



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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53 Bruce Street,
Bexley.

7th December, 1965.

Dear Friend and Member,

Our Christmas Party, this year, will be held in the -

HISTORIC METHODIST CHURCH HALL
BAY STREET, ROCKDALE.
1856

on TUESDAY EVENING, 14th DECEMBER, 1965, at 8 p.m.

The Evening will take the following form: -

1. Presentation of Papers on various parts of District.
2. Exhibition of old photographs.
(WHO HAS THE OLDEST PHOTOGRAPH OF INTEREST TO OUR DISTRICT)
3. Keepsakes and historic souvenirs (BRING ALONG YOUR FAVOURITE
HEIRLOOM AND TELL US ITS STORY).
4. Coloured slides of the year's outings. (BRING THEM. DON'T BE MODEST).
5. AN EXHIBITION OF MR. EARDLEY'S LOVELY PENCIL SKETCHES.
6. Christmas - 100 years ago - Mr. Bryan Mitchell.
7. Christmas Carols.

SUPPER - Ladies are asked to bring a plate of sandwiches or cakes.
Gentlemen please bring something to drink. (The Church authorities have
asked that we respect their opposition to hard liquor so that "something" will
have to be soft.)

Come along! Bring your friends! Make this a night to remember.

R. W. Rathbone,
Hon. Secretary.
LW.4813.

EXPLORATIONS IN AND AROUND COMO, NEW SOUTH WALES.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

One of the prettiest suburbs of Sydney is located at Como, a settlement situated on and around a short promontory jutting from the south bank of the beautiful Georges River immediately adjacent to the confluence of the equally beautiful Woronora River. It is understood that Mr. James Murphy, the secretary and manager of the vast Holt-Sutherland Estate Company, was responsible for the naming of Como where, with the coming of the Illawarra Railway, he established a large pleasure ground and other amenities, calculated to attract visitors from the metropolis. The place name is obviously derived from the famed Lake Como set amidst alpine splendour in Northern Italy. There are a number of other locations in the Sutherland Shire which also owe their European nomenclature to the imagination of Mr. Murphy, such as Sylvania, Miranda, and Lucerne, the latter being listed as a trigonometrical station mounted on the crest of the hill between Miranda and Caringbah.

The initial exploration of the Georges River is credited to Bass and Flinders, those intrepid explorers negotiated the waterway, in their small open boat named Tom Thumb, during October 1795. However, it is within the realms of possibility that, at least, the lower confines of the river were closely examined by Governor Phillip in his search of the Botany Bay area for a suitable site for settlement. The shores of Georges River largely remained in their pristine state until about 1865 when Thomas Holt acquired some 12,000 acres of land, ranging along the southern foreshores of both the river and Botany Bay, between Como and Quibray Bay and the hinterland southwards to the northern shores of Port Hacking. The Como portion of the estate remained undeveloped until such time as the construction of the Illawarra Railway commenced in the early eighteen-eighties.

Messrs. Miller Brothers were successful in obtaining the contract for the first section, 23 miles in length, of the Illawarra Railway, commencing from a junction with the Main Suburban Railway, located at about half a mile south of the then Eveleigh Station, which is now-a-days named Redfern. The route as surveyed followed a general southerly course to the Cooks River at Tempe and onwards, passing through deep cuttings and a tunnel excavated through Arncliffe Hill, to reach Kogarah, a rising township which was regarded as the administrative centre of the St. George District. Initially it was the intention of the Railway Department to cross Georges River by means of a bridge between Rocky Point and Taren Point, at the site of the newly opened Captain Cook Bridge. From Taren Point the line was to traverse the extensive Holt-Sutherland estate and, after reaching the crest of the ridge forming the watershed between the Port Hacking and Georges rivers in the vicinity of Yowie Bay, to curve westwards along the crest of the ridge towards Sutherland, where the southerly course was to be followed along the highlands to Waterfall and beyond.

This arrangement was highly desirable in the sight of the Holt-Sutherland Estate management who proceeded to set a high price for the land necessary for the right-of-way, a sum which balked the intentions of the Government. The impasse thus created was not overlooked by property owners and land speculators, who were legion, in and around the Hurstville, or Gannon's Forest, area. These people, on their promise of giving free land entry for railway purposes, succeeded in their efforts to have the Illawarra Railway diverted from Kogarah to the present alignment, which, in two wide sweeping curves, reaches the Georges River at Como.

The contractors established their works depot at the sidings, still in use, east of the railway line between St. Peters and Marrickville, this latter station subsequently being renamed Sydenham. From the works depot a little tramway of a temporary nature was laid along the route of the line to Tempe, where Cooks River was crossed by a log trestle bridge. Reaching the southern shore-line the tramway passed along the banks of the river immediately north of the historic house named TEMPE to Rocky Point Road, where the line swung southwards to serve a group of three wharves built alongside the deeper waters of Cooks River. Sleepers and other materials necessary for the railway construction were brought by sea to Botany Bay and then transferred to punts, which flat-bottomed vessels were towed by tug-boats to the aforementioned wharves. Here the cargo was transferred to horsedrawn trollies and conveyed

over the temporary tramway to the depot. In the opposite direction came the components for the construction of the railway bridge at Como. Between Cooks River and Como a service of tug-boat hauled punts was instituted, which handled all the bridge components and ancillary equipment, together with the stores, foodstuffs, and the thousand and one items requisite for the every day needs of the construction gangs and their families. There is a consistent rumour, which has not as yet been confirmed, that on one occasion a punt, carrying a small steam locomotive, capsized off Sandringham (or Strippers Point) where the engine, so it is said, still remains in its watery grave.

The extensive construction camp at Como was scattered over the eastern hill slopes abutting on to the shores of Scylla and Carina Bays. All manner of temporary accommodation, not conforming to any specific type, was erected haphazardly to provide housing for upward of six hundred people, some two hundred of whom were employed by Miller Brothers. Many lived in tents, or flimsy rooms of canvas spread over a framework of saplings, whilst others dwelt in small weatherboard shanties, or buildings constructed wholly of galvanised iron, complete with roughly built chimneys fashioned from the same unlovely covering. Perhaps the most substantial building at Como was the Public School, erected on the brow of the low hillock dividing Scylla and Carina Bays, where an average attendance of eighty scholars gained knowledge of the "Three R's", namely "readin riting, and rithmetic". The Woronora Hotel administered to the needs of the adult male population.

The bridge over the Georges River at Como, erected at a cost of about £66,000, is of the lattice girder type, the estimated weight being 2190 tons. The total width to be spanned was 954 feet, and this wrought-iron superstructure was supplied by the American firm of Cockrane and Company on the basis of a separate contract. The erection was carried out by Miller Brothers under the supervision of Mr. T. Firth, the District Engineer for the Railway Department. Four lattice main girders, each 478 feet 2 inches in length, were needed, these being laid on pairs at a distance of 14 feet apart in the clear, the whole forming six spans, at an average distance of 158 feet from centre to centre, across the river. Cross girders, located at 7 feet 4 inches centres, carried longitudinal beams to support the rails of the single line railway track. A massive and well designed abutment supports the northern extremity of the bridge, abutting on to the sandstone cliff face which confronts the river at this place.

To support the bridge and give a clear heading of 35 feet above water level, it was necessary to provide six piers, each consisting of two cast-iron cylindrical shaped columns fabricated in sections, the lowest having a diameter of 11 feet, and the uppermost 9 feet. They were manufactured by the Stockton Forge Company. By the use of caissons these piers were sunk to bedrock at depths varying from 70 to 114 feet below water level. Each pier was filled with concrete and cross-braced to its immediate neighbour. After the concrete had set, each pier was tested with a loading of 250 tons of iron rails prior to the erection of the superstructure. The pier at the southern end of the bridge became enshrouded with the mullock of the high approach embankment on which the Como Railway Station was subsequently erected.

The construction, in situ, of the super-structure of the bridge, formed of numerous wrought-iron components rivetted together at the site, necessitated the erection of a huge timber trestle, or falsework, carried on hardwood piles driven to the bedrock of the river bed. This structure in itself was a work of considerable magnitude as it had to be capable of carrying the weight of the bridge sections as they were extended, piece by piece, from the abutments. After the completion of the span the trestle had to be dismantled, but instead of pulling the piles out of the river, at least at the northern end, the contractors had them cut off with axes at the low-water level, much to the annoyance of the authorities. The obstruction formed by these underwater timbers resulted in the formation of a large sandbank in the channel against the northern shore, on the down stream side of the bridge, which still creates a hazard for small craft frequenting the area.

The Como Bridge was all but completed by September 1885, and on January 19th, 1896, Mr. Wade, inspection engineer for the Railway Department, together with Mr. T. Firth and Mr. Henry Deane, carried out deflection tests which were more severe than any previously applied to bridge construction in New South Wales up to that period. A series of automatic pencil and stretched weight and wire regulators were carefully affixed at intervals on both sides of the structure, and each of the spans tested, first by a dead-weight load afforded by three heavy locomotives, and then by the same three locomotives, coupled together, passing over the bridge at a speed of twenty-five miles per hour. The deflections thus recorded varied from half to three-quarters of an inch, a result that gave the inspecting engineers great satisfaction.

The three steam tender locomotives allocated to the test were of divers types, specially chosen for their weight rather than their appearance. The first was a 2-6-0 "Mogul", No. 299 of Class K, which gloried under the nickname of "Goods Waterburys" insofar as enginemen were concerned. This particular engine was long, sleek, and outrageously ugly, a real dachshund of a locomotive, low of wheels and low of body, but instead of having big ears it possessed a big wooden driver's cab at the rear end. The Baldwin Locomotive Company of Philadelphia, U.S.A., were the builders, and the engine formed one of a batch of ten built for the New South Wales Railway Department in 1885 for the haulage, primarily, of goods trains.

The second locomotive, No. 60 of Class "O", was one of a batch of six 0-6-0 engines built by Messrs. Robert Stephenson and Company of Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, a firm with a hallowed name in railway history. These engines were imported for working passenger trains over the Blue Mountain section of the Great Western Railway. In their original condition, at 1874, they were splendidly painted in a dark green livery with scarlet splashers over their driving wheels, and were further distinguished by a somewhat stumpy "stove-pipe chimney". All in all No. 60 was most pleasing to the eyes of those attuned to just these things.

The third locomotive at the test, No. 205 of Class "B", was the first of a batch of fifty goods engines, also of the 2-6-0 "Mogul" type, supplied between 1882 and 1884 by the world famous firm of Messrs. Beyer Peacock and Company, of Manchester, England. These engines were also in green livery and their small diameter driving wheels made them most suitable for main line goods traffic at the period of their introduction. It must have been a most imposing sight to see these three engines, of such diverse types, racing down the grades of the Oatley Bank and on to the bridge, all steam, fire, and fury.

Contemporary with the construction of the Como Bridge, Mr. Miller had a screw-driven steamer built at his workshops at Como. This vessel was 115 feet in length and had a beam width of 18 feet, the depth of the hold being 8 feet. The power was supplied by a 40 horsepower steam engine which was calculated to provide a speed of 10 knots per hour.

Even after the site of the bridge over the Georges River had been determined the authorities still remained undecided as to what route the Illawarra Railway should follow southwards from Como. A suggestion was that easier grades would eventuate by taking the line through the valleys of National Park. Whilst this proposal was being closely examined and surveyed, as it had considerable merit, it was thought fit to terminate the contract for the first section of the line, held by Miller Brothers, at the 13th mile-post, instead of the 24th, pending the decision of the Railway Department. Mr. Miller's contract continued for about a distance of three-quarters of a mile south of the bridge, the approach to which, from that side, was by means of an embankment containing 80,000 cubic yards of rock filling. This material was gained from the rock cutting, 65 feet in depth, located immediately south of the present railway station at Como.

When the Railway Department finally decided on the direction the railway should follow, southwards from Como, fresh tenders were called and that of Messrs. Rowe and Smith was accepted for a price of about £450,000. The contract included the completion of the unfinished portion of the previously held Miller's contract, from the 13th to the 24th mile-post, by July 1st, 1885,

and from the 24th mile-post onwards to the 34th mile-post by the 31st December, 1887. Incidentally the 24th mile-post was known in the locality as the Waterfalls, and now-a-days as Waterfall. The second section of the Illawarra Railway, so it was claimed, "traverses the roughest country over which any railway has been attempted in New South Wales". On an average the work cost £48,000 per mile. Messrs. Rowe and Smith sited their main residential camp at a distance of about two miles south of Como, in the vicinity of the present day township of Jannali, where a large tent town, including stores but no hotel, was established. The temporarily built shanties were dotted over the landscape to the number of about two hundred, the transient population moving forward as the work progressed.

A railway station, which gained the name Como, was erected on the western side of the southern approach embankment to the bridge and came into use with the official opening of a portion of the second section of the railway, as far as Sutherland, on December 26th, 1885. It is possible that a train service was in operation prior to this date as it was suggested, in the Illawarra Mercury, that special excursion steamers should be run from the Illawarra District (extending southwards from Coalcliff to the Shoalhaven River) to the bridge at Como for the opening of the railway between Sydney and Hurstville, an event of importance which took place on October 15th, 1884.

When first constructed the bridge at Como only carried a single pair of rails, however a decision was made, in view of the potential coal traffic from the South Coast, to duplicate the Illawarra Railway between Hurstville and Waterfall. This work was carried out in various sections, most of which came into use during the year 1890, with the exception of the heavily graded length between Como and Sutherland, which was not duplicated until March 22nd, 1891. The single track across Como Bridge, of course, could not be duplicated, and it was necessary, as an expedient, to establish a signal box, named Georges River Signal Box, north of and adjacent to the bridge. This installation, which came into use as from November 9th, 1890, controlled movements to and from the short length of single line across the bridge. What is known as a gauntletted track, eliminated the need for junction points and also the controlling signal box for same. The new arrangement, which is still in use, came into operation on February 26th, 1894, when the Block System of Safe Working was instituted between the Oatley and the Como railway station signal boxes.

With the present high density of traffic the gauntletted section (meaning a second set of rails laid in juxtaposition to the original track) over Como Bridge has an adverse effect on train operations throughout the full length of the Illawarra Railway. Goods traffic in particular create a problem as it takes these trains twenty-eight minutes, on the average, to clear the section, in the Up direction, between Sutherland and Como. A large number of vehicular handbrakes have to be set at Sutherland and released at Como, to assist in controlling the train over the steep descending grades, a feature responsible, in off peak hours, for the half-hourly service given by electric trains to travellers going to and from places south of Oatley, including the irate train travelling residents along the Cronulla branch line.

Proposal after proposal has come forward recommending that a second bridge should be erected forthwith, one carrying a second set of rails and at a higher level in order to minimise the severity of the approach grades in either direction. Local opinion has been expressed that a four line bridge should be built in view of the fact that quadruplication of tracks now exist between the metropolis and Hurstville, coupled with the phenomenal suburban growth south of Como. Several years ago a start was made on the northern approaches to the oft proposed new bridge, when a considerable amount of earth-work was carried out, activities now marked by a derelict steam boiler which was abandoned to its fate when the project lapsed through lack of finance.

It is understood that it was the Railway Department's intention to establish two new railway stations on the realignment, one on the Oatley side of the bridge approach, and the other close to the present Railway Road Level Crossing at Como South, where it would prove more convenient to the district at large. Tenders are to be called for the construction of the new railway bridge, mooted to cost three million pounds. In the event of a new bridge coming into use it is intended to utilise the present bridge for highway purposes.

Reverting to the affairs of the early settlement at Como, immediately after the departure of the boisterous railway construction encampment, we find that the owner of the area adjacent to the southern approach to the bridge, and much of the nearby hinterland, was Mr. James Murphy. This gentleman sought to capitalise of his Como property by establishing a large pleasure ground on the rocky promontory east of the Como Railway Station. Here a boatshed was built, catering for amateur fishermen, whilst about a hundred "Summer houses" were dotted about the landscape for the convenience of picnic parties. A large shelter pavilion, together with a dance hall, was erected as additional amenities and Como soon came to be known far and wide as the venue of weekend trippers, and also as a highly desirable and convenient base for Sunday School outings. Rail traffic to and from the Como Pleasure Grounds was sufficient to warrant the running of special trains from Sydney at weekends and on holidays throughout the year.

James Murphy built a most ornate two-storied weatherboard house, about 1886, at the top of the headland immediately west of the Como Railway Station, in which he resided for many years. The residence, known as "Como House", is still occupied and maintained in a good state of preservation. Extensive grounds, replete with massive stone buttress walls and many stone steps leading to the various garden levels, were set out as a shrubbery, whilst retaining large numbers of the native trees. The view over the entrance to the Woronora River, together with that of Bottle and Glass Head, and the opposite shores of Georges River, embracing Jewfish Point, Gungah Bay, and the rocky cliffs of the headland at Oatley from which the Como Bridge commences, is truly magnificent. No doubt James Murphy had a keen eye for natural beauty, and even today the scenery is not marred by the suburban settlement, which to a certain extent, has been established along the northern shores of the main river. Here the residents have retained most of the natural tree growth, thus retaining a scene of sylvan beauty, which is somewhat rare in the district of St. George.

A gentleman, named Paddy Larkin, who also resided at "Como House" was kept fully employed at the Como Pleasure Grounds as a general factotum. He was responsible for levelling and creating a circular promenade around the width of the Como promontory, enclosing a series of stepped terraces grouped against the high rocky knoll, which in turn, was graced by a somewhat large summer house, from which a most extensive view, downstream, of the Georges River is to be obtained. The promenade was lined with summer houses, each designed to hold a family picnic party. Larger gatherings usually monopolised the pavilion appointed for that purpose. The spoil gained from the construction of the promenade was used to build a stone revetment wall along the foreshores. Paddy Larkin was also responsible for the erection of a large swimming enclosure which was sited at the eastern end of the pleasure ground.

The first boatshed at Como, built against the northern shore of the Pleasure Ground precincts, was a low structure with a skillion type roof, under which the rowboats were kept when not in use. This building, now in a rather dilapidated condition, still functions as of yore, and is located at the eastern end of a newer two-storied shed, the upper storey of which is used for residential purposes and features a row of three dormer windows, facing towards the river and its mighty bridge. At the rear, or southern end, of the boatshed a separate residence was built to house Mr. William Jordan, the boat repairer, and also the local ferryman who rowed people across to Coronation Bay and Caravan Head. At the latter place the Reverend Carr Smith, then incumbent of St. James Church of England at King Street, Sydney, had a holiday cottage which he, his family, and their friends visited as circumstances permitted. This cottage, incidentally, was the first to be erected in this area.

To cater for the needs of local residents and picnickers in particular, James Murphy built the corner shop which still serves its customers at the entrance to the pleasure grounds. There was an adjoining residence in which Mr. Murphy also lived, dividing his time between this domicile and his beloved "Como House", athwart its rocky eminence. The shop was stocked with all manner of groceries and soft drinks, including "Codd" bottles of lemonade (the glass bottles with the glass marble stopper inside) and the short earthenware bottles known as "Stone ginger beer", specially brewed by Mr. Starkey.

Countless varieties of lollies were kept in capacious glass jars, displayed on the shelves for the delectation of the affluent, or the best girl. The shop windows displayed a miscellaneous collection of the cheaper lines destined for youngsters with a penny or a half-penny to spend. Here were ginger-bread rabbits, sugar-pigs, silver sammies, milk poles, licorice straps and licorice ladders, "Wee Macgregor" butterscotch in small tartan coloured packets, pink coloured musk-sticks, fizzoes (small round balls of white toffee with the inside full of white sherbert (food for the gods) amongst countless other delectables of a like nature. All of these commodities are rarely seen today but, strangely enough, the whole gamut are still to be had from the lolly shops of Dublin, in Ireland, at the same prices. Mixed with the sweets in the windows at Como was an astonishing array of fishing lines to suit all purses, together with sinkers of all shapes, weights, and prices. There were fly-hooks for the inpecunious, and tins and tins of barbarous looking fish-hooks of various sorts and sizes. A most attractive window display calculated to keep any juvenile nose against the glass for hours on end.

No further information has been obtained as to the affairs of the Woronora Hotel which came into being, as previously mentioned, to serve the thirst needs of the railway construction and bridge gangs.

However in the early eighteen-nineties an elaborate three-storied hotel, known as the Como Hotel, was built facing eastwards towards the then pretty waters of Scylla Bay. This hostelry, as it has locally been said, was built by Mr. Porcham, a Frenchman, and its roof lines and imposing tower are reminiscent of the architecture of that gentleman's native land. The so-called "Sydney Lace", formed by the cast iron parapet to the first and second floor balconies, is of most excellent design and warrants close examination. It is believed that the place was financed by the Concordia Club, a Germanic Association with headquarters in Sydney. The Como Hotel catered for the requirements of these people as well as the local picnicking trade, the licensee being named Bucolz. It appears that there were a large number of German residents living along the foreshores of Georges River, including Hans Hatti, of Lime Kiln Bay, all of whom foregathered at the hotel from time to time to fraternise with their compatriots. The hotel licence has been transferred repeatedly over the years, and fortunately the premises have been maintained in excellent order throughout, although the public bar, at least, now conforms to the long, featureless, "swill-counter" arrangement, so beloved by the brewing interests and their minions. However the beer is good and the view, down the river, charming.

About the turn of the century the pleasure grounds at Como were rented to Mr. Smith, a step-brother of James Murphy, who was succeeded in due course by Mr. Rollings, a gentleman who later established a dairy farm near Ovara Crescent at Como, a full time job which precluded him from further interest at the pleasure ground, shop-minding, and other mundane duties. Then came Mr. W.S. Birks, who laid out tennis courts at the eastern portion of the pleasure grounds and resided, with his family, at the shop premises for many years.

James Murphy, having the ownership of the Como area under his control, was able to ward off all competition, until a couple of astute gentlemen conceived the idea of renting the lower portion of the railway embankment, near the southern abutment to the bridge, from the Railway Department. Mr. Wills then established a two-storied boatshed on the western side of the embankment at a rental of £200 per annum, which represented quite a sum in those days. On the eastern embankment Mr. Press erected most extensive premises of a similar nature to which access was given by a short path laid within the railway boundary fence. In 1927 came Mr. Ernest Bryant, the owner of a boatshed in the Lugarno Area who, finding all the available boatshed locations occupied at Como, arranged to erect a shed, standing on piles, at the entrance to the Woronora River, immediately opposite to and near the boatshed of Mr. Wills. A small floating pontoon at the entrance to the shed, to which it was connected by means of a hinged apron floor, permitted the pontoon to rise and fall with the tide, thus giving patrons easy access to the rowboats. Said patrons hailed Mr. Bryant from the end of a small jetty, now derelict, which projected from the western shore in the vicinity of the subway at the Como railway station. Mr. Bryant kept most of his rowboats at his Lugarno shed, towing them to Como by launch if and when required. Competition for custom amongst the four boatsheds was somewhat fierce and, on this account Mr. Wills' boat-

shed changed hands frequently, whilst Mr. Press attracted custom by erecting a small dance hall on his premises which appeared to be precariously perched against the steep side of the eastern railway embankment.

The death of Mr. Murphy, about 1935, brought the Como Estate into the custody of the Roman Catholic Church, according to local information, the bequest being for the education of children of that faith. In due course Mr. Bryant took over the Como Pleasure Grounds, boatshed, and other appurtenances, and promptly closed his former shed which was erected on piles at the Woronora River mouth. He also acquired the other two sheds which had been erected by Messrs. Wills and Press. The Railway Department having no factual information about the goose that laid the golden eggs, decided to double their rental for these latter sheds, namely £400 each, notwithstanding the fact that the bank-inspired depression of the nineteen-thirties had played havoc with the boat-hiring industry.

Mr. Bryant's reaction to this preposterous rental increase was both decisive and prompt. Both sheds were immediately demolished and their structural materials sold by auction to the highest bidder. The sawn-off stumps of the foundation piling of Wills' boatshed, embedded in mud and oyster-shell covered rubble, still remain in situ, giving mute evidence of activities which have long since ceased. All trace, with the exception of the access path, of the Press owned boatshed was removed when the huge city-water pipeline from the Woronora Dam was laid along and through the site, to cross Georges River per medium of the railway bridge.

About 1890 Mr. Saybrook established a pleasure ground some nine miles upstream from Como, on the southern bank of Georges River, in the vicinity of, and opposite to, Picnic Point. This place was named Parkesvale and enjoyed great popularity for many years before it closed in the early part of the 1914 war period. Mr. Saybrook acquired the long paddle-steamer, named "TELEPHONE", from the Balmain Ferry Company, and steamed it from Port Jackson to take over its new duties on Georges River. This vessel has been described as a "double-ender", fitted with a single cylinder which had its steam valve actuated by means of a slip-eccentric. The "TELEPHONE" berthed at a special jetty constructed near the northern end of the approach embankment on the western side of Como Railway station. Access to this jetty was gained by a path laid alongside of the railway line from the "Up" platform at Como Station, said path terminating at the head of a steep wooden stairway, which passed down the embankment slope to the short jetty. This latter structure, and its connecting stairway, was built by Messrs. George and Ike. Sparkes, and Jim and Alf. Pickering, assisted by Tom Thompson, an oyster-farmer of Neverfail Bay. The return fare on the "TELEPHONE" between Como and Parkesvale was two shillings, and in January 1900, it is mentioned that through tickets were being issued by the Railway Department between Sydney-Como-Parkesvale. Trains at this period, running to connect with the steamer, were scheduled to leave Sydney at 2.10 p.m. on Wednesdays (early closing day) and Saturdays, and at 9.40 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. on Sundays. The trippers from Parkesvale were returned to Como in time to catch the 6.50 p.m. train to Sydney.

A large jetty was built at Parkesvale to berth the "TELEPHONE", and at the adjacent pleasure ground was a "superior" dance hall with an excellent floor and a very tinny-sounding piano of the honky-tonk variety. There was a large shelter shed, swings, and other "inducements" for young and old. When this popular watering place was abandoned advantage was taken of one especially high tide to steam the "TELEPHONE" on its last journey to Parkesvale where it was beached, preparatory to being dismantled. The jetty at Como eventually became derelict, and in September 1965, the last stages of decay were apparent. The inroads of the toredo and other marine destroyers of woodwork had taken their toll of the structure. Most of the decking was missing, but the access stairway from Como Station was more or less intact, though in a precarious condition.

Messrs. Richardson and Wrench, a real estate firm of Sydney, brought forth the following advertisement which speaks for itself. "COMO ESTATE". The most gilt-edged proposition in the real estate market - The Como Estate - a tremendous future, situated on what is to be the most important railway in Australia, connecting Sydney with the Federal Port at Jervis Bay. Read the terms. (Auction Sale on the ground at 2.30 p.m. Anniversary Day,

26th January, 1914) £1 deposit, Balance at £1 per month, interest 5%. Torrens Title. For Health, Pleasure, Sport. Subdivision of a brand new suburb. Possessing panoramic views unsurpassed in Australia. There have been no previous subdivisions at Como. Como has been locked up for years to be one of Sydney's choicest suburbs. Only 35 minutes by train from Sydney. Georges River is teeming with fish, and already hundreds visit Como to enjoy the splendid sport which its waters provide. In addition 40 fishermen make their living by fishing in Georges River around Como. The weekly ticket is 2/3d. cheaper to live at Como than suburbs served by tram. 25 trains a day with a special theatre service at night." Such were the suburban beginnings of Como.

The influence of the late James Murphy can be seen in the naming of the streets of the above subdivision, where the European touch is to be noted in Cremona Road, Loretto Avenue, Nevara Crescent, Tivoli Esplanade, Genoa Street, and Ortona Parade. The once beautiful bushland was cleared of its trees in the best approved manner and in no time houses appeared amongst the bare rocky slopes of the scorched hillside. A new school was opened by Mr. Tom Mutch about 1923 and the glamour associated with a new police station appeared on the scene. A few shops came into being, but it was not until comparatively recent years that road access with the outside world was given to the residents of Como.

Prior to the 1914 subdivision at Como residences were few and far between. On top of the ridge west of the railway station, were the weather-board departmental houses of the Station Master and the Night Officer, both contained within the boundary fence of the railway. Then came Como House. Clustered around the northern portion of the Como Pleasure Grounds was the house attached to the shop, the boat repairer's cottage, and a small non-descript shanty occupied by a brother of James Murphy. The palatial Como Hotel was on the outskirts, beyond which lay virgin bushland, and tinkling streams.

The greatest tragedy that has affected the natural beauty of Como was the resumption of the pretty little Scylla Bay, a work carried out, under Council supervision, by the local unemployed during the depression years of the nineteen-thirties. Although most picturesque at high and half tides, this bay became a dreary expanse of semi-liquid ooze when the tide was low. It is a great pity that the silt had not been removed, leaving the foreshores intact, instead of building an ugly retaining wall, and then filling what remained of the bay with mullock, suitably levelling same. Apart from the provision of conspicuous conveniences at the site no other expenditure has been incurred. This unlovely flat expanse, still arid soil in parts, cost some £35,000 to establish, and certainly has not improved either the attractiveness or the amenities of Como, although football enthusiasts find it most convenient for their games.

The control of the Como Pleasure Ground came into the possession of the local Council about this time and the grounds are still used by picnickers to a certain extent though their popularity has greatly waned. However, the circular promenade proves most handy for the parking of motor cars, whilst their owners travel by train from Como to their various destinations. Comparisons are odious but often interesting. As mentioned in the auction sale blurb of 1914, the slow old steam trains of that year took 35 minutes for the journey between Como and Sydney (Central) station. The fast modern electric service provides semi through trains which travel the same distance at an average of 34 minutes. Such is the result of fifty years transport progress.

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