

North Shore Historical Society Inc.

Celebrating North Sydney's Heritage

PO Box 399 North Sydney NSW 2059

Email: NorthShoreHS@Hotmail.com

ABN 58 742 490 986

President ph. 9929 6637 Secretary ph. 0414 416 802

Affiliate Member of Royal Australian Historical Society



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NEXT GENERAL MEETING

6.00pm Thursday 14th November 2024

To be held on 2nd floor, Stanton Library, 234 Miller Street, North Sydney.

Commencing at 6pm, our meeting will finish around 7.30pm- the library closes at 8.00pm

Note- The meeting is being held on the second floor of the library – take lift to level 2.

November Guest Speakers: **Elise Edmonds and Gaynor Austen**

Elise works in the Collection Acquisition and Curation branch of the State Library of New South Wales. With a background in Australian history and museum studies, she has worked with the Library's maps, pictures and manuscript collections, acquiring, researching and promoting these to a variety of audiences. She has curated several exhibitions highlighting the Library's nationally significant First World War collections, along with the immersive audio exhibition 'Dead Central', and 'Kill or Cure? A taste of medicine'. She co-curated the exhibition 'Peter Kingston', presently on show at the Library.

Gaynor is President of the North Shore Historical Society. From 2009, until his death in 2022, Gaynor was Peter Kingston's next-door neighbour

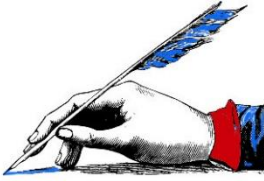
Topic: **The magical world of Peter Kingston – treasures from the State Library**

When artist Peter Kingston died in 2022, North Sydney lost one of its great characters. Peter is remembered not only as an artist, but also as a 'crusader of lost causes', seeking to preserve the life of the harbour, a life which he had observed from his Lavender Bay eyrie for nearly 50 years. This evening is a celebration of his life and work.

Elise Edmonds will discuss Peter's love of Sydney and of Luna Park, and his relationship with fellow artist, Martin Sharp. She will then focus on the State Library's collections of Peter's work, speaking about his relationship with the Library, his artist books, the oral history recording and the photographs acquired just after his death, documenting his house and studio. Gaynor Austen will add some comments on her personal memories of Peter, his art and his activism.

A collection of works by Peter will also be on display.

Welcome to new members- **Paul McGrath and Martin Jaul**



October 2024 report by Don Napper

Researching Aboriginal North Sydney

Dr Ian Hoskins

In 2008, Ian wrote a highly regarded 36-page booklet entitled *Aboriginal North Sydney : an outline of indigenous history*. This gave an overview of Aboriginal life, country and sites in North Sydney and was published by the North Sydney Council as part of its commitment to Aboriginal heritage and reconciliation.

Ian said that the purpose of his continuing research in this area over the past decade was to update and expand this booklet. His revised text is currently being checked by the Aboriginal Heritage Office prior to being released. Ian was inspired to commence this update by the launching of *Trove* by the National Library of Australia in December 2009. *Trove* allows the rapid searching across millions of digitised newspapers, journals, books, pictures and maps from cultural, community and research collections around Australia. The name *Trove* was chosen because it brought to mind a treasure trove, as well as the French verb *trouver*, meaning “to discover”.

In addition to exploiting the remarkable power of *Trove*, Ian also read extensively the early writings of colonial settlers such as Arthur Phillip, John Hunter (of *Sirius* fame and Governor), John White (the First Fleet Surgeon), Watkin Tench (a British Military Officer) and Colonel David Collins (the Judge-Advocate). He also read many of the more recent books by local historians.

One book in particular that influenced him was *Sydney's Aboriginal Past* (2002), written by Dr Val Attenbrow, of the Australian Museum. It provides a map of the different areas occupied around Sydney Harbour by seven Aboriginal clans: the Gadigal and Wangal on the southern shore and the Borogegal, Gamaragal, Wallumedegal, Birrabirragal and Gayemaygal, on the northern shore. Here the suffix ‘gal’ can be interpreted as meaning ‘people’.

These seven clans were an important group of the 29 Aboriginal clans that lived around the Sydney metropolitan area and together constituted what is now called the ‘Eora Nation’. Each of these clans was no more than 200 strong, usually far fewer, and their country extended at most 15 km along the Harbour foreshore. The Harbour clans were not nomadic but did move from cove to cove within their own territory, depending upon the season.

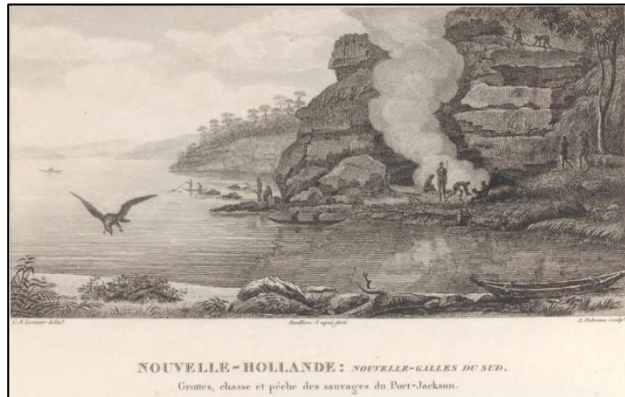
In what follows, I will use the spelling ‘Cammeraygal’ in place of ‘Gamaragal’ as used above. This spelling with a ‘C’ was first used by David Collins (1798) and is now familiar to North Sydney residents through the suburb of Cammeray, the Cammeraygal High School and the Cammeraygal ward of the North Sydney LGA. Please also see the footnote below.

Bradley’s Head was known to the indigenous people as ‘Borogee’ so that it is reasonable to assume that it was here that Cammeraygal country ended and Borogegal country commenced. Their country would have continued eastward through Mosman to the coast and to the Gayemaygal country around Manly. The stronger Cammeraygal are sometimes said to have shared some of this Borogegal country, but this idea may have arisen from a misunderstanding. It seems that the Borogegal may have used the Cammeraygal’s karadjis for their ritual ceremonies, such as the tooth evulsion that took place when young males reached puberty. Such use, however, did not mean co-occupation of country. Karadjis were the wise men, usually just a few per clan, who in addition to their ceremonial role, practiced the healing arts and the supernatural.

Ian showed a series of paintings by both English and French artists who visited early Sydney and whose paintings illustrated how Aborigines lived prior to and during colonization. There were no Aboriginal

chiefs, only elders, and even in winter, no possum skin coats were apparently worn. A differentiation was made between those Aborigines whose country was located near to the coast and whose diet was mainly fish and shellfish (the 'saltwater' people) and those who lived further inland (the 'woods' people), whose diet included both kangaroos and possums.

Ian also showed a current photo of the *angophora costata* (Sydney red gum) forest on Berry Island. This, he said, was how all of the Harbour foreshore would have looked when the first colonists arrived because no prior tree clearing had been done. At least for the saltwater people, Ian argued strongly against Bruce Pascoe's controversial thesis in his book *Dark Emu*. This thesis claims that Aboriginal society was built, at least in part, on agriculture rather than hunting and gathering, as has been widely believed in the past. Ian pointed out that in the absence of open grassland, the land around the Harbour could not have been used for agricultural purposes prior to colonization.



The title of this 1824 French engraving translates as 'New-Holland: New South Wales: Caves, with natives hunting and fishing in Port Jackson'. It is based upon a drawing by CA Lesueur of 1802. NLA Australia

A drawing of the first house on the North Shore, built by the political exile Thomas Muir, was shown, as well as a remarkable portrait by Thomas Watling of the Cammeraygal man Karra-da. The latter made the acquaintance of Lieutenant Lidgbird Ball, commander of the *Supply* and after whom Balls Head is named. This acquaintance was so significant for Karra-da that he even adopted the title of 'Mr Ball' for himself.

Even with his access to *Trove*, Ian remains puzzled by his failure to find any significant reference to the Cammeraygal in the first half of the 19th century. The simplest explanation for this absence would be that the smallpox epidemic brought to Sydney by the first white settlers and which decimated the Aboriginal community on the southern side of the Harbour, may have also decimated the Cammeraygal on the northern side. There is good evidence to suggest, however, that such decimation did not occur, presumably because there were relatively few white settlers living on the northern shore. The cause of this historical gap remains a mystery.

All members of the audience who heard Ian's fascinating talk are eagerly awaiting the release of his updated text.

Footnote: *The spelling of the Aboriginal words recorded here is somewhat optional as the indigenous languages were spoken and not written, meaning that the sound was all important. The use of 'G' or 'C' or 'K' at the beginning of an indigenous word when written is also optional. The Aboriginal sound at the start of such words is said to have been somewhere between the sounds of 'G' and 'C or K' in English. My initial use above of 'G' in 'Gamaragal' rather than 'C' in 'Cammeraygal' derives from being reprimanded by a man who claimed to be a direct descendent of Bennelong and who led walks in the Garigal National Park (note the 'G'). When asked by him to state where I lived, I said as a Rosevillian 'Kuring-gai' to which he replied that this was wrong as it had always been 'Guringai' country and that 'G' should always be used, not 'C or K'. Recent research by the Aboriginal Heritage Office, however, suggests that perhaps even his reference to 'Guringai' country may not stand up.*



Wading through the Archives

Susan Wade

Edition No 93

School Milk and Local Phone Boxes

For my final edition of this year, I would like to reflect on two significant occurrences which grew to become everyday events during the 1950's – a time when I was a young child growing up. These memories are prompted by two letters: one from the Director of Public Health in N.S.W. and the other from the Post-Master General of N.S.W.

Milk Week Campaign 14 to 20 April 1929. A letter in the historical files from the Director General of Public Health, Dr, Richard Arthur, to the Mayor of North Sydney on 9 April 1929 asking for support to improve the health of the people by encouraging the consumption of more milk, particularly amongst children. *“A comprehensive campaign has been mapped out, and for the benefit of school children a screening in Neutral Bay “De Luxe” Theatre on Tuesday 16th April of the Health Departments’ interesting and educational local film dealing with the production, distribution and value of milk”.*

The letter stated the Education Department had consented to children from local schools being released in time to march to the theatre by 3 p.m. where they will be joined by their parents, and it is hoped to screen a scenic film and possibly a comedy as well.

The Local Member of Parliament, the Headmasters and mistresses of the local schools and Presidents of the Parents and Citizens' Association were being invited to attend this function and address the children briefly on the value of milk. The Director General of Public Health stated he would be grateful if the mayor would consent to preside as chairman.¹

On the 17 April the Town Clerk Mr H.E. Perry, wrote to the Minister, as directed by Mayor H.L. Primrose, complaining of the lack of arrangements in connection with the function which was to be held for Milk Week at the Southern Cross Picture Theatre Neutral Bay yesterday afternoon. To his surprise, when the mayor attended at 3 p.m. there was no one present except the cinema operator. His Worship considers that the least that might have been done was to notify him that the event was cancelled and feels the lack of courtesy very much.² Dr Arthur wrote to the mayor on 22 April stating that arrangements had been made with the Education Department for the pupils of the Neutral Bay School to be present, but at the last moment the Head Master refused to permit the children to attend. There was no opportunity to advise anybody in the circumstances (*few phones of course*). *The subject has now been taken up with the Department of Education.*

Did you know Australia's nationally implemented school milk scheme provided liquid cow's milk in special one-third pint bottles to school children from its inception in 1951, introduced by the Menzies government. I think the idea was that it would ensure that all Australian children would be getting fresh milk and a good dose of calcium each day. The idea might have been fine but in practice there were a few problems. The truck delivering the crates of milk to schools would normally drop it off at about 9.30am and recess wasn't until 10.45 (from memory). So, on a hot Australian summer's day, the milk would go off. No refrigeration was available and yet the teachers made you drink the milk, off or not. I remember lining up for my bottle of milk and trying to cope with the coagulated cream at the top of the milk bottle! The delivery of milk for school children ceased in 1973 by the Whitlam government.³

¹ Office of the Director General of Public Health 09/04/1929

² H.E. Perry. Town Clerk North Sydney. 17/04/1929

³ <https://www.google.com/search?q=delivery+of+milk+to+school+children>



The disconnect between the city and countryside was the catalyst for milk delivery; with milk originally being delivered by horse and carriage. Before milk started to be delivered in glass bottles (around 1880), milkmen would take churns on their rounds and fill up customer's jugs by dipping a measure into the churn. Home milk deliveries died out in the 1990's after the deregulation of the milk industry, where supermarkets and other stores were permitted to sell milk.⁴

Not everyone agrees that the abolition of school milk was a good thing and there have been calls recently to revive it, particularly for disadvantaged schools.⁵

Public telephones booths, 1933. Secondly, a Letter from the Postmaster-General's Department dated April 4, 1933, stating that while His Worship the Mayor of North Sydney had made strong personal representations urging **the establishment of public telephone facilities at Kirribilli Point**, conditions had not altered appreciably. A very careful survey of the locality was again made, and from information available there seems to be no doubt that the revenue forthcoming would be totally insufficient to justify the establishment of a facility at public expense. The question of installing a cabinet in the vicinity will be kept in view so that when circumstances warrant it, the matter of establishing public telephone facilities will be favourably considered.

Australia's first telephone service (connecting the Melbourne and South Melbourne offices of Robinson Brothers, a Melbourne engineering firm) was launched in 1879.

The telegraph was the primary mode of long-distance communication at the time, and Bell's attempts to improve the telegraph system led to the invention of the telephone which quickly followed the telegraph. In 1882, the first public telephone exchange opened in Sydney with 12 subscribers. This made personal communication available to the average Australian. People would line up for hours at times to use the public phones.⁶

I do recall in the 1950's my family had to walk to the corner of the street to use a public telephone and very few of our neighbours had the luxury of a home phone.



Australia's first mobile phone system began in Melbourne in August 1981 with the first call made between Telecom executives. But the system was limited to a \$5000 car phone that weighed 14 kilograms, could store just 16 numbers and alerted owners of an incoming call by honking the horn or flashing its headlights.⁷

Andy Penn the CEO and Managing Director of Telstra, Australia's largest telecommunications announced in September 2022 news that local and national calls to standard fixed line numbers and calls to standard Australian mobiles on Telstra's public payphones are now free. This means any

⁴ <https://www.google.com/search?q=delivery+of+milk+to+home>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/AustraliaRememberWhen>

⁶ <https://www.google.com/search?q=when+were+public+telephone+boxes+introduced+in+australia>

⁷ <https://www.google.com/search?q=when+were+public+telephone+boxes+introduced+in+australia>

Australian can now use all of our 15,000 payphones on street corners and in the tiny towns, truck stops and airports in every corner of the country to make calls for free.

Telephone booths are now becoming less common worldwide due to the widespread use of mobile phones. In Australia, many traditional telephone booths have been replaced by modern communication options. However, you may still find some in certain areas or as retro installations in nostalgic locations.⁸ Have you spotted any in our Municipality?

So, school milk and local phone boxes – do they stir up memories for you as well?

**Membership subscriptions are now due
Amount is \$15 per person for 12 months to 30th Sept'25**

**EFT transfer to BSB = 112879; Account = 039538385
Enquiries to the Treasurer 02 94600634**

November Outing 2024

Tuesday 19th November. The Hawkesbury Riverboat Postman

Please join us for a wonderful outing and iconic cruise on the Riverboat Postman which delivers the mail to isolated water-access only residents of the magnificent Hawkesbury River on behalf of Australia Post (as well as other daily essentials such as milk, papers and the odd bottle of rum!). Enjoy morning tea and lunch on board, complete with an entertaining and informative commentary from the skipper.

The boat is a large, stable and comfortable catamaran. Boats are fully licensed so you can enjoy a glass with your lunch. We will catch the train from North Sydney station to Hawkesbury River Station. The cruise departs from the Hawkesbury River train station at Brooklyn. The Cruise, including morning tea and ploughman's lunch is \$59 (5% discount) and includes a 3 hour round trip of the Hawkesbury River.

It will be a special end-of-year outing and quite a unique journey. Everyone I know who has travelled on the Riverboat Postman sings its praises.

Forward money via EFT transfer to BSB = 112879; Account = 039538385 - Enquiries to the Treasurer Don Napper 9460 0634 before the 19th November please.

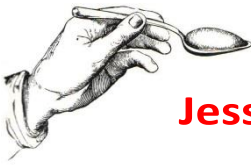
Train departs North Sydney at 8.40 am or meet at Hawksbury River at 9.45 am if driving.

Bookings essential – put your name down November meeting or

contact Susan Wade at sjwade1648@gmail.com

>>>>>> Please note susan's new email address

⁸ <https://www.google.com/search?q=phasing+out+of+telephone+booths+in+australia>



A Spoonful of History ©

Geoff Huntington

Jessie's Request to Protect and Benefit Dogs



Situated on the western side of Bradfield Park north on Alfred Street, not far from the Lavender Street round-a-bout is a small fountain called the Jessie Stuart Broomfield fountain. On the top is a life-sized bronze "foxie" - a modern addition crafted by Clary Akon in 2007.

The name Broomfield is not synonymous with pioneers or the history of North Sydney, nor the Harbour Bridge- she lived in the western Sydney suburb of Northmead- but who was she and why is there a fountain bearing her name?

Jessie Broomfield was a great dog-lover; she died age 70 in December 1935, leaving the substantial sum of £3,280⁹ in her will.

Subject to certain bequests to relatives, the widow's estate was to be divided into two parts. One part to provide drinking fountains for humans and water troughs for stray dogs, and the other part to be distributed among various homes and institutions for dogs in Sydney. Mrs Broomfield, fearing for the future of her pets if they passed into strange hands after her death, directed that her trustees arrange for the painless destruction of any pet animals or birds in her possession at the time of her death.

At one stage Councils were reluctant to draw on the bequest; afraid that drinking troughs for dogs in the parks might encourage strays.



Throughout the 1940s, a number of Broomfield fountains were built around Sydney including Moore Park, La Perouse, Strathfield, Castle Hill, Centennial Park and this one in North Sydney. There are a couple of plaques on the sides of the fountain, a water bubbler for people and troughs at the base for the dogs.

On-going maintenance after completion is the responsibility of the council as no provision was made under the Will for this.

Plaque inscription reads-

Erected by the Municipality of North Sydney from the funds provided by the late Jessie Stuart Broomfield - 1953

Photos 2024 above: by G Austen; and 1980 courtesy Stanton Library LH REF CPF16/1

Photo right: 2021 Bloomfield (sic) fountain in Ford Park South Strathfield



⁹ Various amounts are quoted and some reports state the value to be £3,714