



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



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ROLF HARRIS AT 'FERNLEIGH', BURRANEER BAY, DECEMBER 1960

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# SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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Meetings of the Society are held monthly on the third Saturday at 1.30 pm at the Stapleton Centre, Stapleton Street, Sutherland.

## VISITORS ARE WELCOME

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be addressed to*

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## **Disclaimer**

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



# President's Report



Another year has passed by and for some there may well be a sense of missed opportunity. Yet this new year should offer us all a wonderful chance to achieve more than we have ever done so in the past. We are older but a lot wiser – as each day passes we cannot help but observe and learn. We all fear the loss of faculties and abilities as we get older. However researchers have discovered this process is not inevitable. While our bodies may squeak and creak a little more as the years roll by, our mind is different. If we continue to learn, to think, to look at new things the mind refreshes itself and continues to develop.

One of the great thinkers of our modern age allegedly selects some new area to study in which he has no previous experience. Why? So he can discover something new, something he has not known before, something he can think about to exercise his mind. Once he has gained a level of understanding and mastery of the topic he picks another one and starts all over again. As we age we can slowly retreat into ourselves, shut the doors and windows and live in the past or we can break out and look for new life and new opportunities. The choice is largely our own.

For those who choose not to retreat into their past, the Historical Society gives you a wonderful opportunity to discover all sorts of information about new topics for you to think about. To help with this learning experience there is a quarterly Bulletin, our Web site (which we will expand this year) and the local library where resources are readily available to you. If you need some personal guidance, Helen MacDonald and her colleagues in the various libraries around the Shire are always willing to help you find information about anything that catches your interest. You can spend hours and days and weeks uncovering all sorts of details on an endless variety of topics. Apart from the fun aspect, the health benefits are enormous.

Of course once you have mastered your topic, there is an opportunity to speak to the Society or write an article for the Bulletin or even your first book. Our Society is very fortunate to have several published authors amongst its members who will gladly give you some tips and clues to start you off. But remember, our Society is not just for you but all your friends and family – the more people, the more topics, and the stronger the process of keeping your mind forever young.

This year we will try and broaden our range of topics and contacts with other Shire organisations. Coming up in March is another Society *extravaganza*. This year marks the anniversary of Frédéric François Chopin who was born near Warsaw, in Poland on March 1, 1810 (or on February 22, according to his baptismal certificate). He was born into a small family of a French father, Nicolas Chopin, and of a Polish mother, Tekla Justyna Krzyzanowska. We have invited Wojciech Wisniewski a well known and award winning pianist to come and play some of his famous countryman's music. We will also have our own Mavis Sourry a local teacher with an extensive knowledge of classical music to give a very brief history behind this great man and his music.

This "Chopin project" is a little different from our normal fare, but I hope we will be able to put on special events like this each year. It is part of learning to do something different.

Our Society has much to offer by way of entertainment, stimulation and education. Come and join in – it is the best medicine you will ever get (or give).

*Andrew Platfoot*

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2010**

**20<sup>th</sup> February**

**20<sup>th</sup> March**

**17<sup>th</sup> April**

**Christine Edney. Origins of Shire street and suburb names  
Chopin Centenary, recital and talk, at the School of Arts  
General meeting 1.30, recital 2pm.**

**Heritage Seminar. Champagne & Chicken Lunch \$10  
Dawn Emerson speaking on 'The Overland Journey to the  
Illawarra with Macquarie' 12 o'clock midday.  
After lunch....**

**Helen Macdonald speaking on 'From Blueprint to Building'  
a history of construction and industry in Sutherland Shire.**

# From The Editor's Desk

As this is the first bulletin for 2010 may I wish all our members and casual readers; a belated welcome for the year.

It's pleasing to hear feedback from sources who say 'I read the bulletin in the library or a friend passes it on to me or I loved the article on.....' We aim to provide something for all audiences.



When I begin planning each edition, I often wonder if there'll be enough to fill it or will readers find this one interesting? I'm never disappointed. This edition fulfils both of these criteria. We have a variety of articles written by members and associates that I guarantee will provoke considerable interest.

Our 'Meet the Executive' continues to showcase an amazing depth of life experiences. As our executive has expanded, a new pool of mini autobiographies is emerging. We intend to include other members' experiences in time.

We must applaud the achievements of our members, Jim Cutbush and Les Bursill on the presentation of the prestigious Heritage Volunteer Awards. Their efforts to record and preserve local heritage over many years has been conspicuously recognised.

As many local High Schools have begun celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, Cronulla Public school will be celebrating their centenary in 2010. We wish them well. Pauline Curby, a member of our committee is updating a booklet on the school that she had previously compiled.

One of the Shire's more famous early residents, Phyllis Stroud will celebrate her 105<sup>th</sup> birthday in July. Her recollections of the early days of the Shire are crystal clear. Her story is just one of several conducted as part of the Shire's oral history project and further biographies will feature in subsequent bulletins.

Our cover features an autographed photograph of Rolf Harris, taken at 'Fernleigh' in about 1960. Rolf's career was just taking off. Fernleigh's private zoo with kangaroos and wallabies would have been a fitting venue for the release of his 'hit' song 'Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport' which went on to become a worldwide best seller. It also launched the new musical phenomena of the 'wobble board' It was reputedly 'invented' when Rolf was drying on a heater, a painting done on a masonite board. When he picked it up it was hot and he shook it to cool it down. The rest is history as they say. For more on that refer to the article on page 13.

A reminder to all our readers that that if you have a story, anecdote or relevant information that could be included in the Bulletin, contact myself or one of the executive. Also if you have memorabilia or ephemera (printed material) that may add to the Museum collection, contact Jim Cutbush or one of the museum committee members.

**Finally, encourage a friend to join. Membership forms are on the last page.**

*Bruce Watt*

# MEET THE EXECUTIVE

## - Pauline Curby

I grew up in the 1950s on a dairy farm near Coraki on the northern rivers of NSW, where my family has lived since 1866. Of Irish descent, I was the third generation of my family born in Australia. After attending the Catholic primary school in Coraki, my secondary education was at St Mary's College Lismore. My first year there coincided with the beginning of the Wyndham Scheme that extended secondary education from five to six years. This meant I turned 18 while still at school.

I attended the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale and after completing a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education was appointed to Menindee Central School where I taught for two years. I wanted to see the world and so flew to London with a girlfriend early in 1974 and had two exciting years travelling Europe, teaching in Leeds and meeting Irish cousins living on the beautiful Shannon River. Upon returning to Australia I had a short stint at Grafton High School before transferring to Marrickville High School. In my first week there I took the fancy of the Maths head teacher and Cronulla resident, Kevin Curby who I married in September 1979.

We have three children and while on maternity leave in the 1980s I completed a Graduate Diploma of Local and Applied History at UNE. Despite my history degree, this was my first experience of using primary sources. I was hooked. The family and local history research I did at this time led a few years later to a small publication *Battlers' Boomtown*, a snapshot of Coraki in the early 1890s.

In addition to family duties and part time teaching I completed a Masters degree in Public History at UTS in the early 1990s. One of my assignments was on the early years of Cronulla Public School which our kids attended at this time. This was my first foray into the history of Sutherland Shire and I found it fascinating. I was especially interested by the fact that whereas the first school in Coraki, 800 kms from Sydney, opened in 1868, there was none at Cronulla till 1910.



I joined the Professional Historians Association (PHA) and served on the executive for a number of years with three years as president, before moving to another position as required by the constitution. Although no longer on the committee I remain an active member and currently I am involved in organising a conference on Norfolk Island in July to celebrate the PHA's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### *Pauline and Kevin Curby*

Gradually moving out of teaching in the early 1990s, I began to work on historical consultancies. My first was a thematic history of Sutherland Shire for the Council's heritage study in 1992. In the last 18 years I have undertaken consultancies in oral history, environmental history and heritage for a wide range of clients including government agencies such as State Forests New South Wales and National Parks & Wildlife Service. Much of my work has been for local government, mainly in Sydney's northern suburbs (unfortunately very little for Sutherland Shire) and I have 10 books published as

well as booklets. *Seven Miles from Sydney, a History of Manly* won the Energy Australia/National Trust award for print media in 2002. My most recent publication, *Randwick*, for Randwick City Council's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, launched last December, took over two years. After this 'blockbuster' I have given myself some time off. This year I intend to catch up on some reading, travel and perhaps undertake small consultancies.

I was very proud to receive a centenary medal for services to history in 2000. Currently I am a member of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society executive and represent the Society on the Council's heritage committee.

## **Digital Records On line**

A considerable amount of local history can now be accessed on line. These include aerial photographs, pictures, maps, manuscripts and oral histories.

### **Aerial photos.**

These cover the years: 1930, 1943, 1955, 1961, 1970, 1978, 1984, 1994, 2001 and 2006

This is a useful tool in establishing what development was on a particular site at any one of these dates.

Google 'Sutherland Shire Council Online'

Select 'Shire maps'

Look at 'Aerials'

### **Photographs**

There are currently 1633 images some of which may be copied.

Google 'Picture Sutherland Shire Search Engine Discovery'

Select the first item.

Gives all the images in order

### **OR**

Google 'Picture Sutherland'

Select 'Picture Sutherland Shire'

This allows images to be viewed thematically (in picture trails)

### **ALSO**

Google 'State Library manuscripts, oral history and pictures'.

## Special Historical Society promotion

To commemorate the the bicentenary of the birth of arguably one of the best composers for piano, Chopin, the Sutherland Shire Historical Society, with the support of the Sutherland Music Club..... presents:

### *Two Great Masters*



**Frédéric François Chopin**, considered one of the best composers for piano, was born on 1 March 1810 near Warsaw, Poland. With the encouragement of his French father, Nicolas (Mikolaj), and Polish mother, Tekla Justyna Krzyzanowska, he showed great musical aptitude from an early age, composing two polonaises (Polish dances) by the age of seven. He also studied violin with the accomplished violinist Wojciech Zywny.

**Wojciech Wiśniewski**, is another great master of the piano. Born in Poland in 1981, he was educated in several national music schools including the F Chopin Academy of Music and is currently working towards his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Wojciech holds the position of a Choirmaster and Pianist for the Lithuanian Choir "Daina" a position he has held since 2004.

Wojciech has competed in many musical competitions including the VII National Piano Competition in Łódź (Poland) in 1999 where he gained first place. At the Sydney International Piano Competition in 2008 he was one of 36 participants in the competition selected out of 240 pianists from all over the world.



Sutherland Historical Society is presenting a program on Chopin to demonstrate that history is as much about people as it is about dates, places or major events. The Society is pleased to celebrate such a famous musician by presenting Chopin's works through the skills and abilities of one of his fellow countrymen **Wojciech Wiśniewski** who now calls Australia home.

We are also pleased to have one of our members **Mavis Sourry** a local teacher with a life long interest in classical music to give a brief introduction to this famous composer. Through Mavis we will see something of the man behind the work and perhaps even learn a little of Chopin's partner George Sands?

Locations:	Sutherland School of Arts East Parade Sutherland
Date:	20 March 2010
Time	2 PM
Entry fee:	Donation





*Jim Cutbush receiving his Citation from the Premier*



## **2009 Heritage Volunteer Award**

### **Citation**

#### **Jim Cutbush**

James Cutbush is a genuine ‘quiet heritage hero’. For over 30 years he has worked tirelessly for the Sutherland Shire Historical Society in many roles including deputy president, editor of the society bulletin, curator of the museum and lately, acting President.

Giving freely of his time with no hesitation, Jim offers his skill and ability as a leader in a quiet and unassuming way.

Passionate about his local history, committed to excellence and willing to share his knowledge with all, Jim has overseen many successful local community events and historical displays marking History Week and Australia Day that have won plaudits from experts in the field.

Jim has also represented the society and local heritage committees which has helped to ensure a more informed and considered approach to the preservation of the local area.

In another achievement, Jim successfully acquired the Parke Davis Pty Ltd Pharmaceutical collection and the former RSL memorabilia collection for the Society’s local museum.



## 2009 Heritage Volunteer Award Citation

Les Bursill

Les Bursill is a member of the Dharawal Aboriginal community and is a proud promoter of both the Indigenous and non Indigenous heritage of Sutherland Shire and the Illawarra.

Respected throughout the community for his work as a drug and alcohol counsellor, 'Uncle' Les has also become well known for his support for the protection of heritage. He has recorded more than 300 local archaeological sites and developed a catalogue of archaeological and built heritage items for the Shire.

Les has served as archivist, bulletin editor and research officer during 30 years with Sutherland Shire Historical Society and is a member of the Sutherland Shire Council's Heritage Committee. In addition he has served as Chair of the Sutherland Shire Aboriginal Advisory Committee among his many roles.

Recently he took on the demanding role of founding editor of a new journal of local history and heritage called *Doryanthes* (named after the Genus of the indigenous Gynea Lily.)

Les is making a positive contribution to reconciliation by communicating the significance and richness of Aboriginal culture and art in the Sutherland Shire through his work as a community representative and public speaker.

# Phyllis Stroud

One of Cronulla's leading lights in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century



*Phyllis Stroud, Queen of all the Surf, 1927*

*Although Phyllis Farleigh (nee Stroud) is now 104, her recollections of life in Cronulla before the 1930s, and events such as winning the Sun Newspaper's first Surf Queen competition in 1927 remain incredibly detailed and vivid. What follows is an account of her memories of her family's contribution to Cronulla's early history, based on an interview I conducted with her in August 2009 for Telling It As It Was, a Sutherland Shire Oral History Project spearheaded by historian, Pauline Curby. Sound recordings, photos and related documents of this and other oral histories of local residents are housed in the Local Studies Collection of Sutherland Library.*

*Elizabeth Craig*

## **The Stroud Family**

In 1913, when Phyllis Stroud was eight years old, her father, Frank Stroud, moved his wife, Violet [nee Hammond] and six children to Cronulla. He had been a publican at the Railway Parade Hotel in Kogarah, but fear of prohibition caused him and his family to sell the hotel and move into real estate. Frank had built a Californian Redwood house in a street he named after his son, John. "The first boy after four girls – he deserved to have a street named after him," says Phyllis. The house is still there, although now painted pink, and the tennis court has been sold.

The Strouds were well off. They had a 7-seater Cadillac, a double garage, a vegetable garden, Polly the cow and Jack the horse. "Dad bought a pony and sulky from the Giddings family who ran the coach and horses before the tram was put in from Sutherland," explains Phyllis. The kids, with Grandpa Hammond, would take their white milk pail and ride the pony and sulky to Miranda where Westfield Shopping Centre is now located, and fill the pail with the blackberries growing rife there. These they shared with their friends, the Cridland family, whose children Wally and Emma went to school with the Stroud girls, until Frank Cridland sold their home on Gunnamatta Bay and moved his family to Caringbah.

Electricity was not yet connected, and while most people used storm lanterns to light their house, the Strouds generated their own fuel and lighting from a petrol-filled machine in the shed at the bottom of the yard. Phyllis describes how it worked. "There was a big iron triangle with a dead weight on it. You wound that weight to the top and as you used the gas that weight came down. So in the summer time we'd have a gas stove, and in the winter time Mum used the fuel stove which was in the breakfast room. That warmed the whole of the house."

### **Cronulla Village**

Cronulla was just a village. The telephone shut off at 6pm and opened again at 9am. Cronulla Mall was Kurranulla Street - which meant little pink shells. "Shelly beach was deep with little pink shells, and Sutherland Council sold it as shell grit." The roads were not paved, but the Strouds had a brick pavement outside their place. The shops in Cronulla were accessed over board pavements. Phyllis remembers Wormalds sweet and icecream shop. There were two green groceries: Bellinghams and McGuires. Opposite the School of Arts was Vincents chemist shop. There was also a newsagent. Ray Heaps, who was very well liked in the district, had an icecream shop on the beach. "When we'd had our swim, we'd call into Heaps and for 6d we'd get a glass dish filled with icecream."

Flo Cooper, who Phyllis stresses was an important person in Cronulla, had a little restaurant opposite the Reserve. "We'd have our lunch there, and when they built the new ladies dressing shed, Flo was put in charge of bathing costumes to be rented out. They were all black wool." Flo also played the pianola at the Old Tin Picture Show and ran the sweet stall at interval. "Many a time I've been in the sweet stall, helping her, and then I'd go back and stay the night with her, and go to school from her place. It was just around the corner. Flo also served as a VAD [Voluntary Aid Detachment] during the First World War.

Phyllis attended the Church of England Church on Giddings Avenue. For Sunday School picnics all denominations would go to Audley in Laycock's launches. "The point was we all knew one another. We had a string around our necks with a mug on it. The older people would look after we kids."



***Cronulla Surf Club members***



### **Cronulla Public School**

Phyllis remembers Mr Tonkin, the headmaster of Cronulla Public School, with great fondness. In fact it seemed all of the Tonkins worked at the school. "Mrs Tonkin taught sewing, Millicent Tonkin taught music and Josie Tonkin ran the library". Phyllis did very well at school and once won the [Thomas] Ley Dux Medal for making the most progress. She later attended Sydney Girls High School, at that time located on the site of the David Jones store in Elizabeth Street. She travelled by steam tram to Sutherland and connected with the train into town. Phyllis recalls the author, Ethel Turner's name on the Honour Board at Sydney Girls High School. Turner's son, Adrian Curlewis, was involved with surf life-saving, and Phyllis later met him at the opening of a new shed for Cronulla Surf Club. She was thrilled when Curlewis told her he had known her Dad. "Everybody thought the world of Dad," she says.

Just before she was due to sit for her Leaving Certificate, Phyllis was sent by her father to Stott & Hoare's Business College behind Liverpool Street to study shorthand, typing and accountancy. Afterwards she got a job as ledger keeper with McWilliam Wines, and often stayed with the family at Manly.

### **Cronulla Identities**

Phyllis remembers Joe Monroe very well. She said he "was just a gardener, but he had presence. He was quite tall and handsome, a bit full of himself." Phyllis tells how he eloped with a wealthy widow, Mrs Moya, then built the Monroe holiday flats. According to Phyllis, Joe later got one of the housemaids, Lizzie, into trouble, so he divorced his wife and married Lizzie who was an alcoholic. He later divorced Lizzie and married a third time, and lived on Kangaroo Point.

Joe Monroe built the Cecil Hotel and also built the Cecil Ballroom on top of a shop at the north end of Cronulla Beach.[Joe Monroe's first name was actually Cecil.]. "Every Saturday night was dance time - strictly ballroom," laughs Phyllis. "There was no boogie-woogie. We were doing polkas and waltzes." Another popular dance was called "shot-eeze." It was a lot of fun because, as Phyllis said, "they were all people we knew."

Mr Lawless, the district lamplighter, was a popular figure with Phyllis. Apart from lighting the street lamps, he also collected the money for the Old Tin Picture show in Gerrale Street. It had no box office, so Mr Lawless would sit on the chair outside the door and hand out threepenny tickets. "The seats were benches with backs on them, and if you had a boyfriend he would sit behind you and cuddle you from the back."

Important visitors to Cronulla were often entertained at the Stroud's home. When the famed surfboard rider, Duke Kahanamoku visited the district in 1915, Phyllis recalls sitting on his knee and reciting *Little Orphan Annie* to him. "He didn't take big waves like they do now," says Phyllis. "He took little waves and stood up." Kahanamoku was very generous, Phyllis remembers. He donated one of his two 22-foot surfboards to Cronulla Surf Club. The other one he gave to Harbord Surf Club.

### **Cronulla and North Cronulla Surf Clubs**

Frank Stroud, a keen surfer, was a founder of Cronulla Surf Club in 1907, and trained surf lifesavers. When so many of these young fit men enlisted at the start of World War I, Frank recruited 12 and 13-year old boys from Cronulla School who he trained to become life-savers. He also taught the VAD girls lifesaving techniques. It was unusual for women to be lifesavers then and Phyllis recalls a photo of them in their white uniforms giving a demonstration at Government House. North Cronulla Surf Club was formed after the War by the young men Frank had trained when young boys.



### ***Queen of All the Surf, 1927***

The sea was in the Strouds' blood. All of Frank's children were taught to swim from the age of four. The boys learned overarm stroke, but the girls he taught breaststroke at Sans Souci Baths. Phyllis says her father regretted this differentiation, because when the girls went to Cronulla High School they had to teach themselves overarm in order to take part in swimming competitions.

In 1927 the *Sun* Newspaper ran its first Queen of the Surf contest to raise much needed funds for hospitals. Every surf club from Dee Why to Cronulla competed and Phyllis Stroud was selected to be Cronulla's surf queen. "It wasn't a beauty contest," explains Phyllis. "It was to raise money in penny votes." She promised Joe Monro, who ran Cronulla's team, that if she won the 50-pound prize, she would donate it to St George Hospital. "We didn't dream we would win," she

laughs. Phyllis was supported by the Kogarah and Sutherland Shire districts. Pennies were lined along Kurranulla Street one way, and then up Nicholson Parade. Theft was not a concern even though the Depression was looming. "Pennies were a lot of money in those days. But you could have a mile of pennies and nobody would touch them because it was for charity," explains Phyllis.

Competition was fierce though. "The only reason we won was because I'd agreed to donate my 50 pounds prize to the hospital," says Phyllis. Mr Laycock, patron of Clovelly Surf Club was so keen for his club's surf queen (his wife) to win, that when it became clear that Cronulla was 50 pounds ahead during counting at the *Sun's* office, Phyllis said he wanted to donate another 100 pounds to beat Cronulla. The offer was not accepted.

A cheque for 4,335 pounds was handed over to St George Hospital, representing 1,040,400 penny votes for Phyllis. 100 pounds was awarded to the sponsoring surf clubs, shared by Cronulla and North Cronulla Surf Clubs. They each bought a surf life-saving boat, Cronulla naming theirs *Surf Queen*. "One Sunday afternoon, they took me out for a row, and all of Cronulla came out to watch me," laughs Phyllis.

Phyllis describes the moment the photo heading this article was taken.

"We [the surf queens] were all taken down to South Bondi and we had our photos taken. [The photographer] was posing these girls with fans and umbrellas and sunshades while lying flat on the rocks. I thought 'That's not me!'" Phyllis ran into the water, jumped up on a rock, turned around with a big smile and said, 'Hi'. The photographer called, 'Hold it', and took the shot. Phyllis was wearing the Cronulla Surf Club colours of pale blue, white and black. She couldn't find a pale blue cap, so she'd bought a yard of pale blue sateen and tied it around her hair.

The crowning ceremony was held on Cronulla Reserve, after a huge procession from Sutherland. Phyllis rode in a horse-drawn open carriage, watched by 60,000 people. The procession included a band, representatives from the Junior Red Cross, Scouts, nurses from St George District Hospital, Surf Clubs, the Surf Queens and Maids of Honour, the crown and sceptre bearers, Sweet Nell,



Jesters, the Lord High Chancellor, the Lord High Executioner, a dancer, trainbearers, and of course, "Archbishop", Joe Monro (also President of Sutherland Shire Council). Phyllis recalls that she was wearing a tiara and Joe was about to put the crown on top of it. "I had to tell him to take it off," she laughed. "It was quite exciting".

After the ceremony 2000 pigeons were released.

Getting home afterwards was a nightmare. "There was only one ferry at Tom Ugly's and one at Taren Point," recalls Phyllis, "and the queue was dreadful." When she and her boyfriend, Ray Farleigh eventually got to his home at Arncliffe at about 1.00 am, Mrs Farleigh invited her to stay the night. "I said no, because I knew Mum would kick up a row if I'd stayed there overnight. She'd be thinking I'd done the wrong thing." Ray drove her all the way home to Bondi

[the Strouds had moved there in 1920], and returned to Arncliffe.

### **Frank Stroud's disillusionment with the attitudes to the war effort**

Frank was very disillusioned with attitudes he encountered during the First World War. When he tried to enlist he was knocked back because of deafness. He wanted to contribute so he offered his car and himself as chauffeur for use of the army. He soon realised that instead of driving for the war effort, he was used to ferry young people to tennis clubs. It cost him 12 pounds a week to run the car – a lot of money then – and they treated him like dirt because he was a chauffeur. Frank withdrew his services, and worked instead at the small arms factory at Holdsworthy. He believed that the quicker you worked, the more you produced and the earlier the war would finish. He was a born engineer, and he worked hard. An Irish foreman approached him and said, "Stroud, you're working too quickly. The other fellows can't keep up with you." He was so disillusioned he left there, too. "He was an idealist," explains Phyllis.

### **Phyllis's marriage to Ray Farleigh**

Phyllis met her future husband, Ray Farleigh at a friend's place when she was 19. Ray was immediately attracted to her, but had to find out whether she was Catholic before he would ask to be introduced to her. "He told me he'd have gone through hell if I was a Catholic and he'd married me." Ray's family was strict Methodists from County Sligo in Ireland. They'd been so persecuted that they went to England and changed the spelling of their name from "ley" to "leigh". Phyllis and Ray married in August, 1930, a happy marriage which lasted until Ray's death in 1970. Ray's name for Phyllis was 'Lollylegs'. They loved dancing, and had learned to dance independently at Scotts Dancing School. "He was still in love with me when he died," said Phyllis.



*Phyllis Farleigh  
at the age of 104,  
August, 2009*

## More on ‘Fernleigh’

The cover of the bulletin features a signed photograph of Rolf Harris on a Shetland pony with Ivy Alcott, the owner of the historic home, ‘Fernleigh’, at Burraneer Bay. It was taken around 1960. Ivy was a well known resident, renowned for her charitable work. She also conducted a private zoo which she would open to the public. Animals included monkeys, ponies, lyre birds, wallabies, kangaroos, birds and dogs. Rolf Harris’ career as an entertainer was just beginning. Ben Alcott, Ivy’s grandson has explained that Rolf launched his famous song ‘Tie me Kangaroo Down Sport’ at Fernleigh.

### ***Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport***

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

"**Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport**" is a song written by Rolf Harris in 1957 which became a hit across the world in the 1960s (1960 in Great Britain, 1963 in the US). Inspired by Harry Belafonte's calypsos, it is about an Australian stockman on his deathbed. The song is one of the best known and most successful Australian songs.

This recording of the song peaked at No. 1 in the Australian charts in 1961, No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the United States in 1963 and in the top 10 in Britain in 1960. The distinctive sound of Harris's original recording was achieved by the use of an instrument of his own design called the "wobble board", actually a two by three foot piece of Masonite<sup>1</sup>.

Another famous resident was ‘Basil Bones’ Several fanciful stories were circulated about his origin, including that he was a convict dug up on the site. In reality he was likely to have been a medical specimen. Basil resided in a cupboard in the attic on the top floor of Fernleigh.





***‘Basil Bones’ and Mitzy’.*** The monkey’s photograph could have been taken possibly around 1967 when Cronulla-Sutherland Rugby League Club joined the Sydney Premiership. (note the badge)



***Fernleigh’s boatshed before it was subdivided to become a commercial marina.***

# The DODSON / CAEDMON MYSTERY

**Merle Kavanagh**

In the May 2006 issue of *The Bulletin*, a “mystery” was presented together with an article on Joe’s Milk Bar at Cronulla, built originally in 1926 by John Dodson as refreshment rooms with some flats attached and called Whitby Cliffs. The mystery concerned the name “Caedmon” which at that time was “preserved in bold relief on the wall along The Esplanade in front of the Sea Level Restaurant”. The name Caedmon was also given to the laneway off Croydon Street which runs behind the shops. Caedmon was an illiterate monk who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century at Whitby Abbey situated high on the cliffs around Whitby Harbour in Yorkshire.

Recently I had an enquiry about a “Captain Dodson” from a fellow family historian, Megan Neilson who has uncovered some interesting facts on John Dodson which don’t exactly solve the mystery but which do shed some light on the subject. Her interest in Dodson stemmed from her mother, Audrey Davy (nee Kitt) who knew Dodson when she spent childhood holidays at Cronulla. On one occasion he showed young Audrey a picture of a ship and spoke of it as “his ship”, which is probably why she thought he was a Captain. The picture was most likely of the ship on which he immigrated – the *Nineveh*. But let us start at the beginning.

Having noted *The Hurstville Propellor*’s items on John Dodson’s 95<sup>th</sup> birthday in their edition of 20 June 1946 and his death in their issue of 13 October 1949 it was possible to find him listed in the 1861 U.K. Census for Morpeth, Northumberland as born c. June 1851 in Butterwick, Yorkshire to Francis (an agricultural labourer) and Elizabeth Dodson. This census listed him as 10 years old (though the surname is spelt “Dodgson”) and his siblings as Mary Jane aged 12 born Butterwick, Elizabeth aged 6 born Fallscliffe (should probably be Felliscliffe) and Lousia (sic) born Whitby.

The 1871 U.K. Census showed Francis as a brickmaker and John aged 20 as a brickmaker labourer together with siblings Loe (Louisa) aged 13, William aged 11, Sarah Ann aged 9, Francis aged 4 and Margaret Matilda aged 2. When the family were not found on the 1881 Census a check of the NSW Assisted Immigration records found Francis (Frank), Elizabeth and their children William, Sarah, Frank, Matilda and Martha (aged 5 years) arriving in 1878 on the *Peterborough*. Frank had a sister, Jane Cook in the colony and this would have encouraged her brother, Frank, to follow with his family. In 1879 John Dodson followed his parents to Australia aboard the *Ninevah*, arriving as a bricklayer, aged 28 together with wife Sarah (nee Davy) and children Sarah 4, Louisa 3 and John J. 1, all born in Durham. His early life in England had been spent mainly on the coast of Yorkshire and Whitby, where his sister Louisa was born. Whitby would have made a deep impression on young John then aged about 7 years, old enough to absorb some of the local ancient history of Whitby, the Abbey on the cliff tops and Caedmon.

The Birth, Death and Marriage records for New South Wales reveal that several children were born to John and Sarah in the central west of NSW after their arrival, showing the itinerant nature of John’s work. The births of the following were registered to John and Sarah - Margaret Ann at Cobar in 1882, Alfred John at Liverpool in 1884, Joseph F. at Dubbo 1885, Frances at Granville 1887 and Ethel M. at Burwood in 1891.

However, by the early 1920s they were in Cronulla and in 1925 his wife Sarah died, registered at Sutherland. John built the tea rooms in 1926 and in the same year he remarried – Angelina Sarah Jane Pickering (nee Pye), registered at Rockdale. This event is well remembered by Audrey then aged 8 years, as her mother and grandmother were guests at the wedding and to this young girl it was a grand affair with much fuss about what the guests would wear. It appears that there could be an earlier



connection between Audrey's maternal family line, the Roberts and the Pye family as both families lived in the Yass/Goulburn area. Perhaps this connection and the wedding in 1926 was the beginning for young Audrey of memories that have lasted for over 80 years. To her, John Dodson was 'a memorable person' and she believes he took a special interest in her as she was a bright and interested child. She recalls that he gave the picture of the sailing ship to her, but it has gone astray over the years.

So the mystery still remains, but we do know more about John Dodson and could easily accept that he was connected with the Caedmon name on the wall. Since he gave the name Whitby Cliffs to his 1926 building at Cronulla then the famous monk Caedmon, who lived in Whitby Abbey high above those cliffs, was probably a significant part of his childhood memories of Whitby.



The Caedmon name still appears on the wall of The Esplanade at the Southern end of North Cronulla Beach. The stone is over a metre wide and a quarter of a metre deep.

Someone has affixed graffiti to the adjacent wall which will not last as long as the Caedmon stone. Behind are the cliffs which probably encouraged Dodson to give his building the name of Whitby Cliffs, a place where he lived as a young lad.

### **Some social news**

Each Friday some members of this society meet for a friendly game of bridge in Sutherland. Our group has been in existence for over twenty years and some of the original players are still with us. If you would enjoy a truly social game, with lunch, at a most convenient venue very close to the station and buses, then ring Angela on 9528 - 6251

# HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2010

Heritage Festival will take place between Saturday 10th April and Saturday 24th April.  
Our Society's fixtures are as follows:-

The museum Open daily with an exhibition from 9.30 -3.30. 'The Making of a Nation. Sutherland Shire's commercial and industrial history'. Museum is at the School of Arts, East Parade, Sutherland.

Our Society A photographic display running until the 21st April in the Rainbow Room, Sutherland Council. 9.30 till 3.30.

Saturday 10th April

There will be events run by the Tramway Museum, Woronora Cemetery, Green Point Observatory and Brinsleys Joinery. The Vintage Bus Run will link these venues. Come and experience these on a nostalgic bus ride. The Vintage Bus will depart from Pitt St & Old Princes Highway, Loftus at 10 am, 11 am, 12 am, 1 pm, 2 pm and 3 pm. Taking you to each of these venues, you can alight and get on again on its next tour. Ring Angela Thomas hon sec.9528 6251 or Nola Watt asst.sec. 9521 7265 for more detailed information and timetable of The Vintage Bus.

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>

A seminar with a champagne & chicken lunch at Stapleton Community Centre, midday till 4 pm.

Before lunch: Dawn Emerson will speak on 'The Overland Journey to the Illawarra with Macquarie'.

After lunch: Helen Macdonald will speak on 'From Blueprint to Building; a history of construction and industry in the Sutherland Shire'.

Tickets \$10. Ring Pat Hannan on 9528 8294

Also the Botany Bay Family History Fair, Port Hacking Community Centre, 184 Gannons Rd.South. 1 am till 3 pm

Sunday 18th

The week culminates with a Symphony Under the Stars concert at Como Pleasure Grounds from 5pm till 7pm. Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra will be playing. There will also be bagpipes. Refreshments will be available. This is a free event. Enquiries to Lyn Hoyle 9710 0992.

Tuesday 20th April

Don't forget the Seniors Concerts, morning and afternoon at the School of Arts. Lyn Buchman 9521 7170

## Did you know?

Our Museum is open on the **first Saturday** of every month **from 10 am to 3 pm**, or else, by appointment at any time by arrangement with Jim Cutbush, curator.  
9521 3721



# Trickett Road

I have lived in Trickett Road (previously Trickett Street) Cronulla for nearly 30 years and have often wondered who it was named after. Was it after one of the three Tricketts listed in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* or some unknown person?

Was it **Oliver Trickett** (1847-1934), surveyor and speleologist, who migrated with his family to Victoria aged about 15? He worked first in the Office of Mines, Melbourne, qualified as a mineral surveyor and in 1876 moved to New South Wales, where he was licensed as a surveyor by the Department of Lands. He became an enthusiastic 'cave man', publishing guides to the Jenolan and other caves.

Was it **William Trickett** (1843-1916), solicitor and politician, who arrived in Sydney in 1854? Trickett was admitted as a solicitor in 1866 and became involved in local council politics in Woollahra. In 1880 he was elected to represent Paddington in the Legislative Assembly, was postmaster-general in 1883-84, minister for public instruction in 1884-85 and was later appointed to the Legislative Council. Trickett was involved in numerous philanthropic committees and sporting bodies.

My favourite for the honour of giving Trickett Road its name is the sculler **Edward Trickett** (1851-1916), the Trickett from the most humble background. The son of a bootmaker, Edward was born at Greenwich, on the Lane Cove River and worked as a quarryman. As a teenager he began winning sculling races and by his mid-twenties was the best in New South Wales. In 1876 he competed on the Thames becoming the first Australian to win a world championship in any sport. Tall, lean and fit, he returned to Sydney a sporting hero. In August 1879 defeated Elias Laycock, later a resident of Cronulla, in a championship contest. This was the climax of a great sporting career of a man remembered as one of the most versatile rowers of his time.

Trickett Road could have been named after Oliver Trickett as surveyors' names were often attached to places where they worked. William Trickett is also a possible candidate considering how fond politicians were of having their names up in lights. I favour Edward Trickett, however, partly because of the connection with rower Elias Laycock but also because he was a genuine 19<sup>th</sup> century sporting celebrity.

Sutherland local studies librarian Helen McDonald notes that Trickett Road is on land that was one of two parts of the Holt Sutherland Estate Land Company Gunnamatta Bay Subdivision. The first of these was offered for sale on 20 November 1903 (Lots 1-30) and the second, including Trickett Road, on 2 December 1904 (Lots 31-105). Both subdivisions were surveyed by Louis A Curtis who worked for the Company.

Helen comments that, although there is no conclusive proof the road was named for Edward Trickett, the fact two other streets in the subdivision carried the names of famous scullers suggests this may be the case. Searl Road, wrongly spelt, possibly commemorates Trickett's contemporary, Henry Searle (1866-1889) and Beach Street (Connells Road since 1930) could have been named after Bill Beach (1850-1935), one of Trickett's fiercest rivals in the 1880s.

**Pauline Curby**

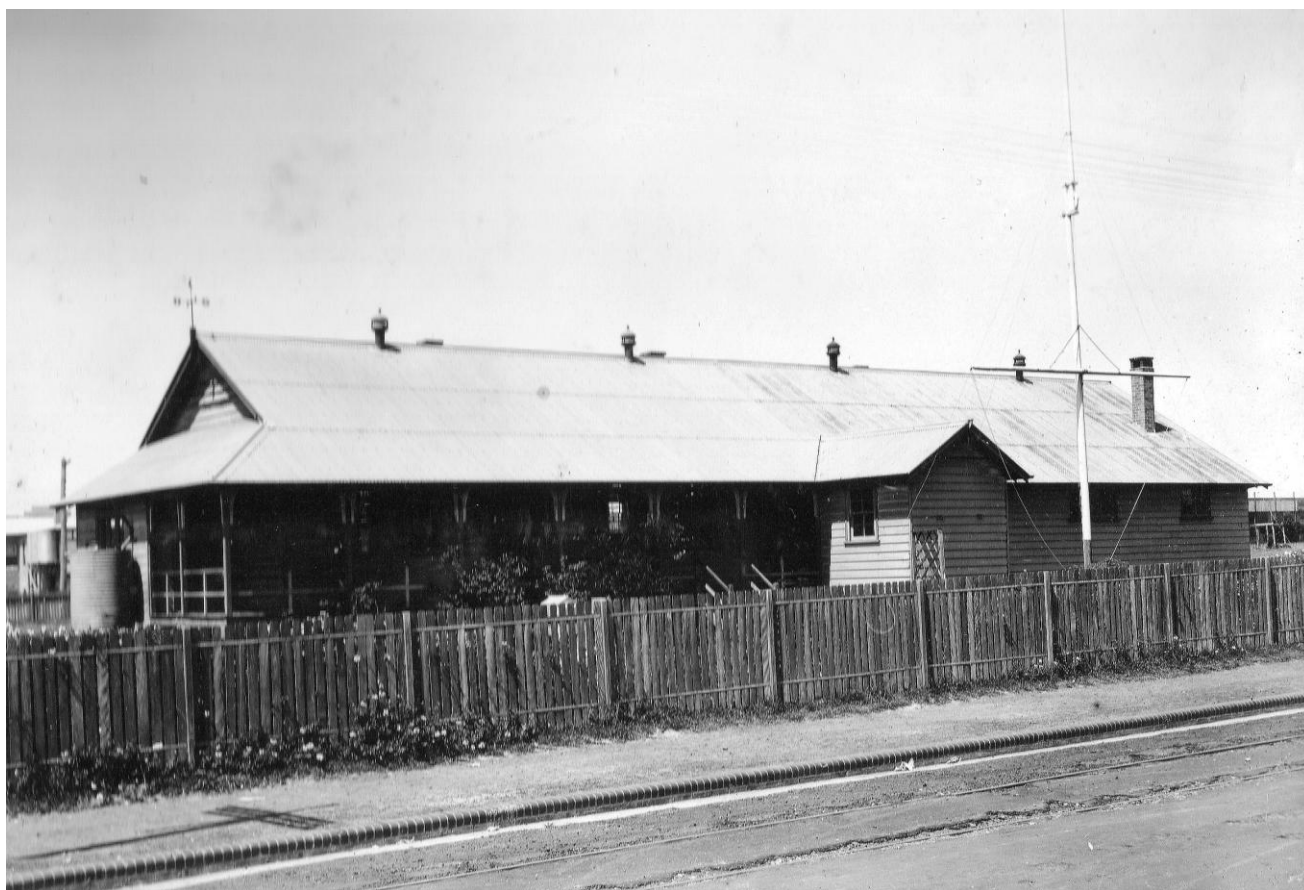
# *Cronulla Public School, the early years*

**Pauline Curby**

## *A village school*

Cronulla Public School opened in January 1910 in the main street of what was little more than a fishing village on the southern outskirts of Sydney. This first school in the eastern part of Sutherland Shire was centrally located opposite where Cronulla railway station now is. But there was no railway station there at that time, just some houses, a few shops and a dirt road.

In winter the place was quiet, as it was in the other Sutherland Shire villages. Things were different in summer. As beachgoers flocked to Cronulla, the village was fast becoming a popular holiday resort. 'Everything was progressing except education', declared the parents who campaigned to have a school in their 'progressive little village'.<sup>1</sup>



## *The original school in Monro Park*

When it opened on 25 January 1910, Cronulla Public School consisted of a single-storey, wooden building with a corrugated iron roof. There were two classrooms, a large hat room with a lunch cupboard, a verandah, a lavatory and a teacher's room.<sup>2</sup> On the day of the opening, Sutherland Shire councillors met the Minister for Public Instruction at Sutherland railway station. After lunch at

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Deputation to the Minister, Cronulla PS file, (5/15567) SRNSW.

<sup>2</sup> WH Brien, Cronulla PS Jubilee booklet.

Boyle's Hotel the party travelled by coach to Audley in the nearby National Park. From there they cruised by motor boat 'along the winding course of the Port (sic) Hacking River' to Gunnamatta Bay. This was a slower but more pleasant journey than the alternative dusty trip by horse-drawn coach.

The *St George Call* described the opening as one of the most successful functions held in Cronulla.<sup>3</sup> It was organised by the Cronulla Parents and Citizens Association, previously called the Cronulla School Association. Without the persistence of this parent group, led by local boat builder and Sutherland Shire councillor John Hill, Cronulla would have continued without a school for some time.<sup>4</sup>

After the school opened, it experienced a period of massive growth. Cronulla was in the midst of a population explosion, especially after 1911 when a steam tram service opened, linking Cronulla with Sutherland railway station. This improved transport helped transform Cronulla from a purely weekend resort to a popular venue for day trippers. At the time it was noted, perhaps with some exaggeration,

the [tramway] extension adds another large suburb to the city of Sydney ... Anyone who compares the place today with only five years ago is astonished at the changes that have taken place. Cronulla has developed into a town.<sup>5</sup>

The 'village' as local people preferred to say, was in transition from a small holiday resort to a thriving commercial and residential centre. Its school on an overcrowded site in the main street was growing rapidly.

### ***Centralising education***

In the early 1890s, lured by the possibility of escaping the congested city and enjoying a healthier lifestyle in picturesque surroundings, families began to settle at Cronulla Beach, later known as the Village of Gunnamatta, and around the shores of Port Hacking. Local children attended a small school which opened in 1893. This catered mainly for three families: the De Leurences, Laycocks and Hills. The De Leurences provided accommodation for the teacher and initially the school room as well, as the school was on their property, at the north eastern corner of what is now Burraneer Park. In 1897 the school was upgraded and sited in its own building on the corner of Burraneer Bay and Gannons Roads, on the site occupied by Burraneer Bay Public School, midway between what are now the suburbs of Caringbah and Cronulla.<sup>6</sup>

For ten years this small, one-teacher school educated local children. Their parents were disappointed when, with no consultation, it closed in 1907, in line with the NSW government's policy of centralising education.<sup>7</sup> The buildings were transferred to Miranda Public School which now became a central school. A lively, semi-rural centre, with a School of Arts and a Progress Association, Miranda had a school since 1893.<sup>8</sup> Residents there considered that if a school were established at Cronulla, it would undermine theirs.<sup>9</sup> Cronulla parents who wanted their own school could expect no support from that quarter. Later in a letter to the *St George Call*, Edward Thacker, the Chairman of the Miranda School Board, elaborated on the educational disadvantages of a one-teacher school,

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<sup>3</sup> *SGC*, 29/1/1910.

<sup>4</sup> Cronulla PS P&C Minute Book.

<sup>5</sup> F Cridland, unlabelled newspaper extract, (1911), courtesy of Michelle Vale.

<sup>6</sup> Inspector's report, Burraneer Bay School File; Sievers & Green Port Hacking Real Estate Map, 1889, (5/5189.1) SRNSW.

<sup>7</sup> Report on Deputation, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> DR Kirkby, *From Sails to Atoms*, Sutherland Shire Council, 1970, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *SGC*, 20/6/1908.

especially for older children. He was anxious to keep the Cronulla children at his own flourishing school.<sup>10</sup>

### *Alive with children*

For many children it was difficult to get to school even when there was one in the locality. The Laycock children, for example, rowed across Port Hacking from their home in Bundeena. In addition to braving often stormy conditions, they now had to travel an extra four kilometres to Miranda.<sup>11</sup>

To ensure its policy of centralisation was viable, the Department of Public Instruction, after 1925 called the Department of Education, introduced a subsidised travel scheme for students living within three to six miles of an existing school.<sup>12</sup> So from 1907 Cronulla children travelled daily, on Mrs Giddings' coach, to the Central School at Miranda. Worried for their children's safety, especially after the coach overturned when the horses shied on one occasion, residents petitioned the Minister of Public Instruction for a school in Cronulla.

'Something like a dozen families', John Hill claimed, refused to let their children travel to school despite the fact education had been compulsory in NSW since 1880. Sent to investigate, a departmental inspector made the coach journey with the children. Observing them squashed into the crowded coach with the older ones riding on the step, he reported that they 'seemed to enjoy the ride'. The parents were not quite as happy as their boisterous off-spring or as complacent about their safety as the inspector was. The Andrews family sent only two of their four children to school but were 'too frightened' to allow the younger ones to ride in the coach.<sup>13</sup>

Even though the inspector admitted, 'there are sufficient children [in Cronulla] to support a public school', the Department of Public Instruction rejected the parents' request. It was considered a small school would not be in the educational interests of the children.<sup>14</sup> In addition the Department was worried about a possible 'flow on' effect if Cronulla was allowed to have a new school. Coaches also brought pupils to Miranda Central School from Sylvania and Port Hacking, as well as transporting children from Cronulla. The inspector was concerned 'the other localities ... [would] expect similar treatment'. He sourly concluded, 'the agitation is kept up at Cronulla by those anxious to push the locality'. While the majority of the 'agitators' were small businessmen who probably did want to 'push' Cronulla, they had a legitimate interest in their children attending a conveniently located school.<sup>15</sup>

Undeterred by the government's attitude, the 'agitators' formed the Cronulla School Association, enlisting the support of their local member of parliament, Frederick Downes. They managed to get some timely publicity in the *St George Call*.<sup>16</sup> When a deputation to James Hogue, the Minister of Public Instruction was held on 17 June 1908, Hogue listened to their arguments politely and, although acknowledging the parents' claims were just, refused to make any commitment. He conceded, however, that during the following year, 'I shall be able to determine whether I can afford to give you a school or not'.<sup>17</sup>

Finally the money was found and in September 1909 it was announced that a school would be built on a central site in the village, now called Cronulla. This decision would save the expense of buying

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<sup>10</sup> SGC, 20/6/1908.

<sup>11</sup> Burraneer Bay School File, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> A Barcan, *A Short History of Education in NSW*, Martindale Press, Sydney, 1965, p. 207.

<sup>13</sup> Report on Deputation, op.cit.

<sup>14</sup> Inspector's Report, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>15</sup> SGC, 20/6/1908.

<sup>16</sup> SGC, 13/8/1906.

<sup>17</sup> Report on Deputation, op. cit.



land as the school would be located on the 'government reserve ... beautifully situated on the neck of the peninsula, near old timer [Elias] Laycock's cottage'.<sup>18</sup> There was to be considerable delay, however, before the children of Cronulla were to be 'beautifully situated' in their own school. As months passed and nothing happened, John Hill, the father of a large family, became impatient and urged Downes to take action as, 'Cronulla is alive with children'.<sup>19</sup>

### *An unsuitable site*

Although a decision to establish a school had been made, there was further delay as the size of the site was debated. Peter Board, the Director-General of Education from 1905 to 1922, realised that the land chosen was not a good long-term proposition. Board had been instrumental in reforming primary schools in NSW with the introduction of a curriculum based on the principles of the 'New Education' movement. For these reforms to be effective each class needed its own separate room, rather than the long classrooms of the past when the pupil-teacher system operated.<sup>20</sup> If his reforms were to be implemented successfully in the new school at Cronulla, a suitable building was needed on a large site. Board recommended land be procured 'for a reasonable price'.

This was easier said than done. Sydney was booming, real estate prices were rising and land in Cronulla was selling strongly. The inspector reported, 'no suitable site can be obtained at less than £300 or £400 per acre'. This was considered an 'altogether unreasonable price'.<sup>21</sup> Board suggested as a compromise that a reserve adjoining land already dedicated for a school be allocated to the new school. Comprising what is now Monro Park, this would have doubled the size of the playground. Arguing that the bulk of the population was migratory and a large school site was unnecessary, the Department of Lands refused to surrender this reserve, regarding it as extremely valuable, as indeed it was. In any case it was considered that children did not need much playground space when there was a beach nearby to play on.<sup>22</sup>

Board's recommendation for a building suitable for 140 pupils was also rejected. It was finally decided that a wooden building to house 90 pupils would be built on the northern half of what is now Monro Park. Short-term economic considerations had triumphed over educational philosophy as was to be the case many times in NSW. When he opened the school James Hogue admitted, 'as the district was developing so rapidly, in a year or two the building would not be nearly large enough'.<sup>23</sup> Hogue's prediction proved correct. In his early weeks at the school Henry Tonkin, the school's first principal, was faced with a site far too small for his rapidly growing enrolments. He immediately requested additional accommodation, as he would continue to do for years.

There were other problems as well. The 'intrusion by camping parties' in the school grounds was a worry, especially the fire danger to the wooden school buildings. At the same time holiday makers resented the presence of the new school on their free and conveniently located camping ground. This problem continued for some time. In May 1912 Tonkin applied to the Department of Public Instruction for repairs and improvements to the school. He complained,

the existing post and rail fence, enclosing the school ground, is insufficient to protect the garden and to exclude pleasure seekers and others who trample on the gardens, steal plants and flowers, camp in the weather sheds and litter the ground with tins, papers and broken bottles. At night, too, undesirable characters occupy

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<sup>18</sup> SGC, 12/9/1908.

<sup>19</sup> J Hill letter to F Downes, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>20</sup> A Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education in NSW*, NSW University Press, Sydney, 1988, p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> Inspector's Report, 24/10/08, Cronulla PS file, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from the Department of Lands, 16/1/1908, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> SGC, 29/1/1910

the weather sheds. Cows get in easily between the rails because the wires have corroded in the holes of the posts and are easily broken.<sup>24</sup>

When the school was barely two years old both the principal and John Hill, the Parents and Citizens Association president, urged that the adjoining reserve be given to the school for additional playground space, as Peter Board had originally suggested. This request was granted, but it was a prolonged battle to obtain more classrooms.

### *Congestion at Cronulla*

At the beginning of every summer, as people flocked to Cronulla, Tonkin wrote, as he did in December 1913, 'The need of additional accommodation for the pupils in the school under my charge is becoming daily more urgent as the Tourist Season advances'. He explained how disheartening it was not to be able to use his 'costly optical lantern outfit' or to display his 'large collections of museum specimens' because there was insufficient space.<sup>25</sup>

When war broke out in September 1914 and renovations and additions to school buildings were put on hold, it seemed as if Cronulla would never get additional classrooms. Not that extra classrooms would have served much purpose at that time. A state-wide shortage of teachers was developing as male teachers deserted their classrooms in a rush to enlist.<sup>26</sup>

The large classes common at this time were usually composites of two or more grades. In 1914, for example, one assistant, Ada Steggles, taught two grades with a total of 55 pupils. Miss V Vigers taught 44 children, also from two grades, and Tonkin had three grades in his class of 55 pupils. Another reason, it seems, for the reluctance on the part of the Department of Public Instruction to relieve the congestion at Cronulla, was its fluctuating enrolments. Visitors came to Cronulla in the summer for extended stays and sent their children to the local school. In winter, however, enrolments decreased. So while the Department waited for some stability in Cronulla, Henry Tonkin, his assistants and the local children had to endure crowded classrooms in which there was not always adequate seating. In 1913 when first class had an enrolment of 65, there was sufficient seating for only 48 pupils. It is uncertain how the teacher managed on days when everyone came to school.<sup>27</sup>

Despite wartime restrictions, additions were made to the school in 1915. The intervention of local member of parliament Samuel Toombs may have helped. He wrote to Peter Board asking for the extensions to be hurried along as this would, 'greatly further my interests and those of my party [the Australian Labor Party] at that end'.<sup>28</sup> Many obstacles, it seems, can be surmounted with a determined politician on side.

It was assumed that not all children would attend school simultaneously, despite the Public Instruction (Amendment) Act of 1916, which had tightened up the compulsory education provisions.<sup>29</sup> In 1920 the chief inspector argued that even though the school did not have sufficient room for the 219 students enrolled, additional classrooms were not needed as average attendance was only 179. Henry Tonkin replied that although school numbers had been temporarily reduced by the opening of a Convent School and a small private school, by June 1920 enrolments had risen to 242. After a forceful letter from the inspector in support of Tonkin's claims, additions to the school were approved.

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<sup>24</sup> Henry Tonkin, letter to Department of Public Instruction, 18/1/1910, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Barcan, op.cit., p 203.

<sup>27</sup> Letters from Henry Tonkin to the Dept of Public Instruction, 17/11/1914; 2/12/1913, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from S Toombs to P Board (43597), Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>29</sup> Barcan, op.cit.,p. 199.

These extensions never eventuated. As the 1921 school year began Tonkin once again reported in despair that 'the existing accommodation for classes in the school under my charge is inadequate'. As a temporary and relatively cheap expedient, the Department leased Bayview Hall, adjoining Gunnamatta Park, to serve as a classroom for the 76 pupils of fourth and fifth classes. These pupils, and their teacher Mr McManus, had been accommodated in a room designed for 48 pupils.<sup>30</sup> Soon there were four classes housed away from the main site: two in Bayview Hall and two more in an annex to Cronulla School of Arts. Parents were concerned that this was 'unsuitable and removed from the headmaster's supervision'.<sup>31</sup>

They were becoming increasingly impatient, writing to the minister 'in emphatic terms' about the 'awful' conditions at the school. Some withdrew their children in winter as, according to the mothers, they were 'continually catching colds'. The Parents and Citizens Association, which had gone into recession some years earlier, was revived in 1922 and began a letter-writing campaign until construction of a new building on a new site got under way.<sup>32</sup>

### *A very desirable site*

Congestion at Cronulla Public School was permanently relieved when the school relocated to Burraneer Bay Road, on land overlooking Gunnamatta Bay. Six and a half years elapsed from the time Sutherland Shire Council first wrote to the Minister suggesting this site before the school moved. While the Council wished to see the children in more spacious accommodation, it also wanted to purchase a strip of the original playground so a lane, now Laycock Avenue, could be widened into 'a decent sized thoroughfare'. As this would 'make still smaller the already too limited space available for the school', it was proposed that a new site be acquired.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, in August 1921 the Department approved the purchase of land overlooking Gunnamatta Bay where the children could have swimming lessons. Tonkin was elated, reporting that it was

a very desirable one ... more centrally situated on an easterly slope sheltered from the westerly winds and less exposed to the blasting effects of the strong SE gales which wrought such havoc on the school garden ... Pupils travelling by tram would have to walk a distance of only 20 chains from the tramstop, and those conveyed by ferry boat from Bundeena on Port Hacking would be landed near the school. The danger and noise associated with trams passing a school would be obviated and the entire environment of the school would be delightful.<sup>34</sup>

On this beautiful block of land, with 'access from all directions', there was a weatherboard cottage with stone foundations which the Elliot family rented for fifteen shillings a week. Ron Elliot, who was a child at the time, recalled how his family moved to the area in 1916 because, 'Dad was due to depart overseas with the AIF and his father Robert Elliot conducted a boatshed at Excelsior Street nearby'.<sup>35</sup> Ron's father returned safely from the War and by the time they had to vacate the rented cottage they were in a position to buy their own house.

The new school site was bought in 1922 for £4000, but it was to be three years before the building was completed.<sup>36</sup> The Parents and Citizens Association was anxious to have a fence erected so a garden could be established on the new site. The 'menfolk' were prepared to 'do all the gardening

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<sup>30</sup> Letters, Cronulla PS file, op.cit

<sup>31</sup> P&C Minute Book, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> P&C Minute Book, p. 10; Letters from P&C to Department of Public Instruction, 7/7/1923 & 29/4/1924, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from TJ Ley MLA on behalf of Sutherland Shire Council to the Minister for Education, 17/3/1919, ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Henry Tonkin to Inspector Riley, 20/8/1921, ibid.

<sup>35</sup> R Elliott, letter 9/1990.

<sup>36</sup> P&C Minute Book, p. 10.

required if protection from straying animals is afforded'. Even though the owners of adjoining properties were willing to pay half the cost of the fence, this request was rejected. Straying animals were to graze unhindered until well after the school was built.

The new building, described by the *Hurstville Propeller*, as 'a splendid example of modern school construction', was finally occupied on 30 November 1925 and officially opened the following January.<sup>37</sup> Nine-year-old John Cowan was the first to step over the threshold after his teacher Mr McManus marched the class to the new building.<sup>38</sup> Young Les Myers trudged across the mud flats, now Tonkin Oval, carrying loads of equipment to the new school.<sup>39</sup> Peter Board would have approved of the building as a suitable place for the promotion of his 'New Education' ideas. Henry Tonkin, a man after Board's heart, who had chosen this incomparable site, was never to teach there, as he had retired the year before the new school opened.

For its first ten years this was the only school in the immediate district. Local youngsters, regardless of religion or economic circumstances, were educated together at Cronulla Public School. While conditions may not have been ideal, there was broad community support for public education. The experience of being educated in an innovative environment that paid little attention to class or creed engendered a community spirit still evident in the people who attended the school in those early years.

Also see below a little piece on the ceremony in Monro Park :

At 9.30am on Monday 25 January a short ceremony was held in Monro Park to mark the centenary of Cronulla Public School's official opening. The Mayor of Sutherland Shire Councillor Lorraine Kelly, local members of parliament, Malcolm Kerr and Scott Morrison and former member Bruce Baird were present. Both Kerr and Baird are former students of the school, as is Sutherland Shire Historical Society representative Jim Cutbush who also attended with Doug Archer. Staff, parents and former school students were there in force and after the ceremony enjoyed morning tea served by a nearby café.

## The Doorway of Hope

This is being constructed at Woronora Cemetery to commemorate the quite large number of missing people amongst us.

Its opening will be held on the 11th April at 1.30

Those wishing to attend should RSVP on this phone number: - 9545 4677

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<sup>37</sup> *Hurstville Propeller*, 29/1/1926.

<sup>38</sup> J Cowan, interview, 14/9/1990.

<sup>39</sup> L.Myers, interview, 26/9/1990.



# The Australian Flag

Nola Watt

Following the Federation of the Australian States on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901, the Federal Government joined with Melbourne newspaper, the Review of Reviews in offering a prize of £150 for the best design for a new flag. A further £50 was donated by the Havelock Tobacco Company to increase the prize to £200.

The competition was officially gazetted on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1901. It attracted 32,823 entrants. Five months later, the winning design, virtually identical to the present flag, featuring the Southern Cross, the Star of Federation and the Union Jack, was announced at the Melbourne Exhibition Building, site of the first temporary Australian Parliament.

The five winning entrants' designs were so similar that they all shared equally in the honour of designing the new nation's flag, receiving £40 each.

Without Parliamentary debate the design was sent to England for approval.

One year later King Edward VII favourably replied, and the fact was gazetted on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1903.



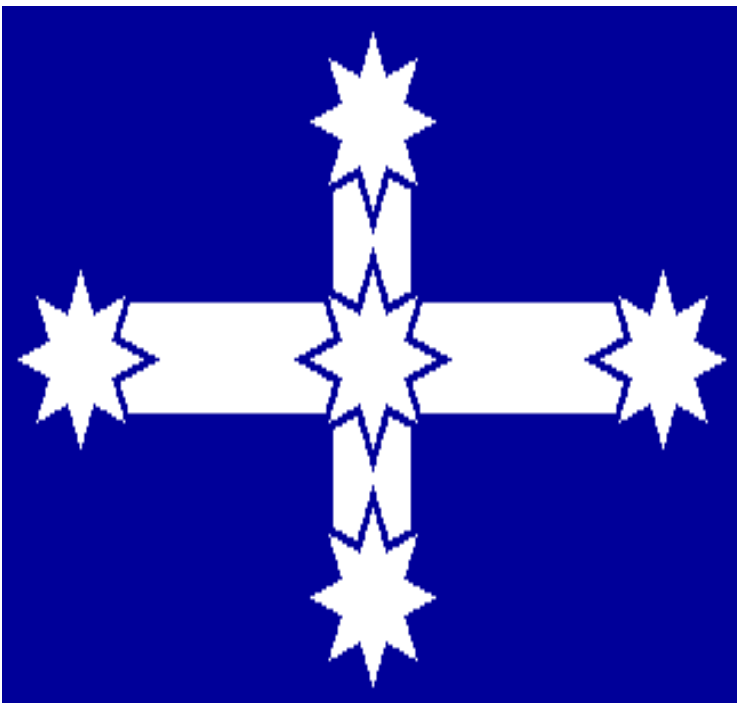
However, Imperial approval did not confer legal status, and therefore the new flag was flown below that of Great Britain and only in conjunction with the British flag on all occasions.

Surprisingly, it was not until 1953 that the Flags Act was passed by the Menzies Government and therefore the Australian flag was now at last, flown superior to all others.

Queen Elizabeth II gave her assent to the Flags Act on her first visit to Australia on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1954.

One hundred years before, on 3<sup>rd</sup>

December 1854, the Eureka Stockade flag, designed by a Canadian gold digger, 'Lieutenant' Ross, was flying inside the stockade when the Government Troopers of the 40<sup>th</sup> Regiment made a surprise attack. After a short battle, 22 diggers and 6 Troopers died.



The stockade was on the Ballarat goldfields, erected by the gold diggers who hated the gold license fee, the corruption of the goldfield's officials and the despotic governor.

The original battered flag was handed over to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 2001.

In recent years a number of other flags have become significant in Australia.

### *The Eureka flag*



The Aboriginal flag, designed by Harold Thomas in 1971 has, since then, been a legitimate symbol of Australia's indigenous people.

#### **Symbols:**

Red earth on bottom

Black sky

Yellow sun

### *The aboriginal flag*

The origin of the boxing kangaroo flag is unknown, however it became the unofficial sporting emblem of Australia, following Australia's American Cup win in 1983. The Australian Olympic Committee eventually purchased the green and yellow flag making it their official Australian Olympic flag.



Russell Kennedy's Reconciliation flag of 1993 combines the Aboriginal flag's colours of black and red with an impression of a kangaroo plus the Southern Cross stars in yellow. Finally, Geoff Hocking notes in his book, 'The Australian Flag, the first 100 years' – 'Australia remains a case of One People – One Destiny – and many flags, and like most Australians he has come to feel - 'whatever, we'll be right mate'.

### *The boxing kangaroo*

Reference:

The Australian Flag - the first 100 years  
Geoff Hocking (Published 2002)

## **MUSEUM REPORT**

2009 was a very busy and interesting time for the Museum which will give us a lot to do this year in 2010. We now have some very important donations made and we have to make sure they are given the right exposure – which will take time and effort.

Visitor numbers continue to be good which also helped with the sales of books and tablemats.

We had our second meeting with 'Museums & Galleries NSW' which was very constructive and helpful, thank you all who attended.

There was a special opening on the 5<sup>th</sup> November for Terry McCosker's Gentlemens Group. Thank you to Angela for all your time and effort as we progress with 'Museums & Galleries NSW' and Merle for your continued recording of items etc., and the Museum Committee for all your support.

*Jim Cutbush, Curator*

# Rev. Henry Fulton – A Loser in Two Rebellions

Laurie Daly

It is odd to find a public school in Australia named after an Irish rebel. Yet at Cranebrook, near Penrith in Western Sydney nestles Henry Fulton Primary School named after one such person, a player in not one, but two historic rebellions and on the losing side in both.

On 11 January 1800 the convict vessel *Minerva* berthed in Sydney town with a cargo of convicts of the most dangerous breed - Irish political prisoners. These were United Irishmen of the great 1798 rebellion who had demanded an Ireland free of English rule and the dominance of an established church, the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. Chiefly Catholics and Presbyterians, ‘*the bold United Men*’ are still honoured today in Ireland’s songs, poems, legends and monuments.

The United Irishmen took an oath “*Union, truth, liberty or death*” and sought help from Napoleon to free Ireland. So extensive was the bloody uprising that the British dispatched more troops to Ireland than fought at Waterloo seventeen years later. Rebels not killed in battle were hanged or transported to the far flung colonies of New South Wales and Newfoundland.

In special quarters on the *Minerva* was Henry Fulton, one of the rebels but of a different class. Henry Fulton was an ordained minister of the Church of Ireland, university graduate and son of a wealthy family. He had been minister to a Church of Ireland (Anglican) congregation in East Galway when rebellion broke out and had thrown in his lot with his flock when they took the oath of the United Irishmen. Sentenced to penal servitude for life for treason and sedition he was accompanied on the voyage by his wife and children who would share with him his exile.

But in 1800 Henry Fulton as a man of the cloth was a rarity in a godless settlement on the shores of Port Jackson. He was also a man of class and the governor wasted no time in giving him a conditional pardon and sending this rebel to the Hawkesbury as schoolmaster, sexton and bellman.

The following year Fulton was sent to minister to the convicts on dreaded Norfolk Island returning to Sydney with a full pardon in 1806. He was appointed chaplain to the settlement at Parramatta and Acting Chaplain for the whole colony of NSW in the absence overseas of Rev Samuel Marsden. He was also made a magistrate. Henry Fulton became a friend of Governor William Bligh.

On the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> January 1808 Henry Fulton was dining at Government House with Governor Bligh when dinner was interrupted by the startling news that the NSW Corps was marching on the residence to depose the governor in a military coup. Fearing for the safety of the household Henry Fulton locked the door and stood by it to prevent entry by the soldiers refusing to let them in. Fulton’s action nearly cost him his life as a sword was thrust through the door to deter such defiance. Henry Fulton was again in the middle of a rebellion...the so called Rum Rebellion. The Irishman’s action was the only token act of defiance to Australia’s first military coup but Fulton had defied the British army once before, after all he had been one of the legendary ‘*bold United Men.*’

With Bligh deposed the ‘rebel’ administration arrested and sacked Fulton as a vocal supporter of the governor but he would later travel to London to testify in the court martial of Lieutenant Colonel Johnston late of the NSW Corps.

Reinstated by Governor Macquarie, Henry Fulton was appointed Chaplain of Castlereagh and Richmond and later Minister of the Parish of Penrith, being a prominent leader in education and charitable works in the local communities.

Henry Fulton, cleric of the Church of Ireland, Irish rebel, defender of Governor Bligh, Australian clergyman and educator, died in 1840 after a productive, long and active life far from County Galway in his land of penal servitude.

#### References:

*Australian Dictionary of Biography*

*Captain Bligh's Other Mutiny*, S Dando-Collins, Random House, Australia, 2007.

## Post Office history

Nola Watt

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1886 representations were made by A H McCulloch MP on behalf of the residents for a Post Office at Sutherland.

The Department of Railways agreed to a Receiving Office for mail at the Sutherland Railway Station, which was usual for small centres at that time. Mr Attwell, the Station Master was paid £5 per annum for this added responsibility. The office opened on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1886.

The Receiving Office was upgraded to Post Office on 12<sup>th</sup> September when the annual allowance of £10 was paid to the Station Master.

The population at this time was about 50 families or 200-300 people.

Four years later, by December 1891, a wooden building, 20 X 12 feet (about 6 X 4 metres) was erected for a Post Office on a portion of Railway land standing about 60 feet (about 18 metres) from the Station. The Postmaster (possibly 'mailman' as the title 'postmaster' did not begin until 1915) was now paid £100 annually plus £26 towards accommodation. The Telegraph system was connected on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1892.

Of course, before any of this happened at Sutherland, it is interesting to note that the famous Overland Telegraph Line was strung from Adelaide, South Australia to Port Darwin, a distance of 2,000 miles.



Charles Heavitree Todd, immigrant from London at 29 years of age had accepted the position in Adelaide of Government Astronomer and Superintendent of Telegraphs in 1855. In 1870, Todd, now Postmaster General was asked to go ahead with the Overland Line, the South Australian Government having passed the relevant legislation.

*Charles Todd*  
*Library*

*Courtesy South Australian State*

This marvelous idea of stringing a line for Telegraph reception across Australia from top to bottom had been in Todd's mind all along. His dream had come true.

The line consisted of a single strand of No. 8 gauge galvanized wire from England, insulators from Germany, batteries and relays from Britain and 30,000 insulator pins

made from ironbark, a tough Australian eucalyptus tree, by a Port Adelaide company. Todd, his men, camels, horses, provisions etc had taken the line, as planned from Adelaide to Port Darwin in just under 2 years!

On 22 August 1872 the men fired 21 rounds from their revolvers and drank a toast to the success of their magnificent achievement.





Unfortunately, they were not able to connect the line to the undersea cable because it had malfunctioned, however, in 3 months, all had been rectified and the line was connected to the rest of the world.

While all this had been going on the new General Post Office building in Sydney was being constructed in the Renaissance style in Martin Place on the corner of George Street.

Constructed of Pyrmont sandstone with columns of Moruya granite along the colonnade, stage one was completed on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1874. If you look up at the GPO from Martin Place you will notice sculptured faces which represent the countries to which Sydney was then connected by the overland and overseas telegraph.

*Erecting the telegraph line. (Courtesy South Australian State Library)*

Returning to Sutherland, progress was slowly and surely being made. On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1900 a permanent 5 roomed cottage was built with a Post Office and lobby attached in Railway Parade. A public telephone was installed on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1905 and a telephone exchange was established in Auburn Street on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1916. The automatic system was introduced on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1927. By 1930 there were 166 subscribers.

Finally, a modern Post Office was built on the corner of Flora Street and the Princes Highway Sutherland on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1966, costing £44,250. At the opening, a telegram of congratulations was received from the manager, Metropolitan Region, Telecommunications Division.

#### References:

- \* The Singing Line  
Alice Thompson 1999.
- \* Preserving Our Heritage. Restoring the Sydney GPO  
Graeme John (Managing Director Australian Post)
- \* Sutherland Shire Council Local History Collection

### Excursion update

Where: New Windsor Historical Museum and tour of the town  
 When: Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> March  
 Travel: Coach, leaving the Multi-purpose Centre at 8:30 am  
 Cost: \$25. A rebate will apply if the bus is full. Hurry, get your tickets.  
 Contact: Pat Hannan 9528 8294

*If you have enjoyed reading our publication, consider joining our Society or encourage a friend or colleague to join. An application is on the following page.*

*The Society offers a friendly, stimulating environment with multiple levels of involvement depending on interests.*

*As well as the Bulletin, members can attend excursions, talks and social events or actively participate in the museum, heritage events, research or the committee.*

**Sutherland Shire Historical Society**  
**Membership application or Renewal 2009/10**

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

**TO ASSIST WITH ACCURATE RECORD KEEPING EACH MEMBER IS REQUESTED TO COMPLETE AN INDIVIDUAL RENEWAL FORM EACH YEAR**

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

It should be noted that a failure to pay the membership fee within three months from the end of the financial year will result in a lapse of membership.

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

-----  
This membership application is a    -Renewal (    ) New Membership (    )                      (please tick)

**TITLE:** Mr, Mrs, Ms

**Family name:** -----

**Given name:** -----

**Postal address:** -----

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

**Please find subscription for 2009/10 enclosed**

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

**Signed** ----- **Date** -----

**Post to –            Treasurer, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, PO Box 389, Sutherland NSW 1499**

\*\*\*\*\*

This membership application is a    -Renewal (    ) New Membership (    )                      (please tick)

**TITLE:** Mr, Mrs, Ms

**Family name:** -----

**Given name:** -----

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