



NUMBER: 230 — FEBRUARY 2024



Corroboree
Or DANCE of the NATIVES of NEW SOUTH WALES.
New Holland.

A Dance of the Natives of NSW (Aboriginal Corroboree), by Joseph Lycett (convict artist)
an engraving from the *Wallis Book*, 1817-1818 [Source: Bruce Watt]

See full description on inside front cover

Article by Bruce Watt, 'Captain James Wallis, an early Colonial publisher' - page 25

MINDFUL OF THE PAST – FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

EMAIL: shirehistory@gmail.com; **PHONE:** 0424 600 150 **SSHS WEBSITE:** www.shirehistory.org

FACEBOOK: Sutherland Shire Historical Society



The back of the polo shirts

See page 13 to read about Leigh Wallbank's experience of volunteering for the Museum.

SSHS Museum Volunteers in their smart new black SSHS polo shirts [Photo: Deborah Burton]

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## **FRONT PAGE IMAGE**

*A Dance of the Natives of NSW (Aboriginal Corroboree)*, by Joseph Lycett,  
**Plate No. VI**, *Wallis Album*, 1817–1818

See Bruce Watt's article: 'Captain James Wallis, an early Colonial publisher on page 25.

The following description was the annotation for a double page sized image in Wallis's Book (one of 6 out of the twelve images).

*Is a View of a corroboree, or Dance, of the natives of New South Wales. The representation of this extraordinary assemblage of savage festivity, as well as the scenery, is taken from nature. The preparation for their dance is striking and curious. They assemble in groups, and commence marking their arms, legs, and bodies, in various directions, with pipe-clay and a kind of red ochre; some of them displaying great taste at their toilet, as in the representation. Their musician, who is generally an elderly man, sings a monotonous tune, in which they all join, striking in regular time the shield with a club or waddy. Each dancer carries a green bough in his hand. The beauty of the scenery, the pleasing reflection of light from the fire round which they dance, the grotesque and singular appearance of the savages, and their wild notes of festivity, all form a strange and interesting contrast to anything ever witnessed in civilised society. The women never dance; and, where several tribes meet together, each tribe dances separately. All the principal figures in the fore-ground are from original portraits; the tall figure laughing, on the left, is the chieftain or king of the Newcastle tribe, called Buriejou [also known as Buridon], – a brave, expert fellow, who has lately presented Governor Macquarie with his eldest son, to be placed in the native institution, as a proof of his confidence in British humanity.*



## CONTENTS – FEBRUARY 2024

|                                                   |                                         |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----|
| ABOUT THE <i>BULLETIN</i> AND OUR SOCIETY         |                                         | 2  |
| SOCIETY COMMITTEE                                 |                                         | 3  |
| SSHS CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES                       |                                         | 4  |
| PRESIDENT'S REPORT                                | PAULINE CURBY                           | 5  |
| FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK                            | ELIZABETH CRAIG                         | 6  |
| NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL NSW 2024         |                                         | 7  |
| A COMO CHILDHOOD                                  | CHRIS SIM                               | 8  |
| A DAY AT THE MUSEUM                               | LEIGH WALLBANK                          | 13 |
| DRIVING ON THE MAD MILE!                          | LAURIE BURGESS                          | 14 |
| LAWRENCE HARGRAVE'S SPANISH PROCLAMATION          | GARRIOCK DUNCAN                         | 17 |
| AN ABORIGINAL SHELTER ON MILL CREEK               | GREG JACKSON, PAM FORBES & BRUCE HOWELL | 21 |
| BOOKS FOR SALE AT THE MUSEUM                      |                                         | 24 |
| CAPTAIN JAMES WALLIS, AN EARLY COLONIAL PUBLISHER | BRUCE WATT                              | 25 |

### PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE AT MEETINGS

|                                                                                         |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>The Matson Collection – Sutherland Shire Museum</i> , by B. Howell, SSHS 2022:       | \$25 |
| <i>Murphy's Lore – Unravelling myths around James Murphy ...</i> , by K. Hatherly 2023: | \$10 |
| <i>East Coast Encounters 1770: Reflections on a cultural clash</i> , by P. Curby et al, |      |
| SSHS 2020:                                                                              | \$35 |
| February 2024 <i>Bulletin</i>                                                           | \$ 5 |



## 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 on our website: [www.shirehistory.org](http://www.shirehistory.org) or for issues up to end 2020, at Sutherland Library - Local Studies. 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, local politicians, the Royal Australian Historical Society, National Trust of NSW, NSW State Library, National Library of Australia, University of Sydney, University of NSW, neighbouring local history societies, 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 2652-4000 (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. Although Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, Covid is still a concern. Please do not attend a meeting if you are unwell, and wear a mask if unsure.

## SUTHERLAND SHIRE MUSEUM

Our new Museum at 88 Venetia Street, Sylvania is now open for visitors. Opening hours are: Tuesdays, 12.00 – 4.00pm, Thursdays 9.30am – 1.30pm, Saturdays 9.00 – 1.00pm. Entry is \$5. To organise a group visit, please email Sue Burrell, our Visitor Services Manager at [shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com](mailto:shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com)

**DONATING MATERIAL:** If you have items of historical significance to Sutherland Shire such as artefacts, documents or photographs, that you wish to donate or lend to the Museum, please contact us at [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com). While we welcome such items, we have very limited space and have to adhere to our acquisitions policy which dictates what sort of items we can accept. If you do not wish to part with original items, we would welcome copies of documents and photographs. Temporary loans for specific periods for suitable items are also welcome. Cash donations and sponsorship assist us to improve the museum and perhaps you can keep the museum in mind when planning your estate.

## CONTACTING THE SOCIETY

All correspondence and membership enquiries should be addressed to The Honorary Secretary,  
Sutherland Shire Historical Society, 88 Venetia Street, Sylvania NSW 2224

Alternatively, email us at [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com); or phone us on 0424 600 150



## SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2023-2024

### ELECTED MEMBERS

|                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>PATRON:</b>                  | Shire Mayor, Cllr Carmelo Pesce |
|                                 |                                 |
| <b>PRESIDENT</b>                | Pauline Curby                   |
| <b>VICE PRESIDENT</b>           | Vacant                          |
| <b>SECRETARY/PUBLIC OFFICER</b> | Elizabeth Craig                 |
| <b>TREASURER</b>                | John Doherty                    |
|                                 |                                 |
| <b>COMMITTEE MEMBERS:</b>       | Creo Moore                      |
|                                 | Kim Hatherly                    |
|                                 | Ian Kolln                       |

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

|                                           |                                              |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>MUSEUM CURATOR</b>                     | Ian Kolln                                    |
| <b>MUSEUM VISITORS SERVICES MANAGER</b>   | Sue Burrell<br>shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com |
| <b>BULLETIN EDITOR</b>                    | Elizabeth Craig                              |
| <b>BULLETIN PROOF READER</b>              | Claudia Dixon                                |
| <b>ONLINE ADMINISTRATOR</b>               | Creo Moore                                   |
| <b>PUBLICATIONS EDITOR</b>                | Elizabeth Craig                              |
| <b>PUBLICITY OFFICER FACEBOOK</b>         | Creo Moore                                   |
| <b>ARCHIVIST</b>                          | Carol McDonald                               |
| <b>GRANTS OFFICER</b>                     | John Doherty                                 |
| <b>EXCURSIONS OFFICERS</b>                | Greg Jackson, Christine Edney                |
| <b>DATABASE MANAGER</b>                   | Bruce Edney                                  |
| <b>SS HERITAGE FESTIVAL COMMITTEE REP</b> | Elizabeth Craig                              |
| <b>WELFARE OFFICER</b>                    | Mary Small                                   |
| <b>AFTERNOON TEA COORDINATOR</b>          | Deborah Burton                               |
| <b>HONORARY SOLICITOR</b>                 | Michael Solari                               |

To contact a Committee member or office bearer, email or phone us:

**Email:** shirehistory@gmail.com, or for Museum visits:

shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com

**Phone:** 0424 600 150 (leave a message)

Your message or email will be forwarded on to the appropriate person, who will contact you directly.

**SSHS CALENDAR: MARCH – MAY 2024**  
(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 (except December)

**Sutherland Shire Museum at 88 Venetia St., Sylvania is open:**

**Tuesdays** 12.00 – 4.00pm

**Thursdays**, 9.30am-1.30pm and **Saturdays**, 9.00am – 1.00pm

For enquiries re Museum visits email [shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com](mailto:shiremuseumvisitors@gmail.com)

**DATE**

|                      |                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>February 2024</b> | <b>Fri 23<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>EXCURSION</b> to Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour. Led by Greg Jackson. Was once a penal facility, then a reformatory for girls, then a dockyard for construction and building of ships. Catch 9.34am train from Sutherland (3 <sup>rd</sup> carriage from the front) for Circular Quay. Ferry to Cockatoo Island. Food outlets on the island. Recommend \$6 audio tour from Visitors Centre. Bring water, walking shoes, hat & sunscreen. Confirm attendance with Greg on 0450 615 104                                                             |
| <b>March 2024</b>    | <b>Sat 16<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>SPEAKER:</b> Gary Darby, author of <i>The history of Sutherland Shire Cycling Club</i> , 2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                      | <b>Fri 22<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>EXCURSION:</b> Through Royal National Park led by Greg Jackson. Fairly level walking surface. Meet at 10.00am at Audley Dance Hall. Confirm attendance with Greg on 0450 615 104                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>April 2024</b>    | <b>Sat 20<sup>th</sup></b> | <p align="center"><b>HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2024</b></p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b> Douglas Newton on his 2021 book: Private Ryan and the Lost Peace – the story of a Broken Hill boy who rebelled against the first world war, and was eventually court-martialled. This talk is part of SSHS's Heritage Festival event and begins at the Stapleton St centre at 1.30pm.</p> <p>See page 7 for details of SSHS events. For all Shire community events go to <a href="http://www.sutherlandheritagefestival.org/">http://www.sutherlandheritagefestival.org/</a></p> |
| <b>May 2024</b>      | <b>Sat 18<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>SPEAKER:</b> To be announced                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

**EXCURSIONS** – Please note that for insurance purposes only SSHS members can attend excursions.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

PAULINE CURBY



We had a productive year in 2023, in which we took our Museum operations up a notch with more customised tours under our resourceful Museum Visitor Services Manager, Sue Burrell. We also

began discussions with Council regarding our plans for more storage space and an outside waterproof shelter. A new member with ideas and energy – Kim Hatherly – joined the executive committee and we welcomed Ian Kolln back to the committee.

Museum Manager Peter Moore has stood down, having done an exceptional job of developing the Museum under difficult circumstances, including Covid, wet weather and lack of space. Peter nurtured a team spirit that has ensured a happy band of volunteers who enjoy what they do. At present Creo Moore is in charge of inside operations such as records management, while Kevin Curby is acting as coordinator for outside tasks such as lawn mowing and projects involving the grounds and sheds. Kevin has also organised official shirts for the guides and other Museum volunteers. See inside front cover for a photo of volunteers in their smart black polo shirts. Also you may be interested in reading Leigh Wallbank's report on page 13 on why she became a volunteer for the Museum, what she does and how she enjoys it.

On Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> January we held a planning meeting to prioritise our plans for this year. One topic was our urgent need to fill vacant roles such as:

- Vice President, who can fill in for the president, and who is willing to become president at the next AGM when I must step down as required by the Constitution.

- Museum Curator. Ian Kolln has offered to take on this job which he had done at the former museum. He will be responsible for the display, and for setting up temporary exhibitions on a rotating basis. Kate Doherty, Carol McDonald and I will help him.
- Grants Officer. At the moment, besides his huge job as Treasurer, John Doherty is also seeking suitable grants for equipment and building projects. He could do with someone to help him.

Another topic discussed was our logo which we wished to refresh to present a more contemporary image. It was decided to streamline the present logo and letterhead. Further investigations have revealed a number of obstacles, so this may be in obedience. The issue will be discussed at the February executive and general meetings.

To help with our fundraising, Kate Doherty has approached Bunnings about holding a sausage sizzle at the Taren Point store. This is quite popular amongst community groups. In addition, Kim Hatherly has suggested a long-term plan of creating merchandise identifiable with SSHS to sell at market stalls and the Museum. These could include images on items such as tea towels and bookmarks. It would be a promotional as well as fundraising tool.

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February I attended a Family History and Historical Societies Forum at St Peters Church. This group, bringing together representatives from a range of societies in southern Sydney, went into recess during Covid but has now reformed. This is the second meeting of the new group at which attendees report on their organisation's activities. It's a valuable networking and information sharing opportunity.

We are looking for volunteers for a number of projects – small and large – and welcome your enquiries if anything appeals to you.



# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

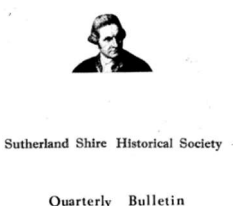
ELIZABETH CRAIG

Welcome to the first *Bulletin* for 2024. We have a few plans for this year in the Publications area.

## **Bulletin masthead**

In the discussion on freshening up our logo, one idea had been to modernise the *Bulletin* masthead as well. I thought you might be interested in a short history of the evolution the *Bulletin* masthead.

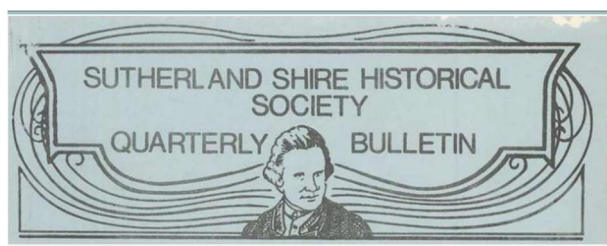
Initially, there was no image on the masthead. Cook's head, taken from an engraving based on Nathaniel Dance's 1776 oil portrait of Cook, was introduced by Marjorie Hutton Neve in April 1968 (with permission by Sutherland Shire Council which was also using this image in their logo.)



*Engraving of Captain Cook based on the 1776 portrait by Nathaniel Dance*



Then in July 1972, the 'New Look *Bulletin*' was brought to us by the Editor, George Heavens and Society artist, Fred Midgley.



In February 2000 then Editor, Les Bursill, with his lauded technical skills, brought in both colour and representation of indigenous people with the image of the Aboriginal drawing of the kangaroo. You will notice he reversed Captain Cook's head to look right to face the kangaroo – contrary to the original engraving. This is the masthead we still use.

## **'Research Page' on SSHS website**

We are fortunate to have some wonderful researchers of local history amongst our contributors to the *Bulletin*. Although their work is valuable as a resource for local historians, it is often too long to include in the *Bulletin*, and often just a bit too dry for our general readers' taste. So one project this year is to create a user friendly page on our website to publish this collection of research articles we have amassed. We will also announce in the *Bulletin* when a new work is added to the Research Page.

## **Personal reminiscences about the Shire**

You will see on page 8, an evocative account of growing up in Como in the 1950s by Chris Sim. He originally wrote it for the 2000 publication marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Como West Public School, but has given permission for it to be republished in the *Bulletin*.

This sort of article is a precious record of our social history, and provides insights into the changing landscape, lifestyle, values and beliefs of the time. If you have memories of growing up in the Shire and would like to share them, we would love to publish them. If you are not confident about writing it, then we would be happy to help you.

## **Suburban booklets**

As mentioned in the November 2023 issue, we are about to embark on a long held plan to publish booklets about Shire suburbs that have not had much written about them. They would include suburbs such as Taren Point, Kirrawee, Woolooware and Engadine. I propose to start the ball rolling with a booklet on Taren Point.

If you are interested in writing a booklet about your suburb, see 'From the Editor' (page 9) in the November 2023 *Bulletin* for details. You can contact me for further information at [elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com](mailto:elizabeth.craig@y7mail.com).

## National Trust Heritage Festival NSW 2024

For details of events by Sutherland Shire groups to mark the 2024 National Trust Heritage Festival running from 18<sup>th</sup> April to 19<sup>th</sup> May, go to <https://www.sutherlandheritagefestival.org/>

Sutherland Shire Historical Society's special events will be on **Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2024.**

Use the hop-on-hop-off Vintage Bus to visit Sutherland Shire Museum at 88 Venetia Street, Sylvania and discover our Shire's history.

*The Vintage Bus leaves the Tramway Museum every hour from 10.00am until 3.00pm, stopping at Woronora Cemetery, Brinsley's Joinery, Sutherland Shire Museum, Hazelhurst Gallery, Kirrawee Pit display, Tramway Museum.*

- Marvel at our unique collection of Aboriginal (Dharawal) tools found in the Shire last century, and discover their story from our guide.
- See and touch actual ballast from James Cook's barque *HM Endeavour*, which landed at Kurnell in 1770.
- Take a photo holding a Sydney 2000 Olympic Torch with the Olympic Community Cauldron
- FOR KIDS
  - Solve the puzzles on 'Time Traveller Trail' to find out the Shire's heritage.
  - For the Under 5s, climb onto a 1920s cart
  - Be hands on with some of the Museum's collection

**Cost:** \$5 entry. (Children under 5 free)



Matson collection of  
Aboriginal tools [SSHS]



Ballast from *HM Endeavour* [SSHS]

Pre-schoolers on the 1920s Menai cart  
[Permission, Chantel Kindergarten]



### **AND THEN...**

At 1.30pm, visit 3A Stapleton Street, Sutherland (around the corner from the Library) and join a meeting of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society to hear author and historian Douglas Newton discuss insights into his 2021 book: *Private Ryan and the Lost Peace* – the story of a Broken Hill boy who defiantly rebelled against the first world war, urging a negotiated peace – and was eventually court-martialled.

Email us at [shirehistory@gmail.com](mailto:shirehistory@gmail.com) to register your attendance.

**Cost:** Free (Afternoon tea: gold coin donation)

**Contact:** Elizabeth Craig – 0491 096 642

## A COMO CHILDHOOD

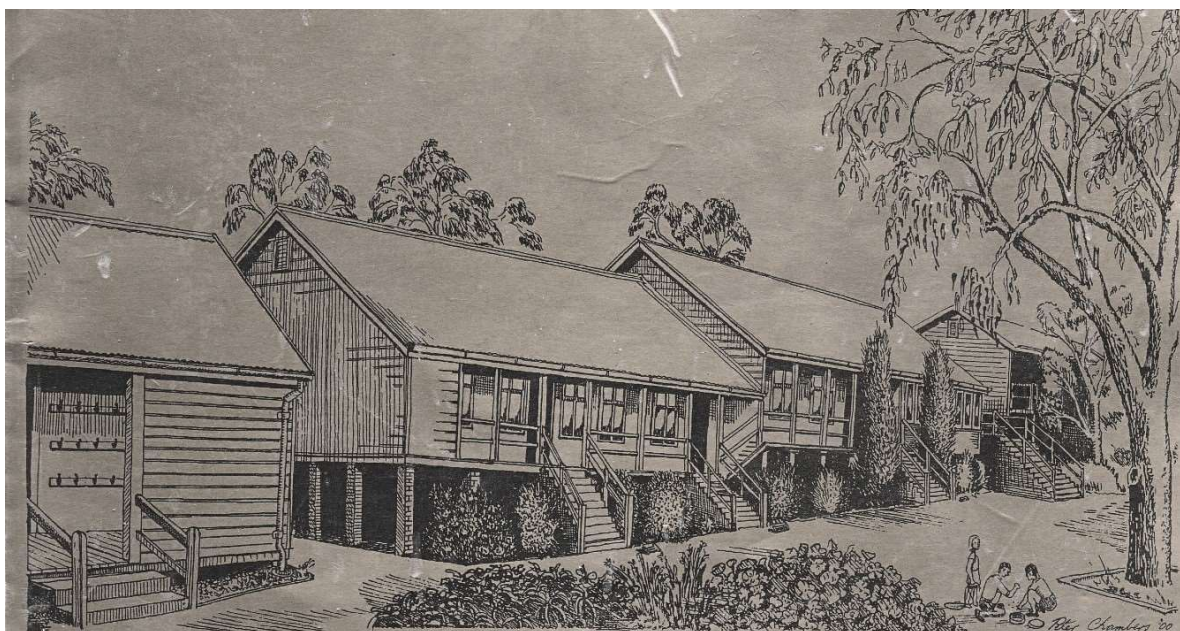
CHRIS SIM

*Editor's note: A publication on the history of Como West Public School was written for the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2000 by a number of its former students, including SSHS member Chris Sim. Although now living in Kogarah, Chris grew up in Como and attended Como West Public School.*

*Following is a chapter from the book reprinted (with some updating and editing) with permission of the author, Chris Sim.*

-----

Como is a special place. The absence of a road bridge across the Georges River has made it a backwater in suburban Sydney. Growing up there in the 1950s, with the bush and the river as our playground, made for a Huckleberry Finn childhood. Back then, Como had more in common with a country town than a suburb of the metropolis, with most people knowing each other to a greater degree than would be the case in the average suburb. Perhaps it is still like this to some extent.



*Como West Public School, sketched by Peter Chambers, former Como West Public School student (c 1960s) [Source: Chris Sim]*

Although the older part of Como was long established, much of Como West did not develop until after World War II. Many ex-servicemen settled here, and raised families through the late forties and the fifties, and it was this 'baby boom' which overtaxed long-standing Como Public School and prompted the modest beginnings of Como West Public School in 1950. Students, teachers and parents of the time remember watching the school grow from a single building to two, then three, and so forth through the fifties. We remember watching each new building being constructed, perhaps seeing some treasured play area done away with.

If it hadn't been for the January 1994 bushfire, the original building would presumably have still been with us, the one that was closest to the intersection of Warraba Street and Girraween Avenue. How delightful it would have been for us oldies to have celebrated our reunion in that building.



We remember with varying degrees of fondness the teachers from that era, principally Mr Behl, headmaster throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> The girls would remember the sewing classes conducted by local resident Mrs Hurst, mother of students Harry and Lorelle.

Whilst we are primarily celebrating the school's half-century, it might be timely for us oldies, many of whom have moved away, to reflect upon life at Como in the 1950s.

In the same way that some of the school buildings arrived as prefabricated kits, so too were more than a few houses around Como West the result of such a construction method, and many of them are still standing today. Of course, it was very common in those days for homes to be owner-built. Often the garage would be built first, accommodating the young family while the main house gradually took shape during weekends and holidays. A 'pioneer' atmosphere prevailed, new neighbours would muck in and help each other with the building tasks, or share information about obtaining building materials – in great shortage during the immediate post-war years. There was zero unemployment in the land of milk and honey that was Australia in the 1950s.

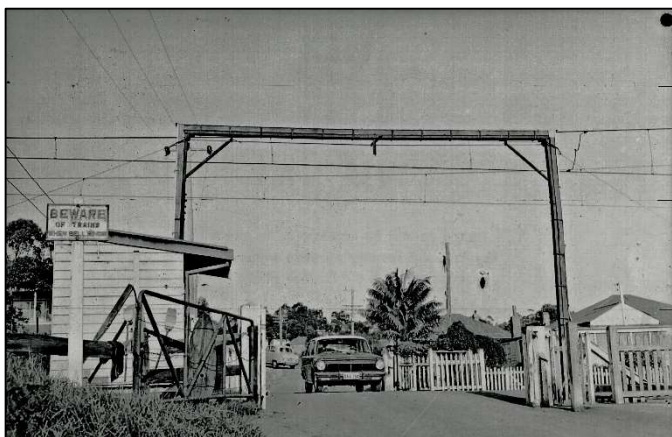
But such matters were far from the minds of us kids, for apart from the working bees around the backyard we'd get roped into, our principal focus was 'play' – and wasn't Como the perfect place for that activity! With the Georges and Woronora Rivers forming two of Como's boundaries, extensive bushland, the creeks, the mangroves, the periwinkle cave, the parks and the vacant lots, it was a children's paradise.

On hot, sticky summer days, with a million cicadas drumming the air, the river swimming enclosure was a magnet for the young populace. How many of us remember days when it was difficult to find a vacant spot to jump into, so densely packed was the mass of broiling youth – and jellyblubbers. The facility is hardly used by today's youth, more accustomed to chlorinated pools, including those in the backyards. In a similar vein, many of the bush tracks have grown over, outdoors exploration having been usurped by electronic games and the like.

Another popular weekend activity took place in the Old School of Arts (aka 'the Bughouse', Fleahouse or 'the flicks') – the Saturday matinee in the rustic little cinema initially founded by Harry Bargwanna Senior.<sup>2</sup>



*Como School of Arts, c 1925-1926. [SLLS]  
It was demolished in 1992.*



*Como level crossing, Warraba Street. Mrs Hall's cottage is to the right of the picture.*

[Source: Chris Sim]

In order to get there, we Como West kids had to negotiate the old railway level crossing, then protected by huge manually operated gates, most often manipulated by old Mrs Hall, whose garden-clad gatehouse residence next to the level crossing in

Warraba Street, was a local landmark. A familiar sight in her straw hat, she generally turned a blind eye when a kid or two got a free ride on the gates as she swung them open after the train

had passed. And she had to keep a wary eye out for kids on pushbikes with dubious braking systems flying down Warraba Street trying to get airborne as they came off the level bit where the rails were. Como's more daring motorcyclists also attempted the airborne act there, though in the opposite direction. Later of course, automatic boom gates were installed, and later again the relocated station and new road bridge did away with the level crossing altogether.



*An afternoon south-bound train on the Como Bridge about to tackle the stiff climb to Sutherland. The fireman had to knuckle down to a long, hard slog of coal shovelling. [Photo: Chris Sim, 1964]*

*Synonymous with life at Como up until the end of 1972 was the basso-rumble of trains tiptoeing across the 1986-built lattice girder bridge. The one-way traffic bridge was a notorious bottle-neck, but the jolting entry and exit curves for southbound trains and the cacophony of sound within the open-windowed 'red-rattler' trains of the time served as an alarm clock for many a weary-eyed commuter. When the new bridge opened, with its smooth transit across the Georges River, the Leader newspaper printed many a letter from folk who'd woken up several stations behind their intended destination, so subconsciously dependent had they become on the 'alarm bell' of the old Como Bridge! Officially, the bridge was off-limits for pedestrians, but that never stopped people of all ages from using the maintenance walkways to cross the river. Some of the gamer Como kids lowered themselves onto a bridge pylon and leapt in the river – guaranteed to raise a cheer from onlookers at the nearby swimming enclosure.*

Passing steam trains, laboring up the steep grade directly behind the School of Arts, sometimes provided cover for some of the high jinks that regularly erupted during Saturday matinees at the fleahouse, particularly around 'cracker' time (bonfire night): 'Smoke sir? Must have been that steam train,' or 'A bang you say? Must have been John Wayne, Sir.' Getting tossed out of the pictures was one of several rights-of-passage for Como's youth. Others included jumping into the river from the old bridge, or clinging limpet-like to the mossy railway cutting walls, or playing Tarzan in the mangroves, or climbing cliffs in the Glen Reserve, or testing one's mettle at soccer or rugby league for Como-Jannali, or sneaking under the tent when Wirths Brothers ran their circus at Scylla Bay footie ground, or catching a Jewfish, or climbing a Moreton Bay Fig at the Pleasure Grounds, or a big Angophora in the gully.

And 'play' at the school must not be left out – every morning before the bell was rung, a massive soccer game, largely rule-less, would come to life on the school's sports rectangle. Unlike today, not a blade of grass was to be seen. The gravel-strewn surface was the cause of many skinned knees. There'd be up to fifty kids a side, and it started the careers of such athletes as Johnny Roche, who later played for the Soccerroos, or Col Rasmussen, who went on to play League for Saints, or Ken 'Shero' Sheridan and Grant Morton, who both played for Cronulla. Players who let the side down might be subjected to punishment on the 'bendback tree', a gnarled and twisted old Banksia whose shape lent itself to the ministrations of youthful torturers...

Not all the school was beer and skittles. There was the enforced consumption of small bottles of milk, having sat in the sun for several hours and emulsified into a consistency that no longer had the ability to refresh. Then there were the dreaded mass inoculations against the likes of diphtheria and polio; and the travelling school dentist was to be avoided if possible. Another chore was to be dragged along to the school on a Saturday when one's parents have to 'vote', whatever THAT meant! To balance these negatives, we had school sports carnivals at Scylla Bay, the yearly fete and school excursions. One of the latter that springs to mind was a walk to The Bonnet to observe a house Henry Lawson had stayed in.

Many of us would remember the Henry Lawson festivals during the 1950s, held of course in Henry Lawson Reserve. The late, great Leonard Teale, then a young man, recited Henry's poetry, and there were bush bands, art and craft competitions, costume competitions for kids and prizes for the best decorated tricycles and scooters. The ladyfolk of Como tested their cake-decorating and jam-making skills. There was even a billycart derby along Girraween Avenue, unscrupulously dominated by the Bargwanna boys with access to their father's mechanical workshop.

But in a constantly changing metropolis, Como has retained its identity to a greater degree than many other parts of Sydney. If it wasn't for the ravages of fire, which took our school, then later our beloved pub,<sup>3</sup> major physical changes would have been limited to the replacement of the original School of Arts building, and the loss of the charming old railway station by the river. With its staghorn-bedecked walls, picket fences, hole-in-the-wall newstand, palm trees, and faithfully attended to for many years by ex-student Robert Stamford, it was a stark contrast to the brutal concrete bunker that replaced it further up the hill.



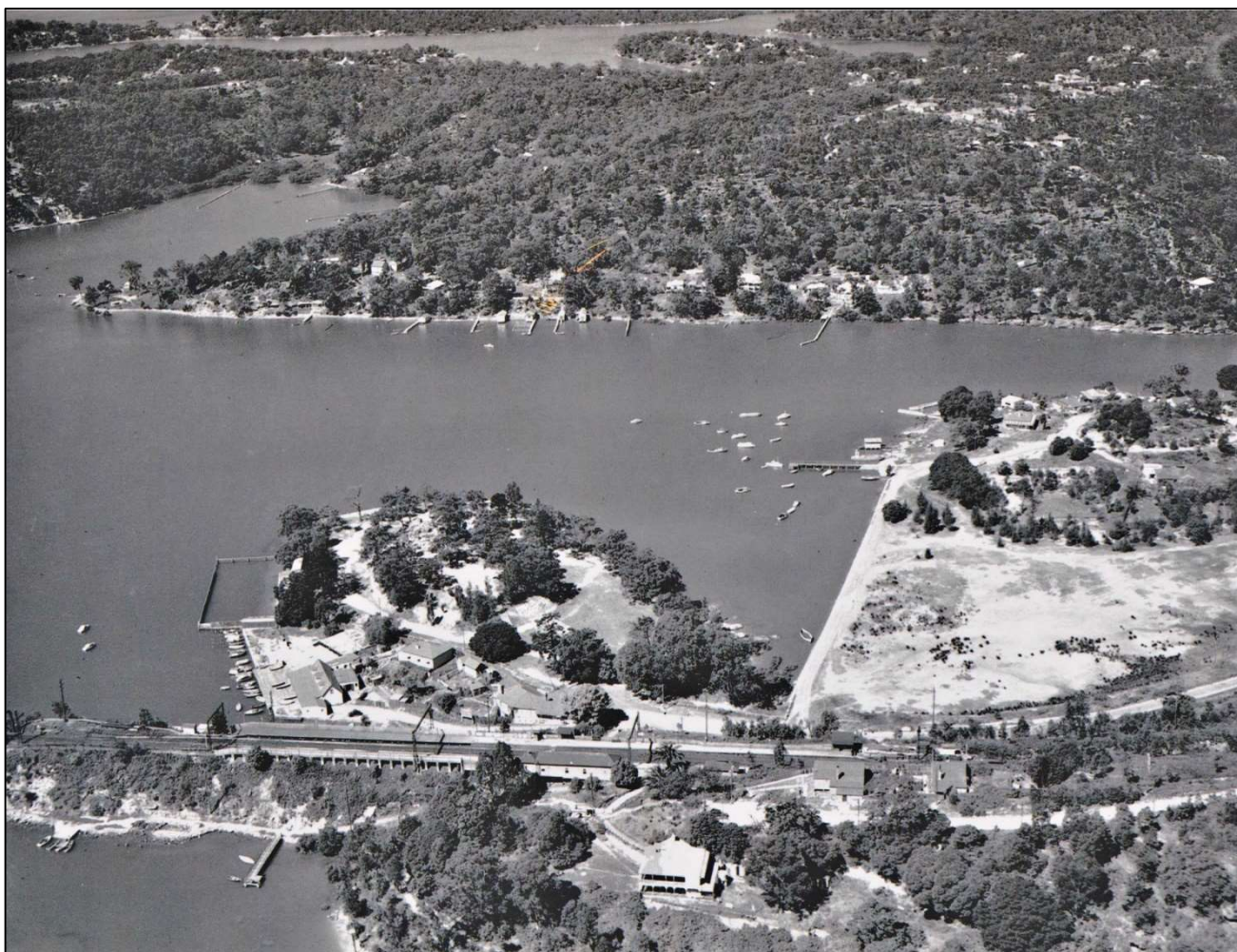
*Our beloved Como Pub, sketch by Doreen Dingle, 1987 [SSHS]*

Sure the scores of old canvas-roofed, pre-war jalopies that used to chug around the dirt roads of Como in the 1950s (many kept going long after their use-by date by 'Dr' Harry Bargwanna) are gone, as are the blue and red Reo buses that struggled up the hills of Como, Oyster Bay and Jannali. And the horse-drawn deliveries we remember from the early 1950s (the baker, the milkman, the iceman – even the mail was delivered on horseback) are but a memory.

But the boatshed, starting point for many a Como adventure in a rented timber rowboat, is still there and Ted Cary's historic butchery, opened by his father in 1926 was still in business.<sup>4</sup> The Café de Como building reminds us of its former life as one of Como's seven 'corner stores' ... that's right, SEVEN! Just one remains (opposite Como West School), the others presumably victims of the supermarket age.



In 2000 Rugby League had celebrated fifty continuous years at Scylla Bay, and is still going. The Pleasure Grounds are in better shape than ever, and though names like Rowney, Lummis and Comino no longer adorn Como West shops, many family names still occupy the electoral roll of Como, which remains in so many ways, the special place it has always been.



*Como from the air, 1954* [Source: SMH]

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<sup>1</sup> Instructors at Como West Public School in the 1950s included Mrs Evans, Mrs Phillips, Mr McEwan, Mrs Allen, Mrs Walkom, Mr Watts, Mr Bailey, Mrs Loch, Miss Smith, Miss Carr, Mr Young, and Mrs O’Gorman.

<sup>2</sup> Harry (Henry) Bargwanna had a motor mechanic’s workshop in Wolger Street, Como. His twin sons Alf and Harry, who were in the first intake into Como West Public School, took over the business after Harry’s accidental death in 1971. Alf’s grandson now runs the business. [Oral history interview with Alf Bargwanna conducted by Elizabeth Craig for Sutherland Library 6 June 2014.]

<sup>3</sup> Como Hotel, first built in the 1880s with the building of the railway bridge across the Georges River from Oatley. It was burned down in November 1996, rebuilt using the original bricks and re-opened in 2001. [<https://thecomo.com.au/about-the-como-hotel/>]

<sup>4</sup> The butcher’s shop soldiered on until 2019 when ill health forced 86-year-old Ted Cary to retire and close the shop.

## A DAY AT THE MUSEUM

LEIGH WALLBANK

I only joined the Museum four years ago after my parents, Fred and Bet Williams died. My father had the local newspaper, *The Cronulla Observer*, and he had been receiving the *Bulletin* for many years, firstly from SSHS foundation member from Cronulla, Aileen Griffiths who used to drop them into his office, and then by post.

It felt right to keep up the tradition so I decided to come to meetings, and then I joined. I have always been interested in history and in my birthplace (Cronulla), so working at the Museum was a no-brainer. I have a customer service background, and now that we are organising tours it seemed logical to become a Tour Guide. We are just starting to gather momentum with tour groups, and with such an enthusiastic crew on board I am sure this will grow. Guiding is great in so many ways. Meeting and helping people from all different clubs and societies and the individual who just comes in off the street is so rewarding. Apart from guiding, there are so many roles at the Museum which would suit people from many backgrounds. The amount of information I've come across since joining is amazing, and the camaraderie and friendship amongst the volunteers is wonderful. Give it some thought – you won't be sorry.



*Happy Museum Curator, Ian Kolln, wearing his smart new polo shirt welcomes visitors to the Museum*



*Leigh Wallbank finds satisfaction in her volunteer work for Sutherland Shire Museum*

[Photos: Elizabeth Craig]



# DRIVING ON THE MAD MILE!

LAURIE BURGESS



*The 'Mad Mile' (Rawson Avenue) looking south from Sutherland (undated) [SSLS collection]*

*As a young fellow growing up in the Shire in the 1950s, it was a treat to go for a motoring jaunt on weekends. It was inevitable, returning along the Princes Highway south of Sutherland, to become part of the line of traffic crawling towards the Georges River Bridge until we could turn off to Gymea Bay. On one of these trips, with my aunt driving, we were startled by a car speeding past us on the gravel road verge. My aunt turned the air blue with expletives deleted, amongst which was the term 'Mad Mile driver'.*

The Mad Mile was, for many years, the familiar local term for the road first opened around 1902 as a straight one-mile-long tree-lined avenue between Sutherland township and the level crossing for the branch railway (now tramway) into the [Royal] National Park.<sup>1</sup> Older Shire residents remembered it as the road through a shanty town in the Depression years,<sup>2</sup> but it had by then already become a favourite place for motorists to 'put the foot down' as they left the city and suburbs behind them. It became the scene of accidents and fatalities. In April 1920, a newspaper reported the death and injuries to a party of picnickers on a truck with *a garden seat lashed to it, on which were seated the picnickers*. It went out-of-control, smashed into the trees and *turned completely over, and all the occupants sent flying in all directions*.<sup>3</sup> In those days St. George Hospital was kept busy caring for victims of that accident and many others occurring along that stretch of road.<sup>4</sup>

Motor vehicle manufacturers in 1927 proudly reported using that stretch of road to speed-test their new products over *the flying half-mile course*:

- *'The Erskine Saloon'* was driven in exactly 35sec., or at an average speed of 51.4 m.p.h. [82.7 kph] <sup>5</sup>
- The time taken by the *'Prince'* [Indian Prince motor cycle] was 28½ sec., corresponding to a speed of 63.8 m.p.h. [102.6 kph] <sup>6</sup>

A motoring article in 1935 titled *The Charm and Variety of National Park* suggested to its readers: Over the [Georges River] bridge we go, with due payment of toll, and on to Sutherland, still through modified suburbia. Then comes Rawson Avenue, a safe stretch on week days for testing 'flat-out' pace and admiring the optimism of the speedometer.<sup>7</sup>

The Government finally decided to put an end to the lead-footers:

The Governor has assented to the Bill introducing a speed limit of 30 miles an hour in built-up areas, and 50 miles in unlighted areas — those sign-posted restrictions commencing on Christmas Eve 1937. Specifically mentioned was Prince's Highway at Lady Rawson-avenue, Sutherland.<sup>8</sup>





*Signs for the speed zones<sup>9</sup>*

Restricting the speed may have made motorists more cautious but didn't bring an end to road accidents. In 1954 a truck driver, experienced in travelling along that section of the Princes Highway and familiar with the train schedules, was suddenly confronted by a train travelling onto the level crossing across the Royal National Park branch rail railway on a training run: It had eight empty carriages to give new drivers experience in handling a long train. A resident at nearby Gardiner's service station described the accident:

When the front carriage hit the truck it threw it in the air and then sent it spinning, rolling over and over. I ran over and could see the driver upside down in the cabin with the front wheels of the train on top of the back of the truck. The driver could not move. I raced home and rang a doctor and an ambulance.<sup>10</sup>

The rear end of the first carriage stopped about half way over the level-crossing.

Moving the Princes Highway to the other side of Waratah Park in the 1970s<sup>11</sup> left most of the 'Mad Mile' still available, but it lost its credibility when a roundabout was installed, about halfway along it, at the entry into Loftus TAFE in the early 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Referred to in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20.2.1932, p.9

<sup>2</sup> McKinley, M. & Hewitt, S., *Sutherland Shire -Some Early Residents*, Sutherland, 2007, also several articles in *SSHS Bulletin* and recorded Oral Histories held at Sutherland Library.

<sup>3</sup> *Sun*, 5.4.1920, p.5

<sup>4</sup> Even though an ambulance station was built in Sutherland in 1929 opposite the Council chambers, (*The Propeller*, 11.10.1934, p.13) patients before and afterwards still had to be taken to St George Hospital for treatment.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 14.5.1927, p.32

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 3.9.1927, p.35

<sup>7</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 4.9.1935, p.43

<sup>8</sup> *Sun*, 23.12.1937, p.3

<sup>9</sup> Extract from photograph, *Sun*, 23.12.1937, p.3

<sup>10</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19.6.1954, p.3

<sup>11</sup> The Sutherland Bypass opened to traffic in September 1975, "Princes Highway, Former Alignment: Sutherland" [ozroads.com.au](http://ozroads.com.au) see also 1970 & 1978 aerial photographs, *Shire Maps*, Sutherland Shire Council, [mapping.ssc.nsw.gov.au/ShireMaps/](http://mapping.ssc.nsw.gov.au/ShireMaps/)

<sup>12</sup> For location see 1994 aerial photograph, *Shire Maps*

## **‘THE MAD MILE’**

### **A history of the naming of Rawson Avenue**

**LAURIE BURGESS**

*NOTE: The following information has been supplied by, and compiled from, unpublished detailed research by the author.*

The road now known as Rawson Avenue was a project initiated in 1887 by the Trustees of the National Park as a new tree-lined avenue into the National Park south of the Village of Sutherland.

Following the construction of the Illawarra Railway in 1882, the former entry along 1864-65 *Main Illawarra Road* had been made difficult for road users between Sutherland and Loftus, as it required crossing to/from the western side of the railway at both Sutherland and Loftus. The entry road to the National Park became the primary route between Sutherland and Loftus when the section of *Main Illawarra Road* west of the railway was abandoned in 1903 when the area west of the railway was redeveloped as Crown Subdivisions and became the Village of Loftus.

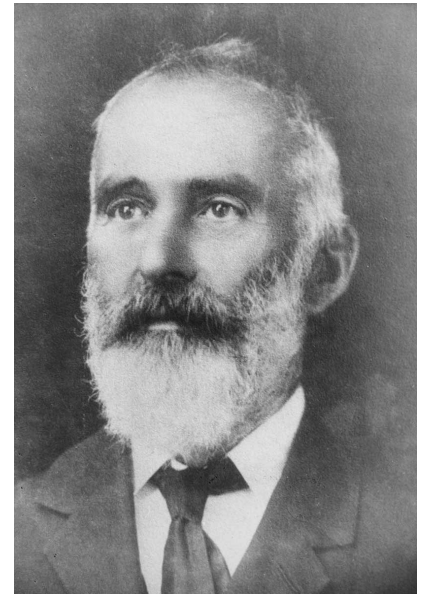
| Date         | Name                                                    | Reference                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Late 1887    | The Avenue                                              | National Park Trustees Report to end December 1887; National Park map 1888                                                                                                                              |
| January 1904 | Lady Rawson Avenue                                      | National Park map 20.1.1904. Name confirmed by NSW Governor (Harry Holdsworth Rawson) 23.12.1904                                                                                                        |
| 19.10.1920   | Princes Highway                                         | Part of national route named in honour of visit of Prince of Wales to Australia                                                                                                                         |
| 21.10.1921   | Princes Highway                                         | Part of Princes Highway within Sutherland Shire, formally named by Sutherland Shire Council                                                                                                             |
| 11.01.1924   | Main Road No 17 – Princes Highway                       | Placed under control of Main Roads Board                                                                                                                                                                |
| Circa 1928   | Unofficial Local name ‘The Mad Mile’                    | Anecdotal – used from around the time that Princes Highway was tar-sealed by Main Roads Board                                                                                                           |
| 17.08.1928   | State Highway No 1 -Princes Highway                     | Reclassification by Main Roads Board.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1.04.1977    | Secondary Road No 2076 – ‘old route of Princes Highway’ | Reclassification of main road following re-routing of State Highway No 1 – Princes Highway along eastern side of Waratah Park                                                                           |
| 4.12.1987    | Secondary Road No 2076 – Old Princes Highway            | Named in amended route of Secondary Road No 2076                                                                                                                                                        |
| Circa 1990   | Rawson Avenue                                           | Sutherland Shire Council Local Environment Plan gazetted 25 May 1990, refers to the road as ‘Rawson Avenue, Loftus’, however no record has been found of any formal renaming from ‘Old Princes Highway’ |

# LAWRENCE HARGRAVE'S SPANISH PROCLAMATION

GARRIOCK DUNCAN

In 1909, Lawrence Hargrave delivered a long and rambling paper entitled 'Lope de Vega', to a meeting of the Royal Society of NSW.<sup>1</sup> Lope de Vega, captain of the *Santa Isabel* (various spellings<sup>2</sup>), was the deputy to Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira in the latter's mission to colonise the Solomon Islands in the name of Catholic Spain in 1596.<sup>3</sup> By the time the mission was abandoned, three of the four ships and their crews, had been lost, including de Vega and his ship, whose ultimate fate was unknown.<sup>4</sup>

Hargrave was aware of de Mendaña's expedition and knew of the missing *Santa Isabel*.<sup>5</sup> De Vega and his crew were, therefore, available to play a decisive role in a radical re-writing of Australian pre-colonial history. Hargrave postulated a short-lived Spanish settlement between 1596 and 1600, most likely on the southern shore of Port Jackson, probably close to his home in Woollahra. According to Hargrave, the *Santa Isabel*, under the command of Lope de Vega arrived in Port Jackson in 1596, and the crew set up camp. In 1600 another ship, the *Santa Barbara*, possibly on a rescue mission, also arrived. The two crews spent much time exploring the general area of the Sydney Basin, even as far south as the Illawarra. Were they looking for gold? Hargrave thought so.<sup>6</sup> Such activity was to be expected since Spanish missions of exploration had a two-fold purpose. The first was the economic exploitation of any and all resources of the territory. The second was the conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity. The co-operation of the local population was not a pre-requisite for either.<sup>7</sup> Late in 1600 both ships sailed north and disappeared.



*Lawrence Hargrave, Aviation Pioneer, Explorer, Historian*  
(undated) [Aust. National Maritime Museum]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hargrave was a significant aviation pioneer.<sup>8</sup> However, his fame had been diminished significantly by the Wright brothers' first manned powered flight at Kittyhawk in 1906. Perhaps, as an attempt to rekindle his reputation, Hargrave turned to alternate history and posed the scenario outlined above to explain a short lived Spanish presence in the Port Jackson area.

Part of the impetus which led Hargrave to develop this new version of Australian history was the result of experiences in his earlier years, when he spent some time on coastal vessels servicing the islands of the Torres Strait. Hargrave felt that indigenous artefacts of this area often displayed European elements, either in design or in materials from an otherwise unknown European source.<sup>9</sup> He would eventually identify that source, at least in his own mind.

Hargrave later developed the same opinion about the abundant rock carvings of the Sydney Basin. These, too, showed to Hargrave some level of European involvement either directly, by European participation in their creation or indirectly, by indigenous use of metal tools left behind by the departing Europeans.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, the indigenous origin of the carvings had been recognised in 1899 by W D Campbell. More significantly, the method used to produce the carvings had been determined by the anthropologist, RH Mathews, by 1910:

...first a row of holes was pierced using a pointed stone, establishing the outline of the drawing, after which the intervals between these holes were cut in such a way to produce an uninterrupted groove...<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in a 1911 letter specifically responding to Hargrave, J H Watson, then President of the Royal Society of New South Wales, strongly repudiated any European involvement in the production of the carvings.<sup>12</sup> K V Smith, an Eora man, who in 2020 re-examined the said rock carvings, has again totally dismissed any European involvement.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from suspect carvings, the Spanish left one legacy, which if correct, is still with us today. In their wanderings around the Sydney Basin, they gave Spanish names to significant features or local areas. The resemblance between the current words, English versions of indigenous originals, and their alleged Spanish originals was based on vague phonetic similarities. Two such locations with a Shire link are 'Cronulla' from *corulla*, the 'room under the deck of a rowing galley', though neither ship image in the Spanish Proclamation (see below) is of a galley, and 'Jibbon' from *jibion*, 'cuttle fish bone plentiful'. While the Spanish stayed for only four years, the local indigenous population were still using some form of these Spanish terms 188 years later when the First Fleet arrived.<sup>14</sup>

However, one item championed by Hargrave was definitely of European origin, the 'Spanish Proclamation', the term coined by Hargrave himself.<sup>15</sup> To Hargrave, this declared the formal acquisition by Spain over, at least, the east coast of Australia.



*Hargrave's recording of the 'Spanish Proclamation'*  
[<https://secretvisitors.wordpress.com/2011/03/20/the-spanish-proclamation/>]

The Proclamation is to be found on an exposed rock surface between the fourth and fifth tees of North Bondi Golf Course. It is composed of a number of items (probably more accurately described as graffiti). Hargrave read the carvings as a single entity, an inscription. The major elements are two lines of jumbled individual letters, all upper case.

Completing the collection are three images. Alongside the W is a shield-like device enclosing a cross. The other two are images of sailing ships, both without masts. Hargrave identifies them as caravels.<sup>16</sup> The right hand edge of the group is marked by a portside view of one ship, in a vertical position bow down. The other is upside down, starboard view,

marking the bottom of the 'inscription'. There is sufficient detail to assume the inscriber had some knowledge of masted vessels. Additionally, at the bottom of this 'inscription', there is a line 400mm long with a small triangle at either end.



Hargrave's 'translation' reads: *We in the Santa Barbara and the Santa y Zabel  
conquered W...from point to point by the sign of the cross.*

There are a number of issues with the text as it stands. Hargrave offered no explanation for the omission of the two 'S's, i.e. representing the title, *Santa*, in the name of each ship. Presumably 'S' was not beyond the skill of Hargrave's Spanish stonemason as he was able to carve 'B'.

'BA' and 'ZA' were taken to indicate the two ships. One would have expected the abbreviation for the *Santa Isabel/Yzabel* (both variants are found) to have been 'IS' or 'YZ'.<sup>17</sup> Hargrave's stonemason was certainly able to carve 'I' as it is in the inscription, and if he was able to carve 'W', why not 'Y'.

*Santa y Z/Sabel* (i.e. *Santa Y/Isabel*) is unlikely, as 'y' is the Spanish for 'and'. Hargrave's Spanish language consultant, Captain Bertram Chambers (RN), should have known this. Of the remaining letters, 'L' represents Lope de Vega himself, while the rest are presumably the marks of witnesses.

Hargrave made much of the shield device, which he thought was a Spanish symbol of conquest, linking it to the motif on the sails of Spanish ships of the era. For Hargrave, it was a symbol of conquest. However, Hargrave's shield device is a common indigenous motif.<sup>18</sup>

What language was used in the Proclamation? De Mendaña's expedition was an outreach of Catholic Spain. Latin should have been first choice, though the Proclamation ignores standard protocols of Latin epigraphy.<sup>19</sup> Hargrave should have known enough Latin to disregard the language, as the 'W' rules out Latin. Though Latin had the sound, *wah*, it was represented by 'V'.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, the 'W' also excludes Spanish. It is rarely used in Spanish, except for foreign loan words, almost exclusively from English. The first English contact with mainland Australia was that of William Dampier in 1699 when he visited the west coast. It is most unlikely that any Anglicisms had moved into Spanish by 1595. The Spanish for 'west' is, of course, *oeste*. Again, where was Captain Bertram Chambers (RN), Hargrave's Spanish language consultant?

Who was responsible for the Proclamation? As early as 1870, two employees of the Dredge Department were suggested.<sup>21</sup> There is a number other suggested origins for the Proclamation, such as convicts, workers on the building of the Malaba Sewage Outlet, even just vandals.<sup>22</sup> W D Campbell (1899) stated that the Proclamation as a whole showed less weathering than nearby indigenous carvings, indicating a more recent date. The letters range in height from 135mm ('Z') to 150mm ('B'). JH Watson and AJ Vogan (1911) detected at least two different hands, indicating the letters were probably not carved at the same time. Hargrave (1914) had to admit that the 'N', 'I' and 'H' were scratched rather than carved. The image of the bottom ship was cut less deep than that of the other (Watson 1911) and, by 2011 it was barely distinguishable.<sup>23</sup>

The language of the Proclamation is, of course, English. There was no Spanish settlement in the area of Port Jackson in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Hargrave's theory received almost total rejection at the time. The Royal Society rejected the opportunity to hear a third exposition of Hargrave's fantasy. Twice was enough. Australian artist Norman Lindsay showed a brief interest but it did not last.<sup>24</sup> However, there was one enthusiastic supporter from a very unexpected quarter.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Anglo-Celtic Australia was a country deeply divided along sectarian lines: Catholics versus the rest, but particularly the Anglicans. Hargrave's unexpected supporter was Cardinal P F Moran, Archbishop of Sydney. He saw Hargrave's theory as proof of the primacy of Catholicism over Anglicanism. Moran even went so far to write a Catholic history of the discovery of Australia.<sup>25</sup> It has been reported that the Hargrave-Moran thesis was taught in Sydney Catholic schools for a number of years.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter, Hargrave's theory fell into obscurity.

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<sup>1</sup> The original paper was published in *The Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, vol.43, 1909, 39-54, 412-425. There are several different versions of Hargrave's original paper. See: 'Guide to the papers of Lawrence Hargrave': <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-241093353/findingaid/>. The list includes: L Hargrave 1911, 'Lope de Vega', Sydney. The version I consulted is held by NLA.

<sup>2</sup> See: Hargrave 1911, 9, 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> For a preliminary discussion, see: B Watt 2012, 'Lope de Vega', *SSHS Bulletin*, 182, Feb. 2012, 16-19.

<sup>4</sup> On the expedition, see: Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira, 1542-1595, Pedro Fernandes de Queirós', [https://library.princeton.edu/visual\\_materials/maps/websites/pacific/mendana-queiros.html/](https://library.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/pacific/mendana-queiros.html/)

<sup>5</sup> Hargrave 1911, 9.

<sup>6</sup> D Gojak 2011a, 'Hargrave - They Searched for Gold', <https://secretvisitors.wordpress.com/2011/03/10/hargrave-they-searched-for-gold/>.

<sup>7</sup> This was decreed by a papal bull, *et Caetera* ('And Other Matters'), the so-called 'Decree of Discovery', issued by Pope Alexander VI, in 1493: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/doctrine-discovery-1493/>.

<sup>8</sup> M Adams 2013, 'Lawrence Hargrave: Precursor to Powered Flight', *Doryanthes*, 6(1), February, 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> D Gojak 2012, 'Lawrence Hargrave's Spanish Sydney', *Australian Place Names*, December, 3.

<sup>10</sup> This was not an entirely fanciful assumption. For a discussion of this practice locally, see: G Jackson 2023 & P Forbes, 'Evidence of Contact', *SSHS Bulletin*, 226, February, 2023. 14-17.

<sup>11</sup> R H Mathews, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hc1r.13?>

<sup>12</sup> D Gojak 2011b, 'The Spanish Proclamation', <https://secretvisitors.wordpress.com/2011/03/20/the-spanish-proclamation/>

<sup>13</sup> K V Smith 2020, 'Tag: Lawrence Hargrave and the Spanish Ships', 8 (as pdf), <https://www.eorapeople.com.au/tag/lawrence-hargrave-and-the-spanish-ships>

<sup>14</sup> Gojak 2012, 6-8.

<sup>15</sup> Hargrave 1911, 5-7

<sup>16</sup> Hargrave 1911, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Gojak 2012, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Smith 2020, 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> On the earliest Latin inscription in Australia, see: E Duyker 2011, *Père Recéveur, Franciscan Scientist and Voyager with Lapérouse*, Dharawal Publications (Sydney), 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> The use of V in Latin began to emerge in late antiquity and was certainly standard by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the assumed date of the Proclamation (W Allen, 1965, *Vox Latina*, CUP, 40-42, 112).

<sup>21</sup> D Gojak 2010, 'Lawrence Hargrave – the Secret Visitors Project', 5 (as a pdf), <https://secretvisitorsproject.wordpress.com/category/advocates/lawrence-hargrave>.

<sup>22</sup> T Alderman 2001, 'Australian Icons...', 13-14 (printed as a pdf): <https://talderman.com/tag/bondi-spanish-proclamation/>

<sup>23</sup> D Gojak 2011b, w3, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Gojak 2013, 'Lawrence Hargrave and Norman Lindsay', <https://secretvisitors.wordpress.com/2013/12/29/Lawrence-hargrave-and-henry-lawson/>.

<sup>25</sup> Listed in the National Library of Australia guide to Hargraves' works is 'Booklet of Discovery of Aust. by Cardinal Moran' (item 11).

<sup>26</sup> M Grealay 1986, 'Mystery carvings near the 4<sup>th</sup> tee', *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 15, 5

## AN ABORIGINAL SHELTER ON MILL CREEK

GREG JACKSON, PAM FORBES, BRUCE HOWELL

There is much evidence, both historical and archaeological, for Aboriginal activity in the Mill Creek area. In his 1803 diary, botanist Robert Brown records that he travelled along the Georges River and stopped at Mill Creek, where he encountered a large number of local Aboriginals with whom he struck up a rapport.<sup>1</sup> Hand stencils, engravings and the large number of axe sharpening grooves located on Mill Creek and many of its tributaries are more concrete evidence of Aboriginal occupation. The shelter shown in **Image 1**, about 50m from a small tributary of Mill Creek, has also been associated with Aboriginal occupation.



**Image 1:** *Shelter in the Mill Creek area* [Photo P. Forbes]

This shelter is said, with no real evidence, to be a 'Birthing Cave' and contains several hand stencils (see **Image 2**). The shelter is close to drinking water from the nearby creek, and is reasonably large with over 1.8m headroom in places. Scale drawings of the shelter are shown in **Image 3**.



**Image 2:** *An arm and hand stencil and a hand stencil on the shelter's back wall.*  
[Photo G. Jackson]



An Aboriginal shelter in this area is not especially noteworthy. But the rockwork placed on both sides of this shelter's entrance (visible in **Image 1**) make this a shelter of interest. Aboriginal rockwork is not unknown in Australia, with many instances of stone fish traps being constructed, along with examples of stone dwellings.<sup>2</sup> However, there is no precedent for Aboriginal rockwork in Sutherland Shire or in the Illawarra. Another explanation could be European occupation; but there is no European litter or graffiti visible either inside the shelter or in the shelter's immediate surrounds. An excavation of the shelter's earth floor and around the shelter's entrance might reveal artefacts of interest, but such an excavation would not be possible without a permit from NSW Heritage.

### **European History**

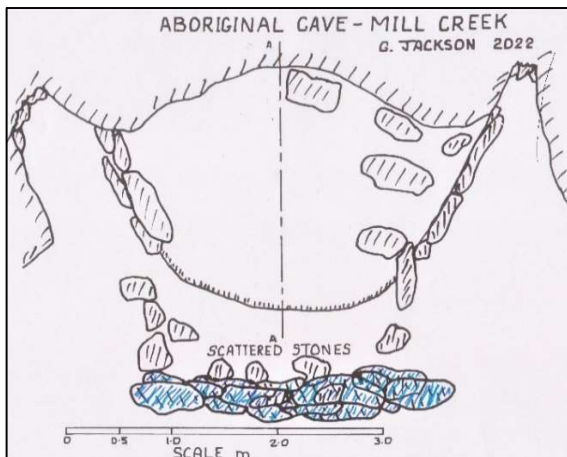
This shelter is located on 700 acres of land originally granted to career public servant David Duncombe in 1822. Duncombe established a farm on this grant, with the 1828 census recording 75 cattle grazing on 50 acres of cleared land at Little Forest. What crops, if any, Duncombe cultivated at Little Forest is not known. To work his farm, he was assigned six convicts (William Webb, James Hickman, John Mulleady, James Kelly, Joseph Holland and Michael Canfry).<sup>1</sup> It is not certain that all these convicts worked at the Little Forest farm as Duncombe had other properties.

This shelter could have provided a dwelling for some of Duncombe's convicts, possibly on a temporary basis while buildings were constructed. No remains of any buildings have been found in the area and indications are that they were located under what is now the enormous Menai rubbish tip site.

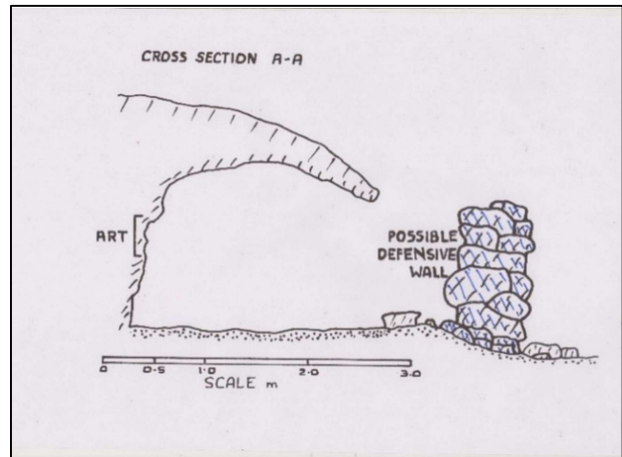
There is evidence that army exercises are a more likely source of the shelter's rockwork. A 1965 report describes a series of low stone walls made from bush rock on ANSTO land above the Woronora River, approximately 2.5 km from the shelter.<sup>3</sup> The walls were investigated further in 1972, and it was concluded that they were built as part of military training exercises during World War 1. The army's large Holsworthy training establishment (built in the 1880s) is approximately 500m south of the shelter. This shelter was possibly used in an army training exercise as a fortified position. Its location with a commanding view over the small valley and stream below make it an ideal military position. A tumble of bush rocks is clustered around the shelter's entrance. Some of these can be seen clearly in **Image 1**. Few bush rocks are located at other locations along the escarpment either side of the shelter. **Image 3** (next page) shows a plan and cross-section of the shelter, and a possible reconstruction of the scattered bush rocks as a defensive wall shielding the shelter's entrance from 'enemy fire'. While this reconstruction is conjecture it does explain the large number of rocks at the shelter's entrance.

### **Conclusion:**

Although the rockwork around the entrance to this shelter is highly unlikely to be Aboriginal, without excavating, its origin remains a mystery. It's possible that David Duncombe's convicts are the builders. As convicts had few material possessions, this would explain the lack of European debris in the shelter, although not the bush rock tumble at the shelter's entrance. Soldiers, 'fortifying' the shelter as part of a training exercise, are the most likely culprits. It is possible that the shelter was cleaned of debris sometime in the past, although why and by whom is unknown.



**Plan of the Shelter**



**Cross section of the Shelter**

**Image 3:** Plan (Drawing 1A) and cross section (Drawing 1B) of the shelter. An 'artist's impression' of a possible army defensive wall shielding the shelter's entrance, constructed from the bushrock that is now the shelter's entrance. It is shaded in blue. [Drawn by G. Jackson after M. Koettig]<sup>4</sup>

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Jackson G., 2017, *David Duncombe's Little Forest*.

[https://www.academia.edu/34738309/David\\_Duncombes\\_Little\\_Forest](https://www.academia.edu/34738309/David_Duncombes_Little_Forest)

<sup>2</sup> Although rare examples of Aboriginal stone dwellings can be found at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/sep/05/evidence-of-9000-year-old-stone-houses-found-on-australian-island>

and

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-significance-of-these-very-rare-aboriginal-shelters-has-been-revealed/634tt22qt>

<sup>3</sup> Letter sent by a Mr C. Geeson of Woronora to Mr Rhys Jones Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney in 1965. This was investigated by Ranger K. Margus in 1972 and it was concluded that the walls were military not Aboriginal.

<sup>4</sup> These drawings were redrawn from a National Parks and Wildlife Service Site Recording Form No. 52-2-1604 date 5/12/1991 by M. Koettig.

## BOOKS FOR SALE AT THE MUSEUM

The following books are available for sale at the Sutherland Shire Museum.

*Address:* 88 Venetia Street (cnr Holt Rd), Sylvania, 2224

*Opening hours:* Tuesday, 12.00pm – 4.00pm  
 Thursday, 9.00am – 12.00pm  
 Saturday, 9.30am – 12.30pm

We accept cash or EFTPOS.

| <b><i>Title and author</i></b>                                                                                                                   | <b><i>Price</i></b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>SSHS Bulletins (new)</i>                                                                                                                      | \$ 5.00             |
| <i>Caretakers of our Past: the first 50 years of Sutherland Shire Historical Society, 1966 – 2016, by Elizabeth Craig, 2016</i>                  | \$15.00             |
| <i>Curious Eyes, by Bruce Watt, 2023</i>                                                                                                         | \$35.00             |
| <i>Dharawal – the first contact people, by Bruce Watt, 2019</i>                                                                                  | \$40.00             |
| <i>East Coast Encounters 1770: reflections of a cultural clash, by Pauline Curby (ed), 2020</i>                                                  | \$30.00             |
| <i>Georges River Blues: Swamps, mangroves and resident action, 1945- 1980, by Heather Goodall, 2021</i>                                          | \$50.00             |
| <i>History of Scouting in the Sutherland Shire, by Christine Edney, 2016</i>                                                                     | \$25.00             |
| <i>Ink from the Bottlebrush, by Laura Dumbrell (ed), 1988</i>                                                                                    | \$ 5.00             |
| <i>Kurnell, birthplace of modern Australia, by Daphne Salt, 2000</i>                                                                             | \$ 5.00             |
| <i>The Matson Collection – Sutherland Shire Museum, by Bruce Howell 2022</i>                                                                     | \$25.00             |
| <i>Murphy's Lore, Unravelling the myths around James Murphy, his brothers, the Holt-Sutherland Company and early Como, by Kim Hatherly, 2023</i> | \$10.00             |
| <i>Pictorial History of Sutherland Shire, by Pauline Curby, 2000</i>                                                                             | \$25.00             |
| <i>Steaming down the Kingsway, a history of the Sutherland to Cronulla Tramway, 1911 – 1932, by Bruce Spencer Irwin, 2020</i>                    | \$15.00             |
| <i>Tom Thumb II (Bass and Flinders), by Christine Hill, 2022</i>                                                                                 | \$20.00             |
| <i>The Shire – a journey through time, by Bruce Watt, 2014</i>                                                                                   | \$40.00             |



# CAPTAIN JAMES WALLIS, AN EARLY COLONIAL PUBLISHER

BRUCE WATT

**Author's note:** *This paper was inspired by the chance discovery and purchase of a folio of pages from a rare book compiled at Newcastle by Captain Wallis and convict artists between 1817 and 1818 and printed in London in 1820. Much of the narrative text had been lost but ten of the original twelve engraved plates that depict scenes in Sydney and convict Newcastle were intact. The story associated with them reveals a fascinating aspect of Australia's early colonial history.*

James Wallis, (1785 – 1858) an Anglo-Irishman from Cork, joined Britain's 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment as an ensign in 1803 and was promoted to lieutenant in 1804. He fought with distinction against the French in Domenica in the West Indies and was promoted to the rank of Captain in 1811.

In 1813 the 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment was ordered to the colony of NSW where in the following year it became Governor Lachlan Macquarie's own regiment, used to protect the population in Sydney and Newcastle against hostile natives, escaped convicts and bushrangers from whom settlers in the outlying areas were in considerable danger of attack. Accounts of hostilities between European settlers and Aboriginal people had increased during the first decade of the nineteenth century as settler incursions on the Cumberland Plain increased.

In 1816 Governor Macquarie received a demand for protection from Elizabeth Macarthur, who had been entrusted by her husband, John Macarthur, to manage his rural affairs on his Camden Estate while he was in England defending his role in the overthrow of Governor Bligh in 1808. Macarthur was a leading figure in the New South Wales Marine Corps ('Rum Corps'), and a powerful influence in the colony. Governor Macquarie responded to Mrs Macarthur's demand on 10<sup>th</sup> April by ordering three separate military detachments to march into the interior and clear the country of Aborigines entirely by driving them across the mountains, or, in the event of resistance, to fire on them, and to hang their bodies in the trees, 'in order to strike the greater terror into the survivors.'<sup>1</sup>

Two of the detachments found no Aborigines, but one led by Captain James Wallis encountered a group near the banks of the Cataract River that led to the incident that became known as the Appin massacre.<sup>2</sup> Wallis' diary records the event as outlined in an earlier article in the *SSHS Bulletin*.<sup>3</sup> Briefly, it was in the early hours of the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> April 1816 that the detachment came across what looked like a deserted encampment. A crying child gave away the presence of the Aborigines, and soldiers pushed them towards the precipitous banks of a deep rocky creek. Some fell to their deaths and others were shot. Wallis counted fourteen bodies. Two of the bodies were hung as directed by Macquarie.

Wallis was accorded praise for his courage and initiative, and rewarded with 15 gallons of rum. Six weeks later, on 1<sup>st</sup> June Governor Macquarie promoted him to commandant and magistrate of the penal settlement at Newcastle. He immediately set the tone by introducing strict discipline, and began to plan the layout of the settlement. This included the construction of new public buildings including a hospital, gaol and convict barracks, a guard house, watch house and boat house, a stone church, enlarging the wharf and beginning a breakwater to improve protection for the harbour.

Governor Macquarie visited the penal settlement on three occasions and praised Wallis's achievements when he was relieved from the position in January 1819. Wallis returned to England in March 1819 and in 1821 was promoted to the rank of major largely on the strong recommendation of Governor Macquarie. He served in his regiment at Bellary Fort in India until his retirement in 1826.

### **Captain James Wallis**



Though a firm disciplinarian Wallis developed relationships with artists and Aboriginals that would leave a mark on the colony at Newcastle, formerly known as Coal River. It was a happy and productive time for Wallis, a period of building, of artistic foundations and strong relationships with Aboriginal people. He talked fondly about the beauty of the Newcastle district, of it being a virtual paradise of plenty. Before photography, sketching and artwork were valuable officer skills. It was fortunate that he was able to encourage the artistic abilities of some convicts at the settlement including Joseph Lycett, William Preston and Richard Browne.

*Captain James Wallis* [Source: Wikipedia]

### **The Wallis book**

It was during his time in Newcastle from 1817 that Wallis began to assemble a book that was first published in England in 1820 with a second edition in 1821. It was titled *An Historical Account of the Colony of New South Wales and its dependent settlements and An Illustration of Twelve Views, Engraved by W Preston, a Convict, from Drawings Taken on the Spot*. It consisted of a narrative portrayal of the colony accompanied by twelve engraved plates described as 'a series of original views in New South Wales'.

Wallis and convict artists contributed to the book. The plates were prepared in Newcastle though printed in London when Wallis returned to England before his reposting to India. They represent some of the earliest examples of graphic arts in Australia.<sup>4</sup> It is a rare book. A very small number of copies in full or partial form are held in public institutions.

### **The Wallis Album**

A personal and much more detailed copy amounting to a diary of his time in Newcastle was compiled by Wallis. A gift to his second wife in 1857, a year before his death, the album consisted of 35 extra colour paintings of subjects – including Aboriginal people – that add greatly to an understanding of contemporary culture. Regifted to her nephew, Lieutenant Colonel A Taylor in 1866, it disappeared for over 150 years until it was found in a cupboard in Canada. Its significance was recognised and in 2011 it was purchased at auction by the Library of New South Wales for two million dollars. It is known as the Wallis Album.<sup>5</sup>

The artworks are extraordinarily rare. They show that Wallis and convicts Joseph Lycett and Richard Browne enjoyed a certain familiarity with Indigenous people that allowed the artists to witness and record aspects of their culture.

Wallis enjoyed sketching and recruited talented convicts to record several views in Sydney and Newcastle and surrounds, scenes of kangaroos and black swans and a night time scene of an Aboriginal corroboree that was performed for the governor when he visited Newcastle in August 1818 (see front cover). The ceremony was organised by Burigon, (or Buriejou) leader of the Awabakal tribe of Newcastle. Burigon, (also known as Jack) was a particular favourite of Captain Wallis. Burigon had developed relationships with Europeans and Wallis trusted him and hunted and fished with him.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Joseph Lycett** (convict and artist)

A repeat offender who was to serve a sentence in Newcastle for forgery, Joseph Lycett (1774-1828) was born in Staffordshire, England. By profession a portrait and miniature painter, he was convicted of forgery at Salop Assizes on 10 August 1811 and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. He sailed in the transport *General Hewitt*, the ship in which Captain James Wallis, of the 46th Regiment, an amateur artist of considerable ability, was coming out for a tour of duty with his regiment.<sup>7</sup>

In May 1815 Lycett was found guilty of forging bills in Sydney and sent to Newcastle to serve three years' hard labour. It was a place of harsh secondary punishment for re-offenders, but Lycett's lot appears to have become comparatively easy after Wallis became commandant in June 1816. In late 1816, Wallis sent Lycett to Sydney to copy the plans of the public buildings then under construction, the designs of which were executed by another convict architect, Francis Greenway. In early 1817 Wallis commenced an extensive building program. Captain Wallis allowed Lycett to paint for much of his time in Newcastle. Lycett received a full pardon from governor Macquarie in 1821 and returned to England.

Among the plates in the Wallis Album are several attributed to Lycett. He was a prolific artist. Many other depictions of Aboriginal people by Lycett held in public institutions record Aboriginal culture and practices from this early period. These include hunting and fishing, traditional burning, types of spears, climbing trees, whale feasts and funeral practices. Another convict artist from this period was Richard Browne who painted images of Burigon, leader of the Newcastle tribe.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Walter Preston** (convict and engraver); **Absalom West** (ex-convict and printer)

The twelve engravings in the Wallis Book were executed by another convict, Walter Preston. Convicted of highway robbery he arrived in New South Wales in 1812 and was assigned to Absalom West, an ex- convict, brewer and printer. Preston engraved the plates for *Views of New South Wales* published in 1813 and 1814. This publication produced in two sets of twelve prints, contained the earliest landscape views of Sydney and the colony. Hoping to receive patronage, West dedicated the series to Governor Macquarie. The series was produced 'for a local clientele including naval and army officers and the captains and crew of trading ships'. Reoffending, Preston was sent to the penal colony at Newcastle. Having the West model of book production and the convict artists and engravers at his disposal, Wallis was in a position to execute his own volume.

#### **Macquarie's Collector's Chest**

Another remarkable and unique artefact purchased by the Mitchell Library is Macquarie's Collector's Chest based on military campaign furniture. Wallis commissioned two of them as a gift to Governor Macquarie in 1819. Like a mini museum they were built by convicts and contained flora and fauna, shells, insects, other natural objects and thirteen oil paintings



mainly depicting the scenery of the Newcastle area. This artistic explosion showcased the skills of the convicts under Wallis's patronage and provided a rare insight into this period.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1818 the 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment was ordered to redeploy to India and Captain Wallis was replaced as Commandant and Magistrate. That Captain Wallis's stewardship at Newcastle during his term was highly regarded is testified to by his commendation by Governor Macquarie at the end of his appointment. He praised Wallis's 'zeal, ability and judgment' in the face of such 'peculiarly arduous' duties, and also the 'humane and judicious system' he adopted towards the nearly seven hundred convicts in Newcastle. 'Condition of those unfortunate Persons has been ameliorated and improved since he took command of the Settlement.'<sup>10</sup>

A Royal Commission into Governor Macquarie's management of the colony, largely brought on by John Macarthur and others who disapproved of the governor's leniency with convicts, led to Macquarie's resignation in 1821.

The brief flourish of art and culture that was fostered at Sydney and Newcastle, by Absalom West, James Wallis and Lachlan Macquarie and the band of convict artists and engravers was gone. The legacy is a brief snapshot of a time and place, fostered by a more enlightened regime whose artistic output of enormous historical significance is today revered as a national treasure.

**Editor's note:** *This article is an extract of a much longer paper by Bruce Watt on Captain James Wallis's time in the colony, including his involvement in the Appin Massacre in April 1816. It will be published on SSHS website on a 'Research Page' to be created.*

### **YouTube video references: Descriptions of the Newcastle experience**

*Stories of our Town 2021: Lycett and Wallis: Unlikely Preservers of Aboriginal Knowledge.*

*Stories of our Town: Indigenous history and Joseph Lycett.*

*Lycett and Wallis: filmmakers launch latest stories of our town.*

*The Newcastle Tribe (1820), Hunter living histories. University of Newcastle.*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Governor's Diary & Memorandum Book Commencing on and from Wednesday the 10th Day of April 1816. — At Sydney, in N. S. Wales.* <https://www.mq.edu.au/macquarie-archive/lema/1816/1816april.html>

<sup>2</sup> Anne-Maree Whitaker. *Appin: the story of a Macquarie town*. Kingsclear books, 2005, Chapter 4

<sup>3</sup> SSHS Bulletin No. 219, May 2021, Bruce Watt, 'Explaining the Appin Massacre of 1816', pp.24-27

<sup>4</sup> Note that the term 'Australia' only came into general use around 1817 following the publication of Matthew Flinders' account of his circumnavigation of the continent after his return to England. Flinders had suggested the use of the name and Governor Macquarie popularised it. Wallis however still used the term 'New South Wales'.

<sup>5</sup> See internet video references above.

<sup>6</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1820 Burigon was treacherously stabbed by a runaway convict whom he was bringing back to Newcastle. His murderer was John Kirkby who was convicted and hanged along with his accomplice. This was a landmark case in Australian legal history. It was the first instance of a European being hanged for the murder of an Aboriginal person under British Law. For a more detailed and visual account see; [hunterlivinghistories.com/2016/02/09/burigon/](http://hunterlivinghistories.com/2016/02/09/burigon/) and also *The murder of Burigon* - YouTube

<sup>7</sup> Rex Rienits, 'Lycett, Joseph (1774-1828)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 2, Melbourne University Press 1967

<sup>8</sup> John Turner, *Joseph Lycett, Governor Macquarie's convict artist* (undated), Chapter 6 'Off to Newcastle – Joseph's worst year', and Chapter 7 'The Commandant's painter'.

<sup>9</sup> See internet video references above.

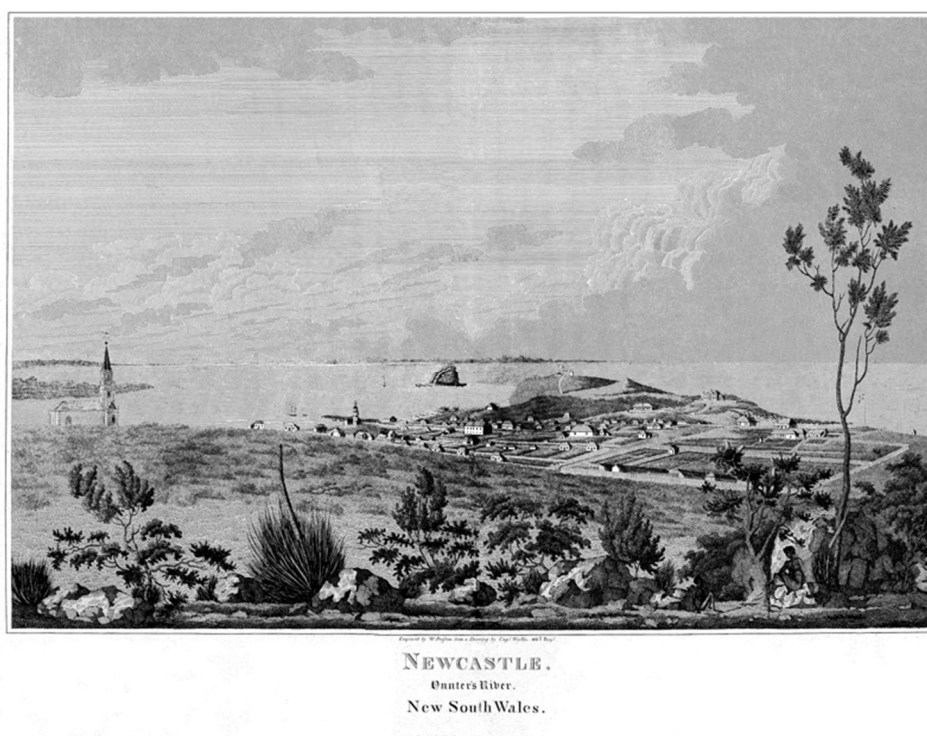
<sup>10</sup> *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 26 December 1818.

## IMAGES FROM THE WALLIS BOOK

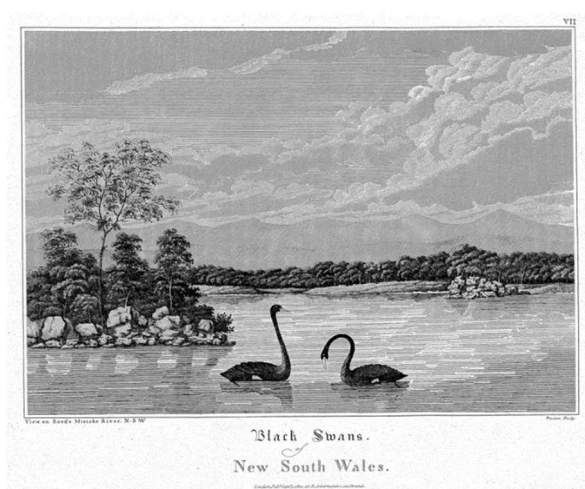
(See 'Captain James Wallis, an early Colonial publisher', by Bruce Watt, page 25)

Unless otherwise specified these images are from the author's archives.

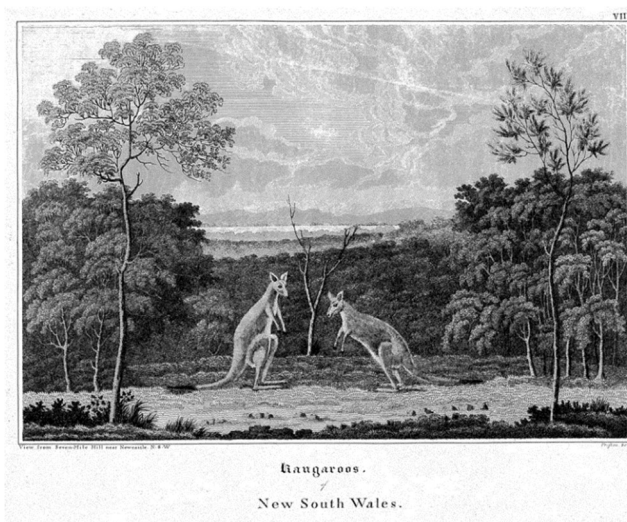
One of the most descriptive images in the book is of an Aboriginal corroboree held at night for the benefit of Governor Macquarie who 'receives Burigon, King of the Newcastle tribe, who has come with a retinue to do "a carauberie in high style" and receive his bounty of grog and maize'.<sup>1</sup>



*Newcastle, Hunter's River, NSW, Capt. Wallis* [Engraved by W. Preston]



*View from Reed's Mistake River, NSW  
by Capt. James Wallis*

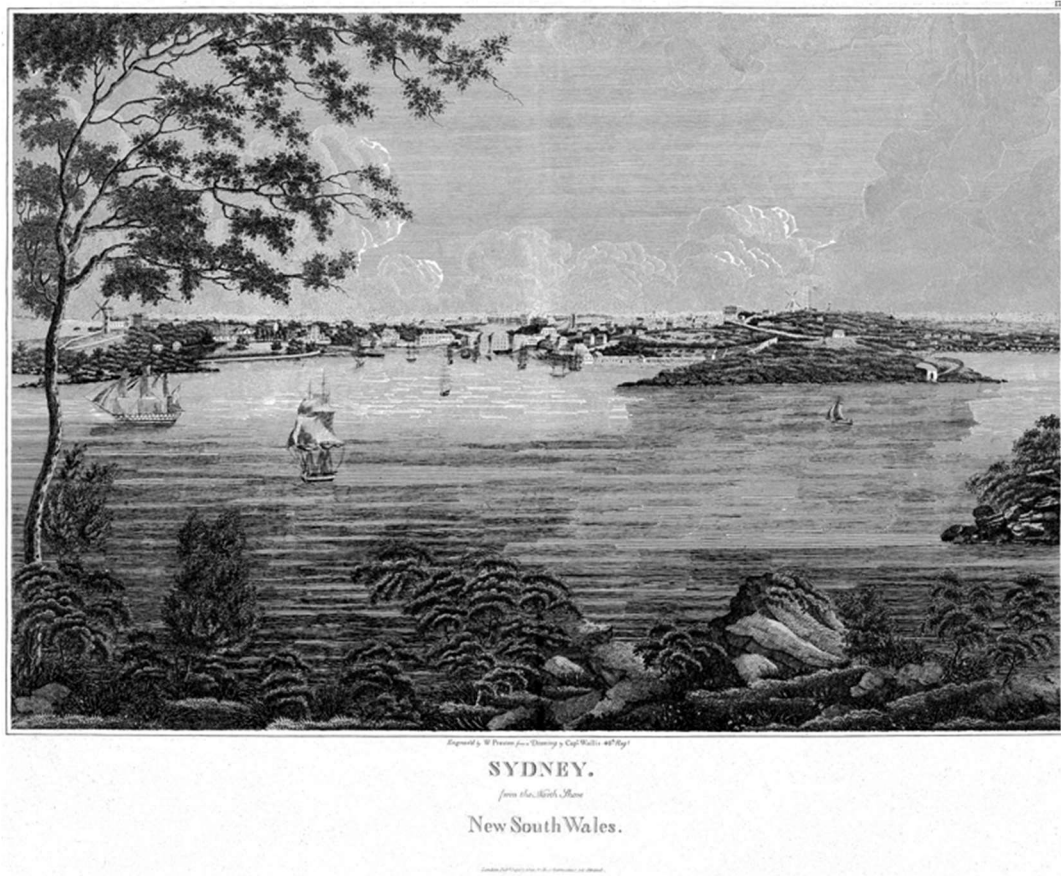


*Kangaroos – View from Seven Mile Hill, near  
Newcastle, by Capt. James Wallis*

<sup>1</sup> M H Ellis. *Lachlan Macquarie, His life, adventures, and times.* 1947 p440

**Images from 'Captain James Wallis, an early Colonial publisher', by Bruce Watt**

See article on page 25



*Sydney from the North Shore*, by Capt. Wallis [Engraved by W. Preston]  
from the Wallis Book [Source: Bruce Watt]



*The Awakabul Tribe*, Painting by James Wallis from Macquarie's Chest. Burigon is noted on the left.  
[SLNSW]