South Coast History Society Inc.

RecollectionS

August–September 2020 Issue 23

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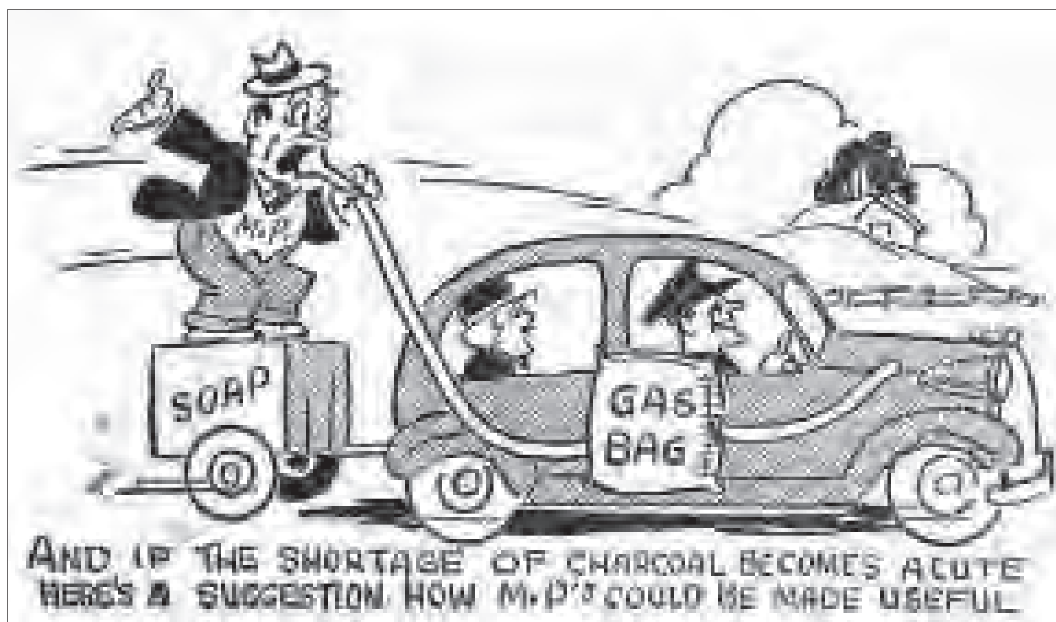

During and immediately after World War II petrol in Australia was severely rationed – during the war to between 2 and 6 gallons (9 to 27 litres) per MONTH…and slightly more after the war. To provide an alternative fuel to enable travel, 'Gas Producer Units' (charcoal burners) were attached to vehicles (see page 5). They were cumbersome and dangerous…and they needed to be lit at least 20 minutes before travel could commence. But a new forestry industry on the NSW South Coast resulted – the production of charcoal. In 1941 the RACV published a series of cartoons in its magazine *'The Radiator'*, to encourage greater public acceptance of Gas Producer Units – this was one of them.

The South Coast Timber Industry

An abundance of suitable trees, the wide variety of timbers available, and the enormous range of timber-based products that could be supplied, ensured that there was a very significant timber industry along the whole NSW South Coast during the second half of the 19th and throughout the whole of the 20th centuries.

The history of the South Coast timber industry is particularly interesting because of the changes that occurred to it over that time: it was an industry that was gradually transformed from a labour-intensive, manual industry to one that became highly mechanized; it changed from being based on small, family-led enterprises to one dominated and operated by large companies; a reliance on bullocks and horses disappeared as trucks and specialist mechanical timber-getting equipment were introduced; there were significant periods of 'boom' and 'bust'; and the gathering and production of some timber products simply disappeared completely over this period.

The Industry's History in Brief

Timber-getting on the South Coast started in the 1840s and, in areas like Batemans Bay, convicts were probably utilised in the early days to cut and haul logs. These logs were used to build local houses and fences.

Initially many of the trees in the area were considered as valueless – particularly as there was then no way for timber to be easily transported to potential markets. But land settlement policies of the time favoured the clearing of trees,

Fantastic Reads

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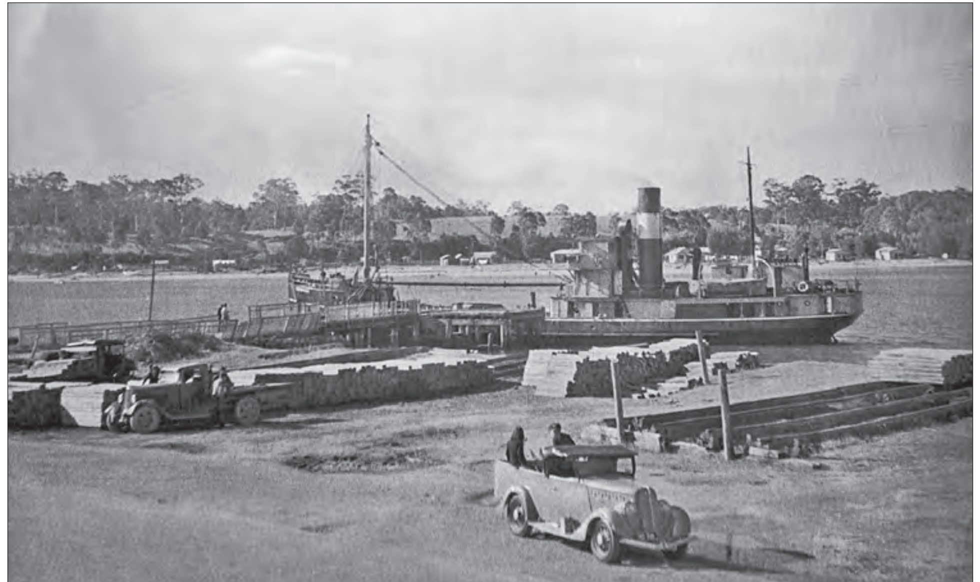
so thousands of hectares of trees were simply ringbarked and burnt by settlers. By 1916 the *Sydney Morning Herald* was observing '*the hills* (around Bega) *are denuded of most of their original forest trees and are well grassed…the picturesque town compares, or rather contrasts, with the place of well nigh 40 years ago*...and, reflecting the thinking of the time, '*refinement marks the landscape*'!

The extensive clearing of the lowland forest cover throughout the area ironically allowed various wattle species, including Black Wattle, to rapidly colonise the area – which, in coming decades, led to the establishment of an additional, new, profitable forest industry: the gathering and processing of wattle bark. This forestry activity was to provide employment on the NSW South Coast through to the 1970s.



Batemans Bay Timber Wharf

From the 1850s, manually operated saw pits and saw mills began to be established along the South Coast. These typically were located along rivers which enabled easy transport of logs to mills, sawn timber to be moved away from the mills and, with the introduction of steam mills (Bega's first steam sawmill, for example, was built in 1869), provided them with ready access to water for their boilers.

Because there was an expanding market in Sydney, sawn timber production on the South Coast grew rapidly in the second half of the 19th century. By 1883 there were 13 sawmills operating in the Batemans Bay area; by 1900 there were at least 10 steam powered sawmills operating in the Eden-Wyndham-Tantawanglo area. These typically were small, family-run enterprises that were often financed by large city timber merchants who guaranteed to take a significant portion of the mill's output.

Loading timber at Bermagui wharf

And from the 1870s, South Coast timber was being exported to overseas markets including New Zealand, South Africa and England.

From around the late 1800s, very high demand emerged on the NSW South Coast for a new timber product – sleepers for railway lines. This provided employment for hundreds, if not thousands, of locals.

By the 1920s, timber cutting for saw logs and sleepers became one of the primary industries along the NSW South Coast. And, unquestionably, the transport of these products significantly contributed to the viability of what became a thriving coastal shipping industry.

In fact, the demand in the area for ships was so great that many were constructed specifically to transport timber and sleepers from the South Coast. Timber companies built or purchased their own ships: for example, in 1909 the 'Wee Clyde' was built by the Clyde Sawmilling Company which then changed its name to the Clyde Sawmilling and Shipping Company; Mitchell Brothers built the 'Kianga'; Allen Taylor and Company had the 'Narooma', 'Uralla' and 'Narani' built to transport their timber to Sydney. And the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company, the major shipping company on the South Coast, purchased ships such as the 'Bodalla', 'Tilba' and 'Benandra' that were specifically designed to transport timber alongside other general cargo.

The demand for local ships and the availability of suitable local timber also led to the development of a substantial coastal shipbuilding industry, most significantly around the shores of Wagonga Inlet and the Clyde River.

During the 1930s the local timber industry experienced

What Did Happen to 'Recollections'?

Hopefully things have now returned to normal and we'll again be issuing both print and on-line versions of '*Recollections*' every second month.

Unfortunately, distribution of the April-May issue was delayed for two months by the Covid-19 restrictions, and there was no June-July issue. However, we did issue three smaller on-line issues in May, June and July. We will re-print some of the articles included in these on-line issues in future issues of '*Recollections*', so our thousands of readers of paper copies don't completely miss out on the 'Fantastic Reads' that we were able to share on-line. Meanwhile, the main articles in those three on-line issues were:

In **Issue 20,** available on-line at **www.bit.ly/Recollections20**
'Can We Call It Home?' – a history of the Wallaga Lake/Gulaga Aboriginal community
'4 Husbands, 5 Pubs' – the life of Eliza Hull, now buried in Bega Cemetery
'*Ellis Rowan: A life in pictures*' – book review
'*Tomakin: The Undiscovered History*' – book review

In **Issue 21**, available on-line at **www.bit.ly/Recollections21**
'The Ghost Port of Broulee' – the history and archaeology of Broulee
'Honoured…In Granite' – the life of John Gilmore who is buried in Moruya Cemetery
'*Pathfinders: A history of Aboriginal trackers in NSW*' – book review
'The Brothers Clarke' – an 1897 newspaper account of the trial of two bushrangers

In **Issue 22**, available on-line at **www.bit.ly/Recollections22**
'2BE: The Voice of the Community' – the story of Bega's commercial radio station
'Murder and Piracy on the High Seas' – the death of Alexander Reid, now buried in Moruya Cemetery
'The Hidden History in Cemeteries' – why cemeteries are worth visiting
'Eden – the Worst Place I Ever Visited' – an account of observing a transit of Venus from Eden
'*Australian Code Breakers*' – book review

a major change with the widespread introduction of motorized trucks. These not only heralded the demise of the use of bullocks and horses by timber-getters, but also led to the relocation of timber mills from isolated bush locations to major towns along the coast.

World War II resulted in a significant increase in demand for timber, but manpower shortages proved to be a major problem. The result was that small sawmills increasingly were taken over by the timber merchants to whom they had historically been financially dependent, and log supply and processing became concentrated in significantly fewer hands.

The demand for timber again increased significantly after World War II, but from the early 1950s the timber industry was to experience a gradual decline. Small sawmills all around the State were regularly closing down (there were 1,360 sawmills in NSW in 1951; this dropped to just 311 by 2004), and things were certainly no different along the NSW South Coast.

In 1968, however, a major change in logging practices was introduced: selective logging (harvesting of sawlogs only) was replaced in some areas by integrated logging (the simultaneous harvesting of sawlogs and timber suitable for use as pulpwood). NSW agreed to supply Harris-Daishowa Pty Ltd with 500,000 tonnes of wood each year from the forests of the south-eastern corner of the State for use in paper manufacturing in Japan and South Korea, and a major chip mill export facility was erected on the shores of Twofold Bay near Eden to enable export of this.

A period of unprecedented utilization of local forests resulted. Timber extraction had suddenly become economic in steeper parts of forestry areas, an extensive period

For local history lovers

Available Narooma Newsagency, Visitors' Centre, ABC Cheese Factory, Bodalla Bakery, bookshops and galleries from Bega to Moruya, or online from author.

www.paceymedia.com.au

Narooma Timber Mill, WH Corkhill, c.1904. nla.obj-140320171-1

of road-building was undertaken by the NSW Forestry Commission in local forests, and integrated logging was gradually extended to other forests in the area.

The NSW Forestry Commission

As was to be expected, a valuable natural resource such as timber very quickly attracted government attention and control.

Regulations affecting the timber industry were introduced from the early 1800s: by 1820 timber getters were required to have licenses (there were only issued to 'persons of good character') which stipulated the amount of timber that could be collected; by 1851 fines of up to £10 were imposed on those cutting timber without a permit.

In 1877 a Forestry Conservancy branch of the NSW Department of Lands was established and the first forest areas were reserved for logging in the future. By 1882 there were 1.4 million hectares of forest in reserve for future use.

In 1909 a NSW Department of Forestry was established when it was accepted that throughout Australia some form of industry control was necessary if the country was to become self-sufficient in timber.

Sleeper Cutters

In 1916 the NSW Forestry Commission replaced the Department of Forestry and most of the remaining forest areas in the State were dedicated as State Forests. Mumbulla and Tanja State Forests (between Bega and Bermagui) were among the first to have their timber-producing potential assessed and to become Forestry areas.

In 2012 the NSW Forestry Commission became the NSW Forestry Corporation.

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Sawn Timber

This has been the industry staple, supplying everything from massive structural timber beams for bridges and wharves to smaller timber pieces for building, flooring and fence palings.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, hardwood props, 12 to 20cm thick and 1.8 to 5 metres in length, were also milled and supplied for use in coal mines around Wollongong and Port Kembla.

Wattlebark

Wattle bark provided tannins used in the tanning industry. There are records of a load of bark being sent from Eden in 1843 on the vessel 'St Heliers', well before the gathering of wattlebark became a significant industry on the NSW South Coast from the mid-1860s. The industry survived for a century, finally dying out in the early 1970s.

DID YOU KNOW
Cobargo was originally called Wattleton?
AND —DID YOU KNOW?
Wattleton was one of the names considered in 1913 for the new city now known as Canberra?

Basically, bark was stripped from near the base and up to the branches of Black Wattle trees. It was then dried for several days before being cut into one metre lengths and tied into 16kg bundles which were transported to tanneries in Sydney. In later times, mills operated on the South Coast (for example at Bermagui and Cuttagee) where the bark was chopped before it was bagged and shipped to Sydney.

Collecting wattlebark was quite a lucrative undertaking, particularly in the period prior to World War I, with some settlers able to pay for their land from the proceeds of the bark collected from local trees.

Railway Sleepers

Demand for hardwood railway sleepers emerged during the late 1800s from throughout Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, China, South Africa and Europe.

By 1907, fifty cutters were working in the Eden district shaping sleepers principally from Woollybutt, Blackbutt and Grey Box. In 1911, more than 94,000 sleepers were cut, dressed and shipped from various points around Twofold Bay, and in one month in 1911, the Forest Guard (the sleeper inspector) certified 7,000 sleepers for shipment from Bermagui and Narooma.

During the Great Depression, 300 sleeper cutters were working in the Eden area alone.

By 1934 supplies of Wollybutt, Blackbutt and Grey Box were nearly exhausted, so greater use was then made of Silvertop Ash. In the 1950s mechanized swing saws replaced the hand shaping of sleepers using broadaxes… but by the late 1950s lack of demand for wooden railway sleepers meant that the local sleeper industry had virtually disappeared.

Sleeper cutters were licensed and had an individual brand that was stamped on the end of each sleeper and on the stump of every tree felled. While the work was hard, sleeper cutting could be lucrative: in the 1900s cutters were paid 9d per sleeper and a good cutter could shape between 72 and 96 sleepers in a six-day week, which resulted in an income of 50% or more than the then basic wage.

Sleepers were shipped from wharves at ports such as Eden, Merimbula, Tathra, Bermagui and Batemans Bay, but thousands of sleepers were also shipped from other riverside locations all along the coast. Huge 'sleeper dumps' were prominent local features at the time, with the dump at Dickenson Point in Bermagui, for example, often holding 5,000 sleepers awaiting shipment.

Charcoal

A shortage of petrol during and immediately after World War II led to a demand for charcoal to fuel charcoal burners that were fitted to motor vehicles. This created a thriving, if short-lived, local industry.

Logs were rolled into large pits in the ground, set on fire, and then covered with sheets of tin and soil. The fire then choked out, leaving charcoal that was subsequently bagged and shipped to market.

Hard Times: Cars were converted so they could be powered by a charcoal burner during WWII, when petrol was scarce. Photo: Australian War Memorial**.**

Eucalyptus Oil

A local eucalyptus oil industry took advantage of the availability of Black Peppermint trees on the South Coast.

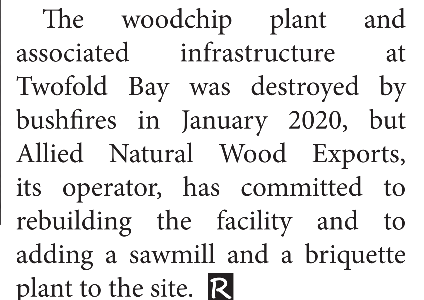
The manufacturing process was simple: trees were felled and their leaves were removed; these were packed into steel tanks which were then filled with sufficient water to generate steam once a fire had been lit underneath the tank; the steam separated the eucalyptus oil from the leaves, and the eucalyptus oil was collected after being condensed in a long pipe that ran off from the tank.

Loading Sleepers on 'Bellinger' at Quarantine Bay, Eden nla.obj-148645344-1

Woodchips

Wood chipping ensured greater use of available timber resources and increased the potential value from each hectare of forest that was harvested. Timber unsuitable for milling (for example, trees that were bent) could be woodchipped, and these trees suddenly were found to have an economic value. The result was that areas previously deemed uneconomic to harvest became attractive and, over time, were logged.

The initial commitment in 1968 was for at least 500,000 tonnes of wood to be provided each year from the forests of the south-eastern corner of the State to the woodchip mill being built near Eden. This supply was initially drawn from forests around Eden, but by 1977 it had expanded to the forest areas around Bega. By the year ending 30 June 2011 over 1 million tonnes of woodchips were being exported per year from this mill.



The woodchip plant and associated infrastructure at Twofold Bay was destroyed by bushfires in January 2020, but Allied Natural Wood Exports, its operator, has committed to rebuilding the facility and to adding a sawmill and a briquette plant to the site. R

Sources: '*History of Bermagui's Timber Industry*' by Allan Douch (Bermagui Historical Society); '*History of Land Use in the Dry River/Murrah Catchment*' by Anthony Scott (CSIRO, 1999); '*Australia and New Zealand Forest Histories*' edited by John Dargavel (Australian Forest History Society Inc. 2005); '*South Coast Register*' 4.9.2018; '*Timber Railway Sleeper*' in Bega Shire's Hidden Heritage at www.bit.ly/begahh90; '*Narooma's Past: Steamers, Sawmills and Salmon*' by Laurelle Pacey; Information displayed at National Timber Workers Memorial, Eden.

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HERITAGE LISTED HOUSE

'Baronda'

There is some impressive and interesting architecture along the NSW South Coast. *'Recollections'* will feature some from time to time, simultaneously sharing some of the stories associated with these historically-important buildings. Perhaps it's appropriate we should start with the story of 'Baronda', a stunning beach holiday house.

When Melbourne builder David Yencken decided he wanted a holiday house in the mid-1960s, he flew along the coastline of southern NSW and picked a 30-hectare block of land on the southern side of Nelson Lake (just north of Tathra). The block was an 'untouched' site of 'virgin bush'.

He then commissioned architect Graeme Gunn to design the house. (Yencken was the part-owner and developer of the Black Dolphin Motel in Merimbula which had been designed by noted modernist architect Robin Boyd and was an early example of Australian 'bush aesthetic' architecture, incorporating undressed tree-trunk posts and natural timber finishes in its design and native plantings in its landscaping. Graeme Gunn was the Black Dolphin Motel's project architect.)

Yencken's brief was to design a simple two-bedroom house with a capacity to accommodate much larger groups of visitors in a sleep-out. Gunn responded with something very much bigger, very much bolder.

'In other circumstances I would have sent the concept drawings straight back ... but Graeme's concept was so imaginative and so compelling that we immediately decided ... the house had to be built,' Yencken later wrote.

'To reduce the cost significantly, without any compromise to the basic design, we decided to build the house without walls and doors' (except to the bathroom!).

But the Mumbulla Council's Building Inspector had other ideas: *'No provision has been made for the installation of glazed windows and doors. The absence of windows and doors would render the building unhealthy...'*

So windows and doors were (reluctantly) added to what was/is an innovative five-level two-bedroom 'tree house' with platforms (or 'rooms') gradually winding their way up, in half-storey steps, a central brick core (the chimney for fireplaces on each of the major levels).

The house design (incorporating the Mumbulla Council Building Inspector's architectural contribution!) rapidly received a number of major prizes and awards. In 2013 the building was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register for a number of reasons, including:

- It is an outstanding example of architectural aspiration in the mid-20th century to achieve 'harmony with nature'. It is a rare example of a building that is almost **of** its environment rather than **in** its environment, and it has been suggested that Baronda 'set a benchmark for Australian

environmental design'.
- Its design and aesthetic qualities are both striking and innovative, and it is a high quality example of mid-20th century 'Modern Movement' design (which rejected ornamentation, embraced minimalism and asymmetrical geometric design, and often utilized new materials).
- And it is representative of a crop of innovative, Modern Movement coastal retreats that were constructed throughout the region from the 1960s, that included Ken Myer's 'Penders', Philip and Louise Cox's 'Thubbul', Daryl Jackson's Bermagui beach house, and Neville Quarry's house near Boydtown.
- It demonstrates the principal characteristics of timber pole construction in NSW.

'Baronda' is 'small by today's mega-everything standards, but it is a place of luxury due to its setting and the richness of its architecture'

- It was the site of several significant meetings, chaired by David Yencken who was the first Chair of the Australian Heritage Commission, at which the first formative directions for the Commission were discussed and from which the Register of the National Estate emerged. (The Register of the National Estate lists the Nation's natural and cultural heritage places that have heritage significance at a local, State or National level. Compiling the Register was a task that had never previously been attempted in any other country.)
- It was the house where Fred Williams, the eminent Australian artist, stayed while painting his 'Baronda' series of landscapes.
- It was a place instrumental in the creation of Mimosa Rocks National Park … and, itself, became part of Mimosa Rocks National Park.

Basically just four materials were used in the construction of the house – treated spotted gum logs for the columns and beams that were harvested from the site, locally sourced stringy-bark timber for the walls, locally made bricks that were bagged for the central chimney, and 'Super 6' fibre cement roofing.

'Baronda' is one of several significant, imaginative rural houses and sheds (such as Ken Myer's/Roy Grounds' 'Pender' complex in Haig's Road, Tanja and I.C.I. Chairman and Managing Director Kenneth Begg's 'Araganui') that were built in the area around the same time ('Baronda' was built in 1968–69) that were subsequently donated by their owners to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service ('Baronda' and 'Penders' were both offered to NPWS in 1973 and were incorporated into the surrounding National Park in 1976) or were later acquired by the Service under a Coastal Lands Protection Scheme for addition to the then newly-proclaimed Mimosa Rocks National Park.

Today, 'Baronda' is clearly visible from Nelson Beach Road (off Nelson Lake Road), Tanja – a house that *'powerfully distils the spirit of the 1960s … (having) literally grown from its site … pioneering environmental self-sufficiency'.* R

Sources: 'Baronda' and 'David Yencken' in Wikipedia; 'Baronda House' in architectureau.com; environment.nsw.gov.au; architectureanddesign.com.au

What local buildings of architectural and/or historic particularly intrigue you? Let us know at southcoasthistory.com.au so we can consider featuring them in future issues of *'Recollections'*.

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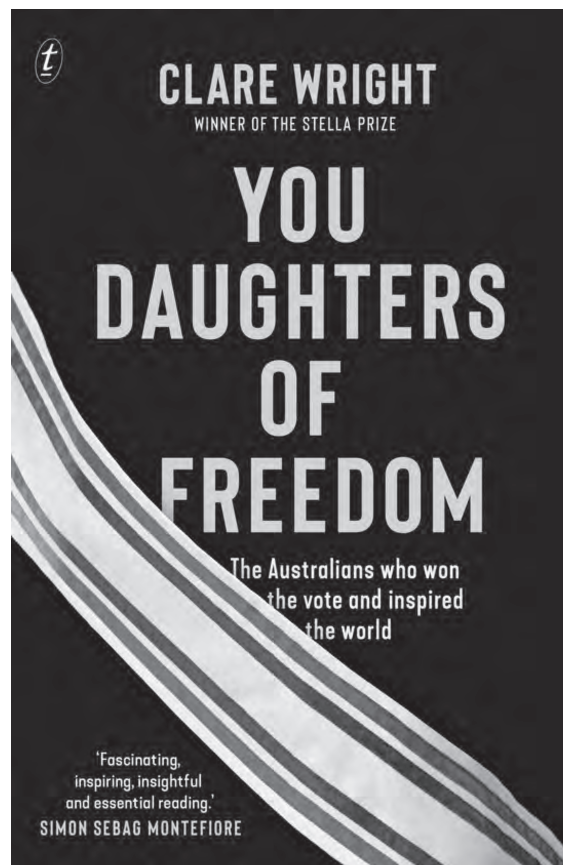
The Australians who won the vote and inspired the world

by Clare Wright

'*You Daughters of Freedom*' is an absolutely fabulous history. Having now read it, I can understand why the *Australian Book Review* reviewer wanted to '*hold the book aloft and tell every person I know to read it*'.

I'd been meaning to buy this book for some time (it was published in October 2018) and perhaps include a review in '*Recollections*'. My first mistake was not having done this earlier.

The book is a substantial tome (479 pages of text + 45 pages of notes), is written by an academic (an Associate Professor of History at La Trobe University), and deals with a narrow era in, and perhaps a specialist area of, Australian – as well as British – history. And, whilst the book has an elegant cover, it's hardly one that suggests 'popular history' (the ribbon design actually does have enormous significance – as explained on page 247 of the book!). So, I'd imagined this would be an 'academic' work, perhaps somewhat text-bookish, and would require absolute concentration when it was being read. How wrong was I – my second, really big, mistake! It's anything but that.



The topic is very interesting… and, as far as Australian history and society goes, is about an extremely important – but not widely known – part of our history. In fact, to be fair, it's not just interesting, it's engaging, it's engrossing. So this is one of those books I would have been quite prepared to have read in one sitting – and would have done so, had it not been 479 pages long! And that's the story of how and why women in Australia were given the vote and were given the opportunity to stand for election to Parliament.

The thing that makes this book so enjoyable is the humour that Clare Wright has brought to what, in reality, is quite a serious topic. She has revelled in discovering all the quirky things related to her subject matter (and, boy, there was no shortage of them!) and has then written the book in an almost-irreverent manner – so, for example, Louisa Lawson is not described as 'mother of the famous Australian poet Henry Lawson', but as '*the formidable*' Louisa Lawson '*the mother of a famous drunkard*'.

And how is Nellie Martel (one of the five figures that are central to this history) introduced? '*A perfumed pugilist with the scent of notoriety wafting around her extravagant millinery and gaudy jewellery*' and 'a *lady of fascinating frocks and irreproachable jewellery…the ornamental and oratorical figurehead of a narrow-minded political sect*'! (O.K., O.K., you've whet my appetite…tell me more!)

And there is more – very much more! – along the same lines in this fascinating book that is presented in three well-constructed sections.

The first part, and the most relevant to Australian readers, is the story of how women in Australia achieved the right to vote and, equally importantly, the right to stand for election to Parliament. Persistent pressure and astute and timely targeting of those framing the Australian Constitution resulted in Australia becoming the first nation in the world, in 1902, to give (white) women full political equality. (Women in South Australia had been fully enfranchised since 1894 and those in Western Australia could vote, but not stand for Parliament, since 1899. The laws in these states ultimately prompted/forced enfranchisement of women to be included in the Australian Constitution. Women in other states were given the right to vote in their state elections in subsequent years [Victorians being the last in 1908; and Victorian women were also the last to be given the right to stand for their Parliament, in 1923].)

The second section describes the roles played by the Australian Parliament and five Australian women who were in Britain during the first decade of the twentieth century (Dora Montefiore, Nellie Martel, Dora Meeson Coates, Muriel Matters and, shortly afterwards, Vida Goldstein – all demonstrating the '*Australians' incapacity of understanding why the people of England should not do as the Australians do in matters political*') attempting to have legislation enacted in England that would give British women the right to vote in their Parliamentary elections. Suffragists (mostly women) apparently had broad public support for their quest but were repeatedly thwarted by Prime Minister '*Asquith's famous smoke-screens, stonewalls and parliamentary obfuscations*'. These led to a series of actions (some quite extreme, some quite bizarre ['*a serial melodrama of the suffragettes*', '*an exhibition of eccentricity*', as they were described] – but all extremely well-organised) that were designed (as Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman had suggested to these ladies in early 1906) to '*go on pestering…and educate Parliament a little more*' about the level of public support for women to be given the vote.

One example of the 'melodramatic' action initiated by these Australian women suffragists aimed at hijacking '*the British census of 1911, scheduled for the night of Sunday 2 April…Boycotting the census was Dora Montefiore's idea… the logic 'If women don't count, neither should they be*

counted'…Unless Asquith promised to pass the Conciliation Bill by 1 April, women should write on their census papers: 'No votes for women, no census. I will fill up the paper when I am a citizen'. The utmost penalty was a £5 fine. Of course, it was always possible to refuse to pay the fine: that would result in an automatic one-month gaol term and 'we hoped to fill every prison cell in the country."

It was '*explained that all men and women who wanted to render the census form incomplete must neither sleep at home on the Sunday night before the official forms were sent out, nor return home until twelve o'clock the following day. Should parents or landlords fill in any particulars about a family member or tenant who was in fact absent that night, it would make them liable for a fine for giving false information. Various safe houses would be set up across the city, where suffragettes would be able to spend the night…(one) was able to accommodate two-hundred women hoping to 'vanish for the vote'…all-night events were planned across England, Scotland and Wales. In London a concert was organized at Queen's Hall and dramatic entertainment at the Scala Theatre…the Aldwych Skating Rink was hired out from 3am to 8am for rollerskating. It was anticipated thousands of census evaders, women and men, would simply walk around the streets all night, like well-heeled hobos. Some wealthy suffragists rented mansions to host mass evasions…Jessie Stephenson was informed by the Chief Constable of Manchester that she could be fined £5 or do one month in prison for each person she housed on the night, the prison terms to the served consecutively. 'The sentences,' he warned her, in case of large numbers, 'might mean the rest of your life in gaol'…*

In London, Emmeline Pankhurst wrote 'No Vote No Census' on her form before attending the concert at Queen's Hall. She then walked about with a thousand other evaders, promenading around Trafalgar Square until midnight. Later, along with [her daughter] *Christabel, she joined 568 other suffragettes at the largest mass evasion in the country: the rollerskating organized at the Aldwych Rink proved to be the most popular spot to while away the evening. At least seventy of the skylarking census shirkers were men. There were 230 evaders at the Gardenia Restaurant in Coventry Garden and 208 at Jessie Stephenson's rented mansion in Manchester…Unlike a parade, which required a visible show of solidarity, the census resistance came down to a quiet conscience vote. 'Punch' enjoyed reporting that indeed not all the country's women had 'decided to take leave of their census'.'*

And the third section of the book continues the story from 1911 through to the passage of the *Representation of the People Act 1918* that finally gave (some) British women their long-sought-after (partial) vote, ostensibly as a reward for the valuable service provided by women in World War I. (But, as the book observes, the war in reality had given Asquith a convenient '*ladder down which he could climb in renunciation of his former errors. And climb down he did.*')

What more should I say about this very-readable book?…other than sharing the advice by '*Honest History*' to '*Read it; share it with your family, friends and colleagues; make sure your library has multiple copies.*'

***'You Daughters of Freedom'* is available from around $26.50.**

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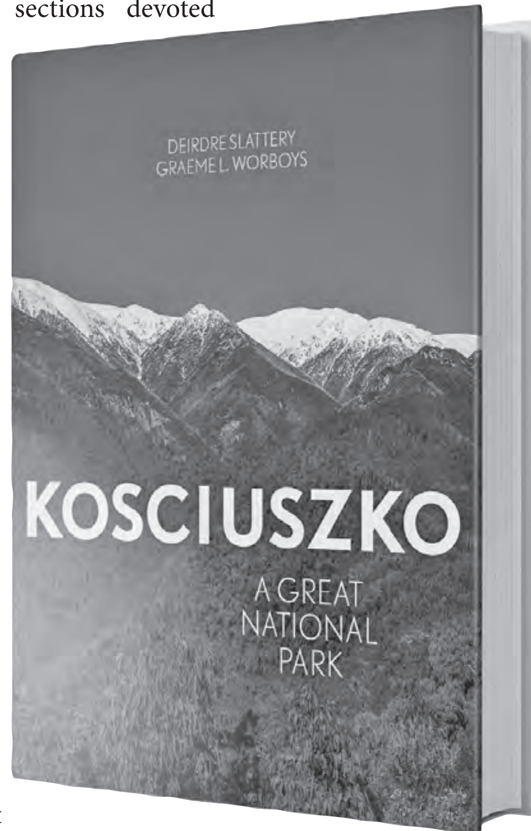
Kosciuszko: A Great National Park

by Deirdre Slattery and Graeme L. Worboys

This very comprehensive, interesting history of Kosciuszko National Park took a little getting used-to, because it primarily focuses on the history of land use and land management (and land mismanagement!) of the area rather than being a more general history of the area. So, it's quite scientifically-oriented, with large sections devoted to the botany, ecology, geology, geomorphology, glaciology, hydrology, limnology, topography, zoology, and a few other -ologies, of the Park.



But it is well-worth reading. And it inevitably leads to one wondering how this great National Park should ideally be managed in the future.

When Snowy Mountains National Chase was declared by Premier Joseph Carruthers in 1906, and again when an expanded Kosciusko State Park was established in 1944 by Premier William McKell (with a different spelling of Koscuiszko), no clear detail was provided about the purpose of the Park. It seems, for example, that McKell simply thought it desirable that NSW's high country 'rich natural heritage' should be 'protected' (whatever that might eventually mean)…and the narrow composition of the first Kosciusko State Park Trust board reflected his rudimentary-level of thinking: men drawn from Parliament (the Minister for Lands), the Lands Department, Forestry Commission, Soil Conservation Service, Government Tourist Bureau, Royal Zoological Society, the general Public Service…along with barrister Garfield Barwick.

'*Although it was nominally pro-conservationist, the personal interests, long-held convictions and diverse values of members in fact gave it a 'pro-use' balance…* (only two members) *had experience or understanding of what conservation management of a (water) catchment might involve…*(so Trust members primarily saw their responsibilities to be) *the opening of roads, tracks and paths, the development of ski trails, the erection of hostels and other buildings and structures, the prevention and control of fires, and other such works and functions.*'

At that time, the Park was already suffering from the impacts of uncontrolled grazing/over-grazing and from extensive historic gold mining in many areas. But, five years later, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme commenced, adding further threats to the land that was meant to be 'preserved'. At best, the Snowy Mountains Authority had to 'consult' with the Park Trust, but essentially the SMA was intent on '*the conquest of nature through technologically taming and altering the mountains for wider human purposes*' and their engineers viewed their dams and aqueducts as 'enhancing' the area. (One such 'enhancement', which was [thankfully] howled-down by scientists and conservationists, was an aqueduct that was planned to semi-circle Mt Kosciuszko from below Lake Cootapatamba, just below the summit of Mt Kosciuszko, to feed a massive reservoir that would have extended from present-day Charlotte Pass Village down along the Kosciusko Road more than half the way [so, around 5km] towards Perisher Valley).

Inevitably the conflicting uses of the area led to some ridiculous situations: '*(Neville) Gare* (the Park's first Superintendent, and Superintendent from 1959 to 1972; In 1967 Kosciusko State Park had a name change to Kosciusko National Park, although responsibility for and financing the Park remained, and has remained, a State concern) *argued the SMHEA's use of exotic willows and poplars to restore roadsides and bare ground at dam sites was strikingly unnecessary: "The SMHEA has for many years followed a policy of planting exotic tree species in association with its works within the park. In many cases these trees have been utilized in soil conservation works, but there has been a disturbingly increasing tendency to plant them along roadsides and in other places virtually as ornamentals."… Gare was frustrated. Why would the SMHEA willingly create future problems?...In protest, he pulled out some of the SMHEA's recently planted exotic plants. In the resulting furore, he had to back down from his stance and replant the exotics.*'

This is a very up-to-date book, for example acknowledging the impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires on the Park. And it certainly pulls no punches. So, it was particularly interesting for me to read the authors' assessments (generally favourable,

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I'm pleased to say!) of the contributions made to the Park by some friends, acquaintances, and others who I have had dealings with over the years.

But I did particularly enjoy their scathing summation of recent feral horse '*legislatively based vandalism*' in a chapter appropriately entitled '*It's a Park, Not a Paddock*':

'*(Gabrielle) Upton became the NSW Minister for the Environment in 2017 and, on her watch, the single greatest regression in the protection of Kosciuszko National Park in 75 years took place. John Barilaro, Member for Monaro, Deputy Premier and National Party leader, introduced his surprise Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Bill to parliament in May 2018. Traditionally, such legislation would be a matter for the environment minister, but Upton was not a minister in the tradition of Tom Lewis or Tim Moore. Instead of Upton's capitulation, Lewis and Moore would have sent Barilaro packing…The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act ignored the draft 2016 wild horse management plan and all the work that went into it. Upton failed several basic political tests. She had no firsthand experience of the feral horse damage. She had never visited Kosciuszko National Park to see the situation and learn for herself, despite being invited. Her ministerial predecessors Lewis and Moore would have visited Kosciuszko without hesitation, appraised the problem, identified political motives other than feral horse matters and stared down this vocal single-issue group. Instead, Upton even chose to ignore evidence gathered for the draft plan by the professional facilitators Straight Talk that the general community was looking for responsible management by the NPWS provided it was carefully considered, planned and professional...(and) for practical purposes, the park was silenced from within. The Sydney-based centralized Office of Environment and Heritage worked spectacularly against community engagement and education right through the wild horse management plan consultation process. As the politics escalated, authority to speak to the issue was increasingly withdrawn from local NPWS staff, and approvals for media statements had to go up the line and were either delayed or not released at all. Local staff suffered daily humiliation as a result of not being able to fully and factually answer criticism or explain their position.*'

The erratic, often-unpredictable efforts to permanently 'preserve' the Park area and to repair nearly 200 years of European settlers' damage to this fragile alpine environment (a consequence of repeated chronic government underfunding and far-too-frequent political interference with the logical and professional management of the Park) are clearly documented in this history. And so I was left with the impression that, despite many achievements over the past 75 years, we still have a very long way to go (an important start would be to eliminate all political influence on management of the Park!) before Kosciuszko can truly be considered the 'great national park' that it deserves to be.

'*Kosciuszko, A Great National Park*' (433 pages, soft cover) is $75 and is available at the Snowy Region Visitor Information Centre in Jindabyne or can be ordered, post free, from sales@envirobook.com.au

Reviews by Peter Lacey

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Honoured...in Granite

John Alexander Gilmore (1877–1965) is honoured by a modest, polished granite headstone in Moruya Cemetery. However, his more substantial, most enduring legacies are to be found in Sydney – on the approach piers and the four pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and in the Cenotaph in Martin Place.

John Gilmore was the Quarry Manager at the Moruya Granite Quarry (also known as the 'Government Quarry' and the 'Public Works Department Quarry') from the time it was taken over by Dorman, Long and Company (who were building the Sydney Harbour Bridge) in late 1924 until it was closed in early 1932.

During that period 173,000 blocks of granite were shipped to Sydney for cladding the piers and pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (these were precision cut and shaped, and numbered so they could be later fitted together in Sydney like pieces of giant jigsaws) and 23 enormous blocks of granite, including one weighing 20 tons, were supplied to form the Sydney Cenotaph.

Remarkably, the level of craftsmanship at the Moruya Granite Quarry was so high that not a single one of these blocks of Moruya granite was rejected and therefore had to be replaced.

John's role, as Quarry Manager, extended far more widely than simply supervising the cutting and shipping of stone. He initially needed to supervise the erection of all facilities on the site on the northern bank of the Moruya River (these included two wharves, a power house, three enormous sheds, an office, a blacksmith's shop, a crushing plant, conveyor belts, a railway line to the wharf and numerous cranes; he also organized for a masonry wall to be built to protect the site from the effects of possible river flooding, which evidently resulted in him being chastised by Dorman, Long and Company. However, only minimal damage resulted in the machinery shed in the 'frightful' flood of 1925), the building and then the running of a town to house many of the 250 quarry employees and their families ('Granite Town', just to the west of the Moruya Granite Quarry, included 67 simple houses [with detached bathroom facilities shared between two families], bachelors' quarters, quarters for the Italians, a post office, a co-operative store, a hall and a school), and the recruitment and training of the employees (which included large contingents of skilled Scottish and Italian stonemasons [one account indicates '*the Italians had their own bachelors' quarters, employed their own cook and lived very well*'] because there was then a shortage of stonemasons in Australia).

John was born in Scotland. He attended '*school until the age of 13 and was taught by Mr William Alexander. One day in class, John was not paying attention so Mr Alexander threw a strap at him. Young John retorted by picking up the strap and hitting Mr Alexander with it – then promptly left school, vowing never to return.*

John went to work at Kemnay Quarry as an apprentice with his father and returned to night school at the age of 17 to learn mathematics, a subject he required to work out the dimensions of the stone he worked…At the age of 19, he was Manager of the Rubislaw Quarry, where it was said of him "What he doesn't know about granite quarrying, very few people are ever likely to find out".'

In 1924 '*Mary Gilmore* [John's wife] *came across an advertisement for the position of 'Quarry Manager' whilst unpacking groceries – reading the paper wrapped around*

The Gilmore family leaving Scotland in 1924

John Gilmore

some meat. They were offering such good conditions – 5 years work, cheap housing and wages of £6.16.8 per week. On behalf of her husband, Mary wrote out an application for the position and sent it off to London…' and soon they, and their nine children, were on their way to Moruya.

John and his family lived across the Moruya River from the quarry in 'Tuffwood', a house originally owned by Arthur Halley Preddey (his fascinating story is included in *Recollections 18* which is available on-line at bit.ly/Recollections18). Initially he rode a horse to work but later Dorman, Long and Company provided him with a motor launch so he could more-easily cross the river. He named it 'The Bon Accord', Aberdeen's (Scotland) motto meaning 'goodwill'.

The Gilmore home rapidly became renowned for its hospitality, and it seems that John and Mary '*radiated a spontaneous captivating charm which had a rare quality because they were quite unaware of it themselves*'.

After completing his contract with Dorman, Long and Company, John worked for the NSW Department of Main Roads and in New Zealand before he and Mary retired in Moruya.

John's significant contribution to the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Cenotaph is recognised locally with the rotunda in Moruya Quarry Park (on the northern bank of Moruya River, on the Moruya Granite Quarry site) having been named in his honour.

J.J.C Bradfield's (the civil engineer who oversaw the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge) observation that '*the granite-faced abutment towers and pylons, simple and elegant, are the architectural features of the bridge – which would otherwise be an immense utilitarian steel structure*' is recognition from further afield of the enormously-important contribution that John Gilmore made from Moruya to that project.

Postscript: The Australian Cricket Captain Bob Simpson's parents were among those who lived at the Moruya Granite Quarry. Jock was a stonemason.

Sources: Information from Norm Moore of Moruya; '*Not Forgotten: Memorials in Granite*' by Christine Greig; moruyastoryline.com.au; '*To Make a Bridge. Where Did the Granite of the Sydney Harbour Bridge Come From?*' in *Traces* magazine, 19.4.2014; '*Gold-and-Granite*' (on-line) Moruya District Historical Society; '*Granite Town – Moruya River. A Chronicle of Almost Forgotten People who Quarried for the Sydney Harbour Bridge*' by Nigel Neilson; monumentaustralia.org.au

We thank Norm Moore for suggesting we include details of this memorial in *'Recollections'*. Your suggestions about other gravestones in local cemeteries that have interesting stories attached to them will be VERY welcome. Send your suggestions to southcoasthistory@yahoo.com or phone 0448 160 852

Christine Greig's *'Not Forgotten: Memorials in Granite'* provides an interesting overview of the Moruya granite quarries and their roles in providing granite for buildings and memorials throughout NSW and for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It also includes numerous, little-displayed photographs of the Moruya Granite Quarry and of Granite Town. It is $12 per copy, with proceeds benefitting the Moruya Quarry Park project and is available from christine.greigadams4@gmail.com

This item was initially included in the June 2020 'Recollections On-line' (www.bit.ly/Recollections21)

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The Hidden History in Cemeteries

I've been poking around some local cemeteries recently, following up suggested subjects for our regular 'Cemetery Secrets' feature, and it seems to me that our local cemeteries are significantly under appreciated, significantly under utilized tourist attractions.

Cemeteries are, I'd suggest, fascinating places. At one time, those who visited and appreciated cemeteries were viewed as slightly ghoulish – but that's changed as, in general, cemeteries are now better maintained, and are therefore much more inviting places to visit, and there is an increasing appreciation of the resources that many cemeteries offer: architecturally and artistically they can be intriguing; they are often significant refuges for interesting flora and fauna (I'm always intrigued, for example, that Bega Valley Shire cemeteries have signs warning of the possible presence of venomous snakes but none promoting other interesting wildlife or plants!); they are often sited in extremely scenic locations (the Tilba District [or Little Lake] Cemetery, as an example, has spectacular coastal views [and, uncommonly, has some excellent explanatory signage – see comments below]); they are tranquil parks; they are places for remembrance and for honouring forebears; they are accessible – and free! – 'open air museums' full of local history, full of interesting sculptures.

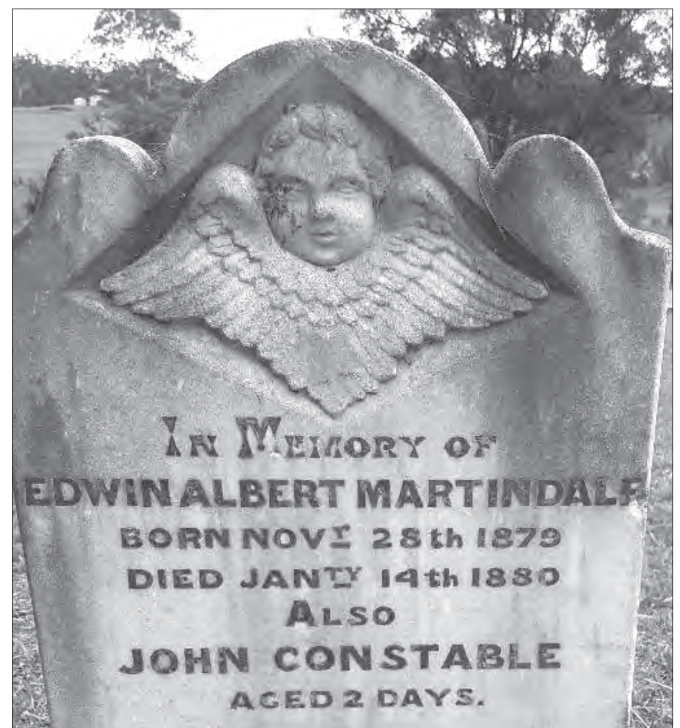
'Died Aged 5 months, 6 months, 7 months' and an adjacent unmarked child's grave.

From just a quick walk around (as an example) Moruya Cemetery, one can get a real sense of the rich history of that area: up until the early 1900s being a child in the Moruya area (like many other places) was quite a risky undertaking…as was riding a horse!; World War II had a very direct impact on the local area; the area had attracted bushrangers (which is hardly surprising as there were rich goldfields nearby); and the town had significant Scottish and Irish populations (and still does have with, according to the 2016 Census, the proportion of residents in Moruya claiming Irish or Scottish ancestry being significantly above the state averages; there is also some particularly interesting, distinctively-Irish headstones and monument decoration and design in Moruya cemetery).

And, of course, cemeteries are an EXTREMELY valuable historical resource to historians.

But I also find many cemeteries to be frustrating places – frustrating because, as a visitor, I'm not immediately provided with enough information about them and their residents. And, equally frustratingly, I know that this dearth of information is something that could (and should!) be relatively easily, relatively inexpensively, addressed!

Most tombstones or monuments provide minimal information: a name and, if we're lucky, a date of birth and a date of death; perhaps some very basic reference to close relatives ('loving wife of Joe, mother to Samuel and Samantha') and some departing wish ('Rest in Peace') or some observation ('Greatly Missed') by those who were responsible for the burial and commissioning of the memorial.



Occasionally, these epitaphs are of greater interest. For example, next-of-kin of those who died on active service in World War I were offered the opportunity to add a personal message not exceeding 66 characters – for which they had to pay 3½d per character! – on standard Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones that were provided free of charge. Beyond the very common 'At Rest' and passages from the Bible, there are epitaphs that make visits to these

cemeteries much more informative; these range from 'He did his bit', to 'Shot at Dawn. One of the first to enlist. A worthy son of his father' (on the grave of a deserter), to 'An only son killed in action on his way to his leave and wedding', to 'Sacrificed to the fallacy that war can end war', to (perhaps uniquely) a bar of music recognising a dead soldier's skills as a violinist.

In times past, the physical limitations and costs of engraving monuments restricted the amount of information that headstones could display. Other monumental options that are available today, however, have removed that limitation, so – hopefully – future tombstones will include significantly more information about the deceased who are buried beneath.

If more information about the deceased is provided, the site will be more interesting…and, surely, will greatly increase community recognition of the contributions those

A nearby headstone is engraved *'In Memory WALTER TOMBS, Police Constable, who died at Moruya from injuries accidentally received from a fall from his horse on the 25th November 1897. Aged 27 Years. Erected by public subscription.'* That story, surely, must be worth displaying nearby.

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who are there, 'at rest', made to society and to local history.

But possible changes to memorials in the future will not address the current situation with existing memorials.

There are stories relating to every surviving grave. Some are simple, some are grand – but, socially, all are important, and all deserve to be recorded and shared. If we do not do this, then we are effectively choosing to ignore the contributions (however humble, however significant) those deceased made to local society.

Their stories ARE of interest to visitors to local cemeteries, and their stories infuse 'life' to individual cemeteries. They can make a visit to a local cemetery vastly more rewarding… and can effectively transform an everyday 'ordinary local cemetery' into a significant, worthwhile visitor attraction.

And many of those stories deserve to be told.

So, what am I suggesting? Basically that we make an effort to provide more information at cemeteries about those who are buried there, perhaps (and this is just one suggestion) by erecting plaques (or, in modern parlance, 'interpretative signage') about the lives of some of the interesting 'residents' adjacent to their graves or around the perimeters of the cemetery. And, then, we should ensure that local tourism material starts suggesting that these local cemeteries are places really worth visiting. (Already an increasing number of people are being attracted to what cemeteries have to offer [cemeteries really do add a depth to travel that can't be found anywhere else!]…and there are even words to describe these visitors: 'taphophiles', 'tombstone tourists', 'gravers').

The stories about John Gilmore (above) and about

Miles O'Grady's story (see right) would be certainly worth including on signage adjacent to his grave (the story is at bit.ly/Recollections1)…and signage would also enable the date of his death to be corrected (it was 9th April, not 7th April)!

Alexander Reid in *Recollections* 22 are examples of information that could beneficially be displayed on interpretive signage at the scenic Moruya Cemetery, which would then provide more encouragement for people to visit the area.

However, whilst I am currently frustrated with the scarcity of information about those buried in local cemeteries, I

suspect that future historians will be even more frustrated by an absence of *any* information at all about most previous residents from the area.

The trend now is for bodies to be cremated rather than buried (so no headstone is erected), for cemeteries to be planned as lawn cemeteries or eco-cemeteries (again, with no headstones), and for obituaries (especially in local media, and especially for 'ordinary' residents) to be printed less often. (Interestingly, on-line obituaries provide the opportunity for more details to be recorded, by more contributors, about more of those who have died – even those who might normally be considered 'ordinary people' – but the problem with these on-line obituaries is that they are transient and few end up, for example, ever being archived by local history societies or museums.) So, regrettably, more and more people in the future will simply 'disappear' when they die, leaving virtually no record of their lives and their contributions to local history and society.

Peter Lacey

FEEDBACK

The death of Constable Tombs (see mention in '*The Hidden History in Cemeteries*') may not have been as dramatic as that of Constable Miles O'Grady, but the Moruya community showed their esteem for Tombs by initiating a public subscription to erect a substantial permanent memorial in Moruya Cemetery. Details of his death were outlined in '*Australian Police*' on 25.10.2012:

'*Shortly after 9am on 25 November, 1897 Constable Tombs led a troop horse from the police stables at Moruya to travel on patrol to Pedro Point. The horse, on loan from Braidwood Police, was known as a rogue and when the constable stepped into the saddle the horse began to run backwards. Despite Constable Tombs attempts to control the horse it fell, landing on top of him. The horse then regained its feet and began to kick out at the constable who was hanging from the stirrups. When Constable Tombs fell to the roadway the horse ran off. Local people then came to the constable's assistance and he was taken to Senior Sergeant Henry Bragga's residence where he was attended to by Dr John Quilter. A short time later he was taken home, however he passed away about midday.*

The cause of death was later found by a coroner's jury to have been "from the effects of injuries accidentally received on 25th November, 1897, in Moruya, through his horse falling upon and kicking him" causing effusion of blood on the brain. He was buried at Moruya.

The constable was born in London in 1870 and joined the New South Wales Police Force on 7 April, 1894. At the time of his death he was stationed at Moruya.' R

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