



Peninsula Historian

Newsletter of the Manly, Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

VOLUME 12 No. 11

December 2019 - January 2020

ISSN 1835-7628 (print) 2207-8401 (electronic)

FROM THE EDITOR

This is the last issue of 2019 and the first of 2020. Given the time of year it is a shortened version and there will be a break over Christmas/New Year.

Thank you to those who have submitted articles or items during the year. They have been very welcome.

The previous issue contained an article on the Camera Obscura on Constitution Hill at Manly. It was based on a painting of early Manly by ST Gill which was "discovered" by one of our members, Henri Quin.

Henri noticed the painting on the web site for the Day Gallery in Blackheath. If you visit the website now you will find that the painting has been sold but, at the end of the associated descriptive text, there is the note "Special thanks to Manly enthusiast Henri Quin for his input".

The previous owner of the painting had purchased it in 1998 with the title *View of Sydney Harbour, possibly from Dobroyd Head*. It had been sold in 1998 in Sydney by Lawsons Australian and European Paintings division.

I visited the gallery a few weeks ago in the hope of seeing the painting in the flesh but it was with the new owner. The catalogue price had been \$24,000 so the sale probably represented the most money that the Camera Obscura ever made!

In this issue there is no main article but rather a few shorter pieces. One of them is on a floor polish factory that was located in Manly. I wrote this for one of my monthly articles in Peninsula Living magazine but they considered it not suitable. I trust that it does not cause offence here. I feel that it shows us something of the history of our culture as well as our locality.

Richard Michell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The year is now at its end. The culmination was the Christmas Party last month which was very well attended and everyone seemed to enjoy it. Thank you for your support.

While the Society has had quite a successful year, unfortunately I cannot say the same about the wider perspective. There has been no apparent progress or even interest in local history from our Council. The working group that they formed to advise on the production of a Thematic History for our area met only once in the entire year - in February. It appears to have sunk without trace.

The *Towards 2040* Draft Local Planning Statement that was put on public exhibition in October/November - the document which represents Council's "commitment to making the Northern Beaches an even better place to live 20 years from now" - is completely silent on local history, both Aboriginal and European. It sees the past solely in terms of physical items that may represent heritage. It has no apparent interest in the context of those items.

The positive noises that were made a few years ago, immediately following the amalgamation of the three local councils, about the possibility of a local history museum have dissipated, apparently completely. Even the existing Manly Art Gallery and Museum failed to get a mention in the *Towards 2040* document. Treatment of its external facade and near environs was mentioned in the just-completed West Esplanade Heritage Activation Plan but the purpose, functioning and future use of the entity was not canvassed.

Finally, a reminder that membership fees for 2020 will fall due on 1 January, 2020. A renewal form is on Page 5. I wish all Members a happy and a safe break.

Richard Michell

DIARY

Meetings held at the NB Council Community Centre on the corner of Abbott and Griffin Roads, North Curl Curl

14 December, 2019 No meeting

We recommence on Saturday 8 February, 2020. (see below). My apologies for an error in the last issue which had us coming back in early January.

8 February, 2020 2.00 pm

Eleanor Eakins *The history of Stony Range*

Eleanor Eakins will outline the history of the Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden at Dee Why

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEXT MEETING, Saturday 8 February, 2020

This will be held as usual at North Curl Curl. The speaker will be Eleanor Eakins and she will outline the history of the Stony Range Botanic Gardens at Dee Why, previously known as Stony Range Flora Reserve.

TIME CAPSULE

When the foundation stone of the Harbord Literary Institute was laid in 1918 a time capsule was inserted behind it. There will be an official “reveal” in February or March next year. We will keep you informed.

POT POURRI

Reader request

Does anyone recall the name of the dressmaker who had a shop at Seaforth in the early 1970s, perhaps near where the roundabout is today? Please ring or email me if you have any information (contact details on Page 4).

The original board wax?

Today we probably do not associate Manly with manufacturing industry. Hence it may be a surprise to learn that, in the first half of last century, a national manufacture of wax-based floor polish had its factory on Pittwater Road, opposite today's Harris Farm Market and the recently-vacated Motor Registry Office.

It may be a bigger surprise to learn the name of the polish that they manufactured – Piccaninny Floor Polish.

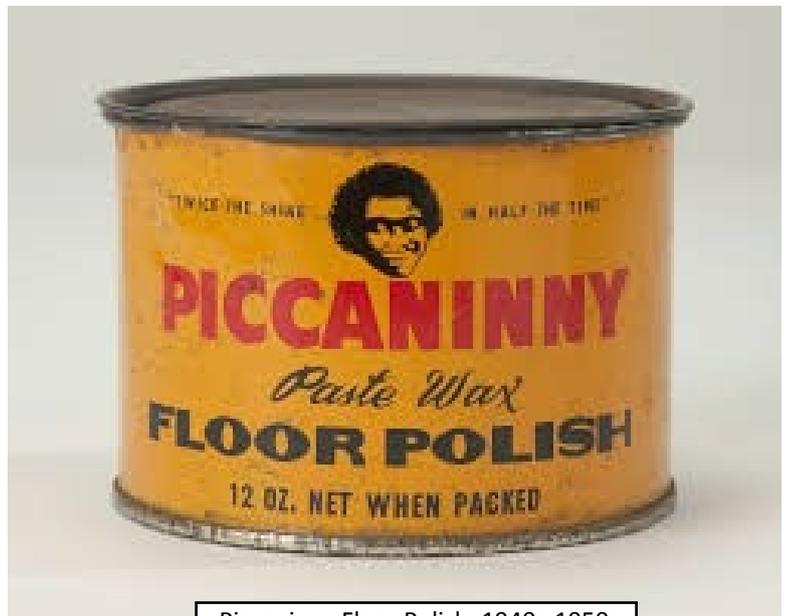
The Piccaninny Manufacturing Company was founded in the early 1920s by Alfred Frederick Esdaile. It made a number of home maintenance products including wax polishes, detergents, perfumed soaps, floor sealers and plastic finishes. Another product was 'Pic-a-lyptus' antiseptic eucalyptus disinfectant.

The use of images of black people in association with cleaning products originated in the US following the Civil War. It was a form of derogatory racism and was imported to Australia in the first half of the 20th century. For example, Nigger Boy abrasive soap pads were a common local household item until the 1960s.

In Australia, although the words used as brands were often of US origin, the associated images were sometimes a little ambiguous. Were they of African Americans or Australian Aborigines? The word Piccaninny was used as a derogatory racial slur in North America in the 1700s and 1800s but became quite widely used in colonial Australia as a term for a young Aboriginal child. While unequivocally racist, it did not have the same overtones as it did in the US. However we would view its use as totally unacceptable today.

Whether because of or in spite of its name, Mr. Esdaile apparently did very well with his polish. In 1935 he purchased a substantial two storey house at 72 West Esplanade, with a wonderful view over Manly Cove. Built in 1878, Esdaile bought it from a Dr. Barron and renamed it *Bewdley Hall*. He died in 1943 and the house was demolished in the late 1960s to make way for a block of units.

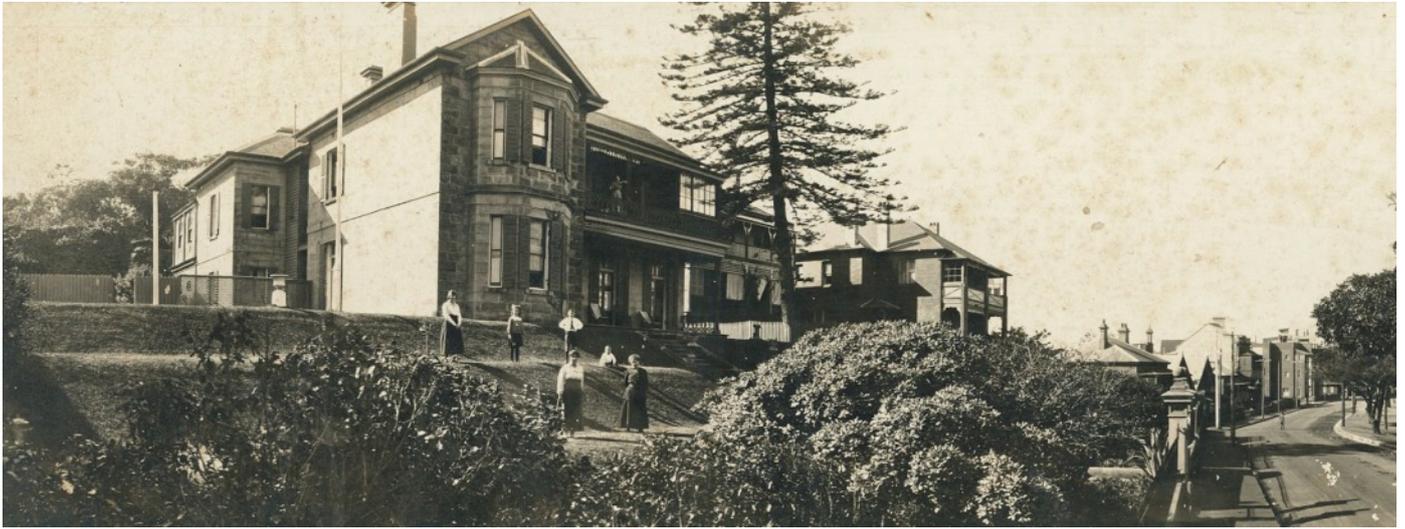
The house was a loss but perhaps not the Piccaninny brand that financed its purchase.



Piccaninny Floor Polish, 1940s-1950s
Museum Victoria, Item HT 23835Tin



Piccaninny Floor Polish, 1940s-1950s
Museum Victoria, Item HT 23835Tin



Leona when under the ownership of the Oaten family, 1919

Bewdley Hall nee Leona

The following is from a Blog written by John MacRitchie in December 2017 when he was the Manly Local Studies Librarian.

This lovely photo of West Esplanade shows the property known as *Leona* and its occupants. *Leona* had a chequered history. It was built for the stock and station agent Robert Matcham Pitt in 1878 and had a spell as the premises of Manly College for Girls, run by the redoubtable Miss Hayes-Williams, before becoming, in the 1920s, the medical practice of Dr Moncrieff Barron.

Some time in the late 1930s it changed its name and became known as *Bewdley Hall* (see previous item, Ed.). The latest photo of the building that we have in our collection shows *Bewdley Hall* in the late 1950s. It was demolished in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and a block of units is now on the site, the four-storey 85 West Esplanade. Only one building in the photograph is still visible today, and that is the house on the corner with the side-street, Rowe Street, known as *Berkeley Square*.

The photographer's stamp tells us that the photo was taken by R P Moore, whose premises were at 379 Kent Street, in the city. A check in the Sands' Directories confirms that Moore was at that address only in 1919, before returning to his native New Zealand. That dates the photo pretty precisely!

Moore specialised in taking panoramic photos, using a type of camera known as the Cirkut No. 10 Panoramic Camera. It required film which measured 10 inches by 48 inches and he is thought to be one of the masters of the panoramic medium. Many of his surviving images centre on a particular house or property, showing it in its full setting. It is likely that this photo was commissioned by the owners of *Leona*, who, in 1919 were the Oaten family, and what are the chances that the lady in black is Mrs Oaten? I don't know much about Reuben Oaten, who doesn't seem to have lived at *Leona* for more than a couple of years, but more will no doubt come to light.

To the right, a passer-by is strolling down the centre of West Esplanade, not a care in the world. Try doing that nowadays.

John MacRitchie

Dr Moncrieff Barron

Dr George Moncrieff Barron was a very active member of the Manly community early last century. He was Chairman of both *The Manly Daily* and the *Far West*, where he gave his medical services free, from its inception until his death, and was instrumental in the Manly District Hospital being built. Further afield he was also President of the Medical Board of NSW. In the period that he owned *Leona* he both lived in it and ran his medical practice from there. Manly truly was a village.



Dr George Moncrieff Barron



Manly, Warringah and Pittwater
Historical Society Inc.
Established 1924

President
Richard Michell
0417 255 726
president@mwphs.com

Senior Vice President
Kevin Martin
kdm1932@bigpond.com

Vice President
Philip Dart

Patron
Currently vacant

Treasurer
Richard Michell
treasurer@mwphs.com

Assistant Treasurer
Di Farina

Archivist
Jan Tinkler
archivist@mwphs.com

Secretary
Di Farina
difarina@bigpond.com

Membership Secretary
Allan Burrowes
secretary@mwphs.com

Editor
Richard Michell
0417 255 726
editor@mwphs.com

Webmaster
Bill Slessor

Website
www.mwphs.com

Postal Address
PO Box 695 Manly, NSW 1655

Index to Volume 12, 2019

No.	Topic	No.	Topic
1	Local Radar in WW2 Original Manly Surf Pavilion <i>Marion</i> at Seaforth	7	Scotland Island, G&S Champion
2	Norfolk Island Pines and Cook Pines Holland's Orchard French's Forest	8	Freshwater Beach Kiosk, K Amos
3	Dr. Roland Thorpe, R Michell	9	Lady Wakehurst, Pt 2, R Michell
4	Thomas Youl, Manly, G&S Champion	10	Original Camera Obscura, Manly, I Milton/R Michell
5	Original route of Mona Vale Road, R Michell	11	<i>Leona/Bewdley Hall</i> , R Michell
6	Lighthouse Service Station, Fairlight Lady Wakehurst, Pt 1, R Michell		

Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2020

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: \$.....

(..\$12.00.)

as above, includes emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian

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:

Account Name:

BSB Number:

Account Number:

Commonwealth Bank, Manly

MWP Historical Society

062-197

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)