



Peninsula Historian

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

A variety of items in this issue. Thank you particularly to Peter Graves for the one on the old Farmer's Store in George Street. I hope it will inspire others to make similar contributions. You may not wish to acknowledge it but, for most of us, our memories are part of history. Thanks also to David James.

The main article is a reproduction of a portion of the journal of the early surveyor, William Govett. It describes an encounter with Aborigines on the Northern Beaches, probably in 1829. For reasons I explain in a preamble to the article, I find it interesting and somewhat remarkable. I hope that you do too.

Richard Michell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It was great to see the large turn out for our February meeting, the first of the year. Thank you for your support.

DIARY

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

14 March, 2020 2.00 pm

Bill Slessor *Bolton Priory and Abbey*

We will be moving off shore - figuratively not literally - to join our Web Master Bill Slessor on a tour of Bolton Priory and Abbey in North Yorkshire.

18 April, 2020 2.00 pm

Jennifer Hubbard *The clothes and the customers of the 'Ladies in Black'*

The fashions and clothes of Sydney in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Jennifer will also cover the social context.

Speaking of support from our members, I wish to acknowledge that, when paying your annual dues, many of you also make a donation. This is very much appreciated and so thank you .

These donations are very timely. Now that we have sorted our Archive and more fully understand what we have in it, we are ready to start digitally cataloguing it. About half of it was catalogued in the early 2000s with the great assistance and support of Manly Library. Our database was included on theirs and was searchable (and it still is).

With the Council amalgamation, the digital system for the Local Studies section of the Library has been under review. There is to be a new one which has been in its birth process for many months. We trust it is getting closer. However, as I understand it, it is not set up for cataloguing. It is a system for storing and retrieving digitised items.

It would be an overwhelmingly massive and expensive job to digitise the entire contents of our Archive. Once the smoke has cleared on their new system, we will raise the problem with Council and and hopefully find a solution.

Allowing others to search our Archive is our highest priority. An example of the value is given by the news item in this issue where researchers from the ABC were able to find that we held an interesting item relevant to a TV programme they are making. Fortunately this item is in the original Manly Library-based catalogue.

Finally, a reminder that our Membership Year runs from January to December and that renewal is due. Thank you to the many (majority) that have done so. The form and/or instructions for those in the other category is on the last page.

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEXT MEETING, Saturday 14 March, 2020

Our webmaster, Bill Slessor, lives in Yorkshire in the UK, not far from Bolton Abbey. In an illustrated talk, he will cover the history of both the Abbey and the Priory and explain their relationship. As always, afternoon tea will follow.

LAST MEETING REPORT, Saturday 8 February, 2020

A wonderful crowd attended our first talk of the year at North Curl Curl. They came to hear Eleanor Eakins on the history of the Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden at Dee Why and certainly were not disappointed. Eleanor gave an entertaining and comprehensive coverage of the history and I am sure has inspired many of those in attendance to make a visit to this incredible oasis.

TIME TRAVELLER

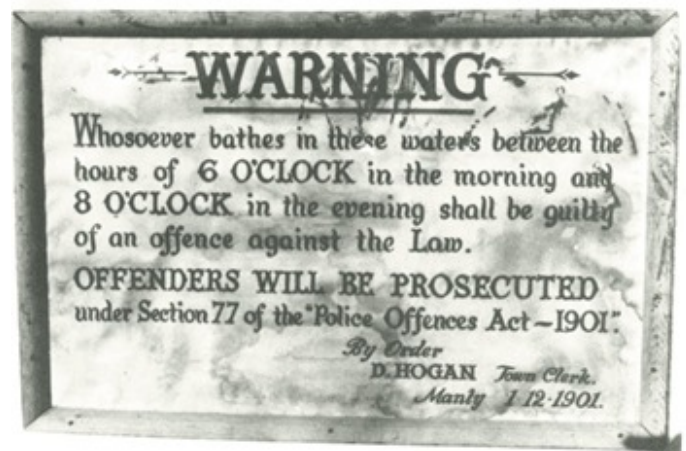
When the foundation stone for the Harbord (nee Freshwater) Literary Institute was laid in 1918 a time capsule was buried behind it, laid by the then Minister for Education, AGF James (see article in Pot Pourri following) It was disinterred last year and the contents were in perfect condition.

The capsule is to be replaced with a new one, with new contents representative of today. Northern Beaches Council held an event at the Institute on Saturday 22 February to display both the original and the new contents. There is further information on the Council web site at <https://www.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/council/search/time%20capsule>.

TV STAR

An item from our Archive will perhaps “star” in an upcoming programme on ABC TV. Some readers may have watched the series *Back in time for dinner* which aired about 18 months ago. Hosted by Annabel Crabb, it set up a family to “live” in various periods from the 1950s onwards. Apparently the ABC is making a second series using the same family but it will cover the decades from the 1910s to 1950.

In (I presume) the first episode, the subject of swimming in public is apparently raised, including the ban on daylight bathing. Whether they will include the myth that the ban was broken by the defiant William Gocher at Manly in 1902 I do not know. What I do know is that in our Archives we have a sign that was on Manly Beach when the ban applied. The creative company working on the ABC series has approached us for a photograph of it and we have obliged. Presumably it will appear in the episode or a promotion for it. Stay tuned.



Sign from Manly Ocean Beach c.1902

POT POURRI

Giving credit where it is due

“The recent reference to the Pope Family and Farmer & Co reminded me that Farmer’s store gave me my first credit card in the 1960s. At that time it was my shop of choice for men’s clothing, but I needed credit first. My after-tax annual salary of \$2,320 in 1966 did not stretch far, as that resulted in \$45 each week for rent, food, clothing, medical expenses, a weekly ticket on the Manly ferry and any possible entertainment. My predictable income as a permanent officer of the Customs Department probably helped my credit assessment.

My use of credit started off with Farmer’s house currency, which were “notes” of various values that could only be spent in the store. This was well before Bankcard. Periodic re-payments (at no interest, I recall) were required, at a quiet counter lined by earnest people with cash registers. This was several floors up by a venerable escalator with wooden slats. Alternative lifts were available, with an operator calling out the goods on each floor as it ascended. Once a minimum amount re-paid, a similar value could be re-drawn and re-spent in the store.

That store had an honoured place in Sydney commerce, as Farmer’s had received the first commercial broadcasting licence in 1923 as station 2FC (Farmer & Co). Taken over by the ABC in 1929, it later became Radio 2 and still exists as “ABC Radio National”. Known as Farmer’s between 1928 and

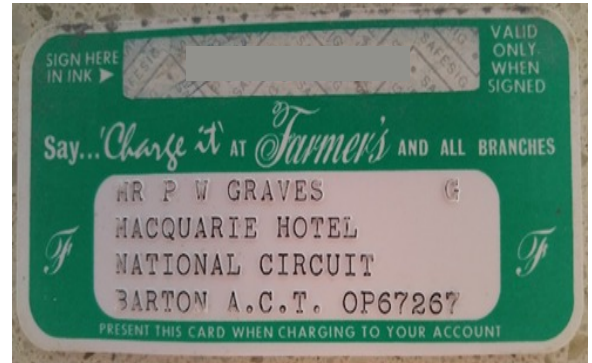


Architect’s drawing of proposed new Farmer and Co. Store, George Street, c1882

1976, the company went through various owners as Myers (1976-83), Grace Bros (1983-2004) and its current Myers.

Opposite Gowings and down from the equivalent at David Jones, Market Street, Farmer's men's wear was usefully located on the ground floor. This was very handy for finding what I needed for work and social occasions, in my short lunch hour and the quick walk up from Circular Quay. There were always enough Farmer's staff who knew their stock and there was always sufficient clothing from which to choose.

My spending there must have resulted in being assessed worthy of my first credit card, which the company was willing to keep extending to me here in Canberra. Its early 1970s version is enclosed:



Thus the store successfully introduced me to the many later challenges of juggling my finances and managing my credit cards. I give all the credit to Farmer's."

Peter Graves

(Peter lived in Manly between 1965-1969 and 1970-71, when he moved to Canberra. He has previously written about life in Manly boarding houses (April 2012), the history of his Curtin suburb (February 2015) and memories of Miller's Manly Vale (May 2016).

Another connection in time to the Harbord Literary Institute

One of our Members, David James, has sent me the following on his great uncle Augustus George Frederic James, the man who, in his role as Minister for Education, laid the original foundation stone of the Harbord Literary Institute, with the time capsule placed behind it.

"Trained as a barrister, AGF James was elected Member for Goulburn and was appointed as Minister of Education in the Holman Government, from which he resigned to take up appointment as a judge in the NSW Supreme Court. This was criticised at the time as a political appointment for the purpose of bringing down the Holman Government, which it did.

He was known as the "Sporting Judge" from his support of boxing and cricket and also held the record for the fastest number of Decree Nisi in Divorce Court, some 39 in one hour. He built and lived in a mansion called Altona named after his wife's birthplace in Denmark and situated in Darling Point and today said to be worth \$79 million.



Augustus George Frederic James

His brother was my great grandfather Adolphus Summer Cloud James, a notable Presbyterian Minister who died in poverty, literally, with his repeatedly patched and repaired underpants that he said in a last letter to his sons, entitled him to be addressed as "His hole-iness". One brother has a fine marble obelisk with James inscribed on it for his grave at Rookwood, the other a crumbling sandstone headstone with the words from Kindly Light, "So long the grace has blessed me, yea it still will lead me on". A rags and riches story, no less."

David James

ARTICLE

ABORIGINES ON THE NORTHERN BEACHES

Very little is known about Aborigines and their lives on the Northern Beaches, both before and after the arrival of Europeans in 1788. We do not even know if there was a separate clan or tribe. The Gayemagal lived at the Manly end of the peninsula and the Garigals were based on Broken Bay. Whether their areas of activity extended up and down the peninsula, with an agreed but unknown "boundary" line, or whether there was a third group in between is not known.

There is quite a lot of archeological evidence that Aborigines were very active in the "middle" area. Given the presence of the lagoons with their wetlands, and also the coastal rock shelves, this is not surprising. These would have been sources of plentiful food. However post 1788, other than from the very first European expeditions into the area, there is very little written evidence. In fact I think that there is a subconscious assumption among the non-indigenous population today that Aboriginal history in this area ended in 1788 and was replaced by European.

The reality is that there was and is a joint history. The power balances within it are enormously skewed to the European side but the history is nevertheless a joint one. I personally find it educational and important to find evidence of it, rare as it is.

Below I have reproduced an entry from the journal of the surveyor William Romaine Govett (of Govett's Leap, near Blackheath, fame). Although it was published in 1832, it is presumably based on the time that Govett spent in 1829 surveying the line of what was to become Mona Vale Road and also the coast south of Broken Bay.

"Upon the edges of the flat rocks which jut out into the sea from beneath the headlands of the coast between Port Jackson and Broken Bay, the natives were accustomed to fish for snappers. They are often seen to great advantage when employed in these occupations, and they being very clever at this sport, it is highly amusing to watch their actions and dexterous management; provided as they are, with only the most simple tackle, still they invariably succeed in catching as many of these fish as they require.

Snappers are voracious fishes, weighing generally from five to fifteen pounds, and even twenty pounds, and measuring from twenty to thirty inches in length, and often longer. They are also handsome glittering fishes, when first taken out of the water, and they mostly resort near the deep waters, bottomless to the eye, at the extremity of these rocks. Probably they find shelter and places of refuge in the rocky cavities below from the monsters which prey upon them, for both whales and sharks, of enormous size, frequent those shores, and have been seen within the harbour of Port Jackson.

The head of the snapper is large and bony, the mouth comparatively small, and the teeth are not sharp, but thick and rounded, and the whole fish is covered with large, broad, silvery scales. It must here be remarked, that upon the surface of these foundation rocks, are, here and there, holes or basins of various depths and sizes, which are always filled with salt water, beautifully clear. In these the cunning native catches his bait - the starfish, a creature formed of a dark gelatinous substance, and appearing like a mass of jelly. They are seen at the bottom of the basins fastened to the rock, with their arms radiating from the centre, moving about; their arms are provided with most powerful suckers, which enable them to adhere so strongly to any substance, as to be with the greatest difficulty removed; and they have, moreover, the power of emitting a black fluid, which instantly discolours the water all around, thus very often effecting an escape. In addition to this, they have also the power of stinging the hand that touches, very severely, inflicting a pain like that of a burn. There are some kinds of sea-weed upon the beaches (not foliated, but wiry or stringy) which inflict a similar pain or burn.

The natives, therefore, are obliged to be very expert and dapper in first securing a sufficient quantity of the starfish as bait, which, from the circumstances above mentioned, are not easily caught by those who are inexperienced. They then prepare the line in such a manner, that when they, they throw off the baited end with their right hand the line will run out its full length. Thus, as shown in the sketch (next page), the natives stand at the very extremity of the rocks, the breakers sometimes forcing them from their position; and, as soon as they have thrown out their line, they cautiously, but gradually bring it in, coiling it with care as before; but when they feel a bite, they haul it with great rapidity, to prevent the fish from carrying the line under the rocks, and as soon as they have brought it out, they immediately kill it, by piercing the back of the head. In this manner I have seen a native catch eight large snappers in less than half an hour from the time he commenced fishing.

A party of blacks assembled together on the coast for the purpose of fishing for themselves, as they were sometimes accustomed to do, forms an animated and lively group of figures. On these occasions, they make good fires as near their fishing ground as possible, and generally roast and eat their captures as soon as they are caught, until they are all satisfied. While the men are fishing, the women attend the fires, the boys catch bait, and collect oysters. The natives in this instance are correct, for these fish are never so good as when eaten as soon as possible after being taken from the water. Their cooking is certainly rude, but the fish are exceedingly good when cooked in this way. They eat their oysters, also, in a similar manner, by roasting them before the fire until they open.

Having stated in a previous paper that the natives were not cowards of the deep, but surprisingly bold both in swimming and diving, I will relate a circumstance which happened to me while surveying this part of the coast,



William Romaine Govett,
c1843, C. Day



Blue lined octopus
Hapalochlaena fasciata

which convinced me of their boldness. I one day accompanied a native for the purpose of seeing him fish. He was very successful, and after a while gave up. I had been watching him with attentive curiosity, and being desirous of trying my skill, I requested him to lend me his line and tackle, assuring him that I would take the greatest care of it. He first seemed to object, but afterwards entrusted them to me with apparent unwillingness, and returned to my camp not far distant with his fish, leaving me to manage as I best could.



Sketch by William Govett from his journal 1932

I very soon found it was a difficult matter to throw out the line properly, and to lift it through the ceaseless motion of the waters, gradually bringing it in without entanglement required both skill and experience. In short, I made but a bungling attempt, and after throwing out the line, entangling it, and disentangling it for an hour, I felt a fish, the line being carried underneath the rocks. I pulled in vain for some time, till I had reason to think that the line was fastened some thirty or forty feet below; but whether to a fish or the rock I could not say.

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In this predicament, I began to conjecture what was best to be done, and how I could satisfy the black for I had no other tackle to give him. Having tied the end of the line securely to a rock I left it, much dissatisfied with my performance. On arriving at my camp, I was informed that the native had hastily eaten some fish, and gone northward to join some others of his tribe, stating that he intended to return early next morning, and fish again. This, at any rate, gave me time to consider, and I actually sent off a man to Sydney, to purchase lines and necessary tackle, with orders, if possible, to return before the native, by travelling all night. This could have easily been done, if the man should be fortunate to get a boat at North Harbour.

The morning came, and the native arrived before the messenger, in company with two others. 'Good morning, massa, you catch him fish.' 'Bale' (no) said I. 'Me want it line,' said the native. I shook my head. He looked suspicious, and presently exclaimed 'I believe you hook him rock, murray, murray (very) stupid you.' You are right, thought I, nodding assent; and seeing his anxiety, I immediately offered him some tobacco, and requested them to eat, &c., both of which he refused in his disappointment. I told him we would go to the rock where the line was, and I explained on the way, whilst he listened to my story attentively. He seemed to blame himself for trusting his line to such unworthy hands, as he constantly sighed 'murray stupid me'; but when he heard that I had secured the line to the rock his countenance I brightened with a hope, and he felt that I was not deceiving him.

When we arrived at the spot, I was full of anxiety to know whether the line had been washed away; but there it was in status quo. I would then willingly have lost fifty pounds rather than the line, for the natives are very tenacious of their property, however trifling, and will take more pains to find a bit of broken pipe, than a white man would to find a purse of gold. The native examined the position of the line, chatted with his companions, and presently was seen to unloose his waistband, throw off his cloak and giving, as I imagined, some directions to them, stood upon the verge of the rock. In an instant, he plunged through a rising wave, and disappeared. He must have been under water full a minute before he again appeared about fifteen yards from the edge of the rock, and came in safe on all-fours upon a heaving surge. The line had been unfastened and was hauled in without sustaining any damage, or even the loss of the hook, to which was attached the tendons of a fish's jaw.

I felt excessively pleased both at the recovery of the line, and the bold daring of the native, who commenced fishing again with success; and on his return to camp I had the satisfaction of presenting him with a new line, and as many hooks as he was pleased to take."

To me this piece from Govett is interesting from several perspectives, not the least his obvious admiration of the skills of the Aborigines, and his self-deprecation. However from the perspective of joint history, we should note that the date is 1829. European farming has been in progress on much of the peninsula for some 10 to 15 years but we learn that the Aborigines had not simply disappeared. Perhaps they were from the Broken Bay area for fisherman apparently "went northward to join some of his tribe" overnight."

Richard Michell

P.S. From Govett's description, it appears that the "starfish" that the Aborigines used for bait were Blue Lined Octupi. Also I know of no local seaweed, foliated or unfoliated, that stings in the manner he describes. Others may. My suspicion is that he encountered Blue Bottles. Suggestions and comments please.



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Thank you for your communication reporting the reception of programmes from 2 F.C. Broadcasting Station. The report is highly appreciated and further comments and suggestions on programmes and service are invited.

STATION 2 F.C.

PRESENT SCHEDULE, ANNOUNCED MORNING AND EVENING, IN DAILY PAPERS:

MID-DAY SESSION 12 to 2 p.m.) (Market, commercial and weather intelligence; "Sydney Morning Herald" news, talks on cooking, racing, cricket, gardening and domestic matters.
Time signals; Stock Exchange; "Evening News" mid-day service; musical programme.
AFTERNOON SESSION (3 to 5 p.m.): Musical programme from 2 F.C. Studios; Talks on music, art, social matters; racing results and sporting information.
EARLY EVENING SESSION (5.45 to 7.40): Bed-time Stories and Fairy Tales by the "Hello Man;" Dinner Music, late news; market, weather and sporting information
(Daily except Sunday)
EVENING SESSION (7.45 to 11 p.m.): Musical items, talks, plays, sketches from the Studio; concerts and lectures from the Town Hall, Conservatorium, King's Hall, University, Colonial Institute; Her Majesty's, Royal, Criterion, Palace, Tivoli, Prince Edward, Crystal Palace, Lyric, King's Cross and Haymarket Theatres.
SUNDAYS—Morning services 11 to 12.30 p.m. Afternoon Session (3 to 4.30): Studio and Band Concerts, Organ Recitals.
Night Services (7 to 8.30) from St. Andrew's, St. Stephen's, St. Mark's, St. James', Lyceum Hall, Pitt St. and Petersham Congregational. Studio Concert (8.30 to 10) Well-known Bands and Concert Artists in suitable programmes.

C 1923, the birth
(with 2SB) of radio
in Sydney

Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2020

(The membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December)

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.)

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E-mail:

Signature:

Date:

MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$20 Single

\$25 Household (2 persons) or Organisation

FEE: \$.....

as above, includes emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian

\$12.00.....

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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

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BSB Number:

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00907384

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