



Peninsula Historian

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

Keith Amos has come to my rescue again and contributed an original article based on his recent research on Fred Lane, the winner of Australia's first ever Olympic Gold Medal in swimming (in fact he won two). The occasion was the 1900 Olympics in Paris.

Fred hailed from the Manly Swimming Club and lived most of his life on the Peninsula. Thank you (again) to Keith for his research and for his readiness to allow me to publish it for your edification, enjoyment and hopefully inspiration (to write something for the Historian, not to win a Gold Medal although that would be a great outcome also).

A swimming theme has emerged. In the previous issue I had a piece based on a photograph in our Archives of two Japanese swimmers. There is no information accompanying the photograph but research revealed that the swimmers were almost certainly Katsuo Takaishi and Takahiro Saito and that the photo was probably taken during a visit they made to Australia in late 1926/early 1927.

I took the liberty of sending the issue to the Japanese Consulate in Canberra and they came back with a little more information for which I thank them. It is in the Pot Pourri section.

Richard Michell

DIARY

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

14 November, 2020 2.00 pm

Christmas function (see Notice on Page 2)

12 December, 2020

No meeting - Christmas/New Year break

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have made the decision to go ahead and hold our Christmas function in November, unless of course the Covid situation deteriorates significantly before then. Details are on Page 2. Numbers will be strictly limited so please book your place.

Members may be aware that the State Government is planning to replace the current Freshwater class of Manly ferries with the so-called Emerald class. These catamaran-style ferries have a passenger capacity of about 400 compared with the Freshwater's 1100.

This is a re-run of the situation in 1975 when the Government announced it was retiring the then-current fleet and replacing it with the inner harbour type ferries. The *Lady Wakehurst*, and at times the *Lady Nothcott*, actually came onto the run. However that decision was reversed and in 1976 construction of the Freshwater class began.

The Society will be making a submission on this matter. I encourage Members to do the same. To me the Government simply does not understand that the ferries have both a public transport and a tourism/leisure role. The old Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company understood this well, hence the associated Harbour Pool, Fun Pier and Aquarium.

The public today may be a little more sophisticated - although I have yet to see convincing evidence - but a ferry trip to Manly is surely potentially one of the top attractions for visitors to Sydney. The Government should be seeking to enhance and exploit the situation, not emasculate it through short-sighted and narrow economic analysis.

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

MEETING REPORT, Saturday 10 October, 2020

Because of Covid no meeting was held.

NEXT MEETING, Saturday 14 November, 2020

This will be our Christmas function. Please see the notice on this page. Pre-booking is essential to ensure Covid compliance.

LONG REEF GOLF CLUB

Sandra Mellows informs me that next year (2021) the Long Reef Golf Club will celebrate its 100th birthday. If you have any historical paraphernalia or even memories or anecdotes, I am sure that Sandra would love to hear from you. jrmell@bigpond.net.au

POT POURRI

A deserved attribution

In the last issue, in the article on the Wheeler house at Dee Why which became the Dutch Shop, I used a portion of a hand drawn map that showed where the early land grants on the Peninsula were. It has been pointed out to me that this map was drawn by Shelagh Champion and represented the outcome of a great deal of research. I was not aware of this - the version I used does not have an attribution on it - but am very pleased to acknowledge Shelagh as the source.

More on Katsuo Takaishi

Last issue I wrote a short piece based on the attractive, intriguing but undocumented photograph of two Japanese swimmers that we have in our Archive. I concluded that they were Katsuo Takaishi and Takahiro Saito. I also reproduced a photo of Katsuo Takaishi that is in Wikipedia Commons. It has apparently been cut or cropped from a larger one which had a hand written message on it. The signature "Katsuo" is at the bottom right and at the top left the end of the word "Australia" can be discerned. I concluded that this photo was possibly a souvenir from the same 1926/27 visit where our one was probably taken.

I sent the *Historian* to the Japanese Embassy in Canberra and they replied very promptly. Although they did not have any further specific information they did point me to another photograph, this one on the Japanese internet. It was the uncropped version of the cropped one (see the next page). It was signed in Townsville and thus confirms that it was taken on the 1926/27 tour.

Their swimming tour began in Townsville on 9 December 1926 and the pair certainly paid their way. They competed in Townsville, Bundaberg and Rockhampton before Brisbane, then Ipswich and Toowoomba. Wellington and Newcastle followed on the way to Sydney. I have not attempted to track their route to Melbourne. The original plan was for Tasmania and South Australia to follow Victoria but the pair had to be back in Japan for their university exams so this portion of the tour did not eventuate.

I also asked the Embassy could they clarify the two different versions of the Japanese national flag that the swimmers are wearing in "our" photograph. They confirmed that the one on the right was a military version - the Japanese navy. What the connection of Takahiro Saito was to the navy is not known. His CV indicates that he was at university at the time and the press reported that he had to get back for his exams. However Japan was attempting to become a swimming super power at the time and perhaps a "job" in the Navy allowed him essentially full time devotion to swimming. However the arrangement may have come back to haunt him. As I reported last issue, in August 1944 Saito was ordered to serve in the Japanese Army in the Battle of Daito Islands and was sent to Manila where he died suddenly on 5 September 1944, only 42-years-old.

Richard Michell



Christmas party

14th November, 2020

2.00 - 4.00 pm

North Curl Curl Community Centre

Cnr. Abbott and Griffin Roads

\$20.00 per head - pre-booking essential

Pre-booked guests welcome

Payment method (EFT or cheque) as per details on Membership Form on last page. RSVP by 7 November.

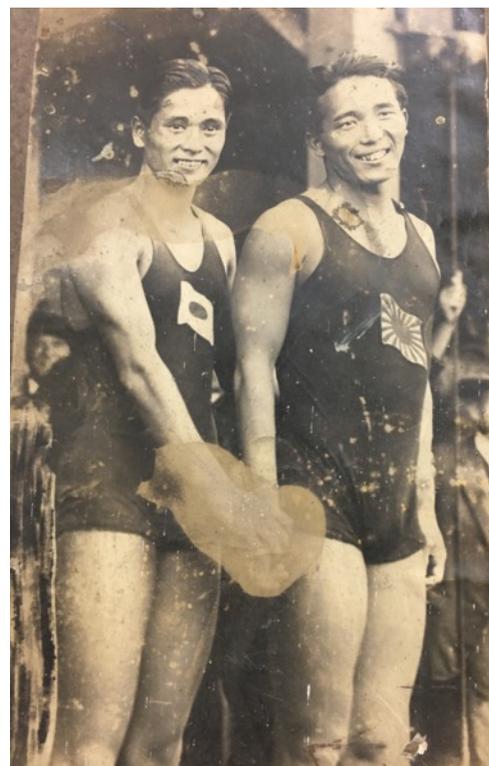


Photo of two unknown swimmers in the MWPHS archive



Photo of Katsuo Takaishi as published on the International Swimming Hall of Fame website



Photo of Katsuo Takaishi as published on the Japanese Internet

More on the 1939 bushfire

In the September issue I recounted some of the story of the dramatic bushfire that hit the Northern Beaches on Saturday 14 January 1939. I had learnt of the event from Betty James who was a young girl living in Dee Why at the time. She was evacuated to the beach.

From contemporary newspaper reports I had gained the impression that, at Dee Why, the fire reached the western outskirts. Some houses were lost there. However talking with Betty's friend Patty Diggins, who was also in Dee Why on the day, I was wrong. Patty lived in Delmar Parade which is on the eastern side of Pittwater Road and the fire burnt down both sides of her house. She was evacuated onto Pittwater Road and there the residents were joined by various lizards and snakes also escaping the flames. It was a day that still generates strong memories for both these women.

ARTICLE

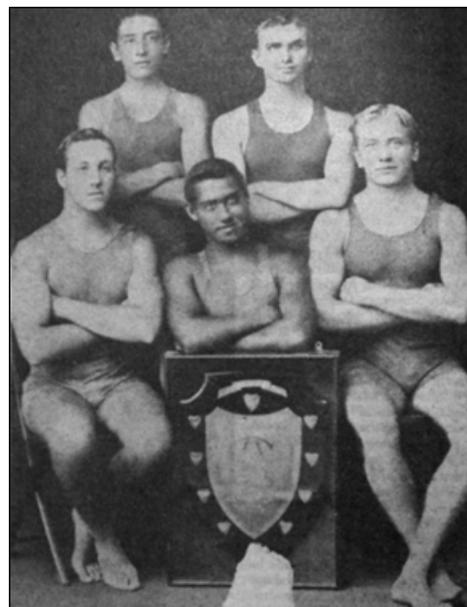
Fred Lane: Australia's first Olympic swimmer

At 3.30 am on 30th June 1968, an 89-year-old man was dragged uninjured from his blazing home in Darley Street, Mona Vale. The rescued man was Mr Fred Lane who had been alone in the house, asleep. The rescuer was his son, Fred, who lived next door. Few people reading this report(1), and hardly anyone today, would have known that Fred Lane senior was the first Australian swimmer in an Olympic Games: winner of two gold medals at Paris in 1900. This was the second modern Olympic games after the original games at Athens ceased in 393 AD. (At the first modern Olympics in 1896 the sole Australian contestant was a runner, Edwin Flack, who won the 800m and 1500m races and came third in doubles tennis.)

As Fred's house was completely gutted, he lost all of his possessions, including his Olympics awards and other trophies (about 350) and valuable paintings by his artist friends Norman Lindsay and John Allcot. As the tradition of awarding Olympic medals did not exist in 1900, the trophies Fred brought home from Paris were two bronze statues: one of a horse, the other of a young woman called 'Farm Girl With a Rake'. Another athlete at the Games received an umbrella, so Fred thought that he had done well with the statues.(2) When Olympic medals were later introduced, Fred was presented with two honorary gold medals and luckily these survived the fire, safe in a bank vault with his valuable collection of autographs.

Frederick Claude Vivian Lane was born on 2 February 1879 in Sydney, the son of John Stoneman Lane, a ship's chandler, and his wife Margaret. Fred and his seven siblings grew up near the water at Miller's Point. When four years old, he fell off a punt and nearly drowned in Sydney Harbour; saved just in time by his brother. After this close brush with death he learned to swim, and soon proved a natural in the water. He won his local school's 100yds event at eight, and as a teenager, all six swimming events at Sydney Grammar. At 16 he became the first schoolboy to win an Australian open title, and in 1898 won the Australasian 100yds final at Christchurch, New Zealand.(3)

As a young man, Fred joined and swam competitively with Manly Swimming Club. Surprisingly for such a powerful swimmer he was unusually small for an athlete, just 5ft 4ins (1.6m) tall, and weighing slightly under 8 stone (51kg).(4) He nevertheless dominated all NSW freestyle events in 1898-99, winning all but one of the state titles including a mile championship in 1899. In this pre-crawl era, he swam a double-overarm version of the Trudgen style (named after English swimmer, John Trudgen), high in the water on his left side, using a small flutter and narrow scissors kick.(5) Selected for the Paris Olympics in 1900, he was Australia's first swimmer to compete in an Olympics and the only Australian swimmer at these Games.



Fred Lane (back right) with Manly Swimming Club teammates - Manly Swimming Club Records

Sponsored by department store magnate, Mark Foy, Fred had already swum in Europe before the Games, setting a world record of 2mins 34.8secs in a British 220yds freestyle championship in 1899. However on his arrival at Paris in 1900, he learned that his favourite 100m freestyle had been dropped from the program in favour of a 200m freestyle - down the River Seine. So he contested this and also the River Seine 200m obstacle freestyle, in which swimmers had to climb a pole, clamber over a boat, and swim under a punt.(6)

Midway in the straight freestyle race, Fred drew level with the expected winner, Zoltan Von Halmay of Hungary, a fine swimmer who went on to win two gold medals at the 1904 St Louis Olympics. Then over the last 100m, the two men swam stroke for stroke until Fred finished just ahead in a time of 2mins 25.2secs. The recovery time before Fred's next event was only 45 minutes, however he won this race more comfortably. Having grown up around boats in Sydney Harbour, he knew that clambering over their more narrow sterns, would take less time than becoming log-jammed with other competitors at the sides. His other advantage in both races was a rather special, finely woven silk costume.(7)



Fred Lane c.1900 - Pauline Conolly

After the Olympics, Fred stayed in England for two more years, working for a legal firm in Blackpool while he continued to swim and break records over the distances 100yds to 400yds. The race he considered his greatest was a 100yds event at Manchester in July 1902 against formidable rivals, champion Englishman Rob Derbyshire, and fellow Australian great Dick Cavill. The three swimmers touched so closely that the judges took 10 minutes to decide the placings. Winning the race, Fred became the first man in the world to swim 100yds in one minute, which he bettered at Leicester later that year in a time of 59.6 secs.(8)

Back in Sydney, he chose to retire from international swimming at the pinnacle of success - aged 24 in 1903. He became a master printer and partner in the stationery firm of Smith & Lane in Bridge Street, and married Rosamund Pearle Lord at St Mark's Church, Darling Point, in 1908. They would have two children, Frederick born in 1909 and Jean born in 1912.(9) Settled at their Mona Vale home 'Oceana', Fred was an energetic man of diverse interests: sailing, surfing, boxing and golf, backed with a fitness regime of cold showers summer and winter, long walks, wholesome diet, no cigarettes and no alcohol.(10)



Fred Lane, racing in the River Seine 1900 - Wikipedia

He wrote and printed a book on his friend Norman Lindsay's bookplates, collected stamps, coins, models, cigarette cards, autographs, posters and memorabilia on his swimming career, marine paintings by the artists Jack Spurling and John Allcot, paintings and literary works by Norman Lindsay. His valuable autograph collection included those of Queen Victoria, Winston Churchill, Charlie Chaplin, Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and cricketer Jack Hobbs. Asked by his friend Helene Rankin for his own autograph, he wrote in her book: *"True friendship is found not in the multitude of friends but in their worth and choice"* - FCV Lane.(11)

In 1956 Fred and Rosamund attended the Melbourne Olympic Games as official guests – ‘Ah, that was a millionaires’ party for me’, he said. Just before the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, he presented every Australian swimmer with a replica of his own gold medal as a good luck charm. Rosamund died in 1958, aged 75, a few weeks before their 50th wedding anniversary. Fred died at Avalon Convalescent Hospital on 14 May 1969, aged 90.(12)

In 1969 Fred Lane was honoured by the International Swimming Hall of Fame at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA. And when Sport Australia Hall of Fame was founded in 1985, he was among the first inducted. Addressing the Australian Hall’s inaugural function in Melbourne, Sir Donald Bradman (the first inductee honoured) listed the qualities he thought all nominees should possess, aside of outstanding skill, as follows: ‘dignity, integrity, courage and perhaps most of all, modesty’.(13) Fred Lane fulfilled them admirably.

Notes

1. Unidentified cutting, 30/7/1968, Helene Rankin’s autograph book, courtesy Jo Harris
2. Pauline Conolly, ‘Obstacle Course Olympian’, 2016 – online
3. G.P.Walsh, ‘Frederick C.V. Lane’, Aust. Dict. Biog., vol. 9, 1983 - online; *Aust. Women’s Weekly*, 30/9/1964
4. Conolly, loc.cit.
5. Walsh, loc.cit.
6. ‘Frederick Lane’, *Sport Australia Hall of Fame* - online; Conolly, loc.cit.
7. *ibid.*, *Sport Aust. Hall of Fame*
8. *ibid.*
9. Death cert. no.18577, NSW BDM
10. *Aust. Women’s Weekly*, 30/9/1964
11. Collections: Conolly, loc.cit.; Rankin autograph: courtesy Jo Harris
12. *Aust. Women’s Weekly*, 30/9/1964; death cert. 18577
13. ‘Frederick Lane’, *Wikipedia* and *Sport Aust. Hall of Fame*

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Jo Harris (Helene Rankin’s daughter) for suggesting this topic and sharing her records.



Lane family home ‘Oceana’,
Mona Vale, c.1950 - Jo Harris



Fred Lane, 1964 (newspaper cutting in
Helene Rankin’s autograph book) – Jo Harris



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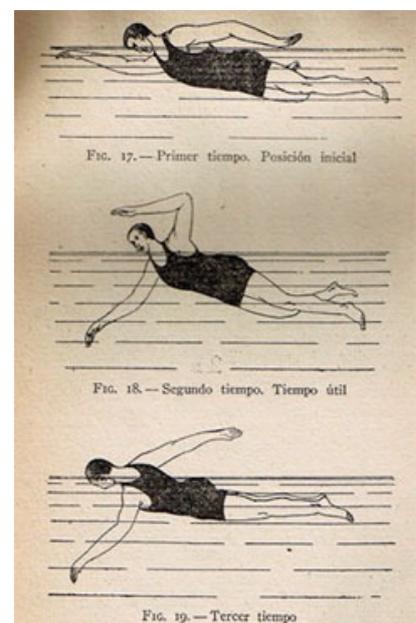
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Fred Lane and the Trudgen stroke

"One swims mostly upon one side, making an overhand movement, lifting the arms alternately out of the water. When the left arm is above the head, the legs spread apart for a kick; as the left arm comes down the legs extend and are then brought together with a sharp scissor kick. The right arm is now brought forward over the water, and as it comes down the left arm is extended again. The scissor kick comes every second stroke; it involves spreading the legs, then bringing them together with a sudden "snap" movement.

The swimmer's face is underwater most of the time; the only chance to breathe is when the hand is coming back and just as the elbow passes the face. The Trudgen developed into the front crawl."

Wikipedia



Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership 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: \$.....

(\$12.00...)

DONATION: \$.....

TOTAL: \$.....

as above, includes emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian

only if you require Peninsula Historian by post

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:

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(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)