



# Peninsula Historian

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

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## FROM THE EDITOR

I continue to stumble over the old Atkins house at Seaforth and John Morecombe continues to catch my fall and save my embarrassment. Last issue I stated that it had been incorporated into the new development and implied it was embedded within it. John informed me that it is at the rear of the new structure and clearly visible from Panorama Parade. I can now confirm personally that it is and the proof is the photos on p.3.

As you will see in the President's Report, in that role I have had an involvement with a heritage pear tree at Frenchs Forest. The article in this issue is one written by Shelagh Champion on the Holland Orchard where the tree grew originally. My grateful thanks to George Champion for forwarding it to me.

In another stumble, I have come across some information on 'White End' a substantial home that was located on the harbour front just to the east of Fairlight Pool. I will include it in the next issue but if anyone has some information on it, or on the Pope family, I would love to be directed to it. Thanks.

*Richard Michell*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since last issue I have attended another meeting of the Blinking Light Working Group. The group has now drafted the document to call for expressions of interest in designing and supplying a commemorative item to memorialise the original blinking light. The RMS is running this process and has announced that the budget for the winning concept will be \$40,000. Their preferred location for the memorial is Brickpit Reserve which is on the southwest corner of the Warringah Road/ Wakehurst Parkway intersection. This land is owned by NB Council and they also have some embryonic plans for landscaping it. I trust that the two organisations can synchronise their efforts.

Still with the road works at Frenchs Forest, the RMS presented a potted pear tree (no partridges) to Forest High School on Friday 15 February. It had been propagated from a tree from the orchard that was originally located on the site of the school. This tree had survived on the verge beside Warringah Road but had had to be removed in the current road works. I was asked to speak a little on the site's history and relied heavily and gratefully on an article by Shelagh Champion which is reproduced in this issue (p.4).

We have reached the point with our archives where essentially all items are now accessioned and physically located in places where we can find and retrieve them. The next task is to produce a database that contains all of the items, in a format that can be readily searched. This is a large job. We have some 6000 items. About one third are listed in the Manly Council Library database and all items that we have accessioned in the past two years are in an Excel spreadsheet. However about half of our items are listed only in a handwritten set of ledger books. There is no simple way of knowing what those items are or of searching them.

We are now trying to work out our next step. Ideally it would be for all items to be entered into the Council database. However they are still in the throes of amalgamating the three systems that existed previously and we are not privy to their plans for the future. We will probably construct our own database, searchable from our web site, and in a format that can be readily transferred to a future Council system. If anyone has expertise in this area I would love to hear from you.

## DIARY

### Meetings at the Curl Curl Community Centre, cnr. Griffin and Abbott Roads

9 March, 2019 2.00 pm

Ian Milton *History of sailing on Narrabeen Lake*

A talk about sailing on Narrabeen Lakes, starting from the vibrant boatsheds dotted along its shoreline, to the small tin sailing canoes, right up to the sixteen-foot skiffs with their billowing sails

13 April, 2019 2.00 pm

Wal Walker *D'Arcy Wentworth*

Father of the well-known William Charles and a significant landowner on the Northern Beaches in the first half of the 19th Century.

Finally another reminder that annual membership renewal is now due. Many have already done so but, if not, there is a form is on the last page.

Richard Michell

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### NEXT MEETING, Saturday 9 February, 2019

#### *The History of sailing on Narrabeen Lake*

One of our members Ian Milton will talk on the history of sailing on Narrabeen Lake. While there is active sailing on the lake today, there was more of it in the past. The lake was significantly deeper and a wider range of boat classes could be accommodated. Ian will also describe the various boatsheds that were dotted around the shoreline.

### LAST MEETING REPORT, Saturday 9 February, 2019

#### *The First Gardens of Pittwater and Broken Bay*

Richard Pearse and Brian Gray gave an interesting and thought-provoking talk to a large audience describing their detective work to identify the first garden in Pittwater. The garden they were focussed on was the first attempt by Europeans to grow food in the area. Their research was based primarily on the contents of various journals kept by members of the First Fleet and they gladly acknowledged the work done by George and Shelagh Champion to identify the relevant material and to transpose much of it.

Richard and Brian's conclusion was that the first garden was most likely planted in June or July 1789 on the third or fourth European expedition to Broken Bay. Its possible location was on the western side of Barrenjoey Headland, a little to the south of where the Customs Station was later built. They offered to conduct a tour of the site and proposed a commemorative plaque. The Society will consider this further.

### LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR JIM BOYCE

In recognition of his many years of active and dedicated service to the Society, the Executive Committee was pleased, late last year, to offer Jim Boyce life membership and equally pleased that he accepted. The official "ceremony" was held at the last committee meeting of 2018, on Wednesday 28 November, at our Cromer room.

## POT POURRI

### **Norfolk Island Pines**

My recent holiday on Norfolk Island got me thinking about Norfolk Island Pines again. Some readers will hopefully remember that, a few years ago, Jim Boyce drew attention to the fact that many of the trees that had been planted on the Northern Beaches over the past thirty years or so were not actually Norfolk Island Pines but Cook Pines. Once your attention has been drawn to this fact you cannot help but see Cook Pines all along our coast.

Older readers may also remember the great controversy in the 1970s with the deterioration of the health, and the ultimate death, of many of the pines along the Manly ocean beachfront. Eventually the problem was traced to the presence of detergent in the sea spray. The source was the sewerage outfall located at Blue Fish Point below North Head and the response was to extend the sewer much further out to sea, the so-called deep ocean outfall. Once relocation had occurred Manly Council began an extensive programme of pine replanting.



Cook Pine at Dee Why Beach carpark

It seemed plausible to me that it was this burst of fresh planting that probably introduced the Cook Pines. The timing seemed right. However the introduction went on for another 25 years or so. Is it also plausible that trees were sourced from a single supplier over all that time, one who, consciously or otherwise, was propagating Cook Pines but describing them as Norfolks? Or was the general nursery supply industry for Norfolk Island Pines tainted?

I think I may have stumbled on the answer. It was a single supplier and they were apparently oblivious of the true identity of the trees they were providing.

A page from the Manly Daily of 22 April, 1982 is reproduced below. The supplier was Manly Council. They cultivated 1,000 trees from seedling. This was more than enough for their own needs and so Warringah Council no doubt used them also. The question remains as to where Manly Council sourced the seedlings. Did this supplier know their true identity?

*Richard Michell*

**1000 new pines for Manly!**

Manly's major contribution to the 1988 bicentenary celebrations will be the greening of our foreshores.

And, now biding their time at one of the council's nurseries, is a mini-forest of Norfolk Island pine seedlings.

One thousand little trees are being nurtured under the supervision of head gardener Ted Hopson.

By 1988, it is hoped most will have survived to be planted along the beaches.

It is a project dear to Mr Hopson's heart.

"I have lived in this area all my life and worked for the council for the past 26 years," he said yesterday.

"I remember when the foreshore from Queenscliff to Manly was a green forest.

Some of those trees were more than 100 years old but during the past 10 years we have started to lose them."

Pollution is the killer, as industrial detergents put through North Head sewer are blown with the sea spray

on to the leaves of the pines. The detergents break down the waxy protection on the leaves and the salt in the spray eventually kills the trees.

"If I have one ambition it is to see all the trees we have

lost replaced along the foreshore," he said.

"And I will keep planting until we have done it — hopefully by then the pollution problem will be solved."

Last year Mr Hopson spent \$75 on pine seeds.

The 1000 nursery pines he has produced will be re-planted several times during the next few years.

When they are big enough — about one metre high — they will go into huge tubs on Ocean Beach Reserve.

By 1988 they should be two metres tall and ready to face life on the foreshores of Queenscliff and Manly beaches.

If conditions are right, a pine tree may grow for the next 200 years, he said.



Mr Ted Hopson, Manly Council's head gardener, squats among the rows of six-month-old Norfolk Island pine tree seedlings.



Cook Pine on left and young Norfolk Island Pine on the right, Dee Why Beach carpark

Manly Daily, 22 April 1982

**The Atkin's cottage at Seaforth**

As explained in the Editor's Report, John Morcombe has pointed out that the old Atkin's family cottage has been restored and is visible at the rear of the medium density development that now occupies most of the original land. Here are a couple of photos. The building can be easily seen from Panorama Parade, just up from its intersection with Ross Street. Ross Street was originally Atkins Street.



Restored Atkin's cottage at the rear of 14 Ross Street, Seaforth

## ARTICLE

### HOLLAND'S ORCHARD, FRENCH'S FOREST

Henry Green, a North Sydney builder, became the owner of nearly forty acres of land in French's Forest on 30 June 1899. Using the present names of roads, the land was bounded by French's Forest Road, Bantry Bay Road, Warringah Road and Rabbett Street. He built a brick house in Warringah Road in about 1900. He cultivated about eighteen acres of the land, planting loquats, persimmons, lemons and other fruit trees. The property was transferred to his son-in-law, John Holland, on 8 February 1906. John Holland had been a market gardener at Botany and an orchardist at Dural before moving to French's Forest with his wife, Elizabeth Lucy. Mr Holland also purchased over six acres near Rabbett Street in 1911, which he sold to James Wareham in 1913. Employees at the orchard were Thomas Tobin and his brother, who came from Bathurst, and John Rafferty, who lived with his wife in a bark hut with a dirt floor, in the Bantry Bay Road corner of the property. Mrs Rafferty kept the hut spick and span.

In July 1912 the Sydney Morning Herald published a news item headed "Foxes near Sydney" which stated, "Foxes are gradually coming nearer to Sydney. Poultry owners at Brookvale have been caused considerable anxiety of late owing to their prevalence in the district. They wrought great havoc in the poultry yards. Mr. Hews, President of Warringah Shire, and Mr J. Holland, both of French's Forest, have missed a large number of fowls and, as they gave the credit of the damage to dingoes, they decided to keep watch. One day last weekend the two gentlemen tied a fowl to a post, and lay in wait with a rifle. Presently the fox came stealthily along for his prey, continuing to advance towards the fowl, until he received a bullet from the rifle.

In 1916 Dr Arthur was promoting his scheme at western French's Forest (now Forestville), settling soldiers who had been wounded at Gallipoli or in France on five-acre blocks. There was much criticism that the land at Forestville was not good for farming. The debate raged on both sides, and a party of city men drove out to French's Forest with Dr Arthur to see for themselves. They visited and reported on a number of market gardens and orchards, including that of Mr Holland, where they saw apples, pears, quince, citrus fruits, especially navel oranges, tomatoes, potatoes, pears and beans, and a haystack of two or three tons. In short, it was a successful farm. In fact, Holland's orchard was the site of the Mosman Sanitary Service Depot, and nightsoil from Mosman was, of course, a particularly good fertiliser!



Presentation to Forest High School by the RMS of a pear tree cultivated from one of the original trees in Holland's Orchard, Feb 2019

In 1917, 53 ratepayers and residents of French's Forest petitioned Warringah Shire Council for the depot to be closed. A second petition from French's Forest Progress Association asked that the depot be removed "to the old position on French's Forest Road." There was another complaint to Council in 1918, this time from the soldier settlers at Forestville, that "night cart tins are washed at the trough". This was probably the horse trough that stood at the corner of Bantry Bay and Warringah Roads.

George, my husband, and I used to drive out to French's Forest during the early 1950s and we remember the old house and orchard. In the orchard was a rough replica of a plane which had seemingly nose-dived into the ground. On it was a notice that hot chips were available for sale at the house.

On 28 June 1950 the property was transferred to the Hollands' daughter Marjorie and her husband John McKay. The McKays built a new house and shops on the corner of Forest Way. One shop was the post office, and John McKay was the local postmaster for some years. Part of these premises is now occupied by an estate agent.

Most people are aware of the pear tree that still stands near the footpath outside the Forest High School, a relic of Holland's orchard. We congratulate Travis Brown for his wonderful idea of creating a grove of pear trees, using cuttings from the tree, and to the Rotary Clubs of French's Forest and Belrose, Warringah Council and others, for bringing the project to "fruition".

*Shelagh Champion, Feb 2005*

### Working Bee

We will be having another working bee at Cromer to further sort our material. Date and time are given below. Please contact Richard Michell (see panel) if you plan to come along. Thank you.

Saturday 23 April  
9 am - 12 noon  
155 Fisher Road North, Dee Why



Manly, Warringah and Pittwater  
Historical Society Inc.  
Established 1924

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Currently vacant

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### St. Patrick's celebration

The International College of Management, Sydney (ICMS) has invited all interested members of the Northern Beaches community to join it to celebrate the 130-year anniversary of the construction of its home, the old St. Patrick's College on Eastern Hill, Manly. There will be a tour followed by a talk by Thomas Keneally, who will share historical insights and his own recollections of life as a student there.

The event starts at 10am on Friday 8 March 2019. RSVP and details at [www.icms.edu.au/event/130-anniversary](http://www.icms.edu.au/event/130-anniversary)

### Enquiry

We have also received the following somewhat cryptic query:

*We are trying to find out the name of the reception centre which was located at Fairlight on a triangular block ..a structure with stone surrounds leading to the main hall...only single storey I think. Our 137 bus used to pass it. Thanks! Peter Carruth in Port Macquarie.*

Any suggestions?

*Richard Michell*

**Annual membership is now  
overdue**

**Please see the form on the  
next page**

**Thank you to all those who  
have renewed**

# Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

## Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2019

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

Account Name:

MWP Historical Society

BSB Number:

062-197

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](mailto:treasurer@mwphs.com). This is essential for your correct identification and is particularly important if your payment is made through a Credit Union)