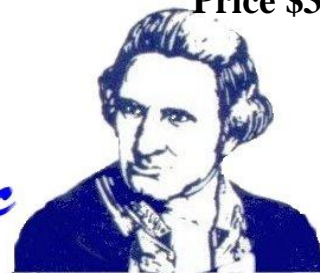


AUGUST 2010

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Sutherland Shire
Historical Society Inc
Bulletin



VOL. 13 No. 3

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Cronulla beach - the early years

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The cover – An early view of Cronulla beach

The Museum is open on the first Saturday of the month from 10 am to 3 pm and at other times by arrangement with Jim Cutbush, curator. He can be contacted on 9521 3721.

Donations of materials with a local provenance are welcome.

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.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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

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Meetings of the Society

are held on the third Saturday of each month at 1.30 pm at the Stapleton Centre, Stapleton Street, Sutherland.

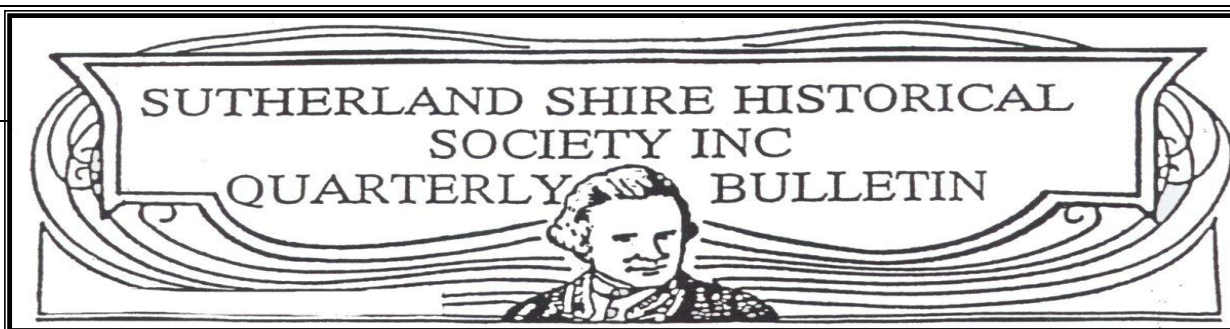
Visitors are welcome.

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The Society's occasional publications carry an ISBN number.



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President's Report

Welcome to another issue of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society, Inc. Bulletin. It is quite a mouthful when you say the full name yet, from the earliest years, the Bulletin has been a symbol of our Society. Some of the enduring art work was produced by one of our founding members Fred Midgley. Fred and his twin brother Alf were descendents from one of the earliest Shire families and their love of 'The Shire' and their commitment and interest in its history were part of the key factors that helped the Society to thrive and prosper when other societies flared into life, struggled for a while and then died.

The Bulletin is a place where experienced writers and novices alike can pen a few thoughts on their story, their history, which will be read and enjoyed by many and live long after we all have moved on. So come on, grab a pen and write a few words. Whether it is serious, silly or sad, we would all like to hear.

This last month or so has been another time of mighty works and projects. First there was the Chopin recital. What started as a simple idea took on a life of its own. Those who were there to hear pianist Wojciech Wiśniewski perform would agree that listening to a fine recording of a great artist is good, but listening to one in person is much better. What a talented person Wojciech is and what a pleasant fellow he is to talk to despite his enormous skills. Special thanks are also given to the Sutherland Music Club who joined with us for the event and allowed us to be the first to use their brand new piano. Special thanks also to Mavis Sourry who spent a lot of time and effort researching and presenting the story behind Chopin. To hear his music is one thing, to know something of his biography adds a whole new dimension. I am also very grateful to those who helped plan, organise and cater for the day. In a word, it was awesome.

Then came Heritage Week and again our people were hard at work in two venues for two weeks running a display for the public. The highlight was of course the Chicken and Champagne lunch at which our former President, Dawn Emerson, gave a lecture on Macquarie and his journeys of exploration. This was another well researched topic and, despite computer gremlins that added to the tension, again brought a figure out of the history books and into our lives. After the excellent lunch, Helen McDonald gave a very interesting talk on architects, designers and building development in the Shire. You could hear the people mutter "I know that place" as each site was presented.

I am nervous about singling people out for thanks because it really has been a team effort. But special thanks must go to Anna Estephan in securing Wojciech for the Chopin presentation and to Pat Hannan for catering and organising the Heritage Week lunch. Then of course there is Jim Cutbush and his tireless activity at the museum and Angela Thomas, our Secretary, who seems to be able to cope with the endless details working behind the scene keeping the whole machine running. Then there is John Risebrow whose calligraphy skills make our Certificates of Appreciation works of art. In fact, the whole committee pitch in as a team and make things happen.

To you all, my special thanks

Andrew Platfoot

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2010

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Aug 21 | Bob Smith on Vincent Smith, his book based on WW1 in England |
| Sept 18 | AGM and a picture show |
| Oct 16 | Beverley Earnshaw, President, Kogarah Historical Society - to be decided. |
| Nov 20 | Lesley Muir. Sydney's Garden Palace Scandal |
| Dec 18 | Christmas Party. Show & Tell |

From The Editor's Desk

Welcome to the 'new look' Bulletin. The major change has been a move to the two column layout. This change has been made to give the bulletin a more contemporary feel and to make it easier and more enjoyable to read.

Over 44 years and 175 Bulletins, the Society has chronicled the life and times of the Shire and matters of broader historical interest. The first Bulletin was four typed pages on foolscap paper. Before the digital age, it was compiled by cutting and pasting typed articles. Today, text and images can be scanned, downloaded from the internet or sent via email and manipulated in size and colour or cropped to remove unwanted parts. Whilst it makes the task easier, there is still the hard slog by authors of researching and writing. There are much higher expectations and the final result is more professional.

This approach is mirrored in the activities of the Society. There is a 'buzz' amongst the executive, a feeling of renewal. Attendance at monthly meetings is up and there is an encouraging sign of new faces appearing.

By the Annual General Meeting, a detailed business plan will have been finalised by the committee. In general terms, this involves some 'navel gazing' and re-evaluation of who we are, what our vision is for the future and how we will achieve it. It also is a manual of what we do and how we do it. By formalising processes, succession planning is easier. Finally, the plan informs other stakeholders such as the Sutherland Shire Council, sponsors and providers of grants about our activities and methods.

I trust that you will enjoy this edition of the Bulletin.

Featured articles include a biography of Thomas Holt, the major land owner in the pre-Shire era, but also a man whose influence spanned a much broader canvas.



This acts as a prequel for the Walker Report which details the Sutherland estate in 1868. It is surprising that such an important document has not been featured previously. Its content will be considered over three issues. 'Pre Shire commercial boatsheds' chronicles yet another missing part of our history. 'Cronulla Public School' describes the early years as it celebrates its centenary this year.

Once again I ask our readers that if you have a story or relevant information that could be included in the Bulletin, contact myself or one of the executive.

Finally, annual membership is from 1st July to 30th June. If you have not renewed as yet then you are unfinancial. Perhaps consider giving a membership as a present. Membership forms are on the last page.

Enjoy your reading.

Bruce Watt

Meet the executive

Bruce Watt



My life as a school teacher happily residing in a seaside suburb of Australia's largest city is a far cry from my rural upbringing on a large wheat and sheep property in the central west of the State. Whilst it was almost a lifetime ago, those experiences and memories were pivotal for me and for which I am grateful.

My mother's family was of English and Scottish ancestry. They had arrived in Australia in the 1850s and settled in the Gunning / Yass district. My paternal great grandfather, James Watt, came out to Australia in the 1880s for 'a bit of colonial experience'. He married a first generation Australian of German extraction whose father had left Germany in 1854 'because he didn't want his sons to become cannon fodder for Bismark'.

My father, one of seven children, grew up on a property at Baldry, near Parkes in the depression years. Unlike two of his brothers who left school in 6th class to help on the farm, my father completed the Leaving Certificate and joined the Department of Main Roads as a draughtsman. As the War had commenced, he joined up at the age of 18 and spent four years in New Guinea. He was a gunner and signalman in the 2/5th Field Regiment which had previously seen action in North Africa. It was brought back for the defence of New Guinea and later it saw action in Borneo. My mother was a nurse in the Women's Air Force and met my father when he was home recuperating from malaria. They married in 1944 but my father wasn't demobilized until 1945. They settled in Parkes and raised four children, all boys.

In 1959 we moved to a property about 14 miles from town. On reflection, it was a poor choice. It was a large property of about 3,000 acres, largely undeveloped with some potential but requiring a huge amount of work. My father continued to work in town and ran the farm as well. He was very busy. In a way, we were modern pioneers.

My connection with things historical stems in part from my childhood experiences. My grandfather's farm was a treasure trove of old

wares. Surrounding the homestead was a mass of old farm machinery and sheds filled with fascinating things. My brother still has the old flintlock rifle that we found in the machinery shed. 'Oakmount' was an historical time capsule. I would spend days wandering amongst the mass of old machinery, marveling at the blacksmiths tools, listening to the gramophone player or reading the old books scattered on dusty shelves. I also spent many happy days shooting rabbits with my grandmother who was a real 'bushie'.

Our farm didn't have a house on it, though Dad had a new one built. In the meantime we lived in a Nissan hut or igloo. During the war, a large air force base for training pilots existed at Parkes. These corrugated iron igloo huts were surplus after the war and Dad bought one as temporary accommodation and we lived in it for about 9 months whilst our house was being built. We lived without power so I was able to experience the type of life, which by 1959 had all but vanished.

Mum cooked on a cast iron stove, ironed our clothes using flat irons and we toasted our bread using a long fork held over the open fire door. Our fridge ran on kerosene, we used tilley lamps for lighting and we had a chip heater over the bath. Without television, which we didn't get until I was 12, we listened to the 'wireless' on crystal sets or transistor radios. Of course we had a pan toilet in an outhouse in the yard. Few people of my age would have experienced that sort of lifestyle.

We lived 14 miles from town and caught the bus to school. 'Bindagundra' was just a rural district and many areas had an aboriginal name. Surrounding us were the districts of Cookamidgera, Mandagery, Nelungaloo and Beargamil. The Wiradjuri were the original inhabitants of a vast area of central NSW. I still have a collection of stone tools that I found on the farm.

Growing up on a farm was fun but a lot of hard work. I remember lots of days picking up sticks after the land was ring barked and

cleared. We were kept busy burning off, cutting Bathurst burrs, 'dagging' sheep, fencing and many other chores. Dad was the butcher and milk man amongst other things. I recall nostalgically the din of the stationary shearing engine and the smell of lanolin and sheep manure from the shearing shed and mustering pens. Bailing the wool, branding the freshly shorn sheep and 'marking' the lambs were part of the routine. We rarely went on holidays because there was always the threat of bushfires or 'fly blown' sheep in summer.

To aid in clearing the heavily timbered land, Dad had two older men camped on the property who ring barked and poisoned trees with a chemical. Later I learned that it was the same chemical, nicknamed 'agent orange' that was notoriously used as a defoliant in the jungles in Vietnam during the war.

Our property was called 'Blue Hills', partly because of its setting but also because of the long running radio serial of that name.

Rabbits were a huge problem and we did a lot of spotlight shooting, trapping and fumigating. I recall as a young boy, bringing home rabbits to feed the family. They could also be sold in town at the freezing works to earn some pocket money. Myxomatosis and later 1080 rabbit poison reduced the numbers for a time. I was given a Lithgow .22 rifle for my 13th birthday and I would go shooting for hours after school. Apart from our 3000 acres, over the hill was a catchment area for an old municipal dam that went on for miles. We were at the end of the line. We learnt to drive tractors and motor bikes long before we were old enough to get a licence.

Dad and I became the first father and son to have been School Captains at the High School. As there were few post-school opportunities, most of us left for the city. Dad arranged a job for me in the city as an accountant but I left it to go to the University of NSW where I attained a Bachelor of Commerce and a Diploma of Education. I began teaching but had the urge to travel. I spent an idyllic 8 months in England and Europe driving around in a van with my future wife, Virginia. On returning I resumed teaching at Fairfield and then Heathcote High for ten years.

The 1980s were busy with the birth of our two girls and establishing a home. I became involved in curriculum development and by 1991 our team had written the Business Studies syllabus, which is today the largest course for the Higher School Certificate after English and Maths. Over the next decade I was heavily involved in teacher professional development through various associations and ran many conferences and developed teaching resources. For almost 30 years I marked the Higher School Certificate exam in Economics and Business Studies where I was the assistant supervisor.

My first position as Head Teacher was at Maroubra Bay High School in 1989. During my first year it was decided to close the school as numbers were falling. It became the set for a television drama called 'Heartbreak High'. I moved on to Randwick North High School which was undergoing similar demographic changes. Over the next few years we reinvented it as a Senior College though it too eventually closed.

Since 1996 I have been a Head Teacher at Port Hacking High School. My faculty (HSIE) teaches Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies, Studies of Religion, Society and Culture, Ancient and Modern History, Geography and Commerce. For its 50th anniversary celebrations in 2009 I wrote a history of the school.

For the past decade I have edited a national student journal on Business Studies. Six years ago I assumed the role of editor for the Sutherland Shire Historical Society bulletin. It continues to broaden in scope, content and format in line with the rest of the Society.

I am fortunate to have had a lifelong interest in history which has provided an endlessly expanding list of interests.

We have been lucky to have had several overseas trips in recent years. I am retiring from teaching in the very near future and I am looking forward to the freedoms and challenges that this new stage will bring. I just need about 3 lifetimes to fit in all of the things that I want to do.

Secretary's report

After another twelve months as Secretary, I can only say that I have been most fortunate in the assistance I have had from the Committee. We have a large committee and the advantage is there is always someone at hand, with a specific knowledge to help in any situation. When attending a Museums & Galleries event I was struck by representatives from other museums similar to ours mentioning that at times they were handicapped by lack of forward thinking from their executive. Well, we have an executive largely composed of vital, active members still in the work force who are in touch with current trends. For example the production of our Business Plan and Collection Policy are vital tools needed for our museum development...these are now completed.

We have moved forward with leaps and bounds and are now part of New South Wales Museums and Galleries and consequently can call on them for advice at any time.

The help of our Assistant Secretary, Nola Watt has been vital during the year as this has been exceptionally busy with several meetings devoted to activities on a broader front than usual. Thank you Nola for all your help and advice.

Some of us attended the presentation of the Cook Community Awards at which Jim Cutbush was a recipient then not long afterwards we went to the city to see him get a Heritage Volunteer Award from Christine Kenneally. Also receiving presentations were Les Bursill and Sue Duyker, wife of Dr Duyker who is a member of the Society. Les also received an Australian College of Education Award and the Order of Australia medal.

During the year our speakers and events have spanned many fields. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to launch Mary Small's book "Seek", dealing with the tracker dogs used in the Vietnam War. A large contingent from the Queensland ANZAC Day Committee, with the publisher, flew down from Queensland. We had 5 tracker dogs and their handlers....I don't think the Community Centre at Stapleton Street had previously witnessed such excitement. We booked out two rooms and filled them, then finished with a bumper afternoon tea.

We also filled two rooms for our Heritage Festival Champagne & Chicken Seminar when Dawn Emerson and Helen Macdonald gave us most illuminating talks on the commercial / architectural development of the Shire and Macquarie's influence. This time we had a lunch. Everyone agreed that the lunch, cooked, organised and served by Pat and her helpers was outstanding. We have orders for next year!

As if that was not enough, we celebrated the centenary of Chopin's birth in March. Anna Estephan had suggested this idea as she knew a talented pianist, Wojciech Wisniewski, finalist in the Sydney Piano Competition and winner of the V11 National Piano Competition in Poland. The Music Club assisted with their expertise and we also had the use of their brand new concert grand piano. Being less experienced in putting on concerts, we were most grateful to them. We would like to thank Anna, the Music Club and Jared Platfoot for his artwork.

So we had a rather unusual year and, for myself, it was great to know there was always help at hand from our assistant secretary and committee.

We have enjoyed a succession of excellent speakers, beginning with Carol Baxter talking about her book "Scandals and Skulduggery", events in colonial Sydney. Christmas saw our party and "Show & Tell", always a popular item. In January we had informative Members Talks, with Pauline, Merle and David giving us insights into their work and hobbies. The year continued with Christine Edney's most illuminating talk on the origin of local place names; likewise another local identity, Allan Murrin president of the Botany Bay Family History Society spoke in May about tracing family history with a most moving personal account. June saw "From Mainbar to Malabar" a book by Patrick Kennedy as the subject of an enthralling talk and in the next month we had Gregory de Moore speaking about the history of Tom Wills which completely fascinated members. Our last speaker of the year is Bob Smith who will speak about his book based on WW1 in UK. We are told this is another rivetting speaker.

The certificates which we present to our speakers are all perfect examples of calligraphy penned by John Risebrow, which are works of art in themselves.

So, as you can see, we have an exceptional committee. Events have ranged from international topics to our own fireside and our meetings have been very well attended. Our outings are now becoming regular items on our calendar, the bus always filling up at 25 and we must be very grateful for the professional knowledge of Terry who makes every mile we travel a pleasure. Sorry about the 'mile' but somehow 'kilometre' lacks romance and I for one find Terry's commentaries most lyrical at times!

Again I would like to thank everyone who has helped me and can only conclude by saying what a pleasure this year has been.

Angela Thomas

Excursion report.

No 1. **Windsor.** 27.3.10 This was a very successful trip and has been reported on previously.

So far this year we have had two excursions.

No.1 27th March

The society travelled by small bus to Windsor to visit the new Historical Museum. We had an uneventful trip to the Hawkesbury Area arriving at about the time the museum opened. Everyone was impressed with the museum which had been purpose built with funding by the local council. We drove around the town viewing and exploring places of historical interest such as Tebbuts observatories and St. Mathews Anglican church and cemetery. Lunch was on the riverbank at Windsor for those who had brought their own and in the town for others. Everybody seemed to enjoy the day.

No.2. 26th June

This trip by bus took us to Berrima, the very historic town in the Southern Highlands. This was another visit to a local Historical museum, this time one which has been running for a number of years. We were made very welcome by the curator, Bob Williams and his volunteers. A large part of the displays at the museum related to the activities of the German internees who were housed in the gaol during

the 1st world war and their families, many of whom moved to Berrima and lived in the township.

After the visit, our members explored the lovely little township including the many eating places. The journey home was via Moss Vale then the Illawarra Highway which took us through Robertson, down the beautiful Macquarie Pass and home via the Princes Highway. Again, all seemed to enjoy the outing.



Berrima Gaol



Terry McCosker at the museum

Planned trips

No.3. **Newtown** Sat. September 11. Bus trip to two historic churches. No. 1 is to St. Stephens in Church St, Newtown and includes the cemetery where some *Dunbar* victims are buried. Arrive 9.45am for BYO morning tea. Church tour (1 hour) at 10am then time to

explore the cemetery. Cost. - \$100 for guide to attend and open gate and church .
Lunch will be BYO or McDonalds nearby.

After lunch we travel to St Johns Darlinghurst for a guided tour which will take approx. 1 hour and includes the tower for those who are interested. Tour starts at about 1.30 pm. Cost per person, \$20. Lunch is at own expense or BYO.

No.4. **The Oaks** Heritage Centre.

Sat 27th November . This is a very well run centre covering the history of the area around the Oaks. It was built as a Bicentennial project. Entry is \$6 each which also includes a good morning tea. Cost per person will be \$25 and we must fill the bus to make it viable. Last time I was in that area we had lunch at Campbelltown Catholic club. They do not have special prices on Sat. but you could have a half roast (\$9 approx) or BYO lunch.

Terry McCosker

Museum report

During the past 12 months the Museum's visitor numbers increased due to better publicity and word of mouth of recent visitors.

Events

Australia Day 2010 – Cronulla Central Plaza

This community facility near the new Cronulla library proved to be a pleasant well lit open foyer area for our photographs, maps and DVD exhibition of the Shire. This attracted a lot of interest and favourable comments by those who visited. Total visitors were 407.

Heritage Festival 10th April – 24th April

Due to an oversight in the booking of the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts the Society had to arrange an extra exhibition in the 'Rainbow Room' of the Sutherland Entertainment Centre as well as having our museum open, giving our volunteers 2 areas to man during this time.

Total visitors for both were 696.

Special Opening 17th February

For David Taylor, who was travelling from Melbourne to Cape York via the Princes Highway, gaining knowledge of places of interest on his way for a book he is writing for The Grey Army.

Information was given and afternoon tea was provided.

Three Special Broadcasts on the Society's activities and history of the Shire with announcer Brian Rose of local 99.7 FM station 2SSR (Sound of the Shire). Thank you for your support.

Donations

A large donation has been made to our society after a project was undertaken by a group of Shire photographers headed by John Cole who have photographed and written regarding the history of Shire businesses and their owners. Some of these have been exhibited during Heritage Festival and in the foyer of Sutherland Library. We have also been given digital records and indexing of all material done. This is a wonderful collection very professionally presented. In the near future the Society intends to have a special exhibition and presentation to thank all who took part.

We also received a collection of sketches, photos and the story of Kirrawee identity (the late) Maurice Jones, which makes interesting social history.

The Museum now has one set of exhibition boards of its own thanks to a very generous donation by a member.

Merle Kavanagh has continued to record and index collections, which is a great help as we have finalised the Society's "Business Plan" and "Collection Policy", that a group of the Executive have been working on under the expertise of Bruce Watt and David Overett. This will be ready for members' approval at our AGM.

Thank you to my Museum Committee for all your assistance.

Thank you to Helen Macdonald, Local Studies Area, Sutherland Library and staff of planning events and also the staff of Sutherland Entertainment Centre (including cleaners).

Jim Cutbush

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT as at
30th June 2010.

INCOME

Member Subscriptions		1606.00	
Donations		2142.35	
Sales		2601.02	
Excursions/outings/functions		2122.40	
Interest received:			
CBA-Cheque account	18		
CBA-Term Deposit	134.53		
St. George - Term Deposit	139.71		
St. George - Term Deposit	67.85		
St. George – last year undeclared interest	450.66	792.93	
Hall Rental returned bonds		<u>600.00</u>	<u>9864.70</u>

EXPENDITURE

Museum Expenses		150.00	
Bank fees		.95	
Excursions/functions		1112.50	
Rent		1212.60	
Donations		200.00	
Postages		560.45	
Printing & Stationery		416.39	
Licenses & Fees		318.00	
Insurance-Personal Acc/Public Liability		527.00	
Printing Table Mats		1398.43	
Website expenses		148.00	
General Expense		1041.46	
Commissioned Oral & Written History		1400.00	
Depreciation		<u>665.67</u>	<u>9151.45</u>

Net Profit 713.25

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A. Estephan.

Hon. Treasurer.

I Andrew Cory, certify that I have audited the above accounts and books and find they are a true and accurate position of the Society as at 30th June 2010.

.....

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30TH JUNE , 2010

ASSETS.

Commonwealth bank – Cheque account		
Statement balance	1551.49	
Unrepresented Cheques	<u>555.20</u>	996.29
Commonwealth Bank – Term Deposit	9078.41	
St. George Bank – Term Deposit	6806.51	
St. George Bank – Term Deposit	<u>7000.00</u>	13806.51
<u>Fixed Assets</u>		
Projector at cost	1997.00	
Accum. Depreciation	665.67	<u>1331.33</u>
Total Assets		25212.54
		=====

EQUITY.

Retained Earnings		24499.29
Current Year Earnings	713.25	713.25
	<hr/>	<hr/>
		\$25212.54
		=====

A. Estephan
Hon. Treasurer

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the
44th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the
Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc.
will be held on Saturday, 18th September, 2010 in the
Stapleton Centre, Stapleton Street, Sutherland at 1.30 pm.

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Confirm and adopt Minutes of the 43rd Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 19th September, 2009
4. President's Report
5. Submission and adoption of the 43rd Annual Report of the Executive Council
6. Treasurer's Financial Statement and Balance Sheet for 2009-2010
7. Motions:
 - 7.1 that the Society's business plan for 2010 – 2012 be adopted and that negotiations be commenced with Sutherland Shire Council representatives to discuss its contents.
 - 7.2 That the Constitution of the Society be reviewed over the course of the year 2010-2011.
8. Election of Officers for 2010-2011
9. General Business: (pertaining to the AGM only)

On behalf of the Executive Council of
Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc.

Andrew Platfoot,
President

Thomas Holt: ‘An Energetic Colonist’

Reviewed by Bruce Watt

The title of this article comes from a biography of the same name, written about Thomas Holt, the first major landowner in the ‘Shire’ The author was Henry E. Holt, grandson of Thomas Holt, (published in 1972). Inspiration to review the book and the life of Thomas Holt sprang from the decision to publish The Walker Report which is the subject of the following article.

Thomas Holt owned practically all of the present day Shire from the 1860s onwards. His descendants are still substantial landowners in the Shire. The Walker Report, written in 1868, details the state of Thomas Holt’s landholding when it was in its embryonic state.

Thomas Holt, however, belonged to a much larger stage than the Sutherland Shire. The complexity of his life, that eclipses any of his achievements in the Shire, squarely qualifies him as ‘an energetic colonist’.

Early years

Thomas Holt was born in Horbury, near Wakefield, England in 1811 and died in Bexley, Kent in 1888. He was to spend nearly 40 years of his life in Australia. As a young man he entered his father’s wool brokering business, travelling extensively in Europe and he amassed considerable capital. When his father retired, Thomas Junior (as he referred to himself until his father’s death in 1856) emigrated to Australia in 1842, a year after convict transportation had ceased to the eastern mainland colonies.

Australia

His arrival in Australia coincided with one of the most severe droughts and economic recessions in Australia’s history. One consequence was that land was virtually impossible to sell. Throughout his life, Holt displayed entrepreneurial skills. He was to make a fortune from land speculation, as a financier and businessman.

Shortly after his arrival he began purchasing and speculating with rural and city land, including extensive ‘runs’ in Queensland.

He commenced business as a wool broker and exporter and was influential in establishing this industry. He retired from that business in 1853. At this time he was a director in six companies, a pastoralist and land owner and speculator.

Business

His entrepreneurial spirit and experience in business in Germany, Spain and other European countries where he has worked as a wool broker in his father’s business, enabled him to establish businesses that had not existed in Australia up to that time. He helped establish the Australian Fire and Insurance Company (1844), the AMP Society (1848) and the Australian Joint Stock Bank in 1853.

He was a joint stock holder in the first railway in the colony. Holt had knowledge of the ‘railway mania’ which swept Europe in the 1840s. In 1849, Holt and 22 other Directors incorporated The Sydney Railway Company. Work began on a line from Sydney to Parramatta though progress was at times slow. The discovery of gold in 1851 at Bathurst led to so many workers leaving to seek their fortunes that the Government sought to import labourers from England. The line eventually opened in 1855 though the venture was short lived. It became the first railway system to be nationalized when the government compulsorily acquired it in 1855.

Sophienberg

From 1843 till 1853, the Holt family lived on a substantial rural property at Liverpool which was named ‘Sophienberg’ after his wife, Sophia. Five children were born at Sophienberg, though two died, one at birth and another of scarlet fever. Another son, Frederick also contracted scarlet fever at the same time which left him deaf. This disability was eventually to cause his death when he was run over by a train in 1902.

Holt’s wealth enabled him to mix in the highest social circles. The explorer, Dr Ludwig Leichhardt was Frederick’s godfather.

A feature of Holt's character was his compassion, generosity and hospitality which were apparent right throughout his life. The plight of the Irish during the potato famine prompted him, with others, to set up a relief committee. In his final years in England, Holt fed thousands of hungry people from his own resources.

This generosity of spirit didn't extend to everyone, however, as it was known that he opposed Chinese immigration.

In the early 1850s as Sydney University was being built, Holt became involved in a committee to build a college, along the lines of those in Oxford and Cambridge Universities, to cater for the moral and religious needs of students. From public subscriptions and government grant, St Paul's College was built.

Camden Villa

In 1853, he sold 'Sophienberg' and moved to Newtown. He had bought a property of 10 acres on King St called 'Camden Villa' where he lived until 1864. It was at this time that he bought a 19,000 acre property at Marulan and then leased another 20,000 acres from the government. The property, called 'Arthursleigh' was a distressed mortgagee sale. Over the next 20 or so years, Holt was involved in a very large number of speculative land dealings, involving vast tracts of land, especially in Queensland.

At the same time he was speculating in land in Sydney and the suburbs. These included Kogarah Bay, Banksia, Tom Ugly's Point, Sans Souci (meaning without a care), Annandale, Forest Lodge, Manly and the city. In 1856 Holt was elected to the Ministry, as Colonial Treasurer of the first Responsible Government in New South Wales

Sutherland

As he had with so many other properties, the Sutherland estate was purchased through other's misfortune. In 1861, 4,600 acres of land owned by J C Laycock were put up for auction. The land was subject to a mortgage on which Laycock had defaulted. John Connell Laycock was the grandson of John Connell who has begun acquiring land in

Sutherland from 1828 and at the time of his death in 1849, owned 3,000 acres.

Laycock and Holt were both members of the Legislative Assembly and Laycock had shown Holt over the property prior to the sale.

In 1862 and 1863 he added another 5,400 acres by purchasing crown land at £1 per acre. From 1863 to 1875 he purchased another 2,000 acres making a total of 12,000 acres.

In 1868, When Holt was in England, his attorney, R. C. Walker prepared a report which gave detailed information on the property and the work done so far.

'After 1861, an intensive programme was commenced, first to clear a large part of the estate, then to cultivate suitable parts and grow pasture and others. Scrubbing was carried out each year, extensive burning was employed when natural bush fires did not occur and most of the forest timber was ringbarked, leaving only some good trees for shade.....

In suitable places grass seed was planted'.

By 1868 the whole of the estate was divided into eleven paddocks by split post and rail fences and subdivided by brush fences into over sixty smaller paddocks.

Holt introduced more sheep on to the estate but dingoes and footrot proved the venture to be unsuccessful. Cattle were also introduced, but this also led to similar disappointing results. Selling ironbark and blackbutt timber was more successful.

Holt spent a very large sum of money in trying to develop oyster cultivation in Weeney Bay. It too, was a resounding failure.

In 1870, to commemorate the centenary of the discovery by the British of the east coast of Australia, Holt had an obelisk built at Kurnell. It still stands today and remarkably, for a man who created so much, it is the only physical evidence of his life.

'The Warren' (1864 -1880)

This was a particularly fine sandstone residence built on a grand scale on 130 acres by the Cook's River at Marrickville. It was completely surrounded by a thick sandstone

wall six feet high. Holt had decided to assist the unemployed but, so that it would not appear to be a charity, he offered 2/6d pay per day. At times, one hundred men were employed. It was built 'on the lines of an ancestral castle in Germany where his wife was born'. Holt introduced a veritable menagerie of domestic and imported animals including alpacas. Holt had introduced rabbits for sport shooting, hence the name of the estate. Holt enjoyed entertaining and his friends spent days shooting them. The Acclimatisation Society of New South Wales was formed in 1861 and Holt placed the Warren at their disposal for seven years. The Society was interested in introducing exotic species of fauna and flora.

'The Warren' was built on the summit of a hill (at Tempe) from stone quarried on site. It was luxuriously appointed with 'a large collection of French engravings, oil and water colour paintings, bronzes, statues and *bas-reliefs* and other works of art purchased at the Paris Exhibition of 1867, after he had joined his wife and family in Europe.' After returning from Europe, the family took up residence at 'The Warren' in 1868.

Other matters

On his return, Holt continued his involvement in a wide range of matters. Over the next few years he donated generously to the building funds of several churches. The inadequacy of Sydney's water supply was one such issue. Holt made a submission to the Royal Commission in 1868 that the Georges River be dammed at Tom Ugly's Point and argued vigorously for this in subsequent years. In 1879, the upper Nepean scheme was adopted.

In 1870, Holt chaired a meeting of parties interested in forming a meat preserving and canning company for exporting meat. The company would carry on operations until 1964.

To develop an export market for beef and lamb, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort and others, including Holt, began experimenting with refrigeration. Mort died in 1878 before it was finalised but the first shipment of frozen meat was sent to England in February 1880. Holt

was a member of the committee and an original subscriber to the fund to purchase the ships.

Queensland interests

Holt continued to develop extensive property holdings in Queensland. One property, 'Wealwandangie' was run by his son Frederick. Another son, Walter, who had been studying engineering, came to 'Wealwandangie' for experience 'because his father thought that it would be more profitable to be a squatter than to continue in engineering'. Whilst there, (aged 19 and much impressed by the vastness of the station) he wrote a detailed report. He mentioned that the fencing around one paddock alone was about fifty miles long. In 1875, Holt added another 20,000 acres to the property.

Walter added to the string of properties by taking up four hundred square miles of land in the Flinders River area in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Holt 'disposed' of all his interest in 'Wealwandangie' Station to Walter just before he left for England in 1881. The terms were 'in consideration of natural love and affection and certain monetary bonds given by Walter to his father'. Walter added to his holdings in 'Wealwandangie' which by 1884 covered an area of 607 square miles.

'Salisbury Plains', a property that Frederick managed covered five hundred and thirty three square miles. Holt also owned several other properties that also covered several hundred square miles. The last property that he bought, 'Chatsworth', covered 1,478 square miles.

In Sydney, Holt continued a very full and public life. He was briefly a Director of the City Bank in 1871. He frequently entertained large gatherings of public men at 'The Warren'. During the 1870s he was an energetic member of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales and he was a founder of the Prince Alfred Hospital (now Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, founded as a memorial to the Prince's recovery after being shot in Clontarf in 1868 whilst on a royal visit.

For three years from 1873, Holt served on the Council of Education which existed up till 1880 when the Public Instruction Act was passed.

In 1880, Holt sold 'The Warren' for £50,000 as his wife had left for Europe and he had built a new residence at Sylvania. It was subdivided and the mansion became a convent for the French Carmelite nuns. It later fell into disrepair and in 1919 it was resumed and demolished by the State Housing Board. No trace remains of the once magnificent home.

'Sutherland House', built by Holt at Sylvania, facing Gwawley Bay, was to be his last residence in Australia. It was 'a commodious residence containing thirty five rooms, including an organ room, used as a small church by local residents, a lodge at the entrance, stables, three cottages for employees, salt water swimming bath, boat shed and flower and vegetable gardens'.

Most of the furniture, statuary, paintings and engravings were moved from 'The Warren' to 'Sutherland House'. Holt lived there until September 1881 when he left for Europe to join his wife. His son, Frederick and his family lived there until 1894 when it was leased. It was run for some years as 'Sylvania Sanatorium', an accommodation facility for 'families desiring a change from the fatigue of city life and for weary travellers'.

Frederick was killed in 1902 when run over by a train and his son, T. S. Holt lived there for some years. It was eventually subdivided. In 1918 it was due to be demolished when a fire totally destroyed it.

Final years in Europe 1881 - 1888

Holt joined his wife and daughters in September 1881 and 1882 was mainly spent touring Europe. In February 1883 whilst in Pisa, his daughter, Florence Marie, contracted typhoid fever and later died, aged 26. In 1883, whilst in Austria, Holt developed a severe cold which developed into a serious illness. It recurred again the following year. A firm believer in alternative healing, he entered a sanatorium for hydropathic treatment involving bathing in cold water. Meanwhile,

his wife found and rented a large white mansion called 'Halcot', at Bexley, Kent which was to be his last residence.

Whilst in very poor health himself, (in the last three years he was virtually an invalid.) 'he devoted himself to the amelioration of the conditions of the London poor'. Many tens of thousands of free meals were provided by Holt and many local charities were liberally endowed. Orphan houses, hospitals, asylums, institutions and missions all received generous donations. His charitable work continued in Australia, where, amongst other benefactions was an offer to build a church at Sylvania.

Thomas Holt passed away on the 5th September 1888 and he was interred in a family vault at Abney Park cemetery.

Thomas Holt had a privileged background which enabled him to amass enough capital to become a powerful financier, land owner and venture capitalist when he arrived in the colony. He was immediately accepted into the highest social circles and he attained high political office. He was the driving force in many economic, social and political movements. He was an ideas man, a 'doer', one who saw opportunities and made the most of them. But unlike some capitalists who amass money for the pure joy of it, Holt was also a philanthropist, who, throughout his life, and especially near the end, gave very generously to the poorest and neediest parts of society.

Correction.

In the May edition, it was incorrectly stated that the Victoria and Albert Museum was opened in the mid Eighteenth Century. It was opened in the mid Nineteenth Century. (1852).

Also, it was the Royal Society of London which lobbied George III to supply a naval vessel to observe the transit in Tahiti, not the Geographical Society (later the Royal Geographical Society) which was not founded until 1830.

The Walker Report

Bruce Watt



T. HOLT, ESQ., THANKING THE RESIDENTS OF NEWTOWN WHO SIGNED THE ADDRESS.—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY HETZER.

Nations have certain documents that describe seminal moments in their history or development. The English Magna Carta, the American Declaration of Independence or the signing of the Treaty of Versailles are examples. One can't begin to assign anything of that importance to the Sutherland Shire. However, the Walker Report compiled in 1868 by Thomas Holt's overseer, was a document that stands as a record of the time when the whole of the present day Shire was largely undeveloped. The area had largely been ignored for the first seventy years of settlement. Because Thomas Holt owned almost all of the land, it meant that it was virtually all his own private estate. As befitting a 'Lord of the Manor', the report that he commissioned whilst he was overseas, surveyed and described all that he owned and it gives us the unique opportunity of seeing the landscape, if not in its virgin state, as much of the timber had been 'scrubbed' or removed at this time, then at least to view it as a frontier land before major settlement. Thomas Holt had amassed a personal fortune since arriving in the colony in 1842. He was in the wool trade but throughout his lifetime he undertook a great many entrepreneurial pursuits. His influence on domestic matters extended to politics. He was elected as Treasurer in the first NSW Government in 1855. In 1861 he was able to buy extensive land holdings that were put up for public auction. He added to this over time. In this edition, the eastern third of the estate is described. Over the next two editions of the bulletin, land in the centre and then to the west will be described. Readers should refer to the map to visualize the areas being described.

The map on the following page is from the biography of Thomas Holt called 'An Energetic Colonist'

[illegible]

① Bonna	⑨ Gunnamatta Bay	⑦ Building	② Dent's Creek
② Boat Harbour	⑩ Burraneer	⑧ Gawley Bay	③ Gymea Bay (182)
③ English Grass	⑪ Shell Point	⑨ Old Farm	④ North West Arm
④ Weeney Bay Point	⑫ Woollowarra (1 to 4)	⑩ Wool Shed	⑤ Green Point
⑤ Cabbage Tree Flat	⑬ Cummins Point	⑪ Horse	⑥ Double Bay (1 to 3)
⑥ Sandy Flat	⑭ Ewey Bay (1 to 5)	⑫ Ewey Bay Point	⑦ Gymea Ground
⑦ Duck Ponds (182)	⑮ Tyreeal Point	⑬ Kangaroo Point	⑧ Waranora
⑧ Reserve	⑯ Homestead or Punt	⑭ Oyster Bay (1 to 4)	⑨ Outside Waranora (& Govt. Land)

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REPORT ON THE SUTHERLAND ESTATE – JANUARY 1868

(transcribed from the original hand written
account by Daphne Salt)

1868 R C WALKER SUTHERLAND ESTATE REPORT *FROM A HANDWRITTEN TRANSCRIPTION*

Spelling, capitalisation, punctuation and pagination as it was written.

Underlined subheadings were written in the margins of the manuscript.

(bracketed) items are as written;

~~S — triketrough~~ is reproduced as it appears in the manuscript.

[brackets] Index and Appendix have been added by the transcriber and are the only deviations from the original manuscript.

The Sutherland Estate commences at Cape Solander – the name given by Captain Cook to the point forming the South Head, of the Harbour of Botany Bay. Sutherland is bounded on the North, by Botany Bay and the George's River; on the West, by the Waranora River; on the South by Port Hacking River – on the East, by a Government Reserve of 1500 acres which runs from Cape Solander to Boat Harbour, forming the Coast to the Pacific Ocean. This is a barren piece of Land covered with a very thick scrub, and is retained by the Government for fortifications. To run a straight line from one end of the Estate to the other, it is about 10½ miles; though the distance by the Road is over 12 miles – the width of the Estate is on an average 3½ miles – but if any one were to start from Cape Solander and ride round the numerous Bays, Points, and boundary Fences, following them in succession, round to the boundary of Boat Harbour, it would measure nearly 60 miles. This Estate comprises about 12,000 acres; upon which there is now nearly 522 head of cattle, 1900 Sheep, and 30 head of Horses & Ponies. The Estate would carry in all seasons in excellent condition' without Sheep, about 1400 head of Cattle; or Sheep without Cattle, about 5,000. but as the grass improves it would take more stock every year. It would feed more Cattle in proportion, than sheep, in its present condition on account of there being so much coarse feed which cattle will eat and sheep will not look at.

The whole of the Estate was very thickly timbered, and some of the timber valuable for building purposes. The whole Run except in patches, where the timber is reserved has been ringbarked, which is the only effectual way of destroying timber at anything like a remunerative cost, where it grows so thick as it does here and on the Coast Country, until the timber is killed, no grass will grow. The greater portion of the Ringbarking was done about 1862 and 1863. but some blocks were left until 1864, 1865. The trees are now well Killed, and the effect on the Land, is very beneficial. All the Land along this Coast, as it is over the whole County of Cumberland, is very scrubby. When the Land is cleared, the scrub Killed, and the Sun allowed to get to the soil, the nature of the soil changes; and couch grass, Kangaroo and other grasses will grow. The couch is one of the best grasses in this part of the Country, being so very hardy, and when once it gets a firm hold of the ground, it is difficult to get rid of does not affect it much, only making it brown and dry, and on the first shower of Rain the whole sward where it grows, becomes green and fresh as ever. Sheep and all Kinds of cattle are very fond of it, and though not so fattening as many other grasses, is very valuable on account of the quantity of stock it will feed to the acre, it has been ascertained on good authority, (Jenkins of Nepean Towers) that well grassed Couch Paddocks, will keep and fatten two sheep to the acre – and other grasses mixed with it, three Sheep could be kept to the acre – The English Rib grass as well as the Rye grass, will grow very well with the couch, the latter grasses are appearing scantily in many parts of the Run, from seed that has been sown broadcast over the Run – and many parts are well covered with Couch.

The East boundary fence of the Estate, starts at a point in Botany Bay about half a mile from the extreme point of Cape Solander, and runs in nearly a straight line for about two and a half miles to Boat Harbour: For one mile the line is secured by a good substantial three Rail split fence with two wires running through it, and for the remainder of the line, it is a good two rail split fence with two wires, which effectually divides the Estate from the Government Reserve.

The whole of the Estate was divided into Paddocks - first by split post and rail fences, into eleven large paddocks, and afterwards sub-divided by Brush fences, into

about sixty two smaller paddocks; but many of the sub-division fences, principally made of light Brush Wood, merely to check the sheep, have been destroyed by the bush fires during the last three years. The lines of the original Fences are however all marked on the map which accompanies this, as great care was taken in laying out these lines to give the shortest amount of fencing, and at the same

time to provide every paddock with an ample supply of fresh water. The names also of all the paddocks, given to them when they were first made, are marked on the Map to enable any one easily to understand the locality, and as a guide for the future, where to erect new fences: it being considered these are the best divisions that could possibly be made of the Run.

COLONEL * CURNELL * being a corruption of CUNTHUL a native name

At Solander Point, near the place where Captain Cook first landed on the shores of Australia, there is a stone House, containing five Rooms and a Kitchen, in front of which there are two fine Norfolk Island Pines – there is also a good stone Dairy, and a Stable – this homestead is called ~~Colonel~~ Curnell, it is enclosed by a paddock of about twenty acres, formed by a line of fence running from Bonna Beach to the boundary fence. This block is partly cleared; the cleared portion having a good sward of Couch, Rib and mixed grasses – the uncleared portion is grassed with Kangaroo, and other native grasses: the ground rises with a gradual ascent from the Bay and forms a very pretty high Land the Water in the Bay is deep to within a few yards of the Shore, and there is a very easy place to land. Close to the House there is a small creek of a never failing supply of beautiful clear water, which runs into the Bay: If a large Dam were constructed there, a great body of water could be secured.

Close to the West side of the creek (marked on the map) at the edge of the Beach, is a small stock-yard, and milking shed for Dairy purposes. When the holes were sunk for the posts of this yard some years back, part of a Skull of a man was found; it is therefore supposed to be the burying place of Sutherland, one of Captain Cook's men, who died soon after he arrived here, and after whom the Estate is named. The soil on this part is sandy, nearest the water it is of a good dark colour, which is very good for cultivation. The timber is Gum, Bang Alley, Honeysuckle, Tea Tree, and Oak: it was scrubbed all over in 1863, but it has now grown very strong again, and requires to be redone. The scrub should be cut down and left on the ground, ~~until quite dead~~ for some time,

until it is quite dead; so as to form a good body for a running fire. From experience on this Estate it is found that where there has been a good body of brush wood the running fires effectually kill and prevent all scrub from appearing except that which grows fresh from seed left in the ground, and from the roots of Tea Tree, bastard Apple Tree, Stringy Bark, and Geebung – these four scrubs appear to come up after either Hoe, Plough, or Fire; or anything that can be done to them – but generally they only grow on the worst land, and on Iron Stone Ridges, which are covered very thickly with Iron Stone; where there can never be much vegetation.

~~Colonel~~ Curnell commands a splendid view, and is a very pretty spot – it takes in a view of the Pacific Ocean, the North Head of Botany bay; part of Randwick, Paddington, Newtown, The Warren, The Botany Bay Water Works, and Cooks River. On the South side of this River when looking at it from ~~Colonel~~ Curnell, there is a long beach called Seven Mile Beach, forming a magnificent [sic] view from this spot: it runs North East and South West from the entrance of Cooks River, up to Rocky Point, the entrance of George's River – now so well known as Sans Souci, the most fashionable resort of the Sydney People for recreation. The Seven Mile Beach to Sans Souci being a favorite [sic] and pretty ride out of Sydney. All about ~~Colonel~~ Curnell there are some splendid sites for houses, and it would make an admirable recreation ground: it will no doubt before long be sought for as the Lungs of Sydney, and would be a beautiful place for Sea Side residences – it is a very pretty and picturesque walk from ~~Colonel~~ Curnell to Boat Harbour, and Krenulla Beach; which Beach extends for nearly three miles southwards towards Port Hacking and affords one of the finest views anywhere about Sydney. There is also one of

the best fishing points on the Coast, just at the Mouth of Boat Harbour. The whole length of Krenulla Beach is backed by very large Sand Hills covering about 300 acres of ground – these Hills are composed of a shifting shell sand, which makes an excellent top dressing for land, owing to the quantity of Lime it contains – on examination with a microscope, it is found to consist of Millions of small shells – this must become very valuable as a manure for the Estate as cultivation progresses.

BONNA POINT Next to ~~Colonel~~ Curnell is what has been named Bonna Point Paddock –this is secured on the West of Quibrey [sic] Bay, on the North by the Sandy Beach of Botany Bay, called Bonna Beach, and on the Southern Side by a large Salt Water Swamp, which Cattle do not cross owing to its soft and Boggy nature, thus it forms a fence, and by a slip Rail being placed at the Head of the Swamp, at the Boundary fence, a complete paddock is formed – along the edge of the Swamp is some very good soil suitable for Cultivation but would require a little draining. The whole of this paddock is low land; along the Beach is a white sandy soil, but near the Swamp it is darker and better soil.

The whole of this paddock was scrubbed in 1863. but having nothing done to it since then, the Scrub is now very thick, consisting principally of black wattle, and a kind of Honeysuckle, and tea-tree. All these scrubs throw off such a lot of seed that unless the land where it grows, (especially in Sandy Soil) is gone over every year for several years, it cannot be kept under – something should be done to this about August of this year, it would then be ready for burning about November, when the ground is generally very dry and the winds strong – this scrub should be cut down as previously pointed, and it is the only way yet ascertained to keep Scrub down unless it be grubbed up all over with the Hoe, which would cost from £5 to £8 per acre – or it would have to be Ploughed up after clearing, the cost of which would be still more, while the Ploughing would not prevent the seed from growing.

The heavy timber of Honeysuckle, Bang Alley, Oak and Gum, is well killed by the Ring-barking – this is an excellent paddock for feed, growing Couch grass well, and

Kangaroo and other native grasses, but there is a great quantity of Coarse mixed grasses, Rushes, Cabbage, and Grass Trees; which would gradually disappear if the place was more clear, and well stocked with Cattle – the Paddock is well watered by what is called the Horse Pond; a large Swamp coming from the Government Reserve, through which the boundary fence passes. This swamp has never been known to go dry, and the Water is very good though of a Dark Color.

BOAT HARBOR PADDOCK

Boat Harbor Paddock, follows Bonna Point Paddock, being only divided by the salt-water Swamp. this part is very thickly timbered, but it is well killed with Ring-barking; the scrub is becoming very thick again and is of the same kind as in Bonna Point Paddock, and it was scrubbed once at the same time. This wants doing badly. There is also a great deal of grass-Tree in paddock. Here also is a large Swamp, which commences near the East boundary fence, and runs along part of Krenulla Sand Hills, and by the fence forming what is named Donovan's Paddock, into Quibery Bay – The Water in Quibery Bay is shallow and the shores low and muddy. It would be very easy to make a large body of pure water from this Swamp, as there is a never failing supply comes from Springs and the drainage of the Sand Hills – the water is of a very dark color owing to the immense amount of Rushes and weeds that grow in and about the Swamp. If a Canal was dug through the Swamp about a chain wide, and five to six feet deep, it would give a fine sheet of water, and drain the other part, so as to make the sides available, giving some very valuable Land fit for any kind of Cultivation. All the Land in this enclosure, is low except between the Swamp and the East boundary fence where there are some high Sand Hills some of them well covered with Kangaroo and other grasses. A strong heavy Brush Fence is constructed between Donovan's and the boundary fence, running along Krenulla Sandhills, ~~for about~~ ~~one~~ of 60 chains 2 Rod in length in order to effectually prevent Cattle and Sheep from passing from the upper to the Lower Run over the Sandhills, which has always given a good deal of trouble, and unless this was done there

is no possibility of preventing Cattle from Mixing.

DONOVAN'S

The next Paddock is called Donovan's, a patch of about 100 acres of cleared land of good sandy soil, and is fenced on both sides by a three Rail split fence with wire, the lines running North and South from Krenulla Beach Sand Hills to Quibery Bay (land is subdivided into two paddocks). On the South side it is divided by a heavy brush fence from the Sand Hills: this patch has been well ploughed, and is laid down with Rye grass, Rib grass, and Burnett. The Rye does very well, but the Rib does not thrive so well as it should do, as it requires Couch or some other grass with it when sown on sandy soil. The Burnett does better here than at Towra: (another part of the Estate) but during the late heavy drought, under which the whole Colony has suffered severely – it has been very much burnt up: both the Rib and burnett, under the heavy Sun, and continued dry weather, quite disappeared for a time, and the roots appeared dead, but the Rain this month has caused these grasses to shoot again very strong. The Rye grass stands the Sun better than the other two grasses, and was the only grass that any seed could be got from, though there was only a very small quantity. The Rib grass will be the most valuable for this Estate of these English grasses, as it is so prolific in the seed, and will grow without cultivation better than the others, it does best with the Couch, but a loamy of clay soil suits it better than the sandy soil. In clay or loam, it will take the ground from couch or any other grass. The Burnett, it appears does not come to perfection under three years in this Colony, for it has now been sown over two years, and no seed worth speaking of has shown on it; but the roots are very strong, some of them being over a foot deep in the ground, and if there is a good Season, this next Spring, there is every probability of some good seed being collected. The Ferns and Cotton Tree at Donovan's are very troublesome, but they were well cleared last year, which has effectually destroyed the greater part of them, there are however some still growing, and they will have to be watched every year, or they will soon get ahead, for so much seed blows over the ground. The Cotton

Tree must be destroyed at once, but the Ferns, may remain until the Spring, as they now afford a shelter for the Roots of the grass without doing any mischief, and they can be taken out then, as the ground must be cleared well, and bush Harrowed at the beginning of the Spring. There is a good Water hole in this patch towards the South West Corner, from ~~Colonel~~ Curnell, supplied by a Spring, but the Water is of a very dark color and the soil round it black. From ~~Colonel~~ Curnell to Donovan's East boundary Fence there are about 1080 acres. this however takes in nearly 100 acres of bald Sand Hill, on Boat Harbor side – There is a small Hut on this ground, but it is of little value, also a small well of good Water, which makes it a convenient spot for Farming.

It is very difficult to land at Donovan's with a boat except at High Water, the water in Quibrey Bay being so very shallow – and the muddy flats run out to a good distance. All along the boundary of the Bay, the Couch is growing very thick, and it is fast spreading over the Paddocks. These paddocks will be very valuable for producing seed to feed the other part of the Run, which is very much in want of artificial seed.

The strip of land on the South side of Donovan's between the Sandhills and the Brush Fence, has not been cleared: the timber is well Killed by the Ringbarking, and it has been scrubbed once in 1863, but it is growing strong again, this however is not of much consequence as the Drift sand is fast ~~is so fast~~ encroaching on it, and in a few years, it will be completely covered.

WEENEY BAY POINT PADDOCK N^o 1 & 2

Weeney Bay Point Paddocks begin at the West fence of Donovan's in Quibery Bay, and runs round Weeney Point, to the edge of the swampy ground leading to Towra, in Weeney Bay, and is bounded on the South, by a Brush fence dividing them from Sandy Flat Paddock. This part is all sand hills, except a flat next to Donovan's; a little flat at Weeney Point, and a few acres at the Entrance to Towra. The Whole of the Timber, Bang Alley, Gum, & Honeysuckle is well killed, and a great deal burnt off by the running fire – they were first Scrubbed in 1864, and again in 1867, and are now very free from Scrub. they give excellent

feed for Cattle, growing Couch grass, Kangaroo and other native grasses, but the hills are covered with coarse Blade grass, which sheep do not care for, or thrive on. Generally stock of any kind will not eat it, but it appears to be of a sweeter nature here, as the Cattle eat it off quite short, and keep on these hills, and the Hills of Sandy flat Paddock – which adjoin, in preference to the other feed, and thrive well on it. All along Weeney Bay the Couch grows very luxuriant, and is spreading fast up the hills: The blade grass does not prevent other grasses from growing in this Sandy soil. There is a good water hole in No.2 Paddock near the Entrance to Towra, supplied by a spring which never fails during the heaviest Drought, and in No.1. there is a small well at Weeney Point, called Lockhart's Well; of beautiful pure Water, which never fails; and any quantity of water can be obtained here by sinking a few feet.

Weeney Bay is purchased, and belongs to the Estate; it is all shallow water and an excellent Bay for fishing with a net – it is also a good Bay for Oysters, and would make a fine spot for Oyster Beds – it could also be easily protected from the fishermen and poachers by running a line of Piles across from Weeney Point to Towra

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TOWRA

Towra is a large block of Land running from the Main Land into Botany Bay, forming a peninsula, but is almost divided from the other land by a large Swamp or Boggy land of about 586 acres, which is sometimes covered by the spring tides, but could all be made available for cultivation by drainage and embankments. There is a roadway through the Swamp, and the Swamp is bounded on the West by Woollooware Bay, and on the East by Weeney Bay: near the North end of the Swamp where the ground is so Boggy that Cattle cannot cross it, the Road has been formed for a short distance by first laying down timber and bushes; then a drain 4 feet wide has been dug on ~~either~~ both sides, and the soil thrown up to raise the road above the ordinary level of the Swamp: At the end of this Road there is a slip panel which makes a complete check for preventing cattle or Sheep

from crossing. The whole of Towra is low land and of a light sandy soil:

The whole of the Timber has been Killed by ring-barking and the greatest portion has been cleared ready for cultivation, but this part does not appear to grow crops as well as Donovan's, and the Land at the Duck Ponds; and evidently requires plenty of manure. There is a projecting point at the extreme North of Towra, of 12 Acres 16 Perches called Towra Point; which is almost divided from the other part by a Mangrove swamp. On the West side of the Point there is a good corn shed. This portion has been cleared, and scrubbed twice. the 1st time in 1863. the second time in 1865 but it has never been ploughed, and the Scrub is showing up again strong, which requires something doing to it. A good strong Brush Fence, Cattle proof, runs across the middle of Towra, in an East & West line, which divides off a 120.3.0. next to the point of 12 acres, about half of which has been cleared, and on the remainder the Timber is all dead, but still standing, though not very thick, and has all been ploughed and cultivated between them about 30 Acres near the Point was planted two years with corn, and in 1867, with Lucerne, which owing to the Drought did not come to anything: there is only 50 or 60 acres of this paddock that has not been ploughed, which adjoins where the Lucerne was sown and is considered not as good as the other land.

Next to this again, on the East side it has been ploughed and sown with English grasses – Cocksfoot and Ryegrass, but the Cocksfoot did not grow, the seed being bad; with part of this seed some Oats were sown, but the severe Drought destroyed all but a very small portion which was sown in the moist part of the ground. but it was one of the worst seasons the Colony has ~~known~~ endured for many Years, and the Crops failed in ~~all~~ most parts of the Country. In a good season, Oats grow very well on any part of Towra and the Rye grass, will do very well. Next to where the Oats were sown, there is about 15 Acres laid down with Rib grass, and nearly the same quantity sown with Burnett grass. but they do not thrive as well here as on other parts of the Estate. Inside the fence there are three small Waterholes, but the water is not very good, and of a bad color. at the West end of the dividing fence there is a good hut and a rough

Stock Yard. From the dividing fence up to the Slip Rail at the Crossing place there are about 180 acres of available land; there being some large Swamps at the point near the mouth of Weeney Bay. All this has been cleared but only about 20 Acres has been ploughed in 1866. the remainder has only been burnt off – it grows good grass, but the scrub is shooting very fast in many parts, and the Cotton Trees are very troublesome, both here and in the first mentioned Paddock; 99 Acres of this was cleared & Scrubbed in 1865. and the 30 Acres at the Mouth of Weeney Bay was done at the same time; and the remainder was finished in 1866 & /67.

There are a great quantity of vines and Black Wattle grow all over Towra, and a great quantity of ~~all kinds~~ different kinds of weeds cover the ground, which are very difficult and troublesome to get rid of. There are also a good many seedling Oaks shooting up that want checking at once, or before next August or Sept. A mob of about 80 head of Cattle have been put here to eat this down, and they will check the young shoots a great deal: ~~and~~ they will also destroy a great deal of the vine. The Couch and Kangaroo grass grows very well here & if the ground is left for a grass paddock, it will soon be a fine sward. If the ground is well manured it will do well for cultivation but if not, it would be advisable only to sow it with Rye grass. either by ploughing or broad cast and bush harrow in the wet. The Prairie grass would also do very well here, which is a very hardy grass, and when once it has a firm hold of the ground it may be cut several times in the year. The nature of the soil at Towra appears too Dry and hot in the Summer, for either the Rib or Burnett. In the last mentioned paddock there is a small Hut at the End near the entrance by the Road, known as “Mangle’s Hut”.

At the West side of Towra there is a point running out into the Bay called Pelican Point, on which there is 26 acres of the same kind of Sandy soil, and is separated from Towra by part of the large Swamp before named: this was ringbarked and scrubbed in 1863. but there is not much timber on it, what there is consists of Oak & Honeysuckle. There are some shell gatherers on this point, and they have put up a couple of rude Huts – the Couch grass is growing very thick all over this part,

but the scrub is coming up thick again, and wants cutting down, and left to be burnt.

CABBAGE TREE FLAT PADDOCK

This Paddock runs along the head of Woolloowarra Bay, and was divided by a low Brush fence, now useless to stop either sheep or cattle: it is nearly all swamp and only grows rough high grass, and what is called cabbage-tree. The Cattle go in here and get some good pickings out of it, but the feed is too coarse, and the ground too wet for sheep. This would be a fine spot to make a large permanent watering place for both cattle and sheep: there are four small waterholes, just outside the fence, in Sandy Flat Paddock, all supplied by springs. It would be easy to cut a canal, say six feet wide and four feet deep thro’ the middle of this paddock, and throw up the earth taken out on the Bay side so as to form an embankment to keep off the Salt Water which in Spring tides comes up a good distance, the canal would drain the other parts and make it more valuable, giving a never failing supply of water, so as in addition to the large drainage from Sandy Flat Paddock and the Swamp the springs would always keep it supplied. The soil here is very black and rich – and contains a great deal of decayed vegetable matter.

SANDY FLAT PADDOCK

The North boundary fence of Sandy Flat Paddock extends from Cabbage Tree Flat to the Donovan’s fence, and is divided from the Duck ponds paddock, by a sheep log fence, running east and West to Krenulla Beach Sand Hills; and forms part of the Southern Boundary of the paddock, the Krenulla SandHills forming the other boundary. This paddock is a series of good Sand Hills, the same as described in Weeney Bay Paddock, growing Couch grass; blade grass, Kangaroo and other native grasses, and is an excellent feeding ground for Cattle, but rather too coarse in feed for sheep. the whole of this paddock was scrubbed in 1863. a portion of it 263½ acres has again just been scrubbed, finished at the end of 1867. now waiting to be burnt with running fire, which the late heavy Rain has put a stop to for some time. There is still about 200 Acres with very heavy scrub on it, and about 50 acres, with lighter scrub which wants something doing to it badly, as it is principally Black Wattle, which grows such quantities of

seed, and if left, will in this Sandy soil soon cover the whole place. If a Running fire passes thro' it, a good deal will be destroyed, as this kind of scrub cannot stand the fire, as well as some other kinds. The whole of the Timber has been Ringbarked and is well dead except a portion of about 50 acres running along the log Fence, which has been badly done: the timber living is principally Appletree, Bang Alley, & Honeysuckle.

It is however all the better, on these sand Hills to have a few trees left for shade, as it protects both the grass and the stock from the hot Sun in Summer, which burns up everything, and becomes unbearable to the Stock unless there is some shelter. The scrubbing in this paddock should not be neglected, and should be kept constantly checked, as it is now very clean, except on those parts above alluded to. for in the loose sandy soil the scrub grows up so much faster than the other parts until all the seed is destroyed.

This is a very fine part for Stock, fattening Cattle well. the principal part of the Cattle of the Estate are now running over these sandhills, and they thrive exceedingly well and cattle which have only been three months on the run, are gaining flesh very fast, and daily improving, shewing that the feed and place suits them well – they are also quiet here and are never hunted or disturbed which helps to improve them.

DUCK PONDS N^o 1. PADDOCK

No 1 Duck Ponds Paddock, adjoins Sandy Flat Paddock, and is formed by a fence commencing at Cabbage Tree Flat made of very low Brush Wood, up to the cultivation paddock, thence by a brush fence to Gunnamatta Bay, from which a Sheep Log fence runs across to Hungry Point, on the Krenulla Beach. there it is met by a Sheep Brush fence that runs along the Krenulla Sand Hills up to sandy flat Paddock. About half of this Paddock nearest to Sandy Flat Paddock, is similar to the last named paddock, being sandy soil thickly timbered with Apple Tree, Bang Alley, Oak & Honeysuckle, the scrub is also thick in this part. ~~Only about~~ this half has not been Ring-Barked. From the end of the Log fence at Hungry Point, running nearly a due North line to the Water Hole, near the Road

Way, as shown on the map – there is a narrow Sandy Flat, very thickly Timbered, like a water course, and along the edge of this there is a sudden Rise and change of soil from sandy to a stiff brown soil and in some parts Iron Stone clay – the brown soil especially near the cultivation paddock where a Hut is erected; towards Hungry Point, the soil is not so good although if cleared and cultivated would make first class farming Land. From where the ground rises from the Flat – the Timber at once changes to Iron Bark, Oak and Gum, all except the best Iron Bark and Gum Trees have been Ring-barked, and are well Killed. but is very thick and prevents the grass from growing well.

The half last spoken of has been scrubbed twice, the 1st time in 1863, and the second time in 1866, and was well burnt with the running fire, which has destroyed all scrub and cleared off a great deal of rubbish from the ground. The fire only extended to the Ridge bounded by the sandy flat from Hungry point down to the Hut and Cultivation Paddock – beyond that the Run has not been burnt either last or this Year. The portion beyond the Flat has only been scrubbed once in 1863 – it is now thickly covered again with a good deal of dead Timber and Brush Wood laying on the ground – and wants something doing to it; there are a good many young Oaks (saplings) ~~and~~ young gums, Honeysuckles etc coming up with the Black Wattle scrub, that ought not to be allowed to get a head. There is a fine large Pond of water in this Paddock near the Hut that stood through the Drought and gave abundance of Water for all the stock.

DUCK PONDS N^o 2. PADDOCK

This is the best land on the Estate, but it is very thickly timbered all over, with Ironbark, Oak, Gum, Stringybark and Woolly-Butt; which prevents the grass from growing on many parts. The Oaks especially about the Middle of the Paddock are very thick, and wherever they grow thick no grass will grow under them. the greater part are however well Killed by ringbarking as well as all the unavailable timber – This paddock is bounded on the North by Woolloowarra Bay on the West by a two Rail split Fence, with log and wire dividing it from Woolloowarra Bay Paddocks on the South by a sheep Log fence

forming the Northern boundary of Gunnamatta Bay Paddock, and on the East by the Duck ponds No 1 divided by a Brush fence.

The whole of the land would make good cultivation ground, in the middle it is rich brown soil, along the boundary of No 1 it is Iron stone clay, but not strong, and again along Woolloowara Bay there is an Iron stone Ridge, with heavy Iron Bark Timber, and some very pretty building sites facing the bay, at the back of this slight rise, near the West boundary fence there is a good water hole but it was nearly dry during the Drought, tho plenty of good water can be obtained anywhere about here by sinking – towards the South West Corner it is again Ironstone soil which runs down the fence – but is very good land. Included in this No 2 is a Cultivation Paddock, Close to the Hut in No 1, of 5½ acres, which has been planted at various times with different crops. ~~But~~ and is planted part with Rye grass, and part with Rib, Buffalo and other grasses. The Rye grass grows remarkably well here, and it would be advisable to have the whole of this patch sown with Rye grass: and if it got a top Dressing with some of the Shell sand from the Krenulla Beach, ~~it~~ which is not far off it – there would be a very fine lot of seed obtained every year, for sowing over the Estate. The later Bush fires completely destroyed the Eastern fence, and in restoring this, the fence line is carried out in to No 1 Paddock so as to take in about 3¾ acres more land, which is almost cleared having only a few standing trees, and some large logs. The greater portion of which will be used for the fence: this piece is a good rich brown soil similar to that which has already been ploughed: it would be a good patch for sowing with Lucerne. The best soil for Lucerne is a rich black loam like it is on the Hunter River where the roots can go down to a great depth. and after that, the brown soil similar to this, as it appears on any other kind of soil it will not stand feeding, but dies off after the second year. And never yields much of a crop.

The whole of the Duck Pond No 2. has been scrubbed twice the first time in 1863 and the second time in 1866. at the last Scrubbing it was very thick except towards Woolloowara Bay; the scrub was cut down cleaner the last time and was quite dead when a running fire

caught it, which made a great Clearance both in scrub and dead timber. Before it was scrubbed there were parts ~~up~~ it was difficult to ride through. Now it looks very Clean and free from scrub, and there will be very little grow after such a fire. Anything that grows ~~will~~ must be from seed already in the ground, or on patches where the dead scrub and grass has not been sufficient to carry the fire on, and there are only a few places like this. The principal feed is native grass with a little Rib & Rye grass, showing in places, and in some parts blade grass – The shore along Woolloowara Bay is low & muddy, and a flat runs out a good distance which is covered by the spring tides.

GUNNAMATTA BAY PADDOCK

This paddock is divided from No 2 Duck Ponds, by the Sheep Log fence forming the Southern boundary of that paddock; and is bounded on the West for nearly half way, by the 2 rail log and wire fence, forming the East boundary of No 3 Woolloowara Bay Paddock. and for the remaining distance by Mr Dolan's east boundary fence. On the South it is divided from Burrameer [sic] Point by a Brush fence and the eastern boundary is Gunnamatta Bay. All the paddock but about 90 acres along the head of the Bay has been scrubbed twice, the first time in 1862, the second time in 1864. About 40 Acres near the gate was scrubbed a third time in 1867. This is now all very clean except the 90 acres scrubbed in 1862. A heavy running fire having passed over the whole of it which destroyed a good deal of the scrub on the 90 acres. It also burnt a good Hut known as Wilson's Hut, which stood near the North end of Dolan's fence. All the upper or Northern part of this paddock, is exactly similar both in soil and timber to Duck Ponds No 2 but as you approach the Bay southwards, it becomes Rocky country Gum Timber and sandy soil; growing a good deal of grass tree and nasty low coast scrub. All ~~at~~ along this Bay there are some very pretty building sites, looking on to the Port Hacking River; and there is a fine spring running into the Bay from the Burrameer Point side, & not from the southern fence, where at a trifling expense a good supply of water could be secured as the spring never fails in the driest season.

RESERVE PADDOCK

The Reserve Paddock is a small patch at the end of the Duck Ponds No 1 and runs to the boundary of the Estate at Hungry Point on the Krenulla Beach. a fine spot for a house. This forms the East boundary of the paddock and Gunnamatta Bay the West. Gunnamatta point forms the Southern boundary. All the timber is well Killed by Ring-barking. But it is poor ironstone land with very little vegetation or grass – growing grass-tree and low coast Scrub: about 40 acres was scrubbed in 1862 and about 20 acres a second time in 1867. There is a shallow well just outside the south boundary of the Estate which supplies it with water.

GUNNAMATTA POINT

Beyond the Reserve Paddock is Gunnamatta Point a block of 300 acres forming the entrance to Port Hacking River which is reserved by the Government for fortifications. This is nearly all barren land growing a coast scrub so thick in places it cannot be ridden through.

END OF PART 1 OF THE R. C. WALKER
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Original blue enamel street sign, Beach Street South Cronulla



House name from original fisherman's cottage, Beach Street, long since demolished

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 stands. 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'.¹

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.² On the day of the opening, Sutherland Shire councillors met the Minister for Public Instruction at Sutherland railway station. After lunch at 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.³ 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.⁴

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.⁵

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

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

² WH Brien, Cronulla PS Jubilee booklet.

³ *SGC*, 29/1/1910.

⁴ Cronulla PS P&C Minute Book.

⁵ F Cridland, unlabelled newspaper extract, (1911), courtesy of Michelle Vale.

between what are now the suburbs of Caringbah and Cronulla.⁶

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.⁷ 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 1893.⁸ Residents there considered that if a school were established at Cronulla, it would undermine theirs.⁹ 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, especially for older children. He was anxious to keep the Cronulla children at his own flourishing school.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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

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

⁷ Report on Deputation, op. cit.

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

⁹ SGC, 20/6/1908.

¹⁰ SGC, 20/6/1908.

¹¹ Burraneer Bay School File, op. cit.

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

¹³ Report on Deputation, op.cit.

¹⁴ Inspector's Report, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

¹⁵ SGC, 20/6/1908.

the *St George Call*.¹⁶ 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'.¹⁷

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 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'.¹⁸ 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'.¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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'.²¹ 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.²²

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'.²³ 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

¹⁶ *SGC*, 13/8/1906.

¹⁷ Report on Deputation, op. cit.

¹⁸ *SGC*, 12/9/1908.

¹⁹ J Hill letter to F Downes, Cronulla PS file, op.cit.

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

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

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

²³ *SGC*, 29/1/1910

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 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.²⁴

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.²⁵

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.²⁶

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.²⁷

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'.²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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.

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

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Barcan, op.cit., p 203.

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

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

²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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'.³¹

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.³²

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.³³

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.³⁴

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'.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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 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.

³⁰ Letters, Cronulla PS file, op.cit

³¹ P&C Minute Book, p. 10.

³² 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.

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

³⁴ Letter from Henry Tonkin to Inspector Riley, 20/8/1921, *ibid.*

³⁵ R Elliott, letter 9/1990.

³⁶ P&C Minute Book, p. 10.

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ Young Les Myers trudged across the mud flats, now Tonkin Oval, carrying loads of equipment to the new school.³⁹ 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.

Book Review

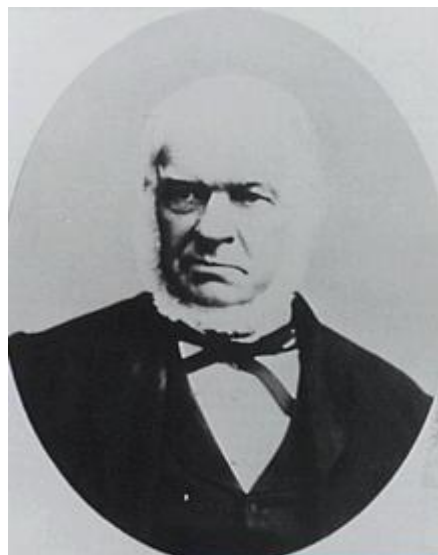
This review first appeared in the February edition of *History* the magazine of RAHS.

The first mayor of Randwick a migrant from Randwick in Gloucestershire, Simeon Henry Pearce who began life in the colony of NSW as a market gardener.

Randwick. Written by Pauline Curby. Formed in 1859, Randwick is one of NSW's oldest government areas. To celebrate, Randwick City Council commissioned historian Pauline Curby to write this delightful, lively and thoroughly researched history. The municipality ranges from Centennial Park to La Perouse. It has scenic

beaches, heady cliffs, prosperous suburbs, industrial estates, a port, a racecourse, a university and a hospital, and it is not without social problems. This is a well-balanced and finely-tuned story of the evolution of Randwick. It is a history of highs and lows, and of an area richly peopled from many cultures and backgrounds. The 406-page book is a beautifully designed production containing many maps and historical photographs. A good read for all, not only local residents. [ISBN 9780908510085. Available at Randwick libraries, and bookstores. For more information, call 9314 4888]

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³⁷ *Hurstville Propeller*, 29/1/1926.

³⁸ J Cowan, interview, 14/9/1990.

³⁹ L. Myers, interview, 26/9/1990.

Sutherland Shire Historical Society
Membership application or renewal 2010/11

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

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

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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.

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