

film *South Pacific Playground* which covers Manly and the northern beaches.

LAST MEETING REPORT, Saturday 11 May, 2019

Lady Wakehurst

A good audience, including a number of new faces, heard and watched a presentation by Richard Michell on Lady Wakehurst, perhaps known to locals mainly from “her” ferry which spent some time on the Manly run, but who was the wife of the NSW Governor Lord Wakehurst who served from 1937 to 1946. The talk covered Lady Wakehurst’s own life including her interesting family background, her privileged but somewhat austere and lonely childhood, her blossoming out on marriage to embrace the wider world and to become an important contributor in her own right, particularly in the area of mental health.



Lady Wakehurst with Lord Wakehurst visiting Bougainville during WW2

DON MOON

Past President Bob Pauling has written

Hello Richard, You might have seen the death notice today for Don Moon. Don and his sister Val were actively involved in MW&PHS before moving to the Central Coast some years ago.

Older members no doubt remember Don and join with me in passing on their condolences.

POT POURRI

Upwardly Mobile

Re the main article in this issue on Mona Vale Road, some members may recall that, post WW2, with the realigned road (today’s alignment) now in use, part of the redundant old road up Foley’s Hill was used for competitive hill climbs. Both cars and motor bikes were catered for. If anyone has any information or memories I would love to hear from you.

Is Mary Lying In A Kirk Near You?

The following enquiry comes from our member and history researcher Nan Bosler.

*Hello Richard,
I am hoping that members of the Society may be able to help find where Mary Kirk was buried. Would it be possible to have this request published in our newsletter (see below)?*

Some background to this unfinished story: Frederick Meredith had arrived as steward to the captain of the *Scarborough* in the first fleet. He returned to England in 1792 for the court marshal over the loss of the *Sirius* but quite amazingly he embarked on the *Bellona* as a free settler to return to the colony. Frederick Meredith is known to have had several partners and in 1794 he had formed a liaison with Mary Kirk who had been transported on the *Royal Admiral* in 1792. They had a daughter Charlotte in 1794. Mary Kirk remained friends with Meredith after she married Robert Inch in 1800. Both Inch and Kirk travelled frequently between the Hawkesbury and Port Jackson. Inch was drowned in 1808 and a year later in 1809 Mary was also drowned. Meredith was the executor appointed in her will.



1959 - Jill O'Brien at the wheel of her Austin Healey Sprite at Foley's Hill. Photo: John Keesing

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, on page 2 of the Sunday 2 April 1809 edition, reports "... the total loss of the *Argument*, Pate, loaded in wheat from Hawkesbury, and the death of all the persons on board, comprising Pate himself, a woman of the name of Mary Kirk ... Their bodies were found about the short reef, nearly four miles from the Heads of Broken Bay, and interred on the morning of Thursday last."

It has been ascertained that the short reef on which the *Argument* was dashed to pieces was Long Reef. So my question is does anyone know of any graves found in the area. Or perhaps human remains uncovered when the Golf Club was built. The wording in the newspaper would seem to indicate *found* and *interred* happened in the same place.

The descendants of Charlotte have the story extremely well researched except for the much sought after information of where Mary Kirk was buried. With all the knowledgeable people in the society reading this I hope that at least one of you will know something that will help us chip away at this 'brick wall'.

I am not a descendant of Mary Kirk but of Frederick Meredith and his wife Sarah Mason. If anyone reading this is also descended from Frederick Meredith please contact me as I would love to include you in the mailing list for the Frederick Meredith Descendants Group newsletter.

Nan Bosler

Further on D'Arcy and Jane

Our excellent web master, Bill Slessor, lives in England. He writes:

"Hi Richard,

Your summary of Wal Walker's talk (in the April issue) is interesting. Over here the relationship between D'Arcy and Jane Austen is often talked about but generally left as 'no conclusion'.

Here are some links where the whole situation is discussed, including a review of Wal's two books on the subject.

<https://thesydneyinstitute.com.au/blog/fact-and-fiction-jane-austens-secret-darcy/>

<https://going-postal.com/2017/11/the-rake-the-servant-girl-and-the-transportee/>

<https://www.biography.com/news/jane-austen-biography-facts>

Of particular interest to me are the mention of Wentworth House, which is only a few miles from my home. and Bingley, which is only a couple of miles north. In fact I drive through it very often. Bingley used to be a small market town but is now a suburb of the Bradford Metropolitan District.

Bill Slessor

Some background on D'Arcy

D'Arcy Wentworth was an Irishman, born in 1762, in Portadown, Co. Armagh, the son of D'Arcy Wentworth, an innkeeper in Portadown. The family, though impecunious, were related to the Earl of Rockingham, Lord Fitzwilliam and the Earl of Strafford.

Young D'Arcy became an ensign in the First Armagh Company of the Irish Volunteers under Lord Charlemont. Whilst in the Volunteers he received some medical training, and subsequently went to London for more. Once in London - and probably in the society of those more wealthy than he, including his titled relatives - he ran into debt and took to highway robbery. It has been suggested that in fact his gambling was too successful, and highway robbery was his method of collecting his winnings from those who wouldn't pay, rather than to make up for losses.

He was charged three times in December 1787, and on all occasions got away with it and was acquitted. According to the Old Bailey trial transcripts, he was fencing the goods through one Mary Wilkinson, his co-accused. The advocate for Mary Wilkinson tried to claim mitigation on the grounds of coercion by D'Arcy, but the judge refused as it seems that D'Arcy and Mary Wilkinson were cohabiting as man and wife, (apparently no sign of Jane!) but were not married. Had they been married, Mary Wilkinson could have claimed protection of the law against coercion. On a fourth occasion, in 1789, he was acquitted possibly only because he had found an appointment as Assistant Surgeon, in a fleet travelling to Botany Bay.



Portrait of Major D'Arcy Wentworth
former commandant at Barracks,
Bothwell (reputed)

THE ROUTE WEST OUT OF MONA VALE

As advised last issue, Terry Flower – a long time resident of Mona Vale – approached me with his interest in trying to find the remnants of the original bullock track out of Mona Vale, the forerunner of today’s Mona Vale Road. He said some bush had been cleared and he hoped some of the track would have been exposed. On Friday 17 May, fellow Society member David James and I joined Terry to see what we could find.

The area involved is the section of Mona Vale Road to the west of the cemetery which, on its journey out of Mona Vale towards St. Ives, curves to the left as it climbs the ridge (see Map 1). The high point on that ridge, a little to the north of the current road, is known as Foley’s Hill. The original track and road climbed more directly up the hill via a series of hairpin bends. The current curve to the left is a later alignment. The map shows the current route and part of the original alignment (still called Lane Cove Road).

The RMS is currently upgrading this section of Mona Vale Road, widening it from two to four lanes. Bulldozers are active and part of Terry’s motivation to look for any remnants of the original track was that, if they do still exist, they may well be destroyed in the current works. Our inspection revealed that the road works were more advanced than we had realised and our first reaction was pessimistic. There was just no way we could inspect the main area of interest because it was an active and restricted work site and already mostly destroyed.

Katandra Bushland Sanctuary is located about 100 metres to the north of the current road (see Map 1). Fortunately David James is a member of its Board and, even more fortunately, he believed that he had seen the remnants of an old road in the area between the sanctuary and the current road. We transferred our attention to that area and, after scrambling around on steep and rough terrain, David found what he was looking for.

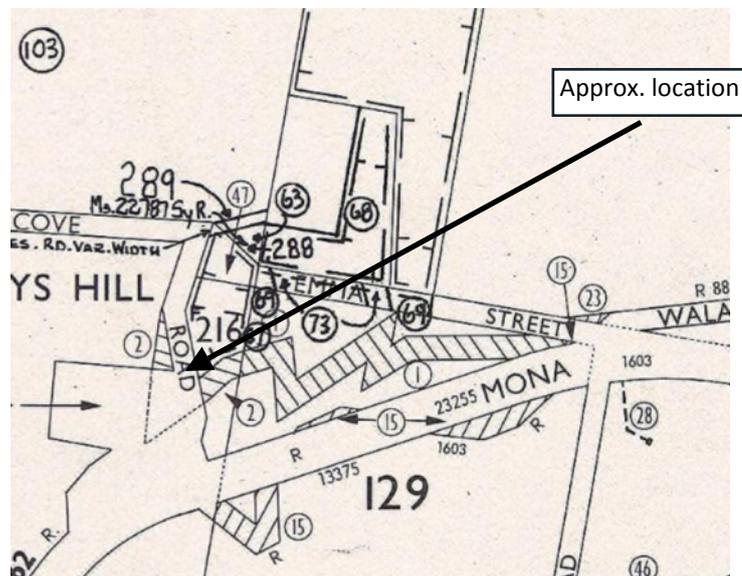


Map 1 Area of current interest on Mona Vale Road

The location of the remnant, and its direction of travel which is essentially at right angles to the current road, can be understood in terms of the original set of hairpin bends. Terry was aware of the approximate route but, further research after the site visit

has revealed that there have actually been three different routes up this ridge. This can be seen from an old Parish map (see Map 2).

The original route is the one furthest to the north, shown hatched, and is a series of six sharp hairpin bends, climbing up Foley’s Hill. The second route has two curves and just two hairpins, and is located a little to the south of the original route to give a longer run from the second last hairpin to the last, up the main hill. By lengthening this section the gradient could be kept tolerable and fewer hairpins used. The third and current route also takes this more southerly course but continues on around across the face of the ridge, not reaching the summit for almost a kilometre. This greater length allowed the elimination of all of the hairpin bends. The current route meets the original after this long traverse. The two early routes are shown more clearly on Map 3 which predates Map 2.



Map 2 Detail at Foley’s Hill (old Parish map)

The section of remnant road that we found was apparently part of the run between the second last and the last hairpin bend on the second route (when travelling west up the hill). It may date back to the first route as the two overlap in this area. It ran almost due north across the eastern face of Foley's Hill.

The construction technique was to cut into the face of the hill and use the removed material to build up the down-slope side of the road, a technique known as cut and fill. We found evidence of drilling vertically into the rock and using explosive charges to break off the outer material, forming a vertical rock face immediately beside the road (see photo).

Although not yet studied in detail, the road surface itself appears to have been constructed of small stone boulders packed onto the compressed fill. Tar may have been used at some point in its history as there is some evidence of it.

Most fortunately the remnant is located about 15 metres outside (to the north) of the area where the road widening work is occurring. It lies just south of the current boundary of the Katandra Bushland Sanctuary. David James tells me that, also fortunately, the land involved is proposed to be added to the Sanctuary once the widening is completed. This would hopefully mean that the remnant could be protected and perhaps restored.

However during the inspection I noticed some surveyor's marks very close by and I fear that it may be intended to route a storm water drain through the area. To clarify this and to try to ensure that the remnant is protected during the current works I have tracked down the relevant people in the RMS. They appear to be sympathetic but it is essential that they act urgently. I will keep you informed.

With thanks to both Terry Flower and David James. And also to Michelle Richmond at the Dee Why Library Local Studies Unit for guiding me in the use of Parish maps.

Richard Michell

Footnote:

Foley's Hill is named for David Foley, an early (1825) lessee of the large 284 hectare (700 acre) farm at what was then Bongin Bongin but became Mona Vale.



Map 3 Somewhat older Parish map



Evidence of drilling/blasting to form old road



Remnant road

NOTICE

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held

2.00 pm

Saturday 8th June, 2019

The Lakeside Room

Tramshed Community Centre, Narrabeen

All committee positions will become vacant.

If you would like to volunteer or nominate someone for a position (see list below) please contact the Secretary, Di Farina, or President, Richard Michell

List of Committee Positions

President

Vice President (can be several)

Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Secretary

Archivist

Web Master

Editor

Social Secretary

We currently do not have a Patron. We will discuss this at the AGM.

While all positions will become vacant we would particularly welcome a nomination for Treasurer.



Manly, Warringah and Pittwater
Historical Society Inc.
Established 1924

Patron
Currently vacant

President
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Senior Vice President
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Treasurer
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Secretary and Membership Secretary
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Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2019

Title: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (please circle)

Name:

Age group (please tick): 10 – 18 19 – 50 51 – 70 71 – 85 86 – 95

[Note: this information is required for insurance purposes; if two persons included in this application fall into different age bands please tick both boxes]

Address:

State

Postcode

Phone: (Home)

(Bus.)

(Mobile)

E-mail:

Signature:

Date:

MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$20 Single

\$25 Household (2 persons) or Organisation

FEE: \$.....

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\$12.00.....

only if you require Peninsula Historian by post

DONATION: \$.....

TOTAL: \$.....

Do you require a receipt? Yes/No

PAYMENT METHODS

- **By cheque or money order**

Please make payable to 'MWP Historical Society Inc' and mail with the completed Renewal Form to:

The Treasurer

Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc

PO Box 695

MANLY, NSW 1655

DO NOT MAIL CASH. If paying in person place cash, cheque or money order in an envelope together with the completed Renewal Form)

- **By Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)**

Account Details:

Commonwealth Bank, Manly

Account Name:

MWP Historical Society

BSB Number:

062-197

Account Number:

00907384

(If paying by EFT please ensure that you enter your name in the 'to account description' box and confirm your payment by sending an email to the Treasurer at treasurer@mwphs.com. This is essential for your correct identification and is particularly important if your payment is made through a Credit Union)