



THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

J A N U A R Y

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Our Musicians, the talented members of the Sutherland Light Orchestra, played music we were all delighted to hear and it was a pleasure to hear the children joining-in the singing of the Christmas Carols. A lot of willing hands and hard work made this night the success it was and to all who helped in any way, we say "thank you".

I believe that Members would have been quite happy to think back to such an enjoyable night without considering whether or not a profit was likely. Everyone looked so contented - just sitting back, in good company, listening to restful music and occasionally turning their heads to watch the reflections of twinkling lights in the waters of Kogarah Bay.

Can we doubt that long, long ago William Carss sat just where we did - and perhaps watched as one or two oil lamps shone from windows of the very-few lonely homes on Rocky Point and were reflected in Kogarah Bay - where the 'plopping' of jumping fish and the gentle lapping of the waves was all that could be heard - unless it was the grunting of bandicoots as they dug for tasty grubs.

Perhaps, from the surrounding forest, koala bears came silently over the tree-tops - just as I am sure that opossums sometimes raced around the tiled roof. And just beyond the light from the windows, wallabies quietly gathered any scraps missed by the fowls.

But William Carss would have found it hard to believe that a light orchestra would have been spread along the length of his front verandah, dispensing pleasant music to a host of people which must surely have included some who envied the man who, long, long ago, selected this beautiful but lonely spot in which to enjoy his retirement.

But reverting to the question of a profit, although we might not have been expecting any, there is no doubt that it was with great pleasure that our efficient Treasurer, Mrs. G. Johns, was able to announce (when she at last recovered from the shock!) that it was THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS AND TWO CENTS.

The Christmas Hamper competition was won by Ticket No. 459 (Miss Nicholson) of Kogarah. The second Ticket (No. 653) was held by Mrs. R. Jones of Sylvania. The lucky winner of the 'door prize' was Mr. Shears - No. 99.

The singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' brought this splendid night - and our activities for 1975 - to a successful close.

Thought for the Month: The folk who are the nicest to be with are the nicest to remember.

Sylvia Kelly.

Social Secretary.

In connection with our Christmas Night, Mrs. Sylvia Kelly, our Social Secretary, has thanked all our grand helpers so charmingly - as she always remembers to do. And in this we all gratefully join. But who organised this wonderful night? And to whom else do the rest of us gladly say a very sincere "thank you"? To Sylvia Kelly and her Committee. For without their organisation and hard work we wouldn't have enjoyed this, and many other happy events. So, a great big "Thank you" from all of us to Sylvia and her helpers. (Applause).

Museum Report.

December has been a busy month in regard to Museum maintenance, with six openings in the past four weeks. This, of course, included the Society's Christmas Night, when many members and their friends spent some time looking at the displays and making purchases in the Museum and Art Centre. Our sales on this occasion reached nearly ninety dollars.

A number of new paintings, bark pictures and dried flower arrangements have added colour and interest to the art centre and continue to add to our funds by way of commission on all sales.

During the month we have received many items donated to the Museum by Mrs. H. Button. These are acknowledged with thanks and will be listed in the next Newsletter.

In 1976 Australia commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of its nationhood. An Exhibit is being prepared for the Museum relating to the commemoration and any suitable material such as photographs and documents associated with Federation and the first Parliament would be appreciated.

Yet another member of the English family has enjoyed a visit to the Museum recently and may be able to contribute further material to the display.

Our last opening of our Museum for 1975 was on the 28th December, when there was a good attendance of visitors, many from other States and countries.

We hope that the Museum will continue to improve and prosper in 1976 and wish all members A Happy New Year.

Museum Roster:

	<u>On duty</u>	<u>To open Museum.</u>
January	4th - Mr. & Mrs. R. Diment	Mr. J. Veness
"	11th - Mrs. J. James & Miss D. MacLean	Mr. J. Lean
"	18th - Mr. & Mrs. J. Howard	Miss C. McEwen
"	25th - Mrs. G. Johns & Mrs G. Taylor	Mrs. G. Johns.
February	1st - Mrs. A. McOnie & Miss M. Foley	Mr. J. Veness
"	8th - Mrs. M. Grieve & Mr. K. Grieve	Mr. J. Lean
"	15th - Mr. & Mrs. E. Schweikert.	Miss C. McEwen

If the date given is inconvenient, please telephone as soon as possible.

Gwen Lean

Museum Convener.

ODDS & ENDS OF NEWS FROM 1867

Bushfire at Vacluse. A telegram was received at about half past two o'clock by Mr. Bown, the Superintendent of the Fire Insurance Brigade to the effect that Mr. Wentworth's house at Vacluse was in imminent danger from a bushfire. Mr. Bown started off at once in a cab, and the engine was despatched immediately afterwards. On arriving there it was found that the fire had penetrated the garden surrounding the house. By the united efforts of Pilot Gibson and two beats-crews from Watson's Bay, the fire was kept from the house. The house was, however, in danger for two or three hours and it was as much as Pilot Gibson and his men

could do to prevent it encroaching on the fencing, garden and trees. The firemen poured some streams of water on the trees and prevented them from catching alight. The engine, in charge of some of the Brigade, was stationed near a well all night with the hose laid on in readiness in case of any emergency that may arise. The house, which is insured for £5000, is at present in charge of Mr. Wentworth's servants.

Death in the gaol. An inquiry is being held before the City Coroner at the Darlinghurst Gaol respecting the death of a prisoner named John Horton, aged 17 years. Dr. Aaron stated that the deceased was admitted into gaol and he ordered him a warm bath and a stimulating mixture which was kept for the purpose. He found him insensible on the following morning and ordered some brandy and some mustard poultice to the calves of the legs and back of the neck. Also some brandy and beef-tea were given to him. Deceased died the same afternoon. The insane cell was the place where all prisoners of unsound mind were placed in the first instance. He considered that deceased had been without sufficient nourishment for some time and the cause of death was serious apoplexy brought on by drink, exposure and privation. Verdict: "Died from natural causes, accelerated by intemperance".

Outlawry of Clarke and Connell. It will be in the recollection of our readers that shortly after the outrage at Nerrigundah, when Constable O'Grady lost his life, two bushrangers, named Thomas Clarke and Patrick Connell, who were sworn to as having taken part in the murder were summoned to surrender under the provisions of the "Felons' Apprehension Act" and for the murder of Constable O'Grady. The time allowed them to surrender has expired, and as neither of them, so far as we are aware has surrendered, they are now outlawed, and anyone finding them can destroy them without challenge. This may seem to be harsh treatment, even for a murderer, but it would seem to be the only effectual way of putting down highway robbery and murderous violence.

Large Snake. Mr. George F. M'Donald, of Glenmore, informs us that last week he killed a large snake of the diamond variety. The reptile measured fully ten feet and from its inside were taken several pounds of clear white fat. The fat is, we believe, regarded as an excellent liniment in cases of bruise and sprain. - Maitland Ensign.

The Boiling-down value of a horse. The Tumut Times says - Now, when horses are almost unsaleable, and when sold from the pound realise the ridiculous rates of from 6d (5c) upwards, it may be satisfactory to their owners to hear that there is a prospect of their soon possessing a proper commercial value. One of our enterprising breeders upon the Murrumbidgee, in the neighbourhood of Gundagai last week experimentalised upon a fat but otherwise useless horse as to the profit of boiling down. After the process had been carefully carried out, he realised fifteen gallons of pure oil, that he readily sold at the first offer in Gundagai, for currying purposes at 6/6d (65c). To this is to be added the price of the hide, the value of the hair, the glue from the hoofs and bones for manure. All this would be realised if the process was carried out in a systematic manner. With this fact before them, how long will our horse-breeders continue to throw away the property within their reach.

. . . V. S. S.

WAITING FOR THE PUNT

By V. S. Smith.

Can you remember the time when, for countless years, scores of people sat in the hot sun - or cold wind and rain - in sulkies, buggies and carts and waited for their turn to cross the Georges River on the Tom Ugly's Punt?

The distance to the opposite shore (and home-sweet-home) was short but the waiting-time might be very long indeed. And the worse the weather the longer the wait. Many an unhappy family of returning picnickers, perhaps including young children, found themselves caught, by an unexpected change in the weather, confined to the restricted space in a horse-drawn vehicle with only rugs as inadequate shelter from falling rain.

In the early morning, blue skies and the warm spring air had proved an irresistible temptation for a drive to one of those delightful picnic areas 'over the river'. Even during those early hours the traffic was considerable and fairly long delays were experienced while the punts were loaded to their limited capacity. The customary breezes usually felt near the approaches to the punt were not sufficient to temper the heat of the sun and all indications were that the day was to become 'a scorcher'.

But once the punt was skilfully loaded, every square foot of space being used, the gate was closed and the engine started. The wire tightened and the large revolving wheel drew the punt forward. As the wire appeared above the surface it could be seen that it was heavily laden with masses of floating seaweed which had caught in its length. The dripping wire passed along the length of the deck and disappeared over the stern. The few passengers stood at one side and seemed to occupy their time watching the schools of yellow-brown jelly-blubbers as with their rhythmic expansion and contraction they propelled themselves past the bulk of the punt and majestically proceeded on their trip to nowhere.

As the punt approached the ramp at Sylvania, the drivers of two cars up near the gate got out and inserted their starting-handles. Then, with a superior air, coldly ignored by the drivers of horse-drawn vehicles, they gave a few brisk turns which had the effect of causing the motors to start with a tremendous roar and to emit clouds of blue smoke from their exhausts. Horses standing behind the motors became very restive and the drivers were relieved when the gate swung open.

A greatly increased roar falsely proclaimed that the cars were racing up the steep incline from the punt. But the truth was that one car, its engine roaring madly, slowly managed to overcome the forces of gravity and glided away at a snail's pace. The other, following a series of splutters, subsided into silence. The driver was perhaps a bit nervous and unaccustomed to the continuous blasting of motor-horns and sirens as impatient drivers at the rear gave vent to their disapproval at being held up. "Wh-r-r, wh-r-r" went the motor. "No good mate. Give it another go with the handle" was the proffered advice. Then the driver again fumbled around in his box of tools and accessories and gave the starting-handle another series of turns. A cheer went up as the stubborn car at last started. But often that cheer came too soon.

If there happened to be a low tide, there was a steep climb from the deck of

the punt to the roadway and this was the cause of many an engine stalling. Owing to inefficient brakes, some of those cars which lacked the power to ascend the very steep rise, were inclined to move back towards the punt and bump into the line of vehicles which followed.

When the motorists finally sorted out their inefficient cars, the drivers of sulkies, buggies and carts gave pitying smiles as, with much exertion, their horses successfully pulled their loads from the punt and proceed towards their destination.

When the selected picnic-area was reached, the horse was tied up with a box chaff under a shady tree and the family settled. The warmth of the day proved ideal for swimming and the picnickers gave little thought to the weather. All their attention was directed to the surf which the warm weather made more enticing than ever and it was only when it was time for lunch that dark rain-clouds were noticed. As lunch proceeded a cool breeze sprang up and the clouds suddenly obscured the sun.

Now the air was definitely colder and dad decided that perhaps, as a precaution, it might be advisable to harness the horse and make towards home. The trouble was, that hundreds of other picnickers, spread far and wide over the Sutherland Shire, suddenly got similar ideas and soon a collection of all manner of vehicles were plodding along the roads leading in the direction of the punt. Then a sudden gust of wind, accompanied by large spots of rain, startled our picnic party as somewhere between Sutherland and the river - followed by hundreds of others - they found themselves brought to a stop at the tail-end of a queue which, at half-hourly intervals, moved slowly forward as, up at the top of the queue the limited space on the punt was filled. Then everyone settled down for a further wait while the punt was drawn across the river, slowly unloaded its burden, took aboard those waiting and steamed back to Sylvania.

In the early 1920's the capacity of the punt was limited to four vehicles, but as motor-cars became more popular a brand-new punt which would hold 20 vehicles was installed. Within two hours of its arrival it had collided with the small punt and was placed out of order for some time. Although this new punt represented a vast improvement in the transport of vehicles across the river, the rapid introduction of cars and improvements in road-construction very soon caused a 20-car punt to prove totally inadequate and the queues of waiting vehicles grew longer and longer.

Fortunately, there were not many accidents caused by bad weather, probably because the punt-masters did not take any risks. But there were a sprinkling of mishaps due to other causes.

One particularly dark night a party of motorists on the Sylvania side drove cheerfully down the ramp - where only a single oil-lamp gave an un-noticed warning - and plunged into the river and sank. In the pitch darkness the driver was drowned.

Then, on a bright sunny day, the last car to move on to the punt from the Tom Ugly's side contained, besides the driver, his wife and a five-week-old baby. When about fifty feet from the ramp at Sylvania the various drivers, including the husband, got out for the purpose of cranking up the cars. But this particular car had apparently been left in gear and it moved backwards. Gaining speed, it went through the gate, then across the tail-flap, and with the terrified mother still inside, toppled over into the river which was

about twenty feet deep at that spot. Mother and child sank with the car, but after a few seconds they floated to the surface, a few feet apart. the engineer and a passenger dived in and they were soon rescued and given medical attention which proved successful.

On another occasion a motorist got out of his car, walked down the front flap and dived in. He was immediately lost to view and amid cries of "man overboard" the punt was stopped. The man suddenly rose to the surface and was dragged on board. "Why did you do that?" demanded the punt-master. "Well", replied the dripping passenger, "I've just won myself a fiver." It appears that his action was no accident but the means of winning himself a bet of five pounds.

Then there was the instance where the master of a punt leant over to detach something from the wire, when he fell overboard. The punt, completely unattended, proceeded on its way and the unfortunate puntmaster swam after it and finally managed to clamber aboard as it approached the landing-ramp. He stopped the engine just in time to prevent the punt running ashore.

On a warm evening, when the weather was fine and there was a steady half-hour movement of traffic towards the punt, the crowds forming the queue were usually in good spirits. Vendors of sweets and fruit walked along the length of the queue, doing a brisk trade. while here and there roadside stalls, perhaps piled high with water-melons, had their customers. Perhaps you might find your place in the queue to be near a lorry loaded with singing picnickers, accompanied by a concertina or other musical instrument. If there happened to be a sprinkling of fair singere, the time passed quickly and more pleasantly - and the occupants of nearby vehicles added their voices to the harmony.

But when storms arose, perhaps accompanied by an icy southerly-buster, and wild winds interrupted the punt-timetable, it was an unhappy time for the cold and wet picnickers. Describing one such incident, a newspaper reported that "when the wind arose the waves were soon washing over the deck of the small punt, holding four cars. It safely reached the Sydney side and then the off-shore flap, which had been madly jumping up and down on the waves, broke away from its chains and sank. So that punt was out of commission. The bigger punt, holding 20 cars, was on the Sylvania side and the punt-master, with the memory of last week's mishap, when the wire snapped and the punt drifted helplessly in midstream for hours, was afraid to risk the trip. Consequently, for a period of two hours that punt remained at its moorings and, all that time, the line of cars up towards Sutherland grew longer than ever. Some motorists, tired of waiting, turned their cars and proceeded to the Taren Point punt, only to find that it, too, was waiting for the gale to subside".

On such a day, police were stationed at Bulli and warned motorists, as dusk approached, that cars already waiting in the queue near Sutherland would probably not reach the punt before midnight and a trip through Liverpool appeared to be the only way to avoid a very long wait.

These not infrequent interruptions to the punt-timetables gave to those held up in the stationary line of vehicles a great opportunity to ponder how - and at what point - a bridge or causeway might be constructed to overcome the difficulty. The annoyance was so great that there was no dearth of ideas as to the very best methods of providing a solution. Each motorist had his own pet idea.

The dissatisfaction was so great that it is just as well the authorities did not yield to some of the hair-brained schemes which, in desperation, were advanced and in a few short years would have proved to have been totally inadequate.

Heavy pressure was put on the Sutherland Council for the construction of a Causeway between Connells Point and Oyster Bay, Sylvania. It was said that a prominent civil engineer had published a statement that in the 1980's there would be hundreds of factories along the foreshores of the Georges River, surrounded by thousands of homes and to cater for these such a causeway was necessary. Federal Members of Parliament had promised to give the plan their support and it was claimed that the scheme would be invaluable in the case of defence manoeuvres. Fortunately, the Council was considering a joint water-supply and vehicular bridge over the river at Como and the request was deferred.

Then, away back in 1920, there was a suggestion that the Como Railway Bridge might be used for motor traffic in between the running of trains. And how silly this sounds now! There was a suggestion that the road on the Sydney side could be extended for $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile and that leading to Cronulla and district for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to gain access to the bridge. Slow traffic, such as horse-driven vehicles and heavy lorries would be confined to the punts so that lighter motor traffic, which was faster, could use the deck of the bridge when the necessary alterations had been made. It was suggested that with the use of gates and a signalling system, the interruptions to motor traffic by trains could be limited to ten minutes! The need was so great that even this idea seemed feasible. It would furnish a route unaffected by wind and rain - and nobody thought of the difficulties nor of the very limited space which would be provided by the single-line railway bridge.

Then, advanced by a leading city newspaper, The Sunday News, appeared a final equally hair-brained scheme which, at the time, sounded very attractive to the many who had experienced up to a four hours' wait in the cold and rain before embarking - and then joining with other rather fearful passengers as they gazed anxiously at the taut wire which had never before looked so frail.

It now, in a wide arc, guided this tossing, wind-swept punt as it proceeded towards the seemingly far-away shore which was only dimly visible through the rain - and we contemplated what prospects one had of survival if the wire snapped.

Far-fetched, you might say. But recollect some of the semi-gales which have lashed across the exposed reaches of the Georges River - and remember that at the times upon which the wire actually DID break, the weather was dead calm.

The article in The Sunday News pointed out that in one of the secluded bays in Sydney Harbour were moored five wooden ships that were owned by the Australian Government. Their history was interesting - but pathetic. Many frantic attempts had been made to dispose of them but they had proved to be a drag on the market. But, it was suggested, they could now be made to serve a useful purpose.

The scheme put forward was to use these ships as supports for a bridge across the Georges River at Tom Ugly's Point. It was contended that similar bridges in America had been built with excellent results, so why not here?

The five ships, robbed of engines and fittings, should be anchored between the shores and the bridge built over them. The girders and roadway would be articulated and at the approaches sliding ramps would be introduced to compensate for the rise and fall of the tide. The mooring of the hulls would present some difficulty owing to the varying water levels but this could be overcome by driving permanent dolphins fore and aft of each with long cable connections. This would ensure that the ships remained practically stationary in any change in the tide.

The hulls would need to be coppered below the water-line to preserve them. Otherwise, the cost of fitting them to use as supports would not be very much.

Repairs and upkeep would be light as the origin, of which the vessels were built would last better without paint. For the spans, trussed girders of fairly light construction would be used, each span being roughly 250 feet long. The roadway would be 20 feet wide.

If the bridge were commenced at once, it was said that it could be completed within six months. The cost, including the purchase of the ships, was estimated at twenty thousand pounds (40,000 dollars). The maintenance cost would be comparatively small. say \$1000 per year.

The official figures for the year 1921 showed that nearly 30,000 vehicles crossed on the punt. It was thought that if the ship-bridge was constructed, this number would probably increase to 100,000. By imposing a toll of 10c per vehicle, the bridge could be made pay for itself even if only 40,000 vehicles used it, for the amount of the toll would then be \$4000.

The yearly financial position would at least be this:-

Cost of bridge:	\$40,000
Revenue from tolls:	4,000
Interest at 5%:	2,000
Maintenance (for year):	1,000
Transfer to sinking fund:	1,000

Until the decision to erect the present Georges River Bridge was finally decided upon, this ambitious plan for a bridge of ships caused much attention and provided a fresh topic of conversation for those Waiting for the Punt.

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