



NUMBER: 199 — MAY 2016

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Heathcote Hall.

Commissioned by Sutherland Shire Historical Society and painted by Kurnell artist, Otto Kuster, in March 2016 from archival photographs dated 1915. Otto Kuster is a renowned Australian impressionist artist whose works are represented in public, corporate and private collections around the world.

MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

SOCIETY WEBSITE: www.shirehistory.org.



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Back cover: Top: *SSHS Xmas Party, November, 2015* [Elizabeth Craig]

Bottom left: *SSHS members on the steps of St Mary's Cathedral, 1966* [Clive Spencer]

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY

The SSHS has a proud tradition stretching back 50 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 Acting Editor: Elizabeth Craig at elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com or phone 9528 4707.

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

Apart from the *Bulletin*, other Society publications are registered with the National Library of Australia in accordance with International Standard Serial Numbering and 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 Avenue, Sutherland (near the library). We welcome visitors 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, 25 East Parade Sutherland (a short walk north from the pedestrian crossing and corner of Adelong Street).

Aside from the Christmas–New Year period, the Museum is open on each Saturday from 9am to 1pm and contains some gems of Shire history and a fine collection of old photographs. For schools and other groups requiring a special tour at other times: contact the Acting Curator, Ian Kolln on 9528 3094 or iankolln@yahoo.com.au.

DONATING MATERIAL: If you have items of historical significance for Sutherland Shire, we welcome their donation to the museum to keep for posterity. If you do not wish to part with items, we would appreciate having copies of documents and photographs. Temporary loans for specific periods are also welcome. 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

SOCIETY COMMITTEE: 2015-2016

ELECTED MEMBERS

PATRON:	Shire Mayor, Cllr Carmelo Pesce		
PRESIDENT	Bruce Watt	9523-5294	watto51@optusnet.com.au
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HONORARY SOLICITOR	Michael Solari	AUDITOR	

APPOINTED MEMBERS

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SCHOOLS LIAISON OFFICER	Glen Stelzer	0416-461-384	
PUBLICATIONS OFFICER	To be appointed		
HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER	Helen Rosner	8539-7707	
PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE	Bruce Watt	Pauline Curby	Elizabeth Craig Clive Baker

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BRUCE WATT



This year has been amongst the most active periods in the history of the Society. Much has been achieved and still more is planned. Of course the big news has been our golden anniversary

celebrations and book launch which were held at Club on East on April 20 to coincide with the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1966. The occasion, the culmination of a year's planning, was deemed a great success and a worthy showcase for the Society, and it was given comprehensive coverage in the *Leader*. A full report of this event appears in 'A celebration to be remembered' by Pauline Curby on page 10.

As outlined in *Caretakers of our Past*, Elizabeth Craig's excellent history of the first fifty years of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society, its establishment arose from the desire to collect and record aspects of the Shire's history. It was promoted by the Sutherland Shire Council, and its President or Mayor has remained the patron. Strong links with Council, its staff and the local studies library have endured.

Elizabeth's detailed research and fluid writing style has resulted in a fascinating account of the Society. I urge anyone who has been associated with the Society to read it. It is more than a recount of 'who did what and when'. It's a social history that outlines the dedication of volunteers who built a social narrative and struggled at times with internal politics and with little financial

backing managed to keep the Society alive, to produce 200 consecutive *Bulletins*, contribute to or write over 30 books, to maintain a modest museum and perhaps as importantly to socialise and form community bonds that have at times endured for several generations within families.

Caretakers of our Past documents the Society's origin and progress in a scholarly way and Elizabeth's efforts are to be highly praised. A big thank you is extended to the many who were involved in the broader organisation and production of this book.

April was an extraordinarily busy and productive month in other respects. The Society hosted the launch of this year's Heritage Festival on Friday 15 with representatives of many of the participating organisations attending an evening at the Sutherland School of Arts. Following the formal proceedings, the Society provided supper. Many members had worked hard to have the museum looking pristine for the occasion and those who attended were impressed. Helen Rosner was the dynamo behind the organisation and we cannot thank her enough for her organisation and 'can do' approach. Pamphlets were distributed widely and I gave a talk on 2SSR to promote the festival's activities. The Heritage Festival highlights the works of many organisations and it shines attention on the Society and in particular, the museum.

It is a little disappointing that there is not a greater general awareness of the existence of the Society and in particular of the museum within the wider community. Publicity is the key. Joan Tangney has taken on this important role this year and is working tirelessly to this end. Joan is an

ideas lady. She has distributed a letter of introduction to over 25 retirement villages in the Shire inviting them to the museum and we look forward to hosting many of them in the future. The Society will look at other avenues including History Week next year to broaden our reach and local impact. Photographic displays were mounted for the heritage festival launch and the anniversary lunch. An additional display was mounted at Celeste Cottage at the Woronora Cemetery. We thank Olsens Funerals for their continued sponsorship for this display.

Plans are afoot to expand the museum activities and this year we are targeting Primary Schools. A program based on curriculum needs is being developed and two schools have attended so far. As we don't control the entire School of Arts, clashes may occur with theatre and other users. To this end we are exploring a permanent cover over the courtyard in the northern garden area that will allow outdoor all-weather activities. Our newly 'minted' grants coordinator, Don Rothnie is applying for such a grant and discussions with Council regarding the structure are continuing. We see education as the main focus and *raison d'être* for the museum.

The unexpected resignation of Clive Baker from the positions of museum curator and *Bulletin* editor in March were initial setbacks. This was especially the case in the lead up to the important events outlined in April. We thank him for the custodianship and very significant contributions to these vital aspects of the Society. Through changing personal circumstances or even death, any organisation though needs to be mindful of the consequences of concentrating important functions too narrowly. When I was elected to the presidency I relinquished the role of *Bulletin* editor and on my election as museum curator in 2014 in addition to being president I also passed this position on. It avoids burn out but it also spreads the load and allows other talent to develop.

Were it not for the depth of talent within the Society and succession planning things could have been dire. Fortunately, Elizabeth Craig, fresh from her successes as an author has taken up the mantle of acting *Bulletin* editor. We wish her well. She brings a depth of talent and passion to the task and she will be well supported.

The museum has been structured so that a committee oversees operations. Ian Kolln, who is also our deputy president has ably taken over the role as committee chairperson and is excelling in this position. The museum's 30th anniversary in August will be an event for which the committee will be planning. Rationalising the collection and recording it, further developing external facilities and publicity, extending school and other organisation visits and much more remain the focus for the committee.

For the past three months our treasurer Anna Estephan has been overseeing family matters in Poland. In her absence, George Miller has ably undertaken the treasurer's duties. This has been a very busy period and we thank George for a job well done.

The Botany Bay Family History has broken with tradition regarding the Heritage Festival activities and has run a successful program at the Gynea Tradies for the past three years. Along with many other groups we had a table at the event on May 7. We sold some books and placemats but the main advantage in attending is to show the flag. We made many contacts. We thank the BBFH for their excellent organisation.

Several Society members attended the annual Meeting of Two Cultures ceremony at Kurnell on April 29. It is well attended and Council and other organisers are to be congratulated.

I have been asked to join a community consultation group for the Kamay Botany National Park preparations for the 250th

anniversary celebrations of the landing of Captain James Cook at Kurnell in 1770. Much needs to be done as it is now only four years away. What is paramount is that 'it must be big'. At the initial meeting I quoted Sir Joseph Caruthers, Minister for Lands who fought to have the 251 acres at Kurnell set aside in 1899 as the James Cook Landing Place Reserve. At the dedication he said 'What Plymouth Rock is to America, so should this memorable spot on the south shore of Botany Bay be to all Australians'. This is admirable but not always apparent. The 250th celebration is highly significant for so many reasons and it 'needs to be big'. Comments from representatives of the consultative group echoed the opinion that the entrance to the site is a little underwhelming at present.

GyMEA Bay Primary School was successful in gaining an Eco grant from the NSW Environment Trust. I have met with a teacher from the school at the museum. The idea is to develop a localised on-line learning tool. She will be developing an iTunes learning course with activities and questions along with an iBook containing resources and primary sources for teachers and students. Aspects of the museum display have been photographed and included in a unit on historical changes in the natural and built environment of the Sutherland Shire including indigenous use of land and country. It is hoped that it will be

completed by September or soon after. It will become a valuable on-line resource for all students. We are proud to have a display worthy of this task.

Ron Simpson has added to the display of Indigenous items for the Margaret Simpson collection. It is a human hair headrest that Aboriginal women wove and used on their heads for carrying items in a Coolamon. This is a rare item. (See image below.)

Meetings have been particularly well attended this year and I'd like to thank our secretary Carol McDonald for the well planned speaker program. Raffles have added interest to the social end of our meetings and the funds raised have been applied to our activities. If you have unwanted items that could be included in the raffle, please bring them along to the meeting. Afternoon tea continues to be a lively attraction and our thanks go to all involved.

So many big things are happening or being planned to raise the Society's profile and to improve the amenities offered to our members.

A quick reminder that membership at a modest \$30 will be due from July 1. This is not an unrealistic birthday or 'thank you' present for a friend who may enjoy the activities that we provide.



Human headrest for a Coolamon

Hair string was an important textile traditionally made by Australian Aboriginals. It was spun into long threads of yarn on a spindle rolled on the thigh and then plaited to about the thickness of 8-ply wool.

This could be used for many purposes, including, as in this case, making the head ring on which to rest the coolamon when walking around.

FROM EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

It is with some trepidation that I take on the role of acting *Bulletin* editor, doing so in the footsteps of our very accomplished former editor, Clive Baker. Like others, I greeted the news of his resignation from the SSHS Committee with shock and sadness. His energy and his massive contribution to the Society in all his roles – museum curator, publications editor and *Bulletin* editor – have been amazing, and I fervently hope he will see his way back into a productive role one day.

Meanwhile I have a lot to learn! I have been grateful for the number of really first class articles submitted by members for inclusion in this our Golden Anniversary edition. Thank you, and please keep it up!

Naturally, a Golden Anniversary edition calls for indulging a little in celebration of our successes last month – our launch of Heritage Week in the Shire and our anniversary luncheon – were both triumphs. But this issue also pays homage to our Aboriginal heritage which has emerged as a strong theme in the articles submitted to the *Bulletin* this month. One is Bruce Howell's compelling and sensitive account of a story told to him by Jim Cutbush about his father's family friend, Mister, an Aboriginal who lived in Cronulla in the 1920s. Mister passed on to the Cutbush children his knowledge of some natural occurrences in the coastal waters

couched in the traditional stories of his people. The haunting thing is that Bruce was able to verify many of the facts of the stories through independent research (page 17). Daphne Salt also tells a goose bump-making story of a boomerang given to her grandfather which she returned to the descendants of the Aboriginal, Tommy Foster, who made it in the 1850s (page 27). And Dawn Emerson relates her interesting, but unsuccessful quest to bring home from Britain the shield and spears taken from the Aboriginals in Kurnell by Lieutenant Cook and his crew during their visit in 1770 (page 32).

2016 is a year of anniversaries. In August we will celebrate 30 years since the launch of our Museum. I welcome any stories or anecdotes, no matter how small, which provide insights into our experience of our museum and what it means to us – memorable exhibitions, particular display items, funny incidents, you name it.

In August I will also re-introduce a *Readers Reply* page giving you an opportunity to respond to anything you read in the *Bulletin*, and also to provide a forum for smaller anecdotes, comments or suggestions you want to share with readers.

Meanwhile, keep those stories rolling in.

OPENING NIGHT OF THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE CITIZENS' HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2016

HELEN ROSNER AND GEORGE MILLER

Friday night, the 15th of April 2016, saw the Launch of the 2016 Sutherland Shire Citizens' Heritage Festival at the Sutherland School of Arts by Councillor Peter Scaysbrook, representing the Mayor of Sutherland Shire.

As this year is the 50th Anniversary of the Shire Historical Society, it was only fitting that the Society hosted the evening. Approx. 80 people, from the different groups

attached to the SSCHF Committee, attended the function and helped create a friendly and interesting mix to launch the Heritage Festival activities.

The Historical Society President Bruce Watt opened the evening with the Welcome to Country followed by a wonderful rendition of didgeridoo playing by local High School student Lachlan Ting.



Then Councillor Scaysbrook officially opened the Festival and thanked everyone for their work in keeping the Festival alive and for attending the evening.

Bruce spoke about the background of the SSCH Festival and its activities, as well as the 50th Anniversary of the Historical Society. Then he introduced oral historian,

Elizabeth Craig who has written "Caretakers of our Past" recording the first 50 years of our Society. Elizabeth spoke about her research for the book, particularly the story of her rediscovery of the headstones of James and Martha Birnie, the first landowners in the area that became the Sutherland Shire. This proved very popular with the audience.

Finally, Chairperson of the SSCHF committee, Dawn Emerson, thanked all those participating in the Festival for their efforts and for the many voluntary hours spent to make the events happen.

Bruce then invited everyone to join in the refreshments which were kindly supplied by all attending. It was a wonderful chance for all to mix and chat while enjoying the tasty spread.

We were lucky to be joined by Eloise Harman from the National Trust and her

fiance' Brett, who mixed with all the group members – then did a tour of the museum and garden. It is pleasing to record that they were very impressed with OUR MUSEUM!!!

The hours of work spent by Committee members ensured the Museum was spruced up and looking great and the display boards were full of interesting pictures and stories of local history.

It was a very successful evening and a great start to the SSCH Festival.

TO PARIS BY AIR

FROM THE OBSERVER, 1816

A correspondent informs us that Mr Egg of the Strand (a German), has nearly completed a balloon, in the shape of a dolphin, for the avowed purpose of carrying the nobility and gentry to Paris, and subsequently elsewhere.



Courtesy: Balloons over Britain, eballoon.org

It is to be made capable of conveying from 15 to 20 persons to Paris in the short space of 10 hours or less; it is worked by steam, and the wings are intended to act as rudders. The journey from London to Paris by Dover is now performed in 73 hours; viz 12 hours to Dover; seven hours (upon the average) to wait at Dover; six hours (average) the passage; 48 hours to Paris, supposing a traveller sets off without taking any rest; total 73 hours.

This scheme, if carried into execution, bids defiance to the usual exactings of inn-keepers, the customary search of custom-house officers, and all the ordinary impediments which so frequently annoy sensitive travellers. Mr Egg is prosecuting the undertaking in a building at Brompton.

Submitted by Angela Badger

A CELEBRATION TO BE REMEMBERED

Sutherland Shire Historical Society turns fifty

REPORT BY PAULINE CURBY

Sutherland Shire Historical Society (SSHS) celebrated the Society's 50th anniversary in style on 20 April. This was a day of reminiscences, nostalgia and an opportunity to launch *Caretakers of our Past, the first 50 years of Sutherland Shire Historical Society*, Elizabeth Craig's engrossing history of the Society.

Almost 100 members and guests attended a celebratory lunch at Club on East in Sutherland. Society president Bruce Watt chaired proceedings with aplomb, keeping the program moving along with just the right momentum. Deanne Schreiber of Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation gave the welcome to country with her customary professionalism and young Lachlan Ting thrilled the audience with his haunting didgeridoo performance.

Sutherland Shire Council was represented by the mayor Councillor Carmelo Pesce, who addressed the gathering, and Councillors Peter Scaysbrook and Phil Blight, both members of the Council's heritage sub-committee. It was good to see the new library manager Deborah Best there, as well as Local Studies librarian Helen McDonald and the Council's officer in charge of heritage, Claudia Miro.

Quoting Voltaire, Virginia Wolfe and Bruce Watt's book *The Shire, a journey through time*, NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage and member for Cronulla Mark Speakman made a lively speech. Several of his colleagues also attended: Craig Kelly the Federal member for Hughes and the member for Heathcote, Lee Evans with his arm in a sling.

We were pleased to have representatives from two historical organisations present to address the audience. Associate Professor

Carol Liston, president of the Royal Australian Historical Society and Emeritus Professor David Carment, immediate past president of the History Council of NSW. Both speakers had thought-provoking comments to make about the practice of history in contemporary Australia. Members of other local historical societies such as Kogarah Historical Society, Randwick and District Historical Society and Botany Bay Family History Society were also present. It was good to see Harold Taplin, too, an early member of the Society who made the effort to travel the long journey from Waitara by train to attend the function. And Peter Neve, whose mother, Marjorie Hutton Neve drove many SSHS activities from the very beginning, also travelled from Junee to join in the celebrations.

The highlight of the afternoon was the launch of *Caretakers of our Past*. Making reference to his own childhood on the historic Richmond River, John Rayner, former Sutherland Shire Council General Manager, spoke of the importance of preserving Shire history and the role of volunteers in undertaking this critical task. Elizabeth Craig responded, paying tribute to those who had helped her make this book a reality. In particular she acknowledged the supportive role of her husband Ted who was busily taking photographs throughout the afternoon. Elizabeth then introduced two stalwarts of the Society, Andrew and Jenness Platfoot who entertained us with memories of the early family-oriented years of SSHS. They especially paid tribute to Jenness's father Harold Ivers who presided over the Society as president from 1972 to 1989. Andrew in particular nostalgically recalls those 'golden years' when SSHS was more concerned with 'having fun' than academic history.

Throughout the afternoon an evocative slide show ran, illustrating the progress of SSHS and some of the characters from past and present. This was the work of our north coast member the inimitable Daphne Salt who also briefly addressed the gathering. In addition artist Otto Kuster's romantic painting of Heathcote Hall – based on a 1915 photograph – was on prominent display. Otto, who attended the function, was commissioned to do this work recently by

SSHS. As a fundraiser, a print of the painting was raffled and won by former president Dawn Emerson – much to her delight. The afternoon concluded with book sales and signings by a very happy, but exhausted author. I consider the organisation and execution of this event was a tribute not only to Elizabeth but to the many Society members who worked to ensure the lunch and launch were a resounding success. This was certainly a celebration to be remembered.



Lachlan Ting plays the didgeridoo before the 'Welcome to Country' by Deanna Schreiber



Daphne Salt speaking of her memories of SSHS



Scenes at the Anniversary/book launch lunch

LOOKING BACK – SSHS MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

ELIZABETH CRAIG

Ten years old!

In April 1976, the Sutherland Shire Historical Society celebrated its ten year anniversary. The festivities were a fairly low key affair, being limited to a birthday cake with ten candles made by Athalie Ivers for the meeting on 9 April. The candles were blown out by the guest speaker, Dr John Antill, a celebrated musical composer living in Cronulla and a Society member. He spoke on the meaning of his composition, 'Corroboree'. This symphony inspired by Aboriginal music and dance, had been premiered before an audience of 2000 at the Sydney Town Hall in 1946 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra performing under the baton of internationally famed conductor Eugene Goossens.

Twenty-five years old!

To celebrate the 25th anniversary on Friday, 12 April, 1991, a dinner was held for 100 guests at the Rainbow Room of Sutherland Entertainment Centre. It was organised by SSHS President Aileen Griffiths, Marjorie Blackley, Ada Cutbush and Ellen Melbourne. The evening's proceedings were opened with another of Dr John Antill's compositions, the Sutherland Shire fanfare, played by the Sutherland Shire Silver Band. (This inspired the playing of the fanfare for the 50th anniversary lunch.) The rest of the musical program was provided by Janelle Scott, Aileen Griffiths' daughter, who sang ballads and opera pieces, accompanied by a pianist.

Guest speaker was former Shire President, Arthur Gietzelt, who had initiated the formation of the historical society back in 1966. There was a moment of panic when it was realised that Arthur had not yet arrived. Aileen Griffiths phoned the Gietzelt home and spoke to his wife, Dawn.



Janelle Scott and pianist perform for the SSHS 25th anniversary dinner [Photo: Daphne Salt]

Arthur had forgotten about the dinner, and Dawn packed him off to the Entertainment Centre immediately. 'He was flustered and so embarrassed,' Aileen recalled in a video interview in 2006, 'but nobody would have noticed.' Daphne Salt agrees. She said he spoke off the cuff and, 'he was brilliant.'

Other special guests included the Shire President, Councillor Don Carter, Shire Clerk, John Rayner, and Federal and State politicians. Sister historical societies – Hurstville, Kogarah and St George – were also invited, and George and Eileen Heavens arrived from Dubbo for the occasion. Daphne Salt photographed the event. She remembered a friendly atmosphere, and much sharing of stories.

SOCIETY NEWS

WELCOME HOME!

Anna Estephan has returned home after her rushed trip to Poland to nurse her mother who'd had a bad fall. 'I have managed to nurse my mother to her pre accident condition. She is feeling all right,' says a relieved Anna. Thank you to George Miller, who took over the reins of the Treasury in Anna's absence.

Noel Elliott has also returned from his trip on planes, trains and boats to explore Europe. He is looking forward to some good old walking excursions on home soil.

HEALTH REPORT

Merle Kavanagh has unfortunately had a nasty fall and damaged her hip. Her doctor advised it will be about six weeks before she has any real relief. To add to her discomfort she says her knee has gone out in sympathy.

Nevertheless, medical advice is to 'keep walking.' Good luck with it Merle. We wish you a speedy recovery.

It was a delight to see that Jim Cutbush felt well enough after a bout of chemotherapy to attend our anniversary/book launch lunch. We were thrilled you could share in the celebrations, Jim! Thank you for making the effort, and thank you to son Nathan for escorting him.

Unfortunately, Doug Archer's lung and heart problems prevented him from making the anniversary function. He is no longer living at home, and has moved to Moran Nursing Home in Engadine. Despite indifferent health, Doug still enjoys contact from his old friends. Please contact the editor for his direct phone number.

		EVENT	SOCIETY ACTIVITIES 2016
JUNE	4	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	11	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	18	Monthly meeting 1.30pm	SPEAKER: Noel Elliott, on the 200 th anniversary of the Botanic Gardens
	25	EXCURSION: Noel Elliott 9521 8622	Historic Walk, Eastern Suburbs,
JULY	2	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	9	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	16	Monthly meeting 1.30pm	SPEAKER: Bruce Watt – history of Cronulla
	23	EXCURSION: Noel Elliott	Historic Walk, Wollongong district
	30	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
AUGUST			
	6	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	13	MUSEUM	Saturday 9 am – 1 pm
	20	Monthly meeting 1.30pm	SPEAKER: Lorraine Neate, Illawarra Hist. Soc, on her book , <i>Scandal, slander and interfering with our neighbours</i> – on characters who shaped the Illawarra.
	27	EXCURSION: Noel Elliott	Mystery bus trip.

HEATHCOTE HALL

BRUCE WATT



Heathcote Hall, 1915 [SSHS]

A 50th birthday or anniversary is a milestone. It doesn't mark the attainment of exuberant youth or the onset of senility but recognises a significant midlife marker where plenty is still left in the tank. So the Society began some navel gazing to find appropriate symbols to showcase its achievements. Documenting its history in *Caretakers of our Past* by Elizabeth Craig and a luncheon for members and celebrity guests soon materialised. A chance meeting with famed local artist Otto Kuster led over time to the decision to commission a painting of a local scene for the anniversary. Otto is a versatile artist who could have painted a range of subjects including coastal

and bush scenes so reminiscent of the Shire. He was invited to the museum where Pat Hannan and Carol McDonald have been archiving our vast collection of photographs. News that Heathcote Hall was being sold led us to examine a photographic image of Heathcote Hall taken in 1915 which revealed more of its curtilage (its surrounds). A decision was made and Otto visited Heathcote to get dimensions and to view architectural details. Otto was in attendance at the luncheon where the painting was unveiled and it received coverage in the *Leader*. It is now on permanent display in the Sutherland Shire Museum.

Controversy has always followed this building and several times it has been sold for considerably less than its replacement cost indicating a massive over capitalisation. It was recently sold along with a large parcel of land. Submission of plans for a large scale development of up to five storeys in height has met with very strong local opposition. No buildings in East Heathcote exceed two storeys. The area, surrounded on three sides by Royal National Park is mainly residential with a school, retirement village and a rural firefighting brigade.

Heathcote Hall was built in 1887 by Abel Harber who was a wealthy brick maker from St Peters. The Heathcote Hall estate covered 20 hectares on land that was part of the original Bottle Forest subdivision in 1842, the first gazetted settlement in the future Shire. Harber was perhaps unlucky. Australia experienced a long boom from the 1850s until the end of the 1880s and was the wealthiest country in the world per capita based on exports of wool and gold. Architecture reflects the economic mood of the time. Heathcote Hall was built in the 'grand Italianate style' and it cost £7000 to build. It was big and it was bold. However the flashy 1880s was followed by a deep and lasting depression and drought with devastating consequences including the collapse of many banks and personal ruin for many. Harber was involved in the building of the Imperial Arcade in the city but ran into financial difficulties. A mortgagee took possession and attempts to sell it for anywhere near its construction cost was unsuccessful. It was eventually disposed of by way of a lottery in 1896.

In 1901 it was bought by Edmund Brown who lived there until his death in 1925. In 1915, men on the south coast Waratah recruitment march starting in Nowra passed through Heathcote where Mr Brown provided refreshments. Anti-German sentiment fuelled rumours that spies were sending Morse code signals from the glass turret on the top of the building. Reflections on the glass from a lighthouse were found to be the explanation. Following Mr Brown's death his widow and an accountant formed a company called the Heathcote Hall Estate Limited. Fifty acres of the Heathcote Hall estate were subdivided into 168 lots in the hope of developing a model residential suburb and in 1928 it was auctioned, though sales were disappointing. Despite a direct rail link from the city it was still far removed from other residential developments and the onslaught of the Great Depression dampened demand. The subdivision resulted in the current street pattern of Grevillea Grove, Boronia Grove and Dillwynia Grove.

In April 1928 Heathcote Hall along with 4 surrounding acres was advertised for auction with a reserve 'considerably less than half what it would cost to build the mansion today'. It boasted cedar interior fittings, golf putting green, tennis court, telephone connection, dining, drawing room and two bedrooms of 29 X 16 feet as well as four other bedrooms, a billiard room and cellar. It wasn't sold however and was leased out to Miss I Pocklington who conducted a business known as the Heathcote Tea Rooms. In 1939 it was leased to Austin Kirton. It became very run down during the war years with unsightly fibro additions added to enclose verandahs for tenants. In 1945 the Hall and 1.7 hectares

of land was sold to Mrs Mimina Farrelly. It has remained in the Farrelly family for 70 years until being sold in 2015.

Though sadly neglected, it remains arguably the most significant residential building in the Shire. Upkeep of such a large property in private hands has always dogged the building. As long ago as during World War II, demolition was floated as an option. It would possibly cost several million dollars today to restore. Grand houses such as these are scattered throughout the inner ring suburbs of Sydney. Costly to build and costly to maintain, they reflect an exuberance of spirit born of booming economic times in the late nineteenth century. Many have suffered the ignominy of subdivision into cheap flats or demolition for a more intensive land use. It is arguable that today's 'McMansions' built during our recent long economic boom will one day suffer this fate as changing demographics and changed economic conditions render them modern 'white elephants'.

This is not an unfamiliar pattern. Sutherland House was another mansion built by Thomas Holt at Sylvania around 1880. Holt was extremely wealthy and owned almost the entire area of the present Sutherland Shire. Despite its grand proportions, no subsequent

economic use was found for it after less than 40 years and in 1918 it was earmarked for demolition before it mysteriously burned 40 years and in 1918 it was earmarked for demolition before it mysteriously burned down. None of his other grand houses, including the magnificent Warren at Tempe survived the harsher economic times. Perhaps grand follies, built by wealthy pastoralists and industrialists in an age of cheap labour and large families, they became out of step with the reality of the times.

In England in the twentieth century it was said that a grand country house was being lost every week. Death duties, upkeep and loss of cheap labour to run them were factors.

It is uncertain what fate awaits Heathcote Hall. It does have protection through a State Permanent Conservation Order under the Heritage Act 1977 and listing on Sutherland Council's Heritage Register provides protection. There is an ongoing conflict between economics and heritage. Buildings need to fulfil a community need or provide an economic return to remain viable. We are familiar with compromises that often destroy a building's curtilage or historical context or leave the façade and repurpose the interior. The alternative is often demolition by neglect.

Reference:

From Bottle Forest to Heathcote, Sutherland Shire's first settlement, Patrick Kennedy 1999

THE MAN THEY CALLED 'MISTER'

(AN ABORIGINAL MAN LIVING ON GUNNAMATTA BAY IN THE 1920s)

An account of conversations with James S. Cutbush, December 2015

(Submitted by Bruce Howell)

[Jim Cutbush has been an observer and a listener all his life. He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the Cronulla area, based not only on his own experiences but also on stories told to him by his father, Bill Cutbush (senior). Bill spent his childhood, during the 1920's, on the southern end of the Cronulla peninsula, which in those days was only sparsely populated. Bill and his brothers and sisters explored their local area, and not surprisingly their travels took them to Darook Park. It was there that they met a man who lived on the shores of Gunnamatta Bay – but this was no ordinary man. Judging by Jim's memories of his father's stories, this man was quite possibly the last of the clan of Aboriginal people who inhabited the Gunnamatta Bay area.]¹

[Jim, how did you come by the stories of 'Mister'?]

Through my father – he was the youngest child, born in 1916. He was brought down to Cronulla when he was three months old, and grew up there, with my grandmother and his brothers and sisters², in Rose Street, with tick bushes, low lying scrub, and very few trees. This was a time when Ewos Parade was a rough dirt track.³

Mister had more to do with the children, my aunts and uncles, than he did anybody else.

[What did he look like?]

He had a beard and a good head of hair – I'm only going by my father's description – it was going grey on the tips and the same on the beard. He looked to be in his early 70s, but even at that age he was a fine physical specimen, and he always bore himself well. He wasn't a frail person, he was of upright stature. My father showed me a drawing of an Aboriginal man that appeared in a book sometime in the 50's that he said gave a good idea of what Mister looked like⁴.

[Was Mister a full blooded Aboriginal person?]

My father said he was full blooded, and he was pretty good with that sort of thing. If my father said he was full blooded, he was full blooded.

[What about his clothing?]

He mainly wore shorts, and he wore a buccaneer shirt⁵, sometimes with the sleeves rolled up. Mainly bare feet – he occasionally wore sandals, and a hat.

[Where did he live?]

He lived in the Cronulla area, I suspect he lived on Gunnamatta Bay. There were two old

boat sheds near Gunnamatta Park that he was allowed to use for shelter.

[How did he get the name 'Mister'?]

My father said that this gentleman was called Mister out of respect – he wasn't given a name like 'Old Tom' or some other name.

[So it wasn't a light-hearted thing?]

Oh no, it was out of respect – I insist on that.

[Did he identify himself in any way?]

He may have done, but he was always known as Mister to them.

[How well did Mister speak English?]

All the kids could understand him, but my grandmother had a bit of trouble understanding him on occasions.

[Did he pass on any of his own language?]

Not that I know of.

[What sort of person was he?]

He was a kindly person, particularly with children, and he wasn't hesitant in passing on what he knew about the area. He'd teach you how to fish, what bait to use, he was a very generous man in that respect, with my aunts and uncles, three boys and two girls – he taught them about how they could tell fish movements by the currents and the warmth of the currents, and he had lookouts where he could see the fish movements. As well as that he taught them about the weather, and how to pick weather, whether a southerly was on its way – they'd be packed up and off the beach and back home by the time the southerly hit. My father was taught so well by this gentleman that he could go out into the backyard at night, and he'd be able to tell what the conditions would be like the next day – he took fishing parties out on weekends – so he might say 'fishing's off tomorrow, it'll be no good' – he knew what sea was running – 'it'll be a rough sea', and he'd be dead right.

[So did your father run a charter business later on?]

Yes, he and his elder brother Neville took fishing parties out on Saturdays and Sundays till the mid 1960s. They had a registered fishing boat especially built by the Matsons. The Matsons had a building yard where Kareena Hospital is now. It was an 18 footer, with a mast in case of an emergency, able to take four people out. The business was very successful and the family had the boat for many years.

[Obviously your father had a very good understanding of his environment, of fish and the movements of fish, of weather changes – would it be fair to say that your father absorbed a lot of that knowledge from Mister?]

It'd be more than fair to say that. The two main ones who absorbed all this, and remembered it all their lives, were my father and Neville. Early on Neville worked with one of the first professional fisherman in the area, a net fisherman who used a rowing boat, and brought the nets in at Blackwoods Beach. Neville helped with rowing the boat and bringing in the nets. He was paid for it and got a feed of fish too. But Mister created the interest in it.

[How did Mister survive?]

He was able to get fish and clams and crabs, as much as he needed, and there was some interaction between my family and him – if they had more than what they needed in the vegetable garden or in the way of fruit and eggs they'd look after him, and when he'd turn up he'd be holding a fish – it was a two way thing. But I won't say he went to the family home a lot – he ate there a couple of times.

[Did he have any form of income?]

I know he was being paid by Sydney University to catch stingrays. I don't know how many, or how big they were, but the stingrays were collected on one particular day each week. Apparently, the university used them for dissection.⁶

[Did Mister cook things up on a fire?]

Yes, he cooked crabs and fish and shellfish. He had the basic utensils – a billy can and so on.

[Did he make cups of tea then?]

I know he had the occasional cup of tea with my grandmother – no milk, but plenty of sugar.

[So he had a sweet tooth?]

Yes – and the kids did too.

[Any other type of food?]

My father said there were berries that he collected down at Darook – they were purple – it grew about so high *[about 1 metre]* - its leaf was a blade leaf.⁷

[What about fresh water?]

The old boat sheds near Gunnamatta Park, they both had water tanks – he could get water from there, or from my grandparents' house, they had water tanks, and they'd welcome anybody. He could use the water, I won't say frequently, but he was known to use it. And when he was around at Darook Park, there was a spring there. He knew there was a spring at Shelly Beach Park, there were two springs there, and there was another one at Oak Park, that still runs.

[Where was the spring in Darook Park?]

There are two that I know of there – one was up towards where you walk down near the fisheries. There's a dead end street there *[at the far southern end of Nicholson Parade]*, and you can walk down, and as you're walking down you're looking at Gunnamatta Bay.

[Was there a spring anywhere further up near the northern end of Darook Park?]

Yes, when you're walking north towards Gunnamatta Park, where there's a roadway going up, water used to come down there.

[Did Mister pass on any other knowledge to do with fishing around Cronulla?]

Yes, Mister said that when the spotted gum comes into heavy bloom⁸, and I mean really heavy bloom, it's a sign the teraglin⁹ were on, and my father did alright out of that. Any excess fish were sold to Newton's fish shop in Cronulla, or holiday makers in Bonnie Vale.

[Did he refer to the bay by any particular name?]

'Gunnamatta' was the name he used.

[Did Mister refer to any other places in the area by name, like Burraneer Bay or similar?]

He knew the Aboriginal name for the lake behind Bonnie Vale *[Cabbage Tree Basin]*. It was to do with black swans. In my time, there were hundreds upon hundreds of black swans. They'd be in Woollooware Bay, and they'd come up in the evening over our house *[in Hyndman Pde, Woollooware at the time]*, then they'd go down along Burraneer Bay, and into the lake.¹⁰ But I haven't seen a black swan in flight in this area for many years.

[Did you see any swans on Gunnamatta Bay?]

Yes, but very scant.

[Did you see any other birds?]

There used to be ducks, when I was younger, I used to go down there, there were ducks in that *[northern]* corner of Darook Park, and there were ducks in Hospital Bay *[on the western side of Gunnamatta Bay near De La Salle College]* where there are mangroves. In behind the mangroves there's a creek that comes down there.

Did Mister pass on any other special stories to your father?]

Yes he did. He told that in the early days the sea was a lot further out, and his people used to gather ochre there. There were two colours, white, and I'm not sure what the other one was. His people used white ochre on special occasions. *[Did Mister say anything about how far off the coast the ochre was?]*

He always pointed in the direction of the bombora – off Jibbon, due east of the headland.

There was one time when one of my father's sinkers came up with white ochre on it. That was about two and a half miles *[roughly 4 km]* off Jibbon Headland.¹¹

And Mister spoke about a mythical being, a giant. He had powers, he was a strong mythical being, but he was a good one, he always wanted to look after the people, he wanted to make sure that they had deeper water, so that the larger fish would frequent the bays and give the people a chance to catch the bigger fish. He used his axe to scrape out the channels that we see now in Gunnamatta Bay and Burraneer Bay. By chance, at the edge of Burraneer Bay, where there's deeper water, his stone axe-head fell off its handle, and he had to stop working at that point. The famous rock that we call "Shiprock" is the broken stone axe-head¹². That's where he got to, but he was coming back to make it even deeper. He came further around towards Lilli Pilli – he knew that overhangs were there and there was spring water. He said that his axe was broken, but his work wasn't done, and he thumped his axe-handle into the sand so that he could come back another time to fix it, but he never came back – this created the deep hole just off Lilli Pilli baths¹³.

[Do you know if Mister specifically knew about the deep hole being there?]

Yes, he knew it existed.

[So Mister must have had a very detailed knowledge of the local area.]

Second to none.

[Did he ever mention the cave-in near Shiprock?]

Yes, it was visited by him in his youth. He said many people were lost. The inference he took was that it was a 'punishment' – he couldn't understand – there were children as well¹⁴.

[Did he mention Biddy Giles¹⁵?]

Not as far I know.

Another story involves the Wanda Beach area. He helped widen the area, the same mythical being, and he told them *[the people]* they would never hunger for fish. They didn't understand him, but he said that they were to watch there consistently, because if they weren't watching that area, they'd possibly miss it, with large tides, the fish landing up there. There would always be times when they would have an abundance of fish, and they'd have to make the most of it while it happened. Whatever he did, it confused the fish, and the fish crowded together along the beach, and were easier to catch.¹⁶

[Did Mister ever refer to the mythical being by name?]

No, I'd love to know though – all I can tell you is that my father always said that it was a friendly one, always trying to help the people.

[Did Mister seem to know of any Aboriginal sites in Darook Park or nearby?]

He did say that there was a special women's place – a women's cave, nearby. The boys were warned not to go near it. Mister said that it could bring very bad luck if you went near it.

[Were the engravings at the north end of Darook Park mentioned?]

It was common knowledge that the engravings were there. The children knew about them, and it seems reasonable to assume that Mister knew of them as well.

[Did Mister ever say where he came from?]

No. He always said that he was local, and it would appear that he travelled a fair distance within the local area, but he never mentioned that he travelled outside of that area.

[Did he ever mention other members of his family or what happened to his family?]

I got the feeling from my father that something happened with his family. He wasn't married – he never had a partner as such – and he never had children, but as far as his family was concerned, my father seemed to think that something happened that he *[Mister]* didn't want to talk about. When I was a child my father used to recite to me the poem "The Last of his Tribe"¹⁷.

[So are you saying that your father believed that Mister was "the last of his tribe"?]

Yes.

[Do you have any idea what happened to Mister?]

No, I don't know.

LOCATION MAP



[Based on a map at www.whereis.com]

ENDNOTES:

¹ Relating to the introduction:

Observer and listener: In Jim's words: 'I'd listen a lot at family gatherings, I'd listen to what the old ones would say – if you showed an interest they would tell you more.'

Encyclopaedic knowledge: Extensive interviews with Jim, conducted by Elizabeth Adams, are currently available on request from the Sutherland Shire Library's Local Studies Section.

Regarding a clan in the Gunnamatta area:

An Aboriginal man, variously referred to as Budgerorry, William, or Willimanan, born in the early 1800s, is described in the journals of GA Robinson, as a 'native of the Koonametta tribe (Port Egan?)' (see the book *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, edited by N.J.B. Plomley (2008), pp. 506-8). The same man is described as coming from 'Port Aitken' (an early name for Port Hacking) on the State Library webpage: http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/_album/albumView.aspx?acmsID=423578&itemID=824089

2



The Cutbush children: Neville, Noela, Bill, Douglas and Valerie. [Photo taken c.1917]

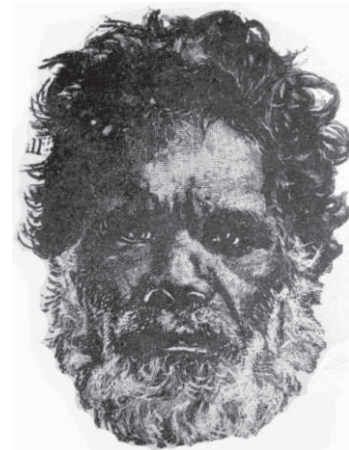
3



The southern end of Cronulla peninsula in 1930. Note the scarcity of houses and the much greater extent of bushland, especially near Darook Park.

[Image accessed from the 'Shire Maps' webpage]

4



The drawing identified by Jim Cutbush as giving a good idea of Mister's appearance.

[From: *Pacific Portal : Pictorial Cavalcade Souvenir Of The Sutherland Shire, 1770-1950*, edited by Robert D. Mackie, available at Sutherland Library, Local Studies section.]

⁵ A white shirt with fuller sleeves than normal.

⁶ In 1907 the Department of Fisheries offered facilities at the Gunnamatta Bay Hatchery to the University of Sydney for investigations in marine biology [personal communication with Sydney University Archives]. In the early 1920s, a lecturer in zoology from the University of Sydney, SJ Johnston, published a treatise entitled 'On the dissection of the stingray *Trygonoptera testacea*', a comprehensive guide to the anatomy of this stingray (also called the *common stingaree*). The stingrays at Darook Park are almost certainly of this species, and the distribution of *Trygonoptera testacea* does include Port Hacking (see the Australian Museum webpage: http://ozcam.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?q=trygonoptera%20testacea&zoom=off#tab_mapView).

So although it may be impossible to prove that it was Mister who supplied stingrays to Sydney University, there is circumstantial evidence to support the idea. Stingrays are still plentiful on the Darook Park sand flats. (See: <http://www.theleader.com.au/story/1411954/treat-stingrays-with-respect/>)



One of the stingrays commonly seen on the Darook Park sand flats, taken at Darook Park [Photo: B. Howell].

⁷ ***Dianella caerulea***, the Blue Flax Lily. Its berries are edible with small, crunchy seeds inside. This plant is common in Darook Park to this day.



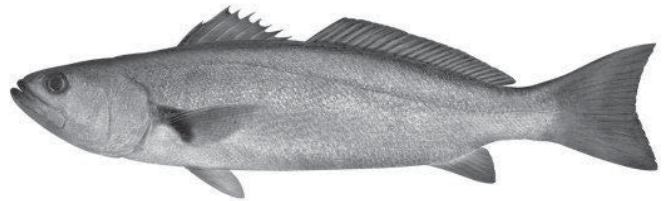
Dianella caerulea. [Photo by Blake, 2011, Lane Cove, NSW, at: [http://bushcraftoz.com/forums/showthread.php?1040-Dianella-caerulea-\(Blue-Flax-Lily\)](http://bushcraftoz.com/forums/showthread.php?1040-Dianella-caerulea-(Blue-Flax-Lily))]

⁸ The spotted gum, ***Corymbia maculata***, flowers during May to September. (https://www.florabank.org.au/lucid/key/Species%20Navigator/Media/Html/Corymbia_maculata.htm)



The spotted gum in bloom [Photo: <http://www.aps-armidale.org.au/resources/facts/articles/blooms06.html>]

9



Teraglin, *Atractoscion aequidens*, referred to also as 'trag', is a species of fish known for its strong schooling instincts, with very large catches reported on fishing websites. Adult teraglin inhabit offshore reefs between Brisbane and Montague Island in NSW. Juveniles occur in inshore waters. [Image and information from: (<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/fisheries/recreational/saltwater/sw-species/teraglin>)]

Although teraglin is an offshore fish, an article on page 3 of the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 9 July 1901 ('Fisheries Matters'), says that teraglin used to be found in Port Hacking, but had been depleted by over-netting. This comment is made regarding observations in 1901 of large schools of fish, including teraglin: 'It appeared as if the shoals had come into the deeper stretches of Port Hacking for the warmer water'.

[<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/14396134>]

In *Fishing Monthly*, it is stated that 'It's the time of year when our warm waters retreat north and the current pushes up from the south, bringing all sorts of species with it. Snapper, teraglin, and big tuna are just a few of the fish we can expect to see in the month of June...'

<http://www.fishingmonthly.com.au/Articles/Display/18410-Great-fishing-still-available-despite-cooling-weather>.

Note: The combined information in endnotes 8 & 9 is consistent with the story suggesting that the arrival of the teraglin will co-incide with the blooming of the spotted gum.

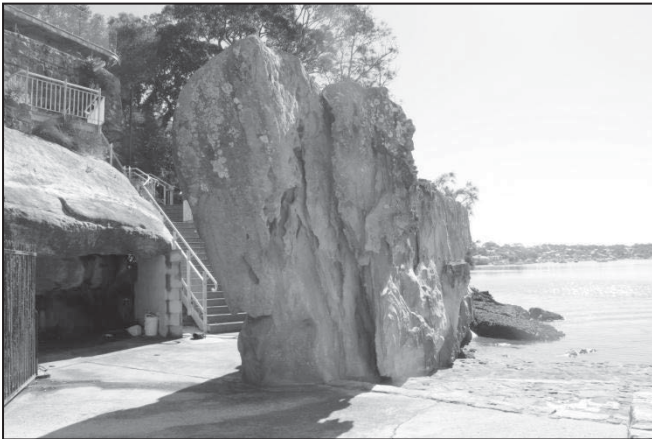
¹⁰ Jim's home at the time of observing the black swans (in Hyndman Parade, Woollooware) is on a direct line between Woollooware Bay and Cabbage Tree Basin. [Checked via GoogleEarth].

¹¹ The implications of this story are significant. When it was told in the 1920s, no-one involved was aware of the modern studies relating to changing sea levels. Those studies show that the current sea level stabilised 6,000 years ago, having risen 120m during the previous 12,000 years. Specific studies for the Port Hacking/Bate Bay area by Associate Professor Alberto Albani of the UNSW, show that the shoreline 18,000 years ago ranged between 6 and 8 km farther out to sea than its present position, and 12,000 years ago, on average, 1 to 2 km from where it is now. (See pages 4-10 of 'Port Hacking, Past & Present of an Estuarine Environment' by AD Albani and G Cotis, available at: www.bees.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/Port%20Hacking.pdf)

On face value, this suggests that Mister's story had been passed down to him over a period of many thousands of years.



Shiprock, a fallen rock on the SW side of Burraneer Bay.



An end on view of Shiprock. [Photos of Shiprock: B.Howell]

¹³ There is a 27m deep hole just outside the Lilli Pilli baths, well known to fisherman and valued as a spot for scuba-divers to practise. Said to be the deepest point in Port Hacking.

¹⁴ In 1918, excavation was done at the site of a collapsed rock-shelter, near Shiprock, reputed to have claimed the lives of many Aboriginal people, two or three hundred years ago. Many bones and stone tools were found, and recent excavation nearby uncovered even more bones.

¹⁵ Biddy Giles was an Aboriginal woman known to have visited Port Hacking during the period from about 1860 to 1875. She is credited with passing on the story of the cave-in near Shiprock. (See chapter 4 of *Rivers & Resilience* by Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow for an account of Biddy's life including her visits to Port Hacking.)

¹⁶ In the same context as the story of the submerged ochre source, this story is also likely to be significant, since Professor Albani's studies (referred to in endnote 11) show that the mouth of the Georges River once emptied through the present day Wanda Beach area, and did not close off to form the present stretch of beach until around the time the sea reached its current level around 6,000 years ago. If there is a link between Mister's story and the changing mouth of the Georges River, there is (again) a possibility that the story has been handed down over a period of thousands of years.

¹⁷ By Henry Kendall. First published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30th September 1864, p8, with the title 'Woonoona: The Last of His Tribe'

[In conclusion, Mister's stories, handed down by Mister to Bill Cutbush and his siblings, and then handed down by Bill to his son Jim, are in a sense a continuation of the traditional way that Aboriginal people passed on their history and culture. If Mister was indeed the last of the full-blooded Aboriginal people of the Port Hacking area, he had no-one to pass on his stories to until the Cutbush children chanced upon him that first day at Darook Park in the early 1920s. It seems clear that Mister invited them into his world and in doing so has passed on three legends that are not only uniquely rooted in the Port Hacking area, but also may have origins that we might trace back thousands of years.]

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *ENDEAVOUR*?

BRUCE WATT

It is interesting to note that in May 2016, it was announced with much media fanfare that Cook's ship, The *Endeavour* had possibly been found at Newport Harbour in Rhode Island in the United States of America. Of course after all this time nothing of the timber infrastructure would remain and any artefacts would be covered in silt. Naval archaeologists would not be looking for the *Endeavour* but what it had subsequently become.

In my book, *The Shire a journey through time* published in August 2014 I reported this discovery.

'The *Endeavour*, like all timber ships of its time, suffered the ravages of the sea and it eventually suffered an ignominious end. During its lifetime it served several purposes. In 1768 Cook was appointed by the British Admiralty to command an expedition to Tahiti in the Southern Hemisphere to observe the transit of the planet Venus across the sun and then to look for the great southern continent that had been partly chartered by various explorers in preceding centuries. The vessel chartered for the voyage was a four year old converted Whitby 'coal cat', called the *Earl of Pembroke* and renamed the '*Endeavour Bark*'. It was a 35 metre, 365 ton former Whitby collier. Cook was familiar with this type of ship as he'd first been apprenticed in Whitby on coal carrying boats.

In 1770, during Cook's first voyage, it was holed on the Great Barrier Reef and narrowly missed being sunk. Cannon, ballast and other heavy items were

jettisoned and it limped ashore and was beached for seven weeks whilst emergency repairs were conducted.

Cook sailed on to Batavia (Jakarta) where more substantial repairs were undertaken. It then returned to England.

It spent the next three years shipping navy stores to the Falkland Islands. It was then sold in 1775 and renamed the *Lord Sandwich*. It briefly returned to naval service during the American Revolutionary War and was used as a prison ship. In 1778 it was scuttled in Newport Harbour as part of a naval blockade'.¹

There are at least five wrecks on the sea bed at Newport that could fit the description. Historians would be looking for the remains of a vessel of the *Endeavour*'s dimension. Few artefacts from the *Endeavour* era would remain as it had been refitted and repurposed but it would be of great historic interest as well as solving a naval mystery. Cook was not only of interest in Australia. In the late eighteenth century, Cook was a superstar having opened up great swathes of the unknown world and cemented Britain as the greatest naval power. This enabled it to claim an area stretching over such latitudes that it was said that 'the sun never sets on the empire'. The discovery of the *Endeavour* (or at least the *Lord Sandwich*) would be a boon to tourism at Newport Harbour with perhaps another museum outlining Cook's remarkable exploits.

¹ Bruce Watt, *The Shire: a journey through time*, 2014, pp.46-47

MYSTERY OF THE MISSING SHIRE PIONEER HEADSTONE SOLVED

ELIZABETH CRAIG

Contributors to the *Bulletin* have visited the story of James and Martha Birnie, the first landholders of the Sutherland Shire district, many times in the last 50 years, beginning with an article by founding *Bulletin* editor, Marjorie Hutton Neve in the very first edition in September 1966. This latest story concerns a project championed by Marjorie in 1972 to bring the Birnie's headstone home to the Shire. While researching for *Caretakers of our Past*, my history of the SSHS, I discovered that in fact Marjorie's project remained unfinished. The headstone had not come home.

This is the story.

Background¹

Captain James Birnie and his wife Martha Matilda arrived in Sydney in 1809 and lived in O'Connell Street. He was a wealthy merchant from London who had first visited Sydney three years earlier while on a sealing and whaling voyage in his ship, *The Star*. The Birnies mixed with the higher echelons of Sydney society, and Governor Macquarie even invited James to take part in discussions about founding the Bank of New South Wales. Martha Matilda supported Governor Macquarie's Orphan School and was a member of the Auxiliary Bible Society of New South Wales.

In 1815 the Birnies were granted 700 acres on the Kurnell peninsular. The property, which they called Alpha Farm, covered what is now Kamay Botany Bay National Park and Kurnell village. They built a three-room cottage, a dairy and an outhouse for servants on the farm, but never lived there. They employed a manager to run the dairy and develop an orchard which was irrigated by

the spring used by Cook and the crew of the *Endeavour* when they landed in Kurnell in 1770.

The Birnies' fortune took a turn for the worse when James developed mental health problems and squandered his wealth. By 1828 he was declared a 'lunatic', and his estate was put in the hands of trustees. Alpha Farm was sold to John Connell and to support themselves Martha auctioned their premises in O'Connell Street and her furnishings, with the proceeds going to the trustees for management.

Married women had no property rights until 1870 and Martha, despite her efforts, was unable to protect her financial interests. Even the 500 acres Governor Macquarie had granted her at Mullengullengong (near Braidwood) in her own name in 1821 did not protect her because the two trustees she had been directed to appoint to manage the estate failed to execute a Deed of Trust giving title to Martha. So in 1838 when she tried to sell her property, Omega Farm, at Mullengullengong it was regarded as part of her husband's estate. Martha pursued every avenue she could to secure Omega Farm in her name, including appealing to the Colonial Secretary in London. By 1843 it was judged too much time had elapsed since her land grant, and the claim was dismissed. With the system against her this courageous woman and her now dependent husband lived their last years in poverty. Marjorie Hutton Neve writes:

... Martha Matilda Birnie, when adversity struck, sacrificed every social and material comfort to remain with helpless and hopeless husband...

he a bedridden lunatic until his death, she gradually becoming infirm and blind with the passing of years.²

James Birnie died in 1844 at the age of 82 and was buried in the Presbyterian section of the Devonshire Street Cemetery. On her death, aged 76 in 1851 Martha was buried beside her husband. There they laid until 1901 when the cemetery was reclaimed for the construction of the Central Railway Station. Those gravestones not removed by descendants of the pioneers - including the headstone of James and Martha Birnie who had no descendants - were transferred to Botany Cemetery.

Move to bring home the Birnies' headstone

Sixty nine years later, in 1970, SSHS secretary, Norman Horwood discovered the Birnie's headstone in an obscure spot in Botany Cemetery. He alerted the managers, who restored the headstone and made a feature of it at the Cemetery's entrance. The SSHS also asked the Sutherland Shire Council to erect a stone memorial to James Birnie at Kurnell at the corner of Captain Cook Drive and Prince Charles Parade. However, the Council, though sympathetic rejected the idea as their funds were devoted to the Cook Bicentenary. The Society considered instituting a public appeal to pay for the work.³

Then in 1972, the matter was raised again. It was agreed that because of the Birnies' status as the Shire's first landholders, their headstone should be moved to Alpha Farm, and Marjorie Hutton Neve approached Sutherland Shire Council again. Council agreed with the proposal, as did Botany Cemetery and the Captain Cook Landing Place Trust which managed the Kurnell Reserve on which Alpha Farm stood. The

date for the unveiling was set for 1 July 1972 and the headstone was to be placed in the grounds of the staff headquarters which had been built over the ruins of the Birnie's cottage. The matter was not mentioned again in the Society's Minutes or the *Bulletin*.

Fast forward to 2016

Considering a photo of the headstone would go well in my history of the Society, I went to the Alpha Farm site armed with my camera to look for it. It was nowhere to be found, and nobody at Kamay Botany Bay National Park knew anything of it. Eventually, a ranger looked up the Captain Cook Landing Place Trust Minutes of 1972 for me. There, on 4 August it was recorded that the headstone would be brought to Alpha Farm only after the staff headquarters, which had been built over the ruins of the original cottage, were removed. The headstone was to be laid adjacent to the ruins with a memorial plaque. So where was it?

My enquiries took me to Botany Cemetery, now Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park. A section of the Park had been designated Pioneer's Memorial Park. My husband, Ted and I walked up and down the rows of pioneer headstones, scrutinising the inscriptions. Many of them had deteriorated so much it was impossible to read the names. Then suddenly Ted called out, 'I've found it!' And there it was indeed, with evidence of the restoration in the 1970s still clear, although the face of the headstone is fragile with a layer of the sandstone peeling off. It read:

To the memory of
JAMES BIRNIE
who departed this life
14th July 1844 aged 82 years.

ALSO
MARTHA MATILDA BIRNIE
wife of the above
who departed this life
12th November 1851 aged 76 years⁴

Why hadn't the headstone been moved to Alpha Farm in 1972 as planned? Well, the demolition of the staff headquarters had never occurred, and so the headstone was never transferred. The opportunity to transfer the Birnie's headstone to Alpha Farm at all was missed when in 1976, along with all the other pioneer headstones in Botany Cemetery, it was set in concrete footings and placed in the newly created Pioneers Memorial Park.



Birnie headstone(left) in Pioneer Memorial Park, Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park
[Photo Ted Craig, Feb. 2016]

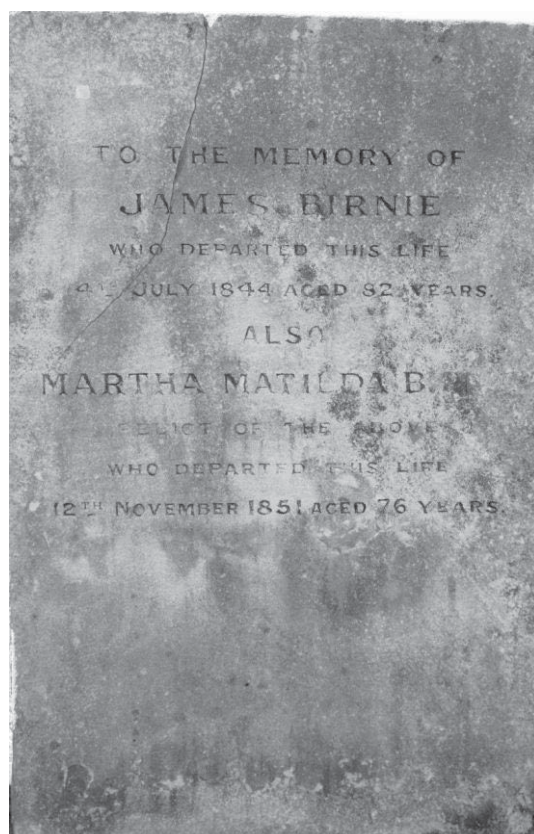
I could feel the spirit of Marjorie Hutton Neve pushing me to solve the mystery and finish the story. I'm sure she'd have been satisfied.

¹ SSHS Minutes, 3 March, 1970; 'President's Remarks', *SSHS Bulletin*, January, 1971, SSHS Minutes, 15 June, 1972

² *Martha Matilda of Sydney Town*, Hutton Neve, 1972

³ Captain Cook Landing Place Trust Minutes, 4 August, 1972

⁴ Headstone, James and Martha Matilda Birnie



The History of Boomerangs

DAPHNE SALT

Contrary to popular belief, the boomerang did not originate in Australia. Historical traces of boomerangs have been found throughout the world. Confucius recorded that the Chinese came to Australia to observe solar eclipses on 17 April **592BC** and 11 August **553BC**. A book called *Classic of Shan Hai* written before **338BC** puts on record that the Chinese witnessed three things in Australia - natives using the boomerang, black millet grown in the southern part of Australia, and the kangaroo. And they took kangaroos back to China for the Emperor's Zoo. Eucalyptus oil was used in ancient embalming fluid and 3000 year-old kangaroo bones, eucalypt leaves and boomerangs were found in Egyptian pyramids.

Boomerangs are considered by many to be the earliest 'heavier-than-air' flying machines invented by human beings. Australian Aboriginal boomerangs have been found as old as 40 thousand years, but older hunting sticks have been discovered throughout Europe. The famed King Tutankhamen of Egypt had an extensive collection of boomerangs **over 2000 years ago**.

Although historians are not certain of the exact origin of the first boomerang, it is speculated that the boomerang was developed from a flattened throwing stick, used by early hunters.

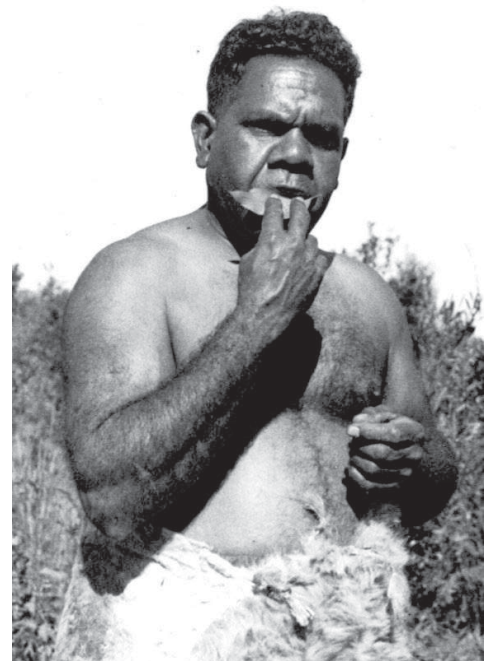
The returning boomerang was most likely discovered by accident by an early hunter trying to fine tune a hunting stick. The modern boomerang is most commonly associated with Australia because it has been preserved in its highest state of development by Australian Aborigines. Since the Australian Aborigines are one of the few cultures in history never to develop a bow and arrow, their heavy dependence on the boomerang for hunting has ensured its preservation.

Aircraft windfoil design programs and Computer Aided Drawing programs are used to optimize flight characteristics of aircraft wings based on the boomerang design. Modern competition boomerangs can stay aloft for up to several minutes time and **distances over 200 yards**.

The Tommy Foster Boomerang

Tommy Foster didn't live in Sylvania, though his forebears had. His family, the Sylvania Tribe, had been re-located to La Perouse. He was an old Aboriginal skilled in the melodious art of the gum leaf musician. Tommy was a devout Christian and sometimes played his gum leaf on radio 2CH on Sunday evenings. He led the Aboriginal Gum Leaf Band at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Tommy often rowed over from La Perouse to Sylvania to pick up my Grandfather, Guido Weber, before rowing up the Georges River to Mangrove Island just inside the Woronora River at Como to carefully select his mangrove elbows which he carved into boomerangs. Tommy used a red-hot piece of wire to burn in the decorations. He gave some of his boomerangs to Guido, two of these he made just after the opening of the Harbour Bridge and had the bridge engraved on them. These two boomerangs were



borrowed from Guido by Mr Edwards to copy to give authenticity to the boomerangs on the facade of the Boomerang Hall when he built it next to the Sylvania Pleasure Grounds where Tommy used to teach and demonstrate boomerang throwing. His boomerangs always came back.



19 January 2000 La Perouse -meeting with Kurnell Aboriginal Elders

12MD– 2.10pm, La Perouse NPWS Centre — room made available for conference.

Beryl Beller— Dharawal tribe,

Iris Williams— Mother of Shayne, Dharawal tribe.

Shayne Williams— Spokesman for the Elders

Daphne Salt—Seeking information about Kurnell Aboriginals for book, 'Kurnell – Birthplace of Modern Australia',

Iris Williams— [Mother of Shayne] Well, my name's Iris Williams and I'm part of the Dharawal nation. The Dharawal tribe. We come from, our area goes from the Shoal'aven up to Port Jackson. And closely associated with the Eora—and I've got that from tribes and boundaries. The Eora and the Dharawal spoke different languages. The Eora were over towards what is now known as Port Jackson, it was called Cadigal back then, the Aboriginal name was Cadigal.

Beryl Beller—My name is Beryl Beller, I'm from the Dharawal people. My maiden name is Timbery, and I have traced my Timbery family here at La Perouse, back to 1819. And I'm in the process of filling in one generation to my family, the Gweagal people from Kurnell.

Shayne Williams— I'm from the Dharawal people, Ah, my family lived mostly in the Georges River area, Salt Pan Creek area. But I've come across personal correspondence by members of me family which demonstrated that they had knowledge of the Gweagal area, Kurnell, and Port 'Acking area.

At the conclusion of a lengthy discussion which I recorded and transcribed with their permission:-

Shayne—The old people used to take dad fishing in the Woronora, in the Woronora River there, that was special. I went there the other day to drop my girl off up in Menai, they've got this big bridge goin' across there! It's huge! An' the pillars are right in the Woronora River! [despairing and disgusted tones]

Daphne— Well, my grandfather used to go up the Woronora River with an Aboriginal gentleman he was a friend of. He used to make boomerangs. They used to go up the Woronora River. He made the boomerang that the Boomerang Hall at Sylvania was named for. They used one of these boomerangs as the model for those on the front of the Hall. In fact I've got that boomerang at home. He used to come over from La Perouse and grandfather went with him in the boat up the Woronora River, just past the railway bridge to the mangroves there in front of where I live

now. He picked out a special piece of mangrove with the right elbow in it and took that back and made boomerangs with it.

Iris—Was it Tom? [spoken very softly, Iris looks wistful]

Daphne— Yes it was Tom Foster. He used to play the gumleaf on 2CH.

Iris— He also had a beautiful singing voice. [clasping hands together on table in front of her]

Daphne—He was a close friend of my grandfather. Grandfather arranged for him to lead a group of Aboriginal gum leaf players in a band at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Iris—He was my uncle. [very proudly]

Daphne—Iris, you would probably treasure as much, or more than I do, this boomerang he made. Grandfather went with him up the Woronora River when he selected the mangrove, the right shape. And brought it back and watched him carve it. And then watched him use a hot wire and burn his design on it. [Iris has tears in her eyes and head to one side and is smiling widely right now.] I have that boomerang. I've got it! And the three stone axes from the Sutherland Shire that grandfather had.

Beryl—Yeh, that's Iris' uncle!

Daphne—[spur of the moment decision] Well Iris, I will let you have it.

Iris—[almost weeping now] Oh, thank you very much, I could kiss you for that.

You know they carved the boomerangs, but they never, ever put their names on it.

Shayne—But you know whose they were by the pictures. Eh?

Iris—when I hold it I'll know if it was by his hand. I'll feel it. You see, when they drew the kangaroo on the boomerang, each Koorie, up and down the coast all had their own ways. You see one drew the kangaroo looking this way and you'd see two ears, another one you'd just have one ear, or looking one way or another. An' that's how you can tell who did it. Well they had a primus and they had their irons.

Daphne—Grandfather said that he used to get a bit of fence wire, barbed wire, and put it ... he used to either wrap it round with a barb pointing out, or push it in the end of a piece of wood for the handle and that was the tool. They used to heat it up on the primus and burn the design into the boomerang.

Beryl—What Daphne was just saying, I remember that! I saw them get the wire and it was barbed wire- they used to cut the barb off the wire and make the tools.

Iris—Have you got any more questions to ask?

Daphne—Not really. Oh yes, would I be allowed to take your photograph?

Beryl—As long as I don't smile [laughter]. I've lost my front tooth.

Daphne—Iris, I'll give you that boomerang and those three stone axes. They've been passed on to me by my grandfather, but I feel that you're the right people to have them.

Iris— [sighing and again with tears in her eyes] We'll treasure them. And the boomerang will never leave the family.

Daphne—there is another thing. I would very much like to ask you all to come to the launching of the book.

Beryl, Iris and Shayne— I'll be there!

Daphne— And Beryl I'd love you to say a few words.

Iris— Beryl does that very well.

Meeting concluded at 2.10pm, then photographed Beryl, Iris and Shayne on the headland at La Perouse with Botany Bay and Kurnell in the background.

I drove Shayne back home to Cronulla, stopping at my home on the way to give him the boomerang and stone axes.

On the way home Shayne said that with the Kurnell Aboriginals the men wore a bone through their nose and as part of initiation they took off the last joint of their little finger.

As I was driving Shayne home he said "You must have some Koorie blood in you, eh? Your family must by destiny be guardians, keepers." I take this as the highest form of compliment he could give me.

I gave him the boomerang and the three stone axes and photographs of Biddy Giles and one of the group of Aboriginals on Holt's estate in 1880. Half of them were his forebears.

Shayne was very taken with the boomerang. He said "I can't take me eyes off it. Eh?" and asked when it was made. I told him that it was about 1931. He commented on the excellent condition it was in and how straight the back of it was. I replied that it has never been exposed to the elements and has always been kept lying flat.

Shane said that he felt faint and the hairs on the back of his neck were standing up. He could feel his great uncle Tom's hand. The kangaroo's turn of head was his signature. I also gave him the page out of my Mother's Autograph Book that Tommy Foster had signed. Shane said that he could feel him on the page and would give it to his mother.



Conclusion:

- The people I spoke with are direct descendants of the Kurnell tribe, and I feel that I have their trust.
 - They have made a great effort to trace their genealogy and back up their claims and statements with proof in the way of birth, death, marriage certificates; early writings of such people as Governor Phillip and Macquarie.
 - Much traditional folklore has been lost and they rely heavily on previously printed matter for reference. However there is still a strong verbal passage of tradition down through the generations.
 - They avoided certain topics deliberately and were reluctant to talk about others with the tape recorder going.
 - Very strong feelings about where Cook's stream flowed and where it entered the Bay.
 - Still hold the white clay sacred and want it to be written in the book.
- Holt is held in high respect by the Aboriginals because he employed them and employed an Aboriginal, William Rowley as manager.
 - They are familiar with a previous book I have written, *Gateway to the South*, and refer to it often. They use it to teach the children. They say that the way I have written about the Aboriginal culture is right and show it to the young ones. There is a photograph in it of their relatives and I have given them copies of this photograph.
 - I have also given them the three stone axes. One of them is a greenstone axe, very hard and polished. It is a thing very highly valued by the Aboriginals and Shayne said, 'It would have cost someone a lot to trade for it. Eh?'
 - Iris almost fell over herself for the boomerang and cried.

THE STORY OF ALICE CASHIN

A WWI NURSE IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE IN WORONORA

PAT HANNAN

Anzac Day 2016 was a timely occasion to hear about an unmarked grave in Woronora cemetery. At a heritage meeting at the cemetery last month it was told to us about a WW1 nurse who is buried in an unmarked grave...how sad.

Alice Eleanor Cashin of Sydney, a World War 1 army nurse was born in Melbourne 26th March 1870, educated at a ladies private college in Sydney and trained for three years at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst. She stayed on as a certified nurse to 1897, then entered private nursing. Alice lived at a nurses' home in Dowling St. Moore Park.



In 1901 Alice joined the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association. She left Australia in 1909 for London, had more training and obtained a diploma in Therapeutic Massage.

Alice intended to return home in 1914, but in the early months of WW1 nursed in the General hospital at Calais, France. Twice mentioned in despatches, Alice was awarded the Royal Red Cross. Alice was matron of the hospital ship *HMHS Gloucester Castle*, which was torpedoed in the English Channel on 3 March 1917. A commendation noted that she 'showed an example of coolness & devotion to duty, and rendered invaluable service'. She also received the French Croix de Guerre. From 7 May 1917 Matron Cashin had charge of the 400 bed military hospital at Whittington barracks, Lichfield, England, where she was much loved, and on leaving in 1919 she was showered with daisies gathered by 'her boys'. Back in Sydney, Alice wrote the story of the *HMHS Gloucester*

Castle for the Australasian Nurses' journal in March 1920. She nursed her father and worked as a sales woman. She died of chronic nephritis on the 4 November 1939 in her home at Marrickville and was buried in Woronora cemetery, after a service at St Brigid's church.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE RECONCILIATION BUS TRIP TO CANBERRA, 24 MARCH 2016

DAWN EMERSON B.A., M. Litt., D.Ua., AALIA

History of the Gweagal spears and shield

Two hundred and forty six years ago, two Gweagal men of the Dharawal nation said angrily: 'Warra Warra!' ('Go away!') brandishing their spears, when Lieutenant James Cook and Joseph Banks came ashore at Kurnell, with a party of men and muskets on that fateful day, 29 April, 1770.¹ Cook and his party continued to advance along the shore, and the Gweagal men ran back to their huts to get their shields to do battle with these men in strange clothing. Cook ordered his men to fire upon the two warriors who stood their ground, spears poised. The muskets exploded, peppering the unprotected legs of the hapless Dharawal men. One dropped his shield and both men ran away at this unexpected thunderous noise which had injured their legs. Their women and children hastily withdrew into the bushland, and Cook and Banks and their men, walked through the deserted village, taking spears and other artefacts from the unattended huts.

Bus trip to Canberra

This is why 22 members of the Sutherland Shire Reconciliation group made a bus trip to visit the *Encounters Exhibition* at the National Museum of Australia on Thursday, 24 March, 2016. It was believed that the spears and shield which had been stolen by Cook and Banks long ago were to be on display. Several efforts have been made to repatriate them, one even by myself when I was Deputy Mayor of Sutherland Shire Council in 2001, but to no avail. However now the items were advertised as being on display, having been obtained on loan from Britain, and although we could not touch them, at least it was possible to see them!

The National Museum, Canberra

Peter and Elaine Lucas picked us up in the bus about 7.30 am, and then we stopped at Sutherland to collect the rest of our passengers. It was a very comfortable trip, and we were soon pulling into Marulan. A brief halt for a 'comfort stop', accompanied by a cuppa and delicious home-baked biscuits and other goodies, and we were on our way

again, arriving at the National Museum a little after midday. We were ushered into the *Encounters Exhibition* after a short talk by Tynan, our guide, and our group then was split in two, the other guide being Helen, and we were led through the exhibition; one group going one way and we the other, to meet in the middle. Firstly we were shown a map of Australia, with an approximation of the areas in which the hundreds of various indigenous languages were spoken. Sadly, so few languages or dialects are still in use today, as the Australian government authorities over the years since then, believed that the Aboriginal culture and languages must be stamped out; that the Aboriginal people should 'assimilate' with their European invaders, and even become extinct, as they boldly asserted, had happened in Tasmania. Fortunately for us all, this extinction was not achieved, and although the Tasmanian Aboriginal culture is almost lost, my son-in-law, (and now our grandson), are descended from them, as I discovered when I read the book: *Redback One*, a biography of his brother.

The exhibition covered every state of Australia, and even particular regions within those states, and whilst we were interested in seeing the artefacts from WA, SA, NT etc. we were impatient to see those stolen from our Gweagal men from the Dharawal nation from Botany Bay in NSW. Finally, we were taken to a glass case where a shield and spears, believed to be from NSW, were on display. Tynan, our guide, noted that the spears in the glass case had been foreshortened, because they would not fit in the hold of the *Endeavour*. The members of our group were very excited at seeing these items, but I was non-plussed. They were not all the same items that I had been shown! I did not doubt that they were made by our own Aboriginal men and came from Australia, and even NSW, possibly from Stingray Bay, but the spears were different to the ones I had viewed at Cambridge. Unfortunately I did not take a photo of the shield at the time, so I cannot verify if it was the same shield that I saw at the British Museum warehouse. As the shield and spears were on loan from the British Museum, it is understandable that these were different spears than the ones held at the University of Cambridge, and which I had seen and handled.

England, 2001

The spears: From a literature search in 2001 I had discovered that five of the spears were being held at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. These were part of the 40 -50 that Banks had taken aboard the *Endeavour* for distribution in England. The spears I saw at Cambridge were the five that Banks had sent to the Earl of Sandwich, who had been helpful in sponsoring their voyage, and they were kept by his family until the early 1900's, when they were given to Trinity College. Later Trinity gave them to the Museum of

Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, where they were put into storage. These were the ones I saw when I went to Cambridge, with letters from the Sutherland Shire council, our Gweagal elders and many other organizations, seeking their repatriation to Australia, and the Hazelhurst Gallery. Before I left, one of our Gweagal elders said to me: 'If I could just see one of those spears here in Australia before I die, I will know that the spirits of the men who made them, are happy.' Whilst we knew that the British Museum regulations forbade any possibility of getting the shield back permanently, we had hoped that the University of Cambridge might let us have at least one of the spears. However, SSC later received a three line letter from Trinity and Cambridge refusing our offer. We had failed again to bring the spears home to Dharawal country.

Canberra, 2016

The spears on display at the National Museum were different to the ones I saw at Cambridge, although the principle of manufacture was similar, so perhaps they were some of the other 35-45 that had been distributed around Britain by Banks. Those held in the National Museum were all pronged spears, but had no fishbone barbs, which I had seen previously (see next page). This is curious, as if they came from a different culture, or perhaps they were unfinished when Cook removed them. I have also seen spears like this in paintings of the era.

In Cambridge I actually held each of the five spears in my hand, and perhaps my imagination ran riot, or it was just the significance of the moment, but I honestly felt some sort of emanation from the spears—despite the fact that I was wearing white fabric gloves that the curators had

given me! Perhaps it was fanciful, but I felt it was almost a spiritual contact. I had the opportunity to view the spears in detail. I had been told that probably they would be made of turpentine wood (and I believe that a couple of the spears on show in the *Encounter* display at Canberra were made from this wood.) However the spears I held, at Cambridge, were each made of a *xanthorrea* flower stem (with the flower end severed)—I could even see where some little insect had “chomped” a couple of holes in it over 245 years ago (I doubt if the University of Cambridge had “borers” in their collection). Then prongs had been attached to the end, surprisingly it seemed to be also of *xanthorrea*, with bees wax and gum from the base of the plant,² and wound around with kangaroo grass. Fishbone barbs were attached on the ends of the prongs with this gum. This formed a very lightweight, but strong and efficient fishing spear. (Note: These spears were not on display at Cambridge to the public.)

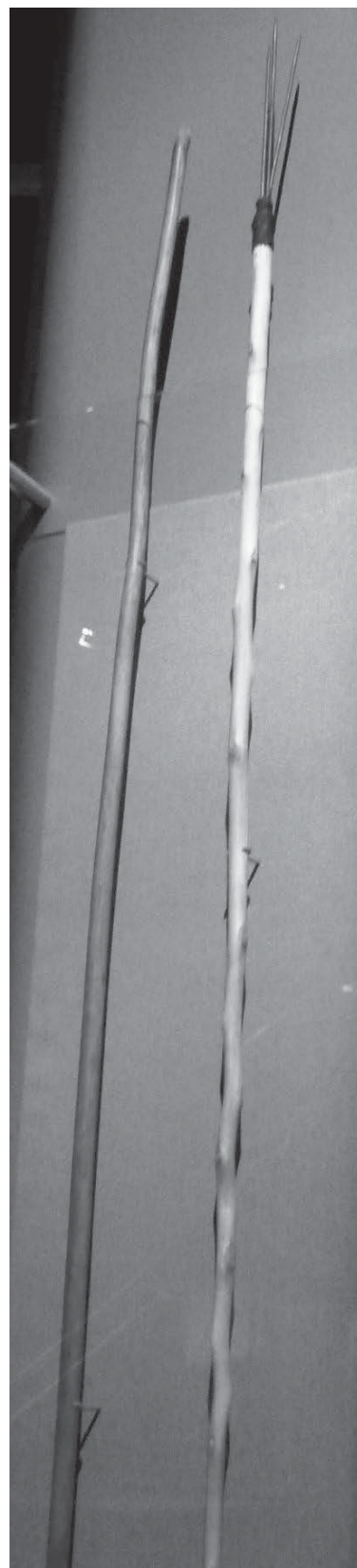
The hunting spear I saw at Cambridge, had a beautifully knapped spearhead of jasper, attached with more *xanthorrea* gum and beeswax to a *xanthorrea* flower stem. It was perfectly balanced, and would have been a fearsome weapon in skilled hands. (We did not see a hunting spear from NSW in the collection at Canberra, only fishing spears.)

The bark shield we saw in the *Encounters Exhibition* at Canberra is also an enigma to me. Contrary to Parkinson’s sketches, it was not round. Possibly he was drawing upon his classical knowledge and, having been told the Gweagal men had shields, drew Grecian ones! We could see the back of the elliptical shield at Canberra, and there was a handhold in the middle, which appeared to be made of

kangaroo skin. I could not see how it was attached due to the poor lighting. The shield

had an eyehole in the centre and a hole at one end, possibly to hang it up when not in use. Whether it was drilled by the Aboriginal craftsman, or by the British museum staff it was unknown. There were no signs of the birdshot pellets which Cook ordered his men to fire upon the two Aboriginal warriors who objected to the invaders, but it was hard to see in the dim light used to protect the artefacts in the National Museum.

The original spears on display at National Museum Canberra, believed to have been collected by Cook and the crew of the Endeavour in Botany Bay in 1770 and taken to England. [Photo: Pauline Curby]



The British Museum 2001

The shield: When I was in London I wrote to the British Museum, asking to see the shield which their catalogue said they held. They wrote back sending a copy of their Museum rules and regulations, which noted that 'gifts' to the museum are the property of Britain and are not returned to their country of origin, just in case I had sought to repatriate anything they held. (The fact that Cook took these 'gifts' at gunpoint does not seem to be covered in the Act.) I then rang them and asked if I could make an appointment to see the shield. I was asked peremptorily if I had read the Rules and Regulations of the British Museums Act 1963 that they had sent me. I said I had, and in so doing, I had noted also that one of their regulations stated, that if any member of the British Commonwealth wanted to see any item held by the British Museum, it had to be made available. I stated that I was here in London, for a couple of months and I wanted to see the shield which they held from NSW as it was not on open display. This caused a little consternation, but then I was given permission to go to their warehouse in Orsmond St. the following week. I had to catch three buses, and made my way to the warehouse, and up to the seventh or eighth floor.

Here was prepared a nice morning tea, and I was welcomed by Dr Lissant Burton and shown the shield. I was not allowed to touch the shield, not even in gloves. Yes it had two holes in it, one slightly left of centre and one at one end. I asked Dr Burton if the Museum had made the upper hole to hang the shield in a display, but she did not know. I perused it carefully but could not see any signs of shot on its surface. I asked her if they would have removed the shot. Again she did not know.



Gweagal shield displayed at National Museum Canberra. It is purported to have been amongst material the Endeavour crew removed from Botany Bay to take to England in 1770. [Photo Pauline Curby]

As there were no indentations commensurate with shot having hit it, or being removed, I decided it could not be the shield which Cook had taken from the Gweagal warriors at Botany Bay. Dr Burton was disappointed, as she said they had lost the provenance of the shield and all they knew was that it had come from NSW. She had hoped I would confirm for her that it was the one that Cook had given the museum. So now as the *Encounters Exhibition* pamphlet asserts that the shield on display was 'collected from the Gweagal people at Botany Bay in April 1770' I am uncertain as to whether it is the shield I saw, especially as Dr Burton told me the provenance had been lost from the one I viewed at the warehouse.

National Museum, Canberra 2016

With regret we dragged ourselves away from the *Encounters* display to have delightful lunch on the Museum patio, and to chat with our other passengers. Then we went back into the *Encounters* Exhibition for a further look. As I am not yet proficient with the Ipad my son gave me, I asked John from our group if he would take some photos for me, and he kindly obliged. We spent a further half an hour poring over the items, marvelling at the craftsmanship, and artistry of our gifted Aboriginal people. Next we made a hurried foray into the 'Unsettled' exhibition of five contemporary indigenous artists, and then dashed up to the exhibition depicting the problems that had occurred importing into Australia: rabbits, toads, buffaloes, goats, camels, deer, plants etc. from other countries, and fostered by disastrous groups such as the Acclimatisation Society.

All too soon it was 3pm, and we were the last to board our bus back to "the Big Smoke". It was a merry journey home with excited chatter at first, commenting on all we had seen, and our impressions. Most of us did not even see the new wind farms that have sprung up along the way, as we were too busy chatting. Peter again pulled into Marulan, and busily set up the table and he and Elaine loaded it with fruit, lovely wraps left over from lunch, biscuits, even 'hot' cross buns!. Once again we each got out our thermos and as Peter had provided again the makings for tea and coffee, we were soon refreshed and on our way home.

On behalf of all of us, we would like to thank the Sutherland Shire Reconciliation group, Peter and Elaine for their meticulous organization, and the National Museum for their hospitality, and assistance.

My only fervent wish is that the Gweagal elder to whom I spoke in 2001, managed to get to Canberra to see the spears before they went back to England, and although we have to farewell the spears and shield back to the British Museum, perhaps the spirits are happier now that they have seen their homeland once more.

Now we understand that the shield and spears will never be returned permanently to Australia, but ----wouldn't it be nice if the Cambridge University and the British Museum would put them on *public display*, so those of us who do get to London, can see them without all that "red tape", through which I had to wade.

¹ Cook records it as 28 April, but he had not allowed for the loss of a day, as was later established by the use of the International Date Line.

² This gum from the base of the *xanthorrea* plant or grass-tree, in addition to having adhesive properties, was also quite volatile. It was exported from many places in NSW, including Sutherland and Kempsey, in large quantities to Germany during World War I, not realising that the wily Germans were using it to make explosives and sending it back as munitions on our troops! This trade was not stopped by the Australian Government until 1921, well after the war had concluded, but at least before WWII!) [Penfold, A.R., *Grasstree resin*. Syd., Govt. Pr., 1931 (Bull.16)]

GEORGE HEAVENS – a salesman from beyond the grave

ELIZABETH CRAIG

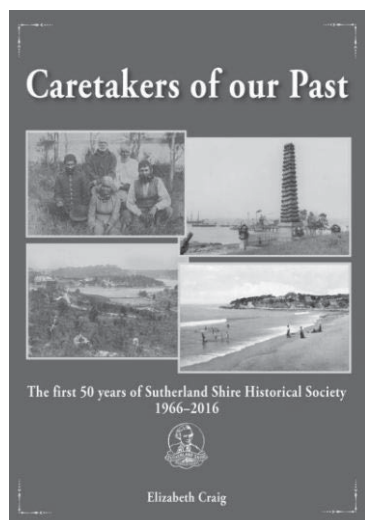
One of the most interesting aspects of my research for *Caretakers of our Past* was discovering the personalities who have driven the Society's activities over the last 50 years. Someone has always emerged to spearhead projects and with the support of members, overcome difficulties on many fronts to achieve their goals.

One of the early personalities was George Heavens, a 'bush larrikin' and former swaggie who had an Anthony Horderns type shop in Sutherland. A local history tragic, he was famed for recording Sutherland's local history – in his diary, with his camera and on film. Although Shire President Arthur Gietzelt called the public meeting to propose the formation of a local history society, George Heavens had been doing some stirring too. He held meetings in his shop in Eton Arcade, attended by both local residents and Councillors, to discuss the idea in the mid-1960s.

When the *Leader* published its article about the forthcoming publication of *Caretakers of our Past* on 20 April, it focussed on the larger-than-life George Heavens and included a photo. Some of the calls from the public interested in buying the book came purely because George Heavens was featured. They knew his shop, and one elderly man told me how he used to admire the shop through the window and drool over a Malvern Star bicycle. George was obviously a legendary character in the community generally – not just in the Society.

Caretakers of our Past: the first 50 years of Sutherland Shire Historical Society, 1966-2016

by Elizabeth Craig, 2016



Description: laminated soft cover, illustrated, full colour, 166 pages (incl. endnotes, index, bibliography & appendixes).

Caretakers of our Past looks inside the workings of the SSHS – how a group of local residents, who over 50 years have brought their passions, talents and energy to research, write and exhibit the story of the Shire's local history, and to preserve its heritage.

It relates the human side of such a group – the legendary characters, how they overcame personality clashes, politics and the demands of an increasingly regulated society as well as new technology to achieve their goals. And it describes where they fit in the Sutherland Shire community – their relationship with Council and with other community groups.

Cost **\$25.00** (plus **\$10.00** postage. Free postage to members living outside the Shire.)

Available at monthly meetings or from the Shire Museum (25 East Pde, Sutherland) on Saturdays, 9am-1pm.

Mail order - Cheque to: The Secretary, Sutherland Shire Historical Society, PO Box 389, Sutherland, NSW 1499

Enquiries: shirehistory@gmail.com or phone Elizabeth: 0416 234 272

SSHS 50th Anniversary lunch/book launch – the Speakers



Sutherland Shire Mayor, Cllr Carmelo Pesce



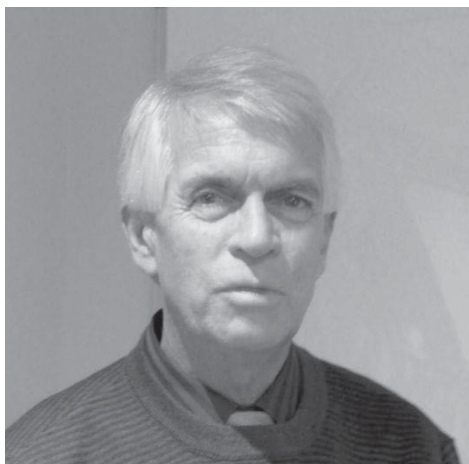
*Mark Speakman, NSW Min. for Heritage,
Member for Cronulla*



*Emeritus Prof. David Carment, former
President, History Council of NSW*



Dr Carol Liston, President, RAHS



*John Rayner, former Shire Council General
Manager, launched Elizabeth Craig's book,
Caretakers of our Past*



*Elizabeth Craig, author, Caretakers of our Past
[Dawn Harridge]*

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR YEAR ENDING: 30 JUNE 2017

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 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

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 for **\$30**

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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

or
Hand it in at a monthly meeting

Celebrating our Golden Anniversary with a book and a painting



Elizabeth Craig with her history of SSHS, Caretakers of our Past, Bruce Watt, President, SSHS, Sutherland Shire Mayor, Clr Carmelo Pesce and Otto Kuster, Kurnell artist who painted Heathcote Hall on the easel behind them. [Photo: John Veage, St George & Sutherland Shire Leader, 27 April, 2016]

and flowers...

...for Angela Thomas (left) for her ongoing support for SSHS over many years... and for Pat Hannan (presented by Ineke Nieuwland) for her tireless work digitising the SSHS museum collection...



Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Who we are in 2016



Who we were in 1966



Caretakers of our Past



**The first 50 years of Sutherland Shire Historical Society
1966–2016**



Elizabeth Craig