Introduction

A description of Bankstown as it is today would be a far cry from the following description in “The New South Wales Gazetteer” of 1866.

“BANKSTOWN”. 13 miles S.W. from Sydney on the Southern Road. The George's River (brackish) flows past the town at a distance of about 2 miles south. The district is an agricultural one, the industry being chiefly market gardening. The soil, however, is poor, and a number of persons subsist by cutting the timber which grows upon it. From this cause the Crown Lands are rapidly becoming cleared.

The nearest places are Liverpool - 7 miles S.W. and Burwood-Enfield, small villages suburban to Sydney. With these places, as with Sydney and all other towns on the line the communication is by rail from Haslam’s Creek (now Lidcombe) distant 4 miles from Bankstown. There is also a coach to Sydney, leaving at 7.30 am. and returning at 7.45 p.m. every day, which is far the most direct way. The nearest method of reaching Liverpool is also by the Southern Road, (although there is no coach), the distance by rail being considerable. The hotels are “The Globe”, Leech’s and the St. Patrick’s, McQuillan’s. The surrounding country is moderately hilly, and intersected by several small, unimportant creeks. The soil, generally, is hard and stony, and overlies beds of clay. From this cause, and from there being no proper control exercised, the roads are in a deplorable state, and almost impassable in wet weather. There is a small bridge at Bankstown, but at present out of repair. The population of the neighbourhood numbers about 1,000 persons. The geological formation is principally sandstone.

Bankstown is the name of one of the original districts of the country. It is bounded on the east side by the Botany Bay district, on the north side by the Liverpool Road and on the western and southern sides by Prospect Creek and George’s River.”

More than 130 years have passed and the woodcutters have gone; the market gardens are few. From 1,000, the population has grown 153,900 (1991 Census). The City of Bankstown covers an area of 7,854 hectares and within its boundaries over 600 factories give employment to some 25,000 people.

In recent years Bankstown has become a notable commercial centre, attracting shoppers for many miles to the new style of shopping complexes such as the Compass Centre and Bankstown Square.
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A CHRONOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION TO BANKSTOWN

1795 Bass and Flinders sailed up Georges River.
1797 Governor Hunter visited the area.
1798 First official land grant in Bankstown.
1810 Governor Macquarie visited the area and became “lost in the woods”.
1814 Liverpool Road opened. Until Liverpool was developed, Banks’ Town consisted of farms on both sides of Georges River. By 1890 the commercial centre of Bankstown was around the intersection of Liverpool Road and Chapel Road.
1818 District constable and pound-keeper appointed.
1826 Bushrangers hung on the site of the present water tower on Liverpool Road.
1834/36 Lansdowne Bridge built.
1853 First church - St Felix’s Catholic Church.
1863 First Post Office.
1880 First Public School.
1886 First Methodist Church.
1889 First Official Police Station.
1895 Bankstown was proclaimed a Municipality.
1899 First official Post Office.
1909 The railway was extended from Belmore to Bankstown.
1923 Electricity in Bankstown.
1926 Electrification of the railway.
1931 East Hills Railway opened.
1954 Bankstown Library opened.
1957 Bankstown Hospital opened.
1959 Bankstown Historical Society was founded.
1963 First stage of Bankstown Civic Centre was opened.
1966 Bankstown Square opened.
1973 Bankstown Town Hall opened.
1980 Bankstown proclaimed a City.
1983 New Central Library opened.
1987 East Hills rail service extended across Georges River to Glenfield.
1988 Arts and Crafts Centre opened.
1990 Civic Tower opened.
1991 Multicultural Aged Centre opened.
Bankstown celebrates 200 years of settlement and 100 years as a municipality.
LOCATION OF POINTS OF INTEREST ON THE TOUR

1. Bark Huts was between Roberts Road and Waterloo Road, Chullora.
2. Chullora Potteries was near the corner of Waterloo Road and Hume Highway, Chullora.
3. The gallows were on the ground now occupied by the tower on the Hume Highway, opposite Stacey Street.
5. The pumping station is on Rookwood Road about 1.6 km north of the Hume Highway. A good view of the reservoirs is obtained from the top of Brunker Road near the water tower.
6. At the corner of George and Powell Streets.
7. At the corner of Hume Highway and Chapel Road.
8. On the south side of Hume Highway just past Meredith Street.
10. Brancourt’s Homestead, on south side of Hume Highway, between Avon Street and Brancourt Avenue.
11. On the north side of Hume Highway near Church Street.
12. On the north side of Hume Highway near Alan Street.
13. On the north side of Hume Highway between Hood Street and Hector Street, Bass Hill.
14. In Sussman Avenue off Carysfield Road, Bass Hill.
15. On Hume Highway c. 26kms from Sydney.
17. In Lionel Street just off Henry Lawson Drive.
18. In the grounds of the Homestead.
19. In Beatty Parade, Georges Hall.
21. Henry Lawson Drive, south of Milperra Road.
22. In Bullecourt Avenue between Ashford Avenue and Horsley Road.
23. Over the footbridge across the Georges River at East Hills; turn left, walk along the bank for about 40 metres.
24. Sandakan Road near Rowell Street, Revesby Heights.
25. Tompson Road near The River Road, Revesby.
26. Bounded by Tompson Road, The River Road and Beaconsfield Street.
27. At the intersection of Tower Street and Anderson Avenue, Panania
28. Railways are not shown on map.
29-32 Chapel Road North, in Civic Centre Grounds.
33. Corner Featherstone Street and The Mall.
1. BARK HUTS

On February 22, 1814, Governor Macquarie opened the Liverpool Road he had ordered to be built to his new town of Liverpool.

While the road gang constructed the road from Enfield to Bowler's Bridge over Prospect Creek, they lived in rough bark huts. A little settlement grew up and gradually became known as "Bark Huts".

In 1832 there were two inns in the vicinity to cater for travellers by coach, the Kangaroo Inn and the King's Arms.

There were magnificent iron bark forests on either side of the Liverpool Road.

William Roberts, who had contracted to build the Liverpool Road, was given a grant of 500 acres of land. His name is remembered in Roberts Road.

The district was still known as "Bark Huts" as late as 1877, but the name has now faded into disuse.

2. CHULLORA POTTERIES

"Chullora Potteries" was originally known as Cumberland Pottery and Tile Works. It was established here by Mr F. Liebentritt in 1863 and was known throughout N.S.W. for fine quality ware, specialising in architectural pottery. Although the Leibentritt family sold out in 1928, the potteries continued on the same site.

Until early 1970, the Chullora Potteries was in operation making flower pots, ventilators, agricultural pipes and supplying clay to schools and craft potters. The tall chimney into which was set a plaque showing the date of erection, 1863, has now been demolished after more than a century of continuous service.

The site is now used for a carton and corrugated cardboard manufacturing industry.

Fine examples of the work of the Potteries may be seen in the Mint Museum, Macquarie Street, Sydney.
3. SITE OF BUSHRANGERS HANGING

On Wednesday, October 18, 1826, two bushrangers, named Patrick Sullivan and James Moran, were hanged on this site, close to the present water tower. The district was later known as Irish Town.

Both men were members of Sullivan’s gang, which had operated in the Bathurst district for nearly 12 months. They had no connection with Bankstown, other than being hanged here!

The problems of bushrangers was so severe at the time that the authorities decided to make an example of these in order to discourage others from taking to the highway. All assigned convicts had to attend the public hanging, which were carried out with all formality. In the same week, three bushrangers who had robbed homes in the Burwood area were hanged there, and two other members of Sullivan’s gang were hanged in Parramatta.

In 1831, Michael Ryan was granted 100 acres, which include the land on which the hangings took place. It was known as Ryan’s Paddock for many years.

The reinforced concrete water tower was completed in 1920 to serve the needs of the growing township of Bankstown.

WATER TOWER, LIVERPOOL ROAD
4. WOOD PARK AND LOOKOUT.

This reserve was donated to the municipality by Walter Selby Wood always known as “Syd” Wood.

His coachbuilding business was founded in 1912 and bridged the period between horse-drawn vehicles and motor transport. From his workshop in Chapel Road, on the north west corner of the intersection with Rickard Road, Bankstown, came the first double-decker bus in Australia in 1926, and also the first bullion van for the Commonwealth Bank.

From the vantage point of the lookout a good panoramic view is obtained of the southern half of the district, which extends to the banks of the river.

On the left is the road bridge over Salt Pan Creek. On the right is Bankstown Hospital. In the far distance, behind the hospital, is Lucas Heights Reactor. Straight ahead on a clear day can be seen the smoke from Port Kembla Steel Works.

"The first settlement in this district follows the exploration of the Georges River by George Bass and Matthew Flinders who sailed up the river in the "Tomb Thumb" in 1795.

A few farms were established near the junction of the Georges River and prospect creek after Governor Hunter made an excursion up the river in 1797, and subsequently named this area Banks Town in honour of Sir Joseph Banks who, after a voyage with Captain Cook to the south sea, continually advocated, and was principally responsible for the settlement of Australia, and who is so aptly named "The Father of Australia". Subsequent to the opening of the Liverpool Road (Hume Highway) in 1814, villages such as Bark Huts, Irish Town, Upper Bankstown and Bankstown sprang up along this route, with the advent of the railway extensions in 1909. The council centre moved from the Highway to its present location."
5. POTTS HILL RESERVOIRS

The reservoirs were built on land which was originally granted in 1835 to Joseph Hyde Potts. Potts was the first employee of the Bank of N.S.W. and the same Potts whose name was given to Potts Point.

In 1888 one of the first projects undertaken by the newly formed Metropolitan Water Board was the construction of the reservoir at Potts Hill.

A busy settlement grew up to cater for the work force. It was large enough to support three hotels near Brunker Road and Rookwood Road and Graf Avenue. None of these remain today.

The reservoirs store water which flows by pipeline from Prospect. From here the water is pumped through an underground pipe for distribution to Sydney via Waterloo. After the pipes cross the road at the pumping station on Rookwood Road, they drop down 300 feet immediately and stay at this level until passing the Enfield brickyard. This is to build up pressure. The pumps had been driven by the steam engines, but a new electrically operated pumping station has been constructed alongside the old one.

The second reservoir was completed in 1922. The water tower on the Hume Highway was constructed in the same period, being completed in 1920.
6. FIRST POLICE STATION

This small cottage was built in the 1880's by a Mr and Mrs Thompson, who worked a market garden. It is believed that, for a short time, the building housed the first two teaching Sisters attached to St. Felix's Church.

In 1892 Bankstown was recognised in the form of Police Station and the services of a (to date anonymous) foot constable. Then a mounted trooper was appointed.

He was Constable John Henry Wilkinson, who had joined the force in 1884, and in 1902 took up his appointment and residency in this house, where he continued to live after his retirement in 1917.

Following a general district move closer to Bankstown railway station from 1909, a Police Station was established in Chapel Road, then Fetherstone Street and is now situated in a large brick complex which incorporates Police Station, Magistrates and Petty Sessions Chambers and Courts of Law, running between Fetherstone Street and Chapel Road South.

The cottage has been extensively altered by removing the bullnose verandah room and replacing wooden windows by aluminium. It is now used for commerce.

FIRST POLICE STATION, POWELL STREET
7. THE CHURCH OF ST. FELIX

St. Felix's was the first church built in the Bankstown area.

In August 1853 John and Bridget Abbott gave an acre of land for the establishment of a Catholic Church in "Irish town", the foundation stone of which was laid in December 1853. The stone was later removed when the Abbotts gave another four acres in exchange for their original gift.

The church, which was constructed of stone and featured long narrow windows, was completed in 1856, but there is no record of the actual opening date.

In June 1853 Mr. Michael O'Connell commenced a Catholic school, which closed in May 1855. The exact location of this school is not known. Then over the next 30 or so years the St. Felix School opened, closed and re-opened numerous times, until in 1886 the Sisters of St. Joseph established the school on a permanent basis.

It is believed the two Sisters who commenced the school lived for a short time in a small cottage in Powell Street, North Bankstown, then moved to a house built on land, either given or sold by Robert Caird, adjacent to St. Felix's Church.

The first Irish Town Convent opened in 1886.

On March 17th, 1916, Father John Joseph Egan was appointed first Parish Priest, and the parish was separated from Rookwood.

The original stone church proved inadequate, and the foundation stone for a new brick building was laid in July, 1925 and the building blessed by Archbishop Sheehan in 1932.

There is a small graveyard within the church grounds where many Bankstown pioneers were laid to rest.
8. FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL

Bankstown’s first public school was built on this site in 1880. The enrolment in 1882 was 49 boys and 36 girls, and expenses for upkeep for the year were 219 pounds, eight shillings and eleven pence.

The first schoolmaster was Mr Dugald McLeod, and he served his pupils until 1912. He had held classes in a church hall until the new school was ready, and gave 34 years of devoted service to the children of Bankstown.

When the new North Bankstown School opened in 1924, the old school was closed. The schoolhouse was not demolished until 1932, and the original weather sheds and schoolmaster’s residence could still be seen until they, too, were demolished in 1976. The dome of the old well can still be seen.

The area is now a small park, McLeod Reserve, in memory of the first headmaster.
9. SITE OF THE FIRST COUNCIL CHAMBERS
FROM 1898 - 1918

The first Council Chambers were opened in 1898 and stood in what is now the parking area used by the Three Swallows Hotel. After the Council moved to the new building erected in South Terrace in 1918, the Brennan family used the building as a produce store.

The second Council Chambers followed the commercial centre of Bankstown, which moved south of the Liverpool Road after the railway came in 1909. That building was used until 1963 when the Civic Centre was built.

The foundation stones of both the 1898 and 1918 buildings can be seen in the Old Town Centre, set into the surrounds of a garden bed in the North Terrace section.

FIRST COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LIVERPOOL ROAD
10. BRANCOURT'S HOMESTEAD

The house was built in 1873 by the Berwick family who were coachbuilders and purchased by the Brancourt family in 1902. It was demolished in 1981.

Brancourt's still operate a cheese factory at the rear of the site.

Bankstown's first Service Station was operated beside the house from 1924. The building that was the workshop of the garage and incorporated a crumpet factory is now occupied by a shop specialising in motor bikes.
11. SITE OF THE FIRST ANGLICAN CHURCH

St. Matthew’s, which was the first Anglican church in the district, was built in 1859 on the Liverpool Road near Church Road. It was a weatherboard structure, erected by a “working bee” of the parishioners, using local timber obtained from Chinaman’s Hill (now known as Condell Park). One of the first church wardens was a Mr F. Meredith, and the first preacher came from Moore Theological College, Liverpool.

On December 6, 1902, a second weatherboard church was built to replace the original church. The Rev. F.C. Williams was minister in 1907.

When St. Paul’s was built in Chapel Road, half way between the Highway and the station, St Matthew’s was no longer required. So the little church was moved, in three sections, to the Milperra Returned Soldiers’ Settlement in 1920. The Rev. William Corner was the first rector.

Until 1969, St. Matthew’s stood at the corner of Bullecourt Avenue and Ashford Avenue, Milperra. A handsome new St Matthew’s has been built on the corner of Fromelles and Armentieres Avenues, in the centre of the new housing estates.

The parishioners of St. Matthew’s, Milperra, presented the bell of their old church to St. Mark’s, Auburn Road, Yagoona, in 1963. So after many years the church bell is again hanging close to its original site.
12. STARLANDS

Built in the 1870’s, “Starlands” was originally an inn patronised by teamsters. It then stood in a 50 acre property, and consisted of the present building, with a ballroom and separate servants quarters.

In 1900 Mrs Brennan bought Starlands and the family had a pig and poultry business. Her son, Bede Brennan, owned the first public transport in the district. He operated a horse-drawn bus service for many years and changed to petrol driven vehicles in 1922.

After the Brennan family built a new home, (which has now been demolished), and moved a little further west on the Liverpool Road, the land was subdivided, the ballroom and servants quarters were demolished and the old house gradually became surrounded by modern cottages.

The numerous chimneys were taken down about 1965-1966, but the large windows and shady verandah with the bullnose iron roof, still painted in the once fashionable two colours, remained to indicate a house of an earlier age. Sadly “Starlands” was demolished in November 1996.
13. IRISH TOWN

The name "Irish Town" has been applied to three separate localities in the Bankstown district.

The first village was in the vicinity of Hector Street and Bass Hill Public School. This part was first settled in 1814 when Governor Macquarie made grants of approximately 40 acres each to Martin Short and Michael Ryan. The name was changed in 1864 to Upper Bankstown and again in 1924 to Bass Hills. In 1975 the Geographical Names Board of N.S.W. decided that the official name be declared Bass Hill.

A second Irish Town, according to the N.S.W. Census for 1833, was centered around the Village Reserve, the area that is now the shopping centre at Yagoona Station.

A third Irish Town was at the junction of Chapel Road and Liverpool Road. In 1868 the Postmaster-General was considering an application to re-name the Post Office here Irish Town, for obvious reasons and to open a second Post Office near Hector Street and call this one Bankstown. Deputations and general comment from residents influenced the Department against that.
14. CARYSFIELD HALL

“Carysfield Hall” is one of Bankstown’s few remaining substantial old homes. Built of red bricks with slender verandah posts and iron lace, it once had a ballroom also. There are large cellars beneath the house, another reminder of its age.

The house was erected by the Hon. George Thornton, M.L.C. as his country residence. He is listed in Sands Directory as living there in 1893 and 1894, towards the close of his long active life. Born in Sydney Town in 1819, he served on Sydney’s first Councils, and was the first official Mayor in 1857. He was an extensive land owner and had a large area of adjoining land passed on to him by his father, Samuel, in 1839. But he acquired the land on which “Carysfield Hall” is built at a later date, as it was originally a grant of land to James Carey in 1830. At one time it had about 200 acres of land, and was reached from Liverpool Road.

Another occupant of interest was George Robert Johnston, in 1895-1897. When Major George Johnstons’ grandson lived there his occupation was given as a squatter.

When the house and land were acquired by Mr Sussman, he subdivided the land. The street fronting the house is Sussman Avenue and Thornton Avenue is nearby.

In 1990 the restoration of the house was completed, with a modern fence.

The house is not open to the public.
15. Lansdowne Bridge and Toll-Gates

The bridge was designed by David Lennox, and built by convict labour to replace an old wooden structure. Bowler’s Bridge. In 1834 the cornerstone was laid by Governor Bourke and the bridge named Lansdowne Bridge after Lord Lansdowne, an official in far-off London. An engraved brass commemoration plate and some coins were placed beneath the stone, but were stolen the same day! Although the brass plate was recovered, the coins were not seen again.

January 26, 1836, the 48th anniversary of the foundation of the Colony, was chosen by Governor Bourke for the official opening ceremony. There was a grand procession across the bridge, coaches with dignitaries and pioneer families, wool teams, fat oxen, fine horses and goats, and wagons of produce such as grain and wine. Music was provided by the bands of the 4th and 5th Regiments, and the day closed with a grand Vice-Regal Ball at Government House, Parramatta.

However, the following day the Bridge was closed, as the toll-house and gates were not complete, and the old wooden bridge was used until 1837. Although Lennox had submitted his design for the toll-house early in December 1835, he was not given the task of building it. The private contractor had difficulty in getting his supplies of stone, hence the delay in opening the bridge was in no way attributable to David Lennox.

The toll charged for crossing Lansdowne Bridge make an interesting comparison with today’s Harbour bridge tolls:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Toll</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-wheeled chariot or carriage drawn by 4 animals</td>
<td>1/6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 3 animals</td>
<td>1/3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 2 animals</td>
<td>1/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 1 animal</td>
<td>9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-wheeled wain or waggon drawn by 4 animals</td>
<td>10d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 3 animals</td>
<td>9d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 2 animals</td>
<td>8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for each animal above 4 an extra</td>
<td>2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-wheeled cart or dray    drawn by 4 animals</td>
<td>6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 3 animals</td>
<td>5d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 2 animals</td>
<td>4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawn by 1 animal</td>
<td>3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for each additional animal an extra</td>
<td>1d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Horse, mare, gelding, ass or mule .................... 2d
Lamb, pigs and goats, per head ....................... 1/4d (a farthing)

The toll-gates and toll-house stood on the Bankstown side of the bridge. On the left hand side of the approach to the bridge, two stone blocks painted white can be seen. These are all that remain of the foundations of the toll-gates.

Conrad Martens painted the Lansdowne Bridge as it was in 1836. The original painting is in the National Library of Australia.

LANSDOWNE BRIDGE, LIVERPOOL ROAD
16. LANSDOWNE HOUSE

Henry Lawson Drive runs down hill though land granted to Lieutenant John Shortland, who discovered coal deposits at Newcastle in 1797.

Lansdowne House can be seen on the left. It was built by John Varnell Tillett, Crown Solicitor of New South Wales, who purchased the land in 1903.

The land around Denman Road was a grant to Surgeon George Bass, and Flinders Road borders the land granted to Matthew Flinders. However, the two discoverers of Bankstown never lived here.

The house is not open to the public.
17. THE HOMESTEAD

"The Homestead" is one of the oldest residences in Bankstown, built in 1837, and was the home of the Johnston family until 1911.

It is the second house built by the Johnston family, high on a knoll out of reach of the flood-waters which had so often inundated the lower ground near the river.

Among the many grants of land in different parts of the young Colony, the Johnston family held large grants in the Georges Hall and East Hills district. George Johnston, Junior, lived here and managed the estates belonging to himself, his father and his mother, Esther Julian.

After the death of George Johnston, Junior, in a riding accident at the Macarthur's Camden home in 1820, his brother, David, was confirmed as his heir and took over the estates at George's River. In 1836, David married Miss Selina Willey of Picton, and built "The Homestead" for his bride, in 1837. The Reverend Richard Taylor, Rector of St Luke's, Liverpool, recorded in his diary of January 26, 1837, a visit to Mr David Johnston at George's Hall, and noted that he was "ereciting a new house on a more commanding site". David Johnston is believed to have lived in Bankstown until his death in 1866. David and Selina had 4 sons and 3 daughters who were christened at St Luke's Church, Liverpool. Their youngest son, Arthur Alfred, and his wife lived here until his death in July 1907, and the property was later sold to Mr Ashcroft.

Esther Johnston, David's mother, had arrived in the Colony with the First Fleet in 1788. After her husband's death in 1823, the management of the family's estates at Annandale passed to her son Robert. She then stayed with her son David from 1830 until her death in 1846.

The style at "The Homestead" is simple and dignified, with wide verandahs, attics, cellars and cedar woodwork. Although the exterior has been altered and additions made to the building, the interior still has the lofty ceilings and spacious rooms of a long gone era.

The National Trust has given "The Homestead" a classified listing and the Heritage Council of N.S.W. has placed a permanent conservation order on the building to prevent it being demolished or altered.

From 1949 "The Homestead" was used as a convalescent home.

In 1989 it was purchased by the Four Square Gospel Church, who now conduct a primary school there.

"The Homestead" is not open to the public.
18. BILLS HORSE TROUGH

Horse troughs are fast disappearing and will be entirely forgotten unless we strive to preserve the ones still in existence. In the grounds of The Homestead stands one, erected by Annis and George Bills, when horses were the prime means of transport. It once stood in Milperra Road, but with the building of the aerodrome was moved to Rabaul Road, Georges Hall.

Some of these troughs were elaborate affairs, others were of simple design, usually in concrete, but the inscription was always the same:

"Donated by Annis and George Bills, Australia".

George Bills was the son of an English naturalist and entered business in Sydney with his brother Henry. He became a Life Governor of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1924, and on his death in 1927, much of his estate of 70,000 Pounds was converted into a trust fund for the erection of horse troughs.

Annis, his wife, was born in England and died there on a visit in 1910. Her estate of 3,350 Pounds was left to her husband. They were both animal lovers who, during their lifetime, travelled the world donating troughs wherever they went. In Australia there were 7,000, including some in Central Australia for camels. Usually a smaller trough at one or both sides provided water for the smaller animals.

There are still a few to be found - some filled with mud, weeds, or broken glass; some well cared for. It would be a pity if these troughs were removed, for they provide a link with the past when horses reigned supreme.
19. SITE OF GEORGE JOHNSTON'S FARMHOUSE, GEORGES HALL

“The settlement of Bankstown originated with Governor Hunter establishing a few marines near the junction of Georges River and Prospect Creek, and naming the area Banks Town. This is shown on his chart of 10th January, 1798.

Major George Johnston of the New South Wales Corps was granted 172 acres on the 6th April, 1798, and it was on this site that the first home was built and named Georges Hall.

A line of oaks is believed to mark the carriageway to the estate.”

A notice to this effect was first erected in 1964 by the Bankstown Municipal Council, at the request of Bankstown Historical Society, but has since been removed.

Until 1809, Georges Hall was also the administrative centre at which a military guard was posted and where convicts were mustered, for the purpose of taking a census.

The suburb of Georges Hall took its name from the farmhouse of Major George Johnston.

The site is now within Lake Gillawarna Reserve, part of Mirambeena Regional Park, opened by the Premier, Mr Neville Wran, Q.C. in 1977, and is known as Garrison Point.

In 1988, the Council unveiled a plaque on a large boulder to mark the site.
20. BANKSTOWN AERODROME

In 1929 a section of Milperra was considered as an aerodrome. It was a flood prone paddock, and as the depression was affecting finances, building and development, nothing positive was done about it.

So it was not until the declaration of the Second World War that Bankstown Aerodrome was developed. The Department of Air purchased some acres of land and the Royal Australian Air Force Station was established in December 1940.

Over the next 18 months squadrons came and went from Bankstown to battle centres such as the Middle East, Malaya and Singapore, England and Gibraltar.

In February 1942 U.S. Army Air Corps commenced operations in Bankstown.

They were followed in mid 1944 by the British. A Royal Navy Shore Base, Monab 2 (Mobile Naval Air Base) known as HMS Nabberley was established. Aircraft were assembled and serviced for the Royal Navy aircraft carriers of the Pacific Fleet until 1946. The base accommodated 84 officers and 1644 other ranks.

Throughout this period De Havilland Aircraft Company (now Hawker De Havilland Aust. Ltd.) serviced the planes passing through, and indeed still operates here. The Aerodrome saw Spitfires, Bell Airacobras headed for New Guinea, Hawker Hurricanes, Brewster Buffalos and served as a base for Kittyhawks ready for the defence of Sydney.

The first women recruits for the W.A.A.A.F in New South Wales were based at Bankstown Aerodrome and served as radio controllers, stores and transport personnel from 1941.

In 1946 Bankstown Aerodrome reverted to the R.A.A.F.

Today Bankstown Airport is the busiest light aircraft airport in the Southern Hemisphere. Future plans include an Aviation Museum based around Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross hangar.
21. MILPERRA

Henry Lawson Drive runs though the suburb of Milperra, named from a aboriginal word meaning “a gathering of people”.

After World War 1, this was the site of the Bankstown Soldier Settlement. All settlers were returned soldiers and were settled on 48 poultry farms and 8 market gardens. Each farm was equipped with a house, sheds, fences and city water supply. A few of the original weatherboard houses could still be seen from the Drive until recently. The poultry farms are gone, but a market garden still survives.

With the establishment in 1975 of the Milperra College of Advanced Education, Milperra began a new era of service to the community.

22. UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY - MACARTHUR

As early at 1972, planning began for the establishment of a College on a site of some 50 acres adjoining the Milperra Primary School.

It was planned that the Milperra College of Advanced Education should be a multi-discipline College, catering in the first instance for Teacher Education, and 270 students were enrolled to begin their studies on 16th July, 1975. A Social Welfare Program began in 1977.

Lectures began in the building that had once been the Milperra Primary School, but new buildings were ready for students in 1976.

From July 1st, 1983, Milperra College of Advanced Education became “Macarthur Institute of Higher Education”, following the incorporation of all South Western District Colleges in 1982. This includes the Campbelltown Campus, to which Milperra will eventually become secondary.

From November 3, 1989, the Macarthur Institute became the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, Milperra Campus.
23. SITE OF THE QUARRY AND STOCKADE

The section of George’s River bounding East Hills Park, is shown on maps to-day as Stockade Reach. Directly opposite the wharf in the park is the site of the quarry from which the stone for Lansdowne Bridge was cut.

The quarry was opened in 1833. By day or night, according to the tide, the stone was transported by punt about seven miles up-stream to the site of the bridge across Prospect Creek.

Close by the quarry was the stockade where the convicts were housed. Until February, 1964, the remains of a well and some bricks and rubble could be seen, but these have been obliterated by the bulldozer in “cleaning up” operations.

David Lennox, the Civil Engineer in charge of the project, treated the convicts very humanely. He succeeded in obtaining extra rations for them and won permission for them to work without iron manacles. In July, 1833 some of the convicts left camp and plundered a private still. Full of rum, they came back threatening to kill the overseer and burn the camp. However, they were soon recaptured and punished by the lash or the chain gang.

At the end of 1836, there was a serious blasting accident at the quarry, in which one man was killed and another badly injured.

In Liverpool Cemetery a headstone records another pathetic story of this time:-

“Sacred to the memory of Alexander McCulloch Pt Soldier of Capt’n F.C. Montgomery’s Comp 50th or Queen’s Own Regt who was mortally wounded by a Musket Ball by means of a spark Communicating with his Firelock when on duty in the smiths forge over the iron gang at George’s River. This stone was erected by his Brother Soldiers of the above Rt as a lasting testimony of the great Esteem he was held in by them. He has left an only brother in the Rt to regret his loss. He depd this life September 18th, 1835 aged 20 years.”
24. THE ABORIGINAL AXE-GRINDING STONE

The aborigines made axes from quarried lumps of stone or from pebbles. Axes were used for chopping the holds in trees to facilitate climbing, cutting out sheets of bark to make canoes and water containers, and for cutting blocks of wood from which weapons were fashioned. The butt was used as a hammer for breaking hard seeds, and for flaking implements.

The Aborigines first began grinding the blades of their axes some 3,000 years ago; previously they used stone choppers with a chipped edge. The blade was ground in the grooves seen on this rock. Water and sand were used during the grinding process.

The pot-holes in the rock were formed by the abrasive action of grit and stones as the water swirled around. They were not hollowed out by the aborigines.

The rock is Hawkesbury sandstone formed as a sedimentary deposit approximately 180 million years ago, during the Triassic period.

A notice board, reading as above, was erected by the Bankstown Council in 1961, but is no longer there.

The stone is fairly easily accessible from steps in Sandakan Road.
"The Pah" is another of the few remaining substantial old homes in the Bankstown District.

Built in about 1894 by Samuel J Hale, a city businessman, it was designed as a country residence. (Mr Hale's Market Street Furnishing Emporium, a department store which he managed from 1889 to about 1909, can still be seen on the corner of Market and Clarence Streets, Sydney. It is now known as Archway House, and has been designated by the National Trust as worthy of preservation.)

"The Pah" then had extensive grounds about it and the stone pillars at the front gate in Tompsoon Road once stood on The River Road. Although the tree lined drive and the gardens have disappeared, their places taken by modern cottages, the house has altered very little. The verandahs trimmed with iron lace, the shuttered windows and tall chimneys are still to be seen, but the slate roof has been replaced by modern tiles.

In those days, the estate carried ducks, swans and deer, until they escaped. One even crossed the river and was caught near Liverpool.

The gardens were renowned, especially one shaped like an anchor. They were tended by two gardeners, a Chinese named Jimmy Teo and George Graf, later a Mayor of Bankstown.

Mr. Hale was in residence until 1903. Old directories give his address as River Road, Bankstown. Other residents have been, M. Hayden, 1904-1907; F. W. Mewton, about the time of World War 1, when he had a poultry farm and orchard; Philip Fluger, in the 1920's using "The Pah", it is said, as a holiday home from his plantation in Fiji; and Mrs N.V Langdale and Mr John O'Neill Creagh.

In 1956 "The Pah" was purchased by Mr and Mrs P. Tierney, and lovingly restored to its former beauty.

The land on which "The Pah" is built was once part of the East Hills Estate, owned by George Johnston Junior, of Georges Hall.

The house is privately owned and is not open to the public.
26. EAST HILLS ESTATE

Part of the present day suburb of Revesby is built on the east Hills Estate, a land grant of 500 acres made to George Johnston Junior, in 1804. He grazed sheep and calves on it under the supervision of an overseer.

The name “East Hills” was in use in 1810, for a notice appeared in “The Sydney Gazette” of December 1, 1810, warning off trespassers, and complaining of the damage “sustained by Robert Gardiner, the tenant under Major G Johnston, of a Farm estate in the District of Bank’s Town, George’s River, and known by the name of East Hills”.

During the 1800’s, the name “East Hills” referred to most of the land south from Milperra Road to the George’s River.

In 1902 a post office agency was opened in J. R. Spence’s General Store in Weston Street, and it was called the East Hills Post Office Agency. This was an additional service for the local community, who already used the store as a meeting place for the exchange of news and for social activities.

But the district was often called South Bankstown too, and with official post offices at Bankstown, Central Bankstown and Upper Bankstown, it is not surprising that when an official post office was opened on The River Road, near Beaconsfield, it was given a new name - Revesby.

Revesby was the name of Sir Joseph Banks’ estate in Lincolnshire. This happy choice of name reminds us once more of Bankstown’s links with our early history.
27. MEMORIAL TO NURSE SCHWARZEL

When the “Village of East Hills”, now Revesby/Panania, was a flourishing community in the 1890’s, “Granny” Schwarzel delivered all this district’s babies.

At the intersection of Tower Street and Anderson Avenue, Panania, there once stood a dignified gray marble drinking fountain with a simple, sincere inscription commemorating her long and useful life from 1858-1937.

“Nurse Sarah Ann Schwarzel from her fellow citizens with affectionate rememberance 1937”

In 1971 the memorial was moved a few metres and re-erected, with a simple slab of marble replacing the “bubbler”, in a charming garden setting between the Panania Library and the Baby Health Centre.
28. THE RAILWAYS IN BANKSTOWN

The Railway arrived in Bankstown at a comparatively late date, a fact which retarded development of the district as the nearest stations were Haslam’s Creek (later Lidcombe) and Belmore.

In 1909 the line from Belmore to Bankstown was opened to traffic and from then on the railways began to move onto the Bankstown district. The Regents Park - Villawood line opened in 1924; the Bankstown - Regents Park line in 1928 and the Tempe - East Hills line in 1931.

The early services were by steam train and rail motor until electricity was introduced. Electric trains ran from Sydney to Bankstown in 1926, but were not extended to the Regents Park and Villawood loops and the East Hills line until 1939.

The East Hills line was extended across Georges River to Glenfield in 1987.

The Chullora Railway Workshops were established in 1923 and with the development of the industrial areas of the north western section of the district, networks of goods lines and sidings were built radiating from Chullora Junction, Regents Park and the Leightonfield/Villawood area to serve heavy industry.

Today, the City of Bankstown has 4 passenger systems totalling approximately 19 kilometres and 13 railway stations either inside its boundaries or immediately adjacent thereto - Punchbowl, Bankstown, Yagoona, Birrong, Regents Park, Chester Hill, Sefton, Leightonfield, Villawood, Padstow, Revesby, Panania and East Hills. With the large car sheds at Punchbowl and the vast Railway Workshops at Chullora, Bankstown constitutes one of the most highly developed sections of the New South Wales State Rail system.
29. BANKSTOWN CIVIC CENTRE

Bankstown’s attractive Civic Centre comprises a complex of buildings. The Council Chambers and the Administrative Offices are designed to complement each other, one being circular, the others rectangular. The architect was Kevin Curtin.

The two buildings are connected to each other by means of a tunnel. There are two floors and a basement in the Administrative Offices. The basement is capable of holding up to sixty vehicles.

In 1964, the exterior lighting gained Council the Australian Illuminating Engineering Society’s award for meritorious lighting.

The surrounds of the buildings have been beautified by lawns and shrubbery. A large area is paved in exposed aggregate to provide a piazza to each building.

In the imposing entrance hall of the Administrative Building is a large mural depicting various facets of Bankstown’s history.

The new centre was opened for business, without official ceremony, on Monday, 2nd December, 1963.

The complex was completed by the Town Hall, officially opened on 30th June, 1973.
30. SIR JOSEPH BANKS' MONUMENT

The statue, named "The Spirit of Botany", was designed by the Sydney sculptor, Alan Ingham. It was unveiled in April, 1964.

The monument stresses the life-long interest of Sir Joseph Banks - botany. It consists of a symbolic figure of a woman, seated on an informal arrangement of natural rocks, holding aloft a plant. The figure, made of cast aluminium, is 3.15m high and weighs about 386 kg.

When first erected, the statue was set in a commanding position between the Council Chambers and the Administrative Building. The statue was surrounded by native plants mentioned in Sir Joseph Banks' journal and nearby, superimposed on a slab of sandstone, above an engraved plate detailing his career, was a profile of Banks.

However, when the statue was moved to its present position in the forecourt of the Town Hall, it was set in a pool of water. The small profile has been hung in the Administration Building and a large profile of Sir Joseph Banks is displayed at the entrance on Chapel Road.

The Bankstown Historical Society, with the permission of the Bankstown Municipal Council, has incorporated the silhouette of this symbolic figure into its emblem.

"The Spirit of Botany" has already come to be identified with Bankstown and is now often used to evoke the image of our large and vigorous municipality.
31. THE DANE FOUNTAIN

The graceful fountain in the gardens at the rear of the Civic Centre was erected in 1966 as a tribute to Mr H.W. Dane, of the Department of Local Government, who has twice served Bankstown as Administrator of the Council.

Officers of the Council designed and built the fountain. It incorporates an intricate sensor mechanism to control the height of the jets of water, according to the strength of the winds blowing.

Many people, as they watch the circling jets and listen to the gentle splash of water into the surrounding rock garden, do not realise that the fountain also plays a practical role in cooling the water used in the air-conditioning of the Civic Centre.

A metal plaque set in concrete has the following inscription

   This fountain was constructed by
   The Bankstown Municipal Council
   as a mark of
   appreciation of the services rendered
   to the Municipality by
   H.W. Dane Esq.
   during his two terms as
   Administrator of the area.
   Erected 1966
32. STATUE OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS

In May 1995, to commemorate 15 years as a City, His Worship the Mayor, Clr Max Parker, unveiled a statue of Sir Joseph Banks, our district’s namesake, at the corner of Chapel Road and The Mall and facing the Court House Reserve.

The sculptor was Carl Merton.

The commemorative plaque reads as follows:

Sir Joseph Banks  
(Circa 1771)

This statue depicts Banks at the time of his visit to Australia when he accompanied Captain James Cook on The Voyage of Discovery.  
(Sculptured by Carl Merton)  
officially dedicated by  
His Worship the Mayor, Clr Max Parker  
on 27 May 1995  
to commemorate  
The 15th Anniversary of City proclamation during the 1995 Bicentenary Community Celebrations programme in the presence of the Council.

South Ward  
Clr Max Parker (Mayor)  
Clr Ray Buchanan  
Clr Alan Ashton O.A.M.

North Ward  
Clr Grant Lee  
Clr Paul Barrett  
Clr Bill Lovelee

East Ward  
Clr Kevin Hill  
Clr David Blake  
Clr Barry Stansfield

West Ward  
Clr Clive Taylor (Dep. Mayor)  
Clr Phil Lopez O.B.E.  
Clr Ian Stromborg

Mark Fitzgibbon  
General Manager
33. Bankstown City Library

The Central Library has been serving Bankstown on this site since 1954. However, 8 years earlier, in 1946, Bankstown became the first municipality in the Western Suburbs to adopt the Library Act, by opening a Children’s Library. The rest of the district was served by a bookmobile, which began operating in 1955.

Between 1958 and 1961 branch libraries were built at Chester Hill, Greenacre and Padstow, and at Panania in 1968.

Despite very cramped quarters, the Library added a Print Lending Collection in 1977 to books and magazines, books in other languages and books in large print for those with poor sight. In 1981 an Audio Service was introduced.

On the opening of the new Central Library on May 28, 1983 listening facilities were made available for Music and Literature cassettes, as well as a video and compact disc service, meeting room, seminar rooms and local history room.

In 1990 the bookmobile was replaced by the Home Library Service for the housebound and a bus to bring people with transport difficulties to the library.
More detailed information is available from:
The Secretary
Bankstown Historical Society
P.O. Box 928
BANKSTOWN 2200

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Tour of Bankstown</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bankstown Story</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bankstown's Northern Suburbs</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative Index B.H.S Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1967-88, with 3 Year cumulations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1989-1996 in progress)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lansdowne Bridge</td>
<td>$0.50c</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Homestead</td>
<td>$0.50c</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pen &amp; Ink Sketches of Bankstown</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Pack of 5 notelet/cards, different scenes)</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.H.S. Badges each</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.H.S. Tea Spoons each</td>
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