

THE ENDEAVOUR



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FAMILY HISTORY BOTANY BAY

Discovering Your Heritage

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Meetings

Face to face meetings are held on the first Saturday of March, June, September and December at the Research Centre commencing at 1.30pm. Zoom meetings are held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month (except January) starting at 7.30pm.

Library and Research Centre Messages and Bookings Only: 02 9523 8948

Port Hacking Community Centre 184 Gannons Road Caringbah South NSW 2229
Open: 10am-2pm: Mon, Wed, Fri, selected Sat. For bus route 978 & timetable, see:
<https://transportnsw.info/routes/details/sydney-buses-network/978/31978>

Annual Membership Fees

From 1 Jul 2025: single – \$45; family – \$60; distance single – \$23; distance family – \$30; membership renewals due 1 July each year.

Research

Volunteers from FHBB will research family history relevant to the Sutherland Shire for non-members: minimum fee of \$30 (first hour) and \$30 per hour thereafter.

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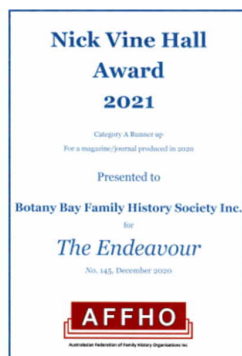
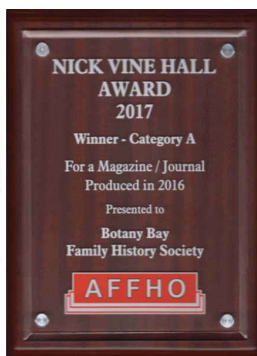
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CALENDAR



Members are advised to check latest details on our Events calendar at www.botanybayfhs.org.au or see your fortnightly FHBB eNEWS

- Nov 22 Irish Interest Group: 2-4 pm on Zoom
 Nov 25 Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm on Zoom
 Nov 27 Writers Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm on Zoom
 Nov 29 DNA Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm on Zoom
 Dec 6 **Christmas Meeting – 12 noon Research Centre, Saturday. Tina Bean. *Dressing the Past***
 Dec 13 Scottish Interest Group: 2-4pm at Research Centre
 Dec 13 Last day Research Centre & Library is open
 Dec 17 **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom.**
- 2026**
- Jan 12 FHBB Research Centre and Library re-opens
 Jan 26 Australia Day Public Holiday – Research Centre closed
 Feb 7 DNA Interest Group: 1.30-3.30 pm on Zoom
 Feb 4 **Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom. Speaker and topic – TBA**
 Feb 14 Scottish Interest Group: 2-4pm at Research Centre
 Feb 18 **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom**
 Feb 19 Museum of Sydney Tour - Unearthed
 Feb 21 Irish Interest Group: 2-4 pm on Zoom
 Feb 24 Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30 pm on Zoom
 Mar 7 **Meeting – 1.30 pm Research Centre. Saturday. speaker and topic – TBA**
 Mar 19 Tour – to be announced.
 Mar 24 NSW State Records Bus Trip – all day
 Mar 26 Writers Interest Group: 1.30-3.30 pm on Zoom



Family History Botany Bay is a member of:



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Hello everyone. As the year winds down, I hope many of you have made great inroads with your research or at least chipped away at a brick wall.

In-Person Interest Days

In October we held an England Interest Day and, like the Australian Interest Day held earlier in the year, it was a major success. Congratulations to Jean **Campbell**, Leonie **Bell**, Roberta **Madsen**, Sue **Hewitt** and Megan **Neilson** who regaled us with informative and diverse material on the day.

Following on from the success of these two events, your Committee has decided to broaden the interest days further for 2026. Plans are now underway to hold a Scottish (April), Australian (June), Irish (August) and England (October) Interest Day as well as a DNA Interest Group Workshop (May). And by the time the March *Endeavour* is released I hope to be able to announce a further two in-person interest or workshop days!

Of course, these days are only successful if volunteers step forward to tell a story, whether it be a research method that would assist others, a family story, or a general topic for discussion. You don't need to be proficient with PowerPoint to present a story so please consider contributing to any of these days. You can contact either me or the leader of the relevant interest group so that the various programmes can be finalised.

Zoom Meetings

Introduced to our Society during Covid, Zoom meetings are still the preferred platform for most of the FHBB events. By using Zoom we have been able to enjoy many international and distant speakers on a variety of topics that would have otherwise been impossible. I am currently arranging the speaker schedule for next year and, to give you a little taste of what is in store, I can confirm that genealogy expert Chris Paton from Scotland has been booked for July.

However, I find it sad that many of our FHBB members are still wary of attending a Zoom meeting. In this edition of *The Endeavour*, you will find easy instructions on how to attend a Zoom meeting. You don't need a camera or microphone to attend – a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone with sound is all that is required. Our guest speakers present at the beginning of the meeting and are usually finished by 8.20-8.30pm. There is no reason that you have to remain longer if you are only interested in hearing the guest speaker, however, you will miss out on the latest Society news, our monthly free book-giveaway, the chance to catch up with other members, or discussions on research problems/successes.

Port Hacking Community Centre

I have been advised that the PHCC will be closed for approximately three weeks in early 2026 to enable a new roof to be put on the centre. While no firm date has been set, there is a possibility that it will be around March. As always, you will be kept informed via our monthly meetings, the eNEWS, and Facebook.

As another year closes, the Management Committee and I continue to be grateful for all the work undertaken throughout the year by our wonderful volunteers – some of whom make important contributions without being rostered for duty at the Research Centre. Once again, thank you all for your ongoing support, enthusiasm, and contributions. Finally, I'd like to wish all of you a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year.

Jennie Fairs

LYNDAL HOLLAND WRITING COMPETITION

by John Levy (Editor)

The FHBB Lyndal Holland Writing Competition was established in 2023 in memory of Lyndal Holland, a Foundation Member and inaugural secretary of our Society. The competition is open to all financial members of our Society with the aim of encouraging our members to write about aspects of their family history.

Congratulations to Ralph Dutneall and Rhonda McKinnon, joint winners of the 2025 FHBB Lyndal Holland Writing Competition. The competition in 2025 envisaged two prizes – one for an article about the life of an ancestor in Australia and one for an article about the life of an ancestor overseas. However, we received no entries for the second category and your Committee decided that joint prizes be awarded for the life of an ancestor in Australia.



Lyndal Holland
(photo: Holland family album)

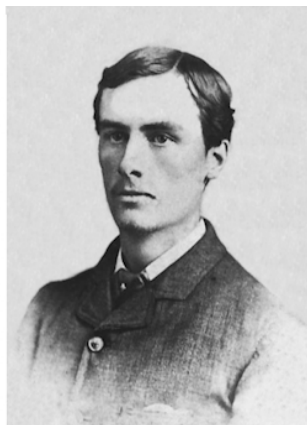
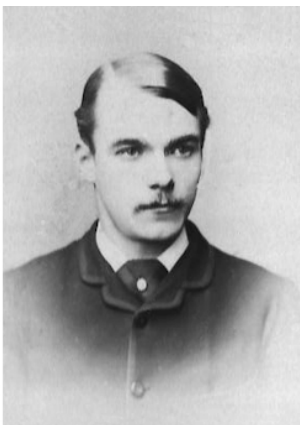
The winners were announced at the Annual General Meeting in September. Please enjoy their articles on the following pages.

LYNDAL HOLLAND JOINT WINNER – ARTHUR'S ADVENTURES

By Ralph **Dutneall** (Member)

Imagine if you could talk with my great grandfather Arthur in 1871 when he was twelve years old. He would probably describe his life as mundane. Then a letter would arrive from Melbourne penned by his uncle Thomas **Kempton**, his mother's brother, whom he had never met. Uncle Tom would write of a land where social class didn't matter, where he had bought land, established his own business and nurtured his growing family in clean air. Then were other stories of lucky Englishmen who had struck gold.

To Arthur, in his humdrum life at the Hampden Gurney School with his best mates Bob **Bannerman**¹ and Lewis **Hutton**² these tales would have opened a window to adventure. They all lived within a stone's throw of Marble Arch in London, immersed in the rigid class system of the time. Arthur and his mother lived in a cramped tenement building in Adam Street West³, whilst his father worked nearby as a live-in butler to some of the wealthiest and privileged people on earth. Bob and Lewis, as sons of local tailors knew all too well the disparity between rich and poor.



Arthur, Lewis and Bob (photo: Dutneall Family Album)

Three adventure-seekers in their mid-twenties hatched a plan to break out of their world and go to Australia as second-class passengers on the *Darling Downs*⁴. Although a safe passage, in reality it was tortuous, as the ship battled storms and gales, their cabin on deck often awash, winds howling through and being constantly jostled. After 140 days at sea, they arrived. Arthur wrote in his diary⁵:

1884, Saturday November 8th 12:15 am. We have just dropped anchor & the voyage is over & done. The lights of Melbourne town look cheerful & wink us welcome.

Arthur threw himself into exploring this new land with trips east to Warragul, west to Bendigo and north to Broadmeadows. He socialised and picnicked with his uncle and cousins. He visited the *Trio Gold Mine* in Castlemaine descending to 384 m and started work as a stationer for Ferguson and Mitchell in Collins Street not too far from his lodgings in Albert Park.

Tragically, Lewis passed away less than a year after arriving and was respectfully buried in St Kilda Cemetery⁶. Undaunted, Bob and Arthur continued exploring. Arthur visited cousins of his aunt, near Daylesford. He noted: *The town is clean & pleasant but as is the case with all colonial places everything is necessarily modern. Nothing old or interesting in the way of architecture.*

Arthur took a steamer to Sydney, where fate had a surprise for him. He was met by his future wife Julia and her brother Will who were also visiting from Melbourne. Art galleries, churches, buildings, ferry trips and meeting friends from his voyage out were all on his agenda.

Back in Melbourne he joined the Freemasons, the Victorian Rifles, saw the 1886 Melbourne Cup and then fell in love. He married Julia Anna **Smith** with a lavish reception for a hundred guests⁷. The happy couple set up a newsagency at Julia's father's new subdivision in Croydon. Their happiness was short lived with the tragic loss of their young daughter Dorothy⁸. Then they received word from England that his beloved mother had passed away⁹. Compounding their grief, Victoria plunged into an economic depression leading to the collapse of their business. They moved home and Arthur took up a job as a commercial traveller in Gippsland. Amongst all of this turmoil, Arthur's longstanding friend Bob married Julia's sister Emma, intertwining their families together for the rest of their lives.



Arthur in his Victorian Volunteer Rifles uniform (photo: Dutneall Family Album)

With his wife and two sons, Steve and Norm, to support and few prospects, it was clearly time for new adventures. They steamed across to Perth, Western Australia! At 35 years of age in 1895 Arthur established a newsagency¹⁰. In typical style he threw himself into community life as the Vice-President of the fledgling WA Newsagents Association¹¹, goldmine investor, lodge member and they welcomed their third son, Alan.



Arthur at the door of his shop in William St., Perth (photo: Dutneall Family Album))

However, the seeds of restlessness were sown as news arrived that Julia's father George was ailing. They abandoned their life in Perth, liquidated their business and moved back to Melbourne, where George sadly passed away in 1901¹². Possibly spurred on by news from his own father, Alfred back in London, Arthur and eldest son Steve almost immediately left for England on the luxury *SS Persic* with the first ever bulk wheat cargo to England.

Julia, Norm and Alan followed for a wonderful few years in their comfortable modern house in West Ealing, London, where the boys attended school and Arthur worked as an insurance agent. They re-connected with family and Arthur spent more time with his father than was ever previously possible. With Alfred's passing in 1909 their ties to London faded, it was time for more adventure!

Back in Melbourne they built a house in Tooronga on a government land release. With the breakout of World War One, all three boys went off to serve in



Arthur, Norm, Julia, Alan and Steve in Melbourne, ca.1919 (photo: Dutneall Family Album)

France. During their leave breaks they were able to re-connect with their English relatives. All three safely returned and began to settle down and marry.

Restless Arthur was not yet finished with adventure. There was a stint at their poultry farm in Mornington, a confectionary business in St Kilda, a mixed business in Northcote, before finally settling into retirement in Caulfield.

Arthur passed away in 1936 at age 77 having successfully accomplished the ideals espoused by his Uncle Tom all those years ago¹³. He had bought land, built houses, started businesses and broken social barriers. He had struck gold not only with his investments, but with his successful sons and his adored wife Julia who passed away in 1944 at 83 years old¹⁴. Friends Arthur and Bob and their wives, sisters Julia and Emma are buried next to each other at Boroondara Cemetery at Kew in Melbourne as a fitting conclusion to their wonderful adventure¹⁵.

Arthur Dutneall was my great grandfather and his son Steve was my wonderful grandfather.

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JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS – COPY DEADLINE

Please submit copy for the March 2026 journal as soon as you have it available but the deadline is **Sunday 1 February** – preferably by email to the Editor at bbfhs_eds@yahoo.com.au. Copy may also be left in the Editor's folder at the Centre, handed to the Editor or a committee member at a quarterly meeting or posted to 184 Gannons Road Caringbah South NSW 2227. Please include your name and state if you want any materials returned.



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LYNDAL HOLLAND JOINT WINNER – HENRY ROBERT HAZEL - THE ONLY GRANDFATHER I HAVE EVER KNOWN

by Rhonda McKinnon (Member)

My grandfather Henry Robert **Hazel** was born at 218 Cleveland Street, Darlington, New South Wales on 14 May 1881.¹ He was the son of silversmith Henry William **Hassall**, from Birmingham, Warwickshire and Eliza **McCarthy**. My family had many theories as to whether our surname Hazel was original or had been changed at some stage over the generations. After 40 years of research, it was only this year that I confirmed the original name was **Hassall**.²

Henry Robert married Annie Louisa **Davis**, daughter of James H Davis and Caroline **McGill**, on 27 April 1904 in the Methodist Church, Botany, NSW.³ After their marriage they lived in Clevedon Street, Botany, NSW. Annie was born in 1887 in St Peters, NSW⁴ and died on 12 August 1915 in Coast Hospital, Little Bay, NSW⁵ at age 28, and was buried on 14 August 1915 in Grave 57, Uniting B, Botany Cemetery, NSW.⁶ They had six children: Amy Irene (died as an infant), Leslie Arthur, Henry William, Stanley Victor, Robert George and Mavis Doreen.

After the death of his wife Annie in 1915, he gave baby Mavis to Annie's parents to be cared for. As he was working at the tannery he placed the other four sons in Bexley Salvation Army Boys Home.⁷ He married for the second time in 1918 to my grandmother Alice May **Luby**, who endeavoured to gradually take each of the boys out of the Boys Home.



*Henry Robert Hazel at Norton Bros Tannery
(photo: Maree McKinley)*



Salvation Army Boys Home, North Bexley, before it was rebuilt in 1938 (photo: <https://clan.org.au/orphanages/salvation-army-boys-home-bexley-north/>)

My father Reginald was born not long after their marriage, followed by Dorothy May, Valda Rose, Gregory William, Neville Vincent and Aileen Joy.

Henry worked as a currier at Norton Brothers Tannery at Mascot for many years, where some of his sons joined him for their employment. He was Secretary of Norton Bros Cricket Club⁸ and also played for the South Sydney Cricket Club. He was a member of the Grand United Oddfellows Lodge at Mascot and held the position of Grand Master at one period. I have memories as a young child attending the ceremony when he became Grand Master. He also enjoyed playing cards with a group of his friends a couple of nights a week.

My father served in the Navy on the *HMAS Stuart* in World War Two and my mother together with my sister went to live with my grandparents while he was serving. My sister thought Grandfather Henry was her father so called him "Farder". He was always known as this name by all his grandchildren.

Henry was a tall man with long fingers and a long face. He was an intelligent, interesting and an unassuming gentleman and I remember he enjoyed smoking his cigarettes in a holder. My sister and I often stayed at my grandparent's house in Sutherland Street, Mascot during school holidays, although it was rather crowded. We put the two armchairs together for my bed and my sister took the long lounge. I loved to stand at the front gate at 4.30pm to wait for Farder to get off the tram and walk down the street with his Gladstone bag. While he filled up the coal scuttle my sister, Maree, and I had the job of getting his slippers ready in front of his lounge chair.

As most of the family lived in the Mascot area, Sunday was family day when all members of the family gathered at the family house. It was a ritual for my family to catch the bus from Dolls Point to Mascot, most Sundays. A piano stood in pride of place in the lounge room, where my grandmother Alice played all the

old tunes, plenty with an Irish touch. I can still remember the words to most of those songs. My grandparents Henry and Alice had a special moment when they sang a duet. The small alcove between the lounge room and bathroom housed a linen cupboard and had a square of linoleum on the floor. My youngest aunt Aileen was a showgirl at the Tivoli and my sister and I learnt tap toe and ballet, so when the call was made from my grandmother Alice – “OK who is next on the lino” we had to entertain the family. It was time to wind up the day when one uncle sang “I’ll be down to get you in a taxi honey” and an aunt would follow up with “Mexicalli Rose”. My Nanna had the honour of singing the last song: “Alice Blue Gown”. The good old days of family get-togethers!



NORTON BROS CRICKET CLUB 1920-21

Presented to H R Hazel Esq by his Club Mates, in Recognition of his Service as Secretary

Back Row: S Fletcher, C Weyman, A Finney, J Manning, E Chapple, W Norton, T Cunningham

Third Row: C Hughes, L Dive, F Farrar, G Starr, W Timbury, M Norton, G Chapple, B McArdle

Second Row: J Philpott, R Hughes, H Hughes (Capt), E Norton (Pres), H Hazel (Vice Capt), G Farrar, H Doel

Front Row: G Taylor, J Norton, Mascot, N. Norton, J Harri

(Photo: McKinnon family album)

Henry or Harry as he was known lived a long and happy life in the Mascot area. He forgot to wake up on a Sunday morning, 10 September 1967 at the age of 86 years. He was cremated on 12 September 1967 and his ashes placed in the Memorial Garden P3, at Botany Crematorium.⁹

RIP "Farder"

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NEW MEMBERS

We offer a warm welcome to the following new members. Please use your membership to attend meetings, interest groups, classes and the Research Centre (and please ask for help if you need it).

1988	Tony Mangioni	Dolans Bay
1989	Michele Mangioni	Dolans Bay
1990	Graham Mundy	Jannali

GETTING STARTED WITH ZOOM - A SIMPLE GUIDE TO JOINING OUR FAMILY HISTORY MEETINGS

by Jennie Fairs (President)

Staying connected is more important than ever, and Zoom has made it possible for us to meet face-to-face from the comfort of our own homes. If you are new to Zoom or haven't used it in a while, don't worry – this guide will walk you through everything you need to know in clear, simple steps.

What Is Zoom? Zoom is a program that lets people hold “virtual meetings.” Instead of gathering in a physical room, we meet on our computer, tablet, or smartphone and see each other on the screen – a little bit like a telephone call with pictures.

What You Need Before You Begin. Just three things:

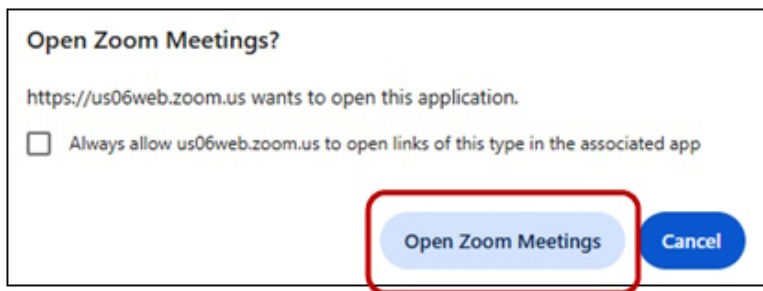
1. **A device** – this can be a desktop computer, laptop, iPad/tablet, or smartphone.
2. **Internet access.**
3. **A Zoom link** – sent or available to you before a meeting.

***NOTE:** You do not need to create a Zoom account just to join a meeting.*

How to Join a Zoom Meeting

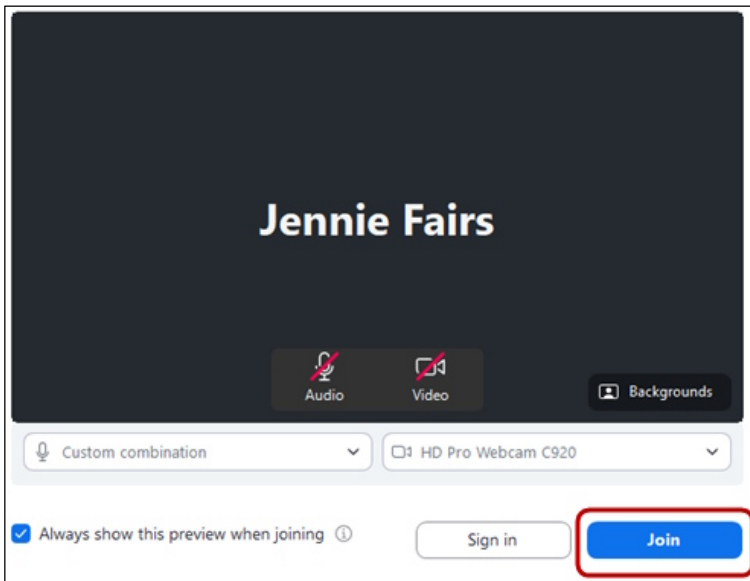
1. Using a Computer (Windows or Mac)

- Find the Zoom link in your email or newsletter and click the link.
- A pop-up window will appear – click on “Open Zoom Meetings”.



NOTE: The first time you use Zoom, your computer may ask permission to install a small program. Click “Yes” or “Download and run Zoom.” After a moment, you’ll see a window asking for your name. Type the name you want others to see.

- Click “Join.”
- When the meeting opens, you may see two pop-ups:



- 1 “Join with Computer Audio” – click this so you can hear everyone.
- 2 A video preview – click “Start Video” if you want others to see you.

2. Using an iPad, Tablet, or Smartphone

- Go to the **App Store** (Apple) or **Google Play Store** (Android).
- Search for “Zoom” and install “Zoom Cloud Meetings.”
- Return to your email and tap the Zoom link.
- Your Zoom app will open automatically and take you to the meeting.
- Tap “Join with Internet Audio” so you can hear the meeting.
- Tap “Start Video” if you want your camera on.

Helpful Buttons on the Zoom Toolbar (see illustrations, next page)

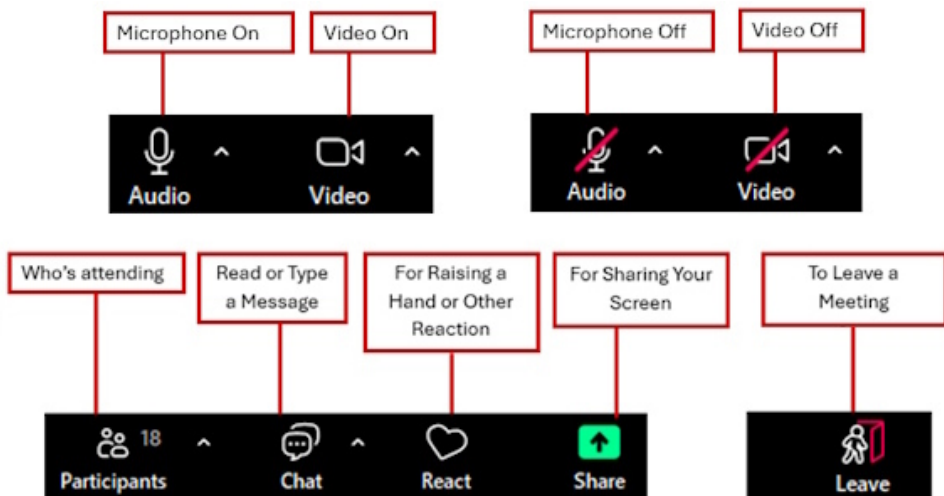
Once you’re in the meeting, look for these buttons (usually at the bottom of the screen) which you can use:

- **Mute / Unmute** – turns your microphone off or on. If there’s a line through the microphone icon, others cannot hear you.
- **Start Video / Stop Video** – turns your camera off or on.
- **Leave Meeting** – when the meeting is over, click this to exit.

No one expects you to be perfect — everyone clicks the wrong button sometimes!

NOTE: You can still enjoy a Zoom meeting even if you do not have a microphone or camera attached to your computer. If you want to ask a question or add a comment — simply use the Chat feature of Zoom.

- Don’t worry – you can’t “break” Zoom. Exploring the buttons is safe!



If Something Goes Wrong

Technology can be tricky, even for experienced users. Some common issues:

No sound?

- Check that your device's volume is on and turned up.
- Make sure you clicked “**Join with Computer/Internet Audio.**”

Others can’t hear you?

- Make sure you're not muted (microphone icon shouldn't have a red line).

Others can’t see you?

- Click “**Start Video.**” (video icon shouldn't have a red line).

The screen freezes?

- Wait a few moments – often the internet just needs to catch up.
- Turn off your video if it is a problem to save bandwidth.

Tips for a Smooth Experience

- **Join 5–10 minutes early**, especially if you are new to Zoom.
- **Sit in a well-lit area** so others can see you clearly.
- **Keep your device plugged in** or fully charged.
- **Microphone:** Unless speaking, it is common courtesy to keep your mic muted to avoid background noise.
- **Video:** When your video is turned on – **remember everyone can see you** if you are eating, sleeping, yawning, playing with your nose or constantly getting up and down to do things. To avoid embarrassing moments, it is good practice to turn off your video camera unless you are contributing to the conversation.
- The **Chat** feature allows you to send a typed message to “**Everyone**” or an “**Individual**” participant. When chatting with an individual make sure you have selected only that person to avoid publicly revealing a private conversation.

Why Join Us on Zoom?

Zoom allows everyone – near or far – to join our family history conversations. It also allows us to secure international or distant guest speakers for your benefit. So, whether you're sharing stories, learning new research skills, or simply listening in, your presence enriches our gatherings.

Meetings held on Zoom are listed in our Calendar on page 3 of *The Endeavour* or the Events Calendar in the Main Menu on our website at <https://www.botanybayfhs.org.au/>

I hope this guide helps you to feel confident enough to join our next online meeting and I look forward to seeing you there!





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THE LICENSED VICTUALLER

by Glen O'Connor (Member)

It was TV's Granny Clampett who first exposed me to the word vittles as another name for food. This common English word, which had a French origin, was later Latinised to victuals but use of the earlier spelling remained popular, particularly by English migrants to the United States.

Historically, at least in England, a victualler was anyone who sold or traded food, whether cooked or raw. A Licensed Victualler had a much narrower meaning, being a person who sold cooked food but who also had a licence to sell alcohol – in other words, most publicans and hotel keepers. In 1793, ten licensed victuallers got together in London and established a charitable institution they called the Friendly Society of Licensed Victuallers. The aim of the charity was to look after the welfare and education of members and their families. The work of the charity was funded from the annual fees paid by members plus other income, contributions and donations.

One very clever initiative was in 1794 when the Society established its own daily newspaper, originally called the *Publican's Morning Advertiser* (later the *Morning Advertiser*). The paper was specifically sold in pubs and hotels and catered to their clientele. Its news and articles were all about pubs, hotels, publicans, landlords and breweries, both in London and around the country. Pubs and breweries advertised their products and pubs and hotels were advertised for sale or lease. The paper also published articles and stories of interest to readers. For example, Charles **Dickens** was one of the earlier contributors.

The paper became an instant hit with the clientele because it also provided detailed horse racing guides. The paper was not aligned with any political party, unlike most other papers of the day. During the mid-1800s, the paper's circulation was second only to *The Times*. It is the oldest continually produced newspaper in the United Kingdom and is still published today.

The next major initiative of the Society was the establishment of a school in 1806, at Kennington in Southwark, to provide both maintenance and education of children of deceased or distressed members who had been annual subscribers to the Society. The demand for placement in the school was soon overwhelming with the result that admission was made subject to election by subscribers. The aim of the school was to prepare the children for good trade apprenticeships or household positions. The focus was not on training to be future victuallers but that was always an option.

A Licensed Victualler's Asylum was established in 1827 at nearby Peckham

as a hospital and retreat for distressed members whose age and illness were now preventing them from earning a living. The asylum was located in a very poor area on the Old Kent Road, which as some will know, was the cheapest land you could buy on the original Monopoly board.

Not all publicans or landlords could afford the annual fees of the Society. If you were fortunate enough to be a member, you were immediately elevated to a higher position in society as a reputable businessman. The sale of alcohol had largely become a disreputable business. London was awash with establishments variously called inns, taverns, grog shops, alehouses, beerhalls, bars, public houses, taprooms, hostelrys and gin palaces. Although The Worshipful Company of Innholders, with origins as a medieval guild, had oversight of the trade in alcohol, its influence was largely lost by 1800 as the number of illicit outlets exploded.

By 1818, a victualler named William **Rees**, who was my 3 x great grandfather, was running a tavern called *The Harp* in Little Russell Street in the London district of Holborn. The tavern, which was not far from the theatres of Drury Lane, was a popular meeting place for actors and musicians, particularly those looking for work. The public space was divided into drinking wards, each defined by the quality and cost of the drinks available. One ward was called the Suicide Ward and it was reserved for charity cases with no funds.

William later took over *The George*, a more upmarket public house in Fenchurch Street, Aldgate. From here, his prospects rose, thanks to some worthwhile family and business connections in the trade. As the licensee of a public house, he was required to be a member of the Company of Innholders as a victualler. All victuallers were expected to pay the appropriate fee to become admitted as a Freeman of the City. William was duly admitted on 23 September 1823. Freemen were allowed to vote in municipal elections (but only after taking the sacrament in church) and were not liable to pay tolls. They were also exempt from the attention of press gangs.

Around this time, William was also admitted into the Society of Licensed Victuallers. It helped that he had a good friend (or possible relative), Joseph **Morgan**, on the board of the society. In early 1825, William and his wife Susannah, made the fateful decision to move across the Thames to Southwark where he took over the licence of the *Mitre Taven* at Broadwall, near Blackfriars Bridge. The tavern was very popular among the working class of the area and was frequently used a meeting place for many of the local charity lodges and fraternities. The bridge was a regular site for suicides and the tavern played host to many an inquest into untimely deaths. Inquests were often held in the evening as it was easier to find more amenable people for the coroner's jury at that later time.

Tuesday 23. Sept. 1823
 and in the fourth year of
 the reign of George the fourth
 of the United Kingdom of Great
 Britain and Ireland King &c

Heygate. Mayor

Upon the humble request of William
 Rees who obtained an Order of this
 Court of the 10th day of March 1823
 to be admitted into the freedom of this City by Redemption
 in the Company of Innholders
 paying unto Mr Chamberlain for this City's use the
 sum of forty six shillings and eight pence. It is
 now Ordered that he be admitted accordingly
 altho' it is more than three Months since he
 obtained the said Order notwithstanding the Order
 made by this Court the 21st day of February 1726
 to the contrary.

Woodhouse

William Rees admission as a Freeman of the City (Image: Ancestry.com – London,
 England, Freedom of the City Admission Papers, 1681-1930)

The only beer sold by the tavern was a dark beer known as porter, made by
 the Anchor Brewery, which had once been the largest brewery in the world. Food
 at the tavern would have included bread and cheese, bacon, roast meats and pies,
 pastries and stews made from left over and off-cut meats. The classic dessert was a
 slice of fruit pie with custard. Alcohol was generally cheap but food was expensive
 and often beyond the means of the poorer working class who ran a serious risk of
 becoming Australians if they were caught stealing to pay for food.

Some of London's pomp and pageantry made its way to the *Mitre* in 1826 after the annual election of the Lord Mayor of London. For over 800 years, the election of a new Lord Mayor had been celebrated by a procession in which the guilds, institutions and associations of London put on an ornate parade of bands, floats and entertainment. The procession sometimes moved onto barges on the Thames and this is the origin of a float in a parade. In 1826, the parade crossed over Blackfriars Bridge on its way to Westminster Hall, except that some in the parade, namely the Five Knights in Armour and their attendants, the Yeomen of the Guard and the State Trumpeters dropped off to take refreshment at the *Mitre*.



The Mitre Tavern, Broadwall, Christchurch, 1867 (Image: London Picture Archive)

William and Susannah took time off work to attend the Frost Fair in 1830. Yet again, the Thames completely froze over, largely thanks to the old London Bridge which acted as a partial barrier slowing the flow of water. The so-called Mini Ice Age, which ran for 500 years until about 1850, also helped. Festivities and entertainments were held on the ice. People set up tents and camped there. An elephant was walked across the river near the Broadwall. As it turned out, this was the last Frost Fair as London Bridge was demolished the next year.

There was much excitement at the *Mitre* in June 1832 when the Reform Bill was finally passed by Parliament and became law. The reforms promised a broader and fairer voting franchise and fairer treatment of the poor. However, it was in that

same month that the cholera outbreak reached this area of Southwark, with particular savagery on the residents along the Broadwall. 60 years old William Rees and his 45 years old wife died within days of each other. *The Morning Advertiser* reported among the death notices “On Tuesday 10th July, Mr Rees, of the Mitre, Broadwall, Christchurch, a subscriber to the Licensed Victuallers’ School and the Asylum, leaving behind him a wife, many children, and many friends to lament his loss.” A similar notice appeared for Susannah Rees a week later. They left behind three young sons and a daughter from Susannah’s first marriage.

William had made a will leaving everything to his wife but Susannah died without a will, creating a messy estate for her half-sister, Eliza **Davis**, to deal with. Fortunately, family friend Joseph **Morgan** was still influential and the boys found their way into the Licensed Victuallers’ School where they were housed and educated. One of the sons, my 2 x great grandfather, George Rees, also became a Licensed Victualler and Freeman of the City. He ran a succession of pubs in London, including *The Ship* in Rotherhithe, which still runs today but under the name *The Clipper*. George made his way to Australia in about 1859 as a late arrival on the gold rush scene.

The *Mitre* lasted longer than most old London public houses. Built in the mid-1700s on the site of a field, it had a major refurbishment in about 1880. It featured under its own name in the 1970-71 television series *For the Love of Ada* and in the 1972 movie of the same name. Run down and neglected, it was finally demolished in 2003. The vacant land is now an organic vegetable growing community allotment, returning to its earlier use as a field.

RESEARCH CENTRE OPENING TIMES

Monday, Wednesday and Friday – 10 am to 2 pm

Please phone 9523 8948 if going in after midday.

Centre closed after Saturday 13 December

Centre re-opens Monday 12 January

Centre closed Public Holidays

**When researching, please ask for help if you need it – it is why
the Centre assistants are there and they love to help.**

FHBB RESEARCH CENTRE AND LIBRARY

by Jean **Campbell** (Research Centre Coordinator)

The Research Centre was used for the **NSW & ACT State Conference on Zoom** on the second weekend in September. There were 15 members present on the Saturday and 12 on the Sunday. There were some interesting and informative talks. Thanks Richard and Jennie for their organisation.

Some announcements from the Conference:

- **Family History Botany Bay won the Dorothy Fellows Award, category A, for our website.** This is the fourth time we have won this award. Congratulations to Pat Fearnley and her assistant Richard Linklater for their fabulous work.
- **We also won \$500, for a Society who held a mini-conference.** This was donated by Chris and Marilyn Rowan from Marilyn Rowan Transcription Services (<http://www.marilynrowan.com.au/>). Thank you!
- **Three of our members won prizes in the raffle!**

The Research Centre was used for the **English Interest Day Seminar** on Saturday 18 October, with 19 people in attendance and six members giving very interesting talks on a variety of topics, all related to ancestors in England. This was well received by everyone present and follows on from the Australian Interest Day Seminar held in June.

Next year, we will be holding more Interest Day Seminars, including ones for Scotland and Ireland, starting in April 2026, so keep your eyes on our eNEWS.

PLEASE have a look at the books and magazines that have been generously donated and see if any are of interest to you. There are quite a number of boxes. Thank you to everyone who has donated these items.

Once again, thank you to the Centre Volunteers, who keep the Centre open and available every month. Your time and expertise are so valuable. I have also had a few more members who have volunteered their time in future months. Thank you!

Best wishes to everyone over the holiday period. We are closing the Research Centre on **Saturday 13 December 2025** and will be opening again on **Monday 12 January 2026**.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BLOCK BOY

by Dianne Switzer (Member)

As dawn approached, Thomas dragged his tired body off the boards he had been sleeping on. The brisk air sent shivers down his spine as he hurriedly dressed. He could hear his mother in the other room preparing his skimpy breakfast. The wafting smell of toast lathered in dripping from the previous night's meal being grilled on the open fire, greeted him as he walked through the door.

Gulping down his tea and smoky charred toast, Thomas picked up his long-handled shovel and scoop, waved good-bye to his mother, as he stepped out of their shack into misty cold air. He was running late and sprinted down the cobbled street as sunlight peaked through the buildings. He crisscrossed through the streets hoping to make his block in time. The stench from the rotting garbage and manure was enough to make one gag as he darted in and out, avoiding the puddles from the previous night's rain.

He just made it, he was there before the overseer had arrived although the bellowing from the other street warned Thomas, he was not far away. It sounded like his mate was getting a blasting; his area must not have been cleared of debris.

The clip-clopping of horse's hooves over the wooden blocks on the street told him his first job may not be far away. Grabbing his shovel and scoop he was ready. He spied orange peel to the left of him, quickly scooping it up, only to spot some more rubbish a little further on. The horse and cart which had now reached him stopped, the horse raised his tail and deposited a mound of manure in front of Thomas. The fumes and steam coming from the manure produced an odour quite foul. As the drayman was attempting to edge his horse out of the way of a four-wheeled carriage thundering down the street, Thomas shovelled up the mess.

Scraping and scooping up rubbish off the streets was a tedious job. Sweet smelling odours coming from the open doors of homes as residents cooked their meals was a welcome diversion from the smell and stench. To see the city come to life as people went about their daily routines was inspiring.

Thomas often daydreamed about the people he saw, what they did for a living. Some were dressed in top hats and flashy jackets and scurrying along, while others looked as bedraggled as he, as they went about their trades.

While attempting to miss horse's hooves and wheels of carts and carriages, Thomas found there was more dung and rubbish to shovel up as he combed his street block. There was evidence of a party the night before as bottles had been flung onto the footpath. He would salvage those. A lone and mangy cat cowered nearby hoping for a tiny morsel that Thomas had left behind.

The council cart would be around soon to collect any dead animals, piles of rubbish and manure. It was a long, never-ending day and with bending and lifting, it was back-breaking work. Thomas would be glad to get home at the end of the day; to greet his mother with his meagre wage so she could put food on their table.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

A recent task for the Botany Bay Writers Group was to write about an ancestor who followed an occupation that is now obsolete. Although I don't actually have a family connection to Thomas' story, I was always intrigued by the block boys' hard life after volunteering for Sydney City Archives many years ago, where I learnt they actually existed. There is not a lot written about the Australian block boys – maybe one of your ancestors was a block boy?



THE WRITERS INTEREST GROUP – A RECOMMENDATION

by Dianne **Switzer** (Member)

I only joined the Botany Bay Writers Interest Group this year but am thoroughly enjoying my time here. Because I live over the other side of Sydney and am not able to travel to meetings I was made feel very welcome on Zoom.

I have nearly completed my father's history but am finding with all the hints from Leonie and other members, I am adding more and more to his story. Some things I had not even thought about and anything extra, makes the story more interesting.

Now because the Writing Group is on Zoom, it makes it much easier for anyone not in the area, to join and enjoy listening to other stories as well as learning more. Not all stories are printed in the magazine so you now have the chance to hear them at the Writing Interest Group meetings.



WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

is available at the Research Centre.
Please phone 9523 8948 to make arrangements.

WOOLOOWARE BAY, THE OLD NISSEN HUT AND THE OYSTER FARMING INDUSTRY

by Les Rogers

Prologue by Pat Fearnley (member)

Pedestrians and cyclists, using the Woollooware Bay shared pathway which stretches to Cronulla notice in passing a dilapidated old Nissen hut at its edge adjacent to the site of the new Heirloom Restaurant now nearing completion and being built by Anglicare as an adjunct to its retirement village, Woollooware Shores. Anglicare is undertaking the restoration of the old hut and resident Les Rogers researched its origins as part of Woollooware Shores' celebration of its 20th anniversary early next year. In doing so, he became interested in the oyster farming that took place in the Bay from the early 20th century onwards and in the remnants of that industry still visible, including the heritage listed jetty at the water's edge. His historical summary is contained in the following article.

Introduction

Why is this quaint Nissen Hut snuggled up amongst the mangroves at the high water level on the shores of Woollooware Bay? That is the question many residents have pondered and researching through historical records held by the Sutherland Shire Council, the following facts were found.

The 'Nissen Hut' was designed in 1916 by Major Peter Nissen, an engineer with the British Royal Engineers during World War



Nissen Hut – front (photo: Les Rogers)

1. Its semi-cylindrical steel frame, covered with corrugated iron, made it affordable, portable, and easy to assemble. These huts were widely used during both World Wars for military accommodation, storage, field hospitals, and mess halls. After World War II surplus Nissen huts were repurposed for civilian use, including temporary housing, workshops, farm buildings, storage sheds, and even churches. In Australia, they played a role in migrant accommodation, such as those at Villawood, particularly for post-war European immigrants.



Nissen Hut – rear overview (photo: Les Rogers)

Historical Significance & Oyster Farming Connection

The heritage listed Nissen hut at Taren Point is closely linked to oyster farming in Woollooware Bay which thrived from the late 1800s to the 1990s and is part of conservation efforts to preserve its historical integrity while adapting it for modern storage use, ensuring that its historical significance remains a part of the community's heritage. The hut was used as a storage and oyster processing facility and the oyster jetty, and other structures, can still be seen from the Woollooware Bay Shared Pathway.

Woollooware Bay sits on Dharawal Country, part of the Georges River-Botany Bay estuary. For countless generations, the Gweagal clan fished and gathered oysters along its mudflats, mangroves and saltmarshes. These natural beds provided an important food source and shaped the cultural landscape long before European settlement.

From the mid-1800s, Woollooware Bay became part of the cradle of Australia's oyster industry. Natural beds had been over-harvested and burnt for lime, prompting experiments in cultivation. Nearby, politician Thomas Holt attempted French-style oyster ponds at Gwawley Bay in the 1860s. Although costly and unsuccessful, such ventures laid the groundwork for oyster farming practices that spread throughout the Georges River estuary.

Between the 1940s and 1970s, Woollooware Bay supported significant oyster lease activity, particularly around Shell Point and Pelican Point. Council records show measures to protect foreshore strips for the industry, while research farms tested methods to overcome disease and mortality problems. Yet pressures from pollution, reclamation proposals and urban growth gradually undermined the industry's long-term viability.

Woollooware Bay's oyster beds were developed by dedicated families. Clarence and Ed Lewis, Reg and Ken Humbley, and Norm Pilgrim were among the best-known names in the 1960s, maintaining beds, racks and trays. Their work continued traditions begun by pioneering families like the Drakes and Derwents, who established oyster farming along the Georges River.

At the end of Atkinson Road, Shell Point, a timber-pile jetty was built in the mid-1950s. Extending more than 150 metres, it served as a vital oyster-processing platform. Boats delivered trays and sticks for sorting and packing. Today the jetty is a heritage-listed structure. Repurposed as part of the Woollooware Bay Shared Pathway in 2018, it now also serves as a safe roost for shorebirds.



Timber Pile Jetty (photo: Pat Fearnley)

Beside the jetty stands the war-time Nissen hut. Known locally as the “McHale’s Navy Hut”, it has been used for more than 60 years as storage by oyster farmers and others. The hut, together with the jetty, forms part of the industrial-heritage landscape of Woollooware Bay.

By the 1960s, oyster farmers faced mounting challenges. Garbage tip proposals, foreshore reclamation, water pollution, and disease outbreaks such as “winter mortality” weakened the industry. Some leases wound down by the 1980s. However the site has been renewed through conservation projects and the foreshore today balances heritage, recreation and ecology.

Today's Bay

Oyster farming has not vanished entirely. Recent heritage assessments accompany proposals to replace ageing over-water structures and enable continued aquaculture. The Shared Pathway and conservation works now invite the public to appreciate Woollooware Bay as both an ecological sanctuary and the birthplace of Australian oyster farming.



Clockwise from top left

Ed relocating 2 year old oyster sticks

Tending oysters from a punt

Loading hessian bags for transport to distributors throughout Sydney and Australia

(photos from interpretive signage at the Shared Pathway, courtesy of Ed Lewis and Sutherland Shire Council)



DIGGINGS



Diggings are titles of articles in journals that we exchange with other societies. We do not list all articles appearing in that particular journal but those that are noted as articles unrelated to the journal's origins. We recommend that you read any journal which originates from an area in which your ancestors had connections.

Members may borrow from the collection of printed journals exchanged with other family history societies held at the Research Centre and Library for the years 2020 to 2024. Please ask a volunteer for the loan procedure. Digital exchange journals are also available at the Research Centre and may be viewed on the computers (click on the *Resources on the Server* icon on the desktop).

AUSTRALIA

Traces Edition 31, 2025

Brad Argent (Ancestry) shares hints and advice on building of a family tree using the Ancestry platform

Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society

The Establishment of Mounted Policing in NSW

Preserving Walla Walla's Heritage – discusses early German settlement in the area

Liverpool Genealogical Society No. 140 Jun 2025

Relationships - and their historical meanings

Old terminology and relationships

Naming patterns

Top eight Family Tree builders of 2025

Liverpool Genealogical Society No. 141 Oct 2025

Sydney's Mutiny – aftermath of the revolt. Riot of WW1 soldiers at Liverpool
Tasmania arrivals immigration and departure records



BRITAIN

Irish Roots 3rd Qtr 2025

Getting started with chromosome browsers and chromosome printing – Donna Rutherford shares some handy hints

Local Resources for Family History Research – County Monaghan

Surnames of County Monaghan

Australian Irish Connections

Landing your Ancestral Research to Ireland – a readers tip for planning your trip to Ireland

Facebook Friends continues with the “M’s”

Compiled by Kate **Anderson** (Member)

THE SUTHERLAND TO CRONULLA RAILWAY LINE

by Colleen **Passfield** (Member)

In the latter days of 1939, after many years of campaigning, negotiation and construction, the branch railway line from Sutherland to Cronulla was, at last, nearing completion and due to open on Saturday 16 December 1939. For more than twenty years, local residents had been increasingly active in their efforts to improve transport between Sutherland and Cronulla as the resident population increased and the area became popular with holiday-makers and day-trippers.

After the extension of the railway line from Hurstville to Sutherland in 1885, horse drawn coaches of the Cronulla based **Giddings** family met the train and provided transport to Cronulla and, in 1908 a motor bus service was introduced into the Shire and operated between Sutherland and Cronulla. It was described as being unfair to operators of established coachlines whose takings declined but continued to operate under a permit offered by the Superintendent of Traffic.

In 1908 the Government approved construction of a steam tram route which opened in 1911. The Sutherland-Cronulla steam tram commenced from the southern end of the Sutherland Railway Station, swung east around the Council Chambers and continued on the Kingsway through Gymea, Miranda, Caringbah to Cronulla, through Cronulla Street, Waratah Street and Ewos Parade and terminated at Shelley Park. The tramway operated until 1932 when it closed due to heavy losses caused by unrestricted private bus competition.

However, the private bus service could not match the service given by the tramway in busy holiday periods. Other beaches were better served by public transport and shopkeepers complained of loss of patronage as the number of visitors declined. In 1926, the electric railway network was extended to Hurstville and Sutherland Council became more involved in the campaign to construct a railway line from Sutherland to Cronulla. At a Council meeting on 19 February 1930 Councillor C.O.J. **Monro** proposed that, like the funding of the Georges River Bridge, the Council should arrange a loan to meet the costs of construction. Land would be resumed around the proposed six stations to create model residential centres and sale of the land would meet the costs of the railway construction, land acquisition, development and compensation. The State Government would guarantee the Council against any loss in the implementation of the scheme and on completion the railway system to Cronulla would be handed over to the Railway Commissioner free of debt. An Act of Parliament would have to be passed for this proposal to be accepted and Councillor Monro planned to introduce a Private Members Bill.

In the Shire there was strong opposition to the proposal led by the Miranda Ratepayers Association – rather than resume and use ratepayer's properties to fund the railway, the whole state should meet the cost. Councillor Monro, as State Member for the district, withdrew his proposal but continued to agitate for the construction and gained the support of influential members like the Deputy-Premier and Minister for Transport Michael **Bruxner** and Hon. J.M. **Dunningham**, Minister for Labour and Industry.

In February 1936, the State Government approved the introduction of a bill to authorise construction of the Sutherland Cronulla Railway Line which would be 10.2 km in length, a single track, with stations at Kirrawee, Gymea, Miranda, Caringbah, Woollooware and Cronulla. In addition to crossing loops at Gymea and Caringbah, goods sidings would be provided at Miranda and Cronulla. The Cronulla platform would be 389 m long, capable of dealing with two eight-car trains at one time in expectation of increased crowds travelling to the beach. The Premier also received a report from the Commissioner for Railways, T.J. **Hartigan** detailing the estimated cost of construction.

The Sutherland-Cronulla Railway Bill was introduced by the Acting-Premier and Minister for Transport, Mr. M. Bruxner, and came before Parliament in July 1936. Speaking in support of the Bill, Councillor Monro, United Australia Party (UAP) for Georges River spoke of how the Shire would benefit from the construction of the railway in providing employment, promoting industry and business, opening up residential areas and bringing Cronulla within easy reach of residents on the Illawarra line and the western suburbs. During the debate, supporters of the Bill were concerned when members of Monro's own UAP stated their intention to join with the Opposition in voting against it but, on 7 July 1936, after passing through all stages in the Legislative Council, the Bill authorising the construction of the railway from Sutherland to Cronulla was passed.

While the Bill was before Parliament the Hon. J.M. Dunningham gave assurances that some 300 returned soldiers would also be employed on what was regarded as an unemployment relief project. Two suggested routes were surveyed for the proposed railway and the route through Sutherland and thence to Cronulla was finally selected. The Council had been agitating for a new railway station at Sutherland for some years and the Railway Department decided to relocate the station further north while constructing the Cronulla Railway.

The building of a major engineering work was the biggest thing to happen in the Shire and, despite the problems to be overcome, construction was to take two years and due for completion at the end of 1939. Roadway systems had to be re-arranged as railway crossings were under the line or over it without level crossings. Homes and properties were disturbed, dust was a nuisance and closure of some roads during summer was not popular. But there was much cooperation between

the Council and the officers of the Railway Department and complaints were surprisingly few. The project was completed on time and within budget.

In July 1939 Councillor Monro announced a proposal to hold a 'Carnival Week' to celebrate the opening of the railway which would be the biggest event to happen in the Shire. Various events, like inter-State swimming, surfing, golf and tennis carnivals would happen in the different districts, with films made for overseas distribution to boost tourism for the Shire. All organisations in the Shire would be invited to assist in compiling a celebrations program for this important occasion. There would be special activities for Scouts, Guides and other schoolchildren, a water pageant on Gunnamatta Bay, and life-saving displays on the beach at Cronulla and, in the evening, a Railway Ball at the Cecil Ballroom.

Local residents were looking forward to the celebrations that would accompany the official opening ceremony to be conducted by the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Wakehurst, in a grand manner befitting such an important occasion in the Shire's history. The outbreak of World War 2 in September and the enlistment of many local men threatened to put a dampener on the celebration plans but, after discussion, the organisers made some appropriate adjustments to ensure the celebrations would make it a day long remembered in the Shire and excitement continued to grow as the final arrangements were put in place.

Thousands gathered at Sutherland and Cronulla to attend the official functions and small groups gathered near each of the new stations along the line to cheer the first train. The official train with a large royal crest on the front carriage, surrounded by flags, ran from Sydney and picked up invited guests at Sydenham and Hurstville. After its arrival at Sutherland, Lord and Lady Wakehurst arrived by motor car with a police escort. His Excellency inspected a guard of honour of Shire ex-servicemen as the NSW Police Band played the National Anthem, then proceeded to the dais where speeches would be amplified and radio broadcasted.

A bouquet was presented to Lady Wakehurst and Councillor Monro welcomed Their Excellencies to the Shire. In his reply, Lord Wakehurst noted that this was the first railway line that he had opened since becoming Governor of New South Wales and nobody had anticipated that the line would be opened in wartime. The growth of development in the Shire where population had grown from 1500 in 1906 to 18,000 had shown the need for fast transport facilities. The new railway would provide a modern fast electric service with special signalling equipment, a modern design for the stations and the absence of level crossings.

After Lord Wakehurst cut the ribbon to allow the first train to go through, the official party and invited guests boarded the train and travelled to Cronulla passing through the new stations. On the way, Driver Ben Randall was able to answer some of Lord Wakehurst's questions concerning electric train driving.

Randall had been a railway man for over 40 years and used to drive the old steam trams between Sutherland and Cronulla. Other trains immediately followed the official train into Cronulla where a large crowd of 5,000 was waiting to greet them.

On arrival, music was provided by the St. George District Boys' Band and the NSW Police Band and a guard of honour of Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Junior Red Cross and Australian Air League members was inspected by Lord and Lady Wakehurst before they proceeded to the official dais. They were joined by the Premier, Mr. **Mair**; Deputy-Premier and Minister for Transport, Mr. Bruxner; Minister for Works and Local Government, Mr. Martin, Mr. **Stevens** M.L.A., the president of the Sutherland Shire, Councillor Monro, M.L.A., deputy president of Sutherland Shire, Councillor **Bingham**; the Chief Railway Commissioner, Mr. T.J. Hartigan, and Mr. A.J. **Hand**.

In the ceremony at Cronulla, Councillor Monro praised the Deputy-Premier and Minister for Transport, for holding that position for many years with great distinction and for his work in putting the Cronulla Railway Act through Parliament. He called upon Mr. Bruxner to officially declare the new Cronulla station open. In reply Mr. Bruxner referred to the co-operative teamwork of the many men who worked on the construction of the railway. In particular he mentioned the "efficient control of the Commissioner, Mr. Hartigan, with his chief engineers". Councillor Monro presented Mr Bruxner with a silver salver to commemorate the opening and also his work in putting the Cronulla Railway Act through Parliament. Mr. Bruxner declared the new station open and also unveiled a bronze tablet to mark the opening of the new line by the Governor.

After this ceremony, about a hundred guests were taken on a tour of inspection around Cronulla and then returned to Monro Park where marquees had been set up and afternoon tea provided for invited guests. Councillor Monro proposed the toast to the Governor and presented him with a locally-made polished Australian wood cigar box. In responding to the toast of 'the Parliament of New South Wales' the State Premier, Mr. A. Mair, referred to long-time dream of Mr. Monro and his persuasive powers that led to the passage of the Bill through Parliament. Mr. B.S. Stevens described the Cronulla railway as "the fulfilment of a long-promised dream" and the persistence of Mr. Monro in his advocacy for this line. It was the only railway line in the metropolitan area which connected a beach with the suburbs and he predicted that a huge residential population would follow the opening of the line. His prediction would be fulfilled in the immediate post-war years and beyond.

The war postponed the development that was expected after the railway line was completed but, when peace came, the rate of development exceeded all expectations. Sutherland Shire's growth was the fastest in Sydney between 1947 and 1961 when the population reached 111,000. The Shire continued to flourish

and on 16 December 1989 another plaque was unveiled at Cronulla Station by the local member Bruce Baird, Minister for Transport to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Sutherland to Cronulla railway line which remains the only line providing direct access to a beachside suburb.

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- Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/>
- NSW State Parliament – Former Members



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ALEXANDER THOMAS BISSET BLAIR – SHIP’S CARPENTER TO SHIPWRIGHT AND BUILDER

by Pat Fearnley (Member)

Alexander **Blair** was my three times great-grandfather and he was born in Saltash, Cornwall in 1818, the second son of Alexander Blair, a long-serving gunner in the Royal Navy, and Tryphena **Sleeman**, a sea captain’s daughter.

At age 10, his parents enrolled Alexander in the Greenwich Hospital School, established in 1692 by Queen Mary II, wife of King William of Orange, and who had been inspired by the sight of wounded sailors returning from the Battle of La Hogue in 1692.

Alexander fulfilled all the Lower School admission criteria of the school, in that he was between the ages of 9 and 12, having a father who had served on his majesty’s ships and the family being numerous and in need. Several of his brothers were also enrolled in the school. Parents were required to sign an agreement that if their child was admitted into the school he must remain there as long as the directors thought proper, but no longer than the age of 14, and be at their disposal to be sent to sea, to serve in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Merchant Sea Service.

In 1837, in London, aged 18, he signed on as a ship’s carpenter on the *Samuel Cunard*, a whaler operating in the South Seas Fishery, plying the whaling grounds, Sydney, Kiapara (NZ), Launceston and Hobart.



The ship's carpenter's role was most a most important one, equivalent to a warrant officer, and involved a degree of privilege on the ship, answerable only to the ship's master (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship%27s_carpenter - cite_note-mckechnies-4) although he did not have his own cabin. His duties required him to continually inspect the ship's timbers, the state of the masts and repair any damage to the ship, especially in emergencies. He was responsible for keeping the ship afloat, in charge of its water stocks, caulking, stopping leaks and splicing masts and spars as required and maintaining paddles. One of his important tasks was maintenance of the ship's hull from attack from barnacles and ship worm. He had to exercise much ingenuity in his work and use whatever material was available. He was in charge of the ship's chest of tools and on ships without a surgeon, might even do simple surgery.

Carpenter's tool set (increase magnification to see tools and read their names)

Early whaling in Australia was carried out using harpoons from small boats and the whales were either towed behind the boats back to whaling stations on shore, or the blubber was rendered to oil and stored in barrels on board. 19th-

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century whaling ships were typically barques or schooners, used to hunt whales for their oil and other products. These ships were equipped with whaleboats, designed with pointed ends for manoeuvrability, try pots for rendering whale blubber, and large holds for storing barrels of whale oil. Life on board was arduous and dangerous, with crews facing long voyages, harsh conditions, and the constant threat of accidents or attacks from whales, to say nothing of long periods of boredom and a monotonous diet that usually consisted of ships' biscuits, known as hard tack, and made of flour, water and salt, and salted beef and pork that had to be soaked for hours in fresh water, with one or more changes of water, before it became edible.

At the start of the voyage, vessels set out with dried peas, beans, potatoes, rice, hard tack biscuits, salt pork, salt beef, salt fish, dry fruits, and molasses. Livestock such as pigs, chickens, ducks, and goats were commonly kept aboard for milk, eggs, and meat. The animals were either kept in pens or allowed to roam. When these supplies ran out, vessels would restock at various ports for fresh water, vegetables, and livestock. The islands in the Pacific Ocean offered a welcome variety of fresh foods like breadfruit, bananas, plantains, coconuts, oranges, pineapples, papayas, and figs, as well as pigs, chickens, fresh fish, and occasionally seabirds. The crew were served out of one large tub, and since they didn't have chairs, they sat on their sea chests to eat.

The Royal Navy had formally adopted the sling hammock in 1597 and each whaling man had his own canvas hammock and bedding which he stowed during the day. They were like a cocoon in a "wrap around" style which



prevented him from being tossed out in rough waters while he slept. The picture below depicts a sailor about to embark on his ship carrying his hammock and

bedding. The crew slept in very close quarters, but the use of hammocks helped keep down the population of bedbugs, fleas and lice.

In addition to being dirty and dangerous, whaling was monotonous work. Life onboard consisted of long periods of boredom; for weeks, even months, no whales would be seen. The crew would repair gear, write letters, play games and music.

To stave off boredom the sailors would often carve scrim. Scrimshaw is scrollwork, engravings, and carvings done in bone or ivory. Typically it refers to the artwork created by whalers, engraved on the byproducts of whales, such as bones or cartilage and commonly was made out of the bones and teeth of sperm whales. Below is an example of scrimshaw carved by a fellow-convict of another ancestor of mine who arrived on the *Parmelia* in 1833.



Whaling was a lucrative industry in the early years when whales were plentiful and the number of vessels hunting them was relatively small, but the industry had started to decline as years of ruthless slaughter took a toll. Whale stocks fell steadily and made it increasingly difficult for vessels to return to port with a full ship. Other factors were at play, too. Whale oil was previously essential for illuminating homes and businesses in the early 19th century, and for lubricating the machines of the Industrial Revolution, but the discovery that petroleum oil could be made into kerosene, the use of which superseded whale oil as a lamp fuel was a major game-changer. The advent of the gold rushes, too, meant that men were lured away from the sea to seek their fortunes on the land, which for all its hardships, were less hazardous than the unforgiving dangers of the ocean.

By the mid 1840s Alexander Blair had opted for a life on land, having met his future wife, Mary Ann, married her and began raising a family in Launceston. Momentarily, he appeared to have been tempted by gold fever, writing to his brother Robert in



England that, “I have not reached the goldfields yet but thinking of going in about three weeks as the men are all going though I am now paying men 15 shillings per day but the fever is so strong that they will not stay at those wages.” Ultimately, despite some financial hardships, Alexander did not succumb to gold fever. Instead, his boyhood maritime education in the Greenwich Hospital School, followed by his years of experience on whaling voyages, well fitted him to establish himself as a pioneer shipwright and one of Launceston’s earliest builders, writing to his brother that, “We have been married for 12 years and are very comfortable and happy.”

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

A recent task for the Botany Bay Writers Group was to write about an ancestor who followed an occupation that is now obsolete. I chose my 3 x great grandfather Alexander Blair whose story is shown above.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Pat’s article shows how members can write parts of their family history in “small chunks”. Writing a huge family history is daunting but by concentrating on either individuals or family units, the task can be broken down into something that is easily manageable. Will you write a piece of your family history? If so, I will be happy to include it in *The Endeavour*, giving you constructive feedback if required.



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FHBB INTEREST GROUPS

by Barbara **Barnes** (Interest Groups Coordinator)

The interest groups give research assistance and help break down brick walls with suggestions by fellow participants. The discussion and interaction during a group's session facilitates social engagement. Please feel free to contact a coordinator for further information.

The group coordinators are:

Irish Interest – Elizabeth **Steinlein** (care of info@botanybayfhs.org.au)

Scottish Interest – Jean **Campbell** (jeanhcampbell47@gmail.com)

Writers Interest – Leonie **Bell** (LeonieNB65@gmail.com)

Family Tree Maker for Windows and Macs –

Pam Heather (pamheather@gmail.com)

DNA for Family History – John **Levy** (j.levy@bigpond.net.au)

Technology Interest – Jennie **Fairs** (fairsj@gmail.com)

UPCOMING PROGRAM

IRISH INTEREST:	Saturday 22 November 2 – 4pm
By ZOOM	Saturday 21 February 2 – 4pm
SCOTTISH INTEREST:	Saturday 13 December 2 – 4pm
At the Research Centre	Saturday 14 February 2 – 4pm
WRITERS INTEREST:	Thursday 27 November 1.30 – 3.30pm
By ZOOM	Thursday 26 March 1.30 – 3.30pm
FAMILY TREE MAKER	Thursday 25 November 1.30 – 3.30pm
FOR WINDOWS & MACS:	Thursday 24 February 1.30 – 3.30pm
By ZOOM	
DNA FOR FAMILY HISTORY:	Saturday 29 November 1.30 – 3.30pm
By ZOOM	Saturday 1 February 1.30 – 3.30pm

NOTE: Session dates are organised months in advance. Members are advised to check the latest details on our Events Calendar at www.botanybayfhs.org.au or see your fortnightly FHBB eNEWS. Please book and pay the \$5 fee to attend an interest group meeting at <http://www.botanybayfhs.org.au/payments.html>, preferably 24 hours prior to the meeting.

DAVID BAIN MEETS THE TARTAN PIMPERNEL

by Helen **Bain** (Member)

My husband's grandfather David (Davey) **Bain** was born in 1898 in Perth, Scotland, a town with a long military history. At the age of 19 he enlisted as a Private in the Black Watch and served in France in World War 1. After the War, he retained his connection with the Black Watch by joining the Territorials. When World War 2 broke out, he again found himself back in France in the 51st Highland Division which included the Black Watch.

On 12 June 1940, the Scottish and an English Battalion making up the 51st were routed by the German Panzer Divisions lead by Erwin **Rommel**, at the town of Saint Valery en Caux on the northern coast of France. With their backs to the sea and no hope of being taken off as part of the Dunkirk evacuation, commanding officer Major General Victor **Fortune**, a Scot born in Aberdeenshire, had no alternative but to surrender to Rommel.

That day, all the men of the 51st Highland Division and the French Battalion that they were there to support, became prisoners of war and faced a long hard trek to Germany via Belgium. There were however a number of notable escapes, mostly in the early stages of the march – Davey was one. The first attempt he made, with another man, was foiled and they were recaptured. Feeling he had become a marked man, he decided to try it alone. Success – and he was on the run.

The details of his journey south to Marseilles and how he evaded capture are unknown and much of this article comes from what little he confided to family members plus the few details I have found on the subject. As he was “off the grid” there is very little hard information. *Ancestry.com*, however, did come up with a document. It is a reply to a request made by the War Office in Liverpool, UK Casualty Branch to the Black Watch HQ in Perth for information on the status of a list of missing soldiers. Davey's name is on the list and in reply, dated 20 February



Davey Bain, in his Black Watch uniform with the red hackle on the Tam o' Shanter (photo: John Bain family album)

1941, came the answer which reads: *Pte Bain is reported as being with the Rev D Caskie Marseilles*, while the only information National Archives , Kew, United Kingdom has on record is: *Pte D Bain 2750096 – Black Watch, Escaped from France to Spain* (no date)

About the same time in Paris, the Reverend Donald Caskie, rector of the Scots Kirk in Rue Bayard, was considering his options as the German forces entered Paris in early June 1940. Having spoken out in his sermons against the Nazis, his life was in danger. He was convinced to leave for the south of the country to catch one of the last ships leaving for England. So with nothing but his Bible and his kilt he set off on foot.

By the time he reached Marseilles he had a change of heart about leaving France and presented himself to the American Embassy, which was still in operation, to see what he could do to assist the many allied civilians pouring into to the city, which was now in the hands of the German-sympathetic Vichy French.

The American Embassy and allied undercover agents in their trust had an alternative dangerous proposition for Caskie: to establish a halfway house in the town's abandoned Seamen's Mission building – on the face of it for civilians only but actually a means of hiding Allied servicemen and smuggling them out of the country to neutral Spain via the Pyrenees. So began an amazing underground organization assisting the escape of at least 500 military personnel out of France over the Pyrenees to neutral Spain. This was to continue until 1943.

Once a man left Caskie's Mission the plan usually consisted of a couple of escapees, in civilian clothes, forged papers and their French Pyrenees mountain guide, taking them to the Spanish border, being careful not be spotted by the Spanish guards. In the book Caskie wrote after the war, he unfortunately does not explain what was intended to happen when a man reached Spain but it is known that the British Ambassador to Spain, Sir Samuel **Hoare**, hid men in the Embassy in Madrid until some means of repatriation could be arranged, often via Gibraltar.

Whatever this plan was, it didn't go as expected as Davey was picked up by the Spanish after crossing the border. He was gaoled as an illegal immigrant where he remained for about two months. Unexpectedly, one day his captors came to him to say they had run out of food and could no longer keep him and he was free to go.

A decision had to be made and this was to retrace his steps and go back to France. This he did and by some means was picked up by the French Resistance. Also known as the Maquis, they were known for their first hand intelligence on what was going on in the country and being the maintainers of escape networks for Allied military trapped behind enemy lines. Ultimately they were able to get Davey out of the country and back to Britain.

Once there, he was detained by the authorities for questioning for several weeks with no outside contact. He was eventually put on the train to Perth to join his unsuspecting wife and children, who had earlier been told that he was “missing presumed dead”. His unannounced arrival back in Perth was after dark. Initially no one in the house was game to open the door to the stranger with the torch knocking on their door demanding entry. Wife Mary said she nearly fainted on the spot when she realised it was the husband she thought dead. She had been in the process of applying for a widow’s pension. Davey was home again.

In 2020 the Black Watch commemorated the 80th anniversary of the surrender at St Valery. At that time I approached the Black Watch Museum in Perth in the hope of obtaining anecdotal information they may have about Davey or other escapers. The only record they had for him was his transfer to the Army Catering Corps, on 3 April 1943, where he remained for the rest of the War. As a cook he gained the new nickname of *Tucker* – a name which stuck for the rest of his life.

Rev Donald Caskie was a Presbyterian Minister, born on the Scottish island of Islay, who spoke Scottish Gaelic, English and French. French was learnt by all the children in his class at school on Islay by their far sighted teacher. The Gaelic came in handy to confound the Gestapo when he underwent interrogation.

Caskie was eventually betrayed by the British traitor, Harold **Cole** and spent a harsh time in several prisons. He was by chance able to avoid execution by the intervention of a German priest and finally became a free man in August 1944 upon the liberation of Paris.

For security reasons, Caskie did not keep records of the many he helped escape so the actual number of escapees is unknown. The only name he ever mentions is that of the last person he helped – William Nash of Whitburn, West Lothian, Scotland in 1943.

Caskie was awarded an OBE for his services and wrote an account of his War experience in *The Tartan Pimpernel*, the proceeds of sales going towards the rebuilding of his Kirk in Paris. The building was reopened in 1957 by Queen Elizabeth II who flew to France for the occasion. (Note. The name by which Caskie was known, *Tartan Pimpernel*, was inspired by the 1905 novel by Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, set in France during the “Reign of Terror” at the start of the French Revolution, where the English hero of the story leads a double life, saving French aristocrats from the guillotine.)

In conclusion – something I found on *The Genealogist* website. It is believed that nearly half the WW2 British POWs who escaped to get back to Britain were from the 51st Division – a fact I am yet to confirm.



*Davey Bain (Tucker), centre, in Army Catering Corps attire, 1943
(photo: John Bain family album)*

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- *Black Watch* by Tom Renouf; Little, Brown 2011.



This article lists the new Library accessions. We remind members that there is a wealth of family history information accumulated over some 41 years in our Library. **Not everything is online!** Check out our library catalogue at <http://www.botanybayfhs.org.au/library--research-centre.html>. You may be very surprised at what you find! **Come to the Research Centre and have a look.** Thank you for the donations from those members who are ‘downsizing’.

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- The Family History Book – How to Trace Your Ancestors in Australia. [A.GUI.1.29LC]

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- The Good Old Days Along the Manning River and Great Lakes. [AN.LH.2429.7LC]
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- Remembering the Shire – Botany Bay Family History Society Writers Group. [AN.LH.2232.25LC]
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- Hill End – A Historical Australian Goldfields Landscape. [AN.LH.2850.9LC]

QUEENSLAND

- Belle of the Barcoo – Tambo – Genesis of Queensland’s Central West. [AQ.LH.4478.1LC]
- Pastoral Country – A History of the Shire of Blackall. [AQ.LH.4472.1LC]

OVERSEAS

- The Clans and Tartans of Scotland. [S. HIS.1.17LC]
- Cornwall – A History. [E.CON.HIS.1.2LC]
- Pigot & Co’s National Commercial Directory for 1828-9 for Cumberland, Lancashire & Westmoreland – facsimile edition. [E.SOU.15.2LC]
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- Edinburgh in Olden Times. [S.MLN.LH.3LC]
- Clans and Tartans of Scotland. [S.HIS1.18LC]
- Clan Fraser – A History Celebrating Over 800 Years of the Family in Scotland. [S.HIS.1.19LC]

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- The Pioneer Register, Volume XII. [G.BIOG.3.17]
- The Pioneer Register, Volume XIII [G.BIOG.3.18]
- The Pioneer Register, Volume XIV [G.BIOG.3.19]
- Known Descendants of Jane Walker. [G.FH.WAL.4LC]

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Compiled by Janette **Daly** (Librarian)



NOTES AND NEWS



Dubbo & District FHS reports that Dubbo Regional Council has made its cemetery records searchable on its new Memorial Mapper, which you can find at <https://maps.dubbo.nsw.gov.au/Cemeteries/>. Run a search for your ancestor to find the plot location – shown on a satellite image of the cemetery; plus photos of the grave or headstone. It is now no longer necessary to pay a fee for a simple enquiry, to help you find where your ancestor was buried.

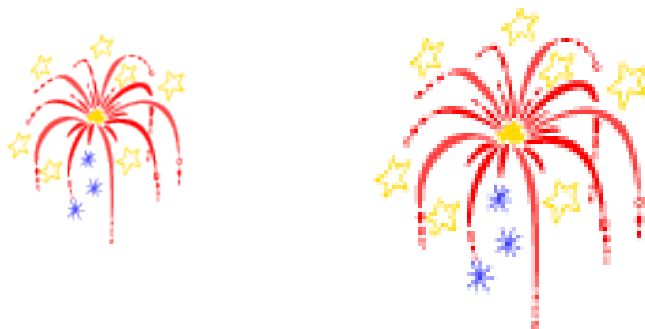
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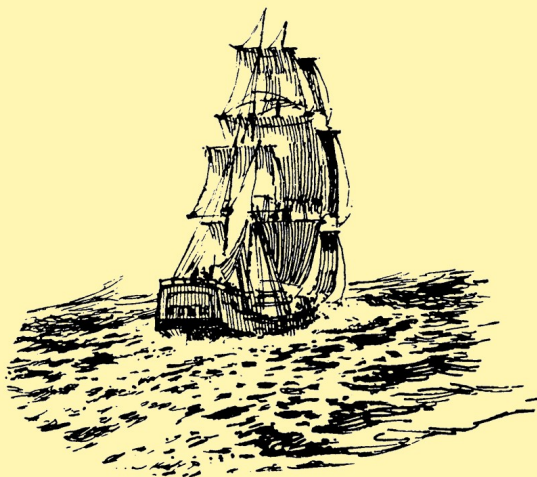
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