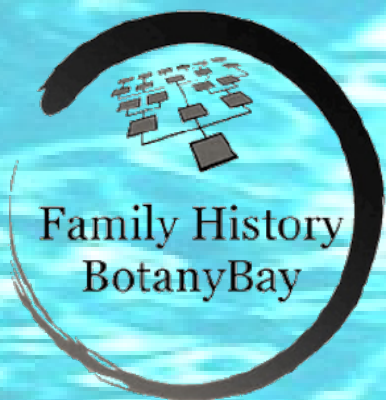




THE ENDEAVOUR

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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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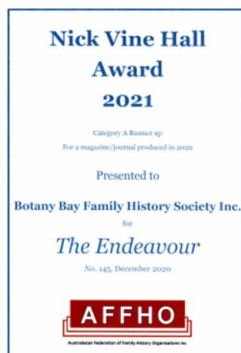
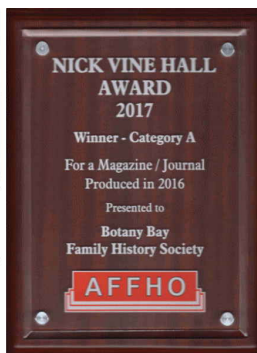
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CALENDAR



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

- Feb 24** Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30 pm on Zoom
- Mar 7** **Meeting – 1.30 pm Research Centre. Saturday.** Speaker: Gillian Lewis – *The Long Journey Home, the Story of the Unknown Serviceman from HMAS Sydney II*
- Mar 18** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of FamilySearch*
- Mar 19** Tour – Botany Cemetery
- Mar 21** Irish Interest Group: 2-4 pm on Zoom
- Mar 24** NSW State Records Bus Trip – all day
- Mar 26** Writers Interest Group: 2-3.30 pm on Zoom
- Apr 1** **Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom.** Speaker: Fleur Creed – WeAre.xyz
- Apr 4 – 6** Easter Public Holidays – Research Centre closed
- Apr 11** Scotland Interest Day at Research Centre, details TBA
- Apr 14** Workshop – Find a Grave: 10am-12pm at Research Centre.
- Apr 15** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of Reading Old Handwriting*
- Apr 17** Tour – Egyptian Room, Petersham
- Apr 18** Technology Interest Group: 2-4pm on Zoom
- May 2** Workshop – DNA Workshop at Research Centre, details TBA
- May 6** **Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom.** Speaker: Charlotte Sale – *How to Do Research So It's Right*
- May 20** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of Scanning Photographs & Documents*
- May 21** Tour – Brislington Medical and Nursing Museum, Parramatta
- May 23** Volunteer's Day at Research Centre
- May 26** Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm on Zoom
- May 28** Writers Interest Group: 2-3.30 pm on Zoom
- Jun 2** Workshop – Beginners Guide to Photo and Scanner Use in Genealogy: 10am-12pm at Research Centre.
- Jun 8** King's Birthday Public Holiday – Research Centre closed
- Jun 13** **Meeting – 1.30 pm Research Centre. Saturday.** Speaker: Mike Traynor – *Our Ancestors' Voyages*
- Jun 17** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of Using PowerPoint to Showcase Your Research*
- Jun 18** Tour – to be announced.
- Jun 20** Irish Interest Day at Research Centre, details TBA

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Hello everyone, I'm delighted to announce that we've finalised dates for several educational events at the Research Centre.

In-Person Interest Days

11 April – Scotland Interest Day

20 June – Irish Interest Day

29 August – Australia Interest Day

24 October – England Interest Day

We're seeking speakers for these Interest Days! If you'd like to contribute a talk (15 minutes to one hour), please contact me at president@botanybayfhs.org.au. Topics can include anything within the day's broader theme: a favourite research website, compelling family stories, insights from visits to ancestral locations, or practical research techniques. Sharing your experiences helps fellow members tackle similar research challenges.

Specialist Workshops

14 April – Making Better Use of Find-a-Grave (John Levy)

2 May – DNA Interest Workshop Day (John Levy)

2 June – Beginner's Guide to Photo and Scanner Use (Richard Linklater)

14 July – Using Google Earth for Genealogy (Jennie Fairs)

Discover Our Microfiche Collection

Did you know the Research Centre houses an extensive microfiche collection? This underutilised resource contains valuable Australian and overseas material including cemetery records, poll books, county directories, monumental inscriptions, and parish registers.

Notable holdings include Ships Pictures Index 1491-1991, Kiama Independent Birth, Death, Marriage & Obituaries Index 1863-1919, Walter Carter Funeral Books 1887-1922, Relations Index of Immigrants to NSW 1848-1879, NSW Telephone Directories 1889-1926, East India Company Records, Buckinghamshire Settlement Papers Index, and Cambridgeshire Baptism Index 1801-1837.

You can view microfiche at the Research Centre using the Scan Pro or the standalone microfiche reader next to Computer 1 and you can access the complete microfiche catalogue via the Research Centre icon on our website or directly at https://www.botanybayfhs.org.au/uploads/5/1/1/7/51172945/microfiche_catalogue.pdf.

I hope you'll find something here to spark your next research adventure!

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.

In our December 2025 *Endeavour*, we presented the winning entries for 2025. In this edition we follow up with three wonderful entries about the life of an ancestor in Australia. Please enjoy the articles by Pat Fearnley, Shirley Walker and Narelle Hitchcock on the following pages.



*Lyndal Holland
(photo: Holland family album)*

JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS – COPY DEADLINE

Please submit copy for the June 2026 journal as soon as you have it available but the deadline is **Friday 1 May** – 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.

Family History Botany Bay is a member of:



BRIDGET

by Patricia **Fearnley** (Member)

Her name was Bridget – Bridget **Duffy** – and she was my great-great-great-grandmother. A child's maid, she was a small woman, only 5 feet tall (1.52 m), with brown hair, grey eyes and a ruddy, freckled complexion. Her birthplace was Manorland, a townland on the north side of the River Boyne in the ancient town of Trim in County Meath, Ireland.

At 19, Bridget was convicted of stealing money, her second offence, and transported to Port Jackson, Sydney, arriving in the Colony of New South Wales on 27 December 1839 on the barque *Minerva II* as one of 119 female convicts whom ship's surgeon Patrick **Magovern**, called *low Irish female convicts*. Magovern also commented: *then there is the fight and scolding day and night, above and below, the real sickness and sham illness to obtain hospital comforts, the endless scheming and tricks are barely credible*. One plus seemed to be that the convict women and 32 steerage passengers arrived in a good state of health. It must have been a shock for Bridget to arrive at the height of a Sydney summer with days of 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29°C) after leaving Ireland in the depths of winter. What would have been passing through her mind as she felt trepidation about what the future held for her, far from her home and familiar surroundings?

After arrival, Bridget would have been assigned to work as a household servant or sent to the Female Factory at Parramatta, but no records survive for her until in August 1843 when she was assigned to Mrs Smythe of Eastern Creek. In 1844 she was on a list of runaways apprehended, so back to the Female Factory for her! Next, on 20 April, she absconded from Mrs Anderson of Macquarie Street and was apprehended a month later. It was well-known that female convicts did not fear the Female Factory and had been heard to say that they preferred the Factory to assignment. Perhaps Bridget was one of them.

Enter Walter **Leonard**, a Meath convict who had arrived on the *Neptune* in January 1838, following a sentence of seven years transportation for stealing a coat. On 9 January 1845 he had just received his Certificate of Freedom and obviously wanted a wife who could join him on the next stage of his life as a free man. As it seemed that Bridget was still an inmate of the Female Factory, it is almost certain that Walter availed himself of the 'marriage bureau' facility there to choose a wife.

This was described by James **Mudie** to the Parliamentary Selection Committee on Transportation of 1837 thus: *The women are brought out, and they all stand up as you would place so many soldiers, or so many cattle, in fact at a fair; they are all ranked up. The convict goes up and looks at the women and if he*

sees a lady that takes his fancy, he makes a motion to her.....then they have, of course some conversation together. If he finds one to please him, they get married.

Their descendants like to think that Walter would have been pleased to find a fellow County Meath woman by this method, even though there is no proof of this. But a mere two weeks after receiving his Certificate of Freedom, Walter and Bridget were married, beginning their life together in Parramatta where their first son Nicholas, named after his grandfather, was born later that year.

In October of 1846 Bridget received her Certificate of Freedom. In the years since her arrival she had lost a tooth on the left side of her upper jaw and now had a scar on her right cheekbone. 1848 found the couple living in a stone, shingled house in Fowlers Square, Sydney and children were born to them:

- 1845-1862 Nicholas
- 1846 Ellen – lived 2 years
- 1850 Twins Ellen & Mary
- 1852-1867 Walter jnr
- 1855 Margaret
- 1857 Catherine – lived 5 weeks
- 1858 Kate
- 1861 James Patrick – lived 9 days

The couple moved frequently during these years: Chippendale and Newtown, in Drutt, Sussex, Parramatta, Charles, and Brisbane Streets. Walter Leonard was making his living as a dealer, then a dairyman when he advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for a general female servant. Must be a good milker, he stipulated. Later, Bridget's husband became a tripe dealer, tallow chandler, and abattoir butcher.

In 1859, their 13-year-old son Nicholas was giving them trouble and his father published an advertisement describing him and offering a £2 reward. In 1861 Nicholas was again in trouble. £13 was stolen from their home and, said the Government Gazette: *suspicion is attached to a man who Leonard declines to charge at present*. The following year Nicholas, 16, died of a fever.

Walter must have been a trial to Bridget, feuding with neighbours and often before the courts for a large variety of offences, including allowing his pigs to stray and keeping his premises in a filthy condition, unsanitary conditions possibly contributing to the early deaths of five of their children of gastric fevers.

From contemporary reports it is extremely likely that the accommodation the Leonards lived in at various places over the years would have been of very low standard. A public enquiry of 1859 found that: *The house accommodation of the working classes of Sydney is admitted on all hands to be deplorably bad; even in*

the most recently erected dwellings the means of drainage and ventilation are almost entirely neglected.

On 10 February 1876, my 3x grandmother Bridget died of heart disease aged 59. Although her life in New South Wales was a hard one and far from a bed of roses, given that her early life in Ireland (which I have not touched on here) was heartbreaking and hopeless, what would otherwise have become of her? She raised daughters who were good mothers much beloved by their families and with Walter she founded our family, whose descendants embrace their Irish heritage, for which we are truly grateful, contributing in many different ways to our great country.



FHBB BUS TRIP TO STATE ARCHIVES

By Jean Campbell (Member)

A trip to the NSW State Archives at Kingswood has been organised for **Tuesday 24 March 2026** (This is additional to the one in August). Numbers are limited so it will be necessary to book and pay \$25 to reserve your place – through the FHBB website or at the Research Centre.

The following is preliminary information: The bus leaves at 8 am from the Sutherland Football Field, Rawson Avenue ('The Mad Mile', Old Princes Hwy) parking area, at Loftus. On the return journey the bus will depart promptly at 3pm from the Archives and return you to your car. There are tea and coffee making facilities at the Archives but no shops close by so **I suggest that you bring your lunch.**

Remember you need a Readers' Ticket! If you've been before, see if you can find it! If this is your first visit, apply online at <https://mhns.wa.au/readers-ticket-application/>

On **Tuesday 10 March** at the Research Centre at 10am Jean Campbell will host a free information session for participants which will include details for pre-ordering research items. Please confirm by email to botanybayfhs@yahoo.com.au if you will be attending this session and include *State Records Trip Info Session* in the header.

NOTE: This Information Session may be moved to a day in late February, if the Research Centre is closed because of the new roof going onto the building in March.



THE LIFE OF MY ANCESTOR IN AUSTRALIA – GEORGE BROWN

by Shirley Walker (Member)

George Brown was born in Southleigh, Devon in 1847 to a farming family. He was one of four children of George and Sarah Brown.

George married Helena at St Nicholas Church, Brighton, Sussex in 1872. He was aged 24 and a railway servant.

This small family sailed from London 17 June 1874 with 1 year old George on the ship *Great Queensland*. A boy was born on the voyage and named William Alexander Tasmania. He was born with a caul over his face, usually a lucky sign, but not for him.

The ship arrived in Maryborough, Queensland on 9 October 1874 with its complement of 508 passengers, after a voyage of six months. George and Helena, toddler George and baby William, made their new home in a new country on a sugar and pineapple plantation at Maryborough. Their simple dwelling was on the bank of Myrtle Creek, the Mary River on one side, and a swamp on the other. The location was most unhealthy and all suffered from dysentery and dengue fever.

Baby William died at the age of fourteen days, probably through malnutrition and he was buried temporarily outside the door of the cottage in a patch of cane in a roughly made unlined box. All the garments that could be spared were placed in the box and an attempt made to line it with calico. The finest handkerchief was then placed over the baby's face. When a slack day came, some of the men folk, including Mr **Burgess** who may have been a missionary, arrived to conduct a proper funeral. With Helena's black cashmere shawl and broom handles to transport the tiny coffin, they started in a rowing boat to Tiaro Cemetery.

There were native blacks around and they would call at the cottage for money when the men were away. The general feeling was to give it to them because in some places babies and small children would be held over the fire until money was forthcoming.

Life on the cane fields was pretty grim so they decided to travel to New South Wales. They moved to Marrickville and a daughter Helena was born. The **Henson** family were living in Livingstone Road and a couple of the menfolk worked on the Young railway which was gradually extending. Finding that George had worked at London's Shepherds Bush Station and knew signal interlocking they got him a signals job. He worked south as far as Lambing Flat and Murrumburrah-Harden. The family lived in a railway cottage at Young (Lambing Flat).

As Young was then the end of the line, livestock to be brought to Sydney came there for loading. Any stock that was in a bad state after long droving was left in their care to recuperate. At Bowning, as a Railway employee, they lived in a bark humpy with earth floor. When it rained it was necessary to cover it with railway tarpaulins because it had no proper roof. The tarpaulins were held down by bricks or billets of wood tied with ropes. Fowls came inside and roosted on the iron bar across the chimney to keep warm. Two pigs, goats, dogs, fowls and two babies escorted Helena across the bridge to the town. Quite an event when the menagerie set out for the days walk.

As the railway settled, George was brought back to the suburbs again, where Nicoli, Charlie, Constance and Frank were born. The family was temporarily at the railway house at Flemington. There was no doctor handy, he lived at Newtown and he travelled by horse and buggy. Neighbours and family helped with new babies. They got back to their own home in Neville Street, Marrickville where they were for some time. The railway men apparently let their homes to one another as they were moved up and down the lines. Baby Bob was born.

Auntie Fanny, Uncle George, their three boys and Granny (Mary Ann) lived next door. Both weatherboard cottages were separated by a large paddock where they had a cow, ducks and fowls. No water was laid on so folks had a well in the back yard to pump water. As well, all homes had a rain barrel at the side, fed by the down pipes from the roof. Auntie's son Arthur died and was buried in the old Balmain Cemetery, now the Pioneer's Park.

Across the back of the place was the tannery paddock. The old buildings were nearby with the soaking pits in a line along Sydenham Road fence. A very big, deep waterhole had been dug on the higher part for water for the works. Not far from the back fence was a heap of very big boulders under gum and turpentine trees. The stones were evidently dug out when this water hole was made. There were many rabbits around and at night you could see flocks of black swans, wild geese and ducks flying across inland from the coast.

One day, Nicki came down the side and round the back into the kitchen to his mother. She told him the other boys had gone to play in a paddock along Sydenham Road. Off he went down Neville Street. Then he came running back and said, "I forgot to say good bye, Mother". He kissed her and off he went over the tannery paddock to the brickwork's road. Within half an hour he was brought home dead, drowned in the brick works shallow hole in Sydenham Road. When the 'Brickies' on that afternoon shift got him out he had a duck egg in his hand. One of the men blew it and brought the empty shell to his mother. It was kept in a glass dome on the mantelpiece from then till mother died. A grim reminder. (This brick pit is now Henson Park).

George died in Auburn in 1900 and Helena died in Ashfield in 1935. They are both buried in the old Anglican section of Rookwood. The gravestone also mentioned her mother Mary Ann and Nicoli who had earlier been buried at Balmain Cemetery.



LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS



This article lists the new Library accessions. We remind members that there is a wealth of family history information accumulated over some 42 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’.

AUSTRALIA

- Tracking Down the Bushrangers. [A.HIS.37.5LC]
- Lost Glories – A Memorial to Forgotten Australian Buildings. [A.HIS.22.7LC]
- First Light – 150 Years of Gas. [A.HIS.1.61LC]

NEW SOUTH WALES

- St. Peters – Stained Glass Windows. [AN.LH.2044.3LC]
- Woollooware – A Grand Position. [AN.LH.2230.9LC]

OVERSEAS

- The Industrial Revolution. [BRIT.HIS.1.11LC]
- Britain Between the Wars. [BRIT.HIS.1.12LC]
- Roads & Tracks of Britain. [BRIT.HIS.41.7LC]
- How We Used to Live – Victorians Early and Late [BRIT.HIS.26.3LC]
- Cotswold – Architecture & Heritage. [E.GLS.LH.3LC]
- Parochial History of the County of Cornwall. [E.CON.HIS1.2CD]
- Lest We Forget – The Parish of Canisbay. [S.CAI.HIS.1.1LC]. (Extreme north-east area of Scotland)
- The Tartan Map with a List of Septs of the Clans. [S.HIS.1.20LC]
- The German Research Companion. [GER.GUI.1.10LC]
- Genealogy – How to do Everything. [INT.GUI.1.23LC]

Note: ‘LC’ indicates a loan copy, which can be borrowed; ‘CD’ a compact disc.

Compiled by Janette **Daly** (Librarian)

MRS BETSY RICE – A FEMINIST, WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, CONVICT, DAIRYWOMAN, HOUSEKEEPER, WASHER, SEWER

by Narelle **Hitchcock** (Member)

Disappointingly, I did not “meet” Betsy until she was 24 years old and I was 45. Eliza “Betsy” Moran/Moore was born somewhere in Ireland in the late 1780s but there is no record of her birth, her parents or her siblings.

In 1812, Betsy appeared in the City of London, County of Middlesex, Old Bailey Court, charged with stealing a sheet, stockings and a shawl belonging to her employer. She had been living with Catherine **Duggan** in Golden Lane for about five months, over which time ‘some things went missing’. The witnesses, for the prosecution, worked at a nearby pawn brokers and they identified the alleged stolen items.

‘Fortunately’, for Betsy she was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation to Botany Bay. I cannot imagine sailing for 138 days on the schooner *Wanstead* with 120 female convicts with no stops for supply replenishments. Betsy arrived at Port Jackson in the heat of mid-January, 1814.

After her arrival, my Betsy, was lost for two years. I have found no record of her in the Colonial Secretary’s Papers, Trove or Church Records, maybe her records are still waiting to be indexed? This reassures me that my Betsy was law abiding, and living somewhere in Sydney Town.

In 1816 Betsy’s first son, Thomas **Rice** junior, was born and baptised. Two years later Betsy married Thomas Rice senior at St Phillips Church of England, with the Governor’s permission. They were living in Phillip-Street where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

Thomas Rice was a Catholic, Irish convict serving a life sentence. His first trial was for larceny, and second was escaping from transportation. His death sentence was converted to transportation for life. On arrival in the colony in 1812, Thomas was assigned as a house servant to the Paymasters of the 73rd and then 46th Regiments.

Their marriage took place two years before the Roman Catholic priest Father **Therry** arrived in the Colony. The Colonial Secretary’s office paid Father Therry to service the needs of all Catholics in the Colony. Over the following years Betsy and Thomas had four more sons all baptised in the Catholic faith, and their only daughter Mary Ann Bridget Elizabeth, was born just before the 1828 Census. Betsy’s boys were enrolled, for several terms, in the fledgling St Marys Roman

Catholic School. Betsy and Thomas made regular donations to the first St Marys Church building fund. “Eliza Rice” is a sponsor in several baptisms in the early Parish Register.

By 1826 Governor **Bourke** disallowed drinking the contaminated Tank Stream water, being the unofficial sewer used for waste disposal of humans and animals. Government House along with genteel society moved west to Parramatta and the streets of Sydney became boisterous.

Somehow Betsy, who was Free by Servitude, owned seventy-five horned cattle and supplied milk, for many years, to the General Hospital. The cattle grazed on land at Bradleys Head next to the natives’ reserve.

Slowly Betsy appears more frequently in the records. She had applied to Governor **Darling** for a pardon on Thomas’ behalf, and she sold part of the Phillip Street allotment. Eventually Governor Bourke granted Thomas a Ticket of Leave.

Betsy’s Phillip Street home was a two storey, three room, brick house with a shingled roof and a detached kitchen. It was written that: *no street in the town where the mason and house carpenter appear to have found less employment*. For more than two decades she had a succession of Government Servants, several of whom absconded because of ill treatment.

In a letter to the newspaper editor, Thomas complained about a story written and published the previous week “... of me throwing stones and bones at my wife who declined to prosecute me...” Poor Betsy. Not long after this event her husband and three sons were charged with fighting and disturbing the peace. The judge states he...” is aware there was a certain part of Phillip-Street, where the Rices were very strong in number...and much given to disturbing the peace.”

My favourite story of dear Betsy is found in the *Sydney Gazette*, to hear her voice almost two centuries later is a privilege. The Court reporter had a wonderful way with words: *...Rice had a few words of sort with his rib, who had grilled a beefsteak to a cinder, in consequence of this breech of good housekeeping, he threatened her with a similar process to that which the steak had undergone, to which she replied, not being devoid of pluck “oh my good man, keep your breath to cool your porridge with, cook the next steak yourself...* Unfortunately, Thomas retaliated by throwing tables, chairs beds, crockery as well as Betsy out onto the street.

Betsy, now aged 41, and Thomas were in court facing another charge, of being drunk and boisterous. Surprisingly, a few years later Betsy’s family signed a petition to the Legislative Council supporting the total abstinence societies of Sydney.

During her lifetime Betsy became the mother of six children and the

grandmother to twenty-four grandchildren. Sadly, one son and ten grandchildren all died under the age of ten. Throughout her turbulent life with Thomas, they acquired four houses in Phillip and Bent-Streets and maintained their connection to St Marys Church which later became the Cathedral.

On 18 March 1858 Elizabeth wife of Thomas Rice, an old and respected resident of Phillip-Street Sydney died aged 69. She left three sons and a daughter living. Betsy was buried at Old Sydney Burial Ground and later re-interred with family members in the Old Catholic Section of Rookwood Cemetery (10 May 1901).

My Betsy had a difficult life, as an uneducated, Catholic, Irish, female convict. Yet with pluck, determination, and a few swigs of gin, she faced her challenges. Betsy Rice aka Eliza Moran is unconditionally admired and loved by her 3x great granddaughter.

So now I ask myself, was she ‘fortunate’ to be transported to colonial New South Wales?





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PLEASE MENTION *THE ENDEAVOUR* WHEN CONTACTING

MY DISCOVERY OF THE GEORGES RIVER

by Glen O'Connor (Member)

The languid waters of the lower reaches of the Georges River to the south of Sydney have long been a source of food, contemplation and entertainment. Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s at Oyster Bay on the Georges River in Sydney gave me many opportunities to explore my particular section of the river and its multiple ecosystems. I spent hours swimming in the tidal baths at Como or sitting in a row boat fishing for flathead, flounder, bream and whatever else managed to find its way onto my hook. I waded among the mangroves, netting small bait fish and luring crabs while being bitten by mosquitoes and often covered in bush flies. I dodged the incoming tidal invasion of huge jelly blubbers while swimming in the open water but never worried about sharks or other water-borne dangers.



Fun on the river at Como (photo: Georges River Library Local Studies Collection)

I explored the southern shorelines and the estuarine channels of the river from Kangaroo Point to the Woronora River. It was a slower and more idyllic life shared with friends, long before the days of GPS and jet skis. We relished the summers of hot days and noisy cicadas spent along the cooler foreshores, gazing at the river from the shade of Sydney Red Gums hugging the sandstone outcrops.

In later years, there were leisurely family outings at many of the picnic grounds at Como and along the river further upstream, such as Oatley Park,

Pleasure Point Reserve, Kelso Park, Deepwater Park, Lieutenant Cantello Reserve, Kentucky Reserve and Garrison Point. Crossing the river on the Lugarno Ferry was always an adventure.

Some years ago, I was keen to track down the actual source of the Georges River, suspecting it was somewhere in the south of the Sutherland Shire, between Appin and Darkes Forest. I was keen because I had only recently discovered that the source of the Nepean River was a stagnant pond of mostly highway run-off at the back of the Pie Shop at Robertson, a piece of trivia I have shared with many people, probably over-enthusiastically.

Well, it seems the traditional method to determine the source of a river is to trace the farthest point from the river's mouth or in other words, find the longest tributary. I mistakenly thought the source might be the highest catchment point above sea level, a view I still believe to be relevant. Google maps and others put the source of the Georges River just off Appin Road and within the catchment of the Cataract Scout Camp.

Other people believe the source is the tributary known as Maddens Creek which starts just to the west of the old Princes Highway, nearly opposite Boomerang Public Golf Course. I checked the distances and Maddens Creek is the clear winner for the longest tributary. To make me feel better, Maddens Creek is



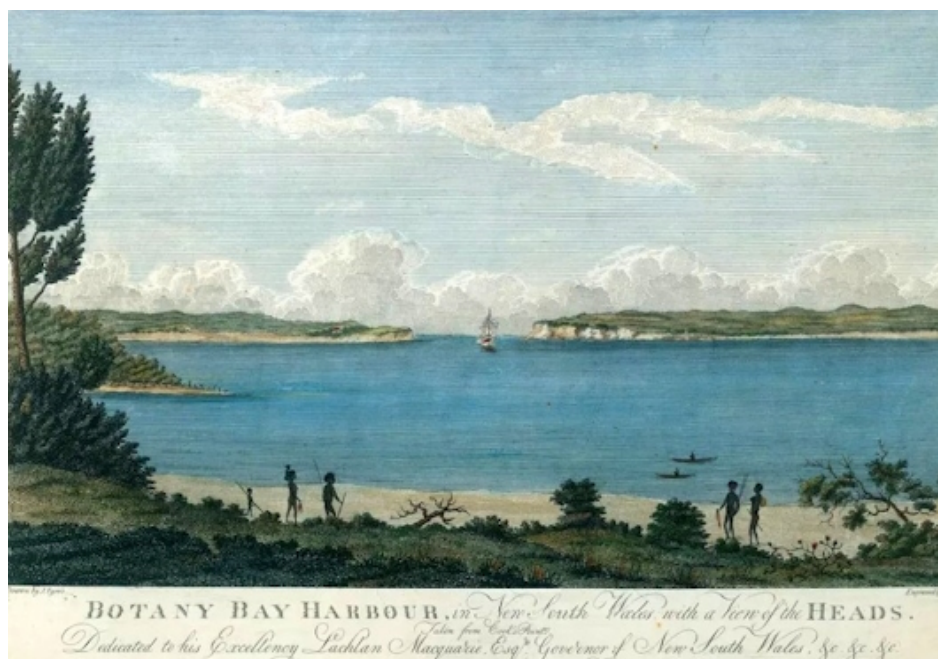
Maddens Creek, near source (photo: Phil Mulhearn)

also the highest at 390 metres as against 372 metres for the Scout Camp.

Maddens Creek runs down to join O'Hares Creek which then winds its way along until joining a larger flow of water at The Woolwash near Airds. Fresh water, if it can still be called that, continues all the way to the weir at Liverpool.

I was also pleased to discover that the source of the Woronora River was the head of Waratah Rivulet. Starting next to the Princes Motorway at 389 metres, less than a kilometre from the head of Maddens Creek. These two wonderful rivers of my childhood are almost sisters, or at least first cousins. Sadly, Waratah Rivulet has been terribly undermined and contaminated by coal mine boring.

Having enough information to satisfy my curiosity on the source of the Georges River, I then started looking into the river's geological history. I think it is generally known that 1,000 years or so ago, when sea levels were much lower, the river's mouth was many kilometres further east than the current location. As sea levels rose, sand was constantly redistributed until it eventually blocked the river from its pathway between Cronulla and Kurnell. The amazing sandhills forced the river to turn north where it met up with the Cooks River which had already cut a path to the sea. The mating of the two rivers thus gave birth to Botany Bay.



Botany Bay (the Art Gallery of South Australia)

That wasn't the end of my discovery tour. I was just as fascinated to find out that the first recorded European to take a good look up the Georges River was Second Lieutenant Philip Gidley King, who would later be the third Governor of New South Wales. To be fair, James Cook's people had a peek up the river in April 1770, at least as far up as Kangaroo Point but it was King who did a more serious exploration of the river.

The First Fleet had arrived in Cape Town in October 1787 on their way to Botany Bay. Governor Phillip was concerned, among other things, about the French heading for the same destination and decided to take off in the smallest ship of the fleet, the armed tender *Supply*, hoping to arrive in Botany Bay well ahead of the rest of the fleet. His ship dropped anchor in Yarra Bay, west of today's La Perouse, on 18 January 1788. A quick look around the Bay revealed little in the way of fresh water. The following day, King took a rowboat to the mouth of the Georges River in search of potable water and good soil.

Soon after entering the river, he rowed up what would be the Woronora River, past Mangrove Island but only as far as Bonnet Bay. He then explored the bays and coves as far as Lugarno where he and his crew climbed the rocks to the high ridge for a better view. He noted that the area had good black soil. He was later chased away by an aggressive band of natives.

He duly reported back to Phillip that he found no worthy source of fresh water. Other crew from the *Supply* had similar results from their excursions elsewhere. Phillip and his officers were very unimpressed with the ability of Botany Bay to sustain a penal colony. The soils were found to be largely sandy, water was scarce, there was an abundance of swampy land and the Bay was shallow and not particularly safe from strong winds and swells. Little did they know they had arrived in the middle of a long drought. To Phillip's great surprise, the rest of the fleet arrived in the Bay on the following day, 20 January.

Phillip was now under more urgent pressure to find a suitable site for the colony. While the fleet was still arriving, he sent two boats out to make a final inspection. King went back to the Georges River and was soon joined by Phillip in the other boat. The boats made their way up to the head of Lime Kiln Bay where they likely encountered a group of natives. Phillip showed his skill at projecting warmth and friendliness and was soon getting on well with the inhabitants.

However, he did not change his opinion about the suitability of Botany Bay or the river. He soon took a boat to explore opportunities to the north of the Bay and as we know, he quickly decided on Sydney Cove in Port Jackson as the site for the colony, probably because he at least found a fresh water source and a very good harbour for ships.

Phillip and his officers would have known that the lower Georges River also had plenty of deep water and protected coves for a large number of ships. Had he explored further upriver, past the high sandstone cliffs, he would have discovered not only good sources of fresh water but also a large expanse of abundant, fertile soils. Had he been a bit more diligent, he may well have chosen this area as the site for the new settlement.

The river, and much of the coves and feeder streams around the Bay, later supported extensive market gardens, showing that Phillip's claims of infertile soil were somewhat shallow. Grazing and cultivation around Milperra and Liverpool flourished in later decades. I suspect that once he saw Sydney Harbour, he realised the strategic importance of claiming the harbour for his settlement. Sydney Cove itself was not much better than what Phillip had rejected.



*Paddle Steamer SS Telephone on Georges River near Cattle Duffers Flat
(photo: Sutherland Shire Library Local Studies Collection)*

I can only imagine that if a good supply of fresh water had been found further along the river, then where I grew up in Oyster Bay would now be part of a high-rise inner city in a large metropolis and the Sutherland Shire would now be a heavily populated area of reclaimed industrial sites and inner suburbs of dense terrace housing. For those of us who live in the Shire now, I think we dodged a bullet.

Phillip returned to Botany Bay on 23 January and made immediate arrangements to relocate the fleet to Sydney Cove. The following day, two French

ships under the command of Jean-Francois La Perouse arrived in the Bay and anchored close by, just as Captain Hunter on the *Sirius* was busy getting his ships ready to sail

The French stayed on in Botany Bay for the next six weeks and made far more detailed surveys of the Bay and its connections than Phillip had done. In particular, they took a boat up the Georges River as far as they could manage and then explored on foot. They likely found where the fresh water flow met the salt water of the river as well as the fertile plains of the low-lying areas. No doubt, they would have prepared detailed reports of the suitability of the river for settlement. Those reports were actually sent on their way to France via the *Sirius*, which meant they arrived intact, unlike La Perouse and his ships, which were later lost.

Of course, the river was not known as the Georges River at this time or when Captain Hunter made a more detailed survey the following year. It was Bass and Flinders on another survey in 1795 who named the river in honour of King George III. An earlier native name for the river has been reported as *Tucoerah*, also known as *Tuggerah*, but the British mostly called it the *southern arm*.

I can still take out a small boat on the lower reaches of the river and lazily throw out a line while thinking of the days when paddle steamers used to provide a ferry service on the river and around the Bay. Or I can hike along the upper reaches of the river that look exactly as they did when Lieutenant King first sighted the mouth of the river

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RESEARCH CENTRE OPENING TIMES

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Please phone 9523 8948 if going in after midday.

Centre closed on Public Holidays

Please ask for help if you need it – the Centre assistants love to help.



The Convict Death Register has been digitised and made available at NSW State Archives at <https://tinyurl.com/bdh3x38j>. The register was used to record the deaths of convicts who died while serving their sentence. It records name, ship of arrival, age, date of burial, parish and occasionally other details relating to convicts whose deaths were reported to the Principal Superintendent of Convicts (until 1855) and subsequently the Inspector General of Police. Entries are arranged alphabetically, and then chronologically by date of death. The register is also indexed in the Convicts Index, 1791-1873 at <https://tinyurl.com/yyyyb3ut4>.

Restarting your computer compared to shutting down your computer?

Restart: Closes all processes, including the Windows kernel, ensuring a clean boot. Reloads drivers and system files – ideal for troubleshooting or resolving errors. Required for completing software installations, updates, or applying group policies. Use when the system is frozen or experiencing operational issues.

Shutdown: Ends all open programs but preserves the Windows kernel in a hibernation-like state (if Fast Startup is enabled). Provides faster boot times on the next startup but does not fully reset the system. Suitable for powering off the device when no troubleshooting or updates are needed. To fully shut down (bypassing Fast Startup), hold the Shift key while clicking Shut Down.

Recommendation: Use Restart for a complete system reset or when resolving issues. Use Shutdown for routine power-off with faster startup benefits.



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VALE MERRILEE CLARK

2 MAY 1946 – 6 DECEMBER 2025

by Patricia **Jarvis** (Member)

Sadly, our society lost a valued member in December.

When Merrilee first joined the Society, she was well-advanced with her family research having accumulated binders full of documents and family memorabilia. She signed us both up for the classes conducted by Paulette Parkes at Sutherland Library during which she took copious notes which she referred to often. After the eight-week program, we decided to continue our routine of weekly visits to the library to further our research. For many years Monday nights found us on the first floor, hunting through microfiche and microfilm, pulling books from the shelves and furthering our understanding of life in New South Wales in the early years of settlement. Her family tree was drawn on a large sheet of blotting paper which she carried folded when we visited the library and our research centre. After a few years, we ditched the library and partook of coffee and cake at Kirrawee McDonalds – don't tell our families!



Merrilee Clark ((photo: Patricia Jarvis, Tasmania 2025)

Merrilee descended from a long line of convicts as far back as the 2nd Fleet, even one who was transported twice! She had many interesting free settlers too: Scottish immigrants brought to Tasmania to work for the Australian Agricultural Company, relatives connecting her to many vineyards still operating in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales and immigrants to Queensland. I can still remember receiving a phone call one afternoon, her excitement tangible through the telephone (still a landline then): “Patricia, you won't believe it; I'm related to Captain Thunderbolt!” Sure enough, reviewing her documents we found her great great grandmother was Selina Maria Ward, sister of the notorious bushranger.

I was often wishing her a bon voyage as she set off on another holiday adventure. Passport always valid, she clocked up thousands of frequent flyer miles: USA with her daughter, Italy with a good friend, China with a tour group, Queenstown NZ for a day – an event to fundraise for the Blind Society. When her daughter was living in Abu Dabhi she visited there and they toured Jordan. She and

husband John were also veteran cruisers, visiting destinations in the Pacific, sailing from Hawaii and Japan. She recounted stories of their earlier lives, living in England, travelling on the Trans-Siberian Railway, queuing in Red Square to view Lenin's Tomb. Just last year she holidayed on the Sunshine Coast and sailed to Papua New Guinea. She and John were 'grey nomads', coupling up their caravan to traverse Australia many times; in recent years they had a regular monthly commitment with fellow caravanners, taking short breaks close to Sydney.

Despite her busy life she always found time to pursue a new interest with her boundless enthusiasm. In her younger years she devoted much time to committee work, indeed that was how we met originally when my husband joined the local CB Radio club; she and John were active in off-road driving clubs; in the 1980s she supplied local play groups with toys; and in the 1990s was the president of Engadine High School P and C. For many years she and her friends had a wonderful time at the Sydney cricket test, selling programs, a portion of the sales donated to Loftus Primary School, a school she had no connection with except me! They even earned a mention in Kerry O'Keefe's book referencing the 'Loftus Ladies'. When you drive along National Avenue Loftus and see the outdoor shade covers remember they are thanks to Merrilee! Merrilee actually worked at Grays Point School. Over the years she volunteered at many significant events; Rugby World Cup, manning drinks stations during the City to Surf and the crown jewel of volunteering: the Sydney Olympics.

A prolific note-taker, Merrilee was always reviewing: those taken at meetings, scanning newsletters and journals, choosing classes, talks, excursions – always on the lookout for a new experience. She enjoyed seeing many historic buildings, museums, went on some Probus Two Fifty outings. Generally, there would be a short summary sent to the society's website or published in a newsletter or the journal, but Merrilee chronicled all of these activities with her chosen medium: the camera. After any lunch, tour, outing, holiday or just watching her grandchildren play sport, her Facebook feed or your inbox would be full of photographs. Last year at a Christmas in July lunch held at Gledswood we had to wait for just the right light to catch a view through a glass door. Just look through your photos of society events, I am confident you will find many memories are thanks to Merrilee's exceptionally good eye, her talent and her generous nature.

An old friend of mine used to say, "Patricia, life is like a cash register; you can't take out of it any more than you put in". I am sure that Merrilee's cash float is overflowing. I often described her as "the Terminator", not because she would ominously declare "I'll be back", but because if you were her friend she would offer you a hand and make the promise, "come with me if you want to live!"

We have been friends for over forty-five years. I know that I shall miss Merrilee enormously, but she has left behind a legacy of loyalty, laughter and love.

FHBB EDUCATION PROGRAM

by Carol **Cronan** (Educator)

Good Fun, Good Learning and Good Help are the outcomes of all the education offered at FHBB. Each of our classes offers support, training and the camaraderie of others who are keen to further their journey into family history.

This year there are three scheduled classes (details below) and also the many Interest Groups and special focus days that are regular features of our calendar. I would urge you to consider attending as many of these offerings as you can as I can almost guarantee you will walk away with a new learning each time.

RootsTech 2026 is coming up and registration and details are available at this link: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/registration>. Even if you can't make time to watch any of the hundreds of classes on offer in real time, most of these classes are available to watch all year once you have registered. Many are available in future years. This is a wonderful opportunity to focus your learning on a particular geographic area or subject and learn from international experts.

Other learning opportunities exist via webinars offered by the National Library (<https://www.library.gov.au/learn/adults/lifelong-learning>), the Museums of History NSW (<https://mhnsw.au/whats-on/?category=Online+talk>) and the NSW State Library website; just to name a few. There are also research guides that many of these major institutions provide online. The guides are a very worthwhile resource to assist you in your investigations and can save you hours of wasted time.

Our in-person classes, held at the Resource Centre for 2026 are:

Date and Time	Title	Presenter	What to bring	Max participants
14 April 10am-12pm	Making better use of Find a Grave – discover more about the features available	John Levy	Lap top	15
2 June 10am-12pm	Beginners guide to photo and scanner use for genealogy	Richard Linklater	TBA	15
14 July 10am-12pm	Using Google Earth for Genealogy	Jennie Fairs	Lap top	15

So, register on the FHBB website and join us for some fun, learning and help. I look forward to seeing you at one or all of the above.

TRAGIC TALES, 1895-1930.

BURIALS IN WORONORA CEMETERY

By Sue **Hewitt** (Member) and Maree **McKinley** (Life Member)

In 1987 Botany Bay FHS began the enormous task of transcribing plaques and headstones in Woronora Cemetery at Sutherland. Being involved in this project over many years was a great challenge and sometimes a headstone inscription would reveal a little more of the story behind family members buried in the cemetery. When we found an inscription saying ‘accidentally drowned’, it prompted us to explore further.

Looking for the reports of drowning victims, primarily in local newspapers, *The Propeller*, *St George Call*, *The St George Advocate* as well as the Sydney dailies led to the discovery of other incidences where an accident had claimed a life. Some of these new discoveries had been buried in Woronora Cemetery but the headstone, if there was one, did not announce the reason for a person’s death. We also searched Coroner’s Inquest files at State Records at Kingswood. The list of burials from the cemetery’s official opening in April 1895 began to grow rapidly and we capped our list to the year 1930.

At the time of our research, online newspaper searching in Trove did not exist and a few members of Botany Bay FHS supported our project by searching microfilm for accident reports, death and funeral notices. Our grateful thanks go to Barbara **Wimble**, Heather **Clarey** and Merran **Rainbow** and others (whose names we have forgotten) for searching newspapers the hard way and Marie **Pay** for looking at probate packets and deceased estate files at State Records.

In the Water

The waterways of Sydney have always attracted people for the purposes of both recreation and work. The Sutherland Shire and St George areas are particularly noted for the profusion of bays and rivers as well as their beautiful beaches and spectacular coastline. Botany Bay incorporates both of these districts with Cooks River and its tributaries flowing into it in the north and the Georges River in the south. Port Hacking and the Hacking River can be found further south and Woronora River to the west. However, inclement weather events could play havoc to ordinarily calm and relaxing seaside or riverside excursions.

With an abundance of water, it is not surprising that swimming was as popular as it is today but at the turn of the century, there were several deterrents to this activity. Most people were fearful of the sea and bathing in open water was considered both indecent and unhealthy. The law of the day took care of this by

banning ocean bathing between 6am and 8pm weekdays with bathing prohibited on Sundays. This law was repealed in 1903 when William H **Gocher**, a newspaper editor of Manly, publicly defied it without being arrested and forced the changes. Even then mixed bathing was not allowed and separate sections of the beaches were set aside for males and females. A 1907 law also controlled the clothing worn by bathers dictating a 'neck to knee' costume, a 'modesty skirt' on men's bathing suits and everyone's chest had to be covered. These laws were in force until 1935 when it was deemed necessary to only cover the body to the armpits in the front, to the waist at the back and the legs of the costume were required to be three inches long (about 7.5 cm). History, of course, tells us that this was not the end of the control over bathing suits. It should be noted that swimming was called 'bathing' as very few people could swim. Even those that could swim mostly used a breast stroke method as the crawl stroke was a relatively new method of swimming.

The Sutherland Shire became a haven for holidaymakers and weekend and holiday cottages in the sparsely populated area began to be built. The waterways and beaches were one of the main attractions. However, some visitors to the Shire's beaches and rivers came only during the summer months to holiday and escape the heat. Some of them accidentally drowned.

QUITE A GLOOM

William Roy **Swanton**, son of Hurstville School's headmaster was an 18-year-old electrical engineering student at Sydney Technical College.¹ A few days before Christmas in 1907 he was at Cronulla Beach and went to 'bathe in the surf'. Friends saw him in trouble a fair way from the shore and although he was rescued from the surf, he died before the closest doctor, who lived in Hurstville, arrived.² Two days before Swanton's death on 23 December, an informal meeting of locals had been held at Mrs **Giddings'** Cronulla home in regard to the formation of a Surf Life Saving Club. Money was raised by subscription to provide 'every modern appliance as well as additional dressing rooms on the Park.'³ Too late for a young man with potentially a successful life ahead.

DOUBLE SURF TRAGEDY

Brothers Sidney, Harold and Hubert **Bass** hailed from West Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. Sidney had arrived in Australia during 1908 and his brothers followed in 1909. Sidney was a chair maker and Hubert an upholsterer and, while living in Glebe, they decided to take a seaside holiday before the season was in full

1 *St George Call* 28 Dec 1907 p5

2 Buried in Woronora Anglican Section 1, grave 408

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/176956323>

3 *St George Call* 18/1/1908 p4

swing. They rented accommodation near Oak Park. On the morning of 15 November 1909, Hubert had swum out into the ocean some distance when Sidney noticed his brother in difficulty. Sidney was a strong swimmer and reached his brother but did not envisage that Hubert would hold onto him so tightly. They both sank.⁴ Harold later identified his brother's bodies.⁵

DEATH TRAP

In 1913 Alexander **Louden**, respected businessman of the St George community and owner of the Australian Boot Company took his large family to their newly built summer residence at Cronulla for the Christmas season. Early in the morning of 30 December 1913, Marjorie aged 21 and her 15-year-old sister Daphne set off to walk to the beach. Accompanying the girls was their sister-in-law, Cecilia wife of Robert James Loudon, and her five children, Alexander aged 12, Marie, Winifred, Robert and little Millicent aged 6. They intended to swim in the 'famous bogey hole' located between Shelly Beach and the surfing area at Cronulla. The older girls however, liked the look of the surf at Blackwood Beach rather than swimming in the hole. Local surfers however viewed this beach as a 'veritable death trap'.⁶

Marjorie threw off her cloak and waded into the surf while Cecilia set herself up on the beach with her children. Within a few minutes, Marjorie was caught in the treacherous undertow. She called out, 'I can't get back', then 'Help, I'm sinking'.⁷ Her nephew Alexander, who was not a good swimmer, plunged into the water to help his aunt but he too was caught in the rip. Daphne then attempted to swim out (her brother Robert later stated he thought his sisters couldn't swim) and she too was carried out to sea. The three young people drowned.

The coroner found that Marjorie Loudon was accidentally drowned while bathing; that Alexander James Loudon was accidentally drowned while attempting to rescue Marjorie Loudon and that Daphne Loudon was accidentally drowned while attempting to rescue the other two.^{8, 9} For more to this story see Colleen **Passfield's** article *Blackwoods Beach* in *The Endeavour* 154, March 2023.

4 *Sydney Morning Herald* 16 Nov 1909 p6; St George Call 20 Nov 1909 p6

5 Buried in Woronora Presbyterian section F, grave 27

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/130558606>

6 *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 Dec 1913 p3

7 *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 Dec 1913 p13

8 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 9 Jan 1914 p3

9 Marjorie and Daphne Loudon buried in Woronora Presbyterian section D, grave 60

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/181523272> Their nephew Alexander was buried in the RC section D, grave 27

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/181523259>



*Marjorie Loudon (photo: The Propeller,
2 January 1914, page 3)*



*Loudon headstone
(photo: Sue Hewitt, 2005)*

Children In the Water

Children seem to be drawn to water, jumping in rain puddles, peering down wells, paddling in rivers and playing about in boats, having fun until sometimes their bravado ends in tragedy.

ACCIDENT AT NATIONAL PARK

It was late on Wednesday 21 May 1902 when eight-year-old Ernie (Ernest James) **Cooper** was playing with a young friend in a boat on the Hacking River just below the Accommodation House at Audley where his family lived. The boy began to rock the boat, lost his balance and fell overboard. His friend tried to catch him but Ernie sank and did not come up again. Audley had become a popular holiday and recreation resort and although it was May and not the height of the season, there were people close enough to the spot to be able to bring the young boy to the surface quickly. Efforts to revive him failed. The funeral took place the following Thursday, the little coffin was placed in the National Park express buggy and wound its way up the hill and across the rail bridge to the Woronora Cemetery.

The Park school children followed the cortege from Audley to the Cemetery.¹⁰



*Audley Causeway and Boatshed
(photo: NSW Government Printer, 1902)*

GIRLS COMMENDED. ATTEMPT TO SAVE TWO BOYS

The *Sydney Morning Herald* presents a fanciful tale as to how Miranda schoolboys Archibald **Bridges** and Garnet **Riley** drowned at Yowie Bay on 24 January 1929. Their mate Donald **Hirkett** survived the event and perhaps it was his version of how his friends drowned that was printed in the newspaper:

...they came upon a derelict flat-bottomed punt on the beach. They dragged it into the water, where it would float, and after playing about it for a little while they became more adventurous, and decided to sail out into the bay.

"Pirates Ahoy...Ahoy, there!" cried one of the lads and they paddled gaily away from the shore in their leaking craft. Though it was useless, heavy, water-logged, leaking and slimy, their imaginations transformed the punt into a racy pleasure yacht.

10 *Evening News* 22 May 1902 p4; *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 May 1902 p8; *St George Advocate* 31 May 1902 p3; buried Woronora Anglican section 1, grave 135
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/161879043>

When the boys were about 45 metres from the shore, there was a sudden inrush of water, and the boat sank. Donald Hirkett swam and reached the shore exhausted, but the other two sank alongside their derelict boat.¹¹

There were locals nearby who saw the boys in the boat. Fred **Matson**, a shipwright told the coroner he ran out into the water as far as he could but when up to his knees in mud he couldn't go any further. Matson, with Misses **Wilkie** and **Mears** rowed to where the boat had foundered and could see both boys lying on the bottom in about four and a half metres of water. The two ladies dived repeatedly for the boys, but without success. The bodies were later recovered with a grappling iron. Both boys had been in the water for about 25 minutes.¹²

Archibald and Garnet are buried in graves adjoining each other.¹³ In a strange co-incidence in March 1951, Archibald's brother, Geoffrey Bridges aged 18, was caught in a rip at Cronulla and drowned.¹⁴

REMARKABLE FATALITY

Just having fun with your mates can be a dangerous thing. James **Curran** was 16 and with a party of five friends was staying at his father's weekend cottage on the Woronora River. Their favourite swimming spot was a deep hole that had formed in the riverbed of Brown's Creek, a tributary of that same river. George **Heavens** remembered the distressing event that occurred on Sunday morning 10 February 1929:

The day dawned hot and clear, with no wind and a full Spring tide at 11.00am.

About a quarter of a mile from the intersection of the river and up Brown's Creek is a sharp bend; here on the corner was a huge rock about 40 feet high with a precipitous face, with a large flat top about 200 square feet – having a very gentle slope towards the water below. Brown's Creek runs fast in flood time, so that a large hole had been scoured out under the rock, making it an excellent swimming spot. The flat-topped rock made a good place to dive from into the deep hole – and a good place to lie on your towel and sunbake.

Lots of people had gathered there on this particular Sunday. Heavens continued -
...without warning, there was a tremble for a brief second, then a roar and a resounding splash: the huge rock had rolled a full quarter turn

11 Sydney Morning Herald 25 Jan 1929 p13

12 Sydney Morning Herald 2 Feb 1929 p14, The Hurstville Propeller 8 Feb 1929 p1

13 Archibald is buried Woronora Anglican section AF grave 108

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/181016246> and Garnet in grave 109
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/163538467>

14 The Observer 15 Mar 1951 p12

*into the swimming hole, throwing everyone off the top of the rock and into the water below.*¹⁵

People struggled to get out of the muddy waters, many had injuries. Men dived down to the murky bottom feeling for anyone who had become trapped.

James, with three other boys, were diving from the rock when it broke away. The three boys all surfaced, injured but alive. James however was pinned securely by a large piece of the rock that had splintered from the main boulder. It was only with the aid of levers that the rock moved enough to release the young lad about an hour after he first hit the water.¹⁶

George Heavens recalled most of the Woronora River residents attended the funeral, many of them with bandaged limbs as they too had been flung into the water on that fateful day.



Browns Creek and Waterfall, c.1940s
(photo: Sutherland Shire Library – Local Studies Collection)

15 Sutherland Shire Historical Society, *Bulletin* No.16 April 1976 p46

16 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 15 Feb 1929 p1; buried Woronora Anglican section AF, grave 92 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173828588>

NEW YEARS DAY FATALITY

Leslie **Garnam** was 19 years old and lived with his parents at Arncliffe. On New Year's Day 1915 he was with Mr Joseph H **Smith** and family, also of Arncliffe, enjoying the day, boating on the Woronora River near Cathedral Rock. After lunch Leslie went out in the boat with some of the children, one of whom jumped into the water which was too deep for him. Fully clothed, Leslie went into the water to rescue the child who had managed by then to find a shallower part of the river. When he returned to the bank, Leslie changed into a bathing costume and again went out in the boat with the children rowing it. Soon afterwards he got out of the boat and holding onto the stern was being towed along. When the boat was nearing the shore, he let go of it, telling the children to continue on. He started to swim. The children had moved only a few yards away when Leslie called out to them just before he sank in about six metres of water. The tide was on the ebb and as it had rained the previous day there was a moderate fresh in the river making it difficult for an inexperienced swimmer to get out of it.¹⁷

The funeral took place the following Monday and his comrades from the 38th Infantry Civilian Military Forces, carried him from his home to the railway station and on arrival at Woronora to the grave.¹⁸



*Cathedral Rock on Woronora River, c1920
(photo: Sutherland Shire Library – Local Studies Collection)*

CAUGHT IN STORM WATERS

It had rained all week but Wednesday 11 June 1913 was very unpleasant. As

¹⁷ *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 8 Jan 1915 p1; St George Call 9 January 1915 p5

¹⁸ Buried Woronora Anglican section WW, grave 67

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/181531287>

well as five points of rain falling in one minute (76 mm per hour) there were hailstones the size of peas, wind squalls and thunder.¹⁹ Eight-year-old Christopher Stanislaus **Devine** lived with his grandfather, Banksia's stationmaster William **Perry** in Lauff Street, Banksia. About 4.20pm on that Wednesday afternoon the young boy, known to his family as Stanie, took an umbrella and went to the shops. On his way the umbrella was whipped from his hand by a gust of wind, landing in the stormwater channel that ran under the railway line at the end of Banksia station. In attempting to recover it he fell into the fast-moving water. Samuel **Dusty** witnessed the accident but failed to find the child whose body was later found about three kilometres away at the flood gates of the Botany Sewerage Farm.²⁰

A MOTHER'S LOSS

Annie **Buckingham** of Rickard Street Arncliffe sent her boys James, aged 8 and Leonard aged 5 on an errand as she probably did most days – to collect milk in a milk can from **Johnstone's** dairy, not far from Wolli Creek. A low bridge crossed the Creek and the boys had been known to sit and dangle their feet in the water.²¹ On Saturday afternoon 14 October 1922, James and Leonard with a milk can and a little friend, Alan Vincent **Fenn-Clark**, aged 2, set off for the dairy. They did not arrive. At the inquest, Annie Buckingham had to speak to the coroner in a private room as she was so distraught that she was unable to give her evidence in public. She said that she had warned her boys not to go near the creek on their way to the nearby dairy.²²

After half an hour she sent her daughter, Myrtle to find them. When Myrtle failed to find them, she went looking down at the creek and found the milk can and the boy's boots and stockings. *The Hurstville Propeller* reported that little Alan Fenn-Clark had returned home about an hour after the boys had set out for the dairy and said that Jimmy had fallen into the water.²³ The boy's bodies were recovered from where the creek approaches the end of Hannam Street. Unsuccessfully attempts were made to resuscitate the boys.

James Albert John and Leonard Lawrence Buckingham were buried in Woronora's Methodist section. Their friends and residents of Arncliffe erected their headstone.²⁴

19 *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 Jun 1913 p10

20 *The Sun* (Sydney) 12 Jun 1913 p6; St George Call 14 Jun 1913 p4; Buried Woronora Cemetery Roman Catholic section E, grave 39

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/177898438>

21 *St George Call* 20 Oct 1922 p1

22 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 27 Oct 1922

23 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 20 Oct 1922 p1

24 Woronora Methodist section B2, grave 2

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/181641130>

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 21 March 2 – 4pm
By ZOOM	Saturday 20 June 2 – 4pm
SCOTTISH INTEREST DAY:	Saturday 11 April TBA: Research Centre
WRITERS INTEREST:	Thursday 26 March 2 – 3.30pm
By ZOOM	Thursday 28 May 2 – 3.30pm
FAMILY TREE MAKER	Tuesday 24 February 1.30 – 3.30pm
FOR WINDOWS & MACS:	Tuesday 26 May 1.30 – 3.30pm
By ZOOM	
DNA WORKSHOP:	Saturday 2 May TBA: Research Centre
TECHNOLOGY:	Saturday 18 April 2 – 4pm
BY ZOOM	

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.



THE GIETZELT FAMILY – ARTHUR ANTON, ARTHUR THOMAS AND RAY

By Colleen Passfield (Member)

The name ‘Gietzelt’ is familiar to anyone interested in Australian politics and the trade union movement in Australia. It is also well remembered in the Sutherland Shire where Arthur Thomas and Ray lived for many years and where Arthur served for fifteen years on the Shire Council including nine years as Shire President. In their pursuit of social justice, the brothers were influenced by the experiences of their father as a businessman during and after the Depression.

Arthur Anton Gietzelt (1895-1993) was born in Townsville, Queensland, the son of Anton Gietzelt and his wife Anna nee **Novak**. Anton had arrived in Queensland on 24 November, 1889 onboard the *Merkara*. Three days later, on 27 November, 1889 he married Anna Novak who came from Bohemia. They had eight children including Arthur Anton and Martha Rosetta who was the youngest. Anna died in 1916 and Anton died in 1917, both in Townsville.

On 17 April 1920, Arthur Anton married Ida Caroline **Stoward** (1895-1991) in Townsville. Ida was a stenographer and Arthur Anton operated a taxi service in Townsville. Shortly after their marriage, they went to San Francisco, California where their first son, Arthur Thomas, was born on 28 December, 1920. They returned to Australia on board the *Ventura* arriving in Sydney on 12 August, 1922. Also on board was his sister, Martha Gietzelt a telephone operator. Arthur had returned with a patent for a brand of rubber tyre and hoped to set himself up in business.

On 22 September, 1922, a second son, Ray, was born in Sydney. However, the family returned to Queensland and were living in Mackay in 1925 where Arthur was employed as a mechanic. By 1930, they were back in New South Wales living at Sans Souci in the St George Area. Arthur established a tyre business in Newtown which prospered until the Great Depression struck. Many of their clients were unable to honour their debts and the business failed. The Gietzelt family struggled financially, often finding it difficult to pay the rent. Undeterred, Arthur tried other businesses until he was successful with a small chemical company, Getz Products. The experiences of the family during this period would influence the future careers of his sons in politics and the trade union movement.

Ida Caroline Gietzelt died at Blakehurst, NSW on 11 September 1991. Arthur Anton Gietzelt died at Kogarah on 1 July 1993. They were both buried at Woronora Cemetery.

Arthur Thomas Gietzelt (1920-2014) was born on 28 December, 1920 in San Francisco, California, USA, the first child of Arthur Anton Gietzelt and his wife Ida. He returned to Sydney in August, 1922 with his parents and aunt, Martha Rosetta Gietzelt.

Arthur Gietzelt attended Hurstville Boys High School, left school at fourteen to help the family and, during World War 2 served in the army in New Guinea from 1941-1946. In 1949 he married Dawn Olive **Haslam**, a librarian, and soon set up home in Caringbah in the Sutherland Shire. They would have three children.

With an interest in welfare and social justice, Arthur joined the Labor Party and ran for election to Sutherland Shire Council. He served on the council for fifteen years including a record nine years as Shire President. As the Shire's longest serving President his achievements were many. He was responsible for foreshore environmental measures which gave residents greater access to the Shire's waterways. He also established important public services such as the library, baby health centres and swimming pools and caused developers to contribute to the social fabric. He stopped the Federal Government putting an airport at Towra Point, a migratory bird sanctuary. After getting scientific data on noise levels, he went around shopping centres with a megaphone showing people what was in store for them. Gietzelt was regarded by many staff members of Council as 'the most astute and innovative of all councillors and with the highest integrity'.

From its formation in 1954, Gietzelt was a member of the Labor Left steering committee set up to fight the Labor Right Grouper Movement. The Movement was set up in Victoria to fight Communist influences in the ALP particularly in New South Wales. During the 1960s, 70s and early 80s, Arthur was a faction leader on the Labor Left and was local campaign manager when Gough Whitlam contested Werriwa in 1952. In 1971 Arthur was elected to the Senate and served until February 1989. He served two terms as Minister for Veterans Affairs in the Bob Hawke Labor Government holding that position until 1987. He was joint Father of the Senate from 1987 until his departure from Parliament.



*Arthur Gietzelt AO
(photo: Wikimedia Commons, Australian
Information Source)*

Just after being elected to the Senate and while still Shire President, he was the target of a bombing when seventeen sticks of dynamite were detonated on the front porch of his home in Kitchener Road, Caringbah. He and his wife very luckily escaped injury. It was suspected that the attack was related to his role in the Sutherland Council imposing the first anti-apartheid ban in Australia against a South African team competing in a surf carnival at Cronulla. A local builder who had to demolish a block of flats for non-compliance with requirements was also suspected. Charges were never laid.

In 1992, Arthur Gietzelt was made an Officer of the Order of Australia ‘for services to the Australian Parliament and to local government’ and in 1994 he was awarded life membership of the ALP. In 2001 he was awarded a Centenary Medal.

Arthur Gietzelt had a distinguished public life, dedicated to progressive social, economic and political causes. Many times, he had to vigorously deny that he was an active member of the Communist Party. Questions were again raised after his death and denied by his family.

Arthur died on 5 January 2014, aged 93 and was cremated at Woronora Cemetery. Dawn Olive Gietzelt died on 29 September 2015 and was also cremated at Woronora Cemetery.

Ray Gietzelt (1922-2012) was born in Sydney on 29 September, 1922 the younger son of Arthur Anton Gietzelt and Ida Caroline. He was the middle of three children and, like his older brother Arthur, would become prominent in the Australian Labor Party.

The failure of his father’s tyre business and the subsequent financial struggles affected both sons and, like his older brother, Ray left school at fourteen to help the family. In 1940, he joined the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union (FMWU) which covered workers in the chemical industry. He was working a 44 hour week at Incorporated Laboratories, a chemical company, while studying chemistry two nights at Ultimo Technical College.



*Ray Gietzelt AM
(photo: Wikimedia Commons, Tribune
Newspaper)*

In 1942, Ray joined the Army and was soon in Papua New Guinea with brother Arthur in the 9th Field Company, Royal Engineers. They were building a

road over the Owen Stanley Ranges to get supplies to the troops fighting the Japanese forces in the north. In September 1945 he was demobbed and, in December, married Violet May **Hinchcliffe** at Rockdale, New South Wales. They established their family home the Sutherland Shire near his brother Arthur.

With the end of the war, Ray Gietzelt joined the family firm and rejoined the FMWU and became involved in union matters. In 1953, he led an internal, right-wing Protest Committee to remove the dysfunctional, right-wing control of the FMWU. He later wrote a book *Worth Fighting For* about these struggles. The challenge included appearances in the Conciliation and Arbitration Court and was successful. Ray assumed office in the NSW branch of the FMWU in 1954. In 1955 he became General Secretary, the youngest to ever hold this office which he held until his retirement in 1984. The FMWU is now known as the United Voice and is one of Australia's biggest unions.

At this time, the Union was low on money and membership. It covered cleaners, watchmen, security guards, manufacturing workers and other miscellaneous groups. Gietzelt set about to modernizing and democratizing the union, opening up the structure to rank and file participation and encouraging the involvement of women. He introduced collective bargaining and encouraged the amalgamation with smaller unions. Membership increased from 22,000 in 1955 to 122,000 when he retired in 1984.

In 1970 Ray Gietzelt initiated a review of the New South Wales branch of the National Executive of the Labor Party which led to rule changes, opening up and democratizing the NSW Party. Following these changes Labor went on the win Federal Government in 1972 and State Government in 1976.

In 1971 Gietzelt and some of his union associates received several anonymous, threatening phone calls. When the home of his brother, Arthur, was bombed, there was speculation that a mistake had occurred and that Ray was the intended victim.

Ray Gietzelt had close, personal and lifelong friendships with three important Labor figures, former Prime Minister and ACTU President Bob Hawke, former NSW Premier Neville Wran and former ALP Senator and later High Court Judge Lionel Murphy. Some contemporary journalists dubbed him '*the Kingmaker*' or '*the Godfather*'.

On his retirement in 1984, it was said that his union had 'never lost a strike or broken its word with any employer, industrial tribunal or kindred organisation'. He was also known for refusing to allow his officials to accept 'gifts' and building the 'Missoes' into the fifth largest union in the country.

After retiring, Ray Gietzelt served as a director on the board of Qantas and

was a member of the Automotive Industry Authority. In 1986 he helped to set up the Lionel Murphy Foundation to provide postgraduate scholarships for the study of law and/or science and served as its secretary for many years.

In 1985, Ray Gietzelt was awarded an Order of Australia and in 2003 a life membership of the ALP.

In his retirement he continued to live in the Sutherland Shire, working in his garden, remaining physically fit and active and surfing at his beloved Cronulla beach.

Ray Gietzelt died on 12 October 2012, aged 90 and was cremated at Woronora Cemetery. He was survived by his wife Violet, daughters Suzanne and Joanne, son-in-law Ray and six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Violet Gietzelt died on 23 November 2013 and was cremated at Woronora Cemetery.

Arthur Anton, Arthur Thomas and Ray Gietzelt were remarkable men. Arthur Anton was a businessman and entrepreneur who refused to give up when the Depression ruined his business and the family faced financial hardship. He inspired his sons to work hard and pursue the fight for social justice. Their legacy remains with us.

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Tribune

Woronora Memorial Park, <https://www.smcnsw.org.au/woronora/home>

Your Journal Contributions

All journal contributions – large or small – are welcome. Email your input to bbfhs_eds@yahoo.com.au, leave it in the Editor's folder at the Research Centre or hand it to the Editor or any Committee member at our quarterly meetings. Please add your name and contact details.

FHBB RESEARCH CENTRE AND LIBRARY

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

The Research Centre is open again for 2026 and we have had quite a number of researchers coming in so far. This is so pleasing, because in the last months of 2025, on some days, there were more Volunteers in attendance than researchers.

On Friday 9 January, a number of members went in to the Research Centre, to prepare for the opening of the Centre. All the computers were updated: programmes and operating systems; and floors, benches and chairs cleaned. Computer B has been replaced. Computer 6 now has a variety of links (on the home screen) to family history programmes online.

There is an updated **2026 FHBB Library Catalogue** on our website and on the computers in the Centre (thank you Janette Daly). Many of the books can be borrowed, so check to see if there are any that interest you.

The day long Seminars in the Research Centre were popular last year, so this year we have organised four! The first one is the **Scottish Interest Day Seminar on 11 April** from 10am to 2pm. The second one is the **Irish Interest Day Seminar on Saturday 13 June**. There will be two more later in the year, on **Australia** and **England**. Keep your eyes on our eNEWS.

In the Research Centre, there are a number of boxes of books and magazines that have been donated. **Please** have a look and see if any are of interest to you. Thank you to everyone who has donated these items.

Thank you so much to all the Centre Volunteers who give their time and knowledge every month. Some have decided to retire, so we thank them for their years of service. There are some new Volunteers too! Many thanks.

If you would like to be a Centre Volunteer, you would be very welcomed. Please let me know at botanybayfhs@yahoo.com.au.

PS: Did you know we opened the Research Centre in 2006? The Centre is 20 years old this year ... and some Volunteers have been present all that time!

BBFHS YOUTUBE CHANNEL

<https://www.youtube.com/@BotanyBayFHS-1>

Each month a short video of family history interest is uploaded to our new YouTube channel for you to enjoy and learn from. Please remember to subscribe and to give our videos the thumbs up.

NELSON BOOTH 1821-1880.

SCHOOL MASTER, GROCER, FARMER

By Helen **Bain** (Member)

On 30 October 1852 the ship *Ottillia* arrived in Melbourne bringing what is believed to be the first member of my Booth family to emigrate to Australia. This was Nelson **Booth**, born Birkenshaw, West Yorkshire, son of John, a green grocer and his wife Sarah (nee **Furness**). At the time of the 1851 UK Census Nelson was described as ‘Schoolmaster & Grocer’ with his wife ‘Tending shop’.

Why had he given up his job as Head Master of the Far Town National School in the town of Pudsey in Yorkshire to travel across the world? Was it the gold rush?

This question was answered when I found a series of reports in the *Bradford Observer* newspaper about a court case Nelson initiated to recover salary due to him following his dismissal from his position at the school without prior warning.

According to witnesses he had carried out his duties in an exemplary manner and tripled the school pupil numbers and raised the school finances in doing so. But he had made himself some powerful enemies in the form of the school trustees who were a group of influential local men who were all related. The most senior of the school’s trustees, John **Farrar**, was called to give evidence but refused to state a reason to the court for the sacking and would only say he had disliked Booth from the start. But there was more to all this than Farrar was prepared to reveal.

Nelson had once been threatened with dismissal if he did not give up membership of the Temperance Society and the Mechanics Institute both of which were considered at the time to be revolutionary. He had also found it necessary to dismiss a male ‘pupil teacher’ (trainee teacher) at the school, for ‘immoral conduct’ with a girl in the village. This student just happened to be the nephew of John Farrar.

The next information I found about Nelson was on a passenger list of the ship *Ottillia* bound for Melbourne and then to Ballarat ahead of his wife Elizabeth (nee **Armitage**) and their two children Nelson Luther 5, and Laura 4, who arrived five years later on the ship *Hotspur*. The address given for them in Ballarat was Humffray Street, Bakery Hill which is close to the site of the Eureka rebellion.

In Ballarat he became the third principal, from 1857-60, of the Humffray Primary School, a school which was later attended by former Australian prime minister Robert Menzies. The school had initially opened in a canvas tent,

followed by a wooden building in 1856. Both Nelson and Elizabeth taught there and were well thought of in the community.

With the number of Chinese people arriving to the digs, Nelson was anxious to set up English lessons so they could better integrate into the community.

In time, the Booths had ten children with four dying in infancy. The fifth to die was his eldest child Nelson Luther aged 8 years and 9 months. The death certificate, 30 April 1860, states: 'Injuries from falling from a dray' and 'Fractured thigh run over by a wagon'. The location of the accident was Humffray Street near the family home.

My final discovery on Trove was a newspaper article on 20 December 1861 advertising a public auction of goods at Nelson's house on Humffray Street, next to the National School: teasing machine or devil, a quantity of woollen flock, carpenters' and other tools, furniture, bed, bedding, books, etc. The family returned to England and appear on the 1871 Census of England and Wales.

The Booth family were initially involved in cloth manufacturing during Industrial Revolution at Birkenshaw Mill near Bradford and most of Nelson's siblings were born there. In later times, several of them turned to other occupations – in his father John's case: green grocer. On his return to England, Nelson also turned his hand to other things for he is listed a 'cigar and fruit merchant' in the 1871 Census.

There was a gap in my information until with sorrow I found that Nelson's luck has run out again and this time for good, with a probate entry at *Ancestry.com*:

Nelson Booth formerly of Pudsey, near Leeds in the County of York but late of Victoria Farm Barkly in the province of Griqualand West in the Colony of Cape of Good Hope, Farmer, who died 23 October 1880 at Victoria Farm was proved by the Principal Registry by Elizabeth Booth Widow the Relict and Laura Elizabeth Booth Spinster the Daughter both of Marsh, Pudsey, two of the Executors. Probate being granted under limitations. Personal Estate under 200 pounds.

How did he end up farming in South Africa? Why would he choose to leave his wife and family to farm in wild country in South Africa? Were they to follow later?

The African records can be difficult to find on the net however a burial record for St Mary's Church, Barkley West, 24 October 1880 turned up his burial record with an additional note – 'Murdered'

A PUDSEY MAN MURDERED IN SOUTH AFRICA.—
 From information received in Pudsey during the present week, it appears that Mr. Nelson Booth, formerly of Pudsey, where his wife and family now reside, had been barbarously murdered at his farm, four miles from Barkly, Griqualand West, South Africa, on Saturday, the 23rd ult. A native boy entered Barkly as fast as his legs could run on that day, and stated that his master had been shot by a bushman. The Resident Magistrate and Dr. Harley, the district surgeon, accompanied by a number of gentlemen, started out at once for the farm, where they found the dead body of Mr. Booth laid in a yard near the house, death having been caused by a pistol shot, which had been fired into his head from behind at close quarters. It was supposed that the murder had been committed by a bushman, who had been engaged as a servant by Mr. Booth only on the day previous, as he was missing immediately after the sad event. He had not been found when the news was sent off. The deceased was buried at Barkly on the day following, and the funeral was attended by a large number of inhabitants, by many of whom he was well known and esteemed. Mr. Booth was about 50 years of age, and was formerly schoolmaster of the National School, Fartown, Pudsey, where he was much respected by all who knew him.

Police Intelligence

(article: *The Leeds Mercury* (England) 25 November 1880)

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A COUSIN LOST – PETER ROBERT CALVER (1950-2026)

by John Levy (Editor)

As far as I know, Peter Calver was not a cousin of mine.

However, as an early visionary of what computing could do for family historians, Peter's foresight in developing the *Lost Cousins* website was enormous. Annoyed that sites at that time, like *Genes Reunited*, produced enormous numbers of possible family related contacts to sort through, many of whom were not actually related, he set up his website in 2003 based on the 1881 England Census, the only English census which had been transcribed at that time and freely available to everyone. It meant that



Peter Calver
(photo: YouTube)

anyone who was related through proven ancestors from that census could contact each other through the website, thus greatly cutting down the large number of extraneous contacts who were irrelevant and saving *Lost Cousins* members lots of time. It allowed 'lost cousins' to interact for their mutual benefit.

Prior to his recent death, Peter arranged for *Lost Cousins* to continue. The website address is <https://www.lostcousins.com/>. The possible census sites have expanded on the original concept – simply enter the relatives on your family tree who were recorded in selected US, Canadian, British, or Irish Censuses and click the Search button. To see how to use the website, click on https://www.lostcousins.com/pages/info/how_to.mhtml. There is a lot of useful information on the site – have a good look around in the different menu categories.

As a wonderful adjunct to his website, Peter wrote a *Lost Cousins* newsletter about twice a month. As a member of *Lost Cousins*, I found it both interesting and helpful when it arrived in my email – new information and snippets – enough to keep up with family history in Britain and elsewhere without overloading me with detail. The newsletters are currently suspended until after Easter. Earlier newsletters are available on the website.

Peter also produced a number of masterclasses where he recorded everything he knew about a particular family history topic. It would pay any family historian

to check these out, particularly if you are just starting out. The masterclasses have been updated as new records have become available, or new techniques introduced. If you subscribe to *Lost Cousins* (£10 a year), you can access the *Subscribers Only* page for the link to the latest revision of each masterclass. However, if you do not subscribe, just type ‘masterclass’ into the search box near the start of any newsletter, then sort the search results by date, so that the first masterclass you come across for a particular topic is the current version.

Unlike most of Australia, there is still no legalized assisted dying in Britain, despite polling showing a majority of the British public and doctors support it. Peter’s wife Sian wrote: *Not once did Peter complain or express fear about dying, but he did express a wish that he could end his torment through assisted dying. “We treat animals better than this. How many more have to suffer like this? The decision makers are not the ones who are trapped in pain, with no control or choice.” He wanted me to speak out after his death, in the hope that one day others might have the choice that was denied to him.*

In conclusion, Sian wrote: *Peter wanted to thank you all for supporting Lost Cousins and inspiring him to keep learning and sharing his discoveries with you.*

Editor’s Note: Peter died of advanced bowel cancer. As a survivor myself (17 years now) mine was caught at a relatively early stage, but it did spread to my lungs four years after my original surgery and chemotherapy. Surprisingly to me, they knocked it out with microwaves, not surgery. **Do the bowel cancer checks** (bowel cancer usually takes about seven years to develop from the first bowel polyp until it turns into cancer). **If you have any suspicions, do something straight away because as my colonoscopy doc said ‘It is eminently treatable’.**

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).

1991	Zoe Beckham	Kanimbla, Cairns
1992	Nea MacCulloch	Cremorne
1993	Helen Falconer	Bonnet Bay
1994	Maureen Purnell	Alfords Point
1995	Denise O’Connor	Hillsdale
1996	Ian Taylor	Heathcote
1997	Kerry Beaton	Sandstone Point, Qld
1998	Stephen Tulloch	Caringbah

FAMILY HISTORY AIDS – SALES TABLE ON MEETING NIGHTS OR AT THE RESEARCH CENTRE & LIBRARY

(Prices current at January 2025, subject to change without notice)

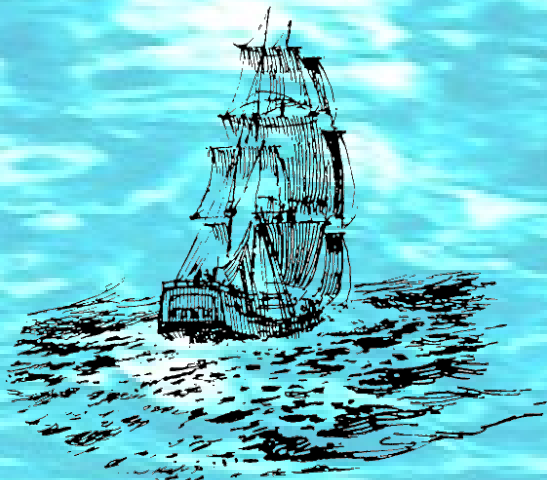
Split catalogue – A – P one quarter, P – Z next quarter

Price

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Archival storage box C	\$5
BBFHS Badges – BBFHS	\$10
Buried Treasure what's in the English Parish chest	\$15
Citing Historical Sources – Noeline Kyle	\$15
Death Certificates & Archaic Medical Terms	\$15
Discover Scottish Land Records – Chris Paton	\$15
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Family History on the Cheap – Shauna Hicks	\$10
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Finding Florence, Maude, Matilda Rose – Noeline Kyle	\$10
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My Ancestor was in an Asylum – Shauna Hicks	\$10
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Half page	\$80	\$29
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