

NUMBER: 212 — AUGUST 2019



Unveiling Edmund James Coote's memorial to Bass and Flinders at Wattamolla in 1938

[Source: NSW State Archives]

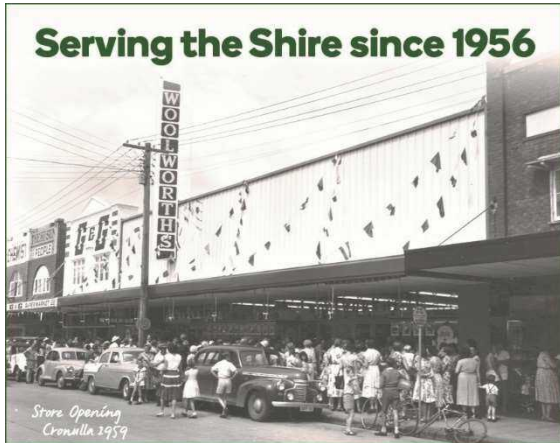
What link does the MD of jewellery company, Angus & Coote, have with Wattamolla? (See story page 12)

MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE


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

FACEBOOK: Sutherland Shire Historical Society

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Jed Wood

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**Cronulla
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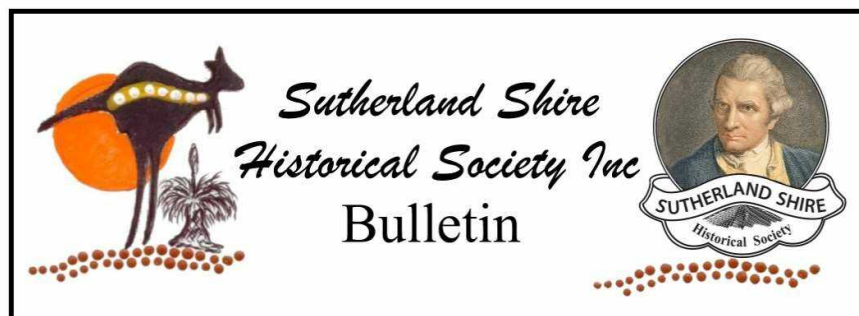
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VISIT OUR NEW LOCATION
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ESTABLISHED 1999



Michael Kingston Diver, 'Providential Head, Wattamolla, 2001, w/colour
[courtesy: Bruce Watt] (See Page 12 for story on Wattamolla)



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SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY

The SSHS has a proud tradition stretching back more than 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. Any enquiries contact the Editor: Elizabeth Craig at elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com or phone 0416 234 272.

Digital copies of the *Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc Bulletin* are emailed to all Society members with online access. Print copies are sent free to members with out online access. Digital copies are also emailed 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. Issues from September 1966 are also posted on the SSHS website: www.shirehistory.org

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REGISTRATION

SSHS BULLETIN – ISSN 1444-2930 (from February 2000); ISSN 2652-0400 (Online) (from May 2019)

Society publications are registered with the National Library of Australia in accordance with International Standard Serial Numbering and have an ISSN or 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 Sutherland Memorial School of Arts, 23 East Parade Sutherland (on the western side of Sutherland Railway Station).

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 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2018-2019

ELECTED MEMBERS

PATRON:	Shire Mayor, Clr Carmelo Pesce		
PRESIDENT	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto51@optusnet.com.au
DEPUTY PRESIDENT	Ian Kolln	9528 3094	iankolln@yahoo.com.au
SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER*	Don Rothnie	0409 820 815	bardon@bigpond.com.au
HONORARY TREASURER	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
MUSEUM CURATOR	Ian Kolln (Assistant) Peter Moore	9528 3094 9523 5375	iankolln@yahoo.com.au peter_mo@ihug.com.au
MUSEUM ARCHIVIST & RESEARCHER	Carol McDonald (Acting)	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
PUBLICITY OFFICERS	Frank Zumbo	0417 213 768	mr.frank.zumbo@gmail.com
BULLETIN EDITOR	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
GRANTS OFFICER	Don Rothnie	0409 820 815	bardon@bigpond.com.au
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Peter Moore	9523 5375	peter_mo@ihug.com.au
	Helen Rosner	8539 7707	hmrosner@bigpond.com
	Carol McDonald	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
	Greg Jackson	9543 6224	greg.jackson100@gmail.com
	Angela Thomas		a.badger@optusnet.com.au

APPOINTED MEMBERS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Carol McDonald	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
BULLETIN PROOF READER	Merle Kavanagh	9521 1043	
MUSEUM COMMITTEE	Peter Moore, Bruce Watt, Carol McDonald, Ineke Niewland, John Doherty		
EXCURSIONS BOOKING CLERK	Vacant		
PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE	Pauline Curby Elizabeth Craig Ian Stewart Liz Adams	9523-8814 0428 6981	pcurby@iprimus.com.au elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com brucedale.124@bigpond.com liz.adams.au@gmail.com
HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER	Helen Rosner	8539-7707	hmrosner@bigpond.com
SCHOOLS LIAISON OFFICER	Elizabeth Craig		Bruce Watt – 0405 493 187
WELFARE OFFICER	Gloria Hans	9589-0251	
HONORARY SOLICITOR	Michael Solari		

AT THE AGM IN SEPTEMBER

ALL POSITIONS WILL BE VACATED AND ELECTIONS HELD

If you are interested in nominating for any position and wish more information,
please don't hesitate to contact an Executive Committee member

SSHS CALENDAR: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2019
(See website: www.shirehistory.org for updates)

MEETING 1.30pm, 3 rd Saturday in month Stapleton Centre		MUSEUM 9.00am-1.00pm Saturdays Sutherland Mem. School of Arts 23 East Parade, Sutherland
DATE		
AUGUST	Sat 17th	SSHS MEETING Speaker: Dennis and Stephen Burns, descendants of William Burns, an original settler in Caringbah, will be speaking about the family timber business, Burns' Timber Yard established in 1910.
SEPTEMBER	Wed 4th	EXCURSION A visit to the Illawarra Bee Keepers bee garden and museum at Waratah Park, 98 Eton St., Sutherland. Our guide will be SSHS member, Dr Lamorna Osborne. Meet at the facility at 9.30am. The tour will include morning tea and honey will be available to purchase. Waratah Park is a 10-minute walk from Sutherland Station, but if you need transport contact Creo Moore – 0425 226 405. <u>Please advise at the August meeting if you wish to attend this excursion.</u>
SEPTEMBER	Sat. 21st	SSHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Speaker: Stephen Ward, Heritage Centre Manager for Woolworths will speak on the history of the retailer (dating from 1924), and specifically Woollies history in the Shire, commencing in 1956.
OCTOBER	Sat. 19th	SSHS MEETING Speaker: Pauline Curby, author and historian, will speak on the 1919 Influenza Epidemic
NOVEMBER	Sat. 16th	SSHS MEETING Speaker: George Cotis will continue his wonderful talk on Fish, Fishing and Fisheries in Port Hacking

MUSEUM

Please refer to the roster located at the Museum and at meetings.

If you are unable to attend at your allocated time, please make private arrangements
to swap your roster time

SOCIETY NEWS

Welcome to new members Maureen Goddard and Kim Hatherly. We look forward to seeing you at Society events – meetings, excursions and if you want to get more involved – say join a committee or volunteer at the Museum, you'd be welcomed with open arms! We could also do with some new blood on the Executive Committee to inject some fresh energy and new ideas. Please talk to existing members for more information before the AGM in September if you are interested.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

THIS NOTICE IS ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEMBERS ARE ADVISED THAT THE AGM AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND
COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2019-2020 WILL BE HELD ON

SATURDAY 21st SEPTEMBER 2019

COMMENCING AT 1.30PM

STAPLETON CENTRE, 21A STAPLETON STREET SUTHERLAND

-
1. WELCOME, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY AND APOLOGIES
 2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE 2018 AGM
 3. ADOPTION OF ALL ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2018-19 FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS PUBLISHED IN THE AUGUST 2019 BULLETIN.
 4. ADOPTION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT AND BALANCE SHEET FOR 2018-19 AS PUBLISHED IN THE AUGUST 2019 BULLETIN.
 5. PRESENTATION BY OUTGOING PRESIDENT.
 6. MOTION TO ADOPT THE MODEL CONSTITUTION PROVIDED BY FAIR TRADING NSW
Should the foregoing motion be accepted, the terms 'Honorary' will be removed from all positions and the Executive will comprise the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary with three committee members being elected. All other positions will be deemed as sub-committees and shall be appointed as required.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT
DEPUTY PRESIDENT
HONORARY SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER
HONORARY TREASURER
COMMITTEE MEMBER 1
COMMITTEE MEMBER 2
COMMITTEE MEMBER 3

If Motion above is not accepted, then the following will also be elected

MUSEUM CURATOR
HONORARY RESEARCH OFFICER/ARCHIVIST
EXCURSIONS OFFICER
BULLETIN EDITOR
HONORARY PUBLICITY AND PROMOTIONS OFFICER
ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR
GRANTS OFFICER
COMMITTEE MEMBER 4

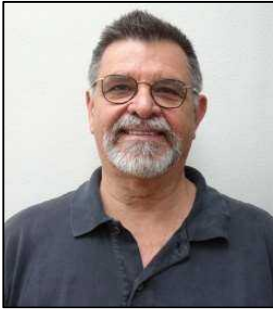
8. AGM GENERAL BUSINESS

THIS NOTICE IS GIVEN IN AUGUST 2019

DON ROTHNIE, SECRETARY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BRUCE WATT



Shire's historical and cultural scene.

Three books produced this year are legacy items. *Kareela - lucky and liveable*, *Dharawal, the first contact people*, and another, still in production about Cook's visit to Botany Bay in 1770 are major additions to the area's understanding of our history. Our quarterly *Bulletin* also is a permanent record of our past with contributions from a variety of our members. The editions from the past 53 years are now on our website and a searchable index by combining the three existing ones is being produced.

Through the direction of the Sutherland Shire Council and various Aboriginal groups, the Sutherland Shire identifies as being 'Dharawal country', Dharawal being the language of the local Indigenous people. The Society proudly participates in the NAIDOC celebrations held in July each year at Gunnamatta Park and the 'Meeting of two cultures' commemoration at Kurnell on April 29 each year. Our museum exhibits pay homage to the Aboriginal heritage of the Shire. Late last year the Society commissioned Dean Kelly, an Aboriginal elder to construct a bark canoe for our display. Dean's smoking ceremony and moving explanation of Indigenous culture was a feature of the canoe's dedication attended by an appreciative crowd at the museum. A significant collection of local Aboriginal objects gathered over the 20th century in the Shire was given on semi-permanent loan to the museum. The other half of this 'Fred Matson' collection is in the Local Studies collection at Sutherland Library. A rare Aboriginal breastplate; 'Tommy

chief of the Woronora Tribe', was purchased at auction and takes pride of place. The interactive 'kiosk' or computerised data base is up and running with content being added.

The Society took part in two initiatives for Senior's week which featured a photographic display and in another, a film was produced during the workshops. A grant through Craig Kelly's electoral office has enabled a memorial to soldiers serving in the armed forces from the Shire to be erected in Peace Park at Sutherland.

During the year several school and Probus groups visited the museum and talks were given at schools and at other venues. Museum boxes that schools can borrow have been popular in demonstrating how technology, especially in the home has changed. A calendar for 2019 was produced.

A campaign to halt or forestall the demolition of a significant historic house (Hotham House) was waged through Council with members successfully arguing to place a heritage order on it. As development continues apace, much of the Shire's built heritage is being lost.

Council's decision to expand theatre space in the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts means that we are being permanently moved out and we must vacate by November. We have been made offers at several sites, though none are satisfactory for our needs. Negotiations are continuing. One possibility, if nothing satisfactory arises is to 'mothball' the collection in storage until a suitable site becomes available. An Expression of Interest has been submitted on a building at Hungry Point. It is remote and would need a lot of work. Our preference is for a location near to Sutherland in an accessible spot. We have accepted an offer of grant funding from Museums and Galleries to assess our collection and provide curatorial advice on display. Members have been cataloguing our collection and a number of 'finds' have been brought to light.

So there have been many successes. However we end the year with a great deal of uncertainty about the future of the museum. On a positive note, we have booked Club on East for the opening night of the Heritage Festival in 2020 and for the all-day 'Cook' seminar the following day – April 18 (which will be a major contribution to the 2020 commemoration of Lieutenant James Cook's arrival in Botany Bay). Cook could not have imagined the country that could have grown up around Botany Bay or the impact of colonial settlement on Aboriginal people.

On a fun side, members enjoyed two trips further afield. One was to Canberra and another to Nowra. These are in addition to the more local field trips and walks that are on offer. I won't thank all those who keep this organisation afloat with the many activities that we provide. It's a bit like a duck swimming calmly on the water. What we don't see are the legs paddling strongly underwater. Over the last year or so there have been several new members who have energetically joined in. The next 12 months will be an interesting ride. We'd love to hear from new faces willing to lend a hand. It is rewarding.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

This has been a milestone year for the *Bulletin*. After 53 years it has gone digital. In the early days it was a team effort to produce the magazine every quarter. Initially, articles were typed manually on to stencils by the editor and then run off on a Gestetner printer. Later they were typed directly on to paper and the Council collated and stapled the pages together – quite a job as we had 300 members at one stage! Doug Archer remembered with fondness the mulberry wine that was distributed to volunteers to make this process less onerous. Envelopes were addressed and stamped, stuffed with *Bulletins* and carted to the Post Office for delivery to members.¹

Nowadays articles, along with images, are submitted to the editor by email, and after editing (with writer approval) and formatting they are placed in order, given page numbers and converted to a single PDF document. After proof reading by Merle Kavanagh and correcting, the *Bulletin* is emailed to members. For those members with no email account, we send the PDF to a printing company (Council no longer prints the *Bulletin* for us), where it is

printed and envelopes addressed ready for collection and postage.

Indexes are essential for easy access to such a wealth of local history material, and two earlier indexes created for the printed versions (1966-1985 and 1986-2006) will be merged with the latest (2007-) online version. This is an enormous job and we are currently seeking quotes from indexers to do it.

We have had some wonderful articles on the Shire's history, most of them original research which will not be found anywhere else. I am very proud to be associated with a publication such as the *SSHS Bulletin*, and I thank all writers for their contributions, especially those who keep up a steady stream for consideration. You know who they are as their names keep cropping up! I look forward to many more from you, and also would very much welcome some new blood. Variety makes for more interesting reading.

If you have an idea for an article, but need some encouragement, please contact me!

¹E.Craig, *Caretakers of our Past: the first 50 years of Sutherland Shire Historical Society, 1966-2016*, Ch.6

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ABN 17 083 299 572

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	2019		2018	
INCOME				
Advertising	\$	600.00		
Calendars	\$	506.00		
Member Subscriptions	\$	3,630.00	\$	3,230.95
Donations	\$	1,129.75	\$	1,820.30
Sales Books:			\$	401.90
Kareela	\$	13,766.71		
Other	\$	508.00		
Grants/Special projects	\$	17,979.50	\$	24,622.56
Excursions	\$	485.00	\$	5,092.65
Miscellaneous	\$	2,631.25		
	\$	41,236.21	\$	35,168.36
Interest received				
CBA Cheque account			\$	0.35
CBA Term Deposit			\$	272.62
St George Term Deposit	\$	230.88		263.71
	\$	41,467.09	\$	35,705.04
LESS: EXPENDITURE				
Museum Expenses	\$	5,173.90	\$	2,444.52
Bank Fees	\$	15.00	\$	17.00
Book exp	\$	7,053.56		
Calendars	\$	460.00		
Marketing			\$	329.12
Equipment Purchases	\$	2,914.06		
Excursions	\$	440.10	\$	4,435.51
Rent	\$	1,023.83	\$	725.00
Stationery & postage	\$	619.50	\$	788.48
Subscription & Licences	\$	263.00	\$	543.00
Insurance	\$	321.00	\$	469.00
Bulletin printing and postage	\$	1,904.35	\$	1,878.48
Website and kiosk	\$	3,860.40	\$	284.00
General expenses	\$	2,081.43	\$	772.36
Special projects	\$	8,327.50	\$	28,962.29
Adjustment			\$	58.55
	\$	34,457.63	\$	41,707.31
NET OPERATING PROFIT(LOSS)	\$	7,009.46	-\$	6,002.27
Retained profits at the beginning of financial year	\$	19,951.35	\$	25,953.62
Retained Profit at the end of Financial year 2018 - 2019	\$	26,960.81	\$	19,951.35

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABN 17 083 299 572

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

CURRENT ASSETS

2019

2018

CBA Cheque Account		\$	2,087.29
Unpresented cheques			
St George Term Deposit	\$	9,285.06	\$ 9,054.18
IMB Everyday Unlimited Account	\$	17,525.75	\$ 8,695.73
Petty Cash	\$	150.00	\$ 114.15
	\$	26,960.81	\$ 19,951.35

Equity

Retained Earnings			
Current Year Earnings	\$	19,951.35	\$ 25,953.62
	\$	7,009.46	-\$ 6,002.27
Balance as at June 2019	\$	26,960.81	\$ 19,951.35

DECLARATION

The Management Committee declares that the association is not a reporting entity and that this is a special purpose financial report.

The Committee of the association declares that:

1. the financial statements as set out on pages 1 & 2 present fairly the association's financial position as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. in the Committee's opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee.

President

Bruce Watt

Secretary

Al Rothnie

Date

10/7/2019

Date

10/7/2019

MUSEUM REPORT

PETER MOORE

The main concern for the Museum is still the Sutherland Shire Council's (SSC) demand that we vacate the Memorial School of Arts by November. Negotiations with the SSC have been ongoing with another offer placed before us of the Sylvania Heights Baby Health Centre. This offer is again deemed to be unsatisfactory due to its remote location and size. There is also an offer from the SSC for some help with curating and cataloguing our exhibits. This work is to be carried out by Museums and Galleries NSW assistance through their Regional Museum Advisor Program. Council say they will match funding with Create NSW to a value of \$7000, to assess our collection and provide advice on curating it.

Although the SSC has made a number of offers of other locations for our Museum we have not stopped looking ourselves, and hopefully something will come from these efforts. Our President Bruce Watt has continued to negotiate with a number of entities for a new location more suitable than those proposed by the SSC. He has certainly been on the case continuously even though he has been in severe pain after his motor bike accident. We all owe him a great deal of thanks.

The attendance at the Museum has been pleasing, averaging between ten and thirteen per week during the last quarter. There is still one Museum Box out on loan to the Taren Point Primary School, which

has been there for some months and is still being used by the staff as an aid to teaching.

During all this turmoil with the SSC life goes on at the Museum. Dedicated SSHS members have been establishing a catalogue of the Museum's contents. A small team of ladies has come together to compile the catalogue - Creo Moore, Elizabeth Carr, Floriana Camper, Joan King and Carol McDonald. These ladies are doing a wonderful job, especially as many of the exhibits are not already labelled. As well as being the keeper of the Museum roster John Doherty has been collating the information and photographs gathered by the ladies. They are all doing a fantastic job and in the end we will have a starting point for the next step in bringing our collection up to standard.

Besides helping with the cataloguing, Carol McDonald is also still trying to keep the office up to date with new information and photographs coming in all the time. The task at times seems to be like one of the Labours of Hercules: when one thing is completed two more tasks arrive on the desk.

Finally, I would like to thank all the volunteer guides who attend every Saturday, especially some of the older hands who have been able to assist the ladies with the identification of some of the mystery items.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

DON ROTHNIE

As usual the secretary is confined to mundane encapsulation of growth in membership, which has a glimmer of growth and regrettably, due to those who are aging, departing persons. Maybe you know some of these we are losing and can offer them transport.

Our current activities are directed to rehousing the museum due to the Council's plans to expand the School of Arts. Currently options provided are not attractive for our needs.

With the upcoming AGM you will find that a motion will be lodged suggesting that the Model Constitution provided by Fair Trading NSW be adopted. Our current constitution having been developed over the past 50 years is not appropriate for today's organisations.

Where issues develop that by-laws cannot cover, the constitution itself has to be restructured. The Model Constitution presents a framework for today's organisations and can also be supplemented with by-laws should you, the membership, accept them in General meetings. If you wish I can email it to you.

In finalising this report let me encourage you to understand that the Historical Society, whilst not returning to the current premises at the School of Arts, will remain an operating and progressive organisation capturing and promoting our Shire history and the people who contributed to its growth. You are part of this society and we look forward to your continued support in the coming year.

Vale

Bernard Sargeant - SSHS foundation member

11 July 1932 – 25 May 2019

Bernard Sargeant arrived in Australia from the UK in 1960 and was appointed Chief Librarian at Sutherland Library. In April 1966, Bernard attended the first meeting of Sutherland Shire Historical Society. He took on the role of Society archivist until 1976 when he returned to the UK for an extended visit. His successors at the library continued as archivist with SSHS until 2001 when more accessible technology meant the Society didn't rely as much on the Library for research, etc.

Bernard developed the local history collections for both the Library and the Society. He asserted that the advent of the SSHS generated much more interest in local history in the community. The Society lacked secure storage space for its collection and accessibility to researchers, so Bernard facilitated the agreement to hand over its documents and photos to the custody of the library in 1974. They were returned to SSHS in 2015 when President Bruce Watt secured room at Hungry Point to store them.

As a librarian, Bernard commanded much respect and admiration. He set high standards of service to readers and built a comprehensive reference and loan collection. On his return to Australia he set up an index to Shire newspapers and Council Minutes before working for Marrickville Library from 1983 to 1991. Bernard is described by his colleagues as a man of integrity whose personal standards were higher than most. This is borne out by his insistence in recent years of paying the annual SSHS fee, even though he had been given honorary life membership for his contribution in its first 15 years.

Bernard lived in Sutherland and though he was not an active member of SSHS after his return to Australia, he enjoyed receiving the *Bulletin*. He died in a local nursing home after a short illness.

With thanks to Helen McDonald and Karen Pender, Sutherland Library.

WATTAMOLLA – HISTORICAL FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW

STEPHANIE BAILEY

*Written for Sutherland Shire Library Series: Local History, Local Stories
Published on 26 June 2019 and a version republished here with permission of author.*



Wattamolla then and now – in the early 1900s
[Sutherland Shire Libraries' Local Studies Collection]

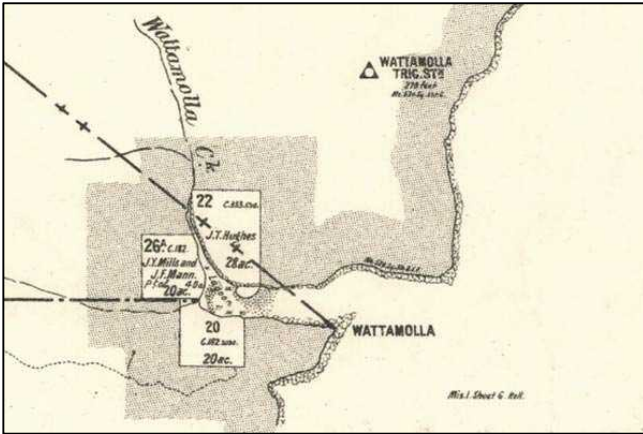


and 2019 [Photo: Stephanie Bailey]

During peak summer periods, Wattamolla regularly attracts more than 4,000 visitors a day, making it one of the most popular destinations in the Royal National Park.¹ Active Sutherland Shire residents and tourists flock to this accessible and breathtakingly beautiful coastal site to swim, snorkel, fish and bushwalk, as well as to inspect and consider some of the enduring Aboriginal engravings and middens located in the Park nearby. Others come just to relax and enjoy a beach picnic with friends and family along Wattamolla's placid shoreline. But this typically serene bush setting is also a place that has sustained countless devastating tragedies, amazing escapes and more than a few unexpected events and episodes. And if different decisions had been made at key moments throughout history, then the landscape at Wattamolla today would be completely unrecognisable from the spectacular natural vista which continues to invite and intrigue so many.

What a gem!

When the large expanse of bushland that is now known as the Royal National Park was dedicated in April 1879, the coastal area at Wattamolla was not incorporated.² This was because sections of land around the lagoon had already been sold off to private owners.³ In 1910, the Crown managed to purchase back 28 acres and this portion was added to the National Park on 3 August.⁴ But there were still two blocks located to the west and south that remained out of government control. Prior to the dedication in 1879, this land – around 40 acres – was granted to a syndicate with the initial intention of mining the area.⁵ Ownership eventually changed hands and in the early 1920s these ocean frontage blocks were offered to the National Park Trust. However, due to the excessive price demanded, not only did the Trust decline the offer, but the Government of the day was also put off buying.⁶ Had it not been for the fortunate intervention of a generous benefactor, then these coastal blocks at Wattamolla would, in all likelihood, have been subdivided into half-acre plots and covered with newly erected weekend cottages.



1900 map showing the three blocks at Wattamolla [detail]
NSW Department of Lands (1900), Parish of Wattamolla, County of Cumberland Land Districts of Liverpool and Campbelltown, Eastern Division NSW [Trove]

The charitable gentleman in question was Edmund James Coote, Managing Director of the well-known jewellery company, Angus and Coote.

When Edmund Coote became aware of the looming development situation at Wattamolla, he moved to purchase the two privately-owned blocks outright so that the estate might be preserved for posterity. In December 1933, Coote presented his 40 acres of property to the National Park Trust and, once the transfer of title was finalised in February 1935, this land was integrated into the National Park.⁷ In recognition of this liberal gesture, the stream running through the bush to Wattamolla Falls

was named Coote Creek. A memorial, situated on the high ground at the head of Wattamolla lagoon, was also erected. This structure took the form of a 21 metre tall flagpole affixed with a wide cross spar, rising from a base constructed of smooth-faced sandstone masonry. In the centre was a raised block which carried two commemorative tablets.⁸ [See image of the unveiling of the memorial, front cover]

These days, only the base of the memorial remains as the plaques had to be removed some years ago for their own protection. But when it was first unveiled in 1935, this monument bore a tribute to Edmund Coote, as well as to three 18th century British explorers – Matthew Flinders, George Bass and the ‘boy’ Martin, who were aboard their small open boat, *Tom Thumb* in March 1796 when they found themselves in heavy seas just south of Sydney. Just as they believed their bark could not survive another ten minutes, they were suddenly thrown by the waves into the calm waters of a well sheltered beach on a cove. They thought to call it Providential Cove, but later learned that the local Aboriginals called it Watta-Mowlee.⁹

Sadly, it doesn’t take too exhaustive a search through old – as well as more recent – newspaper columns to find numerous reports of tragic drownings, heartbreaking disappearances, and atrocious injuries sustained by unlucky visitors to this popular location. And yet Matthew Flinders may well have been onto something back in 1796, because a number of the escapes and rescues that have occurred at Wattamolla could easily be described as ‘providential.’

Three locals on a day's fishing

On Tuesday 18 June 1935, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

A destroyer and an Air Force plane will cooperate today in a search for a small motor launch with three men aboard, which has not been sighted since it left Cronulla on Sunday morning. All yesterday a search was conducted by sea and from the air for the missing craft, which, it is thought, has been blown out to sea by strong westerly winds.¹⁰

Two days earlier, at around 10am on Sunday 16 June, Edward Arthur Parker, John Lynch and Jack Sanders left Gunnamatta Bay for a day’s fishing outside the Cronulla heads. There was a strong wind blowing, the water was rough and the 5.5m launch they were embarking in had neither sails nor a cabin, but the trio were keen and experienced fishermen and so they chose to head out regardless. That turned out to be a huge mistake. Come sundown, the three men had still not returned and so their increasingly anxious relatives notified Cronulla police. The search began at once. A police boat set off to scour the area, but due to the choppy and dangerous ocean conditions, the would-be

rescuers were prevented from leaving Port Hacking. The Navigation Department, too, set to work and sent radio instructions to all coastal vessels to keep watch for the stricken launch and its occupants, but without success.¹¹ As the already chilly evening descended into a bitterly cold night, everyone hoped that the men were safely sheltered in a cove or bay somewhere along the coast. This was not the case

The next day the hunt continued – by land, by sea and by air. Indeed, more than 2,500 square kilometres of ocean to the south and east of Sydney was covered. It wasn't until late afternoon on 18 June, Cronulla Police were informed that wreckage of a launch fitting the description of the missing boat had been found on Marley Beach – around 6.5km south of Gunnamatta Bay. 'It is now almost certain,' the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, 'that the three men who set out from Cronulla on a fishing excursion on Sunday morning have been drowned.' Yet in spite of this distressing news, the friends and relatives of the lost fishermen refused to give them up for dead.¹²

At 2am the following morning, Harry Cunningham, a cousin of Edward Parker, drove down the almost impassable road to Wattamolla (which was still under construction) and searched along the coast. Although he found no sign of the missing men, Cunningham remained convinced that they were still alive.¹³ Later that day he returned with Marshall Russack, a Sutherland garage proprietor, and together they kept on looking. The two had walked some distance through dense scrub near the cliff edge when Russack stopped and peered over the precipice. There on a narrow ledge, way down below, were the three missing men: exhausted, famished, only partially dressed, entirely chilled to the bone after three long days huddled together on the freezing, storm-swept cliff-face; but still very much alive. Whilst Russack kept watch at the cliff top – and helpfully threw chocolate and cigarettes down to the grateful fishermen – Cunningham dashed off to get help. Fortunately assistance wasn't too far away, albeit by one of the roughest routes imaginable.¹⁴

About eight kms inland from Wattamolla was the Public Works Department Camp No.2.¹⁵ Stationed here was a gang of relief workers – mostly unemployed former First World War soldiers – hired to construct a new road to Wattamolla, which had just been officially incorporated into the National Park thanks to Mr Coote.¹⁶ On Cunningham's arrival, a rescue party was swiftly organised. With ropes secured, a group of relief workers boarded a lorry, then drove as quickly as possible down the boulder-strewn, pot-holed old track. Axes were needed to clear a path through the practically impenetrable bush. The lorry became bogged several times and once the party waded through an icy creek; but at last the rescuers reached the cliff top. Then began the terrifying and hazardous job of hauling the trapped fishermen to safety.

The three men – first Parker, next Lynch, and finally Sanders – secured themselves as best they could with a knotted rope; then one-by-one the relief workers slowly dragged them up the escarpment. Each man swung from side-to-side in the wind, his knees skinned and head bashed as his tired and sore body was repeatedly slammed against the rocky cliff face. After an hour and a half – and one badly frayed rope – all three men were finally safe up top. 'That was a tough climb,' said Lynch, 'but it is better than another night down there. Give me a smoke.'¹⁷

The tale they lived to tell

So how was it that these fishermen, having set out from Gunnamatta three days prior, came to find themselves precariously stranded on a rock ledge down a cliff face at Wattamolla? And how on earth did they survive the ordeal? For that, the men themselves explained to newspaper reporters:



An impression of the position where the men were found—by Norton, "Telegraph" artist.

SURVIVORS OF STORM WHO FIGURED IN DRAMATIC SYDNEY RESCUE



AFTER HOPE FOR THEIR SAFETY had been almost abandoned, the three men pictured above (l. to r.), John Lynch, Edward Arthur Parker, and John Sanders, whose launch was swamped by terrific seas off Cronulla, near Sydney, were rescued in dramatic circumstances from a narrow ledge in the face of a cliff at Wattleton Bay. They were hauled by rescuers 200ft. up the sheer face of the cliff by means of a rope which each man in turn tied around his body.

Left: Artist's impression of the location where the men were found [*The Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 1935, p1 (Trove)]

Right: Edward Arthur Parker, John Lynch and Jack Sanders after their rescue [*The Mercury*, 25 June 1935, p9 (Trove)]

Jack Sanders: 'We had just hooked a big fish, and were all very excited, when I glanced round and saw a huge wave rushing towards us. I knew we had no chance but before I could even shout the boat was lifted and capsized and we were flung into the sea. I was entangled in the fishing lines, and to make matters worse, was wearing an overcoat, two sweaters and trousers. When I broke surface a kerosene tin was floating near me, so I grabbed it. John and Ted swam over and we all hung on. My clothes were getting pretty heavy and I managed to drag off my thick overcoat. We all knew the tin wouldn't hold the lot of us. After we had got our breath Lynch called out "Stick to the tin, I'll swim for it." He struck out... I let go and started after him.'

John Lynch: 'Spray and spume dashed in my eyes, temporarily blinding me, and however strongly I struck out for the rocks they never seemed to get any closer. I was practically done when a wave dashed me against a rock and I frenziedly grabbed it.'

Sanders: 'Before I had gone far, I had to stop to take off my trousers. I went under but it was easier after that. Ted Parker had followed me. Near the cliffs a big wave picked us up and we were flung out of the sea on to the ledge. Lynch was just below us, clinging to a rock, but by bending down and stretching out our hands we pulled him up to us.'

Edward Parker: 'The 100 yards from where we capsized to the cliff was the longest 100 I've done, but the wave that put us on the ledge was the best dumper in the world. You can imagine our thoughts when we saw two big sharks cruising about just below us half an hour after the wave landed us.'

Lynch: 'The waves dashed over us, and it was a bit difficult to sleep. Then too we had to remember to cling to the rocks, and our fingers were frozen stiff. The night would not seem to pass and in the grey light of the early morning we must have resembled a couple of half-naked scarecrows.'

Sanders: 'When daylight came, I climbed to a sandy ledge about 10 feet above and covered myself with sand. Even then I was half frozen. Here we found a spring that saved us from the terror of thirst. Water trickled down slowly from the cliff above, and we scraped a basin for the water to collect in. Later in the day the sea got worse, and we all had to perch on a higher ledge. I was so hungry I began chewing bits of grass.'

Lynch: 'It is a desperate feeling to be hungry after seeing the last blade of grass devoured. I am a fast eater and had to sit by and watch the others finishing their meal of grass. We chewed [a] bird's skeleton time and again, and the bones always seemed appetising, especially when we clothed them with succulent meat in our imaginations.... Later, when it seemed certain that we would starve to death, I wondered why I had been saved from drowning. It seemed unfair to me.'

Sanders: 'Next morning we were so hungry that we spent hours watching for a lizard that had run into a hole. I think it made us hungrier. We saw two aeroplanes and several boats, but although we shouted and waved, they did not notice us.'

Lynch: 'We filled in our spare time with writing messages in the sandstone of our prison. Now that it is all over, I can afford to see the funny side of it all, but I for one never had the faintest hope of rescue after the planes passed us by, and I think the others were the same... If we had not been rescued today, we were going to make a bold attempt by swimming two miles around to the beach because we realised we would be too weak to attempt it later... We kept up our spirits with jokes and anecdotes, but even that grew wearisome, and we were ready for the end when the heads of those two men appeared over the edge of the cliff above us. It was a miraculous escape from death.'¹⁸

A giant natural canvas

Almost half a century later, the cliffs at Wattamolla – those closer to the lagoon this time – were used for a very different purpose. Art!

As part of the celebrations for the centenary of the Royal National Park on Saturday 28 April 1979 (two days after the actual anniversary), a visual and sound extravaganza was performed on the beach at Wattamolla. The mastermind behind the astonishing performance which unfolded that evening, *The Rosella Sisters and the Rainbow Eel*, was ground-breaking Bundeena artist, George Gittoes. With his creative partners – filmmaker Gabrielle Dalton, composer Martin Wesley-Smith, and dancer-choreographer Ronaldo Cameron – Gittoes had formed Theatre Reaching Environments Everywhere (TREE),¹⁹ an innovative community group largely comprised of enthusiastic Bundeena and Maianbar residents.²⁰ That night in 1979, TREE transformed Wattamolla into an amazing alfresco stage and screen. 'The cliff faces blazed with dazzling colours and shapes projected onto them,' marvelled journalist Joseph Glascott, 'Aboriginal hand paintings came to life on the cliffs. Dancers leapt along the rock ledges. The Rainbow Eel snaked its way down the lagoon, the progress of the swimmers marked by lights.'²¹

Over the next few years, Gittoes and TREE returned to Wattamolla's cliffs and lagoon on several occasions to mesmerise crowds with spellbinding, surrealist, psychedelic performances which took full advantage of the dramatic, physical environment of the surrounding Royal National Park, utilising a vast array of local organisations and keen individuals, such as the Southern Youth Theatre; CSIRO Division of Fisheries and Oceanography; Kirinari Aboriginal Hostel; Bundeena Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade; and even the lady who ran the kiosk at Wattamolla.²²

The Unfound Land, staged in 1983, was Gittoes' final – and most successful – presentation at Wattamolla.²³ Over two nights, an audience of between 5,000 and 6,000 people gathered on the beach to watch as Ronaldo Cameron climbed a pyramid of drums on top of the cliff and then, with a giant silver flag billowing out behind him, he danced under the night sky.²⁴ 'Wattamolla,' Gabrielle Dalton declared, 'has become like our own Opera House.'²⁵

Things could have been very different, however, if certain politicians had had their way just a decade earlier.

Sydney's second airport

In February 1970, Senator Bob Cotton, the Minister for Civil Aviation, announced that a governmental committee which had studied Sydney's air traffic operations had come to the conclusion that a second major airport was needed to support the city.²⁶ An interdepartmental group was established and, over the next year and a half, 16 different preliminary airport layouts and detailed sets of plans were examined.²⁷

When Cotton presented his ministerial report to the Senate on 15 September 1971, he noted that although the interdepartmental committee had narrowed the choice of location for Sydney's second airport down to four final options, the group had been unable to decide between these sites, or to place them in any order of preference. They were Richmond, Somersby, Duffy's Forest (to the north-west of Sydney) and Wattamolla in the Royal National Park. Although Cotton had advised that the latter two sites were neither 'desirable nor satisfactory', they certainly weren't off the table.²⁸

In his address to the House of representatives on 11 November 1971, Bruce Graham said:

I turn now to the problem of deciding on a site for a second airport for Sydney. I support my colleague the honourable member for Mitchell (Mr Irwin), ... that is in respect of the lower or southern section of the Royal National Park, with an approach over the Pacific Ocean. I realise that this will not be a very popular suggestion in the eyes of conservationists. I refer to an area which can be described only as bleak, unattractive and without any of the qualities which would make this part of the National Park one which would attract tourist activities or which would be visited by many people. It is the Wattamolla area which is in the far south of the Royal National Park.²⁹

Many in the community were extremely alarmed by the very suggestion that Wattamolla might be considered as the site for a new airport. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, one Jannali resident wrote that he thought it 'almost unbelievable that a Government committee would even contemplate alienating a large area of parkland.'³⁰ Sutherland Shire Council President, Ray Thorburn, also found it 'disturbing' that despite Senator Cotton's recommendation that the interdepartmental committee virtually disregard the Wattamolla site, the proposal had its 'champions in the House.'³¹ But perhaps the most forceful voice of opposition came from the Federal Member for Hughes, Les Johnson. During a radio talkback session on 2GB, Johnson told host, Brian White, that 'no big public meeting that has been held in Sydney before would compare with what would happen if the Commonwealth Government tried to take the Royal National Park away from the people.'³² To the House of Representatives Johnson argued:

... Any attempt to alienate this [Wattamolla] or any other part of the Royal National Park for development would be widely regarded as governmental vandalism... Development of an airport complex would mean the destruction of hundreds of acres of natural bushland and drive wildlife from the area... The noise of aircraft and motor vehicles would combine to desecrate the entire environment of one of the State's great tourist attractions.³³

Not to mention the irreversible devastation that construction of a major airport would cause to the Royal National Park's unique Aboriginal sites; evidence that this land was first occupied thousands of years ago and regularly used by the Dharawal people.

Furthermore, Johnson warned that even if the Wattamolla site was accepted, it was highly doubtful that workers would make their labour available for this project, and that the Trades and Labour Council of NSW would 'encourage the placement of a job embargo' on the construction of an airport in the Royal National Park.³⁴ Fifteen months later, in February 1973, when the issue was again raised after a change of Federal Government, Johnson reiterated his disapproval: 'development of an airport

complex would be against the best interests of present and future generations.’ Furthermore, he would ‘do everything to ensure that Wattamolla is... excluded from consideration.’³⁵

Of course, as it turned out, a second airport for Sydney was not built at Wattamolla in the 1970s – or anywhere else for that matter. Although both the State and Federal Governments had grappled with the need for a major new airport since the 1940s, it wasn’t until September 2018 that construction finally began on the long-imagined massive economic infrastructure project – at Badgerys Creek. This site will officially become Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport when it opens in 2026. There are no current plans for an airport at Wattamolla.

¹ Trembath, M., ‘Visitors to Royal National Park urged to consider alternative locations for Australia Day’, *St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader*, (January 7, 2017).

² ‘News of the day’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (June 19, 1882), p. 5.

³ Royal Australian Historical Society, ‘Historic Wattamolla’, *Journal and proceedings*, (1937, Vol.23, No.4), pp. 304-306.

⁴ Proclamation, *Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales*, (August 3, 1910), p. 4341.

⁵ ‘Land at Wattamolla’, *Propeller*, (December 8, 1933), p. 4.

⁶ RAHS, ‘Historic Wattamolla’

⁷ ‘Wattamolla’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (February 8, 1935), p. 17.

⁸ ‘Historic tablets’, *Propeller* (October 27, 1938), p. 3.

⁹ Flinders, M. *A voyage to Terra Australis*, Vol. 1., p. ci-cii.

¹⁰ ‘Blown to sea,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (June 18, 1935), p. 11.

¹¹ ‘Big Plane Joins Sea Search’ *The Sun*, (June 17, 1935), p. 7.

¹² ‘Coast swept by terrific seas,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (June 19, 1935), p. 13.

¹³ ‘Cousin’s faith borne out,’ *The Labor Daily*, (June 20, 1935), p. 8.

¹⁴ ‘Lost launch crew found alive,’ *The Daily Telegraph*, (June 20, 1935), p. 1.

¹⁵ ‘Cousin’s faith borne out’.

¹⁶ ‘Unemployed men’s part’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (June 20, 1935), p. 12; ‘New drive’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (December 14, 1935), p. 18.

¹⁷ ‘Cousins’ faith borne out’.

¹⁸ Accounts condensed from: Victims tell the story of their privations, *Daily Telegraph*, (June 20, 1935), p. 1; and ‘The humorous side,’ *Sydney Morning Herald* (June 20, 1935), p. 12.

¹⁹ Barrowclough, N., ‘A dancer still,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (January 18, 1992), pp. 153-156.

²⁰ ‘Wattamolla dreaming,’ *St. George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, (April 30, 1980), p. 26.

²¹ Glascott, J.

²² McInerney, S., ‘Unusual beach show,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (March 13, 1981), p. 17.

²³ George Gittoes, CV, <http://gittoes.com/biography>

²⁴ Barrowclough, N., ‘A dancer still,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (January 18, 1992), pp. 153-156.

²⁵ Lewis, B., ‘Theatre makes a big splash,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (February 4, 1983), p. 8.

²⁶ ‘Air terminal to be ready for Queen,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (February 20, 1970), p. 5.

²⁷ ‘Mascot stays,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, (September 16, 1971), p. 1.

²⁸ ‘Sydney Airport proposals,’ Ministerial Speech, Bob Cotton (Speaker) – Senate Hansard, 15 September 1971.

²⁹ Appropriation Bill (No.1), Bruce Graham (Speaker) – House of Representatives Hansard, 11 November 1971.

³⁰ A second airport (letters to the editor), *Sydney Morning Herald*, (September 22, 1971), p. 6.

³¹ Sutherland Shire Council Minute No. 1424 of 22 November 1971, Presidential Minute No. 15/71.

³² Appropriation Bill (No. 1), Leslie Johnson (Speaker) – House of Representatives Hansard, 11 November 1971.

³³ Adjournment, Leslie Johnson (Speaker) – House of Representatives Hansard, 10 November 1971.

³⁴ Adjournment, Leslie Johnson (Speaker).

³⁵ Press Release, Leslie Johnson, Minister for Housing, 12 February 1973.

Congratulations
Dawn and Cliff Emerson
on your
DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

Anniversaries are so important and few of us can hope to achieve such a remarkable one – sixty years of marriage - and we heartily congratulate Dawn and Cliff on achieving this milestone on 22nd August 2019.

Some of our newer members may not know how vital the Emersons have been in the history of our society. Dawn, apart from her busy life as councillor and deputy mayor found time to act as our president for eight years. She frequently steered the society through troubled waters and was supported by Cliff, always at her side with his own inimitable presence – who can forget his talks on education and particularly Japan and his other travels.

So we wish them well, good health and good luck and count the Society blessed that we have known them.



*Cliff and Dawn Emerson newly married
- 22nd August, 1959*

Dawn tells their story:

Cliff and I were married on 22nd August, 1959 at All Saints Church, Parramatta by the Rev. Douglas Ernest Oldaker Crawford, who had previously officiated at Mortlake, where Cliff had been an altar boy.

I met Cliff at Fort St. Evening College, when we were studying for our Leaving Certificate in 1957. After our Intermediate Certificates - Cliff at Croydon JT, and I through Blackfriars Correspondence, as I lived in the country at Wedderburn – we both went straight into fifth year and gained our certificates. By the end of the year we were courting, and we married in 1959. It was a rainbow wedding, with my bridesmaids wearing pink, blue and lilac.

I wore a guipure lace bodice and a delustrated satin full-length frock, with a small train and a half veil. I carried a bunch of orchids which had been grown by my later-to-be step-father, George Scattergood. My uncle, Allan Rudd, drove me to the church in his black Buick, and as my father, Percy Crampton had passed away the previous year, my step-grandfather, John Anderson 'gave me away'.

We had the wedding breakfast in the adjacent hall, and my primary schoolteacher, Mr John Hodgkins was the MC. Cliff's uncle, Colin Emerson, who had a beautiful voice, sang a couple of songs during the reception to the assembled guests. Unfortunately, the night before the wedding, Cliff's Jowett Javelin sports-car jumped out of gear and was undriveable. Cliff's Uncle Jack Emerson worked through most of the night, to get the car serviceable, and to our relief, managed to fix it. I changed into a blue silk Dior-styled suit with a cape collar, and a large brim picture hat and we travelled by car for our honeymoon at Ballina.

EARLY SETTLERS ON THE WORONORA RIVER

GREG JACKSON AND PAM FORBES

The Georges, Woronora and Hacking Rivers had always been important to the indigenous population of this area and in a recent edition of the *Bulletin* (No. 206, Feb. 2018) a cave on the Woronora containing undisturbed indigenous artefacts and hand stencils was described. In the early days of the Sutherland Shire the same rivers were the highways and much of the early history of the shire is along its banks. Another cave on the Woronora (Image 2) was recently visited and found to contain early European inscriptions (Image 1) containing a familiar name, that of 'Midgley' and a date of March 24, 1907.

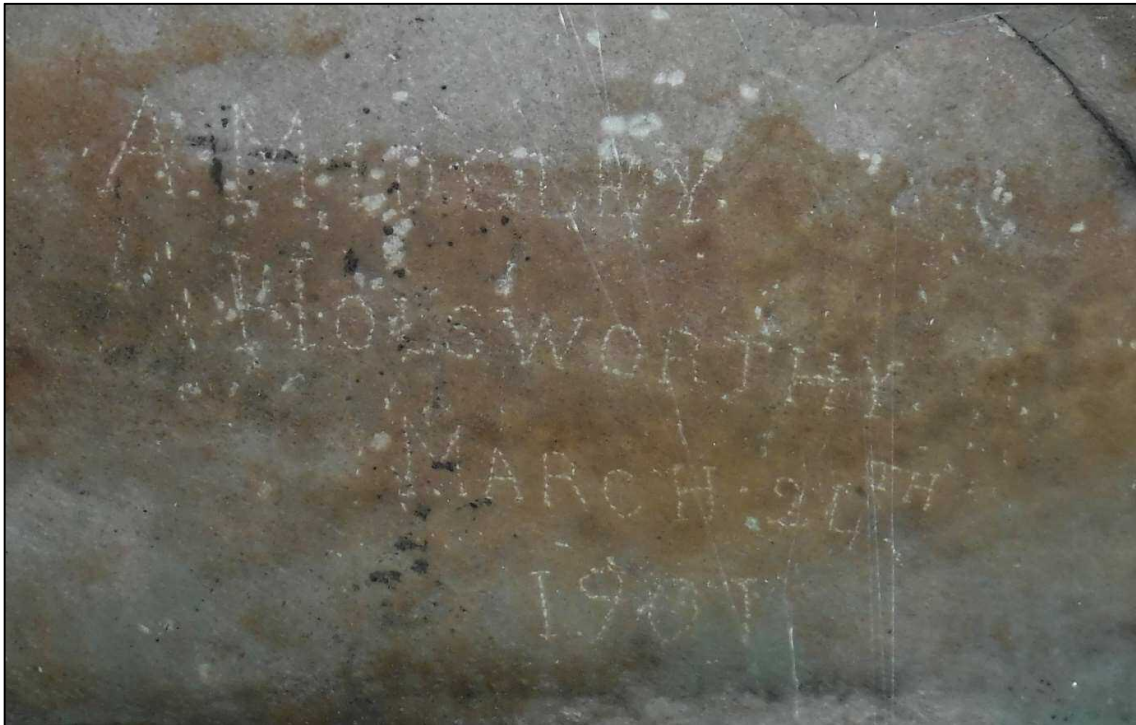


Image 1: Some of the inscriptions on the cave wall including that of A. Midgley and ? Holsworthy with the date 'March 24th 1907' [Photo: G. Jackson]

The Midgley family were one of the early settlers in the Menai area. In 1896 Richard Midgley and his family were the second group of settlers to take up land in the Menai district. Welshman Owen Jones was the first settler, and he named the area Bangor. Later it was renamed Menai. Richard Midgley carried the first mail from Sutherland to Menai on 1 June 1905.¹ (A. and F. Midgley, 1993).

So, who was the A. Midgley responsible for this inscription?

A possibility is 'Alfred Midgley' who lived from 1849 to 1930, much of his life in Queensland, where he was a member of parliament, representing the seat of Fassifern from 1883 to 1887. He was a well-known author of books on agriculture, church history and poetry including *Reflections: Menai Congregational Church 1901-1977*. This A. Midgley would have been 57 years old in 1907. Another possibility is another 'Alfred Midgley', who together with his twin

brother Fred, were third generation residents of the Menai district and foundation members of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society. The Midgley brothers wrote extensively on the early European history of the Menai area and the Woronora River, both being interested in the history of motor transport. This 'A. Midgley' would have been a young lad in 1907. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports the birth of an Arthur Midgley in Wollongong, son of James Midgley on April 7, 1876 who would have been 30 years old in 1907. The Midgley's were a big family and there may have been other unreported A. Midgley's, of a suitable age, living in the district.



Image 2: *The cave entrance* [Photo: G. Jackson]

We may never know who the A. Midgley was whose name appears on the wall in this cave beside the Woronora River, but a clue might be other legible names that also appear inside this cave. As well as the name Holsworthy, seen in Image 1, these names include:

L. Hatfield

W. Garrett with the date 2/10/1910 and

W. Sparkes

If any readers have any thoughts on this mystery the authors would love to hear from you.
(email:greg.jackson100@gmail.com)

¹ Midgley, A and Midgley, F., 1993, *History of Road Transport in the Sutherland Shire*,
http://www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/website/documents/community/library/old_study_7_scanned.pdf

DR GEORGE JOSEPH MILLER

An early family doctor in the Sutherland Shire

JOHN MILLER

Written in March 2002

The original is archived in the Sutherland Library, Local Studies



George Joseph Miller
Painted as a gift by Brigadier Roy M Thompson DSO, MC
at Cowra Military Hospital in 1943.

When George and Mary Miller stepped off the train at Jannali in late 1946 their first sighting was of Mr Gray, a local dairy farmer, leading one of his cows up the main street. Little could they foresee the huge post-war development that this semi-rural area was about to experience, or fully appreciate the major role that Sutherland Shire would come to play in their lives.

The area was not completely new to George and Mary. They had married in St Patrick's Church, Sutherland in 1943 and honeymooned in Cronulla while George was completing another of several locums he had previously undertaken for Dr Eric Miles of Sutherland. A more permanent assistantship arrangement would soon lead to a third-share partnership with the Miles brothers, Drs Eric and Tom.

George Miller was born in Mascot, Sydney on 7th January 1917, the first of two sons to Gladys and

Joseph, a racehorse trainer. George grew up in Napoleon Street where his family had lived since 1852, and attended Gardeners Road Primary School in nearby Rosebery. He completed his secondary school studies on an academic scholarship at Sydney Boys' High.

After graduating with a MBBS from the University of Sydney in 1941, the young Dr Miller served his residence at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in North Sydney where he met Mary who had completed her training as a nursing sister. George then enlisted in the army and served as a captain in the AIF during the Second World War.

In Jannali George, Mary and their two small sons boarded in Mrs Griffith's house in Alice Street. Mrs Griffith was the second wife and widow of the Hon. Arthur Griffith, MLA and who, as Minister for Public Works, had inaugurated the Murrumbidgee Irrigation System in 1912. The country NSW town of Griffith is named after him. In retirement Mr Griffith had moved to Jannali where he later died.

Eventually the Miller family moved to Sutherland in 1950, and lived at Dr Eric Miles' residence and surgery at the corner of Eton and Flora Streets. This was a large two-storey house with expansive grounds, later to be demolished for a motor service garage. The Centrelink

building stands there today. George, also on occasion, held surgery at the home of Dr Tom Miles at the corner of Princes Highway and Belmont Street.

Dr George Miller and family on the steps at Dr Miles' house, cnr Flora and Eton Sts, Sutherland, c.1950

From left: Mary (holding Marie), George, George Jnr, and in front, John. [Courtesy: John Miller]



There was a great shortage of doctors generally just after the war. This was a time when the general practitioners had to be self-reliant. Many procedures were carried out in their surgeries or in the patient's home, which would today be

done only by a specialist in a hospital. Only two medical practices servicing the entire 'top end' of the Shire existed. The other was that of Dr Latham who lived and worked from his house in Eton Street, which was later to become the original Sutherland Library. This was subsequently demolished and the present Sutherland Administration Building built on the site.

During these years George and his colleagues had to work very long hours to provide medical care to a rapidly growing population spread over a large area. This included the neighbouring suburbs of Miranda, Gymea, Kirrawee, Engadine, Menai, Jannali, Como and Oyster Bay. The morning and afternoon surgeries were somehow sandwiched between countless house calls, many in the middle of the night, often to places only accessible by boat - up the Woronora River - or by trek along a bush track in Gray's Point. With babies to deliver at the maternity hospitals of San Gerard at Engadine and Jacaranda at Woollooware, and patients to see at St George Nursing Home, Brighton and St George Hospital at Kogarah, early starts and late finishes to each day were accepted.

In 1951 the family made their new home 68 at Glencoe Street, Sutherland, which they bought from Dr Tom Miles. The solid red-brick house had originally been built in 1935 for the local pharmacist, Mr Cox by George Heavens, who was later to establish his electrical appliance store in Sutherland [and was a founding member of SSHS]. At about this time Dr Miller opened a surgery in Mitchell Avenue, Jannali, and soon after another in Oyster Bay Road, Oyster Bay.

More doctors soon came to the area to fill the fast-growing need. Among these was Dr Harry Soper who was originally a member of the Sutherland practice before moving to Kirrawee and eventually to Sylvania. Dr Norma Nelson arrived in Engadine in 1952 and Dr Douglas Ash started a practice in Loftus. Dr Cousins joined the Sutherland practice, and was later to work at Sutherland Hospital as a surgeon. Dr Jack Woolridge had been a milkman, but immediately after the war had grasped the opportunity to study medicine. He joined the Sutherland partnership for several years prior to specializing in cardiology and [in 2002] still practised in Miranda. Dr Boxall was to arrive and begin general practice in Miranda soon after, as did Dr Gates in Cronulla. Doctors Fisher and Pearson started their own practices in Jannali.

George Miller left the Miles' practice in 1958 to concentrate on his own surgeries, including the new one built on to his Glencoe Street residence, which he opened in 1960. An assistant at that time was Dr Harry Borkman who then practised in Cronulla for many years. In the early sixties Dr Tom Lee joined the Jannali surgery, and was still working there at the time of writing.

George had many and varied interests. Throughout his life he maintained a keen interest in sport. In the early thirties, while attending Sydney Boys' High, he was a GPS (Greater Public Schools) champion and captain of the athletic team. He held various track records both in GPS and in CHS (Combined Highschool Sports) athletics, including the 100 yards and long jump. Later he was to run for the Botany Harriers and became one of Australia's finest sprinters. George also coached netball, organised the sports days at Mary Immaculate College, and managed the cross-country running at St Patrick's Boys. In cricket George represented the Botany district in the Telegraph Shield competition and played for the army team in the Inter-Services Competition during the war. He was also a fine batsman for the St Patrick's Club in the Sutherland Shire Cricket Association competition. He was an honorary vice-president of the Association during 1955-57.

George also loved reading and built up a large and extensive personal library which represented his wide and diverse interests which, according to his wife Mary, precluded no conceivable subject. Mary said that she gave up despairing of him returning from trips to the Sydney bookshops with a car loaded with books. He would read late into the night, then rise at about 4.00am to read again until morning surgery. He seemed to get by with four hours sleep a night.

Apart from purely medical activities, George did much to help in other fields. He was a prominent member in the affairs of the church which he attended regularly with his wife and children. He was a member of the St Vincent De Paul Society and the Sylvania Lions Club, and a long serving president of the Sutherland Music Club during 1959-65. He was also an active member of the Council of Social Services in the Shire, and was Foundation President of the Port Hacking branch of the Australian Medical Association. It was particularly in this capacity that George became well known and respected by all his colleagues throughout the Shire.

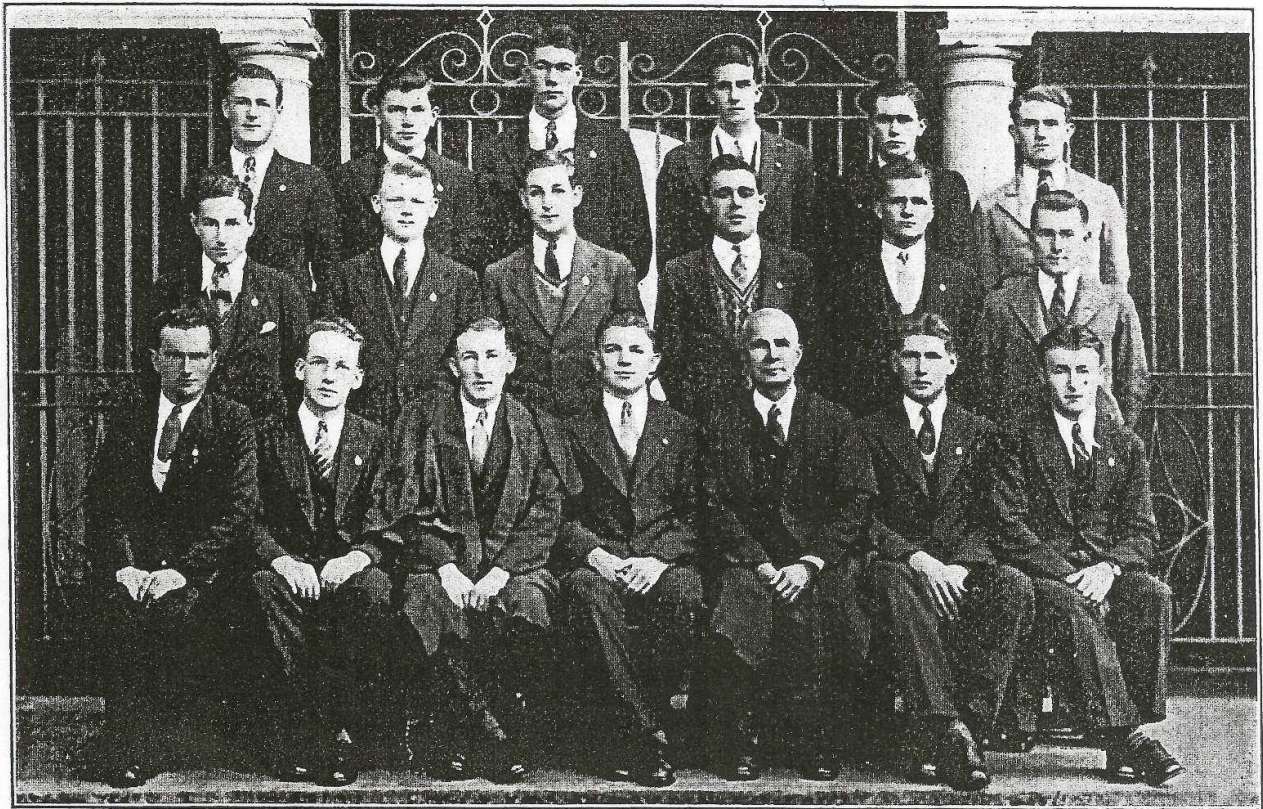
Always with a ready smile, George maintained a great sense of humour. Serving as the district's Government Medical Officer throughout the 1960s, he once had the local police sergeant confessing that it was better to send 'the Doc' in first to defuse a domestic situation. ... the sergeant's theory being that the hammer wielder was less likely to hit the family doctor over the head than one of his constables.

As well as acquiring the many skills required of a successful general practitioner, George undertook continuing studies in obstetrics, gynaecology and dermatology. He served in these capacities on the staff of the Royal North Shore Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital, St George Hospital and Sutherland Hospital. He was also a lecturer to nurses in training at Sutherland Hospital.

George Miller died suddenly at his home on 5th October 1976. It was said that the sad news of his death spread 'like a bushfire' throughout the area that afternoon. Patients knew that in him they had a friend as well as a doctor – a man on whom they could depend for advice on social and family matters as well as on medical affairs. And he knew the families well, having assisted at the births of not only the children but, in many cases, at their parents' births as well.

George was survived by his wife Mary, their six children, ten grandchildren and three great grandchildren, all living in the Sutherland Shire at the time. His younger brother, Dr Laurence Miller, a senior lecturer in Education at Queensland University died in Brisbane in 1997.

Editor's note: Mary died in 2007. Eldest son, George, a former local magistrate and popular member of Sutherland Shire Historical Society, passed away in 2017. Dr Miller's other children, John, Marie, Naomi, Madeleine and Berniece, all still reside in the Shire.



THE RECORD

SYDNEY HIGH SCHOOL, PREFECTS, 1934.

Back Row— J. Buggie, J. P. Quinn, A. R. Cutler, E. Macpherson, R. B. Blackett, R. R. K. Moore.

2nd Row—H. Glass, V. M. Hercus, M. P. Henry, A. Delavere, C. S. Wood, J. G. C. Price.

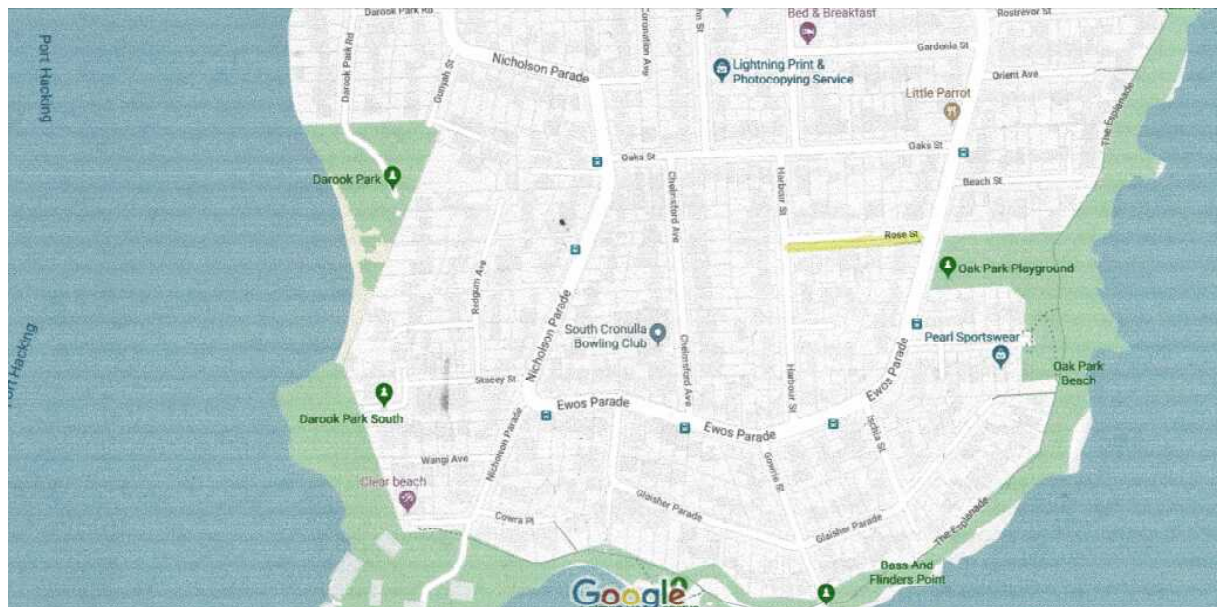
Front Row—G. J. C. Miller, M. F. Hale, F. B. Jones Esq., F. B. Horner (Capt.), F. McMullen Esq., A. H. Loomes, (Vice-

The Record is the annual journal of Sydney High School. In the 1934 edition, school prefects included A.R. Cutler (top row, third from left), later to become Sir Roden Cutler, NSW Governor and George Miller (first left in bottom row), who became a prominent Sutherland Shire doctor. [supplied by John Miller]

NAMING OF ROSE STREET, SOUTH CRONULLA

PETER MOORE

I was reading an article by Laurie Burgess titled 'Edward Thorne of South Cronulla' in a past copy of the *SSHS Bulletin*, Volume 17-Number 4: November 2013, when I noticed that he did not have a derivation of the naming of Rose Street. I checked on the Sutherland Shire Council website relating to the naming of Shire roads and this site did not have an explanation of the name. Rose Street runs between EWOS Pde. and Harbour St. and is opposite Oak Park.



Rose Street, South Cronulla (highlighted in yellow), [Google maps]

Edward Thorne owned a considerable amount of land in South Cronulla mainly around the Oak Park area, which he started to acquire from 1898. He was a businessman from the Newtown area and owned a tailoring shop in King Street. He developed his land in South Cronulla and constructed cottages for holiday letting and a weekend retreat for his family.

Birth search results in NSW only show two children Stanley (1885) and Mabel (1887), but his death notice in April 1931 in the *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)* lists six children: May, Ethel, Stanley, Edith, Mabel and Ella. I carried out a search of death records and found a Rose Thorne - with a father Edward and a mother Annie - died in 1908, which was a family match. I then went to Trove and found that an article in the *SMH* dated 27th October 1908 which reads:

FATALITY AT CRONULLA WOMAN DROWNED IN WELL

The Kogarah police were informed at 11o'clock last night of the death of Rose Thorne, aged 28, who was drowned in a well. She had been living with her

parents at Cronulla and was drawing a bucket of water from a well 11 feet deep and containing 7 feet of water. Whilst drawing it, the boards on which she was standing being wet caused her to slip, and the weight of the bucket pulled her into the well. Her father, Edward Thorne, a tailor, in business at Newtown, had left her at 12:30p.m. and returned at 3p.m. He did not notice her absence, as she had previously stated her intentions of going to the post-office. At 6 o'clock she was still missing. He went to the well and came upon the body. He obtained assistance, and brought her to the surface, but life was extinct. An inquest will be held.

Rose was interned at Rookwood on the 28th October 1908 in Zone B AAAA 179, and on 29th April 1944 her sister May was also interned with her. Her parents Annie (20/2/1928) and Edward (23/4/31) are interned next to them in grave 180. Another sister Mabel (11/1/47) is interned on the other side in grave 178.

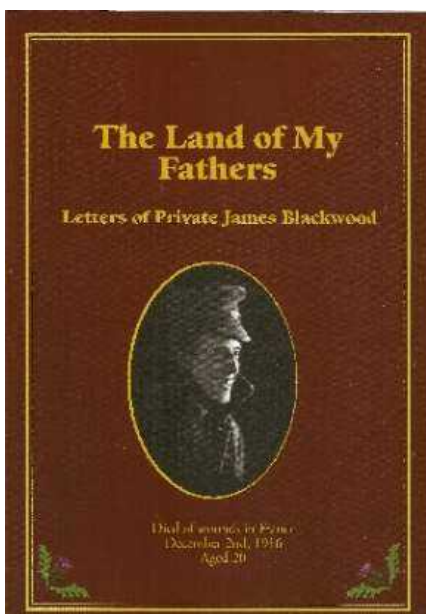
As Laurie Burgess pointed out, the Thorne's had a house in Harbour St. called Cronulla House, which was situated near the intersection of Harbour and Rose Streets.

Therefore, it is most likely that when Edward Thorne subdivided his land he named the new street Rose after his late daughter.

Creo and I found Rose's grave at Rookwood. Thus ends the mystery in the naming of Rose Street.



Rose Thorne's grave at Rookwood Cemetery [Photo: Creo Moore, 2019]



The Land of My Fathers

Letters of Private James Blackwood

Died of wounds in France
December 2nd, 1916, Aged 20

By Don Rothnie, 2018

Price: \$40.00

Available from

- SSHA Museum on Saturday mornings,
- and from Don Rothnie. Phone: 0409 820 815 or email: bardon@bigpond.com.au

Specifications of book:

A4 size; 84 pages; plentiful images in colour and black & white

BOOK REVIEW

ELIZABETH CRAIG

James Blackwood was a member of the family which founded J. Blackwood and Son Ltd, Industrial Engineer Supplies 140 years ago. James served with the Australian forces in World War I in Egypt and in France where he was killed in late 1916. He regularly wrote home to his family about his experiences, and his letters, engaging, articulate and evocative, provide a vivid first-hand picture of life for soldiers in that grim war: the endless marches on blistered feet through the shelled, often swampy country denuded of trees and greenery, the horror of life in the trenches and on the battlefield, the friendships he made and friends he lost. After being wounded on the Somme, he was repatriated to England to convalesce, and he writes of the 'infinite pleasure of seeing with mine own eyes the land of my fathers'. James Blackwood's affection for his family and his great appreciation of letters and parcels from home is obvious. He writes with a mature hand and a philosophical outlook that seems surprising in a young man of 20.

Don Rothnie, who is currently SSHA's hardworking Secretary, worked for Blackwoods for 41 years, and in 2016 wrote a history of the company, *Blackwoods: the first 120 years*. Don was able to access Private James Blackwood's letters and he painstakingly transcribed and compiled them along with his military records, for this beautifully presented book. As Lieutenant Colonel Mark Weller (ret'd) wrote last year in his foreword to this book: 'It is highly appropriate that Don Rothnie has ensured that [these letters] will see the light of day again in the centenary year of the end of this terrible conflict.'

SSHS EXCURSION TO AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM (ANMM)

6 August 2019

ELIZABETH CRAIG

Greg Jackson, SSHS member and his wife, Pam Forbes are marine archaeologists and volunteers at the ANMM. They led sixteen of us on a truly interesting and enjoyable excursion of the Museum. We split into two groups.

Pam led our group over the replica of Cook's *Endeavour*. This was an eye opener for us all, as we tried to imagine 94 sailors crowded on to that tiny ship, along with animals and supplies, including 29 kms of rope! The marines slept in hammocks in dim quarters with such a low ceiling (1.2m) that we needed to bend double when moving through. In contrast was the Great Cabin, a relatively luxurious, well-lit and airy cabin designed for the captain to dine, work and relax in. However, Cook had to share it with the wealthy Joseph Banks and his entourage who used it to work on the botanical specimens they collected.

Pam (on left) explaining the ropes to SSHS members on the cramped HMB Endeavour



The marines' mess plus ship's cat



The Great Cabin used by Captain Cook and Bank's group

Later Greg took our group behind the scenes where artefacts are stored when not on display (eg pieces of *Endeavour* ballast recovered from Barrier Reef waters in 1970, a chair from the *Dunbar* (sunk in Sydney Harbour in 1857 with 121 of the 122 on board killed – the State's worst peacetime shipping disaster ever), and the kayak owned by Australian, Andrew McAuley who tried to cross the Tasman alone in 2007 and disappeared about 30kms from NZ. We saw workshops where models are made of ships in readiness for restoration, and we saw the William Bligh exhibition where visitors are asked to examine the display and decide whether Bligh was the brute he is portrayed as, or was he a hero – or something in between. I certainly modified my opinion!

Altogether, it was an illuminating and pleasurable tour of our maritime history, and we all appreciated the efforts by Greg and Pam. The brilliant sunny day was a bonus too!



Replica of 'HMB Endeavour', Darling Harbour

SSHS EXCURSION TO AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM (ANMM)
6 August 2019

[Photos: Elizabeth Craig]



SSHS Excursionists exploring the 'HMB Endeavour'