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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
March 1980.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, March 21st, 1980, at 8 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General.
Syllabus Item: Dr. J.R. Angel, O.B.E., M.A.(Syd); PH.D. (Australian National University); Dip.Ed.; Senior Lecturer in History at Sydney University; Dean and Hunter Bailee Fellow, St. Andrews College University of Sydney; Immediate Past N.S.W. President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, will be Guest Speaker, the subject of his choice: "Indonesia's Pursuit of Stability & Development, The Dream and the Reality".
This address should be of immediate interest to all.

Supper Roster: Captain: Miss Heath & Mesdames Turton, Havilah, Rootes and Moffitt.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
Phone 587.9164.

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Sec. & Bulletin Editor.
Phone 59.8078.

Mrs. E. Wright,
Treas. & Soc. Sec.
Phone 599.4884.

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159.

"Blessed is the Leader who knows how to lead without being dictatorial.

True Leaders are humble."

Friendship Book.
(Author unknown).

2.

We are honoured to have for our Guest Speaker Dr. J.R. Angel. Dr. Angel's interests are in South East Asian History, particularly Indonesian and Malaysian. His Doctoral Thesis was a study of Indonesian Foreign Policy. Before undertaking this research he served for six years as a Colombo expert in North Borneo for the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Dr. Angel was awarded the O. B. E. for services to Education and the Community.

Dr. Angel is also gifted with a sense of humour.

SOCIAL.

Date: 22/3/1980. Guided Tour of Sydney University, Afternoon Tea at Opera House.

Meeting Place: Leave Rockdale 1.00 p.m. Sharp.

Cost: Coach \$2.20 - Inspection \$1.50.

Date: 19-20/4/1980. (Weekend Tour) Nelsons, Shoal & Fingal Bays respectively. Also Launch River Trip with lunch on board, included in cost.

Meeting Place: Leave Rockdale 7.30 a.m. Sharp, return approx. 6.30 p.m. Sunday.

Cost: \$60.00 all inclusive.

24/5/1980. Coach Tour, afternoon, Balmain and Glebe.
Details later.

2/8/1980. Berry Camelia Show & Market Day.
Details later.

October 4, 5 & 6, 1980. (Long Weekend). Coach Trip to Wagga Wagga & Districts.

For further details and bookings, please ring Mrs. Wright, 599.4884.
Also at March Meeting.

INVITATION.

The President and Members of the Hurstville Historical Society cordially invite you to be present at the First Annual Waldron - McCarthy Memorial Lecture on Saturday, 12th April, 1980, at 2.30 p.m. at the Amaroo Hall, Civic Centre, Hurstville. Guest Speaker: Professor Kenneth J. Cable, President, Royal Australian Historical Society. Subject: "Some Early Anglican Clergy of the St. George Region".

DONATIONS TO LYDHAM HALL.

Mrs. Jacobson, Carlton: Book of Views Sydney & Country Scenes in N.S.W.

Noel Baines, Bexley: Silver Fountain Pencil.

Mrs. Wade, Beverly Hills: Old Sheet Music in Leather Music Case.

Late Mrs Mary Jane Lee, Lakemba: Princess Sewing Machine Approx. 1870's.

Mr. Hawkins, Arncliffe: Gent's Travel Bag.

Mrs. Adamson, Earlwood: Slipper Bed Pan, Large Blue Glass Bottle - on Loan, Silver Match Box, Silver Pill Box, and other items.

Mrs. Bevan, South Australia (niece of Misses Stacey, Bexley): White Cotton Bodice, Small Boy's Shirt, Small Girl's Petticoat, Ladies Cotton Nightdress all on loan.

Mrs. Hirsch, Caringbah: Brown Willow Pattern Jam Dish with Lid.

Mr. Holden, Ramsgate: Collection Blue & White Plates, Blue & White Jug, Egg Beater, 100 years old.

Mr. Hemming, Arncliffe: A Large Picture of The English Derby, 1830, brought from London to Sydney by his Grandmother in 1900.

Mrs. Neeve, Caringbah: 1 Book "Little Ladders to Learning" 1876. On loan.

Miss Cuthbert, Mortdale: Handkerchiefs from about 1897, Queen Victoria's Jubilee, King George & Queen Mary's Coronation 1910, East Hills Railway Timetable Anniversary Day 26th January, 1938, Test Blackout in September 1941, What to do in an Air Raid, List of Family Tree of Ambrose & Mary Schofield, Born 1725, 2 Silk Hankies sent from Egypt 1914-1918 World War, George 3rd Penny, found at Arncliffe late 1920's.

LYDHAM HALL. Miss Otton, Curator of Lydham Hall, is in need of Ladies and/or Gentlemen to assist with the weekend roster. Visitors come from far and wide to see this lovely old Home, and your presence would greatly facilitate the inspections. Ring Miss Otton, 'phone 59.4259. Your call will be appreciated.

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SPECIAL NOTICE. The St. George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley, for the Society, have been re-printed and are now available. No. 8 Book was compiled by Mrs. Bronwyn Perkins.

- No. 1. "The Wolli Creek Valley"
- No. 2. "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway"
- No. 3. "Saywells Tramway. Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach"
- No. 4. "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway"
- No. 5. "Our Heritage in Stone"
- No. 6. "All Stations to Como"
- No. 7. "Tempe and the Black Creek Valley" is also available. (Limited stocks only).
- No. 8. "Early Churches of the St. George District."

All books now available at \$1.00 per copy - plus current rate of postage.

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:

Mrs. E. Wright - Ph. 599.4884. Miss B. Otton - Ph. 59.4259 (after 8 p.m.)

Mrs. E. Eardley - Secretary. Ph. 59.8078. Mr. A. Ellis - Ph. 587.1159.

Society Badges available from Mrs. Wright, Treasurer, at \$1.00 each.

EARLY COLONIAL CRAFT IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

.... the first twenty-five years. 1788 - 1813.

- Vaughan Evans.

- Presented to the St. George
Historical Society,
Friday 18th June, 1976.

"Some of us" wrote Lionel Hale, in a newspaper article in 1956, "are born like Robinson Crusoe, who could build a hut, and plant a garden and breed goats, using only five rusty nails, a handful of wet corn, and a length of twine ... and some are not."

I like that quotation, but you may wonder what on earth it has to do with a talk on ship and boat-building in the early days of the colony of N.S.W. I think that it is a very suitable quotation for, just as Robinson Crusoe was marooned on his island, so were the first settlers marooned on these deserted shores, and, like him, were left to their own devices, to shift for themselves, and to build what they could out of the wilderness.

Now, when the First Fleet arrived, tents were used as temporary accommodation. With the coming of their first winter, better quarters were required, and it is in relation to this that we have our first reference to the use of the boats of the settlement, apart from trips to explore the extent of the harbour. Collins tells us in his "Account of the English Colony of N.S.W." that:

"the long-boats of the ships in the cove were employed in bringing up cabbage-tree from the lower part of the harbour, where it grew in great abundance, and was found very fit for the purpose of erecting temporary huts..."

You will notice that they used "*long-boats of ships in the cove*" and the reason was that they had no others except, perhaps, for a few small boats brought out privately by the officers for their own use. Admittedly, Governor Phillip had brought out two boats "*in frame*" - that is to say, in pieces ready to be erected. Many ships carried boats "*in frame*" stowed away in their holds in case their own craft should be lost; La Perouse had two which were put together in Botany Bay in February 1788 for this very reason. In the case of Phillip's boats, it was not until September 1788 that the carpenter of the *Supply* could be spared to do the work: most of his fellow carpenters were busy building huts when they were not on board their ships.

During this first year of settlement the search for better land for the cultivation of crops had led to the choice of Rose Hill, or Parramatta as we now know it, where settlement began that November. Access by land was tedious to say the least in a settlement which owned no draught

animals; even with a wheelbarrow it is a long 15 mile from Sydney to Parramatta on a good road, and in 1788 there was, of course, only a rough bush track. And so it was decided to construct a launch or hoy, capable of being employed in carrying provisions to Rose Hill, and for other useful purposes. (Collins p.49) Work on this vessel commenced in May, 1789. She was designed to carry ten tons - which indicates that she was probably no longer than about 30' - and was put into the water early in October that year. Collins tells us: (p.82)

"... from the quantity of wood used in her construction she appeared to be a mere bed of timber, and, when launched, was named by the convicts, with an happiness that is sometimes visible in the lower order of people, the ROSE HILL PACKET. She was afterwards generally known by the name of THE LUMP, a word more strictly applied to her size and construction ... (and) was very soon employed in transporting provisions to Rose Hill, and going up with the tide at flood, at the top of high water, passed very well over the flats at the upper part of the harbour..."

What Collins does not tell us is that she sometimes took a week for the round trip, and that this much maligned vessel originally rejoiced in the name *PRINCE OF WALES*, for so she was christened at her launch, though no-one ever bothered to address her as such (See Diary of James Scott, Sgt. of Marines). It is impossible to give an accurate description of this, the first vessel of any size to be built in the colony. No positively identifiable picture of her exists - she was far too lowly to have her portrait painted. Contemporary definition of a hoy does not help much either, for we are told:

" It is very difficult to describe precisely the marks of distinction between this vessel and some others of the same size which are also rigged in the same manner; because what is called a hoy in one place, would assume the name of a sloop or smack in another ... it has but one mast, where the mainsail is sometimes extended by a boom, and sometimes without it."

If that is all we can learn from Falconer's celebrated marine dictionary of 1780, who are we to say, a mere 200 years later, precisely what was, or what was not, a hoy?

Governor Phillip had great difficulty in completing even this little vessel. He had to rely on the services of the ships' carpenters of the *SIRIUS* & *SUPPLY*, when they could be spared, with the assistance of such of the convicts as were capable of acting under their direction. Even before she was built, Phillip had written to England of the need for a strong launch to carry provisions to the new settlement, & added that *"the settlement on Norfolk Island, & the extent of the harbour ... would render two vessels of 30 or 40 tons of infinite service..."*

In the meantime, he borrowed two of the boats of the *SIRIUS*, which she could ill spare, while she went off to Table Bay for provisions.

This voyage of the *SIRIUS* was desperately important to the settlement, for the threat of starvation was very real. It is not surprising that attempts were made to augment the rations with fish caught in the harbour. By April 1790 food was even more scarce, & all private boats were ordered "*to be surrendered to the public use in fishing for the general benefit.*" The largest "fish" seen in the harbour was a sperm whale which had the audacity to pursue & overset a punt owned by one of the officers.

We may guess that private boatbuilding had boomed in this period for, in April, 1791, an order was made limiting the "*length of such boats as should be built by individuals to 14' from stem to stern, that the size of such boats might deter the convicts from attempts to take them off.*" Among the convicts there were many who thought that China, for example, lay only a little way beyond the horizon. Collins continued:

"About this time, some information being received that (there was a plan to seize)...the sixteen oared boat or... one or two of the smaller boats, a centinel was placed at night on each wharf, & the officer of the guard was to be spoken to before any boat could leave the cove." (p.159).

It was in February 1792, four years after the First Fleet had arrived, that Governor Phillip at long last received help from England in the shape of a sloop of 41 tons burthen, sent out "*in frame*" by the *PITT* transport, to be erected here. But the problem was where to find the shipwrights: it was felt that the colony's needs would have been better served had the sloop been put together, coppered, & sent out fully manned from England - but England, too, had her troubles at that time. There was only one shipwright in the whole colony. He offered to put the little sloop together, & was engaged at the princely sum of 2/- a day & his provisions. He laid the keel on blocks near where the Customs House stands today, on Circular Quay.

Governor Phillip did not stay long enough to see the vessel finished. He returned to England in December 1792, leaving Lt. Governor Grose in charge. The vessel was launched on 24th July 1793 & named the *FRANCIS* as a compliment to Grose's son, whose birthday it was. The *FRANCIS* was rigged as a schooner, this being thought a safer rig than that of the one-masted sloop, with its heavier gear. Unfortunately, the local experts soon realised that they had spoiled her sailing qualities by doing so, but it was as a schooner that she continued all her life. She was sent off, as soon as she had been fitted out, to Dusky Bay, in South Island, N.Z., with the *BRITANNIA*, a southern whaler which also served as a transport, to see if the area was suitable for settlement.

The *BRITANNIA* had called at Dusky Bay about a year before, leaving a party of men to collect seal skins, & the ship's carpenter who was to construct a small vessel in case the *BRITANNIA* could not get back. This vessel was of 65 tons burthen, & was almost ready to launch when the men were picked up. The nearly completed hull was left on shore. The shipwright concerned was a certain Mr Moore, who later became

the Government's Master Shipwright, a highly respected member of the colony, & who is remembered today mainly by the Theological College which he endowed and by the suburb which bears his name.

While the *FRANCIS* & *BRITANNIA* were away, the shipwrights in Sydney had put together the frame of a long-boat bought from the master of the *BRITANNIA*, & had repaired the *ROSE HILL PACKET* which, after only four years service, had been put out of commission by the depredations of the teredo ship-worms which infested the harbour then, & undoubtedly still do today. At this time Collins tells us:

"the boatbuilders & shipwrights found occupation enough for their leisure hours, in building boats for those who could afford to pay for them. Five & six gallons of spirits was the price, & five or six days would complete a boat fit to go up the harbour; but many of them were very badly put together, & threatened destruction to whoever might unfortunately be caught in them with a sail up in blowing weather..." (p.230)

With all that liquor inside them it is a wonder that the boatbuilders finished anything that could float at all: they must have been nearly awash themselves. I think that Collins was rather hard on these boatbuilders for, unlike the carpenter of the *BRITANNIA* at Dusky Bay was supplied with all the materials necessary for his work, except for the timber which he & his companions cut & dressed themselves, these men in Sydney had to work with whatever they could lay their hands upon. We know that, the timber around Port Jackson was generally most unsatisfactory, & that the Norfolk Island pine, of which so much hope had been held, was found to be "unfit for large masts or spars, shaky or rotten at 30 or 40' from the butt, too brittle for oars, (&) too porous for planks of a boat ..." (p.77). The days of seemingly endless supplies of cedar lay far in the future.

Nevertheless, not all the boats could have been bad, for in December 1793 we find that "among the conveniences that were now enjoyed in the colony ... (was) the introduction of passage-boats, which ... were allowed to go between Sydney & Parramatta. They were the property of persons who had served their respective terms of transportation; & from each passenger 1/- was required for his passage; baggage was paid for at the rate of 1/- per hundred-weight; & the entire boat could be hired by one person for 6/-..." We are told that the proprietors found these rates very profitable. (Collins p.330). This is not really surprising when it is realised that Parramatta, first settled in November 1788, had outstripped Sydney by the year 1792 with a population of nearly 2000 against Sydney's 1000 or so, &, although the relative size of Parramatta declined from then on, the number of settlers there steadily increased from year to year. Spare oars were carried on these passage boats so that the customers could help the crew.

By 1794 the number of private boats in the colony was said to be considerable. In addition to the passage boats, the fishing boats & the pleasure craft, there was also a little fleet of boats called "lumpsters" which now brought garden produce from the Eastern Farms - later known as Kissing Point, & still later as Ryde - & firewood from Lane Cove.

In this year, 1794, also the need arose for rather more sturdy boats capable of going from Sydney to the Hawkesbury, for Grose had put 22 settlers into the region then known as Green Hills, & later as Windsor.

In between trips to Norfolk Island the colonial schooner *FRANCIS* was employed in supplying these new settlers &, in fact, spent five months from September 1794 almost continually at this work, (HRA 1.490), on one occasion bringing back 1000 bushels of corn, while in 1795, she could only be spared once for Norfolk Island. In fact, Norfolk Island had to rely on the chance visit of the *FANCY*, a snow, on two visits later in the year by the newly-arrived *HMS SUPPLY*, the second of that name, and one visit by *HMS RELIANCE* when she brought out Governor Hunter. Up to Hunter's time there is no evidence of official ship or boat-building in the colony apart from the *ROSE HILL PACKET*, the *FRANCIS*, the 16 and 8-oared boats put together in 1788, & the longboat put together in 1793. On the other hand, only 7 months after his arrival, Hunter expressed concern at the number of people who were building boats privately for anyone who would employ them, "a liberty" he said, "which has crept into the settlement in opposition to all former orders..". In future, official permission in writing had to be obtained before building any boat, while all existing boats in private hands were to have an official number cut into their sterns, or be liable to seizure. Later on that same year of 1796, he expressed concern at the state of the *FRANCIS*, & said that if he had sufficient carpenters he would undertake to build a larger vessel to replace her for service between Sydney & Norfolk Island. (Hunter to King 14.11.96).

A vessel that would have served this purpose well had arrived in Sydney soon after Hunter's arrival, perhaps before he was fully aware of the need: in January 1796 the schooner *PROVIDENCE* arrived from Dusky Bay. This was the vessel built by the carpenter of the *BRITANNIA* in 1793, & now completed by men from the *ENDEAVOUR*, an East Indiaman scuttled there - perhaps not entirely by chance. The little schooner was highly regarded in Sydney, but she did not stay long before sailing for China: what a loss to the settlement. On 17th March that year another smaller vessel arrived, built by the shipwright of the scuttled *ENDEAVOUR* to carry the remainder of the crew back from Dusky Bay. She was named the *ASSISTANCE*, "miserably constructed" according to Collins, but she was sold here for pounds 250.0.0 "notwithstanding all her faults", sailed for the sealing grounds &, like the *PROVIDENCE*, is heard of no more in these waters.

Although conditions in the settlement were gradually improving, & timber suitable for boat-building was beginning to be brought from the Hawkesbury, other naval stores were still very scarce indeed. Collins tells us (p.38):

" In May 1797 the settlement was so much distressed for canvas that the largest & best boat being in the Hawkesbury, it became necessary to dismantle another boat in order to furnish sails to bring her round; those belonging to her having been split in some bad weather which she met with on her passage thither...(the want of cordage was also acute &)... the people were at the same time to procure some of the bark of the tree

lately discovered, to be manufactured into cordage; for which purpose it was reckoned superior to any of the flax that had been brought from Norfolk Island."

The tree, incidentally, was the Black or Forest Kurrajong, whose bark, grey & resembling elephant hide, was used by the aboriginals also for making cordage & nets.

Unfortunately, this "largest & best boat belonging to the settlement", the CUMBERLAND, was seized by convicts on her way to the Hawkesbury in September that same year, & was wrecked by them. The only good that came of this was that Lt. John Shortland, who set off after the convicts in an armed whale-boat, confirmed the location of Hunter's River & the existence of coal deposits there on the way back. Credit for the actual discovery goes to a party of fishermen a year or so before.

The seizure of boats by convicts attempting to escape was a continuing problem, & following the escape of a party of them in a boat stolen at Parramatta - a boat in which, incidentally, they travelled as far as Wilson's Promontory in Bass Straits before coming to grief - Hunter again took action. He expressed concern at the number of private boats, at their carrying on forbidden traffic, & at the manner of their being laid up. In an order dated October 1797 he forbade any further private boatbuilding whatsoever. He also arranged for a "trustworthy person" to inspect boats laid up at night ashore, or secured afloat, to see that all oars, masts, sails & rudders were properly secured in the dwelling of the owner. The penalty for non-compliance was severe - immediate scuttling or burning. In the same order Hunter forbade boats to leave for the Hawkesbury or Botany Bay without a pass - but the orders were not completely successful for, only three months later, convicts seized another boat & made their escape.

Although private boat-building had presumably slowed down at least following Hunter's order, official boat-building began in earnest in 1797. In a return of labour for that year we find that work had commenced on the establishment of a dockyard, near where the Maritime Services Board building now stands, & that the following new boats were being built:

- . a new pinnace
- . a whaleboat for Parramatta
- . a burthensome punt for discharging ships
- . a boat for HMS RELIANCE
- . a long-boat for HMS SUPPLY
- . a new wood boat for the hospital.

In addition, the FRANCIS, schooner, had been repaired as had the hospital and South Head boats, while the keel of a new brig of 150 tons burthen had been laid. We know also that a small schooner named the SYDNEY was now in service with a master & five men to carry provisions to the Hawkesbury, bringing grain, cedar & other produce back. The SYDNEY was probably no more than a decked long-boat, perhaps the one bought "in frame" from the BRITANNIA in 1793; nothing is known of her, but she must surely have been built here.

All through this difficult year of 1797 Norfolk Island was sadly neglected. The only ships to call were *HMS RELIANCE* in June, & the little *FRANCIS* in August. The commandant of Norfolk Island, Captain Townson, was determined to provide himself with the means of sending his despatches with greater regularity, & decided to build what he described as a sloop of 25 tons. The sloop was launched early in the year 1798 & named, appropriately, the *NORFOLK*. She sailed immediately for Sydney, untested, untried, & very leaky. "A man on the island", says Collins (p.2.117) "*had sufficient ingenuity to make a quadrant for navigating (her)..*" On her arrival in June 1798 she was described merely as a decked long-boat. On October 7th she left for Van Dieman's Land under the command of Lt. Matthew Flinders, to become the first vessel to circumnavigate that island, & to prove without doubt the existence of Bass Strait. The *NORFOLK* was almost a leviathan compared to Flinders' *TOM THUMB* - which was kept on shore in the cove for many years, "*an object of veneration to the people of Sydney,*" so the French explorer Baudin tells us in 1803.

Poor Captain Townson: he got very little benefit from his enterprise in building the *NORFOLK* for, after making only one round voyage to Norfolk Island in April 1799, she was employed exclusively on the N.S.W. coast, mainly to the Hawkesbury & back, was seized by convicts in October 1800, & was wrecked. The brig commenced by Hunter in 1797 for Norfolk Island service was not to be finished for some eighteen & a half years, by which time the settlement had long been abandoned.

Meantime, in Sydney in this year 1798, work continued apace at the government dockyard despite the fact, as Collins tells us (2.p.101) that "*the colony was at this time in such want of naval stores of every kind that the ruin of all the floating craft, so lately in good condition, was nearly effected. The bottoms of the boats were destroyed by the worms for want of pitch, tar, paint & oil; & in order to enable the colonial schooner (FRANCIS) to proceed to Norfolk Island..it had been necessary to reduce part of the SUPPLY's sails, & convert them to her use..*"

We know that in 1798 there were 21 men employed by the Government as shipwrights, caulkers, boatbuilders, labourers & watchmen in the dockyard. A statement of their work over the year is impressive (HRNSW 3.521): They began building a boat of 28 tons to replace the *CUMBERLAND*, lost the year before; they repaired the *SYDNEY* schooner, & all the government boats; they repaired the *NORFOLK*, sloop, & made new oars, pumps, masts & spars for her; & they did considerable work on *HMS RELIANCE*. In addition there were carpenters, blacksmiths & bricklayers at work improving the dockyard, & ropemakers twisting cordage out of the bark of the Kurrajong.

The year 1798 is important for private enterprise, too, for in this year the keel of a vessel was laid in Underwood's yard. She was the first private vessel of any size in the colony for which permission to build had been granted. Hunter had agreed on the understanding that the new vessel would be able to reduce the cost of carrying grain from the Hawkesbury from 15d. to 10d. per bushel, but such was the shortage of skilled labour, & such were the differences between the syndicate of owners, that the work was abandoned for four years after the frame had been erected. (SG 27.5.04) She was to be 38' long on the keel, & of

44 tons measurement - no Leviathan, but the largest vessel privately built at that time.

In 1799 work in the dockyard continued much as in the previous year; the *CUMBERLAND* was still on the stocks. Mention is made of work on *HMS BUFFALO*, which arrived in April that year & which was to take Hunter back to England in the following year. In fact, there always was an immense amount of work to be done on ships of the Royal Navy. Collins gives us the amusing piece of information about the *BUFFALO* (2.208) that *"although this ship was named the BUFFALO, yet her (figure) head was the carved figure of a kangaroo, which very much amused the natives..."* - and, presumably, the settlers and convicts too.

In 1799 also, there is mention of another private vessel built here that year. She was the *MARTHA*, variously described as a schooner or as a snow, of 30 1/2 tons, built for Boston & Co., who employed her in the sealing trade. It is interesting to note that, because of his instructions, the Governor was unable to give the *MARTHA* a Certificate of Registry, but gave her instead a certificate permitting her to make voyages on the coast of N.S.W. As the Governor's jurisdiction extended to islands lying off the coast, this came to be interpreted, very liberally, as allowing voyages as far to the east as Tahiti, a matter of a mere 3,000 miles from Sydney - as the crow flies - far more as a boat sails. Under her master, William Reed, & with a crew of four men, the *MARTHA* returned from the Bass Straits in December 1799 with a cargo of 30 tierces of seal oil & 1300 seal skins. The presence of fur seals in the straits had been officially discovered when the ship *SYDNEY COVE* was wrecked on Preservation Island in February 1797; elephant seals had also been seen on King Island. (HRA.1.2.203) At any rate, by 1799, not only was their presence known, but also the people of old Sydney town were at long last able to think of turning them to profit.

It should be appreciated that, by the turn of the century, a large proportion of the 5,000 inhabitants of Sydney no longer had the right to draw on the government stores for their food & other requirements: they had served their term of transportation. Knowing of the wealth to be had from Bass Straits, some of them began to take to the sea in this brutal trade, where brawny arms & a heavy club were the main equipment needed. There was also still a desperate need for transport, which could still only be satisfied by watercraft, so it was only natural that many other men should take to the sea in this more hum-drum role as carriers, the sealers joining them in the winter months. With the proceeds of their enterprise these men were increasingly able to finance the construction of more & more craft &, as conditions gradually improved, of bigger & more sea-worthy craft. It is from this period, around the turn of the century, 12 years or so after the First Fleet had arrived, that private ship & boat building began for forge ahead. Before we look at what happened, let us see how official colonial craft fared in the new century.

In many ways, it is a discouraging story, but only because the need for government colonial craft, except for surveying & other official purposes, was now being taken over very ably by private enterprise.

... to be continued.