

VOLUME 16–NUMBER 2: MAY 2013



MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY

The SSHS has a proud tradition stretching back 46 years and is an entirely volunteer and not-for-profit organisation. Over the years the Society has taken on the responsibility of recording and preserving local history so that Shire residents can learn more about our past.

WRITING FOR THE *BULLETIN*

Since its beginning, the Society has fostered the skills of local writers and their work is recorded in the *Bulletin* – copies of which can be accessed in Sutherland Shire Library Local Studies room. Members and non-members are invited to submit material for future editions and although we give local history priority, we are happy to accept stories on Australian history generally. We ask that you quote your sources and acknowledge any material used as well as obtaining permission from authors.

The *Bulletin* 'style-guide' is available from the editor: Clive Baker. 13 Veronica Place, Loftus. 2232. warbookshop@bigpond.com. Make sure to include your contact details and/or email address.

BULLETIN

Copies of this publication are free to all Society members and are also distributed to all Shire council libraries, the Mayor, Shire General Manager, all Councillors, the Royal Australian Historical Society, National Trust of NSW, NSW State Library, National Library of Australia, University of Sydney, University of NSW, State Rail Authority, Australia Post Archives, Sydney Water Board Historical Research Unit and Shire high school libraries.

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REGISTRATION

Other than the *Bulletin*, other Society publications are registered with the National Library of Australia in accordance with International Standard Serial Numbering and usually have an ISBN number.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are held on the THIRD Saturday of each month at 1.30 pm (except December) – at Stapleton Centre, 3A Stapleton Street, Sutherland (near the library). We welcome your company to hear our guest speakers, mix with local history enthusiasts and share afternoon tea and a chat.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MUSEUM

Our museum is located in the School of Arts, East Parade Sutherland (opposite the bus station). It opens on the FIRST Saturday of each month from 10am to 3pm and contains some gems of Shire history and many old photographs. Entry is free but a gold coin donation will assist our work.

For special tours, schools and groups should make a booking with Curator Jim Cutbush: 9521-3721.

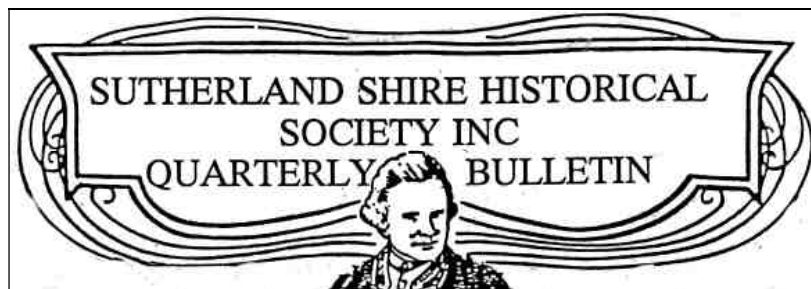
DONATING MATERIAL: If you have items of historical significance for Sutherland Shire, we welcome a donation to the museum where it can be kept for posterity. Cash donations and sponsorship assist us to improve the museum and perhaps you can keep the museum in mind when planning your estate.

CONTACTING THE SOCIETY

All correspondence and membership enquiries should be addressed to The Honorary Secretary, Sutherland Shire Historical Society. PO box 389. Sutherland. NSW. 1499 or a.badger@optusnet.com.au

THANKS TO SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

The Society is most grateful for the on-going support from the Council in printing our *Bulletin*.



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Front and back covers: Sutherland Shire Museum photographed by a visitor, Chris Hawkins of Mortdale, who kindly offered them for use in the *Bulletin*.



c 1911

THE SSHS COMMITTEE: 2012-2013

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MR TWOPENY'S OBSERVATIONS ON SWEARING AND DRINKING

Young Australia [1880s] makes a specialty of swearing. High and low, rich and poor, indulge themselves in bad language luxuriantly; but it is amongst the rising generation that it reaches its acme. The lower-class colonial swears as naturally as he talks. He doesn't mean anything by it in particular; nor is it really an evil outward and visible sign of the spiritual grace within him ... drunkenness comes next on our list of vices. That Australians as a nation are more drunken than Englishmen, I do not believe to be a fact; but what is undeniable is, that there is great deal of drunkenness

amongst those who claim to be considered the upper classes here. An Englishman of the present day, whatever his other sins may be, does not get drunk, because it is 'bad form', if for no better reason ... but there has been a very appreciable improvement in this respect during the past half-dozen years and the tone of public feeling on the subject is gradually approximating to that of English society. The old colonists are not of course expected to change their habits in their old age, but with the young generation there is less tipping and port, sherry and spirits are being replaced by claret.

SOURCE: *Town Life in Australia*. TWOPENY Richard. Penguin. Blackburn. 1976. pp. 124-5

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BRUCE WATT

2013 is already an auspicious year for the Society with some truly spectacular achievements that I'll allude to shortly. The Society is going from strength to strength. It is well known for its welcoming, well attended meetings, guest speakers and afternoon teas and for so many, this social interaction is such an important part of belonging to the organisation. Many contribute to the efficient running of these meetings but special mention needs to be made of Angela Badger, our Secretary who organises our speakers, Leanne Muir our Treasurer and our several members who prepare our afternoon tea.

The *Bulletin* is of such a high standard and will be a primary source of local history for future historians, thanks to Clive Baker's stewardship.

The transformation of our museum though is our crowning achievement for this year. If you haven't had a chance yet to see it, you simply must do so. Starting in July last year, the museum committee dismantled the existing exhibition and began a process of culling items and developing a new theme. This became, 'The Shire; a journey through time'. This task is not easy in a museum space of only twelve metres by eight metres but the mental discipline of having to plan exhibits carefully became a great strength. Eight areas/themes or time periods were selected. These were: Geology, Aboriginal occupation, the discoverers, nineteenth century, early twentieth century, pioneer cooking and washing, war years and post war years.

Council repainted the rooms, giving a fresh start. We were successful in securing a grant from Museums and Galleries for the refurbishment and a consultant was employed. His services proved to be invaluable. He was 'hands on' and the committee learnt so much about signage, display and layout and telling the story in a concise manner. Importantly we applied the principle that 'less is more'. Despite this there is depth and subtlety within the exhibits. Some aspects are suggestive and entice those keen on exploring the local history in more detail to do so. Starting in January, the committee worked furiously and completed the museum for the opening of Heritage Week in April. The result has won universal praise from the many hundreds of visitors who passed through the museum. It is described as 'rich' yet not cluttered. It is a truly exciting, thought provoking exhibition that tells a coherent story of the Shire.

Each area or 'pod' has a brief description outlining significant details and some items within exhibits are individually labelled. It was deliberately planned that visitors would not be swamped by lengthy descriptions.

More detailed information about each pod is available so that our museum guides can answer more specific questions. Each pod is visually stimulating and individually different, yet there is a uniformity in display techniques that binds the exhibition together.

It transcends all ages. Units of work have been written for visiting school students and audio-visual presentations provide colour and movement. Some have stayed for hours! Amongst the many highlights are an Aboriginal camp scene, a figure of Captain Cook in full dress figuratively emerging through the bush, convict manacles and swords, Sophia Holt in a magnificent period dress, a spectacular pioneer kitchen, exciting war paraphernalia and a nostalgic 1950s lounge room complete with an early TV set. Please make time to see this exhibition. You will be rewarded.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank all of those who were involved in the museum's Lazareth-like rise and its emergence into the beautiful flower that it is. It has been a memorable journey.



Jim Cutbush contemplates a display during the re-furbishing.

Jim Cutbush, our curator has a wonderful 'window' to showcase our history and it is a great asset to the people of the Shire. I'd also like to thank the many ordinary members who have volunteered to 'man' the exhibition over the 11 days of the exhibition. Hopefully some will be inspired to stay on or even to take up other duties within the Society.

Last year a surprise announcement was made to close the Fisheries site at Hungry Point Cronulla. The site had been established in 1904 and there was a large public outcry about the decision.

I wrote a submission on behalf of the Society in support of its continued use, based on its history and the significance of Aboriginal relics on site. Despite an independent Upper House enquiry which recommended against closure, the decision was upheld. However, resulting from our submission, the President of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society was appointed to the 11 person 'Hungry Point Reserve Trust' for a term of five years.

In a consultant's report into its future use were 25 recommendations. Two of these were: 'two educational centres be established featuring Aboriginal heritage, marine research history and local Cronulla history and heritage' and 'the site be used by NSW Secondary Schools for excursions'. Hopefully we can contribute towards these goals and justify the trust that has been put in the Society as an upholder of heritage values in the Shire.

I'd like to congratulate Angela Badger on her outstanding efforts in planning and coordinating many aspects of the Shire's response to Heritage Week. Angela ensured that 10,000 information booklets were compiled, printed and distributed throughout the Shire and that publicity for the event was obtained from *The Leader*. The main event on Saturday 13 April was very well attended. A vintage bus operated between the Tramway Museum, Woronora Cemetery, our Museum, Brinsley's Joinery and Hazlehurst Regional Gallery.

There are many other members whose names have not been mentioned but who have contributed in so many ways. We have a great Society with an exciting future. Several have offered to become more involved and that's what we need. New skills, energy, ideas and equally as important, simply members willing get in and contribute what they can.

With half of the year nearly over, there's cause to pause and feel proud of what we have achieved. However, with an active executive and sub committees, the second half of the year will be just as productive.

SOCIETY ACTIVITIES: 2013

MONTH		EVENT	NOTES
JUNE	1	Museum	First Saturday 10 am–3pm
	15	Meeting: 1.30pm	Vashti Farrer: The horse 'Archer' and first Melbourne Cup
		Excursion	None
JULY	6	Museum	First Saturday 10 am–3pm
	20	Meeting: 1.30pm	Gregory Blaxell: Parramatta River
	27	Excursion	Motorlife Museum: \$35 including bus, lunch at a club and museum entry – book early.
AUGUST	3	Museum	First Saturday 10 am–3pm
	17	Meeting: 1.30pm	Michael Boyd: The First Fleet
	31	Museum	GRAND OPENING! Saturday – details to be advised
		Excursion	None
SEPTEMBER	7	Museum	First Saturday 10 am–3pm
	21	Meeting: 1.30pm	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Guest speaker: To be advised
	28	Excursion	Thirlmere Railway Museum: \$30 including bus and entry to museum – bring own food and drink book early.

EDITOR'S SAY

ALL MAIL TO: Clive Baker. 13 Veronica Place, Loftus. 2232.
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This edition sees a few changes in the production of the *Bulletin*. We regret the loss of a valuable member of our vast editorial staff with the resignation of the Chief Proof-Reader, Elizabeth Craig. She leaves due to family issues and her fellow workers wish her all the best and hope to have her back at a later date – at a lower salary of course!

Meanwhile, Merle Kavanagh has taken over Elizabeth's office and editing job, putting me (and all you writers) under further pressure – she is a stickler for correct grammar and spelling. You are warned!

This issue contains a special presentation to highlight the re-opened and re-vamped Sutherland Shire Museum. It is now 'right up there' with other museums and all those who worked so many hours on it, are justly proud.

NEW MEMBERS

WELCOME TO THESE NEW MEMBERS – WE
HOPE YOU ENJOY THE SOCIETY

Melanie GIBBONS
Jim HEATHER
George MILLER
Amanda OLLIEK
Helen ROSNER

Our Secretary, Angela Thomas, said of new member, Carol McDonald (a recently-retired schoolteacher from Bonnet Bay), "She joined the society and walked in and said she was very keen to help – she was bored and she wanted a job! Well! We found her work, even co-opted her for the photo shoot out at Leichhardt Bus Museum..."

Carol is now 'understudy' to help Angela in the role of Secretary.

Likewise, Amanda Olliek became an instant contributor to the museum between trying to get a job and helping out at the Power House museum.

If you are a new member and keen to get involved, don't hold back. The Society needs more younger or older members to become active with their energy and new ideas.

Others members have written more widely on the work that was done and the final result. Their articles and many photographs appear on following pages.

Again may I thank all those who sent material for publication but regrettably, some articles have again been held over until the next issue.

A few non-members have also contributed interesting short articles and we hope their actions are just a warm up before joining the Society.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of Jim Hethrington's book on Cronulla in the 1930s to 1950s, contact me as I am holding stocks.

THE S.C.A.M., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1942.

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1942



1939

The March Excursion.

Joan Morison. OAM

There we were, all sitting excitedly in the bus – our minds on seeing trains – when Terry dropped the bombshell. “Now folks, I received a phone call to tell me that it was 'Thomas the Tank' Day at Thirlmere and 1500 children are expected to attend. Perhaps we should consider an alternative. I do have something in mind.”

We, the passengers (after a variety of moans and groans) had to take a vote, but what's the alternate trip? Terry, who then confessed his wariness of children (us oldies are okay) explained the merits of the Camden, Picton area. So, like most elections these days, the outcome was indecisive, but we must keep our excellent driver happy. Actually we didn't care where we went, especially as we got an \$8 refund! “Let's go Terry – Camden it is.”

We bid farewell to expressways and took the old Hume Highway. The weather fine and sunny, the company friendly, and the driver very informative. He's very good with local history. Passing the battered sign of 'El Cabello Blanco' I recalled those magnificent Spanish horses we saw way back in the 1960s. Passing through Leppington, once entirely rural, it was hard to pin-point the site of the 9th Australian Scout Jamboree of 1970, held as part of the Bi-Centennary Celebrations of Captain Cook's discovery of Australia. *Thousands of Scouts brought the area to life. It is amazing how much development has taken place.*

Morning Tea stop – time for a “cuppa” and that most important “loo” stop. Then it was on the road again, still traversing old roads, we finally arrive in Camden with Terry giving us an informative tour of the town and its history. There was much to see and do. A number of us explored the Antique shops getting a few bargains.

How well Bruce and I remembered Camden in the 1951 floods. We had to evacuate Burratorang Valley, then wade across the flooded bridge in our swimmers with our luggage in our arms, and up to the Station (no longer there) to go home. What a way to celebrate one's Honeymoon! Lunch was in the Agricultural Showground in a handy shelter shed.

Seated again in the bus, our daring driver suggested we take a detour over the old Razorback road to Picton. Okay! We're game! After winding up the narrow road we enjoyed the great scenery at the top looking back on Camden, nestled in the hollow below us. Soon we rejoined the main Hume Highway and headed for Picton. A tour of the town took us under the old brick underpass tunnel to notice (as our knowledgeable driver said) how truck drivers scraped the walls with their load from taking the turn too fast. The bus stopped for us to view the old Viaduct – admiring the skills of the workmen who built it. From here a quick trip over a disused railway line, a modern Go Kart track took our eye. Then Terry tried for an old bridge just past the Malden Cement Works – alas, the way was blocked so it was back over the line and onto the Picton Road again.

Soon we reached the Appin Road turn off (who made that boo-boo about the Wilton Aerodrome?) On the outskirts of Appin we turned onto the Cataract Road. A very steep and scenic drive to cross the Cataract River. Plenty of water, but Terry had once seen it almost dry. He then pointed out the Treatment Works on the hill. Terry's spiel then included some history of explorer Hamilton Hume. A Naval Officer. He had a parcel of land in this area. We passed the road to the Cataract Scout Camp then took the junction of the F6 heading for home – but – there was one more sight to see! Sublime Point, Mt. Panorama and the magnificent view of the coastline from the Lookout.

Refreshed with ice creams from the kiosk, Terry kept us in exploration mood by taking the old road to Waterfall. All too soon we arrived at Sutherland. Thanks Terry for a job well done, but please.... put Thirlmere on the Trip List for later in the year. To organisers – thanks for a great day.

GROWING OLD: WHO NEEDS IT?

COLIN BURGESS

When I was a teenager growing up in Sutherland Shire, there were four places I really loved to go – Luna Park, Cronulla Beach, the Sutherland Odeon and fishing or swimming (perhaps both) at the Gymea Bay baths, which have recently been greatly enhanced and expanded.

Luna Park was by far the most exciting. Down by Sydney harbour, with the lights all aglow, you could ride on the Big Dipper and Rotor, and eat Pluto Pups and Fairy Floss until your stomach finally rebelled and you threw up. Cronulla beach was sensationally wide in those days (or so it seemed), and black inner-tube tyres were the flotation device of choice, even if the valve did leave irritating scratches on your stomach. Back then my brothers and I did everything that is considered wrong these days by baking our bodies in the midday sun, then days later having great fun peeling strips of skin off each other's backs.

The Sutherland Odeon was my haven of celluloid dreams, although in my mid-teens they gutted and desecrated the place by turning that lovely façade and comfortable interior into a sterile Snobs store. My mother used to give me sixpence every Saturday morning: threepence each way to Sutherland and back on the Gymea Bay bus, a shilling to get in to the Saturday matinee, and a whole sixpence to spend at the lolly counter.

Goodness knows how many films I saw at the old Odeon in my youth, but we always went back because after we'd stood for the National Anthem they showed 'The Three Stooges', a 'Tom and Jerry' cartoon and a serial before the main event. And if the film broke down we'd all whistle, stamp our feet, clap and yell out, "Put a penny in it!" or something equally silly. The rest of the week would be spent in earnest conversation with our chums at school over the serial episode we'd seen, wondering how the good guy would get out of that blazing cabin or avoid being blown to pieces by dynamite in that abandoned mine. Mr Olsen from Gymea Bay was the owner or manager of the Odeon, and I can recall that the male usher always wore a smart black suit and bow tie. It was later rumoured – probably truly – that the mother of film critic Bill Collins worked there as a female usher.

I loved fishing, but getting my driver's licence soon saw the end of baited hooks and undersized bream from Gymea Bay baths on the tea table. I can recall we were all in some sort of hurry to grow up in those days, but we still felt awkward and shy around the girls.

Back then acne seemed almost obligatory, and Clearasil compulsory. Maybe it was something

to do with the fat our mothers used to cook in, or the chocolate crackles they seemed to make by the hundreds.

If you wanted to show a girl you were a sophisticate, you pulled on your duffel coat and took her to the Savoy or Roma theatres in town to see 'Mondo Cane' or some obscure foreign film, and then you'd go for coffee in Rowe Street. On a big night out you'd take her to the Prince Edward or the St James. If you bought her a box of Black Magic chocolates at interval, you usually got married.



Most of the girls were just coming out of the age of rope petticoats and ponytails into mini-skirts and cork-soled wedgies, while good old Gossamer hair spray turned many a wondrously stacked coiffeur into solid concrete. The guys wore brothel creepers and winkle-pickers on their feet, and a good, oily gloop of Brylcreem in their hair. Then the Beatles came to prominence and the Brylcreem people went broke as every young lad shunned oil, began growing their hair longer, and combed it down over their forehead.



As far as violence went, the only time you ever encountered any was if you pranged the old man's car.

Looking around all my friends from those days, the great thing is that none of us has really changed all that much. Sure, our hair has thinned out and greyed a little, and gravity has taken over some of the more protuberant parts of our anatomies, but we're all still pretty-much the same fun-loving group of people that we once were, and comfortable in the company of old (as in long-term) friends.

We have many shared memories, mostly good ones, and it's both pleasant and fun to relax and recall shared experiences. It's somewhat comforting to hear the same old stories wheeled out again year after year. I just wish some of the guys would learn a few new jokes!

FROM THE ROVING RETIREE

Daphne Salt continues on her outback driving marathon but to put her whole escapade in the *Bulletin* would leave no space for anything else! Here are the edited highlights:

Dinosaurs: From Longreach I turned off to Winton to drive to the Dinosaurs laboratories and museum ... where they have been excavating dinosaurs since the 1999 discovery of Elliot, one of Australia's largest dinosaurs. The museum also has three uniquely Aussie dinosaurs, Clancy an enormous herbivore, like a prehistoric giraffe; Banjo, a five-metre long prehistoric giant road-runner with razor-sharp teeth and three large slashing claws on each hand; and Matilda, akin to a gigantic hippopotamus... then ... to the Cornfield & Fitzmaurice building filled with dinosaur fossils and other interesting stuff such as petrified tree stumps and local gem stones...

Boulia: I stopped at the ruins of the old Min Min pub (just the fireplace with petrified wood used as bricks) where the Min Min lights story began in 1885. The lights are seen between here and Boulia (I didn't see them) ... left Boulia on the Donohue/Plenty Highway [and] the first 40k was tar then dirt with big pockets of bull dust and detours around road works – concrete and stretches over floodplains and channel networks – the road is in multicoloured stretches – red and dusty, black shiny stones and sharp white stones like flakes of glass or quartz – more like the opal patch at Coober Pedy – flaked off into razor sharp shards - the big mudflap stopped most from flying back...



I had a puncture near the Atitjere Aboriginal Community at Harts Range 215kms north-east of Alice Springs where Shaun, an Aboriginal boy from the Plenty Pathways educational program at the Aboriginal Land Council helped me change the tyre ... the CEO, who also owns Gem Tree Caravan Park put a plug in the puncture for me.

...The sunrises here are breathtaking. It is a beautiful drive – dunes, mulga, ghost gums,

Mitchell grass, mountains, multi-coloured jump-ups, incredible huge distorted red termite mounds.

I would have stayed a few nights at Gem Tree but they told me that a storm and a week of rain was predicted and the river comes up isolating them for up to two weeks so I moseyed on and drove into Alice...

Alice Springs: I generally go for bike ride in the mornings – Alice has concrete bike tracks everywhere. I am quite out of condition after so much sitting driving and need to ride, walk and swim – all of which I am doing here. The temperature gets down to about 26-degrees overnight and up to 45 most days so I use the swimming pool a couple of times a day. There have been a couple of storms over the past few days and since I've been in Alice the Todd has run twice so far and will probably be flowing again over the next few days.



I have done a few overnight drives with the tent – one to Chambers Pillar 180k away ... I photographed the sunset and the sunrise over Chambers Pillar and listened to the dingoes overnight, just as well everything including my rubbish bag was locked away in the car. The Southern Cross was above the trees straight out the door of my tent. And I could also see Chambers Pillar and the twin peaked mountain from camp [then] Back in Alice I turned off and drove out through the West MacDonnell Ranges to Trephina Gorge which was a fabulous swimming hole last time I was here. I pitched my tent then went for a walk down through Trephina Gorge – it was bone dry ... I packed the car for a run to Ellery Creek Big Hole stopping at Flynn's grave on the way then in to Simpson's Gap then to Ellery Creek Big Hole where I went for a swim – the water here is always freezing – the hole is so deep it never dries up. before slapping my steak, onions and hash browns on the gas barbie provided. The next morning I returned to Alice via the Owen Springs 4WD track.

It was now a very damp Alice Springs.

I spent two months in Alice Springs with temperatures up to 52-degrees during the day and 30 overnight ... leaving Alice I camped at Desert Oaks where the black clouds rolled in accompanied by thunder and lightning – then the sky opened up for a couple of hours cooling things down – from there to Cadney Homestead then in the Breakaways I cruised around the rim to the lookouts then down the track through the colourful formations to the Dingo Fence where I camped overnight before going down the Oodnadatta Track to Coober Pedy.

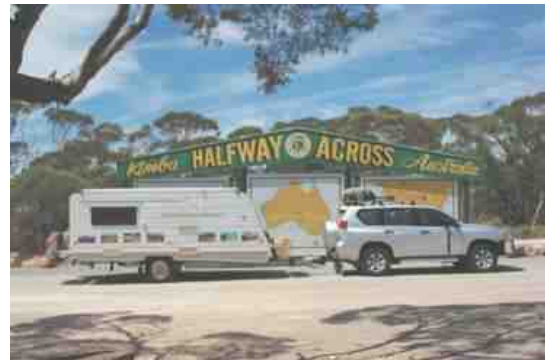
Moving south I camped beside the salty Lake Hart then on to Port Augusta ... I drove out along the waterfront to some beautiful places then wove in and out the Eyre Peninsula camping at Wudinna Rock, through Kimba with its Big Galah and 'HALFWAY ACROSS AUSTRALIA' sign.



After nearly 2,000 kilometres on corrugated dirt roads the van has a broken spring. It gave up the ghost on a rough track near Port Gibbon – fortunately it broke off at the forward eye and jammed itself up against the spring hanger so it was safe to keep on towing ... the same thing happened to the other spring a couple of years ago in Derby WA. The new spring has been ordered from the manufacturer in Victoria and should be here in about a week. There are quite a lot of places I will visit while I am waiting on the spring and a lot of fishing to do here in what is known as the fishing/seafood capital of Australia and Port Lincoln has a Big Shingleback Lizard.

I spent a day driving around the Lincoln National Park taking all of the side tracks to the beaches and rocky waterfront spots – it is truly a breathtaking place. There were several campers near the long curved beaches and rocky headlands.

I will leave Port Lincoln on 22 February having the new spring fitted in the Caravan Centre on the way out, then spend some time around Coffin Bay before heading west into the sunset across the Nullarbor to spend some time at the bottom of WA then slowly going north ...



The new spring was fitted as I left Port Lincoln ... going inland again to Pildappa Rock with a wave formation ... on the way out I took a sandy track via Murphy's Haystacks which are a cluster of granite inselbergs on a sheep-station belonging to the grandson of Denis Murphy, who purchased the farm in 1889. Local legend says that an Irish agricultural expert saw them from a stage coach and informed his fellow passengers that the farmer must have ploughed his land to produce such an abundance of hay!

I drove back to the coast to Ceduna then crossed the Nullarbor Plain the weather was foul – the Nullarbor is 720 kilometres from east to west and 320 kilometres from the coast into the Great Victoria Desert ... named by Edmund Delisser who surveyed it in 1867. Edward John Eyre was the first European to cross the Nullarbor Plain, back in 1841. Nullarbor comes from the Latin *nullus*, meaning no, and *arbor* meaning trees. The aboriginal name is *Oondiri* meaning no water. The average rainfall on the Plain is 200 millimetres. I think it all fell while I was crossing it. The cliff line on the Great Australian Bight is believed to be the longest line of cliffs in the world. The road was sealed in the late 1970s. You can really feel the weight of the continent as it rushes to meet the sea head-on at the cliffs. The feeling is probably accentuated by the flatlands of the Nullarbor plain.



Just after Caiguna is Australia's longest straight stretch of road and one of the longest straight stretches of road in the world, but it's not flat – it's surprisingly undulating! The next stretch from Balladonia to Fraser Range is 117k without a bend ... I took a week or so crossing the Nullarbor TO BE CONTINUED

FROM OUR ARCHIVES
MENAI MEMOIRS – A PIONEERING FAMILY
ALF MIDGLEY (*Bulletin*, July 1969)

Many pioneering men and women lie in the historic cemetery in the shadow of St. Peter's Church of England, Cook's River. Among the graves are members of the Midgley family -- three children of Richard Midgley who operated a coach and buggy building business at St. Peters.

Richard Midgley was born in London; his wife, Fanny, in Luton, England, she being a member of the Toyer family who became well known in the Sans Souci district where a splendid nursery business was conducted until recent years. There were seven sons and four daughters of the marriage, which was consummated in September 1874.

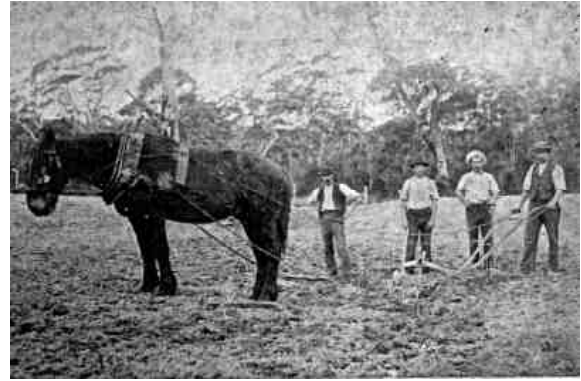
Business worries and ill health of Richard Midgley led to the family decision to leave Yelverton Street St. Peters, in the late 1880s and to settle at Miranda. The property was on the creek adjoining Kia-Ora Road and Kanimbla Road on the western side.

They farmed their land under the Holt-Sutherland Company tenant system, which became the obvious reason why the family moved so promptly to Bangor (Menai) when the Government declared available ten homestead selections from 17 to 34 acres. The Midgleys selected the latter acreage on the day it was declared, December 10th 1896.

The only outlet for three years until Tom Price came to Woronora River in December 1899 with his row-boat ferry, was the hand-propelled punt across George's River at Lugarno.

A temporary shelter was erected while Richard Midgley and his sons cleared the virgin bush and dug a well, from which the clay was made into bricks and baked for erection of the home. The house could have stood for generations but unfortunately was pulled down some years ago.

The hardships of carving out a living and making a fresh start on the harsh land proved too much for an already sick man, Richard Midgley dying on May 24th 1899. He was attended in his illness by Dr. Howse, who rode horseback from Hurstville.



*Ploughing team, thought to be in
Menai, c 1890s.*

George Midgley, the eldest son then aged 22, carried on his father's role and the family continued to work the land, sharing good seasons and drought. With other settlers who came into the district they shared fellowship, helping each other in need and comforting in times of sorrow. Market days meant long slow journeys to Sydney by horse and dray with farm produce.

The home registered scenes of happiness as many of the family married beneath its portals; witnessed the hushed occasions as children and grandchildren were christened; sheltered the saddened hearts and tearful eyes as members of the family died there.

In the home of Fanny Midgley, commenced the first Sunday School in 1901 and she taught smaller children the 'Three Rs', until a provisional school came in the Jones' home in 1902. She instigated the first service of Christian worship in her sitting room on June 3rd 1903, with the Reverend W. Marsh, a Congregational preacher. On June 5th 1905, Richard Midgley carried into the home the first mailbag from Sutherland, thus establishing the post office which remained at that centre for 35 years.

The splendid orchards and cultivated land are now grown over by the bush and trees from which it was gleaned three score and ten years before.

The old home is gone now – nothing remains of it at all save treasured memories. A huge shale pit yawns deep and wide to where the back door opened and closed.

PHOTO NEWS



Above: Museum advisor, Lynn Collins, appears to be accusing someone of wrongdoing but is actually giving advice to workers. However, David Overett looks chastened, Amanda Olliek looks shocked and Ian Kolln is in the 'line of fire'!

Below: Presentation of a cheque to the SSHS at Sutherland Library, 30 January 2013.

L-R: Bruce Watt, Pauline Curby, Elizabeth Craig, Councillor Tom Croucher.

This Community Services and Arts Grant was passed to the Society to assist the two ladies with ongoing oral history work. Recording of interviews with local residents, which are then deposited in the Local Studies Collection at Sutherland Library, are an important resource for the post-war history of the district. They foster positive community relations as well as enriching our knowledge of local history.



MANAGING THE MAKEOVER OF SUTHERLAND SHIRE MUSEUM

BRUCE WATT

Why have museums?

There are hundreds of museums in NSW alone ranging from small localised collections to ones of national significance. Motives vary but it generally involves collecting and preserving physical objects from the past and displaying them in ways suitable to an audience. Those with sufficient resources have specialised facilities for collection, research, restoration and education.

From the 1960s onwards, many local 'folk' museums, especially in country towns and regional centres were established based on a 'pioneer' past. Rapidly changing technologies had transformed the way in which people lived and the physical objects used. There was a nostalgic recognition of a major break in lifestyle in the latter part of the twentieth century and a belief that aspects of the past needed to be preserved.

However many museums have foundered. There are several reasons why. They mainly rely on volunteers who are often elderly and lack the skills required to effectively manage a museum. Finances are limited and unless they have the financial backing from a benefactor such as a local council or a significant bequest, on-going costs outweigh the token incomes that they generate. Belt tightening by local government may mean that the allocation of financial support is contingent on meeting council goals.

Small historical museums are often focused on a single theme or the breadth of the collection is so general as to have no coherent theme. Exhibits are often static and, once seen, there is little need to revisit. They may not engage with the community to establish what is needed or to provide additional support materials that can be used by schools or other users. Often they rely on the 'walk by' principle for capturing an audience.

Museum management is a specialised skill or rather a bundle of skills. Much has changed in the way that they are managed and the story they tell and the way they tell it.

The Sutherland Shire Museum

Our Society was established in 1966 and has had a museum collection since the 1980s, housed in a section of the School of Arts building at Sutherland. Space is limited to two separate rooms and a garage – giving limited storage facilities. The major exhibition room is twelve metres by eight metres. It is architecturally interesting and flows into a foyer inside the building and a landscaped garden outside.

The collection has traditionally fallen into the 'folk' category. From 2004 to 2006 the collection was organised into a 'pioneer cottage' theme with items relevant to living in a rural community in Menai in the 1890s.

Completion of a 'standards' program with Museums and Galleries NSW in 2009 and a formal appraisal of the museum by a professional panel, led to an evaluation of the museum and of Society procedures and practices. Its findings provided some hope for the museum but highlighted significant issues that needed to be addressed. A business plan and collections policy was produced and the constitution rewritten which contributed to a more professional approach. After much discussion, in 2012 it was resolved to dismantle the museum, rationalise the collection and develop a coordinated theme.

Progress

Managing change requires planning to overcome inertia and to provide a pathway. The roadway has thrown up obstacles and has taken a significant amount of time. Exhibitions need to change over time and it was strongly felt that it was time for a fresh injection of ideas into the museum. From June to November 2012 items on loan were returned, fixtures dismantled, items culled and part of the collection boxed or removed and stored off-site. Some surplus items of no significance or provenance were sold.

A grant was applied for and eventually obtained through Museums and Galleries NSW which provided consultancy from a specialist in museum management. This was crucial to the refurbishment and his assistance in providing a fresh perspective cannot be underestimated.

The museum was repainted by Council. Meetings of the museum committee were held to discuss concepts and a project manager from within the committee was appointed to work in conjunction with the curator. A coordinated theme was developed by members of the museum committee: 'The Shire; a journey through time'. It established eight time periods or events that were to tell the story of the Shire. A layout plan was devised, allocating space for each 'pod' within the main exhibition room. Pods included geology, Aboriginal occupation, discoverers and settlers (Cook and Phillip), nineteenth century (Holt era), early twentieth century, war years and post-war era.

Inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective was a significant addition to the museum, having not been emphasised in previous exhibitions. The geology of the area was also a significant addition. A nominal budget of \$10,000 was allocated for the refit to ensure a quality outcome was achieved.

Work commenced in late January 2013 and a meeting was held with the museum consultant, Lynn Collins. A program of staged visits around committee working days was arranged. Key volunteers worked on average two to three days a week with others working as time permitted. To manage the process, committee volunteers agreed on 'ownership' of specific pods. This concentrated efforts though care needed to be taken to ensure coordination of broad themes, signage and consistency of display principles.

For untrained volunteers the process involved a steep learning curve. Display furniture and cabinets were moved around many times until a coherent layout was fixed. A signage style manual was developed to ensure consistency across the exhibition. Storyboards involving a text of approximately 250 words were developed for each pod and items in display cases were given separate signage. The pods grew organically as concepts firmed up and exhibits were found from the collection or acquired elsewhere. Some items including mannequins in period costume were made and images photographed or copied. Use of colour to some extent became a unifying theme.

A soundtrack, using sound grabs representing aspects of the past was developed for playing during exhibitions. An extensive audio-visual DVD collage of photographs is played during exhibitions. As item information is deliberately limited, museum guides have been given detailed information about each pod if visitors ask questions or want specific information. A booklet is to be produced for sale to visitors expanding on the information in each pod.

A teaching unit has been developed for primary schools based on the new Australian HSIE curriculum. A specific unit within this is Community and Remembrance which explores local heritage, how the community has changed and contributions by groups and individuals in the community. This is currently being trialled by one local primary school.

One shouldn't underestimate the amount of work involved in building props, painting and moving equipment. There is also a lot of intellectual work in developing signage, storyboards and creating links between pods.

The Result

Telling a coherent story in less than 100 square metres of space is a daunting task and only aspects of local history can be touched on. Much effort has been made to make exhibits visually exciting and appealing to a wider audience. The feeling amongst the museum committee and feedback from the general public is that the new exhibition is very interesting and informative. Though individual displays will be updated over time, the main theme will remain static for some time because of its relevance and also the significant effort involved in changing them. Whilst the belief amongst the Society has traditionally been that a larger museum space is needed, the necessity of confining the current exhibition within the existing space has focused attention on the 'less is more principle' and the art of limiting the story to key concepts and communicating in a concise manner. The result is pleasing and a source of pride in a job well done.

Much remains to be done. With storage space limited, much more inventory needs to be culled, rationalised or stored efficiently. A second, smaller exhibition room is currently used as an overflow room but will be cleared and used for storage, research and special displays.

As asked earlier, 'Why have a museum?' Given the claim that the Sutherland Shire is the 'birth place of modern Australia', the answer is self evident if it addresses the core issues of this assertion. The inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective in primary and secondary education, the uniqueness of the *Endeavour* model and authentic ballast from the 1770 Cook expedition and other significant components of the collection, all validate the exhibition.

Other Matters

The museum needs to generate greater visitor 'through' traffic to justify the effort involved in establishing it and the resources needed to support it. Opening times should be evaluated. Developing a 'virtual museum' web presentation, planning effective marketing strategies, having an exhibition planner and providing educational materials are further challenges.

The museum renewal process has been a major focus recently. Any non-professional museum curators and committee need to consider the magnitude of the task and to plan carefully. Any project needs the enthusiasm and continued drive of key volunteers to push the process forward and effective communication within the committee to ensure that it stays focused.

The museum committee needs to be formally constituted with specific roles and it needs to meet and communicate regularly. How this is done in practice can vary but as a major part of the overall structure of the organisation, it needs to be accountable. Sub-committees should consider marketing and education and it needs to communicate to the general executive committee at monthly meetings. It should plan budgetary requirements.

On-going operations require a team of volunteers to keep the doors open for a sufficient time to justify its existence and purchase equipment, maintain, update and extend the exhibit as required. Volunteers also need to be actively engaged and have something to do during times when there are no visitors. A register of the committee and a roster of times available should be kept. Ownership and pride in learning new skills from a professional consultant or through visits to other museums are important ingredients.

A fresh set of eyes are essential to avoid stereotypes and outdated presentation. Consideration could be given to coordinating with groups such as 'men's sheds' to widen the pool of talent, sharing the workload and capturing new talent and skills.

Operating and maintaining a museum is a team effort and reward and recognition are important. During the planning stage, pizza nights were held to inform other members of progress, to reward and recognise the work of volunteers and to garner wider support.

Given the age profile of volunteers, succession planning and developing new skills is important. Providing provenance and documentation for items in the inventory, are essential to ensure that treasured items are recognised and available for future museum users. To that end, two ladies have already done much work in creating data bases.

Though the process has at times been frustrating and the path circuitous, the completion of the project has been a source of pride and a positive team-building exercise. The museum curator, committee and volunteers can justifiably feel proud of the achievement.

The Society can be confident that the museum provides a worthy contribution to the Shire's infrastructure and is contributing in a positive way to the education and entertainment of visitors and end users.

THE MUSEUM

ANGELA THOMAS

Preserving local history has been the aim of our Museum over many years and, our curator, Jim Cutbush, has collected and cared for a myriad of donations and acquisitions over that time. But the time had come when our display needed a new lease of life so over the last 12 months many of us have worked on this project.

Firstly we needed to clear and store all material so that the rooms could be decorated, then we had to cull our collection and bring it back to its premises in the School of Arts.

We chose a theme that would demonstrate the evolution of the shire from geological times to the present day...A Journey Through Time.

We were fortunate in obtaining a \$4400 grant from The Museums & Galleries of NSW for the services of a consultant and he commented that our guidelines made his job much easier – we knew what we wanted.

We allocated space to each historical period starting with pre-history, 300 million years ago before Botany Bay was even formed, the

Dharawals inhabited the area.

That was followed by arrival of Cook, early settlers, Thomas Holt's estate, two World Wars, post-war industrial development and lifestyle.

Using our large collection of artefacts we set out the 'pods' as our consultant called them, each with a 'storyboard' explaining their significance.

We had the body of the museum set out and now we needed to clothe it. For a number of months our devoted team cut and fitted, sawed, painted, sewed and typed and labelled. Several days a week were given up to working at the museum and slowly it took shape.

Our Museum opened in Heritage Week, almost a year since the decision to close and work on it. About 300 visitors walked through on Open Day and comments in the Visitors' Book bear witness to the success of our work. The most rewarding words came from one of our own members. She said, "I go on all the bus trips to see other museums and always come away feeling envious – but I'll never feel that way again!"

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MUSEUM

THE RISE OF THE PHOENIX



Kitchen-Laundry pod

BEFORE AND AFTER



Holt pod



Post-1945 pod



Military pod

WORK-IN-PROGRESS
SOME OF THOSE WHO MADE THE NEW MUSEUM POSSIBLE



*L-R: ABOVE:
Jim Cutbush
Pat Hannan
Merle Kavanagh*

*L-R: CENTRE:
Angela Thomas
Terry McCosker
Bruce Watt*

*L-R: BELOW:
Amanda Olliek
Maurie Bevan
Bob Osborne
Clive Baker*



SOME OF THE MUSEUM TREASURES



Clockwise:

*Endeavour: ballast & model
Holt's organ and that dress
Early first aid kit
Hot-coals clothes iron
Traveller's sewing machine
Folding typewriter (c 1918)
Model ship: Supply
Magnificent photo collection*



The military collection.

THE WATERMILLS OF JOHN LUCAS: PART 4

PAM FORBES AND GREG JACKSON

Previous articles in this series have discussed the history of John Lucas' two water mills and their archaeological remains. This article discusses the combined operations of the two mills: sourcing wheat and delivering flour to markets in Sydney.

This involves the maritime landscape of the Georges River and its tributaries together with the boats that would allow transport of materials and people between the two mills, creating a single economic and social unit. The maritime connections of the Lucas family have been detailed in the family history. Their farming interests in Tasmania were probably useful in the supply of wheat to John Lucas' mills. It is also possible that Lucas may have imported wheat from the Illawarra or even overseas.

To maintain the economic advantage of avoiding import duty, Lucas would have needed to transit flour through Liverpool for land transport to Sydney – the symbolic map below shows the waterways connecting the two mills to their markets.

The elements and remains of the landscape are relevant to understanding the operation of the mills.

Building material, wheat, flour, food and manpower would have flowed along these waterways. Although it is only 10 kilometres in a straight line between Lucas' two mills, it is approximately 13 kilometres through the bush, where the terrain is steep and rugged.

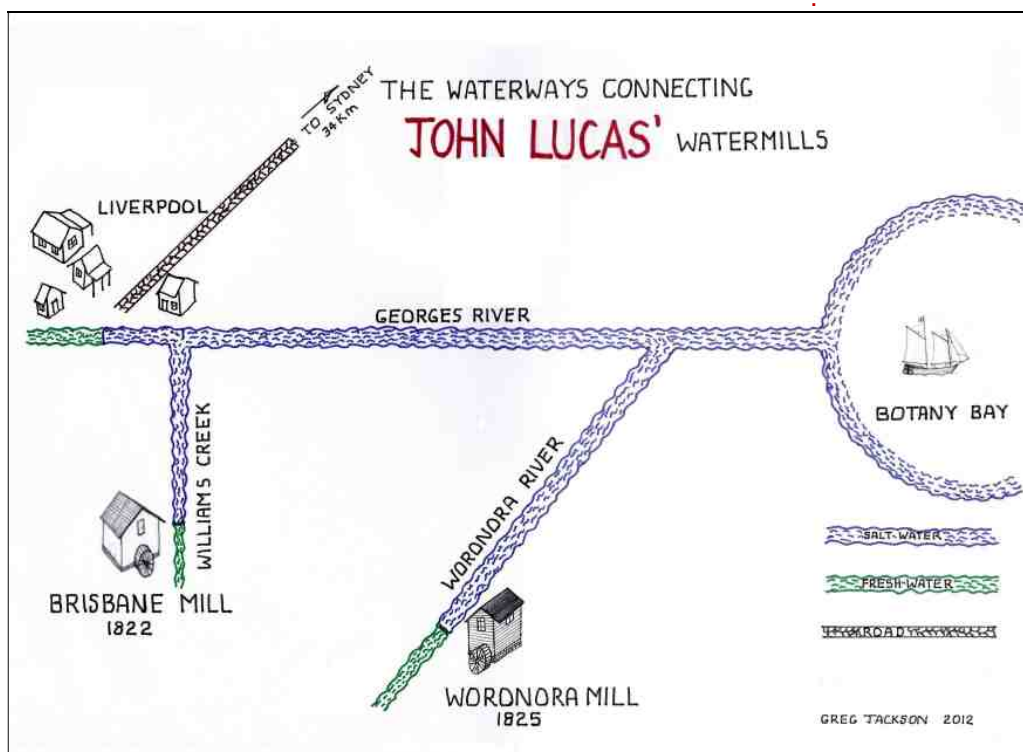
The descent to the Woronora River of over 110 metres (NSW Department of Land and Property Information 2001) would have made cartage difficult for large or heavy items.

In 1843 Sir Thomas Mitchell had struggled to build a road down and across the river near the Woronora Mill and it was soon abandoned because of the steepness.

DISTANCE BY WATER

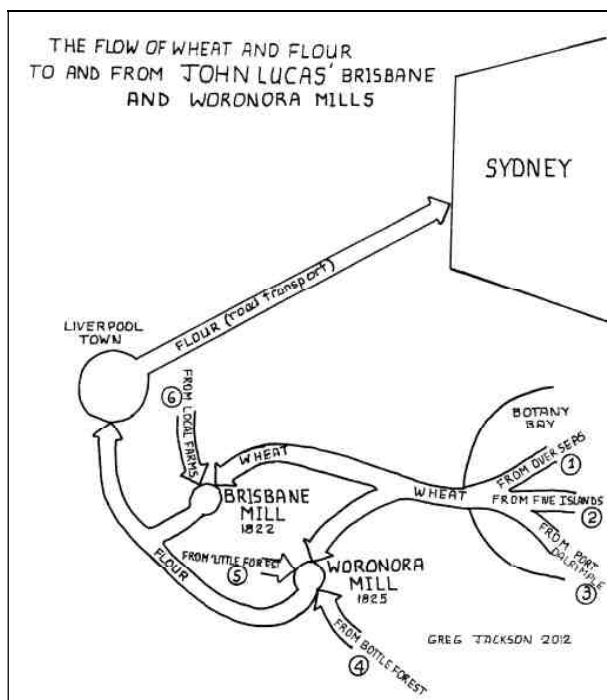
	BRISBANE MILL	WORONORA MILL	BOTANY BAY
LIVERPOOL	16 kms	40 kms	40 kms
BRISBANE MILL	--	28 kms	28 kms
WORONORA MILL	--	--	20 kms

This table gives approximate distances by water between the transit points on the map below. They were measured by summing the lengths of many short straight line approximations of the routes along the rivers using NearMap, (2011).



The movements between these nodes would have been by rowing and/or sailing in a boat, assisted by the tidal flows in the river. Sailing a boat is feasible in the lower reaches of the Georges River, near Botany Bay but very difficult in the Woronora River and upper reaches of the Georges River because the narrowing of the river and the high river banks reduced the wind. The distance between the two mills and between Botany Bay and the Brisbane Mill is considerable and may have been too long a journey for a single tide. No data is available on the tidal flow in the Georges River system at that time. Only by following the route in a suitable sail and oar-driven craft, will the time taken and difficulty of these river voyages be understood.

Such experimental archaeology would also verify the distances estimated in the table above and determine the size and type of vessel suitable for these voyages.



This symbolic map shows the flow of wheat to the Lucas mills and the flow of flour out.

Although Lucas' flour could have gone to the Sydney market by boat, *The Australian* (30 May 1827, p 3) gives the duty on flour as five shillings per hundredweight (50.8kgs).

With flour costing about 20 shillings per hundredweight the duty was approximately 25-percent of the price. By delivering wheat to Sydney by road Lucas could avoid the duty.

From 1813 a road connected Liverpool with Sydney (Liverpool City Council n.d.), was a distance of 34 kilometres. The distance in a straight line from the Brisbane Mill to the centre of Liverpool was approximately 5.5 kilometres over relatively flat country. However no bridge crossed the Georges River until the construction of the weir at Liverpool by Lennox in 1836 (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2010:3). So, unless a boat ferried the flour across the river at Liverpool at the nearest road point, the transport of flour to Liverpool would have been up river by boat.

The possible sources of wheat shown on the map opposite are:

1. Wheat from overseas:

Newspaper shipping records detail the importation of wheat from overseas. For example an article in *The Sydney Monitor* (26.9.1829 p4) laments the importation of 20,000 bushels of wheat to the colony, mostly from India and the effect that will have on local grain prices.

The Monitor (11.2.1828, p4) describes the import of wheat from South America to the Sydney Market. There is no evidence that any of this grain went directly to the Lucas mills but it is certainly possible.

2. Wheat from Five Islands:

(Five Islands is the old name for Wollongong) *The Sydney Monitor* (6.1.1830, p2 and 29.9.1830, p4), describe wheat production in the Five Islands region. This wheat was certainly closer to Lucas' mills than the Sydney Market and small boats could have easily made the trip and possibly delivered the wheat to the Brisbane Mill's door.

Curby (2004:25) suggest that Lucas may have been engaged in the production of illicit alcohol for the thirsty settlers at Five Islands. The remote location of the Woronora Mill and regular boat transport to Five Islands would have made that activity possible.

The Sydney Gazette and *New South Advertiser* (24.2.1821, p2), lists John Lucas as the owner of the 'Black Swan' Inn in George Street Sydney. That would be another possible outlet for any illicit alcohol.

3. Wheat from Port Dalrymple:

(Port Dalrymple: port for Launceston, Tas)
Much of NSW's wheat in the 1820s came from Tasmania, "A strong trade in grain from Van Dieman's Land had developed by 1816 and by 1819 half the island's crop went regularly to Sydney" (Broadbent J, Hughes J). It is highly probable that much of Lucas' wheat came from this source as the Lucas family was heavily involved in this grain trade. The shipping news details the movement of the Lucas family schooner *Olivia*, including many trips from Tasmania to Sydney with a cargo of wheat (for example: *The Australian*, 25.10.1826, p3).

It is likely that this schooner regularly took wheat to the Lucas mills because *Olivia's* burden of 60 tons was close to the 140 ton displacement maximum that could navigate the Georges River (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2010, 9). A ship of 60 ton burden would have a most probable length of 17 metres (Forbes 2012). *The Monitor* (1.9.1826, p6), reported that the schooner *Alligator* of 198 tons burden and approximately 27 metres long (Forbes 2012) attempted to deliver a cargo of wheat from Port Dalrymple to a Lucas mill. She predictably grounded in the shallow entrance of Georges River. A farcical story of the *Alligator's* arrest and seizure resulted (Jackson 2011).

4. Wheat from Bottle Forest:

(The area now called Heathcote)

Kennedy (1999: 48) describes wheat being grown in the Bottle Forest area and transported to the Lucas Woronora mill for grinding. The distance in a straight line from the farms to the mill is approximately 3.8 kilometres (NSW Department of Land and Property Information (SIX) 2001) but the descent to the mill with wheat and the return trip carrying flour would have been difficult. The area under cultivation at Bottle Forest was small so could not have supplied significant amounts of wheat.

5. Wheat from 'Little Forest':

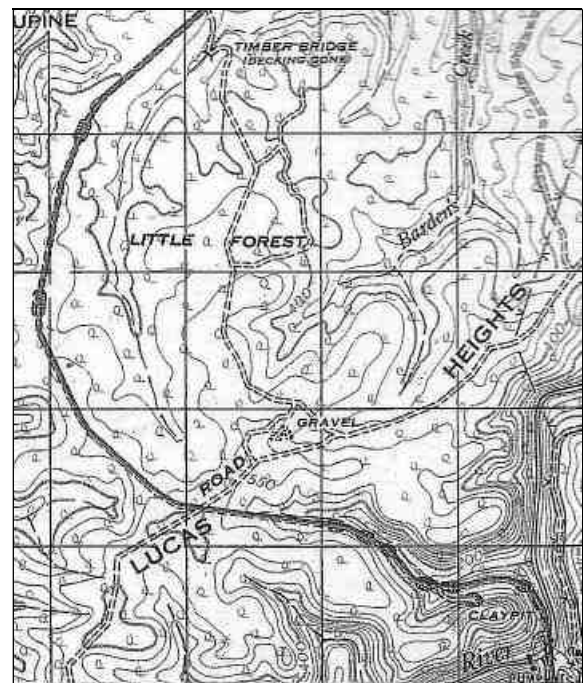
(Landholding near the Woronora Mill)

The land discussed here is about three kilometres (in a straight line) north west of the Woronora mill site (NSW Department of Land and Property Information [SIX] 2001).

The Australian (23.9.1831, p4), reported a land grant of 700 acres to David Duncomb, although he may have occupied the land prior to that date. Some of the land is fertile shale soil and may have grown wheat but there is no evidence of him supplying Lucas. Given the steep terrain it would have been a difficult journey and Parish Map 14065001 (NSW Department of Lands and Property Management Authority n.d.) significantly shows Duncomb's private access road running along the ridge top and bypassing Lucas' land before descending to the Woronora several kilometres downstream.

6. Wheat from farms near Liverpool:

Liverpool was a major wheat growing area in the 1820s. Thomas Rowley, Lucas' brother in law, is listed in *The Sydney Gazette* and *New South Advertiser* (6.1.1821, p2) as a supplier of wheat to the government stores in Liverpool, along with 12 other farmers of the Liverpool area. Lucas' own land on Williams Creek may also have supplied wheat. In addition, in *The Sydney Gazette* and *New South Advertiser*, (29.5.1823, p1), Lucas appeared on a list of suppliers of wheat to the Government Stores.



This 1930s topographical map shows Little Forest off Heathcote Road and near today's New Illawarra Road junction.

That makes it probable that locally grown wheat was being supplied to the Brisbane Mill and may have been its main source.

Conclusion:

The complexities faced by John Lucas in building and running his two water mills, sourcing wheat and delivering flour to market should not be underestimated. The reasons for his failure and bankruptcy in 1828, outlined in the first article, were largely due to factors beyond his control. Archaeological research at the mill sites may shed more light on the mills' operations and the lifestyles of the people who worked them.

A voyage between the two Lucas mills in a suitable boat working the tides and assisted only by sail and oar is planned and this may add to our understanding of how the mills functioned as a single economic unit.

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HERITAGE WEEK REPORT

ANGELA THOMAS

Every year the National Trust runs Heritage Week and they set a theme implemented by the numerous Citizens' Heritage Festival committees.

This year the theme was 'Community Milestones' and we are fortunate in Sutherland Shire for the generous support of our Council and the enthusiasm of our many community groups.

The week has been particularly successful and front page prominence in *The Leader* led to increased public awareness and on Open Day, 13 April, some parts of the Shire took on a gala aspect.

The Committee, chaired by Dawn Emerson, plans Open Day and the subsequent events over a series of meetings involving all interested societies. We are fortunate to have so many public spirited participants, Brinsley's Joinery Works, Spinners & Weavers, Sutherland Medieval Regiment, Sydney Tramway Museum, Royal National Park, Hazelhurst, Botany Bay Family History Society, Sutherland and Engadine libraries, Sutherland Music Club, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, added to that we had an open air concert with Willoughby Brass Band and the Kirrawee High School band.

Focus of much entertainment was Woronora Cemetery and, generous as always, they provided space for the Medieval Regiment and Spinners & Weavers. Their own contribution added much to the enjoyment of the day – bagpipes, Cobb & Co coach, displays, guided tours, Devonshire Teas and Sausage Sizzles (all free). Visitors were amazed at the transformation from a usually solemn aspect to lovely surroundings.

Highlight of the day was the Vintage Bus, lent by the Bus Museum at Leichhardt, it endlessly toiled between all the venues, working to a 'drop-on-off' timetable so that people could get around to all venues. We all felt as we boarded the 'grand old lady' that we were truly part of the past.

Dawn and her committee are to be congratulated on another first class event and we look forward to Heritage Week 2014.

KIRRAWEE GANG SHOW

Adapted from a 1993 Oral History Project: 'Music, Magic and Mayhem'

MERLE KAVANAGH

The Scout Gang Show began its life in London in 1932. Ralph Reader was the producer of that show and also the composer of its songs and writer of its sketches. It was staged at the Scala Theatre, London, opening on 30 October for three evening performances. Ralph could never have envisaged the growth and popularity of the Gang Shows which spread quickly all over the world.



Ralph was a man of the theatre and had produced two shows with the Holborn Rovers before being asked by Admiral Phillpotts, then the County Commissioner for London, to 'organise a concert' to raise money to put in a swimming pool at the campsite at Downe. What Ralph produced with his original songs and sketches and with the help of his friends and 150 boys, became the first Gang Show. They had difficulty deciding on a title, considering 'Downe and Out', 'Up Downe' and 'Downe to Piccadilly' but when a young lad called the cast to rehearsal and reported 'The Gang's all here', they knew they had their title.

The following year they staged 'The Gang Comes Back' for a week in London and people talked naturally about 'the Gang Show'. The name was here to stay.

After the third show the provinces became interested and Stoke, Glasgow and Newcastle produced shows using original Gang Show material as well as additions of their own. Ralph Reader wrote, "We in London now became

aware that something far bigger than anything we had possibly imagined was happening."

The London Gang were the first amateurs ever to appear in Royal Command Performances and these occurred in 1937, 1957 and 1964. One of the signature tunes of Shows 'We're riding along on the crest of a wave' was written by Ralph for the 1934 London Show at which every seat was sold before the opening performance and in 1937 the Gang Show became a film.

Ralph Reader used his enormous talents to create an institution in the Scouting movement and turned over all the material to the Boy Scout Association to be used without payment for Scout shows anywhere.

Gordon Davison, who has produced a large number of the Kirrawee shows, recalls seeing the first show in 1932 as a Cub aged nine years and enjoying it. He had been born at Clapham, South West London at the end of 1922 but by the age of six he had lost his father. Several members of Gordon's scout group joined the London show though it was too far for him to travel. When South West London shows started up, he became a member and met Ralph Reader, who would come over to polish off their productions.

Gordon's first performance was in a sketch called 'A Hole in the Road' when he was about 12 years old and he went on to take part in about 20 more Gang Shows, mostly as a member of the cast until the last one when he 'had a hand in the production.'

Following the war years when he served in the Royal Navy on destroyers as a petty officer and continued scouting as a member of the Deep Sea Rover Crew, in 1950 he married Barbara Tolmie and they migrated to Australia with their son Paul in March 1958, settling at Sutherland.

They arrived on the Tuesday and the District Commissioner of Sutherland was around on the Wednesday and Gordon was at the troop on the Thursday. That year was the tenth anniversary year for 2nd Sutherland Troop and Gordon thought they should 'put on a bit of a show for the parents'. It was not a Gang Show but Gang Show material was used.

The group decided to stage a Gang Show the following year and the Seniors from 1st Sutherland joined with 2nd Sutherland making about 48 participants.

At that time the Sutherland groups were operating in Sutherland District, as Kirrawee District had not been formed. The show was financed by the people involved with 2nd Sutherland and 1st Sutherland, and the Sutherland School of Arts was hired. Costumes were made by the parents (not always a good idea according to Gordon), the show ran for four performances on Thursday, Friday and two on Saturday and a small profit was made. Beverley Hayhow provided the music for the Gang and also played the organ at the Sutherland Congregational Church.

At that time there were two other Gang Shows operating in Australia. Brisbane staged their first show in 1952 and the following year a Ralph Reader Musical 'We'll live forever' was presented by Scouting members throughout Melbourne, establishing the Melbourne Gang Show. This made Kirrawee the third group to produce a Gang Show in Australia.

Two years later, in 1961 the show, now officially a Kirrawee District project, returned to the School of Arts. Members of the Gang included Jim Bruce, Bill Wilcox and Ron Hamilton plus a 'wardrobe department' recruited from the ladies with Gordon's wife Barbara Davison taking a major responsibility. Although this show was presented by Kirrawee, it also involved troops from 2nd Sutherland, 3rd Gynea, 1st Kirrawee and Gynea Bay.

Fundraising for the show involved arranging a car trial and Gordon recorded that "It rained like mad and thunderstormed and it didn't take place and we then had to run a raffle to pay the cost of the car trial."

Publicity involved appearing on ABC TV performing some items and this necessitated a very early morning rise to have the performers made up and into the studio. For future shows they repeated the ritual on Channel 9 with 'Miss Marilyn'.

For the earlier shows, the males performed any female parts. The can-can and hula 'girls' did a great job and were received enthusiastically by the audiences. Jim Bruce recalled a number entitled 'Bring on the Glamorous Girls':

So Gordon picked four of us to be dolled up as ladies and we had to have evening gowns and wigs and make-up and not one of us wanted to be in it – everyone said it was a big hit but we hated every minute of it.

In later years young men reacted differently and Peter Critchley is one of those:

I enjoy doing 'drag' and probably get a lot of comments behind my back. I find it's a challenge and without blowing my own trumpet I think, for a

male to play a woman, requires a lot of guts to begin with, especially with a lot of other males around, plus a fair amount of talent to make it not look either 'camp' or gaudy unless it has to be acted that way.



The problem was solved when the Gang Show admitted girls from the Guiding movement and later when Scouting accepted females as members.

London Gang Show first admitted females to their show in 1968 and Gang Shows world wide soon followed suit. Kirrawee first included them in the 1975 show when they welcomed them from the two Rover Crews of Scouting, the Ranger Crew and Guide leaders, though 'some of the old stagers were a bit apprehensive.'

There would be no show without the backstage crew and other workers behind the scenes – stage crew, costume ladies, make-up artists, prompts, dressers, lighting and sound crews. Scenery and props are prepared by the Stage Director and his crew before each series of performances. Not much scenery was made for the Gynea Bay School Auditorium performances over the years 1963-1969 but with the move to Port Hacking High School Auditorium in 1971 they began to work more on scenery. The Port Hacking High School was the venue from 1971 to 1991, except for 1987 when it was necessary to use Cronulla High School Auditorium. Port Hacking was not available after that time and the show moved to the Sutherland Entertainment Centre. It became traditional for the stage crew to present their own version of the show to the Gang and this is invariably hilarious!

The make-up ladies are an important part of the show, as is the 'prompt' but dressers are a more modern aid. Jim Bruce recalled the early years:

Out in the dressing rooms you could never find anything. We were all in together. There were no dressers or anybody looking after costumes. You looked after yourself so it was pretty hectic backstage.

The early shows were 'pretty basic' with lighting, Fred Dawes being listed as responsible for this job from 1961-1967. D. Porter controlled it in 1969 and then Jim Bruce, who joined the Gang in the 1961 show "started to get some of the real snazzy stuff!" He went on to become a professional in his theatre work and others joined him in this work at Kirrawee, including David Bassford and Marc Rayner.

Costumes, of course were a large part of the whole and a band of dedicated women produced some amazing costumes for hundreds of performers.



Gordon Davison talks with Gang Show participants, 1975.

Outstanding amongst these would be Lenny Westerhof who took over this responsibility in 1975. Lenny's expertise in cutting and drafting began when as a girl of 13 during World War Two she cut a waterproof skirt from an old raincoat. In the Gang Show she tackled some stranger costumes, such as sea horses, pixies on toadstools, mermaids and other mind boggling adornments. Previously Barbara Davison and her 'ladies' had worked on costumes, followed by Jean Quinn from 1963-69 then Dorothy McManus and Pat Black took over in 1971 when Lenny initially joined.

Other helpers were Robyn Genge, Val Stapleton, Joan Lord and Phyllis Critchley, all of whom helped with the recording and filing of costumes into easy-access boxes. One sample of each costume is hung and the rest filed away. There are over four thousand costumes in the wardrobe department.

The changing shape of children over the years poses a problem sometimes, and novelty costumes can be a challenge as they come in all sorts – jockeys, emus, penguins, starfish, etc.

In the closing number the Gang always wear their own uniform with the distinctive red Gang Show scarf. Initially it was just red, but when they had been operating for 25 years it was edged with silver braid. Now that it has been operating for over 50 years, gold braid edges the red scarf.

Sketches were initially contributed by members and it was not until 1989 that Peter Critchley took the first step into Sketch producer which involved locating sketches, writing them, adapting Ralph Reader's material etc. Peter's philosophy was:

Whether it is good or bad, our comedy and our expectations of comedy have changed and we do have to rewrite sketches, trying to keep Ralph Reader's ideas in it.

More often than not, sketches over the years have been the humorous interlude between musical numbers which reaches out to the audience in a special way. At other times there are stooges in the audience who have an interplay of words with the onstage cast member. Peter explains, "It was complete review, vaudeville variety, which is what Ralph intended the Gang Show to be."

The music for the first show in 1959 was provided by Beverley Hayhow on the piano but by 1993 there was an orchestra of 8 players in the pit. From the 4th show in 1965 Beverley was joined by Michael O'Mullane on the saxophone and Frank Thornley on the drums, with Frank's son, Ray joining them on the organ in 1967. Others who played from 1971 were Valda Gardner, Ross Cannings, Arthur Heapy and Col Heapy. Many others have played in the orchestra since then.

Guidelines established in the past requiring the content of a Show to contain six-percent of Ralph Reader material before it can be called a Gang Show, have since been relaxed a little.

In 1960 the Melbourne Gang Show lost its right to the title that year because of the use of too much local Australian material.

However, there are still opportunities for people with various talents to submit songs and sketches for the Gang Show, though they might be altered in some way before being used.

Choreography from 1973 benefited from Shirley Shephard who was a professional Choreographer who worked with the show for some years. She managed to train young boys to make a huge success of the Can-Can, despite dressing room dramas with the suspenders and mesh stockings. Her skill and patience encouraged the boys to confidently dance with bowls of fruit on their heads in a Brazilian segment and to perform amazing Cossack leaps in a spectacular Russian sequence in the 1981 show.

The 'office workers' from the beginning included Rita Clark, typist and Jean Williams who did the duplicating and also Mrs Shorter who joined in 1963. Printing was done by the local S.C.A.M. (Sutherland Cronulla Advertising Medium) office. Gordon remembers, "The old chappie there, we never tried to sell him any tickets but he came to our first show and he came to every show until he died."

The Gang Show is a surprise to many newcomers who expect 'a Scout campfire' as it is a truly professional presentation of "big production" musical items, spectacular costumes, colour, music and sketches. The 1993 production cost about \$24,000 to stage and Gordon reflects "which is amazing when you think how it first started." In comparison the first Gang Show in 1959 made a profit of £1.6.9 about \$2.70.

Ralph Reader in all his years as 'Mr Gang Show' has composed and written over 500 songs and more than 300 sketches and until his death in 1982 wrote encouraging letters to Shows all over the world. He received the MBE in 1944 for his leadership of the RAF Gang Shows entertaining the Services in different parts of the world. Performers included Peter Sellars, Dick Emery, Spike Milligan and Tony Hancock, all of whom went on to fame following their experiences with the RAF Shows. In 1957 Ralph was awarded the CBE for his services to Scouting and on his retirement in 1974, the London Gang Show closed.

Kirrawee Gang Show members have visited other Gang Shows over the years, even going to Auckland, New Zealand. In 1971 they asked the local member of Parliament, Don Dobie, to procure flags from as many countries as he could for an item. It was a very impressive sight to see about 50 flags he had 'acquired', moving down the hall.

Kirrawee gave a performance at the Eighth Australian Jamboree at Leppington in 1970-1971.



Pat Black and Dot McManus, measuring for costumes, 1973.

There were about 210 in the cast playing on one of the biggest stages that had ever been built. Gordon recalls:

Unfortunately it rained like mad during the performance but it went on. There were about 15,000 there at the start and we finished up with about 2,000 who sat through it, including the Chief Scout of the World, Chips Maclean who came back and congratulated the Gang.

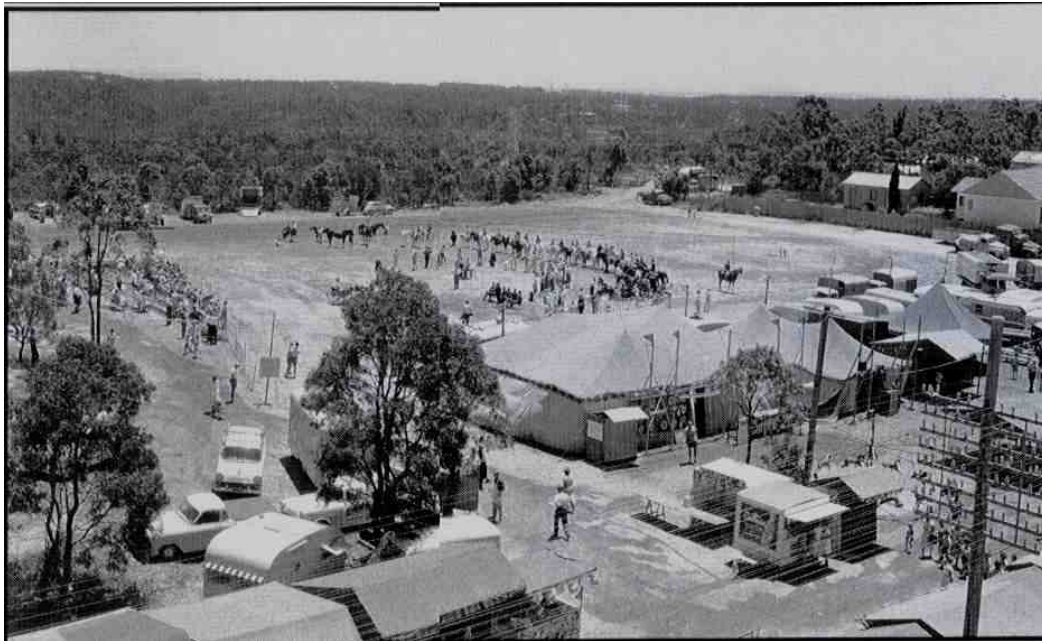
The week-end rehearsals create an atmosphere which allows friendships to be made and cemented and at times can lead to more with a number of marriages resulting. Jim Bruce claims "By the end of the Show they're practically engaged."

Kirrawee has a fine record of performance although it is not staged as often as most other Gang Shows. They are 'Riding along on the crest of a wave' and this is not just due to the talented and enthusiastic cast, but to the innumerable people who work hard behind the scenes to produce a truly professional and thoroughly enjoyable show.

In 2013 Kirrawee Gang Show will be presenting their latest version of 'Music, Magic and Mayhem' with performances at Hurstville Entertainment Centre, McMahon Street, Hurstville from Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 June, with an afternoon matinee on the Saturday. Bookings can be made with John Genge at 9520 6437 and Betty Redman 9533 2115.

THE JANNALI SHOW

JOHN CAMPBELL



*This photo appears to have been taken from a Ferris Wheel but I can't remember seeing one.
The multiple telephone lines also passed behind our land and Dad told me they
were the main telephone/telegraph lines to Melbourne.*

This photograph of Sutherland Shire's first agricultural show held on 23-24 November 1962 brought back memories as I was a visitor when I was 12 years of age.

The site was on what we called 'The Cricket Pitch' on Soldiers Road, Jannali (closed off for the duration of the event) and the same street we lived in. The cricket pitch was made of concrete and was in the middle of the oval that is now a baseball field – home of the Comets. My Dad taught me to drive on the same pitch about this period.

Classmate, Lindsay Mell, lived in the house seen in the right-hand background and in 1956 to 1958, we often walked to Jannali Primary School through this oval. We first used the water pipeline (silver in those days) just behind the trees in the background and school was 50 metres beyond.

We once fled to school in a panic after seeing a green tree snake (harmless) in the lower branches of one of the trees. Our parents never took us to school in those days – different than today.

I remember some of the attractions and sideshows during the day but there would have been no night events on the unlit oval. I fired my first rifle shots in a shooting gallery, using real single-shot .22 rifles tethered to long, steel, 600mm diameter tubes.

A paper target was clipped to a continuous wire that could be reeled back and forth by a device that looked very much like a carpenter's hand drill.

Bullets were fired down the inside of the tube which was about six metres long, aiming at a paper target at the end. For many years I kept the target that was presented after my final shot as well as spent cartridge cases.

The most exciting side show for a 12 year old boy was the Strip Tease held in a large tent that was situated across the road near the little RSL Sub-branch hall (now demolished).



John Campbell with his dog 'Imp'.

The crowd was 'drummed up' and girls were strutting their stuff in outfits that showed a lot less than you would see on any Australian beach today. Nevertheless it was titillating for its day, particularly when the spruiker called for a volunteer to come up and take off one of the seven veils of 'Vanessa the Undresser'.

Mates of one older teenager (names withheld) pushed him up onto the stage near the girl. You could see his face growing redder and redder as the spruiker and the crowd geed him up. He looked like he wished the earth would open up and swallow him.

That was all I saw of the show as I did not have the cost of a ticket. Others with the admission price went in and the unfortunate (or maybe fortunate) teased youth was given free admittance. It was just left to the imagination of those younger ones like myself as to what was revealed inside. No! We didn't crawl under the tent as often portrayed in the movies.

The photo shows food stalls that had fairy floss and

I also recall Laughing Clowns that you fed with ping-pong balls into their moving mouths.

You hoped to hit a numbered box and different prizes were won depending on the number hit. There were also yellow floating ducks that you hooked out of a pool of swirling water to try and win a prize.

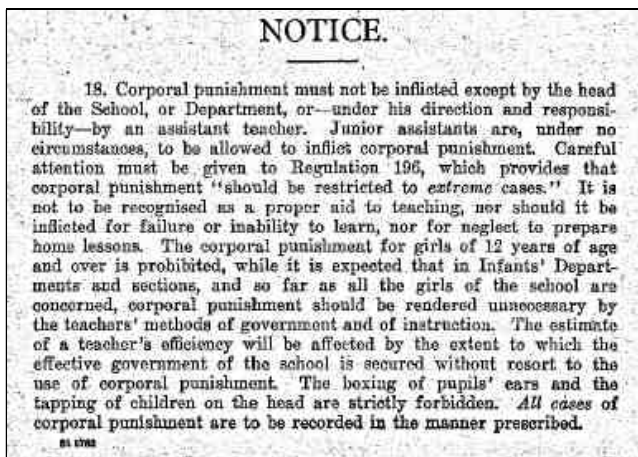
In 1958 the road in the picture had just been surfaced but not with the smooth bitumen we see today – it was jagged gravel embedded in tar.

A group of us leaving school for the day were teasing an unfortunate large older Dutch boy and he chased us up this road where I fell and split my knee and lip open. I was kindly carried to the Mell's house and later required ten stitches in my knee and another in my lip at the doctor's surgery in Box Road.

I couldn't walk for about ten days and I still have the scars to remind me of the results of teasing someone less fortunate than myself.

THE NAUGHTY BOOK

The librarian at Sutherland Primary School, Margaret Harris, has been good enough to scan the 'Naughty Book' in her possession. It dates back to the time when it was a high school. The book reveals the punishment handed out for various 'crimes' which are analysed here without incriminating the punishment givers or the 'criminals'.



Clarence (11) and Alex (13) C_____ were boys who often felt the cane's sting in 1933:

Persistent disobedience & insubordination: 2 strokes – Breaking school rules after warning, taking a bicycle without permission and riding around the lawn in the dinner hour: 2 strokes –

coming late (repeated offence): 2 strokes – persistent chewing: 2 strokes – persistent disorder and insolence: 2 strokes.

They must have left school at that point as their names never appear again and presumably neither became piano players!

Between 1933 and 1955, other crimes that brought strokes to various boys included:

Persistent and deliberate disorder – bullying and kicking at a smaller boy in company – repeated unpunctuality and laziness – Ink splashing and insubordination – lying and not coming to school at the time sent – interfering with and hitting girls – fighting – repeatedly leaving the playground and wandering down town without permission – rebellious attitude towards teacher – cheating in a test – disorder in scripture class – leaving playground and punching small boy in the street – throwing stones – deliberately hurting another child in the playground, causing severe pain – using playground fence as a toilet – interfering with milk bottles (spitting) – filthy game in the playground – writing rude remarks about a teacher – destroying pen nibs – wilfully smashing a large number of milk bottles...

And they say that kids today are bad. Here there were a few bullies apparently on their way to worse trouble in later life.

THE SHIRE: THEN AND NOW

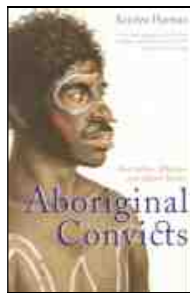


Cronulla post office as it was in the 1930s and in 2012.

THE BOOK SHELF

ABORIGINAL CONVICTS

Kristyn Harman



Bulldog and Musquito, Aboriginal warriors from the Hawkesbury, were captured and sent to Norfolk Island following frontier skirmishes in NSW. Eventually, Bulldog seems to have made it home ...[but]... Musquito was transported to Van Diemen's Land, where he laboured as a convict servant.

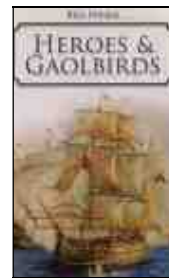
Booy Piet, a 26-year-old Khoisan soldier from the Cape Colony, was transported to Van Diemen's Land for desertion in 1842. After three years of convict labour, he died in Hobart General Hospital.

These men are among 130 aboriginal convicts who were transported to and within the Australian penal colonies. They lived, laboured, were punished, and died alongside other convicts...

*Publisher's summary:
New South Publishing. Sydney. (2012)*

HEROES AND GAOLBIRDS

Bill Hinde



This is the story of George Hunter, the author's grandfather, who became unemployed after the battle of Trafalgar and the Napoleonic wars.

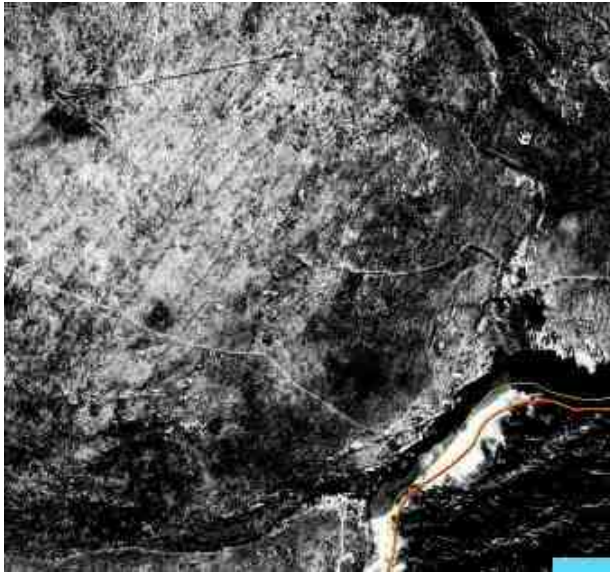
He and a friend conspired to commit a felony for which they would be transported to a far off land where the streets were said to be paved with gold. They arrived in leg irons to find that not only the streets not paved with gold, but mostly were not paved at all.

George served the balance of his sentence and became a free man. Thereafter, his fortunes changed and after a series of misadventures he prospered in this emerging country.

*Publisher's summary:
Boomerang Press. Brisbane. (2012)*

MORE MYSTERIES

CURRACURRONG AREA ON THE COAST TRACK SOUTH OF WATTAMOLLA



This 1978 aerial view is the earliest found so far and shows the triangle – top left corner.



In 2010 the aerial view still shows the triangle outlined in the scrub.

Several members have been investigating this interesting outline which is in Royal National Park between Wattamolla and Garie. Theories range from some sort of military relic from the war years or a signal 'pattern' for aircraft. When John Campbell and Clive Baker went on a search they found very dense and sharp scrub but eventually struck one corner. It was a head-high pit about two metres wide but the scrub made it impossible to follow the line. It awaits another expedition, approaching from another direction. Any ideas from you long-term residents who may have heard something about it in earlier years? Any clues gratefully accepted.

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A Tennis Court is in course of construction.

Lessee: Miss L. POCKLINGTON
Telephone: Engadine 2

This advertisement of unknown date refers to Heathcote Hall as having accommodation and with golf and tennis facilities available to guests. Does any member have photographs or documents from that period?

TIME TO REJOIN!

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

The membership year commences on 1 July each year and ends on 30 June the following year.

NEW MEMBERS: please complete this form and mail to our Treasurer (address below) together with your membership fee:

RENEWALS: so that we can update and check our records, those renewing are asked to please complete this form in full and give it to our Treasurer (or mail to address below) together with your membership fee.

(NB: Failure to renew membership by 30 September each year will result in a lapse of membership. Receipts may be collected from the Treasurer at monthly meetings or, if you wish to have your receipt mailed to you, please include a stamped and self-addressed envelope with your renewal form).

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP: YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2014

NEW MEMBER (please tick) ☐ —OR— RENEWING MEMBERSHIP (please tick) ☐

FAMILY NAME			
GIVEN NAMES:			
NUMBER and STREET:			
SUBURB and CODE:			
HOME TELEPHONE:		MOBILE:	
EMAIL:			

Enclosed is my cheque/ money order **\$30**
(do not send cash through the post).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Treasurer, Sutherland Shire Historical Society,
PO Box 389, Sutherland. NSW. 1499.

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TOM UGLY'S POINT

CATERING FOR WEDDINGS, SOCIAL AND BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

DANCING SATURDAY NIGHT 7 to 12
PHONE: L J 2874

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1958

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LJ2217 **LJ2217**

1950s

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SCRABBLE

THE HOT TEST BOARD GAMES HAPPY FOR YEARS

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SCRABBLE

1965

RESCH'S BEER

at the SEABREEZE HOTEL TOM UGLY'S POINT

RESCH'S BEER

at the SEABREEZE HOTEL TOM UGLY'S POINT

RESCH'S BEER

at the SEABREEZE HOTEL TOM UGLY'S POINT

c1960

ODEON
LB2359

SUTHERLAND

New moving Theatre, P.M. 6.45, 8.15 (Monday) - Conference from 6.45 to 8.15

THE SCANDY AWAY WALKER
"FROM HERE TO ETERNITY"

From the great British film of the day
you have seen it
"SCANDY AWAY"

Monday, Tuesday, 1958, at 1.15 p.m.
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ADVERTISING

Society members may care to take advantage of the following event brought to our notice:

ABORIGINAL HISTORY IN ROYAL NATIONAL PARK AND SURROUNDS

Hosted by
Friends of the Royal National Park Inc.
Sunday 21 July 2013 — 2pm–6pm
Kurnell Visitors Centre,
Kamay Botany Bay National Park
Cape Solander Drive, Kurnell

Speakers include :

Les Bursill
Caryll Sefton
Paul Irish

Aboriginal Art in Royal National Park
Prehistory
The Landing Place Precinct in Kamay Botany Bay
National Park – the archaeology as well as working
with the Aboriginal community.

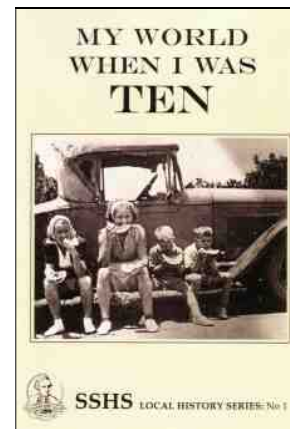
Dean Kelly

My work in the Park and vision for the future.

Park entrance fee waived for participants – afternoon tea provided
– gold coin donation appreciated to assist with catering,
please RSVP before **Friday 19 July 2013**
to Margaret Philips on 02 9542 0648 or email to: margaret.philips@environment.nsw.gov.au



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COLOURFUL PAST – SEVERAL THEMES TO
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