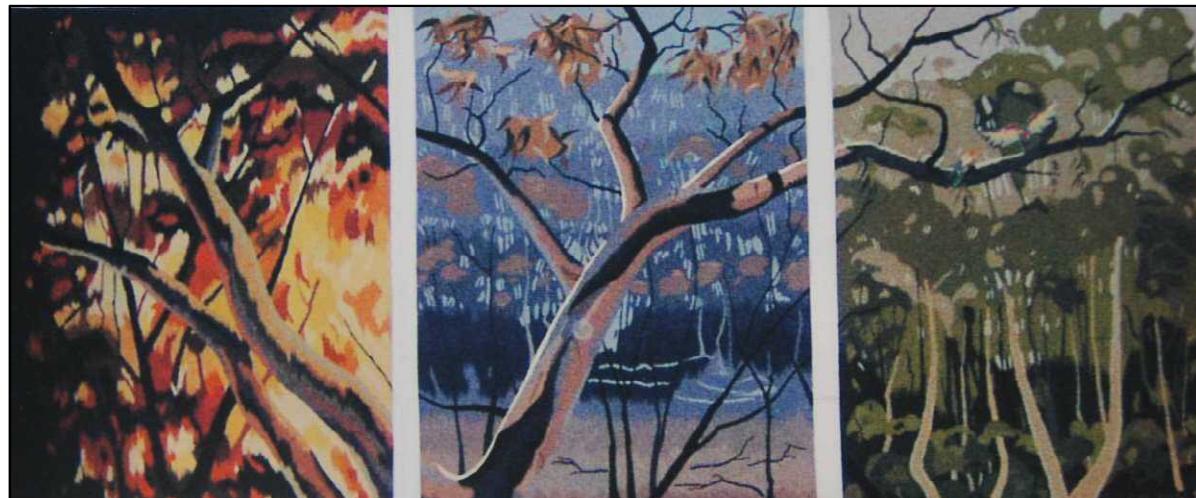


NUMBER: 213 — NOVEMBER 2019



Sutherland Shire Bicentennial Memorial Tapestry, 1988

*Dedicated to volunteer bush fire fighters killed  
at Menai (1977), Waterfall (1980) and Grays Point (1983)*

Designed by John Ralfs and woven by Sutherland Shire Spinners and Weavers (SSSW)  
See article on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SSSW, p.11

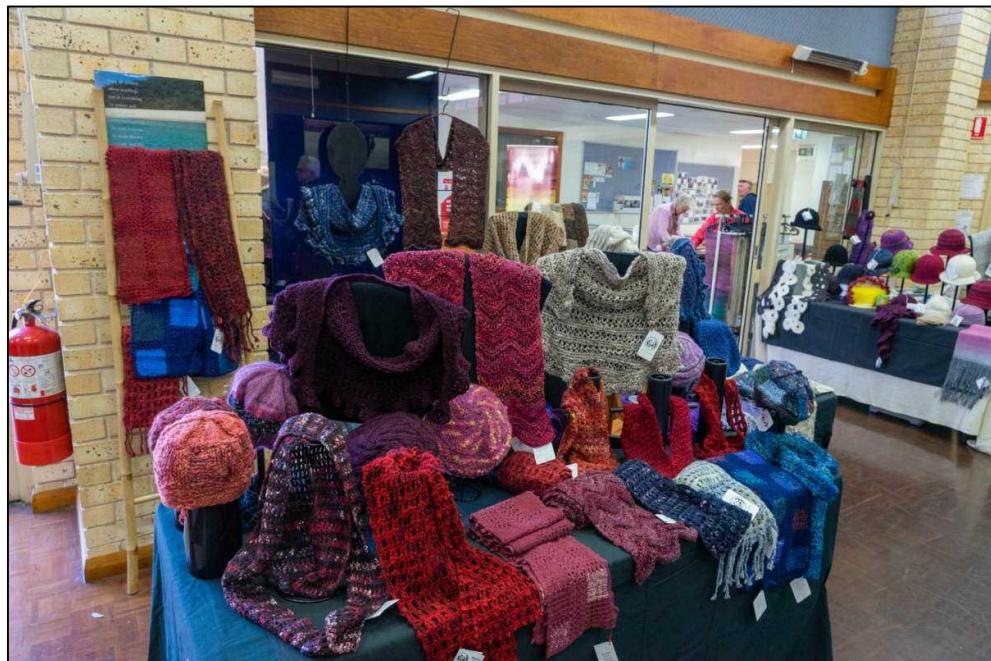
**MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE**

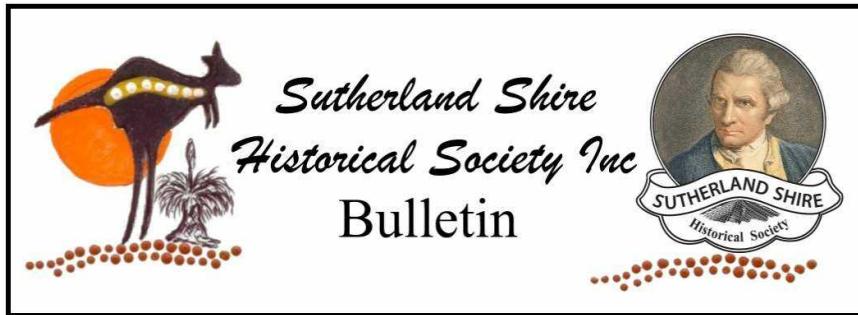
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**EMAIL:** shirehistory@gmail.com **SSHS WEBSITE:** [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org)

**FACEBOOK:** Sutherland Shire Historical Society

**Exhibits from Sutherland Shire Spinners & Weavers (SSSW), 2019**  
**Held in the first week of June each year at Sutherland Uniting Church**  
See History of SSSW, p.11  
[Photos by Colin Woods]





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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 0491 096 642.

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 without 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com)

## **SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2019-2020**

**At the AGM on 21 September, a motion was passed to change the Constitution allowing for four Executive Committee members (President, Deputy President, Secretary and Treasurer) plus three Committee members to be elected.**

**All other positions are by appointment**

### **ELECTED MEMBERS**

<b>PATRON:</b>	Shire Mayor, Clr Carmelo Pesce		
<b>PRESIDENT</b>	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto51@optusnet.com.au
<b>DEPUTY PRESIDENT</b>	Joe Hales	0418 270 744	joehales@outlook.com
<b>SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER</b>	Don Rothnie	0409 820 815	bardon@bigpond.com.au
<b>TREASURER</b>	John Doherty	0425 226 405	johndoherty55@gmail.com
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>	Carol McDonald	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
	Elizabeth Craig	0491 099 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
	Helen Rosner	8539 7707	hmrosner@bigpond.com

### **APPOINTED POSITIONS**

<b>MUSEUM CURATOR/MANAGER</b>	Vacant		
<b>BULLETIN EDITOR</b>	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
<b>ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR</b>	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
<b>PUBLICATIONS OFFICER</b>	Pauline Curby	0427 527 721	pcurby@iprimus.com.au
<b>PUBLICITY OFFICER</b>	Pauline Curby	0427 527 721	pcurby@iprimus.com.au
<b>ARCHIVIST/RESEARCH OFFICER</b>	Carol McDonald	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
<b>GRANTS OFFICER</b>	Don Rothnie	0409 820 815	bardon@bigpond.com.au
<b>ASSISTANT SECRETARY</b>	Carol McDonald	9528 5122	jmcDonald@optusnet.com.au
<b>EXCURSIONS OFFICER</b>	Vacant		
<b>BULLETIN PROOF READER</b>	Merle Kavanagh	9521 1043	
<b>EXCURSIONS BOOKING CLERK</b>	Vacant		
<b>HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER</b>	Helen Rosner	8539 7707	hmrosner@bigpond.com
<b>WELFARE OFFICER</b>	Gloria Hans	9589 0251	
<b>HONORARY SOLICITOR</b>	Michael Solari		

**If you are interested in volunteering for any of the two positions still vacant and wish more information, please don't hesitate to contact an Executive Committee member by email or speak to us at the next meeting**

**SSHS CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2019 – FEBRUARY 2020**  
**(See website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org) for updates)**

<b>MEETING</b>			<b>MUSEUM</b>		
1.30pm, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday in month Stapleton Centre			9.00am-1.00pm Saturdays Sutherland Mem. School of Arts 23 East Parade, Sutherland		
<b>DATE</b>					
<b>DECEMBER</b> <b>2019</b>		--	<b>NO MEETING IN DECEMBER</b>	--	
<b>JANUARY</b> <b>2020</b>	<b>Sat.</b> <b>18th</b>	<b>SPEAKER:</b> Noel Elliot to speak on the topic 'Steaming around Tasmania Plus', after a recent steam train trip in Tasmania visiting several museums.			
<b>FEBRUARY</b> <b>2020</b>	<b>Sat.</b> <b>15th</b>	<b>SPEAKER:</b> Michael Adams will deliver an address on 'a big history of little Stanwell Park.'			

**MUSEUM**

**THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED FROM SAT. 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER until SAT. 11<sup>th</sup> JANUARY  
2020**

**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 Karen Mann and Julie Donno. We look forward to seeing you at SSHS meetings and functions, and trust you will enjoy our company and our activities.

**MUSEUM** If anyone would like to participate in any of our activities, we are always looking for volunteer guides at the Museum on Saturday mornings (training will be provided). Also, since John Doherty has become Treasurer, he needs someone to take over the Museum roster. See him at a meeting, or email him on [johndoherty55@gmail.com](mailto:johndoherty55@gmail.com).

Then, as Joe Hales mentioned in the Vice-President's message, we will need some extra helpers in the new year to join in the huge task of packing up our Museum ready for our move to Venetia Street, Sylvania. Flag your interest in becoming involved either at a meeting or by email: [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com).

**EXCURSIONS** Although we have no excursions set in concrete over the next three months, Peter Moore has suggested that he would be happy to organise another walking tour of the Esplanade at Cronulla in February. Peter is a full bottle on the history of Cronulla and has stories to tell of many of the sites along the Esplanade. Learn more at the November meeting.

## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JOE HALES



Firstly, thank you for electing me as Vice-President of SSHS. I look forward to taking part in its activities and helping to shape the future of the Society.

In the absence of our President, Bruce Watt I have been asked to submit a few words for this *Bulletin*.

Promoting our many activities is the job of our Committee who are doing a great job behind the scenes.

Don Rothnie is talking with the council regarding our proposed new Museum. Things have not been finalised yet. We will need to formulate a plan to promote this important part of the SSHS. Any positive input from any members would be much appreciated.

Before we get too far along the track with the occupation of the new premises, I think that we should have an open day so that everyone who is interested can attend. Perhaps this could be scheduled

in the new year to sound out any constructive ideas to enhance the use and exposure of the new Museum.

Since we have occupied the School of Arts since 1986, moving is going to be a big job! Many hands will be required along with professional people to transport the heavy and fragile exhibition cabinets.

If you are willing and able to help, please let an Executive Committee member know at a meeting, or perhaps you could email us at [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com).

Just a suggestion: maybe we can tie in the opening of the new Museum with the up- coming 250 year anniversary of Cook's landing ....around April 2020?

Thank you, Pauline Curby for a very informative talk at our last meeting - subject 1919 influenza pandemic. There was much interest and questions following her talk.

I look forward to getting to know more of you at meetings and other SSHS activities – such as the upcoming Christmas party.

### *SSHS Christmas Party*

**To be held at Kareela Golf Club  
On Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> November**

Arrive at 12.00 for 12.30 start. Two (2) courses \$30.00, drinks at own expense.

(See website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org) for Menu)

We will need numbers and full payment by the November monthly meeting.

Contact Floriana 0438 284 786



# **SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC**

## **MINUTES OF 53<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**21<sup>st</sup> September 2019**

**Welcome:** Bruce Watt, President

**Apologies:** Carol McDonald, Liz Adams, Joan King, Joe Hales

**Minutes:** Elizabeth Craig

Call meeting to order: 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting declared open.

Presentation of Minutes of 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting read by Don Rothnie.

Business arising: Nil

**Motion to accept the Minutes of 52<sup>nd</sup> AGM:** Moved: Elizabeth Craig Seconded: Bruce Watt

Reports of office bearers (President, Secretary, Treasurer, Museum Curator) published in the August 2019 Bulletin taken as read.

Bruce Watt thanked all office bearers.

**Motion to accept reports:** Moved: George Cotis Seconded: Angela Thomas

Don Rothnie presented an argument for a Special Resolution to adopt the NSW Department of Fair Trading's 'Model Constitution' of 2016.

**Motion to accept the Special Resolution** as follows:

'Members are requested to authorize the adoption of the Model Constitution 2016 without alteration as issued by the NSW Department of Fair Trading as that of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc.'

Andrew Platfoot put a question without notice: Does the Model Constitution protect SSHS individuals from legal liability in case of their negligence?

After discussion, the Secretary promised to follow up the rules on this, but the general membership accepted that it was a matter of insurance rather than the Constitution rules, and that the RAHS, through which local historical societies (including SSHS) are insured, would cover this.

Moved: Pauline Curby; Seconded: George Cotis; Accepted.

Congratulations and thanks to all assembled.

Bruce Watt: All positions are declared vacant.

**Election of Executive Committee** positions under the newly adopted Constitution:

**President:** As a nominee for President, Bruce Watt stood down for this part of the proceedings, and Angela Thomas presided. Bruce Watt returned following the election of President.

Moved: Elizabeth Craig; Seconded: Pauline Curby  
Being no other nominees, **Bruce Watt** declared President.

**Vice President:** Nominee Joe Hales, nominator: Elizabeth Craig; seconder: Don Rothnie  
Being no other nominees, **Joe Hales** declared Vice President

**Treasurer:** Nominee John Doherty, nominator: Don Rothnie; seconder: Frank Zumbo.  
Being no other nominees, **John Doherty** declared Treasurer.

**Secretary:** Nominee Don Rothnie; nominator: Bruce Watt; Seconder: George Cotis;  
Being no other nominees, **Don Rothnie** declared Secretary.

**Committee Members:**

**Carol McDonald** (nomination accepted; seconder: Don Rothnie)  
**Elizabeth Craig** (nomination accepted; seconder: Don Rothnie)  
**Helen Rosner** (nominator: Pauline Curby; seconder: Christine Edney)

All Committee members were elected unopposed.

**Appointed positions**

Pauline Curby nominated as:

- Publications Officer and
- Publicity Officer; seconded:  
(George Cotis/Elizabeth Craig)

Accepted by the General Meeting

Elizabeth Craig nominated as Bulletin Editor (George Cotis/Frank Zumbo)

Carol McDonald has agreed to retain her role as Archivist

The roles of Museum Curator/Manager and Excursions Officer yet to be appointed.

**CLOSE of 53<sup>RD</sup> SSHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

## *LETTER TO THE EDITOR*

Dear Editor,

You will be pleased to know that Murray Trembath of the *Leader* has written a historical piece from the article that I wrote and you published in the SSHS's *Bulletin* concerning the naming of Rose Street, Cronulla.

Unfortunately, his article was not published in printed form of the *Leader*, but the digital version was displayed on Facebook on the 6<sup>th</sup> October. At the time of writing this letter (23<sup>rd</sup> October), there has been an amazing response to his article, with 197 likes, 70 comments and 25 shares.

It is pleasing to see, that people other than members of our little society, read our *Bulletin* and find some of the information published interesting enough to republish. It is also doubly pleasing to see the SSHS's name up in lights so to speak considering the unsavoury position the SSC has placed our little volunteer run society in.

Much thanks to Murray for his reproduction of my article, and also to our member Frank Zumbo, for bringing the *Leader's* article to my attention. Hopefully Murray will continue to use our *Bulletin* for more material in his articles, but if he does it is very important that he sends a copy to our Facebook account so we in the SSHS do not miss out in reading it.

Peter Moore

*Editor's note:*

Hear hear, Peter! It is quite a thrill to see *Bulletin* articles appear elsewhere. Another instance of this is one that was republished from the *Bulletin* by the RAHS in their June 2019 edition of *History* (p.6). 'Are you being served?' by Elizabeth Craig was first published in the *Bulletin* in February this year, and was based on an oral history of Gordon and Lorraine Stone reminiscing about their time at McDowells Department Store in Caringbah in the 1960s, when a service of culture pervaded the retail industry.

.....

## MUSEUM REPORT

### PETER MOORE

Well, it appears that we are to move to the Sylvania Heights Baby Health Centre in Venetia Street, Sylvania as Sutherland Shire Council can find no other venue for us, after requiring us to move out of the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts after 33 years. It means we will have an office and storage space and not much else. I regard this as a short-sighted attitude on behalf of Councillors and Council staff towards the history of our Shire. Have they lost touch with those they should be serving?

At the present time SSHS has not been advised of any firm date to vacate the School of Arts building, but I am told it may not be until some time in the new year.

In this period of limbo, maintenance has not been kept up with the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts building. There are new roof leaks appearing, lighting issues and the continuing subsidence of the building in the North West corner of our Museum.

Our small team of ladies has continued the daunting job of compiling the catalogue as items are donated or appear from the depths of our storage. The team consisting of Creo Moore, Elizabeth Carr, Floriana Camper, Joan King and Carol McDonald, are providing an invaluable service to SSHS and we are all grateful. They are now reorganising the office and bringing the filing up to date.

I must thank Don Rothnie for his donation of two large filing cabinets which has helped consolidate some of our files and photographic records as well as providing a little more room in the office. We still need three or four more drawer filing cabinets, so if you know of any looking for a home, please let us know.

Again, besides being the keeper of the Museum roster John Doherty has been collating the information and photographs gathered by the ladies. He will need to be

replaced in the role of roster keeper as he has also taken over the Treasurer's job for the Society. If you would like to help John by giving a hand with maintaining the roster please get in touch with him at meetings or email him at [johndoherty55@gmail.com](mailto:johndoherty55@gmail.com).

All the helpers are doing a fantastic job and we are inching towards our goal of bringing our collection up to standard. I am very pleased to tell members that we have received some help by a wonderful young lady by the name of Tess Dowell. Tess is a student studying history at Sydney University, and as part of her studies she needs to participate in local history projects. Tess has taken on two projects with us. The first is to upgrade our touch screen kiosk, and the second is to write a historical walking tour of the suburb of Sutherland. Tess has fitted in extremely well with our office team and has really lifted the pace in organising the filing. She has even taken work home. Thank you, Tess! We are very lucky to have you.

In all this chaos in the Museum we are still receiving donations, two of which are of note. The first is a donation by Campbelltown Historical Society member, Diana Vale. She kindly donated two blankets that were used in the Cronulla Migrant Hostel. The blankets are well worn but still retain the identifying stencil. The second donation was a very old damaged Aboriginal Woomera. Unfortunately, the lady who donated this item, Mrs Carol Guest could not provide any provenance, The item had belonged to an old man who was suffering memory loss. Thank you to both donors.

One Saturday we had a visit from a Mr Mark Woodward who introduced himself as an organ player. He had heard that we had some antique organs. I showed him our prize possession, the Holt Organ, and also the newer organ in the vestibule of the theatre. I also mentioned that we had another small organ in storage at Hungry Point that was

used in a church in Menai. He intimated that he did not think that they were of great monetary value but are of historic interest. Some years ago the SSHS obtained a quotation for the repair of the Holt Organ but it was deemed to be too high to justify at the time. I have felt for sometime that at least two of these organs should be restored due to their historic interest in the Shire. I therefore commissioned Don Rothnie, our grants officer to look for a grant for the purpose of restoration. He has obtained budget quotations of \$15000 for these works and will be endeavouring to obtain a full grant to cover expenditure.

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As usual I would like to thank all the volunteers 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 exhibits and photographs. I would also like to thank Ted and Elizabeth Craig for their efforts, along with the museum team, in cataloguing and valuing our extensive collection of art works. These works number in excess of 76 items and have been valued by Ted at about \$67,000. I feel that the SSHS should be looking for other venues for the display of at least some of the more historic of these works.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

The cover story this month is Susan Duyker's history of the Sutherland Shire Spinners & Weavers (page 11), who have just celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. It's interesting to note that like our Society, they and many other Shire community groups started around the same time – a feature of our post-war development.

And the sense of community and connections in the Shire I think is reflected in SSSW's chosen theme for their beautiful 1988 bicentennial tapestry appearing on the front cover of this *Bulletin*. It is dedicated to the volunteer fire fighters who tragically died fighting bushfires in the Shire – and a huge effort by the spinners and weavers. As you will see, there is a poignant addendum to this story after the middle panel of the triptych was stolen.

Thanks to Garriock Duncan for his story on the memorial and museum in Villers-Bretonneux dedicated to the Spring Offensive during World War I (page 19). He includes the Shire soldiers who were in that 1918 action.

It's interesting to note that one of them, Bill Burns, was from a prominent Caringbah family who ran Burns Timberyard from the early in the 1900s. Bill is also featured in Dennis Burns' history of his family in Australia (page 29).

Trust our Cronulla historian, Peter Moore to find yet another piece of Australian history with connections to Cronulla. (Story page 18.)

Two of our most prolific contributors, Greg Jackson and his wife, Pam Forbes, have provided another fascinating story on a convict who had Shire connections – and a liaison with a 'bounceable widow.' (See page 26.)

We are still looking for new writers – different styles by different people adds variety and interest to the *Bulletin*. Thank you to those who put in the effort so often to contribute.

See you all at the Christmas Party on 30<sup>th</sup> November (Details on page 5).

# SUTHERLAND SHIRE SPINNERS AND WEAVERS AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE

SUSAN DUYKER

This year, 2019, the Sutherland Shire Spinners and Weavers Inc (SSSW) celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> (golden) anniversary. It is one of the longest functioning craft groups in the Sutherland Shire. Since inception, members have met in Kareela, Cronulla and Sutherland before settling in Como in 1985. This article is based on the exhibition *Celebrating 50 Years of Friendship in Fibre: 1969–2019*, held at the Como School of Arts, 13–14 April, 2019.

The late 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in handcrafts associated with the back-to-earth movement. The establishment of Crafts Council of Australia (1964), the Argyle Arts Centre in The Rocks (1971) and the *Craft Australia* magazine (1971) were testaments to this trend. There was a fierce belief that these crafts should not be lost. Handcrafts were no longer an essential part of life, but a deeper need to engage in creative pursuits was facilitated by increased leisure time associated with modernity. With the rise of modernity and mass production, we looked back with nostalgia to the handcrafts of the previous two generations.

Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition was a retrospective – a collection of the work of almost all members representing the five decades of the group's existence.

---

## The birth of the Sutherland Shire Spinners and Weavers

Our group was founded in 1969 by a small number of Sutherland Shire women (including Lucy Willings, Heather Gwilt, Alice Catts, Wendy Iliffe, Jacqui Kuyper, Amy McLachlan and Effie Corbett). They first met in Jacqui Kuyper's house in Kareela on 15 April 1969 and continued to meet there for two years, usually sitting on the screened terrace.



Jacqui Kuyper at her spinning wheel in her Kareela garden, April 1969. Made Life Member of SSSW in 1974 [Courtesy:M Taylor]



Lucy Willings, 1973. Also made Life Member of SSSW in 1974 [Courtesy: SSSW]

## The 1970s

As numbers grew, the group moved to the Community Hall on Surf Road, Cronulla, and then to the School of Arts, opposite. In 1994 Effie Corbett wrote in the Book of Memories<sup>1</sup>:

*We had outgrown Jacqui's home by 1970...Here we had storage space for yarns & fleece & work tables for looms. What hectically busy days they were!*

Ros Finnie recalled her first SSSW meeting at the School of Arts, Cronulla:

*With much trepidation, I trudged nervously up 24 steep steps in the dark carrying my wheel...<sup>1</sup>*



Cronulla School of Arts, where SSSW met from May 1971

The first formal meeting of the SSSW was held on 3 May 1971. Although focussed on spinning and weaving, interest in fibre crafts ranged widely. Through numerous lessons and workshops, members experimented with lampshade making, ribbon work, dyeing and fleece skirting. Thanks to Lucy's connections with the Hand Weavers and Spinners Guild, teachers with special knowledge came to Cronulla.

*Heather Gwilt, dressed for Pageant of Women 1972 [Photo: Book of Memories SSSW]*

We gave demonstrations of our craft to schools and community groups, at the Royal Easter Show and even in the new Sydney Opera House.

A library was established along with a store of equipment. Yarns, hard to find for weaving, were obtained for members by a buying officer.

In 1973 eight members from Sutherland attended a TAFE course in Ultimo, continued at the new School of Textiles in Strathfield, and received their certificates in 1975.



Also in 1973, the group staged the first of our (then biennial) exhibitions that continue to this day as the annual Winter Wool Fair, on the first weekend in June.

### Growing membership

The number of members grew quickly, reaching 100 in 1975 and split into two groups for the purpose of meeting. The search for larger meeting space to allow a single meeting, led us to the Community Centre at Sutherland Hospital. At the end of 1977, the group moved to the Sutherland Police Boys Club at Waratah Park.

At 130 members, a waiting list was established. Members living outside the Sutherland Shire were encouraged to start separate groups: Fairfield (Joan Fisher); Burwood (Audrey Miller); Kogarah (Del Macarthur) and Kingsgrove (Ros Finnie).

By 1977 the SSSW had reverted to one group meeting on Tuesdays and offered many workshops run by outside tutors. In 1978 it even offered a Summer School at Gymea TAFE!

In 1974 Jacqui Kuyper and Lucy Willings became our first life members in recognition of their pioneering efforts.

The first of many group projects was started in 1975. A seascape tapestry was designed by member Dorothy Judge. It was woven in sections by small groups using hand-spun and dyed wool from all members. It was completed in 1976 and presented to Sutherland Shire Council's Jean Manuel in 1979. It was displayed in the council's Civic Centre and then in the new Sutherland Entertainment Centre for many years. Sadly, its location is now unknown.



*Edna Evers (left), presents the tapestry to Shire President, Cllr Jean Manuel (right). Centre is SSC's Community Arts Officer, Jackie Hutchison. [Courtesy: SSSW]*

## The 1980s

There continued to be a lot of interest in fibre crafts in the 1980s. In Sutherland Shire there were two other community groups of Spinners and Weavers (Woolooware and Cronulla).

The SSSW shared visits to and from widely dispersed fibre-focussed groups in Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle, Goulburn, Robertson and Bowral. In 1983, the group took part in a 'fleece to garment' competition at Gledswood Winery. The objective was for teams of twelve to create a jumper that dressed the donor sheep. Marie Gabriel recalled in the *Book of Memories*:

*...whilst we waited for the sheep to be shorn I took the opportunity to read the rules, with the last rule being that if the animal dies, we were disqualified.*

And Nona Bailey wrote:

*All hands were going flat out to finish the specially designed jumper. Done! & the shearer brought our little friend back inside & our ladies lovingly (?) dressed him in his own fleece...<sup>1</sup>*

SSSW came second to the Fairfield Spinners.

This was the decade when Australians began to travel to the non-English-speaking world in earnest. Travelling members often reported on their overseas trips with samples and stories. And several overseas visitors brought new ideas to meetings.

Workshops were programmed into the regular group year with the appointment of a coordinator. New interests included acid and cold dyes and felting.

We took opportunities to promote the group with demonstrations at Roselands and Miranda Fair shopping centres. Some of these events even earned us small amounts of money! We also had a regular place at the Southside Festival from 1983.

In 1985 the group moved to the old and slightly decrepit Como School of Arts on our current site.

### **Sutherland Shire Bicentennial Memorial Tapestry**

From 1986 to 1988, group members Kath Fry, Frances Gammie, Jill Ralfs, Alice Catts, Edna Eyers and Marie Gabriel wove the Sutherland Shire Bicentennial Memorial Tapestry (see front cover of *Bulletin*). It was dedicated to volunteer bush firefighters (Menai 1977, Waterfall 1980 and Grays Point 1983). The tapestry was designed by artist John Ralfs. He was inspired by photographs taken by Keith Thompson at the place three firefighters died and six were seriously injured in 1983.

Weavers worked in public at Grace Brothers, Miranda Fair. It was a huge undertaking: an estimated 100 community members had some involvement, including other members Gwen Roberts, Betty Collins and Elaine Peacock.

In 1994, the centre panel of the triptych was stolen and never recovered. Members of the Continuum Arts Society, under the guidance of Ralfs, painted a replacement for display.

In 2001, a fundraising campaign to replace the missing tapestry was organised by Lorna Stone. The cost of reweaving the whole piece was in excess of \$30,000. After intensive fundraising the committee fell short by \$6000 which was donated by the State Government. Barbara Mauro of the Australian Tapestry Workshops, Melbourne completed the missing tapestry. The triptych was re-hung in Sutherland Hospital on 4th December 2004.

### **The 1990s**

From 1990, the group was involved in Heritage Week, an Australia-wide celebration coordinated by the National Trust, state governments and local councils.

By 1993, SSSW was incorporated and our first Council grant towards the financing of our group workshops was approved.

Workshops were fewer than in the previous decade, but touched on surprisingly diverse subjects: mosaic knitting, rya knots (eg fringes), temari balls (Japanese embroidered balls) and raffia hats to mention just a few.

Group projects increased in complexity, most notably with knitted and woven friendship rugs and quilts, where the work of up to 15 participants was shared to create a unique item for each participant.



*Friendship rugs and quilts display, 1993*

From April 1992, the group met temporarily at 4 Taplan Street, Como, awaiting completion of the new Como School of Arts building.

To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the group in 1994, Frances Gammie, with the assistance of Nona Bailey, Betty Collins and Gwen Roberts, produced a *Book of Memories*. It is still presented to new members to give an understanding of the history of the group they are joining.

### The 2000s

An annual tradition began in 2005 when the SSSW president challenged members to create a work around a theme to be presented at our 'birthday' lunch and then exhibited for the public. The first challenge was set by president Lynne Peebles:

*Using my birthday 16.1.42 the challenge was to find an object on page 1, 16 or 42 of a book or magazine. They were to make the object and display the page along with the item. The next year was 'If you have a lemon make lemonade'. They were to supply something that they could not use, yarn etc. and it was swapped and given to somebody else to try and make something wonderful if possible!!!!!! Not a popular project.<sup>2</sup>*

To mark this year's 50th anniversary, the challenge was 'The Golden Fleece'.

From 1973 to 2005, SSSW held a biennial exhibition. From the 1980s, these were staged at the new Sutherland Entertainment Centre and often included a fashion parade.



*Fashion parade, Sutherland Entertainment Centre, 1998*

In 2002, the exhibition moved to Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, before settling in at the Uniting Church, Sutherland. It transformed into the annual Winter Wool Fair in June 2006.



*Winter Wool Fair, Uniting Church, Sutherland, 2018*

### **Sharing our skills**

One of our founders, Lucy Willings, used to say: ‘Pass it on girls, pass it on’. From the beginning, SSSW freely shared skills and knowledge among group members and with the Sutherland Shire community, through demonstrations and education programs.



*Skirting Workshop – removing junk wool, stains & unwanted matter from newly shorn sheep.*



*Spinning demonstration  
Uniting Church, Sutherland,  
2008*



*School holiday knit and weave program, 2005*

From a peak of 130 members, our group has settled at approximately 70 members. It is diverse in age, gender and ethnicity. We welcome all who wish to learn and pass on their skills and knowledge.



*Spinning and tapestry weaving demonstration  
Engadine 2004*

The SSSW celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an exhibition during the Australian Heritage Festival *Connecting People, Places and the Past*, April 2019. The exhibition showcased our members' work over the last 50 years. We gathered items from most current members as well as many former members or their families. The exhibition reflected the great range and diversity of our members' work over the decades from the simple to the complex, the everyday to the award-winning, and across a broad range of fibre crafts.



SSSW - Celebrating 50 Years of Friendship in Fibre: 1969–2019

Opening night, Como School of Arts, 13–14 April 2019

[Photo courtesy: Alyson Keeys]

## References

- Book of Memories*, 1994, held by Sutherland Shire Library Local Studies Collection.  
Sutherland Shire Bicentennial Memorial Tapestry, 1988, Log Book held by Sutherland Shire Library Local Studies Collection.  
Archival records of the SSSW 1969–2019.  
Personal communications with members, former members and families, 2019.

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Memories* produced by SSSW members for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994

<sup>2</sup> Author's interview with Lynne Peebles

## **SO MANY ROADS IN HISTORY LEAD TO CRONULLA!**

**PETER MOORE**

Recently Creo and I spent about a week on the Murray River in a small town called Barham, from which we were taken on a number of tours to the surrounding areas.

One of the tours was to the twin towns of Echuca and Moama. While in Echuca we decided to visit the wonderful Echuca Museum on the banks of the Murray River, in which part of the original huge wharf has been rebuilt and an extensive Museum has been developed. It had been 30 or 40 years since I had been to Echuca and the changes are remarkable. One can only comment on the great help the local council and State Government has given to this development compared to our situation in the Sutherland Shire.

During my tour of the Museum I came across a display concerning the founders of both Echuca and Moama, with one name standing out. He was James Maiden, who started a punt across the Murray River, and among other ventures was an hotelier.

The name Maiden stuck in my head as there was a family who had a holiday house on Cronulla Point by that name during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were very active in local affairs including the School of Arts and the Surf Club.

This inspired me to carry out some research. I found that James Maiden had a son called George Maiden, who was a very well-known auctioneer with Goldsborough Mort. At the time of his death in 1905 at the age of 64, he was endeavouring to bring help to farmers suffering during the Federation Drought. How times have not changed!

George Maiden also had a son called George, who with his brothers carried out an auctioning business in Sydney. It is this George (jun.) who with his wife had a holiday house on Cronulla Point.

The information in this article was found in Birth Deaths and Marriages NSW and from many Trove Articles, as well as the 'The Cronulla Story'.

As a footnote, our great friend of the SSHS Noel Elliot was born and raised in the town of Moama many years ago and remembers the Murray river drying up during drought and being a series of water holes. Times have changed – the Murray is currently flowing well with its level half-full.

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# VILLERS-BRETONNEUX, APRIL 1918: THE SPRING OFFENSIVE (MARCH 1918) AND THE MEN OF THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE

GARRIOCK DUNCAN

This article has two parts. The first part is about the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. The second part looks at the events of April 1918. These events culminated in the Australian assault on Villers-Bretonneux during the night of April 24-25, 1918. I have tabulated the involvement of Shire men in the fighting in and around Villers-Bretonneux at that time.

Villers-Bretonneux ('post code' 808000) is a small village about twenty-five minutes' drive from Amiens (80000) depending upon the route chosen. My wife and I, together with another couple, toured the area in 2011. We hired a car and followed the *Circuit de souvenir*.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, self driving would afford greater flexibility. However, I am sure the Amiens Tourist Centre could provide details of packaged tours and details of English speaking guides.<sup>2</sup>



Anzac Day 2018 marked the centenary of the capture of Villers-Bretonneux in 1918 (April 24-25), but the major event of the day was the official opening by then Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of the Sir John Monash Centre at the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.<sup>3</sup> The Memorial lies between Fouilloy and Villers-Bretonneux and fronts the road known as the D23.

The site was selected for the Memorial in 1928. The design originally chosen using only Australian stone, was by Melbourne architect, William Lucas. Unfortunately, the building of the Memorial coincided with the Great Depression. Consequently, work ceased for a number of years. In 1935 however, a new design by Sir Edwin Lutyens was chosen, using locally sourced stone. Lutyens was also responsible for the British Memorial at Thiepval, which lists the names of 70,000 British and Empire troops who have no known grave. Construction of the Memorial then recommenced and was completed in 1938.

We visited the Memorial on a rather bleak Sunday (October 9, 2011). It was not a good day for photography but I have included some photos taken on the day. However, I am confident you will find better ones on the various websites relevant to the site. There were only a couple of other tourists at the site but surprisingly, the central tower of the Memorial was open and we were able to climb all 160 steps to the top.

The main feature of the Memorial is the central tower. An interior staircase providing access to a viewing platform at the top, affording magnificent views (on a clear day). On either side of the entrance to the tower are plaques (one in French; the other in English), which read:

*To the glory of God and in memory of the  
Australian Imperial Force in France and  
Flanders 1916-1918 and of eleven thousand  
who fell in France and have no known grave.*



The tower is flanked by two open walls bearing the names of some 11,000 Australian soldiers with no known grave. The walls end in two corner pavillions. displaying a strong neo-classical influence. Access to the Memorial from the passing road is through the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

Highly visible among the headstones is the Cross of Sacrifice. At the roadside, the entrance to the site is similarly flanked by two more pavilions, in the same neo-classical style.

Australian War Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux



*... from the west*



*Cross of Sacrifice from the top of the tower  
looking west towards Amiens [www.sjmc.gov.au]*

From the D23, the ground rises up to a ridge line, upon which the actual Memorial is built. The site, particularly from the top of the tower, affords a commanding view of the surrounding area. This elevated position was the reason for the site's strategic value in World War I. Unfortunately, in 1940 the tower of the Memorial provided enhanced views of the surrounding district and, consequently, the Memorial came under attack from the Wehrmacht. The Memorial still bears the signs of this attack.

The Sir John Monash Centre has been built to take advantage of the rise in the topography. The view from the D23 shows that the Centre has been built behind the Memorial and is below ground level, mirroring the Information Centre at the Thiepval Memorial a few kilometres away. So the new museum in no way distracts from the Memorial. The opening of the Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux in 2018 has fixed this Memorial as the principal Australian memorial site of the Western Front.

[photo: www.sjmc.gov.au]



The first official Anzac Day ceremony was only held at Villers-Bretonneux in 2008.<sup>4</sup> It has become an increasingly popular venue. Only a short distance away is le Hamel, the site of Monash's even greater victory, now marked by the Australian Corps Memorial.

A somewhat free translation of *Circuit de souvenir* might be ‘trip down memory lane’. However, these are very particular memories – the achievements of Australian soldiers in France in World War I. For Australian visitors, while the sites generally refer to the events of 1916-1918, the Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux has a specific significance. It particularly relates to the events of April 1918 during the German Spring Offensive, the so called *Kaiserschlacht* ('Emperor's Blow').<sup>5</sup>

The Russian Revolution had occurred late in 1917. The successful Bolshevik government was keen to withdraw from the war expeditiously. Hence, it quickly signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Wilhelmine Germany. This freed considerable German forces for re-deployment on the Western Front. Consequently, a massive German offensive pushed the allies back to the vicinity of Amiens, the Germans' most westerly penetration into France during World War I. Amiens was a major rail hub supplying allied forces. Its fall to the Germans would have been a disaster. Had it fallen the French would have retreated to the west to defend Paris, while the British would have retired to the coast to secure the channel ports, the means of evacuating their forces from France.

As it happened, in early April the Germans captured Villers-Bretonneux bringing Amiens into artillery range and avoiding the need to capture the city itself. Fate decreed they would advance no further. Australian troops played the pivotal role in what happened next. On 'Anzac Day' 1918, the Australians recaptured Villers-Bretonneux in a savage night assault. The Australians took few prisoners. Thereafter, the allies achieved superiority over the Germans and retained it till the end of the war. The *Kaiserschlacht* failed to realise any of its objectives.

How many Australians know of this great feat of Australian arms? Unfortunately, these achievements have been swamped by *Gallipoli mania*. Presumably, attitudes will change because of the Sir John Monash Centre, the building of which Tony Abbott, as Prime Minister, initiated.<sup>6</sup> It is to be hoped that Sir John Monash will now receive due recognition.<sup>7</sup>

#### **MEN OF THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE**

Information on the role of Shire men in operations in the vicinity of Villers-Bretonneux during April 1918 is now easily accessible thanks to a significant piece of historical research by Marilyn Handley and Susanne Hewitt, both members of the Botany Bay Family History Society. Their work, *Service and Sacrifice*, is a survey of the various memorials scattered across the Sutherland Shire listing those who served during World War I. Using these memorials, the authors have produced a database of names crosschecked with Commonwealth military records to produce a series of biographical sketches, numbering some 400.<sup>8</sup>

Amiens was a principal objective of the Spring Offensive. Consequently in the month of April, 1918, there was extensive fighting in its environs. A number of Shire men were involved in the fighting of April 1918. I have split them into two groups. The first group is those, who took part in the 'preliminary' fighting, i.e. in April, but before the 24-25<sup>th</sup> of April. The second

category will be those Shire men, who took part in the night assault (April 24-25<sup>th</sup>) to recapture Villers-Bretonneux.

The biographical details of these men come from Handley and Hewitt's *Service & Sacrifice* 2015, with the numbers in parentheses being page references to that publication.

### GROUP 1 – men involved in the preliminary fighting:

#### **BURNS, William Joseph (111)**

17417, Driver, 7<sup>th</sup> Field Company Engineers

Born in Rockdale in 1894, William Burns's family owned a holiday home in Darook Park. His father, William (sen) a timber merchant, moved the family to Caringbah after 1911 when he bought a hectare of land there to build a timber yard (now the site of Caringbah Inn). Father and son were members of the Cronulla Surf Club and supplied the timber and the men to build the Surf Club's first clubhouse. William (sen) kept horses in a paddock behind the timber yard and used them to haul timber from the Pyrmont wharves. Here William learned his skills as a horseman, and these were put to good use during his war service.

William enlisted in the army in December 1916 and was based in Cootamundra when he married Kathleen (Cassie) Maher in 1917. He arrived in northern France in January 1918, joining the Transport section of the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Company Engineers which was tasked to build communication lines and other structures to facilitate the infantry's advance. As Driver, William cared for the horses used for transport, feeding, watering and protecting them. He wrote home of his experiences.

William returned to Australia and was discharged from the army in 1919. When William (sen) died in 1923, William took over the Caringbah business. He and Cassie lived in Port Hacking Road and had seven children. He died in 1954. See p. 29 for the story of generations of the Burns family in the Shire.



*Driver William Burns [photo courtesy Dennis Burns]*

#### **COOK, Claude Stephenson (134)**

3506, Private, 56<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

Born at St Mary's, Sydney in 1896, Claude Cook enlisted in 1915 and sailed to Egypt. He entered the front line trenches in the Fromelles in 1916, and played a major role as a runner in the battle at Polygon Wood in 1917. For his devotion to duty he was awarded the Military Medal. After serving at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918, Claude was gassed and evacuated to hospital in England, returning to France a month before armistice.

Claude married Mary Ann Lane in London in 1919. The couple sailed to Australia and lived at Harris St., Cronulla for a time. He worked as a carter and later as a NSW Government Railways employee. The Stephensons moved to St Mary's, then Temora and Hornsby. Claude enlisted again in April 1941. He died aged 47 in Sydney, leaving a widow and five children.



*Pte Claude Stephenson Cook MM, [St Mary's Hist. Soc., Service & Sacrifice, p.134]*

## **EMANUEL, John Isaac (173)**

1692 Sergeant, 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion



*Sgt John Isaac Emanuel,  
[St George Call, 11 Dec 1915,  
Service & Sacrifice, p.172]*

Born in Woolloomooloo, Sydney in 1894, John (Jack) Emanuel was living with his family in Rockdale when he joined Cronulla Surf Club. He was employed as a bookmaker's clerk when he enlisted in the AIF in May 1915. Jack arrived in Gallipoli in September 1915, spending ten weeks in the trenches, before joining the evacuation in December. He then went on to France where he fought at Pozieres and, after a spell in England he returned to France and was awarded the Military Medal for his conspicuous bravery at Villers-Bretonneux and Mont St Quentin. After being wounded in October 1918, Jack was evacuated to hospital in England and then returned to Australia in December.

In 1926 Jack married Alice Oliver and they lived in Balgowlah until the 1940s when they moved to Rutherford Avenue, Cronulla. Jack worked as a clerk, an agent and a bookmaker. He died in Berrima in 1952 and his ashes were buried at Woronora Cemetery.

## **GILDER, Telford Graham (197)**

Captain, 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

Born in 1894, Telford Gilder grew up in Pymble, Sydney. His father, William was a city solicitor and owned a holiday house in Cronulla on the corner of Gerrale Street and Ewos Parade (known by locals as Doctor's Corner). William was also a member of Cronulla Surf Club, and for a time President. After attending Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore), Telford studied law. He enlisted in 1915 and was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, sailing to England in May 1916.

While serving in Passchendaele in October 1917, Telford displayed such conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty that he was awarded the Military Cross. In March 1918 he was in Villers-Bretonneux leading his an attempt to secure the spur at Aubercourt. His actions were recorded by war correspondent, CEW Bean.

On his return to Australia in February 1919, Telford gained his Bachelor of Law, becoming a partner in his father's firm. He married Dorothy Nettleton in 1922 and they had two children. Telford died in Killara in 1982.

## **MICHAEL, Charles Lanyon (284)**

3281 Private, 30<sup>th</sup> infantry Battalion

Born in Parramatta in 1897, Charles Michael was the youngest of six siblings. His parents bought a property in Burraneer Bay Road, Cronulla in 1904, and by 1914 were living there. His sister, Jane, lived in Curranulla Street, working as a dressmaker. Charles, who was a sheet metal fixer, enlisted in 1915, giving his address as Erskineville. He left for England in May 1916, eventually joining the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion in northern France. In April 1918 the Battalion was at Villers-Bretonneux as the Allies



*Capt. Telford Graham Gilder,  
[courtesy: Shore School, Service &  
Sacrifice, p.197]*

attempted to save Amiens from the Germans. Charles was hospitalised after being gassed while under heavy attack from shell-fire, high explosives and gas. He was back with the Battalion in June, taking part in battles at Morlancourt, Battle of Amiens in August and St Quentin in October. Charles returned to Australia in 1919. He married Ivy Green in 1926 and had three sons. They resided in Queensland before returning to Sydney. In March 1940 Charles again enlisted and served in the Middle East as a Corporal. He died in July 1980.

### **MIDGLEY, Richard Lionel (288)**

755 Private, 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion



Richard Midgley was born in 1890 to Richard and Fanny Midgley. They moved from St Peters to Menai in 1896 becoming one of the pioneering families of the district. Richard made the long trek to Sutherland Public School until the Menai Public School opened in 1902. At 15 he worked for Sutherland Post Office, collecting mail for the Menai community and was later employed by the Railways.

Richard, a shipping clerk, enlisted in 1918. He and his two brothers, Fred and Harold joined the 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion in northern France. Fred and Harold were wounded during the Battle of Menin Road. Richard was at Villers-Bretonneux in April, coming under heavy fire when he was wounded and evacuated to a hospital in England.

Richard returned to Australia in 1919 and married Lillian Napier in 1921. They settled in Manly and had a daughter. Richard died in 1985.  
[SLLS, Service & Sacrifice, p.288]

### **Group 2 – Shire men who took part in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux**

#### **HARVEY, James Alexander (206)**

32994 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporal, Australian Army Pay Corps

Born in 1892 James Harvey was a storekeeper in Kogarah. He enlisted in 1916 and sailed to England in 1917 as a gunner. Later that year he joined the 114<sup>th</sup> Howitzer Battery of the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade in France and in March 1918 was sent to the Somme to help contain the German Offensive. His battalion was involved in a successful counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux. James was gassed in an attack a few months later and was eventually hospitalised in England. After his recovery he was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Corporal and became a motorcycle despatch rider with AIF Headquarters, London, eventually posted to the Australian Army Pay Corps. He returned to Australia in late 1918.

James Harvey married Esther Harris in 1920, but she died in childbirth the following year. He married Violet Marriott in 1925 and they had two sons. The family eventually moved to Yathong Street, Caringbah. James died in 1972 and was buried in Woronora Cemetery, General Lawn Section.



Cpl James Alexander Harvey [SMH, 4.9.1972] Service & Sacrifice, p.206]

## **WHIPP, Rupert Brice (407)**

37392 Gunner, 10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade.

Rupert Whipp was born in Melbourne in 1895, but his family spent long periods at their Cronulla home where he attended Miranda Central Public School. Rupert, his father and three brothers were members of the Cronulla Surf Club and all attended the inaugural meeting in 1908. Rupert witnessed Duke Kahanamoku's skills as a longboard surf rider in 1915.

Rupert was working as a clerk for the Sydney Municipal Council when he enlisted in 1917. He sailed to England later that year, training as a gunner. He joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade in France in April 1918 where the Brigade participated in a surprise attack in Villers-Bretonneux. As the Brigade was preparing to move to Amiens, Rupert suffered trench fever and was evacuated to England. He returned to Australia in April 1919 and was discharged a month later as medically unfit.

Rupert Whipp married May Lott in 1921 and they lived in Burwood with their three children. Rupert worked as a real estate agent. He died in 1981.

[Additions by Elizabeth Craig]

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**NOTE:** I had the good fortune in 2015 to visit Fromelles, the site of Australia's first action on the Western Front. Subsequently, I have recently done a similar search for Shire men, who took part in the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916<sup>9</sup>. There were seventeen. However, only one name occurs in both lists – 3506 Pte. Claude Cook, 56<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion. Claude was severely gassed on the morning of April 23, and missed the actual assault on Villers-Bretonneux as he was evacuated to England, only rejoining his unit in October 1918.

Garriock Duncan

<sup>1</sup> D Abrahams, et al., *France*, Rough Guides, 2009, pp. 229-230. Also: M Grealey, 'Western Front Pilgrimage', *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, May 9, 2018, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Amiens Tourist Office: [www.visit-amiens.com/acceuil/contact/](http://www.visit-amiens.com/acceuil/contact/).

<sup>3</sup> For the Centre home page, see: <https://sjmc.gov.au/>

<sup>4</sup> S Forster, 'On war's path', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition, *Traveller*, p. 19, March 10-11 2012.

<sup>5</sup> [www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/battles/kaiserschlacht-the-german-spring-offensive-of-1918.html](http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/learn-more/battles/kaiserschlacht-the-german-spring-offensive-of-1918.html)

P Fitzsimons, 'Abbott merits praise for pushing truth over Western Front', *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 17, 2017, p. 19

<sup>7</sup> [www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/monash-master-of-illusion/2006/27/115381632219.htm/](http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/monash-master-of-illusion/2006/27/115381632219.htm/)

<sup>8</sup> M Handley & S Hewitt, *Service and Sacrifice: Sutherland Shire Memorials 1914-1918*, Botany Bay Family History Society, 2015); M Trembach, 'New book puts faces to WWI honour rolls', *The St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, [www.theleader.com.au/story/3132454/new-book-puts-faces-to-ww1-honour-rolls/](http://www.theleader.com.au/story/3132454/new-book-puts-faces-to-ww1-honour-rolls/)

<sup>9</sup> G Duncan, 'Battle of Fromelles – Shire Honour Roll', *Action Report* 10, September 2018, p. 15.

## CONVICT STORIES – THE CONVICT AND THE BOUNCEABLE WIDOW

GREG JACKSON AND PAM FORBES

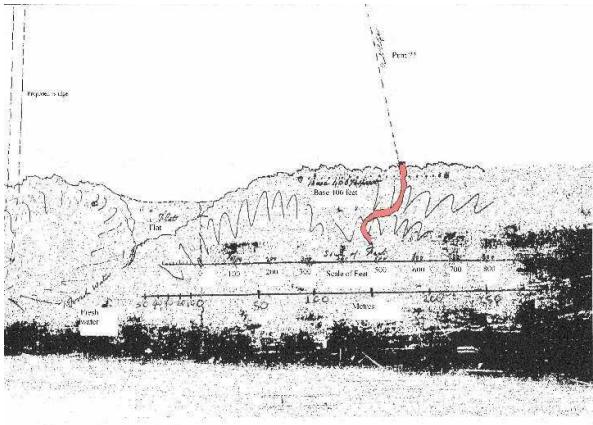
*Convict records have been reconstructed for the convict workforce of miller John Lucas (1821–1828), Industrialist Simeon Lord (1801–1844) at Botany and the convicts who worked on the Illawarra Road (1843–1845). This is a story of one of these convicts.*

William Gurney was found guilty of house breaking in 1835. This was not his first appearance before a judge. He had 4 previous acquittals for larceny and you can almost hear the officials' sigh of relief as Gurney was declared guilty and sentenced to 14 years' transportation. He arrived in NSW in 1835 on-board the *Recovery* and was assigned to the Hyde Park Barracks and worked as a gardener. His convict record in Table 5 shows a litany of crimes both before and after transportation. In 1839 he was involved in an assignation with the widow of colonial clockmaker James Oatley. This was described in the *Commercial Journal and Advertiser*, 2 November 1839 and is reproduced below.

Mary Oatley, former widow of a Mr Bogg, but now widow of Mr Oatley, late of Sydney, watchmaker, who had been residing in Parramatta for some time past, for the benefit of herself and associates, appeared before their worships in deep-mourning (but gay as usual), to answer to an information filed against her for harbouring on the 24<sup>th</sup> September last, a good-looking young man, a prisoner of the Crown, being a gardener attached to the Government Domain, named William Gurney. In support of the information, constable Thomas Horne proved to watching the young widow's house from twelve o'clock at night till six o'clock of the morning in question, when the prisoner come out and opened the shutters; further that no one could go in at either the front or back door without his knowledge. Mrs Oatley, in her defence, said he was a friend of Wiseman's, her lodger, and he merely called to get a shirt washed. Their worships found the bounceable widow guilty of harbouring a prisoner of the Crown of the name of William Gurney and directed that she should pay a fine of ten dollars. Mrs O paid the penalty awarded and walked off.

Bounceable at the time meant bumptious and lively. James Oatley (1770-1839) was himself a former convict who had prospered in his trade as a clock and watch maker. Governor Macquarie appointed him keeper of the town clock and commissioned him to make a clock for the turret of the Hyde Park Prisoners' Barracks being built by Francis Greenway in Macquarie Street; for this service Oatley was paid £75 in June 1819. He received several land grants in the Hurstville area including land in the suburb, Oatley, named after him.

After several brushes with the law William Gurney found himself assigned to the Illawarra Road gang. His inclusion on a list of convicts, written by overseer John O'Hara, in August 1843 suggest that he was working on the road as it crossed the Georges River between what is now Lugarno and Illawong. The ferry crossing at this point was described in a previous *Bulletin* (SSHS Aug. 2011) and is located about 200 metres downstream from the crossing visible at the end of Forest Road, Lugarno and Old Ferry Road, Illawong. The small section of road leading south from the water's edge was last used in 1860 when the ferry at this location was abandoned. It is not only the oldest road built in the Sutherland Shire but is probably the best preserved stretch of relatively undisturbed convict road in the Sutherland Shire. Image 1 shows a sketch, drawn by Thomas Mitchell C1843, of the southern side of the river and the Illawarra Road heading south. Image 2 is a photograph of the stretch of road leading down to the water's edge which has recently been cleared.



**Image 1:** Sketch by Thomas Mitchell C1843 showing the 1843 ferry location and Illawarra Road heading south.

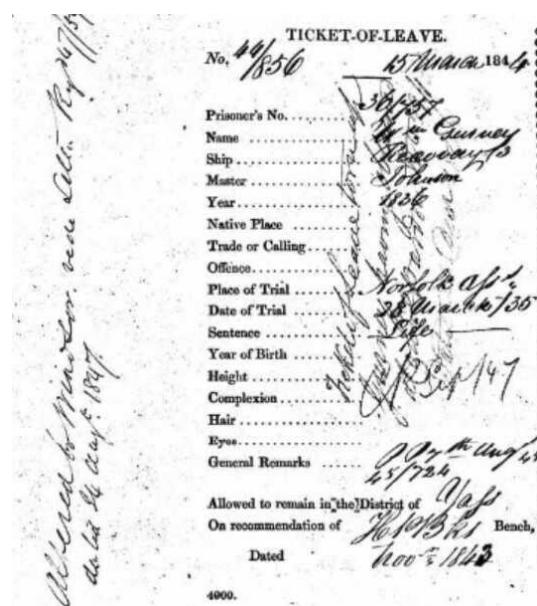
**Image 2:** The section of Illawarra Road leading down to the water. The cobbles shown in the foreground are possible original. Today this road is located in Delardes Reserve, Illawong.



William Gurney is one of the few convicts for whom we have an image, shown in Image 3. Submitted to Ancestry.com by a member of the public, its authenticity cannot be verified. He and others were granted Tickets of Leave at the conclusion of the convicts' Illawarra Road work in 1844 (Image 4). His was 'torn up' but he received another in 1845 and eventually a Conditional Pardon in 1849. Married in 1855 he died in Drayton, Queensland in 1886.



**Image 3:** Photograph of William Gurney below from Ancestry.com (public source)



**Image 4:** *Ticket of Leave*, dated March 1844, for William Gurney. ‘Ticket of Leave torn up’ is written across the ticket.

<b>Convicts Name:</b> William Gurney			
<b>Ship:</b> Recovery 1836			
<b>Offence:</b> House breaking		<b>Sentence:</b> Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk 1835, 14 years	
DOB: 1813	Marriage Married 1855	Status: Religion: Protestant	Education: R & W
<b>Country of Origin:</b> England		<b>Place of Origin:</b>	
Occupation: Gardener	Height: 5' 8 1/4"	Complexion: Dark, pockmarked	Hair Colour: Brown
<b>Eye Colour:</b> Brown			
<b>Freedom:</b> ToL March 1844, Tol April 1845, Conditional Pardon Feb 1849			
<b>Colonial Crimes:</b> Entered Parramatta jail between 1839 and 1842, 1844 ToL torn up			
<b>Crimes Prior to Transportation:</b> Larceny 1831, acquitted larceny 1832, acquitted larceny 1832, acquitted larceny 1834, acquitted			
<b>References:</b> OL6, SRNSW 4/4189; Reel 953. [BDA-Biog Item No. 120143170], SRNSW 4/4199; Reel 956. [BDA-Biog Item No. 120146165], BDA-Biog Item No. 910229217			
<b>Notes:</b> Scars on face. Son born in 1863. Gurney died 1886 Drayton (Toowoomba), Qld			

**Image 5:** The convict record of William Gurney

## References:

The Road South: Crossing the Georges River, Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin, Vol 14 No 3 Aug 2011

T. L. Mitchell, Survey Number SR 5282, not dated, *Trigonometrical sketch of site for bridge etc. across Georges River*. NSW State Archives.

## Data for convict's records came from:

- Ancestry.com: [home.ancestry.com.au](http://home.ancestry.com.au)
  - Biographical Database of Australia, 2016, <http://www.bda-online.org.au/>
  - Convict Ships of Australia, <http://www.convictrecords.com.au/ships>
  - Findmypast <http://www.findmypast.com.au/>
  - Index to the Colonial Secretary's Papers, 1788-1825, <http://colsec.records.nsw.gov.au/>
-

## BURNS FAMILY –Shire Timber Merchants

DENNIS BURNS

In 1852 a 26-year-old Northern Irish sailor, Alexander Burns, jumped ship in Moreton Bay so that he could start a new life with Ellen Carroll, a young Irish passenger from Wicklow he had met on board. They quickly married in Sydney and started a family. Alexander worked hard as a coastal captain and timberyard foreman for William Fairfax's timber importing business.

For a time, Alexander was Fairfax's agent in Wollongong, a frontier village with the only navigable anchorage in the South Coast. He was buying timber, especially cedar, for the Sydney market. By 1870 Alexander was back in inner Sydney, having left Fairfax and had established his own timber milling and importing firm. Ellen was managing a Woolloomooloo grocery and grain store – the beginning of a business empire which, by 1890 had grown to include his own wharf for timber imports ('Baltic Wharf') at Darling Harbour, as well as three business locations in Sydney City (Erskine Street and Druitt St), the Pyrmont docks and large steam mills and storage yards at Balmain, and a fleet of eight sailing ships importing timber and exporting various goods. Alexander's ships flying his company flag – a black and white Maltese cross flag - became a well-known sight on the harbour as his sailing ships came and went to and from ports all over the world. He employed scores of men onshore and on the ships. The family lived in successive residences at Woolloomooloo.

### Second generation of Burns

Alexander's sons William, John, Vincent and Stephen all became involved in the timber business, and two of them branched out on their own to Glebe and Petersham. The eldest, William, (known as 'Willie', born in 1856), married Bridget Bourke, a dairy farmer's daughter from Appin, and by 1879 had established a partnership with his father at business premises in Erskine street in the city, at Woolloomooloo and at a wharf/depot at Cockle Bay (near the Imax Theatre). The young family lived nearby in Pyrmont.



*Willie and Bridget Burns' family at their home, 'Elmina' at what is now Princes Highway, Rockdale, 1904 [courtesy: Dennis Burns]*

Willie soon expanded south to Hurstville and West Botany (now Rockdale). These southern expansions were a direct result of the recent opening of the Illawarra Rail Line, which had reached Hurstville in 1884, just a couple of years earlier. By 1887 Willie had his own business and had settled conveniently close to the new rail station at Rockdale, with his family of eight children. He was later joined at Rockdale by his younger brother, Stephen and his parents: his mother Ellen who died in 1905 and the patriarch Alexander who died in 1908.

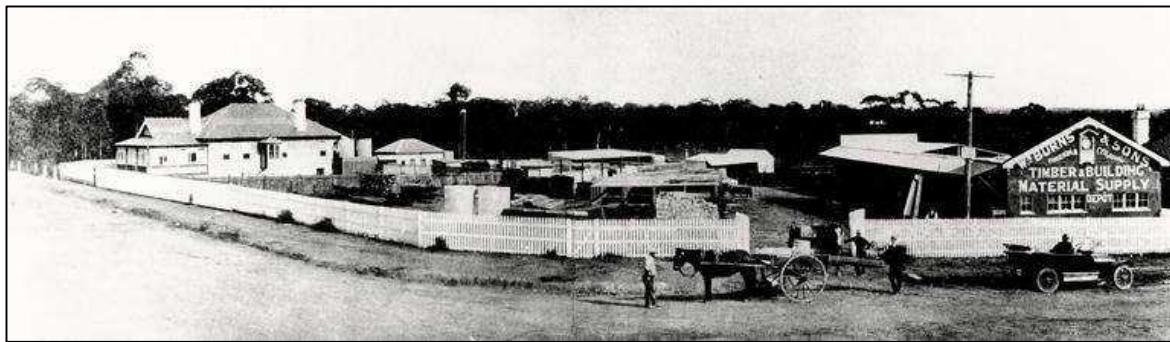
Besides the wharves, the importing and milling business at Pyrmont, and the yard with stables at Rockdale, Willie also had a timber yard and grocery store at Hurstville. Willie Burns prospered in the now-booming St George District, as well as the more isolated but expanding Sutherland Shire. For deliveries to the Cronulla area he initially used an agent (Mr Angus).

### **Burns family connect to the Shire**

As time passed and the new rail connection extended to Sutherland, Willie Burns became very interested in the Shire and he leased a cottage on Gunnamatta Bay for regular family holidays from the 1890s into the early 1900s. He established a business relationship with local identity, in Cronulla, Mrs Giddings, who became his agent there. Willie's staff regularly delivered large quantities of building materials to the almost inaccessible Cronulla after a long day's trip by horses and dray from Rockdale, using the punt at Tom Ugly's Point. A family story says that the driver would wait to use the punt at high tide only, as this would 'save the horses' as they hauled the heavily-laden dray up the steep slope from the river level at Sylvania. Until 1916 the only method for vehicles to travel from the St George district to the eastern Sutherland Shire area was by means of a ferry across the Georges River at Tom Ugly's Point. There were often long delays at this crossing point. Horse-driven wagonloads of imported North American or Scandinavian timber regularly arrived directly at Caringbah from Willie's wharf at Darling Harbour. After 1916, the Taren Point ferry was also used to access Caringbah from Pyrmont, through Arncliffe and Rockdale, avoiding the bottleneck at Sylvania.

### **Birth of Burns' timber yard in Caringbah**

By 1911, Willie had bought about three acres at the crossroads at Highfield, which he claimed 'would be the pick of the Shire one day'. Once again, his purchase quickly followed the new rail tracks: the Sutherland-Cronulla steam tram line had just opened that same year, and Highfield became Caringbah. In 1911, after his wife Bridget died at Rockdale, Willie moved his Rockdale family to a series of cottages he had built on Port Hacking Road, Caringbah. He also built some workers' cottages along Woronora Road (now known as President Avenue). Willie established the business site at the corner of the Woronora Road (known now as President Avenue) and Port Hacking Road (now the Kingsway), today the site of the Caringbah Inn. The imported timber supplies sometimes came by goods train from Pyrmont to Rockdale, then to Sutherland and by goods tram to Caringbah siding. The business contained a large mill with steam-driven saws to prepare undressed timber for the retail market. The business 'William Burns and Sons' (i.e. sons Alec and Bill at Rockdale and Caringbah respectively) supplied not only timber, but building materials and assorted hardware to the fast-growing Shire.



*Burns Timber Yard, cnr of what is now Kingsway and Port Hacking Road in the 1920s*

(Note 'Williams Burns' clock on façade of timberyard depot on right [Source: SSL collection])

The Caringbah office became a community focal point: for example, Willie was a major benefactor for the new Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club in 1908, and the firm's office was used

as a polling booth during elections and for the conscription referenda of 1916-17. William Burns and Sons Timber also donated high-quality timber to be used in the 1912 construction of Mawson's Hut in Antarctica. Burns timber was also used for the Gunnamattha Bay Baths.

### Third generation of Burns

Willie's younger son, William Joseph Burns ('Bill', born in 1894) had married Kathleen ('Cassie') Maher in 1917 just before heading off to the War in France, serving in the Engineers. He returned late in 1919, and rejoined the business. After Willie died suddenly by accident in 1923, aged 66, the firm was hit hard by death duties. Much of the Caringbah property had to be sold. For a time, Bill lived with his young wife and first child, William Michael, back at Rockdale. The Rockdale yard (managed by elder brother Alec) and Caringbah branch prospered for a few years. Then the Great Depression hit very hard, and in 1931 a timber workers' strike and business downturn eventually caused voluntary liquidation of William Burns and Sons Ltd.



*Bill and Cassie Burns, 1917  
[courtesy: Dennis Burns]*

By the mid-1930s the Rockdale yard and stables had been sold off. Bill bought back some of the Caringbah land and built up a new Caringbah timber business – known as William J. Burns Timber Ltd. He built a new timberyard on a new site – just across President Avenue north from the original yard, on the corner with the Kingsway. On this new site the family business was steadily rebuilt through the 1930s and 1940s, becoming a major supplier of timber in the fast-growing Shire. The extended family lived in the original two homes nearby on Port Hacking Road.

The William Burns Timberyard on the prominent Caringbah corner with its unique large clock on the façade was once again a well-known landmark in the Shire.

For the next 20 years or so William J. Burns became a well-known public figure in the shire, often donating funds or resources to community affairs, especially the Shire's Surf Clubs and Catholic schools. Two of his sons, William Michael (aka Bill) and John worked with him. William J. Burns died in 1954 aged just 60. The eldest of his three sons, William Michael (the author's father), had gone to New Guinea in WW2, stayed on there and while he never actually rejoined the business, he maintained a strong financial interest until his death in Caringbah in 1988. The youngest brother, Peter, joined middle brother John in the firm in the early 1950s. They were assisted by their maiden aunts, their father's older sisters.

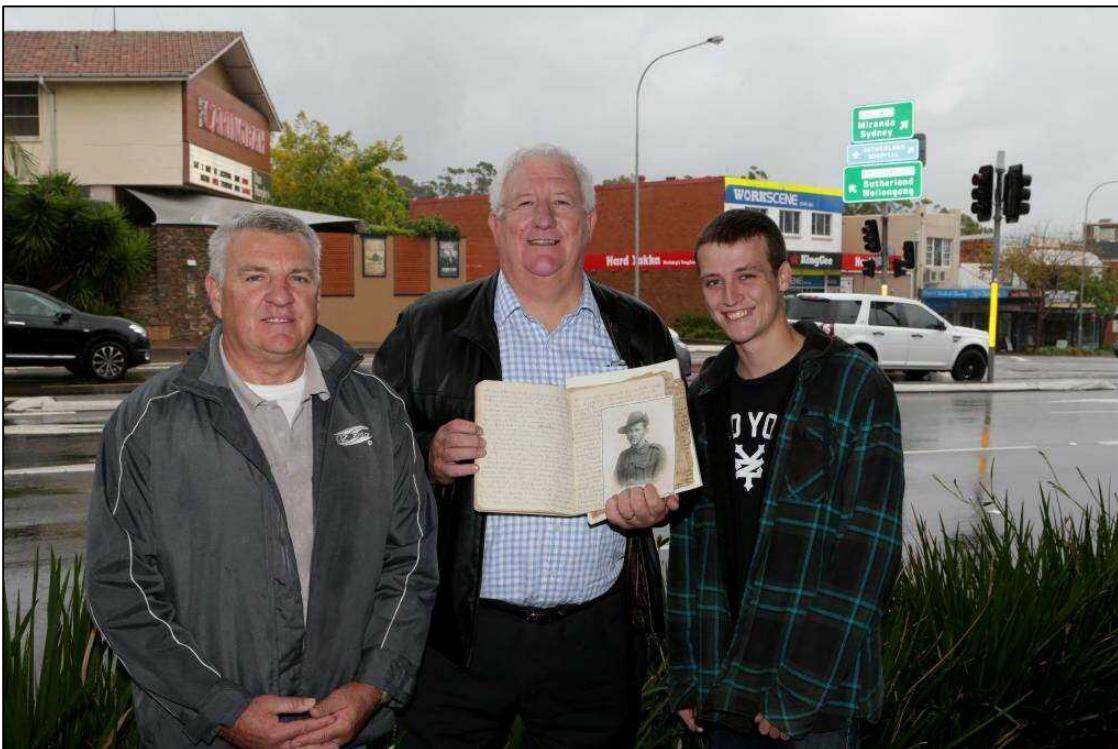
In 1959, as Caringbah's CBD was rezoned and was quickly expanding in the post-war building boom, the family business moved from the Kingsway/President Avenue corner northwards to a larger light-industrial zoned site at 59-63 Captain Cook Drive, which was near the NW corner of Willarong Road. The well-known family suburban timber business continued steadily at this site for the next 30 years, but business gradually dropped off as strong competition from large-scale national commercial operations such as BBC Hardware, Mitre 10 and Bunnings became powerful competitors.

By the early 1990s the Burns family timber business was now employing two young cousins, Michael Burns and Matthew Burns, who were the family's fourth generation engaged in the old shire firm. It was, however, reluctantly sold to an English corporation, Alsford's Timber, and was soon dissolved. Many of the extended Burns family still remain in the Sutherland Shire.



*Burns Timber Yard in the 1960s, with mobile crane*  
[courtesy: Dennis Burns]

During the 1970s -1980s this William Burns Timber mobile crane was used to fly the starting flag for the annual *Sutherland to Surf* running race. It became a symbol of the Shire's sporting history. A staff member would drive it to Sutherland the night before the race, parking it with the crane at maximum height. When the race flag was attached it could be seen above the starting line, a landmark to direct the crowds of runners to the starting line.



*The Burns family at William Burns Timber Corner displaying 'The Burns Family History', 2001*  
William M., son of Peter, Dennis (author), his second son, William V - 5th William Burns in Shire.  
[Photos: Courtesy St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader, 2001]

#### Sources:

1. '*The Burns Family in Australia*', an unpublished private family history by Dr Michael Burns and Stephen Burns
2. *Family correspondence (various) 1880-present*
3. *Sands Directory*
4. *Trove – digitised Newspapers*

## Burns family of Caringbah

See their story on page 29

Images courtesy: Dennis Burns



*On an outing from Caringbah to Cronulla with 19-year old Bill Burns at the wheel, 1913  
Note solid rubber tyres.*



*Bill Burns and friends on a picnic, c.1913*



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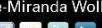
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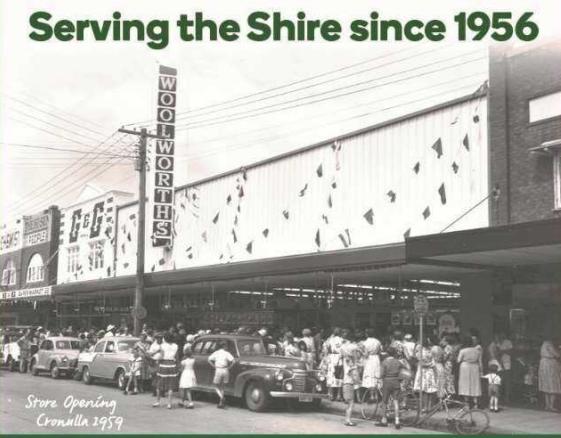
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*Cronulla-Rockdale bus service, c.1900  
[Courtesy: Dennis Burns]*