



# THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

MARCH

1976

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The Kogarah Historical Society meets on the Second Floor of the Civic Centre, Belgrave Street, Kogarah, on the second Thursday in each month.

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Our Annual General Meeting will be held on the second floor of the Civic Centre at 8 p.m. on Thursday, 11th March. Reports and Financial Statements will be presented and the Office Bearers and Committee for 1976 elected.

Then, if the Meeting doesn't take too long, we have fifty minutes of colour film. There is "Gardens of Britain" which shows the development of British Gardens from the 17th century to the present day -- and many attractive gardens are visited. Then, in "Windows on the Past" we see a Maritime Museum, a Science Museum, an Aeroplane Museum and a Childhood Museum. This is a selection designed to bring the past to life. We finish with "Passenger No. 1" -- which reminds us how we enjoyed "Steam" at our January Meeting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS -- Commencing in February, the postage on our Newsletters was increased from 9 cents to 15 cents and the Management Committee has recommended that Subscriptions be increased for the year from 1st February 1976 to 31st January 1977 to \$2.00 for ordinary members and \$1.50 for Pensioners and Students.

You will notice that we have purchased envelopes for the posting of Newsletters, thus enabling us to save the cost of the printing and supply of wrappers and achieving a reduction in postage from 17 cents to 15 cents. The supply and printing of the envelopes cost less than 1-1/3 cents each (\$128.00 for 10,000) and they shall last between five and six years.

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HUNTER VALLEY TRIP - 20th March -(Saturday). There are only a few seats available for this trip. The Coach will leave the Civic Centre at 7.30 a.m. and return about 7 p.m. This pleasant day will include Morning Tea at the Oaks - Lunch - and an inspection of a Winery, if required, a visit to Grossman House, Maitland and finish at Gosford Leagues' Club for a Coffee Break before proceeding home. The cost is \$10.00 (The cost of Morning Tea and Fee of Inspection of Grossman House - 30 cents - are not included).

Norman Lindsay Home -- It was announced at our last Meeting that we were having a Bus Tour and Inspection of the Norman Lindsay Home on Sunday 2nd May. The cost is \$3.50 plus 80 cents inspection of the home (or 50 cents for pensioners) - the bus leaves the Civic Centre at 10 a.m. - please bring a Picnic Lunch. All seats on the bus have been booked but we would like names for a reserve list - perhaps we could fill a second bus!

STREET STALL - KOGARAH - FRIDAY 20th August. This date has been confirmed and we would now like you all to get busy so that we can have a well-stocked stall. Every little helps!

Thought for the Month - Worry is like a rocking-chair

It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere.

Sylvia Kelly.

THANKS! For consenting to "stand-by" in case they are needed, we are indebted to our Hon. Consultants - Mr. Peter Orlovich, Mr. A. H. Brewer and Mr. W. Foster we express our grateful thanks! Members will be happy to know that Mr. W. Foster is to be our Speaker later in the year.

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

The year past has been one in which our Society has continued to grow in Membership and effectiveness.

This has been in no small part due to the enthusiasm of our officers and Committee Members who have worked to provide the means by which all members can participate in the various activities of the Society.

This year too has allowed us to build up our resources financially and physically for the year ahead which promises to be a very interesting and challenging one. In it we hope to embark on a number of new projects, among which are -

1. The publication in booklet form of articles which have appeared in past issues of our Newsletter.
2. The initiation of plans to enlarge the display areas available at Carss' Cottage.
3. The first steps into radio broadcasting.

These are some of the activities we look forward to this year. To enable a wider participation by Society Members in these activities it is proposed to increase the number of members on the Museum Committee to enable all the needs of the Museum to receive the attention they deserve.

Carss' Cottage continues to grow in popularity and great credit is reflected upon the members who give so much of their time to ensure that the Museum and therefore the Society is presented to the public in the best possible way.

The Society has established a base from which it can grow and expand into a vital part of the district.

With this in mind we can look forward to a particularly active 12 months.

J. E. Veness

"Enthusiasm is the mother of effort and without it nothing great was ever accomplished"

R. W. Emerson.

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### 50 YEARS OF ELECTRIC TRAINS.

Although the weather was somewhat unkind, the enthusiasm of many hundreds of guests and spectators was in no way dampened at the ceremony marking the 50th Year of Electric Train Services in N.S.W.

The ceremony was conducted by Mr. J. Trimmer, Deputy Chief Transport Commissioner, who paid tribute to the pioneers of the railways mentioning in particular, Dr. Bradfield, who first planned the electric train system in 1915, and the efforts of many voluntary helpers who had prepared the trains for this particular occasion.

Alderman G.D. Wood, representing the Kogarah Municipal Council, spoke of the co-operation which existed between the Public Transport Commission and the Council over the years; how the setting of the Doug Cross Gardens was a fitting one, in that it was from Oatley that the first Electric Train ran on March 1st, 1926; and also how the land which now forms the Gardens was made available to the Council by the Railways Department, so permitting their establishment to become a landmark in the district.

The Minister for Transport The Hon. T. Bruxner, M.L.A. recalled the successes of the Railways System over the years and gave some insight into the plans for the Public Transport through to the 21st Century.

The Ceremony completed, guests were invited to board the trains for the journey to Central.

An 3-Car Electric Train set with carriages of original style and restored to their former trim was available on the western side of the platform.

On the eastern side a suburban train of the type prior to electrification was waiting, drawn by a vintage locomotive No. 3203.

Riding again in a steam train brought back many memories and in the fully restored carriage are the little items which are forgotten until seen again - The leather seating, the varnished woodwork, water bottle and glasses in their racks, coat hooks, luggage racks. Above the seats, the alarm chain with its warning notice, the timber shutters, the photographs behind the seats and of course, the sounds of the engine itself, the whistle and the rhythmic beat of the exhaust.

The journey into Central was fast with passengers remarking how the old engine still had plenty of life in her yet.

Along the route hundreds of people waved the train on its way, children seemed particularly interested, some jumping up and down with excitement, possibly at their first sight of a steam engine.

Central was reached and guests were invited to inspect a display of items and photographs relating to the electric rail system, and on No. 10 Platform to inspect a selection of the type of carriage currently in use on the railways.

Our journey back to Oatley was in the latest 3-Car Double Deck Train for use on suburban lines.

The contrast with our previous trip was most evident; the functional almost clinical interior, the bright fluorescent lighting, the extremely smooth ride, all contributing to a foretaste of rail travel of the future.

While viewing some of the exhibits we were given a notice from the Railway Museum telling of the opening of the steam Line at Thirlmere in the near future. Those who visit will be able to capture some of the feeling of affinity which the steam train seems to arouse.

J. E. Veness.

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#### LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE.

Last month's article concerning an old Bexley identity, Mrs. William Carey, created considerable interest and Mrs. Sylvia Kelly has now furnished the following account of the death of Mrs. Carey's Mother, Mrs. Sarah Parkes, which appeared in "The St. George Call" in November 1912.

"Another link in the chain of old identities has been broken by the death of Mrs. Sarah Parkes, which occurred at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. W. Carey, Broadford Street, Bexley, at the advanced age of 83 years and 9 months.

Mrs. Parkes (or as she was more familiarly called "Granny"), was a native of Newtown, and a member of the Dent family. Two of her brothers, Harry and George, now some time deceased, were familiar figures in the Hurstville and Jervis Bay districts respectively.

In the early forties the Parkes family established what was known as Parkes Camp, in that locality where Bexley boundary touches Canterbury, and where the many members of the present Parkes family were born.

Grann's descendants were so numerous, that as one member of the family remarked "it would be hard to count them".

The deceased lady was admired by all who knew her, and an evidence of the esteem in which she was held was shown at the funeral.

All the old families in the district, in addition to the many relatives, including Peake, Moore, Whitehall, Blake, Smithson, Mullhausen, Pickering, Luck and many others were at the graveside".

#### MUSEUM REPORT.

Our good friend, and diligent convener of the Museum Committee, Gwen Lean, at the time of writing this report is having a short spell in hospital. We extend to her our very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

This month at the Museum work has proceeded on the transport and the Carss' Cottage display. Many photographs have been added to the Carss' exhibit. These prints, donated by Miss Coxhead, show the park and the cottage in the 1920's after the area had been acquired by Kogarah Council from the Sydney Sailors' Home. We are particularly fortunate to have Miss Coxhead in the Society as her Father was the first Park Ranger, and over the past few years she has been able to enlighten us on the history of the cottage with her childhood memories.

Necessary maintenance work has been completed on the Museum during February and March. A working bee was organized from members of the Management Committee and Mr. and Mrs. Burghart, Mr. and Mrs. Grieve, Mr. Veness and Mr. Cavanough spent a productive morning completing many outstanding jobs. Special thanks must be extended to Mr. Grieve who over the past few months has used his carpentry skills at the Museum to carry out many needed repairs, as well as making a cash-till for use on the entrance counter.

Acknowledgements of items donated during the last month will be made in the April Newsletter.

<u>Museum Roster.</u>		<u>On duty.</u>	<u>To open Museum.</u>
March	7th -	Mr. and Mrs. R. Diment	Mr. J. Veness
"	14th -	Miss J. Nicholson and Mrs. M. Boland	Mr. J. Lean
"	21st -	Mrs. D. Hatton and Mrs. M. Grieve	Mrs. D. Hatton
"	28th -	Mr. and Mrs. J. Howard	Mr. J. Veness
April	4th -	Mr. J. Wright and Mr. K. Grieve	Miss C. McEwen
"	11th -	Mrs. G. Johns and Mrs. G. Taylor	Mrs. G. Johns

Could we please have volunteers for Easter Sunday and Easter Monday - i.e. 18th and 19th April -- also for the Sunday and Monday of Anzac Week-end - i.e. 25th and 26th April. We would appreciate your help in this regard.

If any date given above is inconvenient - or if you can help on any of the other days, please phone me - 587-2090

Colleen McEwen.

## GEORGE'S RIVER.

by B. Goodger  
(of the Bankstown Historical Society).

"River S. of Sydney which flows into Botany Bay. George Bass and Matthew Flinders explored 20 miles up river 1795; 1st settlement on river 1798. Named after George II. Extensive oyster leases." (1)

The above terse note is all the information that can be gleaned from the Modern Encyclopedia of Australia and New Zealand. The Australian Encyclopedia is even less helpful, although it does mention George's River in almost every volume.

The River forms part of the boundary of the Municipality of Bankstown and it was to the fertile alluvial soil on its bank that settlement first came to Banks' Town. For this reason, I have long been searching for and gathering any information I could find on George's River, particularly the area which flows through Bankstown, approximately from the junction with Salt Pan Creek to Lansdowne Bridge.

Although my search is not completed, I decided to list what meagre crumbs of information I have gathered from various sources, in answer to the many queries I have had, not only from those studying the River's history, but also its geography, geology, parklands and bridges.

GEOLOGY. A few books mention the alluvium along the river in an area otherwise consisting mainly of Wianametta shale, and contrast the low-lying Milperra area with the incised cut in the Hawkesbury sandstone that the river makes near Lugarno. (2, 3, 4)

LENGTH. "Rising in the western slopes of the Illawarra Range near Appin, George's River follows an erratic course for over 80 kilometres (50 miles) before flowing into the south-western corner of Botany Bay". (5)

DISCOVERY AND EARLY EXPLORATION. Captain Cook is believed to have rowed up the river as far as Tom Ugly's Point, but the river was not named then.

After Captain Phillip arrived in 1788 to settle his convicts at Botany Bay, Lt. William Bradley reported in his journal for Monday 21 January 1788, that "Mr. King returned having been up an inlet on the S side 5 miles. He found the Country something better than what it was round the Bay but not any water." (6)

As we know, Phillip decided to make his settlement in Port Jackson at Sydney Cove, not in Botany Bay. So it was not until September 1789 that Captain John Hunter spent 10 days surveying in Botany Bay, and visited the "West River", as he called it. He said of it:

"The river in some parts has good depth and that near and within its entrance; but higher up it is all shoal water, and full of knowls of sand; in short, it is only to be navigated by boats; it has two branches, in which there are several coves, or bays, containing shoal water". (7)

Hunter also examined Cook's River, which he called the NW river, but it was early in the days of settlement, and as he notes:

"these rivers were with me no object at this time to throw away time upon; I therefore made no other survey than an eye sketch".

The upper reaches of George's River remained unexplored for some time, although Prospect Creek was discovered in September 1789. Bradley's journal for Wednesday 7 October 1789 says:

"The Governor went to Rose Hill to trace a piece of water near it, supposed by those who first fell in with it to communicate with the NW arm of Botany Bay".

The Governor followed the banks on foot "as far as the gullies, which they were obliged to walk round would admit of", but was halted at "the forked part of a branch, at one part of which a kangaroo was closely pursued by the greyhound that they had with them and took to the water". (6)

Phillip had walked from Parramatta to Salt Pan Creek.

Captain Watkin Tench and Dawes, in July 1791, reported finding a salt water creek southward of Rose Hill, and camped one very cold night at approximately the position of Lansdowne Bridge on Prospect Creek. (8)

But as the little settlement at Sydney Cove was very busy trying to keep alive on short rations, no further exploration was made of the SW river until 1795. Sometime in the interval it had received its name of George's River. It was in 1795 that the Reliance arrived in the colony, and on board was Matthew Flinders and his friend the surgeon, George Bass.

Writing many years later, in 1814, in his book "A Voyage to Terra Australia" Flinders tells how with Bass, "a determination was formed of completing the examination of the east coast of New South Wales" and

"a little boat of eight feet long, called Tom Thumb, with a crew composed of ourselves and a boy, was the best equipment to be procured for the first outset. In the month following the arrival of the ships, we proceeded round in this boat, to Botany Bay; and ascending George's River, one of two which falls into the bay, explored its winding course about twenty miles beyond where governor Hunter's survey had been carried.

The sketch made of this river and presented to the governor, with the favourable report of the land on its borders, induced His Excellency to examine them himself shortly afterward; and was followed by establishing there a new branch of the colony, under the name of Banks' Town". (9)

"Shortly afterward" was actually 15 months later, for it was not until January 1797 that Governor Hunter followed Bass and Flinders. David Collins recorded the visit in his journal for January 1797:

"After celebrating the day on which her majesty's birth was observed with every demonstration of attachment and respect in his power, the governor set off on an excursion to Botany Bay, in order to explore George's river as far up as was practicable, and to examine the soil upon its banks, which he found to be of good quality, and considerable extent. This river, which was observed to run in a westerly direction about twenty-five miles up from Botany Bay, was, in many parts of its branches, exceedingly picturesque; and navigable, for small craft, for at least twenty miles up. Some of its

creeks or branches reached within a small distance of Prospect Hill. Between this river and Parramatta, the governor, on his return, travelled through a thick bushy wood, covering an excellent soil". (10)

Hunter himself reported very briefly in a despatch to London dated 10 January 1798, that "a few of the marine settlers are fixed upon the banks of a river which empties itself into Botany Bay, where the land promises well". (11) His enclosed map shows Banks' Town, covering a much wider area than today's municipality, including Liverpool and both sides of the river. When he made another inspection in August 1799, he found "The settlers whom he had placed there were all doing well, had not any complaints to make and had not been molested lately by the natives." (10)

SETTLEMENT. The farms along the river banks evidently flourished, for there are reports in the Historical Records of New South Wales and the early Sydney Gazettes that show maize was grown, pigs raised, and horses and cattle grazed. They survived floods, which were very heavy in 1809, and did suffer raiding by aborigines. For this reason a small military detachment was stationed to keep guard, with its headquarters at Major George Johnston's farm. The site of his farm can be seen on the banks of Prospect Creek, marked by a notice board erected by the Bankstown Municipal Council and the Bankstown Historical Society.

GEORGE'S HALL. Major George Johnston's farm, George's Hall, was the unofficial centre of the district, to which convicts had to report when a muster, or census, was held. A distinguished visitor he entertained on 7 October, 1806, was the Governor, Bligh. (12)

Another distinguished visitor to the district was Governor Lachlan Macquarie. On Friday 9 November 1810, he recorded in his journal:

"At 6 a.m. I set out to see the remaining farms in the Banks' Town District towards Botany Bay along George's River and on Harris's Creek. After we had looked at the southernmost farm on the latter creek, we crossed the country with the intention of returning home by the upper part of George's River in a south west direction; but missing our way we lost ourselves in the woods and wandered about in a boundless forest for upwards of three hours without knowing where we were. At length we stumbled on the river, and got home a good deal tired about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10 o'clock".

Later that same day, Macquarie had the ground laid out for the town of Liverpool and even marked out the square for the church. In naming it Liverpool, he hoped it would be a port like its namesake on the River Mersey in England. But this was not to be.

ROADS. An 1832 itinerary of the colony's roads, in describing the Great South Road from Sydney to the Cowpasture Bridge, notes the turn off to the left,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Sydney, for George's River, and

"Several bush tracks lead to the farms lying between George's and Cook's rivers; on Salt Pan Creek, and on the upper part of George's river, and further into the wild country to the South, where a large tract has been recently granted to the Church and school estate. There are also extensive tracts of unlocated land, of much capability, on the banks of George's river." (14)

Bankstown is not mentioned at all, as no township existed in 1832, but, at 14 miles from Sydney, approximately near Bass Hill School, "a number of small grants compose Irish Town". The Directory also notes that the George's River was called Tuggerah Creek near Appin.

In 1836 the weir was constructed across the river to supply the town of Liverpool with fresh water.

Lansdowne Bridge was designed by David Lennox and built during 1835 and 1836. The stone was cut from quarries that can still be seen across the river from East Hills Park, and taken up river on barges using the tide to help transport the stone. There was a stockade for the soldiers near the footbridge to the Commonwealth Housing Settlement, and on the same side, which gave the name Stockade Reach to that part of George's River.

In 1843, Major Mitchell surveyed a road to the Illawarra district, crossing George's River by a punt at Lugarno. He hoped to build a bridge there, but his road was never popular, and was replaced by the road that crossed by punt at Tom Ugly's Point.

There is an excellent article on George's River and its road crossings in the journal "Main Roads" for December 1973 (15) which is well worth reading, despite its opening error in stating that Sutherland was named after Forby Sutherland, buried in Botany Bay in May 1770. Mrs. Hutton Neve's researches have proved that the Shire of Southerland was proclaimed in 1835, by Surveyor - General Sir Thomas Mitchell. The spelling was not changed to Sutherland until the 1880's. (16)

PROPOSED WATER SUPPLY FOR SYDNEY. In 1870 there was a proposal to dam the river, either at Kangaroo Point or Tom Ugly's Point, and use the fresh water to augment the supply needed for Sydney. The Hon. Thomas Holt arranged a boat trip up the river for about 150 members of Parliament, judges, lawyers, merchants and journalists. John Young, the famous builder remarked that "there is an absence of mud flats and swamps, cultivation or dwellings of any kind, or in fact anything to contaminate the water." Although the proposal was never carried out, the reporter's description and sketches are of great interest, just over 100 years later.

"Occasionally a break, or a bit of clearing, lends a pleasing charm to the scenery. Places where the axe of the early settler has left its mark on the forest, opening lands and frontages to the water's edge. Strips of fence indicate land once under cultivation; but most of these clearings time begins again to assert itself, and the undergrowth and young forest run riot over the improvements of the early settlers. One of the most noticeable of these gaps along the dark wooded shore is the spot known as the "Government Quarries". The river here opened into a splendid reach - the banks, save where the clearings before spoken of had been made, being clothed with forest to the edge." (17)

PARKS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS. If the river was not used as a water supply for Sydney, it was used for recreation, and there were several picnic grounds along the banks of George's River.

Parkesvale, which was just opposite Picnic Point, was popular from 1894 until about the time of the first World War. It was named in honour of Varney Parkes, the member of Parliament for the area, and son of Sir Henry Parkes. The developers of Parkesvale were the Sanbrook Bros. and they operated paddlewheel

steamers to take picnickers up the river from Como. In 1901, a ticket for the train from Sydney to Como, the steamer from Como to Parkesvale and return, cost 2/6. (18)

The steamers also went to the wharf at Lambeth Park and to East Hills. Besides the trip, picnickers enjoyed swimming, or the pavilions and dance halls.

The Vale of Ah was another very popular pleasure ground, and in our Society's collection of photographs, we have a fine set showing the dance hall, the campers, the swimmers, and even the life saving team in the 1920's.

Since the railway did not come to Bankstown until 1909, and to East Hills until 1931, picnickers who did not come by boat took a train to Auburn, a horse bus along Rookwood Road to Bankstown, and on to the River.

Today there is no swimming permitted in the Bankstown length of the River, but fishermen, water skiers and motor boats use the strips of waterfront that the George's River Parklands preserve for recreation.

In one such strip between Picnic Point and the River Road, was a delightful, rather inaccessible inlet called Cattle Duffers Flat, a name that causes one to speculate on the use it was once put to. In earlier days, there were agistment paddocks along Liverpool Road, where cattle were held and fattened up before being taken into the city for sale. In the quiet hours of darkness, did some cattle leave the paddocks, to be hidden in Cattle Duffers Flat before being sold down river?

Over the years many plans were made to extend railway service into the Bankstown Municipality, and old maps and land subdivision plans show proposed lines and a bridge across the River, to link Bankstown and Liverpool. The plans did not eventuate, but this is the lyrical description of a journalist, writing for a real estate agent in 1924, of his trip by rowboat on George's River:

"The broad bosom of George's River now lies in front of us in a majestic reach, and we must keep the oars moving, for we have far to go. We simply soak in a beautiful picture of shadow and shine, glimmering water, and rugged banks, leaping mullet falling back into circular ripples, wattle meadows, and over all the morning peace of virgin lands. Why were we never told of all this beauty lying so close to a great city like Sydney. Has the river had no poet to sing its songs? Has not even the dry historian had time to tell us the passing story of the lands we are gliding by? We have surely lost something hitherto, but now we know, and we shall never lose the golden memory of this morning; there is beauty here for all who will come to see.

"From this point, where an old dead white tree is lying, we find on our map a thin red line running in disdain of roads and boundaries straight to the Bankstown Railway Station; measuring this line we find it three and one-half miles; holding our breaths, we look in amazed significance at each other! The route of the proposed railway extension from Bankstown to the river; and coming direct to the centre of this magnificent, unbroken sheet of water!....

"...We paddle along another half mile, and once more pause and drift; here where a tall ironbark tree and post and rail fence stand in friendly conjunction. To this point

comes the Old Canterbury Road, once and sometimes now called George's River Road, and now Milperra Road; this change of names being the only change that has happened in this vicinity for many a day ....

"...Here is the narrowest point on the river, some seventy-five yards wide. We note the high banks....and demand why there is no bridge here." (19)

A timber bridge was not built until 1931, and only in 1966 replaced by a modern bridge.

OYSTERS. The George's River, is famous for the delicious oysters grown in the lower reaches. In fact about one-fifty of the production in New South Wales comes from the river. The history of their cultivation can be read in a book by T. C. Roughley. (20) Even before their cultivation the oyster shells had been gathered for lime burning for early building construction. Between 1360 and 1870 deep dredging for shells threatened the survival of oysters in the river.

RIVER CROSSINGS. The railway bridge at Como was opened in 1885, a timber bridge at Liverpool in 1894, replaced in 1958, the road bridge at Tom Ugly's in 1929, the Captain Cook Bridge replaced the punt at Taren Point in 1965, and the Alford's Point Bridge was opened in 1973.

ABORIGINES. Very little evidence of the aborigines remains in the Bankstown area, apart from an axe-grinding stone not far from the river, and a few caves with faint hand stencils. Until the 1920's, there was an aboriginal camp on the George's River, near Peakhurst. Mickey's Point is said to be named for an aborigine who lived in a cave on the point.

George's River is still a very important waterway. Although it never became the entrance to an Australian port of Liverpool, small craft race, or pull water skiers, or bob gently at anchor while their owners fish. Further down from Woronora, oyster farmers ply their trade.

Concern about pollution has caused the member for East Hills, Mr. Pat Rogan, to chair a committee which is producing a most comprehensive report to be submitted to the New South Wales Parliament this year. The universities of New South Wales and Macquarie have made surveys to measure the effects of sand dredging on the river. (21)

It is to be hoped that just as our forbears of the 1890's could come to enjoy the delights of George's River, away from the busy city, so may our children in 2090.

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Two useful books for more information on the lower reaches of the River are:

- CRIDLAND, F. The Story of Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire 1924  
 KIRBY, David R. From sails to atoms; first 50 years of Sutherland Shire 1906 to 1956. 1970.

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