



**NUMBER: 221 — NOVEMBER 2021**



*Mersey Street (now River Road) meets the Woronora River, with Clr Robert Cook's residence on the right c 1907-1912 [Photo courtesy SSL]*

(See David Robinson's story of 'that other Cook in the Shire', who contributed so much to the development of Woronora, page 9)

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

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

**FACEBOOK:** Sutherland Shire Historical Society

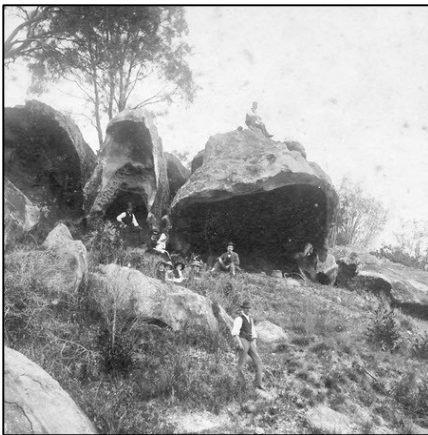
## WORONORA IN THE 1940s

(See Lillian Anderson's reminiscences on page 13)

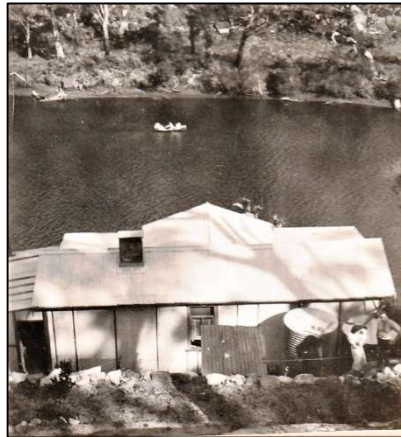


*Lillian Anderson's grandparents' house from the opposite bank of the Woronora River, 1940s*  
[Photos: Lillian Anderson, except where indicated]

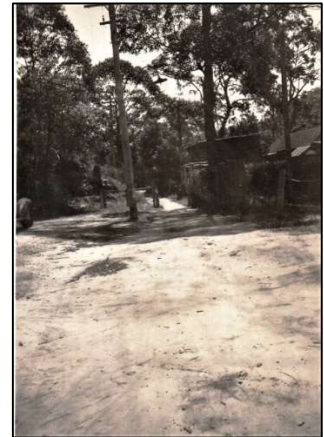
Lillian recalls scrambling up boulders, not realising until recently that they were 'The Bonnet'



*The Bonnet, Woronora,  
ca 1910-1930 [SSL]*



*Rear of Lillian's grandparents' home*



*The Bus Terminus in Prince  
Edward Pde, Woronora, 1940s*



### *SSHs Xmas Party/ BBQ*

is to be held at our Museum, 88 Venetia St, Sylvania

on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> November from 11.30 am

*Entertainer:* **Col Hardy**, Aboriginal country & western musician

*All welcome*

*RSVP* by 20<sup>th</sup> November. Email [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com) or  
phone Creo Moore on 0425 226 405

**On this occasion we will also launch the Soft Opening of our Museum for members**

There will be a \$5 cover charge to help offset cost of food and drinks





## CONTENTS – NOVEMBER 2021

ABOUT THE <i>BULLETIN</i> AND OUR SOCIETY		<b>2</b>
SOCIETY COMMITTEE		<b>3</b>
SSHS CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES		<b>4</b>
PRESIDENT'S REPORT	PAULINE CURBY	<b>5</b>
MUSEUM REPORT	PETER MOORE	<b>6</b>
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	ELIZABETH CRAIG	<b>7</b>
<i>LETTER TO THE EDITOR</i>		<b>7</b>
STORY OF <i>THE ADVOCATE</i> AND ITS SUCCESSOR, <i>THE OBSERVER</i>	ELIZABETH CRAIG	<b>8</b>
ANOTHER COOK IN THE SHIRE: ROBERT COOK AND WORONORA	DAVID ROBINSON	<b>9</b>
A REMINISCENCE OF WORONORA RIVER	LILLIAN ANDERSON	<b>13</b>
BOOK REVIEW: LILLIAN ANDERSON, <i>HISTORY OF THE ANDERSON FAMILY</i>	EDWARD DUYKER	<b>14</b>
SURVEY MARKS ON THE ILLAWARRA ROAD	GREG JACKSON & PAM FORBES	<b>17</b>
WHERE EXACTLY ARE THE NEEDLES?	GREG JACKSON	<b>21</b>
THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING	CHRISTINE EDNEY	<b>23</b>
EXCURSION TO THE PASS OF SABUGAL	GREG JACKSON	<b>28</b>

**Extra printed copies of the *Bulletin* will be available at meetings for \$5.**

***East Coast Encounters 1770, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., will also be available for sale at meetings for \$30***



## **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 can be purchased at \$5.00 each. 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, Shire high school libraries and some local businesses. 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 restrictions, we ask that you register your attendance ahead by email to: [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com) or phone Creo Moore on 0425 226 405

## **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 TREASURER</b>	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
	Carol McDonald	0403 877 397	jmcdonald@optusnet.com.au
	Graham Burton	0423 234 127	grahamburton@live.com.au
<b>ASSISTANT SECRETARY</b>	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com

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<b>EXCURSIONS OFFICER</b>			
<b>EXCURSIONS BOOKING CLERK</b>			
<b>HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER</b>	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto1951@tpg.com.au
<b>WELFARE OFFICER</b>	Gloria Hans	9589 0251	
<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>	Anne Steward Beryl Davis Mary Small		
<b>HONORARY SOLICITOR</b>	Michael Solari		

**SSHS CALENDAR: DECEMBER 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022**  
(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 OPENING SOON**

DATE		
<b>NOVEMBER 2021</b>	<b>Sat. 20th</b>	<p align="center"><b>55<sup>th</sup> SSHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b></p> <p><b>SPEAKERS:</b> (following AGM) <b>Peter Moore</b> will update members on progress in the Museum.</p> <p align="center">And</p> <p><b>Carol McDonald</b> will speak about one theme in the Museum Display – Murder and Mayhem.</p>
	<b>Sat. 27th</b>	<p align="center"><i><b>SSHS Xmas Party/BBQ</b></i></p> <p align="center">at our Museum, 88 Venetia Street, Sylvania from 12.00 noon</p> <p align="center"><i>We will also launch a 'Soft Opening' of the Museum for SSHS members</i></p> <p align="center">(See inside front cover for details)</p>
<b>DECEMBER 2021</b>		<b>NO MEETING</b>
<b>JANUARY 2022</b>	<b>Sat. 15th</b>	<b>SPEAKER:</b> To be announced at the November meeting, and by email/postal correspondence.
<b>FEBRUARY 2022</b>	<b>Sat 19th</b>	<b>SPEAKER:</b> Stephen Gapps will talk on the Sydney Wars: conflict between Europeans and Aborigines in Sydney's early history. Stephen also contributed a chapter to <i>East Coast Encounters 1770..</i>
<b>EXCURSIONS</b>		<b>Greg Jackson</b> will organise a visit to DeLardes Reserve, Illawong in March ( <b>date to be announced</b> ). Read about its rich history in Greg's articles in the SSHS Bulletins, Aug. 2011 and Feb 2012: Aboriginal habitation, remains of Mitchell's convict built road, the first ferry crossings in 1843 and paddle steamers after 1886.

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAILS AND REACHING OUT FOR UPDATES**

- As per Covid regulations you will need to;**
- **sign in on arrival at meetings and other events,**
  - **show proof of vaccination**
  - **and wear a mask**

For further information email us at [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com) or phone Creo Moore on 0425 226 405

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PAULINE CURBY



Despite Covid lockdowns and restrictions, work has continued at the Venetia Street museum. While tasks such as writing stories and signs for the museum were

undertaken at home, once restrictions eased the hard physical labour of preparing for the museum opening has continued. Recently we were pleased to welcome our Museum and Galleries advisor Lynn Collins back. He was impressed with how much had been achieved since his last visit prior to lockdown. We will be seeing Lynn again soon as he continues providing his valuable assistance.

Our hard-working museum manager Peter Moore has been unstinting in giving his time to getting the museum shipshape. His dedicated band of helpers has risen to the challenge of lugging heavy farm equipment around, shunting display cases into position and moving objects that won't be needed immediately for display into one of our sheds. While there is still much to do and the museum will probably always be a 'work in progress', we are planning a 'soft' opening at the Society Christmas party on 27 November.

Our overall theme for the museum – 'old but new' – reflects the ancient Dharawal culture of this district in contrast to Sutherland Shire's relatively recent suburbanisation. In the museum we will highlight a selection of objects and stories reflecting this old but new history.

It is disappointing that we have had so few meetings this year because of Covid, especially as our usual September date for the annual general meeting had to be postponed until November. The executive held monthly 'Zooms', but have recently reverted to face to face meetings. The speakers we had booked

for the cancelled meetings will be re-scheduled for next year.

At present we are awaiting the outcome of three grants we have applied for. Hopefully the result will be known before the end of the year. If successful we will be able to have the hard copies of *The Observer* – Cronulla's historic newspaper – stored appropriately, and in addition add an audio dimension to the displays.

Recently we have been able to have some activities – a pleasant change for all – such as an excursion to the site of Lucas' flour mill on the Woronora River. Our resident archaeologist Greg Jackson – assisted by his wife and fellow archaeologist Pam Forbes – led us through the bush to the state heritage listed mill site. On Saturday 30 October the executive hosted an informal barbeque at the museum for volunteers and those interested in becoming volunteers.



*Pauline speaking at Volunteers' BBQ*

[Photo: E. Craig]

A further 200 copies of our publication, *East Coast Encounters, 1770, Reflections on a Cultural Clash* have arrived and are now selling at the discounted price of \$30. This will make a great Christmas present and, along with other members' publications, is available at the museum.

On behalf of the executive, I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season and look forward to seeing you at our meetings and working in the museum in the new year.



# MUSEUM REPORT

PETER MOORE

It is now two and a half years since a small group of members came together at the old museum at the Sutherland Memorial School of Arts to begin the job of recording what we had in the office, in the museum and in the garage. As we could not find any catalogue of the contents of our museum we had to start afresh building up data bases.

As you all know the SSC had decided that they would no longer support us at the SMSA and that we needed to move. They found us a new venue at Venetia Street, Sylvania. This building was far too small for our needs and the SSC agreed to provide a small shed for the storage of our non-displayed collection, which they constructed for us.

Our move was delayed many times due to slow construction and finding a cheap enough removalist company. A small number of us could not wait for the SSC, and we started to move the contents of the garage ourselves. By the time the removalists were on the scene the shelving and some of the garage contents were in the shed at the new venue.

The move left us in chaos, as the building was overflowing with objects and exhibition cases. It was decided that we needed another shed, and we constructed one identical to the first with the Society's own funds. With the second shed we were able to clear the decks and move some of the clutter out of the museum building.

With the arrival of Covid, work began to slow down, but this also gave us a breathing space so we could reassess the museum layout and displays. We were fortunate that we obtained a number of grants. One, provided by SSC allowed us to purchase professionally made display cabinets and storage facilities for our Aboriginal collections.

We are now finally on the verge of opening our new museum and should be having a soft opening for members at the Christmas Party on 27<sup>th</sup> November. The work will not be finished, but will be ongoing as we complete displays and labelling.

Now is the time to thank all those who have helped in the rebirth of our museum.

Firstly, there is the core of the office: Carol McDonald, Cheryl Spencer and Creo Moore who have set up the new office and sorted out the books, files and photographs into a usable order. They were also helped by Floriana Camper and in the early days by Elizabeth Carr. A newcomer to the Society, Claudia Dixon, has thrown herself into the deep end and has been of great help to us all in the museum.

Another I have to thank is John Doherty for his great assistance, especially his tenacious work in getting grants and overseeing the purchase and construction of our second shed, as well as keeping a close eye on all operations in his role as treasurer.

A newcomer to the Society is Graham Burton, who has been of immense assistance to me in the setting up of the museum. The museum would not be as advanced as it is today if not for the great work Graham has carried out.

Space does not allow me to wax on, but I would like to thank all the others who have helped, Bruce Watt, Elizabeth Craig, Greg Jackson and Peggy Annabelle and her friends.

Finally, I must thank our president Pauline Curby who has been an inspiration to us all with her drive, enthusiasm and above all her love of history which kept us all going through the rough seas.

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

### **Woronora-centric *Bulletin***

As you go through this issue you will notice that most of the stories are linked, and at the centre of them is Woronora!

David Robinson kicked it off after seeing Christine Edney's article in the August *Bulletin* about Cllr Robert Cook, one of the first Shire Councillors. David knew of him as a pioneer of Woronora in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His article, 'Another Cook in the Shire', is on page 9.

Coincidentally, Ed Duyker had written a review of Lillian Anderson's history on her husband's forebears, including the Rev William Anderson, who started Sutherland's first Church in 1887 (see page 14). Ed encouraged Lillian to send us her reminiscences of Woronora in the 1940s where she visited her grandparents. And she did! (See page 13 and images front inside cover).

And another coincidence – Greg Jackson submitted an article on survey marks on the Illawarra Rd made in 1843 by Sir Thomas Mitchell's son Roderick for the convict-built road which crossed the Woronora River at the Pass of Sabugal, Lucas Mill site and the Needles - all on the Woronora River (page 17). He also took some SSHS members on a wonderful excursion to the area (Report page 30 and images on the inside and back cover.)

Christine has come up with another history to do with Sutherland Shire Council – this time on the Council Chambers since 1906. I wonder what stories this will trigger!

Thank you to all contributors. And a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all members and friends!

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## Letter to the Editor

*Dear Editor,*

I read with great interest Christine Edney's article on John Hill, the early Shire Councillor. [SSHs *Bulletin* 220, August 2021, p.22.] Christine has taken the information used in her article from a Sutherland Shire Council library publication, which unfortunately contains an error.

The error carried through here has its origin in John Hill's obituary published in the press at the time of his passing. (*Propeller*, 4 December 1941) The newspaper article stated that John Hill was the first president of the Cronulla Surf Lifesaving Club (CSLC), which is incorrect. John Hill was indeed a president of the CSLC, but not the first. That honour goes to Charles McAlister who was briefly elected president at the end of 1907 after the drowning of young Roy Swanton. In a subsequent meeting in January 1908, William McDonald was elected to chair a new committee to form the surf club. John Hill had the honour of being elected president in 1917 and served until 1919.

This matter has already been taken up with Helen McDonald at the Sutherland Library, and she has had this error corrected in subsequent publications. I can only assume that Christine was drawing her information from an out-of-date copy of the library publication.

The lesson here is not to believe everything you read in the newspapers, as someone in Sutherland library did in compiling the information. Historians must always check their sources. By the way it had me fooled until I checked the CSLC's history.

*Peter Moore*

**The story of the *Advocate* and its  
successor, the *Observer***  
ELIZABETH CRAIG

The *Cronulla Sutherland Advocate* and its successors, under the stewardship of Fred Williams Snr, and later his son, Fred Jnr., are closely connected with the history of Cronulla.

Fred Williams Snr., who owned a printery in Cronulla started the *Cronulla Sutherland Advocate* in 1927. He sold the *Advocate* in 1938 to Councillor Frank Bardsley, who wanted to use it to campaign against his enemy, Councillor Joe Monro. Bardsley, owned the Blue Buses, and also a seaplane that flew in and out of Gunnamatta Bay.

Bardsley's attacks led Monro to ask Williams in 1940 to start a rival newspaper. Williams bought the *Observer* from a Mr E. Weekes for £104 after initially managing the paper for him. Within a year Bardsley's *Advocate* was out of business, and the *Observer* was thriving.

From 1941 Williams' 15-year-old son, Fred Williams Jnr (Leigh's father) began working with his father, doing whatever was needed – editing, reporting, deliveries and selling ads. On his father's untimely death in 1943, Fred Williams Jnr took over as editor and publisher. He was 17.

As Cronulla boomed in the 1950s and 1960s, so the *Observer* grew, becoming the voice of Cronulla. It closed in mid-1979.

Fred (Jnr) loved the paper and his community. 'He knew everybody. Cronulla was his life,' says Leigh. Fred Williams Jnr died in 2018, and to honour their father, Leigh and her siblings are using part of their inheritance to have the *Advocate* and the *Observer* to 1954 digitised and put on to Trove, thus preserving the incredibly valuable local history they contain, and making that information available online to anyone in the world.

References:

- 'Seaside Masts', *The Leader*, Cronulla Magazine, October 2009, p.30
- Bill of sale of the *Observer*, 31 December 1940
- Leigh Wallbank, email and phone, 9 August 2021

**'Flight over Cronulla'**

Fred Williams, Snr, Editor, *Cronulla Sutherland Advocate*, 29 March 1929

Feeling packed with pep, the editor of this journal accepted, readily, the invitation of Mr. Rupert King, of Air Travel Ltd., to a flight round the Shire a couple of Sundays ago.

Always one of the enthusiasts of air travel from the ground, the editor asked if he would be quite safe, and after being assured he could safely put the week's rent on the certainty of his return to the ground, climbed aboard. After a "start up" with a raging roar, the editor was handed his hat from 20 yards back of the 'plane, and then settled down. With a smile and a wave to friends, the plane took off beautifully from the hard sands of Gunnamatta Bay, and we were aloft. Steadily we climbed two thousand, three thousand feet up—not a jolt nor a jar—feeling safe, and a glorious view below and around. In the distance, Sydney and a wide expanse of ocean; below, Port Hacking, Woronora River and all the beauty of this famous resort. Houses, laid out regularly in squares, and every road and lane easily discernible.

During the flight plenty of thrills were given. An Immelman turn gave the editor a turn, and almost caused him to swallow his false teeth.

On the return, slowly the 'plane sank lower and lower, there being an entire absence of that "drop-in-the-lift" feeling. Once more, with head to the wind, the plane ran smoothly along the sands, and we were home again.

Alas! for the triumphant return; during the half-hour aloft and the lateness of the hour, most of the crowd were gone, there just being two and a dog to witness the landing. The stunts above should have made the onlookers look up and take notice. They did look up, but they didn't take much notice.

However, the flight was good, the scenery wonderful, the thrills new, and the editor has resolved to buy a 'plane one of these days.

*This clipping, written by the newspaper's editor, Frederick Edwin Williams Snr, was submitted to the Bulletin by his granddaughter, SSHS member, Leigh Wallbank.*



# ANOTHER COOK IN THE SHIRE: ROBERT COOK AND WORONORA

DAVID ROBINSON



Clr Robert Cook,  
[courtesy SSC]

Christine Edney's list of 'The Shire's Original Councillors' (*Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin* No. 220, August 2021) includes Councillor Robert Cook. In her brief biographical sketch, Edney notes that, 'In 1907 Cook built a house on the Woronora River from which he was going to supply skiffs for fishing & pleasure parties.'

In fact, Robert William Cook (1877-1942) was a significant figure in the history of Woronora in the early twentieth century. An item in the *St. George Call* on December 21<sup>st</sup> 1907 entitled 'Way Down Upon the Woronora'<sup>1</sup> describes how 'an enterprising pioneer', Councillor Bob Cook was building 'a commodious residence on the stone walled terrace' adjacent to Mersey Street and 20 feet (6 metres) from the water's edge. This stone terracing can still be seen at the entrance to Burnum Burnum Sanctuary, just off the low level Woronora bridge, although the house is long gone.

According to Alf Midgley, Cook moved to Sutherland with his family in the mid-1890s and drove horse buses for Giddings Coaches, before establishing his own horse bus business with stables in Eton Street.<sup>2</sup>

He was married to Jessie and they had four children, Evelyn, Robert, George and Alfred.<sup>3</sup> When he died in 1942, aged 64, he was living in Sutherland, but according to *Woronora Ripples*<sup>4</sup> his children and grandchildren had a continuing association with the valley.

## Cook's Pleasure Grounds and Boatshed

Woronora had become a popular weekend and holiday destination for boating, fishing and walking following the extension of the railway to Sutherland station in 1886.

Cook's house was at the end Mersey Street (now River Road). The road had been constructed in 1907 to connect Sutherland with the Woronora River.<sup>5</sup> Presumably hoping to capitalise on the road access, Cook established 'fine picnic grounds on the 200 acre<sup>6</sup> reserve adjoining' his residence on the bank of the river. These were apparently to be known as 'Cook's Pleasure Grounds'<sup>7</sup> and they occupied approximately the same area as the current reserve between Liffey Place and River Road. The name suggests that his aim was to emulate, on a smaller scale, the Como Pleasure Grounds.

According to *The Call*, the site included a hire boatshed designed to house twenty skiffs. Cook offered 'vehicles to convey parties from station to boatshed if required.'<sup>8</sup> Presumably these were Cook's horse-drawn vehicles as the road was rough and difficult. Fred Midgley identifies this as Woronora's first public transport.<sup>9</sup>

It seems that Cook settled for the name Cooks Boatshed and, according to Merle Kavanagh, twelve boats were for hire in 1908. She quotes *Australian Country Life* as reporting in 1911 that there were 'also bathing costumes, and special attention paid to camping and picnic parties.'<sup>10</sup> There are several references to Cook's Boatshed on Trove up to 1916<sup>11</sup> when, according to a piece of family history on Ancestry.com, John Schofield and his wife Margaret purchased it. Schofield's boatshed became a local landmark and continued to operate, I believe, until the 1960s.

## **The First Woronora Bridge**

*The main sources of information in this section are a monograph by the Midgley twins<sup>12</sup> and two articles by Fred Midgley in the Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletins July 1973 and February 1979<sup>13</sup>*

The Midgleys give Robert Cook much of the credit for the construction of the first bridge over the Woronora River in 1912 and its approaches, and there seems to be reasonable evidence to support this assessment.

Prior to that time farmers and market gardeners at Menai used a natural ford in front of Cook's residence to get their produce and stock to Sutherland Station. They had been agitating for a bridge without success since 1901, and according to the *St. George Call* article previously quoted, the construction of Mersey Street by Sutherland Council was aimed at promoting this cause.

In March 1907 Shire President Judd and Councillor Cook initiated a plan for a deputation to local MLA Mr. Downes and to elicit support from Liverpool and Campbelltown Councils.<sup>14</sup> Council's representations were successful and plans were drawn up, but the project lapsed when these were lost in the mail. Renewed agitation led to government funding for the bridge itself, but Sutherland Shire Council was concerned that it could not fund the approach roads, especially on the Menai side. In May 1909 Cook and Mr. Downes met with the Minister for Public Works about this issue.<sup>15</sup> In 1912 the first low level bridge opened at the current site.

After an absence from Council from mid – 1911 until early 1914, Cook appears to have become active in agitating for improvements to the road on his return, with reports of him addressing Council on the matter in 1915.<sup>16</sup> The road on the Menai side was completed with state government funding in 1917 and improvements were made in 1920.<sup>17</sup>

## **Riverside Estate 1914**

While still a boatshed proprietor, Cook turned his attention to real estate, developing Woronora's second sub-division, Riverside Estate.<sup>18</sup>

Woronora's first sub-division was Woronora River Estate, initiated in 1909. This included approximately the present Thorp Road, the Crescent and the section of Prince Edward Park Road beyond Forbes Creek. The estate was accessible only by boat, usually from Como, and on foot from Sutherland station.

In 1914 Cook took a series of mortgages with Arthur Elliott Hobson, a merchant of Sydney and purchased the land from Holt Sutherland to create his own sub-division.<sup>19</sup> His Riverside Estate consisted of 49 lots, 27 of them with water frontages. The estate was located along both sides of what is now Price Edward Park Road, extending from just north of the current Woronora Village shops to the northern boundary of Boyle Park (now Prince Edward Park).

An advertisement in *The Sunday Times* on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1914 (p.4) declared:

*This MAGNIFICENT ESTATE situated next to BOYLE PARK occupies one of the finest positions on the upper reaches of the WORONORA RIVER and commands MAGNIFICENT VIEWS which are unparalleled even in this Picturesque Locality noted for its scenery.*

*The LARGE AREA of the Allotments and the Accessibility of the Estate make it most desirable either for WEEK-END or PERMANENT RESIDENCES.*

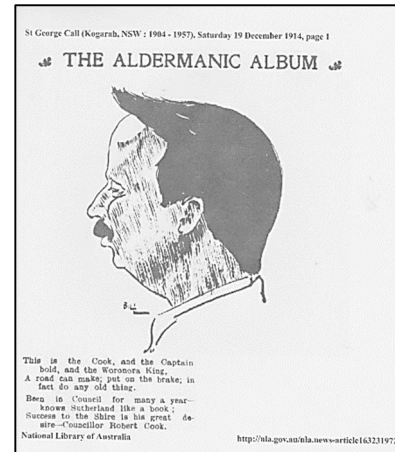
On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1914 *The Sunday Times* reported that 30 of the 49 lots had been sold at prices from 8/- to 2 pound 6/- per foot 'with several good water frontages still available.'

While the advertisement suggests that the blocks were suitable for 'permanent residences', this would have involved difficulties. The extension of Mersey Street which notionally connected the sub-division to Sutherland was still described as a 'footpath' in 1925 and nearly all building materials had to be transported from Como by boat.<sup>20</sup>

### In Conclusion

In 1914 *The St. George Call* published a series of semi-humorous sketches of the members of Sutherland Council under the title 'The Aldermanic Album.' Each contained a cartoon drawing by 'Bill' and an anonymous poem. Cook's appeared on 12<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>21</sup>

*This is the Cook and the Captain bold,  
And the Woronora King,  
A road can make; put on the brake;  
In fact do any old thing.  
Been in Council for many a year  
knows Sutherland like a book ;  
Success to the Shire is his great desire  
Councillor Robert Cook.*



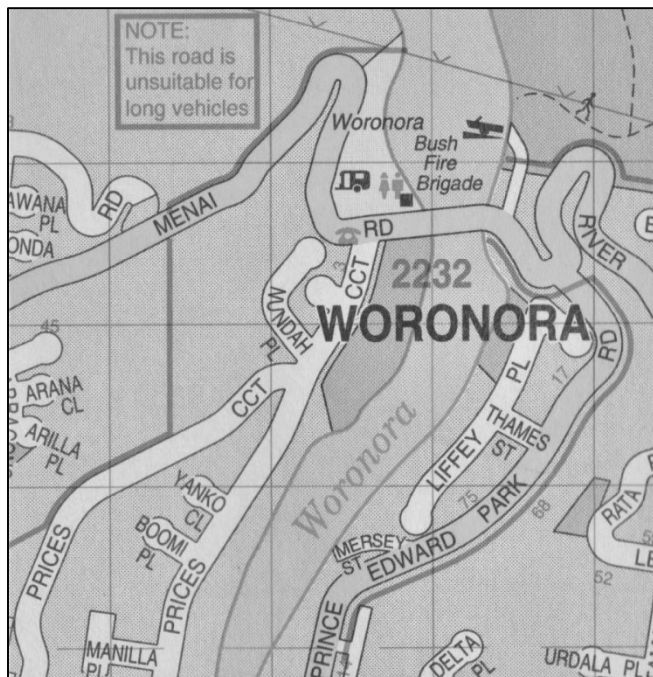
Of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century residents of Woronora, the most commemorated today are the Price family. Their name lives on in Prices Circuit, Prices Track and Prices Cave. To my knowledge there is no landmark to commemorate *The Call's* 'Woronora King', although he seems worthy of at least similar recognition. However, even if he was memorialised, it would almost certainly be assumed today that this was simply another tribute to the Shire's far more famous Cook.

*The author would welcome additional information, corrections or comments.  
(daverobo@iinet.net.au)*



*Woronora Bridge, looking from the Menai side towards the Cook Residence.  
Cook's boatshed was on the right of the bridge looking from this angle. ca 1920s*  
[Photo courtesy of SSL]





UBD Map, 1988

#### Note:

The road from Sutherland to the river was originally Mersey Street and that was Cook's address. Then when Cook developed Riverside Estate, Mersey Street was extended into the estate. The present Mersey Street (shown below Liffey Pl) is the last 50 metres of that extension.

As mentioned in reference 5, during the 1930s the section of Mersey Street from Sutherland to the river became River Road, which would now be the address of Cook's block. In about the 1940s the remainder of Mersey Street and Derwent Street became Prince Edward Park Rd. At that time the present Mersey Street was occupied by the depot of the Woronora Bus Company, but was not called Mersey Street.

When the area which now includes Liffey Place and Thames Street was developed in the 1970s, the current Mersey Street was recreated as a public access to the river from Prince Edward Park Road.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Sutherland library, vertical file 'Woronora'
- <sup>2</sup> Midgley, Alf, 'Cook's Coaches' *Sutherland Shire Historical Society (SSHS) Bulletin*, May 1985, p.93
- <sup>3</sup> Death notice: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1942.
- <sup>4</sup> Dunnet, Beryl, *Woronora Ripples: An Oral History of the Woronora Valley and its Residents* (1988)
- <sup>5</sup> I have been unable to establish when the name changed officially to River Road. As early as 1908 it was referred to as 'The River Road' in newspapers (e.g. *The St. George Call*, 4/4/08) and was often referred to as 'Woronora River Road' in the 1920s. However, in a 1931 street directory reproduced by Pauline Curby in *Pictorial History of Sutherland Shire* (2004) (p.94) it is still identified as Mersey Street.
- <sup>6</sup> 80 ha.
- <sup>7</sup> Fred Midgley: 'Early Menai Settler, Robert Cook' *SSHS Bulletin*, April 1969, p.15
- <sup>8</sup> An unidentified advertisement quoted by Fred Midgley in 'Woronora Bus Service' *SSHS Bulletin*, February 1980, p.316
- <sup>9</sup> Midgley, 'Woronora Bus Service', *SSHS Bulletin*, February 1980
- <sup>10</sup> Merle Kavanagh: Early Commercial Boatsheds Pt. 3, *SSHS Bulletin*, May 2011, p.17,
- <sup>11</sup> E.g. *The Sun*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1914, p. 23 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 1915
- <sup>12</sup> Midgley A. & F., *A Ride Into History* (1970), p.4-5
- <sup>13</sup> Fred Midgley: 'The Woronora Bridge', *SSHS Bulletin*, July 1973, p.30 – 32; 'Preliminaries to Bridging the Woronora River' February 1979, p.245 – 247.
- <sup>14</sup> *St. George Call*, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1907, p. 8
- <sup>15</sup> *The Sun*, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2011, p.5
- <sup>16</sup> *The Propellor*, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1915.
- <sup>17</sup> Midgley, A & F, *Menai Congregational Church Diamond Jubilee 1904-1964*, p.34
- <sup>18</sup> The development of early Woronora sub-divisions is treated in more detail in my monograph, *An Outline History of Woronora to 1940*. (2014)
- <sup>19</sup> N.S.W. Land Titles Vol. 2515 Fol. 35. A copy of the sub-division plan can be found in Curby, Pauline: *Sutherland Shire Foreshore Study – Thematic History Maps* (1998)
- <sup>20</sup> *The Propeller* 8<sup>th</sup> May 1925, p. 3
- <sup>21</sup> *St. George Call*, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1914, p.1 (Trove)

## A REMINISCENCE OF WORONORA RIVER

LILLIAN ANDERSON

I remember family visits to Woronora River in the 1940s where my Bromly grandparents were living at the time. It was a memorable place. From my young memories, access was by bus or car to Prince Edward Park on the river. From there we were picked up by our grandfather in a launch. I also remember a river path winding both in front and behind people's cottages, perhaps on the other side of the river somewhere. Where our grandparents were living, there were huge boulders beside the many steps leading from the river up to the house, which I do not think was connected to power, it then probably being remote as regards accessing utilities. It would be these boulders which could possibly identify the block today.

The aroma of condensed milk and kerosene lamps always transports my mind back to that place and I cannot see a picture of a Flannel Flower without thinking of those growing in the bush out the back. Our grandfather used to make little wooden boats for his grandchildren and we could trail them behind the launch when going to buy provisions from a waterfront shop. Magical! Fresh milk was obtained in a billycan by walking back along the track on their side of the river to a lady who had a cow. I was always a touch fearful, my younger sister ever by my side as I had somehow heard that crows, which were always to be heard down there, could peck out babies' eyes and I was unsure whether they would come for little girls! Came a day when our mother had to take our baby brother, five years younger than I, back to Sydney for some reason and I remember having that same feeling of one's first day at school when one's mother has to leave.

My brother born in 1945 has no memories of the Woronora period so my remembered visits to the house are possibly up to 1946/7. Mine are strong, strengthened by beloved undated photos (our sister is now deceased), but include memories not in any photo. The funny thing is that I can't ever remember having conversations with my grandparents, then or in later years, but I was shy. Perhaps the common saying of that era applied, that *children were to be seen and not heard*, and the adults were having conversations likely with talk of the war until the mid-forties, but as children we were always shielded from adult concerns, even family funerals.

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Having written the above and feeling it may be of negligible interest, I then thought to explore the Internet re the Woronora River. To my astonishment and utter delight, I found photos of *The Bonnet* [Sutherland Shire Libraries] recognising it immediately, never before knowing this feature had a name. I believe they are *the boulders* I described above, climbing past them many a time as a small girl and in which, I was prompted to remember, my grandfather stored fishing gear &etc.

My thanks to Dr Edward Duyker who suggested I share my memories of the river and for the delightful discovery to which that led me.

Lillian Anderson.  
3 September 2021

*Editor's note: Lillian is also the author of a book about her husband's forebears, including the Rev. William Anderson, who built the first church in Sutherland in 1887. See next page for a review of her book by Professor Edward Duyker.*

## BOOK REVIEW

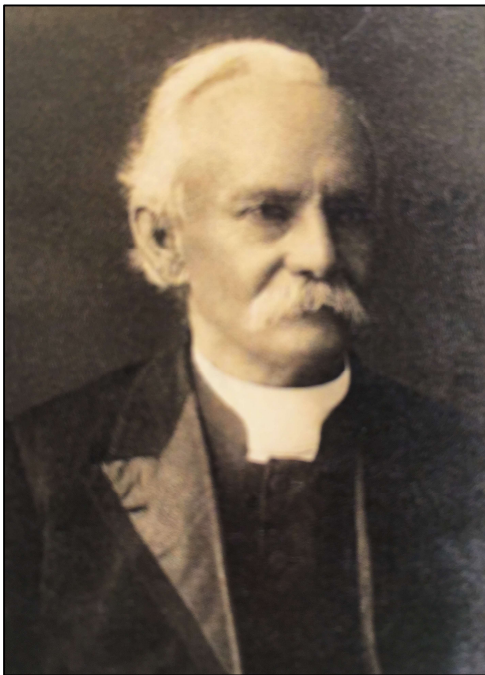
### **Lillian Anderson, *History of the Anderson Family: from Scotland to Mauritius to Australia*<sup>1</sup>**

REVIEWER: EDWARD DUYKER

School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

*Author's note: In the August 2018 issue of the SSHS Bulletin, I published an article on the Shire's connections with Mauritius, especially, the Mauritian origins of Sutherland's very first church: The Evangelical Jubilee Church. Its construction was commenced by the Reverend William John Anderson on 20 August 1887.*

*Lillian Anderson's history of her husband Edward Anderson's forebears offers much additional significant information about these early Sutherland Shire residents.<sup>2</sup> Although her focus was much broader than my article, she inevitably alerted me to some of my mistaken assumptions.<sup>3</sup>*



*Rev William John Anderson, 1 Jan. 1917*

[Source: Lillian Anderson]

One of my first surprises was that William Anderson was born in the *Maison Bullen* at the Mico Model School in Port Louis. The school was founded by a trust established by Lady Mico for the education of liberated slaves in British colonies. William Anderson's father John was appointed superintendent/principal in 1840 after completing teacher training in London. The principal's residence, the *Maison Bullen*, was I suspect, a house provided by Robert Bullen, brother of my great-great-great grandmother Harriet Commins (*née* Bullen), to aid this educational enterprise. This Anderson family history overlapped my own maternal family history in several other respects. William Anderson's parents moved their family to a home of their own called 'Glenside'. I was surprised to read that, in 1954, this house was owned by one of my mother's Béchard cousins and that he and his wife found a twelve-page memoir written by William Anderson's father.

The Reverend Anderson's mother had Huguenot grandparents, and the Anderson family maintained close links with the Reformed Church in France. Anderson's father John, also a minister and the author of several books on Mauritius and the Seychelles, died in Paris. His funeral was held in the Église réformé on the avenue de la Grande Armée. Although it is not known precisely where William John Anderson studied for the ministry, his brother Samuel studied with the reformed church in Paris.

Back in 2018, I was unaware that the Reverend William John Anderson married his first wife, Emma Frances Baker, on 24 June 1864, in Morphett Vale, South Australia. She was also born in Mauritius (on 20 November 1842), but had emigrated to South Australia with her parents and sisters as a two-year old. She returned with William Anderson to the island of her birth a little more than two months after her marriage. Unfortunately, she died of epilepsy there, on Easter



Sunday, 12 April 1868. Bereft of his young wife (she was only 25 years old when she passed away), the Reverend Anderson published a volume of her verse in an anthology entitled *Colonial Poems*. David Scott Mitchell's personal copy of this book is held by the Mitchell Library in Sydney. In December 2020, Lillian Anderson published a separate monograph on the life and writing of Emma Frances Anderson<sup>4</sup> Although Emma's posthumously-published poetry must once have sat on a bookshelf in the early Sutherland Shire, its author neither visited the shire nor wrote about it. Nevertheless, in a poem about her eldest daughter Amy's childhood, Emma captured a linguistic ambience in Mauritius that could easily have described her husband's later family life in Sutherland betwixt two languages:

And the French and English mingling.  
Sounded not so strange there,  
As they teased each other, laughing  
At the titles they would bear.

My initial understanding was that William Anderson married his (I now realise) second wife Mary-Ann Joséphine Paddle in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, on 27 October 1870. Perhaps this was the place of civil marriage registration. According to Lillian Anderson, they were married by a Presbyterian chaplain on the Deep River Estate, Flacq, Mauritius. William Anderson's new father-in-law was the manager of this isolated estate. Imagine my surprise when I read this: I have visited Deep River; it was the sugar estate where my mother spent her early childhood and where my grandfather was employed as a sugar chemist until he was fatally stabbed in 1935!

The Andersons arrived in Sydney on the Messageries Maritimes steamer *Caledonien* on 24 April 1884. Although this ship serviced France, Mauritius, Australia and New Caledonia, I was wrong to assume that they made the entire voyage to Australia aboard this ship. In fact, they sailed from Mauritius to Adelaide aboard the *Yarra*, arriving in South Australia on 20 March 1884. Lillian Anderson speculates, convincingly, that this enabled William Anderson to visit the family of his first wife. A month later he and his new family boarded the *Caledonien* for Sydney.

Readers of my earlier article will know that by 1886, William Anderson had established his 'Franco-Australian Mission', hoping to evangelise the Sydney Francophone community and visiting sailors. Although supported by fundraising concerts and lectures, the overtly Protestant 'Mission' struggled to attract the largely Catholic francophone community to ostensibly non-denominational French-language services held weekly in venues such as the Mariner's Church, Temperance Hall and Oddfellows' Hall, and open-air twice monthly in the Sydney Domain. Anderson also failed to establish his intended 'French reading-room for all classes, with a small coffee restaurant attached to it'.

However, on 20 August 1887, he did begin construction of his 'Evangelical Jubilee Church' on the corner of Oxford and Robertson Street, Sutherland, under the auspices of his Franco-Australian Mission. It took its 'Jubilee' name from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of Queen



Mary-Ann (née Paddle) and William Anderson, 1 Jan. 1878

[Photograph by Charles Léopold Léon Béranger, Source: Lillian Anderson]

Victoria's reign. The Evangelical Jubilee Church was the first church of any denomination to be commenced in Sutherland. Alas, it soon ran out of funds. In May 1888, ownership of the unfinished building was transferred to the Congregational Church, which completed construction. It no longer stands. It was twice relocated in Sutherland and was serving the Congregationalists as a hall when it was demolished in 1951.

Lillian Anderson has chronicled the subsequent years of the life of William John Anderson in Kogarah and Hurstville, then in Hobart, Tasmania, and back in New South Wales. I was particularly surprised to read that despite his financial difficulties, he sailed to London via Capetown on the S.S. *Devon* in late April 1907. He visited his brothers and expatriate Mauritian friends in London and Paris. He even visited Switzerland with his brother Daniel. The Reverend Anderson returned to Sydney aboard the S.S. *Bülöw* via Genoa, Naples, Port Said, Port Suez, Colombo, Fremantle and Melbourne. His home on his return was in Marrickville, but when he died, on 28 September 1917, he was living in Auburn.



*Armadale Charles Anderson  
(William's son), WWI.  
[Source: Lillian Anderson]*

I was delighted to see, for the first time, photographs of the Reverend William John Anderson, his parents, his wives and his children.<sup>5</sup> My own interest in the Reverend Anderson began with one of his Mauritian-born sons, Armadale Charles Anderson (1877–1954), who served as an officer in the Australian Army in Egypt, France and Belgium during the First World War. Lillian Anderson sheds additional light on his life, but also many other members of the Anderson family. She deserves our congratulations for her historical endeavours.

*Editor's note: Lillian Anderson also visited her grandparents in Woronora during the 1940s, and some of her reminiscences from that time appear on page 13.*

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<sup>1</sup> Lillian Anderson, *History of the Anderson Family: From Scotland to Mauritius to Australia*, published by the author, P.O. Box 27, Bundanoon, NSW, 2578, [lfandeganderson@gmail.com](mailto:lfandeganderson@gmail.com), March 2013, ISBN 978-0-646-83195-4

<sup>2</sup> Lillian Anderson's history was published privately in 2013, but received and catalogued by the National Library of Australia in 2021.

<sup>3</sup> The Reverend Anderson's mother, Marie Euphémie Elie (born 1821), although from a francophone family, had Huguenot (rather than Catholic) forebears that had settled in Mauritius and married locally. Her Elie and Bourelly grandparents were from Codognan (near Nîmes) in the south of France.

<sup>4</sup> Lillian Anderson, *Emma Frances Anderson*, monograph, Dec. 2020 (ISBN 978-0-646-83196-1)

<sup>5</sup> One of these portraits of the Andersons, taken by Charles Léopold Léon Béranger (1845–1895) in Mauritius in 1878, offered yet another surprise for me because the photographer was the great-great-great uncle of yet another of my cousins and of a former prime minister of the island republic, Paul Béranger. On small islands, many people are related!

# SURVEY MARKS ON THE ILLAWARRA ROAD

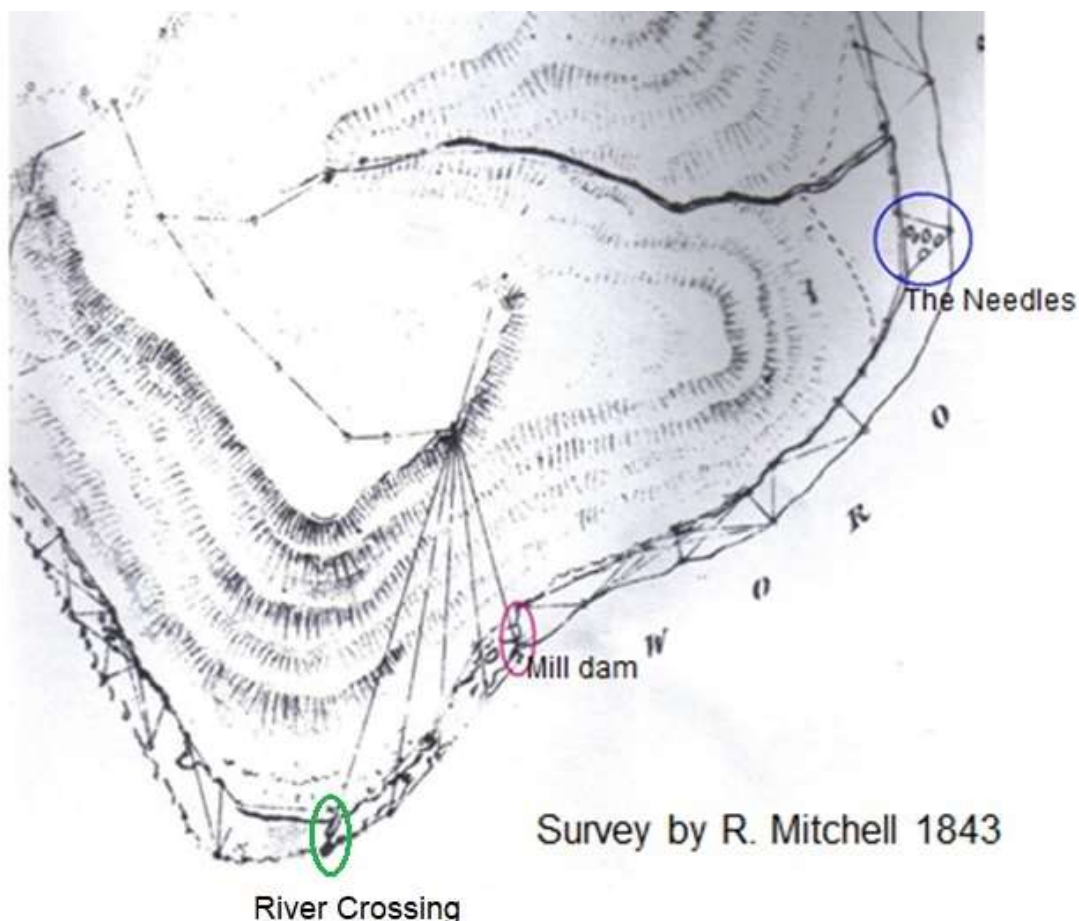
GREG JACKSON and PAM FORBES

In 1843 Mitchell's New Line of Road south from Sydney to the Illawarra was started, beginning at the Cooks River Dam. The previous road south had travelled via Liverpool and Appin and this new road cut 20 miles from the trip. The Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, first travelled the route, probably with his assigned convicts and the assistance of Captain Robert Westmacott<sup>1</sup> and selected the line of the road and the location for the road clearing parties camp sites. There is ample documentary evidence for the presence of the convict clearing gang and the assistant surveyors who supervised them, but physical evidence of their presence along the line of the road is hard to find. This article looks at two survey marks, associated with this road, left in the rock by the surveyors and their attendant convicts.

After deciding on the line of the road Sir Thomas Mitchell ordered his son, assistant surveyor Roderick Mitchell<sup>2</sup>, to prepare a detailed survey of the route<sup>3</sup>.

## Survey Mark No 1

The first survey mark is located on the crossing of the Woronora River at the Pass of Sabugal. Image 1 shows part of Roderick Mitchell's survey of that area<sup>4</sup>.



**Image 1:** Portion of Roderick Mitchell's 1843 survey of the Woronora River (text added by the author) showing Lucas' Mill Dam (purple circle) and a natural causeway which became the river crossing (green circle). The Needles are shown about 900metres downstream (blue circle).

Prior to any road construction Mitchell chose a prominent knoll high above the river (Image 1 and 2, circled in yellow) and surveyed the river from the Needles upstream to the proposed



river crossing. The lines radiating from the knoll are survey lines leading to survey points along the river which would be marked by a small triangle incised into the rock. By overlaying this survey onto a modern topographical map the eastern most survey line falls on the location of John Lucas' watermill (circled in blue) and the western most survey point stops on a natural causeway, the location of the proposed river crossing (circled in red). Lucas' Mill, a timber structure, which operated from 1825 to 1828 was destroyed by fire in the 1830's and would have disappeared by 1843 leaving only the dam and some structure.

The aerial view in Image 2 shows the same area with the location of Lucas' Mill Dam and the river crossing circled with colour matched circles to those on the survey in Image 1.



**Image 2:** Modern aerial view of the area<sup>5</sup> with the Pass of Sabugal, the river crossing of the Old Illawarra Road circled in green, and Lucas' Watermill Dam (1825) circled in purple and the Needles circled in blue.

In the authors' investigation of Lucas' Woronora Mill<sup>6</sup> the survey mark, shown in Image 3 and 4 was located, incised into a large rock approximately two metres downstream from the remains of Lucas' Mill Dam. This equilateral triangular survey mark has been considerably worn by floods, wind and rain over the past 177 years. It measures approximately 900 on the side.



**Image 3:** Triangular survey mark incised in the rock beside Lucas' Mill Dam. The scale card has 1mm and 10mm divisions. [Photo P. Forbes]



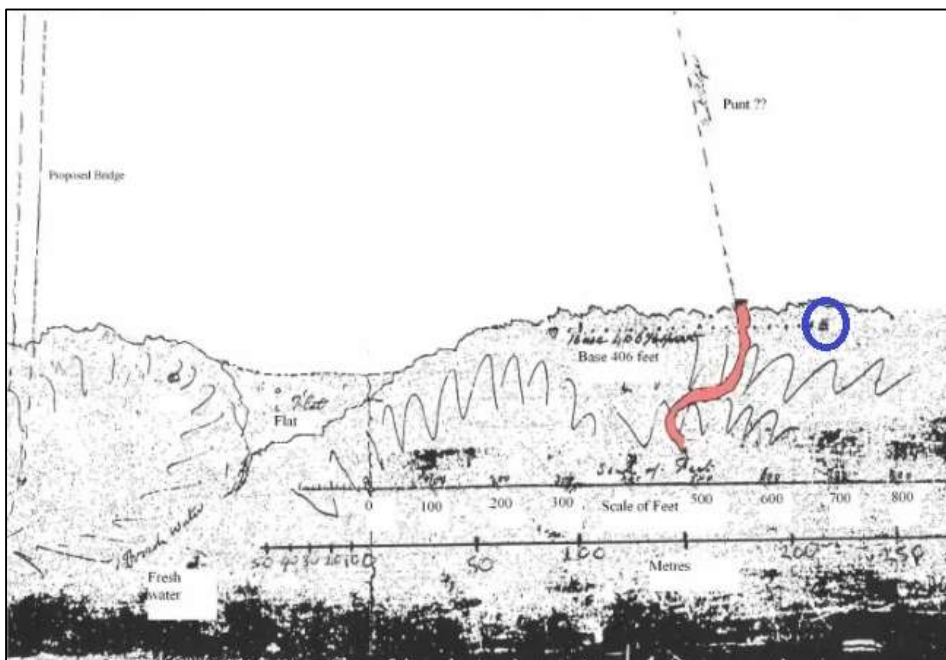
Probably more survey marks remain hidden along this section of the Woronora River. It is unlikely Roderick Mitchell personally incised this survey mark. He would have been accompanied on this survey by at least one assistant (chainman) probably a convict and the job of carving the survey mark would have fallen to him.

**Image 4:** Author Pam Forbes inspecting the survey mark beside Lucas' Mill Dam on the Woronora River. [Photo: G. Jackson]



## Survey Mark No 2

The second survey mark was placed by Sir Thomas Mitchell at the crossing of the Georges River in Albert Delardes reserve.<sup>7</sup> Crossing the Georges River was a major obstacle for the Illawarra Road builders and the crossing was a ferry (punt) between the modern suburbs of Lugarno and Illawong. This historically important place is the narrowest crossing of the lower Georges River, and Mitchell petitioned the governor to build a bridge at this point (he was ignored). To support this petition Mitchell produced a supporting sketch part of which is shown in Image 5. This sketch has been digitally cleaned and Mitchell's abysmal writing translated. The bridge, shown on the left of Image 5, was to be approximately at the end of Old Ferry Road where the second Lugarno ferry ran until 1974.



**Image 5:** Part of Thomas Mitchell's sketch of a proposed bridge across the Georges River (southern shore) cleaned and annotated by the authors.<sup>8</sup>

Although this sketch is undated it was clearly done after the Illawarra Road was at least partially constructed (1843) with the Illawarra Road heading south clearly shown (coloured red in Image 5). However, it was done not long after 1843. On the northern bank (not shown) Mitchell labels the ferry landing as '*Buddivent's unfinished landing place*'. George Buddivent (various spellings) was a shipbuilder from Balmain and was recommended by Mitchell as the first ferry master (he was unsuccessful, the first ferry master appointed was Charles Roman).

Like the first survey mark this one is a small triangle incised into the rock. Mitchell would not perform this menial chore himself. When doing surveys in the field Mitchell was accompanied by group of around five assigned convicts who would be trained in assisting with survey work<sup>9</sup>. To find the survey marks the approximate distance from the fresh-water creek (left of sketch) to the survey mark was scaled off the sketch and then it was down to searching the riverbank. The eastern survey mark (circled in blue in Image 5) was located and is shown in Image 6.



**Image 6:** Survey mark by Thomas Mitchell, 1843

This survey mark would probably have been used on one occasion only so was not deeply incised and weathering over nearly 180 years has not improve it.

### **Conclusion:**

Survey marks are not themselves of great importance but if research can link them to surveys of historic interest, they give us a contact point with both the convicts who chiselled them into the rock and the surveyor who commissioned them. Many more survey marks are probably still awaiting discovery along the Illawarra Road and other old roads in the Sutherland Shire.



## Where exactly are the Needles?

In the Woronora River Valley, below Engadine, is an area known as 'The Needles'. However, confusion surrounds their location. For reasons that remain unknown the Needles' location is popularly recorded as upstream from its real location by almost a kilometre.

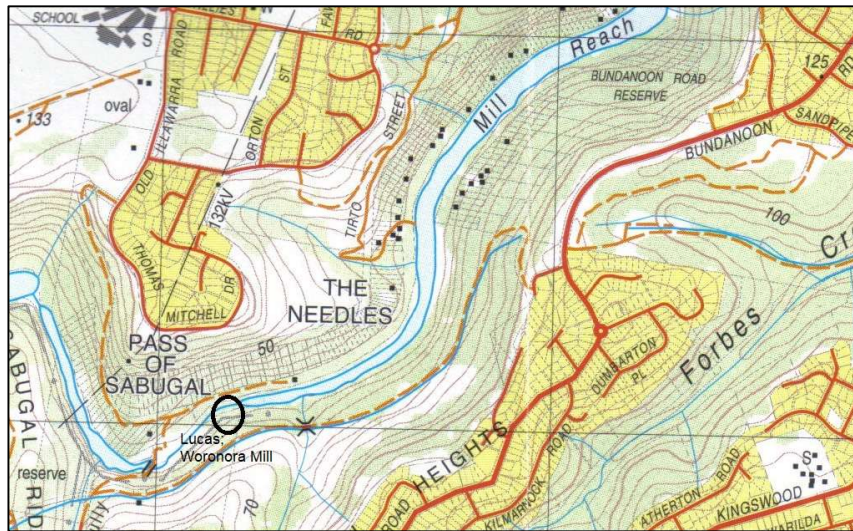
There are many places called 'The Needles' both in Australia and overseas, and the term is a descriptor of a place with sharp pinnacles, usually in a maritime context. In Australia maritime 'Needles' exist at Byron Bay and Brunswick Heads while terrestrial 'Needles' are located in the Tasmania's wilderness.<sup>10</sup>

A sample of webpages from Mr Google all have descriptions of the Needles being at the Pass of Sabugal (including a Sutherland Shire Council website).<sup>11</sup> This is where Mitchell's Illawarra Road crossed the Woronora in 1843. Roderick Mitchell, who had been ordered to prepare a survey of the area by his father, Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General, was the first European to record the Needles (although the Needles were then unnamed), circled in blue in Image 1, page 17 and Image 2, page 18.

An attempt was made to remove the Needles with explosives in 1930 as reported in *The Propeller* on the 18 July 1930. This removal attempt was largely unsuccessful as can be seen from the aerial photo on the inside back cover.

So, the Needles were certainly known at their correct location in the 1930's and although some were blown up, they are still very visible today and still an obstruction to navigation.

The ultimate arbitrator on the Needles' correct location is the official NSW Government Topographical and Orthophoto Maps. The part of the relevant map covering this area is shown below.



**Image 3:** NSW Government topographical Map showing the correct location of the Needles and the Pass of Sabugal. 'Mill Reach' is a reference to the John Lucas' Woronora Mill (1825). The location of this mill has been circled in black by the author.<sup>12</sup>

Will the Needles ever return downstream to their correct location? Probably not. For no obvious reason popular usage has shifted them permanently up stream to the Pass of Sabugal, despite there being no 'Needles' there, and I feel that the records they will never return them to their real location.

Greg Jackson

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## References:

<sup>1</sup> *The Australian*, Fri 9 June 1843. Captain Robert Marsh Westmacott had extensive lands near Mount Keira and acquired land at Bulli where he had a house on Sandon Point, he accompanied Mitchell on part of his trip south and provided Mitchell with a horse.

<sup>2</sup> Rodrick Mitchell was a 21-year-old assistant surveyor working under his illustrious father Major Sir Thomas Mitchell, the NSW Surveyor General. Roderick Mitchell was educated as an engineer in Durham, England. He was described as one of the best educated young men in the colony<sup>1</sup>. His first duty with the Surveyor Generals Department was to survey and explore the great coast range extending northwards from the New England along with Surveyor Burnett. In 1843 young Roderick was instructed by Sir Thomas Mitchell to survey the route from the Cooks River Dam to the Illawarra (Wollongong) which Sir Thomas had blazed. He initially supervised the convict clearing party but was soon replaced by the more experienced assistant surveyor William Webb Dark. Roderick Mitchell was drowned when washed overboard from the small ship *Beaver* in 1851 age 29.

Much of this information comes from: *Memoirs of the Late Roderick Mitchell Esq*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1851)

<sup>3</sup> Letter 43/12 dated 22 July 1843, Reel 3079, 2/1559, 2/15560.1-.3, from Roderick Mitchell informing Sir Thomas Mitchell, NSW Surveyor General, that the surveys of the New Line of Road to the Illawarra was complete.

<sup>4</sup> Survey by R. Mitchell, State Archives, Car 2.1231, *Survey of allotments 1 and 2 Woronora*, 20 June 1843.

<sup>5</sup> Aerial map from: <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au/>

<sup>6</sup> Articles on Lucas' watermills appeared in the Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin in 2012, volume 15: No. 3 and 4, volume 16: No. 1 and 2.

<sup>7</sup> An article on Delardes Reserve appeared in the Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin in 2012: Vol. 15 No 1.

<sup>8</sup> Survey Number SR5282, T. L. Mitchell (undated) *Trigonometrical sketch of site for bridge etc. across Georges River*, available from NSW State Archives.

<sup>9</sup> Letter 44/13 dated 27 May 1844, Reel 3060, 2/1526.1-2, 2/1527, from William Darke to Sir Thomas Mitchell, NSW Surveyor General discusses Mitchells "5 men ... which will be required as usual on your taking the field"

<sup>10</sup> Some other 'Needles' in Australia are located at:

Byron Bay: <https://www.sundive.com.au/project/needles/>

Brunswick Heads: <https://www.bluebaydivers.com.au/julian-rocks-needles-mohole-line-of-smiles/>

Tasmania: <https://tastrails.com/the-needles/>

<sup>11</sup> The following webpages incorrectly describe the location of the Needles being at the Pass of Sabugal

<http://www.wildswimmingaustralia.com/locations/the-needles/>

<http://blog.creatureteacher.com.au/2014/01/the-needles-engadine.html>

<http://www.sharksforever.com/forums/showthread.php?1286-The-Needles-Causeway-on-the-Woronora-River>

<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/5838204/natures-eyesore-as-holiday-makers-leave-messy-trail-of-trash/>

<https://www.findmyaustralia.com/single-post/2016/12/09/Woronora-Dam-to-the-Needles>

<https://localhistory.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/103798>

<sup>12</sup> Land and Property Information N.S.W. 2001, *Topographic & Orthophoto map 1:25 000 : [New South Wales]. 9129-4N, Port Hacking* (3rd ed). LPINSW, Bathurst, N.S.W



# THE HISTORY OF THE COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

CHRISTINE EDNEY

## Chapter 1 - Homeless to Nearly Evicted

When the Council was created in 1906 it was homeless. The first Council meeting was at the Miranda School of Arts in Kiora Rd. Soon after, for 15 shillings a week Council leased a former butcher's shop on what is now Old Princes Highway in Sutherland, north of the site of the current Commonwealth Bank. Council sub-let the residence at the rear to the Town Clerk for five shillings a week. The landlady, Mrs Johanna Lehane renewed the lease in 1909.<sup>1</sup> The Council had its first phone installed in 1912.<sup>2</sup>



*The original Council office building c 1910 [courtesy: SSL]*

In 1914 Mrs Lehane gave Council one week's notice to quit the premises saying: 'After the impertinent remarks of your president I cannot tolerate you as a tenant any longer and shall require the premises punctually, as I want to turn them into something useful.'<sup>3</sup> The Shire President replied: 'I'd like to know what impertinent remarks I made – it's got me beat.'<sup>4</sup> Presumably she did not think Council was 'useful'. The building later became a motor cycle workshop.

## Chapter 2 - Elephants and Zebras

Council decided to build its own building at the corner of Illawarra Rd (now Old Princes Highway) and Eton St, on land they obtained in 1909 from the Holt Sutherland Estate.<sup>5</sup> This site is where Forby Sutherland Memorial Park is now. It was Lot 2 of Section 48 'at the big blackbutt tree'. Whilst that tree was removed, white ant infestation of its roots caused problems for the Council building for many years.

There was opposition from residents, Progress Associations and businesses (particularly from Cronulla-Miranda) to erecting Chambers in Sutherland, and to erecting a building at all until the Shire's roads and footpaths 'had been put in order'.<sup>6</sup> There was a public meeting with over 350 attending regarding the choice of site.<sup>7</sup> Councillor COJ Monro favoured a site at Miranda. Shire President Clr EW Hyndman used his casting vote to choose the site at Sutherland.<sup>8</sup> Competitive designs were called for in 1912 and a contract for the building let in 1914 (Kirkby Index). Builder was William Crawford, and the architect Mr E N Vennard, and final cost £1898.<sup>9</sup> The building was paid for in five years.



*Council chambers as were 1914-1928 [Courtesy: SSL]*

The building was known as 'The White Elephant'. In 1916 some locals showed their disapproval of the building by attacking it with black paint, and to clean their brushes they painted stripes on a nearby white horse (so that it looked like a zebra).<sup>10</sup> In 1915 Council overseer Dwyer erected a powder magazine at the rear of site, and in 1933 two men were seen stealing gelignite from it. They were chased by a local resident who caught one man and retrieved the gelignite.<sup>11</sup> In 1917 Council office hours were 9.30am - 3.30pm weekdays, 6.30 - 8.30pm Wednesdays, 9.30am - noon Sat.<sup>12</sup> Council staff grew from 14 in 1907 to 118 in 1928. To accommodate this growth, the building was extended southward in 1929 at a cost of £6680. (The extension was opened by Minister for Local Government Michael F Bruxner on 2 March 1929.)<sup>13</sup> A rear extension was built in 1953.<sup>14</sup>

In 1933 a safe blowing gang broke into building and tried to blow open the strongroom door but failed. The door was damaged and couldn't be opened till repaired.<sup>15</sup>



*Council building 1929 [Courtesy: SSL]*

In 1939 there was a movement known as Home Rule for Cronulla to divide the Cronulla/Woolooware/Kurnell area off as a separate Council area – and the Council Chambers for that new Council was to be in Monro Park, Cronulla. World War II put paid to the campaign for a separate Council. During World War II the Council Chambers housed the Chief Warden of the local National Emergency Service and his staff. In 1942 the word ‘Sutherland’ had to be taken off the front of the building as the Government required removal of street and other signs that identified locations. This was to make navigating harder in the event of the Japanese invading. Air raid shelters were built behind the building for staff.<sup>16</sup>



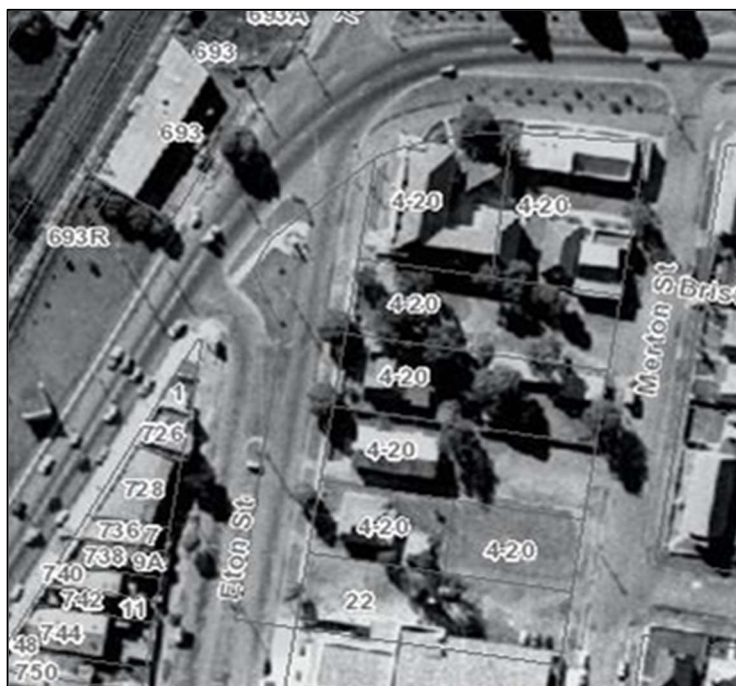
*Council building c 1961 - by this time the building was looking 'dingy' [courtesy SSL]*



*Rear of building viewed from Northeast c 1961 [courtesy: SSL]*



## The Council site in 1961



From top to bottom the buildings are:

*Council workshop*

*Council Offices*

*Library*

*Masonic Hall*

*Kay's Cottage*

*Sydney County Council*

[Source: Shire Maps]

## Chapter 3 – Time to rebuild

From the late 1940's on, the Shire Clerk had been pressing for more space for a new building.<sup>17</sup> Council purchased sites to the south of the old chambers in 1958. The Council Library (former Doctor's surgery) and the Masonic Hall (photos below) were demolished to make way for the new Council building. Further south was Kay's Cottage (used for Library and Town Planning storage), and where the Entertainment Centre is now, was the Sydney County Council building.



*Sutherland Council Library (SSL)*



*Masonic Hall (SSL)*

In 1960 plans for a new Council building had been prepared and the cost estimated as £182,000. There was opposition to the proposal. Two politicians (TW Dalton and Ian Griffiths) attacked the Council in Parliament over the proposal,<sup>18</sup> and there was a public meeting opposing the project and calling for the State Government to investigate the Council finances over the proposal.<sup>19</sup> The Minister for Local Government advised he would not interfere with Council's decision to build the new building.<sup>20</sup> Council meeting of 17 August 1964 accepted Rex Building Co. tender of £304,351 for the building.



It was originally intended that the lower ground floor be a parking level for staff and official cars. Instead it became the Council library, and stayed as such until the library moved to Belmont St in 1994. The new building was officially opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1965, and was officially known as the David R Kirkby Administration Building. (David R Kirkby had been the Shire Clerk from 1928 to 1956.) The first Council meeting was held in the new building on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1965. The Holt Mural in the foyer was given by the Holt Family that same year.<sup>21</sup> The new Council building was extended in the mid-1970's and refurbished in 1996. The quoted cost of works in 1975 was \$1.65 million and in 1995 was \$2.6 million.<sup>22</sup>

The Forby Memorial Garden was created where the earlier Council building had been. A 1970 Bicentennial project, it was officially opened on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1971, and in 1972 it won the *Sydney Morning Herald* prize for the best Council Chamber garden in NSW.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from a few refurbishments, no major changes have been made to the Council building since 1996. Staff numbers grew and some were allocated rented space in the building behind the David R. Kirkby building. However, with the conversion of parts of the main building to hot-desking, and by moving some sections to a depot at Kirrawee, rented space was no longer needed. Now, of course, with the advent of Covid-19 restrictions, most people are working from home, and there is just a skeleton staff in the building.

So next time you go to the Council offices I hope you will see the building in a different light.

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<sup>1</sup> *St George Call*, 11.9.1909

<sup>2</sup> *St George Call*, 30.3.1912

<sup>3</sup> *The Propeller* (Hurstville local paper), 7.8.1914

<sup>4</sup> *SSHS Bulletin* May 1983

<sup>5</sup> Two sources say the land donated, another said it was bought at £1 an acre, *From Sails to Atoms*, by David Kirkby, SSC 1980; *St George Call*, 31.7.1909 and 25.9.1909.

<sup>6</sup> *St George Call*, 31.7.1909, 25.7.1914, 1.8.1914

<sup>7</sup> *St George Call*, 8.8.1914

<sup>8</sup> *Propeller* 31.7.1914

<sup>9</sup> *From Sails to Atoms*, Kirkby

<sup>10</sup> *SSHS Bulletin* Feb 1979

<sup>11</sup> *St George Call*, 6.3.1915 and 21.7.1933

<sup>12</sup> *St George Call*, 23.6.1917

<sup>13</sup> *From Sails to Atoms*, Kirkby

<sup>14</sup> *Propeller*, 22.10.1953

<sup>15</sup> *Propeller*, 8/9/1933

<sup>16</sup> *From Sails to Atoms* by Kirkby

<sup>17</sup> *Propeller*, 21.3.1946

<sup>18</sup> *Leader*, 4.3.1964 and 11.3.1964

<sup>19</sup> *Leader*, 23.9.1964

<sup>20</sup> *Leader* 6.5.1964

<sup>21</sup> *Leader*, 10.11.1965

<sup>22</sup> *Leader* 19.11.1975 and 29.8.1995

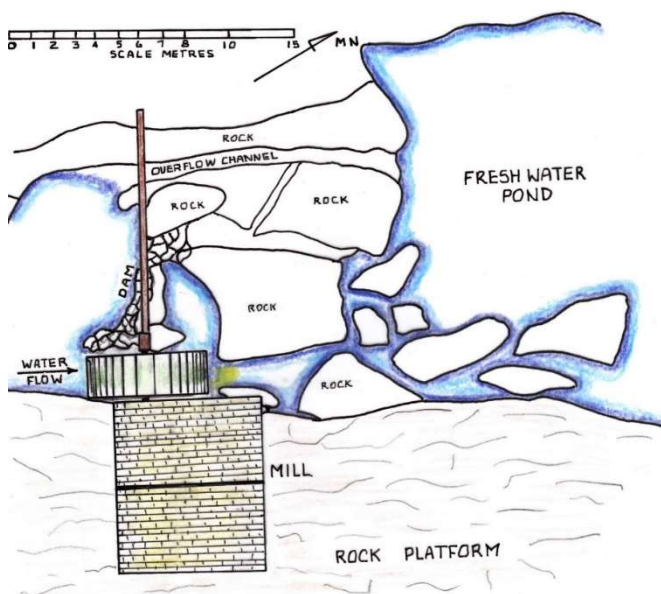
<sup>23</sup> *Leader* 11.10.1972

# EXCURSION TO THE PASS OF SABUGAL

GREG JACKSON

Following the easing of Covid restrictions an excursion, attended by thirteen SSHS members, visited the Pass of Sabugal on the Woronora River Valley on the 27<sup>th</sup> October. This excursion was led by archaeologists Greg Jackson and Pam Forbes.

The Pass of Sabugal was named by Sir Thomas Mitchell in 1843 after a place in Portugal where a major battle between the English and French took place in 1811. This is where the Old Illawarra Road, surveyed by Mitchell and cleared by the last convict road gang in NSW, crossed the Woronora River over a causeway. Although the road - now a fire trail - has been upgraded several times and the causeway is now concrete, it is largely faithful to the original line of road. This area was also the location of Depression era housing in the 1930's and the scant remains of around twelve houses can still be identified.



*Plan view of what Lucas' Mill would have looked like in 1825 [G. Jackson]*

Also visited on this excursion were the remains of John Lucas' watermill built in 1825. John Lucas had a substantial land grant here and built his mill about 100 metres downstream from the causeway. The area above the mill is known today as 'Lucas Heights'. The location of this mill and Lucas' Brisbane Mill on Williams Creek (1822), a tributary of the Georges River, was unknown, or at least unreported, until recently.

This mill was a small timber building with one set of mill stones grinding wheat that was delivered by boat from Botany Bay. Bushfires and floods have removed all traces of the timber building, but beam slots excavated in the rock and the remains of the mill dam give us a good idea of the mill's size and what it would have looked like. Opposite the mill, on Lucas' land, a

small river flat has been cleared of rocks and was probably used by the convict millers to grow vegetables. The base of a small slab hut on this land may have been the convict's home.

The weather for this excursion was ideal and morning tea was taken on the rocks beside the old mill site. The only drawback was the steep climb back up the hill after the excursion.

## *Note from Editor:*

As one of the excursionists, I have to say that this was a fascinating journey into our past – the mill being the first industry in the Shire. Greg and Pam have such intimate knowledge of it and of the Depression settlement. Their stories brought it all very much to life.

Thank you Greg and Pam!

*A slot in the bedrock which would have held the timber supporting the water wheel bearing is still evident. [Photo: E. Craig]*

See more photos from this excursion on the back cover







*The causeway, Pass of Sabugal crossing the Woronora River and looking towards Engadine. While on their way to the Lucas Mill, excursionists crossed this pass (although there was more water on it at the time) [Photo: G. Jackson]*

(See story 'Survey Marks on the Illawarra Road', page 17)



*An attempt to remove the Needles on the Woronora River in 1930 was largely unsuccessful.  
[Source: Shire Maps]*

(See 'Where Exactly are the Needles?', page 21)



## SSHS EXCURSION (27<sup>th</sup> October)

To Lucas Mill and Sabugal Pass, on the Woronora River

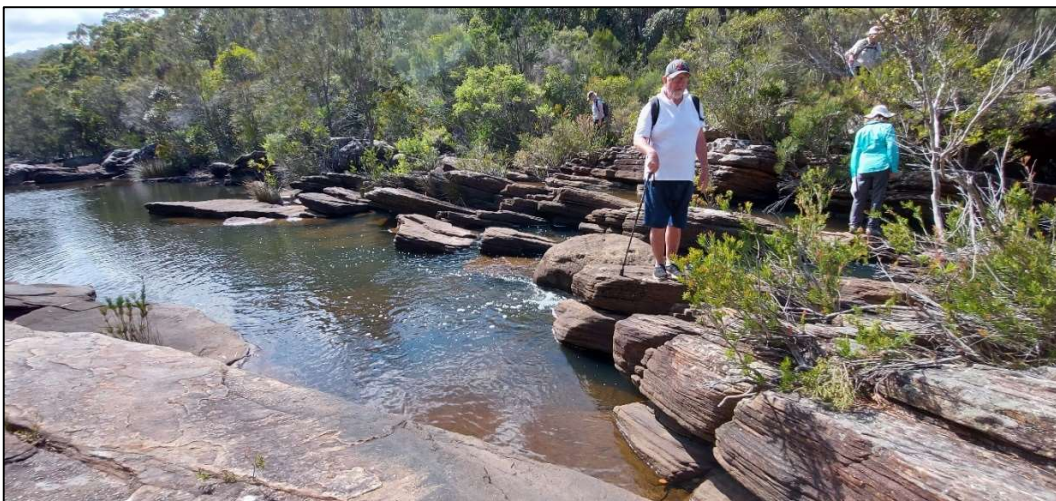
(See Report, page 31)



*Greg Jackson leading the excursion along the Woronora River [Photo: E.Craig]*



*Excursionists enjoy morning tea on the rocks at the Lucas Mill site.  
[Photo: Greg Jackson]*



*The site of the Lucas watermill, 1825 [Photo: E.Craig]*