



NUMBER: 217 — NOVEMBER 2020



*Approach to cave dwellers house near Kurnell, 1930s*  
[courtesy: National Library of Australia, nla.obj-150885108]

See article on Tabbigai Cliff Dwellers, p.13

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

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

**FACEBOOK:** Sutherland Shire Historical Society

## SSHS EXCURSION TO NURSING STATION, LITTLE BAY AND BARE ISLAND

See report, p.22

*Photos by Creo Moore*



*Bare Island linked to the mainland by a heritage bridge*



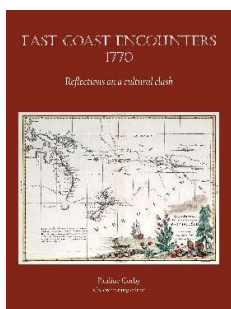
*This ferry service operated from 1890. It ceased when severe storms damaged the wharves in 1974.  
Reinstatement of the service is under consideration by NSW Transport*

*To have your say on reinstatement of the service, complete the survey at  
[https://yoursay.transport.nsw.gov.au/kamay-ferry-wharves/survey\\_tools/give-us-your-ideas](https://yoursay.transport.nsw.gov.au/kamay-ferry-wharves/survey_tools/give-us-your-ideas)*



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*East Coast Encounters 1770, reflections on a cultural clash* produced by SSHS Publications Committee is still available for \$30 (discounted price for SSHS members) + \$10 delivery (free delivery to Shire addresses.)

Or

\$20 to those who join or renew their membership to SSHS (+\$40 membership fee).

See our website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org) for details or phone Elizabeth Craig

*Hurry to get your copy. There are only a few books left.*



## **SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **THE SOCIETY**

The SSHS has a proud tradition stretching back more than half a century 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 and on our website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org). 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](mailto: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. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, meetings have been suspended until further notice.

## **SUTHERLAND SHIRE MUSEUM**

Our museum is currently closed. We have been relocated from the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts in East Parade Sutherland to a venue in Venetia Street, Sylvania, which, after COVID-19 crisis is over, will be renovated to accommodate our Museum. More information on access, opening times etc will be released in due course.

**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. Donations will be stored safely while we wait for renovations of our new venue to be finished.

## **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: 2020-2021

### ELECTED MEMBERS

<b>PATRON:</b>	Shire Mayor, Steve Simpson		
<b>PRESIDENT</b>	Pauline Curby	0427 527 721	pcurby@iprimus.com.au
<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b>	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto1951@tpg.com.au
<b>SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER</b>	John Doherty	0402 848 344	johndoherty55@gmail.com
<b>TREASURER</b>	John Doherty	0402 848 344	johndoherty55@gmail.com
<b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS:</b>			
<b>ASSISTANT SECRETARY/TREASURER</b>	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
	Carol McDonald	0403 877 397	jmcdonald@optusnet.com.au
	Elizabeth Craig	0491 099 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
	Frank Zumbo	0417 213 768	mr.frank.zumbo@gmail.com

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

<b>MUSEUM MANAGER</b>	Peter Moore	0427 213 575	peter_mo@ihug.com.au
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<b>GRANTS OFFICER</b>	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto1951@tpg.com.au
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<b>EXCURSIONS BOOKING CLERK</b>			
<b>HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER</b>	Frank Zumbo	0417 213 768	mr.frank.zumbo@gmail.com
<b>WELFARE OFFICER</b>	Gloria Hans	9589 0251	
<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>	Anne Steward Beryl Davis Mary Small		
<b>HONORARY SOLICITOR</b>	Michael Solari		

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc**  
**54<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Saturday 19 September 2020.**

**MINUTES**

Meeting opened 1.35pm.

- Bruce Watt welcomed all members and guests.
- Minutes Carol McDonald
- Christine Edney presented information regarding upcoming excursion to Prince Henry Hospital Nursing Museum and Bare Island on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Bruce Watt showed his recent acquisition of a painting of Cronulla by Henri Tebbitt, 1925.
- Guest speaker was Pip Rae from Shire Podcast Station.  
Pip is preparing 4 audio tours of Sutherland Shire: Sutherland, Cronulla, Kurnell and Como.  
At the moment they are free. She is working with businesses and organisations.  
They can be edited and updated on streaming platforms.  
Pip played the first 15 minutes of the podcast on Sutherland.  
She then took questions.

AGM followed:

- Minutes from the 2019 AGM were published in the November 2019 *Bulletin* and were taken as read. Accepted Elizabeth Craig, Sec. Peter Moore.
- Other reports Accepted Joe Hales, Sec. Helen Rosner.
- Bruce Watt announced that he was stepping down. He has enjoyed his role and acknowledged all people he had worked with.
- All positions were declared vacant and Andrew Platfoot took on the role of Returning Officer.

President: nominee Pauline Curby, nominated by Elizabeth Craig.  
Elected unopposed.

Vice President: Bruce Watt, nominated by Elizabeth Craig.  
Elected unopposed.

Secretary and Public Officer, John Doherty, nominated by Creo Moore.  
Elected unopposed.

Treasurer: John Doherty, nominated by Elizabeth Craig.  
Elected unopposed.

Committee: Creo Moore (Assistant Secretary and Treasurer), Elizabeth Craig, Carol McDonald, Frank Zumbo. All elected unopposed.

- New President Pauline Curby took over the meeting.

- Election of appointed members.

Museum Manager: Bruce Watt and Peter Moore are considering position.

*Bulletin* Editor: Elizabeth Craig.

Publications Officer: Liz Adams

Excursions Officer: Joe Hales

Online administrator: Creo Moore

Facebook administrator: Frank Zumbo

Archivist: Carol McDonald

Heritage Festival Committee rep.: Frank Zumbo

Afternoon teas: Ann Steward, Beryl Davis and Mary Small

Grants officer: vacant

Welfare officer: Gloria Hans

- Bruce Watt and Don Rothnie have resigned from their positions of President and Secretary and are replaced by Pauline Curby as President and John Doherty as Secretary. Bruce Watt has been elected as Vice President and will continue as an IMB signatory. Pauline will be added to our IMB accounts as a signatory. Account numbers 200790393 and 200855539 in the name of Sutherland Shire Historical Society.
- John Doherty as Secretary/Public Officer will be completing NSW Fair Trading Forms A121-T2 (Annual summary of financial affairs) and A9 (Notice of appointment of Public Officer).
- Pauline Curby closed the meeting with mention of the book *East Coast Encounters 1770* and next speaker, Paul Brunton.

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# PASSING THE BATON OF SSHS LEADERSHIP

ELIZABETH CRAIG

## **After 11 years of dedicated service Bruce Watt stands down as SSHS President**

At the AGM in September, Pauline Curby was elected the new President of SSHS, with former President, Bruce Watt, a member of SSHS for 40 years, as her Vice President. We would all agree that after 11 years at the helm, Bruce has made an immense contribution to the Society. Some of his most memorable achievements include leading the makeover of the Museum in 2013, guiding the Society to greater recognition of our indigenous history and using his enviable networking skills to create meaningful links with other organisations, such as Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery, Hungry Point Trust, Aboriginal groups and other local and family history groups. Bruce was also a representative on the consultative committee for the 250<sup>th</sup> Captain Cook commemoration, and he spearheaded the very successful art exhibition in 2018, 'Painting the Shire'. During his tenure Bruce has written two highly acclaimed local history books: *The Shire, a journey through time* and *Dharawal, the first contact people*. Perhaps Bruce's most challenging role has been to navigate the Society through the gruelling process of finding a new venue for our Museum after Council decided to repurpose the School of Arts, which has been home to our Museum since 1986. Bruce, we thank you for your dedication, your vision and your leadership.

## **Welcome to our new SSHS President, Pauline Curby**

Pauline first joined SSHS in the early 1990s. She has represented the Society in heritage matters, has served on the Executive Committee at various times, and since 2015 she has been convenor of our Publications Committee. In that role Pauline presided over the publication of some very successful local history books, the latest being *East Coast Encounters 1770, Reflections on a cultural clash*.

A former English and history teacher, Pauline grew up in the 1950s on a dairy farm near Coraki on the northern rivers of NSW, where her Irish Catholic family have lived since 1866. After a Catholic schooling, she gained a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education at the University of New England in Armidale. Her first posting as a teacher was at Menindee Central where she taught English for two years.

In 1974 Pauline spent two years travelling in Europe, teaching in Leeds and meeting her Irish cousins. Back in Australia, while teaching at Marrickville High School, she met her future husband, Maths teacher and Cronulla resident, Kevin Curby. They married in September 1979 and had three children. Pauline used her maternity leave to complete a Graduate Diploma of Local and Applied History at UNE, leading to the publication of *Battlers' Boomtown*, a snapshot of Coraki in the early 1890s.

While working and raising her family, Pauline was awarded a Masters degree in Public History at UTS, for which she wrote about the early years of Cronulla Public School where her children were students. It was her first foray into the history of Sutherland Shire and she found it fascinating. A change of career was in the air. Pauline joined the Professional Historians Association (PHA), serving on the executive committee, including a stint as president, and gradually moved out of teaching to work on historical consultancies. The first was a thematic history of Sutherland Shire for the Council's heritage study in 1992. More consultancies followed for several state and local government clients, ranging from oral history, environmental history and heritage, along with commissions for local and institutional histories. Pauline is most proud of her book, *Randwick*, which won the NSW Premier's Prize in 2010.\*

We welcome Pauline as our new President, and pledge our support, especially as she tackles the first task of carrying on the project started by Bruce - settling SSHS into our new venue at Venetia Street.

\* See 'Meet the Executive: Pauline Curby', *SSHS Bulletin*, February 2010

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PAULINE CURBY



Sutherland Shire Historical Society (SSHS) is undergoing a period of upheaval as we prepare to move our museum from the front rooms of Sutherland Memorial

School of Arts in the wake of Sutherland Shire Council's decision to refurbish this building. After an occupancy of 34 years, SSHS has to deal with changing times and the fact that councils no longer offer community groups occupancy of rent-free council buildings. Despite arguments with regard to ownership of the School of Arts, the reality is that this is a council building.

At the Society's 2019 annual general meeting SSHS accepted the Council's offer of an alternative building – the former Baby Health Centre in Venetia Street, Sylvania Heights. This decision caused much angst, and when I assumed the presidency in September this year, I was troubled to find that the lease with the Council involved the Society in extra expense and substantially more work in keeping this building in good condition. After some negotiation Sutherland Shire Council waived the first year's rent and building insurance, and the expense of drawing up the lease. While these concessions will help, regular grant funding will need to be obtained if we are to manage the financial commitments entailed in the lease. A ray of hope is that the Council is in the process of reviewing its Community Leasing Policy, and so we may be able to sign a more suitable lease sometime next year.

The executive – and the membership generally – still has concerns about the new site, especially as we will not be near a

railway station and there is unlikely to be much casual 'dropping in'. On the other hand, the site offers opportunities for storage – the Council will install a storage shed – and there is a possibility of forging links with other community groups to enhance use of the site.

Nevertheless, the amount of work involved in maintaining the building could be problematic, especially considering our elderly membership. I am also concerned that Venetia Street does not consume us and leave no energy for other activities such as publications, excursions and meetings. To ensure this does not happen we need workers to help run the museum, under the direction of museum manager Peter Moore. Volunteers for our grants committee, led by Bruce Watt are also needed.

The move to Venetia St could be an exciting opportunity to revitalise the Society and give us a visible presence in the Shire and beyond, or it could be a white elephant that dries up our funds and saps our energy. Our future depends on the level of commitment members are prepared to make. We were pleased to welcome Councillor Peter Scaysbrook and Lyn Scaysbrook to our October meeting, as it is vital to receive support from within Council as we face these challenging times.

Finally, the executive generally agrees that a long-term aim is to campaign for a purpose-built Council-run museum. This should be staffed by a professional curator with Society members forming a support group to advise, assist where needed and act as voluntary guides. Meanwhile help us make the move to Venetia Street a success by assisting in whatever capacity best suits you.

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

If you are puzzled that Stephanie Bailey's article, 'The Tabbigai Cliff Dwellers' (p.13) looks familiar, this is why. In our 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Reaching Out* (July) we had a short piece from a 1953 *Pix* Magazine article about Bert Adamson, who built his home in a cave in the cliffs at Kurnell. Stephanie, in her usual manner, has dug very deep into the records to give us a full and vivid picture of life for cliff dwellers, including that of Bert Adamson.

Thank you to contributors of the other articles in this edition – quite an eclectic mix of solid history and personal experiences, and even a fictitious piece about standing in the shoes of an indigenous man (p.24).

Reports on SSHS activities show that despite our issues this year – Covid-19 and moving our Museum, we are still a vibrant group, doing some interesting things: excursion to Bare Island (Report p.22); Report on October speaker, Paul Brunton, who attracted so many visitors, they couldn't all be

admitted (p.21). Then there's our latest publication, *East Coast Encounters 1770*. few remaining will be available at the meeting.

Thank you to Creo Moore for her wonderful photos – clear evidence of the enjoyable time on the latest excursion. Thank you too, to Dawn Emerson for generously proofreading the *Bulletin*.

## **Bulletin contributions**

While, I do have a few articles ready for future issues of the Bulletin, they seem to be mainly from men! I would dearly love to publish some articles written by women. It makes a nice balance to have both genders.

## **Printed Bulletins**

Those who have paid \$20 for printed Bulletins, will receive their copy either at the 21<sup>st</sup> November meeting or through the post. There will be a few extra printed copies for \$5 each at the meeting for those who haven't paid, but would like one.

## **SSHS CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2020 – FEBRUARY 2021** (See website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org) for updates)

**SSHS MEETING** - normally held at 1.30pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in the month  
at the Stapleton Centre, Sutherland

### **THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED**

| DATE                 |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DECEMBER 2020</b> | <b>Sat. 5th</b>  | <b>“XMAS PARTY”</b> at Club on East, 12.30 – 2.30pm<br>2-course set menu for \$48 each. Booking & prepayment essential. RSVP by 21 November – Creo Moore – 0425 226 405, or email: <a href="mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com">shirehistory@gmail.com</a> |
|                      | <b>Sat. 19th</b> | <b>NO MEETING</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>JANUARY 2021</b>  | <b>Sat. 16th</b> | <b>SPEAKER:</b> Christine Yeats, President, RAHS will speak on 'Crime, misdemeanours and more in the Sutherland Shire'<br><b>Don't forget to register your attendance</b><br>(Phone or email Creo Moore)                                              |
| <b>FEBRUARY 2021</b> | <b>Sat 20th</b>  | <b>See <i>Reaching Out</i> or SSHS website: <a href="http://www.shirehistory.org">www.shirehistory.org</a> for more information on speakers and other events in 2021</b>                                                                              |



## UNDER SAIL AND UNDER STARS: Aboard the *Endeavour* replica, 24–28 July 1995

EDWARD DUYKER

School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

In the autumn of 1995, I received a letter from John Longley, chairman of the H.M. Bark Endeavour Foundation, requesting suggestions for furnishing Daniel Solander's cabin on the replica of James Cook's famous vessel. I had not yet completed *Nature's Argonaut*, my biography of Solander, but I had co-edited and published his collected correspondence (MUP/Scandinavian University Press, 1995). It was no great problem to provide five pages of referenced notes on the Swedish naturalist's scientific instruments, his taste in clothes and the books he apparently had with him on the voyage. John Longley was surprised that I did not ask for payment for my report. As a gesture of thanks, he offered to put me on any leg of the *Endeavour* replica's voyage down the Queensland coast that year, albeit in the opposite direction to which Cook had sailed. I would have to work my passage as a member of the crew – and sleep in a hammock, not in Solander's cabin. My only expense would be return travel to Queensland and the cost of my uniform. It was a fortuitous offer; I had already planned to visit Solander's landfalls in Queensland as background for the biography. With a little help from my parents (who agreed to camp with my sons in Mackay while my wife Susan was at work and I was at sea), we settled on my boarding the *Endeavour* in Townsville and sailing with her to Hamilton Island.

On **24 July 1995**, with other new recruits, I was issued with my uniform, wet-weather gear and a hammock (no. 31). After a very brief orientation, the *Endeavour* replica sailed out of Townsville harbour with, I was later told, only 0.2 metres clearance for the keel at one point. I was to be No. 4 in the Mizzen watch and was ordered aloft almost immediately. Did this happen to victims of the press gang? Getting onto the maintop (there is no crow's nest, just a small wooden platform), was very frightening for someone who had never done it before. The futtock shrouds<sup>1</sup> strut out off the main shrouds and the top shrouds strut in at nearly 45° from the maintop and this is particularly difficult to climb up and over. You feel like you have reached the top of a cliff, but then you have to contend with a ledge, entangled with vines overhanging the abyss. I thought of my wife and children! I had no safety harness and a fall from such a height would not have had a happy ending! The topman of our watch was Joshua McLennon. He had a ring through his nose and looked somewhat intimidating, but his nature was gentle and understanding. He could see that I was having problems. The mass of ropes on the *Endeavour* (indeed any eighteenth-century sailing ship) was awesome. I wondered if their functions would ever come naturally to me. At 2.00 pm, I was already very tired. I had not slept well the previous night at the Townsville YHA. It was not just the uncertainty of the imminent passage under sail. Located near a railway shunting yard, I had been wakened almost every hour by train whistles and the rattle and crunch of railway wagons vibrating through every corner of the hostel.



*Members of the Endeavour replica's crew working aloft*

ALL PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY EDWARD DUYKER

After leaving Townsville harbour, we sailed close to a cargo vessel, surprisingly, at a moment when it almost lost two containers. A playful dolphin also swam alongside.

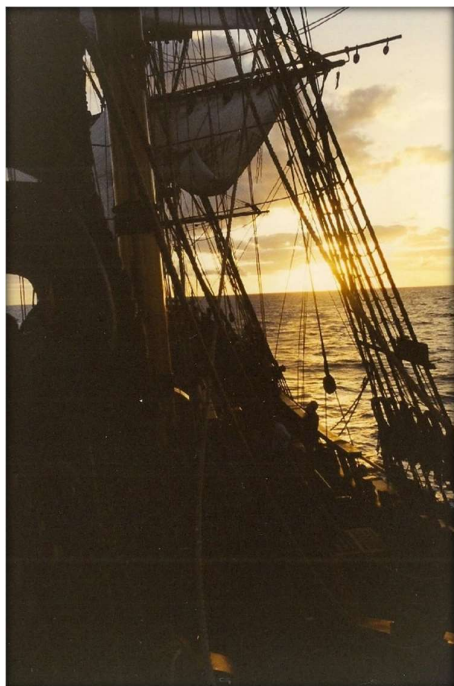
The Mizzen watch was on duty again between 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm. I was placed on bow watch. It was stressful at first, but soon exhilarating as I made my way carefully onto the bowsprit in the dark. I was glad to have made my way out once before in daylight. When our watch was finished, we strung our hammocks (in my case after a very quick shower, a luxury James Cook's men did not have). I was exhausted. Lying in the hammock and swinging with the motion of the waves, was like floating in space, but without any choice other than to sleep on your back. At first, it was warm enough to sleep without covers. I slept reasonably well until the cold awakened me at 2.00 am. My hammock was just under one of the *knees*, a large timber bracket that helps to support the deck. At first, I thought that this was a great disadvantage because of reduced head room, but I soon realised that the knee and the small adjoining air vent gave me a handhold to help me get in and out of the hammock. (We all had to use the tables to climb up.) The proximity of the small rectangular air vent was also a blessing as the air in the hold soon became foetid with the breath (and flatulence) of so many sleeping crewmen – all swaying in unison in their hammocks. I had another hour and a half of sleep.

**25 July 1995** at 3.40 am, I got up to go to the heads (toilets), wash my face and have a cup of Milo before our next watch. The moon was only a faint crescent and it was almost pitch dark on deck. I could not see a thing and stumbled all the way to muster. We called out our numbers in succession: '1, 2, 3, (in my case 4), 5, 6, 7, 8'. I was placed on bow watch again, initially as a runner (to convey reports of any hazards), but then had two periods out on the bowsprit. The sky was rich with stars, including shooting stars. Soon there was a shimmer of light on the surface of the sea. I was wearing *Drizabone* oil skins. It was quite cool and wet as waves broke on the bow. The gathering dawn – amber and rose on the eastern horizon – lit up the clouds like Chinese lanterns.

The Mizzen watch was a mixed lot. It included Jenny, a 37-year old ceramic artist from Batemans Bay; Peter, a former-garbage collector from Mt Isa who had paid top dollar to sleep in Joseph Banks' cabin; Craig, a Macadamia exporter from Queensland; Gerard, a 'semi-retiree' from Cremorne who was reluctant to talk about his past employment; Tony, an English-born air-traffic controller from Perth who had an accent almost identical to that of British broadcaster and actor Tony Robinson. Of the watch, Gerard was an experienced yachtsman who seemed confident aloft on the yards, both clewing and unfurling the sails. And Tony, who already had 42-days' experience aboard the *Endeavour*, literally 'showed me the ropes'. These ropes would soon become my 'new normal'. Although they did not seem anything like nylon or plastic (indeed all the sails and ropes looked like authentic eighteenth-century rigging), they were in fact manufactured from tough and long-lasting synthetics.

We did not make any progress that night. All the winds were contrary and we ended up driven north as Cook had been in 1770.

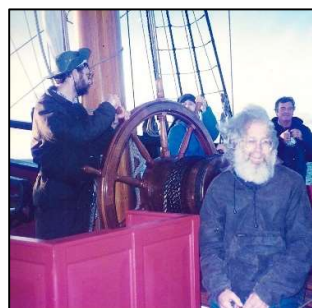
The number-4s of all the watches, myself included, had to do galley duty that morning. I had the dishes to wash. I was surprised to discover that the man washing and drying dishes beside me, David Waters, owned a film animation studio and had read two of my most recent books. I was very tired by the end of my duties and had a thumping headache. I have never been seasick and this voyage was no exception, but I found broken sleep and the intermittent watches a serious challenge. That night, we had the 6.00 to 8.00 pm and the 12.00 to 4.00 am watches. I served at the helm and I am embarrassed to recall that I briefly put the *Endeavour* 20° off course as I learnt to deal with the delay in the rudder answering the wheel. 'Twenty degrees is a lot', said Joshua with understatement! It was an error only noticeable because of modern navigational equipment and soon corrected.



By the end of the watch, I was cold and dizzy with fatigue. However, there had been wonderful compensation. I saw fourteen shooting stars while sitting on the bowsprit during the early morning watch. On clear nights, mariners are surrounded by stars, from horizon to horizon. It is another world in which they float. It is hardly surprising that James Cook and many of his officers were interested in astronomy and not just because of its practical applications for navigation. Before 'light pollution' in large modern towns, most land lubbers also lived beneath a dense firmament of stars at night. Of course, observation of the Transit of Venus in Tahiti had been the principal scientific reason for the *Endeavour* expedition. To my surprise, I found that there was a pioneer Australian radio-astronomer from Magnetic Island on board the *Endeavour* replica. This was Dr Brian Robinson (1930–2004), who had spent four years at the Leiden Observatory and even spoke Dutch. We soon became friends and he explained to me that the unusual number of shooting stars that we had seen was probably caused by the earth's orbit through the tail of a comet.

My night vision improved a little, but I could not help being amused at tripping over something as large (and seemingly obvious) as a replica eighteenth-century canon on the deck.

**26 July 1995**, after morning cleaning duties, I was invited to give a lecture on the life of Daniel Solander, so famously associated with the *Endeavour*. It was a first for me. I have lectured in numerous locations, but never on the deck of a square-rigged sailing ship! After the lecture, one of my shipmates introduced himself as a former colleague from my days in the Joint Intelligence Organisation, more than a decade before. This was Mike Shearer who was now a computer specialist with James Cook University in Townsville. I had not recognised him. His once dark beard and bushy hair were now quite grey. Naturally, we talked about mutual friends and where life had taken us since leaving Canberra.



Edward Duyker steering and Mike Shearer

After anchoring off Haslewood Island, in the outer Whitsundays, we were put to work doing maintenance duties: sanding and painting the black railing on the deck. I also re-painted one of the replica eighteenth-century heads. (The crew, in fact, use modern ship's toilets below deck.) In the evening, we decorated the main deck for a surprise 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party for our topman Joshua McLennon. Sarongs and boxer shorts were *de rigueur* as evening dress. The party was a joyous occasion. Joshua was oblivious to the preparations, having been sent ashore on an errand by Captain Blake. A very small quantity of well-chilled *Yellowglen* was served. Rum might have been a more traditional Royal Navy ration, but I don't think that I have ever enjoyed a measure of *Champagne* more.



Edward Duyker wearing a bandanna made from a fragment of the *Endeavour* replica's first red ensign.

At sea, watches are very important, particularly for a vessel like the *Endeavour*. Without water-tight compartments, a collision with a partly submerged cargo container or another vessel could be catastrophic. At anchor, there are fewer anxieties. I was glad that my watch was only for an hour, from 9.00 to 10.00 pm. I had my best night's sleep on board after a strictly-rationed but wonderful shower.



**27 July 1995**, in the morning, we had to scour the upper deck by hand. We then had further maintenance duties: painting and cleaning in the officers' and gentlemen's quarters. At lunchtime, we took the ship's boat to Haslewood Island for free time and a picnic. I caught up with my journal in the shade of an *Allocasuarina* tree, facing the peaks and headlands of Whitsunday Island in the distance. Aside from my family and uninterrupted sleep, it was this private, meditative, 'writing' time that I missed most on the *Endeavour*.



**28 July 1995**, we were on duty for the 4.00 to 8.00 am watch. That morning, before dawn, I saw another nine shooting stars. A little later we sighted a pod of humpback whales. After breakfast and cleaning stations, we sailed into the harbour of Hamilton Island. There was a great deal of sail handling and the guns were fired in salute several times. Captain Blake was very pleased with our proficiency. I thought my own contribution a miraculous improvement. The arrival of the *Endeavour* provoked great excitement. A flotilla of yachts and small craft accompanied her into port. One, a yacht from Jacobstad in Finland, recklessly crossed her bow several times. Fortunately, there was no collision. After mooring at the dock, I had to get the gangway ready for the public who were permitted to visit after lunch. Captain Blake thought it appropriate that I be posted near Solander's cabin, to inform visitors of the work of the naturalists, but Mike Shearer thought my tendency to engage in long historical discourses, a bad idea on a day when a smooth and rapid flow of people was required below deck. He was probably right!

I left the *Endeavour* at Hamilton Island. The next day was my youngest son Pierre's ninth birthday and I was keen to be with him and the rest of the family. One of my shipmates, Cliff Stanyon, was a Mackay resident and he offered to give me a lift. The only problem was that his car was in Bowen. We took the ferry to Shute Harbour, where Cliff had arranged to borrow a 4WD from Bowen Council. After driving north to Bowen to collect Cliff's car, I drove the council vehicle back to Airlie Beach and then we drove together to Mackay. We reached the Mackay Council Camping ground at 9.30 pm. My parents had just gone to bed in their campervan. My sons Samuel and Pierre were fast asleep in our tent, but they all soon woke to greet me. The next day, after a wonderful 'watch-free' sleep, we celebrated Pierre's birthday. I told the boys and my parents of my adventures (as many a sailor has done before me) and we began the drive back to Sydney to be reunited with Susan.

My brief voyage on the *Endeavour* replica offered me many priceless insights to life at sea in the eighteenth century. I am still reaping the benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Shrouds are rope rigging which hold up the masts. Futtock shrouds are rope, wire or iron rods which connect the lower mast with the maintop.

# TABBIGAI CLIFF-DWELLERS

STEPHANIE BAILEY

*First published in the Sutherland Library online series: Local History, Local Stories, on Wednesday, 24 June 2020. A shortened version is republished here with permission of the author.*

Sutherland Shire residents are blessed with having some of Sydney's most spectacular natural areas and outdoor spaces right on their doorstep: sandy beaches; rugged bushland; a dramatic coastline; lively parks and gardens; vast waterways, and much more. But while we all love being close to nature, not many of us would opt to forgo the comforts and conveniences of modern life and actually go and live in it. But for much of the 20th Century, that's exactly what the cliff-dwellers of Tabbigai did.



*Cave dwellers near Kurnell, 1930s*  
[National Library NLA.obj-150885203]



*Tabbigai cliffs 1930s showing dwellings*  
[National Library NLA.obj-150885300]

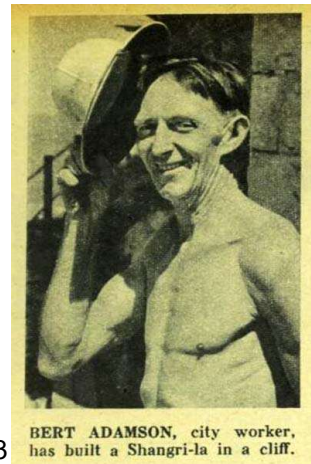
The physical landscape of the Kurnell Peninsula is a paradox; its vast contradictions instantly discernible on satellite images (see back cover). In the centre of the headland is the recently converted Caltex oil refinery, now Australia's most substantial fuel import terminal. Just a stone's throw away is Towra Point Nature Reserve, a haven for threatened and migratory bird species such as the endangered Eastern Curlew and Little Tern. The peninsula itself is shaped like an enormous thumb: it reaches out from the Shire as if trying to hitch a ride from some passing vehicle; and with both the busiest airport in the country and Australia's largest container port just across Botany Bay, there's no shortage of itinerant transport in the area. Yet in spite of all the nearby hustle and bustle, Kurnell somehow manages to retain a peaceful 'away-from-it-all' charm.

In 2016, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2,267 people lived on the Kurnell Peninsula in one of 786 private dwellings.<sup>1</sup> Most of these homes are located along the northern coastal strip which runs from the western tip at Bonna Point to the entrance of the reserve near Captain Cook's Landing Place. The eastern expanse is dominated by the magnificent Kamay Botany Bay National Park, characterised by its spreads of heathland, hardy wildflowers and exposed sandstone clifftops. Towering precipices — daunting, roughhewn and riddled with fissures — define the Park's seaboard boundary between Cape Solander and Potter Point. It is along this sheer wall of rock that Tabbigai Gap coarsely splits the terrain, as if a giant had grabbed both corners of the gorge and tried to rip the land in two. This coastline is ancient, captivating and tempestuous; the powerful presence of the natural elements is completely and utterly relentless. Only the toughest of beings would choose to make this place their home.

Herbert John (Bert) Adamson first visited Tabbigai as a teenager in 1913 when he and some mates travelled down from their inner-city homes to spend the day fishing along the coast. That evening, rather than undertaking the arduous trip back home – which would have involved trekking overland to Kurnell, sailing across Botany Bay to La Perouse, and then journeying onward to Redfern — the group decided to camp overnight at Tabbigai. They set themselves up on a rock shelf about halfway down the cliff. Although the sloping rock made sleeping difficult, Bert Adamson fell in love with this ‘marvellous fishing spot’. He was hooked. And so, on his next visit to Tabbigai, Adamson chipped away at some rock in the cave to make his pitch a little more comfortable. Later, he added some extra touches. And then a few more.



*Pix Magazine, 4 April 1953*



In fact, over the next 50 years, thanks to his meticulous care and persistent toil, Adamson managed to gradually transform his simple cliff-face campsite into something truly incredible.<sup>2</sup>

*Bert Adamson's House* [Courtesy: Mitchell Library]

It may seem extraordinary today, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries there were quite a number of people who inhabited the caves along Sydney's coastline. Many, like Adamson, were ‘weekend’ fishermen who would come and stay in their harbour domiciles for short periods when the fish were biting. Others lived in the caves scattered around the untenanted shores on a more permanent basis: oyster poachers, hermits, artists, those with health issues (including returned Great War soldiers), individuals seeking a cheaper housing option, and many others for any one of a thousand reasons. At Folly Point in Cammeray, labourers — who had originally come to the area to work on the sewage outlet — found that they preferred to live in the caverns along the waterfront instead of in the tents they'd brought with them. Some employees even cultivated garden plots and became so domesticated that when the work at the site was completed, they chose to remain behind.

Eventually, however, as suburban development began to encroach on their caves, the Folly Point cave-dwellers became a ‘nuisance’; they were moved on by the authorities. Cave-dwellers could also be found around Middle Harbour, Smedley's Point (Manly), Narrabeen, South Head (Watsons Bay), Vaucluse, Cremorne Point, the Domain, and Maroubra. In 1917, a man was found living in a cave near Balmoral at Mosman ‘not far from the Lieutenant-Governor's beautiful home.’<sup>3</sup> By that stage, though, the subdivision of suburban land around Sydney's waterways and coastline meant that the number of permanent cave-dwellers was on a steady decline.

Then came the Great Depression. In 1931 the *Sun* newspaper reported:

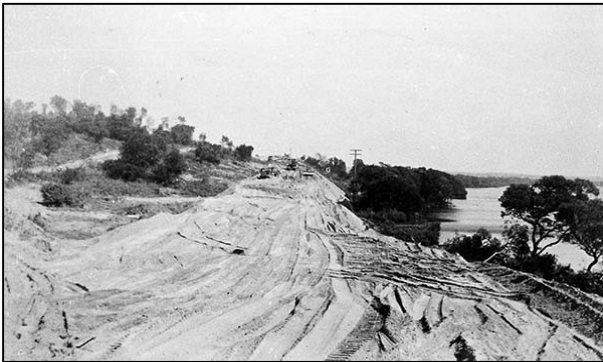
Rising from the ashes of hopelessness and despair, a little community has grown in the military reserve at La Perouse. ... ‘Happy Valley’ this little settlement was first called by someone with a sense of irony. But today, despite the hundred troubles that beset every member, it is as near to Happy Valley as people in such circumstances could possibly get. Families deprived of practically everything, almost of existence, by continued unemployment, sought refuge in this little depression overlooking the ocean. Life had treated them harshly, but it had not broken their spirit.<sup>4</sup>



By the middle of 1931 there were around 350 men, women and children living in 131 roughly constructed homes in the unemployment camp at La Perouse.<sup>5</sup> With no more space available at Happy Valley, someone erected a 'Full Up' sign to deter future home-builders.<sup>6</sup> Yet more and more distressed families found themselves in desperate need of accommodation, and increasingly they sought out the caves around Sydney's foreshores.

By law, Bert Adamson did not actually own his weekend home in Kurnell; he leased the site under a 'permissive occupancy' arrangement. In 1953 the fee was £2 a year in rent and £4/7/- in taxes.<sup>7</sup> Not bad for an ocean frontage, although realistically Adamson could have been turned out at any time. Until the mid-1950s, too, access to Tabbigai was demanding to say the least; the options being either to travel by ferry from La Perouse to Kurnell Wharf, and from there it was a three-kilometre walk overland; or by means of a 16-kilometre tramp through the sandy bush track from Cronulla. To be fair though, the peninsula's very remoteness was, unquestionably, what made it most attractive to Adamson and his fellow cliff-dwellers. But their splendid isolation couldn't last forever; eventually — and inevitably — the steady progress of the 20<sup>th</sup> century managed to push its way right into their rocky backyard.

Over the years, as well as the eyries built into the cliff-faces along the Cape Solander coastline, a number of squatters' huts, humpies, cabins and small homes gradually rose up on the Crown Land between Boat Harbour and Cape Baily. By 1962, there were around 100 of these dwellings, primarily divided into two separate communities: scores of small fishermen's weekenders (visible from Cronulla) were located at Boat Harbour; and at Potter Point various permanent and semi-permanent homes had been erected. Although (reportedly) most of the weekenders illegally occupied the land, many of the permanent builders had taken out cheap permissive occupancy leases with the Lands Department. Life couldn't have been sweeter: there were no exorbitant rents to pay, no hustle and bustle, no noisy cars, and no troublesome neighbours.



*Captain Cook Drive under construction, 1950s.*  
[Sutherland Shire Local History]

Then in mid-1953, Captain Cook Drive (which connects Cronulla to Kurnell) was opened to traffic; within a decade the Kurnell Oil Refinery had built a bitumen road off this thoroughfare, terminating within 300 metres of the main shanty settlement at Potter Point.<sup>8</sup> While this would certainly have made it much simpler for Peninsula residents to pop down to Cronulla to pick up food and supplies, or to collect their mail and pensions, the new roads, of course, also provided easier access for those coming *into* the area, and this included those field officers from the Lands Department

whose job it was to conduct surveys on who may or may not have been using the land legitimately.

One group that did have a valid permissive occupancy agreement from the Lands Department for a cliff site (under the trusteeship of Sutherland Shire Council) was the St. George and Sutherland Shire Anglers' Club. In November 1965, prompted by numerous tragedies involving rock fishermen — a man from Loftus had drowned at Cape Solander just months earlier after slipping from a rock ledge<sup>9</sup> — the club proposed that a dangerous cliff near Kurnell be converted into a safe fishing spot and 'training ground' for young rock fishermen. 'More and more people are losing their lives while fishing from rocks,' said club vice-president, Eric Russell. 'But councils and other authorities just haven't considered it necessary to give any thought to the protection of these fishermen. ... We want to make some sort of contribution to try and lessen the toll. ... We think this Tabbigai site will be ... ideal.'<sup>10</sup>

When the project was completed almost exactly a year later, it consisted of an arrangement of ladders which provided a stairway down through a hole in the clifftop to a cavern 5½ metres below; an additional ladder descended 4½ metres to a lower level. Around 55 metres of meshed safety fencing enclosed the two levels. In accepting the Club's invitation to inspect the project, Councillor Jean Manuel became 'the first lady to descend the ladder system.'<sup>11</sup> There would not have been too many after her. Just a month later, in December 1966, the safe-fishing ground was effectively ruined when vandals stole the 300kg ladder (purchased by the Anglers' Club from the Pymont powerhouse when it was demolished the previous year).

In February 1967, the St. George and Sutherland Shire Anglers' Club's permissive occupancy lease was terminated.<sup>12</sup> Soon all such tenancy arrangements were cancelled; the inhabitants of this rocky coastline were asked to leave — and that included Bert Adamson.

'The NSW Department of Lands has ordered that all residents of Crown Land on the Kurnell Peninsula must, without exception, vacate and remove their structures,' reported the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 16 August 1969.

Of the 20 occupants still there, 19 are weekenders. Some hold permissive occupancies; others live there illegally. Most of the houses are at Boat Harbour, overlooking Bate Bay, inside the Kurnell Peninsula recreation reserve. A few houses were built as snug and comfortable homes, like Bert Adamson's masterpiece of stonemasonry at Tabbigai, a rocky gorge cleaving the cliff just south of Cape Solander, within the Captain Cook's Landing Place Historical Site. The Lands Department's orders to vacate were issued recently because the Captain Cook Historical Site had been enlarged.<sup>13</sup>

At the time of the eviction notices, Bert Adamson was 71-years-old and had been coming to Tabbigai for around 56 years, originally just to fish on weekends, but following his retirement as a wood machinist in 1962, he had moved into his cliff dwelling permanently. In 1969 Adamson paid \$8 a year to the Lands Department (part of his permissive occupancy agreement) and \$30 a year to Sutherland Shire Council. Over the decades (depending on which newspaper you read) he had spent either \$14,000 or \$40,000 on the construction and maintenance of his truly extraordinary cliff home. By 1969 Adamson's home was partially hewed into the solid cliff-face and partly supported above the ocean by heavy timber beams bored into the rock; a complex set-up by which running water was filtered through the cliffs and piped into a network of taps; a sewerage system; a comfy kitchen; two bedrooms; a bathroom; and two fishing boxes built out from the cliff-face.<sup>14</sup> 'Why evict me and wreck all this?' he questioned.<sup>15</sup>

But Adamson's difficulties weren't just with the authorities. 'Too many people ruin the nature,' he explained to a reporter in 1969, insisting that it was not the presence of the oil refinery's outlet pipe — which ended at the foot of the gorge just below his home — that had caused more environmental problems with his immediate surroundings, but rather the influx of people swarming up to Tabbigai to fish from the cliffs. 'The fishing here used to be fantastic,' reminisced Adamson, 'I've seen blue groppers down there so big you had to be careful they didn't pull you in — fair dinkum, no lie. And lobsters — kittens mind you, but big ones, you could catch 'em with your hands.'<sup>16</sup> Adamson recalls the abundant wildflowers in the bush, too. By the late-1960s though, the flowers were gone, car tracks crisscrossed the scrubby sandhills, and the bush trail from Captain Cook Drive up to Adamson's Tabbigai cliff home was littered with rubbish. And, like the Anglers' Club, Adamson had endured more than his fair share of troubles with vandals.

Back in 1963, hoodlums had broken in and smashed the place up: the generating plant — which produced electrical lighting — was damaged; equipment and batteries were stolen. In fact, this happened so

regularly over the years that Adamson was forced to revert to kerosene lamps to light his dwelling. On one occasion, thieves gained entry to his home by smashing the heavy combination lock.<sup>17</sup> On another, they took to his door with an axe. Incredibly too, vandals once demolished part of Adamson's house by propelling a car off the clifftop and through the roof of his dwelling. The car chassis was left to rot in the seething ocean below.<sup>18</sup>

By 1969, the day-to-day physical demands of life in such a challenging location were also getting to Adamson. 'I don't get around like I used to,' he conceded. It was time to go. And yet, it must have been truly devastating for Adamson when he finally walked away from his home at Tabbigai. He was proud of his masterpiece of workmanship — one that had taken more than half a century to create and cultivate — and he hoped that, after he was gone, the cliff-dwelling might remain as a sort of historical artefact. Today, Tabbigai Gap is easily accessible to hikers by way of the Cape Bailly track, commencing at Cape Solander Lookout. Unless you know what you're looking for, though, little still exists at Tabbigai to suggest that this unique and beautiful place was ever home to Adamson and a remarkable community of 20<sup>th</sup> Century cliff-dwellers.

In 1977, Herbert John (Bert) Adamson was living at Carss Park. He died in April 1981 and his ashes are interred at Woronora Cemetery.

### **Further Reading**

- National Parks and Wildlife Service – Kurnell area, [Kamay Botany Bay National Park](#)
- [St. George and Sutherland Shire Anglers' Club: Club History](#) by Robert Hart
- Sutherland Shire Council – [Shire Maps](#). For those readers who have electronic access, view the remarkable difference in the number of dwellings both before and after the Lands Department's decision to evict residents along the Kurnell Peninsula coastline, zoom in and view the aerial map of the area around Potters Point from 1961; then compare it to the map from 1970. (See back cover for aerial maps of 1961 and 2018)

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *2016 Census QuickStats, Kurnell*.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn, J.A.C., Bert and the bureaucrats, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 16, 1969), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> 'Cave-dwellers of Sydney', *The Sun*, (July 25, 1917), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> 'Phoenix of happiness', *The Sun*, (June 7, 1931), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 'Governor visits Happy Valley', *The Daily Telegraph*, (June 10, 1931), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> D.L.T., 'Living on the edge of Australia', *The Herald*, (March 10, 1934), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> 'High Living', *Pix*, Vol. 29 No. 5 (April 4, 1953), pp. 13-15.

<sup>8</sup> Grose, P., 'Shack dwellers fear invasion', *St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader*, (June 7, 1962), p.2 (Sutherland Supplement).

<sup>9</sup> 'Drowned in ledge fall', *St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader*, (April 13, 1965), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> 'Rockhopping is made easy', *St. George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, (November 24, 1965), p. 47

<sup>11</sup> Recreation Reserve R66460, Tabbigai, Kurnell, Council Minute No. 1921 of 14 November 1966.

<sup>12</sup> Permissive Occupancy 1965/57, Metropolitan, St. George & Sutherland Shire Anglers' Club, Council Minute No. 1156 of 24 July 1967.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, J.A.C., 'Bert and the bureaucrat's', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 16, 1969), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Kurnell cliff dwellers*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKoB5NCJLgY>

<sup>15</sup> 'Cliff home spared', *St. George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, (July 23, 1969), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, J.A.C., 'Bert and the bureaucrats', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 16, 1969), p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> 'Cliff home spared', *St. George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, (July 23, 1969), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, J.A.C., 'Bert and the bureaucrats', *Sydney Morning Herald*, (August 16, 1969), p. 16

# THE DROGHER, *MY IDEA*

GREG JACKSON

This article is about an unusual boat, *My Idea*, built by David Chappelow on Sheas Creek Tempe (later to become the Alexandra Canal). Chappelow was the great grandfather of Ian Annabel, one of our Society's long-time members. Ian supplied much of the information for this article.

*My idea* was a type of boat called a drogher (see Image 1). In Australia a drogher is a simple steam powered barge with a flat bottom and large deck area. They were driven by paddle wheels powered by a wood fired steam engine in what could best be described as a shed at the aft end. Some droghers had a wheelhouse and a derrick for handling heavy cargos. Before the coming of trains and motorised transport they were the workhorses of the northern rivers of NSW moving all manner of cargoes, especially timber from the river's shallow upper reaches to the timber mills then downstream to waiting ocean-going steamers. They were not things of beauty but strongly built for a hard life.



Image 1: Typical steam paddlewheel drogher on the Clarence River NSW. [Photo: Greg Jackson]

We know quite a bit about *My Idea*. She was launched in 1883 from Chappelow's property on Shea's Creek Tempe (later to become the unfinished Alexandra Canal). With a burden of 50 tons at 18.5m (60.6 ft) length, a beam of 5m (16.3 ft) and drawing a skimpy 0.6m (2ft) she was, unusually, powered by an 8hp (nominal) engine with a vertical boiler, and was also fitted with a mast and a cutter rig<sup>1</sup>. Droghers, like the one shown in Image1, were common on the northern rivers of NSW and the remains of many droghers can still be seen alongside the riverbanks. All drogher wrecks viewed by the author, have horizontal Scotch boilers and no evidence of sail power. Unusually the steam engine on *My Idea* also powered a circular saw to cut wood.<sup>2</sup> Most droghers were used solely to transport goods, not as a work platform.

In 1885 *My Idea* travelled to the Hawkesbury to work. She was reported to have travelled from Port Jackson to Broken Bay using steam and sail power in 'a little over 4 hours'.<sup>3</sup> *My Idea* apparently created something of a sensation on the Hawkesbury becoming the only drogher on the river although there were several reported in the Myall Lakes further north. It is not known how much work was available for *My Idea* on the Hawkesbury, but she was sold by Chappelow to the NSW Government in 1891.<sup>4</sup>

*My Idea* was not David Chappelow's only boat. In 1878 he launched from his property on Sheas Creek (Image 2), the cutter *Surprise* with a burden of 12 tons. *Surprise* had a length of 50 feet and a beam of 16 feet. After a life of 13 years it was broken up at Duck Creek, Parramatta in 1891.<sup>5</sup>

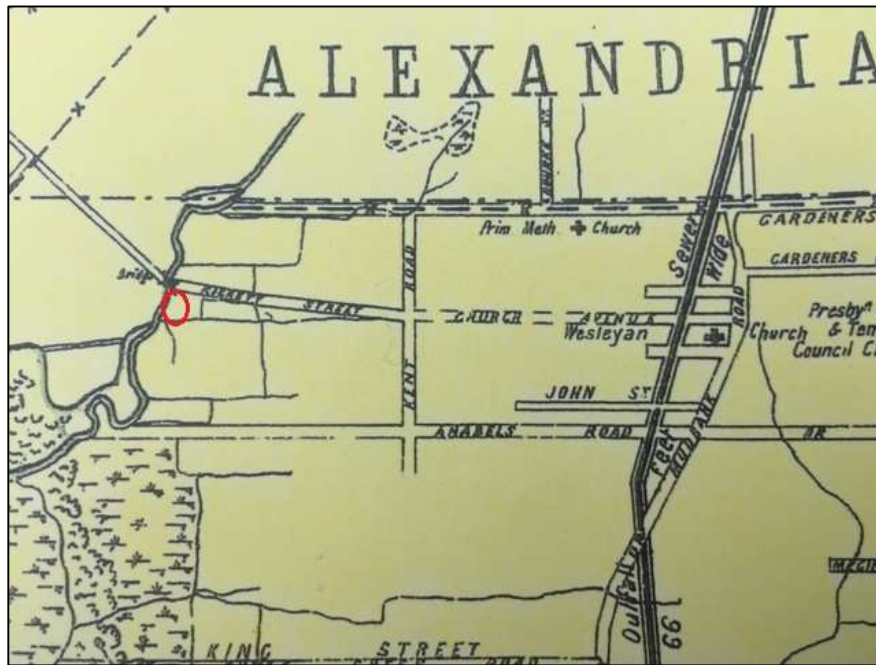


Image 2: The location of David Chappelow's property on Sheas Creek is circled in red. Starting in 1887 the creek was converted to the unfinished Alexandria Channel<sup>3</sup>. Note Anabel [sic] Road, named after Ian Annabel's family. [Credit: Historic Parish Map Alexandria (undated)]

As well as working as a limeburner<sup>6</sup> and using his boats to deliver lime, wood<sup>7</sup> and other general cargo David Chappelow also had other occupations. At the death of his father in 1887 he acted as undertaker<sup>6</sup> and the newspapers record that he had a lifelong interest in horse racing and breeding<sup>7</sup>. He even sold ferrets for 10 shillings each.<sup>8</sup> All this industry paid off; Chappelow prospered, letting out two cottages in 1887.<sup>9</sup>

David Chappelow died in May 1921 at the age of 79 after a long and eventful life. His great grandson, Ian Annabel of Oyster Bay, tells more of the family history over the page.

<sup>1</sup> Earnshaw B. 2011, *The Shipbuilders and Ships of the Georges River and Botany Bay 1810 to 1900*. Pub. Kogarah Historical Society

<sup>2</sup> *Hawkesbury Chronicle and Farmers Advocate*, Saturday 16 May 1885

<sup>3</sup> Ringer R. 2013, Dictionary of Sydney, *From Sheas Creek to Alexandra Canal*, [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from\\_sheas\\_creek\\_to\\_alexandra\\_canal](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from_sheas_creek_to_alexandra_canal)

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1874

<sup>5</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1884

<sup>6</sup> Noted on his father's (John) death certificate, 13 March 1867

<sup>7</sup> *Evening News*, 5 Oct 1887

<sup>8</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 Jan 1917

<sup>9</sup> *Evening News*, 16 July 1887



## 100 YEARS OF FAMILY HISTORY: (THE CHAPPELWS AND THE ANNABELS)

IAN ANNABEL

I grew up in Mascot, NSW in the 1940s, when the district still had many dairy farms, market gardens, swamps and sandhills. Most weekends my family walked to visit my grandmother's large market garden located alongside the Mascot aerodrome. Bunnerong Power Station railway was on the southern boundary and Shea's Creek to the west. She employed her five sons and five Chinese gardeners to grow and transport the produce.

The planes, steam train, creek, horses and Chinese workers were fascinating to a young boy. The Chinese lived in a single room shed on the property. I helped wash the mainly root vegetables, tying them in bunches of 13 (counting in Cantonese) with flax grown on the property. I would occasionally ride on the horse-drawn cart to Paddies Market with the vegetables and return with a load of horse manure from the Dairy Farmers Stables in Harris Street, Ultimo.

Many years after my grandmother and parents had passed away, I received a phone call from the Botany Bay Historical Trust asking if I knew about a road called Anabels [sic] Road, as they were researching road name origins. I found that one of the main east-west roads, Coward Street, which passed the Annabel house, was originally named Anabels Road. It was changed to Coward Street by Mayor Coward when the suburb changed its name from North Botany to Mascot.

This prompted me to research my family history, tracing all ancestors back six generations to their arrival in the colony. The earliest was on the second fleet ship *Neptune*, the same ship as John and Elizabeth Macarthur were on, but my ancestor was on a lower deck with the convicts. In all I found fourteen convicts and the rest were free settlers.

The Chappelow family came to the colony in 1849 when David, my great grandfather was eight years old. They settled on a farm at Wolli Creek close to Tempe House before purchasing 116 acres from Jonathan Croft at Kogarah Bay. Nine years later they sold the property to William Carss, and the family moved back to Wolli Creek. The property later became the suburb of Carss Park.

David Chappelow was involved in water transport, using his droghers such as *My Idea* to carry, lime, timber and quarried stone on the Georges River, Botany Bay and Cooks River. He married Jane Murphy Scully, the daughter of convicts, at St Peters Church, St Peters.<sup>1</sup> The Chappelows settled on a property adjacent to Ricketty Street Bridge, that extended from Ricketty Street to Anabels Road, North Botany alongside Shea's Creek where David conducted his business.

One of their daughters, Sarah Jane Chappelow was my grandmother. She married my grandfather, Albert Clement Annabel at St Peters Church. His family came from Nottinghamshire in 1845 as free settlers. They lived in Mary Street, at the western end of Ricketty Street, Tempe working as brick pit operators, carriers and gardeners. My grandparents set up the market garden adjacent to David's property in Kent Street, North Botany long before the aerodrome was there. Albert died in 1923, and my grandmother ran the market garden by herself until her death in 1948.

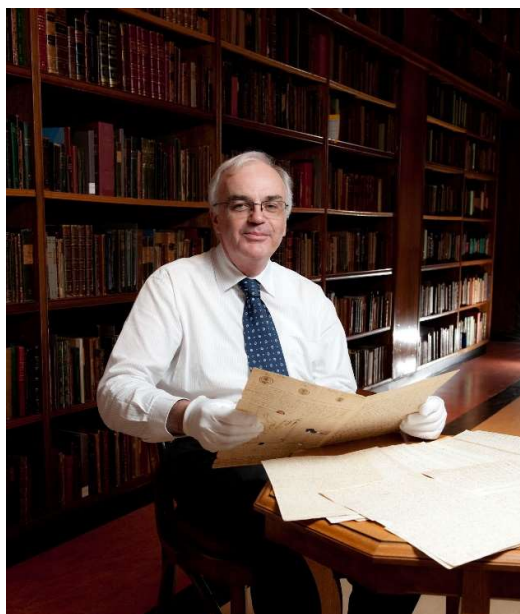
<sup>1</sup>The suburb St Peters was built around and named after the third Anglican church in Australia. It was the first **not** built by convict labour, and is still in operation. Monthly tours of the church and graveyard discuss the lives of early colonists. Many of my ancestors were christened, married and buried there.

## PAUL BRUNTON ATTRACTS THE CROWD

PAULINE CURBY

Sutherland Shire Historical Society's October meeting was a great success, with 50 attendees, the maximum allowed because of COVID-19 restrictions. Our guest speaker Paul Brunton, OAM, Emeritus Curator, State Library of New South Wales, delivered an entertaining and informative talk, 'Quest for the legendary Great South Land'. Formerly Senior Curator, Mitchell Library, 2002-2012, and Curator of Manuscripts, 1986 to 2001, Paul is an expert – erudite but informal and approachable.

Such was the interest in his talk that members and visitors eagerly lined up outside the Stapleton Centre, waiting to sanitise their hands and have their details recorded. Unfortunately, we were obliged to decline admission to 17 people who would like to have attended as we are committed to running COVID-safe events.



*Paul Brunton OAM [Photo: SLNSW]*

We travelled back to antiquity through Paul's illustrated talk and viewed the very first maps of the world as it was then known. He discussed the expeditions of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and British seafarers who braved unknown seas with little or no navigational aids. It was fascinating to be able to see so many historic maps as he took us through his Power point presentation.

Paul's pride in the maps and documents held by State Library of New South Wales was evident, particularly as some of these were purchased during his time at the Library. The Tasman map, which shows the extent of the Dutch mapping of Australia and parts of New Zealand and New Guinea in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was clearly his favourite. It was great to hear that conservators at the Library are gradually restoring this treasure as they scrape away the layers of lacquer painted on by a previous owner. Next time you visit the State Library make sure you inspect the mosaic reproduction of this map on the floor of the vestibule.

There was an amusing interlude when Paul accidentally showed us the same portrait purporting to be two different men. An obvious little hitch in his presentation which he took in his stride. He chuckled and explained that it did not matter as such 19<sup>th</sup> century representations of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century navigators were usually fake. This was also the case with a well-known portrait, held in Hobart, purporting to be of Abel Tasman and his family. Paul glanced at it sceptically, commenting, 'Well, it's Dutch. That's about all that we can say about it'.

Visitors and members thoroughly enjoyed this talk and the lively question and answer session afterwards as Paul was relating a story which is, in his words, 'one of the great narratives of all time'.

# SSHS EXCURSION REPORT

## Nursing Museum, Little Bay, La Perouse Museum and Bare Island

CHRISTINE EDNEY

To paraphrase the US Postal service motto:  
'Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers SSSH members from the  
swift completion of their appointed rounds excursions.'



*SSHS excursionists dressed for wild wet weather at the Bare Island Gate*

On 25<sup>th</sup> October nine SSSH members left the Shire for our first outing of the year. This outing was originally scheduled for May but 'things' got in the way. Our first stop was the Nursing Museum at the former Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay where we were given a guided tour of their displays, including a very 'on topic' exhibition about epidemics, as well as being shown the only working iron lung in NSW. The guides spoke about several Shire people linked to the history of Prince Henry Hospital. After lunch, out of the wind and rain on the museum verandah, we spent about an hour at the La Perouse museum.

The highlight of the day was a guided tour of Bare Island. The fort on the island was built in the 1880s to defend Sydney from potential invaders, but never fired a shot in anger. We learned that dodgy government contractors aren't just a modern occurrence, as within a few years of it being built structural problems surfaced. There are still two large cannons in the fort. An attempt was made to remove one during World War 2 for scrap metal, but after getting it out of its emplacement and down to the timber bridge to the mainland, it was discovered it was too heavy to be taken over the bridge and was returned to its original spot. An even larger gun was found buried on site. During the period (early 1900s on) when the island was used for housing war veterans, some of the veterans had buried it so as to use the area where it was housed as a pool room. A bit of recent history was that when parts of Mission Impossible were filmed on the island the directors wanted to blow up the bridge to the island but were told a very definite 'No', as it was a heritage item. We were lucky to be booked on the first tour of the afternoon as the rain started to pelt down and the wind rose as we were leaving the island, so the next tour of the day would have been a lot less comfortable.

For those who want to go these places on their own:

- The Prince Henry Hospital Nursing Museum is open 10am to 4pm Sundays and is at Brodie St Little Bay. Cost is \$5,
- La Perouse Museum is in the park at the end of Anzac Parade and is free.
- Access to Bare Island is only available via prebooked guided tours (cost \$13 concession, \$15 adult) on Sundays and some Fridays. Refer NPWS website





*Nursing Station, Little Bay*



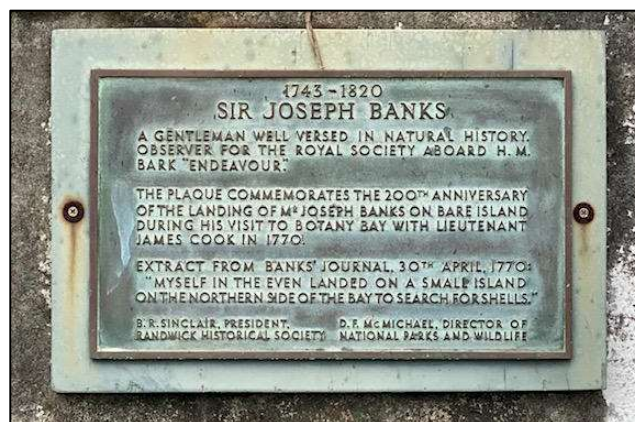
*Only working iron lung in NSW*



*One of the two remaining cannons on Bare Island*



*La Perouse Museum*



A message to the organisers from one happy excursionist:

It was a fascinating excursion despite the atrocious weather and Christine is to be congratulated on organising it.

Regards, Moira White.

# CONFRONTING THE FUTURE

IAN STEWART

*I stood upon the rocky shores*

*I watched the tall ships come ...*

(‘We are Australian’, by Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton)

## *Author Note.*

Reader alert: this story was written by a non-indigenous person as an entry in the Sutherland Shire Short Story competition for 2020. Although essentially fictitious, it is designed to address an enduring social issue, and from an Indigenous perspective.

*Our ancestors - the ones who were the guardians of the country on this southern shore of Kamay Botany Bay - were those who stood on the rocks and sand and witnessed the arrival of the low moving clouds - or were they big birds? - that autumn day in 1770.*

*As the spectres came ashore it was apparent that they were ghosts - white spirits of our ancestors. But they were not benign. They brandished firesticks from which came invisible missiles that wounded us. We kept our distance. They were not to be meddled with, these ghosts.*

*The sun rose ten times and they were gone. Where to? Would they return?*

*We were glad of their departure and to be left in peace. Time passed; seventeen summers came and went. Life happily maintained its rhythm. The spirits seemed to have left us alone.*

*But they did return. The full moon rose two hundred and thirteen times and then they came back. We had all but forgotten the first manifestation.*

*Look all around you and you will see the dire results of that return. You and I are standing on the very shore where the first visitation took place. This shore is now the northern edge of a place they have named ‘Kurnell’. Once, dense bushland came to the water’s edge and behind it rose hills of sand covered in scrub. It was home to many of the animals and plants that made up our frugal but nutritious diet and provided us with skins to keep out the cold. Now there are European-style dwellings everywhere, streets with motor vehicles, shops. Ordered parkland sweeps south behind us, replete with notices proclaiming the beauty of the structured area. Everything is built in a style beloved of the descendants of those who came so long ago.*

*As time passed and they made attempts to subjugate the area to agriculture, the hills became bare and the sand was exposed. We had had no need for solid permanent dwellings nor the settled agricultural life. We simply used the native bushland as a source for temporary construction and food. It*



*always grew back and kept the sand covered. We were careful not to overuse this fragile environment. But the Europeans were intent on permanence. They took away all of the sand to use in mortar between bricks of clay that would underline the permanence that these people thought they should create. But they ignored the fact that we had made the country 'permanent' through our balanced and sustainable ways. After all, we had been at it for over 40,000 years and the whole country was pretty much the same when the ghosts came as when our ancestors first appeared all those millennia before.*

*It was time for me to leave Kamay and return to my desk. What of the next 40,000 years? It was clear to me that the damage wreaked on the environment, and especially on the atmosphere above it, had produced results that, even if we were to return immediately to my ancestors' carefully balanced lifestyle, it was going to take a long time - perhaps measured in hundreds or even thousands of years - for the changes to settle and the Earth to return to balance, albeit balance at a new equilibrium. It was imperative that I rally the people of our First Nation and infuse them with the necessary enthusiasm and iron will to fight for balance, to encompass the old ways and use the old methods. I could see that it all needs to be made into new songlines for perpetual conversation. We know. We have the responsibility to guide the process so that it brings about the changes that will lead to balance.*

*It is no use approaching the elected leaders of the land. We are in the thrall of a European - especially British - system of democracy, a system that has no place in this land where individual desires must always be subjugated to the needs of the land and the people. We are a whole, not a gaggle of individuals fighting for personal gain, individual rights and instant satisfaction. How can the so-called leaders be convinced, both now and into endless time, that the future is bound to a simpler life-pattern? They will scoff and remind me how good it is that we have all the 'benefits' of technology, all the safety provided by the arms and armies that we - no, they - have created. Weapons are for hunting. Hunting is to provide, not amuse. Oh, they have so many lessons to learn.*

*'It is too late,' I hear you say. No, it is not. The future rushes towards us. Change will happen, perhaps catastrophic change. We must be prepared for it. My unshakeable belief is that a return to the balanced way of living that infused the past forty millennia is a desirable, even necessary, path to take if we are to preserve and balance the *gaia* of James Lovelock\*.*

*I am firing up my computer to begin my odyssey.*

\*Note: English scientist, James Lovelock proposed in 1972 that living organisms form a synergy with their inorganic surroundings on Earth to build a self-regulating, complex system that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on the planet. He called it the Gaia Theory after the Greek goddess of Earth.

# MADEIRA: IN THE WAKE OF THE *ENDEAVOUR*

EDWARD DUYKER

School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

On 12 September 1768, the *Endeavour's* lookouts sighted the steep basalt cliffs of the Portuguese island of Madeira. She spent the following night anchored among several merchant vessels and a visiting British man-of-war, HMS *Rose*, before attempting to come closer into Funchal harbour the next morning. Unfortunately, the wind and tide drove the *Endeavour* further out and confused the commandant of one of the sixteenth-century Portuguese forts guarding the island and he fired two warning shots in her direction. Lieutenant James Cook did not mention the incident in his journal, but his midshipman James Matra<sup>1</sup> speculated that the Portuguese thought the *Endeavour* was attempting 'to depart from the island without making the usual reports'. Eventually there was an official apology at the request of the British Consul, Mr W. Cheap, but Cook shrugged off the incident and refused to demand an apology from the officer in charge of the battery.<sup>2</sup> The excitement of the crew, when they anchored on 14 September, was tempered by the tragic death of Alexander Weir, the ship's Scottish quartermaster whom Sydney Parkinson described as 'a very honest worthy man, and one of our best seamen'. Weir became entangled in the buoy-rope of one of the *Endeavour's* anchors as it was heaved out; he was taken to the bottom and drowned.<sup>3</sup>

Madeira was uninhabited when colonised by the Portuguese in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. They named it Ilha da Madeira (island of wood) for its vast laurel forests. Joseph Banks rightly guessed that the island had volcanic origins. During the Miocene, 20 million years ago, lava gushed up over 6000 metres from the floor of the Atlantic and produced a landform traversed from east to west with a serrated mountainous spine.

The island is famous for its eponymous sweet, dark-brown wine. Banks commented on the vineyards and the method of squeezing the grapes, which he thought the 'way probably Noah made his', but seems to have been unaware of the *estufagem* (hothouse) process which makes Madeira unique. It is said that when a cargo of wine was sent to the East Indies and was returned unsold, the Madeirans accidentally discovered that its taste had greatly improved through long storage in the tropical heat of the ship's hold. They replicated these conditions by gradually heating the fortified wine to 46° Celsius, maintaining the temperature for three to six months, and then gradually cooling it! Cook loaded the *Endeavour* with 3032 gallons of Madeira, just before his departure from Funchal. He also recharged the ship's stores with fresh water, fruit, vegetables and 270 pounds of fresh meat and a live bullock.

During their sojourn, which lasted less than a week, Banks and Solander stayed in Funchal, in the home of the British consul Mr Cheap who was also a wine merchant. He obtained permission for them to collect specimens on the island and organised horses and a guide. Despite the consul's assistance, Solander made no mention of him in his correspondence. Instead it was the physician Thomas Heberden FRS (1703–1769) who received his profuse thanks. Solander informed his friend John Ellis, that Heberden took them to the Convent of Santa Clara where the ardent Protestants and apostles of the Enlightenment, were received with considerable excitement. Solander recorded:

He procured us access into a nunnery, and when they heard that Mr Banks and myself belonged to the Royal Society, they immediately took us for men of supernatural knowledge, and desired us to walk into their garden, and shew where they might dig for water; they wanted to know by what signs they should be able to fortel [sic] tempests, rain, and thunder and lightning. The answers and explanations of all this would have taken us several days; but our captain would not stay for the gratification of the nuns.<sup>4</sup>

I have discussed the botanical and zoological collecting done by Banks and Solander in Madeira, in my book *Nature's Argonaut* (1998).<sup>5</sup> Although I visited several of the *Endeavour's* landfalls during research for this book, Madeira was not one of them. It was not until June 2016, on the trail of yet another explorer – Jean-François de Galaup de Lapérouse – that I had the privilege of visiting this fascinating Atlantic island, 520 kilometres off the coast of Africa, with my wife Susan.

On arrival, we were surprised to see numerous Norfolk Island pines piercing the skyline. In the following days, we would see numerous other naturalised Australian trees, particularly the blue gum *Eucalyptus globulus*. In many places, they had become a malignant invasive presence, changing the entire character of the native Madeiran forests on the southern side of the island.

Aside from libraries and archives, there were several museums and other locations that I was keen to visit in Madeira. One was the Convent of Santa Clara, which, as previously mentioned, was visited by Banks and Solander in 1768. We did this on 21 June. Another religious institution of particular interest was Funchal's Franciscan convent, because it was almost certainly visited by Lapérouse's Franciscan naturalist and chaplain Père Receveur in 1785.<sup>6</sup> But earlier, in 1768, it too was visited by Banks and Solander. According to Banks, the 'whole lining, wainscote and ceiling' of the chapel in the convent 'was intirely compos'ed of human bones, two large bones across, and a skull in each of the openings'. Despite this medieval imagery, he and Solander found that the friars were not 'bigots to their religion'.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to James Douglas (1702–68), 14th Earl of Morton and President of the Royal Society, Solander elaborated: 'we were kindly received by everybody. The Monks of a convent (they can also be for males) invited us to dine with them, and, not withstanding it was a fish day, a fat Turkey and a piece of Beef was brought in for us'.<sup>8</sup>

Alas, I was profoundly disappointed to learn that this Franciscan convent was demolished in 1866. There was some compensation, however, in locating copies of a nineteenth lithograph of the building, in both the Frederico Freitas Museum and the Quinta das Cruzes Museum in Funchal. This lithograph was, in fact, one of thirteen images which formed Frank Dilllon's *Sketches in the Island of Madeira*, published by Messrs Paul & Dominic Colnaghi & Co., London, 1850. The complete work is also held by the British Library in London (shelfmark: General Reference Collection 1782.e.7, UIN: BLL01000940060). Frank Dillon (1823–1909) was a British topographical artist who visited Madeira in 1848–9 and his sketches were lithographed by the engraver Thomas Picken (died 1870). Dillon also painted a watercolour of what appears to be a scene within the walls of the Franciscan

convent. It is preserved in the Quinta das Cruzes Museum. Both images give us some idea of what Banks and Solander saw during their brief visit to the island.



*Franciscan convent in Funchal, Madeira*, Frank Dillon, 1850, lithograph by Thomas Picken, [Frederico Freitas Museum, Funchal]

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>James Maria Matra or Magra later advocated British colonization of New South Wales and served as a British diplomat in Tenerife, Constantinople, and Tangier; see Frost, A. & Moutinho, I., *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 1995.

<sup>2</sup>Anon. [Matra], *A Journal of a Voyage round the World In His Majesty's Ship Endeavour, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770 and 1771; Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge, at the Desire of the Royal Society; containing All the various Occurrences of the Voyage, with Descriptions of several new discovered Countries in the Southern Hemisphere; and Accounts of their Soil and Productions; and of many Singularities in the Structure, Apparel, Customs, Manners, Policy, Manufactures, &c. of their Inhabitants*. T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, London, 1771 [Facsimile edition N. Israel, 1967], p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Parkinson, S., *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in his Majesty's Ship The Endeavour: Faithfully Transcribed from the Papers of the late Sydney Parkinson, Draughtsman to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. in his expedition with Dr Solander round the World*, Charles Dilly and James Phillips, London, 1784 [facsimile edition, Caliban, 1984], p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Solander to John Ellis, 1 December 1768, in Duyker and Tingbrand (ed. & trans), *Daniel Solander: Collected Correspondence 1753–1782*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 275.

<sup>5</sup>Duyker E., *Nature's Argonaut: Daniel Solander 1733–1782, Naturalist and Voyager with Cook and Banks*, Miegunyah/Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998.

<sup>6</sup>Duyker, E., *Père Receveur: Franciscan, Scientist and Voyager with Lapérouse*, Dharawal Publications, Sydney, 2011.

<sup>7</sup>Beaglehole, J. C., (ed.), Beaglehole, J. C. (ed.). *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768–1771*, Public Library of New South Wales/Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, vol. I, p. 164.

<sup>8</sup>Solander to Lord Morton, 1 December 1768, in Duyker and Tingbrand (ed. & trans), *Daniel Solander: Collected Correspondence 1753–1782*, op. cit., p. 277.





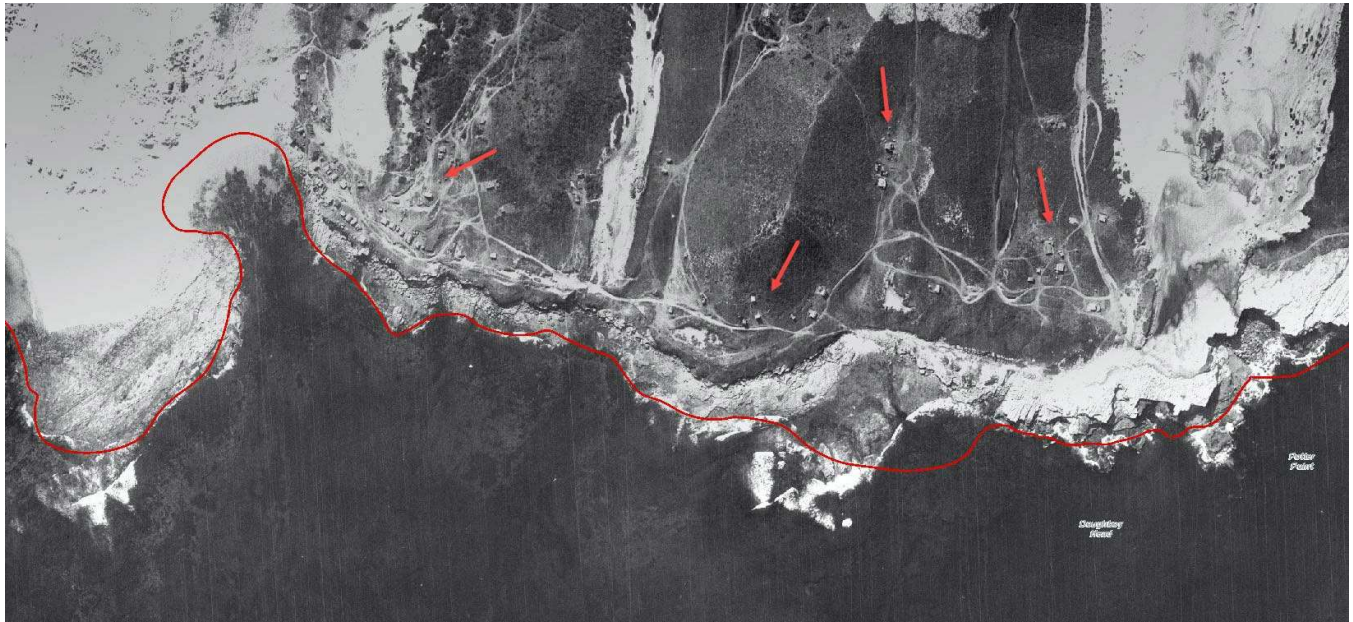
*Franciscan monastery in Funchal on the island of Madeira. It was visited by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander while on the Endeavour in Sept. 1868 - Cook's first voyage.*

Watercolour by Frank Dillon 1849  
[Quinta das Cruzes Museum, Funchal]



## TABBIGAI CLIFF DWELLERS, KURNELL

(See article on page 13)



Comparison of the shoreline between Boat Harbour and Potter Point in 1961 and 2018, showing dozens of temporary dwellings dotting the cliff tops in 1961 that have subsequently been removed. Note the few remaining shacks at Boat Harbour today. [Shire Maps](#)

