oysters from the rocks fronting Mr. Carrs's land, as Mr. Carrs had told the employee he was about to purchase the rocks on which the oysters grew! Albert had hotly defended his oyster lease, "for the whole of Botany Bay" in a complaint that was pithy and succinct. The letter is headed "Georges River Oyster Fishery" (which again shows evidence that Albert regarded himself as an oyster farmer as well as an oyster gatherer) and says: "The rocks covered at high tide are a natural oyster bed and with the other oyster beds in this river are leased to me. Therefore I respectfully object to Mr Carrs being allowed to complete the purchase during the term of my lease. I may state that I have heard other persons declare their intention of applying for water frontages with the avowed object of being able to pillage the whole river under the pretext of owning a few rocks of no value for any honest purpose.-- I remain your obedient servant, A.R. Emerson." (16) It was resolved in June, 1 876 and the file is noted: "Mr. Emerson has leased the natural oyster beds in Georges River. I presume any alienation of lands under the 9th and 12th clauses of the Alienation Act will be made subject to Mr. Emerson's claims under his lease... The writer may perhaps be informed that Mr. Carrs has not purchased the foreshore of his property." [Letter in possession of Carrs Park Museum, Kogarah Historical Society]. John Emerson at the Royal Commission later refers to this taking of oysters from an oyster lease by unlicensed persons as "stealing".

John Emerson, Snr. advocates multiple individual Oyster Leases

In November, 1876, John Emerson, Snr said before the Royal Commission: "I do not think there is any obstacle at all to the growth of oysters here if proper ground is secured" He also went on to say: "I think it is quite as much a crime to steal oysters from a person's ground as it is to steal sheep off a run." John was advocating individual leases, as well as an inspector to police good quality oysters. He continues: I think the Inspector should have power to inspect oysters anywhere, and to condemn them and prevent their sale if he considered them unfit, just as the Inspector of Nuisances has power to seize unwholesome fish.

In 1876 there is a Mrs. Emerson, midwife living at 147 Crown St., and we believe it is Mary Ann, Albert's mother. In 1877 John Emerson had an oyster saloon at 128-132 King St., whilst a T (homas). Emerson was a Carver and Gilder (sic) at 147 Crown Street, the same address as Mary Ann, and therefore must have been a relative of John and Albert-- a brother?. In October, 1877 Thomas Holt leased his one and a half acres at Tom Ugly's Point to Albert Emerson (Lease 31) "for a secure stockyard for the security of cattle that may be crossing in mobs to or from Sutherland by the punt." Holt had increased his herd of cattle by local purchases and by bringing them by sea from his properties in Queensland. Unfortunately the cattle did not fare well in this climate, and Holt was forced to abandon the attempt to run cattle.(17) As the Sea Breeze had already been built 7 years previously it seems the land was used to build the two cottages and boatsheds which were on it when the estate was sold in 1912. On 30th September, 1884, Albert Emerson, hotelkeeper, living at the Village of Woniora on Tom Ugly's Pt. purchased the one and a half acres at Tom Ugly's, which he had been leasing from Thomas Holt since 1877. It seems that Holt had decided to sell the land before sailing for England on the P & O. Steamship "Cathay", on the 23rd

September, 1881, but the deal was transacted after he had left.

Thomas Holt connection with the Cordingley family as well as Emerson family

In 1880 we find that John Emerson was a fish dealer and oyster salesman at 124 King Street. The 1880 Fisheries report says that the collections taken from private oyster fisheries for the year is 92 bags of spawn from Weeney Bay, and 169 bags of remarkable oysters from Gwawley Bay. Were these Holt's oysters? It is interesting that Thomas Holt in addition to owning the Sutherland Estates, also owned "Arthursleigh" at Marulan, where Cliffs other great grandfather, Thomas Cordingley was born!

Albert Emerson, licensee Sea Breeze hotel, still harvesting Oysters

Albert had applied for a hotel licence annually between 1879-1882. (18) Albert at this stage was managing the Sea Breeze Hotel. This was a pleasant colonial building with a shady verandah, bedecked with many ferns, across the front. It was an ideal location for an hotel, and it is recorded that many a journey was extended thanks to the comforts of the Sea Breeze. According to Colin Emerson, his grandfather, Albert Emerson had employed a Chinese cook, which added variety to the seafood fare of the hotel in its several dining rooms. In 1883 Albert Emerson harvested 926 bags of oysters. On the 14th February, 1883, Albert's wife, Ellen (Nell) died, aged 39 years. She was buried at the St. Georges Anglican Church graveyard. It is believed that about this time that Albert Emerson's asthmatic attacks had worsened, and his health was failing.

Regatta Held to Commemorate Railway Opening, 1884

The first section of the Illawarra Railway was almost completed, so a Regatta was held to commemorate its opening, on 15th October, 1884, commencing at 1 lam between Tom Ugly's Point and Sandringham. Entries for the races were to be given to Mr. Albert Emerson of Tom Ugly's Point, amongst others. A banquet lunch was held at Rust's Pavilion at 1 pm, with a trip up the George's River in a large steamer in the afternoon. The races to be held comprised: fishing boats under working sails; single pair of sculls in skiffs, course 2 miles; junior double sculls in club skiffs, open boats under pleasure sails not exceeding 24ft in length; youths 16 years and under in out-riggers, course two miles; a canoe race, course 1 mile; a tub race; and gig and dinghy race. As an added incentive, a flyer records that "The Committee will endeavour to arrange to take skiffs, etc. from Sydney and back in a steamer".(19) The Como Railway Bridge which had been begun in 1883 was completed in 1885 and the Railway extended to Sutherland with the Sutherland Railway station opening that year.

1884 Oyster Fisheries Act

In 1884 The Oyster Fisheries Act was passed, a government act for the protection, preservation and culture of oysters, against falling supplies, pilfering and over-harvesting. Leases were given to persons who were willing to hold them under lengthened tenure of 15 years with a renewal option of a further 15.[26:38] This enabled the lessees to adopt oyster cultivation and production as employment full-time. Also to protect their investment and livelihood, lessees were given absolute control over their leases and protection from trespass, which are still much the same conditions which oyster farmers have today. Mr. Andy Derwent, who founded the Neverfail Bay oyster-farming colony, took up one of these leases, but Albert Emerson did not, as he was now running the Sea Breeze Hotel, with Mr. Underwood as the hotelkeeper, and Albert's wife had died the previous year. Probably Albert's increasing ill-health due to asthma was the reason he did not renew his hotelier's license or even his former oyster lease, despite his former efforts to cultivate oysters in the Georges River. Mr. Len Drake, a present day oyster farmer, says he has seen Albert Emerson's signature in the meeting books of the Oyster Farmers' Association, which are in his possession and Albert was President of this body for some years. Albert Emerson obviously was very fervent in his belief that oyster culture was an important industry for the Georges River. As Albert had proved and Mr. Bob Drake says today: "Oyster farmers have had to band together over the years."

In 1885 the Sands Directory records that Albert Emerson's address was "Seabreeze Hotel", Woniora, Bot (any Bay). On the 13th April, 1885 it was reported that: "There is a most enjoyable excursion by rail and bus to Emerson's hotel, Tom Ugly's Point, and thence by water to Como where the scenery is pronounced as almost unrivalled. The banks of the River are covered with dense foliage and beautiful flowers." (20)

The first official train crossed the Como Railway Bridge on 26th December, 1885. Photos of the occasion show the northern bank was heavily timbered and devoid of habitation at this time. What a difference 100 years makes!

The Passing of Albert Emerson

Albert that year had gone to Picton to live; possibly it was thought the higher altitude might aid his recovery. On the 30th December 1885 at Upper Picton, Albert Russell Emerson died of "bronchial asthma and phthisis", which he had had for 2 years. His occupation was given as "publican", aged 45. His funeral notice records the body leaving the Sea Breeze Hotel, Woniora, Tom Ugly's Point to go to Hurstville cemetery. He was buried at St Georges Anglican Church, on 2nd January, 1886, beside his wife who had predeceased him. His death was notified by his brother, John Emerson, and the death notices on 1/1/86 requested "Norfolk papers please copy " It is interesting that there was no request to the New Zealand papers to copy, if there were relatives living there.

"Poor Mrs Emmerson"

In 1889 there is only one entry in the Sands Directory, an upholsterer, Thomas Emerson, at 28 Waterloo Street, living alone, when previously he had lived with (his mother?) Mary Ann Emerson. In 1873 the Rice family had settled in Sylvania and "opened a general store on the shores of the Georges River fronting on to Belgrave St" which... was the first shop, PO and school in the Sutherland Shire... Mail for Sylvania was taken to the Emerson's Sea Breeze Hotel from where it was collected by Honoria Rice. On 8th January, 1890 a letter was sent by William Rice from Glasgow to his wife, Honoria. He writes: "Remember one to...Poor Mrs Emmerson poor woman what a lot of trouble she has had of Laite an I am quiet Certain that it is to be hoped that her luck will Chainge and bring her mutch Haappenefs, I am sure she deserves it and I am asslso Sure that bout me and all of you wish it."

Now Ellen, Albert's wife had died on 14th February, 1883 aged 39 years---so who is this "Mrs Em(m)erson"? Surely William could not be so far behind with the local news? However Daphne Salt said that William Rice spent long stretches of time overseas, so perhaps he did not know of Ellen's passing. Is Mary Ann, Albert's mother still alive? We have no address for her in the Sands Directory after 1877, and in 1890 she would have been about 70 years of age, so it is possible, but where was she living? Had she come to the "Seabreeze" to mind Albert's now orphaned children? Had Russ the eldest son married? Colin Emerson says that it is believed that Russ went to New Zealand and was not heard of again, so perhaps this was so. Nevertheless the tone of the letter is that it was meant for a peer, and Mary Ann would have been about the same age as William Rice. If so, then Mary Ann had seen the death of her son, Albert and his wife Ellen and his children orphaned, and two foster children acquired, as well as Albert's elder brother, John drowned in a creek in Queensland ---so she had had a sad life, and merited William Rice's sympathy. He would have known her well too if they collected their mail from the Seabreeze Hotel. We do not know how the family got on after Albert died. John was a ferry master at 19, so the family would still have his wages coming in, but he married shortly after. Colin has no knowledge on this point, except to say it was believed that Sissy made an unsuitable marriage, according to the family, and left home. Arthur had gone to the war and fought in France, waiting for a sick mate to get well in a Flanders hospital, and then they both returned to Australia after the War. He lived for a while with his widowed sister-in-law, Laura at Enfield, and her four little sons until he died "from drinking the Nile water" according to family legend.

Albert and Ellen Emerson's tombstones

In 1910 there was a fire at the St. Georges Anglican church at Hurstville and all records were destroyed. It is believed that Canon Dillon carefully copied all the inscriptions (others say it was not Dillon) and these records were taken to St. Andrews Cathedral, and then to the Mitchell Library, because in 1962, the St. George Anglican Church decided to build a Rectory. Unfortunately the only land available was that taken up by the old cemetery! They advertised their proposed action, to remove the gravestones to build the Rectory, in the local paper, but by this time descendants had spread far and wide, and very few saw the advertisement. These were the days when preservation of history was not important, and who cared about a few old gravestones? As there were no objections, the church had the gravestones removed, and

although it is not known where they went, it is believed that Hurstville Council used Lucas Heights Tip and so Albert's tombstone is possibly reposing under Sutherland Shire Council's new playing fields which have been developed since and are now sporting fields, comprising a golf course, a club house, basketball courts, football and soccer fields etc.

Albert Emerson's Will

It was a surprise to the current members of the Emerson family, to look back on Albert's will, which was researched by June Lane. It had NEVER been discussed by John Emerson, Jr, or his wife Laura, in speaking to their sons, so the sons were unaware of its contents. The six living children of Albert: Richard Russell, Albert Ernest, John (Jr.) Arthur, Percy Marryatt, and Margaret received 5/8th of the capital (about 6,000 pounds) and of the stocks and securities, (Albert had shares in the Australian Gaslight Company) upon trust for sons Richard Russell, Albert Ernest, John, Arthur and Percy at 21 years in equal shares, 3/8ths of said capital. Their sister, Margaret (Sissie) received all her mother's, Ellen (Nell's) jewellery, and her share at 21 years if she married with the consent and approval of the trustees; their uncle John Emerson Snr, Albert's brother, received 100 pounds; their foster brother Joseph, received 100 pounds; their foster brother, Phillip, 50 pounds, (but if he was older than Joseph, why did he receive less, and why has the family never heard of him?) a Clara Hayward, (?unknown) Georges River, 50 pounds, Mrs. Green, housekeeper, 25 pounds, and Frederick Gannon, of Sydney, solicitor, received a diamond ring. Albert gave each of his executors 25 pounds to buy a remembrance of him, and Albert also gave 25 pounds to have a mug made in his memory--(whatever became of this?) Albert also appointed Frank Underwood, of Waverley, near Sydney, as Hotel Keeper. He appointed William Haigh of Saint Peters, near Sydney as the executor and trustee of his will.

Demise of the Sydney Rock Oyster

It seems that after Albert's death, the short term demise of the oyster industry in the George's River followed. In 1888 New Zealand oysters were introduced (by whom and why?), and with them came parasite mud worms. These still cause problems with our oyster industry, and even today the depth the oysterlings are laid on the trays is critical, as to whether they are infected with mudworm. In 1889 the oyster industry was devastated, and there was only a 4 bag harvest from the Georges River. In 1890 no oysters were sold. Oyster leases had been granted along the foreshores of Crown lands in parts of Botany Bay and the Georges River, and these were granted to John Geddes, Azarias Cook and Joshua Brown. T. Wray owned a private oyster fishery in Gwawley Bay.

Seabreeze Hotel

John Emerson Snr was apparently still running the Sea Breeze Hotel in 1891. It is recorded that "1st June, 1891, Queen's Birthday, saw Lake Como alive with craft of all descriptions, and a breeze slightly curling the otherwise placid waters was sufficient to fill the sails of numerous boats containing pleasure parties. At host Emerson's Sea Breeze Hotel, the water was black with boats and the pleasure grounds filled with picnic parties. Buses run to Kogarah and Hurstville, and Tom Ugly's Point is the key to the Georges River and its oyster beds, Lake Como, the Worinora (sic) and Port Hacking. Near the bridge, Holt, Sutherland Co., are erecting a fine jetty, where the larger vessels can anchor at high tide" (21) It is not known what happened to the family after this date. Family lore says that John, Albert's brother, drowned in a creek in Queensland. A Mrs. Sarah Bennet took over the Sea Breeze in 1893, so John Snr may have died at this time, and it had to be sold. Or was it the Depression, and the bank holding their money had failed? Russell, Albert Ernest, John Jr, and Phillip and Margaret had all turned 21. It is known that young John Jr had to start work from 12 years of age, the date of his father's death, working on ferries, until at 19 years of age he became a ferry master on the Parramatta River.

John Emerson Jr marries Laura (nee Sutton)

John Emerson Jr's life is another interesting piece of local history. It is also known that Russell Emerson, young John's brother, managed the Simpson's Hotel at Bonnie Vale, and that young John and his bride, Laura (nee Sutton) spent their honeymoon there. An Elizabeth Emerson, possibly Russell's wife, was buried in the Simpson's plot in the Woronora Cemetery, in 1939. It is believed that Russell later went to New Zealand, and family legend has it that he received most of the money from the inheritance. 25

Seabreeze Hotel Licensee, Sarah Bennett

Sarah Bennett ran the Sea Breeze hotel from 1893-1915, and no story including the Sea Breeze Hotel would be complete without including Cocky Bennett, a cockatoo who originally lived on a ship, and had travelled the world at least seven times. He was a naked dilapidated ancient bird with a beak several inches long, and had only three or four feathers left on him. His sorry state had prompted some wag to teach him to say: "So help me God, if I had one more feather I'd fly!" In 1912 the Sea Breeze Estate, Tom Ugly's Point was released for sale by Raine and Horne on Sat 2nd November, 1912 at 3pm, "with absolute waterfrontages ". There were only 2 cottages and some boatsheds on this peninsula, on Shipwright's Bay, apart from the Sea Breeze itself. Did the young John Emerson still have some sort of tenure of the boatsheds or cottages, (1 and a half acres) and it is at his stage that he was feeling ill-health; perhaps he relinquished his lease, and the property was able to be sold? He died in 1916 and is buried at Woronora Cemetery.

In 1917 soldier settlers were given assistance to establish oyster leases on the Georges River. [28:78] In 1919 tray cultivation of oysters was popular.

Demise of the Seabreeze

A picture of the Sea Breeze in 1927 appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 12th August, 1985. In the 1960's the old Sea Breeze was demolished to make way for the new hotel. Now Dr Ed Duyker, a member of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society, has in his lounge room at "Glen Robin", Sylvania, a beautiful Italian marble statue of a Grecian maiden in flowing robes, about 4ft. high, which may have graced the foyer of the Sea Breeze Hotel. His wife's family found it in the cellar when the Hotel was being demolished. The proprietor said that previous owners had said it had taken up too much room in the foyer, and they had put it down in the cellar, and he had never bothered to move it again as it was too heavy. Dr Duyker's mother-in-law and his father-in-law purchased it on the spot. This is the only relic left to my knowledge and it was quite exciting for me and Cliff to view it when we went to visit Dr Duyker and reflect upon the past glories of the Sea Breeze. However, when reading "Sutherland Shire: a history" UNSW Press, 2006 I noted a description of Bill's Cabaret:

Bill's father had operated a small oyster kiosk near the Sylvania punt in the 1920's... Bill's Cabaret opened on the site of Bill the Oyster King in 1930, was known as 'Oyster Bills'and was started up by Dora and Bill Skelsey.] It was set back from the road with an exotic cave-like structure with its fantasy grotto...the work of another local, Bill Waller. The cabaret featured a pool surrounded by reproduction Grecian sculptures." [26:84]

It occurred to me that possibly our Grecian maiden may have originated from Bill's Cabaret? No-one knows the history of the statue, and possibly the "Seabreeze" had only acquired it in its latter years and the statue had nothing to do with its earlier history!

Tom Ugly's Bridge

Between 1924-9 Tom Ugly's Bridge was built, being opened on the 11th May, 1929. The Sutherland Library has a piece of the ribbon from the opening. Gone were the days when people ate their oyster lunches while they waited for the ferry. It is interesting that in 1944 this bridge was prepared for demolition in case the Japanese landed south of Sydney!

Recent events in the Georges River Oyster Industry

The revival of the oyster industry was very evident in 1976, when it was noted in an official report that on 600 acres of off-shore cultivation, some 20,000 sacks each of 100 dozen oysters, were produced for annual consumption by Australia and overseas. The gross return to the grower at this time was estimated at about \$1 m, and on the retail market some \$3m. It was also noted in the report that compared to other meats, the oyster industry produces more "meat" per acre than any other form of meat growing. In 1978 purification of all oysters before sale was systematically introduced in all NSW estuaries.(22) Although in 1986 we had the biggest floods on record in the Georges River, in 1989 on the western side of Neverfail Bay, the oyster lease produced 6,000 bags or \$1.8m. The average production since 1990 of 104 million oysters, worth about \$28m per year, has made oyster farming the most valuable aquaculture industry in NSW for over 100 years. (23)

Future of Oyster Cultivation

And where are we today with the oyster industry in Botany Bay? The pollution of the Georges River is slowly being arrested with stringent measures being taken by local Councils and the government, to re-establish the oyster industry. The establishment of the Georges River Riverkeeper by the GRCCC [Georges River Combined Councils' Committee] (9 councils which have territory abutting on the Georges River) in conjunction with Waterways and NSW Corrective Services has been a great boon. The latter supplies up to 200 personnel per day to assist in ridding the river of pollution, by assisting the Riverkeeper in any project such as removing car bodies and rubbish from the Georges River and planting native trees along its banks and on the islands. The river is now returning to its former healthy state and fish stocks are increasing and oyster cultivation is being resumed as a result.

The Q virus, or QX, a parasitic disease, has taken its toll, virtually destroying the oyster industry in the Georges River over the past seasons. In 1996 a Fisheries Industry Research and Development Corporation grant was made to the NSW Fisheries Aquaculture Research Section for research into the breeding of the Sydney Rock Oyster lines which are genetically resistant to QX. This new research follows on from research over several generations of another parasite known as Winter Mortality. Already pairs of breeding lines, QX resistant, Winter Mortality resistant, and one where they select for both have been produced, and a 10% improvement in resistance is expected in each generation.

Scallops appearing in Botany Bay

In speaking of the demise of the mud oyster to the Australia Day Botany Bay Regatta Committee of yachting enthusiasts, I was surprised to learn that Tasmanian scallops have made their appearance in Botany Bay, but not yet in commercial quantities. I am informed by NSW Fisheries that scallops migrate and spawn every 10 years, and penetrate every estuary from the

Shoalhaven to Botany Bay, hence their current appearance in the Georges River.

Proposed Botany Bay Cultured Pearl Industry

I am reliably informed that a DA has been received recently by Sutherland Shire Council, for a proposal to commence a cultured pearl industry in Botany Bay, following along the lines of aquaculture and fish farming. Very few shore dwellers have been advised of this proposal, or of the impact it may have on our oyster industry, if the pearl oyster is allowed to spawn, and possibly overwhelm our Sydney Rock Oyster by its proliferation. It is believed that the meat is edible, but purists who love their creamy succulent Sydney Rock Oyster may be hard to convince that the pearl oyster is an acceptable substitute. Whereas we all benefit by the cultivation of rock oysters, and their harvesting, only private industry will benefit by a cultivated pearl industry.

Conclusion

Albert Russell Emerson, for his short 45 years on earth and 25 of these in Australia, certainly made a niche for himself in our colonial history. It is interesting that not even his grandchildren knew of his contribution to the Australian oyster industry until I began my research, by accident at the University of Sydney, twenty years ago, when in the Geology Library I stumbled across a thesis which held the story of Albert Emerson's contribution to our oyster industry. I have tried many times to obtain this thesis to verify my research, but my search has been fruitless, particularly with recent clamp-downs on viewing past theses for research.

Some 10 years ago I had a dream about Albert Emerson. My husband Cliff's father, Allan; Cliff's three uncles; my husband Cliff and I had never met Albert, of course, and I have never seen a photo of him, yet he appeared to be a stocky man dressed in navy blue serge trousers, and jacket, rather like a seaman, and wearing a captain's hat. He was furious, standing in my front garden at Illawong, and he wanted to know what had we done with all the large shells he had collected over many years around the world? Laura Emerson, wife of John Emerson Jr had magnificent clam shells and spider shells from the tropics and the Islands, placed along the front of her property at Enfield. When she died, each of the sons, Cliff's uncles and his father, took some. When Cliff's Dad died, his share was divided up between Cliff and his brother. We inherited two spider shells, and none of the clam shells. In the dream I tried to explain to Albert what had happened, but he said the shells were an important part of our family's history, and we should have kept them all together. ---Even in the spirit world Albert still worries about his world of shells and shellfish!

In retrospect I believe that Albert and John Emerson were responsible for the first marketing of our succulent Georges River oysters, and according to the Fisheries Report in 1874, Albert was the first successful grower of cultivated oysters and an oyster farmer. Holt's experiments seemed to have had problems and almost convinced the Royal Commission, 1876 that oyster-growing was "unsuitable in Botany Bay" until Albert's brother, John gave evidence to the contrary. Albert Russell Emerson's world was our oyster, and we owe the successful cultivation now of Sydney Rock Oysters, to his experiments with oysterlings on that sandbank near his home.

1. Shipping Records Arch. Off. NSW Reel 408 on the "Eagle" Inwards Shipping Lists- Sydney 5/1860-12/1860
2. Perhaps this is where Albert met the Chinese who was later to become the cook at the Sea Breeze.?
3. Arr. Domestic, Shipping Records Arch Off. NSW Rel 407 "Clarence" Inwards Shipping Lists -Sydney 1/1860-4/1860.
4. NSW Fisheries: The NSW oyster industry. [1994?]
5. Hurstville, Story, p85)
6. Hurstville Story, p85)
7. St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader, 7/11/89: p12.)
8. Mr. B. Clarke, NP&WS tour on Georges River, 14/11/98)
9. Rathbone: Hurstville Hist Soc. Monog, No. 14 says "Alfred", but possibly he was misled by erroneous research.
10. M. Hutton Neve says "A.E. Emerson", which is correct: Albert Ernest Emerson
11. The "Hurstville Story" says "Alfred Emerson", however perhaps the flowery writing was mis-read on the original documents.)
12. Map of Municipality of Hurstville, showing historical places including historical notes. [Hurstville Council?][n.d.]
13. Hurstville Story, p85)
14. Mr Rudy K? of Bundeena has a pump similar to that used on the punts for the divers, which he recognised immediately and bought as a curiosity in a garage sale, and the Australian National Maritime Museum have a diving suit, similar to that used by Albert Emerson, stored in their museum.
15. Roughley, T.C. Oyster culture on the Georges River. Syd., 1922:12-13)
16. Letter from A.R. Emerson to Under-Secretary for Lands, 29th January, 1876.)
17. Holt, Henry E.: An energetic colonist. Hawthorn Press Pty Ltd., 1971.)
18. Archives, Globe Street
19. Town and Country Journals, Reg. Book V, Folio 114
20. Kogarah Council: River, road and rail: a history of Kogarah municipality history. Ed by Jim Fletcher, drawings by Daphne Kingston, KMC, 1985 p40; 48, 146-7, 164
21. Town and Country Journals, Reg Book V, folio 114.
22. NSW Fisheries: The NSW oyster industry. [1994?]
23. NSW Fisheries: The NSW oyster industry. {1994?]
24. Oyster Culture Commission: report of the Royal Commission appointed on the 29th September, 1876 to inquire into the best mode of cultivating the oyster, of utilising, improving, and maintaining the natural oysterbeds of the colony, and also as to the legislation necessary to carry out these objects; together with the minutes of evidence and appendices. Sydney, Charles Potter, Acting Govt. Pr., 1877.
25. A brochure on Simpson's Hotel, at Bonnie Vale Bunduna (sic) printed during the war years (it refers to travelling to Cronulla by train, which commenced in 1939) and refers to G. Feldwick as the Proprietor. Feldwick was also a builder, erecting a house in Harcourt Ave., Campsie in 1925 for the Fortiers.]
26. Ashton, P. et al: Sutherland Shire: a history. Sydney, UNSW, 2006
27. R. Turpin: St. George Call, 30 Jan 1904
28. "A History of Jannali", Sutherland Shire Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin, No.18 Oct 1976: 114-117
29. Geeves, Philip and Jervis, James: Rockdale: its beginning and development. Rev ed. 1896. Rockdale Council, 1986.
30. Auckland P. L. of Shipping; S 1 1017:25
31. Perrott, D.R.: A Larrikin's life. Unpublished work. 120pp. 2007