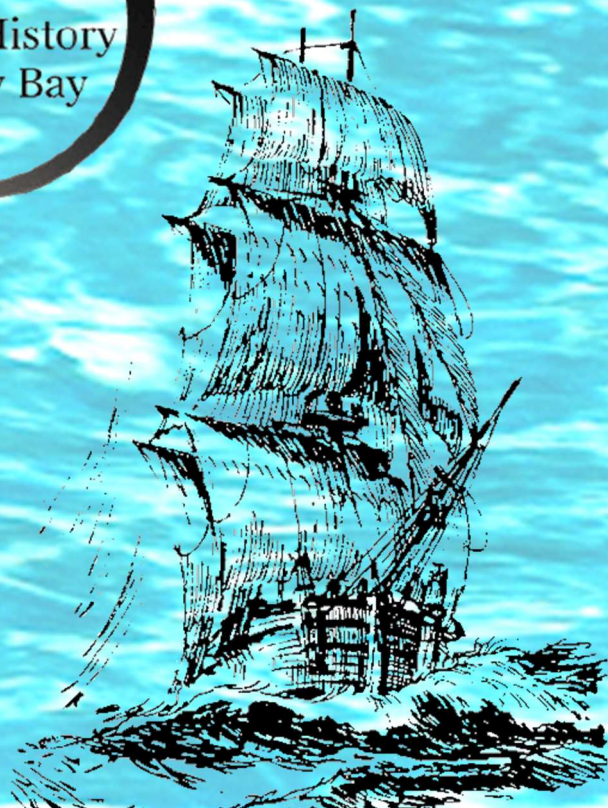
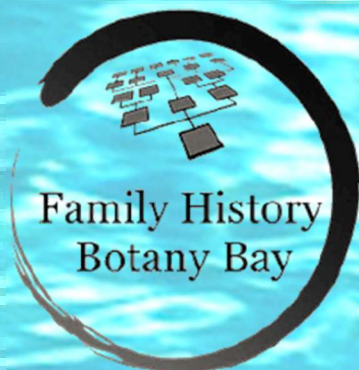




THE ENDEAVOUR

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FAMILY HISTORY BOTANY BAY

Discovering Your Heritage

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Email: info@botanybayfhs.org.au

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Family History Botany Bay
184 Gannons Road
Caringbah South NSW 2229

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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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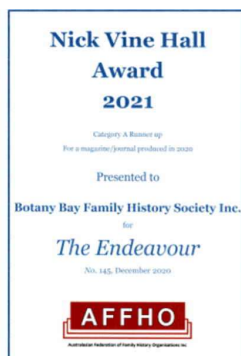
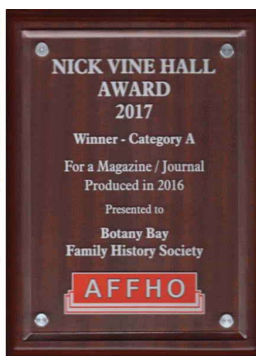
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CALENDAR



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

- May 26** Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm on Zoom
- May 28** Writers Interest Group: 2-3.30pm 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 – Dapetto and the Arncliffe Heritage Trail
- Jun 20** Irish Interest Day at Research Centre, details TBA
- Jul 1** **Meeting – 1.30 pm Research Centre. Saturday.** Speaker: Chris Paton – *Scottish Church and State Records*
- Jul 11** Technology Interest Group: 2-4pm on Zoom
- Jul 14** Workshop – *Using Google Earth for Genealogy*: 10am-12pm at Research Centre.
- Jul 15** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of Newspaper Archives*
- Jul 16** Tour – Police and Justice Museum
- Jul 23** Writers Interest Group: 2-3.30pm on Zoom
- Aug 1** Workshop – DNA Interest Group: 1.30-3.30pm at Research Centre
- Aug 4** University of the 3rd Age Day (u3a) – details to be advised
- Aug 5** **Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom.** Speaker: Lilian Magill – *60 Websites in 60 Minutes*
- Aug 8** Scottish Interest Group: 2-4 pm at Research Centre
- Aug 19** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of Using One Note for Research Organisation*
- Aug 20** NSW State Records Bus Trip, Kingswood – all day
- Aug 25** Family Tree Maker Interest Group: 1.30-3.30 pm on Zoom
- Aug 29** Australian Interest Day – details to be advised
- Sep 5** **Annual General Meeting – 1.30 pm Research Centre. Saturday.** Speaker: Matt Murphy – *Gold: the Remarkable Story of Edward Hargreaves*
- Sep 16** **Member's Chat Meeting – 7.30 pm on Zoom,** Topic: *Basics of DNA Testing for Family History*
- Sep 17** Tour – details to be announced

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



By the time you receive this report I will be halfway through a cruise of the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland islands, followed by two weeks of specific genealogy researching in Belfast and London.

More importantly, it is hoped that our Research Centre will have reopened following the roof replacement of the Port Hacking Community Centre. The necessary cleaning of desks and workspaces, transfer of books and CDs from the rental unit and reinstalling of the computers and other electronic items, all required considerable effort and I'd like to thank everyone who volunteered their time and muscle to get the Research Centre functioning once again.

I can never state enough how important volunteers are to our Society and we had planned to hold a Volunteers Thank You morning tea during Volunteers Week, 19-25 May, however, the closure of the Research Centre has meant we have had to shelve those plans for now and instead look to hold it later in the year.

For those of you who regularly use the Research Centre I hope the enforced closure was a really productive period for you. Sometimes stepping back from hands-on centre visits is a great opportunity to consolidate, reflect, and do the online groundwork that often gets neglected!

Maybe you were able to catch up on sorting and labelling existing photos, documents, and certificates, or updated your family tree at Ancestry, MyHeritage, FamilySearch or WikiTree. Or maybe you finally got round to scanning and digitising those paper documents, old photos, and handwritten records to preserve them for future generations.

During the closure, your committee has been busy working on our Society Guidelines. These Guidelines capture our policies and procedures for the efficient running of the Society and are reviewed every two years. It is necessary to review and implement any updated or new government regulations, and the 2026 review includes privacy and data protection of our members as well as investigating and preparing a detailed cyber security plan.

Jennie Fairs

Family History Botany Bay is a member of:





Inside our Research Centre – covered in tarps (photo: Jennie Fairs)



The roof coming off the Community Hall (Research Centre) (photo: Jennie Fairs)



NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc
Port Macquarie

Annual Conference 2026

THE PAPER TRAIL & BEYOND: FAMILY HISTORY IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Early bird registration is now open!

**The Annual Conference will be on 18, 19 & 20
September 2026.**

**It will be held in Port Macquarie, on the Mid North
Coast of NSW, at Panthers, Port Macquarie. A
variety of interesting speakers on a number of
family history topics has been arranged.**

**For all the details, visit the Conference website at
<https://www.portmacconference2026.com/>**

BOTANY BAY FHS NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Botany Bay Family History Society Inc will be held at 1.30 pm on **Saturday 5 September 2026** at the Port Hacking Community Centre Hall, 284 Gannons Road, Caringbah South. Only financial members can vote. Any financial member may be nominated for election to the Committee by any two other financial members. Nomination forms are available from the Secretary at botanybayfhs@yahoo.com.au.

JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS – COPY DEADLINE

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



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PLEASE MENTION *THE ENDEAVOUR* WHEN CONTACTING

LAST OF THE BOOTMAKERS

by Glen O'Connor (Member)

Arthur Phillip, the newly appointed Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Territory of New South Wales, was adamant that every convict about to be transported in his fleet to Botany Bay had to be washed, scrubbed, disinfected and be free from disease. He harried his superiors with uncompromising demands for suitable clothing and food to meet the needs of the convicts for the voyage and for at least a year after they arrived.

A year's supply of clothing for men was three shirts, three trousers, two jackets, four woollen drawers, four pairs of woollen stockings, one hat and three pairs of shoes. Women received three frocks to go with their list of clothing. I doubt there was much of a colour range. As it turned out, the clothing packed away on the transport ships was barely suitable for the harsh conditions of life waiting in the penal colony. The fabrics and stitching were of poor quality and easily damaged or degraded from hard work.

It was the shoes, however, that became a bigger problem for many. They were also poorly made from inferior materials and not at all suitable for the hard rocky surfaces and sandy soils found in the colony. Shoe sizes were a lottery resulting in many convicts swapping or stealing shoes or preferring to go barefoot. Convicts referred to their shoes as *crab shells*.

There were about six recognised shoemakers among the convicts at Sydney Cove and they were in high demand to repair torn and separated shoes, particularly after the backup supply of leather ran out. As tanned leather was almost impossible to obtain locally, shoes needed to be patched up as much as possible. Shoes made from local fauna were a waste of time, unless you were after a comfortable pair of wombat slippers.

Eventually a local tanning industry was started using the hides of the burgeoning cattle industry. Cheap leather began to be imported from India and Cape Town. More shoemakers arrived as free settlers and by the 1840s, the colony was largely self-sufficient with enough qualified tradesmen to meet demand. Heavy boots were needed for most outdoors work and many a shoemaker found themselves making more boots than shoes. Deciding whether to advertise as a shoemaker or a bootmaker was quite a dilemma, although well-made shoes brought the most reward.

Life in the colony changed dramatically when gold was officially discovered in 1851. Thousands of workers, including shoemakers, packed up and

left for the goldfields. Supply of new shoes in the cities and large towns dropped and prices doubled. Those shoemakers who remained spent most of their time making boots for the newly arriving gold seekers.

One of those shoemakers, Edward **McCamley**, arrived in the colony in 1842. He is my wife's 3 x great grandfather. He was a farm worker from Ireland (or so his papers claimed) but within a few years, he was working as a shoemaker in Clarence Street, Sydney. I suspect that after his arrival he worked for a shoemaker to follow the trade.

He later set up shop at the back of a rudimentary family home in Kent Street where he was busy enough to employ other workers and the occasional apprentice. After a brief but very profitable time on the goldfields, he spent the rest of his working life as a shoemaker. He also passed on his trade to the next generation.

His eldest son, John McCamley, also tried his luck on the goldfields, mostly in the Gulgong area. He later worked as a bootmaker in Mudgee and then Rylstone. Maybe it was competition from other bootmakers or maybe he upset someone, but in any event his shop in Louee Street was deliberately set on fire and burnt to the ground in 1882. Only three weeks earlier he had advertised for "*a good general workman*" but added "*no drunkards need apply*", suggesting he may have had a problem with a previous worker.

The shop was insured but not the contents, leaving John with no shoes, boots or much of his tools of trade. John's insurer offered a £25 reward for indictable information. This was matched by the Colonial Secretary, John **Robertson**, who took a dim view of arson when the premises were also occupied by a family.



Edward McCamley
(photo: O'Connor family album)

John's business suffered badly after the fire and he was soon declared insolvent by his creditors in Sydney. A year later, after seeing off his creditors, he relocated with his family to Penrith where he leased a shop in the High Street. He advertised locally as a "*Prize Boot and Shoe Maker ... sewn, stitched or peg work made to order equal to any first class house in Sydney.*"

By 1886, John was suffering from a serious eye injury or condition that forced him to abandon his work. The Benevolent Society provided home assistance to his wife and two of the children but the other four children were taken into care at the Society's asylum at the southern end of Pitt Street in the city. The youngest child, who was only 18 months old died in care two months later with the cause of death reported as a gastrointestinal disorder caused by teething. Teething was long considered one of the major risk events early in life and was wrongly blamed for a lot of childhood illnesses including fevers, seizures and convulsions. The recommended cures were usually far worse for the infant.

During this time John received excellent medical treatment for his eye condition at the still new Prince Alfred Hospital and was given a certificate stating he had sufficiently recovered to follow his usual occupation. He was soon reunited with his family and they settled down in St Marys. John, however kept a low profile, probably to avoid debt collectors from his days at Penrith. His house and business were now in the name of his eldest son, 17 years old Edward.

John not only made himself scarce by keeping low, he disappeared entirely as he took the family out of NSW and well up the Queensland coast to Rockhampton. The exception was his son Edward who decided to stay on at St Marys to continue the bootmaking business.

By 1890, John was working for Rankin Brothers in East Street, Rockhampton. All footwear at the factory was made by hand and John, with his long-standing skills, would have been a valued employee. The factory employed up to 60 men and 28 women (the women were cheaper). At the time, very few employees were paid a wage, instead being paid for each piece of work performed. John mainly worked as a clicker, responsible for cutting uppers for boots and shoes from the leather skins or sheets. The hand-held knife made a clicking sound each time it touched the pattern board on which the leather was cut. The job was highly skilled as it required the clicker to obtain the maximum use of each piece of leather having regard to thickness, colour, markings, damage, grain and stretch lines.

After John passed away in 1897 at the age of 47 from a genetic kidney disease, his wife and children relocated to Sydney where they were reunited with eldest son Edward who now had a boot factory in Surry Hills. Some of his

younger brothers, who had followed their father in the trade, joined forces with Edward although at least one other brother started up his own bootmaking business.

The factory later moved to larger premises in Redfern and operated for many years under the name *McCamley Bros*. Larceny and other petty crimes were prevalent during the Great Depression. Two known criminals broke into the factory one night and stole 119 pairs of boots and shoes. A squad of detectives and constables pounced on the thieves at daybreak the following day. After a fierce fight, the two miscreants were overwhelmed and handcuffed.

Edward reconstructed the business in 1938 by buying out his brothers and creating a new business under the name of *Edward McCamley & Sons Pty Ltd*.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the business was now sufficiently large and mechanised to allow Edward to tender to the Federal Government to supply boots for the armed services. The Government had advertised extensively for tenders and awarded many contracts to businesses around Australia. Edward's company was awarded a contract in 1943 for brown army ankle boots at a price of £23,764 1s 3d.



*Edward McCamley and one of his sons
(photo: O'Connor family album)*

The war brought many Government rules, regulations, restrictions and rationing, much of which continued until well after the war. The Labor Government had also taken the opportunity to make a raft of changes to industrial laws and industry awards.

In 1946, Edward found himself at odds with the Government over a regulation that required apprentices in the boot trade in their fifth year or later, to be paid the same wage as an adult tradesman. Edward sought legal advice with a

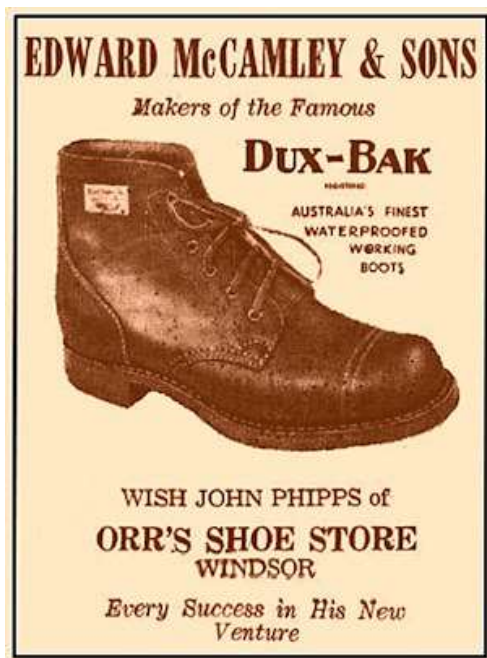
view to challenge the regulation, chiefly on the ground it was passed under the wartime powers and as the war was over, it could no longer be justified. There was also an argument the regulation was not within the defence power of the Government.

After Edward's case failed to sway a special magistrate, an appeal was made to the High Court of Australia which was eventually dismissed with costs against the company. Edward may have been disappointed with the result but his Kings Counsel, a certain Garfield **Barwick**, would go on to be elected to the Federal Parliament in 1958 and be appointed the Chief Justice of the High Court in 1964. Barwick had made his name at the bar for attacking Government regulations and red tape. The NSW Supreme Court was often on his side but the federally created High Court largely upheld the regulations, despite claims of glaring overreach.

By the end of 1951 Edward's health took a serious downturn. His lifelong smoking habit finally took a toll. He was diagnosed with throat cancer. Despite treatment, his condition only got worse over the next six months. He was 77 years old when he died at St Vincent's Private Hospital in 1952.

The business, now run by Edward's sons, continued to trade for many years with extensions and expansions between the 1950s and 1980s, including the opening of a new factory in Taree in 1981. The business was still registering new boot designs in 1987 but I am not aware of any McCamleys still involved in the business after that time.

Edward's brother William McCamley had set up his own bootmaking business at Forest Lodge in Sydney under the business name *Forest Boot Factory*. After a few moves, the business settled down in a factory in Illawarra Road, Marrickville. William, known as Bill, also had his share of criminal intent to rob him during the Great Depression.



While break-ins of boot factories became common, light-fingered employees were often a greater threat. Bill had employed Ronald **Williams** to work as a canvasser. This was not a bootmaking skill but rather someone who takes samples of various boots, shoes and sandals around to shops and other outlets to promote sales. Williams would return with orders and then pick up the footwear from the factory to take to the buyers. He reportedly was very successful in obtaining orders and Bill certainly had no reason for complaint.

That is until a George Street buyer rang to say a large order had not arrived. Williams had earlier told Bill he was going away for the weekend to Crookwell but he failed to return. Bill then received a black bordered card from Williams saying he had gone to Melbourne after the sudden death of his father and would return when he had wound up his father's affairs.

Bill became suspicious and began digging into the order book. Other orders were found to be bogus. Bill then referred his concerns to the police who were quick to act. A detective, Sergeant **Baker**, armed with the appropriate paperwork, went to Melbourne where he arrested Williams and brought him back to Sydney where he was duly charged with larceny of 19 pairs of boots, 113 pairs of shoes and 30 pairs of sandals.

It seems Williams was due to marry his fiancée and wanted to make some extra money. While awaiting trial he was given one hours' special leave from Long Bay Gaol to be married at the Botany Presbyterian Church. Williams soon faced trial in Sydney before Judge **Armstrong** and a jury of 12 men. On arriving in the court, the smart-looking 33 year old gave a cheery smile to his new bride who fluttered a shy hand in response. He then conducted his own defence after asking the judge to help him along and let him sit at the bar table so he could access all the documents.

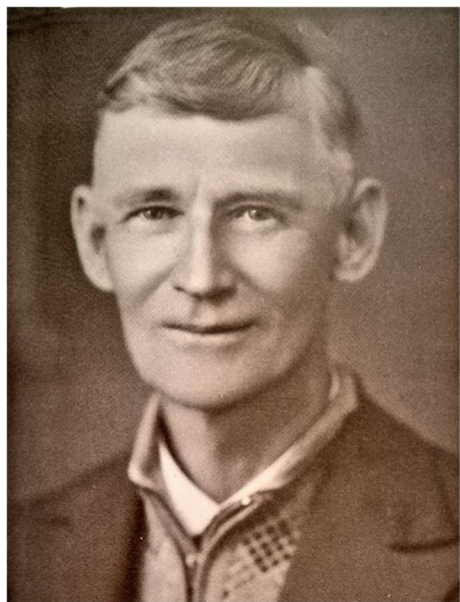
He told the court it was all a terrible misunderstanding. He cross-examined Bill at length about confusion between orders and deliveries and claimed that this was another case of confusion caused by the very large number of orders he had successfully obtained for the business. His wife of four days was allowed to give evidence, which was probably not a good idea. She said her husband had tried very hard to go straight, which may have been an inadvertent admission by her. She appealed to the jury to accept her husband's story which she was convinced was the truth.

Evidence given by the Solicitor-General as prosecutor was that the goods had been sold to a second-hand dealer below the factory cost. Williams admitted his father had not died and that his surname was in fact **Morris** and not Williams. Sergeant Baker said Morris was a plausible scoundrel without one redeeming

feature, who had previously defrauded a soldiers' organisation. Morris conceded he had been in trouble before, including eight convictions for false pretences and three for forging and uttering, adding he had paid the penalty for those and they were all over and done with.

The jury took about 10 minutes (roughly nine minutes longer than expected) to return with a unanimous verdict of guilty. The judge then gave him a sentence of 18 months in gaol with hard labour (which was served in Bathurst Gaol), adding "I am sorry to say it, but I am sure to meet you again." Mrs Morris-Williams was led away by friends, sobbing bitterly. She said outside the court "I will wait for 18 months – and 18 years if need be. I have known him for over two years, and I am the only person in the world who understands him. I am going to find a job somehow, somewhere, and then save until he comes out." Morris called out to his wife from the back of the prison van on its way back to Long Bay "Goodbye. Be brave and don't cry".

I note in passing that Morris was missing the first joint of his left ring finger, a common enough injury for someone in the boot trade. He was, however, a former motor mechanic.



*William McCamley
(photo: O'Connor family album)*

Following the Government's declaration of war in 1939, the Federal Parliament soon started passing the National Security Regulations. The regulations largely impacted on the supply and price of materials, goods and food needed for the armed services. Boot manufacturers, for example, were required to give preference to Government orders and hold to pre-war prices. Disagreements on pricing were to be resolved by compulsory arbitration.

The Government kicked off the process of acquiring boots by issuing requests for quotations which went out to selected boot manufacturers, mostly in Sydney and Melbourne, in late September 1939.

The quotations were for the supply of brown ankle boots for both the army and air force. Quotes received were between 11s 4³/₄d a pair and 14s 11d a pair. It was clear the Government

would favour the lower quotes. The boot manufacturers soon panicked as they realised events were quickly unfolding that might mean their prices were too low.

A semi-formal meeting of representatives of the New South Wales and Victorian Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Associations was held in October at which it was agreed that common prices of 15s 11½ d would in future be offered to the Government. Higher common prices were also agreed for heavier boots. Previous quotes to the Government were then withdrawn before the Government had issued any orders. The apparent reason for the price increases was the sudden rise in the price of leather, which had been approved by the Government's Prices Commissioner. There was also the possibility of a huge order of boots by the Egyptian Government that would limit supply of materials and workers although it may have helped to increase profits.

The Government was very unimpressed with this turn of events and gave dark threats of punishment for anyone found profiteering from the war. The Government then invited formal tenders for the supply of boots. The threat of punishment largely worked and many tenderers departed from the agreed pricing. However, ten firms were not swayed and adhered to the new fixed prices.

The Acting Minister for Supply, Sir Frederick Stewart, said in Parliament the following month that this was, "A deliberate attempt at war profiteering." He then sought to shame the firms by naming them. Among the ten names were Edward's firm, McCamley and Sons Pty Limited, and Bill's firm, Forest Boot Factory Pty Limited. The mood of the public was definitely against any war profiteering so the accusation would have hurt both personally and commercially.

The Minister was quite pleased that orders had since gone out to approved tenderers around the country for over 125,400 pairs of boots, some priced at 40% a pair less than the fixed price. No prosecutions, however, were recorded against the ten firms who continued to deny any profiteering motive suggesting the attack on them had an element of playing politics. Accusations were put forward within the industry that not all boots were being



*1942 vintage army boots
(photo: O'Connor family album)*

made to the required quality, despite the Government relying on mandatory patterns and samples.

Bill issued a statement to the media in September 1940, saying his company was now on the approved list of tenderers and had been making military boots at the rate of 500 to 1,000 pairs a week for many months in accordance with the required standards. He said the price for continuous production was reasonable. The fixed price the previous year had been a genuine price based on likely conditions. As those conditions did not occur, "...our previous position was wrong and the Government's position was the proper one. We are only too happy to accept further orders at the Government price."

The pattern and standard of army boots was changed in 1941 most likely because of the need to adapt to jungle warfare. Metal toe and heel caps were among the improvements made. The demand to supply military boots only increased during the war and, as mentioned before, Edward's firm also received large orders from the Government. I have little doubt that Bill's firm continued to supply boots to help meet the growing demand. By 1941, a regulation was passed giving the Minister for Supply the power to call upon boot manufacturers to set aside a minimum 52 hours a week to make boots for the military.

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from 5 to 10 (size 5—3 Coupons;
sizes 6 to 10—6 Coup-
ons). PRICED AT **21/-**



A work boot from the Forest Boot factory and a Work Senses boot from Edward McCamley's factory (photo: O'Connor family album)

After the war, normal business was resumed although there was a clear catch-up period for customers who were unable to purchase much footwear

during the war. By 1947, Bill's most popular product was the Cossack boot, a style that had never gone out of fashion in the boot industry. You could buy a pair of Bill's Cossack boots in sizes 5-10 for 19s 11d.



Inside a Sydney shoe and boot factory (photo: Dictionary of Sydney)

The Forest Boot Factory continued in business for many years. The first four of Bill's sons all worked in the boot trade, presumably for their father. No doubt the sons were running the business for most of the Second World War, Bill having retired early on although remaining as a director of the company. Bill passed away in 1972 at the age of 91. The Forest Boot Factory was voluntarily wound up two years later.

The McCamley family started out by becoming skilled artisan shoe and boot makers, capable of making a shoe completely by hand. They benefited hugely from the advances in mechanised production that gradually displaced skilled workers from their roles but made shoe production faster and cheaper. However, further innovation and efficiency, including injection moulding, synthetic materials and high-volume factory processing, eventually led to shoe

production moving offshore to cheaper economies. You may still find a shoemaker in Australia today if your interest is an artisanal sandal or an orthopaedic item.



Edward McCamley's factory at Redfern (photo: O'Connor family album)

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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’.

NEW SOUTH WALES

- A Pictorial History of Canterbury/Bankstown. [AN.LH.2193.3LC]
- Landed Enterprise and Penal Society. A History of Farming and Grazing in New South Wales Before 1821. [AN.HIS.6.4LC]
- Deaths Recorded for Tenterfield Shire & Beyond – Volume One - Tenterfield Cemetery. [AN.SOU.5.2372.1]
- The Historic Buildings of Windsor and Richmond. [AN.LH.2756.13LC]
- Sydney Takes Shape. A History in Maps. [AN.LH.2000.39LC]

OVERSEAS

- Highland Clans & Tartans [S.HIS.1.18LC]
- Dating by Design 1840-1915 – A New Way of Dating Old Photographs. An Easy to Follow Guide for Family Historians and Genealogists. [BRIT.GUI.5.7.LC]
- Parochial History of the County of Cornwall. [E.CON.HIS.40.1CD]
- The Cornish Family – The Roots of our Future. [E.CON.HIS.26.1LC]
- Ireland – A Genealogy Guide. [I.GUI.1.29LC]

GENERAL

- Beyond the Dunes – A Dutch Australian Story. [G.FH.DUY.1LC]

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

Compiled by Janette **Daly** (Librarian)



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MAYS HILL CEMETERY

by Helen **Bain** (Member)

Mays Hill Cemetery is, in reality, two separate and distinct cemeteries. They stand on the corner of Great Western Highway and Steele Street, Parramatta.

The first cemetery to be established was the Presbyterian in 1839 which was followed by the Baptist in 1849. Death certificates record six different names for this cemetery - Mays Hill, Baptist, Parramatta General, Presbyterian, The Western Road, Anglican Section and Western Road. The register lists even more denominations.

Over time the cemetery became a sad, vastly overgrown and damaged with many fallen headstones and vandalised. However, when the Bicentenary came around the people of the area became interested in their history with people like the amazing Judith Dunn OAM, FPDHS, who came to the Cemetery's aid. She was joined by a number of field workers who gave their time for two days a week, unearthing memorials from under enormous rose bushes, falling into holes and tearing their hands on sharp grasses and discarded hypodermic needles.

Eventually they were assisted by Holroyd Council who took an active interest in the cemetery and made their records available for research purposes.

It was more than just a clean-up exercise – there were other things to take into account. Another team commenced recording names and details of what was found with photographs, if possible. Once the work reached a certain stage stonemasons came in to determine what was able to be restored. In many instances it was obvious that scavengers had been at work.

The first time I visited Mays Hill Cemetery it was in the 1970s, to take my father on a mission to see if we could find the grave of his aunt and uncle. Fortunately, Dad knew roughly where to look as he had been at his uncle's funeral many years ago and it was where he thought it would be.

It was a number of years before I saw the cemetery again. The group *The Friends of Mays Hill Cemetery* had been established and it was at last starting to look like a cemetery again. My husband and I hadn't been there long when a woman who was digging out weeds at the other end of the graveyard waved to us and came over to see if we needed help. It was Pat O'Brien, Secretary of the *Friends* who had done extensive research on those buried there. She also took guided trips for interested people from time to time.

As it happened, she had researched the grave of my great uncle Sydney Evan Jones who had gone to the South Pole with Douglas Mawson in 1913. I also ended up being one of her Guides on weekends for several years.

The *Friends* now have a *Self-Guided Walking Tour* on their website for those who may be interested in downloading some information. It's worth a look and you might just find a name you know. I never thought I would have had relatives buried there.

Acknowledgments:

- Judith Dunn OAM, F.P.D.H.S. who produced *The Paramatta Cemeteries Mays Hill* (a copy of is in the FHBB Library)
- Pat & Gerry O'Brien, *The Friends of Mays Hill Cemetery* and all those people who gave their time to help restore the Cemetery.
- Parramatta and District Historical Society
- *Find A Grave*



David and Helen Bain on duty – beside the gravestone of Sydney Evan Jones (photo: Bain family album)



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A DEAD MAN'S PENNY

by John Hely (Member)



Herbert Angus Sullings' plaque (photo: John Hely)

*The **Memorial Plaque** (shown full size – 120 mm) featuring Britannia, a lion, and the inscription "**He died for freedom & honour**", was issued after the First World War to the next-of-kin of British and Empire service personnel killed as a result of the war.*

*It came to be known as the **Dead Man's Penny**, **Death Penny**, or **Widow's Penny** because of its similarity to the smaller penny coin.*

As well as being a member of Family History Botany Bay, I also belong to Sutherland Combined PROBUS Club and coordinate a Family History Interest Group, which commenced at the beginning of 2025 based on a group organised by members, John **Levy** and Rowena **Summers**, at the Engadine Central PROBUS. Several of our interest group members belong to FHBB.

At our meeting March 2026 we were introduced to Herbert Angus **Sullings**. One of our PROBUS members who prior to retiring was involved in the construction industry. At one of the sites being demolished Wayne had picked up a couple of items of interest in a cardboard box in the rubble - one item was a bronze memorial plaque and the other was a Rising Sun badge that was attached to the Australian Military Forces hats in WW1 and WW2. He did not know what the bronze plaque was and enquired with our Family History Interest Group.



The rising sun badge carries a scroll inscribed 'Australian Commonwealth Military Forces' (photo: John Hely)

Well, this chance discovery became the focus of our two hour research time together, and the story of Herbert Angus Sullings began to come alive.

Prior to our March meeting one member of our group established when Herbert died and shared the initial findings with the group. With the various internet links set up for our March meeting, using the groups growing skills, our quest was to undertake further research, with the goal of finding a relative of Herbert for these personal items.

Our groups journey of research is provided briefly below using a number of links to build a picture and story of those close to Herbert and to establish the possible journey of the Dead Man's Penny, the memorial to the death of Herbert Angus Sullings, that went initially to his next-of-kin.

LINKS: Australian War Memorial and National Archives of Australia

<https://www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/service-records>

<https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records>

Military enlistment papers, or service records (including attestation forms), are official documents detailing an individual's military career, including personal details, next of kin, and service history. They are available for Australian service personnel from the Boer War onwards.

For Herbert:

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=8095885&isAv=N>

EXTRACT: Service Number – 4052: Place of Birth – Tingha NSW: Place of Enlistment – Liverpool NSW: Next-of-Kin – (Mother) SULLINGS Catherine Christina

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8095885> is a direct link to view a copy of the record.

LINK: The Ryerson Index:

<https://www.ryersonindex.org/>

A death notice for Herbert Angus Sullings was found in the *Newcastle Herald*. Herbert died 31 October 1917 at Beersheba, Palestine. This was the date that the Australian Mounted Division's 4th and 12th light horse regiments (4th Light Horse Brigade) conducted a mounted infantry charge with bayonets in their hands, their only weapon for mounted attack, as their rifles were slung across their backs.

Herbert's mother (and next-of-kin) Catherine Christina Sullings' funeral notice dated 12 September 1925 (late of Hamilton) was also in the *Newcastle Herald*, as also found from the Ryerson Index.

LINK: TROVE

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>

EXTRACT: Reported in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* – Herbert in the 2nd Light Horse had been wounded during the recent fighting in Egypt.

On 15 December 1917 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the 370th Casualty List was printed. Herbert was included in those killed (48), along with reports of individuals that died from wounds (10); missing (3); prisoner of war (3); wounded (358); ill (21); and injured (7), totalling 449 soldiers from New South Wales.

Reported in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* were memorials from family members on the date of Herbert's (Bert's) death over a number of years. It was very moving to read the memorial words from Herbert's parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncle and aunts. There are eight entries regarding Herbert's passing.

There were other entries in newspapers relating to Herbert and his family's lives.

LINK: NSW Births Deaths and Marriages

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/family-and-relationships/family-history-search>

EXTRACT: Herbert was born in 1887 (7 April) to parents Samuel and Catherine C. Sullings, registered at Inverell, New South Wales (no. 25431).

Herbert's father Samuel was born in 1860 to Samuel and Mary Ann Sullings in Armidale and died in 1939 at Mosman.

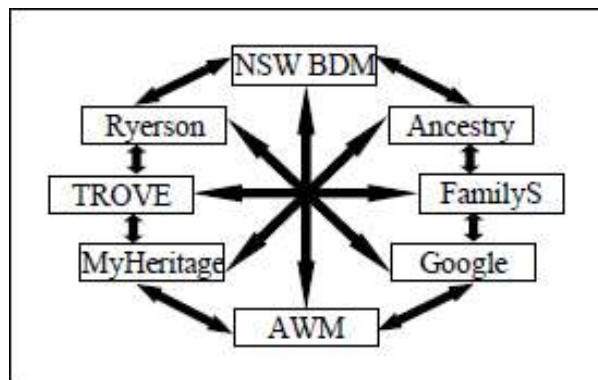
From TROVE: Samuel Sullings died age 79 at his daughter's residence (Herbert's sister), 26 Ryrie Street, Mosman.

LINK: Ancestry

<https://www.ancestry.com.au/>

We researched public trees using Ancestry, looking for information on Herbert's wider family, particularly his mother (next of kin) and father. We found a number of family trees but only a couple provided information on Herbert's siblings. One tree had detail of Herbert's only sister's (Ella's) family and her child James Herbert Donaldson. This may have been the family line that the Memorial

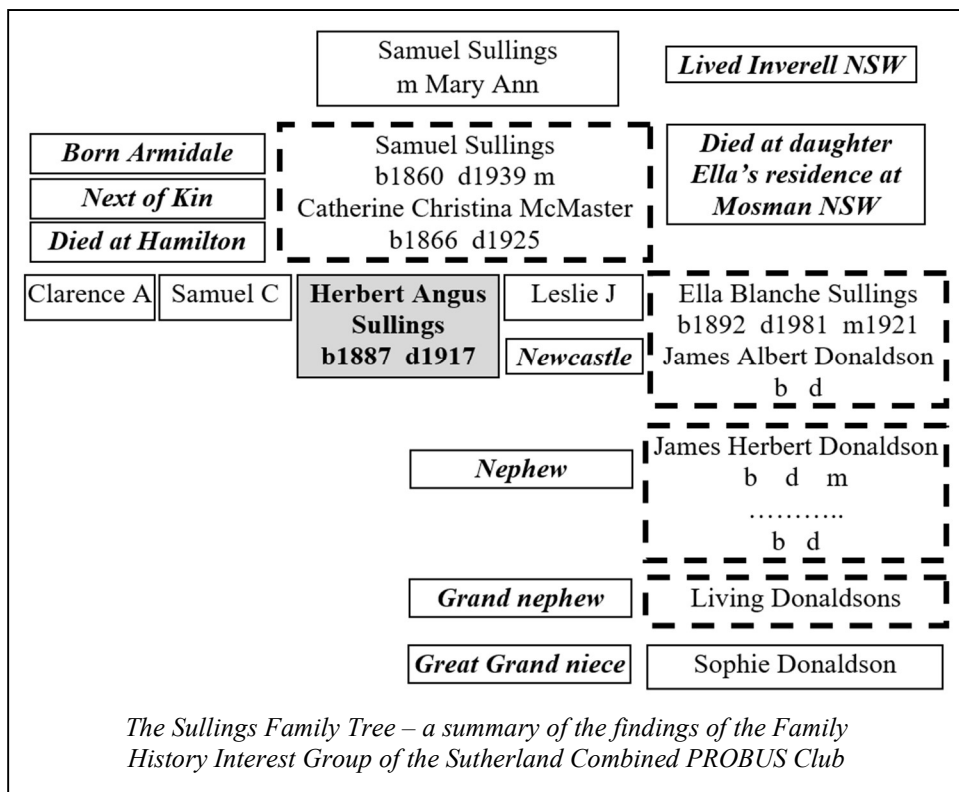
to Herbert may have been passed on to.



Research Interactions

By researching Herbert's nephew (James Herbert Donaldson) on Ancestry one family tree was found that had descendants shown. A message had been sent to the author of that tree – the great-granddaughter of Herbert's sister Ella regarding our findings.

Our group felt honoured to find more about Herbert's life, his family and memorials of his life and his loss to his family and friends. This was undertaken by investigating newspapers, official records and other available information. In the time our group was together, 17 pages of extracts were down loaded to a working (Word) document of notes and information. Finding information in one LINK was use to research further on other LINKS weaving a story of Herbert and his family and possible journey of the Dead Mans Penny memorial for Herbert up to the time it had been found in the rubble of a demolition site.



It is hope of our Group to find descendants of Herbert's family, to share our findings, important information for his family that should not be lost or forgotten.

Lest we forget! Herbert Angus Sullings.



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.

ANGELS OF MERCY

By Colleen Passfield (Member)

For many years, in annual professions surveys, nursing has topped the lists as the most honest and ethical profession and the most trustworthy. Nurses are with most of us from the beginning of life to the twilight days and end of life as we know it. They are with us in days of peace and days of conflict and war when their selfless courage and dedication can be most visible.

Nursing is never easy or glamorous and is more a vocation than a job as they tend the sick and comfort the bereaved and, in time of war, risk their lives to nurse the sick and wounded. They are warmly appreciated by all with whom they are in contact but there is rarely much publicity about their invaluable contribution to society. In the Sutherland Shire, three women became well known and loved by many – Kate **Lobb**, Irene **Haxton** and Beryl **Bonfield**.

Kate Lobb 1866-1939 nee **Coombs**, was a pioneer midwife of the early 1900s in the Shire. Born in Kiama, in 1895, Kate moved to the Sutherland Shire where she soon established herself as a practising midwife. In 1903, she married Arthur James Lobb, lived in Merton Street, Sutherland and raised two children.

Kate dressed in a distinctive blue cape and bonnet with long tails at the back and was a familiar figure as she went to attend her patients in her sulky. In all weathers, her bag was always packed and ready to go when she received a phone call, even being rowed across the river to National Park to attend a birth. She never put pressure on patients to pay their bills as she always said, “If they could afford to pay her they would.”

With few doctors practicing in the area, for 43 years, Kate delivered babies and provided care to local women until she died in 1939 due to a sudden heart attack. A memorial ceremony was held by the Sutherland P & C Association and her grave was inscribed with the words ‘A Tribute from the Mothers of Sutherland’.

Irene Thomasina Haxton 1905-2002 nee **Hooker**, was born in Queensland. After her registration as a General Nurse in 1928, to further her career, Irene moved to Sydney, NSW to train as a midwife at St Margaret’s Maternity Hospital in Darlinghurst. In 1930, her name was recorded in the Midwifery lists of the NSW, Australia Medical Registers, 1925-1954. Until 1953, with a lapse between 1941-1948, her registration was renewed regularly.

In 1938, Irene married Vivian William Stuart Haxton at Glebe NSW, moved to Tamworth but returned to Sydney in 1945.

In 1948, Irene renewed her registration as a midwife and obtained approval from the NSW Department of Health to set up and operate a four-bed maternity hospital with a labour ward at 12 English Street, Cronulla. With an exploding population in the Shire, the closure of the Cottage Hospital in Croydon Street, Cronulla and the nearest public hospital being St George at Kogarah, there was a desperate need for such a facility. Named the Jacaranda Hospital, the facility continued to expand and extra land was purchased for a new building.

In 1956, Sister **Mullins** joined the staff and became Matron when Sister Haxton retired in 1962. Soon after the Maternity Hospital was converted to a Nursing Home.

Soon after the hospital was opened, Sister Haxton had established a tradition. As the baby left the hospital, the mother was handed a jacaranda seedling in a jam jar or tin to plant at home, the seeds having been collected from places like Penrith and Grafton. Soon an average of 32 babies were born there every month and now, when jacarandas bloom, the Shire develops a purple haze and Sister Haxton is remembered.

Beryl Bonfield 1913-2004, has been described as a woman of indomitable spirit and unwavering dedication and is mainly remembered in the Shire as the founding Matron of the Sutherland Hospital but her story is remarkable.

Beryl Bonfield was born in Sydney in 1913 daughter of Alexander and Petronella Bonfield. She gained her general nursing certificate at Sydney Hospital and Maternity Certificate at Crown Street Women's Hospital. In 1937 She joined the Inland Mission (now Flying Doctor Service) serving mining communities in Marble Bar and Western Australia. When war broke out in 1939 and working at Lithgow, she joined the militia.

From 1941-1947 Beryl was appointed to the Australian Army Nursing Services with postings in Palestine, Egypt, New Guinea, Borneo and Japan. She provided nursing care through various Australian General Hospitals (AGH) and was promoted to Lieutenant. Being witness to crimes related to prisoners of war, she attended the Tokyo War Crimes Trials in 1948. She spent a year with the Occupational Force and promoted to Temporary Captain.

Discharged in 1947, she nursed at Concord Repatriation Hospital (113 AGH) and in 1948 travelled to England to attend her sister's wedding. Unable to arrange passage back to Australia, she answered an advertisement to help two airmen fly an aircraft from England to Australia. In 1949 she was given a seat on the plane to attend to any injury or illness during the journey which took 39 days with 48 landings.

Returning to Australia in 1950, Beryl became Matron of Yass Hospital and in 1952 Matron of the Tweed District Hospital in Murwillumbah. In 1957 her application was accepted and she became the foundation Matron of the brand new, unoccupied 200 bed Sutherland Hospital (TSH) and responsible for furnishing and staffing the hospital and the adjoining nurses' home. She was responsible for approximately 250 nursing staff as well as staff from domestic services and worked hard to seek funding and ensure that the TSH Nurses' Training School was equipped to be the best in the state. Beryl was the first ever to be awarded Honorary Membership of the NSW College of Nursing for her service to nursing.

In 1979, after 21 years as Founding Matron of Sutherland Hospital, Beryl Bonfield retired and was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her contribution to nursing and community. She was involved in organisations such as the State Emergency Services Nurses unit, Girl Guides, Quota Club, St Johns Ambulance, Presbyterian Sunday School, the Cronulla Musical Club and Cronulla RSL Women's Auxiliary.

In 1961, she joined the Cronulla RSL Sub-Branch and remained a member until her death in 2004 aged 91, in Caloundra, Queensland. The Cronulla RSL Club received her medals and other awards through her estate and have worked hard to preserve her memory and celebrate her remarkable achievements. The Club has named their restaurant BONFIELD in honour of Beryl Bonfield and included her story in their FRIENDS BY THE SEA PODCAST cronullarsl.com.au/podcasts).

'A nurse may only run in case of hemorrhage or fire. At all other times she must walk briskly' Beryl Bonfield

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

OAM (Order of Australia Medal – 1978)

The 1939-1945 Star

The Africa Star (With '8' clasp- served with Montgomery's 8th Army in North Africa

The Pacific Star (Active Service in SWPA – South-West Pacific Area)

The Defence Medal

The War Medal 1939-1945

The Australian Service Medal 1939-1945

The Australian Service Medal 1945-1975

REFERENCES

- BBFHS Connections, <https://bbfhsconnections.com.au/TNG/>
- New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, <https://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au>

- Trove, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>
- Ryerson Index, <https://ryersonindex.net/search.php>
- NSW and Australian Medical Registers
- Woronora Memorial Park, <https://www.smcnsw.org.au/woronora/home>
- Jacaranda Nursing Home, Cronulla
- National Archives of Australia, <https://www.naa.gov.au/>
- Sutherland Shire Libraries, <https://libraries.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au>
- Stan Grimshaw, Cronulla RSL Sub-Branch memorabilia officer
- Friends By The Beach Podcast, <https://www.cronullarsl.com.au/podcasts>
- Australian War Memorial, Canberra, <https://www.awm.gov.au>



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).

1999	Sonia Vasyli	Kirrawee
2000	Fleur Creed	Biggenden, Qld
2001	Yvonne Hawkins	Sans Souci
2002	Tammy Hawkins	Sans Souci
2003	Val De-Viell	Cronulla
2004	Richard De-Viell	Cronulla
2005	Sherryl Leighton	Manning Point
2006	Jennifer Fitzgerald	Cronulla
2007	John Fitzgerald	Cronulla
2008	Donna Slattery	Loftus

Your Journal Contributions

All journal contributions – large or small – are welcome. Email your input to bbfhs_ed@yaho.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.

THOSE COUNTRY MUSEUMS

by Rowena **Summers** (Member)

This is just a short article to particularly encourage new family historians with ancestors who came from country towns to remember to check there for what information may be available on their early family members. My husband and I were recently in Narrabri and visited the Old Gaol which is now a museum, and is an absolute treasure trove of information on the early families in that area. There were many photos in different categories such as weddings, sports, soldiers, family groups, clothing styles, etc. and what impressed us most was that a vast majority actually had name labels! Very few nameless faces stared down at us from their places on the walls. There were many filing cabinets of information which all appeared well-organised, and outside was a collection of household and farming implements used long ago.

Having just come from a farm we stay at with numerous cousins every Easter, including a couple who had done a stint with Blaze Aid (mainly fencing for farmers who have been burnt out in fires or washed out in floods), I found something I have never seen before: a framed board mounted with almost 30 different varieties of barbed wire, including one that had been patented in Adelaide in 1883! I had always thought barbed wire was just barbed wire but I certainly learnt differently at this wonderful museum, so I urge you all to try your luck to see what you can find to add interest to your family trees.



A selection of barbed wire from the 30 on the board (photo: Rowena Summers)



Ku-ring-gai Historical Society has replaced an aging computer program which stored their 15,000 image photo collection. Judith **Godden** says: volunteer Peter **Lenehan** designed and built a new in-house photo library system, supported by our computer experts Ralph **Davis** and Peter **Stehn**. The result, known as *Kpix*, is modern, flexible and intuitive, with easy computer searching, easy editing and uploading by users, and compatibility with standard web browsers. With thoughtful design and the assistance of AI, we successfully transferred our entire legacy database into *Kpix*.

Peter intends to make the software freely available as open-source, so anyone with basic development skills can download it and adapt it to suit their own needs. If you would like to know more, please go to <https://khs.org.au/contact-us/>

The Registers of Assignments and Other Legal Instruments from 1794 to 1824, known as the ‘Old Register’, were inscribed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register in 2009 and the indexes are now online at <https://mhns.wa.gov.au/indexes/land/the-old-register/>. Representing some of the earliest colonial records in NSW, the Old Register is a nine-volume series of registers dating from 1802 to 1824 (backdated to 1794) that record private legal transactions and dealings between individuals and businesses. They deal with a wide range of matters, including land transactions, marriages and separations, convict–master relationships, deeds, and sealing and shipping agreements.

These records offer fascinating insights into early colonial times, providing information about the details of social relationships as well as the demographics and values of the colony. This index was compiled by Lois **Sabine**, Indexer, and is published in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar General. Search the index by name, subject or place.

In this free webinar at <https://tinyurl.com/y5fs9nym>, Dr Carol **Liston** AO, Adjunct Associate Professor in History at Western Sydney University, explores the ‘Old Register’ and what it can tell us about early colonial New South Wales.

Unearthed – Museum of Sydney, open daily, 10am–5pm, free entry. Between 1983 and 1991, archaeologists excavated the site of Australia’s first Government House. They unearthed around 140,000 objects that had lain hidden beneath the city’s streets for almost 140 years. *Unearthed* displays a fascinating selection of objects excavated from the site and sheds light on the people who lived and worked there, and those whose lives were impacted by decisions made within its walls. It also presents the people and stories behind the archaeological digs.

Small Debts Court Records Now Online. For years, researchers have travelled to the Kingswood Reading Room to consult the rich holdings of the Museums of History NSW (MHNSW – formerly State Records). Now, more of that material is coming online. MHNSW is digitising key records from its 14-million-item State Archives Collection to improve public access, prioritising high-use and at-risk records. Among the most valuable for historians are the Small Debts Registers – a work in progress and an extraordinary resource for both family and local history research. This work forms part of the Archives for Everyone project, with new series being added progressively.

From 1846, Courts of Petty Sessions were authorised to recover small debts (up to £10). While modest, these cases open remarkable windows into everyday life. The registers record the plaint number, names of plaintiff and defendant, cause of action, amount claimed, costs, judgment and amount awarded. The index also includes the date of plaint and, where noted, the magistrate and attorney. For family historians, these records can confirm residence, occupation, business dealings and personal networks – sometimes revealing disputes that illuminate character and circumstance. The Small Debts Registers index is now available online at <https://mhnsw.au/indexes/courts-lower/small-debts-registers-index/>, making this once labour-intensive research far more accessible.

Some Historic Graves in Australia

- The son of Charles **Dickens** is buried in Moree in New South Wales. He was Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, the youngest of seven sons, who arrived in Australia in 1868 and although he was a Member of Parliament for six years, rarely spoke in the House. He died in 1902 aged fifty and a brass plate was installed in his memory in All Saint's Church of England in Moree.
- Three descendants of famous writers are buried in Victoria. The grave of Araluen, daughter of poet Henry **Kendall** is found in the Melbourne General Cemetery, and engraved on the tombstone is: *Leave the darling with her flowers, other hands will come and tend them, other friends in other hours.*
- A grave in the Echuca Cemetery has the inscription: *Henry Curwen Wordsworth, eldest son of Rev John Wordsworth, Rector of Brigham, Cumberland, eldest grandson of the Poet Laureate. Born Wokington Hall, 29 July 1834, died Echuca 27 December 1865*
- Sarah **Burns**, grand daughter of the famous Scottish poet is buried at Campbells Creek Cemetery. She had arrived in Victoria with her parents during the 1850s gold rushes, and died in 1885.

REFERENCE

World's News, 31 December, 1955

TRAGIC TALES 2, 1895-1930.

BURIALS IN WORONORA CEMETERY

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

This article describes more tragic tales, this time involving a railway accident. It follows our article in the March edition of *The Endeavour* which covered drownings.

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.

Up and Down the Line

In the early days of rail in New South Wales seven train disasters occurred between 1878 and 1894. This period was prior to the opening of Woronora Cemetery and the 38 fatalities were buried elsewhere. In our study we found three later railway disasters that resulted in people being buried in Woronora Cemetery. Two occurred on the Illawarra line, the first in 1901 and the other some years later in 1920. The first, outside Sydenham station, was a spectacular derailment leaving seven people killed and 26 injured. The seven deceased were buried in Woronora Cemetery. The second major accident on the Illawarra Line occurred

at Hurstville station. The third accident involved a family man who lived in the Sydney suburb of Carlton. Alfred Charles Bray a mail guard was killed in a train collision at Exeter in the Southern Highlands area of New South Wales in 1914.

WORST ACCIDENT SINCE THE SYDENHAM DISASTER AT HURSTVILLE

Tuesday, 3 August 1920, and the 5.24pm Sydney to Sutherland steam train left Sydney Central station with passengers on their homeward journey at the end of their day. Workers and shoppers crowded into the carriages assured of a 30 minute trip to the train's first stop at Hurstville station. Many passengers alighted at Hurstville, leaving those bound for Penshurst, Mortdale, Oatley, Como and Sutherland to continue their journey. The train moved off and, when just past the platform, stopped by a second signal. The engine driver waited. It was growing dark on a cool winter evening. Inside the carriages small gas lantern lights produced enough illumination for some passengers to read their evening papers and others to play a game of cards. Some stood on carriage platforms or looked out of the windows seeking a reason for the delay.¹

Meanwhile the 5.27pm from Sydney had arrived at Hurstville at 5.58pm and discharged its passengers. It was then to become the 6.11pm for a return journey to Sydney. This was a peak time at Hurstville station with trains in and out of the station every four minutes. David **Clayton**, a porter at Hurstville station, was also involved in shunting operations although he was not technically qualified. He merely had to obey the signalman's directions. Shunting operations for the 6.11pm Sydney train began. The engine was uncoupled and the driver took his engine out just past the points where he saw a red tail light of the Sydney to Sutherland train. Having cleared the points, he ran his engine around and coupled up at the other end of the empty carriages. Then this full-length train had to be shunted from the down line onto the up line ready for its return journey at 6.11pm. The driver waited for his signal to start backing his train out. About four minutes had passed since he had seen the tail light of the stationary train. The 'home signal' showed, allowing the driver to back his empty train out of the station. After a short distance he felt a 'bump'.

The passengers in the last carriages of the Sutherland train experienced more than a mere bump. The end carriage of the backing train smashed into the end carriage of the stationary train causing the next two passenger laden carriages to telescope as the force of the impact was carried forward. The gas mantles and the windows broke, spraying broken glass over the unsuspecting passengers; the wooden carriages splintered like matchsticks and the steel frames bent at odd

¹ *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 Aug 1920 p11

angles. Darkness had now fully enveloped the accident scene. Some men and women jumped from the carriages. William **Mathison**, a city council labourer, was seated in the middle carriage of the stationary train expecting to continue his journey home to Mortdale. As the carriage disintegrated people were flung from their seats. Mathison escaped unscathed to see many fellow passengers lying injured on the ground or stumbling dazed and confused along the permanent way. He went to the aid of an apprenticed boilermaker, 14-year-old Stanley **Forrest** who had become jammed in the tangled mass of iron and wood. A part of the buffer had also been pushed into the carriage. One of Forrest's legs was crushed



Smashed box car (photo: Daily Telegraph 5 Aug 1920 p5)

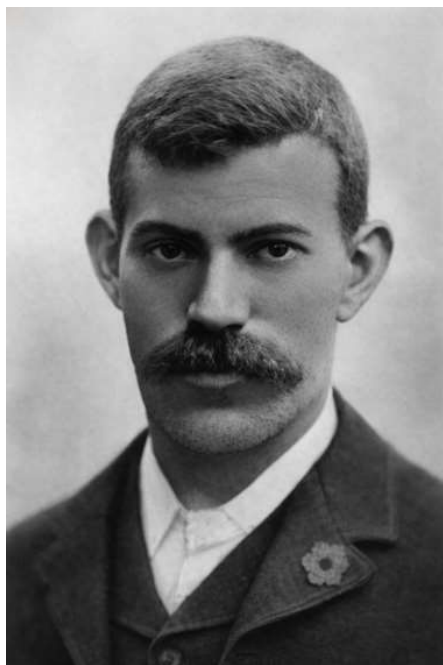
and the other leg so badly mutilated that it was nearly severed. Reportedly Forrest bravely said, “one of my legs has gone, you might as well chop the other off and get me out!”² A doctor at the scene ordered that to release him, his leg would need to be amputated just below the knee. Mathison said he held Forrest up while axes and hatchets were found. Finally, a tomahawk did the job. Forrest was taken to the St George Cottage Hospital with another injured young man, Arthur **Prentice** who also had to be cut from the wreckage. Young Stanley Forrest died at the hospital at half past nine that evening. In the Forrest home in Myall Street Mortdale, Stanley had not arrived home for his tea. His father Edgar Forrest went

² *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 6 Aug 1920 p2

down to the station where he discovered that all the injured had been taken to the hospital. There, he found his son and stayed with him until he died.

As the extent of the number of passengers requiring medical attention became clear, many vehicles were made available to ferry the injured to hospital. Buses and private vehicles as well as ambulances from a number of metropolitan depots, delivered the injured to the hospital. As so many patients needed prompt attention, the disused isolation ward became the emergency receiving point.

Jessie **Ritchie** had been to the city on a shopping expedition. She caught the 5.24pm from Sydney intending to travel to Como station and then home. She was seated in a carriage towards the front of the train and received quite a jolt when the accident occurred but was otherwise unhurt. Her husband, Alexander Ritchie would be home later and now it seemed she would be late getting his tea ready. She needed to find alternative transport home. At home and as the evening grew later, Alexander did not arrive as expected. In the morning Jessie sent one of her sons to Hurstville station to inquire after the passengers injured in the accident. The stationmaster had a list of the fatalities and the injured. The boy told his mother that his father's name was not on that list. Later in the day, Jessie learned that her husband was killed in the crash and that his name was not on the list as he had been wrongfully identified as Michael **Sheehan**. Alexander Cecil Ritchie died instantly, crushed between the ends of two carriages. His body was cut free from the wreckage with whatever tools could be found. His lunch tin was found nearby 'squeezed like a concertina'. The floors of the crushed carriages were bloodied.³



Alexander Ritchie (photo: Jeni Ritchie, Find a Grave memorial 172240064)

John **White** of Penshurst caught the next train after the 5.27pm train. Because of the accident his train also terminated at Hurstville and when he got out at the station platform he saw a couple of stretchers on which lay badly injured

3 *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 4 Aug 1920 p9

people. One of the stretchers cradled his son Ernest. Someone told him his son had died. Ernest was 14 years old and had died instantly, crushed by the telescoping effect of the carriages on impact. He was in the same carriage as Ritchie.⁴

Many passengers were taken to the cottage hospital that night. While local doctors **Elliott** and **Webb** were on the scene at Hurstville, others were called in to the hospital. Patients were assessed, minor injuries treated and then allowed to go home. Fifteen people with more serious injuries were hospitalised. Young lads, Norman **Byron**, a factory hand of Oatley, Albert Prentice upholsterer and Thomas **Short** both of Mortdale all the same age as Stanley Forrest and Ernest White survived their injuries. Most of the adults were local people from Oatley or Mortdale.

The day following the accident the funerals of Ernest White, Alexander Ritchie and Stanley Forrest took place in Woronora Cemetery. Ernest White's funeral left his parents' home in Penshurst for the Roman Catholic section of the cemetery.⁵ Stanley Forrest was interred in the Anglican section of the cemetery.⁶ His parents, Edgar and Nellie Forrest had experienced the loss of another son Percy Neville when he died on 29 October 1917 from wounds received at Ypres during the First World War. When the headstone was erected on the grave after Stanley's death, it included a memorial to Percy. *The Propeller* printed a poem entitled, *In Memory of a Hero* submitted by *A Mortdale Mother* illustrating the compassion felt for Nellie's and Edgar's tragic loss:

They tried to extricate the crushed and bleeding form
Of a brave young hero who left his home right that morn;
When looking at his lower limbs,
He raised his fair young head
'One is gone, take the other!' he coolly said
His brother died in battle, fighting for his King
And may these simple words to his mother comfort bring:
And let her this remember, amid her grief and pain
That one who reared such heroes has not lived in vain.⁷

4 *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 5 Aug 1920 p5

5 Buried Woronora RC section M grave 86

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/182481647>

6 Buried Woronora Anglican section 3 grave 133

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/178610660>

7 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 13 Aug 1920 p3

Alexander Ritchie was a cooper by trade from Fraserburgh in Scotland.⁸ In 1920 with his wife Jessie and sons Alexander aged 16 and Cecil aged 14, he lived in Warraba Street Como. He was 51 years old when he was buried in the Presbyterian section of the cemetery.⁹



Alexander Mackay Gillies
(photo: *The Propeller*, 13 Aug 1920
enhanced by ChatGPT)

On the day of the three funerals, another passenger fell victim to the carnage caused by the collision. Alexander Mackay Gillies, with his distraught wife Clara at his bedside, died from haemorrhage and shock. He was 33 years old. His funeral left from St George Cottage Hospital on the afternoon of Friday 6 August 1920 for the Presbyterian cemetery where he was laid to rest nearby Alexander Ritchie.¹⁰ Gillies was born in Toronto Canada the son of Alexander and Susan Gillies and grandson of Roderick Gillies, master builder of Kylaken, Isle of Skye. Alexander had committed to a £225 mortgage on a cottage at 27 Kitchener Street Oatley where he lived with his wife and four young daughters Amy aged 12, Thelma aged 11, Flora aged 8 and Clara aged 5.

The inquest into the worst accident since the Sydenham catastrophe in 1901 took place at the City Coroners

Court on four separate days during a period of three weeks in front of a jury at the insistence of Forrest's and White's fathers.¹¹ During that time evidence was given by Herbert **Close** the driver of the Sydney to Sutherland train, James **Wythes** the driver of the empty train, David Clayton in charge of shunting

8 State Records NSW, Series 2765, Item X2091, Reel 343, Coroner's Inquest

9 Buried Woronora Presbyterian section XX grave 17

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/172240064>

10 Buried Woronora Presbyterian section XX grave 21

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/175737534>

11 *The Sun* (Sydney) 19 Aug 1920 p7

operations on the day of the accident, Cecil Reginald **Stevens**, night officer at Hurstville, Arthur **Hawley**, a railway shunter and Leslie Robert **Dickey** a signalman. On the night of the accident Dickey let the Sutherland train depart at 5.56pm. When he thought he should be able to see the tail light of that train he looked and saw a red light in the position he thought the tail end of the train should be. When the red light disappeared, he put No. 4 signal to danger assuming the Sutherland train had passed through the signal. However, at the same time there was a train ready at the platform for its return to the city. The roof of the car opposite the signal box obscured his view of any trains on the ‘down’ platform and also greatly obscured his view of a train going to or standing at No. 4 signal.

The verdict was one of accidental death. The jury added that defective lighting in the Hurstville railway yards and obstruction of the signalman’s view caused by trains, meant the wrong signal was given to the empty train. Safety procedures of the department were proclaimed to be very ‘lax’ though no negligence of individual officers of the Railway Department was found.¹²

The fathers of both Ernest White and Stanley Forrest lodged applications for probate on behalf of their sons so that an Administrator could be appointed who could then bring an action for compensation against the Railway Department on behalf of the parents. In each case the only asset for each of the boys was a suit of clothes and £2. The outcome of any proceedings for these families is not known.

Three days before Christmas of 1920, Jessie Ann Ritchie had her day in court to determine her compensation claim against the Railway Commissioners. The jury assessed damages at £1500 and directed that £1200 be paid to the widow, plus £300 for her children.¹³ She did not marry again and died at her home in Warraba Road, Como in 1947. Clara Gillies was also awarded £1500 compensation for the loss of her husband; £500 in addition to £200 to pay off her mortgage and £800 to be invested for her four little girls.¹⁴ By 1948, Clara and her daughters had moved to Harbord. When Clara died on 22 May 1975, her family had increased with the marriages of all her daughters, the births of 11 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.¹⁵



12 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 20 Aug 1920 p2 and 27 Aug 1920 p2

13 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 24 Dec 1920 p2

14 *The Propeller* (Hurstville) 26 Nov 1920 p3

15 *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 May 1975 p120

THE STRANGERS IN THE BOX – A POEM BY PAMELA A. HARAZIM (©1997)

By Denise O'Connor (Member)

In 2022, whilst searching for scrapbooking inspirations for a family album, I came across Pamela's original scrapbook page setting out her poem *The Strangers in the Box*. At the bottom is printed: ©1997 by Pamela A Harazim. All Rights Reserved. May be used in unchanged form for non-commercial purposes if accompanied by this copyright message.

During a clearing out of old magazines, in the 2014 edition of *Australian Family Tree Connections* (which ceased publication in 2017), there was a letter from Pamela Harazim to the Editor as follows: *I am always amazed at how many lives that little poem has touched! In 1997, I authored the poem titled 'The Strangers in the Box'. At the time I was teaching scrapbooking classes and used the poem in my presentations. I have found it in so many places printed as 'Author unknown' but I am trying to correct this and ask that you credit me.*

I originally wrote the poem when my mother had dementia and realised that the stories she loved to tell me about her youth and her family were locked inside her and I didn't remember them like I was so sure I always would.

Hence, the box of strangers. I have a few stories of family before my grandparents – I need to do some genealogy hunting for myself! PAM HARAZIM

By an amazing co-incidence, forming part of the September 2022 edition of the *Shropshire Family History Society Journal*, there is a poem titled '*Inside the Drawer by Anon*'. This is the poem written by Pamela Harazim.

I wrote to Karen, the Editor, advising her of this and continuing: *You might appreciate knowing the correct name and origin of this delightful reminder of how important it is for us to try to flesh-out a second-in-time, as best we can, with descriptions of 'who, what, where and when'...*

This is part of her reply: *Thanks for your email and hello to you in Sydney. I have visited once, in January 2016 and loved your city and wider country.*

Thank you also for clarifying the copyright on the poem I recently published. I do my best to check things but my apologies that this got through. I will seek to double check everything that comes my way in the future.... I will include a 'correction' in our next Journal which I am currently working on and which will be out in early December.

The Strangers in the Box

Author: Pamela Harazim

Come, look with me inside this drawer
In this box I've often seen
At the pictures, black and white
Faces proud, still and serene.

I wish I knew the people
These strangers in the box
Their names and all their memories
Are lost among the socks

I wonder what their lives were like,
How did they spend their days?
What about their special times?
I'll never know their ways.

If only someone would have taken time,
To tell who, what, and when,
Those faces of my heritage
Would come to life again.

Could this become the fate
Of the pictures we take today?
The faces and the memories
Someday to be tossed away.

Make time to save your pictures
Seize the opportunity when it knocks
Or someday you and yours could be
The strangers in the box.

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FHBB INTEREST GROUPS

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

The FHBB 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 DAY:

Research Centre

Saturday 20 June, details TBA

SCOTTISH INTEREST:

Research Centre

Saturday 8 August 2 – 4pm

WRITERS INTEREST:

By Zoom

Thursday 28 May 2 – 3.30pm

Thursday 23 July 2 – 3.30pm

FAMILY TREE MAKER FOR WINDOWS & MACS:

By Zoom

Tuesday 26 May 1.30 – 3.30pm

Tuesday 25 August 1.30 – 3.30pm

DNA WORKSHOP:

Research Centre

Saturday 1 August, 1.30 – ?, details TBA

TECHNOLOGY INTEREST:

By Zoom

Saturday 11 July 2 – 4pm

AUSTRALIA INTEREST DAY

Research Centre

Saturday 29 August, details TBA

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.



FHBB RESEARCH CENTRE AND LIBRARY

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

The building that holds the Research Centre is being reroofed, so we are closed for the month of May. Sutherland Council will contact us when it is finished and we can move back in. Hopefully it will be in early June, but it all depends on the workers and weather.

Because many of our books and assets have been put into storage, it will take some time to bring it all back and set it all up, computers especially. Thank you everyone who lent us their tarpaulins to cover everything we could in our room. We do hope dust and rain are kept out!

Before we closed, we held the Scottish Interest Day in the Centre on Saturday 11 April. It was a great success, with 20 people present, who heard six talks on a wide variety of Scottish subjects. There is something special about holding meetings in-person, when questions can be asked of the members of the group and ideas discussed. The next one is the **Irish Interest Day on Saturday 13 June**, in the Research Centre.

I hope members have had a look at the variety of the family history websites online and found some interesting information. Our subscription sites have been put on hold for the present and all have been understanding and accommodating.

Please read our eNEWS, which is sent to you on a Saturday every fortnight. You might note something interesting, which can be investigated further when we re-open.

A Centre Volunteers roster for June will be sent out, as soon as information from Council is received.



DEADLY FLORAL DISTRACTIONS

By Leonie **Bell** (Member)

Many of us have wandered the Heathcote fire tracks to admire the glorious blooming waratahs each September/October, but for one woman in 1892 it turned into a deadly expedition.

Sydney resident Mrs Sarah **Nagle** was reasonably well-off. She owned 23 acres (9.3 hectares) of land in Heathcote, inherited from her late husband.¹ Since his death in 1891, Sarah had been residing with her daughter in Auburn. Sarah confided to her sister that she didn't like living with her daughter, and she was consequently in the habit of returning each weekend to the family house at Heathcote.

In the spring of 1892 Sarah was spending the weekend at the Heathcote property, following her regular routine. Her daughter Mary Catherine and son-in-law Charles Edward Hunter **Ford** visited her in Heathcote on Saturday. The following day was sunny, perfect for an afternoon stroll to see the waratahs scattered throughout the bush.

It's unknown who raised the alarm, but when Sarah didn't return to the house by dusk a search party was summoned, comprising police, aboriginal trackers and local residents. Most people were still hopeful she would be found, but her son-in-law Charles insultingly referred to his 63 -year-old mother-in-law as 'weak, excitable, and timid, she would probably lose control of herself when she realised that she was lost.'²

He seemed convinced she was already dead, insisting that police search the waterholes on the eastern side of the railway line for her body, although the searchers thought she had most likely gone in the opposite direction.

After a week's fruitless searching along the ridges and descending into the rugged, steep gullies, they had no success and most of the men returned home, while Charles paid a neighbour £140 to arrange for others to continue the search over the next nine weeks, offering a £50 reward for information leading to her discovery.

The police were increasingly suspicious that Sarah may have met with foul play. There were conflicting reports on her actions that Sunday. One claimed she had stayed at home feeling ill. Another report stated that she had been invited by neighbours to go for a stroll to see the wildflowers, but had declined, as she never indulged in recreational activities on a Sunday. Later she knocked on the door of the house across the road to ask if there were any church services nearby. She

was last seen by the Heathcote stationmaster Michael **Hogan**, standing outside her home at 12.30 p.m. He was the last person to see her alive, or was he?



*Heathcote – wilderness, ca 1910s
(photo: Sutherland Library Local History Collection, file MF004116)*

By Christmas, the police had no further evidence, although the government was offering a reward for information leading to a possible conviction for murder.³ Probate was declared in May the following year, with Mary inheriting her mother's entire property.⁴

Five years later, in August 1897, two men were shooting game in the Royal National Park, when they spotted a curious egg-shaped white object tucked under a rock ledge in on the eastern side of Heathcote Valley. On closer investigation, they made the gruesome discovery of a skeleton.⁵

The pair summoned the police, leading the constable to the spot. Their immediate thought was that this was Sarah Nagle, whose body had never been found. Two days later a coroner's inquest was held at the Royal Hotel, Sutherland. The identity of the victim was quickly established from her possessions. The cause and circumstances of her death were a little more difficult to establish. The evidence was conflicting.⁶



*Royal Hotel (1910-20), East Parade Sutherland where the inquest was held
(photo: Sutherland Library Local History Collection, file: MF001875)*

The doctor testified that he found the skeleton lying on a bush bed of grasses, with bushes piled in front, as though to keep the wind off, which inferred that the woman settled herself in the cave for a night's rest after wandering aimlessly about the bush for several days. There were no visible marks of violence and he believed the death was due to natural causes.

The family were unhappy that they didn't receive sufficient inheritance from Henry Nagle's will. Mary would eventually inherit the property, but her mother had a life interest in it. Circumstantial evidence, the newspapers, and local gossip suggested that the son-in-law couldn't wait for his wife's inheritance, and therefore may have pushed her into a gully so that he would inherit Sarah's land. Did he return to Heathcote on Sunday afternoon without being seen? Charles indignantly refuted allegations that he had asked Mrs Nagle for money, but possibly he was merely embarrassed to be seen as an avaricious man.

Her sister Mrs **Middlemiss** testified that although Sarah enjoyed lone bushwalks, she would have been most unlikely to go for a walk on a Sunday, as she 'had a great reverence for that day,' and considered recreational walking on a Sunday sinful.

Her daughter Mary alleged that her mother seldom went out alone, was forgetful and had once become lost travelling by train from Auburn to the city.

However, the neighbours related that she frequently walked in the bush on the western side of the rail line. Perhaps her daughter didn't know her mother as well as she thought.

The daughter also claimed her mother had a heart condition. Did Sarah simply lay down and die as the doctor suggested?

The jury found 'How or by what means she came to her death there, there is not sufficient evidence to enable us to say', the NSW Police Gazette surmising, 'Deceased probably wandered into the bush, lost her way, and died from want and exposure.'⁷

We will never know whether she was lost or murdered.

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WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

is available at the Research Centre.

Please phone 9523 8948 to make arrangements.

FHBB EDUCATION PROGRAM

by Carol Cronan (Educator)

Our first class for the year was a huge success. We certainly had Good Fun, Good Learning and Good Help.

More people than chairs gathered in an eerily empty Research Centre to learn how to delve more deeply into the many features that the *Find a Grave* website offers. John Levy took us through many of the hidden gems of this website, patiently answering our many questions. We are incredibly grateful to him for sharing his deep knowledge with us.



John Levy presenting to a very keen class (photo: Carol Cronan)

Coming up in June, Richard **Linklater**, another of our very talented members is going to run a class: ***A Beginners guide to photo and scanner use for genealogy***. At the moment this class is scheduled for **2 June** but this will depend on whether the roofing of the Centre has been completed. Details will be posted on the FHBB website if the date changes.

A reminder to all that the classes from RootsTech 2026 are still available via your *Family Search* login. The library of classes on offer from *Family Search* is truly amazing and is highly recommended.

Finally, I would ask you to consider volunteering to run a class. We would love to hear from you at botanybayfhs@yahoo.com.au. It is only because of the generosity of our members and their willingness to share their knowledge and skills that we can offer the classes we do.

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