



Peninsula Historian

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Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

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FROM THE EDITOR

For those struggling to find things to do at the moment, this issue will hopefully fill in a little of your time.

Thank you to Judith Halnan and Phil Colman, both of whom responded to my appeal last issue to put pen to paper. Their submissions are in the Pot Pourri section. Hopefully their presence there will inspire others. Judith is already threatening to send me some more! Very welcome.

Keith Amos has continued with his prolific research and has produced a booklet outlining the life of Dorothea Mackellar, she of *I love a sunburnt country* fame. Dorothea Mackellar lived - on and off - for many years at Lovett Bay on Pittwater. I hope to reproduce at least part of Keith's history in future issues.

The article on the Spanish Flu of 1919 is based on various sources, including a piece by John Morcombe in the Manly Daily in 2017.

Richard Michell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I trust that life under lockdown is proving bearable. I also hope that none of our Members, your families nor your friends has contracted the virus. A friend of mine was on the *Ruby Princess* and sadly has died. This is a very real and serious situation.

As part of the lockdown, Northern Beaches Council has, quite appropriately, shut all of its libraries and community centres. This has in turn shut off our access to our archives, both physically and digitally, and has given us another incentive to

DIARY

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

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, all monthly meetings have been cancelled until further notice.

transfer the contents of our archive into a remotely-accessible database. Currently this information is stored on a computer that is also located in the archive room in Manly Library! We do have a backup copy but this cannot take the place of a remotely-searchable database.

Judging by the number of enquiries that we are receiving, many people are using the time that they currently have on their hands to do local history research. The inaccessibility of our archive is a hindrance in responding to those queries.

Our monthly meetings remain in abeyance and it is not at all clear as to when they will recommence. Even when restrictions are lifted to allow assembly, I am very conscious that most of our members are in the very vulnerable group in terms of reaction to the virus. We will proceed very cautiously.

Keep well!

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

[NEXT MEETING, Date to be advised](#)

Monthly meetings have been suspended until further notice.

POT POURRI

How to pass the time in lockdown - Idea #1

Our editor is asking us for contributions to the Historian during this current crisis. Some newspapers suggest we bed down – or armchair down – with heavy matter like *Ulysses*, or *The Decameron*, or *War and Peace*. We members have an historical bent, so why should we go further than our shores?

The tomes I suggest do not have the huge pagination of *War and Peace*, but as we read some of these books we can see that Covid 19 is not the only crisis to hit humanity. Ruth Park, George Johnson and D'Arcy Niland tell of the battles of many

Aussies not so long ago, and make our present difficulties seem less catastrophic. And these books, while not of the flavour of Agatha Christie, are hard to put down when started.

I have listed only 5 books here. All should be in the local library (if not already on your shelves) but these authors have written more, and that era produced other wonderful authors such as Katherine Susannah Pritchard, David Malouf and others who should see you through the winter months. Most books will have other titles written by the same author or other similar titles listed somewhere, front or back – more than enough for one year!

- Ruth Park – *The Harp in the South, Poor Man's Orange, A Fence Around the Cuckoo*
- D'Arcy Niland – *The Shiralee*
- George Johnson – *My Brother Jack*

Ruth Park talks of a much simpler era. But the problems then were not dissimilar to those of today. And keep in mind there were no supermarkets, no toilet paper as we know it, no wide telephone use, medical facilities were pretty primitive, radio to keep us informed of virus progress, and no Internet.

Phil Colman

How to pass the time in lockdown - Idea #2

While letting my thoughts roam, and with the added impetus of an imminent significant date, 29 April 2020, I ask "have Covid19 restrictions made it a good time to get grandchildren and great grandchildren involved in family history?"

We all, including our indigenous people, come from overseas. So what is your part of the 60,000 year story? Why does your family live in "The Great Southland"? Let us investigate the 'persuasive' paths of history.

I was born, a mere 206 years after the birth of James Cook, in the tiny village, Marton-in-Cleveland, Yorkshire and baptised at St. Cuthbert's Church, as was he (see extract from register). Across the cornfields from our home was the great Teesside Steelworks, Dorman Long Ltd., innovative designers and builders of Sydney Harbour Bridge (Bradfield was the facilitator). In May 1940 Middlesbrough was the first town bombed in the UK. Because of the danger my school was evacuated to the tiny village of Newbiggin-on-Lune in Cumbria.

In 1946 June Hayden, from Mudgee, NSW, asked Radio host Eric Child to find a pen friend. At school in England, my teacher asked "who wants to write to a girl in Australia?" Thus started a wonderful friendship spanning over 70 years. June hadn't thought of coming to England so we, Bo and I, after some other considerations decided to come here. June was descended from first Fleeter Frederick Meredith. Together we visited Garden Island to see "F.M." the first "Graffiti" in Sydney Harbour. In 1970 I attended the significant 200 year celebration at Kurnell and have photos of the replica HMB Endeavour firing her canons that day 50 years ago. Several of you will remember crossing 'The 75 year Bridge' in May 2007.

Now that NSW is Locked Down because of Covid19, a dangerous and unwelcome virus, the 250 year commemoration is cancelled. I thought that we as a family should mark 29 April 2020 together by adding your own stories.

Have you worked out the significance of the date 29 April 1770?

Judith Halnan



St. Cuthbert's Parish Church, Marton



Extract from 1728 birth register at St. Cuthbert's, Marton James Cook's entry marked. It reads "Nobr. (November) 3 James ye son of James Cook day labourer baptized."

ARTICLE

“COVID-19” 100 YEARS AGO

Manly has had the dubious honour of being named as one of the early hotspots in the current Covid-19 outbreak. Involvement in pandemics is nothing new for Manly but in the past it has been in the news primarily because of the presence of the Quarantine Station on North Head. However its residents have also not been immune. The so-called Spanish Flu of 1919 is an example of both roles.

When more than 1000 Australian soldiers set sail from Liverpool, England for Sydney aboard the troopship *Argyllshire* in late 1918, they were leaving behind the killing fields of Europe but sailing into a new horror, the Spanish ‘flu pandemic that would eventually claim the lives of at least 20 million people worldwide.



SS Argyllshire (State Library of Victoria)

The journey did not go smoothly. When the ship arrived at Albany in Western Australia there was a strike by coal-loaders, so the soldiers had to load 800 tons of coal. Their return to Sydney was further delayed by a stopover in Melbourne to offload some commercial cargo. The authorities wanted the men to disembark there and go into camp at Broadmeadows but they resisted because, as part of the lockdown measures put in place by the state governments to stop the local spread of Spanish Flu that had by now reached Australia, there were no trains running to NSW. Some officers went to inspect the camp and found no facilities. So the soldiers stayed on board the *Argyllshire* and proceeded to Sydney.

Although the men had already served quarantine time in Albany, and again in Melbourne, the excursion by the officers to Broadmeadow had inadvertently broken Australia’s quarantine regulations. So when the ship finally sailed into Sydney on February 6, 1919, it was put into quarantine for another four days, anchored off Chowder Bay. But, on the promised release date of February 9, 1919, in a prelude to the current saga with cruise ships, a suspected case of the ‘flu was found aboard the ship and the soldiers were told a further period of quarantine was necessary.

In a bid to appease them, the authorities announced that they could go to the Quarantine Station at North Head, where a camp had been prepared. However on arrival they found that all that was provided was an area of bush. They had to clear it, dig drainage ditches and pitch their tents. Also, given their unexpected arrival, food was scarce, water distant and cooking and sanitation facilities non-existent. To top it off, the camp site was shared with some poisonous snakes – the soldiers claiming that they killed 60 during the first night, presumably an exaggeration but even one snake is less than ideal.

So the soldiers mutinied, albeit in a very controlled and disciplined manner. On the morning of February 11, about 900 men formed into ranks and marched out of the Quarantine Station. The 150 police officers guarding the Station realised the hopelessness of trying to stop 900 angry soldiers and let them pass. Wearing the compulsory face masks, the soldiers and their NCOs marched down the hill to Manly.

ARGYLLSHIRE SOLDIERS MARCH OUT OF QUARANTINE



The Sun (Sydney) 11 February, 1919

Alerted to the men's action, the authorities had the Manly ferry *Bellubera* sent to the cargo wharf at Manly to collect them and take them to Fort Macquarie, now the site of the Opera House. While the military authorities understood the men's grievances, they could not condone their disobedience and refused their request to be allowed to finish the the remaining three days of their four day quarantine at Victoria Barracks. Instead they were offered the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The soldiers then marched from Fort Macquarie, face masks still in place, along Macquarie St, College St, Oxford St and Flinders St, keeping rank until they arrived at the SCG. But again they balked and refused to enter. Their concern was that if even a single case was detected in the neaxt three days they would all have to remain in quarantine. A delegation went to the State Government and it was agreed that they would be broken up into segregated groups of 50. This satisfied all parties. Fortunately the three days passed without incident and so on February 14 – nine days after arriving in Sydney – the soldiers from the *Argyllshire* were finally demobilised. Not quite the homecoming that they had hoped for.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the residents of Manly were not pleased to have the Quarantine Station, with its inmates who had the Spanish Flu, so close by. Led by their local state MP Dr. Arthur, the proposal was made that the station be relocated to Jervis Bay where there was a naval establishment. The Federal authorities disagreed with both the risk to residents and the proposed use of Jervis Bay. However they did provide extra police and military guards to deter inmates from leaving the Station, including patrols of the Manly Village.

However tourist numbers to Manly were affected. There was a tension between the perceived health value of visiting the seaside and the fear that the influenza infection could be blown from the Quarantine Station. But some day trippers continued to come, many of them masked as the photo of Manly ocean beach shows.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the preventative measures against the Spanish Flu promoted by the health authorities in 1919 were very similar to the ones circulated today for Covid-19, including the washing of hands. However, unlike today, the wearing of a face mask by the public was seen as a definite form of protection. PPE for health workers was also comprehensive, as the photograph shows.



Front line health workers, Sydney 1919

Richard Michell



Manly Beach in 1919 (note the masks)



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Resistance to social distancing

As is the case today, in 1919 not everyone accepted the restrictions on social gatherings, particularly when they impacted negatively on income. On the 24 March 1919 a charge was heard at Manly Court against Mr. Llewellyn Bruton the proprietor of the New Brighton Hotel on The Corso. He was accused of keeping his licensed premises open on the afternoon of February 15, and thus failing to comply with the order of the Governor closing hotels during the epidemic.

Bruton's solicitor, Mr. A. J. Macaulay, claimed no offence had been committed because the proclamation closing hotels during the Influenza epidemic was invalid. He submitted that the proclamation could not override the Liquor Act, which was self-contained, and that it could be made only under a Commonwealth Act - the Quarantine Act - by authority of the Governor-General.

Mr. D'Arcy Irvine for the Crown contended that the State Government had power under the Public Health Act of 1902, which Incorporated section 23 of the Quarantine Act, to make orders in the case of Infectious or contagious diseases, highly dangerous to the public health, breaking out in New South Wales, in order to cut off all communication between any sections of the public.

The magistrate Mr. Giles Shaw agreed and, after evidence had been given, convicted Bruton and imposed a fine of £2, with 6s costs. In the case of five men charged with aiding and abetting the licensee by being in his hotel, fines of 10s each, with 6s costs, were imposed.

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.)

(Mobile)

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.....

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

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Account Number:

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