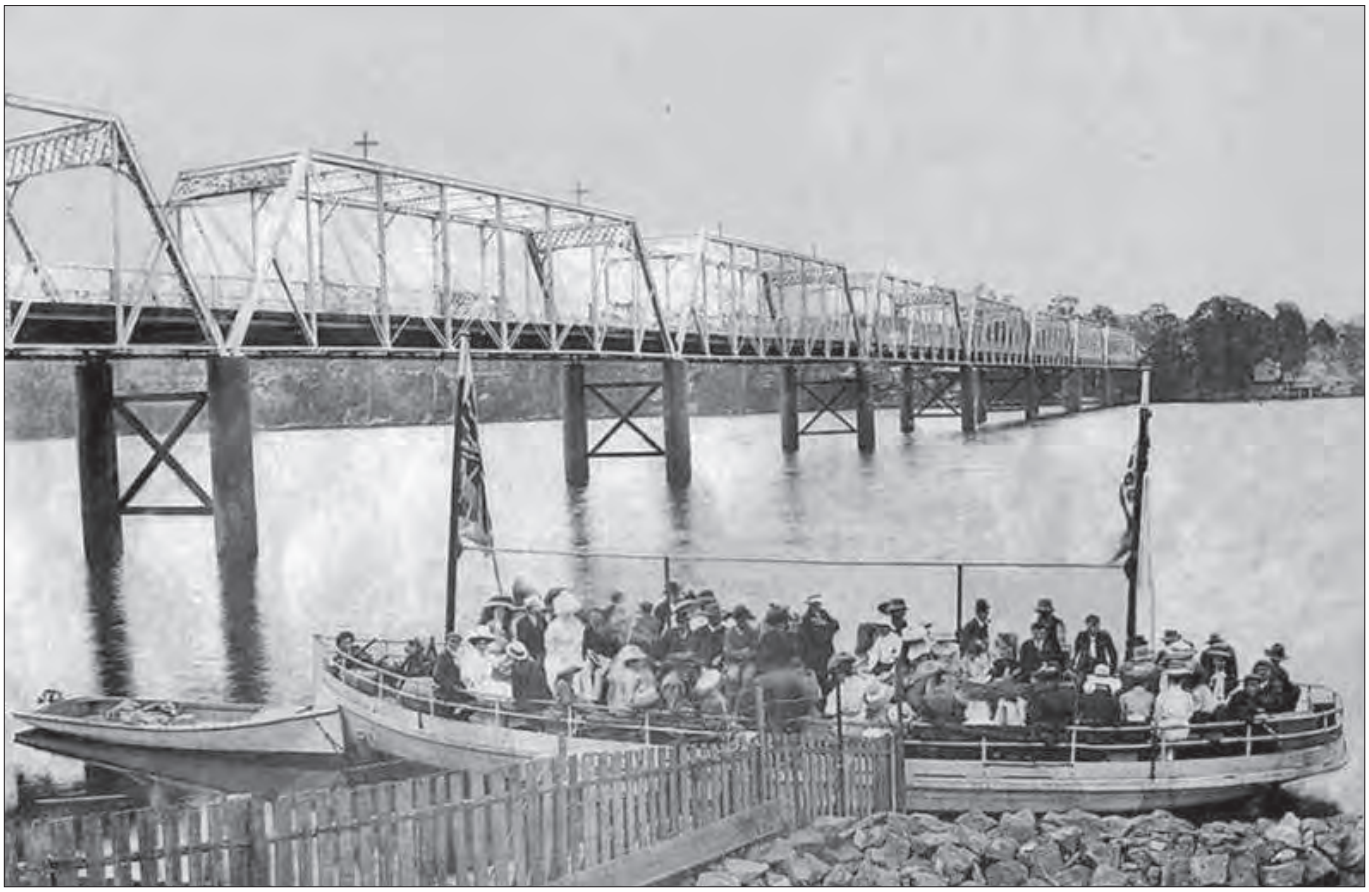
South Coast History Society Inc.
RecollectionS
Issue 43 — December 2023



The Shoalhaven River Bridge at Nowra – see 'Unreliable History' story page 10

The South Coast's
Magical History Tours

Summer is when Australians go travelling. And there's no more interesting area to explore than the NSW South Coast!

So, join us now on a couple of 'magical history tours' and enjoy the experience of visiting many fascinating areas where history actually happened.

Tour 1: The South Coast's Maritime History

For at least a century and a half (from 1770 to the mid-20th century) the history of the NSW South Coast was inextricably linked to the sea. The earliest European 'discovery' of the area was from the sea. The earliest settlers arrived by sea. Shipping then provided the essential links between the South Coast and the 'outside world', enabling the South Coast to be developed and, ultimately, to prosper. The South Coast's maritime heritage is colourful. It's **extremely** interesting. Some still-accessible highlights include:

The South Coast's Original (European-named) Landmarks

As Captain Cook sailed up the NSW South Coast in 1770 the first place he named was **Cape Howe** – now the easterly

This issue of Recollections is dedicated to the memory of Lei Parker who was the Editor of The Beagle, the Eurobodalla's on-line newspaper. Lei was an extraordinarily community-minded man and an enthusiastic supporter of the South Coast History Society.

Fantastic Reads

end of the NSW-Victoria border. To reach it requires an overnight walk.

Much more accessible are **Mt Dromedary** (now Gulaga) near Tilba Tilba that he named two days later, **Bateman Bay** (now Batemans Bay), **Point Upright** (just south of Depot Beach), '**The Pigeon house**' (Pigeon House Mountain or Didthul) west of Ulladulla, **Cape St George** (the southern headland to Jervis Bay) and **Long Nose** (the northern headland to Jervis Bay). Walking tracks lead to the top of Gulaga and Didthal.

In 1797 and 1798 George Bass explored the South Coast in more detail. Places he visited and named include **Shoals Haven** (the entrance to the Crookhaven River that joins with the Shoalhaven River), **Barmouth River** (now Pambula River) and **Twofold Bay**.

Our 'Highway of Light'

A string of lighthouses was built along the South Coast in the second half of the 19th century to (hopefully) provide assistance and protection to the ever-increasing amount of shipping, much of it serving emerging local communities.

Details about all these lighthouses were included in the last issue of 'Recollections' and all of them are worth visiting – each of them being a tangible reminder of the importance of local shipping to the South Coast.

The three lighthouses with the most interesting histories are probably the Cape St George Lighthouse, the Green Cape Lighthouse and the Warden Head Lighthouse.

The **Cape St George Lighthouse** (now in ruins on the southern headland of Jervis Bay) is particularly interesting because the builder who constructed it did so four kilometres from where it was intended to be built – simply so it would be closer to the quarry from which he was sourcing his stone. The result was that the light was of no assistance to ships approaching Jervis Bay from the north and was of little assistance to ships approaching the Bay from the south. It's probably appropriate that the Australian navy later used the tower for target practice!

The **Green Cape Lighthouse**, south of Eden, is the tallest lighthouse in NSW and architecturally is the most interesting lighthouse on the South Coast. Its builder faced enormous challenges building the tower and, as a result, eventually went broke.

The **Warden Point Lighthouse**, on Ulladulla's southern headland, has had two lives. It was originally sited on a pier in Ulladulla Harbour but was moved, 24 years later, to a higher and more prominent position on Warden Head. It's also interesting because it is built from curved wrought-iron plates that have been riveted together using ship building techniques, rather than being constructed of (the more usual) masonry or stone.

Boyd's Tower, Twofold Bay

Also worth a mention in the context of South Coast lighthouses is **Boyd's Tower** which is not too far from Green Cape Lighthouse. It was intended to be a lighthouse but was never used as a lighthouse because the government considered it to be unsuitable for that purpose. So, it became a whale-spotting tower.

Wrecks…Wrecks…and even more Wrecks!

Wrecks of ships litter the NSW South Coast. And many demonstrate that lighthouses built along the NSW South Coast did not always provide the protection to shipping that they were intended to provide!

Some of the shipwreck sites are accessible, if you want to go diving. But, for the strictly land-based traveller and for the historian, the intriguing stories of these shipwrecks are just as worthwhile exploring.

Many of these stories of shipwrecks are well-told in displays in local museums. Some of these museums have very strong maritime focuses – the **Tathra Wharf Museum**, the **Bermagui Museum**, the **Eden Killer Whale Museum**, the **Batemans Bay Heritage Museum** and the **Jervis Bay Maritime Museum** being among them. But even those museums that are located a little further from the sea usually also include some sort of maritime display because shipping to the South Coast was once absolutely vital to their existence.

[One of the most popular of the displays in the Tathra Wharf Museum is a map that pinpoints where the South Coast's shipping wrecks are located.]

The story of the Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Company (ISCN) is a common feature in virtually every one of these museum displays. This company had vessels that provided cargo, livestock and (up until 1928) passenger services to Wollongong, Port Kembla, Shellharbour, Kiama, Gerringong, Berry, Nowra, Jerara, Huskisson, Ulladulla, Bawley Point, Pebbly Beach, Batemans Bay, Nelligen, Broulee, Moruya, Tuross Head, Potato Point, Narooma, Bermagui, Tathra, Merimbula and Eden.

However, in just under a century, the ISCN Co was to lose 15 of its vessels:

- the *Mimosa* was wrecked on 19th September, 1863 on a rock north of Tathra (with 2 fatalities);
- the *Mynora* struck a reef off George's Head, south of Jervis Bay in foggy weather on 6th April 1864. She managed to free herself, but was so severely holed she was deliberately run ashore three miles north of George's Head;
- the *Monaro* was wrecked on Binge Binge Point (south of Moruya) on 10th May 1879;
- the *John Penn* was wrecked after hitting Burrowarra Head in heavy fog on or about 8th November 1879 and sank at Broulee Bay while under tow;
- the *Coolangatta* was wrecked after a flood swept it from the Shoalhaven River on 27th February 1873;

- the *Blackwall* was wrecked after her anchor dragged on Shellharbour Reef on 20th July 1876 (she was eventually refloated);
- the *Kameruka* sank on 16th October 1897, after striking Pedro's reef near Moruya (when the ship struck the rocks, a rope was tied around a pig. It swam to shore and the 48 passengers and crew followed along the line);
- the *Alexander Berry* foundered off Bass Point, south of Shellharbour, on 1st July 1901 (with 4 fatalities);
- the *Bega* capsized and sank off Tanja Beach on 5th April 1908, with the death of one passenger;
- The *Vision* was wrecked in a storm off Montreal Goldfield, just north of Bermagui, on 13th January 1911;
- the *Tilba* was wrecked after running into rocks off Summercloud Bay (near Wreck Bay, Jervis Bay) on 18th November 1912;
- the *Duroby* caught fire while at anchor in Sydney on 14th March 1923;
- the *Bodalla* was wrecked on 19th January 1924 at Narooma, when she ran aground at the entrance to Wagonga Inlet;
- the *Benandra* was lost off the Moruya River at Moruya Heads after hitting a sandspit on 25th March 1924, resulting in one death;
- and the *Merimbula* ran aground on Whale Point at Currarong, just north of Jervis Bay, while heading south on 27th March 1928.

Many other ships that were not ISCN Co vessels have also been lost on the NSW South Coast:

In World War I the ss *Cumberland* hit a mine between Merimbula and Eden that had been laid by a German raider. Its story is interesting, not just because it was the only ship lost to enemy action in Australian waters in World War I but because of the way the Australian government then tried to cover up the real cause of the ship's loss. We've told this story before – a long time ago! – but it is certainly worth repeating, so have included it below.

In World War II, seven vessels were sunk by Japanese submarines in the area between Jervis Bay and the Victorian border – the *George S Livanos* and the *Coast Farmer* off Jervis Bay, the *Dureenbee* off Moruya, the *Iron Knight* off Bermagui, the *William Dawes* off Tathra Head, and the *Iron Crown* off Gabo Island. Three of these ships were sunk on successive days by just one Japanese submarine, the *I-11*: the *George S Livanos* on 20th July 1942, the *Coast Farmer* on 21st July 1942 and the *William Dawes* on 22nd July 1942. The bodies of the three seamen who lost their lives when the *Durenbee* was sunk are buried together in the Moruya Cemetery.

And more recently, in 1964, ***HMAS Voyager*** was sunk north-east of Ulladulla in a collision with ***HMAS Melbourne***. 82 sailors lost their lives.

Simply pick any area up or down the NSW South Coast and a heap of interesting, enthralling stories about shipwrecks await!

The *Dureenbee,* after having been attacked by Japanese submarine *I-175*

South Coast Ports

The ports (where you can call them that!) that were regularly visited by shipping on the NSW South Coast are just as important historically and are just as interesting to visit.

The South Coast's 'jewel in the crown' is, undoubtedly, the **Tathra Wharf**.

This started life as a modest wharf, constructed by local farmers around 1860 so they could send their produce to Sydney and other markets. A more substantial jetty was erected on the same site in 1862 and this was gradually extended and improved well into the 20th century.

The wharf enabled shipping to access the area and, because of the presence of the wharf, the township of Tathra was established and grew.

The Tathra Wharf is an open sea wharf so, when heavy seas were being experienced, shipping had to by-pass Tathra (usually then calling to Merimbula which had a south-facing wharf, in contrast to the north-facing wharf at Tathra). At one time there were 15 open sea wharves along the NSW coast. The Tathra Wharf is now the only surviving one of them.

A good little maritime-focused museum, appropriately, now has pride of place on the wharf - in an original cargo shed (one of two that used to be on the wharf).

Twofold Bay provides reasonably safe protection to shipping, so a harbour with port facilities developed there. The **port of Eden** now has three main wharves: a privately owned woodchip terminal, a multi-user Royal Australian Navy wharf, and the Eden Cruise Wharf that is used by an increasing number of cruise ships. The port is also home to one of NSW's largest fishing fleets.

The Clyde River has been and is accessible to shipping. **Nelligen**, about 9 km upstream of Batemans Bay, developed as the first port on the river and became the terminus for the road (now the Kings Highway) up Clyde Mountain to Braidwood and beyond. Nelligen is historically interesting and is well-worth the visit. Later, shipping facilities were established in **Batemans Bay**.

Ulladulla port has been developed in a natural bay (but one with numerous, quite dangerous reefs near its entrance). A wooden jetty was built in 1859, after the ISCN Co informed local farmers that would not continue to call at Ulladulla unless better mooring facilities were provided. Seven years later, the jetty was replaced by a stone pier built by the government over one of the natural reefs. Then Ulladulla enjoyed a weekly cargo service

to Sydney until the mid-1950s. In 1873, a lighthouse was constructed on the harbour breakwater. This was relocated in 1889 to Warden Head. Today, Ulladulla's commercial fishing fleet is the largest on the NSW South Coast.

In contrast, **Kiama's Harbour** is man-made. Again, it was constructed to encourage the ISCN Co's vessels to visit the port. It took 17 years to build.

The Port of Eden

South Coast Fishing and Seafood Industries

Whaling was Australia's first major primary industry and was undertaken in the late 18th and the 19th centuries up and down the South Coast. It was particularly successful in Twofold Bay, just south of Eden.

Davidson Whaling Station was the longest-operating shore-based whaling station in Australia and the last of its type to close down. The Davidson's house and artefacts associated with their whaling enterprises can be found at this historic site at Edrom, 35km south of Eden. The **Killer Whale Museum** in Eden displays the skeleton of Old Tom, the most famous of the killer whales (orcas) that once worked with whalers in Twofold Bay, and other whaling-related memorabilia.

Commercial fishermen supplied local markets on the South Coast from the early days of settlement but began supplying the more important Sydney market in the 1860s when regular steamship services were introduced to the area, ice became available, and the waters around Sydney showed signs of being overfished. Whilst their numbers are now much smaller than they once were, significant numbers of commercial fishermen still operate out of **Eden**, **Bermagui** and **Ulladulla**.

Four fish canneries once operated on the South Coast. The first, which operated from 1938 to 1960, was in Fosters Bay, Narooma and mostly processed salmon. Its products were mainly marketed under the Greenseas and Nar-Roo-Ma brands. At peak times, fish were kept in holding pens at the entrance to Wagonga Inlet before being towed in nets to the cannery.

Two fish canneries operated in Eden between 1940 and 1999. The first of these was on the northern side of Lake Curalo but was replaced in 1948 by a larger cannery at Cattle Bay. At peak production this cannery had an output of almost 15,000 cans per day.

And from the mid-1950s to 1960 a small tuna cannery operated on the Bermagui Steamer Wharf that marketed its product under the Cee-Dee brand. At one time 50 tuna pole boats were operating out of Bermagui and light aircraft were being used to spot shoals of fish.

All these South Coast fish canneries have long since disappeared.

Tuna pole fishing near Eden, 1960. Image National Library of Australia, nla.obj-137011608

Tour 2: Travelling by Land to the South Coast

Just getting to the South Coast by land has always been a challenge.

The escarpments from the Southern Highlands and the Monaro to the South Coast are very steep and there are no natural routes down them to the coast. Coming from the north (once the challenges of descending the escarpment have been overcome) is no better – there are numerous, formidable rivers to cross.

It's easy, therefore, to see why early settlers to the area looked upon sea transport as the logical way to link the area with Sydney and beyond.

There was also no logical reason for the government to spend resources to link the area with Sydney, which was then the major area of population. What did the South Coast really have to offer? And why devote limited resources to an area with a limited population that would require significant expenditure to properly service?

It's unsurprising, therefore, that the earliest roads to the area simply followed Aboriginal walking tracks, avoiding the major obstacles – the old road from Milton to south of Batemans Bay, for example, crossing the Clyde River well upstream and then basically following the course of the river along its western bank down to near Mogo…and a road that wound around Wagonga Inlet to avoid a major water crossing at what is now Narooma.

Gradually things did improve. Bridges were built (often to be washed away or severely damaged by flooding; for example, the current Moruya Bridge is the fourth bridge spanning the Moruya River since the first was opened to great fanfare in 1876) and punts provided crossings of major waterways.

But the road south from Sydney was not sealed to Kiama until 1932, to Milton until 1937…to Moruya until 1950… and ultimately all the way to the Victorian border until as late as 1965. And it was another year after that before the Brown Mountain Road from Bega to Cooma was sealed.

Building a railway to the South Coast was similarly slow. The railway from Sydney only reached North Kiama (Bombo) in 1888 and Bomaderry, on the northern side of the Shoalhaven River in 1893. And then it stopped…and has never been extended any further south. (In contrast, the main north railway extending from Sydney up to the Queensland border at Wallangarra was opened in 1888 and the Great Western Line connecting Sydney to Bathurst was

The geologically unstable Brown Mountain Road.

opened in 1876, even though construction of that line required overcoming considerable engineering challenges in crossing the Blue Mountains.)

The major roads to the South Coast can still probably best be described as 'interesting'. They all reflect the problems of ascending/descending the steep escarpment from the coastal plains.

The main Mount Ousley road down to Wollongong was only constructed in 1942, following Japan's entry into World War II, as a contingency defence route to and from Sydney.

The Kings Highway linking Queanbeyan and Batemans Bay (still for most of its length just a single lane road in each direction) was surveyed as early as 1855, but a punt service across the Clyde River at Nelligen was not provided until 1895, and this was then not replaced by a bridge until 1964.

The old timber truss bridge over the Bega River. It was replaced by the current concrete bridge in 1975.

The Snowy Mountains Highway, connecting Cooma and Bega, really only became a road around 1907 when Bega to Cooma motor passenger services were introduced. Prior to that, from around 1867, it had been little more than a 'Postman's Track' linking Cooma to the coast. When the Snowy Mountains Scheme commenced in 1949, the road became a more important thoroughfare (enormous quantities of bricks, for example, were transported from Kalaru near Bega to the Snowy Mountains for the construction of hydro power stations, tunnels and buildings) so roadworks were undertaken to upgrade the standard of the road, and these were often paid for by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority.

Both the Snowy Mountains Highway and the Kings Highway are geologically unstable so even now have serious ongoing maintenance challenges.

Perhaps the most interesting features of the roads to the South Coast have been the bridges crossing the major waterways. Regrettably, some of the more picturesque ones have been replaced over time – but that's called progress!

The old **Nowra Bridge** was opened in August 1881. Technically, it is an extremely interesting bridge and this was recognized even before the bridge was built because one complete span from it was erected at the northern end of the Garden Palace on Macquarie Street in Sydney, as part of the 1879 International Exhibition, to provide an example of advanced technology.

The bridge is an example of an early form of truss – the Whipple truss – and the Nowra Bridge is the only complete Whipple truss bridge surviving in NSW. It is pin-jointed, something that is very much identified with American engineering (the bridge was cast of wrought iron in Delaware, USA). The advantage of pin jointing is that assembly can be undertaken very rapidly (and it was on the Nowra bridge); the disadvantage of pin jointing is that pins cannot be removed to insert a replacement without the bridge collapsing!

The bridge was built with no separate footway. This was particularly alarming to pedestrians because often herds of livestock were driven across the bridge. Soon after construction, gated refuges were added, providing pedestrians with some shelter from stock. A cantilevered footway was added to the downstream side of the bridge in 1937.

The bridge over Dry River at Quaama, c 1912.

The **Narooma Bridge** is similarly interesting. It is now the only remaining operating bascule span bridge in NSW (bascule span bridges operate like a drawbridge in a castle; more commonly, vertical lift bridges [like the recently-removed Batemans Bay Bridge] or swing-span bridges [like the old Glebe Island Bridge in Sydney] were constructed where an opening bridge was required). It was also the first bridge in Australia with a cantilever bascule-lifting span that could be worked by a single operator.

It was built between 1929 and 1931 and was the first major bridge built on the Princes Highway as part of a program by the Mains Road Board to develop and upgrade the highway. The lifting part of

The old Clyde River Bridge at Batemans Bay. This opened to traffic in November 1956 and was replaced by the current bridge in February 2023.

the bridge was included to allow coastal steamers to sail into Wagonga Inlet.

BHP in Newcastle provided the steel for the bridge, which was then fabricated and also assembled in Newcastle. The bridge was then taken apart and transported to Narooma in three shipments on the steamer *Kianga*.

The *Kianga* was intended to play a major role in the opening ceremony for the bridge. The bridge was to be opened and the *Kianga* was to steam through. However, the night before the opening ceremony the *Kianga* ran aground at Bingie Point north of Tuross Head!

The bridge cost over £42,000 which, at the time, some people considered an excessive expenditure. The local member for Tilba Tilba, H J Bate, when opening the bridge thought it necessary to point out that this cost was no more than would be spent on one mile of railway construction.

The ironies in all this are that this bridge, and others that were subsequently built along the Princes Highway, were largely responsible for the ultimate demise of coastal shipping on the South Coast and for the government changing its transport priorities from the construction of railways to the construction of roads.

The more modest **New Buildings Bridge**, spanning the Towamba River west of Pambula, is representative of around 4,000 timber road bridges that were once built throughout NSW, giving the state a stature of being 'the timber bridge state'. Many of these timber bridges have, of course, now long-gone.

This bridge was built in 1921 and replaced an earlier bridge that was built in 1911 but was swept several kilometers downstream in a massive flood in 1919. It is a Dare truss bridge and is being conserved because it is the only remaining 3-span Dare truss bridge in the state.

The network of roads on the South Coast is also historically significant because their construction opened up the area to tourism and, in many respects, radically changed the nature of tourism to the region. This topic is, perhaps, one we could examine in some detail in a future edition of *Recollections*.

Construction of the old Shoalhaven Bridge at Nowra

For now, from a historical point of view, it's worth noting that early 'tourists' to the area would have arrived by 'service car' or by bus, perhaps having first travelled by train to Bombaderry, Cooma, Nimmitabel or Bombala, and most likely would have then stayed in a hotel or guest house.

The Sydney *Sunday Times* in April 1925 described (with some enthusiasm!) one such service that was available to tourists:

The Far Southern districts of New South Wales owe much to the mail and passenger services of Balmain Bros. They are truly a modern and improved edition of Cobb and Co. Isolated towns such as Bega, and even more remote districts fifty miles from railhead, receive before lunch each day, Sydney mails posted the night before, and which had first to be carried 290 miles by rail to Nimmitabel. Balmain Brothers' cars, running in first-class order after

The Narooma bascule span bridge

having done 130,000 miles with as many as 60 bags of mail and passengers aboard, still climb daily the eleven miles of road up the famous Brown Mountain. From Bega at sea level they climb daily to an altitude of 3,400 feet.

As privately-owned motor vehicles became more common, Balmain Bros. expanded to provide a full range of services to the motorist – including operating a local touring information centre for visitors to the area and running the local NRMA roadside service. And, around the same time, regular promotion of the South Coast's attractions was being aimed at motorists (this example from the *Goulburn Evening Penny Post* in February 1937):

Narooma's great popularity with the tourist is that it has numerous walks within easy distance of the town, each possessing a distinctive and unusual beauty. The many vistas of delightful scenery, of mountainous country, wooded slopes, coastal and river views, never fall to thrill even the most hardened traveller. With river and deep-sea fishing, a golf course described by Jim Ferrier as one of the prettiest in the world, tennis courts, one of the largest and safest swimming pools in Australia, and long beaches, Narooma has everything to offer that should make for a delightful holiday…(and) Narooma is served by roads that make motoring a pleasure.

No longer used tourist attractions and tourist facilities from 'back then' – places like the Big Cheese tourist complex in Bodalla, the Brogo Valley Rotolactor tourist complex, the motel with its tiny rooms on the entrance road to the Bega Cheese Heritage Centre, and the Central Hotel in Bega that once provided overnight accommodation to Pioneer Motor Service passengers – still dot the main roads along the South Coast. It would be interesting to now identify all of them.

A further couple of South Coast 'tours' will be included in a future issue of *Recollections*.

New Buildings Bridge

Unreliable History

If you read almost any history of Nowra, you'll discover that the original bridge spanning the Shoalhaven River was (to use *Wikipedia* as an example) '*originally intended to carry a double railway track, as part of the proposed extension of the Illawarra railway line to Jervis Bay and possibly Eden*.'

Really???

- ✔ That bridge was built in 1881 (there seems to be general agreement about this);
- ✔ It was a wrought iron bridge that was fabricated in America (again, there is general agreement about this);
- ✔ It was the longest bridge in New South Wales prior to the Iron Cove Bridge in Sydney being opened the following year (again, this seems to be generally accepted).

But, was this Nowra Bridge originally intended to be a railway bridge? The evidence seems to suggest otherwise:

- ✖ In 1881 there was no railway south from Sydney. The railway from Sydney to Hurstville was not even opened until 1884. The concept of building a railway line many miles away from Sydney across the Shoalhaven River at Nowra – let alone actually constructing a railway bridge across the Shoalhaven River in 1881 when there was no railway anywhere near the area – is, therefore, somewhat far-fetched;
- ✖ In 1881, building any railway would have required an Act of Parliament. No Act had then been passed for the construction of a South Coast railway;
- ✖ Only in 1888 did the South Coast railway reach North Kiama (now Bombo). And it was not then extended to Kiama and to Bomaderry until 1893 – 12 years after the 'railway bridge' at Nowra had been built;
- ✖ The construction of new railways was the responsibility of the Engineer-in-Chief for the NSW Government Railways, John Whitton, yet he played no role in the planning or erection of the Nowra bridge;
- ✖ The construction of double-track railway bridges at the time was rare, and they were then only being built close to Sydney. Even the Como bridge across the Georges River on the outskirts of Sydney on the Illawarra railway line, which was built in the 1890s (many years after the Nowra Bridge had been opened), was single-track, and the many tunnels that were ultimately built for the railway to reach Bomaderry were all single-track. There would, therefore, have been no justification for or need to build a double track bridge across the Shoalhaven River;
- ✖ An 1889 Parliamentary Public Works Committee enquiry into the extension of the railway from North Kiama to Nowra recommended the line only be built to Bomaderry *to save the great cost of a railway bridge across the Shoalhaven*. So, clearly, the 1881 Nowra Bridge was never intended to be a railway bridge;
- ✖ And the bridge was not engineered to be able to carry a railway. In particular, its piers were insufficient to carry the weight of a train and could not have been modified to do so;

So why have so many histories today got the facts about the Nowra Bridge so wrong? The answer is simple – some author, at some time, has fancifully suggested something along the lines that the Nowra Bridge was '*originally intended to carry a double railway track, as part of the proposed extension of the Illawarra railway line to Jervis Bay and possibly Eden*', and his or her 'facts' have been picked up later by other authors who have then, without questioning the 'facts', simply duplicated (and, unwittingly, reinforced as 'fact') these erroneous 'facts'. (And yes, I plead 'guilty', having done precisely this in recently writing about the Nowra Bridge!)

Here is another example. Recently I was researching the history of South Coast lighthouses for the article that appeared in the last issue of 'Recollections' and read on the Kiama Library's website that the Kiama Lighthouse '*is the only lighthouse attributed to (Edward) Moriarty*'. But elsewhere (for example, on the Powerhouse Museum's website) Moriarty is credited with also having been the architect of the Ulladulla and Wollongong Breakwater lighthouses.

For the story I was compiling, this inconsistency probably wasn't an important consideration. I could have easily left out any reference to other lighthouses that Moriarty may or may not have designed. That would not have detracted in any way from the basic story I was telling because the story was a general story about South Coast lighthouses, not one about lighthouse architects, or a biography of Mr Moriarty where such a level of detail would have become important.

And, after all, the majority of people who read general (i.e. non-academic) histories are primarily interested in the general narrative, rather than the minutiae.

My computer has a spell-check. What I (and other historians) now need is a facts-check – because it is important that, wherever possible, we historians should strive to ensure the basic facts are correct and not be promoting 'fake history'.

I guess with the development of computer technology and A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) a facts-check will be available one day. It may not be a definitive tool, but at least it might present a list of the possible 'facts' that previous histories and historians have recorded about any particular subject (e.g. the various dates that have been assigned by previous historians to a specific event). An author at any time would then be able to go back to original sources to identify what are, in fact, the correct 'facts'.

The problem with histories these days is that once a single author includes a single error in something that is being published, that error can easily and rapidly remain unchallenged – essentially ultimately becoming accepted, not an erroneous information, but as 'fact'. And with advances in publishing (in all its forms, including things

like internet chat rooms) this problem of differentiating historical fact from historical fiction is only going to get much, much worse.

In computer science there is a saying 'garbage in, garbage out'. In history the adage is 'a historian is only as good as his sources'.

So, for those who enjoy reading histories – and without wishing to temper that enjoyment in any way – perhaps every history today should routinely carry the old caveat: 'E & O E'.

Peter Lacey

Sources: 'Railway History in Illawarra' by C C Singleton (Australian Railway Historical Society); 'Nowra Bridge' by Bill Phippin (Engineering Heritage Australia, Vol 3. No 4).

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The First Casualty of War is the Truth!

The only enemy action that occurred in Australia and against Australia in World War I occurred on the South Coast of New South Wales. On the morning of 6th July 1917 the SS *Cumberland*, a cargo ship bound for England and laden with war materials, struck a mine off the coast between Merimbula and Eden. This mine had been laid by a German Raider, the *Wolf**

The crew of the *Cumberland* abandoned ship, expecting her to sink. But ten of the men later reboarded the ship and nursed it on to a beach on Gabo Island.

Temporary repairs were made to the hull of the vessel and an attempt (seemingly successful at first) was made to tow it into Twofold Bay. However, the 30-foot long patch along the side of the vessel (consisting of four layers of canvas with wool packed between them) shifted and the *Cumberland* sank 15 miles off Eden on 11th August 1917.

It was a thrilling sight, the sinking of the Cumberland. She went down bow first, just like the Lusitania…as the vessel rose again slowly the propellers were seen. Again she sank, but on the next lift the watchers saw right under her. Finally, higher and higher rose the stern, and with a hissing, rushing sound, the Cumberland, almost vertical, rushed headlong to the bottom, disappearing amidst a rush of boiling, bubbling waters, rising 50 feet above the sea. (*Southern Star*, 18.8.1917)

(1,852 tons of copper, zinc and brass ingots were recovered from the wreck in 1952.)

The story of the sinking of the *Cumberland* is itself an interesting part of our history – but the most interesting aspect of the incident is how it was subsequently reported.

Prime Minister Billy Hughes was, at the time, attempting to introduce conscription in Australia to supply sufficient troops to replace the enormous losses that the Australian army had suffered in the Gallipoli campaign and on the Western Front. He was, in particular, waging a campaign against left-wing (and anti-conscriptionist) organisations such as the Australian branch of the International Workers of the World. So, when news was received that the *Cumberland* had hit a sea mine, an immediate ban was imposed on the press reporting the incident while the government examined the 'facts' before announcing, three days later, that the *Cumberland* had been damaged by an explosion that had occurred in the ship's cargo holds.

This was in spite of it being rapidly determined that the *Cumberland* had been holed as a result of an explosion outside of the vessel.

The explosion 'on board' the *Cumberland* was attributed to 'traitors' who had loaded the ship's cargo in Townsville, Bowen and Sydney.

The Sydney *Sun* offered a reward of £1,000 for the "conviction and punishment of the chief criminals." This was followed by offers of rewards of £1,000 from the NSW Government, £2,000 by the Australian Government, £1,000 by the British Board of Trade and £1,000 by the Queensland Government – each of these rewards reinforcing the Australian Government's assertion that the *Cumberland* had been sunk as the result of the work of 'traitors.'

The Minister for the Navy, Joseph Cook, when questioned in Parliament about the incident, further perpetuated the government's deliberate mistruths: *the investigating officer had specially requested that no information should be published until he had completed his investigation. Everything pointed to foul play. He hoped that they would catch the fiends and punish them*.

The story of sabotage by 'traitors' was then to assume a life of its own.

Even those who conducted a maritime enquiry and Australian navy officials – despite compelling evidence to the contrary – had great difficulty accepting any explanation other than the *Cumberland* had been damaged by traitors working on the Australian wharves.

(However, the inquiry ultimately reported *the results of the investigations show conclusively that a mine was responsible for the damage*.

But this finding, in turn, led to calls for the internment of Germans and those with German heritage, who were living in Australia – the suggestion being that the mine had been laid by German sympathisers living in Australia!

The Melbourne *Argus* suggested *it was apparent that mingling with local citizens are men either in the pay of Germany or associated with an unlawful organisation* [the International Workers of the World had by then been declared an unlawful organisation] *doing all they can to injure the industrial and commercial interests of the Empire.*

The Sydney *Mirror* went further, observing *the loss of the Cumberland behoves the authorities to be suspiciously on the alert. Nothing short of wholesale internment will allay public anxiety.*)

The ss Cumberland beached on Gabo Island

Information publicised about the *Cumberland*'s cargo was also a somewhat misleading:

WAR CHEST GOODS

The hon. secretary of the Citizens' War Chest Fund stated yesterday that 9,600 pairs of socks and about 108 cases of milk, shirts, etc., from the War Chest Fund, were shipped in the Cumberland. Fortunately these were all insured. In addition, the fund had shipped in the same vessel 62 cases from battalions' comforts funds. The socks were portion of those received in response to the recent appeal.

The local Candelo newspaper, the *Southern Record and Advertiser* (which, incidentally, adopted a more-independent attitude to the War than most other newspapers of the time), presented a more accurate report of the incident:

The S.S. Cumberland's disaster off Gabo Island has a nasty look, like a Hun outrage – a hole 22 x 11 ft. was blown in her side, and a diver who went down to examine it reckons it was blown from the outside.

The authors of *The Wolf* describe this deliberate government misinformation campaign as *a cautionary glimpse of how easily the press and the public can be manipulated towards xenophobic hatred when governments wield enormous powers of censorship and propaganda.*

The *Wolf* actually laid 30 mines off the NSW South Coast. It took some time for the government to admit there were mines in the area and to organise minesweepers to search the area. Several exploded when they drifted on to the coast, causing some concern to locals.

The *Southern Record and Advertiser* described one incident:

Reported that over a dozen mines have been picked up in the vicinity of Gabo. One brought up recently got away and finally drifted ashore near Black Head, where a number of men are camped procuring grass tree gum. When the mine hit the rocks, about midnight, it exploded, throwing pieces over 200 yards inland, many of which fell on the camp, and the men thought the enemy was bombing them. Needless to say there was a general stampede of men and horses.

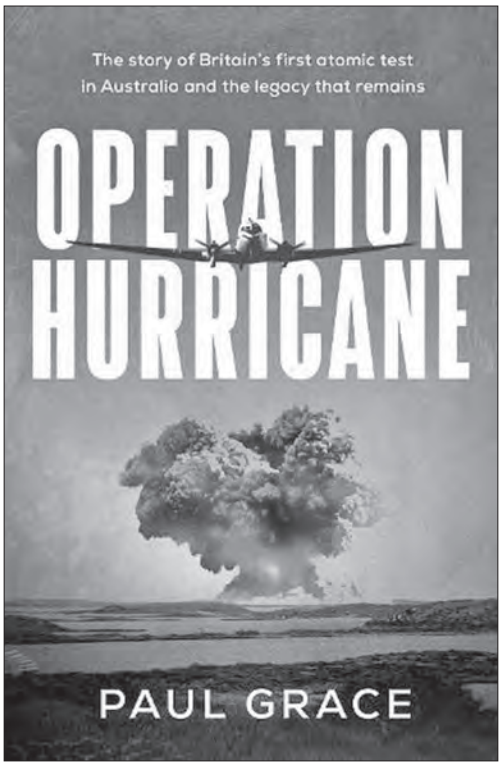
* The story of the *Wolf* is, in itself, a fascinating story and is told in a book '*The Wolf. How one German raider terrorized Australia and the Southern Oceans in the First World War*' by Richard Guilliatt and Peter Hohnen. The *Wolf* was sent on a suicide mission to inflict damage on Allied shipping and, over a 15-month period, it travelled 64,000 miles, sank 16 vessels and captured another 14 ships, before returning to Germany with over 400 prisoners on board. R

OPERATION HURRICANE: The story of Britain's first atomic test in Australia and the legacy that remains

Paul Grace

This is an exceptionally interesting, well-written, very-readable history.

It is a detailed account of the first British atomic test undertaken in Australia – at the Montebello Islands off the north-west coast of Western Australia on Friday 3rd October 1952. The lead up to the detonation of the atomic bomb is described, as is the explosion itself, and the aftermath of the test.



The book took five years to research and write. Paul Grace's interest in the topic was sparked by his grandfather's role in Operation Hurricane, as this test had been codenamed. Grandfather had been a Dakota pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force who had flown security patrols prior to the explosion and 'coastal monitoring sorties' (i.e. flights looking for fallout on the Australian mainland) after the bomb had been detonated.

Much of what Grace reveals can only be described as 'incredulous'… or, perhaps, things were simply done a little differently back then!

When Prime Minister Menzies was asked if Britain could conduct this atomic test in Australia, he immediately agreed and committed Australia to providing whatever support and resources the British might require. The British were astounded that no attempts were ever made by the Australians to place any conditions on their approach.

A RAAF Dakota over Mount Potter 'buzzing by at frighteningly low altitudes'

And it was common knowledge that radiation and fallout from atomic blasts could affect peoples' health. Yet little was done to ensure the safety of those near the blast or in areas that the atomic cloud subsequently travelled over. In fact, people were actively sent into dangerous areas – for example, being directed to fly into the atomic cloud or to travel to the blast site shortly after the blast to obtain radiation samples, without being given any real protective clothing or radiation monitors.

* * *

It's not unusual, in a history such as this, that some of the most interesting aspects are at the periphery of the main story. In this instance, these highlights are the stories about how the *West Australian* newspaper reported on Operation Hurricane.

As (secret) preparations for the test were being made, it seemed to those at Western Australian Newspapers that something might be happening around the Montebello Islands. A decision was made that four staffers should be sent to the area.

All efforts to purchase seats on a commercial flight or charter an aircraft to Onslow failed, so the press men went by road. After a false start in a Holden sedan with dodgy suspension, the small expeditionary force left town in [Managing Editor of Western Australian Newspapers Limited] *Macartney's brand new Ford V8 at 2.30am on Tuesday 22 April. For the next three days, they travelled on dirt roads, ate hard tack out of tins, and slept by the side of the road. River crossings were especially punishing, with all four men wincing as the V8's undercarriage took a pounding on jagged, boulder-sized rocks in the dry riverbeds. They finally made it into Onslow with the gear rods smashed to pieces and the car stuck in top gear.*

The press men were amazed to find that the sleepy town had been transformed into a busy Army base…

The first thing the press men did was head to the post office to report back to Newspaper House. Onslow was not yet equipped with telephones, so all messages to the big smoke were sent by telegram, manually transmitted by a telegraphist trained in Morse code. It was a cumbersome way to get copy back to Perth…

While Jack Nicoll [one of the four] *went off to find his mate with a lugger, the rest of the team took the V8 to the local garage for some much-needed repair work. They learnt, to their surprise, that the people of Onslow had been watching*

RAN and RAAF personnel shuttling backwards and forwards for 18 months. The failure of the usually reliable bush telegraph was the result of…an ASIO man having asked the local press representatives to keep quiet about the unusual service activity, and to a man they had kept their word.

Soon Nicoll returned looking grim. 'It looks as though it is all off', he announced. The lugger was out of commission due to an overdue delivery of essential rigging…later on the press learned that ASIO had got wind of their plans and arranged for the rigging to be 'delayed' until a prohibited area [around the Montebello Islands] *had been gazetted.*

The owner of the garage was Billy Clark, an experienced sailor who had served with the Army's Small Ships Section in the Pacific campaign. It was Clark who saved the day. 'I have a bit of a boat which might get you to the islands', he said. 'I'm happy to give it a go, if you are.'…

The Thelma reached the Montebellos on Sunday afternoon, anchoring in a secluded bay. The press men rowed ashore in the dinghy and climbed a nearby hill, where an incredible sight unfolded to them. Amidst the scattering of barren islands, what looked like a full-scale invasion was under way: the two LSTs (Landing Ships) *were riding at anchor in the channel, troops in jungle fatigues were ferrying stores ashore in landing craft, and shirtless men were hard at work bulldozing roads through the scrub…*

[The next day] *they were soon discovered:* [we were] *met by a landing barge manned by Royal Marines with automatic weapons at the ready, and a couple of terribly serious Australians …they demanded to know our business.*

We asked them to declare theirs and they reluctantly announced themselves as Commonwealth Security officers and ordered us to leave the area. They did not press the point when we told them we were aware that prohibitive legislation has not yet been passed.

The press men than returned to Onslow and filed their stories, which were published two days before the official security ban came into force…

Ever since the voyage of the Thelma, Jim Macartney had been planning his company's coverage of the test. 'It's going to happen in our own paddock and we are going to cover it for the world, without any outside help', he proclaimed… (but) *another layer of secrecy was added when, at the urging of the Brits, the Australian Government introduced an official system of Defence Notices (or D-Notices). Under the D-Notice system, news organisations agreed not to publish or broadcast any information that the government deemed detrimental to national security. D-Notice No 8 covered atomic tests.*

A meeting was held in Melbourne *to establish the exact procedures of the D-Notice system and discuss any concerns about the prohibited topics. No one thought to invite WA Newspapers.*

Macartney wrote to the Prime Minister advising Western Australian Newspapers would be attending, and *the day before the meeting their invitation arrived. The upshot was that The West Australian and the Daily News were allowed to cover the test from the mainland, as long as their reporters and photographers remained outside the prohibited zone.*

An observation post was set up on Mount Potter, about 135 miles north of Onslow and 55 miles from the Montebellos (later a second observation post was set up on the verandah of the Onslow pub!).

Prior to the departure of the observers, *WA Newspapers*

had negotiated for the Postmaster-General's Department to install a temporary post office at Mount Potter. A flatbed truck was parked under the telegraph line, and a PMG linesman from Roebourne installed two morse keys under a tarpaulin on the back of the truck and patched them into the telegraph line. Once the linesman was finished, the truck was designated the Mount Potter Telegraph Station. A darkroom was erected nearby. Cameras were mounted on wooden stands, aimed at the precise point on the horizon beyond which the Montebellos lay.

The long vigil commenced.

One day not long after camp was established, a Dakota swooped down out of the sky, pinpointing the observation post and nearby camp. It was 86 Wing Detachment, keeping a close eye on the press men while they were out on patrol. A Dakota appeared nearly every day after that, often buzzing by at frighteningly low altitudes. To stick it up the nosy airman, the press men arranged painted stones on the hilltop spelling 'TOP SECRET: KEEP OUT'.

… and, thus, the comedy continued. When the atom bomb was – ultimately – detonated, 12,000 words were transmitted from Mount Potter Telegraph Station and 300+ photographs were developed and then delivered to Perth by a specially chartered aircraft that was waiting at nearby Mardie homestead. Within an hour of the blast, a special edition of the *Daily News* was rolling off the presses in Perth. The next morning, the first dramatic pictures of the mushroom cloud appeared on the front page of the *West Australian*. WA Newspapers turned a tidy profit after the rights to the stories and pictures from Mount Potter were sold around the world.

Operation Hurricane is available in paperback from around $22.

Bee Miles: Australia's Famous Bohemian Rebel, and the Untold Story Behind the Legend

Rose Ellis

'Am I mad because I don't want to sleep in a feather bed? Am I a psychopath because I don't drink? Am I wonky in the belfry because I'm not and never have been a prostitute? Am I loony because I refuse charity? Am I off my head because I like riding in taxi-cabs?'

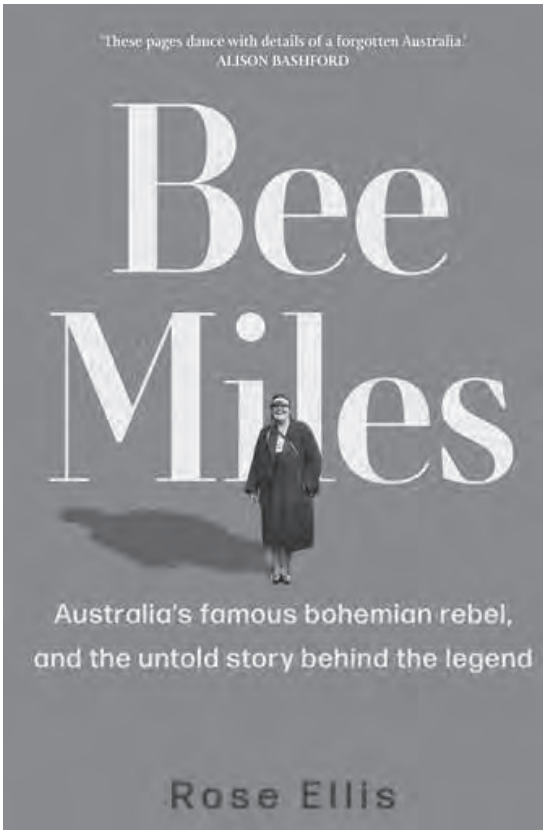
Bee Miles is, undoubtedly, one of Australia's – and certainly Sydney's – most celebrated eccentrics. Those of us who lived in Sydney in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s almost certainly knew of Bee, and possibly even encountered her.

Bee (or Bea; she was Beatrice; Rose Ellis uses Bee because, evidently, this was Bea's preferred spelling) 'did things differently' and her family, the police, the judiciary, the mental asylums and the jails (in which she was frequently incarcerated) simply had no idea how to deal with her.

Every kindergarten tot in Sydney knows that when a copper is getting low on his quota of arrests he goes looking for a drunk, a deadbeat, a street-woman or Bee Miles, who is none of these things...If there's one thing the coppers can't stand, it's a person who doesn't conform to convention and yet stays within the law. That's ME.

And there are SIX reasons why the cops get at me: 1. They cannot make me leave the city. 2. They cannot get me on

a criminal charge. 3. They cannot get me on a vice charge. 4. They cannot get me on a drunk charge. 5. They cannot 'vag' me. I have a small private income so I'm not a vagrant. 6. They cannot get an honest doctor to declare me insane.



The 1950s are often viewed as a period of conformity, where order and respectability were linked as civic virtues. But no society is homogeneous, and in every mainstream there are undercurrents that move against the flow...Bee was the anomaly...

Throughout the 1950s Bee was increasingly viewed by police as a threat to public order, and there were times when this view was justified. Bee's habit of jumping into cars and demanding to be taken to her desired destination would have been disturbing, if not frightening, for some people – though whether it was illegal is debatable. Equally, the way she walked into the middle of traffic to hail cars, forcing drivers to swerve around her, was at times dangerous and reckless, though this had been ruled as legal by an appeals judge.

But in most cases the charges were petty and were to do with her appearance. 'She was without shoes and stockings and her manner was offensive to me' was a familiar statement by arresting officers. 'Her dress was above her knee,' one policeman claimed, as reason for arresting Bee when she was touting for business as a recitalist on a busy corner opposite the Town Hall. In another incident police at Darlinghurst Police Station were in the process of charging Bee for offensive behaviour when one of her admirers put his arm around her and kissed her. The police response was to charge her again, as well as her companion. At different times she was charged with poking out her tongue at a driver, sleeping in a bandstand and calling a taxi driver a mug. One of the most dubious arrests occurred when Bee was asleep in a garden bed in Elizabeth Street. The police removed her blankets and then charged her with offensive behaviour because, they claimed, her 'bloomers' were exposed. She was fined £5.

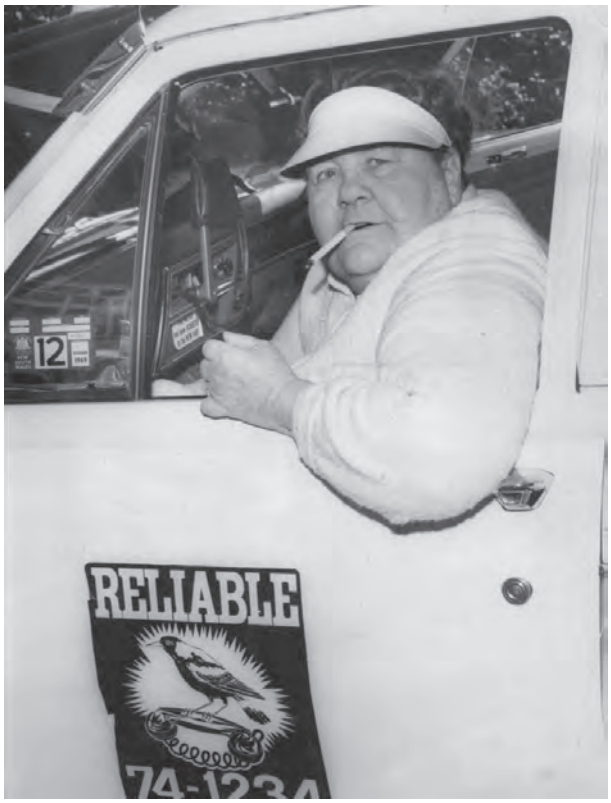
Bee's eccentricities seem to have derived from a combination of an unusual family background in which she was taught to 'reject all forms of arbitrary authority', her schooling at the exclusive Abbotsleigh Girls' School on Sydney's north shore that gave her a love of literature and an ability to then present it as theatre, and having suffered from encephalitis lethargia (a seriously debilitating disease with a high mortality rate that spread to Australia after the First World War and – briefly – became a pandemic). The times she spent in psychiatric hospitals, police cells and jails would not have helped her curb her 'eccentricities'.

Bee's main 'eccentricity' was that she was compelled to forever be on the move...and, more frequently than not, as a non fare-paying passenger. She would ride the running boards of cars (at a time when cars had running boards), sit on the spare wheel at the back of cars (the driver often being unaware he had picked up a passenger – and this, of course, also in the days when cars carried spare tyres on the rear of the vehicle), or simply get into one of the car's passenger seats and instruct the driver to take her to her nominated destination. Or she freely boarded trams or trains, often whilst they were moving. Her favourite means of transport, however, was the taxi with an expectation – naturally! – that her fare would be waived.

Perhaps typically Bee, 'the bumper bar girl', in 1930 she perched in the spare tyre cavity of aviatrix Amy Johnson's car in her welcome parade from Mascot Airport to Darlinghurst; in 1931 her bicycle was pulled by an obliging policeman from Sydney's Railway Square to the Domain during a march commemorating the anniversary of the Russian Revolution; and in 1932 she sat on the bonnet of the first truck to cross Sydney Harbour Bridge after its official opening.

Many of Bee's 'stunts' are recorded in this book, and these sections are probably the most readable of the book. Typical of her 'stunts' are two that relate to Manly Beach:

By 1928 Bee was circulating in public and revelling in her freedom. She was boarding at a private residence in Chatswood on Sydney's North Shore and visiting the beach at Manly every day. But in what was to become a regular pattern, ordinary pursuits always contained an element of risk, and were guaranteed to attract the attention of the authorities. Bee's transgressions consisted of swimming out half a kilometre from the shoreline and then embarking on a swim from South Steyne to Queenscliff and back; a distance of around four-and-a-half kilometres. This was considered dangerous enough – and further, they claimed, than any man had ever swum – but it was the fact that, when other swimmers tried to emulate her and they had to be rescued that really caused consternation for the beach inspectors.



On the day a reporter from 'Truth' arrived on the beach to investigate the story, two swimmers had already been retrieved from the surf. The large knife that Bee carried, suspended from a belt from her waist, was also causing some anxiety. She insisted it was for pricking 'blue bottles' and protecting her if she was attacked by a shark. The knife had been seized and was being held by Manly police, while members of Manly Council considered their options...the 'Truth' reporter found it hard to conceal his astonishment at his subject's erudition: 'It is rather staggering to hear the classics quoted – word perfect – by a slip of shingled, merry, blue-eyed, shark baiting siren.' Perhaps having finally run out of adjectives, he acknowledged that: 'There is something elusive in her personality that cannot be caught on a metaphorical pin and examined.' He couldn't quite make up his mind if she was 'savage or super-cultured'.

Despite Bee claiming she was 'heartwhole' and could go where she liked and say what she thought, the outcome of Manly Council's extraordinary meeting was to grant its lifesavers authority to ban Bee from the beach. The results were reported more prosaically in the 'Women's Mirror', though it did note that Bee was probably the only woman in Australia to have been the subject of an entire municipal council meeting. As a result of the council's decision, Bee bought a new knife and began swimming at Bondi…

Manly Beach was hot and crowded. The newspapers estimated that there were more than 10,000 people gathered on that last Saturday of summer in 1938. They had come to watch teams from across Australia and New Zealand compete in the Inter Dominion and Interstate Surf Carnival. The surf was uncharacteristically calm.

But not so the lifesavers, and in particular the beach inspector Albert Henry Owen, whose attention was focussed, not on the huge crowd or the competing teams, but on a single female who had swum into the area cordoned off for the carnival. Hadn't she been banned from Manly by the mayor for swimming beyond the flags with a knife strapped to her thigh a decade before? Yet here she was again...

By now the crowd's attention also began to move from the competition to what looked like a very unusual rescue attempt happening offshore. With the now-furious inspector barking instructions through a loudspeaker, not one but two boats full of lifesavers rowed out to rescue the swimmer, but each time they managed to get her in the boat, she dived back into the sea...Finally, the inspector himself swam out, and with the assistance of another lifesaver, escorted the woman back to shore.

A constable was waiting on the beach. At first the woman refused to give her name but eventually identified herself as Bee Miles of Bourke Street, Darlinghurst. Then she promptly turned around and went back into the water.

Incensed, the inspector followed her out. By now the whole crowd was watching as the two stood facing each other waist deep in the surf.

'Don't put your hands on me,' Bee commanded in her best Abbotsleigh voice.

Unwisely, as it turned out, Owen ignored her, and so, with a crowd of 10,000 looking on, she slapped him across the face and tried to pull his hair.

'All this happened in full view of thousands of people,' he later told the court. 'The behaviour was very offensive to me... and it made me feel ridiculous.' No doubt he felt even more ridiculous when the story was circulated in newspapers from Melbourne to Auckland...

Bee was fined £1. 'Anyone would think I was undressing on the beach there was so much fuss,' she commented.

This book also highlights how so many things have changed in Australia in the past century – community attitudes, the law and the application of the law, and how differently those with eccentricities are or are not accepted. And, in particular, what is considered to be acceptable female behaviour.

Whilst reading this biography of Bee, time and time again I wondered what reception this poor girl would have received had she been born 50 or 75 years later. I'd hope she would not have suffered lengthy incarceration in mental asylums or jails, but suspect the 'average Australian' would in more recent times have been less tolerant of her largely-harmless eccentricities.

Bee Miles is certainly interesting and worth reading, even if it at times – just like Bee – it tends to meander a little.

Bee Miles is available in paperback from around $28.50.

Reviews by Peter Lacey

Extraordinary Histories: Amazing Stories from the NSW South Coast

Why compile a history of the NSW South Coast?

- Because it's not been done before. Lots and lots and lots of histories about parts of the South Coast have been written and published (most usually by local history societies – and there are at least 16 of these on the South Coast!) but no panoptic [all-encompassing] history has previously been written about the South Coast;
- Because the history of the area is extraordinarily interesting;
- Because the public (potential readers) are very interested in the area's history and, if the feedback received by South Coast History Society is any indication, there is a strong demand for more general histories of the area to be produced;
- And, it makes sense for there to be a history of the entire South Coast because '*the geography of the entire South Coast strip of New South Wales – from just south of Sydney to the Victorian border – has largely determined the history of the area:*

  To the east is the sea – which was not readily or easily accessible from land. Jervis Bay was the only 'natural' port along the entire coast and Twofold Bay provided some protection to ships. Every other potential 'port' had limitations for seafarers;

  To the west is a range of mountains with an escarpment that has always been a challenge to those wanting to travel up or down it;

  To the north are several major rivers that (somehow) had to be crossed;

  Along virtually the entire length of the coast is fertile grazing land that, from the earliest days of European settlement, had an alluring appeal to graziers in the Southern Highlands and on the Monaro;

  Its weather is (mostly) favourable;

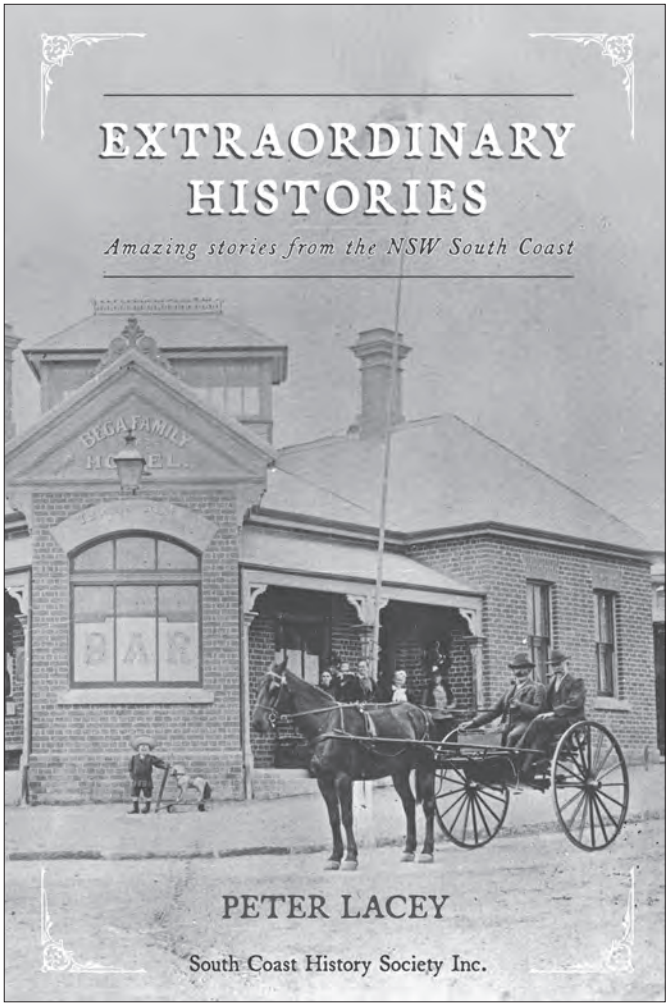
  And the resources required for settlement (things like supplies of reliable, permanent, drinkable water, and timber from which houses could be constructed, and potential sources of income that is necessary to sustain a population [activities such as dairying, timber getting, fishing]) were in abundance and were easily exploitable.

Everyday Histories ended up becoming a 320-page paperback. It includes 75 interesting old photographs.

So, what does it include?

Stories of shipwrecks…gold rushes…floods…fires…droughts…bushrangers…whaling…dairying…timber-getting…mysterious disappearances that have never been solved…lighthouses built in the wrong place…fascinating entrepreneurs and pioneers…periods of boom and bust…agricultural and industrial innovation…promises of railways that proved to be no more than promises…and a lot, lot more. Plus, a guide to places where the South Coast's fascinating history can still be seen, which is intended to make any journey in the area more informative and more rewarding.

'Less exciting' aspects of the South Coast's history have been excluded – things such as the histories of local government, utilities, schools – simply because other things have more 'sizzle' and are, therefore, more likely to be considered 'interesting reading'.



Extraordinary Histories starts out as a conventional history in chronological order but soon dissembles into a collection of somewhat random, but fascinating, stories about the area – with the emphasis being on stories!

This is the most ambitious of three histories that have been published this year by South Coast History Society – the previous two, produced jointly with Bega Valley Historical Society, being *Fascinating Bega: The Anatomy of a Town, 1851 – 2023* and *Carp Street, Bega*. Publishing these books (along with simultaneously compiling and distributing *Recollections* and *Mini Recollections*) has been part of the Society's remit to actively promote and disseminate the South Coast's colourful history.

Profits from *Extraordinary Histories* are to be shared by South Coast History Society with other South Coast history societies.

We're hoping that *Extraordinary Histories* will be enjoyed by many over this Christmas holiday period.

Extraordinary Histories is widely available throughout the South Coast and direct from the South Coast History Society (0448 160 852). It is $34.95 R