



NUMBER: 207 — MAY 2018



'Painting the Shire' Art Show – a success story! (See report, page 34) [Photo: Ted Craig]

MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

EMAIL: shirehistory@gmail.com **SSHS WEBSITE:** www.shirehistory.org

FACEBOOK: Sutherland Shire Historical Society

SSHS HERITAGE WEEK EVENTS - 21st April

Gary Lester, former Sharks player, sports writer and author of *The Sharks - Colour Me Black, White and Blue* – a history of rugby league in the Shire, addressed an audience at the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts on the Cronulla Sharks. Seventeen signed Jerseys from football teams existing in 1992 were also on display. (See report, page 7.)

(Unless otherwise specified, photos by Ted Craig)



Gary Lester with some of the jerseys displayed.



Rapt attention from Gary's audience



Heritage bus taking visitors from one heritage event site to another



Peter Moore Leading a tour of Woronora Cemetery [Photo: Creo Moore]



Revamped Museum featuring surf and backyard culture in 1950s Shire



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**SSHS MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2018-19 ARE DUE ON 1ST JULY.
MEMBERSHIP FORM IS INCLUDED WITH THIS BULLETIN**

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 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 usually have an ISBN number.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are held on the THIRD Saturday of each month at 1.30 pm (except December) – at Stapleton Centre, 3A Stapleton 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, 23 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 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

Alternatively, email us at shirehistory@gmail.com

+ SOCIETY COMMITTEE: 2017-2018

ELECTED MEMBERS

PATRON:	Shire Mayor, Clr Carmelo Pesce		
PRESIDENT	Bruce Watt	9523-5294	watto51@optusnet.com.au
DEPUTY PRESIDENT	Ian Kolln	9528-3094	iankolln@yahoo.com.au
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HONORARY TREASURER	Anna Estephan	9525-6441	annaestephan@gmail.com
PUBLIC OFFICER	Angela Thomas	9528-6251	a.badger@optusnet.com.au
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MUSEUM ARCHIVIST & RESEARCHER	Pat Hannan	9528-8294	patricia.hannan@bigpond.com
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	Helen Rosner	8539-7707	hmrosner@bigpond.com
	Joan Tangney	9523-6774	jtangney@optusnet.com.au

APPOINTED MEMBERS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Carol McDonald	9528-5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
BULLETIN PROOF READER	Merle Kavanagh	9521-1043	
MUSEUM COMMITTEE	Bruce Watt Joan Tangney	Noel Elliot	Ineke Niewland John White
EXCURSIONS BOOKING CLERK	Noel Elliot	9521-8622	
PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE	Pauline Curby Elizabeth Craig	9523-8814 9528-4707	pcurby@iprimus.com.au elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
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SCHOOLS LIAISON OFFICER	Elizabeth Craig	9528-4707	Bruce Watt - 9523-5294
WELFARE OFFICER	Gloria Hans	9589-0251	
HONORARY SOLICITOR	Michael Solari		
HONORARY AUDITOR	Stuart Cole		

**YOUR SSHS MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE BY 1ST JULY.
A MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM IS INCLUDED WITH THIS BULLETIN**

SSHS CALENDAR: JUNE – AUGUST 2018
(See website: www.shirehistory.org for updates)

DATE		MEETING 1.30pm, 3 rd Saturday in month Stapleton Centre	EXCURSION EXCURSION OFFICER Noel Elliot – 9521 8622
JUNE 2018	2		
	9		
	16	Speaker: Bruce Watt, on Aboriginal culture and heritage in the Sutherland Shire.	
	23		
	30		
JULY 2018	7		
	14		
	21	Speaker: Mary Small, author of several children’s books, four relating to war, and one of which, <i>Lennie’s Ride</i> , has become an epic and is currently being made into a movie.	
	28		
AUGUST 2018	4		
	11		Excursion to Parramatta. Details will be given at upcoming meetings.
	18	Speaker: Liz Adams, Launch of her new book - <i>KAREELA – Lucky and Liveable</i>	
	25		

MUSEUM

Sutherland Memorial School of Arts, 23 East Pde, Sutherland
OPEN EACH SATURDAY, 9.00 am to 1.00 pm

*Please refer to the roster located at the Museum and at meetings,
or phone Noel Elliot on 9521 8622*

PLEASE NOTE: SSHS MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE BY 1st JULY. A RENEWAL FORM IS INCLUDED WITH THIS BULLETIN

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BRUCE WATT



As this *Bulletin* edition goes out we are nearing the end of an extremely busy and productive period. In anticipation of the Heritage Festival events we began with a museum refurbishment.

Eight glass cabinets

with internal lighting have replaced the older wooden cabinets. The result is spectacular and gives a new lease of life to the exhibits. It has also freed up some space and allowed an exhibit that pays homage to the post war period of beach life and back yard culture. Further glass cabinets are to come. We acknowledge the office of Craig Kelly, MP for assistance in this regard.

We have occupied a portion of the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts since 1986. Council is about to embark on an ambitious refurbishment that will see much greater usage of the building. We hope that we can work in with this to enable more exposure.

The Heritage Festival opening night was conducted at the School of Arts by Miranda Musical Society and we were able to showcase the museum. The following day the museum was open for festival activities including a museum drop off by a vintage bus provided by the Tramways Museum. Gary Lester was our guest speaker at our widely publicised public meeting. He provided a comprehensive overview of the development of Ruby League in the Shire, culminating in the Sharks Grand Final win in 2016. A collection of signed jerseys from 1992 was a unique attraction as several of those clubs are no longer in existence. The event was attended by many non- members who

enjoyed the event. We also had a marquee at Woronora Cemetery to promote our activities. Peter Moore conducted a popular grave site tour. We acknowledge Olsens Funerals Sutherland as a benefactor.

Promoting our many initiatives has been a function of an active sub- committee including Elizabeth Craig, Creo and Peter Moore, Don Rothnie, Ian Kolln and Bruce Watt. Some of our activities were reported in an interview on local radio 2SSR. Our major promotional initiative for this year is the art exhibition called *Painting the Shire*. As 'Friends of Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery' the Society had accepted 30-odd art works from artists dating from the 1980s and 90s. What to do with them was an obvious question. In broadening our scope and building on works that we had, the decision was made to mount our own exhibition.

The story of how this exhibition unfolded, and the resounding success it was when held at the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts last weekend appears on page 34. Briefly it included 142 artworks – oils, pastels, watercolours, timber sculptures and pottery. It was a retrospective of Shire artists and/or Shire themes. Paintings dated from the 1880s to contemporary pieces. The art scene in the Shire is strong though we are mindful that this area was once exclusively Dharawal Aboriginal land. Thousands of occupation sites, some with art work in stone, ochre and charcoal testify to a long tradition of art in this area. We were able to include images of local Aboriginal art by mounting on to canvas photos by Bruce Howell of rock carvings and drawings from around the Shire. I acknowledge the work of Elizabeth Craig in particular as a driving force in this exhibition.

On April 29 at the 'Meeting of two cultures' celebration, I was again asked to give an address along with local Federal and State members of parliament, Scott Morrison and Mark Speakman. This year was the 248th anniversary of Cook's landing at Kurnell. In a joint announcement both ministers announced a \$50 million initiative to mark the 250th anniversary in 2020. The Society hopes to work with Council in this celebration.

The Society once again took part in the Botany Bay Family History Fair at Tradies. It is attended by a variety of related organisations and it is an opportunity to network and to sell some items. SSHS was also pleased to support a Shire charity called Relay for Life. It is a fund raising event to aid cancer patients and is held at Wanda's Don Lucas Reserve.

It is with great pleasure that we can announce that Liz Adams' new Shire suburb history on Kareela is going to print and will be

launched in August. It is being funded through the Society though it has received funding from the Council's Heritage Publications grant and has also received a substantial grant from Olsens Funerals at Sutherland.

Good news too for our archivists. Don Rothnie has been informed by IMB that our application for a grant to buy a good quality scanner was successful.

Since its creation in 2013 I have represented the Sutherland Shire Historical Society on the Cronulla Hungry Point Trust. I was very pleased to retain this position following a recent spill in positions. It is a highly significant site requiring oversight to achieve its potential.

Throughout this year the executive and members have excelled in the many tasks that we have undertaken. It is a lively and dedicated team that we are all, collectively very proud of.

KURNELL TO GET NEW CAPTAIN COOK MEMORIAL

BRUCE WATT

Following community consultation and planning in the lead-up to the 250th anniversary of Cook's landing at Botany Bay in April 1770, a new memorial to Captain Cook and visitor's centre will be built at Kurnell. The \$50 million redevelopment will be jointly funded at Federal and State level in an initiative that will raise the profile and significance of this event that was to spur scientific research and ultimately led to the development of modern Australia. Two years into a circumnavigation of the globe, the *Endeavour*, having spent six months circumnavigating and mapping New Zealand was heading back to England. Encountering land at Point Hicks, the *Endeavour* turned north. A sailing ship with about 100 crew needed wood for cooking and water. It was important to find a sheltered bay to take on these supplies. During the eight-day stay at what Cook named Botany Bay, the first contact occurred between Indigenous people (referred to as 'indians') and Europeans on the east coast of 'New Holland'.

The \$50 million redevelopment of the Meeting Place Precinct will feature a new discovery centre as well as an aquatic monument that takes in the original mooring site of Cook's ship HMS *Endeavour* and the foreshore.

Treasurer Scott Morrison, Federal Member for Cook in announcing the initiative said the memorial would be 'a place of commemoration, recognition and understanding of two cultures and the incredible Captain Cook'.

MY CULTURE, MY STORY, MY SHARKS

CREO MOORE

Gary Lester was our guest speaker on 21st April at the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts. We had quite a turn up including members and non-members of SSHS and our new look museum was very popular.

Gary was talking rugby league and the Sharks. He held us captivated as he took us from their humble beginnings, including having their first meetings in Cody's Pharmacy back rooms in Caringbah in 1967 to winning their first Premiership in 2016. Quite an accomplishment after 50 years!

We heard how the Cronulla Sharks entered the competition in 1967 wearing a sky blue jersey with a white V and red numbers on the back. Originally they were to wear the colours of brown and gold which they managed to swap with Penrith. Their home ground was Sutherland Oval with captain Monty Porter and coach Ken

Kearney. The move to Endeavour Field at Woollooware in 1968 was very popular, and the Sharks became the only Sydney club to own their own ground.

Jack Gibson was one of the characters to be involved in the story of the Sharks in his role as coach, with his famous saying, 'Waiting for Cronulla to win the rugby league premiership is like leaving the porch lights on for Harold Holt'.

Along with players such as Andrew Ettingshausen, Mark McGaw and the unforgettable Tommy Bishop, The Sharks started to take shape and made it to the grand finals and semi finals a few times with no positive outcome.

From the start the Sharks have always faced challenges and scandals. After winning the premiership in 2016, 'the porch lights for Harold Holt have now been turned off.

OPEN DAY AT WORONORA CEMETERY

CAROL McDONALD

Woronora Memorial Park held a very successful open day with Cobb & Co. rides for the children and bus tours. The Sutherland Shire Historical Society had a booth there with historical photos, and information about the historical society. Peter Moore held grave tours of well known Shire people. Our display and tours proved to be popular and we had about 200 visitors.

People were amazed at some of the old photos and historical information presented. It is pleasing to see people taking an interest in the past.

Peter's tours were very interesting and enlightening. Each tour took about an hour leaving Peter exhausted by the end of the day. Most notable was the first burial in the cemetery. It was in 1895 of a 19 year old girl Helen Willow who died of tuberculosis.



Peter Moore (2nd from left) leads a tour around Woronora Cemetery [Photo: Creo Moore]

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

The *Bulletin* is late this time because we wanted to include a report about last weekend's art exhibition, *Painting the Shire* while we are still feeling so euphoric after its success. (See story, page 34).

Thank you again to all the contributors to this month's magazine. Again, there is a great variety of articles – from a report of an SSHS excursion of historic Churches in the Shire (page 21) to a delightful story on the Queen's visit to Sutherland Shire in 1954 (page 26) and an interesting history of an Aboriginal family – the Simms from La Perouse (page 10). And there's more!

Please contact me if you come across a story, or have one in mind to write that would be suitable for the *Bulletin*.

I would welcome letters to the Editor, too, perhaps commenting on or adding more information to an article, or any other suggestions.

We are now having our *Bulletin* envelopes addressed by Civic Copying, saving Floriana and me many headaches battling with the label template.

Meanwhile, happy reading!

SSHS MEMBERS' NEWS

We are happy to welcome the following new members to our Society:

Helen and Joyce Hoppitt of Jannali

Brian Nixon of Loftus

Moirra White of Kirrawee

Frank Zumbo, adviser to our Federal representative, Craig Kelly

We are a friendly group and like to meet new members, so please make sure you introduce yourself to someone at meetings. There are plenty of activities available through SSHS too – apart from our monthly meetings where interesting speakers and a sociable afternoon tea are the draw cards. We have excursions which are announced at meetings and on our website: www.shirehistory.org. You can read excursion reports in the *Bulletin* too, to get an idea of what they're about.

The Sutherland Shire Museum at 23 East Parade, Sutherland, is definitely worth a visit. It is open most Saturday mornings (see the

Bulletin or our website for details). The display which is put together by our Museum Committee members has recently been revamped. The theme, *A journey through time*, takes visitors through the history of the Shire from ancient times, through European settlement and contemporary times. Central displays change from time to time. Currently it is about 1950s surfing and backyard culture. You can get involved by putting yourself on a roster on Saturday mornings. If you are interested phone Noel Elliot on 9521-8622.

Sad news

We have lost a few members recently. George Coulthard has passed away in Mudgee after a long illness. A tribute to George appears on page 17.

Bob Walshe too, a Sutherland Shire icon for his activism in environmental matters, died last month, aged 94. He has been a long time member of SSHS, although he hasn't attended meetings for some time.

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MUSEUM REPORT

IAN KOLLN

We are worn out this month from the effort of installing the **Journey through Time** history of the Sutherland Shire into new display cabinets. Our museum was shut for two weeks to get this done. The new glass cabinets with white framing and lighting focussed on the shelves were funded by a fifty per cent community grant through the office of Mr Craig Kelly MP, with the balance from our SSHS funds.

Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers who assisted with the refurbishment. Anna, Pat, Carol, Bruce and Peter worked hard to remove the old brown timber cabinets and then set up the new display. In addition, many thanks to our president, Bruce, for his tireless efforts and the supply of the 1950s lawnmower and surf ski to depict home and recreation in the Shire.

The Dharawal and Aboriginal items were placed into two cabinets, one 'hunting' and the other 'gathering'. This was an eye opener to me as the way to assist the story telling when showing school groups and other visitors around our museum.

There is a display of our Society *Bulletins* as well as books for sale. Remember these if you need a lasting gift for friends still in the Shire or who have moved away.

As your curator I attended workshops at Castle Hill Discovery Centre run by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (aka the Powerhouse Museum), directed at volunteer museum personnel. I had informative discussions with other curators on the benefits of e-hive as an electronic cataloguing system that they found met their needs, and hope to soon put a proposal to our Executive on a system to get our collection catalogued.

The Heritage Festival days brought new audiences to us to enjoy our **Sutherland Shire Museum**. Our art exhibition, *Painting the Shire* on Mother's Day weekend from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th May has done the same.

Your thoughts for new exhibition themes are welcome, please let me know next time you visit us.



Refurbished museum [Photo: Ted Craig]

A LA PEROUSE FAMILY

PAULINE CURBY

Beautiful and scenic, but sometimes windswept and chilly, La Perouse is located on the northern shore of Botany Bay. It sits on a small peninsula on a headland where Botany Bay National Park is located, with Congwong Bay to the south and Yarra Bay to the north. Generations of Aboriginal people have lived there, and many others have visited this picturesque spot.

Since at least the 1870s there has been a permanent Aboriginal settlement at La Perouse fronting Frenchmans Bay, on land gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve in 1895. Named after French naval officer Jean-Francois de Galaup, Comte de La Perouse (1741-1788) who stopped there briefly in January 1788, this became a Sydney suburb in the 20th century.

A little boy named John Henry Simms was living at La Perouse in the 1880s, when details of the local Aboriginal people were recorded. Born on the Shoalhaven River, in the southern reaches of the family's traditional country, John Henry's people were among the earliest residents in the settlement. Members of his family still live there.

About the Simms family

La Perouse is the northern limit of the Simms family's country, a swathe of territory stretching from southern Sydney to the Illawarra district. A faded, but iconic whale carving, once visible on rocks at the edge of Botany Bay, is just one indication of a long Aboriginal connection with this idyllic place. An Aboriginal camping ground for untold ages, it remains the home of many Aboriginal families.

With long-standing connections to the south coast and the Burratorang Valley, members of the Simms family often moved from one district to another, depending on the availability of work. It is uncertain when they first came to live at La Perouse but a government census of the Aboriginal community completed on 29 September 1887 indicated that Harry and 20-year old Mary (actually, her name was Jane)¹ Sims (sic) were among the 64 Aboriginal people living at La Perouse. This young couple had two children: six-year-old John and three-year-old Mary Jane.

The government report stated that Harry had 'lived at Botany for years', possibly at another reserve which closed in the early 1880s. At some stage he moved to La Perouse, where he worked as a woodcutter and did 'piece work'. As they received no rations or other government assistance, the family found the going tough. Sometimes there was plenty to eat but at other times food was scarce. Their small wooden hut was basic, with clay floors and no window sashes.²

A proud ancestry

The Simms family were part of an extended family network that established a permanent settlement at La Perouse in the late 1870s. The 'father' of the camp George Timbery and his wife Emma were John Henry Simms' grandparents as Harry Simms' wife Jane was their eldest daughter. John Henry Simms' mother Jane Timbery had a proud ancestry as she was descended from Cooman (Kooman) and Nellie Oolonga, who was said to be a member of the Mulgoa (Nepean) clan. Cooman and Nellie had two

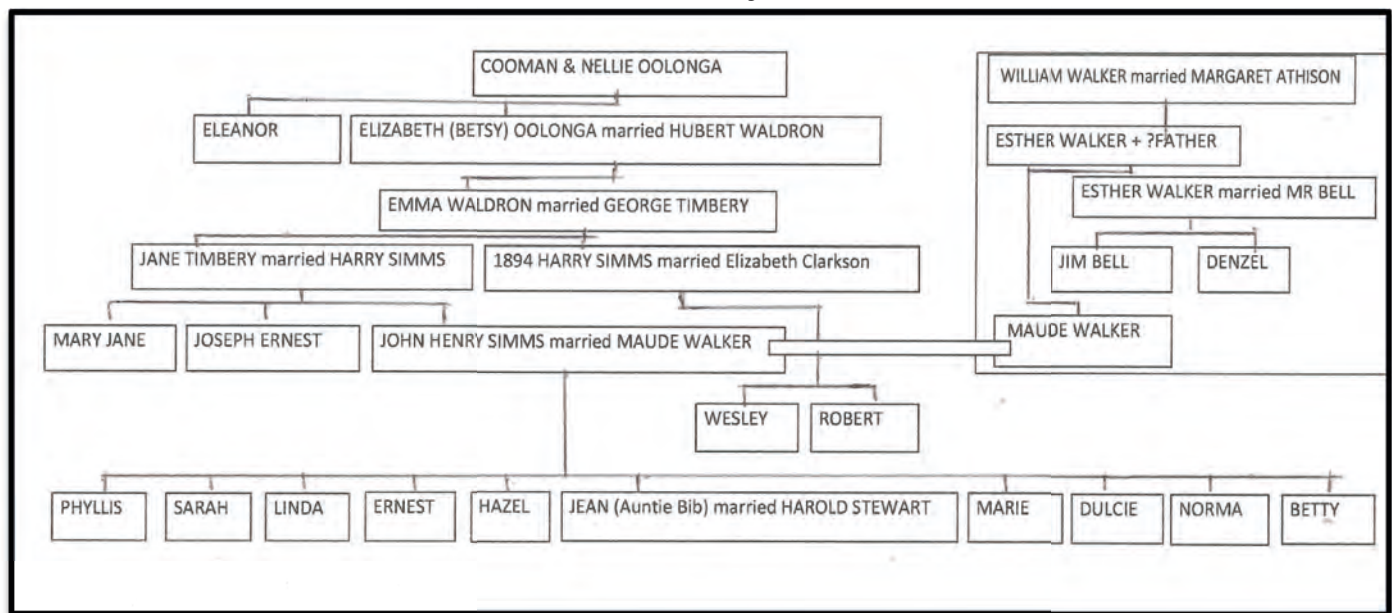
¹ Harry's wife was Jane, not Mary. This could simply have been a mistake on the part of the 1887 census taker.

² La Perouse Census, 1887, Box 1/2687, Letter No. 88/1253 (87/10724), SRNSW.

girls, (probably twins) Eleanor and Elizabeth, born in 1821.³ Elizabeth (Betsy) married Hubert Waldron. In turn their daughter, Emma married La Perouse man George Timbery and Jane was their eldest daughter.⁴

Although there is a Simms family tradition that they are descended from one of the men who challenged James Cook and his crew when they landed on the southern shore of Botany Bay in 1770, it is not possible to verify this. The story is also told how in about 1850, Cooman's sister, Sally Mettymong, aged in her eighties, pointed out the location of Forby Sutherland's grave to a young white boy. One of Cook's crew on the *Endeavour*, Sutherland had died in April 1770 and was buried on the southern shore of Botany Bay. 'White man buried there', Sally had told Elias Connell Laycock (1845-1939) when he was a child. At that time Elias' father owned a large parcel of land at Kurnell, including Cook's landing place.⁵ Sally Mettymong was possibly Elias' nanny as many years later he told his grandchildren stories of the Aboriginal nanny he had when he was growing up.⁶

Simms Family Tree



John Henry Simms (1882-1938) – early life

John Henry Simms had two full siblings: Mary Jane⁷ (already mentioned) and Joseph Ernest, born in about 1887. It is not known when their mother Jane Timbery died but we do know that her husband Henry Simms, or Harry as he was known, married Elizabeth Clarkson in 1894. They had at least six living children, including Wesley, born in 1900 and Robert (Bob) in 1911. La Perouse residents remember how in later years Bob Simms sometimes spoke 'language' – probably Gundungurra – apparently learnt from his father who had Burraborang Valley connections.⁸ Flooded in the 1950s by

³ Registered Births, Deaths & Marriages 1788 - 1905, NSW, references to aborigines from 1788 to 1905, P.J. Mackett, 1989, <http://www.cifhs.com/nswrecords/nswbdm.html>, accessed 11/10/12. There is a history of twins in subsequent generations of the Simms/Timbery families.

⁴ 'Ancestor tree of Yvonne Simms', courtesy of NativeTitle Services Corporation, 4 November 2011.

⁵ Elias Laycock in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 10, 1924: 5, pp. 275-278.

⁶ Alice Miller (nee Laycock), granddaughter of Elias Connell Laycock, personal communication, July 1998.

⁷ Mary Jane Simms' death certificate (1954) lists her parents as Henry Simms & Caroline Timbery, NSW Death Certificate transcription Ref No 1954/26379. Her niece Linda Longbottom (nee Simms) was the informant. As Mary Jane was 74 at the time of her death this means she would have been born in 1880. This does not sound like the three-year-old Mary Jane at La Perouse in 1887.

⁸ Norma & Yvonne Simms, personal communication, 26 November 2012.

the construction of the Warragamba Dam, this valley with its many significant sites had once been the home of Gundungurra-speaking people.⁹



View of the flooded Burragorang Valley, July 2013 [Photo: Pauline Curby]

After their mother died John Henry, Mary Jane (known as Auntie Jane) and Joseph were raised by their grandmother Emma Timbery. One of John Henry's daughters Jean (Auntie Bib) recalled the details:

The children went to live with Granny Timbery and George. Surrounded by their grandparents and family of aunts and uncles, the children were taught to hunt and gather food from the sea and surrounding landscape as well as the art of making traditional arts and boomerangs.¹⁰

John Henry and Joseph's descendants – Mary Jane had no children – have a strong attachment to the memory of the formidable matriarch, Emma Timbery.

While Mary Jane never married, the Simms brothers, John Henry and Joseph, both married in 1911. On 19 January at La Perouse John Simms – a fisherman like his father – married 18-year-old Maude Walker, with Lancelot Railton the officiating minister. Because of her youth Maude, whose occupation was given as 'household duties', married with the consent of her mother Esther Bell. John and Maude were both residents of La Perouse and John at 29 years of age was a good deal older than his bride.

Maude was born at Bombo near Kiama in 1893. Her young mother Esther, in her early 20s, did not name the father on the birth certificate but family tradition is that it was a white man.¹¹ Apparently he wanted to marry her, but Esther declined. Her parents, William Walker and Margaret Athison, were also from the coastal area south of Wollongong, around the Shoalhaven and Minnamurra Rivers. They were the parents of six children. When William, a labourer, died of 'senile decay' in 1895, he was buried, 'according to Aboriginal rites at Saltwater Creek, Minnamurra River near Kiama'.¹²

⁹ Jim Smith, *Aboriginal People of the Burragorang Valley, 1830-1960*, the author, Wentworth Falls, 1991.

¹⁰ Jean Stewart story, as told to her daughter Sandra, undated.

¹¹ Maude Walker birth certificate.

¹² William Walker death certificate.

Three rooms and a summer house

John Henry and Maude Simms had a large family, with their first child Phyllis born in 1911. In the course of the next 23 years seven more daughters and a son were born to the couple. Not all survived. Born in 1912, Sarah died the same year, while the couple's only boy Ernest, born in 1917, died two years later, perhaps during the influenza pandemic.

During these years accommodation on the La Perouse reserve was grossly inadequate. In 1913 when the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) 'granted' houses to two young couples 'who sorely needed them', it was regarded as an unusually generous act. Perhaps the Simms boys and their wives were the lucky couples. When additional accommodation was supplied and 90 blankets distributed, the resident missionary, Miss Baker, was overwhelmed, commenting, 'For all these things we are truly grateful, for La Perouse is much exposed to severe winds during the winter'.¹³ She was also fulsomely grateful in 1925 when an electric light was installed in the mission house – but not in the Aboriginal housing.¹⁴ Indeed the Simms family remember how their mother Maude did shell work by kerosene light many years after this.

Aboriginal housing lagged behind the Australian standard – not that the children worried. John Henry and Maude's middle daughter Jean recalled many years later how in the 1920s,

... we lived on the old reserve on the foreshore of Botany Bay. Our house which faced Aboriginal (later Endeavour) Avenue had three rooms and a summer house out the front that was built by my father. As children we played under the fig tree – also known as the Dreaming Tree – during the day and on some nights in the moonlight. Our family and relatives were always close by to keep watch over us.¹⁵

Jean and the other children grew up with a keen sense of their heritage. She recalled,

As a child I was told that the land on which I was born was a grant to Queen Emma Timbery, my great grandmother. Because of this we were told that the land would always be ours and that we should never leave.¹⁶

This determination to stay on their own land became evident in the 1920s as sand drifts began swallowing up the old houses on the beachfront reserve. In the winter of 1927, alarmed at the situation, APB members who visited the reserve ordered that the sand drift be reduced and the effected houses renovated. Work began when three of 'the native men' were contracted to remove the sand.¹⁷



Simms family home (on right) from where John and Maude sold artefacts, c1930.

*The little girl in the photo is Marie Simms (1926-1991).
[Randwick and District Historical Society]*

¹³ *Australian Aboriginal Advocate (AAA)*, 31 May 1913, p. 7.

¹⁴ *AAA*, 30 May 1925, p. 7.

¹⁵ Jean Stewart, as told to her daughter Sandra and sister Norma Simms.

¹⁶ Jean Stewart, as told to her daughter Sandra and sister Norma Simms.

¹⁷ *AAA*, 31 August 1927, p. 6.

This was a favourable moment for Randwick Council to consider moving the settlement elsewhere. In the 1920s opportunities to promote tourism in Sydney's beach and bayside suburbs were being investigated: a speedway was drawing crowds at Maroubra; at Coogee an ocean pier was under construction. Pretty Frenchmans Bay presented an opportunity for tourism that local promoters did not want blighted by the sight of the rudimentary reserve houses. When news of these plans reached La Perouse, the Aboriginal people were reported to be very upset as, according to the missionaries, 'they love every inch of their little settlement'.¹⁸ As it happened they were not 'moved on' but remained at Frenchmans Bay.¹⁹



View of Aboriginal Reserve in its original position, c 1920 [Randwick and District Historical Society]

Meanwhile after inspecting the reserve the APB met members of Randwick Municipal Council to decide how best to improve its 'general appearance and conditions'.²⁰ No Aboriginal families were consulted in 1930 when it was decided that 'the old area' was to be cancelled and a new Reserve established, 'fronted by a park area, facing the beach'.²¹ With funds provided by the Unemployment Relief Council the Department of Public Works demolished a number of 'old galvanised iron dwellings' and built new ones on an adjoining site. The APB reported that the Aborigines 'are now very comfortably housed, the settlement having the water laid on to each dwelling, and the whole area properly sewered'.²²

The first steps to beautify the reserve were taken when staff from the Botanic Gardens supervised the planting of 'a large number of trees and shrubs ... with a view to making the Reserve an attraction' as the Government Tourist Bureau was considering including the Reserve in its itinerary for overseas tourists who were being shown the 'attractions of the City and its beaches'.²³

While it is not known what the local Aboriginal people thought about their home becoming an attraction for foreign visitors, a number of them considered this an opportunity too good to miss. As the APB commented in 1931, 'this should result in facilities for the Aborigines to dispose of their boomerangs and shell work, in the manufacture of which many of them earn their livelihood'.²⁴

¹⁸ AAA, 31 March 1928, p. 3.

¹⁹ AAA, April/31 May 1928, p. 3.

²⁰ NSW Legislative Assembly (NSW LA), 1929-30, Report of Board for Protection of Aborigines (APB report), 30th June, 1929, p. 3.

²¹ NSW LA, APB report, 30th June 1930, p. 2.

²² NSW LA, APB report, 30th June 1931, p. 2.

²³ NSW LA, APB report, 30th June, 1931, p. 2.

²⁴ NSW LA, APB report, 30th June, 1931, p. 2.

Shell work and boomerang throwing

The men of the reserve in particular never let an opportunity slip by. In anticipation of a visit from the American fleet in 1925 for example, they were reported to be busy making boomerangs. There were numbers of visitors including 'many country natives' coming to La Perouse at this time.²⁵ Jean Stewart (nee Simms) recalled how her father, John Henry became 'a well known identity at La Perouse [as] he was a champion boomerang thrower and skilful artefact maker. His sister Janey (sic) was also a skilful artefact maker and would proudly display her work.'²⁶

Producing artefacts kept whole families occupied as children regularly helped gather materials. Jean also recalled,

My father would take my sister and me with him to gather the materials needed for him to make artefacts. This was hard and sometimes hazardous work. My mother also made artefacts and I would help gather materials for her shell work. This would sometimes result in travelling into other areas to collect what we needed.

I would also help my Auntie Janie sell her shell work down at the Loop area where the rest of the family had their stalls on the weekends. When not at school my time would be spent listening to stories of our culture, learning how to make artefacts and being a help where and when needed.²⁷



Section of a shell wall in Barangaroo by Esme Timbery, 2015 made in the tradition of her great-grandmother Emma Timbery. Material is powder-coated aluminium. [Photo Elizabeth Craig]

Over the years shell work continued to be an important source of revenue and artistic expression for the La Perouse women.²⁸ Despite this inventiveness and hard work, life was tough.

Hard times

By the time the three youngest of Maude and John Henry Simms' children were born the Australian economy was in freefall. Unemployment soared and evictions became routine in Sydney. Many of the homeless families fled to quiet bushland or beachside locations and set up temporary homes to sit out the depression. In 1931 there was an 'influx of unemployed into the Yarra Bay district', adjoining the Aboriginal Reserve.²⁹

Despite the fact John Henry had relief work, the Simms family struggled, even in the late 1930s when the depression was officially over. This is not surprising considering they were excluded from many of the benefits other Australians took for granted. For example the Commonwealth Government maternity allowance was extended to Aboriginal women for the first time in 1959, whereas other Australian women had received this benefit since 1912.³⁰

Norma Simms recalls going bare foot to school and sometimes not having lunch to take. There was usually little money in the house. Maude looked after her brood, however, often arriving at the perimeter of the playground at La Perouse Public School with tea and warm damper for the children.

²⁵ AAA, 31 August 1925, p. 5.

²⁶ Jean Stewart, as told to her daughter Sandra and sister Norma Simms.

²⁷ Jean Stewart, as told to her daughter Sandra and sister Norma Simms.

²⁸ AAA, 30 April 1923, p. 3.

²⁹ La Perouse School file (5/16562.1) SRNSW.

³⁰ 'Asiatics', Pacific islanders and Papuans were also excluded from the benefit. Maternity Allowance, No. 8 of 1912. An Act to provide for Payment of Maternity Allowances. [Assented to 10th October, 1912.], *Australian Government, ComLaw*, <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C1912A00008> accessed 6 August 2014; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal, the history of Australian Feminism*, (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999) p. 210.

These may have been hard years but there were also happy times. Norma particularly recalls trips to Wreck Bay where Maude's half brothers Jim and Denny (Denzel) Bell lived.

John Henry Simms was working at the old Maroubra speedway site 'shovelling sand' in 1938 when he collapsed and died one day after finishing work. When Maude was told of her husband's death she had been applying kalsomine to the walls of their house. The tragic news made her drop the brush leaving a deep mark on the wall: it was there for years afterwards. She struggled to support the family, especially as she was not well herself: there was a 'shadow on her lungs'.³¹

Maude died in 1945 when the children were still relatively young. The new matriarch Phyllis was only 34, while Hazel and Jean were in their twenties and the three youngest girls were under 18. With both Simms parents dead, the family were haunted by the spectre that the children would be taken away by 'the welfare'. This was an ever present threat to Aboriginal families, especially after 1915.



John Henry and Maude Simms

[Randwick and District Historical Society]

Although the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* permitted the removal of children from their families, it required that neglect be proved. If children were well clothed, fed and manifestly not neglected, as was the case with the Simms children, this was difficult to do. In 1915, when this legislation was amended, the APB was given power 'to effectively deal with the aboriginal children by placing them in training homes and apprenticing them to suitable employers'.³² This amended act was soon implemented at La Perouse and in 1916 the first of many children were sent to children's homes at Bomaderry and Cootamundra. With good, but misguided intentions, religious organisations such as the Australian Aboriginal Mission aimed to 'take these little ones away from the influence of the reserve'.³³ The organisations which did this believed they were acting in the interests of the children.

None of the Simms family was removed: their family held them close and even after the death of both parents the younger girls remained at home as the result of an alliance between Jean Simms and her employer local shopkeeper Mr Pawsey who had a general store with a post office agency and tea rooms at Yarra Bay. Jean used to reminisce how Pawsey warned her, 'Don't let them take those kids'. Her vigilance ensured this did not happen.

Two years after her mother's death in 1947 she married returned serviceman Harold Stewart who proved to be a pillar of strength in her struggle to keep her family together. Even though Jean and Harold did not live with them, they were close enough to keep an eye on the younger girls, while at the same time supervising the hostel on the reserve where visiting Aborigines were housed.

³¹ Dulcie Simms, personal communication, 14 March 2013.

³² Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy, Land In Aboriginal Politics In New South Wales, 1770-1972*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, pp. 120-123; NSW PP LA, Protection of the Aborigines, Report of the Board, 1915, p. 3; Aborigines Protection Amending Act, 1915, www.aiatsis.gov.au.

³³ AAA, 30 September 1916, p. 8; 28 February 1917, p. 8.

VALE GEORGE COULTHARD

ELIZABETH CRAIG
(with additions by Bruce Coulthard)

George Coulthard, a member of a pioneering family from Como, passed away in Mudgee in December 2017 after a long illness.

Although George left the Shire for Mudgee in 1970, his interest in Como has never wavered. He continued to write and collect Como history, and he visited often, attending neighbourhood reunions and celebrations. After joining SSHS in 2014, George managed to attend several meetings and contributed articles and poetry to the *Bulletin*. (His mother, Florence's memories of early Como, written in 1967, were published in the *Bulletin* in February 2015).

In 2005 I had the pleasure of recording George's oral history, a copy of which is now lodged in Sutherland Library's Local Studies archive.¹



George Coulthard, 2005
[Photo: E. .Craig]

This was his story.

Born to George and Florence Coulthard in 1929 George grew up at 2 Ortona Parade, Como. His parents had built the first house in Mulyan Street, West Como in 1913, but the snakes, bushfires and isolation drove them to pull the house down and rebuild in Ortona Parade. Even so, George recalled there were few houses, roads or amenities around them. Scylla Bay had not been filled in and Ortona Parade was then a through road, along which the bus travelled to Como Station.

George's father was a carpenter on the railways, but after falling and injuring his knee he became crippled, unable to work. The family relied on the dole and his mother lined up for clothing and food tickets. It was the Depression time and many people in the district were poor. George described how the community helped each other. Busy bees were organised to help someone build their house, and benefits were held for anyone in need. When one of the Coulthard's chooks was stolen, George's father attitude was, 'Well, they must have been hungry.'

The Como community made their own entertainment too. They held concerts and dances. George's mother had the only piano in Como at one stage, and it was taken by horse and dray to be used at many places – for functions at the School of Arts, for parties on riverboats and for dances down at the Pleasure Grounds. On Sunday nights, the fire would be lit and George's mother would play the piano with everyone singing around it.

George's Dad frequented Como Pub every Saturday. He would often see Henry Lawson, who was deaf, sitting by himself in the pub because he couldn't hear anyone. Like everyone else, he did it tough during the Depression.

The Como kids played in the Georges River, making tin canoes from corrugated iron and sealing them with bitumen from the road workers. Carina Bay came right up to George's place in Ortona

Parade and when the tide was in it was a great swimming hole. Sometimes they swam in the nude. They ate oysters picked from the rocks, and used bamboo from down near the swamp to make bows and arrows. They sometimes had gang fights, although not serious ones, said George. They wandered through the bush looking for birds' nests.

Kids didn't wear shoes to school because they were kept for best. George walked to school along a bush track, and returned via the road to pick up the mail from the post office. That was his job. George wasn't a great student at school and got six of the best more than once. He never finished a composition, and only began writing poetry after he moved to Mudgee. At a school reunion in the early 2000s, George brought a copy of his poems to give his favourite teacher, Jack Crogan. Jack taught third and fourth class. He was Indian, the son of a hawker who sold out of a suitcase. Known as Black Jack, George said he could do anything – play the piano, he put on concerts and even made a donkey with wiggly ears out of wire and hessian for a sketch they were doing. George was sad that he missed Jack at the reunion and could not hand over his poetry.

George was working at the Sutherland Brickworks when war in the Pacific finished. The staff were told the news at 11.00am, and they all went home, got dressed up and went to town. 'You couldn't move. There was singing, dancing, crying,' recalled George. He reached Martin Place, but was nearly crushed. There was sadness too. The Reverend Riley, Como's Presbyterian Minister, who had delivered the dreaded telegrams informing families of deaths in the war, lost both his son who was in the air force, and daughter who was in the navy. George had friends who didn't come back.

George joined the army during the Korean war, but didn't get there. He was kept in Puckapunyal because of his mechanical skills and stayed there for six years. Later, George worked as an undertaker with Olsen's Funerals in Sutherland. His job was to arrange funerals, trim the coffins and prepare bodies for viewings. 'Kiddies were hard,' he said.

In 1970, George married Doris Stewart (nee Appleby) who worked for Scott's Florist shop in Sutherland and they moved to Mudgee where they managed and owned the Central Motel. During this time, George was the prime force in establishing the first Mudgee Tourism Committee. After selling the motel, George & Doris opened the first 'Mudgee Florist' and George spent a couple of years building the home that Doris still lives in today in Mudgee. Upon moving in, George then bought and ran the Mudgee Laundromat. In the late 90's, George & Doris sold their businesses and retired.

As per his wishes, his son (Bruce) and Grandson (Allen) are planning to soon deposit his ashes somewhere near his childhood home in Como.

¹ Oral History interview – George Coulthard with Elizabeth Craig, Tuesday, 30 Aug. 2005, in Suth. Library, Local Studies

BLACKWOODS BEACH

PETER MOORE

Blackwoods Beach is a small sand and rocky beach situated just south of Cronulla Beach. It is nestled below the cliffs and behind the island known locally as Shark Island. In calm weather it can be a wonderful safe swimming beach, but in moderate conditions it can be very deceptive with very strong currents generated near the rocky shore. When the seas are running it is extremely dangerous and only the strongest of swimmers dare to enter the water.



I have lived above the beach since 1964 and was a frequent visitor prior to this. Over the years I have participated in more rescues than I can remember. Most people find themselves in trouble when they misjudge the seemingly calm conditions and find the strong currents taking them out to sea.

Blackwoods Beach, Cronulla [Photo: Creo Moore]

There has always been a mystery as to the derivation of the naming of Blackwoods Beach. When I was young the beach was always known locally as 'Blackmans Beach' and we surmised that it must have been named after our Aboriginal forefathers. It would have been a good place to find shell fish and there were a number of semi permanent water soaks coming out of the cliffs. It would have been a good summer camping spot for them.

The Geographical Names Board indicates that the beach was named after a local resident. Early maps show that a F.M. Blackwood owned D.P. 229 fronting The Esplanade and extending to Ewos Pde. Fred Midgley in his *Bulletin* article (May 1977, page 44) stated that a house was being constructed for Dr Blackwood at Cronulla in May 1901. This information was derived from a newspaper report, in the *St George Advocate* published 25th May 1901. I can not find this reference in Trove, but it is held in the Historical Index of the SSC library.

The first reference that I have found in Trove is of his purchase of the land on 8th July 1901 in the *NSW Gazette*. A house was built and was named 'Roker'. Eventually several Doctors move to adjacent holdings and the area became known as the 'Doctors Corner', with Drs Gordon Craig and Blaxland being some of the neighbours.

Who was Dr Blackwood? Dr Frederick Martindale Blackwood was a doctor and a surgeon who graduated in 1884 from Durham University.¹ He was the fourth son of a James Blackwood and Grandson of Pinkstan Blackwood who was said to be a surgeon in the Royal North Down Regiment from Northern Island.

The first mention of Dr Blackwood I can find is that he appeared to be working for a railway construction outfit in the Cooma area in 1886.² He appears to have stayed in the area for some time and became involved in a number of mining ventures including the Cobar and Giandarra mines.³

In 1898 he married a widow Mrs Elizabeth Adams, whose late husband had been the NSW Bank Manager in Cooma. The marriage took place in Darlington on 15th February 1898 and on the 13th November 1898 their son Pinkstan Hamilton Blackwood was born at 'Airedale' Summer Hill.⁴



In 1904 his mother Elizabeth died in Sunderland on 28th September. She had lived at Park Place Sunderland. Sunderland is coastal city situated on the River Wear downstream from Durham.⁵ To the north of Sunderland across the River Wear is beach side area known as Roker. The sandy beach is backed by cliff very similar to our Blackwoods Beach, thus homesick Dr Blackwood named the house 'Roker'.

Sunderland South Lighthouse from Roker Beach, UK [geograph.org.uk]

Dr Blackwood became ill in 1903, resigned as Honorary Medical Officer of the Western Suburbs Cottage Hospital, and took an 18 month world trip to regain his strength. On their return, for some time they settled in Roker.⁶

There is little evidence that the Blackwoods took much interest in the local area as the only references are nominations for the election of Cecil Monro. The house was extended in 1908 by builder Allan Blood (from Shire street names) and was used as a boarding house by Mrs Hamilton, who had previously operated a boarding house in Sylvania House - part of the Holt Estate. Mrs Hamilton continued operating the boarding house at Roker until 1912 when the block went to auction in January and the contents of the house sold in May. Roker continued to be advertised as a boarding house by the Martin family for the next few years.

Roker Street first appears in Trove in 1912 when a block was sold in September for 350 pounds.

Dr Blackwood appears to have moved his practice to Turramurra in 1908 and no longer had any interest in the Cronulla area. He died on 10th July 1953 at Chatswood.⁷

Just to add some confusion in the naming of 'Blackwoods Beach' in April 1909 the Shipwreck Relief Society awarded a bronze medal and certificate of merit to Mr Arthur E Thomas for his bravery in rescuing a 10-year-old boy named Ronald Best. It appears that young Ronald was swimming at 'Hamilton Beach' (after Hamilton's boarding house), Cronulla on January 22nd and was carried out to sea. Mr Thomas with great promptitude plunged in and swam through the heavy breakers to the lad's assistance, taking a lifebuoy with him. He managed to support the boy until assistance was rendered by a fisherman and his boat. An article on the rescue and photograph of A E Thomas appeared in *The Sydney Mail* and *New South Wales Advertiser* on Wednesday 18th August 1909.

¹ *NSW Government Gazette*, 23 March, 1886

² 'Accident on Railway Line', *Queanbeyan Age*, 21 September, 1886

³ *Dubbo Despatch* and *Wellington Independent*, 3 September, 1897, p.4; *Evening News* (Sydney), 2 November, 1897, p.3; *Goulburn Herald*, 31 January, 1894, p.2

⁴ 'Social Gossip', *The Australian Star*, 19 February, 1898; 'Family Notices', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 November, 1898

⁵ *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 September, 1904

⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 March 1905; 22nd October 1904, p.9

⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 29 February, 1908, p.10

THE SHIRE'S HISTORIC CHURCHES

An SSHS Excursion of 3rd March, 2018

CHRISTINE EDNEY

Sutherland Shire has six heritage listed churches and many other early churches. On 3rd March sixteen Society members embarked on a bus tour to visit a number of them. This is a summary of the trip plus information of past and present churches at Sutherland. In later *Bulletins* there will be articles on churches in other parts of the Shire.

We started at the southwest corner of Robertson and Oxford Streets Sutherland where the shire's first church had been- **Sutherland Congregational church**. Early Congregational services were held in the waiting room at Sutherland Railway Station. The foundation stone of what originally was the Evangelical Jubilee Church was laid on August 20th 1887. The unfinished building was acquired by the Congregational Union in May 1888. In about 1900 the church was moved to Railway Parade adjacent to the then Post Office and around 1920 it was moved again to the corner of Belmont and Acton Streets where it became a hall behind the 1925 brick Congregational church.¹



Preparing to move Congregational Church from Oxford Street to Railway Parade circa 1900 [Sutherland Shire Library - SSLib]



Outside the Uniting church hall in Merton Street is the foundation stone of the original 1887 Evangelical Jubilee Church which became the first Congregational Church at Sutherland .

[SSHS]



Congregational Church when it was near Post Office circa 1911 [SSLlib].

We drove to Jannali Scout hall in Box Road, where members of the Jannali East Congregational church met, then to Oyster Bay Baptist and Catholic churches, followed by Como School of Arts where early Catholic and Congregational Services were held. From there we drove to Mulyan Street Como where the **Congregational/ Uniting church** was built in 1932.² That church was sold in 1986 and is now a house. Morning tea was at **Jannali Congregational Church** at 3 Louisa Street.

After visiting **Sylvania Heights Congregational church** (now a child care centre) and **St John's Church of England Sylvania Heights** - both in Holt Rd - we bumped across Sylvania's speed humps to view **St Stephen's Anglican Church** (built 1935). This was originally west of Taren Point Road in the F6 corridor, but was moved by Rotary in 1996 onto the grounds of Taren Point Public School. It was called St Stephens as it was built from recycled material (timber, doors, leadlight) from St Stephens Presbyterian Church in Macquarie Street.³ The school bell was from Caringbah's first fire station. Nearby the former **St Lukes Miranda** is now the Fisherman's Club off the end of Alexander Avenue.

Our first stop in Kurnell was at **Harold Wheen Methodist church** which was built in 1927. It was closed and sold in 1986 and is now a house. Next we went inside **St John Fisher Catholic Church** on Prince Charles Parade which was built in 1937/38 and remains very much as it was when built. The last Kurnell stop was **St James Anglican Church** at the south east corner of Dampier and Torres Streets. This was the original St Andrews Cronulla church and before that a dance hall.

Next stop was **St Andrews Church of England, Cronulla** where Society member 'St Andrew' Platfoot spoke about the church. This church was built about 1936 in Byzantine style with art deco details. Next we went to the **Caringbah Uniting (formerly Methodist) church** at the corner of Port Hacking Road and Dudley Street. The original Methodist church was opened in 1919. The current church was built in 1959.

We threw in a modern church because of its unusual architecture and visited **Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church** off Port Hacking Road. We drove past the current **St Philip's Anglican Church** in Port Hacking Road and its former site in President Avenue. We then went to the site of **St Barnabas Anglican Church Gympie Bay** (now a children's centre) and on to **St Stylianos Greek Orthodox Church** where the priest spoke to us about the unusual iconography in the church.

Back at Sutherland we passed **St John's Anglican Church**. According to *History of St Luke's Miranda* the first St John's Sutherland was dedicated on 4th March 1894. In 1932 the wooden church buildings were relocated from the north-west corner Boyle and Eton Streets to the corner of Flora and Belmont Streets. The low loader pulled by horses became bogged in Flora Street and had to stay overnight hung with kerosene warning lamps. The official opening of the relocated church was on 6th June 1932 by Mrs Stapleton. The current church was constructed in 1964 and opened in 1965. It was built mainly by volunteer labour using a design for a community building at Caringbah as the Church could not afford architect's fees. As the Church was a war memorial donors could claim a tax donation.

St John's Church before it was moved from Boyle and Eton St [SSHS]



St John's Church circa 1930 [SSLib]

The western wall, made of corrugated metal, was built as a temporary wall to allow for future expansion of the church. This never eventuated.

Our last stop was **Sutherland Methodist Church** (now Uniting). From 1903 Methodist services were held in Lobb's Hall. A weatherboard church was erected at the corner of Flora and Merton Streets and officially opened on 4th March 1905. The Methodist newspaper of 4 February 1905, *Methodism in Sutherland Shire*, commented:

*Sutherland has steadily improved and the Hon. E Vickery is building a church for them, to be given to the people called Methodists as a New Years gift.*⁴



[SSLib]

The Sutherland Methodist Church was burnt down, and on 12th October 1907 approval was given to build a new church.

According to 'Brief History of Sutherland Methodism' (SCAM 9/5/1953) on 2nd November 1935 some boys got into the church vestry looking for a sword belonging to the Church's Order of Knights which they had heard was there. To see what was in a locked box belonging to the Ladies Church Aid Society they dropped a match through a crack in the lid. The contents of the box caught alight, the boys ran away and the church burnt down. While the church was without a building, services were held in Sutherland School of Arts. In 1936 the first part of the new church was built (and the interior of the church remains practically unchanged). In a cavity behind the foundation stone was placed the history of the church on a parchment scroll enclosed in metal waterproof cylinder.⁵

On our way back to our starting point we passed the former Catholic presbytery in Merton Street where Father Dunlea (Sutherland's first parish priest) started taking in destitute boys in 1934 which led to the establishment of Boys Town.

Sutherland Catholic Church. Prior to 1891 masses were held in the house of Mr Kelly near Woronora Cemetery. In 1891 the church bought and converted a former hall in Robertson Street into a church. In 1920s a new church was built on its current site. The current church dates from the 1980s.



First Catholic Church – corner Oxford and Robertson Streets (SSLib)



St Patricks Church (photo from between 1960-1970) [SSLib]

Sutherland Baptist Church was at the north east corner Auburn and Flora Streets and was where Sylvanvale (then the Handicapped Children's Centre) started in 1947. The church was officially opened on 8th March 1941. Prior to the church being built services had been held from mid 1930s in the Sutherland School of Arts.⁶ . According to a parishioner the money from selling the church was used to build Inaburra church/school at Menai.

Shire Live at 7 Stapleton Street started as **Sutherland Assemblies of God** church in 1949. Early meetings were at the School of Arts. The church bought 7-9 Stapleton Street for 450 pounds and in 1954 built their first church.

Sutherland Presbyterian Church – was at corner of Glencoe and Flora Streets.

¹ Sutherland Uniting Church website

² *Four Into One: Memories and Events of the Four Churches that came to be Jannali Peninsular Parish*, by Frances Gammie, c 1989

³ History of St Stephens Anglican Church, Taren Point

⁴ *Methodism in Sutherland Shire*, by R Short of Australian Methodist Historical Society (1968)

⁵ *St George Call*, 8th May 1936

⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10th March 1941

1954 ROYAL VISIT

STEPHANIE BAILEY

Written for Sutherland Shire Library Series: Local History, Local Studies

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The first visit by Queen Elizabeth II to Australia was beset with false starts, tragic setbacks and unforeseen challenges, but when she finally arrived in February 1954 the people of the Sutherland Shire embraced their Queen - and the small part they were to play in her visit - with unreserved enthusiasm and boundless energy.



Flags and banner line the Princes Highway at Sylvania to celebrate the royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the Shire, 1954

On 19 October 2011, hundreds of well-wishers and dignitaries greeted Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, when they arrived in Canberra for the start of their most recent – and possibly final - official tour of Australia. This ten day trip was the 16th time that the Queen had travelled to our country, and although the spectacle generated a huge amount of media interest and public excitement, it was nothing compared to the frenzied anticipation of 1954 when the young and newly crowned Queen became the first – and so far only – reigning British monarch to set foot in Australia.

Prior to 1954 Australia had never seen a British sovereign on its shores, however over the years it had played host to a handful of members of the royal family. In fact, when Prince Philip disembarked at Farm Cove in Sydney on 3 February he was not the first Duke of Edinburgh to do so. He was the second. In 1867, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, son of Queen Victoria became the first royal figure to travel to Australia. The trip was overshadowed by several unpleasant occurrences, not least of all an assassination attempt when the Prince was shot in the back whilst attending a fundraising picnic at Clontarf Beach on 12 March 1868. Thankfully, Prince Alfred's bullet wound soon healed, but his would-be killer, a troubled Irishman named Henry O'Farrell, was

quickly tried and then hanged at Darlinghurst Gaol on 21 April. When Prince Philip arrived here 86 years later, he would have envisaged a rather less alarming reception from the local inhabitants, particularly as he had already made two earlier trips to Australia. The first was in 1940 as a naval officer aboard the battleship *Ramillies* and the second was as an officer aboard the destroyer *Whelp*.

Three future British kings also travelled to Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it was not until after World War II that plans were made for an actual reigning monarch to journey Down Under. And that monarch was not Queen Elizabeth II, but her father, King George VI. As Prince Albert, Duke of York, the King had toured Australia in 1927 with his wife, Elizabeth (later known as the Queen Mother), and by late 1948 preparations were well underway for the now ruling couple, along with Princess Margaret, to make a return visit early the following year. It was a trip which never came to be.

On 23 November 1948, Prime Minister Ben Chifley announced to the nation that as a result of advice given to the King by his special medical consultants, the proposed royal tour of Australia and New Zealand was postponed indefinitely. A bulletin issued from Buckingham Palace stated:

'The King is suffering from an obstruction to circulation through arteries of the legs, which has only recently become acute. The defective blood supply to the right foot causes anxiety. Complete rest has been advised.'

In layman's terms, the King had a blood clot. It was a huge blow - not only for the King – and carried with it far-reaching implications.

Because of the postponement, both the Federal and State Governments, along with business interests and public organisations, all incurred heavy financial losses. But perhaps the hardest hit, despite having charged substantial premiums, were the insurance companies that provided cover for monetary risks sustained in the event of the tour being 'postponed for a period of more than six months from the scheduled date of the King's arrival in Australia or cancelled altogether.'

Something must have been in the wind regarding the King's condition because policies originally purchased at the rate of 10 guineas for each £100, increased in price in October 1948 to 15 guineas, and then to 25 guineas just a few days prior to Mr Chifley's announcement. In fact in September, a Sydney agent for Lloyds stated:

'We will not accept this type of insurance as a bet. It is legitimate only if the person or business firm seeking it would suffer pecuniary loss in the ... event that the tour would have to be postponed.'



The Royal Visit and You, 1954

As it turned out, many were affected. Hotel bookings were cancelled, sporting events were abandoned, event rehearsals were put on hold, and countless businesses – particularly those that had purchased special decorations for the one-off event – found that they were out of pocket, even after making hefty insurance claims. For example, Walders Manchester Company had imported about £20,000 worth of flags, flagpoles, shields, bunting, and cotton draping, but only £8,000 to £10,000 of this was covered. A myriad of books, brochures, homewares and novelty items were also

specially produced for the 1949 royal tour. Today many of

these mementoes, thanks to their quirkiness, are quite collectable, but back then it would have been practically impossible for souvenir sellers to shift all their suddenly erroneous stock of keepsake mugs, ash trays, spoons and tea towels. It is therefore not surprising that when it was announced in September 1950 that the King, Queen and Princess Margaret would travel to Australia in early 1952, manufacturers and importers were wary and most opted against carrying any orders for the rescheduled royal visit until they were sure the tour was imminent. This was a sound decision because on 23 September 1951, King George VI had his left lung removed.

On 10 October 1951, it once again fell to the Prime Minister, this time Robert Menzies, to explain to the country that the King was simply too unwell to undertake such a lengthy and exhaustive journey to Australia. Speaking in the House of Representatives, Menzies offered his profound regret regarding both the cancellation of the tour and its cause, but he did offer some consolation – Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, would travel in place of the King. ‘We look forward to their visit,’ Menzies enthused, and ‘shall find in their presence another means of expressing in every way open to us our devotion to the Throne.’ Arrangements for the 1952 tour then assumed a fresh energy more befitting the young couple. Unfortunately, heartbreak lay ahead.

London, Jan. 31 (A.A.P.). – The King stood bareheaded and sad at London airport to-day as he watched Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh fly off on the first stage of their trip to Australia and New Zealand. The Royal couple left at 12:12pm (10:12pm Sydney time) for Nairobi, Kenya, whence they will travel to Australia in the liner Gothic ... It was a departure without fuss, ceremony and emotion, but for the Royal family it was obviously a sad affair. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1952).

It was also the last time the Princess would see her father, because on 6 February 1952 King George VI died. Elizabeth, now Queen, immediately flew back to London, but before leaving Africa she assured the people of Australia, New Zealand and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) that her visit to their countries was not cancelled, but merely postponed. NSW Premier, James McGirr responded optimistically that the Government would preserve the records and documents compiled for the abandoned royal visits as they ‘may be useful for a tour later on.’ Not quite so useful were all the keepsake items which had once again been produced to celebrate the impending visit. Indeed, the general consensus had been so overwhelmingly confident that this tour would take place, that insurance cover against cancellation had been very small. Unfortunately, most of the 30,000 illustrated booklets which had been specially printed for presentation to schoolchildren as souvenirs of the 1952 royal tour had already been distributed. As it turned out, it was another two years before Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh finally made their way to Australia - and the Sutherland Shire.

‘By November 1953, when the Queen left London en route to Australia,’ wrote Jane Connors in her 2015 book, *Royal visits to Australia*, ‘the inflammatory effects of the coronation, plus the two painful episodes of *tour interruptus* had brought the desire to see a reigning monarch actually here at last and standing on Australian soil almost to boiling point.’ What eventuated was ‘the most complex, most witnessed and probably most expensive journey ever through this country’. (A comprehensive list of facts and figures from the 1954 royal tour is found on the National Museum of Australia website).

To ensure the success of the Australian leg of the tour, an unprecedented amount of preparation and participation was required at multiple levels of government and society. Whilst programs and appointments were overseen by the Director General of the royal visit, Lieutenant General Frank Berryman, district councils formed planning committees to deal with the arrangement of events within their local areas. In October 1953, the Sutherland Shire appointed its working party of (then) President D.G. Welch and Councillors Pollard, Fitzpatrick and Monro. Even though the Queen was not scheduled to stop, but just pass through the Sutherland Shire on her way to official functions in Wollongong, they still had an awful lot to organise.

The National Archives of Australia is full of photographs, documents and records pertaining to the royal visit and includes a digitised copy of the 125-page book: *Notes for planning the visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh*. This verbosely-titled item was prepared from information obtained from Buckingham Palace and was intended to assist officials make practical decisions regarding provisions for the Queen's visit. It is a fascinating publication and contains some insightful titbits, such as:

- Inquiries are often made as to the Queen's favourite colour. Her Majesty has no marked preference but does not like magenta.
- The Queen and His Royal Highness do not like oysters or soup. Alternatives such as grapefruit, paw-paw or melon are suggested.
- Her Majesty may have a glass of sherry before a meal and occasionally a little wine or champagne with the meal but normally the Queen prefers a fruit drink, such as a long orange.
- Strictly speaking, there are no 'Royal Colours'. The nearest approach is the Queen's Racing Colours, which are – purple, gold braid, scarlet sleeves, black velvet cap with gold fringe. It should be noted that the purple here referred to appears as an extremely dark blue.

There is also quite a lot of information and direction in the book regarding transport procedures. During their 1954 tour, the royal couple travelled by royal aircraft, royal barge, royal yacht, royal car and royal train - the latter not without some controversy. The first problem was that a coupled pair of Canadian diesel-electric Alco locomotives had been chosen to pull the carriages in which Queen and her entourage would travel. This did not sit at all well with steam enthusiasts who thought that a C.38 coal-burning locomotive – built locally in the Eveleigh workshops – should haul the royal train as a tribute to Australian engineering. Instead a green steam C.38 was given the less prestigious job of pilot engine and would precede by 30 minutes the royal train - with its royal blue diesels - on the Queen's journeys to Bathurst and Newcastle.

The second issue was that members of the Australian Railways Union felt that seniority had not been observed in the Minister for Transport, Mr E. Wetherell's choice of guard for the royal train in NSW. There was even talk that guards might call a stop-work in protest on the day of the Queen's arrival. Fortunately, this storm in a railway teacup soon subsided and in late January technicians undertook a thorough trial run of the Queen's train journeys. This was a task which was not taken lightly. During rehearsals the signalling, the internal telephone system and the Queen's radio were all tested. Stewards even prepared the royal dining-room and three plates of cold chicken and ham salad were laid on the table – but were not eaten. At Lithgow, Katoomba, Bowenfels and several other stations, a railway official alighted from a carriage and paced up and down the platform. He was making sure that when the royal train pulled into each station it would stop at exactly the right position so that the Queen could simply step straight onto the royal carpet. One railway station that was not tested was Bulli. This was because, despite all the months of intense

preparation, the royal train was never supposed to visit the seaside town, nor journey north along the line through the Sutherland Shire. Not until the eleventh hour that is.

The Queen's first week in Australia was crammed full with official functions, whirlwind trips to rural centres, and frequent outings through Sydney streets packed to bursting with an expectant and animated public. Many people had waited hours just to catch a fleeting glimpse of Her Majesty. On Thursday 11 February 1954 it was finally the Sutherland Shire's turn to see the Queen.

At 10am the royal couple stepped out from Government House and into a dark and cloudy morning. Coordinating noticeably with the overcast conditions, the Queen was dressed in a gunmetal paper shantung coat with matching hat, black shoes and accessories. The Duke wore a light grey single-breasted lounge suit. From their city accommodation, the royal couple then drove off in a luxury landaulet towards Wollongong for what was probably the most relaxed day of the tour to that date. After leaving the CBD the royal entourage travelled south through the St. George district, down Rocky Point Road and then along the Princes Highway. Crowds cheered and waved them on their way.



Chambers at Sutherland decorated with ribbons and flags for the royal visit.

When the royal car entered the Sutherland Shire, the Queen was met with a 'rousing and enthusiastic' welcome. Not to mention, most likely, a huge sigh of relief. After months of hard work and years of waiting, Elizabeth II had, at last, arrived in the Shire. 'It is estimated,' reported the *Propeller* newspaper, 'that about 20,000 persons lined the route through the gaily decorated township.' Along what is now the Old Princes Highway, Council buildings and local businesses were bedecked with red, white and blue flags, bunting and streamers. (At a later Sutherland Shire Council meeting, a certain Mr E.G. Whitlam was thanked for his efforts in decorating the Post Office). In a special enclosure reserved for the elderly, 500 sat on rugs or in chairs along the roadside. As the Queen continued on towards the National Park and Lady Rawson Drive, one old lady waved a rather sodden flag and called out in a high, clear voice: 'God bless you, dearie'.

[And then] a magnificent view greeted the Queen. For a mile ahead, beautiful trees lined the straight stretch of road and two floral gates of dahlias, surmounted by crowns picked out in marigolds, stood on the shoulders of the road, whilst just ahead of them was a large decorative arch, built by Sutherland Shire Council, with the inscription 'We Welcome Our Queen'.

Once through the arch (a second had been erected at Sylvania) the Queen and her entourage were greeted with a thunderous reception. 17,000 children and 300 teachers from 60 schools had assembled three to five deep on both sides of a 2km stretch of Lady Rawson Drive. The excited youngsters had arrived in Sutherland that morning by train, bus and on foot. Special signs, with information painted on both front and back sides, had been specially erected to help guide the children and their teachers to the correct marshalling areas. Indeed, five chains on the western side of Lady Rawson Drive had earlier been cleared and debris removed to make room for the young crowd. Ambulance tents, shelters for lost children, and temporary sanitary facilities were also provided and as the royal tour coincided with the height of summer local Bush Fire Brigades were on hand in case an emergency should eventuate.

The Queen and Duke smiled and waved constantly as the royal car literally crawled through the cheering congregation at Sutherland, but after twelve minutes they had passed by all the children, as well as a group of assembled ex-servicemen, and then they continued on their journey south. More crowds lined the highway at Engadine, and at Waterfall some 270 tuberculosis patients, with 50 nurses, sisters and doctors, gathered alongside the sanatorium. 'Sitting outside is not too good for some of the patients,' commented Dr N.C. Wright, 'but you have to compromise at a time like this.'



Royal motorcade, Princes Highway Engadine, with people lining the road.

Following their official functions at Wollongong, the original plan was for the royal couple to return to Sydney in the manner they had come – in the landaulet. But just one day earlier, on 10 February 1954, the NSW Premier, Mr J.J. Cahill, announced a change to the itinerary – the Queen and her party would travel back in the royal train from Bulli. A Mr Harrison, who returned with the

Queen from her northern tour to Lismore said: 'It was thought that at the end of a long day it would be infinitely better for the Queen to be able to relax on the train, rather than travel over the same route by car.' Although this was most likely true for the Queen, the unexpected change would not remotely have been a relaxing proposition for all those who had to spring into action to accommodate the amended travel plans.

Nevertheless, by late afternoon on 11 February, the royal party had boarded the royal train at Bulli and was en route to Sydney. Large crowds congregated at stations or positioned themselves at vantage points along the way in the hope of catching sight of the royal couple, and indeed many thrilled onlookers were rewarded as the Queen repeatedly interrupted her tea to stand and wave from the train's observation platform. 'As the train passed along the coastline,' reported the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'the Duke pointed out landmarks and beauty spots to the Queen. At Sutherland, the train slowed to walking pace as the Queen waved to people crammed on either side of the station. A girl stood on the railway track beside the royal train with two cocker spaniels flying coloured pennants from their leads.' Just further along, huge groups had grandstand views from the enormous clumps of rock which ran alongside the railway line. Many of these boulders were painted in white letters the leftover catchphrases of political campaigns: 'Peace: Stop War,' 'Victims of U.S. Dollar Plans,' and 'Vote So-and-So.' Whether these unexpected slogans raised some royal eyebrows is not known.



Crowd awaiting arrival of Queen Elizabeth.

At 5pm, the royal train pulled in to Central Station and from here the Queen returned by car to Government House. The Duke, on the other hand, stepped into a separate waiting vehicle and then set off at pace through peak hour Sydney so he could arrive in time at the Sydney Cricket Ground to watch champion Victorian runner, John Landy, compete in the Australian Athletic Championships – which he won.

It was another remarkable day in Queen Elizabeth II's 1954 royal tour of Australia, and one which has endured affectionately in the memory of those who were lucky enough to be there – including perhaps, you.

Further Reading and Information

- The documentary, *A Royal Romance – Queen Elizabeth*, can be viewed through Sutherland Shire Library's Kanopy on-demand video streaming service.
- The Governor-General's railway carriage, in which the royal couple travelled whilst in New South Wales, is currently on display in Store 3 at the Discover Centre of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences at Castle Hill.

Sydney Morning Herald articles:

- *Insuring on the royal risks*, 22 September 1948, p.1
- *High insurance claims*, 24 November 1948, p.3.
- *Royal souvenirs not dead loss*, 1 February 1949, p.2.
- *Royal tour plans will be kept for future*, 8 February 1952, p.6.
- *Royal tour to be early 1954*, 16 October 1952, p.3.
- *Sydney men to man royal train*, 1 January 1954, p.1.
- *Protest at royal train decision*, 5 January 1954, p.4.
- *Royal train trial*, 1 February 1954, p.6.
- *Proud day for 'Diesels' – no steam for the royal train*, 6 February 1954, p.2.
- *Queen back after busy Northern tour*, 11 February 1954, p.1.
- *Laughing, joking Queen enjoys drive*, 12 February 1954, p.1.
- *The Queen left tea to wave*, 12 February 1954, p.6.

Other newspaper articles:

- *Royal visit – school children to see Queen*, Propeller, 13 August 1953, p.1.
- *Wollongong gives Queen enthusiastic welcome*, Daily Examiner, 12 February 1953, p.1.
- *Illawarra's big day*, Propeller, 18 February 1954, p.1.

Other Sources

- *Royal visits to Australia* by Jane Connors
- NAA: D959, IA1953/154 PART 3C
- *Royal visit to Australia*, Ben Chifley (Speaker) - House of Representatives Hansard, 23 November 1948
- *Royal visit to Australia*, Robert Menzies (Speaker) - House of Representatives Hansard, 10 October 1951
- *Minutes and report of the special sub-committee meeting of the Council of the Shire of Sutherland*, 12 January 1954

PAINTING THE SHIRE – A SUCCESS STORY!

ELIZABETH CRAIG

Months of planning and preparation had gone into putting together this unique exhibition showcasing the history of the Shire through the eyes of artists.

With his twin skills of networking and charm Bruce won the attention and enthusiastic support of artists and owners of Shire artworks, Creo spread the word on Facebook and Elizabeth supplied the *Leader* with stories and photos. Suddenly our fear that we would never get enough paintings to hold a significant exhibition – we envisaged needing around 100 – was over. The Shire community was interested in the idea and paintings and sculptures arrived in droves.

We had around 170 in the end (including the 30 given to us by Hazelhurst Gallery last year). Cataloguing and keeping track of the artworks was a huge task. We drew out some themes and wrote more detailed histories surrounding the paintings involved, and one of those is included in this *Bulletin*.

Belinda Hanrahan, Director at Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery and curator Carrie Kibbler, were very enthusiastic about our project and their help was invaluable to the success of this project. They printed out our catalogues and lent us two of their experts to arrange the display, Gilbert Grace and Mark Etherington. Ted Craig (Elizabeth's other half) supplied and erected the lights to brighten the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts auditorium and bring the exhibition to life.

We exhibited 142 works in all. And some wonderful stories went with them.

The oldest painting was one by Louis Frank of the Woronora River in the 1880s. This was loaned to us by Aimie Attard in memory of her mother who had owned it. She said her

mother would be thrilled to know this special painting was being exhibited to the Shire community.

One Shire artist whose work was not of the Shire, but who has made a significant contribution to the shaping of the Shire is Jiawei Shen. He is a legacy of the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989. (See story on page 36.)

One story of a Shire icon told through art is that of Como's legendary butcher, Ted Cary (who has been featured many times in the *Bulletin*, eg page 25, November 2017). Three artists submitted depictions of Ted – two paintings and a relief wood sculpture by neighbour, friend and renowned sculpture, Tom McMahon. Tom has very kindly given us his sculpture of Ted Cary to display at the Museum on a 'loose loan'.

Other paintings capture an important event in the shaping of the Shire, such as Helena Gibson's 1963 painting of the construction of Captain Cook Bridge. Our waterways, bushland, beaches, historic buildings and urban areas were also featured.

We were very nervous about the Opening Night - Friday, 11th May. Creo and Carol had sent out about 100 invitations. Not all replied. We had no idea how many guests would arrive. The weather forecast too, was for cold and rain, breaking a long spell of perfect weather.

At last 6.00pm Friday was upon us. Creo and Peter had organised the catering. Anna had got a new 'square card' for purchasing paintings electronically. Lots of others were on hand to help. Don Rothnie put on his penguin suit to be MC. And we waited. It was cold, but not wet.

Then visitors arrived – 200 or so. There was a buzz of excitement as people walked through the exhibition admiring the number of works on display, their diversity of style and their quality.

After the haunting sound of the didgeridoo played by Lachlan Ting filled the auditorium, Don Rothnie introduced the guest speakers. Bruce Howell who acknowledged the Dharawals as the first people in the Shire, then spoke of the gallery of Aboriginal art we have scattered around the Shire. Dawn Emerson, head of the Heritage Committee congratulated the Society on the project. Belinda Hanrahan spoke of her delight at seeing the School of Arts used in such a way to exhibit the artistic talents of Shire artists over time. Sutherland Shire Mayor, Councillor Carmelo Pesce then officially opened the exhibition. Bruce Watt, relieved that months of very long hours and very hard work had ended in a brilliant success, welcomed all guests, and thanked our supporters, including Otto Kuster who cleaned and restored some of the paintings, and Arties Framing whose frames, which were gratis for SSHS, transformed many paintings. Bruce explained the significance of some special works

including Jiawei Shen's monumental work, *The eternal hug* (see inside back cover).

By Sunday afternoon at the end of the exhibition over 500 visitors had come to inspect the exhibition and four artworks had been sold. Sale of raffle tickets to win Jim Flood's generously donated painting was hugely successful. In fact, the artistic community has been very generous with their support for SSHS. Jim Flood's wife, potter Janet Flood donated a piece of her pottery for the lucky door prize. And artist Margarette Looney has given the Society her photo and watercolour collage, *Boatsheds of Port Hacking*. We thank you for your faith in us!

Comments from visitors about both the concept and the quality of the exhibition were extremely positive, several people saying that their visit had been a most uplifting experience. The Museum too received accolades as visitors wandered in from the exhibition, many expressing surprise and delight as they had been unaware of it.

All those involved in working on this exhibition feel quite euphoric about its success. It has raised the profile of the Society – and of the Sutherland Shire Museum - enormously.



Auditorium of Sutherland Memorial School of Arts transformed into an Art Gallery [Photo: Ted Craig]

JIAWEI SHEN, BUNDEENA ARTIST and legacy of the Tiananmen Square massacre

ELIZABETH CRAIG

Born in 1948, Jiawei Shen was a celebrated propaganda painter in Maoist China. He came to Australia in early 1989 on an English-study visa. Appalled at the massacre at Tiananmen Square in June 1989, Shen knew he could not return home, and stayed in Australia after Prime Minister Hawke's emotional decision (without Cabinet approval) to allow Chinese students to remain.

Jiawei Shen now lives in Bundeena with his wife, painter and sculptor, Lan Wang, who with their daughter Xini, joined Jiawei in 1991 under the family reunion scheme. Born in Beijing five days before the Tiananmen massacre, Xini was first seen by her father when aged two. The Shen family became Australian citizens in 1998. They are very much embedded in the local art community, and each month open their studios to visitors for the Bundeena Maianbar art-trail. Shen has entered portraits of prominent Australians in the Archibald Prize often reaching the finals. He is obsessed with painting history and won the Sir John Sulman Prize in 2006 for *The Peking Treaty 1901*. Shen has embraced Australian history and culture, including the Gallipoli legend. In 2016 he was the first Chinese-Australian to win the Gallipoli Art Prize. 'I share the memories of Gallipoli with every member of our nation, and [I'm] in tears when listening to *Waltzing Matilda*,' he says.

The Eternal Hug, 2013 was inspired by a true story. In 1969 two young Australians, Ace Bourke and John Rendall bought - on impulse - a lion cub from Harrods zoo-park. They called him Christian and raised him at their home in London for a year. A local vicar allowed them to exercise Christian in the church graveyard. When he grew too big and costly to care for they asked for assistance from George Adamson, a Kenyan conservationist, to reintegrate Christian into the wild at his compound in the Kora National Reserve.

Christian did integrate well, even heading his own pride. When Ace and John visited the lion in Kenya in 1971, he recognised them and greeted them with joy, hugging them and nuzzling their faces as he always had. The last time they saw Christian was on a second visit in 1972 when there was the same joyous reunion.

Ace Bourke is now Jiawei's neighbour in Bundeena. Shen's painting of Christian the lion with Ace is based on a photo of 1970 when he was a young man, but here Jiawei Shen has shown Ace as he is today to express the timelessness of love.

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PAINTING THE SHIRE

JIAWEI SHEN, BUNDEENA ARTIST

And legacy of the Tiananmen Square massacre

Diggers 1915 is usually hung at the RSL Club in Bundeena. Jiawei Shen offered it and *The Eternal Hug* 2013 to SSHS for inclusion in the *Painting the Shire* exhibition. It is not of the Shire, but the artist, with his background as a Chinese immigrant, his commitment to Australia and its culture and his engagement with the Bundeena community, has had an impact in shaping the Shire.



Diggers 1915, by Jiawei Shen



The Eternal Hug, 2013 by Jiawei Shen

PAINTING THE SHIRE
at the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts
a heritage event by SSHS - 11th to 13th May 2018



(Photos - Ted Craig)



Sutherland Shire Mayor, Carmelo Pesce with Bruce Watt



Angela Thomas with Ted Cary and the art works depicting him - portrait by Nicole Southwall and wood relief sculpture by Tom McMahon



Lachlan Ting on didgeridoo, Bruce Howell, Dawn Emerson, Belinda Hanrahan, Hazelhurst, SS Mayor Carmelo Pesce and Bruce Watt