South Coast History Society Inc.

RecollectionS

Issue 39

The Bumper Batemans Bay and District Issue!

A Brief History of Batemans Bay and District

Traditional owners of the country now known as Batemans Bay and district, identify as the Walbunja tribe of the Yuin nation, which extends from Sydney to the Victorian border. So, "Wallawani" (a form of welcome in the local Dhurga language) to open this brief introduction to the rich cultural history of the area.

For thousands of years prior to European settlement, the Walbunja lived on country, travelling for resource exchange and social gatherings. Before 1788, the Yuin population in the area from Cape Howe to the Shoalhaven River and inland to the Great Dividing Range is estimated to have been about 11,000.

James Cook's *Endeavour* sailed swiftly up the coast in 1770, Cook's journal noting fires along the coast as he passed. Cook sounded depths and marked key features to assist later navigation. Among them was a bay which he thought might make a harbour. In naming it Bateman, he honoured Nathaniel Bateman, a naval officer with whom he had served when surveying the coastline of the St Lawrence River.

After sighting the *Endeavour*, "**Gurung-gubba**– a great white pelican on the ocean", 27 years passed before the Walbunja's first physical experience with Europeans. A party of 17 survivors from the wreck of the *Sydney Cove* were walking the 700 kilometres from Ninety Mile Beach, in current-day Victoria, with the aim of reaching Sydney. The whole party made it to the Moruya area because they were often fed, ferried across rivers, occasionally ushered into camps overnight, and shown the way north by Aboriginal men who sometimes walked with them.

In the Moruya-Batemans Bay area, we don't know how or why, but nine of the party perished and another five were lost as they made their way up along the Illawarra coast. Eventually just three men reached Sydney. [This story is told in Mark McKenna's excellent book '*From the Edge:*

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Fantastic Reads

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Loading timber on to an ISNC steamer at Batemans Bay. Image: NSW State Archives 12932_a012_a012X2449000113 digital id

Australia's Lost Histories', MUP, 2012.]

In April 1808 a small vessel, the *Fly*, was driven into Batemans Bay by bad weather. Five sailors went on shore to replenish their water supplies, were met by a party of local Aboriginals, and conflict resulted. Three of the crew were killed.

In 1821 a ship carrying cedar cutters took storm shelter in the Bay. Local Aboriginals reportedly met the intruders aggressively, killing one man and injuring another and forcing the boat to head back to sea.

On the Governor's instruction, Lt Robert Johnston sailed down the coast that year to assess Cook's earlier named landmarks, and to investigate what happened to the cedar getters. Finding a navigable river must have been a pleasant surprise! Johnston stayed in the area for several days, anchored in the lee of the little island he named *Snapper* after his vessel.

In his journal, he wrote, "*On my way up [the river], I saw several Native fires near the banks. At one place I landed, taking with me the two Natives who accompanied me from Sydney, upon which we were met by a tribe of them, who showed no symptoms of hostility towards us, but entered freely into conversation; and, through my interpreters, I learnt the particulars of the melancholy loss of Mr Stewart and his boat's crew.*" [He also dryly noted signs of axes and other metal objects around the huts.]

Explorers of the day claimed geographical 'naming rights.' As the first European to explore the river, Johnston named it the Clyde [its Dhurga name was Bhundoo], referencing his family estates around the Clyde River in Scotland.

Early the following year Johnston returned with merchants and explorers Alexander Berry and Hamilton Hume who were seeking opportunities for land development. Berry eventually took up land grants further north. The town of Berry is now located in his former Coolangatta estate.

In 1827 and 1828 government surveyors Robert Hoddle and Thomas Florance surveyed the area in anticipation of the southern boundary of the Limits of Location (the area from Sydney that could be legally settled) being extended south from the Clyde River to the northern bank of the Moruya River. At the entrance to the bay, Hoddle named two of Batemans Bay's islands, Tollgate and Tollhouse (now known collectively as the Tollgates).

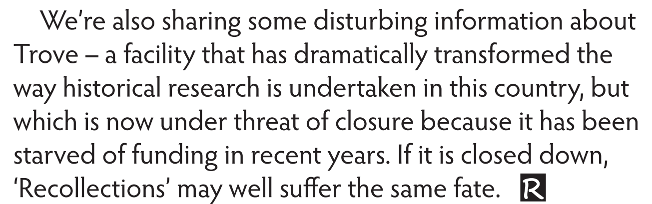
Hoddle's opinion of the prospects for the area was bleak: "It is very barren. At least nine tenths of it will be suitable for no purpose whatsoever." Here we might note Surveyor-General Sir Thomas Mitchell's view of Hoddle: "*…a man who can scarcely spell … this man can only be employed as he has always been, at the chain*". Literally, hauling a physical chain was the means by which land was surveyed.

In October 1826 John Harper, a member of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, travelled down the south coast in search of a suitable location to establish a 'Mission to the Aborigines'. He put in at Bateman's Bay and remained there for two weeks. He recorded his first impressions in his Journal, noting, '*They are very kind to their women and children; the blankets which I gave to the men they gave to their wives and children...*'. The Missionary Society subsequently applied to Governor Darling for a land grant. It was refused, Governor Darling stating "*I have … lately declined authorizing the*

This Special Batemans Bay–Moruya issue of 'Recollections'

Some extremely interesting speakers outlined histories and told fascinating stories about the Batemans Bay– Moruya area at our recent all-day South Coast History Day in Batemans Bay. If you missed that event, you unfortunately missed some really informative presentations.

We're sharing some of the information from some of the presentations in this special Batemans Bay – Moruya issue of 'Recollections'. We hope you enjoy the read. And there will be more in the next issue of 'Recollections'.



We're also sharing some disturbing information about Trove – a facility that has dramatically transformed the way historical research is undertaken in this country, but which is now under threat of closure because it has been starved of funding in recent years. If it is closed down, 'Recollections' may well suffer the same fate.

Wesleyan Missionary Society to select land, which they had applied for along the Coast of Bateman's Bay, considering it would have been prejudicial to the interests of the Settlers".

Settlement of Batemans Bay began in the 1830s, with timber cutters and fishermen active in the area. With European settlement expanding from Sydney as far south as Braidwood, it was inevitable that the two conflicting economic systems – those of European pastoralists and those of the Aboriginal hunter-gatherers – would collide, with resource competition becoming the focus of conflict. Within the Eurobodalla, however, there are few records of violent conflict, and most of the hostility that did occur was in the first decade of European intrusion in the area.

It was the gold mining rush of the 1850s that led to the establishment of regular shipping to and from the south coast. After amalgamations, the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company established itself as the primary carrier servicing townships from Nowra to the Victorian border. Nelligen, upstream of the current Batemans Bay township, became an important stop for hopefuls heading to the rich Araluen goldfields.

For over a century the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company was to contribute significantly to the economic growth of the district.

Batemans Bay township was surveyed in April 1859 and a postal service to the town was established the same year. Descendants of original land title owners still live in the district today.

Batemans Bay's 'blood dripping' sign that generated national media coverage

Around 1860 a ship building industry was founded by local entrepreneur and businessman Francis Guy. Small oyster farming enterprises were also established along the Clyde River – and this is now the oldest established industry that continues from pioneering days. The district's first timber mill was opened in 1868 producing finished timber in such large quantities that steamers called to the town twice a week to transport its output to Sydney.

By 1869 the population of the town had reached 60 people, enough for a provisional school to operate. A public school replaced it in 1872, and the building, with its adjoining schoolmaster's cottage, are two of the very few remaining historic buildings in the Bay.

Working relationships were formed from the earliest days with local Aboriginal employed in sheep washing, hoeing, harvesting maize and potatoes, cutting wood and stripping wattle bark. Several became servants. There are many documented examples of Aboriginals assisting newcomers throughout the early years of early European settlement. It seems they helped as a simple act of kindness or as part of an economic exchange. They provided information on the landscape, guided people to the area and to good locations for grazing stock or gathering timber.

The Town and Country Journal, 1883, claimed the timber trade was almost the sole industry in the Batemans Bay and Clyde River district with 13 mills in operation and 3 being built. The 'red gold' of cedar did not grow past Ulladulla, but hardwoods were apparently in limitless supply as the town responded to a boom demand for railway sleepers.

The State Government's establishment of a Board for the Protection of Aborigines in 1883 (see story in 'Recollections' issue 34, available at www.bit.ly/Recollections34), with its policy of encouraging Aboriginal people to live in separate reserves away from towns and cities, resulted in dramatic changes to the lifestyles of Aboriginals and their relations with European society. In the Eurobodalla, Aboriginal reserves were created at Wagonga, Narooma, Moruya, Terouga Lake, two at Tuross Lake, Yarboro, Turlinjah, Moruya Heads, Tomago River, Wallaga Lake, Currowan, Snake Island and Merriman Island in Wallaga Lake, and Narooma. Some of these were created to house specific families, many seem to have never or were rarely occupied by Aboriginals, and over time most of the reserves were revoked.

The Bateman's Bay Reserve has a particularly interesting history and sadly illustrates how opposition from Europeans could result in Aboriginal children's exclusion from their local government school.

Nine acres on the outskirts of Batemans Bay township had been set aside as an Aboriginal Reserve in 1902. By 1918 the town was expanding and the Batemans Bay Progress Association informed the Aboriginal Protection Board that the Reserve stood in the way of white residential development. In 1922 the Board agreed to encourage the residents of the reserve to move to a new reserve several miles out of town. Those families refused to move because they had already erected homes on the Reserve and because it was easy for their children to walk to the local primary school.

In 1924, further pressure from the white community led to the Aboriginal Protection Board agreeing to the revocation of the Reserve. Again, its residents refused to move.

The white community responded through the school's Parents and Citizens Association. It voted to segregate the school, which effectively meant that 15 to 20 Aboriginal children would be given no education at all. Under the threat of segregation, Indigenous grandmother Jane Duren wrote to King Edward VII arguing, as subjects of the Crown, their children were entitled to receive State provided education.

Backed by some white supporters, they mounted a '*sustained and well-coordinated campaign to have the segregation rescinded*'…and two years later – after an assurance was given to white parents that an influx of Aboriginal children from other areas would not occur – segregation ceased.

The local Aboriginal community won this battle but eventually, some time before 1932 (and possibly as early as 1927), the Batemans Bay Aboriginal Reserve was closed and the residential development for white housing proceeded. However, many descendants of traditional owners continue to own property in the district.

How did the townships of Nelligen and Batemans Bay develop? Illawarra Steam Navigation Company shipping records reveal individual families exporting hard cheeses to Sydney, and growing basic crops in a market garden style. Fishing and timber products drew on natural resources. Aboriginals provided labour to these industries. Another major source of employment for Aboriginals (up until the 1970s) was seasonal crop-picking when locals were joined by several hundred men, women and children from throughout NSW and Victoria to harvest peas and beans, principally in the Bodalla area but also around Batemans Bay.

Development of Eurobodalla took longer than might be expected due to three major river systems and a mountainous environment limiting road access. The Clyde River itself had to be crossed *twice*. A small hand-operated ferry service started in 1891, and expanded through several size iterations over a 60 year period. Also known as 'the punt', it served the community well – even hours often spent waiting to cross the river were 'part of the holiday and lifestyle'.

That way of life changed dramatically with the opening of the first Batemans Bay Bridge in 1956. Then in 1962, the Kings Highway was fully sealed, providing easy weekend access to the Batemans Bay area from Canberra and Queanbeyan.

Finally, in 1964 a bridge over the Clyde at Nelligen replaced its punt service – which, as some recall, meant no more male 'enforced' stops at the riverside Steampacket Hotel whilst their womenfolk kept a foot on the car's brake whilst awaiting their turn to cross the river on the punt.

The Bay's medical needs were initially met by a bush nurse and a two ward cottage hospital. This was patently inadequate by the 1960s, particularly during peak periods, prompting the local Hospital Appeal Committee to erect a 'blood dripping' banner at the highway intersection into town reading '*Don't Have a Bloody Crash Here! Very limited hospital facilities.*' This received national media coverage… but it took another 10 years before a new hospital was finally opened in 1970; its status is currently the subject of a review by the region's health services.

The population of Batemans Bay reflects the periods of the area's greatest growth – from the 1960s, but particularly from the 1980s. The 1881 census records 266 people (that is, property owners). In 1981 it was 4,924. By 2016 this had grown to 11,290 across the Bateman's Bay district. During peak holiday periods, however, population numbers explode!

From the 1960s, the Australian public service was increasingly moved from Sydney and Melbourne to Canberra, with Batemans Bay actively promoted as the nearest seaside location to the national capital – so, to many people, it was viewed as being "Canberra by the Sea", a popular destination both for holiday-makers and for retirees.

Floods and fires in and around Batemans Bay have challenged the area throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries – the most recent being the horrendous 2019–20 bushfires in which (as the Eurobodalla Shire Council website glibly records) '*hundreds of homes, many businesses, and thousands of hectares of bushland were damaged or destroyed.*' In particular, Batehaven and the small township of Mogo, experienced frightening devastation. The popular Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens lost many hectares of forest, but fortunately its Herbarium and some buildings were saved. It has literally risen from the ashes with new facilities and provides a haven of natural beauty and environmental education.

In recent years, Batemans Bay has transformed from a community principally comprising small family and holidays homes to a more-diverse community now including retirement villages, apartment blocks and substantial homes. As an important service centre, the Bay is primarily driven by tourism and the demands of a changing demographic.

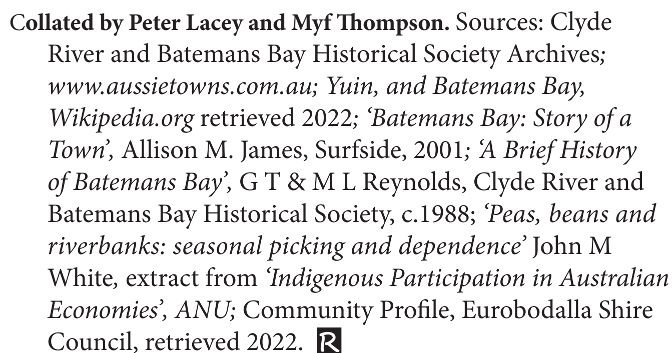
Today, Batemans Bay has an extended suburban sprawl both north and south of the river and it is hard to tell where the town – now the largest coastal community between Wollongong and Melbourne – finishes, and some of its satellite communities begin.

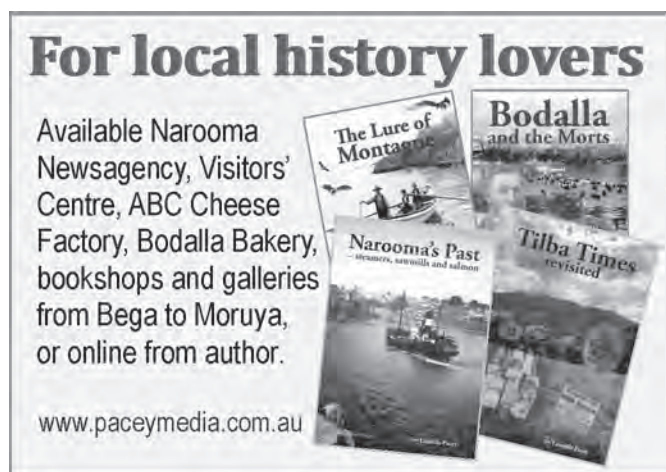
For all its working life the Bay's iconic lifting span bridge was the welcoming 'face' for arrivals to the district. Acknowledging an overwhelming increase in traffic, the State government has invested in bridge replacements (the Bay in 2022, and Nelligen scheduled for completion in 2023) which will further impact the lifestyle of residents.

It is hoped that a revitalized foreshore around the new Batemans Bay Bridge might provide a focal point for sharing

the unique story of the Clyde River and Batemans Bay with the local community and with the area's many visitors.

Collated by Peter Lacey and Myf Thompson. Sources: Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society Archives; *www.aussietowns.com.au; Yuin, and Batemans Bay, Wikipedia.org* retrieved 2022; *'Batemans Bay: Story of a Town',* Allison M. James, Surfside, 2001; *'A Brief History of Batemans Bay',* G T & M L Reynolds, Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society, c.1988; *'Peas, beans and riverbanks: seasonal picking and dependence'* John M White, extract from *'Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies', ANU;* Community Profile, Eurobodalla Shire Council, retrieved 2022.





Your Questions Answered

Who produces this magazine? South Coast History Society Inc., a community-based, totally volunteer-run Society committed to sharing the fascinating history of the NSW South Coast with anyone who is interested in the area's history.

How can I support South Coast History Society? Donations are VERY welcome. We rely on them to be able to produce Recollections. You can forward your donation to our account BSB 633 000 Account 158877472 or phone 0448 160 852 and we'll charge your Visa or Mastercard. Donate $25 or more and you'll be a member of South Coast History Society (from now until June 30, 2024). If you'd like to assist in some other way, please phone 0448 160 852. And we're currently looking for a volunteer in the Batemans Bay area to help distribute Recollections – it will take just a morning or an afternoon every couple of months.

How can I get back issues of Recollections? They are available online at www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX where X is the issue number, except for issue 3 which is 3- and issue 10 which is 10- The Bega Cheese Heritage Centre, Eden Antiques and Well Thumbed Books in Cobargo can supply some back issues.

Where can I get copies of Recollections in the future? We have around 100 very supportive outlets (libraries, retailers, visitor centres, clubs, etc.) along the coast between Batemans Bay and Eden where you can pick up a copy. They are free. The next issue should be available from the very end of May.

Can I be emailed future copies of Recollections? Yes. Just email 'Send Recollections' to southcoasthistory@yahoo.com

Can I have copies of Recollections posted to me (or to a friend)? Sure. The cost is $20 for a year (6 issues). Send your cheque or credit card details to South Coast History Society, 90 Whitby Wilson Road, Quaama NSW 2550 – and be sure to include the delivery address!

Do you have any other activities scheduled for the near future? We've recently been screening some classic history-based movies at The Picture Show Man in Merimbula. The next movie, on Monday 3rd April, is 'Spartacus'. It's free. Just turn up for a 10am start.

South Coast History Society and Bega Valley Historical Society recently compiled the first major history of Bega in 80 years. How can I get a copy? The Bega Pioneers' Museum, or phone 0448 160 852 with your credit card details and for just $21 (including postage) we'll post you a copy.

Getting to the South Coast from the Southern Highlands and the Monaro

by Peter Smith, President, Braidwood & District Historical Society

The big question once was: how do we get down from the Southern Highlands and the Monaro to the NSW South Coast?

This was an important question. Colonists in NSW wanted land and, once the barrier of the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney had been conquered in 1813, they started looking at possibilities south of Sydney. But, having then settled in the Southern Highlands, they needed some connection to markets in Sydney and beyond for their produce. Direct roads and road transport – let alone railways – to Sydney at the that time were non-existent. A connection by sea with Sydney from the South Coast seemed, logically, to be a possibility.

And the seemingly rich lands along the South Coast were also attracting attention. Stock needed to be moved down there to exploit the potential that the lands offered.

But, the earliest explorers and surveyors had been anything but encouraging:

"*Owing to the great number of native fires we perceived in every direction we thought it most prudent not to approach the Sea Coast any nearer. We therefore returned well knowing that the Natives in this quarter are very hostile … The country from the top of the hill to the sea coast appeared to us to be hilly scrubby land. Both to the north and southward the country appeared to be very mountainous.* [However] *It appeared to us that* ***a very good road*** *about three miles from where we are at,* ***might be made to Batemans Bay….***" – *Journal, recording tour of the coast west of Bateman's Bay by Messrs Kearns, Marsh and Packer (Packard) following the publication of their account of the discovery of the River Clyde,* 1822

A few years later, in 1828, Surveyor Hoddle reporting to the Surveyor General Mitchell said, ***"I despair of being able to find a good practicable Road for Carriages to Batemans Bay****, although a road may be made with little expense for cattle."*

And Surveyor Hoddle, surveying the Batemans Bay country in 1829, reported, "*I have traced the Nelliken Creek near it source; and the range above its source. There now remains but one creek, Murrengenburg, to be surveyed; which passes through an impossible country. The Range above is travelled over by the Blacks; but* [is] *impassable for cattle.*"

Determined Southern Highlands settlers and would-be South Coast settlers then looked for viable tracks/roadways down the escarpment.

A map produced by the National Parks and Wildlife Service shows the network of early bridle tracks that eventually traversed two of the National Parks – Deua National Park and Wadbilliga National Park – on the South Coast.

The numerous failed attempts to find a route down the very rugged escarpment are not included.

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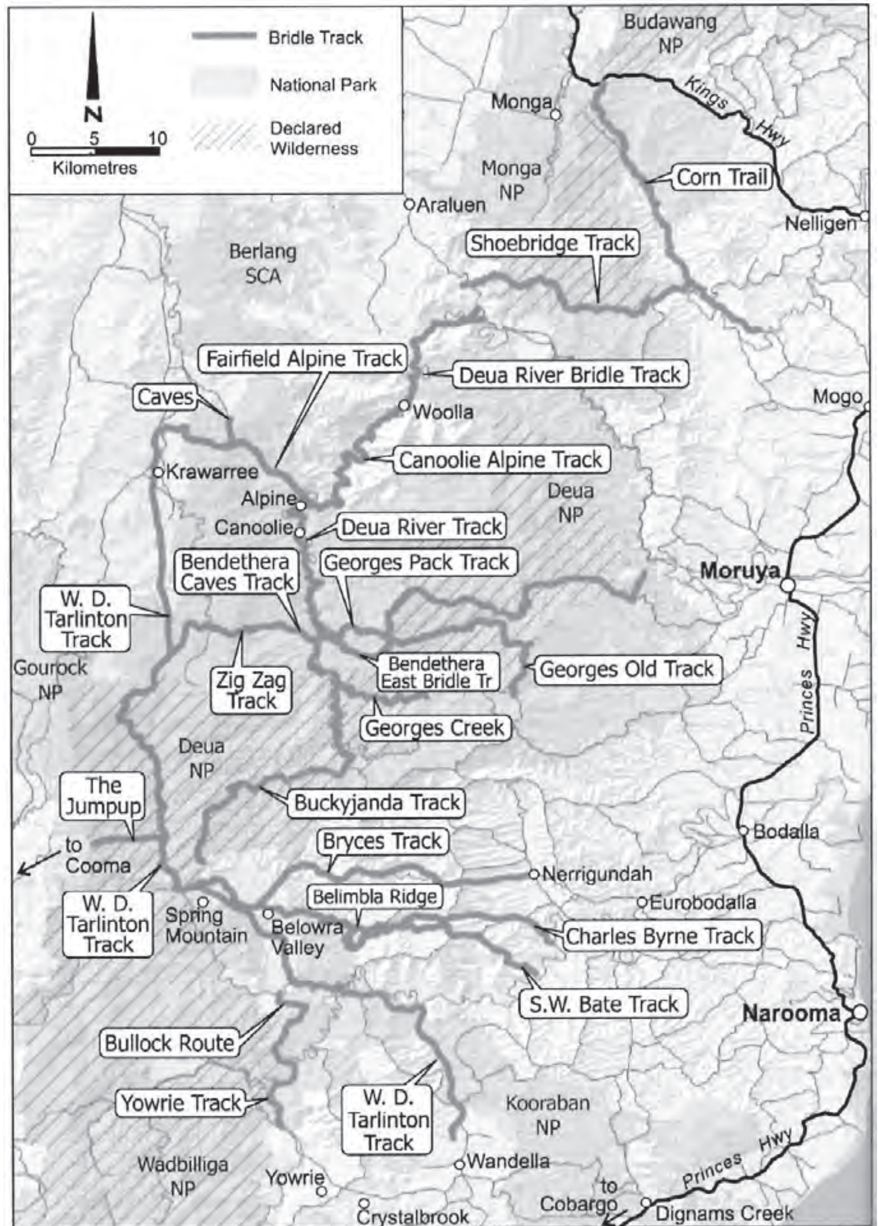
The Corn Trail

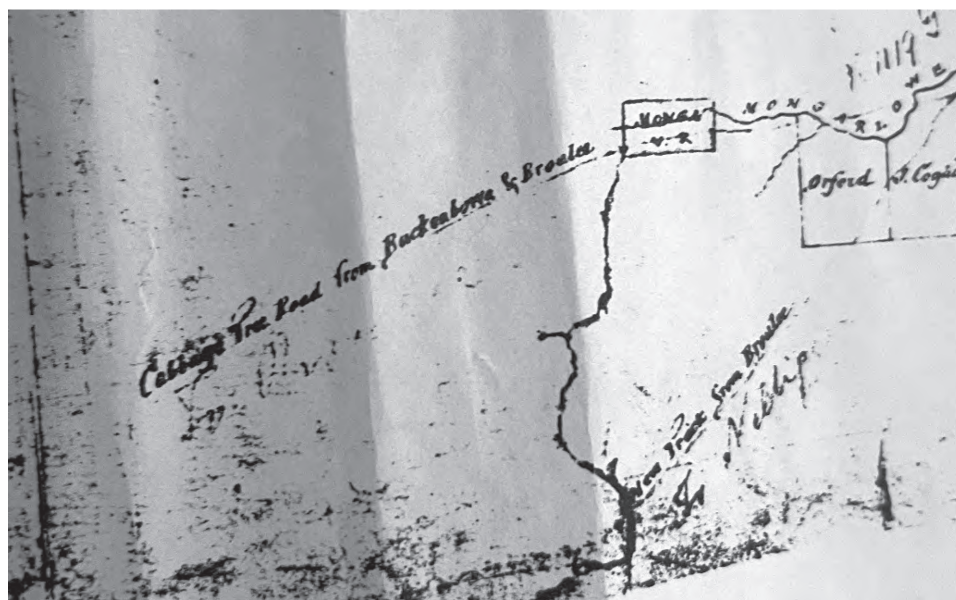
Other information from Kearn's journal is more revealing. On their return journey north, they reached the Shoalhaven River again, where they met some natives and through their guide were told the hill where they had made their observations of the coast was called *Murraro,* also known as *Murrengenburg* Mountain. Remarkably they were also told the Murrumbidgee River flows into the sea on the west side of New Holland.

A map drawn by Surveyor James Larmer in 1840 shows the track named *Cabbage Tree Road to Buckenbowra and Broulee.* In addition, there was another bridle track shown on Larmer's map titled *'new track from Broulee'*. This 'new' track ascended Sugar Loaf Mountain. It could be where Kearn's thought the road could be made and probably close to the present Kings Highway, but it was no dray road. It was described as, *"The horse track at present, after keeping along the range for a short distance in a northerly direction, descends, in an almost perpendicular manner, to the head of a deep gully, and follows an almost impassable course to the foot of the Sugar Loaf at the top of the leading ridge aforesaid."*



It was not until 1856 that a road suitable for wheeled vehicles would be open from the tablelands to the Clyde River port of Nelligen. The Cabbage Tree Track (Corn Trail) then fell into disuse. In 1872 it was revived, according to the *Braidwood Monitor*, by Thomas Shoebridge, formerly from Araluen: *"Mr Shoebridge, a resident of Bolero, formerly took his produce to Araluen* [no doubt using what is now called the Shoebridge Track], *but in consequence of the falling-off of the population at that place there has not been that demand for maize as formerly, so he thought he could bring it into Braidwood, and reduce the distance by the ordinary road he could bring it up the Cabbage-tree Mountain, which lessens the distance some twenty-two miles. In this he has been successful, having formed* [improved] *a track for horses, by which means he brought up 16,000 lbs of maize by eight pack horses."*

In 1988, as a bi-centennial project, the track was re-opened for horse riders and bush walkers and was named The Corn Trail.



Part of Surveyor Larmer's 1840 Map showing 'Cabbage Tree Road' from Monga (top) and 'New Track' (bottom). Courtesy of Braidwood Museum.

View from the Shoebridge Track Overlooking the Araluen Valley. AFA website.

WD Tarlinton Track

Another Aboriginal track that became a major route for new settlers was what we now call the WD Tarlinton Track. It goes from the headwaters of the Shoalhaven River south to Cobargo. It was shown to William Duggan Tarlinton by three Aboriginals in 1829. Tarlinton had formed a cattle station of 320 acres in 1828 at Oranmeir at the junction of the Shoalhaven River and Jerrabattgulla Creek, south of Braidwood.

The track passed Krawarree, around Mount Euranbene and followed Woila Creek to the Tuross River where it branched to Nerrigundah or followed Wandella Creek towards Cobargo. In 1829 this part of the country was outside the nineteen counties, beyond the limits of location, but the land was ripe for the taking regardless of the legality.

Tarlinton moved cattle down in 1833. Many Braidwood property owners soon followed down the same track. They included Dr Braidwood Wilson, Major Elrington, Captain Bunn, Curlewis brothers, Ryrie, and Badgery families. Eventually most squatters were recognised as lessees and many gained titles to the land they occupied. Tarlinton's properties, Beadbatowra 10,200 acres and Narira 13,000 acres (near today's Cobargo) were recognised. He moved his family from Oranmeir to Breadbatouwra in 1851.

The WD Tarlinton track became a well-worn route to the coast with a branch to the Monaro. It was used by John Lambie in 1839 when he set out to complete the census of occupants of Crown Lands. It was also used by the Clarke gang of bushrangers following their raid on Nerrigundah and the murder of Constable O'Grady in 1866.

It was severely impacted by the bush fires in 2019 but has been cleaned up and cleared by a keen group of horse riders from Access for All and can be still used by horse riders today.

The First Dray Road to the Coast from Braidwood

It was a six-week trip from Braidwood to Sydney for a bullock dray. Until the railways crossed parts of the country, the most economical method of transporting goods and people was by rivers and sea. Braidwood's first road to the sea was The Wool Road which was constructed privately in 1841, using convict labour. It did not connect to Batemans Bay, but ran from Nerriga to Jervis Bay. Nerriga already had a dray road connecting to Braidwood.

(The historical significance of The Wool Road is that it was the first road, capable of being used by wheeled vehicles, linking the inland area around Braidwood to the South Coast. The road led to the foundation of the privately owned port town of South Huskisson (Vincentia since 1952) and the adjacent 'government township' of Huskisson.)

The Wool Road was used for wool grown around Nerriga and Braidwood, but it proved to be impractical for places further away, such as the area around Canberra and the Monaro. As a result, even some of those who had supported the building of the road did not use it once it was completed.

The absence of wool cargoes from the outer areas meant that the volume of wool shipped via The Wool Road and its port was much less than had been expected. Money became short when New South Wales entered an economic depression in the 1840s. In 1842, there were numerous insolvencies and in 1843 some bank failures. The steep part of The Wool Road, passing through the Wandean Gap and

on to Wandandian, fell into disuse and became overgrown in parts, as early as 1848. In 1854 The Wool Road was described as being in a state of "*total abandonment*".

(Much of the original route of The Wool Road actually remains in use today, but some parts are accessible only to four-wheel drive traffic. Part of the original route that is currently used is now known as The Wool Road or The Old Wool Road—the section from the Princes Highway to Vincentia. The remainder of the original route still in use today is made up of a significant part of the Braidwood to Nerriga Road (MR92), Wandean Road, and a short section of the Princes Highway.)

Gold

The discovery of gold in the Moruya River in 1851 brought a flood of people to the district. Other fields soon followed. Getting to the gold fields was difficult enough but the population also needed to be supplied with goods and services. The biggest concentration of population was at Araluen but there were no dray roads, only bridle tracks or pack tracks. Access and supply access to the valley remained difficult throughout the 1850s. Meanwhile competition to supply the market was fierce between Moruya and Braidwood.

There were three tracks to Araluen from the Braidwood side, one by Majors Creek, one by Bells Creek and one descending from Reidsdale. The tracks were generally too steep for drays to ascend or descend. Sometimes they were even a challenge for horse riders.

For nearly a decade goods were transported into the valley on slides at a number of locations. They carried about half a ton and, although dragged by horse, they were steadied by hand-held ropes as they were lowered to the bottom of the mountain. It was a one-way trip because no horse could draw the slide back up the mountain. So once down the bottom, the slide became firewood.

Other supplies came from Moruya along the bridle track that crossed the river and the creek innumerable times so, consequently, was inaccessible during rainy periods when the river and creek flooded. At one time there were 400 to 500 packhorses travelling this road, each loaded with four bushels of corn, or the equivalent in potatoes, chaff or butter.

In November 1860, following a devastating flood in the valley, a new road was opened down the mountain on the Braidwood side from Bells Creek. It was only 12 feet (3.7 m) wide and considered dangerous in places. It was too narrow to allow two vehicles to pass, so regulations were posted at the top and bottom with allocated up days and down days. However, the regulations were often disregarded and there were many accidents. Gradually the new road was widened and became safer, but the descent into the valley by coach or with a fully laden team of bullocks or horses was often a nerve-wracking experience.

From the Moruya side of Araluen there was still only the bridle track. More flooding increased the anxiety from both ends. For Araluen it meant people had to go without many important staples and for Moruya it meant the loss of an important market. The Moruya business owners and residents campaigned hard for a dray road from Moruya to Araluen. In 1861 they succeeded only in getting an upgrade of the bridle track from Larry's Station to the junction of Araluen Creek. The new work eliminated all the river

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crossings, but for some time it would still remain just a pack track.

Meanwhile an enterprising storekeeper at Mudmelong, Lower Araluen, named Thomas Shoebridge found an all-weather route from his Pack Saddle Store to the Clyde River. At considerable personal cost, he marked out a pack track through the mountains to Austin's Point, a distance of 26 miles (42 km), which became known as the Shoebridge Track. It proved to be reliable in all weathers and became busier and in constant use by pedestrians, horsemen and teams of packhorses but, again, its narrowness with steep drop-offs made passing difficult and dangerous. As it had become an important public supply route the government granted £1,000 to fund an extensive upgrade. The work was completed in January 1862. The gradients did not exceed 1 in 12. The track was made 6 feet (1.8 m) wide and passing bays were built about every 300 yards (275 m), in sight of one another. They were 10 feet (3 m) wide and 30 feet (9 m) long to allow a dozen horses to pass without coming into contact with one another. It was a great piece of work and would have to rank as one of the finest pack tracks of the time. Unfortunately, it had a short life because it was still only a pack track. Once a dray road was available, packing took second place.

Following a big flood on Christmas Day 1870, the Moruya River bridle track was widened and became a dray road all the way to Araluen. From that time, the all-weather Shoebridge Track became all but obsolete. Earlier in the 1860s, Araluen and Majors Creek had also been linked with a dray road, albeit narrow and steep, but nevertheless it was a dray road and was used for the gold escort from Araluen to Braidwood. Earlier the gold escort was by horse-back.

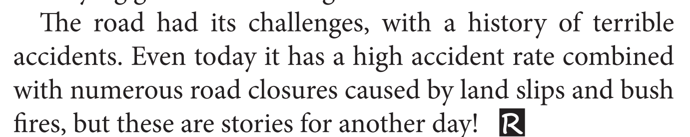
So, by 1870 there was vehicle access to Araluen via three roads. We may wonder about 'progress' since that time: the Moruya Road has been closed for two years owing to landslips; the Majors Creek Road has been closed for about 4 or 5 years owing to wash outs and lack of government funding; the Braidwood Road from Araluen suffered two land slips last year and is currently operating with only one lane controlled by traffic lights.

Finally - The Clyde Mountain Road

The development of the Southern Goldfields brought an increase in population and increased commercial opportunities. There was pressure to upgrade from pack tracks to the coast to forming a dray road and opening a sea port. Under the changed circumstances there was a re-think about building the road that the explorers thought could be done with no difficulty, and the surveyors thought otherwise. Regardless The Clyde Road to the Port of Nelligen on the Clyde River, 6 miles (10 km) upstream from Batemans Bay, made Nelligen the port for the district and secured Braidwood's position as the administrative centre of the Southern Goldfields.

A regular steamer service was soon established which ran from Nelligen to Sydney every Tuesday and Friday at 4 pm and returned every Monday and Thursday at 10 am. In addition to passengers, goods were also streaming into the port. Eighteen to twenty loaded wagons a day were conveying goods from Nelligen.

The road had its challenges, with a history of terrible accidents. Even today it has a high accident rate combined with numerous road closures caused by land slips and bush fires, but these are stories for another day!



Our Maritime 'Highway'

Peter Lacey

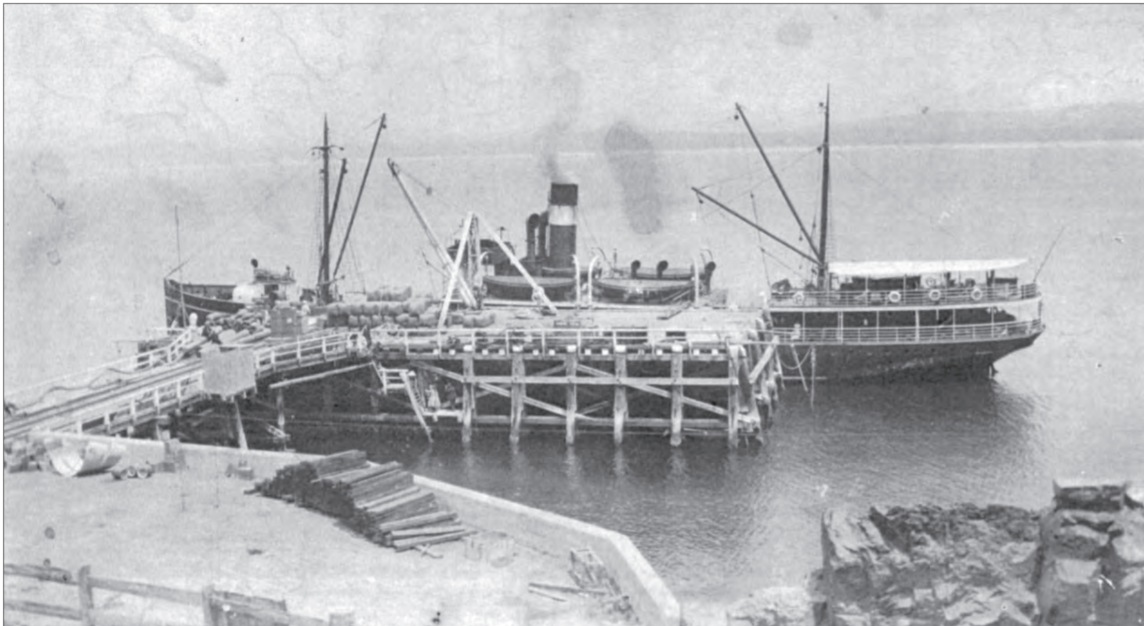
When roads were virtually non-existent or rudimentary at best, and when numerous significant size rivers had to be crossed to reach Sydney, the State's centre of population, it was natural that those on the NSW South Coast would look to shipping to provide their everyday link between the South Coast and elsewhere.

So, for about a century – roughly from 1858 until just after World War II, by which time our road system was starting to become half-decent and motor vehicles were starting to become more powerful and more reliable – the shipping routes along the coast played the role of the area's highways.

The history of general shipping along the NSW South Coast is essentially the history of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company. It was formed by amalgamating 3 small shipping companies (the Kiama Steam Navigation Company, the Shoalhaven Steam Navigation Company and the General Steam Navigation company that was, itself, an earlier amalgamation of the Illawarra Steam Packet Company and the Brisbane Water Steam Passenger Company). Subsequent competitors were usually rapidly gobbled up – even one (the Moruya Steam Navigation Company) that had been specifically formed because of local dissatisfaction with the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company. So, the history of general shipping on the South Coast is essentially a history of one company which almost had a monopoly on shipping to the NSW South Coast.

The Illawarra Steam Navigation Company's vessels were small – very small. For those who might remember the old Manly ferries, the *Dee Why* and the *Curl Curl*, they were 800-ton vessels. The ISN vessels initially ranged from 54-tons (so, about 1/15th the size of an old Manly Ferry) and even when larger vessels were added, they were not huge. The *Merimbula*, the largest of the company's fleet was a vessel of just over 1,100-tons. So being on board one of these vessels was like being on a cork bobbing up and down in what could, at times, be extremely rough seas.

At various times, the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company's vessels called into every possible 'port', if you can call them that, on the South Coast – including Wollongong, Port Kembla, Shellharbour, Kiama, Gerringong, Berry, Nowra, Jerara, Huskinson, Ulladulla, Bawley Point, Pebbly Beach, Batemans Bay, Nelligan, Broulee, Moruya, Tuross Head, Potato Point, Narooma, Bermagui, Tathra, Merimbula and Eden. Apart from Jervis Bay, and possibly Eden, none of these 'ports' was a safe haven – so, in most instances, vessels either had to stand offshore to unload and then load passengers and cargo into smaller vessels to get them to or


The 'Eden', an Illawarra Steam Navigation Company vessel at Merimbula Wharf

from shore, or had to cross dangerous bars at river mouths, or had to attempt to dock at open-sea wharves like the one at Tathra. At Tathra, if a north-easterly swell was running, the vessel would simply by-pass the wharf and head to Merimbula which has a south-facing wharf, and everyone waiting for the ship at Tathra would race down the road (if you could call it that) to Merimbula to meet the vessel…and passengers expecting to disembark in Tathra at 9am would then not reach Bega until around 8.30 that night.

The ISN vessels mostly plied between the South Coast and Sydney, but they occasionally went further afield – for example to Launceston and Hobart in Tasmania, and to New Zealand.

The service provided by the ISN was principally to carry cargo. And some of their vessels that were constructed later in the company's history were purpose-built for specific cargoes. The *Benandra* and the *Bodalla* were introduced specifically to transport timber (especially wooden railway sleepers which were shipped from various ports on the South Coast in their hundreds of thousands), and the *Duroby* which was purchased specifically to transport silica from Ulladulla to Sydney and Newcastle.

Passenger traffic was of secondary importance, so much so that it was said the Pig and Whistle Line (as the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company became known) might wait an hour for a pig, but not one minute for a passenger.

And, being a passenger, was not particularly comfortable. As one history of the Pig and Whistle Line recounts: "*On the earlier ISN vessels all passenger accommodation had been of*

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the open type, where the dining table was down the centre of the saloon. The berths fitted around the ship's sides and were sheltered by curtains. This type of accommodation could not have been very inviting…it was never pleasant to be taking a meal whilst a passenger was being audibly ill in the berth behind…this of course being in addition to the all-pervading smell of the pigsty, as it was a rare occasion for a company ship not to have some porkers aboard…in the berths around the ship's side, it was customary for the sleepers to lie with their heads forward, so that one's head was next to the next person's feet. The story is told that on at least one occasion a steward, mindful of the cleanliness of the bed linen, requested a passenger who had just come in from the stockyard and gone to bed fully clothed, to take his boots off. When he did there was an immediate outcry from the man sleeping in the next bunk, insisting that he be made to put them on again."

And there was always the possibility that these tiny vessels would catch fire, run aground or run into the rocks, or simply turn-turtle. In just under a century, 15 of the Pig and Whistle Line's vessels were lost and a number of passengers and crew lost their lives.

I cannot, however, underemphasize the importance of this shipping service to the development of the South Coast. Locals in the area realized this, and several of the wharves in the area were constructed by locals to enable ships to regularly visit their area or, if a service looked as though it might have to by-pass their port, were upgraded to ensure the service continued. For example, the Tathra Wharf was originally built by a local farmer, Daniel Gowing, so he could get his produce to Sydney (and, incidentally, he also built the road from Bega to Tathra so he could then access the wharf), and the Ulladulla Wharf was upgraded by locals to ensure that ships could continue to visit that area.

The array of goods that these sailing ships and steamers carried was amazing: timber, railway sleepers, wattle bark which was used in tanning, wool, maize, potatoes, cheese and butter, and once refrigeration became available milk, seafood, live pigs and cattle, hides, minerals, produce and animals for display at Sydney Shows. In one case a South Coast local even shipped his horse and sulky whenever he went to Sydney so that he had transport in Sydney and, upon his arrival back at Tathra, was able to simply harness his horse, climb into his sulky and drive home. Operating in the opposite direction, the ISN ships transported all the necessities required on the South Coast, including copious bags of coal to a town Gas Works in Bega. Basically, the prosperity of the South Coast became possible because of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company.

And the company recognized its importance. There is one story about the *Coomonderry* that was, at one time, providing a service to Moruya and Narooma. It was licensed to carry 6 male and 6 female passengers…except at the end of one school year 44 passengers turned up – mainly schoolkids. The Harbourmaster in Sydney came down to the ship and told Captain Canty he would have to put 32 of them ashore. The Captain indicated there would be many sad hearts in Moruya that Christmas, at which point the Harbourmaster indicated he had a poor memory for figures…and all 44 passengers were subsequently delivered safely down here.

And then, when the railway was extended to Nimmitabel

The ISSN's 'Bodalla' wrecked on the bar at Narooma

and Bombala and looked like taking trade away from the ISN, one employee rode through the Monaro offering graziers handsome discounts on their freight if they would sign up with the company to consign all their freight by sea for some years. Most signed and honoured their agreements, the result being that the railways initially experienced a very lean time.

In other, perhaps less obvious ways, the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company was important to the South Coast. For example, it was an early advocate for tourism to the area and actively promoted the area to potential tourists – anticipating there might be a lucrative market selling tickets to potential visitors on its voyages. In 1905 and again in 1912 it produced an interesting Illustrated Handbook intended as a guide for tourists and holidays makers to the area. But I don't think these promotions were particularly successful – I think, for most Sydneysiders at that time, a holiday to somewhere like the Hydro Majestic at Medlow Bath, travelling by train, would have been far more appealing than chancing a couple of coastal voyages accompanied by loads of pigs!

After the *Merimbula* ran aground at Currarong, just north of Jervis Bay, in March 1928, the company decided to discontinue its passenger service so, for the last two decades or so of the Pig and Whistle Line's history, it essentially only ran a cargo service to the South Coast.

Eventually better road vehicles, better roads and – particularly – the construction of bridges across the major South Coast rivers, led to the ultimate demise of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company and its shipping services to the South Coast. R

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On Time and In Place – Romancing Roads, Building Bridges

by Dr Lenore Coltheart, historian and co-author of 'The Timber Truss Bridge Book'

How do you get to Batemans Bay?

On the Princes Highway, across our beautiful new bridge of concrete, curving over the Clyde River? Or maybe you drive the Kings Highway and cross both our new Clyde River bridges?

Everyone else, by simple deduction, will have come from the south, up the Princes Highway, or its George Bass Drive, built in the 1970s alongside the coastline from Moruya. The deductions are too easy, as any South Coast resident will tell you – you have to come by road. We have no railway and our coastal passenger ships are long gone – we might see the occasional cruise ship, but that is another thing entirely. You can fly of course, but only from Sydney and you'll still need to do the half-hour road trip from our tiny Moruya airport.

How will this change in the remainder of the 21st Century? One thing is for sure: it is as pointless lobbying governments about the isolation of the NSW south coast in this century, as it was in the last, and the one before that. It's frustrating and it's awkward – and even perilous, as we were reminded three summers ago.

But 235 years after colonisation commenced, is it all bad?

Thanks initially to the assistance Yuin people gave brilliant naval lieutenant Matthew Flinders and pragmatic businessman George Bass in their explorations by tiny boat south from Sydney, this coast was an early starter in the spread of European colonisation from Sydney after 1788. Once the separate colony of Victoria was established, a big

Taking freight from Nelligen wharf to Braidwood c1902 – the Currawong Creek crossing. Image: National Library of Australia

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part of the problem was our proximity to it. Thanks to the Sydney-centric policies of every colonial and state administration since, the south coast of NSW is eternally the poor cousin in transport infrastructure – a century ago the plea was to recognise 'four hundred miles of neglected coastline'.

For the Colony's first hundred years, rivers were roads and by far the greater quantities of passengers and freight were carried the greatest distances by ship or boat. Unlike the coast north of Sydney, with its upriver port towns from Morpeth to Lismore, the rivers from the Shoalhaven down to the Towamba were not navigable for any great distance. Nelligen was a port for seagoing vessels, but it is just 10km upstream. Even so, while money was – almost literally – poured into each of the big north coast rivers the Hunter, the Manning, the Hastings, the Macleay, the Bellinger, the Clarence, the Richmond, and the Tweed, coastal engineering south of Sydney was minimal by comparison – for instance, dredging of the Moruya River.

The timber truss Warri bridge

Road and bridge building followed the same priority, especially once more systematic construction programmes were possible with the establishment of responsible government and a Public Works Department in the 1850s. Nelligen is in fact a key and poignant marker of this change, the older practice represented by Chief Surveyor Sir Thomas Mitchell, whose death in 1855 was attributed to the harsh conditions endured in surveying the road over the Clyde Mountain that made Nelligen a key port, giving Braidwood and Queanbeyan access to shipping their wool out, as well as gold brought across from Araluen, with the need for imported supplies throughout the district guaranteeing an inwards cargo.

Under the new order of responsible government, legendary chief engineer for roads and bridges William Bennett completed the harrowing work of building the – still harrowing – road, known as King's Way. For the crossing of the Shoalhaven River north of Braidwood, Bennett designed one of the most striking of his timber truss bridges, the Warri Bridge. The timber truss design enabled the use of unique local hardwoods – several decades before the first timber testing laboratory showed these to be the best in the world.

Sydney-centrism is the same story with the great construction era of railways in the second half of the 19th century – ours never got closer than the other side of the Shoalhaven at Bomaderry – though the 1886 railway bridge crosses the river to our side, full of false promise still. Way down south is our other vestigial railway, the 1921 Bombala end of the 1889 line from Cooma and Queanbeyan, where passenger and freight services ended over thirty years ago. Hopes were raised in 2018 with a study on the feasibility of re-opening the Canberra to Bombala rail line with an extension to Eden, a 300 km distance, and then were dashed with the finding, two years later, that the costs of $5.4 billion would lead to a return of $240 million!

Now the last of the line's beautiful little timber truss railway bridges is a crumbling gravestone to the vanished era of rail, overtaken in NSW from 1925 by the era of the motor car – again, a product of government policy, not the unstoppable progress of time.

* * *

Though Bateman's Bay stands royally at the junction of the Kings and Princes Highways, this really isn't any monument to monarchy. King's Way was named after one of Thomas Mitchell's surveyors and simply became King's Highway, without the 'the' – and without the apostrophe after punctuation in road names was eliminated by fiat fifty years ago. Then unsealed for most of its length, in 1920 the coast highway from Sydney to Melbourne was named the Prince's Highway in honour of the visit of Edward, Prince of Wales, possibly the shortest-reigning monarch in British history. By the time of his abdication in 1936 his highway – which, despite hopes, he had not used at all – was sealed south from Sydney almost to Batemans Bay, reaching there in 1939, when vehicles and people and goods were still carried across the river on the punt crossing first built in 1871, and motor-powered from 1915.

From 1930 passengers alighting from the midday train at Bomaderry station were met by Harrisons motor bus service to Bega, with connecting car on to Eden; from Nowra there was a bus to Moruya and another one from there to Narooma, where a bridge over the Wagonga River was completed in 1931. This bridge as well as the 1936 Brogo River bridge near Bega and the 1932 Palwambra Mountain deviation between Mogo and Moruya were all

unemployment relief works during the Depression, as was the sealing of the Princes Highway.

From 1941 the war in the Pacific diverted all resources to defence, including shipbuilding at Moruya and a RAAF base at the river entrance – now our airport. Sealing the Princes Highway south of Batemans Bay was halted until 1946, when work started on the steel truss bascule lift bridge over the Clyde River, the postwar shortage of steel delaying its completion until 1956. The next year, Bodalla also had a new bridge across the Tuross River. By then the bitumen seal was close, reaching Moruya in 1950. For the next sixteen years though, the Highway crossed the Moruya river on its temporary third timber bridge, standing in for the second, washed away in 1945 floods. The fourth, new and present bridge was opened in 1966, the year after the Princes Highway was sealed all the way to the Victorian border.

Almost exactly a century ago, advances in concrete technology meant new highway bridges were designed and built in curved concrete, ending the long era of timber truss road bridges. But it was government policy to fund roads in preference to rail, which meant the ever-increasing loads on all main roads crushed – in some cases, literally – the timber truss bridges, distancing us from an extraordinary and very local artefact.

Bridge engineers are fond of saying that a bridge is not a bridge when it can't fulfil its purpose of connecting one place to another. They are right, as far as that goes – but such things are more than just themselves: historical artefacts are powerful time-travellers and, when in place, they connect one time to another.

And the more unspoiled, 'under-developed', disregarded the place, the further we can travel to its past times. R

Time-travelling back to when the highway south included this Allan Timber Truss Bridge crossing at Dry River, Quaama

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Finding the National Story on the NSW South Coast

by Dr Mathew Trinca, AM FAHA, Director, National Museum of Australia

The National Museum of Australia has a clear and unambiguous mission – to bring the stories of our nation and its people alive. Yet it wrestles constantly with the fundamental questions of what the nation is and how best to represent its diverse and remarkable history.

After all, our national narrative is like no other. It reaches back more than 65,000 years, embracing the remarkable histories of the continent's First Nations, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who have lived and walked on this land for thousands of generations.

Then there are the stories of all who have come after. The efforts of those who established the foundations of contemporary Australia upon British laws, social forms and institutions. And the experiences of peoples from around the world who have come to these shores in search of a better life. In fact, Australia has welcomed immigrants from almost every other nation on Earth.

Necessarily, this work takes us all around the country, from west coast to east, from northern tropics to the temperate south. Each place has its own story to tell, and the telling of that story colours and enlarges our understanding of what it means to live in Australia, of the sheer diversity and breadth of our nation and its past, present and future.

In the case of the South Coast of New South Wales, the stories the National Museum has told in recent years give some sense of how wide and inclusive this work can be. Most recently, when the Museum made a major new exhibition to mark the 250th anniversary of the voyage of the *Endeavour* in 1770, the South Coast was present in the stories of the Yuin people and in the accounts of Captain James Cook and others aboard his ship.

It is a story worth recounting. After first sighting land at Munda Bubul, which Cook named Point Hicks, on 19 April, Cook's ship sailed north following the coast. Two days later, he sighted a prominent mountain which the Yuin called Gulaga. Cook thought the mountain looked like a camel and so called it Mount Dromedary. But for the Yuin, it was an important women's place linked to ceremony, childbirth and storytelling. For Cheryl Davison, of the Walbunja/ Ngarigo people, Gulaga was Mother Mountain:

> *She's always been here Gulaga is the Mother Mountain. Pregnant, she lies on her side, her head to the south, her feet to the north, facing the sea...she was here when the stars and the moon and everything else was created.... she's always been here.*'[1]

When the Museum made the exhibition *Endeavour Voyage*, it represented Cook's accounts of what we now know as the South Coast alongside the views of the Yuin and others, who told their stories from the perspective of those onshore looking out to the ship. In many ways, the dualism of these views, from ship and shore, is emblematic of all that came after, when colonists came to the area in the 19th century several decades after the Cook voyage.

In 2015, the Museum undertook a major project to research and exhibit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections from the British Museum alongside newer works

The trio of Orcas— Old Tom, Humpy and Kinscher. National Museum of Australia

land and sea, where many of us come to a sense of our essential relationship to the physical environment. The Museum's new permanent gallery devoted to environmental history, *Great Southern Land*, demonstrates this with an extensive display on the history of whaling at Eden, focusing on the remarkable relationships formed between whalers and the Orcas who helped them to hunt the great whales in Twofold Bay.

The Thawa people of the Yuin nation had a long association with Orcas in the area, for whom they were an important totem animal. After Thomas Raine established whaling at Snug Cove in 1828, many of the Yuin were employed as crew on the boats that set out from shore to hunt whales. A trio of Orcas – Old Tom, Humpy and Kinscher – collaborated with whalers, particularly the Davidson family, to drive the humpbacks and other whales into shallow water and assist in the hunt. In return, the Orcas were allowed to feast on the lips and tongues of the whales that were killed.

Life-size models of those three whales, developed

from those same First Nations source communities. The result was Encounters, an exhibition shown in Canberra, after a corresponding show held in London earlier in the year. The Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, was patron of these ground-breaking, twin exhibitions that went to the very heart of our history. Among the many astonishing objects which returned to Australia for the exhibition (for almost all of them, the first time they had returned here since their original collection), was a hand-stencilled shield from the Shoalhaven collected by Henry Moss and shown at the 1862 International Exhibition in London. At the time, Wandi Wandian elder Sonny Simms had this to say about the connections between the shield and the land of his people around Nowra:

> *Just up the river here, up around that cave near Longreach, there's numerous hand stencils there. Some are high, some are children's hand stencils...the way a lot of our people done the hand stencils...it's like looking up at the stars.*[2]

Alongside the shield a carved pole was exhibited, made by Jerrinja artist Noel Wellington who continues the tradition of carved markings on wood in the forms of his ancestors in the Shoalhaven. The pole he completed for *Encounters* showed the traditional foods and the ongoing importance of the Shoalhaven River for the Jerrinja people. His work continually expresses the strong connection that people along the South Coast have to the seas, as a source of sustenance materially and spiritually. It is also an emphatic statement of continuity and endurance, demonstrating his own presence and connection to the land 150 years after the shield was shown in London.

The sea of course connects us all in Australia, one way or another. Indeed, the vast majority of us live within 100kms of the coast. It is also frequently the zone, this littoral between

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Pink Propert 'Trailaway' van – a one-off built in Sydney in 1956, at the National Museum of Australia

through close study of the markings on the whales seen in photographs, are the centrepiece of the exhibit devoted to the story of whaling at Eden. Greg McKee, an expert on the Orcas of Eden, helped the team responsible for making the replicas, SharpFX in Melbourne. Also on display are a series of artefacts relating the history of whaling at Eden and elsewhere in Australia, including hand-held harpoons like those used by the shore-based whalers like the Davidsons. Altogether, it is a dramatic reminder of how our relationship to the Australian environment is both distinctive and unexpected, by turns a thing of wonder and delight.

Of course, only a fraction of the Museum's National Historical Collection is on display at the Museum at any given time. The greater part of the 250,000 strong collection is housed in our repositories till it is needed for exhibition changeover, for temporary exhibition or for loans and exchanges with other museums. In those warehouses are objects which speak directly to the history of the South Coast and reflect its varied and diverse stories. From early surveying instruments and 19th century photographic plates to surfboards, fishing reels and caravans. All have a tale to tell.

Among those objects is a Gunter's chain employed to measure a precise distance; that is, a chain, one of the arcane units of measurements used in the old imperial system. A chain was equivalent to 66 feet, or 22 yards, the length of a cricket pitch as it happens. The Gunter's chain in the Museum's collection was used in surveying land in the early years of colonial development on the South Coast. The chain was brought from England to New South Wales by William and Ann Willcocks, who settled on land near Narooma in 1854. Descendants of the family are still farming in the district today, but the chain is a reminder of those early days in which farms were laid out and established.

One of the Museum's great treasures is a vast collection of early Australian postcards acquired from the Sydney dealer, Josef Lebovic. The collection affords a glimpse of the past, capturing views of Australian people and landscapes from across New South Wales. But the South Coast is especially well represented, with views of most major towns and districts from Wollongong to Eden. There are sepia views of Nowra, not least the old bridge across the Shoalhaven River in all its box girder glory. Another postcard details a steamer plying its trade on the Clyde River near Batemans Bay and there is also a fabulous image of the old Hotel Bega, among many others. Altogether, the Lebovic postcards offer a delightful sense of the South Coast towns in the early decades of the 20th century.

Long before I came to know the South Coast first-hand, I imagined it as a fisherman's paradise, courtesy of the many accounts of fishing along the coast that I devoured as a bookish child. As a result, among the many objects in the National Historical Collection which I find intriguing, I am particularly taken by a fishing rod and reel used in the 1930s by the celebrated American author and game fisherman Zane Grey. Grey made a series of trips to Australia and helped to establish big game fishing on the South Coast in 1936 and 1937.

Growing up in Perth, I read about Grey and his larger than life exploits that made him an exotic and celebrated figure not just in his homeland, but right around the world. He was one of the first millionaire authors, making a fortune from his books about the American west in the early decades of the 20th century, but in later years he came to Australia and New Zealand to indulge his love of fishing. The rod and reel in the collection were custom made for shark fishing and Grey's accounts of his exploits catching marlin and sharks from his base at Bermagui put the region on the map for big game fishing right around the world.

Since that time, the region's reputation as a tourist and holiday destination has continued to grow and other objects in the National Historical Collection document that rise. An early Propert fold-up trailer camper used in Bega and Eden areas on family trips in the 1960s is in the Collection, as is a 1964 surfboard, or more properly longboard – one of the earliest artefacts acquired by the National Museum as it began to collect for the nation in the 1980s.

More recently, and more poignantly, the Museum has displayed a remarkable object to its collection drawn from the region's recent history. The Cobargo Telephone Box

destroyed in the New Year's Eve 2019 bushfire that devastated the town is now on display in the Museum's Great Southern Land Gallery. No one who sees the remnant of the phone box can fail to be moved by the destruction experienced by the Cobargo community on that night. Alongside it stands a twisted steel girder from Cyclone Tracy in Darwin five decades ago; both horrible, forceful reminders of how our love of this land and its beauty often comes at considerable personal cost. The account of that night that recorded by a local firefighter, Bruce, in the Museum's online site, *Momentous*, is chilling:

> *Our crews spent most of the day trying to save all we could and then began mopping up. I myself spent 17 hours in Cobargo that day, arriving home just before midnight. However, there was no joy as the clock ticked over to the new year. In my 43 years as a volunteer with the RFS I have never seen fire behaviour like I did in the 2019/2020 fire season and never wish to see it again.*[3]

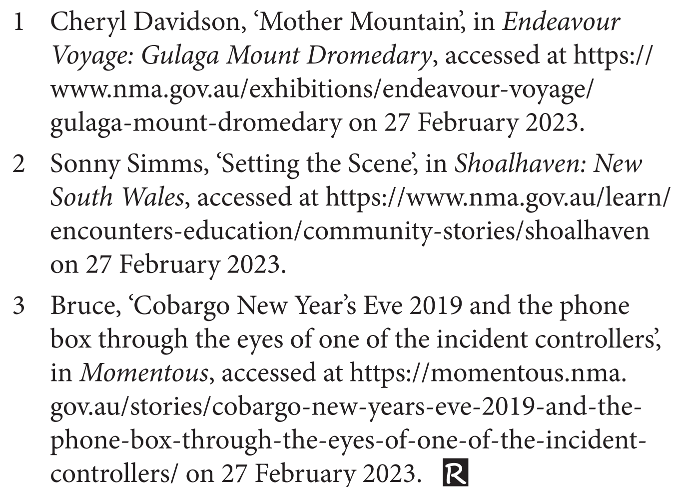
The telephone box with its tendrils of melted plastic is one of those astonishing things that gives us a visceral, intuitive sense of the past, as much as any closely worked rational argument. To see it is to feel something of what the people must have gone through that night, and establishes an empathy for them in ways that words simply cannot do.

This is the real value and power of the National Historical Collection that the Museum collects, preserves, researches and exhibits in the interests of us all in this country. It is for this reason that the Museum's legislation charges us with the development, research, preservation and display of things that teach us about, or otherwise reveal, Australian life and experience.

Cobargo's melted phone booth is now displayed in Canberra in a temperature-controlled museum. Image courtesy National Museum of Australia

By virtue of the materiality of artefacts, and the physical sense we can have of objects and the places from which they come, museum collections remind us of the fundamentally embodied nature of our lives. In doing so, historical artefacts and the collections which they form can take us into and reveal the lives of others. They allow us to transcend our own experience and consider what the past was and is from the perspective of another, in this case the stories and histories of the people and places of the South Coast of New South Wales.

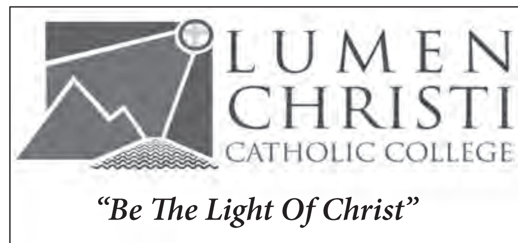
The objects and stories of the South Coast documented in the collections and exhibitions of the National Museum are therefore part of a wider tale, a history of nation that is composed of the experiences of people across this vast continent. This is how we build a national history that truly represents us and joins us all to the story of Australia, from the ground up, in every town and community across this land. It is why the stories of this part of Australia – the South Coast – are as important as any other, and are cherished by the Museum and its staff as much as those from anywhere else.



1 Cheryl Davidson, 'Mother Mountain', in *Endeavour Voyage: Gulaga Mount Dromedary*, accessed at https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/endeavour-voyage/gulaga-mount-dromedary on 27 February 2023.

2 Sonny Simms, 'Setting the Scene', in *Shoalhaven: New South Wales*, accessed at https://www.nma.gov.au/learn/encounters-education/community-stories/shoalhaven on 27 February 2023.

3 Bruce, 'Cobargo New Year's Eve 2019 and the phone box through the eyes of one of the incident controllers', in *Momentous*, accessed at https://momentous.nma.gov.au/stories/cobargo-new-years-eve-2019-and-the-phone-box-through-the-eyes-of-one-of-the-incident-controllers/ on 27 February 2023.



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Local historians are usually conscious of the archival sources available to them in their own area or region. They are also usually aware of how state archives can assist their research. Less obvious perhaps are collections relating to the Christian churches, many of which (although not all) have been centralised for preservation in what are usually known as 'diocesan archives'. The Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn holds invaluable material on the story of the spread and development of Catholic communities right along the South Coast of NSW in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Catholic populations on the South Coast were not large by modern standards but, nevertheless, their presence was substantial. For example, in 1871 the town of Bega was 30 per cent Catholic; the small village of Candelo was 47 per cent Catholic. And the colonial census of 1891 revealed the Moruya district to be 43 per cent Catholic. Additionally, to understand the Catholic spread in the 19th century is a way to track Irish settlement, because the great majority of Catholics at that time hailed from the Emerald Isle. In this article Denis Connor provides insights into some of the local treasures and significant information that can be found in the Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn, located in Canberra.

The Rural Deanery of the South Coast and Monaro Districts: An explanation of the history and sources

Denis Connor, Diocesan Archivist, Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

When the Catholic Diocese of Goulburn was established in 1862 its eastern boundary was set at an imaginary line drawn between the headwaters of the Lachlan River system in the north and the headwaters of the Murray system in the south. Its territory was all that was contained within the boundaries of these river systems until the point of their junction in the south-western Riverina.

Before 1862 the spiritual care of the Catholic flock through all the territory of NSW south of Sydney was the responsibility of the Archdiocese of Sydney. The creation of the Diocese of Goulburn removed much of that territory from Sydney with the exception of the regions identified as the 'Rural Deanery of the South Coast and Monaro Districts'; a description applied by the historian of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn – the late Father Brian Maher – in the published Archdiocesan history *Planting the Celtic Cross*.

Background to the Rural Deanery of the South Coast and Monaro Districts

From as early as the 1840s it is recorded that there was a Catholic ministry stretching to the South Coast from the settled areas to the south-west of Sydney – initially led by clergy from around Campbelltown but in time from the localities of Goulburn and Queanbeyan. This was well before the establishment of the Diocese of Goulburn, and any of the 'travelling clergy' involved were associated with the Sydney Archdiocese.

As European settlement increased – encouraged by pastoral pursuits as well as the discovery of gold – Catholic parishes, with resident clergy, were established across this region, including the coastal parishes of Moruya (1850), Bega (1865), Araluen (1869), Pambula (1886), Milton (1890) and Cobargo (1891).

When the Diocese of Goulburn was established in 1862, these parishes – or the territory that was to become parishes – remained with the Archdiocese of Sydney. It was a re-structure of diocesan boundaries across southern NSW in 1917, resulting from the creation of a new diocese centred on Wagga Wagga, that transferred the Rural Deanery of the South Coast and Monaro Districts to Goulburn Diocese.

These boundary changes are significant because the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn holds official records for these parishes only for the period they were part of our Diocese (Archdiocese from 1948).

More recent boundary variations

When the Australian church received approval for the creation of a separate Diocese of Wollongong in 1951, the two most northerly of the South Coast parishes – Milton and Moruya – were removed from the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese and attached to the new diocese. Milton has remained with Wollongong, but Moruya returned to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn in 1976 as three parishes – Moruya itself, and the new parishes separated from it in Narooma (1957) and Batemans's Bay (1968).

A separate parish, centred on the townships of Candelo and Bemboka, was created in 1953, taking in territory that had previously been part of Bega parish, but this proved not to be sustainable and was re-attached to Bega in 1974.

Catholic Parishes of the South Coast

Parish	Year Parish Created	Year Joined Goulburn Diocese[1]	Year Departed Goulburn Diocese[1]
Milton	1890	1918	1951
Moruya	1850	1918 1976	1951 Current Parish
Araluen	1869	1918	x1928[2]
Batemans Bay	1968	1976	Current Parish
Narooma	1957	1976	Current Parish
Cobargo	1891	1918	Current Parish
Bega	1865	1918	Current Parish
Candelo-Bemboka	1953	1953	1974[3]
Pambula	1886	1918	Current Parish

[1]Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn from 1948; [2]Included in Braidwood Parish; [3]Re-joined Bega Parish

In spite of the changes to boundaries and names, and the challenges they present to a stable administrative history, the Archdiocesan Archives holds material that will be of interest to those wanting to research the Catholic history of the South Coast.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES

The major sources can be summarised as follows:

Official records of the Archdiocese

The official records of the Archdiocese are those that are received, created and accumulated by the Archdiocese in the official conduct of its business activity.

Parish files: These contain correspondence and other information exchanges between the parish and the Diocesan Chancery, that includes a range of reports that set out information on the size of the parish, the property held and the levels of activity within the parish. In particular these include an annual parish return, which provided an annual summary of facts and figures about the parish, property reports for insurance purposes and episcopal visit reports, which were an assembly of information before the visit of the bishop (usually every 3 years).

Parish files also refer to fundraising/ financial information, the acquisition and sale of property, the construction and renovating of parish buildings, clergy movements and information about activities within the parish.

A file is held for each of the South Coast parishes.

Diocesan newspaper: A monthly newspaper called *Our Cathedral Chimes* was produced between 1928 and 1958 (apart from a gap in 1938–1940). Its main focus was on happenings around Goulburn, as the centre of the diocese, but from the mid-1940s an 'Around the Diocese' section was introduced which included reports submitted from the parishes. Contributions from the South Coast parishes did not appear as regularly as some of the larger inland parishes, but they had a presence, and a glance at issues for 1947 showed items from Milton, Moruya, Cobargo and Bega.

The Archdiocese holds a fairly complete set of issues of *Our Cathedral Chimes.* A set of is also held by the National Library of Australia.

After *Our Cathedral Chimes* ceased production in 1958 there was then no whole diocesan paper until 1988 when the *Catholic Voice* was introduced. It continues today – though in recent years has appeared in a combination of printed and online formats.

Published sources

Australian Catholic Directory: The *Australian Catholic Directory* provides an annual administrative breakdown of the structure of the Church in Australia. It was first produced from the 1850s, but our Archdiocesan holdings date only from 1893. Over the years it has had a number of formal titles, but the title '*Australia Catholic Directory*' best describes what it does.

While over time there have been some variations in content the Directory includes an entry for each diocese that then provides a breakdown of each parish within the diocese. The parish entry usually sets out:

the names of appointed clergy;

the names of churches and other centres of worship within the parish;

names any schools in the parish and the religious order that conducted them;

Any other church institutions in the parish (eg. hospitals, orphanages);

Holdings of the Directory can also be found in The National Library of Australia, State Libraries and other major libraries, and later issues can be accessed on-line through a subscription.

Published histories of parishes: There have been histories published on several of our South Coast parishes – and readers will be aware of those relating to their own area. Some are parish-wide histories, while others are anniversary publications of a particular church, the parish schools or the religious orders who taught in them. The archdiocesan archives holds published histories relating to a number of parishes, including Moruya, Cobargo, Bemboka and Bega. These are a valuable source for not only the story they tell but also for early photos they contain of people, buildings and events.

Resources collected by Fr Brian Maher

Fr Brian Maher was a priest of our Archdiocese who served during the years 1967 to 2004. He had a keen interest in the history of our Archdiocese, and accumulated a wide-ranging collection of resources to support this interest. Reference has already been made to his history of the Archdiocese, *Planting the Celtic Cross,* which was published in 1997.

Fr Brian was also the author of histories of several parishes, and many will be familiar with his Moruya parish history, *Down by Shannon Harbour*, published in 1987.

To support his interests in the history of the local area, Fr Brian put together a remarkable documentary collection.

Fr Brian died in 2021, but had made provision for his collection to be preserved for the longer term. That portion of it relating to church history – which is a remarkable documentary collection – is now with the Archdiocese and can be made accessible for research.

Files on Parishes: Fr Brian's files on parishes have a very different flavour to the Archdiocese's files. He set his net wide and most files would include a mixture of the following:

Copies of local history books, pamphlets, brochures, as well as religious sources such as booklets for commemorative events and memorial cards;

Photocopied extracts from the sorts of publications listed above, as well as photocopies from newspapers, journals and magazines;

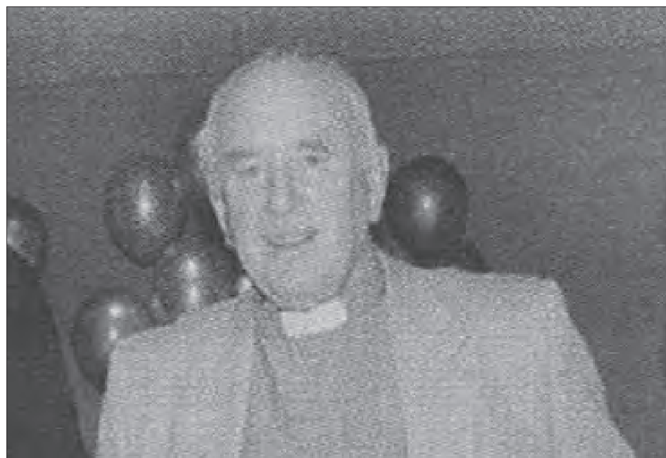
Typed extracts from historic documents – including the diaries of pioneer clergy and other official documents of the archdiocese;

Letters from people who provided additional information – including family stories – on parishes, schools and localities of interest; and

Photographs – of buildings, people, places or events.

Files are held for the Batemans Bay, Bega (including Bemboka & Candelo), Cobargo, Moruya and South Coast, Nelligan and Pambula (including Eden & Merimbula) parishes and localities.

Fr Brian's earliest area of parish research related to Moruya. It was the first of his parish histories (published in 1987). Because Moruya was the first proclaimed parish on the coast, the telling of its story also overlapped into the histories of the later established parishes. The Moruya file runs to 8 parts, which is much larger than that held for



Fr Brian Maher in 2007. Image courtesy Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn Archives

other parishes. Researchers who have studied these files have noted that they hold information extending through the whole South Coast area. No matter where your South Coast study focus is, it would be advisable to include the Moruya files in your initial examination.

Resources on clergy: Fr Brian had a deep regard for the clergy of the Archdiocese. In early years they were often key community leaders, and he thought it important that their story be recorded.

He prepared a Directory of Clergy which was published by the Archdiocese in 2012. It provided several tables that held basic biographical details of these men and their service in the archdiocese. For most the Directory also provides a more informative biographical entry.

Fr Brian's research notes and the final drafts of the biographical entries included in the Clergy Directory are held by the Archdiocese. The clergy research notes are similar to his files on parishes and contain material from a wide range of sources, including accumulated typed or hand-written notes, press cuttings, copies of ordination booklets, requiem mass booklets and memorial cards, a range of letters with snippets of information, and photographs.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs relating to parishes held in Archdiocese collections, relate to parish buildings – including churches, presbyteries, schools, convents, and halls – or to the clergy who served in the parishes. These are held across a range of collections. Inquiries in specific cases will usually result in some success.

INQUIRIES AND ACCESS

Material held by the Archdiocesan Archives is generally open and accessible.

Restrictions may be applied to protect sensitive information held on files – which is largely to respect information about individuals. This is applied according to the 'where disclosure would be unreasonable' principle which is widely used by Australia's government archives. Regard is also given to provisions of the *Privacy Act* which does not permit the release of information about people still living.

Inquiries should be made to the Archivist via email (address: archive@cg.org.au).

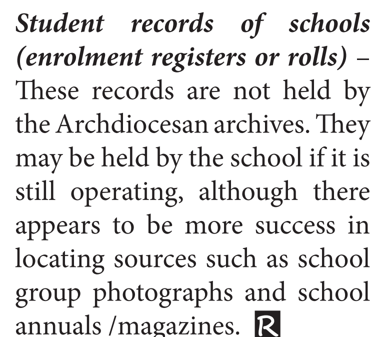
While it is usually possible to have researchers visit the archives, this is not possible at present due to repairs to the building facilities in which the archives are housed. We expect to again be open to researchers in the second half of 2023.

Historic St Edmund's Church, Bodalla. St Edmunds was blessed and opened by Cardinal Moran in June 1886. Image courtesy Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn Archives

INQUIRIES ABOUT PARTICULAR COLLECTIONS:

Sacramental registers (Baptisms, Marriages, Burials)– These are generally retained in the parishes, and access to the historic registers is usually provided by parish staff extracting requested information on payment of a fee.

Student records of schools (enrolment registers or rolls) – These records are not held by the Archdiocesan archives. They may be held by the school if it is still operating, although there appears to be more success in locating sources such as school group photographs and school annuals /magazines.



TROVE

Trove's funding runs out in July 2023 and the National Library is threatening to pull the plug. It's time for a radical overhaul

by Mike Jones (Postdoctorial research fellow, Australian National University) and Deb Verhoeven (Visiting Fellow, University of Technology Sydney)

The National Library is threatening to pull the plug on Trove, its free online service that provides public access to collections from Australian libraries, universities, museums, galleries and archives.

In its recent *Trove Strategy*, the library has indicated that without additional government support, it will shut the service down by July this year:

The future of Trove beyond July 2023 will be dependent upon available funds […] In a limited funding environment, Trove may reduce to a service focused on the National Library of Australia's collections. Without any additional funds, the Library will need to cease offering the Trove service entirely.

It's been nearly seven years since the #fundTrove campaign, a response to budget cuts to the National Library of Australia in 2016. (These were part of the Turnbull government's "efficiency dividend", which cut $20 million from the budgets of six Canberra-based cultural institutions over four years.)

That campaign resulted in a government funding package for Trove intended to rescue the popular service, which was topped up with more cash last year.

But in recent months it has become increasingly clear the National Library of Australia was never cured of its funding ills, and Trove was just on life support.

Threats to public access

Launched more than a decade ago, Trove now contains more than 6 billion digital items. Users can find information about books, journals, maps and archives without incurring any charges. There are digitised newspapers and magazines, photographs, web archives, parliamentary papers, reports, theses and more.

The content comes not just from the National Library's collections, but from almost 1,000 contributing organisations around the country. Many of these organisations also provide funding to Trove, subsidising more than 40% of its current operating costs.

For many people – and not just academic researchers – Trove is now part of their daily lives. The service boasts more than 22 million visits per year: around 63,000 a day on average. Trove is one of only two Australian government websites in Australia's top 15 global internet domains – the other is the ABC.

The repeated threats to the public's access to nationally significant collections are part of a broader malaise. Australia's national collecting institutions have been hobbled by funding cuts and debilitating efficiency dividends for decades, with the some of the deepest cuts occurring in the years since Trove was launched.

Reduced access to these publicly funded resources is more than an inconvenience: it is an attack on democratic accountability.

Trove needs a radical overhaul

We believe Trove and the National Library deserve better than ad hoc injections of cash – there's little value in a one-shot dose of vitamins if you are suffering from malnutrition. We'll just all be back in the emergency room again in another few years.

Trove itself needs a radical overhaul. What is currently a Frankenstein's monster of dead and mouldering technologies and systems needs more than just cosmetic surgery. It needs to be rebuilt from the ground up as an essential component of national library services.

On this note, we might ask why Trove is yet again the part of the library that ends up terminal. There is no suggestion that without additional funding the library's catalogue will be shut down, or the shelves sold and the books kept on the floor, or the oral history collection deleted to save on server space. Such things would be unthinkable.

The fact that the demise of Trove remains thinkable means it is still seen (by some at least) as an optional extra rather than a vital organ. Public access should not be the first sacrificial offering every time there is a budget crisis.

All our cultural institutions need sustainable funding

We also know the impact of chronic underfunding runs far deeper than Trove. After years of neglect, the roof of the National Library's heritage building is currently being repaired, restricting public access to significant collections material for months. It shouldn't be this way.

Other peak cultural institutions are faring no better. The National Archives of Australia was left begging for public donations to save parts of its collections before a one-off dose of funding. The National Gallery of Australia has a $265 million budget shortfall that could lead to extensive job losses and reduced opening hours. The National Film and Sound Archive is losing the battle to preserve thousands of hours of film, television and audio stored on obsolete and deteriorating media.

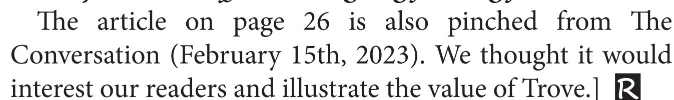
Only the Australian War Memorial seems in rude health.

Yet here we are, sitting at Trove's bedside, begging the government for another injection – when far more sustained and holistic treatment is required.

We need a comprehensive health strategy for all our national cultural institutions. We need sustainable, recurrent funding, rather than just a series of booster shots. And we need government investment that recognises that access to our national and state collections – including via digital platforms like Trove – is essential for researchers and writers, family historians, school students, and the incurably curious.

[*This article was first published in The Conversation on December 23, 2022. It is reprinted here under a Creative Commons licence.*

Trove IS such an extraordinarily valuable resource. It is extensively used to produce 'Recollections' – in fact, so much so that if Trove is closed down we will have no option (unless we somehow can source significant additional funding!) but to cease publication of 'Recollections' or to significantly reduce its size and the frequency it is issued. (For gorsake, stop laughing: this is serious!) ***We therefore strongly urge YOU to contact your local Australian Government Member of Parliament and ask what they can do to help ensure the National Library receives sufficient on-going funding for Trove.***



The article on page 26 is also pinched from The Conversation (February 15th, 2023). We thought it would interest our readers and illustrate the value of Trove.]

What is Trove?

[*This article was written in September 2013. The usage figures quoted are now way out of date (they have increased dramatically since 2013!), but it provides a good summation of Trove's extraordinary capabilities.*]

Since its launch in late 2009, Trove (trove.nla.gov.au) has become the National Library of Australia's (NLA) most popular online service. Every second, three people search Trove, and one corrects a line of computer translated newspaper text; every minute, someone tags an article; and every hour, a comment is added to an item and an image is uploaded by an individual for inclusion.

Trove is a free online discovery service that links people across Australia and anywhere in the world to resources that are available online, or are available in Australian libraries, cultural institutions and research collections. Trove links to more than 340 million resources in multiple formats.

Trove allows any researcher or member of the public to discover and locate books, articles, conference papers, theses and other research resources; find and view pictures that are held by Australian collecting institutions; find and read full-text articles from the collection of digitised Australian newspapers issued between 1803 and 1954; find and explore websites from PANDORA, Australia's web archive; and identify archival papers, letters, diaries and other collections. Trove goes beyond providing access to resources; Trove users can also find and read biographies from multiple sources such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography, the Australian Women's Register and the Encyclopaedia of Australian Science.

Trove use is growing very rapidly. By April 2013, Trove had an average of more than 60,000 unique visitors per day, and a daily high of nearly 80,000 unique visitors—nearly double the use of just a year earlier.

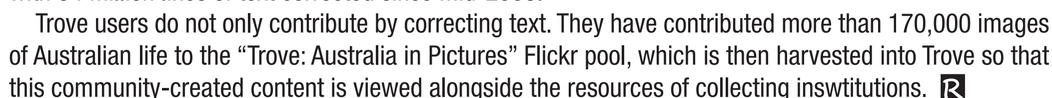
Trove has a truly national reach. Australians in regional, rural and remote areas are particularly appreciative of their new access to national documentary heritage, as this comment from a regional resident shows: "Using the e-resources through NLA [Trove] is very useful when you live in a rural area and have to travel miles to access resources." Indigenous elders in remote Western Australian communities are delighted to find images, newspaper articles and other resources about their communities in Trove, and in some cases are using these resources to share their stories with their young people.

Trove is also a service used around the world, with more than 40 percent of usage by residents from other countries.

Trove's content base is also growing rapidly. In May 2010, Trove provided access to 100 million items. In May 2011, the number of information resources in Trove almost doubled, to more than 200 million items, when access was provided to many millions of journal articles contained in electronic databases to which Australian libraries subscribe.

The State Library of New South Wales funded the digitisation of more than four million new pages of rural and regional newspapers—many of which were last published years ago—between 2013 and 2016 as part of its Digital Excellence strategy. [Regrettably, many South Coast newspapers have still to be digitised.]

Trove newspapers are extremely popular with the Australian public, with more than three-quarters of all Trove searches beginning in the newspapers zone. But newspaper users do not just read or use this content—they actively contribute to improving its quality. Optical character recognition is never 100 percent accurate on scans of old and sometimes not particularly legible microfilmed newspapers. Recognising this, the NLA opened up the newspaper transcripts to correction by any member of the public. The enthusiasm with which members of the public have taken up text correction of Australian newspapers is remarkable, with 94 million lines of text corrected since mid-2008.



Trove users do not only contribute by correcting text. They have contributed more than 170,000 images of Australian life to the "Trove: Australia in Pictures" Flickr pool, which is then harvested into Trove so that this community-created content is viewed alongside the resources of collecting inswtitutions.

'This issue of 'Recollections' has been produced with support from the NSW Government through CreateNSW'

‘Small Town’

From the South Coast History Day presentation by Myf Thompson, OAM, Curator of the Batemans Bay Heritage Museum

Wallawaani to readers.

In his little orchestral piece ‘*Small Town*’, Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe envisaged the quintessential Australian town, frozen in a more innocent time, rather like the towns in the paintings of his close friend Russell Drysdale.

Introducing his composition, Peter reads D H Lawrence’s account of a ‘small coastal town’ (Thirroul) that Lawrence visited in 1923. (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6_csmTRc80)

In Peter’s travels around Australia his creative mind took note of the common patterns in everyday life. He wanted his music to ‘*sing of all Australian towns*’.

He wove into this piece what bound these older places together – a town square, a war memorial, a park, a small RSL, real church bells, maybe a CWA baby health centre. People who were helpful to strangers. A strong sense of simpler times not yet forgotten.

Batemans Bay of the mid-20th century could easily have been the model for his composition. Electricity arrived as the man filling the ice chest was still in business. Orders were delivered to the home by a boy on a bike after ringing Mr Annetts’ shop on phone number 09. Town celebrations always involved a street parade with decorated bikes and competitive floats. Wood chopping and fishing competitions were sell outs.

We didn’t have a Mechanics Institute – we had a School of Arts in the Main Street. A little timber building with thunderbox toilets – the venue for flower shows, debutante balls, prize-givings, Saturday dances, and amateur dramatics, concerts, any event that warranted community get-togethers. Like dancing down the street and onto the ferry to ring in the New Year in the middle of the shark infested river.

There was a red phone box on a couple of streets for which you had to have the right change. Travel around town was dictated more by common sense than by traffic lights, and the policeman had an official stable for his horse.

Guy’s Store and neighbouring residence were originally built in timber in 1869. In 1877 they were upgraded with convict made bricks that came to Batemans Bay as ship’s ballast. By the 1920s Guy’s Store was trading as Thomsen’s Store.

Economically, there was a hardworking oyster industry, a small fishing fleet, crop growing, and timber mills still the mainstay of employment.

But in 1956 came the first major shift in the lives of the thousand people who called it home. A distinctive lifting span bridge with real character arrived, and the town was suddenly opened up. No more lines of cars waiting hours for the ferry in holiday times. Within 6 months the ferry was no more and over the bridge they poured and locals muttered “*We’d better start locking our doors*.”

And for 65 years that iconic bridge led the development of a small town toward its new identity – no longer the hard labour of fishing and timber but *services* – catering for those who arrived to enjoy life by the sea, who moved or holidayed here expecting a proper hospital not a converted cottage.

These people wanted shopping centres, and a main street with a multi-screen cinema. Milk bars gave way to cafes with odd names. The staple takeaway food for generations, fish and chips, was overwhelmed by fast food outlets and a number of places selling flavoured coffee that didn’t come out of a Camp coffee bottle.

Lt James Cook was on an economic journey, too, of sorts, when he surveyed the south east coast of NSW. Rocketing past us a mile a half out to sea he didn’t land here but noted in his journal for future reference that the bay looked like it could be a good harbour with several large island rocks providing shelter. He’d also spotted signal fires lit as he passed. Generally, he wasn’t one for memorialising people, he preferred useful descriptive names like Pigeonhouse mountain, and Mt Warning. But he named this bay Bateman, after a former naval colleague, also a maritime surveyor.

Twenty years after Cook named it, struggling seamen arrived in the Bay, remnants of the crew off the ‘Sydney Cove’, shipwrecked in Bass Strait. They were walking 700 kilometres back to Port Jackson to get help. Several disappeared in our district – ill health or killed by locals – it’s not known. On May 15, 1797 after walking for more than two months, a fisherman spotted the three remaining survivors crawling along Wattamolla Beach just south of Sydney.

This gruelling journey is hardly known, and yet it was the first extended encounter between Europeans and Aboriginal people beyond the confines of Sydney. And they weren’t sponsored to explore, it wasn’t scientific, they were off a commercial trading vessel.

The Walbunja people here enjoyed some peace until 1821, when Lt Robert Johnston of the Royal Navy was commissioned by Governor Macquarie to expand on Cook’s mapping, revealing the Bay was actually the estuary to a substantial river system. Just like

Cook, any European explorer considered they had naming rights, and Johnston called the river, Clyde, after his family's estates along the river in Scotland.

Europeans arrived in the 1840s to take up land, mill the timber and try to make a living. We see them in early photos – the family lined up in front of their timber hut, a small vegetable patch, an attempt by the woman to prettify a tiny front garden. And the stumps of trees all around.

It was the discovery of gold in nearby Araluen that brought our River into prominence again, because would-be miners could easily sail from Victoria or Sydney then 10k up river to the village of Nelligen – last port of call before a corn trail up to the tablelands and Queanbeyan, or a 70 mile ride or walk to the goldfields. Nelligen prospered. Four pubs, two churches. Regular sailings for its merchant goods. When you visit Nelligen now, the police station and courthouse has been converted into a church, the Catholic Church converted into a shop, that shop converted into a private residence – it is hard to imagine its heyday of rowdy sailors, storekeepers, foreigners, the sheer hullabaloo of loading and unloading vessels. All leading to a permanent police presence in the township.

Meanwhile, Batemans Bay slumbered; ships didn't stop here—nothing to offer. Until the 1880s when the national railway system demanded timber for rail sleepers and mine props. With its apparently unlimited supply of hardwoods The Bay district boomed – 13 mills along the foreshore and just inland. Cut down, carted, milled, graded and inspected. The roll call of the young men who served from this area during WWI reveals their occupations predominantly mill-hand, labourer, farmhand, carter.

Between the wars and depression years, men stripped wattle bark for the tanning industry or made charcoal. Being on the coast there was fishing, and shellfish, dairy and agriculture survived. Seasonal visits by Aboriginals travelling the coast to pick peas and beans, almost up until the 1960s.

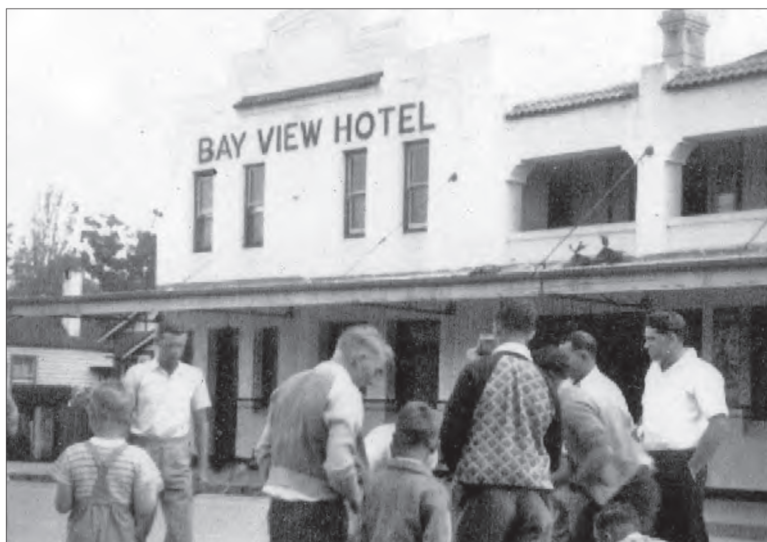


Image courtesy Batemans Bay Heritage Museum

Today the town boasts 19,000 residents tripling in holiday periods. What did we need? Another bridge. Can't have vehicles waiting 10 minutes for the lifting span to operate twice a day to let boats through! And with the demolition of the old bridge memories faded of how the community cheerfully marked the day of her opening by celebrating her 25th, 50th and 60th, and birthday cards from primary school children for her 65th. *'Dear bridge, thank you for taking me safely across the water"*.

In 2022 the old one was dismantled and the sleek curve of a new 4 lane highway bridge emerged. A glorious sweep of concrete guaranteed to encourage more business, more travellers, and greater economic benefits.

Time will tell if it warrants birthday cards.

Who tells the stories of small towns if not their museums and historical societies. How do you judge where you're going if you don't know where you've come from?

© Myf Thompson

Cartoon detectives: how Australia's most famous cartoon was lost and found—twice

by Robert Phiddian (Professor of English, Flinders University),
Richard Scully (Associate Professor of Modern European History at the University of New England)
and Stephanie Brookes (Senior Lecturer, School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University)

A man hangs, precariously, high above the street, holding onto the girder of an unfinished skyscraper. Around his ankles, a second man holds on for dear life.

This is no scene of drama, but hilarity. The second man has pulled down the first's pants in his desperation to hold onto life, and is lost in laughter. Grimacing, the first man growls:

For gorsake, stop laughing: this is serious!

Published in 1933, this is Australia's most famous cartoon, drawn by Stan Cross.

Labelled an instant classic, bizarrely, this cartoon has ***twice*** been lost. Not only was the original artwork missing for eight decades, the National Library of Australia's Trove database holds no record of its first newspaper publication.

These disappearances – and the diligent detective work required by those who recovered the cartoon – demonstrate deep flaws in the way Australia maintains our rich cartoon heritage.

Lindsay Foyle, longtime editorial cartoonist and honorary historian of the Australian Cartoonists' Association, has been on the elusive cartoon's trail for decades. With him, we recently published what we hope is the definitive account of its attempts to dodge the cartoon detective and escape the national record.

The search for the original

"Stop laughing" was published on July 29 1933 in Smith's Weekly, known for its anti-authoritarian and nationalist stance.

Smith's was a key part of a raucous Australian cartooning culture, then dominated by weekly publications whose cartoons provided both social commentary and political satire.

The production process started with a reader suggestion given to a young artist, and Smith's lead cartoonist, Stan Cross, setting out to mentor him.

Cross became engrossed and finished the artwork and reworked the accompanying joke himself. Smith's advertised and sold copies of the cartoon to meet huge public demand – inadvertently creating many false leads in the eventual search for the artwork.

Despite its instant popularity, the original artwork soon disappeared. Foyle's many attempts to track it down, alongside ex-Smith's staff and other cartooning historians were unsuccessful until 2014.

That year, at a community market on the central coast of New South Wales, a man approached cartoonist Rob Feldman to ask if he had heard of Cross' cartoon.

It emerged Cross had given the original to Smith's company secretary Arthur Ayers soon after publication. It had remained with the family for nearly 80 years.

Foyle and leading amateur comics scholar Nat Karmichael went on an expedition, and immediately recognised this as the original. They put the owner in contact with the National Library of Australia, where the restored artwork is now housed.

"For gorsake, stop laughing: this is serious!"

© Cross family trust

And the search for the digital

While tracking down the original is vital in art-historical terms, the most significant state of an editorial cartoon is really how it was first published in print.

From this perspective it is the second, digital disappearance of "Stop laughing" that raises the biggest concerns about Australia's cartoon archive.

Original copies of historical newspapers are challenging to access, but in 2022 we expected it would be easy to find a digital copy of the cartoon through Trove, which digitises Australian newspapers and magazines.

But we found no sign of the cartoon at all in the July 29 1933 copy of Smith's, or on any nearby date.

The first appearance of Cross' famous cartoon is not until August 12, labelled "reprinted by request" and advertising copies for sale.

How had "Stop laughing" gone missing again? Was it all a marketing hoax from the 1930s – was it really only published for the first time in August, the requests for reprints being fake?

The real answer is almost as interesting. It was due to a minor but consequential theft from the newspaper collection of the State Library of New South Wales.

When transferring their print copy of the July 29 1933 Sydney edition to microfilm later in the 20th century, it had been noted by a careful archivist that pages three and four were missing, and so they were substituted with pages from the Queensland edition.

This new, hybrid edition then made its way onto Trove.

It was then "Stop laughing" disappeared from Trove's digital archive. In fact, it had never been there.

The interstate editions – printed earlier to allow for transportation time – had published the cartoon on page 16. This might not have been an issue had the cartoon been published on the same page as in the Sydney version. However, it seems in the hours between editions, the editor decided to move this "instant classic" forward, and to size it up for greater effect. The substitution of pages three and four from Queensland created a hybrid with no trace of the cartoon.

A search of what is possibly the last surviving intact copy of the original NSW edition – held at the State Library of South Australia – allowed us to rediscover "Stop laughing" as it was originally published, and as seen by no one for decades.

It sits proudly on page three, larger than any other single-frame cartoon we've seen printed in Smith's.

Preserving the archive

Australians pride themselves on their history of editorial cartooning.

We take the anti-authoritarian, larrikin nature of the humour, the relative freedom with which cartoons are published, and the good humour of those lampooned as signs of the health of our democracy.

And yet, we are surprisingly careless with our cartoons. There is no real rhyme or reason to what we keep, where we keep them, or how easy they are to find.

The dual disappearances of "Stop laughing", decades apart, expose the patchiness and inaccessibility of Australia's cartooning archive. There is an urgent need for a solution that develops and sustains the national collection, to preserve and make accessible our rich national cartoon heritage.

- **Which made us wonder – what might be the most memorable South Coast-related cartoon?** R

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