



# OUR HISTORY

MAGAZINE of the ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

October – December 2018

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History on the  
Edge

Sandringham's  
Six O'Clock Swill

A Big Splash  
in Botany

Craning for a View  
in Wolli Creek



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**Front Cover Image** – Ron Rathbone, OAM, former Rockdale mayor, councillor and historian, c. 1990. <sup>27</sup>

**Front Cover Background** – 1939 street map of Rockdale, NSW, showing administrative boundaries and physical features, scale [ca. 1:18,000]. <sup>28</sup>

**Back Cover Image** – The Prince of Wales hotel at Sandringham. By 1960, when this photograph was taken, the Moylans had been in charge for more than seven years and many improvements and structural alterations had been made. There were however, many more changes to come because at this time Mick realised that if he was to compete into the future he needed to expand and modernise. During 1963 this historic old building was demolished and the ‘new’ Mick’s stood in its place. On this section of the property, Mick built the new ‘Beach Lounge’ fronting onto the white sands of Sandringham beach.

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# St George Historical Society Inc.

The St George Historical Society Inc. was formed in 1961 with former Rockdale mayor, councillor and historian Ron Rathbone, OAM, as the inaugural secretary. First known as the Rockdale Historical Society, it was renamed in 1962 to serve the wider region.

The aim of the not-for profit Society is to conserve and encourage the recording of local history, raising awareness of the heritage of the St George District of New South Wales, Australia. The area includes the suburbs in the local government area of Georges River Council and part of Bayside Council, bounded in the east by Lady Robinson Beach in Botany Bay.

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## Welcome

“ In our January edition, we featured highlights from the 2017 Ron Rathbone Local History Prize. It was a celebration of Bayside's local historians.

The depth of research and the quality of the writing is again outstanding in the 2018 edition of the awards. The range of topics, from personal stories, to community institutions and issues, will interest anyone seeking a great true story.

During the awards ceremony in September, it was a pleasure to meet the authors and read their essays. Every entrant seemed driven by a passion for their chosen topic, compelling them to share the story. We're fortunate that this history writing competition, now in its 13th year, offers an outlet for local research, published both online and through our library network. In our final edition for 2018, 3 of the 9 entries in the adult category are featured.

When Leonie Bell searched her family tree for records of military service during WWII, she discovered her paternal grandfather instead worked in an industry vital to the war effort. His was the third generation in the family to work in the wool industry, and the impact of the industry in Botany and to the Bell family is recounted in her award-winning entry, *Botany Wool*.

Mick Moylan's Pub, the Prince of Wales Hotel in Sandringham, was a local landmark for decades. When the hotel was demolished in the 1980s, we lost a meeting place that brought so much pleasure to locals. It is still fondly remembered and Garry Darby has interviewed many of the people touched by the pub. He has recorded the site's history, while celebrating Mick Moylan's achievement of a bold dream. His essay, available to purchase as a book, features dozens of large photographs and brings to life the atmosphere at the height of the pub's popularity.

When Wolli Creek Railway Station opened in 2000, it led to rapid urban renewal in the area surrounding the state heritage-listed Tempe House. The site has transformed with a series of high-rise residential apartments. A Wolli Creek resident, Sheila Ngoc Pham, reflects on the dramatic scale and pace of change. She describes life in a place where history is moving faster than ever, and asks

what the future may hold.

I'm grateful to these three authors, each receiving awards for their work, for granting permission to feature excerpts in this edition of *Our History*. The full essays are available on the [Bayside Library Historical Resources page](#) and on display in the Local Studies section of Rockdale Library.

Dubbed the “Minister for Murder”, controversy swirled around Thomas John Ley throughout his political life. After serving in Hurstville Council for 15 years, he became the State minister of justice. After claims that he attempted to bribe his opponent, he was elected to the Federal seat of Barton. During investigations into his business dealings, including accusations of the murder of two of his critics, he sailed to Britain with a mistress, abandoning his wife and children. Ley profited both from a failed lottery sweepstake and as a black marketeer during WWII. In 1947, Ley was convicted of murder. He died in Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, protesting his innocence. In *Strength with Virtue: Member for Barton, Thomas John Ley's Life*, Anne-Marie Hoffman attempts to uncover the facts of Ley's life, clouded in scandal, to gauge if elements of his reputation can be restored. Her essay is also on display in Rockdale Library.

On behalf of the Society, I extend a warm welcome to our newest members, the **Diaz family**, **Jill Hennessy** and **Angela Hume** of Arncliffe, **Bernie Howitt** of Kincumber, **Tania Matovic** of Bexley, and **Jonathan McLoughlin** of Penshurst.

As well as the print version of this magazine, we also publish a digital version in PDF format. The digital edition is easily searched and includes additional video, webpage and email resources. It is accessible on most computers, tablets and smartphones and it's an environmentally friendly alternative. To “go digital”, email me at [barry.johnson@live.com.au](mailto:barry.johnson@live.com.au)

Do you have any local stories, newspaper clippings, objects or photographs about which you've always wondered? Please email me or let me know at our next meeting. We can help you reveal the answers from the past.

**Barry Johnson**  
Editor

# Calendar

Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month (except December and January) at 2pm in Rockdale Library, Level 3, 444-446 Princes Highway, Rockdale.

Visitors are very welcome to enjoy presentations by guest speakers and discuss local history with members during our afternoon tea. Please visit our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page, check the Events pages of the *St George Leader* published on the Wednesday preceding the meeting, or contact our Secretary, Laurice Bondfield on 02 9599 4274, to confirm the details.

Please update your calendars with our final events for 2018 and our 2019 schedule:

- **17th November 2018** Guest speaker: Craig Werner, Nepean District Historical Society – the Arms of Australia Inn. Built in 1826, the inn was a staging post for travellers journeying from Sydney over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst and the goldfields. The [Arms of Australia Inn](#), one of the oldest buildings in Penrith, is now a museum and home to the NSW Corps of Marines.

## 2019

- 16th February
- 16th March
- 18th May
- 15th June
- 20th July (Annual General Meeting)
- 17th August
- 21st September
- 19th October
- 16th November

## Special events:

- **Tempe House Open Day** – Saturday 3rd November 2018 10am – 4pm. Free Entry. 8 Brodie Spark Dr, Wolli Creek.
- **WWI Armistice Talk** – Saturday 3rd November 2018 2pm – 4pm. Free Entry. Alf Kay Eastlakes Community Centre, 16 Florence Avenue, Eastlakes.

On 11 November 2018 the world will mark the centenary of the Armistice of the Great War – the ‘war to end all wars’. Anne Slattery, Jenny MacRitchie and Paula Grunseit, the authors of *Postings from the Front: the City of Botany Bay and World War I*, will share some fascinating local stories of service and sacrifice – both at home and on the front line. The book received a Highly Commended award in the 2017 National Trust Heritage Awards and was featured on Macca’s ABC radio program, *Australia All Over*. To book, visit <http://baysidelibrary.eventbrite.com>

- **DNA Down Under** – Monday to Wednesday 26-28 August 2019. Castle Hill RSL Club, 77 Castle Street, Castle Hill. A DNA-themed roadshow to major Australian cities with an extended / in-depth 3-day conference in Sydney. Blaine Bettinger, genetic genealogist, speaker and author, will be the principal speaker, with other Australian and international speakers also contributing.

See Blaine's website, <https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/>, for updates. Visit the <https://www.dnadownder.com/> for the full program.

# 2018 President's Report

Wesley Fairhall

The Society has continued to consolidate the firm foundations laid in recent years. The Committee has striven to identify opportunities to increase promotion and knowledge of our existence in the general community. I note our newest membership identified 'Google' as the source of his finding out about us. We need to acknowledge the efforts of Fred Scott and Tina Workman in ensuring our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) presence remains current and accessible; critical to survival in the 21st Century.

Our relationship with The Discovery Point/Tempe House Estate is fostering much goodwill and there remains a mutual advantage in supporting Ross Berry, a fellow member and resident of the Discovery Point Estate in the quarterly Open days. In general, the Open days have been well-patronised and the society has benefited from the publicity received by having a presence in historic Tempe House. In addition, book sales and a few new memberships have also been much appreciated. St. Magdalene's Chapel provided excellent acoustics for classical music.

The Lydham Hall Management Committee has unfortunately not had the generous funding available to Tempe House, so has struggled to undertake the many repairs which although necessary and long overdue, remain frustratingly unresolved. Despite the loss of the hard working and dedicated Henke family following Gloria's death, the Management Committee has continued to ensure the house is available for organised tours, group bookings and Sunday openings. Improvements such as a new alarm system and renovated garden add to the amenity of this gracious old home. We are indebted to Joan and Jeff Rankin for their tireless dedication to duty. In addition, members Liz Barlow, Robert McGarn and Tina Workman must also be mentioned for their faithful service. Rumour has it Tina could probably get work as a professional cleaning contractor, as she is a dynamo of cleaning energy when at work in Lydham Hall. Tina has brought some excellent proposals to the committee for consideration which could help promote both Lydham Hall and the society....stay tuned!

The mini conference organised and hosted by the

society in March within the lovely St. Magdalene's chapel in the grounds of the Tempe House Estate was sufficiently well attended to make the occasion worthwhile. It was a pity this event coincided with the hottest day in many years; ceiling fans are not quite as cooling as reverse cycle air conditioning! There were about 30 delegates from 8 local/family history societies, which allowing for the fact the event could only be promoted about 3 weeks prior to the date, was exceptional. The 2 speakers from the Royal Australian Historical Society together with the speaker from the Sydney Living Museums provided an engaging mix of local history and practical tips and considerations for running both societies and local history museums. The occasion facilitated networking in a convivial atmosphere which was a hoped-for outcome. The society is indebted to Olga Sedneva for negotiating the Bayside Council grant process.

Book sales have been well patronised this year which is most encouraging given the number of hours required to transport books and man the sales tables. Once again, any opportunity to fly the society's flag should be harnessed. Perhaps the champion book seller for many a year is Olga who sold an incredible \$224.00 worth of books to the Loftus Tram Museum...I daresay numbers of the late Gifford Eardley's publications found a captive audience.

Our monthly meetings have showcased a diverse range of topics from the intrigue of the Kingsgrove Slasher to a minor Hollywood star. There is surely something for everybody's taste!

The society has taken the tedious but necessary journey of constitutional reform. We will today ratify the proposed changes and in so doing, ensure the society complies with contemporary standards of an Incorporated society.

Barry Johnson continues to set the benchmark in quality newsletter production. The colourful 'Our History' magazine is aesthetically pleasing and the contents reflect a diverse range of subject matter. We are indeed fortunate to have a member who is prepared to exercise his talents in our service. Thank you very much Barry.

Some members have experienced significant health

challenges over the last 12 months, notably Joan Fairhall, Robert McGarn and Alan Powditch. Fortunately, Joan is making a slow recovery and Robert and Alan are enjoying much better health.

The society sadly farewelled some longstanding and significant members. Kessell Fox was a gentleman in his late 90s who had been a resident of the St. George area most of his life. Kessell enjoyed a good talk and often popped up to Lydham Hall for a chat with members on duty or at Open days. Helen Rasko was an acclaimed singer, who in her youth lived in the St. George area. Her German grandfather held claim to being the first person to cultivate a pineapple in the Arncliffe – Rockdale area, an historic ‘photo exists of him proudly holding aloft the aforesaid pineapple. Gloria Henke was a mainstay at Lydham Hall, ably and quietly supported by her husband Heinz and son Richard. Heinz was blessed with a practical can-do ability which greatly assisted with maintaining the fabric of the home and in resolving logistical quandaries. The Henke family were also responsible for the society’s journal for many years. Gloria and her family will be missed!

New members have happily joined our ranks. In the last 12 months we have welcomed Reginald Hyndman, Dan McAloon and Jonathan McLoughlin. We hope these gentlemen will be inspired to take full advantage of what the society has to offer and enjoy many years of membership.

I take this opportunity to thank the indomitable Laurice Bondfield for the innumerable tasks she undertakes in good humour and great efficiency.

Laurice organises the meeting programmes, sources the speakers, records excellent minutes, helps with refreshments, keeps abreast of members’ milestones, hits the pavement as an excursion leader par excellence and most importantly helps to keep me in check....most of the time. Well done, good and faithful servant!

Bayside Council should also be publicly thanked for its provision of this very convenient, accessible and state-of-the-art meeting space; we certainly have a room with a view. Aside from this meeting space, we need to acknowledge the resident library staff who so happily assist with the almost monthly technological challenges associated with Powerpoint presentations and the like. We would also like to publicly thank the Council in its most generous printing and postage of the ‘Our History’ magazine. The cordial relations we have with Bayside Council would surely be the envy of most similar societies.

Finally, a special thank you to all members who have contributed ideas, suggestions and been ‘hands on deck’ to help the committee realise many successes. Keep up the good work! Your constructive feedback and ideas are most welcome. Just speak up or even join the Committee for 2018-19.

With very good wishes,

Wesley Fairhall - President

# 2018 Financial Report

Wesley Fairhall

## Statement of Income & Expenditure for the Financial Year Ending 30 June 2018

	2017/18 (\$)	2016/17 (\$)
<b>Income</b>		
Membership	680.00	820.00
Donations	1,000.00	107.60
Book Sales	693.00	435.60
Functions	-	101.18
Bayside Council Grant	-	1,500.00
Bank Interest & Other Interest	207.85	0.80
Refreshments	229.65	287.90
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$2,810.50</b>	<b>\$3,253.08</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>		
RAHS Membership fees	(119.00)	(108.00)
Newsletter Expenses	(48.50)	-
Tempe House Open Days	-	(235.00)
Lytham Hall Book Sales Reimbursement	(110.00)	-
Advertising	-	-
Stationery/Postage	(85.47)	(117.09)
Donations	-	(297.99)
Insurance	(469.00)	(469.00)
Refreshments	(230.22)	(173.10)
Fair Trading	(45.00)	(54.00)
Honorarium	(120.00)	(30.00)
RAHS Conference	(230.00)	-
Funeral Wreath	(118.00)	-
Mini Conference	(871.63)	-
Website/Domain Name	-	(35.45)
Cash Float	(50.00)	-
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$(753.56)</b>	<b>\$(1,519.63)</b>

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,056.94</b>	<b>\$1,733.45</b>
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## Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2018

	2017/18 (\$)	2016/17 (\$)
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Commonwealth Bank Society Cheque Account	1,456.33	686.87
Bendigo Bank Club Cheque Account	2,771.13	3,399.76
Bendigo Bank Term Deposit	8,207.88	8,000.00
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$12,435.34</b>	<b>\$12,086.63</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Unpresented Cheque	(30.00)	-
Membership in Advance	(300.00)	-
Bayside Council Grant	(628.37)	-
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>\$(958.37)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,476.97</b>	<b>\$12,086.63</b>

**Treasurer: Wesley Fairhall - 20 July 2018**

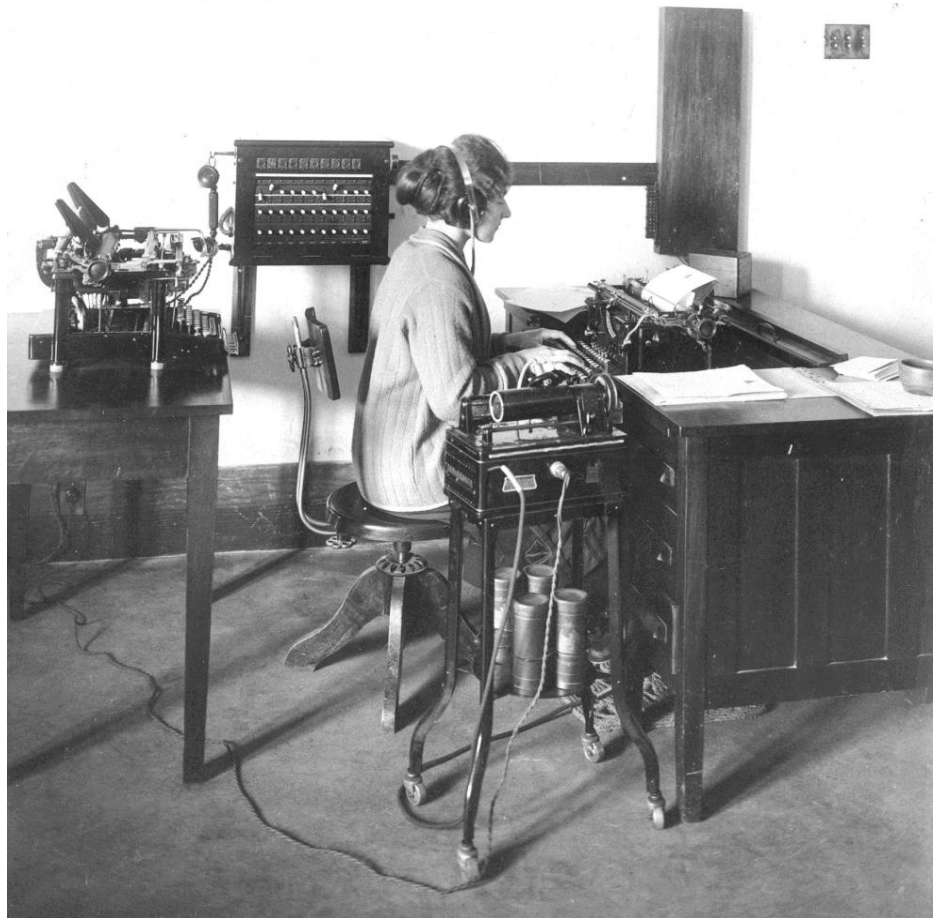
**Auditor: Tina Workman**

## Highlights at the Hurstville Museum and Gallery

### Keep in Touch

20 October 2018 - 27 January 2019

Since the introduction of the internet and smart phones, communicating with each other has never been easier or more instantaneous. This exhibition takes you back to the world of analogue communication and showcases the development of information and communication services in the St George region. Explore old writing equipment, telephones and radios and see how things have changed over time.



*Miss Elsie Coombes, the first 'typist' for the St George County Council, in 1925. <sup>22</sup>*

### Home Sweet Home

20 October 2018 - 27 January 2019

This exhibition displays the homes, their owners, and interiors of the Georges River region from the late 19th century onwards. It was a time of expansion, development and subdivision; homes varied from large sprawling villas and mansions with extensive grounds and gardens, to smaller cottages and bungalows on estates. These images capture the lives and homes of those from the past, frozen in a moment of time.



*Norwood, Forest Road, Hurstville, c. 1890-99. <sup>22</sup>*

## Friendly Delivery - Right to your Door

Hurstville Museum & Gallery holds in its collection one of the original bikes used by the Friendly Pharmacy Dispensing Chemist to make local deliveries. The Friendly Pharmacy was established in Hurstville in 1911. Since 1913, the pharmacy has existed at its original location, 17 MacMahon St, Hurstville.

Friendly societies were established in Australia in the 1830s, and were a precursor to health insurance schemes. These societies were generally formed by members of the working class who combined their resources and, in conjunction with chemists and doctors, created a scheme in which members could have access to essential medical services that they could otherwise not afford.<sup>1</sup>

The Friendly Societies Act was passed in 1843, and created key regulations for these societies.<sup>2</sup> The first friendly society dispensary opened in Sydney in 1847.<sup>3</sup> Such societies grew in popularity throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, since they were able to provide subsidised medications to those who paid annual membership dues.<sup>1</sup>

The phone number advertised on the bicycle ("LU1411") has assisted in dating the object, as it has a telephone exchange name that dates from the period between 1930 – 1963.<sup>2</sup> This particular

model, designed for commercial deliveries, was also advertised in a Malvern Star catalogue, which dates from 1942.

The growing popularity of cycling in Australia received a significant boost during World War II. Since the rationing of fuel and mechanical parts made it increasingly difficult to maintain a car, cycling offered a relatively affordable and efficient method of transportation. Yet for some bicycle manufacturers, this was still a difficult time to source parts. Malvern Star, however, thrived in this period, doubling their turnover during wartime as the company improvised and began producing its own replacement parts.<sup>3</sup>

Do you have a connection to the Friendly Pharmacy in Hurstville? Or maybe you know someone who was a member of a local Friendly Society? We would love to hear about it!

**The Hurstville Museum and Gallery is located at 14 Macmahon St, Hurstville, one block east of Hurstville Central Library.**

**Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm, Sunday, 2.00pm – 5.00pm**

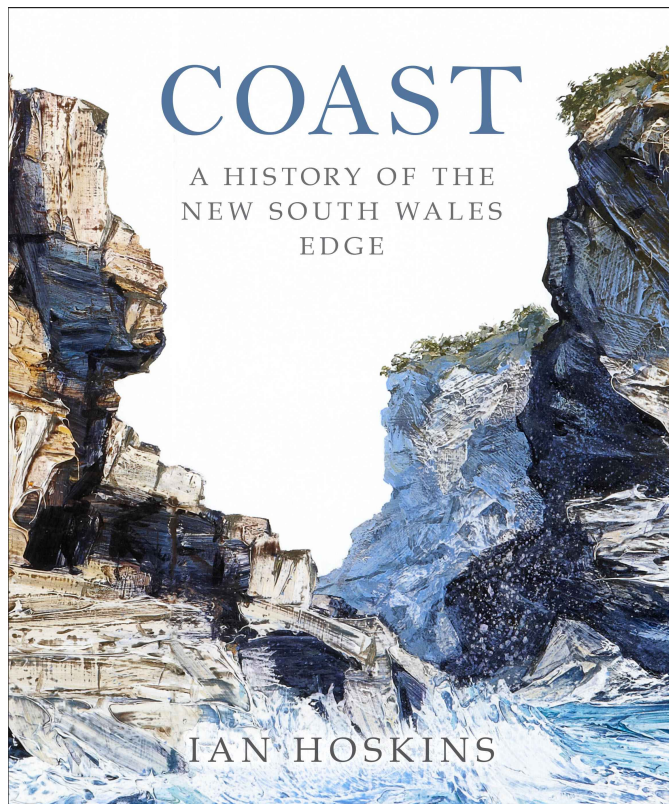
**Call (02) 9300-6444, email [museumgallery@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](mailto:museumgallery@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au) or visit <http://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/HMG> for more information.**





# Book Review – *Coast – A history of the New South Wales Edge*

Laurice Bondfield



Ian Hoskins, North Sydney Council Historian, has written a valuable account of the settlement of the NSW coast from Aboriginal times to the present day. It brings together many different aspects of coastal settlement, often fragmented in other locally written histories or general accounts of the settlement of the state. As the cover states, the book "traces our relationship with this stretch of land and sea starting millennia ago when Aboriginal people feasted on shellfish and perfected the art of building bark canoes, to our present obsession with the beach as a place to live or holiday". The hardcover book is, moreover, beautifully illustrated and printed by New South Publishing, making it a joy to read and to look at. Don't be intimidated by the number of pages - many are full page reproductions of paintings by early artists of coastal scenes, flora and fauna and contemporary maps.

How does Ian Hoskins tackle the daunting task of writing a history of the NSW Coastline - vast in both time and space? You can gain an idea of his approach by looking at the list of chapter headings. We have chapters headed "Natural Histories", "The First Coast People", "Claiming the Coast",

"Convicts Coal Cedar and Cane", "Harvest of the Sea", "Boats on the Coast", "Harbours and Lights", "Defending the Coast", "Embracing the Coast", "Sea Change", and "Heritage and the Coast".

"Natural Histories" examines the scientific work undertaken to systematically identify the different marine animals and environments along the coast. Interestingly, many of the most prominent twentieth century researchers were women: Isobel Bennett, Elizabeth Pope, and Helen Turner, who in 1946 travelled down the NSW South Coast exploring the intertidal zone - moving from one small coastal town to another, ending in Bermagui. In 1948-49, with mentor William Dakin, Professor of Zoology at Sydney University, she continued on to Twofold Bay and the Victorian Coast, then north from Sydney to Brisbane. The rest of the chapter examines the earliest collectors and researchers such as William Hargraves (son of Edward Hargraves, a gold prospector in Bathurst) and William Sharp McLeay (son of Sir Alexander McLeay, Colonial Secretary and builder of Elizabeth Bay House). Their collections eventually formed the basis of the Australian Museum inventory. Another famous researcher, Thomas Huxley, later known as "Darwin's Bulldog" for his fierce championing of the theory of evolution, said "My scientific career practically commenced with work done in Australian seas." He began his work in Sydney Harbour on *Physalia* - bluebottle - that won him election to the Royal Society of London at 26. These are just some of the fascinating characters you meet in these pages as well as gaining an idea of the different aspects of the coast and seas.

"Claiming the Coast" details the exploration and mapping of the coastline. All the familiar names are here: Cook, Phillip, Hunter, Flinders, and Oxley. Tribute is also paid to George Bass, "for many years the whaleboat was preserved on the shore of Sydney Cove as a shrine to Bass's first trip and probably the man himself" (p. 101). We usually learn about the voyages of Bass and Flinders, and the path that Flinders' life took afterwards is well known. That Bass undertook at least one voyage to the south of Sydney is less well known. His undertaking was a closer examination of places for future settlement like the Shoalhaven



or Jervis Bay, which Cook had named but not explored. After his voyages with Flinders, Bass set out in 1803 for South America. Somewhere in the Pacific, he and his boat disappeared - no trace of them has ever been found. This chapter is illustrated with some beautifully reproduced contemporary nineteenth century maps and drawings of coastal features.

"Convicts, Coal Cedar and Cane", as you can guess, details the attempts to settle various parts of the coast and to create industries to sustain the settlements. If, like me, you have holidayed in places like Coalcliff, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, or other coastal towns, visited a museum or historic site, and have a fragmented idea of how and when they were settled, this chapter will make all clear! The chapter features carefully chosen works, again beautifully reproduced to aid historical imagination. These include the reproduction of an 1840 oil painting of Port Macquarie and the mouth of the Hastings River, two pages from an album of photographs, hand-painted scenes presented to Edward Knox of the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. in 1894, and a full page reproduction of Conrad Martens' 1848 painting of Brisbane Water.

Though it is tempting to outline the contents of every chapter, this would make an inordinately long review and spoil your discoveries! I will, however, mention two names which will be familiar to local readers. In "Harvest of the Sea", David Stead of Lydham Hall is mentioned in two contexts - first as the Chief Scientist in the Holman state government to examine the deep sea trawling industry in Britain and to buy trawlers for the state-sponsored fleet; and later as an opponent of Norwegian whaling in seas that "geographically"

belonged to Australia. He believed there were plenty of whales to be had, but that Australians should be exploiting the resource. "Sea Change" details the altered ideas of healthy living in the nineteenth century which saw many fine houses built to catch sea breezes and facilitate sea bathing. One early pioneer was Alexander Brodie Spark of Tempe House (irritatingly his surname is spelled "Sparks" throughout).

The final chapters trace our changing relationship to the coast, from a resource to be exploited for food, to a healthy place to holiday, live or retire. Ian Hoskins examines the question of heritage, both of dwellings and places. The very things that attract people to the coast to live are often the first to be destroyed when little fishing villages or holiday towns grow to accommodate them. Why don't we preserve some of the old fibro holiday shacks? What about the preservation of underwater sites like shipwrecks? What are the arguments for and against underwater and coastal National Parks? Some intriguing questions and no simple answers.

This beautifully presented book is well written and comprehensively examines our changing relationship with the beach and the sea - highly recommended either to read through, dip into, or simply admire the well chosen artworks that contribute much to your enjoyment and understanding of the topic.

***Coast – A history of the New South Wales Edge* by Ian Hoskins. New South Publishing, Nov. 2013. 448 pages.**

**Order from NewSouth Books [online](#) or by calling (02) 8778 9999.**



# The Botany Big Splash

Jenny MacRitchie

**D**o you have happy memories of summer days spent at the Botany Big Splash? For more than 50 years the aquatic centre near Booralee Park has provided a place for locals to cool off during the warm weather. Many well-known faces have visited the aquatic centre since its opening in 1966, but it would be fair to say that the people of Botany waited a long time for their own swimming pool.

Botany Council first saw the need for swimming 'baths' in 1889 but it was not until 1917 that baths were opened at the end of Bay Street, near the outfall sewer and the old mouth of the Cooks River.



By 1929 the baths had been abandoned, with Council discussing many alternative plans during the next 30 years.

In 1962 tentative plans were made for a swimming centre at Mutch Park, but in 1963 the location was changed to the eastern end of Booralee Park. The foundation stone was laid on 8 May 1965.

The swimming centre, at a cost of more than \$500,000, was finally opened by Mayor George Hanna on 24 September 1966. It was a grand occasion but the weather was uncooperative, as an extremely cold southerly wind made the actual swimming rather unpleasant. As the Mayor officially declared the pool open, a child from each local school jumped into the water.

During the opening Olympian Dawn Fraser

demonstrated her style and a number of races were organised by the Botany RSL Swimming Club. Dawn Fraser went on to become the pool's first swimming coach, soon after her retirement from competitive swimming. She held this position for three years.

There was big excitement during October 1984 when Olympic gold-medal winning weightlifter, Dean Lukin visited the pool to launch the swimming season and the pool's new name, The Botany Big Splash. He was escorted by seven lifesavers from South Maroubra Club. After his 'big splash' in the pool, a fashion parade featuring

the latest Speedo swimwear was held and two Council employees donned neck-to knee bathing costumes, reminiscent of earlier days.

On the evening of 14 April 1999, a massive hailstorm hit Sydney, with extensive damage to the eastern suburbs. The largest verified hailstone measured 9cm in diameter! This was the biggest natural disaster insurance claim in Australian history with 23 planes and helicopters also damaged at the airport. The waterslides at The Botany Big Splash were badly damaged in the storm and had to be dismantled for repairs. The

blue and yellow slides were replaced with green and white slides.

In March 2008, Botany Aquatic Centre hosted the State Swimming Championships. In October of that year three lifeguards saved the life of a 10-year-old boy during the Botany RSL Amateur Swimming Club carnival. Anthony Nicol, Mitchell Parkinson and James Horrey were awarded High Commendations by the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia and then Governor of NSW, Marie Bashir in 2009.

During September 2010, Olympians Ky Hurst and Libby Trickett, ambassadors of the Black Dog Institute, visited Botany Pool to publicise the 'Exercise Your Mood' campaign for mental health.

Many swimmers have a long association with

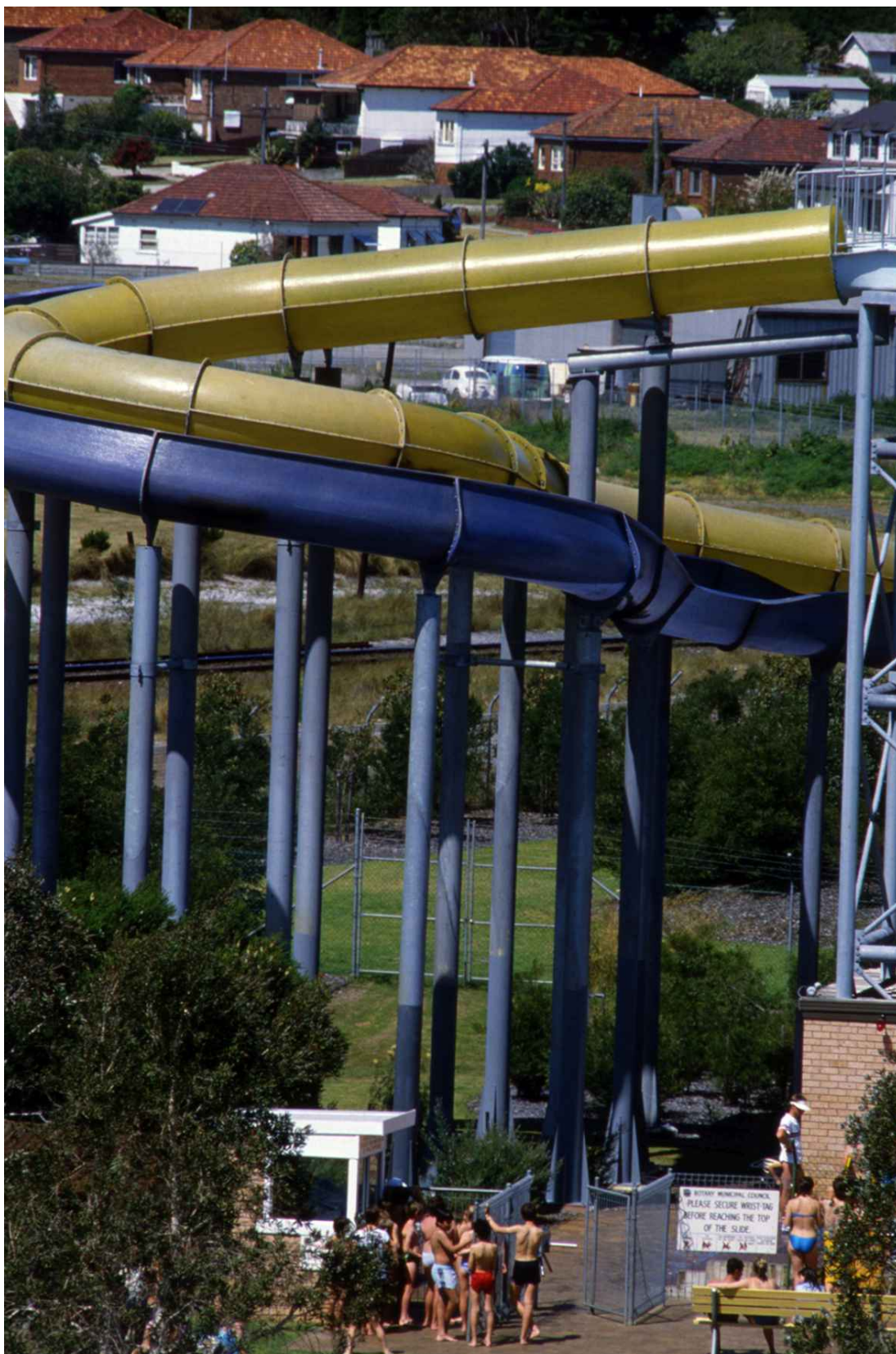


Botany Pool, as does the Botany RSL Swimming Club. Founded in 1960, it transferred there from Heffron Park after the pool's opening in 1966. The Club still meets at Botany Aquatic Centre on Saturday mornings during the swimming season.

Botany Aquatic Centre continues to play a prominent role in the district for swimming carnivals, learn to swim classes and summer fun.

Visit the [History at Bayside](#) blog to read more.

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*The waterslides, c. late 1980s.*

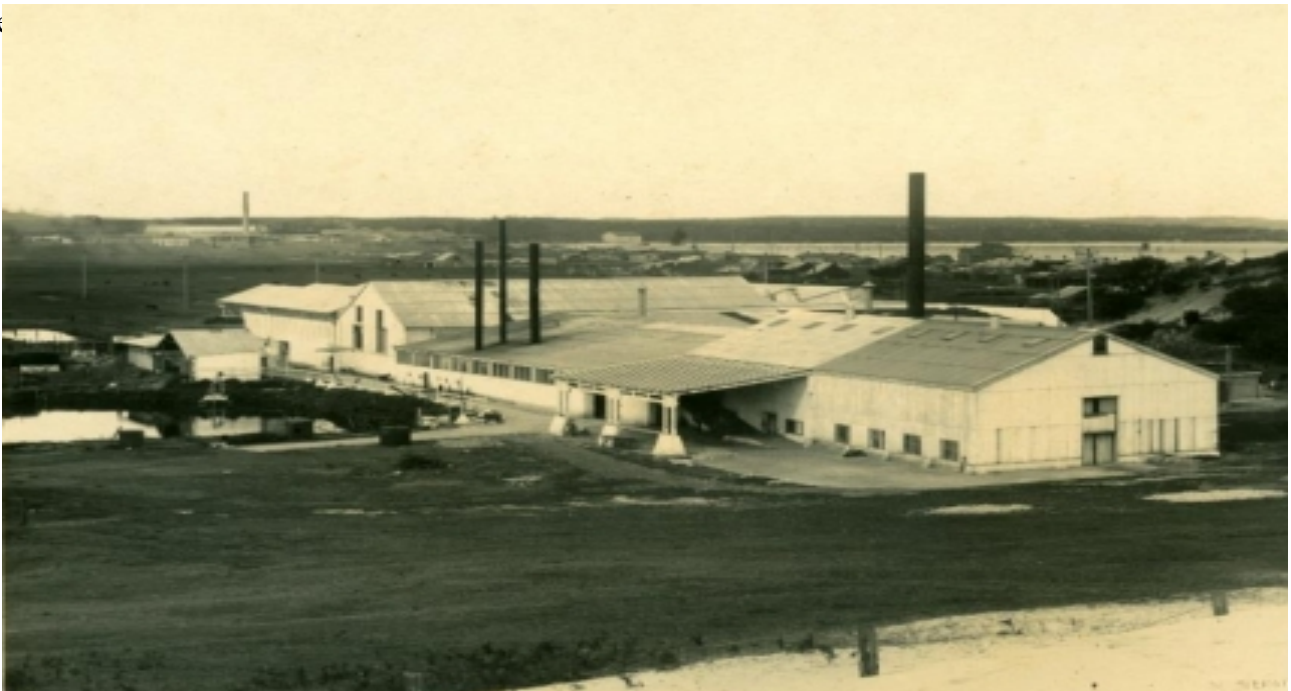
# Botany Wool

Leonie Bell

The 100th anniversary of World War 1 has prompted many people to collect stories depicting how their ancestors fought in World War 1 or 2. My grandparents did not fight in either war. They were too young for the Great War and worked in protected industries during the Second World War. My maternal grandfather was an ambulance paramedic. My paternal grandfather, James Richard John Bell (1904-1989), worked at Floodvale in Botany, a fellmongering business that was considered vital to the war effort as a primary industry. He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather William Bell (1841-1930) and his father George Robert Bell (1875-1932), both of whom were Botany fellmongers.<sup>4</sup>

Fellmongering is the process of scouring, washing and packing wool into bales. The wool is removed from the pelt or skin by treatment with chemicals. This was a smelly job, as the tallow from the wool would be absorbed into the fellmonger's skin, so that the workers always had a 'wool yard' smell about them. One man who was forced to share a tram car with them indignantly complained they were, "wet and evil-smelling from their peculiar work" and called for them to be banned from the trams, without consideration for how they might reach their place of employment.<sup>5</sup>

The



*Floodvale Works, Botany Bay. The Long Pier (demolished 1969) can be seen in the background and the roofs of the houses on Botany Road are just visible behind the sandhill to the right.*<sup>22</sup>



plenty of delicious spuds cooked in flavoursome lard and smothered in home-made gravy simmered from the pan juices. Afterwards, the youngsters ambled along the beachfront, playing in the sandhills, collecting jellyfish, watching the coal ships unload from the now demolished Long Pier which serviced the Bunnerong Powerhouse, and paddling into the bay in a tin canoe.

James left school at 14, as did most children in this period, and found employment at the wool yards. Fellmongering was a hard, sweaty job. My grandfather walked to work each day from his parents' home in Botany Road, and later cycled from Alfred St Botany, dressed only in a pair of clean but work-stained shorts. No singlet. No shoes. It was too hot to wear any more apparel. Over the years James became skilled in each of the different tasks involved in wool processing.

In the early 1930s the wool yard was closed for many weeks because of a labour dispute and James took his young son with him to the Mascot and Botany tanneries seeking work; the toddler perched on the handlebars of his father's bicycle. When he was employed, James' wages were about 3 pounds (\$6) per week. Now he was without an income, as unemployment benefits were not introduced in Australia until 1945.<sup>6</sup> The family budget needed to be frugal, as they relied solely on Gladys' paltry income from her work in shoe manufacturing. Women were paid much less than men until wage reform in the 1970s. Their only hope was for James to gain another job as swiftly as possible, or to rely on the vagaries of assistance provided by charitable bodies.<sup>7</sup>



*The men of Floodvale work barefoot handling the sheep basils (skins).<sup>22</sup>*

Despite this grim period, James remained at Floodvale almost his entire working life, until the business closed its doors five years before his retirement and he was thrown out of work, along with hundreds of other men. Like many supposedly 'unskilled' labourers, my grandfather was highly skilled in a tough physical working environment. However, these skills were not readily transferable to other industries.

Current studies of twenty first century retrenchment strategies have shown that in some instances half of retrenched men over the age of 45 are unable to find employment and may unintentionally retire by default.<sup>8</sup> Even in the 1960s, employment could potentially prove difficult to find for an elderly man who had only worked for one employer.

Fortunately, James' son was able to secure his father a position as a cleaner at Commonwealth Industrial Gases (CIG) in Alexandria, where James earned a comfortable living until retirement at 65.

My grandfather's story prompted an interest in the employer to whom he had devoted so much of his working life. What did a fellmonger do? Was it a dangerous trade? Who owned Floodvale and when did the business start? Why were fellmongers

located in this area? How did Floodvale fit into the bigger picture of industrial Botany and the noxious trades? What caused the closure of the Botany fellmongers? The story of Floodvale and the Botany fellmongers is a key part of the saga of Australia's greatest export

—wool.

# Mick Moylan's Pub

Garry Darby

## Mick buys the 'Prince of Wales' Hotel at Sandringham

Down Sans Souci way Mick Moylan's pub is legendary. Generations of locals still refer to it - it was demolished in the 1980s - as "Mick's" and the stories that originate from that place are limitless and many seem to test the bounds of truth more than somewhat. Indeed the entire area of Sandringham Point on the Georges River is still referred to as "Mick's". Mick and Mavis were there from 1952 to 1966.

These were the 'golden years' for suburban hotels. There were 1,800 new pubs licensed in NSW during those two decades and this was far and away the greatest increase between 1905 and 2014. Mick was astute enough to know that the 'boom' was on.<sup>9</sup>

\*

Mick and Mavis - married at North Sydney on 3 July 1943, Mavis' 23rd birthday - learned the hotel trade when they became licensees for the first time at the Governor Bourke Hotel, Camperdown.

Mick's father, M E Moylan Snr., had passed away just one month after they began there in February, 1950.

The Moylan family was not a wealthy one and it is likely that business finance and deposits for loans from the brewery and others originated with Mavis. Furthermore she was the thrifty one of the partnership and it has been suggested that she saved Michael's pay from his war service to give them a great new start.

Prior to operating hotels Mick had had a milk run at Neutral Bay in the 1930s and later he and Mavis had a newsagency at Glebe. Mick was ambitious to do well in business and for a time had studied accountancy of a night to prepare himself for the career he envisaged for himself.

They were, however, ambitious, quick learners, and by November 1951, just 17 months later, they had moved on to busier premises at the Welcome Hotel Rozelle.

From the beginning the Moylans had what it took



*Michael Eugene "Mick" Moylan, of Irish heritage, became the legendary publican at Sandringham between 1952 and 1966. He died at Sans Souci in 1969. Mavis Moylan (née Wesley) - looked after the rooms, staff and administration aspects of the hotel. Mavis passed away in May 2012.<sup>24</sup>*

to be successful hoteliers and beer sales escalated at Rozelle.

Mick Moylan's dream, however, was to own a suburban pub and he purchased the historic Prince of Wales at Sandringham from the occupying publican, Les Ritchie, in 1952 for £56,000. Ritchie was, himself, something of a household name in the area and was known by one and all as "Lousy Les". Before coming to Sandringham Ritchie had been licensee at the Lewisham Hotel, Lewisham.

\*

There were two distinct periods for Mick's hotels on the site. The 'old' pub, formerly 'The Prince of Wales', was his from 1952 to 1963 when he demolished it to make way for the cream coloured brick building which he named the 'Sans Souci Hotel'. However, before that came to pass there were some rip roaring days, and nights, at this outstanding, local watering hole.

\*

Moylan's fame and huge success as a publican rested on his wonderful ability as a promoter, and his continuous flow of ideas and projects which were all aimed at improving his lot. He enjoyed the limelight but was not self-indulgent.

Some preceding publicans there such as "Aussie" Billy Longton had continuously publicised their own name and profiles in press advertising, but Mick and Mavis relied more on simply providing great experiences for their patrons.

Interviewed in 2012, Rea Moylan Hewitt, his daughter said, "Dad was the ideas man and Mum

was the backstop. She looked after the rooms, staff and the administration side. She was known for her boisterous laugh".<sup>10</sup>

Mick Moylan certainly was an 'ideas man' - a term that was later made famous in the Australian movie, *The Castle*.

Many older residents of St George and Sutherland Shire would remember the entertainment provided by the Moylans in the pub's beer garden that overlooked the water at Sandringham Point. It featured a dirt floor and very basic furniture. During the colder months patrons would huddle around steel braziers in which logs were burning. These were dotted strategically throughout the open areas of the pub. Come what may, all this was set in a situation facing Botany Bay and George's River that few other hotels in Sydney could match.

Rea Moylan Hewitt recalled just how promotionally minded her father was, saying;

*There were talent quests, beauty contests and all the latest rock'n'roll bands. Dad really made the entertainment the attraction because he didn't have poker machines or Sunday trading. In those days, Dad owned the point and he was very generous, letting fishermen access the water. Dad was a showman. We had circuses for the kids and he imported big American cars from Detroit that were always on show in the car park. We would have huge bonfires on cracker night.*<sup>10</sup>

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*The famous "Rush" at the Prince of Wales in October 1957. Mick Moylan, a great promoter, brought Sydney's headline acts to entertain people in the old beer garden. The "rush" would be to secure seats nearest the stage. Note the primitive nature of the "furniture", some from the 1930s.*<sup>24</sup>

# Wolli Creek: A Community Under Construction

Sheila Ngoc Pham

## At ground zero

**R**ubbernecking. There's no denying that was my intention as I huddled with the growing crowd behind the blue-and-white checkered tape, our smartphones at the ready. On the other side of the temporary barrier were dozens of emergency workers in high-vis vests.

All heads were turned skywards to where a tower crane had crashed into the eleven-storey Arc apartment building in Wolli Creek, falling over from the Marq East construction site.<sup>11</sup> The former was completed in 2014,<sup>12</sup> the latter due for completion mid 2018.<sup>13</sup> Residents had been evacuated, as well as those in the adjacent buildings. Police were mobilised to prevent looting, control traffic and ensure public safety. The developer, Frasers Property, and the building company, Probuild, were in damage control in all senses.<sup>14, 15</sup>

At the exact moment of impact twenty-four hours earlier, I was with my husband and then seven-month-old baby. Walking home from a café close to the site of the accident, the distant boom didn't even register given the constant clanging and clanking in our neighbourhood. After all, we live in a suburb with one of the highest numbers of residential cranes in Sydney.<sup>16</sup> According to the RLB Crane Index, a useful way to diagnose 'the construction sector's health within Australia'<sup>17</sup> is to count the number of active cranes. Looking up from the pavements of Wolli Creek, the construction sector is as healthy as it's ever been – though clearly it can come crashing down as well.

As with most occurrences in the area, we only heard about what happened when someone posted a link to a story online later that day, the first of the extensive media coverage<sup>18</sup> during the week in August 2017 that it took for the errant crane to be dislodged. Although the building was damaged, no one died. Three workers were injured and soon released from hospital. It was a freakish occurrence

and one that gained national interest, albeit fleeting. Three months later, what seems to be a lone follow-up story appeared, reporting that the penthouse residents had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and were still struggling.<sup>19</sup>

## The virtual town square

For local residents there was a kind of thrill about the incident at the time, particularly those of us who didn't live in the affected vicinity. Facebook became the virtual town square where the inexhaustible discussion about the crane took place and news, official statements and links were shared.<sup>ix</sup> There was also what seemed to be a surge of civic spirit, driven by a genuine desire to be useful and help those in need.<sup>20</sup> It wouldn't be the first time a disaster forged a community, as Rebecca Solnit wrote in *A Paradise Built in Hell*:<sup>21</sup>

*When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people step up – not all, but the great preponderance – to become their brothers' keepers. And that purposefulness and connected-ness brings joy even amidst death, chaos, fear and loss.*

But this wasn't a disaster, just disaster-like. And perhaps we weren't even a community, just community-like; was the crane crash enough to galvanise the online discussions into offline connections? The whole incident served to highlight how compartmentalised we are, with little need to cross the thresholds of each other's homes between the strata-managed and developer-owned spaces. But it's in the mess of it all that we find and form connections and I wondered if this singular event would be an important spark for fledgling Wolli Creek, under construction in more ways than one.

Good fences make good neighbours but we have no fences here, only gyprock walls.

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# St George, Canada

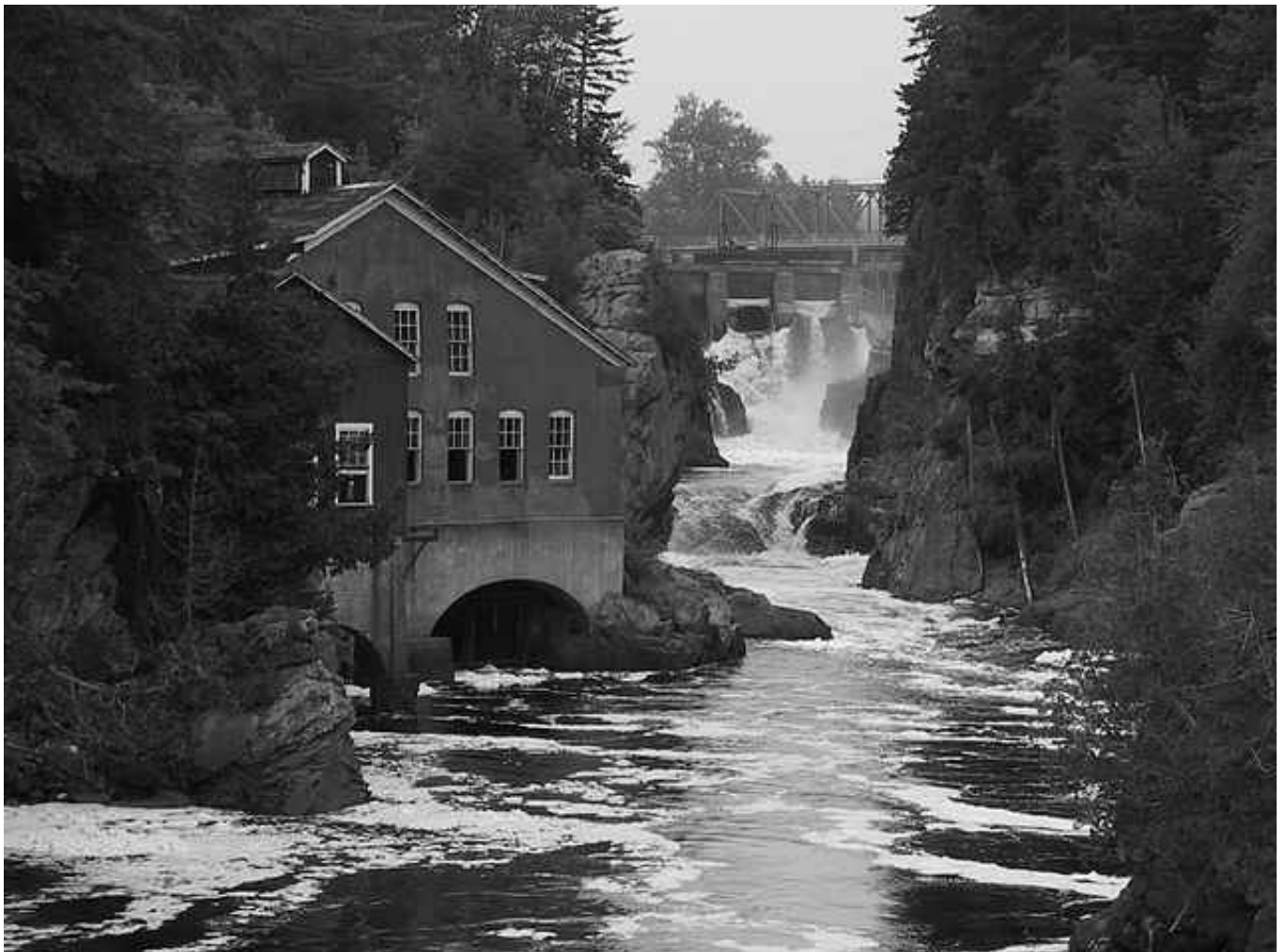
Barry Johnson

**T**he name of our region commemorates Saint George of Lydda (modern-day Lod in Israel). An officer of the Roman Empire, he was martyred in the fourth century AD while defending Christianity. Dozens of other sites throughout the world also bear his name. This regular feature in our magazine explores these cities, churches, regions and monasteries.

that time.

He then represented St George as a member of the first New Brunswick Legislative Assembly. Both Peter and his wife Lucretia passed away in 1816. They were laid to rest in the First Community Cemetery, where burials were performed until 1876.

From the mid-1800s, the town's primary industry



In this edition, we venture to St George, a town in New Brunswick, one of the Maritime Provinces on the east coast of Canada. The Irishman, Peter Clinch, founded St George in 1784. The site was part of a land grant offered after he fought with the Royal Fencible American Regiment, preventing the advance of Revolutionary forces from the American colony into Canada.

When he settled in Canada, he was named a United Empire Loyalist rather than a Canadian, with that demonym referring to the First Nations peoples at

was mining of red granite from the cliffs lining the Magaguadavic River. The 80-mile waterway flows south, lined with tributaries and lakes.

The term Magaguadavic, pronounced "mack-uh-day-vick", originates via both the local First Nations cultures, in the Maliseet and Passamaquoddy regions. Maliseet are the Indigenous people of the Saint John River, speaking Algonquia. Passamaquoddy live in New Brunswick.

Magaguadavic was also the first name of the town, later changed to St George to follow the convention of neighbouring towns and parishes, including St Stephen and St Andrews. The new name also affirmed British pride in securing a site defended by Clinch and his troops from American expansion.

The local granite industry is unique for the quality and variety of red stone, unsurpassed by imports. It is used throughout Canada in monuments and cemeteries. One of the earliest examples is the Lake Utopia Medallion, from granite extracted by explorers in 1604. In the 1950s, high wage costs allowed the introduction of inferior grades of granite from Europe, causing the collapse of the local industry.

The town's workforce has since transitioned to lumber, with sawmills harvesting the valley's pine trees for paper.

A dam was constructed in 1968, and salmon fishing has grown from a recreation pastime into an aquacultural industry. After the plunge over First Falls, a 21-metre waterfall at St. George Gorge, the river is sedate, but in December 2010, St George experienced the natural disaster with a flooding of the Magaguadavic.

During the growth in consumer electronics and computing in the 1980s, the town briefly opened mining operations to extract tungsten and molybdenum, creating an alloy for electronics manufacture.

By the time of the first national census in 1901, almost 800 people lived in St George.


In the 21st century, over 1,500 people live in St George, with a declining proportion of Francophiles.

Historic sites include:

- First Community Cemetery. Burials were performed here until 1876, including those of Peter and his wife Lucretia Clinch (both died in 1816). Many of the headstones are carved from red granite.

- School bell from the first Superior School, established in 1888. Although the school has been demolished, the 90kg brass bell is set on a red granite cairn in front of the town hall.



- The world's first artificial salmon ladder. The installation of the dam would prevent salmon from migrating upstream. This series of 40 pools was installed, with the cascading water allowing salmon to ascend over First Falls.
- 19th century hand operated water pump. In the centre of St George's main street, it is fed from artesian wells and pours into a red granite trough.
- The remnants of the Milne-Coutts & Co. Granite Shed. The first local granite business, established in 1872, and also the last to close, in 1954. Locals also consider it a landmark of the Industrial Revolution in St George.
- The Government of Canada Building. Built using local red granite, it has been the St George's site for federal administration since 1935. 

# A Night At The Pictures

Barry Johnson

Our cinemas in Beverley Hills and Hurstville feature films from around the world, using technology to create a 3D experience. A century ago, moviegoers enjoyed the silent silver screen, with black-and-white films shipped from Hollywood to Acme Pictures on Rocky Point Road, Rockdale, and Kogarah Pictures on Derby Street, Kogarah.

Highlights of the cinema in July 1918 included <sup>31</sup>:

***A Romance in the Redwoods*** – Directed by Cecil B. DeMille and starring Mary Pickford "the world's sweetheart", this silent film is set during the Gold Rush in California.

Mary's character, Jenny, is travelling by ship from New York to Los Angeles to meet her uncle, John, after her mother died. As she rides a donkey to his home in Strawberry

Flats, a remote mining town, John is killed by Native Americans.

Discovering the corpse, a notorious stagecoach bandit, "Black" Brown, steals John's identity to evade police.

Although only slightly older than Jenny and half the age of John, Jenny is unaware of "Black's" real identity but surprised at his uncouth demeanour.

She attempts to bring an east coast refinement to his home, tempting him to reveal his true identity to begin courting her.

After another stagecoach robbery, Jenny discovers his mask, complete with eye holes (pictured <sup>25</sup>), and faces the choice of fleeing to the police or remaining silent in the hope of reforming him.

Mary was the most successful actress of the period, chosen in the inaugural hand and footprint ceremony on the Hollywood Boardwalk of Fame

in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. She also co-founded United Artists with her husband, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and 33 other performers.

***Back of the Man*** – Dorothy Dalton stars as Ellen Horton, lover of an insurance salesman. When her husband is framed for murder, she plays amateur private investigator, solving the case and securing his promotion.

***Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*** – Based on the novel of the same name, this romance also stars Mary Pickford.

She plays Rebecca, a teenager living with her aunt in New England. When she promises to marry a local boy when they are old enough, her aunt separates the couple by sending Rebecca to a

boarding school.

When she graduates, her beau is waiting, hoping her love remains true.

In one scene, the dialogue was cut by censors, removing a reference to cohabitation.

***Undying Flame*** – English actress Olga Petrova stars as a seductive Egyptian princess in this fantasy romance.

Her father has arranged her

marriage to the builder of his greatest temple but she plans to elope with her true love, a local shepherd. When the king discovers her plan, he orders the death of the shepherd. Moments before the execution, the couple clutch two halves of an enchanted scarab amulet, making a supernatural pact to return in a new life to fulfil their love.

Centuries later, the princess is reincarnated as the daughter of an English officer stationed in Egypt. The shepherd returns as a junior officer under her





father's command. Alive once more, they must remember the ancient pact, joining the amulet halves to find love again.

***Scandal*** – A silent comedy starring Constance Talmadge. She may have been the inspiration for the Hollywood Boardwalk of Fame after walking through wet cement while touring Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre (pictured).

***The Fatal Ring*** – The latest instalment of a serial thriller, involving a diamond theft and an international chase to recover the jewels.

Tense scenes involved the lead actress tied to a railroad as a locomotive approached, gunplay, knife fights, hold ups, car chases, kidnapping, and a cauldron of boiling oil. The censors sharpened their scissors to make dozens of cuts.

***A Soul in Trust*** – Belle Bennett stars in a romance with dizzying plot twists.

Belle plays Courtney Maitland, married to Dabney, a Wall Street stockbroker with a secretive past. By chance, she meets his first wife, Nan, who reveals she gave birth to a son before Dabney abandoned her. When Nan dies suddenly, Courtney adopts the baby.

A senator begins a crusade to expose corruption on Wall Street, and Courtney joins his staff, revealing her husband's financial schemes. When Dabney

discovers the identity of the adopted child and hears police approaching, he flees. Overjoyed, the senator and Courtney marry.

***Son of His Father*** – Based on the novel by Ridgwell Cullum and starring Charles Ray as Gordon, the son of a railroad tycoon.

Eager to impress his father, he promises to turn a \$5,000 stake into \$100,000 by expanding the network with a new station beside Niagara Falls. He immediately encounters trouble, as locals extort high prices for the land sale. After his father's agent arrives, refusing to provide funds for the expensive contract, Gordon holds him prisoner to prevent the news from reaching his father. Frustrated with delays, Gordon's father arrives and becomes the next prisoner.

Gordon resolves to build the station before releasing them, sending a telegram in his father's name to approve the transport of materials and workers. When the station begins to take shape, Gordon releases his father, who promptly forgives him, proud at his son's initiative. The agent is also nonchalant about being held prisoner. He arranges for his daughter to meet Gordon and they are married with the new train station and Niagara Falls as the setting for the wedding ceremony.

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*Constance Talmadge makes her mark in Hollywood.* <sup>26</sup>



## SGHS Publications

The St George Historical Society has many books and pamphlets for sale, documenting the history of suburbs, people and events in the St George district, including well-researched books by Ron Rathbone.

Items can be purchased at Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley on most Sundays from 2pm to 4pm, or by contacting Mrs Joan Rankin on (02) 9567 8641.

• The Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway	\$2.50
• Saywell's Tramway 1887-1914 – Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach	\$2.50
• The Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway	\$4.00
• Our Heritage in Stone	\$4.00
• All Stations to Como	\$4.00
• Tempe and the Black Creek Valley	\$4.00
• Early Churches of the St George District	\$4.00
• Early Settlers of the St George District – Volume 1	\$4.00
• Early Settlers of the St George District – Volume 2	\$4.00
• The Illawarra Railway – Hurstville	\$4.00
• <del>Rockdale: its Beginning and Development</del> – <i>Out of stock</i>	
• Christina Stead by Jennifer Gribble	\$10.00
• History of the Rockdale Uniting Church – 150 Years Anniversary (1855-2005)	\$15.00
• Kingsgrove – The First 200 Years by Brian Madden	\$20.00

Books by R.W. Rathbone:

• A Village Called Arncliffe	\$25.00
• The Bardwell Valley (available via Rockdale Library)	\$25.00
• Brighton-Le-Sands	\$25.00
• Cameos of Bexley	\$25.00
• The Bexley Book	\$15.00
• The Glen Village – its first 25 years	\$7.00
• The Sans Souci Peninsula	\$26.00
• The Lydham Hall Booklet	\$6.00

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