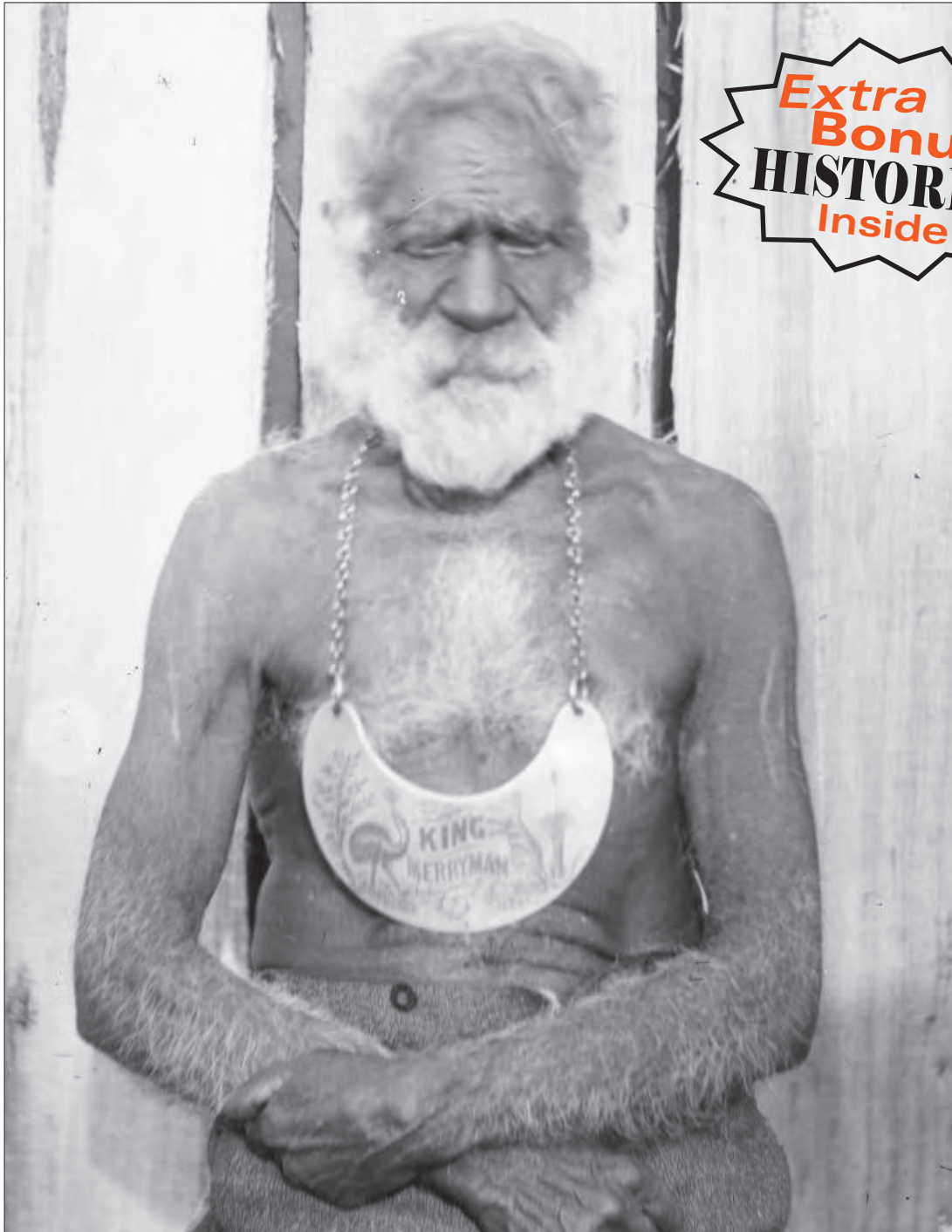


South Coast History Society Inc.

# Recollections

Issue 10, October 2018



**Extra  
Bonus:  
HISTORIES  
Inside**

Umbarra, or King Merriman (died 1904) was an Aboriginal elder of the Djirringanj/Yuin people of the Bermagui area. Although Aboriginal people traditionally did not have kings or chiefs, only elders, the white authorities sometimes gave metallic king plates to elders they perceived to be local Aboriginal leaders. Hence the moniker 'King'. Umbarra was believed to possess clairvoyant abilities, and communicated with a black duck, his *moojingarl*, which forewarned him of forthcoming dangers. See story page 2. Photograph: National Library of Australia, nla.obj-140308578

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## They Shared the Damper

The people whose names are inscribed in the landscape, the pioneers of modern society, moved onto land that had for millennia been the home of Aboriginal people. All this happened quite quickly. From the 1820s the squatters were granted licences to run cattle on land from Sydney out to the south and the west, and tracks were being used to connect to markets, ports and administrative centres. The stories of how grassy flats and permanent waterholes were found are often heroic but also tell of cooperation, of misunderstandings and just plain doggedness in the meeting of two cultures.

An insight into the often-contradictory nature of the relationship between Aboriginal people and white settlers can be gleaned from responses to the request by the Colonial Secretary in 1826 for 'lists of Black Natives' living on settlers' properties. Some respondents were worried about large gatherings of Aboriginal men, fearing it was threatening their crops and stock and called for military support. Others described how useful Aboriginal people were in tracking bushrangers and working on the farms. They asked to be provided with brass plates with inscriptions for 'chiefs' of the various tribes to give as rewards to their Aboriginal workers.

The significance of Aboriginal pathways in Australia's history cannot be underestimated. Major Thomas Mitchell who was appointed Surveyor General in 1828 directed his

surveyors to use Aboriginal guides and aboriginal place names:

*'The first surveyor to come up the Deua River valley was in 1828. It's amazing that it was so early in our history. He was Peter Ogilvy, an assistant to Robert Hoddle who surveyed Araluen. Ogilvy went up the river as far as the 36th parallel, beyond Bendethera and collected local place names. Bendethera was named in those days; it was called 'Bendithey'. The early surveyors must have communicated with the Aborigines to find out the names. Moodong Creek, Bier Creek, Woolla Creek, they're all named.'* – Peter Smith.

The story goes that Joseph George, who settled at Bendethera in 1863 employed an Aboriginal man known as 'Black Paddy' to blaze a track from Bendethera to Nerrigundah. This was to be used to supply the Gulph gold diggings with butter, meat, fruit and vegetables.

William Duggan Tarlinton described how he was shown the way to Cobargo by three Aboriginal men along what is now known as the Tarlinton track.

*'In 1829 William Duggan Tarlinton came from a property called Oranmeir which was on the junction of the Shoalhaven River and the Jerrabatgulla Creek. He wanted more grazing land so he went exploring ... He was only maybe 20, 21 when he first came down here. So he was fairly keen and independent in those days. And he set off in the company of three blacks. Without doubt it would have been an Aboriginal walking trail that they followed from one water point to the next. They camped at what is now the showground at Cobargo ... it is recorded that they shared damper with the local natives. It wasn't until 1832 that he brought cattle back down on the same track which was marked by blazes on the trees (he did that in 1829) and they were followed each time by every other explorer and people in to this area.'* – Richard Tarlinton.

Early records of the district have lists of Aboriginal people encountered by early travellers and ledgers of the government's annual blanket distributions to Aboriginal communities. These have been invaluable in providing names and tribal affiliations for people from which it can be conjectured that the three men who showed Tarlinton the way were three brothers: Orion (Tom Toole), Koitbe (Dick Toole) and Kotebirns. They were recorded as being from Belowra and were at 'Arnprior', Braidwood employed by the Ryrle family in 1834 and in Bega in 1844.

John Jauncey who established an early run near Cobargo had travelled with Dick Toole previously when coming down through Kybeyan, the Tuross and Yowrie to Narira in 1833.

Belowra is on the Tuross River in the centre of the route between the tablelands and the coast – the Tarlinton Track. John Davidge has travelled on this track and sees the role of the guides as crucial to finding the way.

*'The Tarlinton Track would have been the black fellas' track; that would have been their track through to Bermagui. Why did he go up Wandella Creek when he was on the Tuross River? Wandella is only a smaller creek running into the Tuross, but he went up it, so those black fellas must've had a*

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- 📄 We continually hear how valued 'Recollections' is to many in our community (and, please, continue to send us your much-appreciated and important feedback – even if it just confirming you've read the latest issue!). But we'd like to make copies more widely available, so if you know a shopkeeper or a business in your area that is often visited by locals and that would be willing to distribute 'Recollections', please ask them to contact us. (We simply need A4-size counter space + perhaps an adjacent space for a donations tin for a minimum of 1 week every couple of months.)
- 📄 We welcome articles for inclusion in 'Recollections' ... or, if you're not a history researcher, even your suggestions about topics that should be included in future 'Recollections'.
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fair bit of influence on him, they must have been telling him that was the place to go, to Cobargo, and they took him to Cobargo.' – John Davidge.

The squatters and early settlers clashed with the Aboriginal people when they denied them access to water, food sources, sacred sites, and country in general. The Aboriginal people of the south coast were noted for their fighting spirit and it is reported the reason W D Tarlinton travelled with Aboriginal guides was not just to find his way but also 'without whom it would be dangerous to travel, as the then wild natives were supposed to be treacherous' (Bayley, 1987). It is also reported that on this initial trip to the Cobargo area Tarlinton observed a 'fierce battle between the Monaro and coastal tribes. The former were victorious but not before 60 from each side were killed' (McGowan, 1991). Reports usually tell of these types of battles having a very low death rate but there may have been extra pressure causing the Monaro tribe to move down to the coast as they were pushed out of their homelands by white settlement.

There are records of resistance to the spread of settlement such as the attack on John Tarlinton at Toongabbie in 1798. In Bega the story of the 1832 murder of Michael Dunn, a hut keeper for Henry Badgery, was published in local papers fifty years later. Hut keepers, often assigned convicts, were isolated on recently claimed land at the very edge of the frontier. The article describes the land 'all along the river where Mr Darcy now lives, was like a township belonging to the Black's camp.' Earlier Captain Raine of Bathurst sent



King Merriman, Neddy and marked tree at the site of a former tribal fight. Photograph: National Museum of Australia.

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the first cattle to the Bega district, putting up yards and a hut at Brogo, 'but the blacks hunted them and the cattle away.' After Dunn was killed, Badgery's cattleman Bartley had to run for his life from many men chasing him with lighted torches. He was able to get to Wandella by following marked trees and, after his first meal in two days, he went on to Merricumbene Mountain where Badgery supplied him, 'a horse and saddle and sent four armed men with him to Bega to stay a week to watch with the Blacks ... Tree of the men returned to Braidwood, one stayed as a housekeeper. They left a musket and a sword ... They remained there six years longer alone.'

There is no report of further conflict, but later accounts tell that 'they had muzzle loading guns, which the natives treated with great respect; these early whites were heavily outnumbered and could not have coped with a full scale tribal attack.'

The opportunity to hear the story of these conflicts from the other side of the frontier is limited but in more recent times awareness of the existence of another side to the story has increased and historians have been scouring historical records to put names and faces to the Aboriginal resistance fighters. One example is Pemulwuy [Pimbloy]. He was active in the Prospect and Toongabbie areas, leading attacks on settlers' farms and crops in the 1790s and could well have led the attack on John Tarlington. Pemulwuy survived being shot and escaped while a captive in hospital. He continued to fight on and gained fame amongst his people for his

resistance. Governor King issued a reward and an order to shoot on sight. Pemulwuy was killed in 1802 and his head was sent to England.

Today it might be difficult for some to think of this part of Australia as a place where Aboriginal people once vastly outnumbered the whites. The pioneers and their bark and slab huts and later the squatters' elegant homesteads with deep verandahs and picket fences tend to be the enduring images of colonial history.

More often than not there were Aboriginal families living and working in the houses and on the farms. Aboriginal women and men were employed as herders of cattle and sheep, keeping birds and other animals away from crops, harvesting, shearing and sheep-washing, and as household servants. Settler women were vastly outnumbered by men in the early days and there are many stories of Aboriginal women living with white men. The forebears of many present-day south coast Aboriginal families may have been referred to by Reverend Allan of Braidwood who in 1846 observed Aboriginal women living with convict shepherds and having children by them. He counted 'from fifteen to twenty half-castes of different ages, all following the habits of the Aborigines.' (Egloff *et al.*, 2005)

Family stories hand down glimpses of life with the Aboriginal people on the frontier. Ann Marie Alcock married James Green in 1855 and they lived on her uncle's claim Doolondoodoo on the Monaro. Her granddaughter Ella Elphic wrote: 'Life must have been very primitive.



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My mother has told me tales of her mother, Ann Marie, showering hot coals around to scatter the black gins from her cooking fire (Cummings and Clifford, 2008).

A story of William Tarlinton's wife at their hut in Brogo was published at her death in 1920. 'Then a young wife,

her husband away to help his father muster cattle on a big run at Cobargo, Mrs Tarlinton was left alone with a young baby; but her husband, prior to leaving, arranged for a couple of aborigines who were camped on the river bank nearby to keep an eye on the house.' When bushrangers

came knocking on the door late at night the Aboriginal men come in through the back door and confronted them with a gun, saving the life of the white woman and her child.

W D Tarlinton's great grandson, Harold Tarlinton, wrote the following memories for a collection of local histories:

*'These lean and muscular men worked long hours to build their early shelters, which gave a certain amount of security from the natives, who were numerous, and who soon acquired a liking for the white man's fare, particularly sugar. If the huts were not securely fastened, items would often be found missing, and with no way of obtaining more this side of Braidwood, every precaution had to be taken. Possums and squirrels were also troublesome. These stockmen must have endured*



The Wallaga Lake Cricket Team c. 1900 Photograph: National Library of Australia, nla.obj-140265569

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great hardship and privation, as well as loneliness ... Generally speaking the natives were friendly and with the exchange of food and other items they did not worry the newcomers. However, tribal quarrels did occur. ... There were many signs of aboriginal activity, particularly along the Murrabrine Creek where the gully extends north into the areas later called "Fairview". An aboriginal battle and burial ground was witnessed here by early stockmen and trees nearby had shields cut from their trunks.'

In 1870 the Sydney Morning Herald reported on the case brought against W D Tarlinton's daughter, Margaret, for the killing of her newborn daughter in April 1864. The accuser, Emily Wintle, had lived with the family for thirteen years. She described how Margaret and her sister, Elizabeth, covered up the birth of the baby whilst their parents were away in Sydney for around six weeks. Emily watched Elizabeth burying a black bundle in the garden and when she uncovered it found a dark-skinned baby girl. She went on to tell the court that:

'...there were several darkies camped on the station about the time, they used to go backwards and forwards to the house, the name of one of them was Dick Bolloway, another was named Briney, they had been on the station three or four years, they were half-castes, they were often skylarking with Margaret and Elizabeth Tarlinton. Mr Tarlinton once caught Margaret skylarking with Dick Bolloway, and he threatened to break her leg if he ever caught her skylarking with him again, this was just before the child was born. I often saw the prisoner and Dick dragging one another about.'

The murder case was brought six years after the event and the jury dismissed all charges, and acquitted Margaret Gilbert, nee Tarlinton 'without a stain on her character'. Emily Wintle was cross-examined about her moral standing and questioned why she reported the incident a few days after her husband's horse was impounded by W D Tarlinton.

Over the decades the children of the early white settlers grew up with the children of the original tribal people but the two groups were kept largely separate by ideas of social standing of the time and later official policies of segregation. Sport was one area where the skills of the Aboriginal people were appreciated, with local newspapers running stories of the Tarlinton boys playing cricket against the team from Tilba which included the Pickalla lads from Wallaga Lake.

In the 1880s pressure was building to provide schools for local Aboriginal children who were being discriminated against in local schools. Merriman, an Aboriginal Elder, had been granted land in Turlinjah but when he realized the title would only last until his death he tried to find an alternative

## 'Brave Hearts and Smiling Faces'

Narooma Historical Society  
exhibition marking 100 years  
since the end of the Great War

8-20 November 2018

SoART Gallery (10-4)

Official opening 3pm Thursday 8 November



Welcoming some of Narooma's soldiers home.

Photo courtesy Joan Hyland and Narooma Historical Society

Exhibition will show:

- faces and stories of 'our lads in khaki' on Narooma's Honour Rolls
- and the War's impact on Narooma and in the years following

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that would support his people into the future.


Merriman worked for Henry Jefferson Bate and was successful in persuading him to provide 330 acres to local Aboriginal people, which became the Aboriginal Reserve at Wallaga Lake.

Hope Bate had been raised with local Aboriginal people working on the Bate's farm and in her old age talked of the traditional Aboriginal stories she had been told as a child, about the landscape of Gulaga Mountain and about the greedy boys who were turned into off-shore rocky reefs south of Bermagui.

In 1983, most of the old reserve was handed back to the Merriman Local Aboriginal Land Council and today most Aboriginal families of the region either live in or have connections with the 'Koori Village' at Wallaga Lake.

The pioneering period of Australian history, often called the contact period, is the shared history of white settlers and Aboriginal people. There are many examples of how Aboriginal people worked on the land, still aligning with their traditional country, and lived closely with the white settlers from the very first. They were not land owners in

line with British law, although demands for land rights and land ownership were made by local Aboriginal people early in history. Dick Bolloway and Merriman are examples of this. The descendents of both the black and white pioneers still live in the region today and carry their own histories within their families.

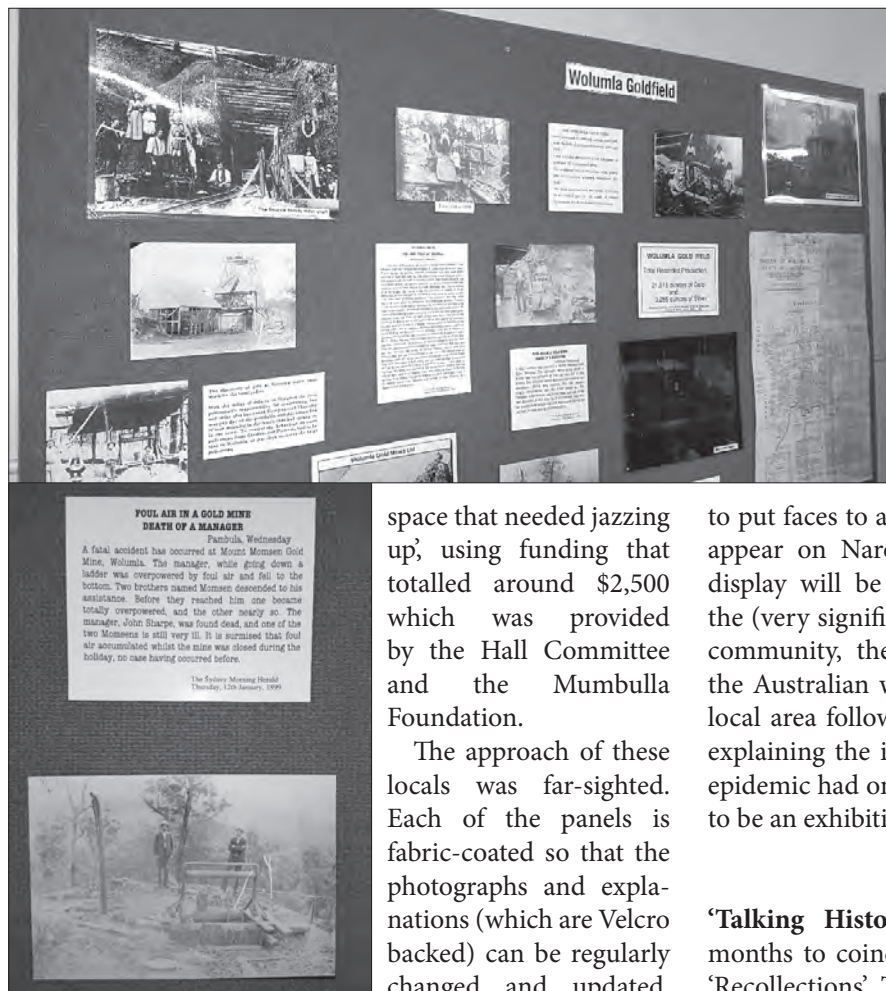
*'My mother and father, Zeta Andy and Les Mongta, married at the Church of England in Tilba Tilba in 1930. Zeta's father was Bob Andy, a well-known tracker and her mother was Mary Ellen Piety, an Aboriginal midwife who worked at the Corkhill's farm in Tilba Tilba ... Grandfather Bob Andy was a ploughman, every farm needed one ... Bob Andy told me that generations of Koori families camped along the [Tuross River]. Today I live in Bodalla not far from where my grandmother, Kitty Sutton was speared because her mother ran away with a white man.'* – Lionel Mongta, in 'Aboriginal men and women's heritage' by S Donaldson, 2008. 

Edited extract from 'Tracks in the Wilderness', reprinted with permission from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service – Far South Coast Region. See review on page H-2 in the HISTORIES supplement in this issue.

## In Brief ...

There is an interesting and quite extensive collection of historic photographs of the Wolumla area on the walls of the Supper Room in the **Wolumla Memorial Hall**. They were placed there 6 or 7 years ago, primarily through the efforts of three or four enthusiastic locals, because 'there was a dead

The current display themes are Local Identities, Local Sport, Local Schools, The Hall, The Wolumla Goldfield, Community Groups, Local Stores, Local Agriculture, Transport, and Local Sport. The accompanying photograph depicts part of the 'Wolumla Goldfield' display.



It would be wonderful to see this concept extended to all other community halls in the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla Shires that have 'dead space that needs jazzing up'. It's a simple, effective, community-focused way of more-widely sharing the intriguing and diverse histories of our area.



To coincide with the centenary of the end of World War I, the Narooma Historical Society is presenting an exhibition in the SoArt Gallery (beside the Kinema in Narooma) from 8th to 20th November

space that needed jazzing up', using funding that totalled around \$2,500 which was provided by the Hall Committee and the Mumbulla Foundation.

The approach of these locals was far-sighted. Each of the panels is fabric-coated so that the photographs and explanations (which are Velcro backed) can be regularly changed and updated.

to put faces to and to tell the stories of those whose names appear on Narooma's World War I Honour Rolls. This display will be accompanied by an exhibition outlining the (very significant) impact that the War had on the local community, the ways that the local community helped the Australian war effort, and what then happened in the local area following the end of the war (which extends to explaining the impact that the devastating 1919 influenza epidemic had on the surrounding community). It promises to be an exhibition well-worthwhile viewing.



'Talking History' morning teas are held every two months to coincide with the release of each new issue of 'Recollections'. They are held at libraries in the Bega and



Eurobodalla Shires.

Several local historians and local identities are invited along to 'talk history' and, invariably, their contributions are both interesting and entertaining.

The free 'Talking History' morning tea for this issue of 'Recollections' will be held from 10.30 am to Noon at Bega Library on Wednesday 26th September. If you're planning to attend, please reserve your place by phoning Bega Library on 6499 2222. The following free 'Talking History' morning tea, coinciding with the launch of the December 2018 issue of 'Recollections' will be at Batemans Bay Library from 10.30 am to Noon on Friday 30th November. Phone 4472 5850 to reserve your seat.



We are now endeavouring to ensure that all books reviewed in 'Recollections' subsequently become available for loan through local libraries. So copies of books purchased by or received by the South Coast History Society and then reviewed are now being donated to local libraries. We understand the following books, reviewed in previous issues of 'Recollections' are now available from Bega Valley

Shire Libraries and either directly, or through the inter-library loan system, from Eurobodalla Shire Libraries: 'The Man Who Carried the Nation's Grief: James Malcolm Lean MBE & The Great War Letters' by Carol Rosenhain, (reviewed *Recollections* 2); 'From the Edge: Australia's Lost Histories' by Mark McKenna (*Recollections* 3); 'The Rag Tag Fleet' by Ian W Shaw (*Recollections* 5); 'Australian Desperadoes: The Incredible Story of How Australia Gangsters Terrorised California' by Terry Smyth (*Recollections* 6); 'Australian Gypsies: Their Secret History' by Mandy Sayer (*Recollections* 7), 'Fighting the Kaiserreich: Australia's epic within the Great War' by Bruce Gaunson (*Recollections* 9).



Available places at the South Coast History Society's 2018 South Coast History Day seminar are filling fast, so if you are interested in attending you would be well-advised to book your seat TODAY. Because we need to organize catering in advance and because seating is limited, we regret NO admission tickets will be available on the day at the door. For further details, please see page 10. **R**

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## The Historic Kameruka Estate

The Kameruka Estate was one man's dream, one man's vision.

That man was Robert Lucas Lucas-Tooth.

He was born in Sydney in 1844 to parents who ran a farm in Tasmania. He was initially schooled by his mother, but was taken to England to attend Eton College when his mother felt that "*Robert will begin to require something beyond my instruction and I feel he cannot mix with our Colonial youths without contamination*".

He returned to Australia in 1863, joining his two brothers in the management team of Tooth's Kent Brewery. In 1868 he became a partner in that business – so he had money to invest!

In 1864 he purchased the leasehold of the 75,000 acre Kameruka Estate from his uncle. By 1871 the Estate had reduced in size to 22,000 acres, but Robert Lucas-Tooth now owned that area freehold.

Robert's objective was to develop the farm in a way that would implement his own humanitarian social ideals and become a "transplanted segment of the English countryside; a largely self-contained community based on the English agricultural estate system", "providing his tenant farmers with six-roomed cottages, a school, a church, a meeting-hall, store and post office. He planted English trees on a large scale, built an ornamental lake, kept an aviary of golden pheasants and liberated all kinds of game: pheasants, quails,

hares and foxes" ... and, naturally, provided the Estate with a full-size cricket oval!!

Robert never lived at the Estate, although he visited it on a number of occasions. (In the late 1870s he also developed the 820-acre Eridge Park estate at Burradoo near Bowral into a 'model park', and 'in 1882 he built a castellated Gothic mansion at Darling Point, with a ballroom larger than that at Government House, and named it Swifts after the family home in Kent' – so he also had significant interests elsewhere in NSW as well as in England.) Instead he employed outstanding managers at Kameruka who would send detailed reports to him on a monthly basis.

He died in England in February 1915, reputedly of a 'broken heart' following the deaths of two of his three sons who were killed on active service during World War I. His other son, Archibald Leonard Lucas-Tooth, took over responsibility for the Kameruka Estate, but died shortly afterwards, in September 1918, when he contracted influenza whilst serving in the British army in France.

The period in which the Estate was at its most successful was when Robert Lucas-Tooth was its owner. He established a core business on the Estate (dairying), but he was innovative and was not afraid to trial new things.

When necessary, he imported skilled labour to the area to ensure that every one of his ventures was given a maximum chance of succeeding.

*Continued on page 11 following the Histories supplement.*

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**2018 South Coast History Day**

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**'Our Pioneers ... Their Heritage'**

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with Keynote Speaker Peter Spearritt, Emeritus Professor in History at the University of Queensland, who has just completed an appropriate book to be released in September – '*Where History Happened: The Hidden Past of Australia's Towns and Places*'.

Other speakers will focus on local people and local events that have impacted the South Coast's unique heritage ... and the day will conclude with a special performance of several well-known World War I songs – our way of acknowledging the centenary of the end of World War I, to be celebrated just two weeks after South Coast History Day 2018.

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# HISTORIES A 'Recollections' Supplement

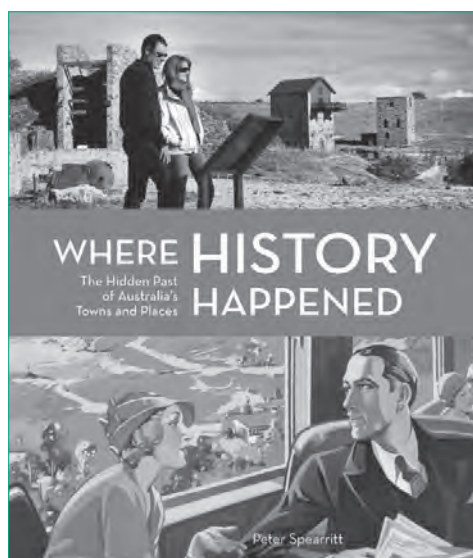
There are so many great local and Australian histories available at the moment. Far too many for us to feature just one or two in each issue of 'Recollections' and all deserving to be widely supported. So, as a bonus, we've included this 'Histories' supplement in this issue of 'Recollections'. If you can't do so beforehand, please get yourself a selection of these books (any would be a wonderful Christmas present to receive ... or to give!), find yourself a comfortable chair over the long Christmas break, and simply become enthralled by some of our intriguing local and Australian histories.

## Where History Happened: The Hidden Past of Australia's Towns and Places

by Peter Spearritt

Emeritus Professor Peter Spearritt of the University of Queensland undoubtedly enjoyed this project.

He selected 29 places from all around Australia that he had visited earlier in his life – including when he was a youngster – and 'revisited' them to discover and document their histories and their stories from the past. And then he trawled through the National Library of Australia's extensive photographic resources to illustrate his impressive book.



I'm not sure how he decided which 29 towns and places – as diverse as the Seppeltsfield Winery in South Australia, the Ipswich Railway Workshops in Queensland, to Byron Bay in NSW and Rottnest Island off the coast of Western Australia – to include in 'Where History Happened'. They certainly are not the most historically-important Australian locations, nor necessarily those that are the most historically interesting – as evidenced by not a single town or place from the NSW South Coast being included in the book!!

'Where History Happened', however, was 'written with the conviction that we should continue to explore our places and spaces, and attempt to understand the forces that have shaped them over time. There is no better place to start to understand a building, a township, a mine or a tramway than by exploration.' So Spearritt 'only alighted on places one could explore'.

In a couple of instances, towns that are featured in the book have very personal significances to the author. Peter Spearritt's paternal grandparents, James and Alice Spearritt, ran the Federal Bakery in Cooktown in North Queensland in

the early years of the 20th century and his uncle Selwyn was elected the sixth Abbott of Australia's only monastic town at New Norcia in Western Australia in 1997.

What has resulted is an intriguing book for travellers and for armchair travellers that is packed full of interesting historic stories and anecdotes. And, for the travellers, many chapters end with a list of places of historic interest that should be visited when in each town or place.

Taking the 'Melbourne's Trams' chapter as an example, here are some of the things I learned: Melbourne's trams were originally cable cars and these remained part of the Melbourne tramway system until the 1930s; in the days of 6 o'clock closing of hotels, schoolgirls were warned to be off the trams before that hour of

the evening; Melbourne today has the world's largest tramway system measured by track length, even though the tramway system in St Petersburg in Russia carries more passengers; Sydney, which also once had an extensive tramway system, imported British experts who advocated getting rid of its trams and replacing them with (the now long-gone) British-made Leyland buses!; a major reason why Melbourne draws greater numbers of fans to its sporting events than does any other city in Australia is the ready availability and accessibility of its trams; most tourist-promotion photographs of Melbourne landmarks (such as of the Shrine of Remembrance, St Kilda Road, the Arts Centre, Federation Square) invariably include a tram in the foreground.

Santa should ensure his sleigh is well-stocked this year with copies of 'Where History Happened'. It surely will be an outstanding Christmas (or birthday) gift for any Australian with even the slightest interest in our fabulous history.

'Where History Happened' is produced by NLA Publishing and is priced at \$39.99.

Professor Peter Spearritt is the keynote speaker at South Coast History Day in Merimbula on Saturday October 27th. If you would like to purchase a signed copy of 'Where History Happened' at the special price of \$35 at South Coast History Day (or if you cannot attend and would like to have a copy posted to you, post free) please call South Coast History Society on 0448 160 852 BEFORE OCTOBER 15th and we will ensure a copy has been ordered and reserved for you.

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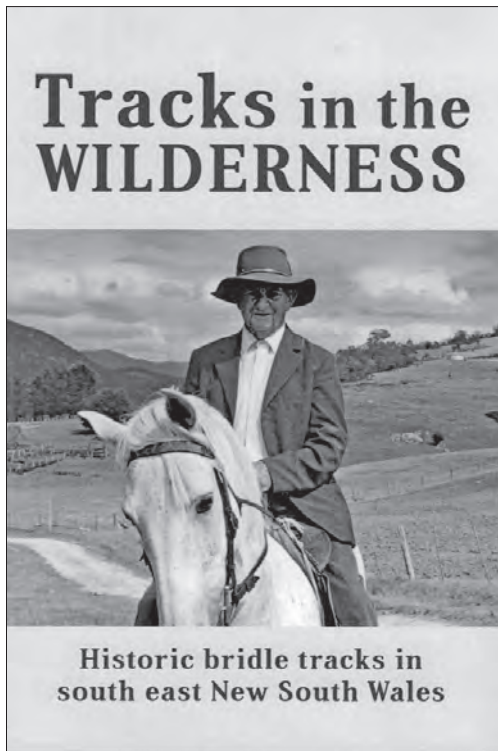


# Tracks in the Wilderness: Historic bridle tracks in south east New South Wales

Compiled by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Far South Coast Region

This book is one of the outcomes of a couple of successful 'people power' protests that occurred on the South Coast 20 years ago.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was planning to declare significant parts of a number of national parks to be 'wilderness areas', effectively denying access to these areas to anyone other than self-reliant bushwalkers.



The horse-riding community was incensed. Tracks that they had used for about 150 years were suddenly to be closed to them.

Protests were held in Bega and Braidwood (each attracting huge numbers of horse riders, 4-wheel drive vehicles, log trucks, walkers and even teams of draught horses pulling wagons) in mid-1998. The upshot of these was that NPWS staff were directed to establish a dialogue with local horse riders to discuss the opportunities then available and to examine those that might become available to them in the future.

It rapidly became evident that 'interest in horse riding was not just about recreation but also about the considerable significance of the old bridle tracks to pioneering heritage and to cultural identity'.

Eventually (in 2014) three of the historic pack-horse tracks (the Shoebridge Track, Georges Pack Track and W D Tarlinton Track) were reopened to those on horseback on a trial and monitor basis ... and the horse-riding community was invited by the NPWS to help maintain these tracks.

As part of the NPWS' (now ongoing) community dialogue procedures, oral histories were collected about the history and importance of bridle trails in south east New South

Wales, and from those who had ridden the tracks. Extensive research was undertaken into at least one track (the W. D. Tarlinton Track).

As Rob McKinnon, NPWS' Strategic Programs Officer, observed '*we've learnt of Aboriginal pathways, early exploration, convicts, conflict and cooperation, bushrangers, gold rushes, trust between horse and rider, the development of industries, and stories that tie people to landscapes. We have also learnt of feelings of dispossession and denial when access is denied to places that form part of people's identities*'.

And '*Tracks in the Wilderness: Historic bridle tracks in south east New South Wales*' outlines a lot of what they discovered – and is now a '*record of what life was like in the landscape, to engage the imagination of the reader and to be an educational resource for the national parks guardians of the land and for school children and to ensure the history is not forgotten*'.

It is a broad-ranging book, starting with an explanation of the '*Aboriginal origins of the tracks*' and ending with suggestions about '*responsibilities for the future*'. And, between these two, are chapters on '*ships across the world: the settlers arrive on the shore*', '*two cultures together on the land*', '*expansion of settlement*', '*those tracks were the life blood*', '*back then it was a road*', and '*everything we did was on a horse*'.

Evidently 68 bridle tracks, extending 1,537 km in length, have now been documented and mapped in south-east NSW. Most of them are in rugged and remote areas, and have not been intersected by roads – so many remain intact. However, '*back then (the mid-19th century) and still today you need local knowledge to find your way around. The tracks are still for those in the know*'.

As I was reading through this book, I was repeatedly thinking what an interesting, what a unique, what a valuable resource this area possesses in these historic tracks – a resource that deserves to be better used.

In the final chapter of the book it became clear that those who contributed and those who were interviewed agreed with this sentiment, believing that these historic tracks now need to be maintained and be opened up to walkers and horse riders. There is even a bold heading emphasizing this: '**Tracks simply disappear if they are not maintained and used**'.

Frustratingly, though, the book includes virtually no information about the current accessibility of these tracks, how well maintained and marked they are at present, or are likely to be in the future.

(A subsequent discussion I had with two members of staff at NPWS' Narooma office revealed that the only one of these many historic bridle tracks they are now willing to recommend to bushwalkers is The Corn Trail. The others, it seems, are still often poorly marked, difficult to follow and sometimes cross private property. There seem to be no current plans to mark or clear them, or to negotiate right of way for

walkers along these historic 'roads' in the places where they now cross private property.)

Another frustration for me (and, I am sure, will be for future researchers using the book) was that the book did not always provide a date to accompany many of the interesting descriptions provided by those who had been interviewed – so I had no idea, in a number of instances, whether the information given related to the mid-19th, the late-19th, the early-20th or the mid-20th centuries.

'*Tracks in the Wilderness; Historic bridle tracks in south east New South Wales*', though, contains many interesting descriptions of life in years past and some extremely valuable information from those who were interviewed in the course

of the project. It is also richly illustrated with old photographs and with a number of maps.

I just hope a companion book will, at some time, be issued: 'Tracks in the Wilderness: A walkers' and riders' guide to travelling the historic bridle tracks in south east NSW'!

*Tracks in the Wilderness: Historic bridle tracks in south east NSW* is published by NPWS – Far South Coast Region and is priced at around \$30.

A local community-based organization, *Access for All*, has also extensively researched a number of these historic bridle tracks in south east NSW. Details are available on its website, [www.accessforall.asn.au](http://www.accessforall.asn.au)

## **A Coveted Possession.**

### **The Rise and Fall of the Piano in Australia**

by Michael Atherton

This is an engrossing book.

Perhaps perversely, the section of this history I enjoyed most was the chapter, very cleverly numbered 'Coda' (in music, a passage that brings a piece to an end), and titled 'Where Do Old Pianos Go to Die?':

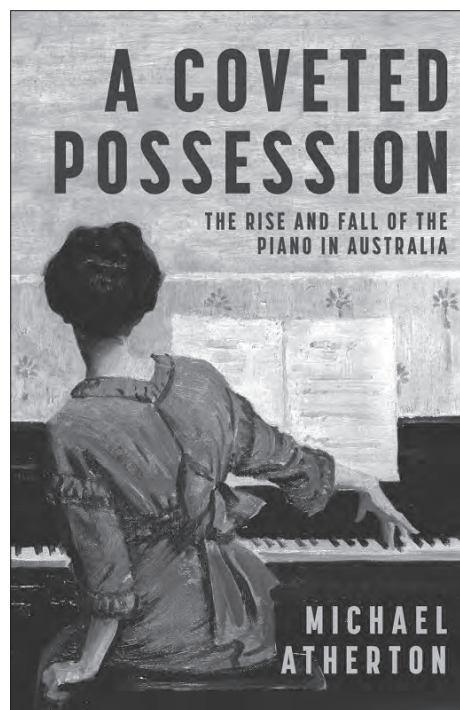
*'... the regrettable fate of the piano is neglect and the relentless destruction of old instruments. There are pianos everywhere that are beyond repair, yet cherished as family heirlooms. However, after a house move or two, these objects of sentiment and nostalgia become burdens. Over generations heirlooms are abandoned ... the senescent, worn out, neglected piano, faced with the threat of fire or the sledgehammer, is dying of old age ...*

*For some owners it is an easy choice to consign a piano to the tip...some pianos are 'free to pick up' if strong arms and a truck are provided...often, vendors talk about wanting the piano to go to 'a good home'. Other advertisers point out that repairs are required but the instrument is still good for beginners, naively unaware that even a beginner needs a fully functioning instrument...*

*Apart from natural attrition and deterioration, a piano will sometimes suffer wilful destruction in the name of performance art. There are a number of aficionados of piano bashing. One such man in Melbourne attacks the piano with such ferocity that it is apparently like watching a champion woodchopper at the Royal Easter show. Breaking into a sweat, a barbarian gleam in his eye, he smashes the keyboard and sides until he reaches behind the frame of the piano. To hear the sound of a piano being smashed can be an emotional experience. No 'last rites' are offered, no recognition of its unique history, from the first sounds that may have been made by a child to its life under the hands of an enthusiastic amateur, or perhaps the professional and possibly the virtuoso. All of this is annihilated in just a few minutes ...*

*What kind of person wants to destroy a piano, to silence its history, to disembowel or burn it? An owner, a Dada artist, a vandal, an iconoclast or those in dire need of firewood? You can step on a violin and render it matchwood in seconds but it takes brute strength with a sledgehammer to smash a piano ...'*

Michael Atherton's passion for music, his recognition of the exalted position in which the piano was once held in Australian society, is clearly evident in that quote – and is reflected throughout *A Coveted Possession*. Perhaps that's not surprising, considering he is a composer, performer, music producer, and was Foundation Professor of Music at the University of Western Sydney...and he is one of those (diminishing number of) Australians who has enjoyed playing a piano almost all of his life. Quite obviously, he now regrets the decline in the popularity and status that the piano has suffered in Australia (except nowadays among Chinese, Korean and Indian immigrant families) since World War II.



Atherton points out that owning a piano was every Australian family's aspiration in the years before wireless, refrigerators, cars or televisions became THE status symbols or signs of upwards movement in Australian society

But the piano represented a lot more. 'On remote stations, the piano was both a solace and a joy, comforting and educating the lonely and isolated, frequently women. The

*piano was essential for weddings, dances and parties. It entertained us on ships and trains, in hospitals and prisons. In its golden period of popularity between 1870 and 1930, the piano was a staple of education, summoning memories of nuns brandishing rulers, ready to discipline a wrong note. The piano was steadfast in peacetime and fearless in war, accompanying servicemen and women to the fronts of World War I and II, and to the jungles of New Guinea and Vietnam. The grand piano, or more often the old upright thumper, served the social bonds of family, community and national life.*

*So important was the piano in Australia that it contributed to nation building, through local manufacturing. Superb piano factories built by Beale in Sydney and Wertheim in Melbourne presented a challenge to importers by producing fine instruments suited to local conditions ...*

*Carted by bullocks and splashed with beer in goldfields tents, harbouring mice, dusted in classroom chalk, missing a string at the local church hall, or serving as a mantelpiece for family photos or flowers – the piano became our constant companion. This is the story of Australia's passionate relationship with an instrument that rose to the status of family member, albeit often to become a neglected and unwanted heirloom sent to the tip.'*

And, to cater for demand, Australia had numerous very successful piano manufacturers who produced instruments of world-class standard – particularly Beale and Company that manufactured 95,000 pianos between 1895 and the 1960s (and suspended piano production during World War II to make fuselages for the De Havilland DH-98 Mosquito bomber), and Wertheim Pianos who crafted around 18,000 instruments over a period of 27 years.

Their success was, undoubtedly, assisted by significant tariffs then levied on imported pianos. Cheaper German pianos had the reputation in Australia of being the best pianos (except during, and for periods immediately after, World War I and World War II when German pianos became unsaleable, and owners of German pianos often replaced their German nameplates with more socially acceptable Anglicised equivalent 'brands' – a reversal of an earlier practice by some Australian piano manufacturers who gave their pianos fake German names to make them more saleable!); the strong reputation of German pianos had been established at the 1879, 1880 and 1888 Sydney and Melbourne trade exhibitions where German manufacturers had won major prizes), but

while any Australian production of pianos continued, so did the tariffs. So leading importers, such as W.H. Palings, actively bought-out Australian manufacturers and closed them down until the Australian piano manufacturing industry totally ceased to exist in the 1970s ... after which overseas-made pianos could be imported free of duties.

Today there are only two significant, small-scale piano manufacturers in Australia: Overs who manufacture small numbers of concert grand pianos, and Stuart & Sons who craft bespoke pianos.

The wireless, the gramophone, the car, the television were, however, not the only significant threats to the long-term future of the piano and to Australians learning to play the piano. The player piano (or pianola, as it is more commonly called) emerged around 1900, rapidly became a status symbol, and retained its popularity for about 30 years.

Like the piano, it fostered desired musical culture, but provided instant access to a greater variety of music and negated any need for individuals to learn to play – and then laboriously practice – the piano. A significant and interesting section of his book is devoted to the Australian history of these player pianos.

But that's not all this book contains. It encompasses everything from details of the first piano that arrived in Australia (with settlers on the First Fleet) to the most modern pianos (and non-pianos such as electronic keyboards), profiles a number of prominent Australian pianists and composers for the piano, examines the role that pianos played during wartimes, outlines how the piano helped promote 'Australian Made', and provides mini histories of many of the Australian manufacturers of pianos and player pianos.

Now that 'heirloom' pianos and player pianos have fallen from grace and are being dumped or destroyed in their thousands, I can only imagine that, at some future time, the then few surviving Australian-made models of pianos and player pianos will become particularly valuable, sought-after antiques. I hope some local museums and galleries will now have the foresight to preserve working examples, in good condition and with significant local provenances, in their collections to intrigue future generations with what was the once-common Australian 'home entertainment system.'

'A Coveted Possession' is published in paperback by La Trobe University Press. It is available from around \$26.00.

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## **Captured Lives: Australia's Wartime Internment Camps**

by Peter Monteath

This is an absolutely fascinating book.

It is the story of how Australia reacted to the outbreaks of World War I and World War II when thousands of 'enemy aliens' were suddenly 'discovered' to be living here; how Australia reacted when faced with what to do with significant numbers of enemy servicemen that had been captured by our fighting forces; how Australia reacted when its allies (principally Britain) asked it to take many of the prisoners of war and civilian internees that they themselves were unable to accommodate (in early 1941, for example, Allied forces took a staggering 130,000 Italian prisoners following decisive battles

at Bardia, Tobruk and Derna); how Australia reacted when it declared war and found crews of now-enemy merchant vessels having the unexpected, untimely misfortune of then being stuck in an Australian port; how Australia reacted to merchants from enemy nations who had been legitimately trading in Australia but whose activity suddenly was represented as 'aiding the enemy' (but was in reality simply rivalling the interests of other Australian businessmen!); or how Australians reacted to possible 'spies in our midst' (such as leading overseas-born businessmen, honorary consuls ... or even neighbours who were the recipients of racially



malicious or untruthful accusations).

Australia's response was to intern them in 'concentration camps' (as they were called in World War I) or 'internment camps' or 'prisoner-of-war camps' (as they were called in World War II) for indefinite periods.

With the benefit of hindsight, Australia's actions can only be judged as having been, at best, reprehensible or, at worst, inhumane. In thousands of instances, Australia simply 'captured the lives' of totally innocent individuals and their families for many years.

Incarcerating captured enemy servicemen until the end of a war is perhaps understandable. But it's now almost incomprehensible that we would round up law-abiding Australian citizens (in many cases Australian-born or naturalized Australians) who simply had the misfortune of having parents - or even grandparents - who had been born in an overseas country with which we were now at war, throw them into a prison camp, and then effectively 'throw away the key' (simultaneously offering them little or no chance of appealing their incarceration) for an indefinite period, until the war ended.

Because this is exactly what happened in Australia in both World War I and World War II.

It seems the governments of the day simply bowed to hysteria from sections of the public, believing that incarcerating large numbers of 'suspects' would mollify concerns within the Australian community. A good example is that of Edmund Resch, the well-known Sydney brewer (see story on the next page from 'The Slab').

'Captured Lives' by Peter Monteath, Professor of History at Flinders University in Adelaide, documents where Australian internment camps were established in World Wars I and II, and provides fascinating details about the various groups of people who were interned in them, why they were interned, how they lived and were treated by Australians whilst they were interned, and when and how each of the groups were ultimately released. The differences between camps, the differences in how disparate groups of internees were treated, the seemingly constantly-changing rules about who should be interned and why they should be interned, are what makes this book so interesting.

These differences are illustrated, for example, in the contrasting descriptions included by Peter Monteith of the World War I internment camps at Berrima and Holdsworth. Holdsworth was a hastily-erected barbed wire enclosure, and a spartan 'uninviting place' sited on a dry and dusty plain that held over 6,000 prisoners from all around Australia. 'One of our major diversions was walking the fence in the evening and watching the wondrous Australian sunsets ... Hundreds

and hundreds of Australia's prisoners of war walked every evening along the massive fence, talking, gesticulating, and stopping to drink in the brilliant sunsets. We walked much in the way tigers walk in their cages at the zoo: back and forth along dense lines of steel barbs, longingly looking through the fence, beyond the red horizon into what had become a dream world from which we had been separated.' (Over 100

prisoners at Holdsworth were to die from influenza between the end of May and the beginning of June 1919, whilst they were awaiting repatriation or forced deportation.)

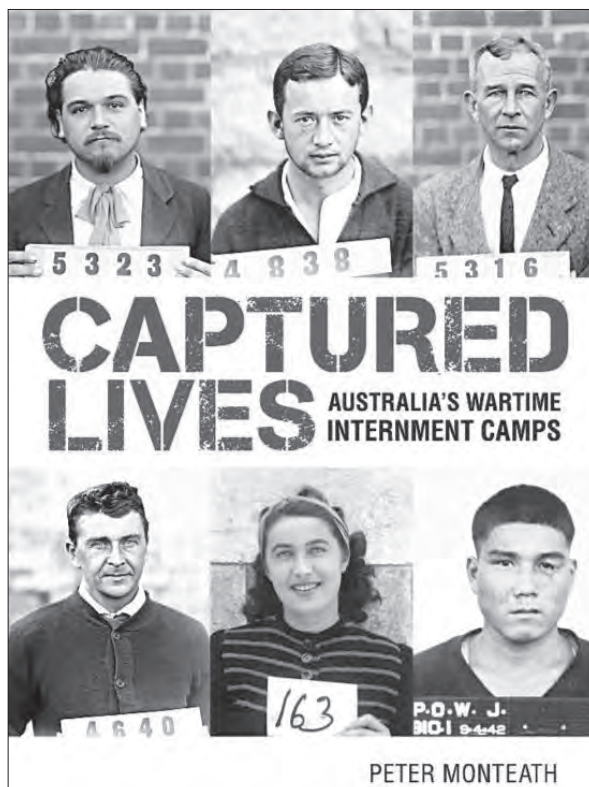
The camp at Berrima was primarily a camp for seamen (and in a few cases their family members) that was established in a long-unused 19th century gaol. On weekdays the prisoners were free to move about town where 'almost from the beginning, we went to morning coffee sitting at white clothed tables that had been set out with coffee and cakes by the daughters of the owner, enjoying the tastes, and the homely feeling of once more being treated as human beings.'

To celebrate the Kaiser's birthday, at Berrima 'we ran sports, boat regattas and various

other suitable activities on the small lake that had been made on the river ... The preparations that we had been making for weeks became known far and wide with the result that on the day, a great stream of people came and spread themselves on the banks of the river, a sight that these backwoods had never seen before. First there were swimming races (with betting on the results), then displays of high diving from a tall tree conveniently placed on the bank. There were rowing races (again with betting) and then the model clipper appeared being towed by the freighter that had smoke issuing out of its funnel, from smouldering dried cowpats ... Everything received great applause from the spectators even when a fully-rigged sailing ship with three men in it, and flying the English flag at its stern, was rammed by a miniature torpedo boat and sunk, whereupon its crew had to swim. The roar of applause was too much for the Lieutenant who hurried to the Major saying he should not allow such a provocative event. But the Major simply said he had stated it was their affair and he could not renege.' (The Berrima internees learned their repatriation or forced deportation would occur on 12th August 1919. 'On the evening before, they built a great bonfire in the gaol's courtyard and burnt all their bunks and mattresses'.)

'Captured Lives' is also well-illustrated, with hundreds of historic photographs, paintings and documents illustrating and expanding on the book's central narrative.

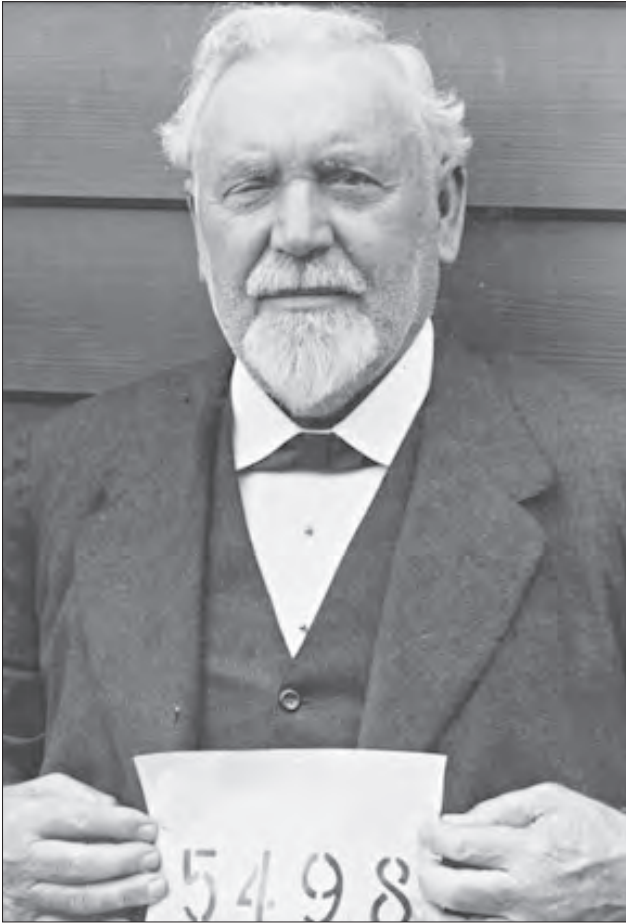
'Captured Lives' is published in paperback by NLA Publishing. It is available from around \$31.



## Edmund Resch – German-born, Australian Brewer

In 1913, Edmund Resch Jnr – who had been back to Germany a few times since arriving in Australia – suffered an injury to his eyes that led to him losing complete sight in one and retaining only partial vision in the other. His doctor in Sydney advised him to return to Europe for treatment, which he did.

While that may have been sound medical advice, it was really crap travel advice. Because World War I broke out while Ed Jnr was in Germany and, while he managed to make it back to Australia, it was only after narrowly avoiding being interned in Germany. That was presumably because he was an Australian and Germany was at war with those pesky foreigners.



A sad irony would soon befall the Resch family. You see, while his son managed to avoid being jailed in Germany for being Australian, Edmund Snr ended up getting jailed in Australia for being German. Somehow both sides of the World War I conflict figured the Resch family was an enemy.

And so, Edmund Snr, a frail 71-year-old man, was arrested by the Australian government in November 1917. There were no charges laid against him at the time of his arrest and he was put in an internment camp in the Sydney suburb of Holsworthy. The Australian Dictionary of Biography claims the arrest followed an unnamed “indiscretion” but the likely cause of his arrest was being German.

The fact he had become a naturalised citizen in 1889 did not seem to help Edmund’s cause. Nor did his purchasing of several thousand pounds worth of war bonds. Or the fact his brewery was paying the difference between the military pay and previous salaries of more than 60 employees who were at the front fighting for Australia. Or even the fact that he was making beer – a job which some would likely view as the most “Aussie” job you can have short of captaining the national cricket team.

Nope, he was German. Germans were bad, so off to jail you go, sunshine.

His arrest was relatively civil; according to a Sydney Morning Herald report, military officers turned up at the brewery and handed him the warrant for his arrest. He then went home, had lunch and later was driven to the Holsworthy internment camp in his own car.

But the camp itself was far from civil.

According to the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, the camp was overcrowded with as many as 5000 internees and was the centre that most resembled a prison: “Heat, cold, dust, boredom, stress about families and businesses led to a malaise called ‘barbed wire disease’. Guards taunted and shot at internees. Some internees suicided and others tried to escape. The most troublesome prisoners were housed in a high security jail known as ‘Sing Sing.’”

Edmund was there for four months, being released in February 1918, eight months before the armistice. “It was explained by the authorities yesterday,” reported the Sydney Morning Herald on March 1, “that the medical officers had certified that Mr Resch was in very bad health and in the circumstances the Minister for Defence had given his consent to Mr Resch’s removal to his own home, where he would be permitted to remain under certain conditions.”

Edmund lived for five more years before dying at his home on May 22, 1923.

It should be said Edmund was not the only German brewer to suffer from the wave of racist anti-German sentiment in Australia during World War I. He wasn’t even the only German brewer in his family to suffer.

His younger brother Emil was general manager of Carlton and United Breweries (CUB) in Melbourne. Indeed, he was one of the key figures in bringing together the six ailing breweries under the CUB name and seeing them succeed. Like Edmund Jnr, Emil was in Germany at the outbreak of the war and took some time to make his way home, but when he got back he found CUB suddenly had no further use for his services and he was forced to retire.

There may have been fears within CUB of a rival spreading messages like “you wouldn’t drink beer brewed by a German, would you?” but it might have also been a response to avoid criticism from the temperance campaigners. For this was around the time of the temperance movement’s biggest win in Australia – six o’clock closing. Alcohol had been getting a bad rap for the last decade and pressure was building for governments to do something. For a brewery with a German-born boss, it may have seemed a way to deflect some attention by kicking him to the curb. But, as history shows, it didn’t avert early closing at all.

Unlike his brother, Emil wasn’t arrested and sent to an internment camp; he was able to live in his rather grand home on five hectares. But the government felt it was not right for a German – albeit one who had become a naturalised Australian – to own so much land and so forced him to sell off two-thirds of his property. You know, because Germans were bad and all that.

Beer historian Brett J Stubbs says that, during World War I, CUB also discontinued lagers with names like Bismarck, Rheingold and Strasburg because of their German names. It would also look to downplay the Teutonic origins of lager, pointing out that Foster’s – which CUB kept – was “not manufactured or sold by Germans” and was “manufactured and controlled purely by British people”.

Not Australia’s proudest moment.

From Glen Humphries’ *‘The Slab: 24 Stories of Beer in Australia’*. For more information visit [lastdayofschool.net](http://lastdayofschool.net)



## Dampier, the Dutch and the Great South Land

by Rob Mundle

This is the story of 17th century European discovery of Australia ... and the story of the bits of the continent that were missed and were not discovered until the late 18th century, or even the 19th century.

But it is also the fascinating story of shipwrecks, buccaneers, pirates, mutinies – the sort of history that is infinitely more exciting and engaging than that of Cook, Flinders, Bass and others, and deserves to be taught to kids in late primary school, at the very least. If the stories that Bob Mundle tells so well in *'Dampier, the Dutch and the Great South Land'* were ever told to my class when I was at school, then I must have been absent that day because they certainly would have been memorable!

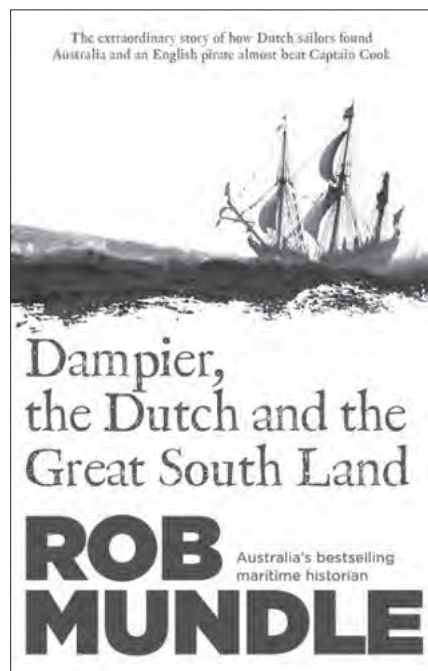
Mundle's many revelations, presented together, have created an eye-opening, fascinating story – one that Mundle even admits, somewhat curiously at the end – and not the start - of his book, resulted in his becoming *'captivated by one extraordinary fact after another. Most interesting was the realisation that over countless centuries, and for reasons unknown, this huge tract of land – Australia – was never claimed and occupied by any country, not even by the homelands of the earliest documented discoverers. It was only when the English were forced to settle there, not for any strategic reason, but because they needed a distant repository for convicts held in their grossly overcrowded prisons, that settlement of this little-known land became important. Equally extraordinary is the fact that, despite the slowness of English expansion across the continent, no other nation took the opportunity to capture any part of it. Because of this, Australia stands today as the largest single nation that is completely surrounded by sea.'*

Many of the *'discoveries'* [that Mundle documents] came through misadventure, whereby ships were wrecked and countless lives lost: the west coast of the continent was a maritime graveyard. But when it came to planned exploration, it was the Dutch that led the way, not through any real desire to find and settle the land, but in the process of seeking new markets and sources for their burgeoning spice industry based in the East Indies.

*My own discovery was that the finer detail of these planned expeditions and shipwrecks was a fascinating and little-known part of Australian history, and it had all the elements for an equally fascinating book ... [which] would document an absorbing century, from when Dutchman Willem Janszoon became the first known European to set foot on Australian soil, through to an amazing individual, Englishman William Dampier. I was surprised how few people knew about this incredibly talented pirate-cum-explorer. Most identified him as being Dutch, and few, if any knew he came so close to stealing Captain James Cook's thunder seventy years before the latter claimed the east coast of 'New Holland' in the name of His Majesty, King George III, on 22 August 1770.'*

The book is basically the story of voyages by **Willem Janszoon** in 1606 (he sailed eastward from near Batavia [now Jakarta] and into the Gulf of Carpentaria, and travelled up the western coast of Cape York, becoming the first-recorded

European to set foot on Australian soil and having the distinction of being the first European attacked [twice! – with nine of his crew being killed as a result] by Australian Aboriginals, before crossing the Torres Strait [not realising this was a passage into the Pacific Ocean] and then sailing west back to Batavia), **Dirk Hartog** in 1616 (who Mundle suggests was *'unintentionally blown into the history books'*



and who left an inscribed plate on Dirk Hartog Island, which is now the oldest-known evidence of a European landing in Australia, before he mapped 225 nautical miles of the coast up to North West Cape, near modern-day Exmouth), **Jan Carstensz** in 1623 (he surveyed the south-west coast of New Guinea and more of the Gulf of Carpentaria), **Abel Tasman** in 1642 (*'there would be a dubious honour associated with this voyage: Tasman would become the first explorer to circumnavigate what is now Australia without sighting the mainland'*) and 1644 (a 2,000 nautical mile voyage that traversed the entire length of the northern and western coasts of Australia, from almost the tip of Cape York to North West Cape), and of various voyages by **William Dampier**, including one on a ship he had captured as a pirate that was quickly renamed *Bachelors' Delight* because she was found to be carrying sixty female African slaves, and a voyage in 1699 aboard the *Roebuck* that took him along 1,000 nautical miles of the north-west coast of New Holland, during which time he undertook the first proper detailing of Australian flora and fauna, before he headed north and then sailed along the north coast of New Guinea and broadly circumnavigated New Britain and New Ireland.

Interspersed with all this are details of some equally fascinating shipwrecks that occurred on Australia's western and north-western coastlines: for example, Australia's oldest-known shipwreck, that of the *Trial* (or *Tryal*) which occurred in 1622 near Barrow Island and which resulted in its few survivors sailing two open boats on a 1,000 nautical mile



journey to Batavia; and the 1629 grounding of the **Batavia** on Morning Island in the Houtman Abrolhos group of islands that ultimately resulted in one of the most grisly mass murders in Australian history, and for which two of its lesser participants were sentenced to be left behind in Australia by those who ultimately rescued the remaining survivors of the wreck (so, effectively, becoming the first European settlers in Australia).

A bonus to me, from this book, is that it explains the origins of the names of many places in Australia and elsewhere: **Arnhem Land** after one of Carstensen's ships;

the **Solomon Islands** because of a belief that they were the location of the legendary King Solomon's Mines; the **Gulf of Carpentaria** in honour of a Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, Pieter de Carpentier; **Cape Leeuwin** (which was named by Matthew Flinders in 1801) after a ship that passed along the nearby coastline in 1622; **Roebuck Bay**, honouring William Dampier's ship; etc.

'*Dampier, the Dutch and the Great South Land*' is promoted as a 'sweeping and powerful account of Australian maritime history'. It is! And it's available in paperback from around \$20.

## **Scrummaging on the Sapphire: Early Days of Rugby in South-east New South Wales**

by Ron Grainger

Before reading '*Scrummaging on the Sapphire*' I had no idea that so many local towns on the south coast and on the Monaro once had Rugby clubs.

Between 1880 and 1930 clubs from Araluen, Batemans Bay, Mogo, Moruya, Mullenderee, Nerrigundah, Bodalla, Narooma, Tilba Tilba, Central Tilba, Wallaga Lake, Dignams Creek, Yourie, Wandella, Cobargo, Bermagui, Dry River, Brogo, Numbugga, Bemboka, Mogilla, Bega, Tathra, Kamaruka, Candelo, Toothdale, Wolumla, South Wolumla, Merimbula, Pambula, Bimbaya, Wyndham, Rocky Hall, Pipeclay Creek, Yowaka, Burragate, Towamba, Eden, Jindabyne, Cooma, Berridale, Bombala, Spring Vale (a pastoral station), Rock Flat, Nimmitabel and many others were playing competitive Rugby. Even the workers constructing the Cooma to Bombala railway line fielded a team.

On top of this, there were numerous 'social Rugby' teams fielded by local Church groups, ex-services groups, and assorted boys' clubs, plus many schools provided teams that competed with other schools in the area.

Often the competitive Rugby teams would participate in a competition that included just two or three other teams because, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, actually getting to a game (particularly if it was some distance away) was a major challenge for players: '*over the years there were a number of occasions when the late arrival of a visiting team in midwinter meant a delayed game which finished after sunset but only with the aid of car headlights which sometimes temporarily blinded the players.*'

Transport was not the only challenge that local Rugby clubs faced. Ron Grainger details the effect that World War I had on local Rugby (for example, 14 members from the Cobargo club enlisted, as did 12 from the Central Tilba club, and 10 from the Dignams Creek club), and then proceeds to outline the effect that the emergence of Rugby League had on the code in the years up until about 1930 (some local clubs changed codes several times during the 1920s; '*one of the reasons League was popular was because it was played on a Sunday, whereas Rugby was played on a Saturday, a working day for most people ... numerous Councils and clubs were criticized for allowing play on Sundays; what is now common practice was then seen by many as a "day of rest"*').

Local social histories, such as this, are such a valuable resource ... and are also extremely interesting. So Ron Grainger deserves to be highly commended for his efforts in compiling this noteworthy history.

(One challenge that Ron encountered whilst compiling this history was locating records such as Annual Reports and Minutes of individual Rugby Union and Rugby League clubs that once played on the south coast and the Monaro. He suspects some of these might still be held by families living in these areas. He would be thrilled to hear from anyone (rongrain@optusnet.com.au) with documents relating to any of these clubs.)

Copies of '*Scrummaging on the Sapphire*' are held by Bega and Cooma Libraries. They can be purchased direct from Ron (phone 6492 4923) for \$25 (\$30 posted).

Reviews by Peter Lacey. We welcome any local or Australian history (whether published in hard copy or electronic format) for consideration for review in 'Recollections'. New books should be forwarded to the Society as soon as copies become available because space for reviews in 'Recollections' is limited and, at present, the delay in publication of reviews is – regrettably – up to two to three issues.

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## Kameruka Estate

*Continued from page 10*

Vicky Small's 'Kameruka' provides many details of life on the Estate and describes some of the innovations that occurred at the time it was owned by Robert Lucas-Tooth:

'Hog raising' was introduced and James Manning [one of Robert Lucas-Tooth's partners in the Towfold Bay Pastoral Company which owned the Kameruka land before it was purchased by Robert] developed a successful formula for preserving hams and bacon ... Mr Manning's efforts were greatly acclaimed in Sydney and it was noted 'the bacons and hams of Kameruka will be well known and as highly appreciated as the rich delicacies of York and Westphalia'.

Business activities were extended by operating a flour mill with the assistance of a Mr Kirkwood. Unfortunately it was found that wheat would not grow satisfactorily and eventually it was converted into a cornflour mill [in Merimbula] by Mathew Munn in 1865.

At the dairies on the Estate the milking families were provided with a well built cottage of six large sized rooms protected from the hot Australian summers by a verandah. At the back was a detached kitchen sixteen feet square, and outside a brick oven. These homes were described as a 'comfortable and convenient homestead, that many a pioneer of civilisation on the far interior would envy or covet.'

Each family was responsible for the care and milking of one hundred cows and were paid at the rate of a penny a gallon. The milk received in the morning had to be delivered at one of the three cheese factories by 7am, and in the

afternoon milking commenced at 3pm so it could be in the cheese vats before dusk.

A 'Manipulator', the head cheesemaker, was in charge of each cheese factory ... The 'Manipulators' were recruited from America [where more scientific methods of cheese making were in use] on a two year contract basis and were paid a monthly wage. While employed a four room cottage with kitchen was provided in close proximity to the cheese factory they operated. The Estate covered the cost of their passage to Australia and when their two years had been completed a return fare was provided.



The Clock Tower, Kameruka Estate.

Early Religious Instruction was provided by Ministers calling at private homes, but in 1865 a Church of England Committee was formed and the now famous Architect, Edmund Blackett, was called upon to design the 'Holy



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Trinity' Church. As with schools, the land for the Church was provided by the Estate, and the construction was undertaken by Charles Galli at a cost of £565 ... A stipend to pay the Minister was collected quarterly at ten shillings per family.

The first school built on the Estate, Kameruka Public School, was opened in August 1879 with an enrolment of 32 pupils. A second school was provided five years later and 27 students attended Toothdale Public School which

were held in homes, enticing many to walk or ride for miles bringing their musical instruments and talents. A very memorable highlight was when Alfred Shaw brought the Eighth English Cricket Team to Australia. Whilst on tour Kameruka played host to a match between an English Eleven and Candelo Twenty-Two on the 'hay paddock'. Held over two days on 12th and 13th January 1885, the interest the occasion generated is best described by Alfred Shaw who was astounded by the attendance:



THE OFFICE, KAMERUKA. ON MILK PAY DAY.

Photograph: The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser, 25.03.1903.

'The most astonishing part of the matter was the attendance – where they came from is a mystery. At least 150 buggies and 600 horsemen and horsewomen, besides foot people, were on the ground – in all at least 2,000, and certainly almost everyone within an area of 15 miles must have been there, some coming much further, and a few so many as 100 miles, one of the players riding 100 miles through the bush, and another, with his wife, driving 90 miles.' (The

was far more convenient for those children living further afield.

A store was built for the convenience of the tenants providing a large and varied amount of household items and a Post Office was opened where all postal requirements were available. Mail was delivered weekly when the 'Postmans Track' was established from Cooma down Brown Mountain but when creeks became swollen with flood waters much of the mail arrived in a saturated state.

Due to the distance from the townships of Bega, Merimbula and Pambula the residents of Kameruka were a close-knit family and much of the entertainment was provided by picnics beside the creeks, or parties which

English won the match by an innings and 12 runs.)

In 1880, Robert laid down the foundations of the Jersey Herd in the Colonies by importing the bull 'Lucius', and the cows 'Majestic', 'Princess Royal' and 'Pretty Queen' from England. They made their home at Eridge Park ... In 1888, the herd was transferred to Kameruka and they became the nucleus of the breeding program. The herd at one time included more imported animals than any other in Australia.

£90 annually was allocated to enclose land for planting shade and shelter trees and an area was set aside for the use of employees wishing to form sporting clubs, and £22 was to be used for this purpose. The Deer Park was to be kept for game purposes only ...

Mr James Moody, who had received his training under

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the Californian experts at Mildura, was engaged as an orchardist at a salary of £125 per annum, with a new cottage to be erected for his use. His first duty was to establish a new orchard of 50 acres ... Mr Moody's only request was that the new orchard not be situated near Candelo 'owing to the ill fame of the township for pilfering'.

All the dairies were to be upgraded to satisfy the requirements of the officials under the Dairy Supervision Act and these premises, complete with milk cooling arrangements, were built at a cost of £120 each. The dairymen were also to receive new cottages as white ants had destroyed a great many of the buildings on the Estate. The new seven room homes were built of brick with a verandah out front and back, and the added luxury of a kitchen inside. There were further concessions of milk, firewood, and land for growing vegetables and housing farm animals.

To help assist in adverse weather conditions, Robert asked that irrigation be looked into and an experimental system set up. This job was handed to the Orchardist, who attacked the work eagerly. Five acres of land was ploughed, subsoiled, and sown with lucerne whilst still wet. In addition, a quarter of an acre of paspalum grass and two acres of paspalum planted on the hills amongst the natural grass were selected. These areas were to be irrigated with a pump day and night.

In addition to the irrigation experiment Mr Moody had requested another fifty acres of land for orchard, which was granted ... After much discussion, it was decided to invest in prune trees as at the time no one in the State was growing them in any large numbers. Five thousand were planted, along with four hundred pear trees. Apples, peaches, and apricots were already being grown.

To handle the crops a Central Fruit Barn, eighty feet by fifty feet, was built of brick with a large loft and cement floor.

In 1903 1,400 cows were being milked. By 1904 Kameruka

was making Derby, Stilton, Dutch and Leicester cheese. When the NSW Butter Company went into liquidation the Estate Manager attended the sale and was very pleased with the purchase of a complete plant for Gouda and Edam cheese. Imported by the Butter Company at a cost of £100,



The Troy family milking on their Kameruka Estate dairy. The cows' tails were attached to a nail to prevent them from flicking the milkers.

Mr Wren had been able to purchase it for £25. The dairy farmers had their cultivation areas increased

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another five acres for the purpose of growing pumpkins, and a competition was held for the prize pumpkin which was grown at Copley, turning the scales at 136 lbs. The farms were also fitted with manure pits, for the purpose of fertilizer, and the dairymen were paid a bonus for every pit filled and emptied.

Accommodation for single men was beginning to become a problem so management decided to build a Bachelors' Quarters, instead of erecting individual cottages. Two storey and constructed in brick, it could comfortably house sixteen men, making it more convenient for the labour to be living at their place of employment.

1911 brought some improvements for the employees. All factory hands were to have three weeks leave of absence and sick pay was to be made available at a half rate of pay for one month. A pension pay was also introduced for the older men who were eligible for the Government Old Age Pension. Sam Williams and John Doyle [John's photograph was on the front cover of Issue 3 of 'Recollections'], two men who had spent close to a lifetime on Kameruka, were to receive ten shillings each week for light duties, which usually involved raking up leaves or keeping the premises around the offices tidy.

The foundations for The Hostel [providing tourist and visitor accommodation] had been laid down by Thatcher and Son at the end of 1914, with two bricklayers working for twelve shillings a day. Situated in front of The Lodge, near the entrance to the Estate, The Hostel contained eight bedrooms and six sleepouts, with added accommodation for three Chauffeurs. In addition, there were four bathrooms and a shower, a dining room and a library, and it also sported a billiard table for the entertainment of guests ... a daily Tariff of fifteen shillings included bed and three meals, and morning tea was provided for sixpence while afternoon tea was one shilling. [The Hostel became a temporary hospital in 1919 when the Spanish Flu epidemic swept across the area; it was demolished in 1927, by then having become

unprofitable, and its bricks were used to construct corn silos on the Estate.]

An added attraction was a nine hole golf course designed by Laurie Auchterlonie, who had been responsible for designing the distinguished St Andrews golf course in England ... a charge for the use of the links was set at two shillings a day each player or ten shillings a week, with the rule that 'no golf was to be played on Sunday during the hours of the Church service at Kameruka' ... Maintenance of the course was solved when 149 wethers and ewes were purchased at twenty-five shillings and nine pence a head to keep down the grass.

Further building was undertaken on Kameruka when a Social Hall was completed, 'a splendid addition to the equipment of the Estate and should be greatly appreciated by all those who are privileged to use it.'

The real importance of the Kameruka Estate to the NSW South Coast was that it provided the district with a large scale commercial enterprise at a time when there was no other large industry in the area. This provided employment opportunities, which in turn attracted a significant population to the area.

The solid foundations that had been laid whilst Robert-Lucas Tooth owned the Kameruka Estate paid dividends for some years thereafter. Kameruka Alberta peaches and apples were much sought-after in Sydney and, during the 1920s for example, the Gold Medal for Cheesemaking at the Royal Sydney Show was won on six occasions by the Estate.

At its height the Estate milked 2,000 cows and was home to the largest Jersey herd in Australia. It operated 15 sharefarms named after villages in Kent, as well as a home dairy which for a time supplied a 'Home Farm' butter factory. Three schools were sited on the Estate to educate the children from the large families that were resident there.

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\* Back issues of *Recollections* are at [www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX](http://www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX). Insert the number of the issue instead of "X" (but for issue 3 insert 3-). Also note capital "R" is required.



When Leonard Lucas-Tooth died, ownership of Kameruka Estate passed to his two infant daughters, Rosmarie and Christine, and the Estate was run by Managers reporting to Trustees for these girls. These Trustees, however, proved unwilling to invest in the Estate at the levels that Robert had done, and were reluctant to innovate.



Advertisement 'Sydney Morning Herald' 26.10.1919

A series of unfavourable natural conditions, including floods, bushfires, fires in a number of Estate buildings, droughts, rabbit plagues, hail and strong winds which affected the orchards – and the Depression of 1929! – also significantly affected the Estate and its profitability over the years since World War I.

The enormous changes to transportation that occurred after World War II also had a significant impact on the Estate, virtually consigning the concept of, and any need for, 'a largely self-contained community based on the English agricultural estate system' in Australia to history.

From late 1958, when suppliers to the Candelo (Bimbaya) and Bemboka Co-operatives started redirecting their outputs to Kameruka, the Kameruka cheese factory started processing milk for the first time from producers outside of the Estate.

Three separate cheese factories once operated on the Kameruka Estate –Niagara, Wolumla (both of which were closed in the 1950s) and The Island. The Island factory ceased cheese production in June 1971 (although packaging of cheese on the Estate continued for a further six months) after legislation rationalising the NSW dairy industry meant that Kameruka could no longer be assured of receiving reliable milk supplies, and the Estate found that significant capital expenditure would be needed to modernise its factory to ensure it remained commercially competitive. Milk from the 14 Kameruka dairies then functioning was diverted to the Bega Co-operative and the Bega Co-Operative took over the processing of Kameruka brand cheese.

Over time, however, the focus of the Kameruka Estate gradually shifted from milk-production to the raising of

beef cattle and sheep – although in 1983 eight of its share dairies were still supplying an impressive 3.67 million litres of milk, and until 2008 the Kameruka Jersey Stud had the distinction of being Australia's oldest continuously-running dairy stud.

The Estate remained in the Tooth family for 150 years

until, in 2007, it was sold to an English shipping magnate, Giles Pritchard-Gordon. At the time of its sale it covered 3,337 acres.

After the death of Pritchard-Gordon in 2014, his widow put the property up for sale. It was purchased in recent years in two separate tranches by a neighbouring family of dairy farmers who also own the historic Oaklands farm in Pambula.

They have set to work restoring the numerous homes at Kameruka as well as the historic seven-bedroom homestead, and are running beef cattle and sheep on the property. Unfortunately, they have no current plans to re-open the Estate to visitors, although the historic Church can still be accessed from the Candelo-Bega Road. **R**

Sources:

'Gold from Gold' by Stephen B. Codrington, 1979.

'Kameruka' by Vicky Small, 1989

*Australian Dictionary of Biography*

*Jersey Journal*, December 2008/January 2009

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## FABULOUS FEEDBACK

Fiona Firth's interesting article in the August issue of 'Recollections' about the history of the Bega cemetery obviously fascinated many readers, if the amount of feedback we received is any indication. Well-known Pambula historian **Pat Raymond** was one who was prompted to contact us, providing more information about the cemetery and about the four young Ryan children who died of diphtheria in February 1895. We thank Pat for her valuable contribution.

### THE CEMETERY BUNGLE

As far back as December 1882 the people residing in the township of Bega were petitioning for the Bega general cemetery to be removed to an area away from the centre of town. One of the reasons put forward for the removal was the possible health contamination to the public when they came in contact with leachings from the burial grounds after heavy rain. It was a subject that was debated every few years and, at one stage, a site at North Bega was selected and dedicated, but this proved to be unsuitable. Finally, it was decided to move the cemetery to the Bega Common, its present-day location.

However, after years of discussion and planning, Bega was caught unprepared when it was time to bury the first person in this cemetery. In early April 1905, the Bega Municipal Council gave notice that in three months' time it would be illegal to bury anyone in the existing cemetery where the Bega High School now stands. No-one seemed to have heeded this notice and, when the three months had expired, the preparation of the grounds for the new cemetery was still incomplete. The roads to the cemetery had been formed but the laying out of the internal allotments was still waiting to be done.

When James Pike passed away in the Bega Hospital on the 10th June 1905, the undertaker, Mr. E. Zingel, was in a dilemma as to where he should bury the deceased. He commissioned the grave digger to dig a grave in the old cemetery but the Inspector of Nuisances, Inspector Ellis, came along and told the man to desist, as he was liable to prosecution and a fine of £5. Application was then made to the Mayor for permission to bury Pike in the old cemetery but, of course, consent could not be given to a breach of the bylaws.

The only option then was to use the new cemetery. But nobody was sure where the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, or the Methodist portions lay. The undertaker was placed in a dilemma, but finally Mr. Jas Jauncey, one of the Church of England trustees, was located, and permission was obtained from Mr. Blomfield, Secretary to the Trustees, for the body to be interred. As the ground had not been properly laid out at this stage, there was no alternative other than for the grave to be dug away in a remote corner. The whole proceeding was very unseemly, and the question was, who was most culpable in the matter – the Municipal Council or the trustees of the various churches?

The *'Southern Star'* on the 14th June 1905 writes *'The Municipal Council should at least have seen that the new*

*ground was all ready for burials before it finally closed the old cemetery. The churches, too, have displayed woeful apathy over the question, and we believe that only one of them was represented (and that by accident) when the surveyor laid out the various portions. Such apathy is truly deplorable in a matter so vital to everyone in the community. What would have been the indignation, had the unfortunate corpse in question not been that of a stranger may well be imagined, but the circumstance should be quite sufficient to direct public attention to the sad state of things existing. In our 20th century enlightenment, such a bungle should not be possible, the spectacle of people having to run from pillar to post in order to get a place to lay the remains of a fellow man being disgusting.'*



Old gravestones moved from the old Bega Cemetery to the new Bega Cemetery, positioned near the top of the hill at the southern entrance to the town.

Poor James Pike's death caused quite a stir in Bega and the people involved in the decision as to where he should be buried were relieved that this undignified happening involved a 'stranger', and not one of their own! However, James Pike aged 58 years, the son of Thomas & Ettie Pike who was born in Parramatta, was a well-known former hotel licensee and farmer who had resided in the Eden and Towamba district from at least the early 1870s. On 28 April 1875 he married Sabina Day at Rocky Hall according to the rites of the Church of England. The couple remained childless and in 1901 Sabina Pike sought a dissolution of the marriage on the grounds of adultery. What a shame to think that upon his death, James didn't receive the respect that was due to him. Today there is no headstone over his grave to identify him as being the first person to be buried in the 'new' Bega Cemetery.

It is interesting to note that Sabina Pike was a very forward-thinking business woman of the day and, at the turn of the century, she was the hotelkeeper of the Great Southern Hotel in Eden. In 1904 she bought an acre block of land in Imlay Street, Eden as it was her intention to build a grand new hotel which had the capacity to cater for the increasing tourist industry. This hotel was opened in the same year that James Pike died, and she named it the Hotel Australasia. This is the same building that has been surrounded by controversy over the last few years following

its purchase by the Bega Valley Shire Council and with its subsequent sale recently falling through. Eden people who are passionate about their history want the building to be saved and for its frontage to be restored to its former glory.

Information from 'Southern Star' and 'Bega Standard' newspapers and the 1871-1918 Bega Courthouse Burial Index.

#### EXHUMATIONS FROM THE OLD BEGA CEMETERY

Up until at least 1926 spouses still had the right to be interred in the old Bega Cemetery if their husband or wife was already buried there. The first person to be exhumed from the old cemetery and interred in the new burial ground was James Gee, a 48 year-old man who died on 8 September 1865. He arrived in Australia in 1833 on board the convict ship 'The Camden' and was granted his pardon in 1839. In 1855 James Gee was amongst the first land holders in the Bega district. His widow, Janet Robinson Gee, died at Tarraganda on 5 June 1912, aged 90 years. She was buried in the Presbyterian Section of the new cemetery.

Three months later the family of James and Janet organised for M.J. Ryan, an undertaker, to remove James' coffin from the old cemetery and to place it beside his wife, enabling their parents to be reunited in death. It was surprising to find that after 48 years of being buried, the coffin was still in a good state of preservation.

Whilst the location of their graves is known (Presbyterian Section Row C Plot 25 and 26), sadly there are no headstones

to show the public where they are buried.

Fiona Firth, in her article in the August 2018 issue of 'Recollections', mentions the surviving memorial to the four Ryan children who died in February 1895 from diphtheria. They were the children of James and Alice Ryan who resided in Rawlinson St., Newtown.

Their remains were actually exhumed from the old cemetery, were removed in the second week of June 1932, and were interred in the new Bega Cemetery. In this instance very little remained of their four coffins or bodies. Their original headstone was placed over their last resting place in the new cemetery. No doubt the aged parents had made a decision that they would like to be buried with their small children.

Sadly, three months after the children's remains were removed to the new cemetery, another son of James and Alice died in Sydney. He was Peter John Ryan, aged 34 years, and his body was brought back to Bega to be buried next to his four siblings.

The parents both passed away in 1936, Alice on 23 August and James soon after on 14 November, and they lie in the same plot as their four young children. **R**

Information from 'Bega Budget', 'Bega Standard' and 'Bega District News' newspapers and from 'A Long Way From Silver Creek - A Family Memoir' by Margaret Gee.

The information on 'The Cemetery Bungle' was first published in 'The Valley Genealogist' Volume 15 No 3.

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## Bendethera Caves

(By R. King)

Until twenty-three years ago the Government of New South Wales thought fit to employ a caretaker of the Bendethera Caves, situated well up on the mountain-side approximately thirty-five miles west of Moruya, and a similar distance south of Araluen, and from four to six miles from the Shoalhaven River.

The interior of the caves, according to visitors who should know, are quite equal to the famous Jenolan Caves if they were cared for in a similar manner, but owing to their inaccessible position, very few people have visited them of late years. This can be verified by the names and dates on the walls.

Since the Government has abandoned the Caves to the mercies of all and sundry, stalactites and stalagmites have been broken off and souvenired, and in many cases the beauties of nature have been ruthlessly damaged and destroyed.

The Caves may be reached from Moruya via the Burro, Black Hill, and Bendethera Mountain, but only on foot or by pack-horse. The same conditions apply if either Araluen or Krawarree is made the starting point.

The scenery, however, on either route, would well repay one for the long and tedious climb to the mountain tops, which, in some cases, reach an elevation of over 4000 feet.

The track from Moruya leads one along the Braidwood Road for a distance of seven miles, where the river is crossed, and the 'Burra' is then the guiding hand for a distance of two miles, until the last outpost of civilisation west of Moruya is reached. From there on to the old Bendethera homestead, a distance of from twenty to twenty-five miles, the track permits of walking in single file only, sometimes climbing steep spurs, at others winding round the mountainside for miles, but upwards, ever upwards, reaching the top of "Black Hill" and passing just under the "Trig. Station," and then down, down, down to Diamond Creek, and still further down to Coondella, where camp was pitched for the second night, and where the dingoes' howl ushered in the darkness.

Leaving Coondella in the early morning, and after crossing the creek five times within a mile, we reach the foot of Bendethera Mountain, and with tent, blankets, and food sufficient for a week's stay, the voluntary breasting of a mountain 4,000 feet high requires not only energy but a good deal of enthusiasm.

But lo! The health-giving influence of such a trip easily compensates for the temporary strain imposed on one in negotiating the mountain.

The third day's journey of from eight to ten miles takes eight hours to complete, including lunch on the mountain top before descending to the old Bendethera homestead on the western side of the Duea River.

The name "Bendethera" was a household word in the early days for miles and miles north, east, south and west of the station, for was it not under the giant cliffs just below the homestead that the Clarks camped the night after sticking up the store at Mudinalong and causing a great commotion in the township of Araluen while a fashionable ball was in

progress, the gents, being dressed in moleskins with silk sashes dangling from their waists?

Bendethera — the home of the George family. Sixty-five years ago Mr. Joe George made it his home, and today Mr. Randolph George holds it as a cattle station; and thanks to his courtesy and kindness, much valuable and appreciated information concerning the old place was made available to the writer, and many old-time stories were told round the camp fire during our stay.

To show the grit and determination of the late Mr. George, one has only to visit the station and there stands a reaper, and binder, hay rakes, waterwheel, drays, and other machinery, all lowered over the mountain-side with block and tackle.

The flats adjoining the river were cultivated— and, mind you, irrigated, and the wheat grown and milled into flour on the spot. The irrigation drains still carry the water in some cases, but as cultivation has ceased the water is allowed to flow back into the creek.

Mr. George was originally the owner of one hundred and fifty pack-horses, with which he used to pack maize and other goods from Moruya to Araluen in the early days when the town boasted thirty-eight hotels.

The official gold returns from the Araluen field were £90,000,000.

He was informed of the existence of the Bendethera flats by a blackfellow, and decided to investigate. On his way up the Duea River, accompanied by his faithful henchman, he was surprised to discover another black and his gin in the company of a white man in charge of horses, and when they saw Mr. George coming they saddled up and set off at full speed up the river. Mr. George also set sail to see what was doing, and after running them down he discovered, hobbled out on one of the river flats, a mare that had been stolen from him some time previously, and it was to get this mare out of sight that the blacks made off at the first appearance of Mr. George.

The Caves, as already stated, are situated well up on the mountain-side and at the head of Con Creek, "Con" meaning "good" in the language of the aborigines of that part. And it was to this creek, which derives its source from the limestone country around the Caves, that the natives travelled many miles to partake of the water as a remedy for the various ills to which they were susceptible, and every member of our party will bear testimony to the judgment of the blacks as regards the quality of the water.

There are several caves of different dimensions in the limestone belt.

What is known as the old cave was the first to be discovered. This is a small cave at the foot of the mountain, and is surrounded by "blue bush." It is supposed to be of very great depth, but is full of water, and undoubtedly travels for some distance, for lower down the water comes straight out of the mountain like coming out of a pipe-head.

On the mountain-side there is also the "Fig Tree Cave,"



and further south again the “Gins Cave.”

It was to the “Gins Cave” that all native couples were condemned to spend their honeymoon, and when the time expired the lord of the manor, with his gin, came down to earth, and they were then admitted to the “San Hedrin” of the tribe.

The Bendethera Caves proper penetrate the mountain to a distance of ten or twelve chains. The ladders originally placed in position by the Government have rotted away, and one has to climb from the lower to the upper levels by means of a wire rope, and owing to the greasy nature of one’s foothold this requires a good deal of skill and dexterity to accomplish.



Bendethera Homestead, Deua River Valley NSW, c. 1910.

The area known as Bendethera has also been known as ‘Bendethra’ (of Welsh origin), ‘Bendithera’ and at least in one instance ‘Bendithey’. Two homesteads stood on the Bendethera property at different times, but neither has survived.

On entering the caves, the elephant in the centre first attracts one’s attention. Then on the right are the Ionic and Doric columns, with a beautiful chandelier hanging over the entrance on the left. And so on right through the caves one admires many beautiful works of nature, untouched and unspoilt by human hand.

Two days were spent at the caves.


Being new to the novelty of cave exploring, we were somewhat dubious on the first day about tackling the wire rope to the upper reaches, but our genial young friend, Mick Hart, of Moruya, undertook to pilot us through on the second occasion, and to him we express our hearty appreciation for the enjoyment derived from his company and for sacrifices he made in order to make our trip exceptionally pleasant.

Four days and five nights were spent in camp. On Monday and Thursday the caves occupied the whole of our time. Tuesday was spent on the upper reaches of the Deua River, and for the sportsman who happened to be lucky enough to traverse these parts in summer, perch fishing would provide

him with entertainment sufficient to meet the most exacting requirements.

Wednesday saw us making downstream in the direction of Araluen, in order to view the cairns marking the last resting places of two notable celebrities of the early tribes.

In the early days of Bendethera the caves were visited by many parties on horseback, coming in mostly from Araluen or Krawarree side, but since they are so far out of reach of the motor-car, and horses having been relegated to the past, visitors are few and far between! Who knows but what the demands of

tourists of the present day may yet see the caves again under Government control and the old Bendethera homestead pulsating with life, and extending the hand of welcome to distinguished visitors. 

*Shoalhaven News and South Coast District Advertiser, 14.6.1930*

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## Focus on Bermagui

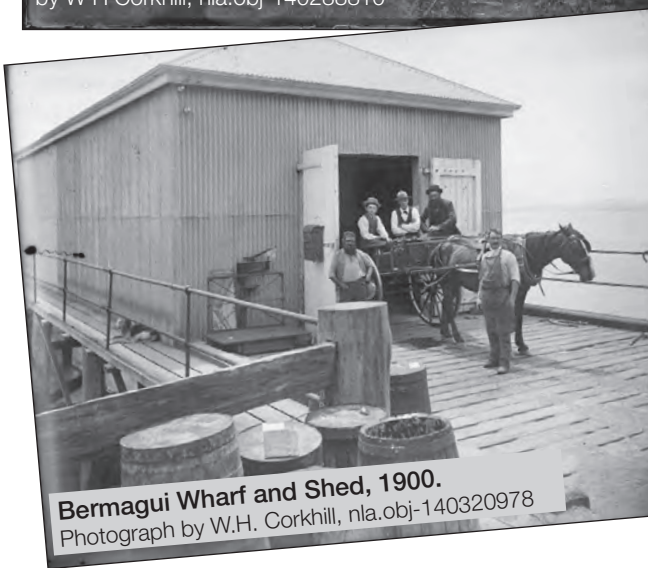
The port at Bermagui was established in the 1830s primarily to serve the local dairy farmers. By the 1840s it was used to ship tallow from the boiling down works which were located near the mouth of the Bermagui River. The town, planned in 1867, quickly developed into a fishing harbour and became a major port from which railway sleepers were shipped to Sydney. Remains of the wharf shown in these photographs can be seen off Pacific Drive near the Bermagui War Memorial.



The Wharf at Bermagui, c. 1897. Photograph by W H Corkhill, nla.obj-140288810



The Beach House, Bermagui South, 1910. Photograph by W H Corkhill, nla.obj-140293315



Bermagui Wharf and Shed, 1900. Photograph by W.H. Corkhill, nla.obj-140320978



Bermagui 1949. nla.obj-230971402



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