

Botany Historical Trust

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2022



Photograph by: E. A. Bradford - 7 July 1931.

An unrecognisable Botany Road covered in flood waters: this edition's article on the floods of July 1931 includes a newspaper account of how a section of the road collapsed overturning a Water Board truck with five men inside.

President's Report



L-R: Robert Hanna, Anne Slattery, Member for Heffron Mr Ron Hoenig MP, Councillor Jennifer Muscat and Councillor Jo Jansyn at the Botany Historical Trust Annual General Meeting, March 2022

As the new President, I want to say that it is an honour and a privilege to be chosen as President of the Botany Historical Trust. I hope I can maintain the standards and achievements of previous Presidents and that the Trust can continue its challenging role in promoting, preserving and publicising the history and heritage of the area that was formerly the City of Botany Bay.

My family has had an association with the Botany area since the 1890s. My late father, George Hanna, was a Mayor and Alderman of the former Botany Municipality, who always had a passionate interest in the Botany area and its history. From an early age, he made me aware of the history of Botany, the Bay and its place in the overall history of New South Wales and Australia. Thanks to him, I inherited this interest.

I have been an active member of the Trust and have served as an Executive Committee Member for over fifteen years. In that time, I have served with three outstanding Presidents, namely the late Nancy Hillier, Jacqueline Milledge and Anne Slattery and I hope I can live up to their standards.

I want to particularly thank our outgoing President, Anne Slattery, who has been President for the last ten years. She has served the Trust well, particularly through the difficult times of Council amalgamation and the COVID pandemic. Anne was a driving force in the publication of “Postings from the Front”, commemorating the centenary of Botany and Mascot’s involvement in World War I. Anne also introduced our programme of excursions to historical places of interest involving the general membership.

I also want to place on record my thanks to Alice McCann and Clarrie Jones, who retired recently as members of the Trust’s Executive Committee, for their invaluable contribution to the activities of the Trust.

The Trust has achieved much since its inception. These include the refurbishment of the Light Horse Memorial at Eastlakes, the installation of plaques at the Botany and Mascot War Memorials honouring our World War II servicemen and women, and the restoration of the memorial plaque at Arthur Park. As well there was the establishment of a register of heritage listed buildings in the area; the commissioning of research projects; commemorating significant people and historical events; displays at

George Hanna JP

Alderman of Botany
1959 – 1968 Mayor
of Botany 1966



the Mascot Library and GHMM, and the scrutiny of development applications referred by Council that would have affected heritage buildings and streetscapes; to name but a few.

Ongoing Trust projects include ensuring the preservation, appropriate storage of and access to City of Botany Bay archives and other historical documents and artefacts; as well as continuing to lobby the State Government for preservation, and possible community use of the former Botany Police Station.

I have some ideas as President for the Trust to consider. I hope to recommence Anne Slattery's excellent programme of excursions to local and national places of historical interest.

Our excellent publication of "Postings from the Front" in 2016 encourages me to put some focus on the history of the local area during the 'Roaring Twenties,' with perhaps another local history publication. 2023 will see 135 years since the establishment of local government in Botany and Mascot, and it would be appropriate, I believe, to pursue this project. Previous histories of Botany and Mascot were published in 1938, 1963, 1970, 1988 and 2017. I think it would be fitting to consider yet another publication in 2023.

We need your support as members to help us on our way and I look forward to holding Trust meetings involving the membership in historical and heritage

matters. I also encourage members to come forward with suggestions and ideas on projects we can consider. At our recent Annual General Meeting, we failed to fill two positions on the Executive Committee. Please consider putting your name forward for one of these positions and help us on our journey.

I also believe the Trust needs to involve local community organisations in its activities. We have worked well in the past with the Botany and Mascot Sub Branches of the RSL on several projects. I'm hoping this will not only continue but serve as an example of how we might work with other community organisations. Our area is a diverse community, and I hope we can harness the involvement of different cultural and community groups and organisations.

I want to thank Ron Hoenig, the former Mayor of the City of Botany Bay, for his initiative in establishing the Trust, and for his continuing support. I'm sure that without his drive and energy we would not exist today.

Finally, I need to mention the support of staff of Bayside Council, without whose help the Trust would not function, in particular Bobbi Mayne, Leonie Maher, Kirsten Broderick, Alison Wishart and the Communications & Events team. Past and present staff have provided the Trust with professional and dedicated support, and I look forward to Council's continuing support.

Thank you all for supporting my selection as the Trust's President. I hope we can continue to pursue our common goal, the preservation of the heritage of the former City of Botany Bay LGA, and the promotion of its history.

Robert Hanna, President, Botany Historical Trust

THE COMMITTEE



Robert Hanna
President

Christopher Hanna
Senior Vice President

Jacqueline Milledge
Vice President

Carolyn McMahon
Secretary

Richard Smolenski
Treasurer

Peter Orlovich
Committee Member

Jennifer Muscat
Councillor

Jo Jansyn
Councillor

We have Committee Member positions vacant and we invite members to apply. If you are interested please email: council@bayside.nsw.gov.au for the attention of the Botany Historical Trust

SIMEON LORD

“ FROM CHAINS TO RICHES ”



One of the pioneers of Botany was Simeon Lord, who came to New South Wales in 1791 as a convict aged 20. Simeon had previous business experience and acumen as a salesman in the UK. He had worked around cloth and fabric mills and was transported for allegedly stealing 21 pieces of cloth, a trifling offence. Once free he set about making up for lost time. By 1798, he was acting as an agent for captains visiting Sydney and two years later, he was one of a syndicate which persuaded Governor Hunter to let them buy goods directly from vessels arriving at Port Jackson and so broke up the monopoly held by the officers of the New South Wales Corp.

Lord had an amazing knack for being in the right place at the right time and how to seize the moment. He was a shrewd businessman, he bargained down prices, networked with ships' captains, acquainted himself closely with ships from everywhere imaginable and allied himself with prominent traders to form significant partnerships globally.

Lord went on to become involved in many ventures including his own trading company, ship building, smelting iron ore as well as being appointed a magistrate by Governor Macquarie. During his career as a shipowner, he had interests or outright ownership of up to eleven vessels. He demonstrated far sightedness having turned his early attention to the sea as a source of building his wealth and believed that the surest road to prosperity was to control the ships themselves. At the time, residents of NSW were not allowed to own vessels capable of trading with Asia, but in true entrepreneurial style he found ways around this.



Circular Quay 1877 Image Courtesy SLNSW

In 1798 Lord purchased a cottage, a warehouse and a few other small buildings in Bridge Street in the City later known as Macquarie Place. He later expanded his portion of inner-City land to one acre and seven perches through a lease from the Governor.

In 1803 he commenced building a large three-story house by the Tank Stream Bridge that faced towards the Governor's House. Its frontage would have been in the same alignment as the present-day Customs House Hotel, in fact his house served as Sydney's Customs House for a short time after Lord had moved to Botany.

Lord, it can be said, saw the writing on the wall at a time when the economy was in depression, currency was a growing issue with imports and exports greatly affected. Therefore, in 1815 he branched out to build mills and began his career as a manufacturer, which was where he made his greatest wealth.

In 1812 Lord acquired 135 acres originally granted to Edward Redmond in Botany and developed a fulling wood mill on the site. Fulling, tucking or walking is a step in woollen cloth production which involves the cleansing of wool to eliminate oils, dirt, and other impurities. As part of the project, Lord dammed the Mill Stream to create the Mill Pond, which powered two undershot 8-15 horsepower waterwheels to drive the woollen worsted mill. Not the first such mill in Australia but the first privately owned.

In the 1820's the family moved from their 'city' home to their 'country' home in Botany, known as Banks House, nearer the site of the mills and proposed factory. Between 1827 and 1828 the government paid Lord over six thousand pounds to surrender part of



Lords Flour Mill Botany Bay Image:
Bayside History Collection

his grant at Macquarie Place as well as giving him land grants totaling 17,813 acres in various parts of NSW including Cowra, Orange, Penrith, and the Hunter Valley.

Lord also built a second dam on the Engine Pond and developed a three-story flour mill powered by one undershot wheel. This was at the northern end of the dam on the Cooks River side. At the peak of his career, Lord was employing over 300 people in various roles in several locations.

In 1823 he was granted an additional 600 acres at Botany which embraced the original water reserve on the Mascot side of the Mill Stream. Lord built a factory on this site thereby centralising his operations, he also built cottages for his employees.

Apart from his businesses in Botany he was also involved in the sealing and whaling trade and was one of the first to enter the pearling trade. He promoted the import and manufacture of New Zealand flax and developed the cedar trade exporting the timber to London.

Lord was a man of vast energy and great business ability and the early colony owed much to his activity. His death occurred at his residence, Banks House, Botany at age 69 years in 1840.

Leonie Maher, Administrative Officer



Lords's Wife Mary Hyde who
featured in the Botany Historical
Trust Newsletter of April 2021.
Image Bayside History Collection



Let's We Forget

With ANZAC Day occurring recently, and having attended the Botany Dawn Service, I was reminded of two names on the Botany Cenotaph. John Joseph Dymond and George Arthur Couper.

The City of Botany Bay publication, *Postings from the Front*, published in 2016, sought in some small way to recognize the contribution of the men and women of Botany and Mascot during World War I, and the impact their stories had on the local community. Regrettably though, not all individual stories were told in this book. Researching each individual story was a monumental task. The individual stories that are told in this book will hopefully give a representative sample of the contribution and

sacrifice made by all of them. Our best effort is at least to list the 700 or so names of those who served, in the hope that others may continue the task of conducting further research.

In 1914 Australia was a nation of less than five million people. Of this number, some 417,000, or nearly 10% of the population, joined the armed forces. Some 60,000 of these were killed or died of wounds. About 700 of those who served were born in or had an association with the communities of Botany and Mascot and Some 126 of these paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Of the 700 or so from Botany and Mascot who enlisted, some 269 came from Botany and 52 of these men were killed in action or died of wounds.

I took on the task of listing and researching the details of all the men from Botany who served in WW I. I paid attention to those who paid the supreme sacrifice, and whose names are on the Botany War Memorial. In researching the archives and war records, I found it hard not to be side-tracked or diverted by some of the individual stories.

Two men stood out in my mind.

Corporal John Dymond and Private George Couper. In brief, their stories follow: Corporal John Dymond, an engineer, from Botany, enlisted at the age of 23 on 29 September 1914. He joined the 13th Battalion, which arrived at Gallipoli on 26 April 1915 and was promoted to Corporal in June 1915. The 13th Battalion took part in the Battle for Hill 60, commencing on 21 August 1915. Hill 60 is located between Suvla Bay and ANZAC Cove.

Hill 60 was the last major Allied offensive on the Gallipoli Peninsula, involving Australian, New Zealand and British units. The infantry had no effective artillery support, and instead were decimated by Turkish artillery. The artillery fire caused the undergrowth to catch fire, burning many of the wounded to death.





Hill 60 Cemetery, Gallipoli: Image Courtesy Commonwealth War Graves Commission

John Dymond was likely killed in action on 22 August 1915. He was listed as missing in action the following day on 23 August 1915, along with some 20 or so comrades. It was not until April 1916 that an Army court of inquiry determined on the available evidence that he was killed the previous year. His mother agonized until 29 June 1921 when she was advised by the Army that his last resting place could not be found. It was believed he was killed in the artillery barrage, and his remains consumed in a subsequent scrub fire around the area of the action. His identity disc was not found until after the war in 1923 at Hill 60 by a NZ Army officer. Shades of the Russell Crowe movie, *The Water Diviner*, come to mind.

Private George Couper, a carpenter from Botany, joined the AIF on 10 May 1915. He was 19 years of age. He saw action in Gallipoli and on the Western Front, joining the 49th Battalion on 27 December 1916. The 49th Battalion's records show the unit in action at Ypres in September and October 1917, fighting in heavy rain, and subject to heavy attack from gas shells. The unit was withdrawn to the rear after this period of action.

George Couper deserted during this period and he was previously disciplined for insubordination. He was court martialled and sentenced to five years' penal servitude for desertion at Ypres on 27 October 1917. Fortunately for George, he was not executed for desertion, as was the case in the British Army. The Australian Government, to its credit, insisted the Australian Army would deal with its own



Villiers- Bretonneux Memorial Cemetery. Image Courtesy Commonwealth War Graves Commission

transgressors, and not impose the death penalty on its volunteer troops. Still fresh in Australian minds was the execution of Breaker Morant by the British during the Boer War.

Who knows what George may have gone through prior to deserting? The unit records never reported on such matters. Some 12 days later, however, his sentence was suspended, and he was returned to his battalion on 8 November 1917, such was the need for troops in the field. He served until he died of wounds after action at Villiers Bretonneux on 6 May 1918. His family received his WW 1 medals posthumously.

Let us not forget the sacrifice and courage of these men, particularly those who died in the service of their country. Let us also hope that their sacrifice in the cause of defeating tyranny, and preserving our liberty, freedom and democracy which we take for granted, is not lost today on all of us, particularly our political and community leaders.

Robert Hanna, President, Botany Historical Trust

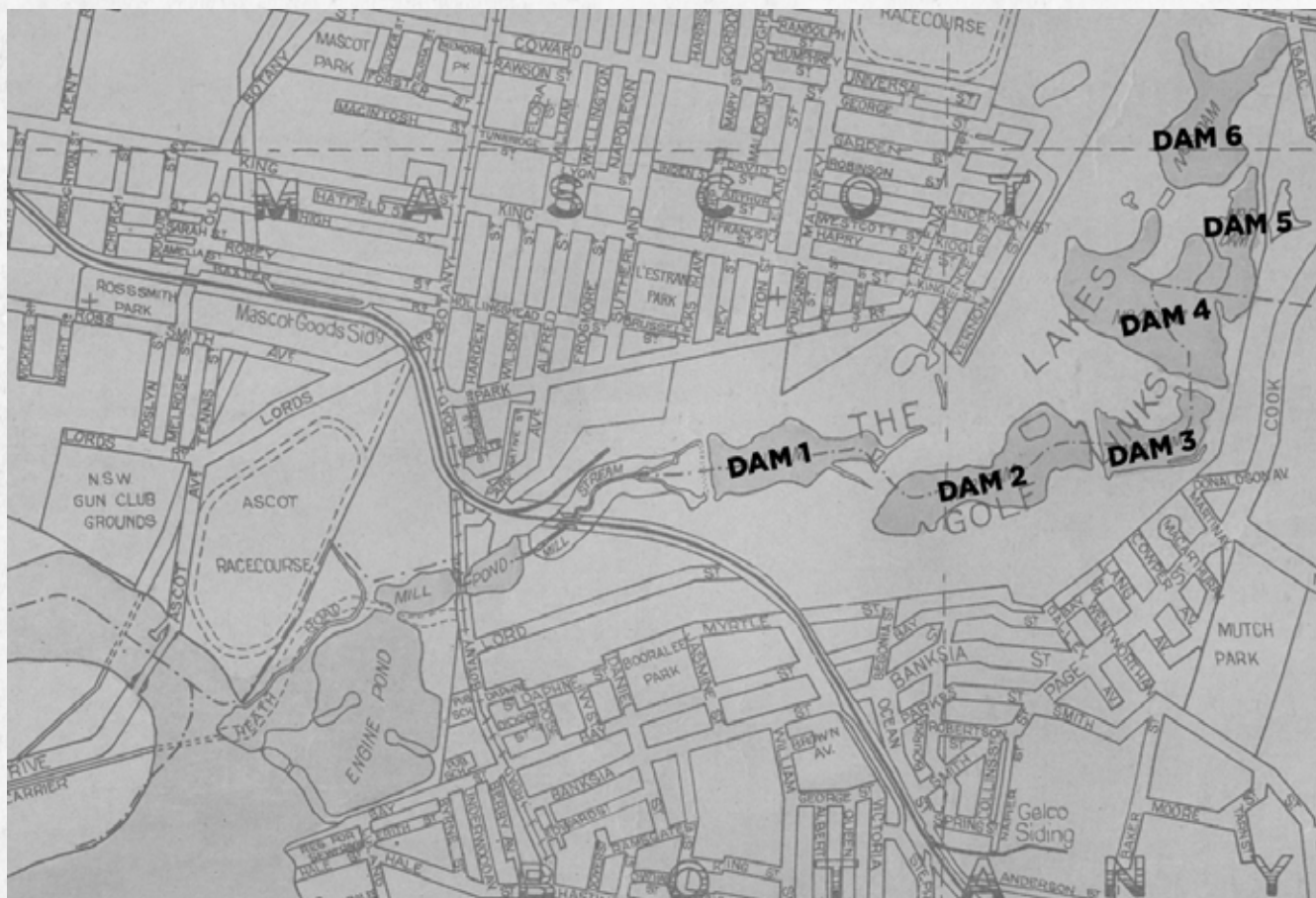


Private George Couper

Image Courtesy Virtual War Memorial Australia



FLOODING IN BOTANY



A section of an early 1930s H. E. C. Robinson map of Sydney showing the six Water Board dams located within the municipalities of Botany and Mascot.

Considering the recent flooding on the eastern seaboard it seems a good time to reflect on historic flooding in our area. On the evening of Sunday 5 July 1931, a cyclone off the eastern coast of New South Wales was accompanied by torrential rain and violent windstorms which battered Sydney throughout Monday and into Tuesday 7 July, causing at least three deaths, multiple accidents and injuries, and enormous damage to homes and properties.

In Botany, the cyclonic winds blew the roofs off at least nine houses and left many more badly damaged. However, what was most alarming for Botany residents was the bursting of the Water Board dams in the Botany Water Reserve. Bayside Library Service is grateful to Charles Dearling for a donation of 34

photographs by aerial photographer Theo Purcell and commercial photographer E. A. Bradford showing the damage caused by the storm.

Of the six dams that made up the Botany water supply system, two had been built by Simeon Lord in 1815 for his wool and flour mills (see previous article on Simeon Lord). These operated beside the Mill Pond and the Engine Pond until the City of Sydney Council began to acquire land along the Botany wetlands for a new water supply system. By 1870, a system of six dams linked the Botany waterways and wetlands between Mill Pond and the intersection of Gardeners Road and Isaac Smith Street. In 1931, when nearly eight inches of rain fell in a twenty-four-hour period, this water system flooded, the locks connecting the dams broke and the dams collapsed.



Theo Purcell, 1st of August. The Engine Pond, its spillway and floodgates, and the adjacent premises of Swinbourne & Stephen.

The damage caused when the dams burst their banks was dramatically described in *The Sun* newspaper on 7 July:

“

A violent torrent of water was released, which swept away the main roadway, destroyed a railway embankment and the tramway track, and flooded several woollen mills and private homes. A bridge dividing Mascot and Botany municipalities was swept away and trams and 'buses are now marooned on the Botany side.

The water rushed over the roadway to Botany Bay, tearing up a large section in its course. A big stream broke away from the main torrent and entering Ascot racecourse completely flooded the racing enclosure which is now between three and four feet under water.

A motor truck, owned by the Water Board, was crossing the Botany-road bridge when the bridge collapsed. The truck plunged into the roaring current, and five men, who were thrown out, had to swim strongly before they were dragged out by nearby residents.

Cottages on the boundary of Botany were flooded before the water found an outlet over the smashed roadway. The 200 yards between St. Bernard's and St. Matthew's Churches was a deep, swirling whirlpool, and rivulets raced through houses in the vicinity.

”

The Sun, Tuesday 7 July 1931,

Two Botany wool scouring companies Weidemier & Co and Swinbourne & Stephen, leased premises adjacent to the Botany Water Works from the Water Board. These premises were so badly damaged that in December 1932, both companies received compensation payments from the Water Board. The following photographs dramatically illustrate the full strength of the storm.

Kirsten Broderick, Local History Librarian



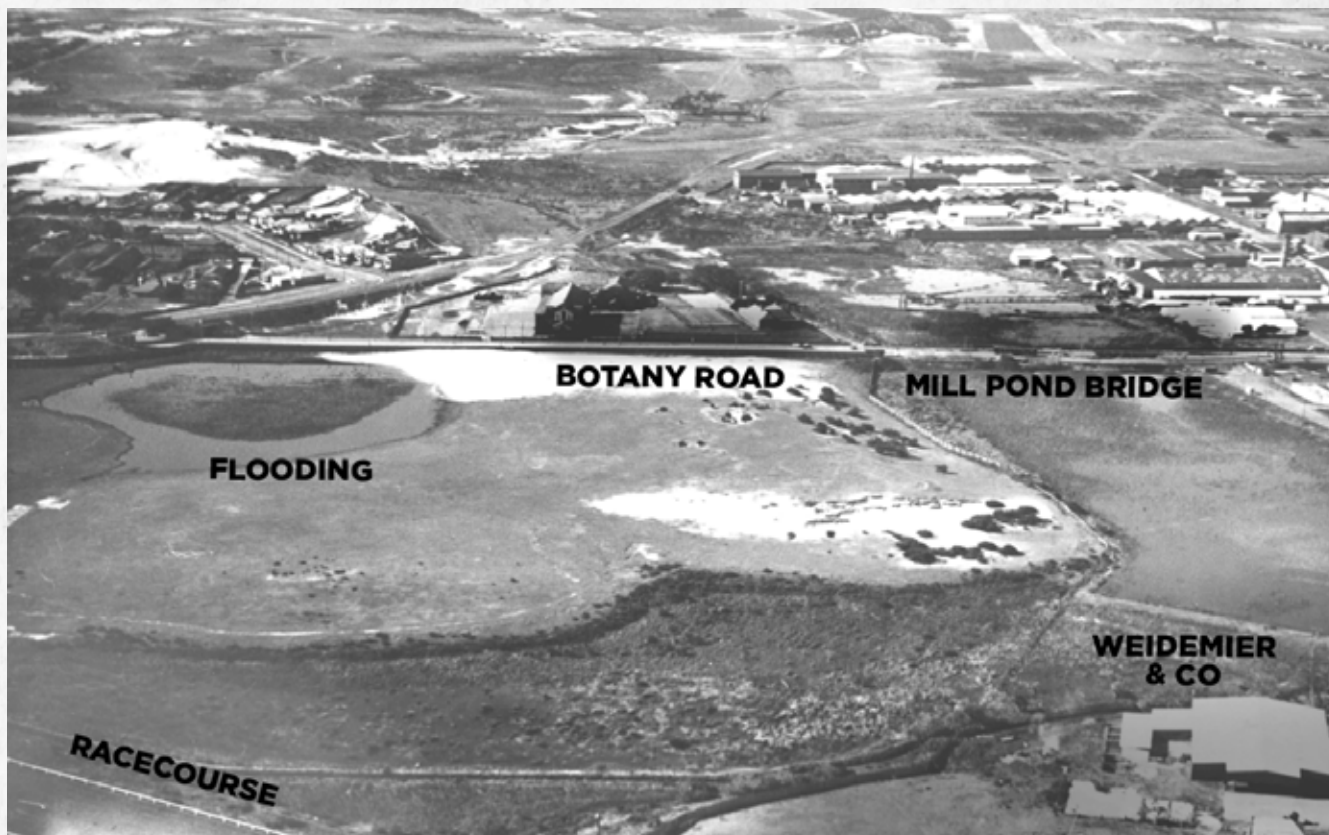
Theo Purcell, 1st August.

Taken from the Mascot side of Mill Stream showing the view upstream across the houses on McBurney Avenue, called Park Avenue in 1931, to the No. 1 Dam and, above that, the Nos. 2, 3 & 4 dams. The photo shows the damage to the embankment across Mill Stream; this embankment carried the electric cables from the Bunnerong Power Station. When the embankment was washed out, the electricity supply to Botany was cut and the whole district was plunged into darkness. Visible above the embankment, to the right of the No. 1 dam, is the turncock's residence and Water Board's depot.



E. A. Bradford, 7th July.

The Weidemier & Co premises surrounded by rising flood waters.



Theo Purcell, 1st August.

The building in the right foreground is the wool scouring premises of Weidemier & Co, immediately above it is the Mill Pond. The rail fence just visible in the lower left-hand corner is the fence of the Ascot Racecourse.



E. A. Bradford, 11th July.

The scene after the flood waters had receded, showing the extent of the erosion caused by the flood waters behind Swinbourne & Stephens wool scouring works. This erosion proved to be irreparable, and, in April 1935, Swinbourne & Stephen wrote to Botany Council formally requesting an adjustment to their rates. In 1931 the company had been paying rates on the 11 acres of land they leased from the Water Board; the violent flood waters had washed away a full three acres and reduced the size of the company's works to eight acres.

Mascot Primary School turns 100

Mascot Public School (formerly known as King Street Public) celebrates its centenary this year. In 1922 Mr Tom Mutch, Minister for Education officially opened the school and presented an “Australian ensign [flag] to the school and unveiled a tablet commemorating the opening”. The school was described as a “fine two-storied edifice” costing approximately 13,000 pounds to build and “represented the last word” in modern building and facilities (Sunday Times 19 Feb 1922, p.2).



Image courtesy NSW State Archives

Tom Mutch

Mayor Dr Christina Curry joined the centenary celebrations and presented the school with a Certificate of Recognition on Monday 21 March 2022. Councillor Jo Jansyn, Member for Kingsford Smith, the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP and Member for Heffron Mr Ron Hoenig MP also attended the celebrations

Judy Munday (widow of Jack Munday who helped save Eastlakes Reserve) shares her memories of attending Mascot Public School in the 1950s:

“I appreciate being part of a society that provided me with quality public education. I enjoyed my time at Mascot Primary School in the 1950s when Miss Wetherell was headmistress. Her brother, she told us with some pride, was the Minister for Education in the NSW Government.

My enjoyment, it must be said, did not extend to the bottle of milk thoughtfully delivered for the pupils early each morning and left in the sun until play

lunch time by when it was warm and, to give it the most charitable description, unappealing. No doubt the provision of the milk was well intentioned if universally unappreciated.

The school was well run, and I fondly remember some teachers including Miss White and friends, in particular the Bonner twins, Janet and Joyce, who were special friends. Mascot Primary laid the foundation for my high school years and later my university education for my Arts and Law degrees.

I strongly believe that quality public education is one of the social determinants needed for the development of a fair society that provides opportunity for all and I congratulate Mascot Primary School on reaching its 100th anniversary as a quality public education institution.”

Nina Walton, Library Network Officer

FLASHBACKS

One hundred years ago, young boys were working at the Anselm Olding & Sons yard on Ross Smith Avenue. They were learning how to be stonemasons and carving marble and granite. The yard was located in Lauriston Park, and produced ornamental items. If you've never heard of a suburb called Lauriston Park, that's because it was gradually subsumed to build Sydney airport.



Anselm Olding & Sons c 1925 Image: Bayside History Collection

More information in *Lauriston Park: the Forgotten Village*, which is available at Bayside Libraries.

“ WHAT IS THE MOST ALTERED AND POLLUTED RIVER IN AUSTRALIA?

THE MURRAY? THE ORD RIVER IN NORTHERN WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

THE COOKS RIVER IN SOUTH-EASTERN SYDNEY HAS THIS CLAIM TO FAME. ”



Botany fishermen and their boats, moored near the mouth of the Cooks River, January 1938. Image: Bayside History Collection

This working river has had its mouth moved, its ecosystem transformed (some might say trashed) and its banks concreted by industrial and urban development. Yet it once provided a vista that colonial gentlemen, like Alexander Brodie Sparks, owner of Tempe House, sought to enhance their grand villas. Many of us have enjoyed walking along the banks of the Cooks River, and its tributaries along Wolli Creek and Muddy Creek during the 2021 greater Sydney lockdown, perhaps unaware of its complex history.

More information in *River Dreams: The People & Landscape of the Cooks River* by Ian Tyrrell which is available at Bayside Libraries.

Alison Wishart, Local History Project Officer

BOTANY COAT OF ARMS 1988



This ornate document was prepared by the College of Arms in London and presented to Botany Municipal Council to mark its centenary in 1988. Signed by members of the Royal Victorian Order of the Garter it features the Botany coat of arms in the top left-hand corner.

A coat of arms is highly symbolic. Botany's features a kangaroo, representing Australia and a Bengal tiger as a reminder that Botany was the location of Australia's first zoo at Sir Joseph Banks Pleasure Gardens. Both animals wear an astral crown, which is often found in the coats of arms of air forces and squadrons, as a symbol that Kingsford Smith airport was part of the Botany Municipality. A banksia flower (Banksia ericifolia) sits at the top of the coat of arms and references the man whom the flower is named after, Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist who sailed into Botany Bay on HMS-Endeavour with Captain James Cook in April 1770. Botany Bay is represented by the anchor and wavy blue lines. Unlike other coats of arms the motto "value our heritage" is in English and not Latin.

The Heritage of Botany

As part of the 2022 NSW Heritage Festival, Bayside Council is giving away free copies of The Heritage of Botany. This 1989, illustrated publication tells the history of parks, schools, sports fields, industries and other public spaces in the former City of Botany Bay. It is richly illustrated with photographs

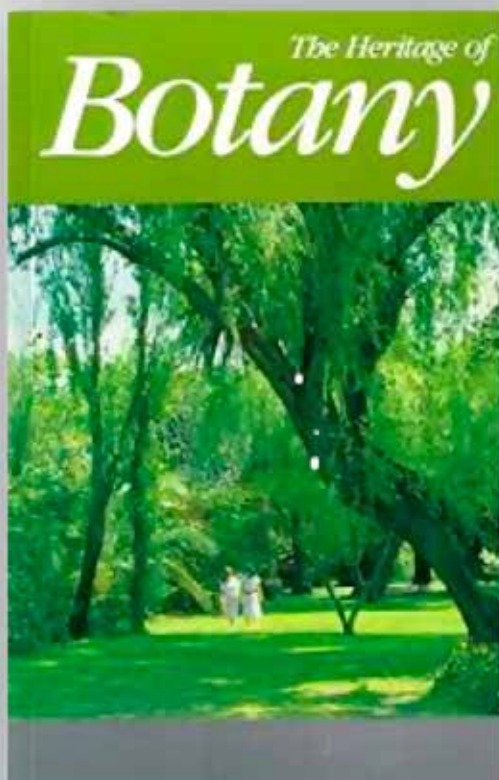
To obtain your free copy, please email community_history_team@bayside.nsw.gov.au

with your: Name / Phone number / Email address and advise which library you would like to pick-up your copy from.

You can collect your copy from the following libraries only:

- Eastgardens
- Mascot
- Rockdale
- Bexley North
- Sans Souci

HURRY!
THERE ARE
ONLY 50 COPIES
AVAILABLE!



AN UNCOMMON HANGMAN

THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF ROBERT 'NOSEY BOB' HOWARD



SATURDAY 13 AUGUST, 2-4PM
AUTHOR TALK AT
MASCOT LIBRARY

Refreshments provided.
Free event but RSVP essential
to **community_history_team**
@bayside.nsw.gov.au
by 10 August

Louisa Collins: the 'Botany Murderess' and 'Nosey Bob'

Robert Howard (1832–1906) used to be a household name; today, the noseless hangman – better known as 'Nosey Bob' – is largely forgotten. Join Rachel Franks for story of the longest-serving executioner for New South Wales (1876–1904), the man who hanged the notorious 'Borgia of Botany': Louisa Collins. Howard's work, including the execution of Collins, is vital to understanding changing attitudes towards capital punishment in Australia. Nosey Bob is a compelling figure in the story of Sydney. More importantly, he is a critical chapter in the history of how generally enthusiastic spectators at early executions were overtaken by campaigners for the abolition of the death penalty.

Rachel Franks

holds PhDs in Australian crime fiction from Central Queensland University and true crime texts from the University of Sydney. A qualified educator and librarian, her extensive work on crime fiction, true crime, popular culture and information science has been presented at numerous conferences as well as on radio and television. An award-winning writer, her research can be found in a wide variety of books, journals, magazines and online resources. She is the author of *An Uncommon Hangman: The Life and Deaths of Robert 'Nosey Bob' Howard* (NewSouth, 2022).

Taking Control of Gentrification in South Sydney

Nancy Hillier annual lecture at Botany Town Hall | Thursday 25 August, 6-8pm



Theme: While gentrification is a powerful force changing all of Australia's capital cities, the Botany region has had and continues to be transformed by both the negative and positive impacts of gentrification. This panel seeks to draw on Botany's history of gentrification, as well as contemporary best-practices for urban change to explore the lessons we can learn for the future of South Sydney at a time when housing affordability, neighbourhood change, and increasing populations are unavoidable realities.

This event is hosted by UNSW and supported by Bayside Council and the Botany Historical Trust.

More details to come!

**FREE
EVENT!**

Refreshments
provided



BAYSIDE COUNCIL'S DAWN SERVICE 2022



Lest We Forget



Michael Daly MP, Member for Maroubra, Councillor Scott Morrisey,
Mayor Dr Christina Curry, Ron Hoenig MP Member for Heffron



Councillor Scott Morrisey, Mayor Dr Christina Curry and
Banksmeadow Public School Leadership Team



Chris Hanna BHT
Senior Vice President