

NUMBER: 222 — FEBRUARY 2022



Defending infantry locating the enemy, Como Bridge, 1901

[Source: *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 30 November 1901]

See 'The Battle of Como', by Stephanie Bailey, page 21

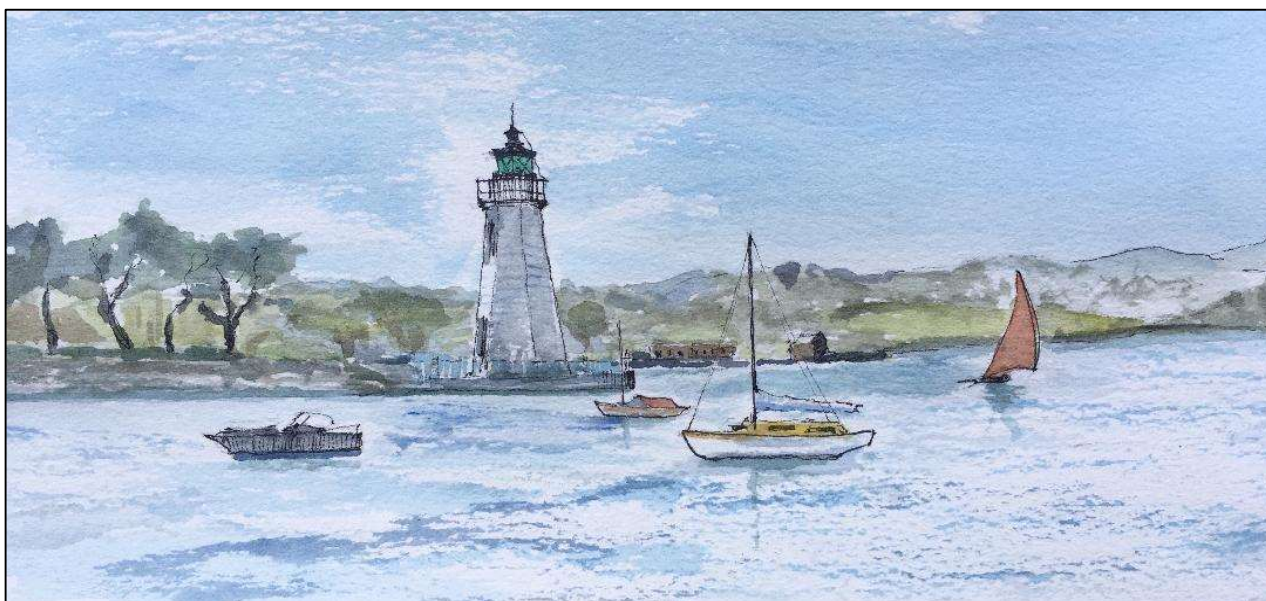
MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

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

FACEBOOK: Sutherland Shire Historical Society

Is Cook's *Endeavour* still in Newport Harbour where it was scuttled in 1778?

Read historian, Dr Ed Duykers' conclusions based on his research in Newport in 2019:
'The Endeavour at Newport?', page 10.



View looking towards the Goat Island lighthouse from the Hunter House, Newport, the French naval headquarters during the War of American Independence. The former *Endeavour* is thought to lie in waters off the island. [Susan Duyker, 2022 watercolour from her sketch of 27 July 2019]



A piece of ballast from HMB *Endeavour* [Silent World Foundation Collection, 2021]

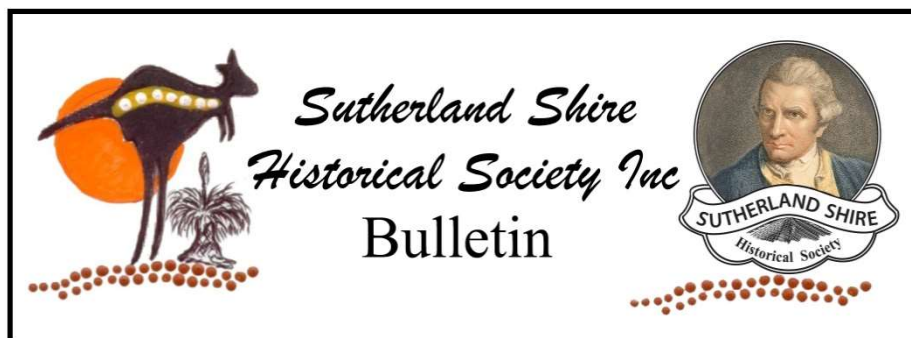
On Monday, 11 June 1770, the barque *H.M. Endeavour* was sailing north when at 10 o'clock in the evening it was struck by what is known as Endeavour Reef (Latitude 15 degrees south, Longitude 145 deg 34 minutes east).

In his diary, Lt James Cook wrote, 'Immediately upon this we took in all sails, hoisted out the boats and inspected our ship and found we had got upon the south east of a rough of coral reef ... as soon as we went ashore, about the top of high water we not only started water, but threw overboard our guns, iron and stone ballast, casks, hoop stays, oil jars, decayed stores, etc.'

The ballast and cannon were left where they had been jettisoned until an expedition from the US Academy of International Sciences found and retrieved them in January, 1969.

Sutherland Shire Museum has a piece of that jettisoned iron ballast on loan from the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Ref: *Captain Cook's Journal During the First Voyage Round the World*. Cook, James (1728-1779)



CONTENTS – FEBRUARY 2022

ABOUT THE <i>BULLETIN</i> AND OUR SOCIETY		2
SOCIETY COMMITTEE		3
SSHS CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES		4
PRESIDENT'S REPORT	PAULINE CURBY	5
MUSEUM REPORT	PETER MOORE	6
MINUTES, 55 TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING		7
FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	ELIZABETH CRAIG	9
DR IAN STEWART, OAM	ELIZABETH CRAIG	9
ENDEAVOUR AT NEWPORT?	EDWARD DUYKER	10
PIRACY IN PORT JACKSON	GREG JACKSON	13
AUSTRALIA'S ONLY WOMAN PIRATE	ELIZABETH CRAIG	16
THE PRE-HISTORY OF LILLI PILLI OVAL	CHRISTINE EDNEY	17
PUTTING OUT THE RUBBISH ON THE WORONORA RIVER	GREG JACKSON & PAM FORBES	19
THE BATTLE OF COMO	STEPHANIE BAILEY	21

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

***East Coast Encounters 1770, 2nd 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. Members and non-members are invited to submit material for future editions and although we give local history priority, we are happy to accept stories on Australian history generally. We ask that you quote your sources and acknowledge any material used as well as obtaining permission from authors. Any enquiries contact the Editor: Elizabeth Craig at elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com or phone 0491 096 642.

Digital copies of the *Sutherland Shire Historical Society Inc Bulletin* are emailed to all Society members with online access. Print copies 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

COPYRIGHT

Copyright for material appearing in this publication remains the property of the individual writers and, apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without the written permission of the author. All enquiries should be made to the Secretary.

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 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

SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2020-2021

ELECTED MEMBERS

PATRON:	Shire Mayor, Clr Carmelo Pesce		
PRESIDENT	Pauline Curby	0427 527 721	pcurby@iprimus.com.au
VICE PRESIDENT	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER	Graham Burton	0423 234 127	grahamburton@live.com.au
TREASURER	John Doherty	0402 848 344	johndoherty55@gmail.com
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
	Carol McDonald	0403 877 397	jmcdonald@optusnet.com.au
	Deb Burton	0403 625 889	burton.deb@gmail.com

APPOINTED POSITIONS

MUSEUM MANAGER	Peter Moore	0427 213 575	peter_mo@ihug.com.au
BULLETIN EDITOR	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
BULLETIN PROOF READER	Dawn Emerson	9543 1060	emersondawn939@gmail.com
ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
PUBLICATIONS OFFICER	Elizabeth Craig	0491 096 642	elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com
PUBLICITY OFFICER FACEBOOK	Creo Moore	0425 226 405	creoaus@gmail.com
ARCHIVIST/RESEARCH OFFICER	Carol McDonald	0403 877 397	jmcdonald@optusnet.com.au
GRANTS OFFICER	John Doherty Bruce Watt	0402 848 344 0405 493 187	johndoherty55@gmail.com watto1951@tpg.com.au
EXCURSIONS OFFICERS	Greg Jackson Christine Edney	0450 615 104 0410 141 439	greg.jackson100@gmail.com cmedney@gmail.com
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto1951@tpg.com.au
HERITAGE WEEK LIAISON OFFICER	Bruce Watt	0405 493 187	watto1951@tpg.com.au
WELFARE OFFICER	Mary Small	9522 9917	marysmall@optusnet.com.au
AFTERNOON TEA	Anne Steward Kate Doherty Floriana Camper Deborah Burton		
HONORARY SOLICITOR	Michael Solari		

SSHS CALENDAR: MARCH 2022 - MAY 2022
(See website: www.shirehistory.org for updates)

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

THE MUSEUM IS OPENING SOON

DATE		
MARCH 2022	Sat. 12th	EXCURSION: Greg Jackson and Pam Forbes will guide us around areas of significant historic interest at Delardes Reserve, Illawong from 12.00 . See a large midden; remains of convict built road and ferry landing surveyed by St Thomas Mitchell, 1843; stone wharf used by the paddle steamer, <i>Telephone</i> , c1900; archaeology related to former Lugarno Pleasure Ground. Easy walking. SSHS members only.* Bring walking shoes, hat and sunscreen. Contact Greg Jackson to confirm attendance.
	Sat. 19th	GENERAL MEETING SPEAKER: John MacRitchie will tell us the story of the St George and Sutherland Shire District ambulance – ‘St George to the Rescue’.
APRIL 2022	Sat. 16th	NO MEETING – EASTER
MAY 2022	Fri 4th	EXCURSION: Greg Jackson and Pam Forbes will lead a visit to the remains of Parkesvale Pleasure Ground (1899 – c.1912). Meet at Sandy Point Comm. Centre at 9.30am. Plenty of parking. Walking: about 2.5km round trip. Bring morning tea, hat, water, sunscreen. SSHS Members only.* More details on website and at meetings.
	Sat 21st	GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS: Archaeologists, Greg Jackson and Pam Forbes will speak on the Pleasure Grounds of the Georges River.

***EXCURSIONS:** Please note that for insurance reasons only SSHS members can attend excursions.

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 or phone Creo Moore on 0425 226 405

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PAULINE CURBY



Another year begins, bringing with it unknown challenges and a new era for us at Sutherland Shire Historical Society.

This could be a landmark year, as we expect

our museum will open at the end of April during the Heritage Festival. It is too early – and the times too uncertain – to give a definite date at this stage.

We feel the museum will probably always be a 'work in progress', but it will certainly be a lively and innovative space where members and visitors are welcome. I can assure you all willing workers will be greeted effusively and given a cup of tea before being put to work. First Mate Creo Moore is adept at motivating her team in sorting office files and photos, while museum manager Peter Moore – known as the Pirate – has plenty of tasks to allocate to eager recruits.

Even though we're still working hard to complete displays and signage, we had a 'soft' museum opening at the Society Christmas party on 27 November at which we launched the Margaret Simpson Collection.

Before her death in 2014 Margaret, a former principal of Sylvania Public School, arranged for her collection of artefacts used by Aborigines of the Western Desert to be displayed at Sutherland Memorial School of Arts. She used these in the classroom to help students understand traditional Aboriginal lifestyles and values. At the Christmas party Ron Simpson spoke movingly about his late wife's passion for education.

We all enjoyed the Christmas party, despite the cold, windy and showery weather. It was, however, a severe test of our capability to manage 40 plus people in our small premises. Somehow, we managed: speeches were made, lunch served and country and western singer Col Hardy entertained us under a temporary shelter. Luckily our Museums and Gallery advisor Lynn Collins was able to come and later provided us with feedback on what we need to be aware of in dealing with that number of people in such a small space.

In my last report I noted that we were awaiting the outcome of three grants we had applied for. Unfortunately, our applications were not successful this time, but we will keep trying. Grant funding is available on a regular basis for a range of projects and we have so far received \$24,000 in grants, including a Federal Government grant of \$4000 for computer and printing equipment. Whenever we see one that could apply to the Society our grants officer and treasurer John Doherty submits an application. We have lots of ideas for future funding, but as the process is competitive, we are not always successful.

Hopefully this year COVID-safe meetings will be able to continue. We would relish this as everyone is heartily sick of lockdowns and restrictions, while recognising the importance of measures to keep the community safe. At our first meeting in February Dr Stephen Gapps will be speaking about the Sydney and Bathurst wars. Stephen's ground breaking work focuses on the military aspect of these conflicts. Even though later played down as mere 'incidents', these were regarded as warfare in the early days of the colony.

Best wishes to all our members for a productive 2022 and special thanks to SSHS's hard working executive whose efforts make my job as president manageable.

MUSEUM REPORT

PETER MOORE

Although we would like to have been up and running by now with many paying customers coming on board, we have once again been delayed by the yellow flag fluttering from the Q-Station's yard arm.

Due to the virus we have kept numbers working in the museum to a minimum and much work has been carried out on the home front.

We have had the museum roster operating on three days a week since December, and although there have been no visitors, those rostered on have worked at getting the museum ready for a real opening. The crew has come together and developed a very strong esprit de corps, with every one having an enjoyable time.

One of our rostered members, Bruce ('The Semaphore') Edney declined to be a museum guide, but asked to do something useful in the office. Well he did not know what he let himself in for! His task was to bring all the information on our objects together in a digital spread sheet. He has just about finished designing the system and now all we have to do is enter the information on each of our objects. Bruce has confessed to having a Masters Degree in Computer Science and he has been able to use his experience to get a bespoke system working for us. Bruce's efforts will, in the long run, save the SSHS a considerable sum as we will not have to buy a proprietary system for the museum. Thanks Bruce!

Bruce - along with John Doherty and Creo Moore - have also been reviewing our computer and printer needs as we now have gratefully received a much needed grant of \$4000 from the Federal

Government for new equipment. Soon we will have an up-to-date system up and running. As usual though, finding space for everything in is an ongoing problem. The office is just about at capacity with two people working in it. We will have to find space somewhere in the museum for another work station to allow more people access to the system.

The design of labels and signs is a little behind schedule, but these things take time to develop. It will be worth the wait to get a good consistent result. We will need to get several signs made commercially, which will cost approximately \$600.

While all this activity is going on a review of our storage capacity in our sheds is being carried out, and in future some more shelving will have to be acquired to complement the existing shelving.

Hopefully, these expenses can be offset by the sale of some redundant equipment. Once again I must thank all of the crew who have made themselves available to serve on the museum committee. Unfortunately, space does not allow me to name you all, but please accept my heartfelt thanks for all the good work you have undertaken in trying circumstances.

We also thank Helen Gorman for donating a planter stand originally from the Cecil Hotel built by Cecil Monro in the early days of Cronulla's history. And we are grateful to Pam Mace for the objects she gave us from the late 19th century Mondel Winery in Caringbah. Items like these make great visual representations of important periods in the Shire's history.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

55TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2021

AT STAPLETON CENTRE, 21A STAPLETON STREET, SUTHERLAND

MEETING COMMENCED 1:10pm

1. Welcome, Acknowledgement to Country,
Apologies – E Craig, Graham Burton, Deb Burton
2. Adoption of Minutes of the 2020 AGM – 1st P Boler , 2nd J Doherty
3. Adoption of All Annual Reports for 2020 – 2021 from the Executive Committee – 1st D Emerson , 2nd B Watt
4. Adoption of the Financial Report and Balance Sheet for 2020 – 2021 as published in the August 2021 Bulletin. 1st P Moore, 2nd C McDonald
5. Presentation by Outgoing Vice President – B Watt made short speech
6. Motion to Amend the SSHS Constitution - That the tenure of the four elected Executive Committee positions be limited to 3 years. Those positions include: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer. Dawn Emerson and Pam Boler spoke in favour of the motion. Vote taken – non against, 1 abstain. 1st E Craig 2nd B Watt. Motion Accepted.
7. Election of Officers: Andrew Platfoot took the chair
 - a. President – Pauline Curby elected unopposed
 - b. Vice President – Elizabeth Craig elected unopposed
 - c. Secretary /Public Officer – Graham Burton elected unopposed
 - d. Treasurer – John Doherty elected unopposed.
 - e. Committee members – Carol McDonald, C Moore, D Burton
 - f. Museum Manager – P Moore
 - g. *Bulletin* Editor – Elizabeth Craig
 - h. Publications Officer – Elizabeth Craig
 - i. Excursions officer – Greg Jackson/Christine Edney
 - j. Publicity Officer –
 - k. Online Administrator – C Moore

- l. Archivist – Carol McDonald
 - m. Community Engagement Officer – B Watt
 - n. Heritage Festival Rep – B Watt
 - o. Afternoon tea committee – Anne, Steward, D Burton, K Doherty
 - p. Grants Officer – J Doherty, B Watt
 - q. Welfare Officer – Mary Small
8. General business- P Moore spoke on Museum progress, the Aboriginal collection and the Simpson and Matson Collections. The Margaret Simpson Collection will be the major item for Opening Day. He thanked Graham Burton for all his help, and Pauline Curby. New theme is Old But New. The new museum will be starting with the aboriginal collection, then Cook, the ballast from the Endeavour, Holt, Environmental Disasters, Science, R & D.

Carol McDonald talked about Murder and Mayhem in the Shire.

Pauline Curby reminded everyone about the Xmas party 27 November at Venetia Street Afternoon tea.

Meeting closed 4:00pm

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ELIZABETH CRAIG

We have published several articles on the fate of Cook's *Endeavour* over the last couple of years, many of them by marine archaeologist and SSHS member, Greg Jackson.

This month we have one by SSHS member and historian, Dr Ed Duyker, on his own research during a 2019 trip to Newport Harbour, Rhode Island, in the USA where the former *Endeavour* was scuttled in 1778. Ed was focusing on French attempts at salvaging the hulks in the Harbour in 1780. (See pp, 10-12 for his conclusions.)

Coincidentally, the Australian National Maritime Museum, who have had a team working at the Newport site since 1999, has just announced that the remains of the former *Endeavour* have been positively

identified. Their American colleagues angrily denied that the evidence was undisputed, sparking a heated debate.

We alerted the *Leader* to Ed's article, and that led to an interview with him appearing in last week's edition, thus adding to the debate. Ed ensured a reference to SSHS *Bulletin* was made. Great publicity! Thank you, Ed. It's great to get the word out about some of the valuable research to be found in the *Bulletin*.

Thank you also to *Bulletin* contributor stalwarts, Greg Jackson, Christine Edney and Stephanie Bailey for their articles on a range of topics: piracy in the Shire, the history of Lilli Pilli oval, a history of rubbish disposal at Woronora and a true life Shire drama – the Battle of Como.

Congratulations Ian Stewart OAM



SSHS member and former Shire boy, Dr Ian Stewart was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia in the 2022 Australia Day honours last month. Ian now lives in Wagga Wagga, but spent his secondary and tertiary education years in Caringbah before joining the resident staff of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1967.

An obstetrician and gynaecologist in the Riverina community from 1974 until 2006, Ian has been recognised for his contribution to the education of medical undergraduates and postgraduates during that time, but more especially since the advent of the two clinical schools, UNSW in 2000 and Notre Dame in 2010.

He provided medicolegal reports for the NSW Medical Board and the Health Care Complaints Commission from 1994 to 2006. He chaired the Greater Southern Area Health Service Community Advisory Board from 2006 to 2010, and was a member of the NSW State Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on two occasions between 1985 and 1995.

Readers may also recognize Ian's face from the latest SSHS publication, *East Coast Encounters 1770, reflections on a cultural clash*. Ian contributed the chapter, 'Remembering Forby Sutherland', the first European to be buried on Australian soil, and after whom Sutherland Shire is named.

Congratulations Ian from all of us at SSHS!

Elizabeth Craig

THE *ENDEAVOUR* AT NEWPORT?

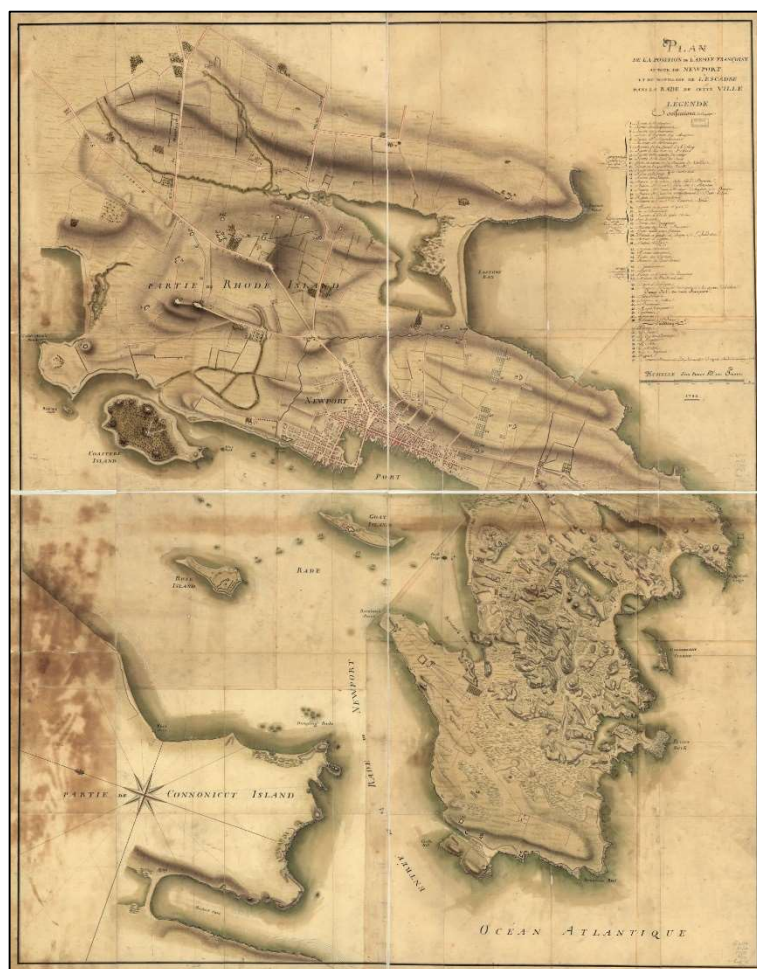
EDWARD DUYKER

School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney

I read, with interest, Greg Jackson's article 'HMB *Endeavour* After Cook', in the *Sutherland Shire Historical Society Bulletin*, August 2021 (pp. 16–19). With my wife Susan, I visited Newport, Rhode Island in 2019, on the trail of Lapérouse – a significant French participant in the War of American Independence. Inevitably, we also gazed out over the waters beyond Goat Island, in Narragansett Bay, and pondered the fate of the *Endeavour*.

To remind my readers (and Greg's), on 4 August 1778 the British commander, General Pigot, sought to hinder any French attempt to enter Newport's inner harbour by sinking 13 surplus transport vessels. One of these vessels was the civilian transport *Lord Sandwich II* – formerly James Cook's *Endeavour*, sold off by the Royal Navy in March 1775.

The British eventually abandoned Newport, and the French returned in July 1780 with the Chevalier de Ternay's fleet and the Comte de Rochambeau's expeditionary corps to aid the Americans. While researching Lapérouse's sojourn in Newport with the frigate *Amazon*, I was drawn to several important documents. One was a French map drafted in 1780 showing a row of 'hulls of ships sunk to the bottom by the English at the approach of the fleet of the Comte d'Estaing in 1778'. It is part of the Rochambeau Collection at the Library of Congress.¹



Plan de la position de l'armée française autour de Newport et du mouillage de l'escadre dans la rade de cette ville (1780) [Rochambeau Collection, Library of Congress, Washington.

(French caption translated: *Plan of the position of the French army around Newport in Rhode Island and of the anchorage of the squadron in the harbour of this town, Newport 1780.*)



Detail showing Dyer's Point, the location of the French frigates (marked no. 56) and the hulls of ships scuttled by the British in 1778 (marked no. 57)

It also shows where three French frigates were anchored below Dyers Point and its battery (now Battery Park, Newport). Although they are not named, one of these frigates was the *Hermione* which had arrived earlier in Newport with the Marquis de Lafayette. The other two frigates were the *Amazon* and the *Surveillante*. So, Lapérouse's *Amazon*, might have anchored as little as 275 metres from where James Cook's former *Endeavour* may have been scuttled!

Another important document I consulted was the journal kept by one of Lapérouse's lieutenants aboard the *Amazon*: Pierre-Alexandre Pastour de Costebelle (1750–1791). In 2016 I located and copied this at the Archives nationales' Pierrefit repository in Paris.² Interestingly, Pastour de Costebelle kept a separate journal of events while the frigate was at anchor, '*Journal de Rade pendant le séjour de l'Escadre à New-Port, du 12 juillet 1780 au 28 8^{bre} 1780*', but it is bound with the sea journal. I have no idea whether marine archaeologists working in Newport have consulted this interesting document, but it indicates that the submerged barrage of transport vessels remained a problem for the French and presumably the Americans.

On 30 July 1780, an 'English brig destined for France' (perhaps the *Anne* or the *Joseph*, captured by the French not long before their arrival in Newport) struck the hull of a scuttled vessel and sank. One sailor was drowned, but the rest were saved by boats, presumably from the *Amazon* and the other two French frigates anchored nearby. A month later, after this brig was salvaged and before it was careened ashore, it was used as a place to execute, by firing squad, a marine found guilty of killing a surgeon in the French fleet.

Pastour de Costebelle also records that, on 13 September, three American ships attempted to raise a sunken hull, but were forced to 'let go' when their bows ceded to the water line during the attempted lift (and they apparently risked sinking themselves). A week later, there was a renewed attempt and Pastour de Costebelle saw the bowsprit of one of these sunken vessels and still more of its timbers emerge from the water. That afternoon, the American ships had

hauled 'their hull three or four cables to the north of us'. On 25 September, the Americans had hauled the hull 'close enough to land' and to 'discharge' it.³

Inevitably, one is tempted to ask, could the 366-ton, former *Endeavour*, *Lord Sandwich II*, have been raised by these three American vessels of unknown tonnage? And if Pastour de Costebelle's journal records only the period 12 July to 28 October 1780, what other successful salvage work occurred before and after this period? These scuttled vessels, lying in relatively shallow waters, were a nuisance, but also potentially valuable to a young nation attempting to establish a navy and rebuild its merchant fleet.

The dispersed site identified under the supervision of Dr Kerry Lynch of the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project in 1993, contains the fragmented remnants of numerous sunken vessels assumed to have been scuttled in 1778. Since 1999, the Australian National Maritime Museum has participated in this marine archaeological project because of the possibility of finding the remains of the former *Endeavour*. Yet, despite protracted surveys, timber analysis and decades of other research, no definitive identification has been made. I would be thrilled if this historic vessel could be found, but I can't help asking: Is she still there?

The author in his Sylvania office with a model of The Endeavour made in Mauritius. Edward notes that model shipbuilding is something of a cottage industry in Mauritius. It was begun in the 1960s by José Ramar in a house built by Edward's great-great-grandfather in Curepipe. It was the same house in which Edward's mother lived until she emigrated to Australia in 1950. Edward bought this model in Curepipe in October 2003.



[Photo: John Veage, *Leader*, 5 Feb 2022]

End note: On Thursday, 3 February 2022, Kevin Sumption, the chief executive of the Australian National Maritime Museum, announced that the *Endeavour* had been positively identified. Yet this identification was made of a wreck of which only 15 per cent reportedly remains. The announcement promptly raised the ire of Dr Kathy Abbass the current executive director of the Rhode Island Marine Archaeological Project. Despite discoveries 'consistent with what might be expected of the *Endeavour*', she said, there was still 'no indisputable data' and 'many unanswered questions that could overturn such an identification'. (*The New Daily*, 3 February 2022).

¹ 'Plan de la position de l'armée françoise autour de Newport et du mouillage de l'escadre dans la rade de cette ville (1780)', Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C., G3774, N4S3 1780, P53.

² Pastour de Costebelle, 'Journal de la Campagne dans l'Amérique septentrionale, de la frégate l'*Amazone* commandée par M. de La Pérouse, Cap[itai]ne de vaisseau [du 22 février 1780 au 5 xbre 1780], Archives Nationales, Pierrefit, Archives privées, 19 AP 1 Papiers Pastour de Costebelle.

³ Pastour de Costebelle, 'Journal de Rade . . . du 12 juillet 1780 au 28 8^{bre} 1780', Archives Nationales, Pierrefit, Archives privées, 19 AP 1 Papiers Pastour de Costebelle.

CONVICT STORIES - PIRACY IN PORT JACKSON

GREG JACKSON and PAM FORBES

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

Piracy was a common crime in the colonial NSW with desperate convicts attempting to seize a suitable vessel and flee the colony. One such attempt was made in April 1827 with 13 convicts attempting to seize a vessel in Port Jackson to make good their escape. Their exploits were described in *The Monitor*, 6 April 1827, and are reproduced below.

The Schooner Liberty sailed at an early hour on Saturday morning for Port Stephens, With Stores &c. for the Australian Agricultural Company. Shortly after leaving the Cove she was neared by a boat containing about thirteen hands. The individual who assumed the ostensible command having reached the vessel's side, ascended the deck; and represented himself as having charge of the party in the boat for the purpose of procuring them a passage; and that failure on his part, would be attended by serious inconvenience.

The Master of the Schooner persisted in the impossibility of finding them accommodation, when the shout "the Vessel's ours," prematurely given, at once acquainted the crew of the nature and intention of the visitors, and they instantaneously made signals for assistance. The invaders saw their imprudence and immediately abandoned the craft. The Liberty pursued them into Sirius Cove.

The course then taken by the departed boat and her crew became doubtful, she might have put ashore, so what was still more to be apprehended, the Sloop Glatton, for Newcastle, had been wind-bound in the offing, and lay an easy prey to such a Party all was now bustle and confusion-here were the brave dread nought constables in groups armed with muskets, hurrying in all directions there were detachments of the military scampering, neither they nor their Commanders knew whither.

A strong body of troops marched to the dock yard on their arrival there, all were again "at fault," there were no ordinary means of conveyance for such a number, and impressment was resorted to. The Fanny just ready for a trip to Hobart Town received the cargo all alive, and started in pursuit. Reports from South-head announced the Darling on her return from Newcastle, to be at fifteen miles' distance, and that a vessel supposed to be the Glatton was bearing down upon her there was fresh cause of alarm, they have taken the Glatton, but the Darling is a larger and better sea-boat and they will attack her - if confusion prevailed before: it now increased to a ten-fold degree, now Military Orderly's were seen scouring the street from the Barracks to and from "The Authorities."

Everything conspired to give the affair the utmost importance. The safe arrival of the Darling however removed all fears on her account, and eventually the apprehension of Michael Coogan, the alleged leader of the pirate band, set at rest in a great measure the rumours which had previously succeeded each other with such rapidity. Several men had been absent from their muster at Hyde Park Barracks on that day, but such is most commonly the case on a Saturday, and they were for the most part found in the watch-houses, &c. taken out of the streets drunk.

No apprehensions have taken place saving that of Coogan, which could attach suspicion to any one being concerned in their attempt he is known to be enterprising, inured to the sea-service, and possessing superior abilities; had been missed from his employ in the office of the Principal Superintendent of Convicts, was apprehended on Tuesday about noon concealed in a house in King street, into which he had contrived to obtain admission, and subsequently (unknown to the principal occupiers of the house) secreted himself in a loft. He is still under examination.

Another event transpired calculated to increase the general ferment. Quin, one; of the run-away Pirates, had been found - in company with two others, sitting under a rock in the vicinity of Cockle Bay, he was captured, but his companions escaped, "they must be desperate fellows," and off went constables by threes and sixes, with muskets and other weapons, offensive and defensive; these continued their peregrinations during the whole of: Saturday and Sunday, but much to their content were unsuccessful in their search.

Quin in the meantime remained and remains in the watch-house, until some of the sufferers by plunder up the country shall arrive in Sydney to report if he has been a party concerned in the late robberies. A Correspondent complains that some of the Constables were to be seen in George Street, carrying loaded fire arms in a state of intoxication, and during the Church Service too. What will the Archdeacon say to His Majesty's Servants so acting? Surely he will order the salaries of those officers to be raised, to tempt sober men into the service.



Image 1: Sydney Cove c1817 – 1840 by Edward Charles Close, [State Library of NSW PXA1187]

This description of the attempted piracy in the humorous journalese of the time sounds rather like a comedy of errors involving both the convict pirates and the law officers. Although the name of all the 13 convicts involved is not known, Scotsman Thomas Dobbie was definitely one. *The Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser* on 9 April 1827 tells of Dobbie's involvement (although his name is reported as James Dolby).

James Dolby, assigned servant to Mr, Simeon Lord, was charged with being concerned in the late attempt to seize the Liberty. From the evidence of Mr. Lord, it appeared, that the prisoner had been absent from his service the whole of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday last, and that a chart of the N. E. coast of New Holland, found amongst those taken from the possession of Michael Coggan, the ringleader, had been stolen from the premises of Mr. Lord, and positively sworn to, by him, as being his property. The prisoner was remanded.

Dobbie was sentenced to work in a road gang, in irons, for six months in June 1827 with the pirate's ring leader, Michael Coogan, being executed. It is not known where Dobbie served his sentence but the 1828 census records him still working for Simeon Lord at Botany. Lord ran a factory on the shore of Botany Bay manufacturing a variety of goods, including hats, so Dobbie's trade as a hat finisher would be used to advantage. Dobbie's convict record is shown in Image 1.

Convicts Name: Thomas (James) Dobbie (Dobie) (Dolby)			
Ship: <i>England</i> 1826			
Offence: Housebreaking		Sentence: Edinburgh 1825, life (death)	
DOB: 1800	Marriage Status:	Religion:	Education: R & W
Country of Origin: Scotland		Place of Origin: Perth	
Occupation: Hat finisher	Height: 5' 6"	Complexion: Fresh	Hair Colour: Brown to grey
Eye Colour: Grey			
Freedom: Ticket of Leave (ToL)* issued March 1836, ToL issued Dec 1837			
Colonial Crimes: June 1827 Sydney jail, attempting a piracy, sentenced to iron gang, 6 months. ToL destroyed in 1845. In Bathurst jail 1847, crime unknown			
Crimes Prior to Transportation: None			
References: B#1016518101			
Notes: With Simeon Lord in 1828 at Botany			

Image 2: *The reconstructed convict record of Thomas Dobbie*

Data for Thomas Dobbie's records came from:

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

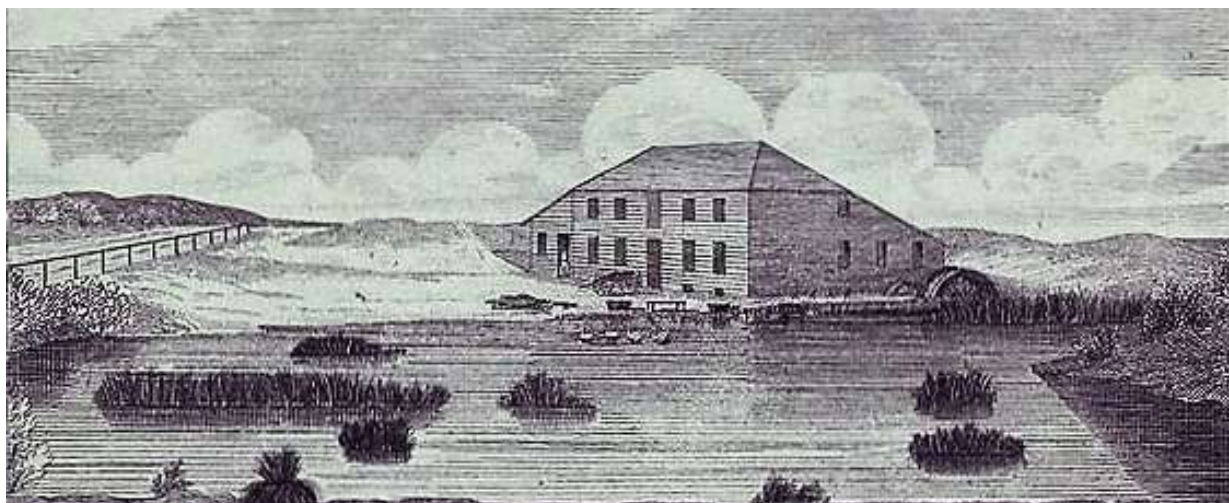


Image 3: *Lords Mill, Botany, built in 1815, drawn by John Carmichael 1838. [NLA call no. PIC Volume 109 #U1131 NK1477]*

Information about the ships in this story:

From *Shipwreck Atlas of NSW* (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage).

These ships are all quite small, even by the standards of the day. Research, by the authors, has enabled an accurate statistical estimate of the dimensions of sailing ships, built pre 1849, given only their tonnage. This research is used to estimate the ships dimensions where a survey is unavailable it is available from:

https://www.academia.edu/9509349/How_Big_is_a_100_ton_Brig

Glatton: Sloop, 13 tons burden. Estimated length: 9.8m (32'), beam: 2.9m (9.8')

Liberty: Schooner, 42 tons burden. Length 13.7m (45'), beam 4.4m (14.4')
built 1824 in Tasmania, Lost 20/01/1830 Sydney Harbour, North Head.

Fanny: Colonial cutter, 25 tons burden, Estimated length: 12.3m (40'), beam: 3.6m (11.9')
built 1826 in Cockle Bay Sydney.

Darling: Schooner of between 30 and 40 tons burthen, Estimated length: between 13.8 and 14.6m (45' and 48'), beam between 3.7m and 4.1m (12.2' and 13.8'). *Darling* was launched at Sydney in October 1825, having been built for her owner, Thomas Street.



Sydney Morning Herald, 26 October 1937 [Trove]

In 1801 a woman named Charlotte Badger arrived in Sydney having been convicted in Worcestershire, England, of housebreaking. She was transported for seven years.

With just two years of her sentence to go Charlotte gave birth to a daughter in the old Parramatta Female Factory. That year, 1806, she was assigned as a servant to a settler

in Hobart, and with other convicts, mostly male, she and her child sailed from Port Jackson on the *Venus* to Tasmania.

On 17 June, at Port Dalrymple on Tasmania's north coast, Charlotte was, according to the ship's captain, an 'enthusiastic participant' in a mutiny, where the convicts took over the ship and sailed across the Tasman to the Bay of Islands in New Zealand. Here Charlotte and her child stayed with the local Maoris while the *Venus* sailed on down the coast. Charlotte's fate is unknown, but one account says that she eventually escaped to America.

Ref: Biography, Badger, Charlotte, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b1/badger-charlotte>

In 2002 SSHS member, Angela Badger, wrote an account of Charlotte's life in *Charlotte Badger, Buccaneer*, Indra Publishing, Victoria.

Elizabeth Craig

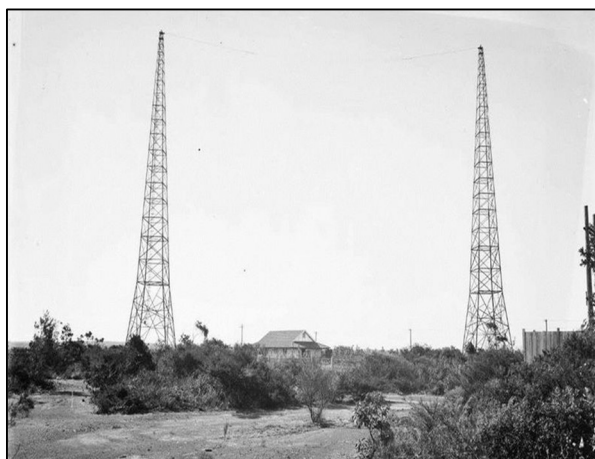
THE GOAL POSTS WERE REALLY BIG THEN!

THE PRE-HISTORY OF LILLI PILLI OVAL

CHRISTINE EDNEY

Long before it became a soccer oval in 1961 Lilli Pilli Oval had another life.

In 1932 Radio Station 2UE set up a transmitting station on the land that is now Lilli Pilli oval and the site of houses north of it. The first transmission was on 2 October 1932. The steel towers were 200ft high and 40 tonnes of concrete were used for each foundation which were set ten feet deep - down to bedrock to minimise the towers bending or swaying. The transmissions were sent from the station's studio in Pitt St, Sydney by a dedicated land line. The station contained large generators and the transmission was at 4000 watts.¹ The choice of site may have been because it was not only the highest point in the area, but the owner of 2UE, a Mr Stephenson, lived close by on the corner of Port Hacking Road and Turriell Point Road.



Towers and transmitting station in December 1933 [NLA]

During World War 2 (in about 1942) the site was taken over by the RAAF as a Radar station, and timber towers were erected.² Air raid shelters were built at the northern end of the oval and the RAAF staff lived in houses near the corner of Telopea St and Port Hacking Road.

In 1946 two rifles with bayonets were stolen from the radar station.³ Also in 1946, five of the six cottages that had been used by RAAF were vacant, and there was a newspaper article pushing for the houses to be made available for occupation by homeless returned servicemen. The RAAF said the houses were needed as the radar station was going to be used in conjunction with RAAF use of Bankstown Airport. Only one of the houses had a kitchen as it had been used as a mess building, and there was a recreation hut at the rear, a communal shower and a toilet block.⁴



1943 aerial showing towers in middle of what is now the oval (look for the shadows), transmitting station to the north-west of the northern tower [Shire Maps]

The Kirkby index cards indicate that some of the land was set aside as a park in 1951 and more in 1957.⁵ Council decided to erect playground equipment using money paid to them by the Commonwealth Government as compensation for interference with the land by the RAAF. In 1958 it was decided to sell more land at the northern end for residential purposes, and at the southern end to the Education Department for a school and a playground. Local residents opposed the sale of any land and were ordered out of a Council meeting by the Shire President in May 1958. In 1958 the Council cleared the remains of the radar installation from the site and erected a dressing shed and toilet at the southern end of the field. The land was officially dedicated for public recreation in 1959.

The newly formed Lilli Pilli Junior Soccer Club approached Council in late 1960 about using the oval for the 1961 season.⁶ The first kiosk building was erected at the northern end of the field in 1964, and Caltex donated a construction shed building from their Refinery site.

¹ *Propeller*, 30 September 1932

² <https://www.ozatwar.com/ozatwar/radar.htm> [accessed 9.2.2022]

³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 1946

⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1946

⁵ <https://www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/Community/Library/Libraries/Sutherland-Library>

⁶ SSC Parks & Playgrounds Comm. Minutes, 5 December 1960

PUTTING OUT THE RUBBISH ON THE WORONORA RIVER

GREG JACKSON

'Most archaeology is guesswork; the rest is prejudice', Will Durant

These days we take our rubbish collection service for granted, but this has not always been the case. Habitation on the Woronora began in the second half on the nineteenth century with oyster farmers and a few holiday makers building on its banks, and starting to produce rubbish in large quantities. Much of this rubbish would be burnt or simply thrown into the river, and for a tidal river with the occasional big flood, such as the Woronora, this would generally dispose of most rubbish adequately. Rubbish of a heavy non-organic nature sometimes remains on the riverbank. Image 1 shows some late nineteenth century alcohol containers and broken ceramic tableware still visible along the river.



Image 1: Broken alcohol bottles and ceramic tableware on the shore of the Woronora River.

[Photo G. Jackson]

One of the truisms of archaeology is that a house's alcohol bottle dump is to be found at throwing distance from the house door. This distance can vary, of course, depending on the throwing arm of the house owner and his state of intoxication when the bottle was thrown, but it is a good rule and, on the Woronora, useful in predicting the location of bottles along the shoreline.

At least one resident had a more enlightened view of the disposal of rubbish. Image 2 shows part of a long, low rock overhang containing what must be many years of non-organic rubbish disposal extending for about 20 metres along the riverside. Metal food containers have been neatly folded flat to save space. This rubbish dump is below the 1917 house of Charles Humble, which later passed to his son Ken and was destroyed by fire in 1994. Without unpacking and analysing all the rubbish, the date that this method of disposal began is unknown, but by good luck a bottle on the outside of the pile, has a visible date of 1966. This gives a reasonably accurate end date for the rubbish disposal method.



Image 2: A small part of the rubbish heap in a riverside overhang on the Woronora River with a beer bottle dated 1966. [Photo G. Jackson]

Rubbish disposal is still a problem on those parts of the Woronora with no road access. It is no longer legal or socially acceptable to burn rubbish or throw it into the river and the Sutherland Council provide a viable alternative. For many years, an aquatic version of a garbage truck, shown in Images 3 and 4, provides a weekly pickup service.



Image 3: Rubbish pickup from houses on the Woronora with no road access c1970's.¹



Image 4: The Woronora Rubbish Truck at Prince Edward Park in 2022. [Photo. G. Jackson]

Rubbish disposal on the Woronora has come a long way from the 'burn it and chuck it' days of the nineteenth century. Houses with no road access now have similar disposal options as the rest of the Sutherland Shire.

Footnotes:

¹ Sutherland Shire Council: Historic Photos, *Garbage collection in the upper reaches of the Woronora River, 1970s*

https://localhistory.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/nodes?keywords=Woronora+river+garbage&searchbutton1=Search&all=1&whole=2&in=2&q=&checkAll=0&nodetype_id%5B6%5D=6&datemin=&datemax=&orderby=rel

THE BATTLE OF COMO

STEPHANIE BAILEY

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

Published on Monday, 13th September 2021, and republished here with permission of the author

The leafy banks along the Georges River at Como may seem peaceful now, but 120 years ago this tranquil foreshore was once the site of a pitched – and fiercely contested – military battle.

On 19th November 1901, the headquarters of the New South Wales Military Forces issued this alarming report:

A hostile force has effected a landing on the South Coast, in the vicinity of Bulli, and is in occupation of that district. ... Bulli Pass are seized during the night of the 18th instant. On the 19th instant the main portion of the enemy's force occupies this position, and advances in the direction of Appin; object, to seize the Sydney water supply and advance on Sydney, via Parramatta. A flying column detached from the Loddon River to proceed via Waterfall and Sutherland, with the view of seizing the Como Bridge and ferries above and below.

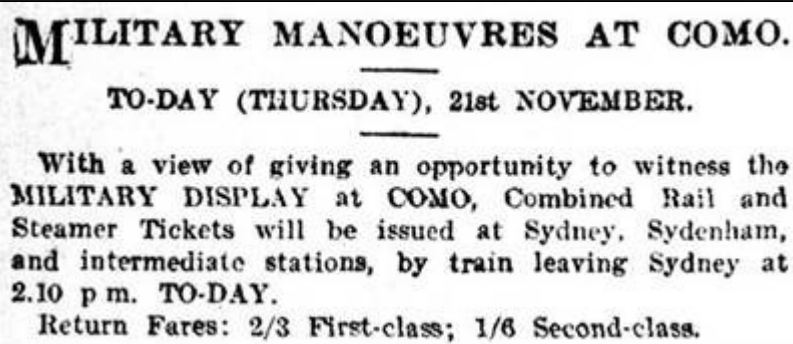
Sydney was under attack!

And yet, despite the apparent danger, no panic set in. In fact, if anything, Sydneysiders were rather excited by the opportunity to witness the looming military encounter between the belligerent invaders who were then fast advancing on Como, and the corps of metropolitan volunteers that had been despatched to halt them. Railway authorities had even arranged for special 'combined rail and steamer tickets' to be issued so that members of the public could easily travel to the combat zone on the day of the conflict.

On 21st November 1901, the two opposing sides took up their positions along the Georges River and faced each other. Right on 4pm a BOOM erupted from the Como side: the attacking force opened with their 15-pounder. The defenders' reply was swift: 50 rifles rang out. The Battle of Como had commenced. And yes, this really

happened... sort of. The action staged that day was, in fact, a mock battle; the climactic final challenge to a series of military training exercises that had been carried out across the escarpments and bushland between Clifton and Loftus over the previous fortnight; each manoeuvre fought with very real objectives and targets, but (thankfully) blank ammunition.

Throughout much of the 19th Century, the art of warfare had primarily been taught in the Australian colonies in military barracks, or occasionally in permanent camps. Then in 1901, Lt-Colonel Bayly of the Infantry School of Instruction at Victoria Barracks decided to introduce a new feature into the training of the officers, non-commissioned officers and men under his command: a moveable camp held under conditions that resembled (as closely as possible) those that might be encountered on active service. Bayly recognised from firsthand experience that this type of practical and instructive fieldwork could be immensely valuable.



MILITARY MANOEUVRES AT COMO.
TO-DAY (THURSDAY), 21st NOVEMBER.
With a view of giving an opportunity to witness the **MILITARY DISPLAY** at **COMO**, Combined Rail and Steamer Tickets will be issued at Sydney, Sydenham, and intermediate stations, by train leaving Sydney at 2.10 p.m. **TO-DAY.**
Return Fares: 2/3 First-class; 1/6 Second-class.

Advertisement in *The Daily Telegraph*



*Lieutenant Colonel M.W. Bayly
NSW Officers at the Front
[AWM ART50125]*

Originally from Devonshire in England, Montague William Bayly (1859-1906) was already a proficient soldier by the time he immigrated to Australia in the 1880s, having served in the North Yorkshire Militia and Yorkshire Light Infantry for several years. His first military appointment in Australia was with the Infantry Reserve Corps; he later graduated to the permanent staff of the 1st and 2nd New South Wales Infantry Regiments. In 1892, when a system of schools of instruction for permanent and citizen forces was established, Bayly (then a brevet¹ Major) was selected as the first Commandant of the Infantry course. It was in this role as a training officer that Bayly proved himself exceptionally adept.

Then in 1899, when the war in South Africa (now commonly referred to as the Boer War) began attracting soldiers from across the British Empire, Bayly was amongst the first officers sent from New South Wales on 'special service.' He had an eventful war.

During his 18 months in South Africa, Bayly attained the unenviable distinction of being taken prisoner – not once, but twice. Fortunately, on both occasions he was liberated because, as he later explained during a newspaper interview: 'the Boers could ill-afford to support prisoners.' Crucially too, Bayly's time in South Africa provided him with the opportunity to closely observe the Boer enemy's tactics, strengths and capabilities. He was thereby able to gain an acute understanding of the vital importance of both local knowledge and support from the resident population, as well as the 'absolute necessity for mobility' when fighting an enemy on their home soil. These were lessons that would profoundly inform Bayly's military training methods when he returned to Australia in April 1901.

On 9th November 1901, the *Evening News* reported:

A camp will be initiated on Sunday in connection with the Military School of Instruction. The camp – a moving one – will be under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Bayly, and will be conducted on the strictest service lines, the operations being carried out as though the forces were in hostile country. The men will sleep in their blankets upon whatever kind of soil the halt for the night chances to be made. The camp is being organised for instructional purposes, and every branch of the military service will be represented.

The following day, Bayly's South Coast Column – which initially comprised 124 (but later 143) men of all ranks, 70 horses, guns, transports and equipment – set off. So that eager Sydney newspaper readers could stay up to date on the progress of Bayly's military manoeuvres, a 'Special Correspondent' was also attached to the column. His daily despatches were sent via bicycle to the telegraph station at Waterfall. The artist, Fred Leist, travelled with the unit too. Although he created several sketches of the moving camp, there was – until the day of the final battle – no accompanying photographer on hand to record proceedings.



*Fred Leist sketch of Bayly.
['With the Flying Column', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1901.]*

After leaving Victoria Barracks, the country officers led the convoy south towards Redfern, through Rockdale and Kogarah, then 'down the slopes' from Tom Ugly's 'turn off'. They reached the Georges River Punt around 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon. Once all had crossed the river, the column continued towards Loftus, where camp was pitched for the night. From then on, the campaign began in earnest. 'Play the game' was the phrase on everyone's lips.

In many ways, the scenario for this first stage of 'the game' was identical to the one that was later outlined in the military headquarters report: an enemy force had landed at Bulli, captured the coal mines, cut all telegraphic communication on the coast line south of Waterfall, and taken charge of the region.

There were several reasons why the South Coast was considered strategically vulnerable. Firstly, an attacking force would find themselves in a self-supporting country, with horses, cattle and other general supplies readily available for the taking. Secondly, as was pointed out at the time: 'When an advance on Sydney is contemplated the enemy will hardly go up to the front door and into the jaws of the watchdog.' Bulli was therefore identified as a possible point of invasion as it afforded several directions from which an assault on the city could be mounted, even if all routes posed a succession of grim problems for both attackers and defenders. In fact, the consequences of such an invasion, in terms of both physical human suffering and the loss of resources, would have been almost too awful to imagine. It was also altogether impossible to devise a defence scheme that would adequately cover the full range of real opportunities available to an invading enemy. And so, for the purposes of the training exercise, it was necessary to pretend that Bayly's Column represented just a portion of the force despatched to defend Sydney against a make-believe foe whose advanced flank scouts had been seen in the vicinity of Audley.

Over the next week or so, Bayly's men carried out their training exercises, drills and skirmishes in the bushland around Stanwell Tops, Loftus, and the National Park; occasionally in full view of crowds of picnickers who had come down to Audley for a day by the river. The work was hard, relentless and exhausting, and it forced the troops to continually grapple with many of the physical demands and dangers that actually prevail on active service: an unforgiving environment; precipitous tracks; dismal weather; animals, weaponry and equipment to manage and maintain; illness, injuries and fatigue; and a steady diet of near-inedible food – 'tinned dog' was how one soldier described his nightly ration. There were abstract obstacles too, and not just the imaginary enemy they were fighting each day: notices such as 'This bridge is destroyed,' or 'This road is mined', blocked pathways and alternative routes had to be devised and negotiated. Bayly's men made many mistakes and there were shortcomings, but the result was – even after this short period of training – the formation of a more cohesive, determined and competent unit of fighting men; a detachment capable of mounting a valiant defence against a formidable, invading enemy.

And then the game changed.

'From tonight we change our colours,' wrote the Special Correspondent in his despatch from South Clifton on 17th November.

Up to the present we have been an Australian army and gloried in the fact. ... We ambushed many of the enemy and licked the rest all the way from Garie Heights. The crest-fallen invaders have taken to their invisible ships, and from tonight are speeding along on a dead sea to the mythical shores of Utopia. From within a mile of Bulli they will cease to occupy our thought. But we merely change the spirit of the dream. For WE ARE NOW THE ENEMY – and let Sydney beware.

That's right: the revised scenario meant that Lt-Colonel Bayly – having disposed of the foreign foes – had, for some reason become hostile himself, and instead of acting in defence of Sydney, now set forth to march on the city.

The Special Correspondent continued:

We take the roads on the heights, get to Loddon River, pass through some of the dreariest country imaginable, leave our tracks on the Bottle Forest Road, take possession of Waterfall, and the great and crowning object of our expedition will be to capture Como Bridge. Once over the Georges River, ... we do not think that Sydney has a ghost of show against "Gen'ral Bayly's Irresistibles" – the South Coast Flying Column.



Portrait of Colonel J.C. Neild, 1901. [NLA]

The other significant change to the military manoeuvres was that Bayly's men would no longer be skirmishing against a make-believe adversary, but would face in battle a contingent of hundreds of metropolitan volunteers whose job was to halt the attackers' advance at Como. The man tasked to lead the defending force was an interesting choice. Lt-Colonel John Cash Neild (1846-1911), an insurance agent and politician who had, at times, represented New South Wales in both the Legislative Assembly and the Senate. In 1896, despite having no previous military experience, nor (reportedly) 'the tact and judgment necessary to the efficient command of a regiment', he was appointed Officer Commanding the 7th Volunteer Infantry Regiment (St. George Rifles). He was later promoted to Major and then Lt-Colonel. Interestingly too, Neild and Bayly had a bit of a history.

Back in April 1899, during a sham fight at the Easter Encampment at Kingsgrove, a number of Lt-Colonel Neild's men were taken prisoner. Neild was not at all happy. He vented his anger – with both his superior officers and the press – in a series of powerful letters written from Parliament House on Parliament House paper. His final letter – addressed to Colonel Bayly (his immediate superior) – strenuously criticised several high-ranking officers of the headquarters staff. For this act of insubordination, Bayly concluded that his only course was to suspend Neild's command of the St. George Rifles. In a sensational turn of events, Neild (notwithstanding his claims to 'parliamentary privilege') was also placed on open arrest. In the end, the matter became the subject of a prolonged and damning court of enquiry, that somehow left Neild in command of his regiment. Two years later, Bayly and Neild would find themselves engaged in a very different type of conflict: The Battle of Como.

Thursday 21st November 1901 started early for the 143 men of Bayly's South Coast Column. Shortly after midnight, the troops struck camp at Heathcote and made a start for Sutherland, arriving at 2.00 am after travelling up from Heathcote on the top of railway coal trucks. They then bivouacked in the station's waiting-rooms until 8.00 am when the rest of the mounted convoy and wagons arrived, accompanied by one of the field guns. The second 15-pounder, meanwhile, had been sent from Heathcote on a different – and tactically ambitious – route with Lt Taylor of the Artillery. In 1901 there were three points at which Georges River could ordinarily be crossed: Como Bridge, Tom Ugly's Punt to the east, and a government punt two miles farther west from the bridge. Lt-Colonel Bayly anticipated (correctly) that on the afternoon of the battle, Lt-Colonel Neild would set up his defences at each of these positions, with the main body of troops engaged with the artillery in the vicinity of Como. And so, a scheme was devised to take the defenders by surprise in a flank attack.

Lt Taylor, with a mounted escort of around 20 men and 30 horses, headed off cross-country towards Woronora River. The rugged banks and rough country tested the gunners' bush skills and ingenuity; at times dragropes and guys had to be used to haul and lower the 15-pounder up and over enormous boulders. At the Georges River, immediately opposite Saltpan Creek, Taylor was able to commandeer a punt and a fleet of rowboats to take them across the river. Still, it took some work to get all the horses safely to the opposite bank. 'It was a heavy job' explained Taylor. 'I got into a boat, planked my feet against the stern, and pulled the horses, two at a time, into the river. They were quivering and trembling, and it was an awful strain My hands were skinned, but the job had to be done.' Thankfully, all the horses were accounted for; the gun made it across the river undamaged and unobserved by the defenders' scouts; and Taylor and his detachment were therefore able to continue their sweep around on the enemy's position.

Back at Sutherland, after a few hours' rest, the convoy were served rations as well as blank ammunition and supplies for the afternoon's encounter. At 11.00 am, the troops were escorted by a local bush guide through the thick bushland between Sutherland and Como where they took up their various positions along the foreshore, and made all final preparations prior to the battle. There was much to organise. Bayly realised that the Sydney defenders believed he was in possession of two field guns, when in truth one of these weapons was further upriver with Lt Taylor's unit; a fact he certainly did not wish to disclose to the enemy. And so, a hastily-constructed, but well-concealed gun-pit was set up on the heights south-east of Como. From here Bayly stationed his 15-pounder; its sights set on Como Bridge. Under the shelter of irregular scrub, a second gun-pit was erected 30 yards away. In this way, the troops would be able to manhandle the weapon from pit to pit, firing from each spot alternately, and bombarding the defenders into believing that both field guns were engaged at that point.

Yet another group of attackers led by Major Lee of the Submarine Miners, set out east along the river. Disguised as fishermen in rowboats, they snuck across to Sandringham; walked to Sans Souci; then lay in waiting amongst the mangrove swamps until the battle commenced. Clearly Bayly's attacking force were taking the day's military exercise incredibly seriously. The defenders? Not quite so much. In fact, the first prisoner of the day – a colour sergeant from the Kogarah Company – was captured well before a single shot was fired. Intending to return and parade with his unit in the afternoon, the colour sergeant had nonchalantly ventured over to Como some hours earlier for a picnic with his wife and family. Once arrested, he was forced to spend the rest of the day confined in a small pavilion, surrounded by his female relatives and children.

Lt-Colonel Neild's defending force were a mixed body of around 450-600 metropolitan troops – mostly volunteers – drawn from the 1st and 2nd Regiments, St. George's Rifles, Civil Service Corps amongst other companies; as well as a detachment of the Field Artillery with two 15-pounders under Captain Dangar. They left Sydney by special train to Oatley at 2:30pm and were met by Major-General French and his staff. From here, 40 members of the Kogarah Company moved off towards Tom Ugly's Point (unaware of the danger that was lurking in the mangroves). Meanwhile, an advance party were sent out along the heights on the Sydney side of the Georges River, but finding no trace of the enemy, the rest of the metropolitan troops were brought up. But instead of proceeding carefully and concealing themselves, Neild's Sydney defenders heedlessly marched along in solid formation. Half these troops took up positions on the eastern side of the railway line, while the rest occupied the huge bluff directly overlooking Como Bridge. It was an excellent display of what not to do, as it provided Bayly's faultlessly hidden attackers with a fine view of where the defenders were stationing themselves, and they fixed their guns accordingly.



Defenders' Artillery on the march.

[‘The Attack on Sydney’, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1901]

Still, despite their recklessness, the defenders did hold several advantages. Firstly, as outlined in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

‘[Their] position was practically an impregnable one, as a small force could easily hold the bridge against an enemy trying to rush it, whilst it would be madness for a hostile body to attempt to cross the 1200 yards of water intervening in punts or small boats.

And secondly – and importantly – Neild’s Sydney defenders outnumbered Bayly’s South Coast attackers by at least three to one.

As the seconds ticked down till 4.00 pm, both sides stood ready and waited excitedly for the battle to commence. In fact, Bayly and his men had been specially requested to refrain from attacking until this time by the ‘troops who came out for a half-holiday from town.’ ‘Presumably,’ mocked one Sydney reporter, ‘[because] an earlier hour would have been too soon after dinner for the brightly-uniformed defenders.’

But as the clock’s long hand reached the top of the hour, all niceties abruptly ended: the roar of artillery fire ripped through the air as the attackers’ field gun opened from the south-east portion of their ridge. The defenders’ rifles and Captain Dangar’s 15-pounders promptly responded, but the attackers remained invisible. Not so the defenders on the north side of the river: they carelessly broke cover, hopping from rock to rock to the edge of the heights. Then, thinking they’d spotted a group of four enemy soldiers on the Como side – Bang! However, it was not Bayly’s troops, but a group of picnickers gathered to watch the battle.

Suddenly a loud continuous fusillade was heard to the east as Major Lee of the Submarine Miners and his detachment leapt from their swampy hiding places and ‘pumped death’ into the bewildered troops of the Kogarah Company amassed outside the hotel at Tom Ugly’s Point.

The defenders were just beginning to recover from their shock, when Captain Millard’s infantry detachment – which had crossed from Kangaroo Point and reached the heights unobserved – fired into them from the rear. Captain Tower simultaneously shot at the defenders from the opposite side of the river. The Kogarah Company were killed to a man, but they refused to lie down. Instead, they charged their attackers with fixed bayonets, ordering Captain Millard to surrender! With no intention of offering defeat, Millard replied that ‘the heroes of the bayonet charge were dead— stiff, stark, riddled corpses — and that in addition to his fire THEY WERE DOUBLY DEAD, by the fire of Major Lee.’

Back at Como, Bayly's infantry remained concealed, conserving their ammunition; all that was visible of his riflemen were tiny puffs of smoke as they carefully took aim and picked off their targets. Meanwhile, the battery sergeant kept the attacking force's 15-pounder pegging away – boom, boom, boom. By rushing it from end to end in the sheltered double entrenchment, the metropolitan troops had no idea that there was only one field gun firing upon them. It was a spectacular display, and it kept the defenders' attention concentrated on Como Bridge, blazing away at everything and nothing.

Then suddenly, the defending troops withdrew. Bayly was astonished. The battle had only been in progress for just under an hour. What was going on? Yes, the attacking force were clearly better disciplined and more resourceful, but the fight was far from over. Although being both brazen and unruly, the defenders had, until this moment certainly fought with gusto and not shown any sign of yielding control of Como Bridge. They also overwhelmingly outnumbered their South Coast enemy. So, was it a trap? No. Incredibly, Major-General French had given the order for the defenders to cease hostilities and instructed Lieutenant-Colonel Neild to march his force back to Oatley as a rear-guard so that they might all catch the train home in time for tea! But the most extraordinary action of the day was still to come.

As the defenders withdrew towards Oatley, they spotted armed men in the scrub, about 200 yards from the station. Assuming that Bayly's infantry had already crossed the bridge, Lt-Colonel Neild immediately ordered a force to open fire on them. Lifting their rifles, the defenders poured volley after volley into the bushes. Reinforcements rushed to the firing line, but instead of extending, the men ran in amongst those who were already shooting. One well-directed shell could have killed 60 men. Neild, meanwhile, sent more of his men to occupy the hill to the left of the railway line, take up flank positions and open fire on the supposed enemy. But then several 7th Regiment soldiers, thinking that the sound of musketry on the other side of the line came from their invisible enemy, bravely ran right across the fire zone to engage. The troops at the station, seeing these men dash through the smoke, and, heedless of the fact that they were on the same side, intensified their firing. Amidst the noise and confusion, a farcical triangular-duel ensued. For ten minutes the defenders shot at each other and annihilated themselves.



Defenders Returning from the Battle.
[‘The Attack on Sydney’, Australian Town and Country Journal, 30 November 1901.]

At Oatley Railway Station, Major-General French was waiting in a train, with his metropolitan corps staff grouped close by, as the two big guns of the defenders' battery came rattling slowly up the road, accompanied by a sauntering contingent of infantry troops. All at once a shout rang out: ‘Great Jupiter, where did you come from?’ In the culminating action of the Battle of Como – and effecting the greatest surprise of the day – Lt Taylor and his men, having finally completed their arduous cross-country sweep, ‘dropped from the clouds’ and overcame the Sydney defenders from the rear. BOOM! – their 15-pounder erupted at the Neild's artillery, firing ‘enough case shot into them to translate them all to another sphere of usefulness.’ For the attackers at Como, the field gun blast signalled a rush across the river. And with that, Bayly pushed his attackers forward along the undefended bridge, and over the river in boats, securing as prisoner a few straggling defenders along the way.

'Still this part of the show will probably not count,' lamented the Special Correspondent, as 'it was not within the ridiculously short time limit imposed by the defenders. Taken right through, the attackers outwitted and out-generalled the defenders; they were putting into practice the lessons learned on the coastal trek — lessons which the defenders have yet to learn, and which, with more modern systems of training, such as were adopted by the column, they will yet learn.'

'The work was hard,' Bayly said later, 'but every soldier appears to have been gratified that he had the chance of taking part.'

It had taken less than two hours for Lieutenant-Colonel Bayly and his South Coast invaders to cross the Georges River to continue their march on Sydney. The Battle was of Como over.

References

- 'The Neild imbroglio,' *Evening News*, (April 17, 1899), p. 5.
'A military trouble,' *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, (April 17, 1899), p. 5.
'The Seventh Regiment,' *The Australian Star*, (October 25, 1900), p. 2.
'Boer and British warfare,' *Kalgoorlie Miner*, (May 7, 1901), p. 2.
'Military camp,' *Evening News*, (November 9, 1901), p. 2.
'With the Flying Column: landing of a hostile force,' *The Australian Star*, (November 11, 1901), p. 5.
'South Coast manoeuvres,' *The Daily Telegraph*, (November 12, 1901), p. 5.
'The coastal trek: preliminaries and incidents,' *The Australian Star*, (November 12, 1901), p. 4.
'The coastal trek: strategical points involved,' *The Australian Star*, (November 13, 1901), p. 5.
'The coastal trek: on the ocean cliffs,' *The Australian Star*, (November 19, 1901), p. 7.
'To repel invaders,' *The Australian Star*, (1901, November 20, 1901), p. 6.
'The attacking force,' *The Australian Star*, (November 22, 1901), p. 5.
'Taking up position,' *The Australian Star*, (November 22, 1901), p. 5.
'The Como conflict,' *The Australian Star*, (November 22, 1901), p. 6.
'Sydney attacked by the South Coast Column,' *The Daily Telegraph*, (November 22, 1901), p. 5.
'The battle of Sydney,' *Evening News*, (November 22, 1901), p. 4.
'South Coast manoeuvres: the advance on Sydney,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (November 22, 1901), p. 6.
'The South Coast trek: return of the Flying Column,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, (November 23, 1901), p. 9.
'The attack on Sydney,' *Australian Town and Country Journal*, (November 30, 1901), p. 37.
'Death of Colonel Bayly,' *The Daily Telegraph*, (December 22, 1906), p. 9.

Other sources

National Archives of Australia: B5200, ROLL 8, *Contingent pay ledgers for New South Wales Forces who served in the Boer War* [contains Volume 1 and Volume 2]

National Archives of Australia: B5202, ROLL 12, *Pay ledger for New South Wales Military Forces who served in the Boer War*

National Archives of Australia: B5205, ROLL 14, *Pay ledgers for New South Wales Military Forces involved in the Boer War* [contains Volume 1 to Volume 3]

Martha Rutledge, 'Neild, John Cash (1846–1911)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

Australia's Boer War: the war in South Africa, 1899-1902 by Craig Wilcox.

¹ 'Brevet' was a warrant giving a commissioned officer a higher rank title as a reward for gallantry or meritorious conduct, but did not confer the authority or pay of real rank, [http: www. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brevet_\(military\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brevet_(military))]

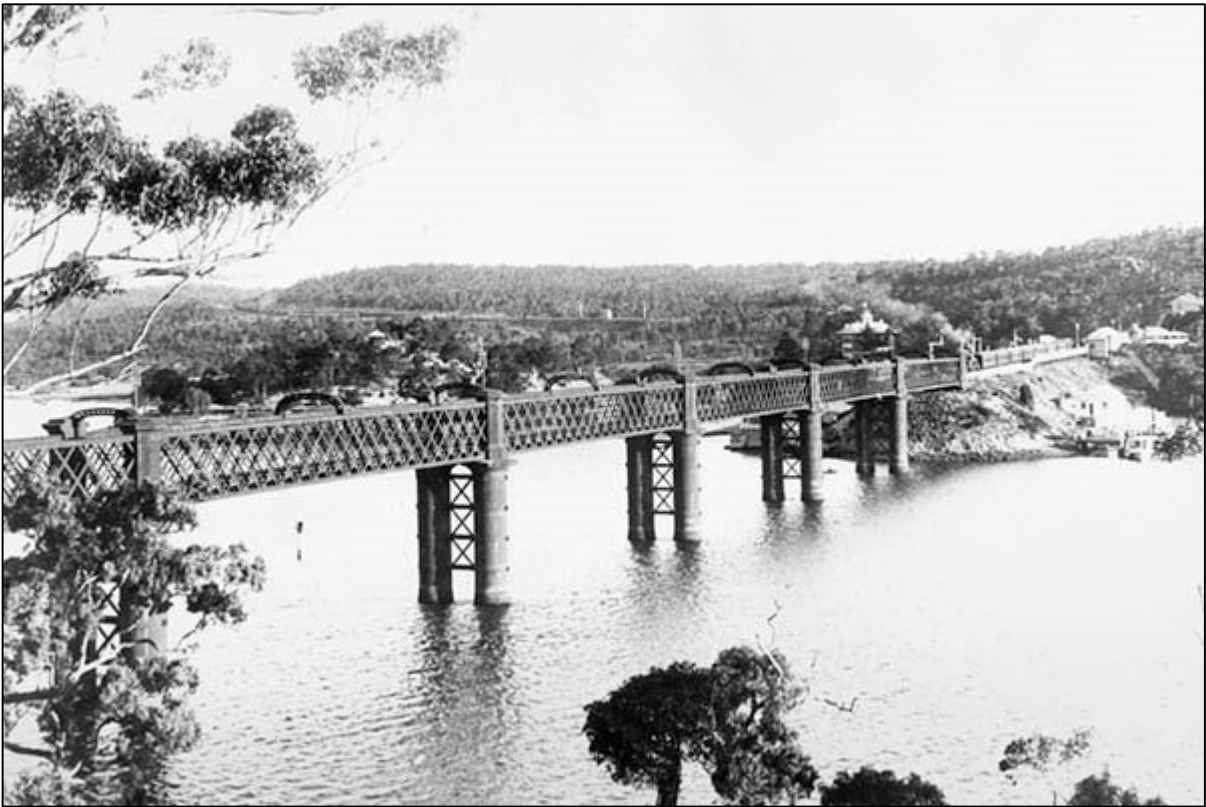
'The Battle of Como' as reported in the media in 1901



Defending force assembling at Redfern preparatory to entraining.
[*'The Attack on Sydney'*, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1901]



Defending Infantry bringing 15-pounder into action.
[*'The Attack on Sydney'*, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1901]



Steam train approaching Como Railway Bridge, 1896 [SSL collection]



Sylvania and Kangaroo Point. The bridge in the right foreground spans the waters of the Georges River.

Aerial photo Tom Ugly's Bridge (built in 1929), 1954