



Peninsula Historian

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks again to Judith Halnan who has sent me some more of her wartime experiences. I hope that they prove inspirational to others. You are making and living history every moment of your lives.

I was recently asked for some information about the Dutch Shop that was located in Dee Why for many years, an outcome of the large migration from The Netherlands to this area after WW2. I was able to give the address as 645 Pittwater Road and the proprietor as George Broekhuysen. Does any one have any further information or personal experience of it?

I hope I am not depressing you but the article in this issue involves another pandemic - the Black Plague of 1900. It draws on various sources but I particularly wish to acknowledge George and Shelagh Champion, Ian Milton and John Morcombe.

Richard Michell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Restrictions are starting to ease but it will still be some months at least before we are able to recommence our monthly meetings. Because of this we have applied to the Department of Fair Trading for a deferral of six months in the deadline for our AGM, which should have been held by 30 June.

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership. Happily this is most of you. If it has escaped your attention we would be pleased if you would rectify the situation. Otherwise, unfortunately this will be your last Historian.

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.

Council's Community Centres are still off limits. Once they reopen we will study the then-prevailing social distancing rules and see if it will be practicable and safe to recommence our monthly meetings. Until then I wish all members well.

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEXT MEETING, Date to be advised

Monthly meetings have been suspended until further notice.

AN ACT OF KINDNESS

I recently received the following email:

"I have uncovered some artefacts relating to the 1977 play by the Manly Centennial Players, "*Dalley at Manly*" and wondered if you would be interested in them: they consist of two programmes, a double-LP recording of the play in plain sleeves and some of Noel Hagen's notes on the play. All are in very good condition; the LPs appear unplayed - see photos below. They are from the late Professor Roger Covell's book and music collection which we purchased last year - I notice his name in Noel's list of "Further partial acknowledgements".

I'm happy to post them down to you and don't want any money for them.

Kind regards,
Kerry Kirk"

Kerry and her partner run The Hathill Gallery at Blackheath. They deal mainly in old vinyl records. Please don't tell any one but Fran and I have been spending most of the lockdown at our weekender in Medlow Bath and so it was quite simple for me to pick up the artefacts from Blackheath.

It emerges that *Dalley in Manly* was a musical - hence the LPs and the connection to the Hathill Gallery. The Noel Hagen mentioned was a Peninsula dentist who lived at Bayview. He wrote the musical together with Yvonne Gardiner, and his

second wife Margaret Gillett performed in it. Does anyone remember the event at St. Mathew's Hall? I have tracked down Noel's son and so I will hopefully have some further information shortly.

POT POURRI

A serious lockdown

Last issue, Judith Halnan wrote about being born in the tiny village, Marton-in-Cleveland, in Yorkshire and baptised at St. Cuthbert's Church, where James Cook had been baptised 206 years prior. She also mentioned being evacuated during WW2. Judith has sent me a little more of her wartime story.

Richard, this is a glimpse of our life then, sent to my grandchildren and great grandchildren.

"My cousin and I played "Hide and Seek" in and out of the corn stooks in the cornfields. In May 1940 Middlesbrough was the first town bombed in the UK. Because of the danger (our garden was covered in shrapnel each morning and the Barrage Balloons flew over head) my school was evacuated to the tiny village of Newbiggin-on-Lune in Cumbria.

We five to six year olds were cold and miserable. One day we went on a paper chase - yes white newspaper - across the deep snow. The soggy newspaper disappeared under the snow and so, nearly, did we as we struggled down to a brook and back up the other bank.

Missing our parents, seven of us were brought home. If our parents were going to be killed we might as well all go together. I was extremely happy to be back home despite each night, when the sirens sounded, descending into our dark wet Dug Out in the garden until the ALL CLEAR rang out.

Our group of parents employed a teacher and we spent two weeks at each house. My mother had a tiny Fiat 500 (not much different from my daughter's modern version 80 years later) into which six of us squeezed (we were small and it was not illegal then) to go to the next house. Thanks to my parents I didn't feel deprived though we were. Rationing was still in place when I went to Uni in 1953!

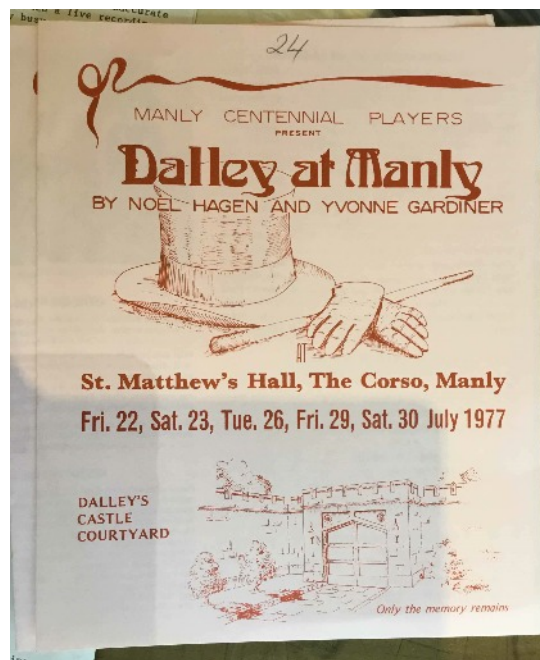
I am forever thankful to have lived (and survived) through those times. They taught me the difference between Need and Want. I even saved up six special fondant sugar confections, a violet cream, orange, lemon, lime, strawberry, vanilla until after the war"

Judith Halnan

As Judith states, at 1.42am on Saturday, 25 May, the first German bombs to fall on Britain in WW2 landed near North Ormesby in Middlesbrough. A single German bomber was involved and it dropped a further 12 bombs as it flew in a corridor over South Bank and Grangetown. The last one exploded near the Dorman Long steelworks, injuring eight men.

It is sometimes said that the bombing of Middlesbrough was the first action in Operation Seelöwe (Sea Lion), the German plan for invading Britain. However Hitler did not issue his Führer Directive No. 16, setting in motion preparations for a landing in Britain, until 16 July 1940, almost two months later. It is not certain why a single bomber made this sally. Perhaps it was to check Britain's defences.

Middlesbrough certainly was targeted when the blitz did begin in earnest. This was because of its iron and steel industries and its location on rail and road networks. A wartime German map was recently auctioned in Britain which shows the railway station and some industrial targets outlined in red ink.



Cover of programme for 'Dalley at Manly'



Wartime German map showing some targets in Middlesbrough marked with red ink

ANOTHER PANDEMIC

In the November 2019, issue of the Historian following the “discovery” by one of our members, Henri Quin, of a painting of Manly by ST Gill, I wrote about the substantial stone Camera Obscura built on the hill to the west of Manly Wharf, in the vicinity of today’s Camera Street. In that issue I also mentioned that a second Camera Obscura was subsequently built on the wharf itself. In a topical twist, this second one was a victim of a pandemic.

In July 1888, tenders were requested for the erection of a Tower to house a camera obscura at Manly Pier. Mr. E. C. Cracknell was the Consulting Engineer and Architect. Not all members of Manly Council were happy with this development. They felt that private interests were taking away their ability to plan Manly, that *“there was a disposition shown by speculative outsiders to exploit Manly for their own benefit, irrespective of every consideration of the comfort of the residents.”* The fact that it would be competition for the existing camera obscura may also have been a factor.

During construction the Council had it inspected and, perhaps to the disappointment of some, at the Council meeting held on the 7 September 1888, Mr. Cracknell reported that the *“Camera obscura in course of erection at the wharf was being built in a safe and substantial style.”* However he was perhaps a week premature. On Tuesday 18 September 1888 the Evening News reported that Albert Bowden was working as a carpenter *“putting up the match-lime ceiling in the Camera Obscura,”* when he fell onto *“some ironwork which was in readiness for the balcony.”* Suffering concussion he could not recall anything taking place prior to the fall, not *“even that he was working on the job.”* When completed in late 1888, the development opened under the grand name Royal Camera Obscura. It also included a refreshment room, as the advertisement from the SMH of Monday 8 October 1888 indicates. This latter function apparently proved the more profitable and by 1892 the structure had been converted fully to tea or refreshment rooms. The camera obscura was no more. No doubt taking tea on the upper level with its views over Manly and the harbour was very pleasant. But there was a dark cloud in its future.

The first case of bubonic plague in Australia was reported in January 1900. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* (*Y pestis*). It firstly infects the rat flea (*Xenopsylla cheopis*), which then infect its host, usually the black rat (*rattus rattus*). The fleas can move from the rats to humans who, once bitten, become infected. The bacterium causes acute inflammation of the lymph nodes. When the nodes break down, the toxins spread through the body causing massive haemorrhaging in the internal organs, discolouring the skin — hence the name ‘Black Death’.

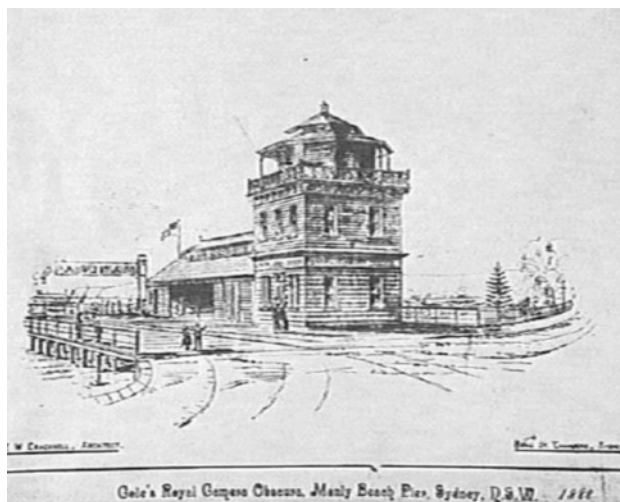
The three major bubonic plague pandemics that have occurred historically are among the greatest natural disasters of all time. In 541 CE the plague arrived in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the largest city in the world at that time. It is probable that *Y pestis* was carried north from Sudan on the Nile River aboard grain ships, and then across the Mediterranean Sea. Over the following year, the plague killed 40 per cent of Constantinople’s population and eventually a quarter of the population of the eastern Mediterranean. It spread across Europe, reaching England by 664. Frequent smaller outbreaks occurred across Europe until 750 when the disease disappeared.

In 1348 the plague erupted again in Europe when Genoese soldiers, returning from the siege of Kaffa in the Crimea, unknowingly transported *Y pestis* back to Italy. It spread rapidly across the continent and was most virulent between 1348 and 1356. The pandemic became the deadliest event in human history, killing a quarter of the people in Europe.



Camera Obscura under construction at Manly Wharf 1888 (NLA)

THE CAMERA OBSCURA, MANLY PIER.
 Manly now boasts of a new attraction. Mr. J. J. Cole opened a camera obscura exhibition on the pier. It is in connection with some capital refreshment rooms which have just been begun, and which will doubtless be well patronised by holiday-seekers. The camera is an exceedingly powerful one. The views are unique. The woodlands show up to advantage, and the sea shore is wonderfully pretty. The effect of a sunset upon the water is enchanting. The exhibition will be open to-day.



Cole's Royal Camera Obscura, Manly Beach Pier, Sydney, N.S.W. 1888 (MWPHS)

The third great bubonic plague pandemic started in northern China in 1855. By 1894 it had reached Hong Kong, with 100,000 deaths reported that year. In 1896 it spread to India and in 1899 Noumea was declared a plague-infected port. Australian colonial authorities were acutely aware that it was only a matter of time before the disease reached our continent.

The first case reported in Australia was that of Arthur Paine, on 19 January 1900. He was a delivery man who worked at Central Wharf, Sydney where the ship carrying infected rats would presumably have docked. By the end of February, 30 cases had been reported, all in inner Sydney, and the government was concerned the colony was on the brink of an epidemic.

Although not near the main port, Manly proved not to be immune. The first reported case was Alexander Cuthill, 39, who was diagnosed with the plague on April 28. He lived in Ashburner Street and had a shop on The Corso. When his shop was demolished, dead rats were found

under the floor. But how had rats carrying the bacterium reached Manly? It was almost certainly via the Manly ferries. These carried both passengers and goods cargo, including butcher's meat. They spent some time at the wharves at each end of the relatively short voyage and also were usually moored overnight at the Sydney end. By an oversight, they had not been included in the general port fumigation programme, as the ferries that operated from Darling Harbour had been.

The number of cases in Manly increased including amongst them, on May 12, 14-year-old Emily Tobin who worked in the refreshment room on the wharf. Concerned, in June 1900 the State Government acted and proclaimed an area of quarantine around the wharf. They particularly targeted the Camera Obscura. A team of more than 100 men, including carpenters, was brought to Manly on a specially-hired steamer. They demolished the building, having to pause at times for fresh air to escape the dreadful stench. The building was found to contain an illegal residence for its lessee Mr. Eaves which was reported to be "*quite inadequate*". When the floors were pulled up, about 30 dead rats were found, "*in a state of decomposition*". This was the source of the smell.

The streets and buildings near the wharf were inspected and plans made for further demolitions. Manly had only recently installed a sewerage system and many premises were unsewered, their sanitary conditions being described as "*almost of the worst description*". Rubbish found in the streets was collected and taken to the wharf for disposal at sea by punts.

Over the next few months the area quarantined was gradually increased, but always based on the wharf. A map drawn by Shelagh Champion in 1996 shows the extent. Area 1 was the first declared (4 June 1900) and Area 5 the last (10 July 1900). The steps were successful and, although in all 10 residents became infected and two died, Manly was spared what could have been a far worse fate for a small village.

As well as rats, the other concern for the residents of Manly was the presence of the Quarantine Station on Eastern Hill. When a person was diagnosed with the disease in Sydney they were taken to the quarantine wharf in Woolloomooloo Bay. Their families were also taken to the wharf, but in separate wagons, after which they were all taken to the Quarantine Station by launch, with the patient travelling in a separate compartment.

After arrival, the launch was disinfected with bi-chloride of mercury while the ambulance and wagons used to transport the patient and their family were disinfected in a sealed disinfesting shed at Woolloomooloo by burning sulphur.



Rats caught in Sydney, 1900



Quarantine areas declared in Manly, 1900

Richard Michell



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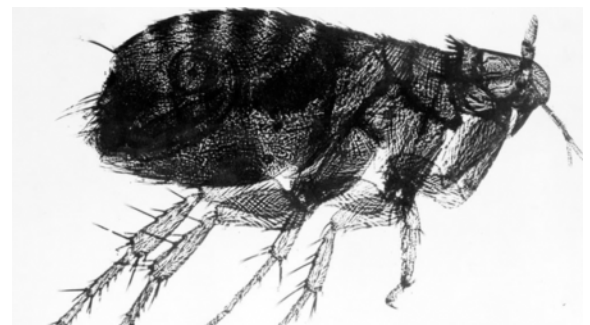
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An Australian contribution to the scientific understanding of the bubonic plague

During the Hong Kong epidemic in 1894, the French and Japanese epidemiologists Alexander Yersin and Kitasato Shibasaburo individually discovered the pathogen that causes the disease. Another French epidemiologist, Paul-Louis Simond, then proved during the 1896 plague outbreak in Bombay that fleas (*Xenopsylla cheopsis*) could act as vectors for transmission between rats.

However, this theory was not widely accepted by the medical community until the chief of the New South Wales Board of Health, John Ashburton Thompson, isolated the *Y pestis* bacterium in fleas on dead rats captured in Sydney. Ashburton Thompson's reports were '*models of cogent reasoning*' and his experiments were instrumental in changing public health methods around the world to combat bubonic plague.



Xenopsylla cheopsis (not to scale!)

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

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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:

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BSB Number:

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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)