

JUNE 2023

JRAHS

Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society



VOLUME 109 PART 1

JOURNAL
of the
**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABN 91 000 027 654

History House

133 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone (02) 9247 8001 • Fax (02) 9247 7854 • E-mail history@rahs.org.au • Website www.rahs.org.au

Joint Patrons

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley, AO, KC
Governor of New South Wales
and Mr Dennis Wilson

President

Dr Iain Stuart, BA (Hons), M Env Sci, PhD

Senior Vice President

Ms Christine Yeats, BA, DipLib, DipArchAdmin, FRAHS

Vice President

Mr Graham Shirley

Treasurer

Dr Kathrine M Reynolds, FRHistS, BA, B Crim, MSc, PhD

Councillors

Mrs Lynne Allen, BA, DipEd, GDipLFAH (UNE), MA

Mrs Judith Dunn, OAM, FPDHS

Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston, AO, BA (Hons), PhD, FRAHS

Mr Craig McPherson B Des (Arch) M HerCons M ICOMOS

Dr Mark St Leon, BEc, GCertTQM, MBus, MA (Hons), PhD, CA

Associate Professor Richard White, BA (Hons) Dip Ed

Alison Wishart, BA (Hons), MCultHeritage, GradDipInfMgmt

Honorary Editor

Ms Christine Yeats, BA, DipLib, DipArchAdmin, FRAHS

Book Review Editor

Ms Christine Yeats, BA, DipLib, DipArchAdmin, FRAHS

All correspondence regarding contributions to the *Journal* should be addressed to the Honorary Editor. The Society is not responsible for the opinions of contributors expressed in the *Journal*.

ISSN 0035-8762

Production Editor

Bruce Pollock

0432 612 375

Proofreader

Janette Pelosi, BA (Hons), DipIMLib, DipIMArchivAdmin, MInfoStud (Lship), FSAG

Production Coordinators

Phillip Jaworski, BA (Hons)

Donna Newton, DipLibInf, ALIA (Tec)

Design, typesetting and printing

PLT Print Solutions

18/2 Cerretti Crescent

Manly NSW 2095

(02) 9976 2527

Editorial Note

The *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* is a peer-reviewed journal. All articles submitted for publication undergo a process of independent review by appropriately qualified historians prior to acceptance for publication.

The Editor of the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* welcomes articles on Australian history. All material should be original research and not previously published.

The maximum length for articles, including footnotes/endnotes, is 8000 words. Manuscripts should be typed and should follow the guidelines set out in the style sheet, a copy of which is available at www.rahs.org.au or on request from the Society. The author should not be identified on the manuscript. Illustrations should not be embedded within the article but sent separately. An abstract of approximately 100 words should be included along with a brief note (maximum 50 words) on the contributor including affiliations, expertise, areas of interest and publications list.

Manuscripts may be submitted by email to library@rahs.org.au or posted to The Editor, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000. If the article is accepted for publication the Editor will request the article in electronic format. Inquiries regarding Open Access should be directed to the Editor.

The Editor welcomes for review scholarly, non-fiction publications in Australian and Pacific history and politics. These should be addressed to the Book Review Editor at the above address.

Cover Illustrations

Front cover: Watercolour by Sarah Stone, depicting a 'Banksian Cockatoo', collected by Surgeon General of New South Wales, John White, for his friend and patron Thomas Wilson and published by John Debrett in London. (Stone, Sarah, Banksian Cockatoo, 1790; National Library of Australia online catalogue, accessed 28 April 2023; <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKJ3NqBBQd/b06QWAvqe4v78>.)

Back cover: A view of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel overlooking the Emu Park, from an illustration published in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, 3 June 1854, from: *Waugh & Cox's Sydney Post Office Directory*, 1855. (Source: Royal Australian Historical Society.)

JOURNAL

of the

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 109	Part 1	June 2023
-------------------	---------------	------------------

Editorial		7
------------------	--	---

Terry Kass	Touching hands with Anzacs: a re-evaluation of 1920s War Service Homes in NSW	9
-------------------	---	---

Mark St Leon	Beaumont & Waller's Botanical & Zoological Gardens, at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, Botany Bay 1848-61	30
---------------------	---	----

Keith Amos	Ingleside Powder Works: 'a curious colonial enterprise'	55
-------------------	---	----

Matthew Fishburn	Thomas Wilson Esq and the natural history collections of First Fleet Surgeon John White	79
-------------------------	---	----

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Cox, <i>Broken Spear: the untold story of Black Tom Birch, the man who sparked Australia's bloodiest war</i>	RUTH KERR	101
---	-----------	-----

Anthony Webster, <i>The Foundation of Australia's Capital Cities: Geology, Landscape, and Urban Character</i>	DON GARDEN	102
---	------------	-----

Heather Goodall, <i>Georges River Blues: Swamps, Mangroves and Resident Action, 1945-1980</i>	PAULINE CURBY	103
---	---------------	-----

Brendan Atkins, <i>The Naturalist: The remarkable life of Allan Riverstone McCulloch</i>	IAN LOWE	105
--	----------	-----

Alan Atkinson, <i>Elizabeth & John: The Macarthurs of Elizabeth Farm</i>	IAN DODD	107
--	----------	-----

June Factor, <i>Soldiers and Aliens: Men in the Australian Army's Employment Companies during World War II</i>	BRUCE PENNAY	109
--	--------------	-----

Joan Beaumont, <i>Australia's Great Depression: How a nation shattered by the Great War survived the worst economic crisis it has ever faced</i>	RICHARD WATERHOUSE	111
--	--------------------	-----

Joel Stephen Birnie, <i>My People's Songs: How an Indigenous Family Survived Colonial Tasmania</i>	MICHAEL BENNETT	113
--	-----------------	-----

Patricia Clarke, <i>Bold Types: How Australia's first women journalists blazed a trail</i>	SUZANNE JAMIESON	115
--	------------------	-----

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	119
-----------------------	-----

Editorial

As the RAHS embarks on a new chapter in the history of its Journal, I want to express our appreciation for the incredible work and dedication of the previous editorial team. Adjunct Associate Professor Carol Liston AO edited the Journal from mid 2002 to 2022. Under Carol Liston's guidance, the Journal has flourished, offering an important platform for historical research and scholarly discourse. For more than 10 years Joy Hughes has proofread the articles, corrected historical inaccuracies, spent hours amending hundreds of reference notes and followed up elusive citations at the Mitchell Library and the NSW State Archives. Joy Hughes' commitment and precision have left an indelible mark on the Journal, and we recognise her invaluable role in ensuring the excellence of its content. We also extend our utmost gratitude to Bruce Pollock, our Production Editor, who will be continuing in this role, for his meticulous attention to detail. We acknowledge and thank Donna Newton for her ongoing assistance in the production of the Journal over many years, in particular in locating suitable images to accompany the articles and in managing the despatch and return of the books for the reviews.

The production of this issue of the Journal would not have been possible without the support of the History House team. On behalf of the RAHS Council I want to record my thanks to Suzanne Holohan (RAHS General Manager), Phillip Jaworski (RAHS Digital Media) and Donna Newton (RAHS Librarian). In addition, the assistance of Janette Pelosi, who has just joined the incoming editorial team as the proofreader, and Bruce Pollock is noted with thanks.

There are four refereed articles and nine book reviews in this issue of the Journal. Terry Kass discusses the War Service Home scheme operating after World War I, arguing that little is known or understood about its history, unlike that of the various soldier settlement schemes. These houses are disappearing owing to redevelopment pressures but those that remain have a direct association with the Anzacs and the current owners or occupiers often have no inkling that they are 'directly communing with an Anzac every day they wake at dawn'.

Mark St Leon's article 'Beaumont & Waller's Botanical & Zoological Gardens, at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, Botany Bay 1848-61' outlines its origins as one of Sydney's favourite outlets for public leisure and recreation and development until 1861. Beaumont & Waller's legacies extend beyond their Botany venture. They include the foundation of the travelling shows 'that would keep regional Australia amused until well into the 20th century', the development of other pleasure resorts in Sydney and regional New South Wales and the eventual establishment of Taronga Park zoo.

In 'Ingleside Powder Works: "a curious colonial enterprise"' Keith Amos discusses the history of the Powder Works. This was the creation of the 'mysterious

entrepreneur' Carl von Bieren. Amos examines how this unique powder works came into being in the 1880s, only to collapse in controversy. Instead of manufacturing gunpowder for the first time in New South Wales, Von Bieren led investors deeply into debt without ever beginning production.

The Irish-born surgeon John White was one of the key figures of the First Fleet and also an indefatigable collector of Australian natural history, chiefly on behalf of one of his greatest supporters, the Londoner Thomas Wilson Esq. As a result, Wilson was the driving force behind the publication of three of the most important early Australian books, all based on White's collections. Mathew Fishburn's article 'Thomas Wilson Esq and the natural history collections of First Fleet Surgeon John White' documents this close association.

Christine Yeats FRAHS

Editor RAHS Journal June 2023

Touching hands with Anzacs: a re-evaluation of 1920s War Service Homes in NSW

TERRY KASS

An orange peel killed returned soldier Claude Bradley, not machine guns or artillery. Returning to his War Service Home at 15 Gallipoli Street, Lidcombe on 4 August 1921, after collecting his service medals from the army barracks in the city, he slipped on an orange peel at Lidcombe station, falling under a train as it left the station. He left a wife and child.¹ Bradley enlisted in July 1915, and was posted to Egypt followed by service in France before his return to Australia and discharge in January 1917.² His house, one of the very first constructed under the War Service Homes scheme, still stands. There are many other War Service Homes that survive to the present day.



Claude Bradley's house at 15 Gallipoli Street, Lidcombe. (Source: Terry Kass.)

It has become *de rigeur* for Australians to make pilgrimages to Gallipoli for the dawn service every Anzac Day, to walk, or more correctly, trudge the Kokoda track or participate in the dawn service at distant battlefields on Anzac Day or Armistice Day. Attendance at Anzac Day ceremonies has been growing significantly since the 1970s. Australians wish to commune with Anzacs, making long pilgrimages to far parts of the globe. Yet, evidence directly associated with Anzacs is all around us, in capital cities, suburbs and country towns. Significant historical research has highlighted attempts, unsuccessful as well as successful, to settle returned servicemen on the land.³ However, a far larger percentage of returned men settled in towns and cities applying to purchase a War Service Home. Most current owners or occupiers of these houses have no inkling that they are directly communing with an Anzac every day they wake at dawn.

Little is known or published about War Service Homes. In Joan Beaumont's recent magisterial review of the impact of the Great Depression on Australia, when reviewing the benefits provided for returned servicemen, War Service Homes were not even mentioned. She briefly noted that 21,000 homes were built but does not mention who built them.⁴ The history of the Repatriation Department by Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees investigated the initial establishment of the War Service Homes Commission but limited its analysis to only the first few years of the Commission.⁵ Paul Ashton dealt with them briefly in an article about town planning in the early 20th century, largely basing his analysis on Federal government inquiries into problems with the scheme.⁶ John Johnson published an overview of the early years of the scheme that is probably the most comprehensive to date.⁷ These houses are disappearing due to redevelopment pressures while there is little or no appreciation of their worth.⁸

The following is a preliminary overview of the War Service Homes Commission in New South Wales until the Great Depression, highlighting its failures and achievements.

The War Service Homes Commission

The Commonwealth government established the War Service Homes Commission to house returned men and women. As World War I drew to a close, it was clear that there would be considerable demand for houses in urban areas across Australia. By creating an authority charged with providing homes for married returned men or those about to marry, the Commonwealth government would partially compensate them for their sacrifices, enabling them to bypass the anticipated housing shortage. The War Service Homes Bill was introduced in the Federal Parliament by the Minister for Repatriation, NSW Senator Edward Davis Millen, in December 1918.⁹ However, early chaotic administrative uncertainties combined with anxious calls by returned servicemen for housing created unsatisfactory initial procedures.

Under the scheme, returned men or widows or dependents of deceased servicemen could acquire homes on what were intended to be very attractive terms. The scheme officially came into operation on 6 March 1919.¹⁰ It was proposed that the Commission would acquire land in bulk and build houses in group schemes that would be available to returned men either by rent-purchase or mortgage.

The War Service Homes Commission (WSH) entered into an agreement with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia on 27 June 1919 to finance the scheme, to act as its agent, to buy land and houses and erect and sell houses on behalf of the Commission as well as organising insurance while the Commission established the necessary administrative and construction machinery. On 30 April 1920, the agreement was modified so that the bank sold land and houses, collected payments and arranged insurance.¹¹

Applicants could acquire homes either by rent-purchase or mortgage. Under the rent-purchase scheme, homes built by the Commission were paid off over a term of years, usually 37 years. Alternately, the Commission could take a mortgage over a home owned by the applicant, which may have been built by the Commission or by private builders to an approved standard. Many began their path to home ownership with the deposit paid from their war gratuity.¹²

If the applicant did not have 10 per cent of the purchase price either in land value or cash, the title was put in the name of the WSH. If they had 10 per cent deposit, the title was placed in the name of the applicant secured by a mortgage at 4.5 per cent.¹³ The WSH originally provided for a maximum loan of £700 to applicants. Due to rising costs of building materials and labour, this was increased to £800, becoming law on 19 October 1920.¹⁴

Loan conditions were relatively generous. Interest was charged at 4.5 per cent (later raised to 5 per cent) and paid off over 37 years. For comparison, at the same time, the Government Savings Bank of New South Wales provided loans for 30 years to build houses at 5.5 per cent or 6 per cent. It should be stressed that the WSH was *not* a public housing agency. Yet it was designed for sale to deserving applicants – in this case returned servicemen or their dependents.

Initially, the War Service Homes Commission mostly used the existing cadastre, resuming or purchasing allotments in existing subdivisions such as Marne Park in North Lidcombe, where Claude Bradley had his home, but it soon organised its own subdivisions such as Launcelot Street, Enfield; Sloane Street, Goulburn; Albury and Junee as well as the Newcastle district.

Although it was believed that private contractors would initially undertake construction of most War Service houses, this proved to be mistaken. The Commission found it had to undertake the work itself using day labour.¹⁵ Between 1919 and 1921, 4,483 homes were built under the Act and another 11,771 were financed across Australia.¹⁶ The bulk of houses built in New South Wales were constructed of brick.

Problems emerge

As part of its repatriation scheme, the WSH employed many returned men on the erection of homes. Administration and organisation of the WSH was originally badly planned and conducted. A number of unsuitable sites were acquired. Control over building was lax. Rather than using the existing expertise of the Commonwealth Government Works and Survey staff, the WSH appointed its own staff, some of whom were unsuitable for their positions.¹⁷ New South Wales had four deputy commissioners from April 1919 to March 1920.¹⁸

Problems were evident in the arrangements in New South Wales. W. J. Earle, Deputy Commissioner of Tasmania, was sent to New South Wales in October 1919 'to carry out a vigorous building policy, as New South Wales will require 3,400 dwelling-houses to be erected before the end of the financial year' (June 1920). He was empowered to:

1. Purchase enough land for 5,000 houses
2. Immediately begin a vigorous building program
3. Report on the organisation of the New South Wales office.¹⁹

Deputy Commissioner Earle energetically set to work, building group schemes ahead of requirements, usually employing day labour and occasionally using contracts.²⁰ Initially, the scheme seemed to be proceeding well. On 16 May 1920, the Minister for Repatriation, Senator Edward Millen, reported that 485 houses had been completed and occupied (across Australia) and that another 1,991 were being built. Of these 719 were being constructed by day labour, and 1,272 by contract.²¹ Up to 30 April 1921, an area of 853 acres 2 roods 29 perches had been bought for £243,853 and 295 individual lots had been bought for £27,456.²²

The Act permitted the Commissioner to build houses in anticipation of demand.²³ Each state was divided into zones for more efficient administration. In New South Wales, the zones were:

1. Warringah and Manly
2. Ku-ring-gai, Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman
3. Hornsby, Eastwood, Dundas, Ryde, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill
4. Rydalmere, Granville, Auburn, Rookwood [sic], Concord, Homebush, Strathfield, Burwood and Drummoyne
5. Prospect, Sherwood and Parramatta
6. Bankstown, Canterbury, Enfield and Ashfield
7. Hurstville, Bexley, Kogarah and Rockdale
8. City and Eastern Suburbs.²⁴

In Area 4, the Commission had acquired 507 lots on which 150 houses had been commenced. The only area with more buildings under way was Area No 6 with 313 houses.²⁵

Problems arose for the Commission within a short time. Not only did it have to create an Australia-wide agency with administrative, financial and design staff as well as personnel to oversee the construction, it was soon swamped with large numbers of applications, shortages of building materials, rising costs of materials and labour. Difficulties with staffing meant there was a rapid turnover of key individuals. Coupled with that, the parallel organisation created by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia at the request of the Chief Commissioner, Lt-Col James Walker, soon attracted jealousy from Walker, which degenerated into unproductive rivalry.

Other problems emerged in the erection of WSH houses. A major problem was that the construction of houses was taken out of the hands of the architects and put in the hands of supervisors, some of whom were poorly chosen. Even the best of the supervisors had too many houses to manage. Thus, the capital cost of building the houses exceeded the £800 limit of the WSH. Since the applicant had signed a contract to pay the full capital cost, the additional cost from poor management was regarded as an imposition on buyers. They were unpleasantly surprised at the implications for them. The WSH built to the full £800 limit far too frequently.²⁶

According to the later 1921 inquiry into the WSH, G. S. Keesing, honorary architect of the New South Wales branch of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia found that the buildings built by the 'present' Deputy Commissioner, Donald James Hutchings, to be of 'excellent construction' while 'the houses erected earlier were defective in many particulars, and occupants experienced great difficulty in having these remedied'.²⁷

Poor management, the shoddy construction of a few dwellings and the existence of some poorly chosen estates meant that the scheme attracted criticism. *Smith's Weekly* began a scurrilous campaign criticising the Commission and its houses, which eventually contributed to the establishment of an inquiry into the Commission in 1921.²⁸ The purchase of large areas of land in the Newcastle district, which was unsuitable for building in part due to flooding, was a matter for concern.

In Goulburn, the Commonwealth Bank had engaged builder John Cody to build a line of cottages for railway workers facing Sloane Street, all individually designed by John and Herwald Kirkpatrick. The supervising architect was John Cody's son, Vincent Cody. Complaints about the buildings included the use of poor quality bricks, roofing timbers of inadequate dimensions, drummy plaster and a reluctance by John Cody to remedy the problems. Herwald Kirkpatrick subsequently stated that since Vincent Cody was a returned serviceman, he was confident that Vincent Cody would insist on quality building despite the fact that he was supervising his father.²⁹

All work on WSH dwellings stopped in December 1920. In March 1921, the Commissioner, James Walker, was removed from office. Only houses in progress were completed.³⁰ On 4 February 1921, the Deputy Commissioner for New South Wales was informed that no more contracts would be entered into and no more day labour would be employed.³¹ W. J. Earle was blamed for a number of shortcomings and failures in New South Wales, especially the hasty selection of estates and some poor work.³²

Public Accounts Inquiry of March 1921

The Commonwealth government in March 1921 appointed a Joint Committee of Public Accounts Inquiry into the WSH to report on the concerns. The published reports of the Joint Committee have served as the main sources regarding the early activities of the War Service Homes Commission, and emphasise failings in the provision of War Service Homes while ignoring any positive achievements.³³ The main criticisms related to the disorganisation of the Commission, its disorganised accounting systems, which often meant that applicants were being charged more for the houses than they had expected, and the acquisition of land and building materials at inflated prices. The National Archives of Australia holds the records of this inquiry but they have never previously been accessed by researchers.

After the inquiry – a new mission

In December 1921, existing applications for WSH homes were prioritised. Building would re-commence. Day labour would no longer be used. All work would be by contract. The general orders issued to personnel of the War Service Homes Commission specified, ‘All major works will be carried out under contract let after public tender.’³⁴ The Commission changed into a financier and designer of houses for its applicants. Applicants were given more scope to select and alter house designs for their needs instead of group building. According to Johnson, designs were thereafter aimed at a more elevated market than previously – more ‘upmarket’ in his words. Rather than selecting estates and developing them ahead of demand, the Commission would build when and where applicants wanted their houses rather than in group schemes.³⁵ Nevertheless, the Commission retained numerous vacant allotments suitable for building and numerous houses built in group schemes, which it offered to applicants.

Group developments continued. The Commission no longer constructed a mix of houses on each development and then offered them to applicants. Rather, greater choice was allowed to applicants and building did not begin until designs had been approved. This brought the practice more in line with what was happening with houses constructed by the Commonwealth Bank. An excellent example is Colane Street, Concord, where the range of War Service Homes provides examples of individual design. Other areas in Concord, including Hospital Road, Merville, Fremont and Killoola Streets near Concord Hospital, show a similar mix of individualised designs.

After reorganisation following the 1921 inquiry, the WSH struggled with high demand for labour and materials. In New South Wales, in 1924-25, it had problems finding enough tradesmen to undertake work.³⁶ The introduction of the 44-hour week and Workers Compensation in New South Wales in 1925-26 increased building costs.³⁷ In 1924-25, the average cost of building brick WSH houses in New South Wales was £770/13/4.³⁸ In 1925-26, the average cost had risen marginally to £777/5/6.³⁹ Nevertheless, compared to the cost of building simpler weatherboard cottages, the products of the WSH were comparatively expensive, placing a greater strain on the ability of buyers to pay off their homes. It is notable that in 1923, Water Board figures showed that the average cottage in worker suburbs constructed of brick, with three bedrooms and a kitchen, cost £660. A new weatherboard cottage cost £450, with building allotments at £100.⁴⁰ Both were much cheaper than brick WSH homes.

The following table outlines the activity of the WSH in New South Wales from date of commencement to 30 June 1929.

Applications received	31,572
Applications approved	12,999
Houses under construction	155
Contracts let – not commenced	73
Tenders called – in progress	197
Building applications approved – no tenders called	311
Houses completed	5788
Houses purchased	4196
Mortgages discharged	1181
Transfers & re-sales	1099
Dual assistance	5
Houses enlarged	–
Instalments paid	£3,758,717
Arrears	£46,081

Source: War Service Homes Commission, *Annual Report*, 1929, p 12

Walking away

Much of the literature on rural soldier settlement emphasises the inability of many soldier settlers to succeed on the land. By the early 1930s, many of them had walked off their properties. A similar process occurred for many hopeful purchasers of War Service Homes, particularly as the Great Depression wreaked havoc in the 1930s.

Houses in NSW Reverted to WSH July 1924 to May 1932	
Year	Total Reversions
1924-5	323
1925-6	155
1926-7	189
1927-8	90
1928-9	104
1929-30	169
1930-1	372
1931 – end May 1932	446

Source: NAA CRS A1419, A1932/6710

Thomas Cleary, who worked in the New South Wales WSH from 1922 until September 1928, becoming Deputy Commissioner in November 1930, stated that, ‘Many purchasers who selected group land obtained their allotments at capital cost, which, at the time, was substantially less than the valuation, and when it is taken into consideration that the homes were erected by competitive tendering through the press, they were able to obtain a cheap home.’ Cleary noted how, despite the poor economic conditions and unemployment, the WSH understood the ‘heroic measures adopted by the majority, many of whom are living on the bread line ... to recognise their first responsibility to their wives and children is in respect of the home’.⁴¹

Nevertheless, it could be argued that even the purchasers who walked away from the homes they were buying still derived some benefit from the building program. They had been housed and their families accommodated for a period. It is also notable that many of the loan cards show the Commission was unable to collect debts incurred by the applicants. Many record the entry ‘Debt irrecoverable’ or NFA (‘no further action’ to recover debts).⁴²

While there was loss to the Commission and to the Commonwealth government, the action of abandoning their home and neglecting to pay debts incurred provided some benefit to those who had served. The loan cards suggest that occupiers were often charged £1 rent per week when not paying instalments on their purchase. In the early 1920s, the highest monthly premium was commonly £3/19/4, suggesting that the monthly premium was even less than paying weekly rent.

Satisfaction or not?

The Commission sought to promote and apply quality architectural design to homes, as well as the most up-to-date thinking about internal layout, and thus had a significant role in promoting appropriate and healthy design. Additionally, after 1922, the Commission dealt directly with purchasers and designed houses keyed to the needs and desires of the buyer. For many worker homebuyers, this was a revolutionary approach.

Previously, they were only able to acquire the older cast-off houses of their 'betters' or the cheaper basic standard designs of speculative builders, with little choice. Evidence in the papers of the 1921 inquiry, surviving application files as well as remarks by architects and officials showed that applicants knew what they wanted and insisted upon it. They did not expect to receive 'trickle down' housing provided by the speculative building industry or what landlords were prepared to offer them. They had specific requirements and insisted on receiving them.

Buyers of War Service Homes knew what they wanted and were keen to receive it. Nevertheless, the views of some dissatisfied applicants have tended to dominate reviews of the houses built in the 1920s. Since reports of complaints and press reports of difficulties tend to dominate, these views obscure satisfaction. Most of the complaints surviving in existing files or in press reports are concerned with matters of eligibility, administrative red tape and procedures and rejection of requested additions or alterations and only occasionally with faulty construction. Little survives about satisfied purchasers.

The Commonwealth Bank's architects, John and Herwald Kirkpatrick, who designed individual houses on individual lots for applicants, maintained a comments book so buyers could record their satisfaction or otherwise regarding their houses. Herwald Kirkpatrick personally investigated all the cases where the buyers were dissatisfied.⁴³ This comments book does not appear to have survived, but a selection of positive responses was included in a report by Herwald Kirkpatrick regarding the operations of building and design. Clifford Thompson was 'perfectly satisfied' with his cottage built by Montes and O'Brien in Forest Road, Penshurst, while W. D. Connochie thought his cottage in Doran Street, South Kensington, built by Louis Strange-Mure was 'satisfactory in every way'.⁴⁴ Doubtless, Kirkpatrick would have selected only positive comments, but bank governor Sir Denison Miller assured the 1921 inquiry that most of the comments were positive.⁴⁵ However, that does not provide insight into responses to group homes built by the Commission.

The inquiry into the WSH found that applicants did not like the group schemes since they 'objected to being segregated in this way from the ordinary community'.⁴⁶ However, these assertions came from critics of the work of the Commission. No such comments by soldier purchasers have been located so far.

Marne Park

As an example of the development of an early War Service Homes estate that included two of the largest early group developments (Groups 6 and 16), as well as the construction of individually designed houses for individual applicants, Marne Park, Lidcombe, the site of Claude Bradley's house, will be examined. It is an ideal estate to explore the building processes and success of the WSH Commission since its development spanned the decade of the 1920s. The 1921 inquiry included lists of

buildings constructed in different groups. The first three groups were: Group 3 Lakemba,⁴⁷ Group 4 Five Dock and Group 6 Lidcombe.⁴⁸

LIDCOMBE MARNE PARK ESTATE

Auction Sale on the Ground

SAT. 18 MARCH 1916 at 3 p.m.

ARTHUR RICKARD & CO^{LD}

Auctioneers & Realty Specialists 84^B Pitt St Sydney.

PARRAMATTA ROAD

ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280
281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288
289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296
297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304
305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312
313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320

MONS

ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162
163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170
171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178
179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186
187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194
195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202

OSTEND

ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124
125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132
133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148
149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156
157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164
165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172
173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188
189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196
197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204

GALLIPOLI

ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88
89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96
97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104
105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112
113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128
129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136
137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144
145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152
153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168
169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176
177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184
185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192
193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200

BACHILL

TORRENS TITLE TERMS

Purchase money not exceeding	Deposit
£ 25	£ 1
£ 50	£ 2
£ 75	£ 3
£ 100	£ 4
over £ 100	£ 5

The balance including interest payable thus:
On purchases up to £ 25
10% per month & 5% per month for every additional £ 10 of purchase or portion thereof.
Interest at 5% per annum calculated on the Quarterly balances charged half yearly to buyers accounts.

LOCAL SKETCH

MARNE PARK ESTATE is within 15 minutes comfortable walk of Lidcombe Station by good streets & footpaths, passing on the way two Churches, Shops, School, Post Office, Town Hall and a number of good Cottage Homes with pretty gardens. The new Railway to the Abattoirs is within a minute of the North East corner of the Land and on the opposite side of the Parramatta Road is a reservation in which shade trees are planted. The position is high, dry & healthy, with fine views of the hills and the Blue Mountains, and being in such a central position for home sites, must be a safe and profitable investment.

Water & Gas available.

NICHOLAS

All measurements and statements subject to Deposited Plan.

COWDERY & COWDERY

Lic'd Surveyors R.P. Act
8 Castlereagh St City.

Building Restriction £ 200.

10 minutes from Lidcombe Station

F. Cunningham & Co. Ltd., Litho, Sydney

Auction plan of Marne Park estate, 18 March 1916. Lots 155 to 168 facing Mons and Ostend Streets, acquired by the War Service Homes Commission as Group 6 are marked.
(Source: Mitchell Library, Lidcombe subdivision plans, L7/135.)

As one of the first groups to commence, Marne Park is a good place to start. Marne Park was subdivided and auctioned during World War I under the tutelage of the extraordinary selling agent, Arthur Rickard. Patriotic names — Mons, Gallipoli, Ostend, Jellicoe and Anzac (later altered to Bachell) — were given to the streets, appealing to the current war fervour. Marne Park was the largest subdivision in Lidcombe in 1916, creating a total of 320 lots.⁴⁹ After World War I, the WSH purchased numerous lots in the estate and built upon them, some as group schemes and others for individual applicants.

The first batch of lots in the estate bought by the WSH (lots 155-168) was transferred to the Commission on 4 November 1919. This became Group 6, facing Mons and Ostend Streets. On 2 December 1919, lots 74-89 were transferred to the WSH.⁵⁰ This became Group 16, facing Gallipoli and Ostend Streets.

Other requirements of the Commission regarding suitability of land were demonstrated by the form completed by surveyor Arnold Hugh Garnsey on 19 August 1920. He recorded Marne Park was 75 chains (1509 metres) from the station. The train fare to the city was one shilling and two pence return. Workplaces nearby included a bottle yard and sheep saleyards.⁵¹ He omitted the Sydney Meat Preserving Company's works facing Parramatta Road west of the estate. Work on the State Abattoirs across Parramatta Road had commenced in 1910.⁵²

On 7 April 1920, the Mayor of Lidcombe, W. J. Maunder, informed council that the War Service Homes Commission was about to begin building in Lidcombe and the first would be 16 cottages on the Marne Park estate.⁵³ Building by the Commission appears to have started soon afterwards. The WSH accountant's note in the file regarding 'Opening of House' cards has the notation, 'Already opened 19 Mar 1920.'⁵⁴ In June 1920, the journal *Building* published a description of a WSH estate at 'Larcombe' by architect Gordon S. Keesing.⁵⁵ It was probably Marne Park, although it may be the WSH development in D'Arcy Park (south of the railway line). It is worth quoting in full:

The blocks are good, with good frontages, and large enough to enable owners to have both vegetable and flower gardens, and in addition a good drying ground. The houses are built of first-class material, and the finish is good for this class of residence. The appearance is fairly satisfactory.

The homes have been built at a low cost. The Minister stated that the tenders received were £900, but the houses built by day labour only cost net £715 and £745, including cost of land. I have heard, however, that the construction has been altered since they were tendered for — by example, in the roofs, as tendered for, there was a remarkable waste of timber. This is hearsay.

The interior arrangement is unsatisfactory. The windows and doors have been placed without any regard to the position of essential furniture. The tiny rooms have so many doors and windows that some of these will need blocking in the best bedrooms, to enable a double bed, wardrobe and dressing table, to be placed in the rooms.

... Senator Millen stated that only sixteen houses had been built (they are not all

finished yet); but then he said, 'We have had difficulties with labour, etc the same as private individuals who have had much delay in getting houses and business premises built.'⁵⁶

Keesing also criticised the kitchenette-laundries as being too small and the absence of provision for extension so that only one child could be accommodated. The houses in question appear to have been Group 6, facing Mons and Ostend Streets (lots 155-161; 163-167), with a total of 12 dwellings. The earliest record for the occupation of one of these cottages is 19 March 1921 when William Hall occupied 4 Ostend Street.⁵⁷ Both Groups 6 and 16 were built by the Commission using day labour.⁵⁸

Groups 6 and 16 demonstrated the difficulties the Commission had containing costs using day labour to build group schemes. A tabulation of costs compiled for the 1921 inquiry showed excessive construction costs for Group 6, leading to the comment on the tabulation: 'This Group is opposite Group 16 and comparing the cost of same type of house and almost identical conditions, it is considered probable that an error in the allocation of materials has occurred.' Nevertheless, houses were still allotted to applicants for a personal loan of £800.

Lot 158 (7 Ostend Street) was shown to have an excess of £181/12/4 above the loan permitted to the applicant William Clarence Morgan.⁵⁹ He was not required to meet the excessive construction costs but was granted the maximum loan of £800. Morgan still carried the burden of paying off the loan. When it was finally transferred to his ownership in September 1959, the final summary calculation on his loan card showed that the original loan was recorded as £804/19/9. By that time, he had also paid £869/16/3 in interest as well as £17/10/- in miscellaneous charges.⁶⁰ That burden would be familiar to all who financed the purchase of their homes with a mortgage. Who is to say that he did not deserve to own his own home? He enlisted in December 1916, serving in France with the 5th Machine Gun Company of the 20th Battalion. He was evacuated with a severe stomach wound received on 27 July 1918, from which he recovered.⁶¹

Marne Park was one of the earliest estates developed by the WSH but building continued on lots in the estate throughout the 1920s until the WSH ceased building. Vacant lots were eventually disposed of as late as the 1950s.

Like returned men everywhere, some named their houses after their wartime experience. Number 58 Ostend Street carried the name plate 'Passchendale'; Number 9 Ostend Street was also known as 'Bullecourt', while Number 52 Ostend Street remembered the ship that brought the soldier home – 'Beltana'.⁶²

Not all houses built by the Commission were in groups. Numbers 10, 52 and 67 Jellicoe Street were constructed as individual houses for applicants.⁶³ James Richard Hoskin had been pensioned from the Royal Navy in November 1914 but then served with the Royal Australian Navy working as a coder, receiving extra pay for that

service, which included participation in the occupation of German New Guinea in September 1914, along with his war gratuity.⁶⁴ After the deduction of £14 received from the Admiralty, he received a war gratuity of £120/5/- at the rate of 1/6 per day for his Australian service.⁶⁵ An individual War Service Home named 'Iolanthe' was built for him at 67 Jellicoe Street, beginning payments in February 1928, for a loan of £785/18/2. He died on 4 October 1933 before he completed his purchase.⁶⁶



Iolanthe, 67 Jellicoe Street, Lidcombe, now demolished. (Source: Terry Kass.)

How many applicants eventually acquired the freehold of the War Service Home they wished to purchase? As early as the 1920s, the Commission was disposing of some dwellings by sale to private purchasers who were not returned servicemen. No example of this has been found in Marne Park before the late 1930s. Unable to keep up payments, purchasers of War Service Homes who vacated houses and rescinded the contract increased substantially during the 1930s Great Depression.

The loss of homes by WSH applicants in Marne Park was part of a wider problem. In March 1932, the Minister for War Service Homes, Josiah Francis, reported that an inquiry would be set up into War Service Homes. It would investigate the impact of the Depression on the ability of purchasers to complete their contracts to buy WSH homes and would recommend ways to ensure completion of their contracts, keeping in mind the effect on the finances of the Commonwealth and the interests of taxpayers.⁶⁷

At the inquiry on 9 May 1932, Ernest Barber, who occupied a group WSH house at 9 Ostend Street, Lidcombe, claimed that his house was sold to him for £833, which meant a monthly payment of £4/5/2. He then had arrears of £60. The rent of privately owned houses similar to his in the same area was 10/- per week. Barber had lost his left hand in the war as well as the big toe on his left foot. He had been

a lift driver but his employer was in liquidation. He received £2/13/- per week for himself and his wife as a war pension. There were about 30 vacant houses near his dwelling, although he did not say if these were WSH. ‘Some of these were badly damaged, palings being torn off the fences, windows broken and other damage done. The average cost of repair would be £30 to £40.’⁶⁸

The following table demonstrates the success of original applicants in obtaining the freehold of their War Service Home in Marne Park. Notably, in a number of instances, it was not the original applicant but another returned servicemen who acquired the freehold, thereby fulfilling one of the aims of the scheme.

Final Transfers of Applications for Marne Park Groups 1920-1960

Group	Freehold to original applicant	Freehold to Returned servicemen	Freehold to private buyer	Unknown	Total
6	3	—	7	2	12
16	3	4	7	2	16
87	2	6	3	7	18
88	3	9	5	0	17

Source: NAA, CRS ST2366/1; CT 3003 f 101; 3003 f 114; 3089 f 145; 7456 f 175

On the other hand, Group 4 at First Avenue, Rodd Point, consisting of nine group houses, showed a much larger proportion of first applicants who acquired the freehold.

Final Transfers of Applications for Group 4, Rodd Point 1920-1960

Group	Freehold to original applicant	Freehold to Returned servicemen	Freehold to private buyer	Unknown	Total
4	5	1	—	3	9

Source: NAA CRS ST2366/1; CT 2987 folio 80

It is difficult to say if this is unusual. Many purchasers buying houses in the private housing market from developers or builders on time payment failed to complete their contracts, most particularly after the advent of the Great Depression. Comparative data is necessary to determine whether WSH purchasers were less able to complete their transactions than purchasers more generally in New South Wales.

Simply because an applicant walked away from the War Service Home they were originally allotted did not mean that they lost the benefit. William Alfred Goldstone was originally allotted 9 Ostend Street in Group 6, later occupied by

Ernest Barber, but walked away from the house. Instead, he later took up 16 Fremont Street, Concord, receiving the freehold in June 1945.⁶⁹

Design

Houses built and acquired by the War Service Homes Commission fall into the following categories:

- Existing houses purchased by the Commission for applicants 1919-21.
- Individual houses constructed by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia for individual applicants on their sites to their designs.
- Houses constructed by the War Service Homes Commission.
- Group homes constructed 1919-21.
- Individual houses constructed c.1920 onwards.

Although the Commission sought to provide homes, it was not simply a builder of basic accommodation. It sought to apply the latest thinking on house design and internal layout. Careful internal planning as well as external design was emphasised. Building on small allotments was discouraged. A minimum lot size of 40 feet by 120 feet was insisted upon.⁷⁰

Although many early houses were built in group schemes, they were not identical rows of houses such as a 'spec' builder might erect. Each house was different and individually designed.⁷¹ In New South Wales, they were designed in the latest architectural forms, such as the 'Californian Bungalow' or 'Spanish Mission' style and particularly the 'Colonial Revival' style popularised by Hardy Wilson. In Sydney, most War Service Homes were built of brick, often rendered externally or with dark brick facades. Timber houses were built but were far less common in New South Wales. Striving for quality and applying the latest concepts of house design eventually caused significant problems.

It was reported in 1921 that the Commission had more than 500 designs provided in Melbourne but they were often not climatically suitable for the area they were designed for or 'because their elaborate and expensive nature placed them beyond the means of many of the soldiers'. Designs produced by the state branches after design was devolved to them proved better suited to their areas.⁷² J. J. C. Morrell, who later became the Deputy Commissioner for New South Wales, was appointed to oversee the house design section.⁷³

Early extant War Service Homes in New South Wales built in 1919 and 1920 on individual lots were the product of the Commonwealth Bank and its architects. The bank built on isolated allotments chosen by the applicants to designs which had been prepared by Kirkpatrick architects. Those designs were prepared in consultation with the applicants themselves to their individual requirements.⁷⁴ Photographs of

these early houses prepared by the Commonwealth Bank and its architects show the diversity of design and requirements of the applicants.⁷⁵



A War Service Home constructed by the Commonwealth Bank in Fairlight Street, Five Dock. The builders have not yet removed their bricks and building rubble, while the front yard needs grass and flower beds. Bedsheets on the clothesline in the back yard show the applicant is in occupation. (Source: Reserve Bank of Australia Archives, PN-003104.)

The first house constructed by the bank for the Commission was situated on Lot 18 Kennedy Avenue, Belmore (now 32 Kennedy Avenue) and was designed by John and Herwald Kirkpatrick for Frederick G. Baxter. Unlike many later applicants, Baxter was a successful purchaser eventually holding the property until his death, after which it passed to his widow.⁷⁶ The governor of the Commonwealth Bank, Sir Denison Miller, laid the foundation stone amidst a well-attended ceremony. Baxter already owned the land, giving him an advantage over many other applicants, but was not a wealthy man, enlisting in January 1916 as a labourer.⁷⁷ The 1921 inquiry concluded that the Commonwealth Bank had largely carried out its work successfully and satisfactorily, noting that a large number of applicants dealt with ‘had means of their own, to utilise, in addition to the statutory amount allotted to them’.⁷⁸

Frank L’Anson Bloomfield, ARIBA, architect in charge, New South Wales WSH, was appointed on 17 March 1920, succeeding William David Jeater.⁷⁹ Bloomfield had been a qualified architect with the NSW Public Works Department before enlistment and had previously served in the Boer War. In September 1919, he attended an architectural course at Bedford Square, London before returning to Australia.⁸⁰



Returned serviceman Frederick Baxter standing next to his wife Nellie, the bride he brought back from Britain, wait for Sir Denison Miller, Governor of the Commonwealth Bank, to lay the foundation stone of their new cottage. (Source: Reserve Bank of Australia Archives, PN-002065.)

Criticism of building in groups was directed at the Commission, so Bloomfield defended his designs. On the other hand, Herwald Kirkpatrick only worked with 11 basic designs for each state, which he adapted for the requirements of individual applicants.⁸¹

Bloomfield told the 1921 inquiry that initially Victorian designs had been adopted with some modification but after he took over he virtually redesigned the plans since they were not always suitable for New South Wales. He reduced the number of breaks in the walls to make construction simpler to economise on brickwork and roofing and allow the construction of verandahs. He designed houses as groups rather than individual houses,

‘on the assumption that the unit is too small to obtain any effect, by having each unit different. To obtain the proper effect, they must be designed in groups and by having two or three the same, and then broken by a different type and then followed by another 2 or 3 of the first type.’ [abbreviations modified]⁸²

Regarding his simple designs, Bloomfield affirmed that,

‘The monotony is broken by the different designs of the different units; by combination of different units you get a variety. I believe that our collective designs are pleasing and quite satisfactory, because it must be remembered that the unit is too small to treat individually.’ [abbreviations modified]⁸³

Bloomfield's later work included the Northern Suburbs Crematorium, 197 Delhi Road, North Ryde, designed in 1931.⁸⁴ Frank L'Anson Bloomfield, of 48 Muston Street, Mosman, died on 4 October 1949.⁸⁵



*Group 88, Gallipoli Street, Marne Park, Lidcombe, in 1941.
(Source: Lidcombe's Golden Jubilee, 1941, p 33.)*

The legacy

Many purchasers did not acquire the freehold of their War Service Home. Yet later purchasers, often returned servicemen, eventually acquired the freehold. An increase in owner-occupation was a significant legacy of the construction program of the Commission and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in the 1920s. The War Service Homes Commission was also the first major government initiative to construct dwelling houses on a large scale. The New South Wales Housing Board preceded it, but its operations were limited. Although it was not a public housing agency, the War Service Homes Commission established a precedent for large-scale public-housing programs instituted by federal and state governments after World War II.

From a heritage perspective, the group homes built by the War Service Homes Commission comprise distinctive streetscapes that stand out from neighbouring houses constructed by individuals or speculative builders. Even though individual houses were designed to be different from their neighbours, since they were part of the same design palette, there is unity of design within each group. As Bloomfield said, 'The monotony is broken by the different designs of the different units.'⁸⁶ Group houses built in the first few years of operation by the Commission were products of a period of difficulty and disorganisation but they remain a distinctive feature of the urban landscape. Apart from some examples, they have largely been ignored for their heritage value.

Additionally, many of these homes still survive despite redevelopment pressures across Sydney suburbs. Those built in country towns appear to have a much higher survival rate. It is possible to commune with an Anzac in surviving War Service Home cottages. A number still survive at Marne Park, Lidcombe. There are examples

in suburbs such as Concord, Ryde, Oatley, Parramatta, Roseville, Bankstown, Belmore, Canterbury and Belfield.

A significant group of very early designs survives at Launcelot Street, Croydon Park (originally addressed as Enfield). Kinghorne Street in Goulburn has a magnificent row on the north side of the street. Possibly the best preserved group is in Fullagar Road, Wentworthville. Apart from these, examples constructed as individual houses for applicants are scattered across the suburbs of Sydney, while groups can be found in the suburbs of Newcastle and country towns such as Albury, Junee and Wagga Wagga. Communing with Anzacs is possible in many Sydney suburbs and country towns. Maybe, you live in a War Service Home.

Member RAHS

Notes

1 *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 15 August 1921, p 10; National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Record Series (hereafter NAA CRS) ST2366/1, J.14708 (lot 74).

2 NAA CRS B2455, BRADLEY C, Barcode 3108531.

3 Bruce Scates and Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle: Soldier Settlement in Australia, 1916-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2016; Marilyn Lake, *The limits of hope: soldier settlement in Victoria, 1915-38*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987.

4 Joan Beaumont, *Australia's Great Depression: How a nation shattered by the Great War survived the worst economic crisis it ever faced*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2022, pp 19-22.

5 Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp 153-167.

6 Paul Ashton, “‘This villa life’: town planning, suburbs and the “new social order” in early twentieth-century Sydney’, *Planning Perspectives*, 25, 4, October 2020, pp 475-476

7 John Johnson, ‘“No small undertaking”: The disastrous history of the Commonwealth War Service Homes Commission, 1919-1925’, in *Suburbia: a conference*, edited by Jacqui Goddard, National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney, 2002, p 113.

8 The National Archives of Australia holds substantial quantities of War Service Homes Commission records both in its national repository in Canberra and in state repositories. Significantly, many of these files have never received requests for access.

9 C. C Lloyd and J. J Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p 154.

10 Women who had served as nurses were also eligible under the scheme, but I have not yet identified any who applied for a War Service Home.

11 ‘Progress Report from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts upon the War Service Homes Commission (New South Wales)’, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1920-1, Volume V (hereafter ‘Progress Report (New South Wales)’), pp iv-v.

12 A statement prepared for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia showed the proportion of finance provided by war gratuities. S-19-16, Secretary’s Record group, War Service Homes, July-December 1919, Reserve Bank of Australia Archives. I wish to thank archivist Sarah Middleton-Jones, of the Reserve Bank of Australia Archives for providing access to this material.

13 NAA, CRS A1419, A1932/6710.

14 War Service Homes, (Act No 35, 1920), c Cl 10.)

15 Australian Housing Corporation, *Defence Services Homes Scheme – Its Nature History and*

Operations, Canberra, 1976, pp 6-7.

16 Australian Housing Corporation, *Defence Services Homes Scheme*, p 59.

17 'Final Report from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts upon the War Service Homes Commission', *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1922, II, (hereafter 'Final Report War Service Homes Commission'), p 5.

18 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p iii.

19 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p vi.

20 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p vii.

21 *SMH*, 27 May 1920, p 9.

22 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p vi.

23 NAA CRS A1419, NAA, Item A1922/3641, 2116.

24 NAA CRS A1419, Item A1922/3641, Progress Report 1920, pp 4-5.

25 NAA CRS A1419, Item A1922/3641, Progress Report 1920, p 5.

26 'Final Report War Service Homes Commission', p 11.

27 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p ix.

28 John Johnson, 'No small undertaking', p 110.

29 NAA CRS CP253/20, 60, 21 May 1921, p 19.

30 John Johnson, 'No small undertaking', p 111

31 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p xii.

32 'Progress Report (New South Wales)', p xiii.

33 One of the earliest analyses was R. L. Wettenhall, 'Administrative Debacle 1919-23', *Public Administration*, December 1964, pp 307-327; Johnson and Ashton have also provided a generally negative view of the Commission since they have relied heavily on the records of the inquiry.

34 War Service Homes Commission, *General Orders*, November 1924, Clause 83 (1), p 38.

35 John Johnson, 'No small undertaking', p 113.

36 War Service Homes Commission *Annual Report*, 1924-5, p 3.

37 War Service Homes Commission *Annual Report*, 1925-6, p 2.

38 War Service Homes Commission *Annual Report*, 1924-5, p 28.

39 War Service Homes Commission *Annual Report*, 1925-6, p 27.

40 Registrar of Co-operative and Building Societies, *Annual Report*, 1924, p 22.

41 Evidence T. Cleary, NAA CRS A1419, A1932/6710.

42 NAA CRS ST2366/1.

43 NAA CRS CP253/20, 60, 21 May 1921, pp 5-6.

44 S-19-16, Secretary's Record group, War Service Homes, July-December 1919, Reserve Bank of Australia Archives. Kirkpatrick's report to Commonwealth Bank Governor, December 1919.

45 NAA CRS CP253/20, 58, 3 May 1921, p 27.

46 'Final Report War Service Homes Commission', p 11.

47 This consisted of six lots in Ferguson Avenue which are now demolished.

48 NAA CRS CP253/20, 28.

49 *Cumberland Argus*, 3 February 1917, p 2.

50 Certificate of Title (hereafter CT) 2331 f 28, Land Registry Services, NSW.

51 NAA CRS SP859/1, G1946/5262.

52 Public Works Department, *Annual Report*, 1909-10, pp 4, 31.

53 *Cumberland Argus*, 10 April 1920, p 2.

54 NAA CRS SP859/1, G1946/5262.

55 This is a transparent alias for Lidcombe. The suburb was renamed from Rookwood by combining the names of two former mayors: Lidbury and Larcombe.

- 56 *Building*, June 1920, p 77.
- 57 Lot 83 Ostend St, NAA CRS ST2344/1, J.5695. The cottage is extant though re-roofed and externally painted.
- 58 NAA CRS CP253/20, 28, Group 6; Group 16.
- 59 NAA CRS CP253/20, 28, Group 6.
- 60 NAA CRS ST2366/1, J.6651.
- 61 NAA CRS B2455, SERN 681.
- 62 Museums of History NSW State Archives Collection Maps 15022, 15027. State Archives of New South Wales
- 63 10 and 67 Jellicoe Street are now demolished.
- 64 NAA CRS A6770, J. R. HOSKIN, Barcode 4544604.
- 65 NAA CRS CP979/2, 882.
- 66 NAA CRS ST2366/1, J.19471.
- 67 *Canberra Times*, 24 March 1932, p 2.
- 68 *SMH*, 10 May 1932, p 10.
- 69 NAA CRS, CP253/20, 28, Group 6; NAA CRS ST2366/1, J.15621; CT 5499 f 41.
- 70 War Service Homes Commission, *Annual Report*, 1927, p 3.
- 71 *Building*, 12 June 1920, p 80.
- 72 'Final Report War Service Homes Commission', p 7.
- 73 John Johnson, 'No small undertaking', p 107.
- 74 NAA CRS CP253/20, 60, 21 May 1921, pp 4, 12.
- 75 Glass plate negative collection, Reserve Bank of Australia Archives.
- 76 NAA CRS ST 2366/1, J.20; CT 2483 f 112.
- 77 NAA CRS B2455, SERN 2593.
- 78 'Final Report War Service Homes Commission', p 10.
- 79 NAA CRS CP253/20, 55, 17 March 1921, p 70.
- 80 NAA CRS B2455, SERN N36168; *SMH*, 5 January 1921, p 12.
- 81 Report by John and Herwald G. Kirkpatrick, 31 December 1919, in S-19-16, Secretary's Record Group, War Service Homes, July-December 1919, Reserve Bank of Australia Archives.
- 82 NAA CRS CP253/20, 55, 17 March 1921, pp 72-73.
- 83 NAA CRS CP253/20, 55, 17 March 1921, p 79.
- 84 NSW Heritage Register, Northern Suburbs Crematorium (Heritage Item ID: 2340067), <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=2340067><http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=2340067>, accessed 29 April 2023.
- 85 *SMH*, 5 October 1949, p 26.
- 86 NAA CRS CP253/20, 55, 17 March 1921, p 79.

Beaumont & Waller's Botanical & Zoological Gardens, at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, Botany Bay 1848-61

MARK ST LEON

Fifty years after the foundations of Sydney were laid, Botany Bay retained a 'wild and disconsolate appearance'.¹ Apart from Simeon Lord's Flour Mill at Mudbank at the mouth of the Cook's River and the huts of fishermen and lime-burners, its foreshores showed 'little indication of the work of man'. The 'cart track' from Sydney to Botany Bay, through Chippendale and past the Waterloo Mills, was 'wretched in the extreme'.² At the corner of Parramatta Road [now Broadway] and Botany Road [now Regent Street], the words 'To Botany' were painted on a sign outside an old weatherboard cottage with an index finger pointing in the direction.³

Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial Thomas Kellett, a Kent Street baker and former soldier, recognised the locality's potential. In 1840, he began building a two-story inn of stone at Banks Meadow, on the north side of the bay, south of a section of the Old Botany Road called Bunnerong Road, later Botany Road. Kellett had purchased this 75-acre block six years earlier for £75.⁴ Initially named the Banks Inn, Kellett soon re-named his house the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel.⁵ As well as catering for private dinners and piano recitals, wedding parties and honeymooners, Kellett developed the location into a popular destination for bathing, boating and shooting. By May 1846, he had built a jetty extending some 200 yards into the bay and claimed to have repaired the road from Sydney.⁶

In January 1847, Kellett leased the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel and 25 acres of adjoining land to William Beaumont for seven years for £100 a year.⁷ Beaumont thus became the licensee of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel [hereafter 'the Hotel'].⁸ By September 1848, William Beaumont, with the assistance of his business partner, James Waller, had begun to transform the gardens and grounds surrounding the Hotel into the pleasure resort that would be named as Beaumont & Waller's Botanical and Zoological Gardens. This article will outline the context, origins, development and demise of this, Sydney's earliest pleasure resort of significance.⁹



Botany Bay from the hill above the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, 1853, watercolour by William Leigh.
(Source: *Sketches in New South Wales, 1853, by William Leigh, p 23;*
State Library of New South Wales, FL1149171.)

Sydney's temperate climate provided a natural inducement for outdoor leisure. On their own initiative, transported male convicts, drawn mostly from the 'lower orders' of the British Isles, reproduced the plebian, pre-industrial pastimes of bullbaiting, cockfighting, bare knuckle-fighting, racing, ploughing matches, gambling and drinking.¹⁰ Their native-born progeny – the 'currency' lads and lasses – inherited these limited concepts of leisure and recreation.¹¹

The recreational proclivities of the colony's upper orders – its officers and few free landowners – were not remarkably different from the proclivities of those over whom they held sway. Although they strived to emulate the lifestyle of country gentlemen, theirs was a 'rambunctious', 18th century style, not the polite, self-improving Protestantism of the 19th century, pre-occupied with status and breeding.¹²

Only gradually did the early governors sanction a wider variety of recreational activities.¹³ Convicts had been permitted to present a single performance of a play to celebrate the King's birthday in 1789 and Robert Sidaway was sporadically able to open a theatre between 1796 and 1800.¹⁴ On Hyde Park, in October 1810, Governor and Mrs Macquarie patronised the first, officially sanctioned, races, which, over three days, attracted people from as far as the Hawkesbury and Nepean areas.¹⁵

The *Act for Regulating of Public Exhibition and Entertainment* of 1828 granted the Colonial Secretary the power to license 'any interlude, tragedy, comedy, opera, concert, play farce or other entertainment of the stage ... or any stage-dancing, tumbling or horsemanship or any other public entertainment whatever to which admission shall or may be procured by payment of money'.¹⁶

After the *Eden* discharged its cargo of convicts in November 1840, Sydney's penal purpose was wound down. For decision makers in London, New South Wales had become 'too well settled and too civilised to be a good penal colony'.¹⁷ This suited both masters and servants for, unlike unpaid convict labour, a free labour force possessed purchasing power.¹⁸ Within a growing, free, market-based economy, living standards could improve.¹⁹ Diversified beyond 'mere food production and pastoralism', this new economy strengthened calls for 'rational' leisure and recreation.²⁰ The cockpit and the bullring were incompatible with the march of intellect.²¹

Although Sydney's expanding working class shunned the vulgar pastimes of the convicts and their progeny, it also spurned the well-ordered pastimes of the upper orders, their amateur theatricals, promenades, balls and concerts. Instead, this 'common sort' preferred the popular stage, variety halls and circus pavilions.²² Hotels sponsored 'musical nights' in the 1830s, catering for audiences longing for 'light music, gaiety, ribald and sentimental songs, recitations and comedy'.²³ These audiences of 'plebians' were more interested in the enjoyable, rather than the educational, qualities of the stage, but the colonial administration continued to rigorously license theatres and plays lest either threaten the prevailing order.²⁴

As John Hood observed in 1842, Sydney's chief places of amusement comprised the Theatre Royal, 'a very neat house ... tastefully ornamented' with 'knights and ladies of the sock and baskin ... most respectable in character and talent', and Signor Dalle Case's 'very unique but neat [Australian Olympic] theatre' which exhibited 'horsemanship, tomfoolery, and the like'. However, neither establishment was 'much patronised by the *soi-disant* upper classes'.²⁵ Instead, their number patronised 'legitimate' entertainments including 'amateur theatricals, promenades, balls, concerts, reviews, bands and other amusements'.²⁶

In Britain towards the end of the 18th century, new *genres* of mass entertainment, such as circus, pantomime and hippodrama, had evolved to compensate a newly urbanised workforce for its lost rural customs and pastimes. Devoid of dialogue, these new *genres* neatly circumvented the restrictions of a repressive *Theatre Act*.²⁷ By the 1820s, Britain's civil, moral and religious leaders had begun to promote the need for 'rational' entertainments to amuse the lower orders, humanise their minds and serve the unrelenting demands of factory and office.²⁸

In the new Australian colonies, an emerging colonial bourgeoisie fostered a similar 'culture of reason' to serve the imperatives of work, piety and rational recreation.²⁹ Rejecting an application for the opening of a circus pavilion in York Street in 1850, the Colonial Secretary determined that two licensed theatres, the Royal Victoria and City Theatres, were sufficient to ensure 'due competition in catering for the public taste'.³⁰

As Sydney slowly shed the signs of its penal origins and its 'dull monotony', it

began to assume more of the characteristics of the cities of the British Isles, Continental Europe and North America. As suggested in Table 1, Sydney had steadily accumulated a range of cultural milestones by the first gold rushes of the 1850s.

Table 1

<i>Some early Sydney cultural milestones</i>		
1816	Sydney Botanic Gardens, opened	31
1822	Agricultural Society of NSW, formed	32
1826	Australian Subscription Library, opened	33
1829	Sydney [later Australian] Museum, established	34
1832	Theatre Royal, opened	35
1833	Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, founded	36
1835	Sydney College, opened	37
1838	Royal Victoria Theatre, opened	38
1842	Australian Olympic Theatre, opened	39
1848	Beaumont & Waller's, opened	40
1850	Royal Australian Equestrian Circus, opened	41
1852	University of Sydney, opened	42

None of these milestones was an extension of Australia's pre-existing Indigenous culture nor the product of an autonomous colonial imagination. Instead, each was derived from developments that had already taken place in the Old World. For these reasons, the philosophical origins of Beaumont & Waller's deserve examination.

As the nations of Europe built colonial empires, they imported strange animals from distant lands with increasing frequency.⁴³ Aristocrats amassed private collections of wild and exotic animals that they accommodated in 'menageries'. To exploit the curiosity of the masses, enterprising showmen organised travelling 'menageries' to display wild and exotic animals, often in cruel and degrading conditions. In 1708, 'a collection of strange and wonderful creatures' was exhibited at St Bartholomew's Fair, London.⁴⁴

By the 19th century, many cities of Europe and North America boasted their own botanical gardens, often developed and maintained at public expense. At the simplest level, 'botanical gardens' were 'pleasure' gardens for which an enterprising individual charged admission and earned additional revenue from games and the sale of flowers and refreshments. London's first pleasure gardens were opened on the south side of the Thames in 1661.⁴⁵ Then, there were botanical gardens, often attached to universities, organised principally for scientific research. And there was

the mixture of park, floral and botanical gardens as seen at Kew, which would serve as a model for the development of the Sydney Botanic Garden.⁴⁶

This was just as well, as early Sydney's few experienced naturalists were far removed from the hectic pace of research taking place in Europe.⁴⁷ As a result, its 'botanical pill' was thickly coated 'with the sugar of a "garden of pleasure" a beautiful view of the harbour from the flat and the natural amphitheatre which surrounds it, and with such display of flowers as can be seasonably maintained'.⁴⁸

After the founder of Singapore, Sir Stamford Raffles, returned to London in 1825, he renewed his long-standing interests in botany and zoology. To Raffles, a 'zoological garden' could promote both the presentation and study of wild and exotic animals for scientific research, public education and appreciation.⁴⁹ A zoological garden not only promoted positive attitudes towards wild and exotic animals but celebrated the emerging bourgeois values of science, progress, education, law and commerce.⁵⁰

Under Raffles' founding presidency, the exclusive 'Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society of London' were opened on the northern edge of Regent's Park. After the society was granted a Royal Charter in 1829, the animals of the Royal Menagerie, housed in the Tower of London, were transferred to its collection.⁵¹ In 1847, 'The Zoo', as the gardens and menagerie on Regent's Park had become known, was opened to public admission.⁵²

As early as 1830, people could visit Mr Nailor's Royal Cherry Garden, a 'minor Vauxhall Gardens', on Parramatta Road, four miles west of Sydney. As well as its licensed house, visitors could enjoy fireworks, music, a 'good skittle ground' and 'four acres of garden laid out in English stile [sic]'.⁵³ In 1843, advertisements appeared for Blake's Improved Gardens & Pleasure Grounds at Balmain but, if it ever opened for business, it soon closed.⁵⁴

Many of Australia's first settlers, bonded or free, were familiar with the botanical, zoological and pleasure gardens that dotted London. Now perched on Australia's coastline, they were as removed from the birds, reptiles and marsupials of Australia's interior as they were from the sights and sounds of animals from Asia and Africa.

In May 1843, recently arrived from Edinburgh, the actor George Selth Coppin sought the assistance of Governor George Gipps to establish a zoological garden on several acres of land on the Government Domain. It would relieve 'the great dearth of innocent amusements' for 'parties who object to visiting theatres' and amuse the native-born citizens deprived of exhibitions of 'wild animals and the surprising docility they may be brought to'. Claiming 'long experience in most of the Gardens in England', Coppin sought an exclusive right to exhibit wild animals together with 'fireworks, music and any entertainments not interfering with the legitimate drama'.

Maintaining he had neither the power to grant land nor contribute financial support, Gipps declined to assist, remarking that, even if Coppin attracted private

support, his venture would inevitably 'end in disappointment and loss'.⁵⁵ Not to be discouraged, Coppin refined his objectives and petitioned the City Council for the 'grant of a lease of about two or three acres of land' opposite the 'Catholic chapel':

'... in the Government Domain between the two southern gates, for the purpose of constructing a zoological garden which, beside comprising an extensive exhibition of wild animals, should contain an extensive concert saloon, and be supplied with other kinds of amusement for the entertainment of the citizens ...'

Coppin estimated that the cost of establishing the garden – including the erection of a pavilion 80 feet in length and the purchase and importation of wild animals from Calcutta and the Cape of Good Hope – would amount to £1500. His petition was 'well received' but Council did not control the Domain and it was simply noted and put aside.⁵⁶

Talk of pleasure resorts and zoological gardens must have been in the air as the young William Beaumont began establishing himself as a builder and contractor in Liverpool Street, Sydney. Born in Presteigne, North Wales, in 1814, Beaumont had arrived in Sydney with his wife, Elizabeth, in 1840. Declared insolvent in December 1842, possibly a casualty of the prevailing recession, Beaumont soon re-established himself in partnership with James Waller at 235 Castlereagh Street, opposite the Star [later, the Seven Stars] Hotel.⁵⁷ Outside of their business interests, Beaumont was a 'lover of animals' and Waller belonged to 'the first rank of vocal and instrumental performers'.⁵⁸

In the gardens adjoining the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel and its surrounding bushland, Beaumont recognised the possibility of creating a pleasure resort, like those that served London.⁵⁹ Clearly aware of growing demands for 'rational recreation', Beaumont intended to appeal to 'parties in search of innocent recreation' by organising 'a collection of as many specimens of the natural history of the country as were procurable'.⁶⁰

None of the few contemporary maps extant describe the layout of these pleasure grounds. A map dating from no later than 1871 shows 'zoological gardens' positioned between the Hotel and the jetty.⁶¹ An early advertisement drew attention to swans, emus and 'forest birds' which would appeal to visitors unfamiliar with the 'ornithology of Australia'; pathways shaded with trees that wove through bushland dressed with native flora; and the monument to La Perouse and Captain Cook's Commemoration Plate that lay within a 'short distance' of the Hotel. On the other hand, the six miles, mostly a crude track, that lay between the city and the Hotel would discourage 'that class of persons to whom ladies and gentlemen object to mix' from visiting the resort.⁶²

In appealing to 'the discrimination and good taste of the better portion' of Sydney, Beaumont and Waller replaced the popular image of a nefarious Botany



The Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, watercolour by John W. Hardwick, c.1853. This shows the original two-storey building of Thomas Kellett adjoined, at its western end, by a dining room added by William Beaumont in 1850. The dining room accommodated up to 60 guests and contained a well-stocked cellar. (Source: National Library of Australia.)

Bay with calls to both history and progress:

Many influential members of our community have by their noble endeavours to 'Advance Australia' created quite a furore for the encouragement of colonial education, colonial manufactures, colonial horticulture, &c, now, if the principle be correct and the feeling general ... Messrs Beaumont and Waller ... are bound to apply the principle to the encouragement of colonial enterprise on the spot most distinguished in colonial history.⁶³

By the summer of 1852, Beaumont and Waller would claim that 'their efforts to supply ... suitable enjoyment' had met with success since 'pugilism has given place to promenades, milling to music, and the temperate enjoyment of rational recreation has superseded drunkenness and consequent degradation.'⁶⁴ Altruism notwithstanding, Beaumont & Waller's was a business enterprise. Its 'conservatory', for example, was not a place for scientific research but the location of a 'gardener of well-known skill' who sold native pot plants to visitors.⁶⁵

Whatever Waller's contribution, the vision of a pleasure resort was Beaumont's and he was the driving force in its development. It was Beaumont, alone, who took out the lease of the Hotel and its surrounding grounds, held the licence 'to retail fermented and spirituous liquors' from the Hotel, bought up surrounding land, initiated his own repairs to the 'cart track' leading from Sydney (the Old Botany Road, managed by

the Old Botany Road Trust under the *Parish Roads Act*) and made representations to the City Council to improve the state of road access from the city.

The botanical and zoological gardens surrounding the Hotel were not subject to any obvious public regulation.⁶⁶ Whether by design or oversight, the *Act for Regulating of Public Exhibition and Entertainment* did not embrace open-air pleasure gardens. This omission would have allowed Beaumont and Waller complete autonomy in their conduct of the resort beyond the precincts of the Hotel.⁶⁷

After the groundwork undertaken during 1848-49 – including improvements to road access and the laying out of grounds and gardens – Beaumont and Waller scheduled the first major public opening of their Botanical & Zoological Gardens for New Year's Day, 1850. The occasion was promoted as a 'marine treat', the chief attractions of which were 'gardens and beautiful walks' and the 'varied performances' of a band.⁶⁸ Although provision was made for 500 guests, over 1000 attended, surprising even Beaumont and Waller that an 'amusement before unknown to this community would prove so much to the public taste'.⁶⁹

Most patrons travelled from Sydney by a variety of conveyances along the Old Botany Road.⁷⁰ As a promotional fillip, a paddle steamer, the 244-ton *Eagle*, was chartered to depart 'Circular Wharf' at nine o'clock on the day for the three-hour voyage to Botany Bay. The *Eagle* brought 'as many respectably dressed passengers as she could accommodate' but this was only a small fraction of the number attending on the day.⁷¹ On arrival, passengers were ushered towards a 'very large tent' and seated to a 'sumptuous' luncheon. A limited number of luncheon tickets were issued to other patrons for 2s 6d but 'Sydney prices' were charged for ales, wines and spirits.⁷²

The success of this 'marine retreat' provided Beaumont and Waller with a model for organising elaborate 'grand fetes' into the 1850s, typically on New Year's Day, Easter Monday, Queen's Birthday, Boxing Day and other special occasions. The first of these took place on 1 May 1850 to mark the visit to Sydney of HMS *Meander*. Captain Keppel lent the *Meander*'s 'splendid' brass band for the occasion; a black-face minstrel troupe, Blythe Waterland's Ethiopian Serenaders, performed the popular Christy Minstrel songs of London's music halls; and Signor Carandini, a music master and husband of the renowned colonial diva, Madam Carandini, officiated as master of ceremonies. In the evening, there was a 'grand discharge' of fireworks.⁷³

The pseudonym 'Blythe Waterland' was the 'Yankee appellation' of Henry Burton, a former equestrian, manager and ringmaster of Cooke's Circus, a large company that 'worked' Scotland and the north of England. The 'fine feats of the colonial boys in riding', had inspired Burton and his wife, the renowned equestrienne, Madam Rosina, to sail for Australia with the intention of organising a circus that could 'work' the colonies. To sustain themselves as they got organised, Burton, a fine singer, had the foresight to bring three 'Ethiopian' serenaders with him.⁷⁴

On 24 May 1850, Sydney celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday. A royal salute was fired from Fort Phillip; the 11th Regiment fired three rounds of musketry on the Domain; a levee was held at Government House; a boat race was held on Sydney Harbour; illuminations hung in city streets; and fireworks enlivened the suburbs.⁷⁵

The 'half-holiday' gave Beaumont and Waller the opportunity to mount another fete at Botany Bay and to experiment with other attractions and different pricing structures. A chartered steamer, *William IV*, conveyed a small number of patrons back and forth for a return fare of 5s but most patrons came by road. After paying a general admission of 2s, all visitors could partake of a luncheon consisting of 'every delicacy the season affords' and laid out 'in a tastefully decorated pavilion' for 2s 6d.⁷⁶ At 12.30, a genuine '[hot] air balloon' almost 40 feet in height, was inflated and launched aloft from which several 'living aeronauts' – probably dolls or puppets – would be released and descend by parachute. A band played on the lawn and, on a stage beneath a canopy erected in the Kangaroo Keep, Blythe Waterland's Ethiopian Serenaders again performed.⁷⁷

Although Beaumont and Waller claimed in advance of their summer season of 1850-51 that the Botany Road was 'in thorough repair' and that a 'ride or drive' would take no more than an hour, heavy rains in October left it impassable. Until repairs could be completed, 'intending parties' were advised to defer their visits for several days.⁷⁸ Taking up residence in Botany, Beaumont and several neighbours banded together to improve access to their properties by building a branch road from the Old Botany Road (near intersection of the present-day Botany Road and Chelmsford Avenue), across the Botany swamp, running approximately parallel to, and south of, the present Edgehill Street and Anniversary Road. Ditches and marshes were filled with faggots of bark that were covered with sand and then with strips of bark. Known as the Bark Road, threepenny tolls were collected from passing traffic but the monies raised were never sufficient to fund the cost of maintenance.⁷⁹

As Beaumont and Waller continued to expand and diversify the range of attractions offered, Burton returned to Botany Bay in the spring of 1850 to open a 'riding school' to teach 'the art of riding ... to persons moving in the higher circles of society'.⁸⁰ The engagement provided him with an opportunity to begin organising a professional circus troupe. Beaumont and Waller supplied 'a tea-tree and canvas structure where for eight weeks ... Burton laboured hard to break both men and horses into their business'.⁸¹ Several evenings each week, Burton returned to the city to serve as ringmaster in the Royal Australian Equestrian Circus, Sydney's first permanent circus, recently opened at the rear of John Malcom's Adelphi Hotel in York Street.⁸²

Upwards of 4000 people attended the 'Grand Fete' on Boxing Day, 1850, some paying a return fare of 5s to travel in 'lumbering coaches' to and from Botany Bay.⁸³ On New Year's Day, 1851, some 3000 people attended another 'Grand Fete'. Several dozen patrons arrived by the *Rose*, the iron steamer chartered for the

occasion 'for the accommodation of those who wished to imbibe the sea breeze rather than be enshrouded in ... clouds of dust'. The *Rose*'s passengers came ashore to find cabs, drags, gigs, tandems and spring carts already parked at the rear of the hotel, and hundreds of people formed into picnic parties in the shade of the bush.⁸⁴

As well as enjoying bathing, boating and picnicking, visitors could now observe 'almost every beast and bird peculiar to the colony'. For an additional 6d, they could enter an enclosure to see a 'Royal Bengal' tiger, a black bear from the Himalayas and an 'extraordinary ape', the first non-indigenous animals to be exhibited.

However, the chief attraction on each occasion – Boxing Day and New Year's Day – was the two-part circus performance Burton presented in a 'rustic' (open-air) amphitheatre capable of accommodating 2000 people. Prices of 2s and 1s were charged to the 'gallery' and pit respectively. In addition to the men and horses he had recently broken in, Burton presented several experienced artists from the York Street circus. His wife, the 'talented and graceful' Madame Rosina, was announced to appear 'on her spirited charger and perform her elegant equestrian feat in an act entitled *The Syren's Scarf*, during which she will execute and embody *The Passions* as [portrayed] in Le Brun's celebrated pictures'.⁸⁵

At the end of each day, Burton and his troupe trundled back to York Street to perform to 'overflowing' houses.⁸⁶ Having welded his performers into a viable circus troupe, Burton opened his New Equestrian Circus at Parramatta, on Saturday evening, 1 March 1851. From there, Burton launched his first regional tour and, with it, a touring show industry that would serve regional Australia with entertainment until displaced by the emergence of the electronic media.⁸⁷

Bowing to Sabbatarian proclivities, Beaumont and Waller refrained from opening the Gardens on Sundays, thus forfeiting the potential revenues to be generated on the Sabbath. When Friday, 7 March 1851 was set down for a 'grand fete' under the patronage of the Governor and his wife, some citizens protested that the occasion would take place during Lent. Beaumont and Waller acquiesced and postponed the fixture until Friday, 2 May.⁸⁸ Then, after the road was 'so dreadfully cut up during the late rain', Beaumont and Waller had to again postpone the fete until the following Thursday.⁸⁹

One evening the following week, two carriages – including 'one of the handsomest hackney carriages in Sydney' – conveyed parties home after a day at Botany. In the darkness, just 300 yards before the tollbar, unable to distinguish a deep depression across the Old Botany Road, each driver 'precipitated' his vehicle into the ditch. Fortunately, several passing men managed to extricate the passengers – chiefly 'ladies' and children – the horses and badly damaged carriages. Although Beaumont and Waller claimed that this section was the responsibility of the City Corporation, the *Sydney Morning Herald* pointed out that the Corporation's jurisdiction started on the other side of the tollbar and 'to the trustees [of the Old

Botany Road Trust] alone must be ascribed the blame' for the accident.⁹⁰

Speculative sea captains kept local exhibitors supplied with animals that they purchased at ports-of-call in Africa and Asia.⁹¹ Colonists were especially indebted to Captain William Charlsworth for 'nearly every foreign animal ... introduced here'.⁹² Charlsworth regularly voyaged between Sydney, Hobart Town, Calcutta and Madras by Robert Towns' barque, the 510-ton *Royal Saxon*.⁹³ When the *Royal Saxon* docked in Sydney on 26 August 1851, Charlsworth offloaded an 'Indian lop-eared goat' and a 'black Bengal sheep' for Beaumont and Waller and a 'Royal Indian' elephant for anyone willing to reimburse him for his 'outlay in procuring' the animal.⁹⁴

Despite expectations that the elephant would be 'installed' in comfortable quarters at the Australian Museum, next to the tigress, a public subscription failed to materialise.⁹⁵ Instead, the elephant was exhibited with other animals Beaumont and Waller brought from Botany Bay to exhibit in a 'temporary menagerie' they erected on 'the racecourse' (today's Hyde Park). To enter this 'wooden' enclosure, placed opposite the corner of Park and Elizabeth Streets, visitors paid a shilling and children sixpence.⁹⁶ While providing amusement for the city's youth, the small collection drew attention to the wider need for a public menagerie to serve the city.⁹⁷ The exhibition lasted until Saturday, 8 November 1851 when the animals, including the elephant, were removed to Botany Bay for the coming summer season.⁹⁸

Another 'Grand Equestrian Exhibition' was the theme of the grand fete set down for Easter Monday, 12 April 1852.⁹⁹ On this occasion, artists from Ashton & Cardoza's Olympic Circus in Castlereagh Street performed in a large canvas tent at half-hourly intervals. However, the highlight of the day was Ashton's drive of four 'splendidly caparisoned' horses from the Botany Road tollbar, at the corner of Redfern and Botany streets, to the entrance gates of the Hotel, about five miles. Ashton wagered 'any respectable person' £50 to £100 that he would complete this 'unparalleled feat' in 30 minutes.¹⁰⁰

On the day, 'numberless' pedestrians, equestrians and others seated in cabs, carriages, omnibuses and carts, began 'wending their way from all parts of the city' towards Botany Bay. By 10 o'clock, almost 1000 people had gathered at the tollbar to witness Ashton begin his ride, only to find that the rains of previous days obliged him to start further along Botany Road, on the sandy ground at the bottom of the hill near the Waterloo Mills. Coupling his four horses, Ashton drove them faultlessly to the entrance of the Hotel where 2000 people awaited.

Later in the day, thousands witnessed the 'elegantly dressed' Signor Cardoza ascend his tightrope from a windlass to the top of an old tree.¹⁰¹ Ashton and Cardoza's company then performed in the arena before 'a highly respectable company' of about 600 people. On the lawn in front of the Hotel, the City Band played overtures and polkas throughout the day. Many did not leave the Hotel until 10 o'clock that evening but 'scarcely a drunken person was seen upon the road'.¹⁰²

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1852.

UNEQUALLED FEAT OF HOREMANSHIP.

THE UNDERSIGNED, conjointly with his partner, Signor Cardoza, having made arrangements with the Proprietors of the Zoological Gardens, at Botany, for a
GRAND EQUESTRIAN EXHIBITION,
ON EASTER MONDAY,

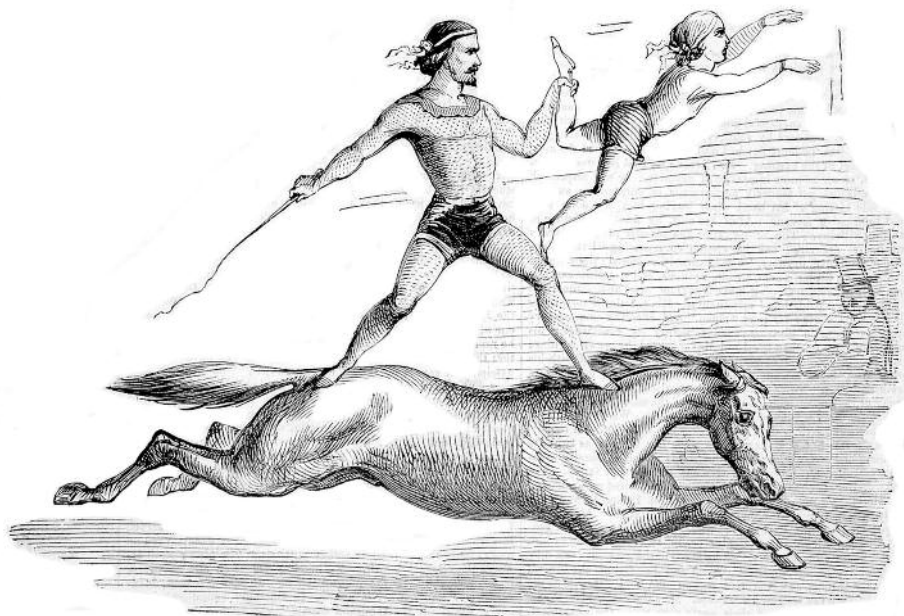
Begs to intimate to the public, that for the purpose of shewing how much may be effected by scientific training of horses, and, at the same time, to display his own professional ability, he will on
EASTER MONDAY, APRIL 11, 1852.

RIDE FOUR BARE-BACKED HORSES FROM THE BOTANY TOLL BAR TO THE ENTRANCE GATE AT THE SIR JOSEPH BANKS HOTEL (the distance being five miles) in thirty minutes! And further in proof of his confidence, both in himself and his horses, he will make a wager with any respectable person of from £10 to £50, that he will perform the feat within the above mentioned time.

J. H. ASHTON,
Olympic Circus,
Castlereagh-street.

313

An advertisement for Ashton's 'unequalled feat of horsemanship', from People's Advocate & New South Wales Vindicator, 10 April 1852, p 2. (Source: State Library of New South Wales.)



MR. ASHTON AND MASTER GAYNER AT THE ROYAL AMPHITHEATRE, YORK-STREET.

Mr Ashton and Master Gaynor at the Royal Amphitheatre, York Street, from Illustrated Sydney News, 2 June 1855. (Source: State Library of New South Wales.)

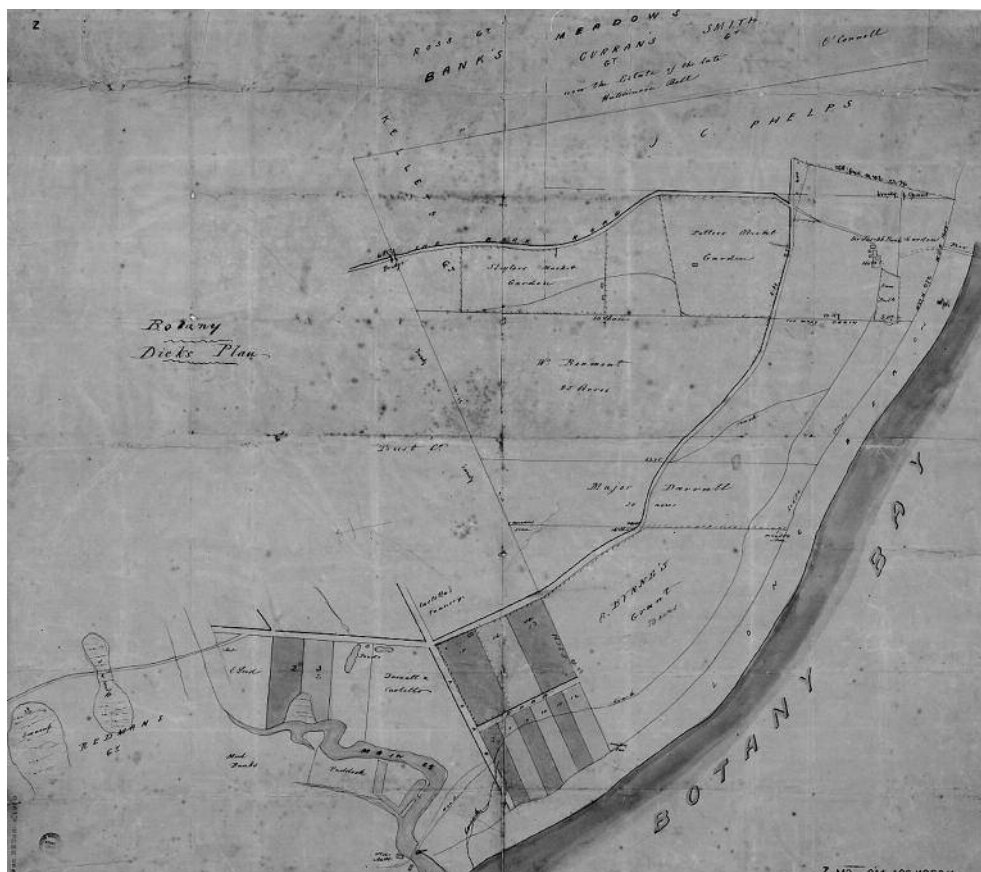
Although the ‘racecourse’ menagerie had been a valuable advertisement for Beaumont & Waller’s during the spring of 1851, the city’s development was not conducive to further exhibitions. The following May, the City Council declined Beaumont’s application to exhibit animals on the same location on the pretext that a fountain was about to be erected upon it.¹⁰³ An alternative space was found at the corner of Pitt and Park streets. The exhibition included a Californian grizzly bear, a South American wolf, a Persian sheep and a variety of scarce Australian birds and beasts. The ‘juvenile portion’ of the public crowded the exhibition daily.¹⁰⁴

However, this was the last of Beaumont and Waller’s menagerie exhibitions within city precincts. When, in April 1853, Beaumont sought permission to erect a ‘a temporary but secure’ menagerie at the corner of Spring and Hunter streets, he was refused on grounds that the ‘effluvium’ would be emitted in a ‘part of the town ... already rendered somewhat unhealthy by the Tank Stream’.¹⁰⁵

Despite the absence of detailed financial records, contemporary descriptions yield insights that suggest the Gardens’ financial viability was, at best, marginal. As the ‘grand fetes’ had to be subsidised out of the sales of ‘luncheon and drinks’ and the Gardens attracted limited patronage at other times, Beaumont and Waller did not refrain from openly admonishing ‘ungenerous’ patrons who brought their own food and drink.¹⁰⁶ Although they had intended to limit their zoological collection to native fauna, public enthusiasm ‘induced’ Beaumont and Waller to procure – expensively – specimens from ‘almost every part of the world’.¹⁰⁷ In 1852, they claimed to have spent almost £1000 on the animals, their cages, dens and enclosures and the ‘caravans’ for their transportation. A further £300 had been paid in commissions to Charlsworth and other obliging mariners.¹⁰⁸

It would be reasonable to presume that the Gardens’ financial liquidity and capital improvements were subsidised, as needed, out of the revenues of the Hotel. Although we lack financial records for the Hotel, it was sufficiently profitable for Beaumont to renew his lease from the beginning of 1852 for another 10 years.¹⁰⁹ A few months later, Beaumont purchased 85 acres of land immediately to the west of the Hotel from the estate of the late merchant, Simeon Lord, for £350, upon which he built his private residence.¹¹⁰ A map produced shortly after shows the position of the Hotel in relation to the principal access route, the Bark Road, the Emu Park, Gardens and Pier.

As well as Beaumont & Waller’s, Sydney was occasionally served by other, smaller exhibitions of wild and exotic animals. The popularity of these exhibitions strengthened calls for the establishment of a public zoological garden to serve the city. Over the winter of 1852, the Rev G. E. Turner called for one to be established on the ‘eastern portion’ of the Domain.¹¹¹ Understandably, Beaumont and Waller protested that a public zoological ‘institution’ would prevent recovery of their own investment.¹¹² Despite his own preference for a public zoo, the naturalist William



Plan of the area on the north shore of Botany Bay, showing, at the top, the Bark Road leading from the Old Botany Road to the gates of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel. Adjacent to the Hotel are marked the 'Garden', 'Emu Park' and the 'Pier'. The plan is dated '1851 to 1855' but shows the 85-acre block of land that Beaumont purchased in 1852. (Source: Z/M3 811.186/1853/1, Map Collection, Mitchell Library.)

Sharp Macleay sided with them:

[The] completion of the [Australian] Museum ... happens at present to be at a stand-still for want of proper fitting up ... As for Zoological Gardens, I think such had better, at least for the present, be left in the hands of Beaumont and Waller ... [The] Local Government ... ought not to be called on to defray the expenses of a place of public amusement, whether a theatre, zoological garden, or even an equestrian circus ...¹¹³

Although the concept of a public zoological garden failed to gain traction, the debate was prescient. Two years later, in October 1854, no longer able to afford to feed its collection of animals, the Australian Museum transferred the collection – which included two eagles, some 'silky' gibbons, a 'native' dog [dingo], a tigress, a

‘grizzly’ bear and an emu – to Botany Bay to augment the ‘increasingly valuable and interesting’ menagerie under Beaumont’s care.¹¹⁴ Some disgust was expressed over the transfer of a public collection, funded by public contributions, to the enrichment of a private undertaking.¹¹⁵

Over the summer season of 1852-53, the Gardens reached the zenith of their popularity. The numerous carriages that rolled about Sydney’s streets on the morning of Boxing Day 1852 were, by one o’clock, parked on the green lawns or amongst the shady groves and manicured gardens of Botany Bay.¹¹⁶ These ‘carriage folk’ appreciated the seclusion that the Gardens offered and, despite occasional instances of inebriation, largely abstained from ‘debauchery and revelling’.¹¹⁷ Nothing more than a mild police presence was required. A pickpocket was detained and handed over to Inspector McCook.¹¹⁸ Not to be seen were the larrikins renowned for blocking Sydney’s footpaths, jostling pedestrians and defacing property.¹¹⁹

Beaumont and Waller cited an unspecified ‘wonderfully improved aspect of colonial affairs’ when promoting their ‘Grand Annual Fete’ for Easter Monday, 1853. A ‘splendid steamer’, the *Sir John Harvey*, chartered for the day with a quadrille band on board, departed for Botany Bay from the Flour Company’s Wharf at nine o’clock and returned at half past six.¹²⁰ The artists of Malcom’s Royal Australian Circus gave equestrian performances at 11 o’clock and 3 o’clock. Throughout the day, Schmidt’s band delivered ‘a great variety of new and popular waltzes, polkas, quadrilles &c’.¹²¹

A touch of the sensational was sure to maximise patronage at these grand fetes. Following on from the balloon ascent (Queen’s Birthday, 1850), a ‘grand morning concert’ (Governor’s Fete, 1851) and Ashton’s four-horse drive (Easter Monday,



‘Going to Botany’, from *Illustrated Sydney News*, 31 December 1853, p 4. (Source: State Library of New South Wales.) ‘Thousands and thousands at an early hour were on the road to Botany ... There were groups of pedestrians ... There were drays ... ‘chay carts’ and spring carts, omnibuses, gigs, tandems, curricles and cabs ...’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1853.)

1852), thousands 'poured out' to Botany on Boxing Day, 1853, to witness a 'sporting gentleman' – probably a turbaned mahout – ride a 'real live elephant' through the Gardens and perform some daring feats of 'elephantmanship' before riding the animal into the waters of Botany Bay.¹²²

The lack of road improvements continued to restrain the Gardens' revenue-generating potential and friction between Beaumont, the City Corporation and the Old Botany Road Trust continued to mount. In February 1854, Beaumont wrote to the City Commissioners to complain that it was 'absolutely perilous' for any springed vehicle to pass along the road.¹²³ Little or no action was taken. In September 1856, Beaumont wrote to the City Commissioners to request they mend the bark-covered section of road, leading from the parish road over Edward Lord's Bridge to the gates of the Hotel. On this occasion, Beaumont complained that drays transporting large water pipes for the extension of Busby's Bore to the Botany swamps had inflicted considerable damage but the draymen had not contributed 'one penny' to repairs.¹²⁴ When, in 1859, after the City Council resumed a portion of Edward Lord's land – upon which Beaumont had erected, at his own expense, a hut for the toll-keeper – Beaumont implored the City Council to reconsider its demand for rent of 2s per week:

[Not] only shall I have borne a large portion of the cost of constructing the road ... [supplemented] the toll receipts for repairs ... [and] lost the right to the hut I built at my own cost, but shall have now further to supplement the tolls with the amount demanded for rent or suffer the road to become impassable ...'¹²⁵

Despite his musical proclivities and commendable character, Waller was charged in October 1854 with a 'vicious assault' upon an indentured apprentice, convicted and fined 40s.¹²⁶ Whether a result of the incident or not, Waller withdrew from active involvement in the Gardens about this time and the resort was promoted thereafter under the sole signature of 'W. Beaumont'. In comparison to the ebullient, column-length advertisements of earlier years, it was a modest announcement that heralded the grand fete at 'The Zoological Gardens, Botany Bay' set down for Easter Monday, 1854.¹²⁷

From 1854, as summarised in Table 2 – presumably inspired by the Beaumont and Waller's example – others entered the leisure and recreation market with similar offerings. Most were short-lived and few could match the beauty, seclusion and diversity of attractions of Botany Bay. Yet, all were conveniently accessible.

The gold rushes of the early 1850s had precipitated a massive increase in free immigration that fed and diversified both the supply and the demand for entertainment. Sydney's population reached 82,000 in 1856, almost twice the population of 10 years earlier. Audiences, increasingly cosmopolitan and affluent, would no longer put up with repetitive circus performances *ad nauseam*. The 'trans-

Table 2

Sydney's early pleasure resorts

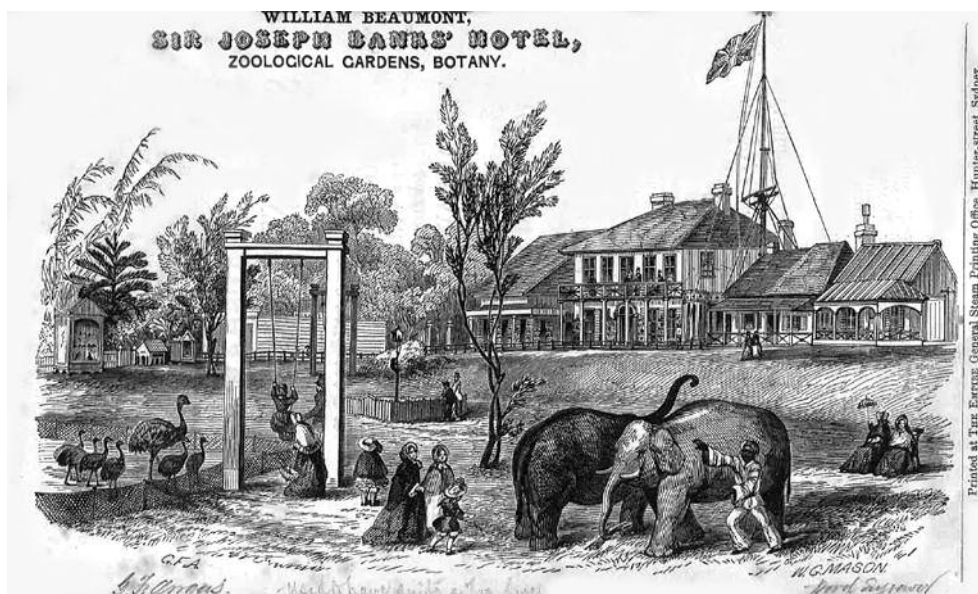
Year	Resort	Location	Access	
1854	Murray's Cremorne Tea & Pleasure	Blues Point	Ferry	128
1856	Wakeley's Cremorne Gardens Hotel	Robertson's Point	Steamer	129
1858	Vauxhall Hotel Pleasure Gardens	Parramatta	Road, rail	130
1858	Birch's New Brighton Hotel	Manly Beach	Steamer	131
1859	Tivoli Tea Gardens	Manly Beach	Steamer	132
1859	Billings' Marine Hotel	Watson's Bay	Omnibus, ferry	133
1860	Grocott's Pier Hotel	Manly Beach	Steamer	134
1863	Clontarf Pleasure Grounds	Middle Harbour	Steamer	135

Pacific thespians' who were welcomed in the aftermath of the Californian gold rush obliged the circus troupes to roam the bush and goldfields in search of their audience.¹³⁶ Profit-seeking entrepreneurs reacted accordingly. In July 1854, the Olympic Circus in Castlereagh Street was reconfigured as the Royal Albert Theatre. In March 1855, the Prince of Wales Theatre was opened in Castlereagh Street with seating for over 3000. In June 1856, John Malcom began to transform his York Street amphitheatre, previously used for equestrian performances, into an 'elegant vaudeville theatre' with seating for 2000.¹³⁷

When the Gardens were advertised for Boxing Day, 1855, Beaumont decided 'to permit the season to pass by without an Annual Demonstration' as seasonal festivities were 'no longer compatible with the position the establishment has gained'. Furthermore, patrons were fewer and 'of a kind' content with the resort's 'ordinary attractions' and to whom Beaumont and his 'servants' could better attend to their 'comfort and convenience'.¹³⁸

Nevertheless, Beaumont continued to enhance the menagerie with occasional additions, such as the penguin that Captain Clarke of the *Lord Burleigh* brought back from St Paul, an island in the southern Indian Ocean.¹³⁹ There were also occasional subtractions. After the death of the elephant 'Sarah' in June 1855, her skeletal remains were donated to the Australian Museum for reconstruction.¹⁴⁰

By the summer of 1858-59, the menagerie included an elephant, African lion, 'royal' Bengal tiger, cheetah ['hunting leopard'], leopard, black bear, Himalayan mountain bear and a grizzly bear, 'all in splendid condition and arranged in the best manner for exhibition ... in as nearly natural a condition as their safe custody will permit'. In addition, kangaroos, wallabies, emus, native dogs [dingos] and cats, red deer ['of Manila'], monkeys, black and white swans, a pelican, waterfowl, wild ducks as well as 'a great variety of other beasts and birds, native and foreign' could



An illustration of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel and the edge of the Emu Park showing a turbaned mahout in charge of two elephants, published in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, 30 June 1855, from Cox & Co's *Sydney Post Office Directory*, 1857. (Source: Royal Australian Historical Society.)

be seen about the grounds.¹⁴¹ It was the largest, most diverse collection of wild and exotic animals to be seen in Sydney.¹⁴²

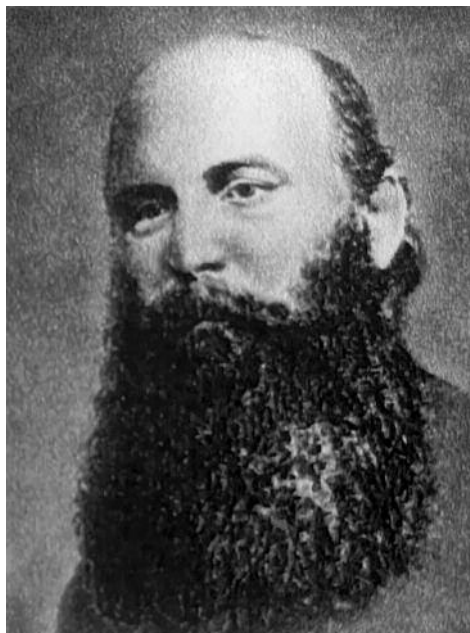
Late in 1859, the showman Henry Billing began exhibiting his collection of wild animals at the Greenwich Pier Hotel, Watson's Bay.¹⁴³ Unlike Beaumont's Gardens, Billing's menagerie could be visited on Sundays and reached by ferry, steamer or road. Several times each Sunday, a large, four-horse omnibus departed for Watson's Bay from the corner of King and George Streets.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, the omnibus that served Botany Bay on New Year's Day, 1860, was limited to two round trips for the day and had to cope with the 'intolerable' state of the Old Botany Bay Road.¹⁴⁵

The last Grand Fete at Botany Bay took place on Easter Monday, 1861. While 'fresh air and quiet sport' were still the chief attractions, only a limited range of activities was offered. Polkas had to be danced to the accompaniment of a banjo and accordion rather than a band. Upwards of 600 'elegantly dressed' people visited that day, a larger number than had been seen for some years but well short of the thousands who attended in the early 1850s.¹⁴⁶

A proposed tramway to Botany, if it had been constructed by this time, may have guaranteed the Gardens' immediate viability but the line would not be opened until 1882.¹⁴⁷ At the end of 1861, Beaumont decided not to renew his lease of the Hotel and advertised his personal properties and menagerie for sale by auction.¹⁴⁸ Thomas Kellett instructed Messrs Richardson & Wrench to sell the Hotel, York Lodge

(Kellett's Botany residence) and eight small adjacent farms.¹⁴⁹ Henry Billing purchased the animals for his menagerie at Watson's Bay.¹⁵⁰

On 13 January 1862, the vessel *La Hogue* was cleared to leave Sydney for London, its passengers including Mr and Mrs Beaumont and child.¹⁵¹ Before the year's end, the Beaumonts had returned to Sydney and to their Botany family home.¹⁵² Beaumont subsequently developed a pleasure ground on this property under the name of Correy's Gardens. The business partnership between Beaumont and Waller, timber merchants, lasted until Waller's death in 1871.¹⁵³



*William Beaumont, c.1880, and James Waller, c.1860.
(Source: Mitchell Library State Library of New South Wales.)*

Beaumont served as a councillor of the Zoological Society of New South Wales.¹⁵⁴ In 1879, the Zoological Society established Sydney's first public zoo in the grounds of Moore Park, the predecessor of Taronga Park Zoo, which opened in 1916.¹⁵⁵ Having acquired 'considerable means', Beaumont died at Burwood on 26 January 1904, aged 90, 'full of honour and anecdote' and leaving an estate valued for probate at £19,349 13s.¹⁵⁶

Despite the closure of Beaumont's Zoological Gardens, the Hotel and its surrounding grounds remained a popular destination for Sydney's pleasure-seekers. About 1870, a two-story north wing in Italianate style was added to the original edifice of the Hotel to provide a façade overlooking Anniversary Street.¹⁵⁷ In 1908, a new owner re-named the grounds surrounding the Hotel as the Olympic Recreation and Picnic Grounds.¹⁵⁸

In 1920, a new 'Sir Joseph Banks Hotel' was built on Botany Road and both the original hotel's name and its licence were transferred to the new premises. In 1921, the original hotel was sold but left vacant until sold to James Rutley in 1930 for his family residence. In 1947, the premises were converted into flats.¹⁵⁹

The last traces of the original pleasure grounds had been obliterated with the construction of the Southern and Western Ocean Outfall Sewer, completed in 1940.¹⁶⁰ In 1988, the grounds were restored as a Bicentennial project.¹⁶¹ The original Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, fronting onto Anniversary Street, 'suffered greatly from remodelling and additions' but in the early 2000s, the building was restored and converted into apartments.¹⁶²



The Anniversary Street frontage of the former Sir Joseph Banks Hotel, photographed in December 2021. (Source: Google.)

However, these visible examples of Beaumont and Waller's former existence were not its only legacies. The resort left other far-reaching legacies that, today, may not be so obvious. First, within its grounds, the foundations of a touring circus were laid, the first example of the industry of travelling shows that would keep regional Australia amused until well into the 20th century. Second, upon Beaumont & Waller's example, other pleasure resorts would be conceived and built in Sydney and throughout regional New South Wales. Third, its zoological theme would eventually lead to the establishment of Taronga Park Zoo, today one of the Sydney's premier family and tourist attractions.

Councillor RAHS

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the following people for reviewing earlier drafts of this article: Emeritus Professor Richard Waterhouse, Emeritus Professor Peta Tait, Dr Lisa Murray and Ms Leann Richards. The author assumes responsibility for opinions expressed and conclusions reached.

Notes

- 1 Joseph Phipps Townsend, *Rambles and Observations in New South Wales*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1849, pp 9-10.
- 2 Alexander Marjoribanks, *Travels in New South Wales*, Smith, Elder and Co, London, 1847, pp 19ff.
- 3 *Truth*, 10 March 1912, p 9.
- 4 NSW Land Registry Services: Historical Land Records Viewer, Grant Register, Serial 35 p 9; *NSW Government Gazette*, no 99, 22 January 1834, p 46; *Sydney Sportsman* [hereafter *SS*], 30 August 1905, p 3.
- 5 NSW Land Registry Services: Historical Land Records Viewer, Grant Register, Serial 35, p 9; Museums of History NSW State Archives Collection (hereafter MHNSW StAC): NRS-14401, Butts of publicans' licences, 1830-1849 [4/80] 1846 Licence 499; Reel 5060.
- 6 *Australian*, 23 May 1846, p 1; *Sydney Morning Herald* [hereafter *SMH*], 10 December 1846, p 1.
- 7 NSW Land Registry Services: Historical Land Records Viewer, General Register of Deeds, Book 11 Number 853; E. J. Silva, *A History of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel*, The Author, Sydney, 1978, p 10.
- 8 MHNSW StAC: NRS-14401 [4/80]; G. A. King, 'An early Sydney zoo', *SMH*, 6 July 1935, p 11.
- 9 For the sake of brevity, the term 'Beaumont & Waller's' will describe the business entity, Beaumont & Waller's Botanical & Zoological Gardens. The term 'Beaumont and Waller' will refer to any other associations between the two men.
- 10 Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture since 1788*, Longman Australia Pty Limited, South Melbourne, 1995, pp 3ff.
- 11 C. M. H. Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, Macmillan Company of Australia, South Melbourne, 1982, p 46.
- 12 Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2009, p 145.
- 13 Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure*, pp 32ff.
- 14 Eric Irvin, *Theatre Comes to Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1971, p vi.
- 15 *Sydney Gazette* [hereafter *SG*], 13 October 1810, p 2, 20 October 1810, pp 2, 3.
- 16 *An Act for Regulating Places of Public Exhibition and Entertainment*, 9 Geo IV, no 14.
- 17 Gail Davis (ed), *Guide to New South Wales State Archives Relating to Convicts and Convict Administration*, State Records Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, 2004, pp 255-56 (online at <https://mhns.w.au/guides/convict-guide-2006/>).
- 18 Wray Vamplew (ed), *Australians, Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p 104.
- 19 Vamplew, *Australians, Historical Statistics*, pp 25-26; J. W. C. Cumes, *Their Chastity was not too Rigid: Leisure Times in Early Australia*, Longman Cheshire Reed, Melbourne, 1979, p 176.
- 20 N. G. Butlin, *Forming a Colonial Economy, Australia 1810-1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p 26; Shirley Fitzgerald, *Sydney 1842-1992*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1992, pp 24-25.
- 21 *SMH*, 31 December 1852, p 1.
- 22 Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure*, pp 45-46; Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage, 1788-1914*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, 1990, pp 22-23; Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol 3, 1860-1900, Oxford University Press Australia, South Melbourne, 1988, p 222.
- 23 Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure*, p 44; Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre, 1788-1914*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, p 206.
- 24 Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, pp 26-27; Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre*, pp 273-74, 277.
- 25 John Hood, *Australia and The East*, John Murray, London, 1843, pp 98-99.
- 26 Susan Bambrick (ed), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p 273; Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of the HMS Beagle Round the World under*

- Captain Fitzroy RN, The Folio Society, London, 2003, pp 430-50; Hood, 1843, pp 98-99.
- 27 Arthur H. Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse: A History of Hippodrama in England and France*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1968, p 1.
- 28 J. M. Golby & A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England, 1750-1900*, Sutton Publishing Limited, Stroud, 1999, pp 91-92.
- 29 *Cornwall Chronicle*, 3 January 1846, p 2; Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville*, pp 25-26.
- 30 MHNSW StAC, NRS-905, Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], 1851 Letter No 50/5995 with 51/678 in [4/2924], Memorial from Edwd Roserie for Licence to hold Public Exhibitions; City of Sydney Archives, Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], Edwd Roserie, A-00281206, 12 June 1850.
- 31 J. H. Maiden, 'History of Sydney Botanic Gardens', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal & Proceedings*, vol XIV, part 1, 1928, pp 13-16. Today, the Gardens are known as the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.
- 32 *SG*, 12 July 1822, p 2. The *SMH*, 14 January 1891, p 6, reported that the name of the Society had been altered to 'The Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales'.
- 33 *SG*, 1 March 1826, p 2.
- 34 *SG*, 6 February 1830, p 2.
- 35 *Sydney Monitor*, 22 December 1832, p 3.
- 36 *The Currency Lad*, 23 March 1833, p 3.
- 37 *SG*, 20 January 1835, p 2; *The Alfred*, 20 January 1835, p 1.
- 38 *Commercial Journal & Advertiser*, 24 March 1838, p 2.
- 39 *Sydney Herald*, 26 January 1842, p 3.
- 40 *SMH*, 8 September 1848, p 1.
- 41 *SMH*, 15 October 1850, p 1.
- 42 *Empire*, 2 June 1852, p 3.
- 43 Wilfrid Blunt, *The Ark in the Park: The Zoo in the Nineteenth Century*, Hamish Hamilton Ltd, London, 1976, p 32.
- 44 Thomas Frost, *The Old Showmen & The Old London Fairs*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1881, p 91.
- 45 David Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011, pp 18ff.
- 46 Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart MacIntyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, revised edition, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001, p 84.
- 47 Ronald Strahan, *Rare & Curious Specimens: An Illustrated History of the Australian Museum, 1827-1979*, The Australian Museum, Sydney, 1979, p 133.
- 48 J. H. Maiden, 'History of the Sydney Botanic Gardens', *Royal Australian Historical Society: Journal and Proceedings*, vol XIV, part 1, 1928, p 17.
- 49 Nigel Rothfels, 'How the Caged Bird Sings: Animals and Entertainment', in Kathleen Kete (ed), *A Cultural History of Animals, Vol 5: In the Age of Empire*, Berg, Oxford, 2011, pp 96, 97.
- 50 Rothfels, 'How the Caged Bird Sings', pp 96, 100-01.
- 51 Blunt, *The Ark in the Park*, pp 74-75.
- 52 Blunt, *The Ark in the Park*, pp 74-75.
- 53 *Sydney Monitor*, 20 November 1830, pp 2, 3; *SG*, 24 September 1831, p 4.
- 54 *SMH*, 6 February 1843, p 3; *SMH*, 24 July 1843, p 4.
- 55 MHNSW StAC: NRS-905, Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], [4/4558.3], Letter No 43/3389, letter dated 4 May 1853, Letter No 43/3546, letter dated 9 May 1843; *SMH*, 18 March 1843, p 2.
- 56 *Australasian Chronicle*, 30 May 1843, p 2; *Australian*, 31 May 1843, p 2.
- 57 MHNSW StAC: NRS-13654, Insolvency files, 1842-1887, NRS-13654-1-[2/8717]-564: Insolvency Proceedings, William Beaumont [Builder, 5 Liverpool Street, Sydney], 30-11-1842 to

- 21-06-1843; *Evening News*, 27 January 1904, p 3; SS, 13 September 1905, p 3.
- 58 *Australian Town & Country Journal*, 25 February 1871, p 9.
- 59 SS, 30 August 1905, p 3.
- 60 *SMH*, 26 June 1852, p 3.
- 61 MHNSW StAC: NRS-17513, Primary Application Packets, NRS-17513-36-139-PA 3104, Primary Application – John Thomas Neale 6 acres 1 rood 15 perches in Parish Botany County Cumberland Volume 175 Folio 181, 26-07-1834 to 20-02-1874.
- 62 *SMH*, 8 September 1848, p 1. The La Perouse monument and Cook's landing place lay on the northern and southern shores of the entrance to Botany Bay, respectively. The term 'short distance' implies that a sailing vessel was provided to enable visitors to reach these locations.
- 63 *SMH*, 6 December 1850, p 1.
- 64 *SMH*, 31 December 1852, p 1. In this context, the term 'milling' is understood to describe people moving around in a large group without any particular purpose.
- 65 *SMH*, 28 November 1850, p 1.
- 66 In 1849, the licensing of publicans in New South Wales was re-codified in the *Licensed Publicans Act*, 13 Vic No. 29.
- 67 MHNSW StAC, NRS-905, Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], 1851 Letter No 50/5995 with 51/678 in [4/2924], Memorial from Edwd Roserie for Licence to hold Public Exhibitions; City of Sydney Archives, Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], Edwd Roserie, A-00281206, 12 June 1850.
- 68 *SMH*, 6 July 1935, p 1.
- 69 *SMH*, 25 March 1850, p 1.
- 70 *Bell's Life in Sydney* [hereafter *BLS*], 3 January 1850, p 1; *People's Advocate* [hereafter *PA*], 5 January 1850, p 2.
- 71 *PA*, 29 December 1849, p 10.
- 72 *SMH*, 31 December 1849, p 1.
- 73 *SMH*, 1 May 1850, p 3.
- 74 Mary Salmon, 'An Old Time Circus', *Australian Town & Country Journal*, 3 August 1904, p 34.
- 75 *PA*, 25 May 1850, p 3.
- 76 Salmon, 'An Old Time Circus'; *BLS*, 18 May 1850, pp 2, 3; *SMH*, 18 May 1850, p 1.
- 77 *SMH*, 23 May 1850, p 1.
- 78 *SMH*, 17 October 1850, p 1, 26 October 1850, p 1.
- 79 City of Sydney Archives, Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], W. Beaumont, A-00290571, 10 May 1859; Silva, *A History of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel*, p 4.
- 80 *SMH*, 12 November 1850, p 1.
- 81 Salmon, 'An Old Time Circus'.
- 82 *SMH*, 15 October 1850, p 1.
- 83 *SMH*, 28 December 1850, p 5.
- 84 *BLS*, 4 January 1851, p 3.
- 85 *SMH*, 23 December 1850, p 1.
- 86 *SMH*, 16 December 1850, p 1, 24 December 1850, p 1, 28 December 1850, p 1.
- 87 *SMH*, 1 March 1851, p 1.
- 88 *SMH*, 5 March 1851, p 1.
- 89 *SMH*, 3, 6 May 1851, p 1.
- 90 *SMH*, 10 May 1851, p 5.
- 91 W. C. Coup, cited in Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2002, p 17.
- 92 *SMH*, 27 September 1851, p 4.
- 93 *Maitland Mercury* [hereafter *MM*], 1 October 1851, p 2.
- 94 *MM*, 30 August 1851, p 2; SS, 30 August 1905, p 3.
- 95 *SMH*, 1 September 1851, p 2.

- 96 *SMH*, 11 August 1851, p 2, 12 September 1851, p 1.
- 97 *MM*, 1 October 1851, p 2.
- 98 *SMH*, 5 November 1851, p 1.
- 99 *SMH*, 6 April 1852, p 1.
- 100 *BLS*, 10 April 1852, p 3.
- 101 *SS*, 5 February 1908, p 3.
- 102 *PA*, 17 April 1852, p 4.
- 103 *SMH*, 26 June 1852, p 3.
- 104 *MM*, 15 September 1852, p 4.
- 105 MHNSW StAC: NRS-905, Main series of letters received [Colonial Secretary], [4/3197], Letter No 53/4172, letter dated 30 April 1853.
- 106 *SMH*, 30 December 1851, p 1.
- 107 *SMH*, 12 September 1851, p 1, 23 December 1851, p 1.
- 108 *SMH*, 26 June 1852, p 3.
- 109 NSW Land Registry Services: Historical Land Records Viewer, General Register of Deeds, Book 23 Number 934.
- 110 NSW Land Registry Services: Historical Land Records Viewer, General Register of Deeds, Book 34 Number 398.
- 111 *SMH*, 29 June 1852, p 2.
- 112 *SMH*, 26 June 1852, p 3.
- 113 *SMH*, 19 June 1852, p 5.
- 114 *SMH*, 12 October 1854, p 8.
- 115 *SMH*, 13 October 1854, p 5.
- 116 *Empire*, 28 December 1852, p 2.
- 117 Geoffrey Scott, *Sydney's Highways of History*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1958, p 210.
- 118 *SMH*, 29 December 1852, p 2.
- 119 Fitzgerald, *Sydney 1842-1992*, p 40; John Rickard, 'Lovable larrikins and awful ockers', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol 22, no 56, 1998, pp 78-85.
- 120 *SMH*, 26 December 1853, p 3.
- 121 *SMH*, 28 March 1853, p 1.
- 122 *Illustrated Sydney News*, 7 January 1854, p 2.
- 123 City of Sydney Archives: Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], W. Beaumont, A-00281924, 17 July 1854.
- 124 City of Sydney Archives: Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], W. Beaumont, A-00288266, 4 September 1856.
- 125 City of Sydney Archives: Letters Received [Municipal Council of Sydney], W. Beaumont, A-00290571, 10 May 1859.
- 126 *PA*, 14 October 1854, p 3.
- 127 *SMH*, 15 April 1854, p 2.
- 128 *SMH*, 11 November 1854, p 3.
- 129 *SMH*, 24 March 1856, p 1.
- 130 *SMH*, 19 November 1856, p 6.
- 131 *SMH*, 18 December 1858, p 9.
- 132 *Empire*, 24 May 1859, p 4.
- 133 *SMH*, 3 January 1860, p 5.
- 134 *SMH*, 17 December 1859, p 1.
- 135 *SMH*, 19 December 1863, p 1.
- 136 E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America and Australian Gold: Americans and the Gold Rushes of the 1850s*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1974, pp 123-53.
- 137 Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre*, pp 277-81.
- 138 *SMH*, 22 December 1855, p 6.

- 139 *BLS*, 8 September 1855, p 2.
- 140 *SMH*, 27 June 1855, p 5.
- 141 *SMH*, 23 December 1858, p 8.
- 142 *SMH*, 6 November 1858, p 3.
- 143 *SMH*, 13 January 1860, p 9.
- 144 C. A. Byrne, 'Reminiscence', August 1983, *Reminiscences File*, Randwick and District Historical Society.
- 145 *SMH*, 31 December 1859, p 5.
- 146 *SMH*, 2 April 1861, p 5.
- 147 *SMH*, 21 September 1861, p 11, 23 May 1882, p 9.
- 148 *SMH*, 31 December 1861, p 7.
- 149 *Truth*, 25 February 1912, p 9.
- 150 *SMH*, 24 October 1931, p 9.
- 151 *SMH*, 14 January 1862, p 4.
- 152 MHNSW StAC: NRS-13278, Passengers Arriving, 1855-1922, *Duncan Dunbar*, arrived 12 December 1862, [X107-108], Reel 411; *Empire*, 13 December 1862, p 4.
- 153 Silva, *A History of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel*, p 23; *SMH*, 7 February 1871, p 1.
- 154 *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 1904, p 4. Founded in 1879, the Zoological Society was the successor to the Acclimatisation Society of New South Wales.
- 155 *SMH*, 11 February 1916, p 5, 30 August 1916, p 6.
- 156 *SMH*, 29 January 1904, p 5; *SMH*, 1 March 1904, p 4.
- 157 *SMH*, 2 September 1871, p 10.
- 158 *SS*, 11 November 1908, p 5.
- 159 *Daily Telegraph*, 9 February 1947, p 9.
- 160 *SMH*, 14 February 1940, p 17.
- 161 *SMH*, 20 July 1987.
- 162 NSW Department of Planning and Environment, State Heritage Inventory, <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/heritage/search-heritage-databases/state-heritage-inventory>, 'Sir Joseph Banks Hotel (c.1840) (former), 23 Anniversary Rd, Botany, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1210002>, Heritage Item ID: 1210002, accessed 27 April 2023.

Ingleside Powder Works: 'a curious colonial enterprise'

KEITH AMOS

The Sydney suburb of Ingleside and Powderworks Road through it are lasting reminders of Ingleside Powder Works, the creation of a mysterious entrepreneur called Carl von Bieren. Today, the only vestiges of Von Bieren's sojourn at this location are his much-changed residence and the last remains of a gunpowder mill. Following is an examination of how this unique powder works came into being.

The powder works was a grand plan in the 1880s that collapsed in controversy. Instead of manufacturing gunpowder for the first time in New South Wales, Von Bieren led investors deeply into debt without ever beginning production. He was arrested trying to abscond to Britain, found guilty of fraudulent insolvency and sentenced to two years and 10 months imprisonment. Released from Goulburn Gaol in 1888, he took passage to America and, apart from one fleeting rumour, was never heard of again.

The works' mysterious past has never been fully explained due to unanswered questions and conflicting interpretation. When Von Bieren was convicted after four trials lasting six months, *The Sydney Morning Herald* observed:

The trial of Carl von Bieren ... forms a curious chapter in the history of colonial enterprise ... Had there been any honest intention to carry out the undertaking, it is simply impossible to understand the motives which could have led the projector to abandon it ... he held a large interest in the company which he had been the means of bringing into existence ... Why, then, leave the country under circumstances which naturally provoked indignation and led to his arrest as a criminal?¹

In 1924, the *Daily Telegraph* 'Sunday News Pictorial' ran a three-page article titled 'The great grass-tree swindle: Passing of the Von Bieren relics'. Prompted by plans to sell the powder works estate, the writer speculated about its history. Before World War I, he reasoned, vast quantities of the Australian grass-tree were exported to Germany supposedly for varnish making, but since it was known in 1882 that a powerful explosive (picric acid) could be extracted from grass-trees, Von Bieren's secret intent could well have been to help Germany arm for war.²

Keen to learn about the powder works, the newly founded Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society (MWPHS) arranged a joint inspection of the site with the Royal Australian Historical Society in August 1927. The group was addressed on the day by RAHS president Captain James Watson (a sprightly 85-year-old) who concluded his talk thus: 'Many conflicting stories of the old powder works were told, and Von Bieren's intentions seemed to be honest, but he had fallen into financial difficulties. Although some machinery was installed in the works, the retorts were not completed, and not an ounce of gunpowder was made there.'³

The only comprehensive treatment of this topic is 'Narrabeen Powder Works' (2012), a 90-page monograph by MWPHS historians, Shelagh and George Champion. On Von Bieren's motives the Champions reach a conclusion similar to Watson's, that having over-reached his capacity to produce gunpowder, Von Bieren lapsed into fraud and fled to avoid loss of face and ever increasing debts:

The story relating to Carl von Bieren and his attempt to establish a viable powder works at Narrabeen in the Colony of NSW in the 1880s is both intriguing and complex. It is open to various interpretations and it must be left to readers themselves to draw their own conclusions after carefully considering all the evidence presented. Just a cursory glance at the material may lead, perhaps unfairly, to an immediate condemnation of the man as a scoundrel. However it will be observed that he took many risks both financial and personal in an endeavour to achieve his original aim.⁴

In contrast to the views of the Champions, this article contends that Von Bieren built the works ostensibly for explosives production while actually to maintain, for a time at least, a comfortable lifestyle for himself and his supposed wife, Anna.

Von Bieren's modus operandi

The first document unmasking Carl von Bieren (hereafter Carl) as an imposter is a passport application he swore to in New York in September 1882.⁵ The passport identifies him as an American citizen, 38 years of age, born in Amsterdam, Holland, on 25 December 1843 during a sojourn of his parents abroad. It records his American father as Ferdinand von Bieren and that he would be travelling abroad with his wife Anetta, aged 27. But on trial in Sydney, Carl stated that he was born on 25 December 1844 at Ithaca, New York State, the son of John von Bieren.⁶ So was his father Ferdinand or John, or neither; and was he born in Holland in 1843 or the US in 1844, or neither? Only his birthday is consistent – and easy to remember being Christmas Day!

The passport describes him as 5ft 8ins (173cm) tall, with blue-grey eyes, brown hair, full face, round chin, and having a dark complexion. Other than during the Civil War, US passports were optional before World War I, being used mainly by travellers for identification at hotels and banks, collecting mail from post offices or seeking embassy assistance as American citizens.⁷ In Carl's case though, the passport supported a false identity.



'Blue-grey eyes, brown hair, full face, round chin, and having a dark complexion.'
Carl Von Bieren's business card. (Source: Australian Town & Country Journal,
16 August 1884, p 6.)

By October 1882 the couple were in London, where Carl called at the American Exchange and introduced himself to the manager, Henry Gillig, as a traveller mixing business with pleasure. There was some pleasant socialising with Gillig as he helped with their projected tour of Europe.⁸ Gillig also wrote Carl a letter of introduction to a British bank in Calcutta signed by him for proof of identity, for any business he might undertake in India and beyond:

London 12th October 1882

Messrs King Hamilton & Co, Calcutta

Gentlemen,

We take pleasure in introducing to you our esteemed friend and client Mr Carl von Bieren who, with his wife is travelling in your district.

Mr von Bieren holds our letter of credit, and may probably undertake extensive business transactions in your country; we therefore commend him to your best care and attention, and will appreciate as extended to ourselves, any special courtesies you may have the opportunity to accord him.

We are, Gentlemen, your obedient Servants,

American Exchange in Europe Ltd

Signature of:

Henry F Gillig, General Manager

Carl von Bieren⁹

Their travel arrangements changed as soon as Carl had this letter. The next day he telegraphed Gillig to book passages for them on SS *Orient*, bound for Australia



The SS Orient in the Suez Canal, on the way to Australia, c.1885 – ‘a large sail-assisted iron steamship with 520 passengers, 68 of whom were travelling in the luxurious first-class saloon including ‘Mr and Mrs Carl Von Bieren’.

(Photograph, J. W. Lindt. Source: National Library of Australia.)

within a week. Gillig expressed disappointment they were leaving so prematurely, he had enjoyed their 'ripening friendship' and had looked forward to joining them on their return to America in February or March.¹⁰

The *Orient* was a large sail-assisted iron steamship with 520 passengers, 68 of whom were travelling in the luxurious first-class saloon including 'Mr and Mrs Carl Von Bieren'.¹¹ After a fast trip of 41 days, the couple disembarked at Sydney on 7 December 1882.¹² They took accommodation at Foster's Hotel in Castlereagh Street, moving a little later to Perry's Family Hotel on Church Hill.¹³ There were no bookings for further travel and a month after they arrived Carl decided to buy a large block of land remotely situated north-west of Narrabeen, outer Sydney.

When he first made plans to establish a powder works is not known. More certain is that he had learnt from conversations, either aboard the *Orient* or shortly after arriving in Sydney, that all explosives in New South Wales were imported, and began expressing the view that a local industry would be highly profitable.¹⁴ Advice about land at Narrabeen was probably gleaned at Manly, where Carl's concept excited a number of local businessmen, several of whom were Manly Council aldermen. Manly, as elsewhere in New South Wales, was booming economically in the 1880s, with profits flowing from stock-market investment, real estate and associated development.

Small farmers had long occupied better land beyond Manly, but uncleared crown land was plentiful, mostly on sandstone ridges and gullies or swampy flats. The terms for a 'Conditional Purchase' were attractive, the Crown Lands Alienation Act allowing a buyer to select land at a fixed price of £1 per acre on a down payment of 25 per cent. The balance was to be paid in three annual instalments, interest-free, or deferred for all time on an annual interest payment of 5 per cent. Three years residency on the land was mandatory and improvements of £1 per acre had to be effected.¹⁵

Two Manly timber merchants enthused with Carl's powder works idea were Robert Evans and Sam Bailey. It appears they advised Carl to buy a crown land block off the Lane Cove Road to Pittwater (today's Mona Vale Road) near Sugarloaf Hill (close to the Bahai temple today). On the terms described, Carl bought 320 acres on 11 January 1883 for a down payment of about £80. Three months later Evans purchased 640 acres nearby, apparently to supply timber to the works, either for building or charcoal (one of three components used to make gunpowder). In July 1883, perhaps to avoid building a residence there, Evans transferred the block's ownership to Carl, although he was not paid for nearly a year.¹⁶

Two weeks after buying his land Carl engaged Montague Hawkins as his private secretary,¹⁷ and in February obtained a New South Wales government permit issued by the chief ordnance officer and inspector of magazines, Julian Blanchard, to manufacture explosives subject to safety and building inspections.¹⁸ A hive of activity followed. Plans were drawn, labour employed, carriers engaged, timber delivered, all causing much interest in Manly. Construction began on both the

powder works and residence, the latter ready to occupy by late 1883. The building team spent the working week on site, accommodated overnight in the men's quarters, a building near the residence. On Friday afternoons they were taken in wagonettes to Manly for the weekend, returning late on Sunday afternoons for work the next morning.¹⁹

Noteworthy is how this was financed. Carl gave the impression both before and during his trials that he and Anna ('Anetta' was only ever on the passport) were independently wealthy.²⁰ He claimed in court that Anna's father, P. V. B. Scott, was 'a Scott of New York, related to members of a large iron firm of that name in New York'; that he owned Philadelphia Powder Works when he married Anna in 1877; and that he had sold the works before embarking on their overseas trip. They arrived in Sydney, he claimed, with £2500 in gold belonging to Anna and a letter of credit for £600 on the Oriental Bank, from the American Exchange in London.²¹

In reality, little of this was true. The 1880 US Census records that 'Annie' Scott was 24 that year, single, living with her parents and working in her father P. V. B. Scott's dry goods store in Philadelphia.²² So clearly, Carl and Anna did not marry in 1877. They may have eloped to Europe, as the birth certificate of their Australian-born daughter, Viola (born in February 1884), records that Anna had given birth to a male child who had died sometime before their arrival in Sydney.²³

Only the letter of credit appears accurate, given Carl's above-mentioned dealings with the American Exchange. All else, including Anna's gold, is almost certainly fictitious. Within a few months, Carl would inveigle a group of easily persuaded, mostly Manly citizens into financing his grand scheme on only a limited outlay of his own or Anna's money.

In July 1883, for example, Andrew Duncan was appointed powder works production supervisor on a salary £300 a year until the business became fully operational, after which as sub-superintendent he was to receive £500 a year. However, Carl postponed Duncan's wages for two months then borrowed £300 from him, which was not repaid.²⁴ Many of Carl's creditors lent him money to secure their prospects once production got underway, and it appears Duncan was one of these.

In the case of an American named Franklin Kron, however, it was more a matter of picking up easy money. As New South Wales representative of A. K. Kron and Co., tanners and commission agents, Kron had conducted £50,000 worth of business in four years before he met Carl in May 1883. That July he lent Carl £500 which was paid off in a few months, but this led to bigger loans that were never repaid.²⁵ Suffice to say that Carl's *modus operandi* was exploiting ready victims for money.

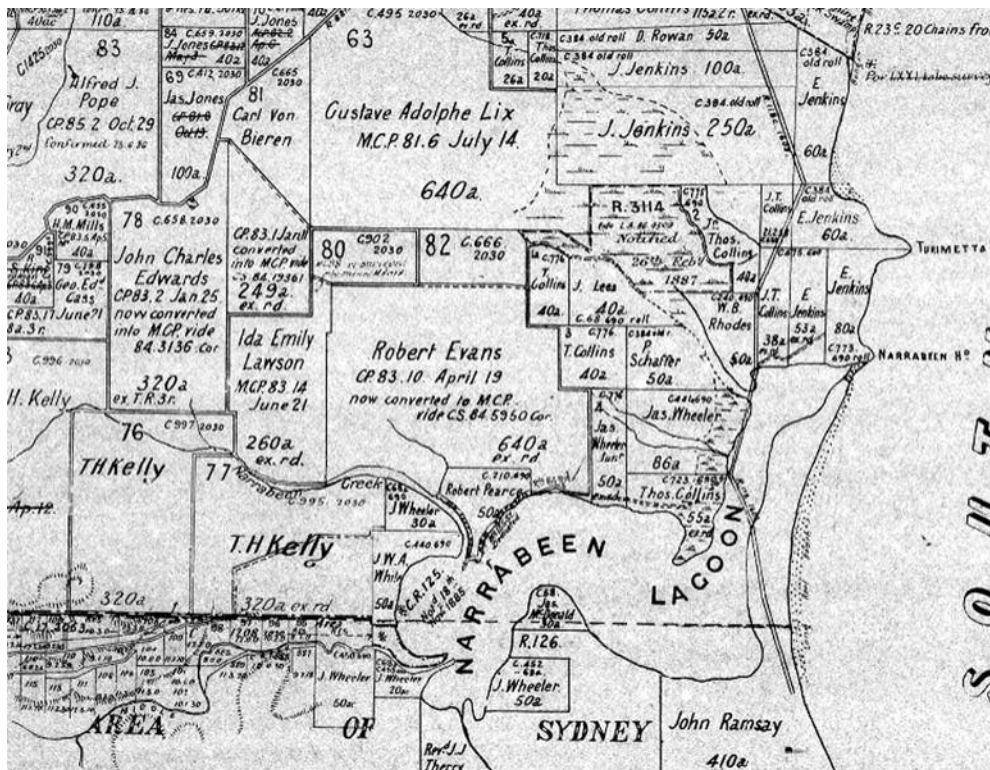
To enhance his credibility when in company of a person or group he aimed to impress, Carl would share letters supposedly from his relatives but actually written by him. For example, from 'Liverpool, England', on '19 March 1883', a cousin 'George' writes: 'Dear Cousin, Carl von Bieren, I have sent you plans of Machinery for

making "Giant Powder" by SS *Orient* and today send you expense money by Am. Ex. in Europe.' Another letter on writing paper from the 'Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, England' – clearly collected by Carl when he was there himself – has cousin 'Alf' writing: '10 Dec 1883 ... I leave tonight for London and will send you through Am. Ex. Three Thousand seven hundred dollars as soon as I get returns from N.York'.

A Manly policeman found these and other letters when Carl fled from Australia in 1885.²⁶ As their handwriting is roughly uniform and similar to Carl's, he obviously fabricated them. They were not suspected of this during his trials and not used in evidence.

Ingleside House

The Von Bieren residence, Ingleside House, was finished about the end of 1883 and occupied while work progressed on the nearby powder works. It was most directly reached 10 miles (16km) north of Manly via Pittwater Road, past Narrabeen Lagoon then north-west up a steep ascent through the properties of James Wheeler, Thomas Collins and Gustave Lix (see map). On arrival, there was a scenic view of



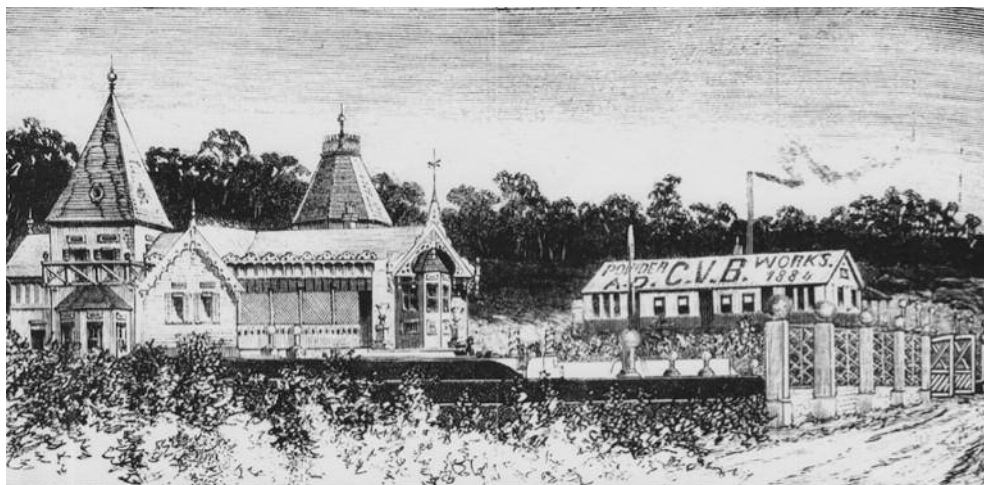
Map showing Von Bieren's 320-acre block of land north-west of Narrabeen. (Source: Parish of Narrabeen, County of Cumberland [cartographic material]: Metropolitan Land District, Eastern Division NSW, 1886; MAP G8971.G46 svar. Courtesy National Library of Australia.)

the ocean from the homestead's elevated site below Sugarloaf Hill. The main house and outbuildings – stables, tool-house and cowshed – were spread across a gently sloping block bounded by a decorative timber fence. A driveway passed through tall stone gate pillars and curved around a carved stone fountain and terraced gardens. Water came from a large reservoir on a rise behind the house.²⁷

The house itself was a large bungalow clad in American timber, with a steeply pitched red tile roof, bay windows and ornate features. It faced north and ran longways up the block, flanked by verandahs for sea breezes. The western side had a double-storey hexagonal tower containing a boudoir below, study above, and a small lookout on the peak of its roof. The house had 13 rooms, the largest long and lofty, containing a carved stone staircase to the tower's upper level. The provider of this 1884 report, travel writer Francis Myers, waxed lyrical over 'the cultured and refined humanity' evident in such a creation:

Those who roam in search of the beautiful ... will certainly halt before this chalet, as in the sight of Narrabeen Waterfall or Manly Cove. It is like an actual shrine to some deity to the flowers of the land, and quite unlike any other house in or about Sydney, or Manly, or any other Australian town. You might imagine it imported as it stands, from the Tyrol ... All this beauty M. Von Bieren designed for himself ... a marvel in the bush.²⁸

Francis Myers' unfamiliarity with the architectural style of the building was due to it being, almost certainly, the first Queen Anne Revival house in Australia (predating by two years what is thought the first example, the Fairfax home 'Caerleon' in Bellevue Hill, Sydney).²⁹ Carl would have seen and admired this style in America, where it was a popular choice of the nouveaux riche: 'The last two



*Sketch of Ingleside House, 1884 (the planned tower on the left wasn't built).
(Source: Australian Town & Country Journal, 16 August 1884, p 26.)*

decades of the nineteenth century saw Queen Anne become the most dominant residential style in the US, heavily favoured by the Victorian elite who had become wealthy from industrial growth.³⁰



*Decorative stone pillars, Ingleside House, showing a powder barrel inscribed with 'Advance Australia' and the head of German chancellor Otto von Bismarck.
(Source: E. G. Shaw photo, 1924. State Library of NSW.)*

In the front garden were various ornamental sandstone features carved by a team of German stonemasons whom Carl addressed in their own language.³¹ One large block displayed 'Ingleside House' (from Gaelic *aingeal* meaning fireplace) and on either side of the front steps were two pillars, one with Carl's initials 'CVB' above '1884 AD', another featuring a gunpowder keg with 'Advance Australia' above it. The fountain centrepiece was a carved stone eagle bearing a globe of the world on its back and a cannon ball in its talons. There was also a finely carved head of Germany's 'Iron Chancellor', Prince Otto von Bismarck (unifier of Prussian princedoms into the German Empire, 1871-1890). Here, then, was how Carl wished to portray himself to visitors: a refined industrialist of Prussian background, building a new industry to advance Australia on the world stage.

Anna, meanwhile, was nearly full term in pregnancy. Assisting her at the house were two German-speaking servants, Elizabeth Brunne, a housemaid, and her sister Theresa Maus, a cook, who were joined once the baby arrived by a nursemaid, Clara Goodwin.³² Anna gave birth on 16 February 1884 to a girl they named Viola Mabel Scott. At Manly a week later, Carl registered the birth³³ as having taken place at

‘Ingleside Powder Works, Narrabeen’ to his wife Anna Bovie Scott, aged 28 years, born at Troy, New York State, whom he married in Philadelphia, USA, in December 1877. He is recorded as a chemist, 40 years of age, born at Ithaca in New York State, USA. But most revelatory is that Carl identified himself as ‘Clinton Van Buren’. One explanation is that he risked signing his real name for the sake of Anna and the child; another (contended below) is that this too was an alias, unknown to Anna, who secretly believed she was Mrs Van Buren.

Company business

The Sydney Morning Herald gave the first detailed report about the powder works on 6 March 1884. The new venture, it was said, had government approval to manufacture all kinds of gunpowder, from fine sporting to pellet and grain, blasting powder, dynamite, nitro-glycerine and even a moisture-resistant torpedo explosive. In production it would have a workforce of 80, would be of great value to the colony in terms of exports within and beyond Australia, and in defending Australia if imported explosives from Britain were interrupted by war in Europe. Described at length were the production processes, plant and machinery, and buildings nearing completion atop and within a gully a safe distance from the proprietor’s residence. The first black powder was expected on the market in six weeks.

The report outlined Carl’s credentials for such an important undertaking and how he aimed to succeed at gunpowder production, for the first time in New South Wales, through a special treatment of Eucalypt charcoal:

For the establishment of the industry the colony will be indebted to the enterprise of an American gentleman, Mr C. Van Buren, formerly proprietor of the Philadelphia powder mills, in the anthracite coal regions in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. He spent seven years at the Heidelberg University, where he graduated as a chemist and surgeon; passed two years at the School of Mines, in Freiburg; and is a member of the Pennsylvania Scientific Society. Mr Van Buren has tested various indigenous timbers, and found ... (one of the Eucalypti) admirably adapted for making a very fine description of charcoal ... [through treating] the wood with an inexpensive chemical solution before submitting it to the charring process.

Noteworthy are references to ‘Mr C. Van Buren’. Why so, when he had told all others except the registrar recording Viola’s birth that he was Carl von Bieren? It appears he may have slipped up in giving his real name or former alias, or else ‘Von Bieren’ in his American drawl sounded like ‘Van Buren’ to the reporter. Regarding Carl’s claimed expertise, the reality is that he had never owned a ‘Philadelphia Powder Mills’ – of which there is no trace. Nor was he ever enrolled at Heidelberg University or the prestigious Freiberg Mining Academy in Saxony.³⁴ Neither did he have a special chemical means of treating Eucalypt timber (further on this below). Rather, Carl was embellishing his false identity.

By May 1884, Manly merchant Robert Evans was pressing Carl for the money owed to him: £700 for the 640 acres of land, a loan of £100, £104 owing on a store-keeping account and a credit advance of £500; a total of £1404.³⁵ Carl said he could settle the debt when his cousin George arrived from America with a large sum of money, but Evans and Sam Bailey (to whom Carl also owed money) wanted better assurance.

When it was put to Carl they jointly float a company, he had little option other than agree. Carl would continue as works superintendent on £500 a year and receive £4000 for having all of his property absorbed into company ownership. He would then use half this sum to repay his debts and pay £1000 each to Evans and Bailey to organise the float. All were winners, as the whole deal was to be financed through a Mercantile Bank overdraft, the three men becoming major shareholders of the company.³⁶

The formalities were drawn up on 7 May by Joseph Tucker, a Sydney master mariner, and Horace Robey, a Sydney merchant, covered by an insurance policy for £6000 from a New York company. A prospectus was issued at the end of May for the 'Australasian Powder and Explosives Manufacturing Co', the first draft of which read:

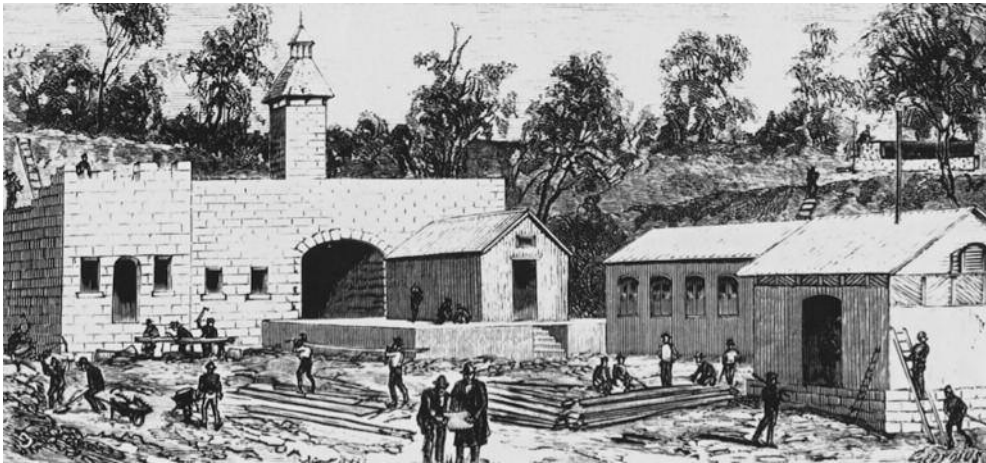
The proposed capital is £16,000 (with power to increase to £20,000), in 320 shares at £50 each; £8000 worth of shares to be issued as fully paid up shares, with £4000 cash to be handed to Mr C. Von Bieren and the remaining £4000 to be retained and placed to the credit of the company for the purpose of purchasing machinery and defraying working and other expenses.

Brokers: Bailey and Evans, Manly.³⁷

A group of mostly Manly businessmen assembled for the company's first meeting and launch of shares – in a convivial hotel setting with 'drinks on the house'. But a Manly baker named William Johnson was probably not the only person who viewed the new enterprise with caution, stating afterwards that he regarded the company as little more than 'a sharebroking, hand-me-round-the-wine, share-selling concern'.³⁸

There was no mention of making nitro-glycerine or its related explosive, dynamite. Instead, the aim was to produce blasting and gunpowder by processing a blend of charcoal, saltpetre and sulphur, for which a number of buildings were taking shape.³⁹ In the gully was a massive two-storey stone building containing spark-proof magazines for storing the powder, mixing rooms, testing room and offices. Another building was for refining saltpetre (to be imported from India) and a third, four storeys high and clad in corrugated iron, for preparing charcoal using furnace-like retorts. A fourth building was for storing and refining sulphur imported from New Zealand.

On Saturday 26 July 1884 about 100 guests were invited to a grand open day for a demonstration of the first sample of gunpowder produced.⁴⁰ First to arrive at Manly from Sydney were the Governor, Lord Augustus Loftus, Colonial Treasurer G. R. Gibbs,



Ingleside Powder Works construction site, 1884.

(Source: Australian Town & Country Journal, 16 August 1884, p 26.)

and Colonel Halkett, conveyed in the police launch *Nemesis*. Waiting to meet them were Manly resident, Attorney General William Dalley, with a large group who arrived on the ferry, *Fairlight*. All then left Manly in horse-drawn carriages at around 11am, but took more than three hours to reach Ingleside due to drenching winter rain.

On arrival, lunch was served in the men's dining hall, a long building with 'CVB Powderworks, AD 1884' painted in large letters on its roof. The guests included Royal Artillery Commander Colonel Roberts, Manly Mayor Charles Hayes, several Manly councillors, sundry businessmen and two doctors. In a witty speech, Governor Loftus remarked that if it was desirable to put a powder works 'in an unapproachable place (laughter), then ... we have come to the best possible situation (great applause and laughter)'. In conclusion, he applauded the founding of an industry of such importance to Australia and invited all to join him in drinking the 'Health of Mr von Bieren and Company, wishing them every success in this laudable and patriotic industry'. The Governor then departed, apologising that he could not stay for the gunpowder test.

After more toasts to 'the Queen, the Governor, the Ministry, Colonial Industries, the visitors, the press, the ladies, and lastly the chairman [Von Bieren]', the whole party descended into the gully for the demonstration. Most had reached the test site, others still coming, when the ground suddenly shook from three massive explosions followed by an earthquake-like rumble, as a long crevice opened up in the gully rock-face. Two workmen nearest the crevice fell about 15ft into it and were knocked unconscious from falling rock; other workers nearby, including quarry foreman James Mackie, were flattened but not injured. Fortunately, the two doctors who were present as guests gave the worst injured immediate attention: James Daly with scalp wounds and a fractured jaw, Henry Cox, with severe concussion and shock.

It was quickly realised that too much blasting powder had been used, displacing 3000 tons of rock and uprooting large trees nearby. The accident would have been far worse had the explosion not moved sideways, opening up a crevice rather than hurling more broken rock into the air, which would have caused numerous injuries, if not deaths. Impressed, if somewhat shaken, the guests returned in their carriages to Manly, arriving about 6pm.

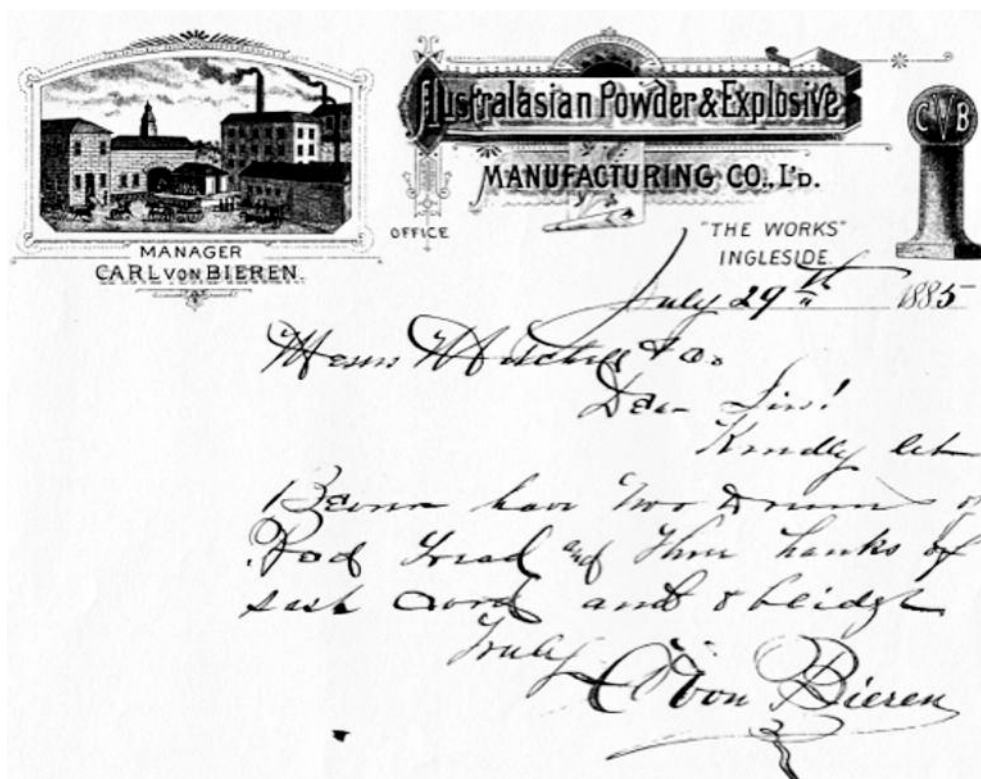
All invited to the demonstration believed the gunpowder had been produced on site. Colonel Roberts, for example, informed the gathering that on his initial examination Carl's 'hand-made sample ... would hold its own with any ever imported'. He added that he was impressed to learn from Mr Von Bieren that his 'secret chemical process [made] the powder so much quicker'. In reality – as Senior Constable George Murphy of Manly police would later uncover – Carl had secretly bought a 50 lb keg of blasting powder from Felton's Ironmonger in Sydney:

Von Buren [sic] sent a man named Hawkins [Carl's secretary] from Narrabeen for a case of what he said contained dangerous chemicals. Hawkins conveyed the case to the Powder Works and ... placed it in the room where Von Bieren was supposed to make gunpowder. A few days later he was asked by Mr Nock [Felton's manager] if Von Bieren had received the case containing the Powder. Hawkins then knew that the case said by Von Bieren to contain chemicals contained Gun Powder ... the holes for the charge were drilled and the powder put into them by a man named James Mackie, who states he knew it was a Swindle from the first.⁴¹

For the present, suspicion about Carl's capacity to produce gunpowder was limited to a few workers. Encouraged by the demonstration, the company launched a second float in September 1884: 16,000 £1 shares offered in expectation the company would return a net profit of £35,000 in the first eight months' production.⁴² By this time, £18,000 had been spent on property and plant, including Ingleside House, and £4000 (Carl said) was needed to finish the works. There was general confidence that production would begin in a matter of months.⁴³

Time to leave the country

Carl was already secretly organising their return to America. In June 1885, he discreetly obtained a £65 loan from company director Robert Prendergast explaining he was temporarily in debt and needed the money to send Anna to New York for funds from America. Prendergast agreed not to mention the loan to anyone.⁴⁴ In actual fact, Anna was four months pregnant and Carl had decided their best course was that she should slip quietly away with their infant Viola, followed by himself shortly afterwards. To support her, he bought a return passage for their nursemaid Clara Goodwin as far as San Francisco, and from there Anna and child continued by train to her parents' home in Philadelphia. Her second daughter, registered 'Elsie Boyer Van Buren', was born at 420 Wyoming St, Philadelphia, on 27 November 1885.⁴⁵



*Ingleside Powder Works order, 1885. (Source: MHNSW-StAC: NRS-880, Clerk of the Peace, Papers and Depositions, Supreme Court Sydney and on Circuit, 1824-1946. [9/6747]
R vs Carl von Bieren, Central Criminal Court, 1887.)*

In July 1885, the Australasian Powder and Explosives Company held a brief and rather subdued annual meeting in the company's offices at 90 Pitt Street, Sydney. Alderman John Taylor presiding, an annual report and financial statement were adopted, together with an undertaking that the company would have its first powder on the market in six weeks. With this assurance, the meeting was considered 'very satisfactory', closing with the usual vote of thanks to the chairman and directors. As there was no mention of a progress report from Carl, he was either absent or chose not to address the meeting.⁴⁶

September 1885 saw a convergence of pressures on Carl and the company. Every company director had put in £250 for the second float and all were collectively responsible for an £8000 mortgage from the Mercantile Bank. As Carl would later relate, two directors approached him fearing imminent insolvency: 'Things are looking blue, and we have no money; we are bankrupted; we cannot sell the 8000 shares, and the company must go up King-Street [bankruptcy] ... you are the only one who can recompense us; now, if you refuse to do this, the whole thing must go insolvent.'⁴⁷

A second problem, known to only a few including Carl, was that the works had just failed an official inspection by ordnance officer Julian Blanchard. Due to defective building and safety standards, no government licence would be issued without a major re-build.⁴⁸ A third, insurmountable problem was that Carl had guaranteed his principal creditors' trustee, Edmund Shaw, that powder production would begin on or before 4 September.⁴⁹

Carl had already arranged his departure, financed by duping company director James Tedd into secretly founding a partnered venture, 'Broken Bay Charcoal Company'. Tedd bought a site for its factory at Bayview, settled there himself and gave Carl a cheque for £780 to purchase retorts from California. In requesting the money, Carl had said he was temporarily impecunious but would recover financially when Anna returned from America with £15,000 from their wealthy family connections. Carl banked the cheque then withdrew the money in gold to pay for his passage and settlement in America.⁵⁰

In October 1885 Carl packed a few belongings at Ingleside House, burnt a pile of documents in his study fireplace late into the night, and departed the next day for Melbourne. Several telegrams explained to Tedd and others that he was purchasing sulphur for the powder works and would be back in a few days. Instead, he took passage on the first available ship leaving Australia, the *Loch Vennacher*, bound for London via South America on 13 October. For identification, he used a teaching certificate and discharge papers from the US Marine Service for Clinton Hiram Walbridge, an American citizen.⁵¹

As Carl was the only first-class saloon passenger, he regularly dined with the ship's captain, William Bennett. As usual, Carl cultivated their acquaintance to his personal advantage, as Bennett would later relate in evidence:

[He said] he was the nephew of General Hancock of the U.S. Army, that he had been in the service, and showed me his discharge in the name of Walbridge ... He told me he was going home to buy woollen machinery for his woollen mills near Brisbane ... [and to] Germany for the machinery ... He one day offered me the situation of manager of his Northern Mills at Brisbane at a salary of £600 a year ... [From] all I was told about woollen factories I could write half the day about that Queensland one, for I thought I was going to get a good situation ashore.⁵²

The long arm of the law

When Carl did not return to Sydney as expected, the company chairman, John Taylor, informed Manly police station, whereupon the officer in charge, Senior Constable Edward George Murphy, took up the case. Following Carl's trail in Melbourne, it was found that he had left for London using the alias C. H. Walbridge. To follow a suspect at sea, Murphy obtained a warrant from Sydney Water Police and by mid October, he was in pursuit aboard a mail steamer, RMS *Ballarat*,

planning to reach London ahead of the sailing ship *Loch Vennacher*. He also grew a thick beard to make it less likely Carl would recognise him from their occasional contact in Manly.⁵³

As *Loch Vennacher* rounded Cape Horn, Carl surprised Bennett by asking if he could disembark at Rio de Janeiro, but was told it was not a scheduled port of call. He then offered Bennett £25 to be transferred to another vessel, but none were sighted. A few weeks later they reached the mouth of the Thames, where the ship hove to in stormy weather, waiting for better conditions before sailing on to London. Carl pressed Bennett to be put ashore without delay, offering £5 to be transferred to a tugboat, but the seas were too rough for one to come alongside. This happened on the evening of 5 January 1886. Ashore at Margate the same night, Murphy was arranging to be transferred by pilot ship to *Loch Vennacher* – he had reached England only two days earlier.⁵⁴

Informed that Carl's ship was riding out a storm off Margate, Murphy knew exactly how to proceed. He happened to have been born and raised at Margate where his father was a mariner in the coastguard service,⁵⁵ and decided to use the bad weather and cover of darkness as elements of surprise. Accompanied by a police superintendent from Margate, he boarded *Loch Vennacher* late at night and asked to be taken to the captain. Bennett's account (from Carl's trial) vividly depicts the arrest:

The police came aboard about 1 o'clock in the morning; it was a very rash thing to do in such weather; the constable said the accused was a scoundrel and that Mr Taylor had told him to bring the — — back, dead or alive. The constable asked him if the accused had any firearms, and witness said he had a revolver; the constable told him to call the accused at 6 o'clock in the morning; witness did so, and as [Carl] was drinking a cup of coffee, the constable, who was in a recess with the superintendent, put his arm against the accused's neck, and his knee in his stomach; the constable said: 'Where's the revolver?' and the accused said it was in his portmanteau; he added 'Who are you?' and the constable said, 'Do you not know me?' and told him he arrested him, the accused said, 'Well, I never expected this.' The constable then counted the money in his possession, and the accused said he wished Tedd to get it.⁵⁶

Murphy reported that when he identified himself as a Manly policeman, Carl called out in shock 'Good God!' then thrust up his hands, whereupon Murphy said 'Keep them up. I want your revolver.' He then searched the cabin, discovered £739 in gold, another £23 on the prisoner, a gold watch, chain and pin, the Walbridge identity items, some cheque books, and his clothing in a Gladstone bag.⁵⁷ Carl was escorted to London's Bow Street police court, charged with insolvency and remanded to Sydney on 14 January 1886. On arrival, he was held in custody until the first hearing of his case in the Water Police Court on 12 March, charged with fraudulent bankruptcy.⁵⁸

Carl was tried four times before being convicted and sent to prison. The Water

Police Court magistrate dismissed a weak case against him on grounds that the relatively small amount he had misappropriated from the company could be repaid. Then a second civil case on a charge of insolvency became overtaken by two much longer criminal trials. After the first of these, on a charge of fraudulent insolvency (Justice Faucett presiding), ended with a hung jury, Carl was re-tried on the same charge at Central Criminal Court (Justice Innes presiding) in September 1886.

Carl's 'Van Buren' identity came to light during the first criminal trial when the American consul, Gilroy Griffin, as a witness for Carl's good character, said that he had got to know him in Sydney and believed him honest, adding that he knew the New York Van Burens to whom Carl was related. When Justice Faucett queried, 'That is not his name,' the consul explained that this family 'of the largest means in America' had two branches, Van Burens and von Bieren, and that from Carl's appearance he had 'no doubt he was one of them'. Clearly, the consul had been approached to support Carl as an innocent, falsely accused American, related to some powerfully placed Van Burens (Martin Van Buren was American president 1837-41). Cross-examined, he said that he knew New York was a Dutch settlement, but wasn't aware that 'Van' was a Dutch prefix to a surname whereas 'von' was German.⁵⁹

Another alias that needed explaining was the 'Clinton H. Walbridge' identity Carl used when he fled by ship from Melbourne. The implausible defence was that Carl had used three of his given names to avoid arrest before collecting funds in America to repay his debts.

Even more implausibly, a defence witness named Charles Clapp said he had known Carl since boyhood and had seen his name in a family bible in Van Buren Manor, on the corner of 5th Avenue and 46th Street, inscribed 'Carl Clinton Hiram Walbridge von Bieren'.⁶⁰ Clearly, Clapp had been induced to commit perjury. *Historic Bibles of America* (1905) has no listing of a Van Buren family bible⁶¹ and the notion of such a bible having a Von Bieren entry is ridiculous. Clearly, Carl had stolen the identity of a seaman named Clinton H. Walbridge. Also, found in Carl's possession by Constable Murphy was some blank writing paper headed 'Van Buren Manor, 5th Avenue, New York' – hence the precise address given by Clapp.

Murphy always held strong suspicions that Carl was an imposter. It was Murphy who discovered that Carl had signed 'Clinton Van Buren' on his daughter's birth certificate, had faked a demonstration at the powder works' official opening using blasting powder bought secretly in Sydney, and that his special chemical liquid for soaking charcoal at the powder works was diluted Indian ink.⁶²

The continual borrowing Carl had used to support Anna and himself for nearly two years at Ingleside was comprehensively exposed in court. However Justice Innes, in his final summing up, counselled the jury that although the evidence of fraud was compelling he did not believe Von Bieren an imposter, adding that he saw no reason to doubt that Carl was a member of the Van Buren family and could

understand his using shortened forms of 'Carl Clinton Hiram Walbridge von Bieren', because 'When a man was handicapped in life with such a name, not through any fault of his own, but by the action of his godfather or godmother, could he be blamed if he dropped some of it?'⁶³

88. 34
No. 3699 Name Carl C. H. W. Von Bieren 167

Date when Portrait was taken, 15-3-1886
8971. 86

Native place America
Year of birth 1844
Arrived in Ship Oregon
Colony Year
Trade or occupation previous to conviction Manufacturing Chemist
Religion Catholic
Education, degree of None
Height 5 feet 10 1/2 inches
Weight { On committal 174
in lbs. { On discharge
Colour of hair Brown
Colour of eyes
Marks or special features:—

Where and when tried Sydney G.D.
Offence Insolvency
Sentence 2 years & 10 mos. Imprisonment
Remarks:— Goodman Gaol
Strongly recommended to mercy

(No. of previous Portrait)

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS.

Where and When.	Offence.	Sentence.
	<u>Nil</u>	




Prison registration record for 'Carl C. H. W. von Bieren', March 1886 (Source: MHNSW-StAC: NRS-2138, Darlinghurst Gaol Photograph Description Book [19/9835] p 167 No 3699) and Von Bieren during his last trial, sketched by Justice Innes. (Source: Justice Innes's Bench Book, MHNSW-StAC: NRS-6223, Notebooks, Criminal Causes, Justice J. G. L. Innes, [2/4548].)

So guided, the jury found the Carl guilty as charged of fraudulent insolvency, with a strong recommendation for mercy. He was sentenced to two years hard labour, but on appeal that he had 'never done hard work' Innes increased it by ten months without hard labour. A request that friends be allowed to bring Carl meals in prison 'as he suffers greatly from indigestion' was denied.⁶⁴ He was sent to Darlinghurst Prison, then Goulburn Prison for the rest of his sentence. Released on 20 September 1888, he left Sydney by ship, eventually reaching Havana, Cuba, where he took passage on the American steamship *City of Atlanta*, arriving at New York on 31 January 1889.⁶⁵

Concluding perspective

During Carl's first trial, Manly citizens organised a presentation evening in honour of Constable Murphy's worthy service. The mayor presiding and most aldermen in attendance, Murphy was praised for the 'upright and manly conduct' he had always displayed in Manly. The mayor added that while instances of police work should not be singled out, the gold watch and chain presented to him paid special tribute to a notable case being brought to a conclusion. The watch was inscribed, 'Presented to Senior Constable Edward G. Murphy by residents of Manly in recognition of the efficient and praise-worthy manner in which he performs his duty on land and sea, March 1886.'⁶⁶

Apart from one rumour heard in Narrabeen many years later – that Carl had been seen running a San Francisco boarding house for sailors⁶⁷ – no one in America can be positively identified as Carl after he landed at New York in 1889. However it is clear he never re-joined Anna and her daughters in Philadelphia. Viola and Elsie, single throughout life, had no children; and the three women are buried side by side, surname Van Buren, in Mt Peace Cemetery, Philadelphia.⁶⁸

International swindlers were not uncommon in the later 1800s. For example, Carl von Bieren closely resembled another imposter, 'Count Ignaz von Attems', who arrived in Sydney in 1868. Using forged introductions and bogus credit notes from the Anglo-Austrian Bank, 'Attems' defrauded numerous victims in Sydney and Brisbane before escaping to Java, where Dutch police eventually arrested him. Unlike Carl he made a full confession, admitting he was Curt Oswald Schmalz, born in Saxony in 1843. He had trained in a commercial academy in Trieste, become a captain in the American Civil War and made a career of deceiving banks and gentry around the world, using various, mainly Austrian, identities.⁶⁹

Curt Schmalz and Carl are strikingly similar: both well educated, at ease in upper-class society, astute with international banking, masters of forged documents and identities. And since Carl spoke fluent German and had a bust of Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck at Ingleside House, they appear to have shared a central European ethnicity. But though about the same age, it is inconceivable they

were the same man. Schmalz's many victims in Sydney would never have forgotten his face.

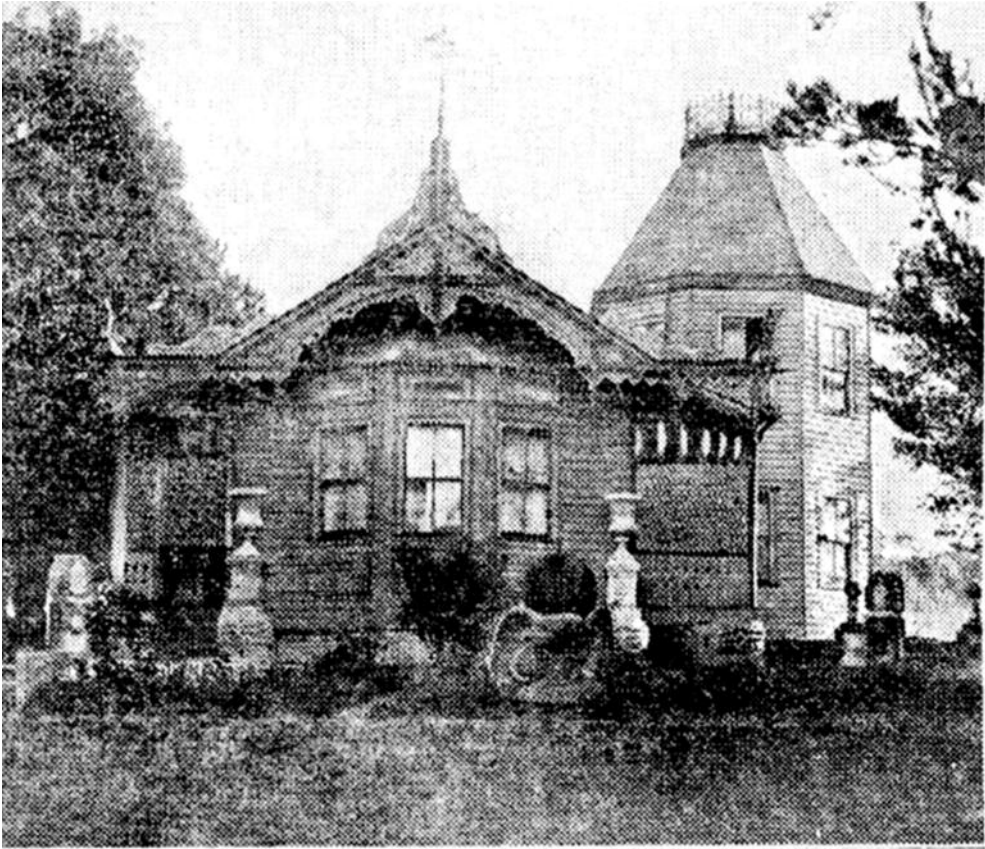
Thus the real 'Carl von Bieren' can be at least partly identified as a masterly 19th century confidence man: 'Not a thief in the traditional sense, he seduced his prey with silky words and fantastical promises until his victims willingly gave him their trust, their money and quite literally their confidence.'⁷⁰ That he never re-joined Anna and their daughters suggests that they, too, may never have known who he really was. When sentenced, Carl responded: 'I thank your Honour for the kind manner in which you have dealt with me.'⁷¹ Doubtless he was relieved that his real *modus operandi* had not been uncovered, with a new identity he could always embark afresh on another swindle, far away from Australia.

To have succeeded with such a remarkable web of deceit, Carl was almost certainly a serial offender, demonstrating consummate skill in duping so many Sydney victims. When ordnance officer Julian Blanchard was asked in court why much of the works would have to be re-built before a licence to produce explosives could be granted, he replied: 'His [Von Bieren's] knowledge of gunpowder works was derived from reading.'⁷²

Throughout Australia, post-1850s gold rushes wealth and booming population growth strongly stimulated manufacturing and construction, railways especially,



Ingleside Powder Works in ruins, 1924. (Source: E. G. Shaw photo. State Library of NSW.)



"The Manor," of which only a few pillars and foundations are left. Here "Baron" von Bieren lived.

Ingleside House in a derelict state, photo c.1919: 'The Manor, of which only a few pillars and foundations are left. Here "Baron" von Bieren lived.' (Source: *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 1927.)

creating an increased demand for explosives. This undoubtedly sparked both investor enthusiasm and government support for a pioneering venture of the kind Von Bieren proposed. Hence the timing of his unique deceit and the vulnerability of those he deceived were coincidentally optimal.

Gunpowder production actually began in the 1870s in Victoria, where seven factories were operating by 1884-85. However five in the Bendigo/Sandhurst district were closed by 1900 as blasting powder became superseded by superior dynamite and gelignite. Until World War II, the only manufacturers of commercial and military explosives in Australia were those at Deer Park and Maribyrnong, in outer Melbourne⁷³.

The Australasian Powder & Explosives Manufacturing Co at Ingleside went into receivership in 1888 and the works site was sold a year later. A sample of the explosive cellenite was successfully tested at the old works in 1900, along with

another explosive derived from grass-tree resin, but the experiments did not progress to a viable business. Ingleside House gradually became dilapidated and was mostly demolished for its timber in 1919. A subdivision called Ingleside Heights Estate was drawn up for sale in 1927.⁷⁴ Hearing this news, the RAHS and MWPHS organised their excursion to the old powder works site later that year – curious to learn about its strange history.

Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society

Notes

- 1 *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 21 September 1886, p 6.
- 2 *Daily Telegraph* (hereafter *DT*), 4 April 1924, taken from the Cale collection of original cuttings at Ingleside House, courtesy Kate and Richard Cale on visiting the House in 2007.
- 3 *SMH*, 15 August 1927, p 8.
- 4 Shelagh and George Champion, 'Narrabeen Powder Works', unpublished monograph [2007], revised 2012, Introduction.
- 5 US Passport Applications 1795-1925, www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/, accessed 16 March 2007.
- 6 *SMH*, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 7 'A Brief History of the United States Passport', <https://blog.library-in.gov/a-brief-history-of-the-united-states-passport/>, accessed 28 February 2023.
- 8 Museums of History NSW State Archives Collection (hereafter MHNSW StAC): NRS-880 Papers and depositions, Supreme Court, Sydney and on circuit, 1824-1946, [9/6747], R v Carl von Bieren, April-November 1887; Gillig to Von Bieren, 13 October 1882, 'Von Bieren Case', NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 9 MHNSW StAC: Gillig letter, attachment, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 10 MHNSW StAC: Gillig letter, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 11 *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 9 December 1882, p 37.
- 12 MHNSW StAC: NRS-13278, Inward passenger lists, 1854-1922, *Orient*, arrived 7 December 1882, [X158] Reel 452.
- 13 John Ruffles, 'Von Bieren – stage set for ruin', *Manly Daily*, 1 July 1972, Local Studies Collection, Manly Library. Ruffles intended writing a book on espionage in Australia.
- 14 *SMH*, 6 March 1884, p 3, 3 June 1886, p 4, 15 September 1886, p 6.
- 15 C. J. King, 'Closer settlement in NSW, Part 1: The sequence of the land laws 1788-1956', reprint from *Review of Marketing and Agricultural Economics*, September-December 1957, p 80.
- 16 NSW Land Registry Services General Register of Deeds, Book 295, number 793, Book 301, number 462, available on Historical Lands Records Viewer, <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>, references courtesy of Shelagh and George Champion, 2007; *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.
- 17 *SMH*, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 18 *SMH*, 6 March 1884, p 3.
- 19 Samuel Morrison, 'Early Pittwater Reminiscences', *Manly Warringah Journal of Local History*, April 1990, p 8.
- 20 *SMH*, 6 March 1884, p 3, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 21 *SMH*, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 22 1880 United States Federal Census, www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/, accessed 16 March 2007.
- 23 New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (hereafter NSW BDM), Birth registration 11890/1884 Viola M. S. Van Buren.
- 24 *SMH*, 8 June 1886, p 4.

- 25 *SMH*, 8 June 1886, p 4.
- 26 MHNSW StAC: For original letters, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 27 The partly demolished house was rebuilt differently in 1938.
- 28 *A Traveller's Tale: from Manly to Pittwater* (facsimile text of *Beautiful Manly* by Francis Myers, 1885), View Productions, Sydney, 1984, p 50.
- 29 New World Queen Anne Revival architecture, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_Queen_Anne_Revival_architecture, accessed 9 March 2023.
- 30 Architectural Styles of America and Europe, <https://architecturestyles.org/queen-anne/>, accessed 9 March 2023.
- 31 *DT*, 4 April 1924, 13 July 1927, taken from Cale collection.
- 32 MHNSW StAC: Brunne and Maus, police statements, NRS-880, [9/6747]; *SMH*, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 33 NSW BDM, Birth certificate 11890/1884 Viola M. S. Van Buren.
- 34 Heidelberg University to author, 30 October 2009; Freiberg Mining Academy to author, 3 April 2007 – after enrolment searches for 'Carl von Bieren' and 'Clinton Van Buren'.
- 35 *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.
- 36 Bailey to *SMH*, 3 June 1886, p 4.
- 37 MHNSW StAC: 'Aust Powder Co', NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 38 *SMH*, 3 June 1886, p 4.
- 39 *Evening News*, 28 July 1885, p 5.
- 40 For following account: *DT*, 28 July 1884, p 5; *Evening News*, 28 July p 8; MHNSW StAC: Roberts quote, second prospectus, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 41 MHNSW StAC: 'Sen Const Murphy's Report, Police Station Manly', 10 August 1886, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 42 MHNSW StAC: Second prospectus, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 43 *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.
- 44 *SMH*, 1 June 1886, pp 3-4.
- 45 *SMH*, 15 September 1886, p 6; Birth registers, 1860-1903, for the city of Philadelphia, Film 1289324, courtesy L. D. S. Church, (available online from FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/151270>).
- 46 *DT*, 31 July 1885, p 2.
- 47 *SMH*, 2 June 1886, p 6.
- 48 *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.
- 49 MHNSW StAC: Von Bieren to Shaw, 21 July 1885, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 50 MHNSW StAC: Tedd's deposition, 16 November 1885, NRS-880, [9/6747]; Commercial Bank of Australia transaction, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 51 MHNSW StAC: Police reports, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 52 MHNSW StAC: Bennett's statement, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 53 MHNSW StAC: 'Von Bieren Case, Serg Murphy's Statement', 6 March 1886, NRS-880, [9/6747] (Murphy's statement, NRS-880, [9/6747]).
- 54 MHNSW StAC: Murphy's statement, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 55 NSW BDM, Death certificate 92/1910, Edward George Murphy, 23 January 1910.
- 56 *SMH*, 14 September 1886, p 4.
- 57 MHNSW StAC: Murphy's statement, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 58 MHNSW StAC: Murphy's statement, NRS-880, [9/6747]; *SMH*, 13 March 1886, p 11.
- 59 *SMH*, 3 June 1886, p 4.
- 60 *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.

- 61 Jean Dixon, *The Riddle of Powderworks Road*, Wentworth, Sydney, 1980, Foreword.
- 62 MHNSW StAC: 'Sen Const Murphy's Report', 10 August 1886, NRS-880, [9/6747].
- 63 *SMH*, 18 September 1886, p 10.
- 64 *SMH*, 21 September 1886, p 7.
- 65 Ancestry.com New York, USA, Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists 1820-1957, www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/, accessed 16 March 2007.
- 66 *North Shore Times & Manly Press*, 15 May 1886, cited in Champion, 'Narrabeen Powder Works', part 2, p 4.
- 67 *Manly Daily*, 2 May 1925, Local Studies Collection, Manly Library.
- 68 United States Federal Censuses, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/, accessed 28 May 2015; Pennsylvania Death Certificates, 1906-1969, www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/, accessed 28 May 2015; Mount Peace Cemetery records, Janie Sotoloff to author, 26 September 2018.
- 69 *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 10 January 1871, p 4.
- 70 Mimi Matthews, 'The 19th Century Confidence Man', <https://www.mimimatthews.com/2016/06/20/the-19th-century-confidence-man/>, accessed 20 June 2016.
- 71 *SMH*, 21 September 1886, p 7.
- 72 *SMH*, 16 September 1886, p 7.
- 73 *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 12 March 1887, p 10; John Kelly, *Coal, Gold and Explosives: Joseph Thompson Arblaster and his Powder Works*, Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies, Bendigo, 2015; Albion Explosives Factory, <https://www.livingmuseum.org.au/black%20powder%20mill/AEF%20history%20and%20developmen.html>, accessed 14 April 2023.
- 74 'Narrabeen Powder Works,' Part 4.

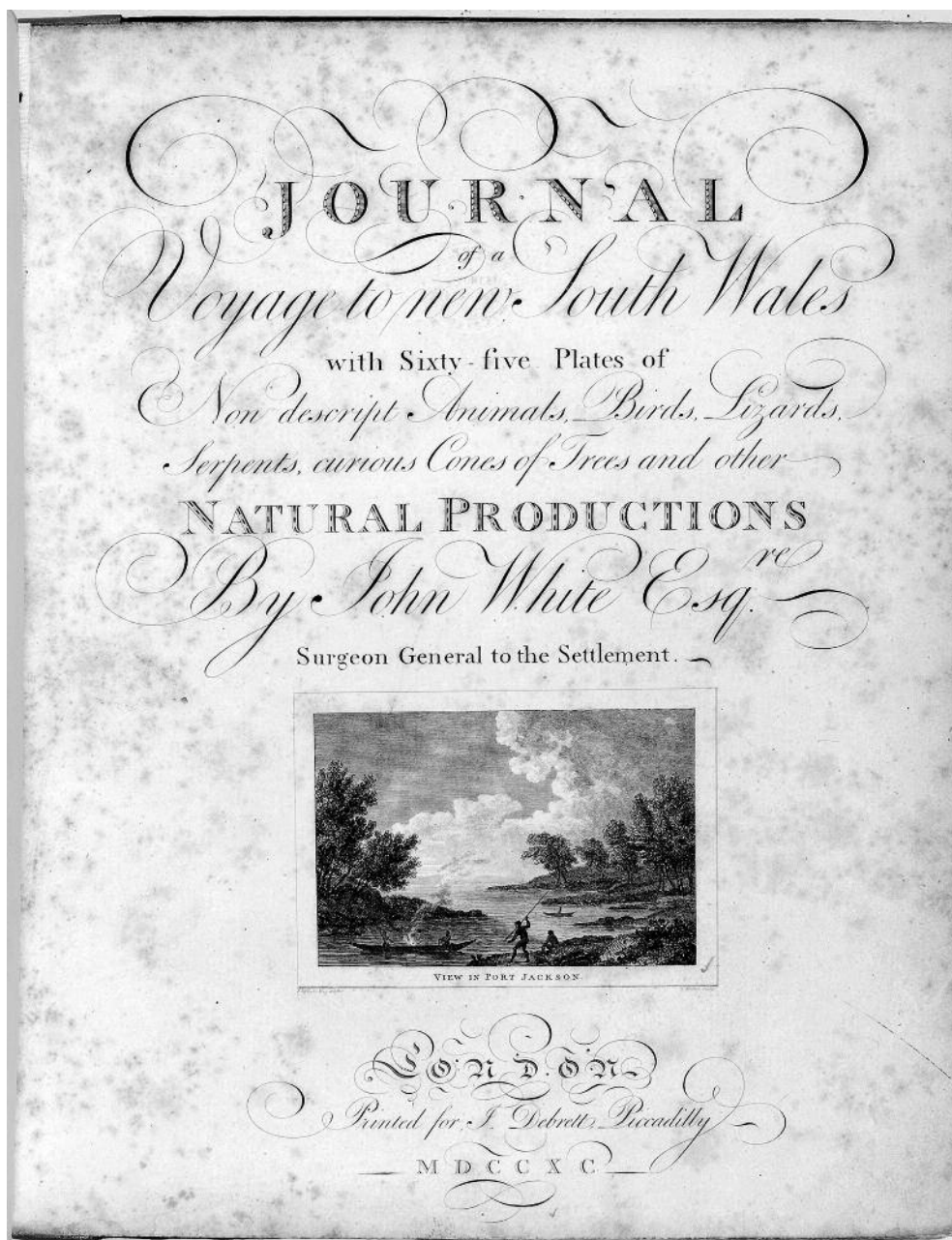
Thomas Wilson Esq and the natural history collections of First Fleet Surgeon John White

MATTHEW FISHBURN

One of the key figures of the First Fleet was the Irish-born surgeon John White (c.1756-1832). White had joined the Royal Navy as a surgeon's mate in June 1778, serving in the West Indies and India until, in late 1786, he was appointed Surgeon General of the expedition to establish the convict settlement at Botany Bay. Sailing on the convict transport *Charlotte*, White contributed greatly to the general health of the entire fleet and was directly responsible for establishing the hospital built on the western shore of Warrane (Sydney Cove) soon after their arrival. In private, he was a robust critic of the whole project but would remain in the Colony of New South Wales until December 1794, a stint of almost seven years of unrelenting work and great privations, especially after the arrival of the grim Second Fleet with its frightening mortality rates. After his return to England he was always reluctant to return to New South Wales. In August 1796, faced with the alternative of doing so immediately or of relinquishing his appointment, he chose to resign.¹

White is now best known as the author of one of the most substantial and far-reaching accounts of the First Fleet, recounting his voyage to Botany Bay and the first 10 months of the settlement. The book was based on a substantial manuscript White had sent to his friend and patron Thomas Wilson Esq, together with a great parcel of natural history specimens including everything from rainbow lorikeets to spiders, all of which arrived in London sometime in early June of 1789. Within the month, the publisher Debrett's of Piccadilly began advertising for subscribers to a work based on this material, ultimately published in January 1790 as the *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*.

Significantly, the book opens with a dedication to Wilson, which explicitly states that 'the following Journal was undertaken at your Request ... to afford you some Amusement during your Hours of Relaxation'.² Wilson, that is, had explicitly encouraged White to collect on his behalf, presumably with more than half an eye on publishing. The most senior of the medical staff, a careful observer and keenly interested in the local birds and animals, White was well placed for such a task.



Title page of surgeon John White's *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, Debrett, 1790.
(The Alfred Lee copy, State Library of New South Wales. MRB/Q991/2A2. SLNSW online
catalogue, accessed 28 April 2023;
<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKJ3NqBBQd/b06QWAvqe4v78>.)

Especially in its deluxe hand-coloured form, White's beautifully produced quarto is of great significance for its suite of natural history plates prepared by a studio led by Sarah Stone, an artist highly regarded for her skill in depicting exotic birds. Underlining the book's scientific credentials, White's journal is supplemented by a long appendix on natural history which runs to almost a third of the text, written by three of the major figures of the day: John Hunter FRS (mammals), Sir James Edward Smith PLS (botany) and George Shaw FRS (fish).

Publication of the book did cement White's position as an authority on New South Wales, although his private pessimism about the settlement alienated pro-government figures, not least Sir Joseph Banks, who personally took a transcript of one of White's letters from this period and retained it in his papers, noting austere in the margins that 'it would not be prudent to rely wholly upon what this gentleman has advanced'.³



Portrait of John White, Esq, Surgeon General of New South Wales, miniature by the convict artist Thomas Watling (1762-c.1814), Australian unframed oil on ivory signed and dated NSWales 1792. (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

Despite publishing a private journal, few details about White were known until the relatively recent biographical essays of E. Charles Nelson and the subsequent rediscovery of the only known portrait, a miniature by the convict artist Thomas Watling, now held in the National Museum of Australia (NMA).⁴ None of White's original manuscript journals have been discovered, the disappearance of the 'large rude Manuscript' he lent to Aylmer Bourke Lambert as late as 1797 being particularly lamented.⁵

These gaps in the record have been exacerbated by the fact that his friend, patron and editor Wilson has been an even more unknown quantity. A typical note on his involvement is that of Rex Rienits as long ago as 1962, who called him a 'little-known Londoner, a minor naturalist who was friendly with White' who 'volunteered to prepare the material for publication.'⁶ However, it is clear that Wilson's involvement was far more substantial, and that unravelling the details of his life shows him to have been one of the most important supporters of the study of Australian natural history, at the centre of a more commercially minded group that included key figures in the new Linnean Society and that existed alongside, and often in overt competition with, the better-known network of Banks.

Wilson was in fact a wealthy apothecary, not only a patron of White but an important supporter of Matthew Flinders, as well as being tangentially connected to two other surgeons associated with New South Wales, John Lowes and George Bass. A better understanding of Wilson's role also provides a significant insight into the ongoing work on the pictorial history of the First Fleet, especially the thorny and convoluted history of White's collections and the artists he employed, as discussed in the work of Smith & Wheeler, Lennon, Neville and especially Anemaat, each of whom mention Wilson's role in passing.⁷

The networks of John White

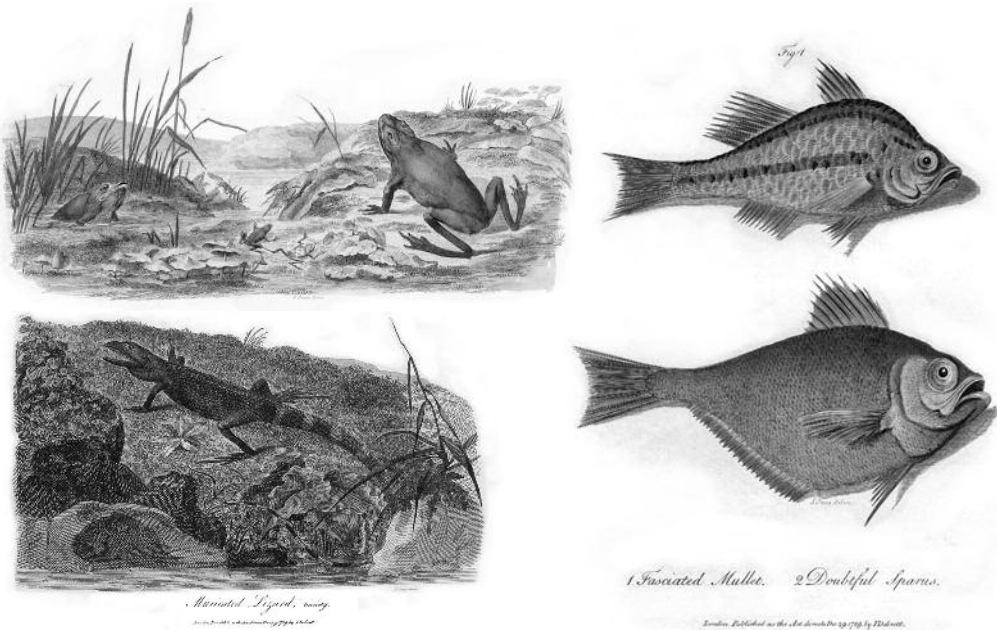
The White collection arrived in England on board one of the two returning ships that docked mid-1789, either the *Fishburn* (arrived 25 May) or the *Golden Grove* (9 June), a good two months after the scramble to print the very first authentic news of Botany Bay in late March and early April. As Nelson has shown, within the month the journal together with a selection of timber, plants and 'several specimens of birds' was the subject of a public lecture at the Society for the Promotion of Natural History (SPNH) on 6 July 1789.⁸

The society was founded in the autumn of 1782 for people with an interest in curious and rare specimens by William Forsyth, the chief gardener for the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries' Garden in Chelsea. They met on the first Monday after the full moon, usually at Leicester House, extremely convenient for one of their more active members, John Hunter frs, who lived just across the square.⁹ Wilson had been an active member since 1785 as White must have known, given

that the dedication of his book includes the line that he hopes ‘that the Specimens of Natural History may tend to the Promotion of your favourite Science’, doubtless a knowing play on words.¹⁰

White’s journal also came to the attention of the publisher John Debrett, who had already had a small triumph by rushing into print the earliest serious book on the new settlement, Watkin Tench’s *Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*.¹¹ The success of Tench’s small book must have whetted Debrett’s appetite for the subject, not least because he was known for his intense rivalry with his old colleague John Stockdale, whose premises three doors down Piccadilly were frequented by the pro-government faction. Stockdale had been a de facto promoter of the settlement in New South Wales since 1786 and by mid-1789 was already advertising for subscribers to a richly illustrated quarto, *Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, which was finally published on 3 December 1789.¹²

Debrett, always keen to steal a march on his rival, clearly thought there was room in the market for a second grand quarto, based on White’s collections and consequently with a particular emphasis on natural history, especially the glorious Australian birds. Not only did he base his particularly clever advertising campaign



Natural history plates prepared by a studio led by Sarah Stone, an artist highly regarded for her skill: ‘Blue frogs pyriformis’, ‘Muricated Lizard, variety’ and ‘1 Fascinated Mullet. 2 Doubtful Sparus.’ (White, John; Stone, Sarah; Fort, G. Y; Badgery, H. S; Pitcairn, Daniel and Pitcairn, Elizabeth, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales: with sixty-five plates of non descript animals, birds, lizards, serpents, curious cones of trees and other natural productions*, printed for J. Debrett, London, 1790; <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1434289>, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1434982> and <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1436946>.)

around the gimmick of displaying many of Wilson's specimens 'in fine preservation' in his shop window on Piccadilly to lure prospective subscribers, but he advertised his bona fides by attaching the artist Sarah Stone – 'Miss Stone', then fresh from her work on the Leverian collection and one of the most highly regarded bird painters of her generation – to the project from the start.¹³

Lectures also continued at the SPNH, with a second on 7 September (Hunter's protégé and brother-in-law Everard Home on the 'flying squirrel from Botany Bay'), a third on 5 October displaying the drawings by Stone, and a fourth on 2 November (on a shark and a fish from Port Jackson, and an Aboriginal hair ornament).¹⁴ In fact, it must have been around this time that Debrett and Wilson secured the involvement of Hunter, Smith and Shaw in writing the natural history appendix to the book, as all three were active members of the SPNH. White himself was elected as honorary member of the society in absentia at the second lecture in September.¹⁵

These lectures also had the advantage of advertising White's forthcoming books among the ideal target audience, with the result that at least 17 members of the SPNH subscribed, and probably more (some of the names listed are too vague to be certain), not counting some that went to members of the Linnaean Society, which had only been founded in 1788 by Smith and was already attracting the more talented members of the SPNH, most prominently Banks. Wilson himself personally took an additional 20 copies, privately retaining the artist Stone to add bespoke hand-colour to an unknown number, one of which he presented to his friend Dr David Pitcairn (another member of the SPNH but not a subscriber in his own name).¹⁶ Nelson makes the significant point that Pitcairn's annotations to the book describe Wilson as the 'editor', the one time that his close involvement in the whole production is so explicitly recorded.¹⁷

That White was able to personally send home enough material to make a quarto book and support a season of lectures at the SPNH is striking enough, but he was simultaneously sending quantities of natural history and 'artificial curiosities' to all manner of supporters. The details of these other collections are often only known parenthetically: for example, the fact that he sent a drawing of the kangaroo that was engraved for inclusion in Stockdale's *Voyage of Governor Phillip* is only known because of a throwaway line late in the book disparaging White's artistic ability (Stockdale could clearly not resist devaluing White's expertise – and therefore Debrett's ambitions – even at the cost of his own product).¹⁸

Simultaneously with his presentation to Wilson, White also sent a 'collection of drawings of the animals of Botany Bay' to Lady Hamond, the wife of another of his patrons, Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, as is recorded in a few pars in the newspapers of the day. He would eventually send the Hamonds enough timber samples that they were able to decorate a small work table in Australian veneers (now with the NMA).¹⁹ White also became, by default, a major supplier of Australian specimens to

the Leverian because Wilson presented many of the bird specimens used in the production of the book to the museum in August 1790.²⁰ Two years later White is even recording as having sent back a live kangaroo, which ended up in a showman's menagerie, but this is known only because Governor Phillip insisted, with more than a hint of disdain, that he would not dream of being so mercenary.²¹

White clearly continued assiduous on Wilson's behalf and must have dispatched more drawings around 1791, because the striking depiction of a black swan engraved for Shaw and Nodder's periodical the *Naturalist's Miscellany* of July 1792 is noted as based on a drawing 'obligingly communicated by Thomas Wilson, Esq of Gower Street, to whom it was sent, together with many other non-descript animals, &c. by Mr White'. The evidence would also suggest that the following plate in the *Miscellany*, that of the 'Porcupine Ant-Eater' of New Holland – the echidna – was probably from White as well.²² Another proof that the work was ongoing is found on a watercolour of a mollusc signed by the convict artist Thomas Watling, who only arrived in New South Wales in October 1792, which has a note by White to the effect that a great variety of the shells could be seen at Wilson's house in Gower Street, 'to whom I have sent the other varieties of Shells which I collected in this country'.²³

Around this time Wilson was also the go-between in an epistolary exchange between White and Mary Watson-Wentworth, Lady Rockingham, the widow of the former prime minister, whose Wimbledon property, Hillingdon House, had an important garden. Rockingham had plants from many sources including Governor Phillip, but White was one of her ablest supporters, notably with the valuable gift of a 'box of Botany bay seeds' that, by context in her letter, must have come from him via Wilson.²⁴ White was definitely the source of her prized bottlebrush, one of the first to flower in England.²⁵ To her alarm – she was apparently quite retiring in later life – White made a small visit to her at Hillingdon House in October 1796 which must have gone well because she was still thinking of 'our friend Mr White' in a letter she wrote six months later.²⁶

More important was the burgeoning relationship White had with Sir James Edward Smith, the founder of the Linnean Society. Although Smith had written part of the appendix for White's *Journal*, he had only really become excited about Australian plants around 1791 when he received specimens and seeds of 'many most lovely things from Botany Bay' from an unknown correspondent (almost certainly White). The real bonanza began in 1792, when Smith wrote to his close friend Edmund Davall in Switzerland that he was now inundated with so many beautiful specimens and drawings that his collection outstripped that of 'Banks and Co', and meant to publish if he could see a way of doing so without offending all at Soho Square.²⁷

A year later there were more again, Smith this time telling Davall explicitly that 'White, Surgeon to the Colony, sends them me'.²⁸ This letter to Davall is one of the

rare occasions actual quantities are recorded, Smith commenting that he would send 130 specimens, some very fine, some 'as good as I have', adding 'when you consider how many people I have to supply, & that there is not a professor or botanist in Europe who wd. not jump at the least bit of these rarities, & that no one has got them, you will I trust not be dissatisfied'. White via Wilson, that is, was Smith's main source for huge quantities of material he sent across the continent, with at least one recipient, Thomas Johnes in Hafod (Cardiganshire) explicitly thanking him for the present of 'Mr Wilson's seeds from New Holland'.²⁹

This bounty was behind Smith's next flurry of publishing, the dedication to his monograph on the *Botany of New Holland* (1793) underlining his debt to White for sending 'coloured drawings, made on the spot' as well as the 'most copious and finely-preserved collection of dried specimens'.³⁰ Once again Wilson was heavily involved. Not only was he the dedicatee ('at whose persuasion this work was undertaken') but it was originally his idea to issue Smith's botanical studies in tandem with Australian zoological plates by the other surviving contributor to White's *Journal*, George Shaw, as a sort of general compendium of natural history. As Smith wrote to Davall, 'I don't like the plan, but it was settled by Wilson who gave me all the plants'.³¹ Ultimately, the zoological work was separated, being published as the *Zoology of New Holland* (1794). Both works featured striking hand-coloured plates by the artist James Sowerby, who worked closely with Wilson as was revealed by the ornithologist Keith Hindwood's discovery of a letter from Shaw to Sowerby, an urgent scrawl declaring that the 'Squirrel Opossum' was alive 'at Mr Wilson's', and that the artist was welcome to take it home for a few days to study.³²

At the same time Shaw was also working on one of the more lavish books of the era, the *Museum Leverianum* (1792-1794), which means it is possible that the handful of rather ragged Australian birds figured in the book have a connection to Wilson as well, most particularly the Ground Parrot 'lately received from New Holland'.³³ That Wilson was definitely involved with the Leverian at this time is further confirmed by his presentation of a bird from Sierra Leone, the 'Leona Creeper', which had been given him by a newly-returned First Fleeter and surgeon, John Lowes, who was then posted to the fateful Sierra Leone settlement.³⁴ It is easy to suspect that Wilson had struck the same sort of arrangement with Lowes as he had earlier done with White.

Although no correspondence between them is known, Smith definitely met White after his return from New South Wales in 1795 ('White from Bot. Bay is here,' he wrote to Davall) and it was this connection that led Smith's friend Aylmer Bourke Lambert to take copies of some 200 drawings from White's portfolio as well as having, for some years, custodianship of the now lost manuscript journal.³⁵ The strength of the connection is made perfectly clear in essays Smith published in the *Transactions* of the society, notably one of 1797 in which White is the confirmed

source for 15 plants ('sent from Port Jackson ... by Mr White'; 'found at Port Jackson... by Mr White'; 'indebted to Mr White'; 'we are told by Mr White') and probably involved in the collection of several more of the rare specimens of *Leptospermum* or *Myrtus*.³⁶

In due course some of these began to appear in Smith's *Exotic Botany* (1804-1805), which figures 38 Australian specimens 'chiefly collected by Dr. White at Port Jackson', a connection firmly recorded in descriptions of seven (nos. 10, 12, 29, 41, 55, 56 and 104).³⁷ Smith would later say in a letter to a friend that money had changed hands, describing how he had 'bought all the New Holld. specimens, & Mr Lambert the drawings' presumably – although it is not stated – from White directly, but equally possibly from Wilson himself.³⁸

The point is that Wilson, as White's patron, was the conduit for a staggering amount of material as well as for White's introductions to some of the most influential figures of the era. At every point the role of Wilson, both in supporting White and in encouraging publication, was crucial. Certainly he was well known. In the later 1790s, for example, the ornithologist John Latham, then working on his second supplement to his *General Synopsis of Birds* (1801), a major work of Australian natural history, showed that he clearly knew Wilson and his collection, mentioning him a handful of times by name.³⁹ Wilson's ongoing supply of choice Australian material must have been behind his election to the Linnean Society on 21 February 1792, his proposers being Shaw himself, together with the co-founder Thomas Marsham and the first librarian Jonas Dryander.⁴⁰ However, after rapidly coming to the attention of the cognoscenti through lectures, museum specimens, published engravings and three major books, Wilson seems almost as rapidly to have retreated into obscurity.

Thomas Wilson Esq of Gower Street

Wilson is not apparently mentioned in the sprawling correspondence of Banks, and the name is common enough that few leads paid off, beyond creating an abiding sense that untold hordes of 'Thomas Wilsons' inhabited Georgian England: there were non-conformists, chapel-builders, silk merchants, naval officers, pay agents, and others besides. Doubtless the most significant clue, as noted above, was the printed comment accompanying the illustration of a black swan in the *Naturalist's Miscellany* of July 1792, which notes that the drawing was 'obligingly communicated by Thomas Wilson, Esq of Gower Street'. This address had an important confirmation in, of all things, the 1805 list of supporters of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, which while including no fewer than *five* Thomas Wilsons, does provide a specific address for the only one who was a fellow of the Linnean Society, no. 41 Gower Street, then a relatively new estate fronting Bedford Square.⁴¹

The real key, however, is a hitherto unknown letter from White in the papers of the philosopher and prison reformer Jeremy Bentham, probably sent in the same ship that first brought his journal to Wilson in 1789. How White and Bentham knew each other is not clear, but the letter is intriguing for many reasons, not least as evidence of White's already marked dislike for the colony ('I have been from one extreme of North America to the other, through all the West India Islands on the Musquito Shore and other parts of the Spanish Main, and in the course of my peregrinations I never saw so unpromising miserable a Country as this is').

Much of the letter is devoted to the practical subject of timber – perhaps implying White knew Bentham's brother Samuel, a naval architect – and winds up with his comment that he has sent some samples of Australian pine and hemp to London, and that if Bentham would like to see them he should call on 'Messrs Wilson & Hodgkinson of Snow Hill'.⁴² Crucially, this is the same firm that crops up in the correspondence of another surgeon and antiquary, Richard Greene (1716-1793), whose Lichfield Museum is now most famous for a large collection of items collected by the surgeon on Cook's third voyage, David Samwell.⁴³ In 1787, Greene wrote to his fellow antiquarian Richard Gough to say that if any interesting objects turned up in London they should be delivered to 'Messrs Wilson and Hodgkinson, druggists, Red Cross, on Snow-hill'.⁴⁴

As this suggests, it can now be shown that by the late 1780s Wilson was a well-connected 'druggist' in Snow Hill, near St Paul's, in partnership with a man called Hodgkinson, enough information to piece together a good potted biography. Wilson was born c.1744, possibly in London. Little has come to light regarding his early life, but he definitely married Ann Fernyhough at St Dunstan in the West on 19 July 1772 and went into partnership as a 'druggist & chymist' with her brother Francis the following year. Wilson was definitely working with new compounds, as is recorded in a printed notice held in the Wellcome Collection, registering his patent (later printed) for 'a Medical Composition, which ... hath been found to be an Infallible Remedy for Agues and Intermitting Fevers'.⁴⁵

Francis Fernyhough died in May 1784, and Wilson took up with two new associates, Sampson Hodgkinson and Thomas Ashmore.⁴⁶ Ashmore died in 1787 and Wilson's wife Ann must have also died in these tumultuous years because, continuing his intermarrying ways, in 1788 Wilson married Ashmore's widow, Mary Ashmore (née Boldero, a connection which is presumably why the wealthy banker Charles Boldero Esq subscribed to White's *Journal*). They had two children, Anne (born c.1792) and Thomas (c.1796). In fact, one of the clearest signifiers of the family's social standing is that the pastellist John Russell RA, then a favourite of the Royal Family, painted a charming portrait of Anne when she was around three years old, standing next to her pet dog and holding aloft a small songbird perched on her index finger.⁴⁷

Remarkably, the best source for this period of Wilson's professional life is Matthew Flinders *senior* (1751-1802), the Lincolnshire doctor and man-midwife, father of the explorer. As Flinders' diary records, by 1775 Fernyhough & Wilson was his main supplier for the drugs he used in his trade, routinely making purchases of around £10 per month or more.⁴⁸ The relationship between the two was close and enduring and when Flinders and his (second) wife visited London in October 1796 they 'dined &c.' with all the partners of the firm and 'was at the Shop on Snow Hill every day'.⁴⁹ More importantly, Flinders' accounts also make it clear that Wilson was working as a sort of banker and quasi-agent: the firm would forward money, buy a reference book and send it down with the drug order, purchase stock on Flinders' behalf in the 3 per-cents, even buy lottery tickets.⁵⁰

Given this close professional relationship, it is no surprise to see that Wilson soon became involved with Flinders' sons Matthew and Samuel at the beginning of their naval careers, making cash advances to them in 1795 and 1797.⁵¹ This was a time when Wilson's firm was prospering and references to it are not uncommon, whether it is the listing in *Kent's Directory for the Year 1794*, a company subscription to R. W. Whitton's *The Oil-Man's Vade-Mecum* (1799), or the Royal and Sun Alliance insurance records insuring the premises at no. 87 Snow Hill (Holborn Bridge) between 1782 and 1829.⁵² The firm also gets a handful of notices in the Old Bailey trials of the era, notably one from April 1801, regarding an accusation of the theft of some beeswax, camphire and castile soap by one of their porters (a glimpse of their stock in trade) confirming the important fact that they had an attached 'accounting house'.⁵³

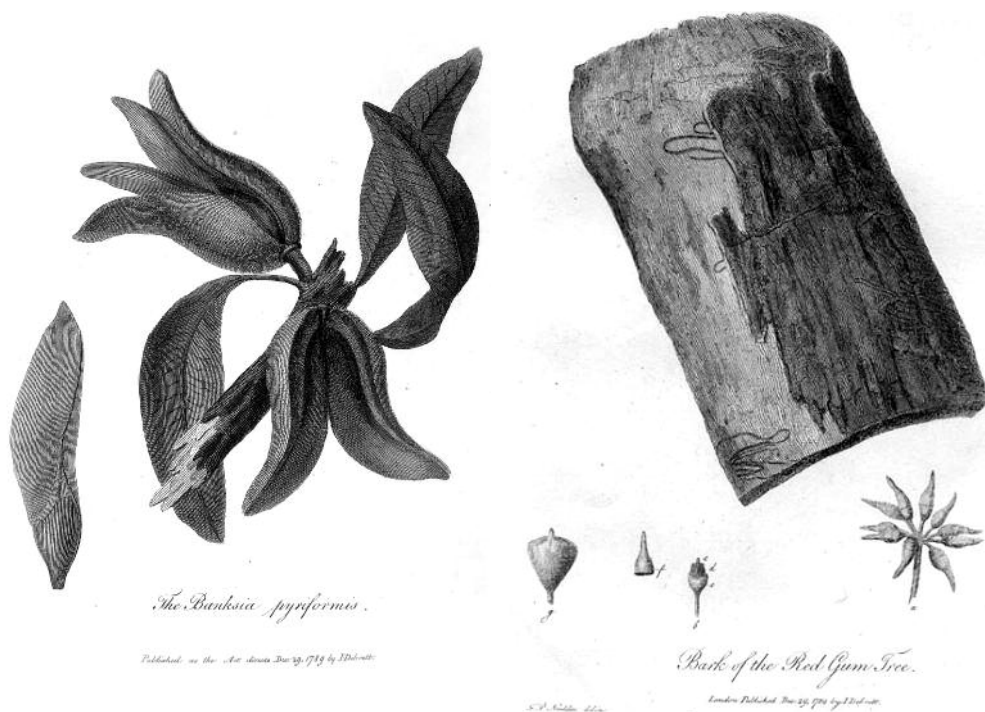
Wilson was therefore part of the remarkable growth in the sale and use of commercial drugs in the early modern period. Fuelled in no small part by military contracts, this period saw a meteoric rise in the fortunes of the Society of Apothecaries at Blackfriars, which had been supplying the Navy from 1703 and the East India Company from 1766.⁵⁴ The second half of the 18th century was also the era when the Chelsea Physic Garden, established 1673 but in the process of being revolutionised under the direction of William Forsyth (founder of the SPNH), came into its own as the bigger firms researched botanical novelties.

Wilson's connections with officers like White are a reminder of the growing interdependence between commercial druggists and the Royal Navy. In the decade from 1800 to 1810, for example, the Navy spent an average of £18,072 per year with the Apothecaries. The East India Company was spending more.⁵⁵ It was around this time that the economist Adam Smith commented that, 'Apothecaries' profit is become a bye-word, denoting something uncommonly extravagant.'⁵⁶

It is possible to see what this trade looked like in miniature from the outfitting of the ships for New South Wales, especially in the official correspondence of the surgeons on the early voyages discussing the general wellbeing of the convicts, the

need for medicaments like peruvian bark, essence of malt or anti-scorbutics, quite apart from the run of the mill supplies for the hospital. Huge sums were involved.⁵⁷ White, as chief surgeon, was deeply enmeshed in these procurements, at one point in July 1788 writing to Lord Sydney with details on the items they urgently needed to combat the problems they were having with salt provisions and scurvy, entreating 'your Lordship will be pleased to cause the medicines to be sent from Apothecaries' Hall, where they are sure to be genuine and fresh'.⁵⁸

The connection between White and Wilson therefore explains much of the more curious architecture of the published *Journal*. The animals, especially the gloriously illustrated birds, are simply the most glamorous and keenly sought of any natural history, both by the hunters in New South Wales and the collectors in London, but the botanical specimens, which have always been considered a rather limited group centred around technical delineations of banksia nuts, the 'peppermint', the tea-tree and some specimens of bark – and not featuring, that is, any of the beautiful plants that would soon enough be splashed in Smith's *Botany* – is a reflection of a serious and shared professional interest, alert to commercial opportunities.



'*Banksia pyriformis*' and 'Bark of the Red Gum Tree'. (White, John; Stone, Sarah; Fort, G. Y.; Badgery, H. S.; Pitcairn, Daniel and Pitcairn, Elizabeth, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales: with sixty-five plates of non descript animals, birds, lizards, serpents, curious cones of trees and other natural productions*, printed for J. Debreth, London, 1790; <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1432465> and <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1432743>.)

The book's description of the efficacy of 'oil of tar' ('wonderfully resists putrefaction, destroys vermin and insects of every kind; wherever it is applied overcomes all disagreeable smells; and is in itself both agreeable and wholesome') now reads like something between a professional review and an advertisement.⁵⁹ White's comments on the druggists of Rio de Janeiro are similarly detailed, including his shrewd comment that their 'valuable gums' are much dearer than they should be, which leaves the door wide open for his own notes on the various Australian gums. Thus, the 'astringent red gum' of New South Wales is useful in treating dysentery, being not unlike 'that known in the shops by the name of Kino, and for all medical purposes, fully as efficacious'; there is a yellow gum which he rates not quite as good as the South American 'balsam Tolu'; the local sweet tea has served as a 'good pectoral'; while a small berry White describes as not unlike a white currant had served as 'a good antiscorbutic'.⁶⁰

That White had commercial designs is never more obvious than in his having sent Wilson a full quart of oil collected from the *Eucalyptus obliqua* (what he calls the Peppermint Tree); one of the appendices of the book including the glowing recommendation that it is more 'efficacious in removing all cholicky complaints than that of the English Peppermint', while being 'less pungent and more aromatic'.⁶¹ Around the same time Phillip also sent oil to Banks, and it was presumably the whiff of profit that was behind the squabble that soon broke out among the surgeons over priority of discovery.⁶²

White's relationship with Wilson has an important echo in a letter dated from Sydney 17 April 1790, which was later published in at least two newspapers.⁶³ A rare example of any confirmed letter by White, this gives a tangible glimpse of the tenor of White's missing journal during a period of great privation in the Colony after the wreck of the *Sirius*, in 'a country and place so forbidden and so hateful, as only to merit execrations and curses'.⁶⁴ The letter openly reveals his frank disbelief that the country was not better reconnoitred ('very much surprised at Mr Cook's description of Botany Bay'), a note which would have infuriated Banks, who kept a cutting of it, noting in the margin his belief that the letter had originally been sent to 'Mr Skill, dealer in hams, tongues, salt salmon, &c., in the Strand'. While this marginal comment was surely meant as a rather hoity dismissal of White, John Skill was not only one of the great traders of the day, but a specialist dealer with the royal patronage of everyone from the Duke of Clarence to Catherine the Great, by 1800 being styled 'Purveyor-General and Oilman to the Royal Family'.⁶⁵ More than that, Skill was particularly known for his involvement in the lucrative Royal Navy trade, having specialised in naval supplies since the early 1770s, one of his more adroit ideas having been the offer of free cartage of all purchases to Portsmouth on request.⁶⁶

Being Jan 1. 1791.

BOTANY BAY.

The following Letter is from Mr. White, Surgeon General at Botany Bay. Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, New South Wales, April, 17, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

His Majesty's Ship Sirius and Supply Tender sailed from hence the 6th of March last, with the Lieutenant-Governor, half the Marines, and about two hundred convicts, for Norfolk Island, and landed them safe the 16th. This division of our numbers the Governor thought necessary on account of the low state of our provisions. The ships stood off and on until the 19th, before an opportunity of landing the provisions and stores offered; then the Sirius stood in as close as possible to hasten and facilitate getting the things through a heavy surf, which continually rolls in on the beach, but by a current, or some other unforeseen cause, she was driven on a reef of hidden rocks and irrecoverably lost. The ship's bow is in a position which will probably make her hold together until every thing is got ashore, where all the Officers and men are safe, with a greater store of provisions than we have here. Had the Sirius arrived safe, she was immediately to have gone to China for some relief for us, and on her dispatch our all depended; but, alas! that hope is no more, and a new scene of distress and misery opens to our view. When the Supply arrived with the melancholy tidings, the Governor called all the Officers together, to consult and deliberate on what was best to be done in our present distressed and deplorable situation. He laid before us the state of the provision store, which contained only four months flour, and three of pork at half allowance, which has been our ration for some time past, every other species of provision being long since expended. We therefore determined on the necessity of reducing our half allowance of these two articles, to such a proportion, as will enable us to drag out a miserable existence for seven months. Should we have no arrivals in that time the game will be up with us, for all the grain of every kind which we have been able to raise in two years and three months, would not support us three weeks, which is a very strong in-

stance of the ingratitude and extreme poverty of the soil and country at large; though great exertions have been made. Much cannot now be done, limited in food, and reduced as the people are, who have not had one crumb of fresh animal food since first in the country; a country and place so forbidden and so hateful, as only to merit execration and curses; for it has been a source of expence to the mother country, and of evil and misfortune to us, without there ever being the smallest likelihood of its repaying or recompensing either. From what we have already seen, we may conclude that there is not a single article in the whole country, that to the nature of things, could prove of the smallest use or advantage to the mother country or the commercial world. In the name of Heaven, what has the Ministry been about? Surely they have quite forgotten or neglected us, otherwise they would have sent to see what became of us, and to know how we were likely to succeed. However they must soon know from the heavy bills which will be presented to them, and the misfortunes and losses which have already happened to us, how necessary it becomes to relinquish a scheme that in the nature of things can never answer. It would be wise by the first steps to withdraw the settlement, at least such as are living, or remove them to some other place. This is so much out of the world and tract of commerce that it could never answer. How a business of this kind, (the expence of which must be great) could suit be thought of without sending to examine the country, as was Captain Thompson's errand to the coast of Africa, is to every person here a matter of great surprise. MonC. Peyrouse and Clannard, the French Circumnavigators, as well as us, have been very much surpris'd at Mr. Cook's description of Botany Bay. The wood is bad, the soil light, poor, and sandy, nor has it any thing to recommend it. Accurate observers have surveyed the country without being able to fix any thing like the meadow land that Mr. Cook and others mention. The Frenchmen declare the same, and that in the whole course of their voyage they never saw a place half so unpromising for a settlement as this. They laid at Botany Bay eight weeks just after our arrival in the country repairing some damages which the Bouffle and Astradaie under their command received while at the Navigator Islands. Before they came to Botany Bay, they had been at Norfolk Island, but could neither an-

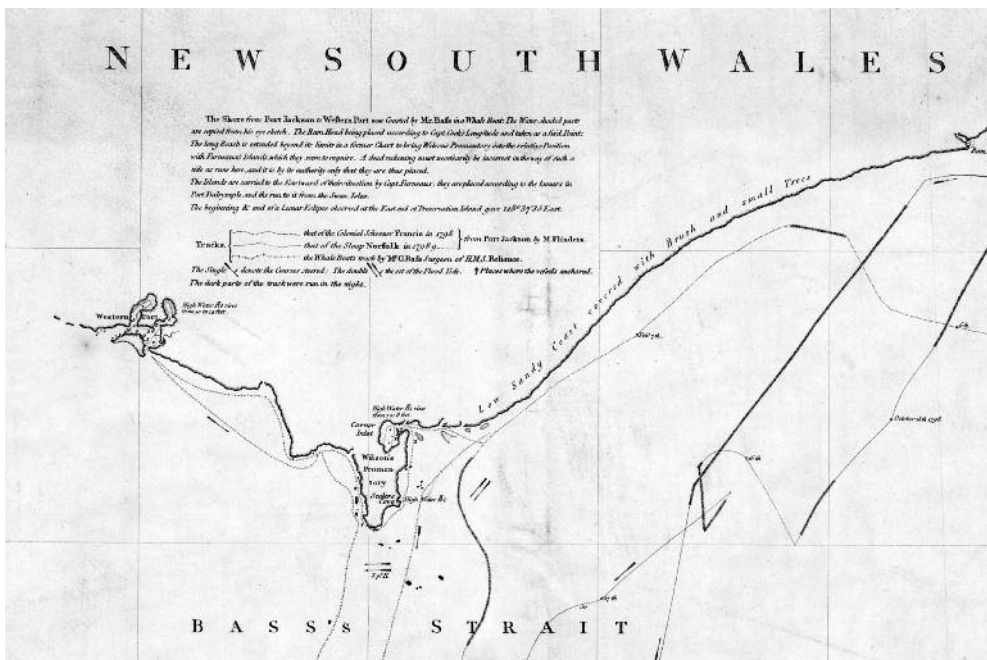
chor or land. They made an observation with respect to it, (which from its singularity, propriety, and force, I cannot suppress) that it was only a place fit for Angels and Eagles to reside in. The Supply Tender sails to-morrow for Batavia; in hopes the Dutch may be able to send in time to save us. Should any accident happen to her, Lord have mercy on us! She is a small vessel to perform so long and unexplored a voyage, but we rely much on the abilities and active attention of Lieutenant Ball, who commands her. Lieutenant King, 2d of the Sirius, takes his passage in her to Batavia, and from thence to the Cape of Good Hope (in his way to Europe) where he has orders to charter a ship and send her to us immediately, should no other ships have pass'd that place in their way here. Whatever may be my fate and that of my fellow sufferers, God bless you all in England, prays your faithful and sincere, &c. &c.

This letter was addressed to Mr Skill Dealer in hemp, Tongues Salt Salmon &c in the Strand

White's letter published in the *The Diary, or Woodfall's Register*, and kept as a cutting by Sir Joseph Banks, who has annotated it in his own hand. (Banks Papers, Series 36.09. SLNSW online catalogue, accessed 28 April 2023; <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/section-06/series-36/36-09-letter-written-by-john-white-17-april.>)

White's connections with Wilson, Bentham and Skill are evidence of the commercial forces at play, just off-stage, in the earliest years of the New South Wales colony. More, Wilson was not only working as a chemist and de facto banker, he was using his trading network as a left-letter office for carriage to New South Wales. Lady Rockingham, for one, wrote to White in Sydney via this method, asking Smith if he would take charge of her 'Letter for Mr White & shall be much oblig'd to Mr Wilson if he will forward it to his excellent friend'.⁶⁷ The diaries of Flinders (senior) definitely record sending letters via Wilson to his son Matthew in New South Wales in September 1795, his son recommending the same process to his future wife Ann Chappelle the same year, begging her to write to him via a ship known to be sailing 'for the Settlement ... most probably Mr Wilson knows of her'.⁶⁸ Flinders was more explicit in his journal in 1812, recording that he had left a packet of letters with one of Wilson's partners, 'Mr Ashmore, Snow Hill, to go by Captain Waters'.⁶⁹

This practice made Wilson an important source for the latest news, never more strikingly in a lengthy letter Flinders wrote to George Bass from Port Jackson in February 1800, noting that he would leave his manuscript charts of Bass Strait at Wilson's Bedford Square house, recommending that if Bass ever finishes his proposed book on the colony he should send it to the same gentleman, as they had agreed 'that the book should be altogether fit for publication from your hands'.⁷⁰ Wilson was evidently contemplating getting behind another book on Australia, the less surprising when it is remembered that Bass was yet another surgeon by training who was trying to make his career in South Seas trading. That Bass never published is well known, but Flinders soon paid homage to Wilson by naming 'Wilson's Promontory' in his honour, the nature of the compliment made perfectly clear in his 'Chart of Bass Strait' (Arrowsmith, 16 June 1800), in which the promontory is at the very centre of the chart, giving eye-catching prominence to Wilson's name. Flinders later confirmed that this was 'in compliment to my friend Thomas Wilson, Esq of London'.⁷¹



Wilson's Promontory at the centre of the Flinders map of Bass Strait, named for his patron Thomas Wilson Esq. (Detail of Aaron Arrowsmith, 'A chart of Bass's Strait between New South Wales and van Diemen's Land explored by Mattw. Flinders', 1800; SLNSW online catalogue, accessed 20 April 2023; <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VvRo0A5ORZ/Lwv6mxJEjXz eo>>.)

After a remarkable decade, in which Wilson was closely associated with a series of major monographs on New South Wales and supported an important cadre of medical and naval officers, he retreats from view. Doubtless this was partly because White was comfortably in home waters and Flinders was soon to begin his long imprisonment in Mauritius. It is nonetheless telling that on 29 October 1810, a scant four days after Flinders first arrived in London after nine years away, he sought out Wilson at the Gower Street address. Flinders had barely had time to be reunited with his wife, have some interviews at the Admiralty and send out a batch of letters (including one to Sir Joseph Banks) before seeking him out, only to discover that Wilson was living in grand semi-retirement at Ives Place, Maidenhead.⁷²

Flinders wrote to Wilson a fortnight later, and also began to socialise with the younger and still more active partners in the firm at Snow Hill, Thomas Ashmore *junior*, [John] Hodgkinson and William Minshull (another subscriber to White's *Journal*), their names regularly cropping up in his journal; at one point in April 1811 Flinders recording having met Ashmore and the former Governor of New South Wales, Admiral John Hunter, at the same event.⁷³ Only on 10 July 1811 did Flinders happen to run into Wilson while both were visiting Snow Hill, the two men forming a party with Hodgkinson and Minshull, to travel down to Greenwich where they met up with none other than 'Dr. White of Chatham' – John White, of course, who was posted at Chatham Yard from 1803 to 1820 – the 'sole person of my acquaintance', wrote Flinders.⁷⁴ Clearly the meeting went well, because a week later he travelled down to Ives Place to visit 'the old friend of my father'.⁷⁵

By this time Wilson was about 67 years old but still heavily involved in the company, not least because the partners now included his step-son Thomas Ashmore *junior*, while another of Wilson's closest associates, George Paton *junior* married a 'Miss [Mary] Ashmore' on 6 September 1808, probably Wilson's step-daughter, given that the wedding announcement noted that both bride and groom lived at Upper Gower Street, Bedford Square.⁷⁶ Wilson's had always been a family business with strong naval connections, so it is little surprise that in July 1812 his daughter Anne married William Innes Pocock RN (1783-1836), an officer and artist who published *Five Views of the Island of St Helena* in 1815.⁷⁷ The couple had three children, Anne (b. 1822), Mary-Innes (1823-1848) and Catherine-Elizabeth (1825-1917).

Wilson's wife Mary died 'aged 60' on 13 October 1818, and their son Thomas died at Maidenhead on 19 May 1824 'aged 28 years', the family headstone recording nothing more than the fact that he was his father's 'only son.' Less than a year later this was followed by the death, on 13 May 1825, of Wilson's only other child Anne, probably from complications in childbirth. This bleak series of events was capped by Wilson's own death on 14 April 1829 at the age of 85. He had outlived both of his children and was buried with them in St Michael's, Bray, in the family vault. In his will he left substantial legacies to the families of his step-

children through Thomas Ashmore and George Paton, as well as to all of his former business partners. Ives Place and his personal estate went to his son-in-law Pocock in trust for his three granddaughters.⁷⁸ Some of Wilson's papers were apparently split between Ashmore and Pocock, but what they contained is not known.

There is no obvious mention of any private natural history collection in contemporary reports or his will, which may imply that he had given much or all of it away, as for example with his presentation of Australian birds to the Leverian in 1790, but it is impossible to say.⁷⁹ Perhaps, by that token, it was Wilson's botanical collection that Smith acquired some time before 1805.⁸⁰ That is, Wilson may already have relinquished much of the collection; if nothing else, that would accord with his apparent disappearance from natural history circles around 1800.

To date, only one firmly attested item from his personal collection has been discovered, the Wilson family copy of Smith's *Botany* and Shaw's *Zoology*. Given the family connections with the Navy, it is not surprising that two of Wilson's granddaughters eventually married RN officers, Mary the artist Frederick Darby Cleaveland RA, Catherine a man called George Campbell Fowler RN who was – almost inevitably – the son of Robert Merrick Fowler, Flinders' second in command on the *Investigator* voyage to Australia. Of Wilson's granddaughters only Catherine is recorded as having children, her large family living at Crookham End, Brimpton near Reading. Catherine had stewardship of a few family heirlooms, most prominently the Russell pastel of her mother Anne as a child, which was still owned by Catherine's son Colonel William James Fowler when he died in 1918.⁸¹

This family history now confirms, although the connection has not previously been made, that she also retained the remarkable copy of Smith and Shaw's combined works on New Holland from her grandfather's library, with her name, Catherine Elizabeth Fowler, on the front flyleaf. The connection to Wilson is confirmed because the book is not only extra-illustrated with two original botanical watercolours by the artist Frederick Polydore Nodder, both originals for engravings in White's *Journal*, but it also had bound-in the letter to Sowerby about borrowing an 'opossum' from Mr Wilson, as first described by Hindwood in his 1968 article.⁸² Perhaps their copy of White's *Journal* remains to be discovered as well, or other diaries and papers that may have been scattered among the descendants of Wilson.

It is well-known that commercial interests hovered around what news of the earliest settlement in New South Wales was published, whether it be the clamour among owners of exotic menageries to display kangaroos, the frankly appraising tone of a third contemporary publication by Debrett, Captain Thomas Gilbert's *Voyage from New South Wales to Canton* (1789), or the keen interest taken by the Enderby whaling family, who subscribed to *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay* (1789) and Hunter's *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* (1793), also buying a copy of the later *Account of the*

English Colony in New South Wales (1798-1802) by David Collins, pasting their rather grim bookplates (a young man poised with a vicious harpoon) into the family set.⁸³

There was, equally, a distinctively mercenary note to the fervent collection of natural history specimens by anyone with access to a method of shipping them to England, resulting in a series of lavish illustrated quartos and a cottage industry in the copying of Australian natural history drawings. Wilson was at the epicentre of an influential network clustered around Hunter, Smith and Shaw. He got rich as an apothecary and for a decade or more collected natural history and other curiosities with enthusiasm, a pursuit which brought him in touch with figures such as the antiquary Richard Greene of Lichfield, Sir Ashton Lever and his famous museum, the artist Sarah Stone, Lady Rockingham of Hillingdon House, the botanist Aylmer Bourke Lambert, and many others besides.

He was not only one of John White's patrons but the forwarder of three major early books on Australian natural history all compiled from the White collections; knew the young First Fleet surgeon John Lowes; had a close connection with the career of Matthew Flinders (including having some degree of involvement with a fourth major book on the colony, his young protégé's *Observations*); and was also aware of the work of the RN surgeon George Bass before the latter's untimely loss at sea. Resuscitating his name from oblivion should open up new avenues for research centred on the professional milieu of surgeons and apothecaries in the later Georgian era.

Notes

1 Rex Rienits, 'White, John (1756–1832)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australia National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-john-2787/text3971>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 28 April 2023.

2 John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales: with sixty-five plates of non descript animals, birds, lizards, serpents, curious cones of trees and other natural productions*, Printed for J. Debrett, London, 1790, p [i], online at SLNSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKJ3NqBBQd>, accessed 3 May 2023; E. Charles Nelson, 'John White's Journal of a Voyage to new [sic] South Wales (London 1790): bibliographic notes', *Archives of Natural History*, no 25:1, 1998, pp 109-130.

3 Sir Joseph Banks Papers, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter Banks Papers, SLNSW), <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research-and-collections/significant-collections/sir-joseph-banks-papers-1767-1822>, accessed 3 May 2023, Section 6, Series 35 Miscellaneous reports and memoranda concerning the settlements in Australia, [1770], ca 1786-1808, Series 35.05 'Extract from the journal of John White, 18 November 1788', online at <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/section-06/series-35>.

4 E. Charles Nelson: 'The First Ulsterman in Botany Bay: Surgeon-General John White', *The Linen Hall Review*, no 3:2, 1986, pp 8-9; 'John White (c.1756-1832), Surgeon-General of New South Wales: Biographical Notes on his Irish Origins', *Irish Historical Studies*, no 25:100, 1987, pp 404-412; 'John White AM, MD, FLS (c.1756-1832), Surgeon-General of New South Wales', *Archives of Natural History*, no 25:2, 1998, pp 149-212.

5 Nelson, 'John White' (1998), p 184.

- 6 John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, with a biographical introduction by Rex Rienits, Alec H. Chisholm (ed), Angus & Robertson in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, (Facsimile ed), Sydney, 1962, p 13.
- 7 Bernard Smith and Alwynne Wheeler (eds), *The Art of the First Fleet & other early Australian drawings*, Oxford University Press, in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the British Museum, Melbourne, 1988, p 148; Jane Lennon, 'Art and Science: Early Australian Natural History Drawing and Engravings', *Australiana*, no 17:3, August 1995, pp 72-77; Richard Neville, *A Rage for Curiosity: visualising Australia 1788-1830*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1997, p 24; Louise Anemaat, *Natural Curiosity: unseen art of the First Fleet*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2014, pp 53, 216.
- 8 Nelson, 'John White' (1998), p 155.
- 9 A. T. Gage, *A History of the Linnean Society of London*, Printed for the Society by Taylor & Francis, London, 1938, pp 3-4.
- 10 *Rules and orders of the Society for Promoting Natural History established in London, in October 1782. With a list of the members*, [sn], London, 1791, p 27.
- 11 'Captain Tench's Narrative', *The World*, 4 April 1789, p 2.
- 12 Eric Stockdale, *'Tis Treason, My Good Man!': four revolutionary presidents and a Piccadilly bookshop*, Oak Knoll Press, New Castle, Delaware, 2005, pp 123-126; 'This Day was Published', *London Chronicle*, 3-5 December 1789, p 541.
- 13 *The World*, 23 July 1789, p 1.
- 14 Nelson, 'John White' (1998), pp 155-156.
- 15 *Rules and orders of the Society for Promoting Natural History*, p 36.
- 16 Now in the National Library of Australia; Louis J. Pigott, 'John White's Journal of a voyage to new [sic] South Wales (1790)', *Archives of Natural History*, no 27:2, 2000, p 159. Similar copies are recorded as being presented to the SPNH in 1791 (now unknown) and the Linnean Society in 1792 (thought to have been stolen in the 1970s): see Christine E. Jackson, *Sarah Stone: natural curiosities from the New Worlds*, Merrell Holbertson, Natural History Museum, London, c.1998, p 141.
- 17 Gregory M. Mathews, *The Birds of Australia: Bibliography of the Birds of Australia: books used in the preparation of this work with a few biographical details of authors and collectors*, H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1925, p 146; Nelson, 'John White,' (1998), p 122.
- 18 *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, Printed for John Stockdale, London, 1789, p 290, online at SLNSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VvEmLyopWX>, accessed 3 May 2023.
- 19 *Star and Evening Advertiser*, 2 June 1789, p 2; Anemaat, *Natural Curiosity*, pp 53-55; National Museum of Australia, <https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/collection/highlights/first-fleet-table>, accessed 13 February 2023.
- 20 Jackson, *Sarah Stone*, pp 28, 140.
- 21 Phillip to Banks, 15 October 1792, in Neil Chambers (ed), *The Indian and Pacific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768-1820*, Pickering & Chatto, London, 2010, Volume 3, Letters 1789-1792, p 444.
- 22 *Naturalist's Miscellany*, Printed for Nodder & Co, London, 1791-1792, vol 3, plates 108 and 109.
- 23 Thomas Watling, 'Mollusk, native name 'Nag-ga-rang' (Red Australwelk, *Charonia rubicunda*), Watling Drawing no. 387, Natural History Museum (London), <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/art-nature-imaging/collections/first-fleet/art-collection/nathist.dsml?sa=1&stype=sarea&lastDisp=gall¬es=true&beginIndex=379>, (notes) accessed 3 May 2023.
- 24 See Sir James Edward Smith Correspondence (hereafter JESC), <https://linnean->

online.org/smith_correspondence.html, accessed 13 February 2023: Watson-Wentworth to Smith, 20 July 1790 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/91); 2 December 1791 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/105); 26 May 1792 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/109).

25 Smith, 'Botanical Characters of some Plants of the Natural Order of Myrti', *Transactions*, no 3, 1797, p 272.

26 Smith to Edmund Davall, 28 October 1795 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/14/77); Watson-Wentworth to Smith, 25 October 1796 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/123) and 30 May 1797 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/124).

27 Smith to Thomas Jenkinson Woodward, 19 December 1791 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/18/51) and Smith to Davall, 27 June 1792 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/14/50).

28 Smith to Davall, 2 July 1793 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/14/60).

29 Johnes to Smith, 30 August 1794 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/16/23).

30 James Edward Smith, *A Specimen of the Botany of New Holland*, the figures by James Sowerby, Printed by J. Davis, Published by J. Sowerby, London, 1793, p viii, online at SLNSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKJgVmBQDO>, accessed 3 May 2023.

31 Smith to Davall, 24 September 1793 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/14/62).

32 K. A. Hindwood, 'Three Early Natural History Books,' *Australian Zoologist*, no 14:3, 1968, pp 253-54. See also Lennon, 'Art and Science', pp 72-73.

33 George Shaw, *Museum Leverianum*, James Parkinson, London, 1792-1794, pp 217-220 (unnumbered plate dated 2 February 1793), online at Wellcome Collection, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/nb7298bc>.

34 *The Naturalist's Miscellany*, no 10, 1799, plate 369.

35 Smith to Davall, 28 October 1795 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/14/77); Aylmer Bourke Lambert to Dr Richard Pulteney, 23 November 1796, SLNSW, MLMSS 10253; A.B. Lambert, 'Description of a New Species of Macropus from New Holland', *Transactions*, vol 8, 1807, pp 318-319; Anemaat, *Natural Curiosity*, p 80.

36 Smith, 'Botanical Characters of ... Myrti', pp 255-288. White's involvement is also mentioned in Smith, 'Botanical Characters of four New-Holland Plants', *Transactions*, vol 6, 1802, p 299.

37 James Edward Smith, *Exotic Botany*, [R. Taylor], London, 1804-1805, p vi, online at SLNSW, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VK24vglAbl>, accessed 3 May 2023.

38 Smith to William Roscoe, 20 November 1805 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/17/26). Lambert's assistant David Don also wrote of a purchase, although he recorded that the herbarium was split between Smith and Lambert. See Hortense S. Miller, 'The Herbarium of Aylmer Bourke Lambert', *Taxon*, no 19:4, 1970, p 545.

39 John Latham, *Supplement II to the General Synopsis of Birds*, Printed for Leigh, Sotheby & Son, London, 1801, pp 164, 188, available online from Biodiversity Heritage Library, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/49008>, accessed 3 May 2023. See also mention of birds, notably including 'Wilson's Parakeet', from the Wilson collection in Latham's revised *General History of Birds*, Printed by Jacob & Johnson for the author, Winchester, 1822, vol II, pp 170-171, available online from Biodiversity Heritage Library, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/62572>, accessed 3 May 2023.

40 With thanks to Luke Thorne, archivist at the Linnean Society for these references. See also *List of the Linnean Society of London*, Philanthropic Reform, London, 1799, p 6.

41 *Transactions of the Society, instituted at London, for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, no 23, 1805, p 211 [later Royal Society of Arts (Great Britain)].

42 White to Bentham, Sydney Cove, 19 November 1788, University College London, JB/119/098/001-004, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bentham-project/transcribe-bentham>, accessed 13 February 2023.

- 43 [Richard Greene], *A particular, and descriptive catalogue of the curiosities, natural and artificial, in the Lichfield Museum*, Printed and sold by John Jackson, Lichfield, 1786.
- 44 Printed in John Nichols, *Illustrations of The Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, Printed by and for Nichols and Son, London, 1831, vol 6, p 325.
- 45 Thomas Wilson, *AD 1781. No 1278. Specification of Thomas Wilson. Medicinal Compound*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1856, available online at Wellcome Collection, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/q2utvsha>, accessed 3 May 2023.
- 46 Martyn Beardsley & Nicholas Bennett (eds), *Gratefull to Providence: the Diary and Accounts of Matthew Flinders, Surgeon, Apothecary and Man-Midwife*, Lincoln Record Society, Lincoln, 2007-2009, vol 1, p 39.
- 47 Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800*, 'John Russell – IV Named sitters P-R' (J.64.233), <http://www.pastellists.com/Articles/Russell3.pdf>, accessed 13 February 2023.
- 48 Beardsley & Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, vol 1, p 23; vol 2, p 166.
- 49 Beardsley & Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, vol 2, p 173.
- 50 Beardsley & Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, vol 2, pp 9, 20, 25, 39, 104.
- 51 Beardsley & Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, vol 2, pp 145, 152, 185.
- 52 London Metropolitan Archives, <https://search.lma.gov.uk>, accessed 13 February 2023, search "Thomas Wilson" - "Snow Hill", for Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance (Collection), 1557-2007, CLC/B/192 items: CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/302/461559 (1782 July 04); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/400/632873 (1794 Oct 9); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/426/745713 (1803 Apr 1); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/455/871281 (1812 May 27); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/464/885324 (1813 Aug 12); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/468/906236 (1815 Apr 6); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/466/919710 (1816 Jun 10); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/473/934711 (1817 Oct 22); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/473/942070 (1818 Apr 29); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/492/993224 (1822 May 29); CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/519/1090078 (1829 Apr 7).
- 53 Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 15 April 1801, trial of James, alias John Busby (t18010415-28), www.oldbaileyonline.org, accessed 13 February 2023.
- 54 Cecil Wall, Hector Charles Cameron and E. Ashworth Underwood, *A History of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, pp 148-181.
- 55 Anna Simmons, 'Wholesale Pharmaceutical Manufacturing in London, c.1760-c.1840', in Lissa L. Roberts and Simon Werrett (eds), *Compound Histories: materials, governance, and production*, Brill, Leiden, 2018, p 297.
- 56 Patrick Wallis, 'Consumption, retailing, and medicine in early-modern London', *Economic History Review*, vol 61:1, 2008, p 43.
- 57 Alan Frost, *The First Fleet: the real story*, second ed, Black Inc, Collingwood, Vic, 2012, pp 90-91.
- 58 White to Lord Sydney, HRNSW, vol 1:2, pp 175-176.
- 59 White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, 1790, p 30.
- 60 White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, 1790, pp 64-65; 233; 179; 196.
- 61 White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, 1790, p 227.
- 62 See, for example, HRNSW, vol 1:2, pp 220-224.
- 63 See both the *London Chronicle*, 30 December 1790-1 January 1791, p 3 and the *Public Advertiser*, 31 December 1790, p 3.
- 64 Banks Papers, SLNSW, Series 36, 'Newscuttings concerning the settlements in New South Wales, 1788-1791', Series 36:09, Letter written by John White, 17 April 1790, online at <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/section-06/series-36>.
- 65 See notices in the *Argus*, 6 January 1790, p 1; *Oracle*, 18 November 1800, p 4.

- 66 *Public Advertiser*, 24 November 1770, p 1; *Middlesex Journal*, 5-8 January 1771, p 1.
- 67 Rockingham to Smith, 14 December 1791 (JESC, GB-110/JES/COR/15/106).
- 68 Beardsley & Bennett, *Gratefull to Providence*, vol 1, p 157; Flinders to Ann Chappelle, 10 March 1795, in Paul Brunton (ed), *Matthew Flinders: Personal Letters from an Extraordinary Life*, Hordern House, Sydney, 2002, pp 37-38.
- 69 Anthony J. Brown and Gillian Dooley (eds), *Matthew Flinders Private Journal from 17 December 1803 at Isle de France to 10 July 1814 at London*, Friends of the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, 2005, p 415.
- 70 Flinders to Bass, 15 February 1800, in Brunton, *Matthew Flinders: Personal Letters*, p 45.
- 71 Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Nicol, London, 1814, vol 1, p cxv.
- 72 Brown & Dooley, *Matthew Flinders Private Journal*, p 328. See also Flinders Papers, Royal Museums Greenwich, <https://flinders.rmg.co.uk> (archived website), Flinders, Matthew, Captain, 1774-1814, FL101; accessed 17 February 2022. By 1811, *Boyle's* lists only a 'Mrs Dawson' living at no 41 (p 52).
- 73 Brown & Dooley, *Matthew Flinders Private Journal*, p 355; see also pp 339, 340, 344, 381, 410, 412, 415, 416, 418, 421, 421, 430, 454.
- 74 Brown & Dooley, *Matthew Flinders Private Journal*, p 369.
- 75 Brown & Dooley, *Matthew Flinders Private Journal*, pp 332; 361; 370.
- 76 Brown & Dooley, *Matthew Flinders Private Journal*, p 415; *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol 78, 1808, p 850.
- 77 Obituary in *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol 160, 1836, pp 324-325.
- 78 Pocock sold Ives Place and remarried Elizabeth Anne Pearson, daughter of Dr Richard Pearson, on 8 August 1833. They had a son, William Innes Moreton Pocock (1834-1866).
- 79 Edward Donovan (comp), *Catalogue of the Leverian Museum: Sale of the entire collection by Messrs King & Lochee*, Hayden, Printer, London, 1806; Adrienne Kaeppler, *Holophusicon – the Leverian Museum: an eighteenth-century English institution of science, curiosity, and art*, ZKF Publishers, distributed in the United States by Bishop Museum Press, Altenstadt, Germany, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2011, pp 62, 72, 188.
- 80 See note 37.
- 81 George C. Williamson, *John Russell*, RA, George Bell & Sons, London, 1894, p 143.
- 82 The book was known to Hindwood from the library of T. G. Vallance. See 'Notes and Exhibits', *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales*, vol 91, no 412, March 1967, p 239. The volume was recently sold: Hordern House, *Rare Books, Manuscripts, Paintings* (Catalogue), Hordern House, 2020, pp 66-69.
- 83 Sotheby's (Melbourne), *The Willcox Collection* (Catalogue), 29 November 2004, lot 5, described in <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/the-willcox-collection-of-pacific-and-australian-exploration-au0668/lot.5.html>, accessed 2 May 2023.

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Cox, *Broken Spear: the untold story of Black Tom Birch, the man who sparked Australia's bloodiest war*, Wakefield Press, Mile End, South Australia, 2021, xxi + 299 pages; ISBN 9781743058671.

Reading the book on Kikatapula, known by Europeans as Tom Birch, illuminates two major questions: why did Tom Kikatapula undergo such a crucial cultural transformation, and how do the sources the author has chosen complement his arguments about Kikatapula's life and achievements?

The telling of the story of Kikatapula's short life is very intense. It is set in the context of the contemporary understanding by Europeans of sovereignty and the relationship between it, territory and jurisdiction which were being recast during the period of Kikatapula's life.

The documentary evidence of frontier conflict all over Australia is voluminous. Correspondents to newspapers contributed letters of sympathy either for the suffering of European settlers or the dispossessed Aboriginals. By the end of the 19th century many of the original settlers had written books or memoirs and newspaper articles. Conflict with Aboriginals was a common theme in those writings, described in terms of war.

This theme was not continued in 20th century writings. The new White Australia Policy took precedence and

Aboriginal history retreated out of view. The energy of Aboriginal resistance was forgotten and the people were pitied and not respected.

This book on Kikatapula seeks to redress this situation together with a growing body of similar books throughout Australia. Nick Clements's book, *The Black War: fear, sex and resistance in Tasmania*, addresses similar themes.

Historians usually have a transferential relationship to the pasts they research. They identify emotionally with something in the historical work they undertake and so something of themselves is implicated in their treatment of the subject. The history in this book is deeply political in the broad meaning of the word because it arouses deep passions about the European settlement of Tasmania and the Aboriginals' response. This is a moral and political book rather than an academic one. Robert Cox uses his journalism skills to tell a significant story using all the primary and secondary sources he knows for the task.

Up until November 1827 Kikatapula's life had been one of constant frontier conflict, seeking to protect his people and to inflict damage on the European settlers and their crops and cattle.

After multiple raids on settlers throughout the south and centre of Van Diemen's Land, Kikatapula was captured by Constable Scott on 13 November 1827 in the Derwent Valley near New Norfolk.

The conversation between Lt Governor George Arthur and Kikatapula on pages 131 to 133 is central to the book. The preparations for the implementation of the proclamation by Lt Governor Arthur in 1827 and on 16 April 1828 and Gilbert Robertson's negotiations with the Lt Governor for a lucrative contract in rounding up Aboriginals in settled districts and removing them changed the landscape completely and provided an opportunity for Kikatapula.

Kikatapula's role in this is critical in Tasmanian history and in this book. The pivotal role of how Robertson convinced Arthur and invited Kikatapula into the process is not fully told in the book.

The trip of Augustus Robinson and Kikatapula to Port Davey is enormously interesting as the location is still considered extremely remote in Tasmania today.

Broken Spear is an excellent book fulfilling the author's aims, as well as scholars'.

Dr Ruth S. Kerr

The University of Queensland, St Lucia

* * *

Anthony Webster, *The Foundation of Australia's Capital Cities: Geology, Landscape, and Urban Character*, Lexington Books, Maryland USA, 2022, xii + 327 pages; ISBN 9781498597951.

This is not a conventional history written by an historian: a clue is found in the sub-title, *Geology, Landscape,*

and Urban Character. Anthony Webster is a mining geologist whose focus is on the geology and landscape of seven of Australia's capitals (notably not Canberra) and how this influenced, in particular, the early stages of British settlement. He undertook much of the research using online sources while working in the Western Australian Pilbara region, although there has been subsequent library/archives research.

The main contribution of the book lies in its goal of interpreting the influence of geological and other natural landscape features in the selection and early settlement of the capital city sites. Geological underpinnings shaped the topography, but also the broader elements of landscape such as rivers, wetlands and botany, although there is little recognition of the zoology. In turn, these influenced settlement patterns in such matters as the availability of building materials and water, transport and communication routes, the nature of agricultural activity and other economic and demographic elements. Some of this has been written previously about individual city sites, so it is valuable to have an Australia-wide overview.

The author's scientific and technical background has influenced not only the focii of his interests, but also his general approach to the writing of the history and the structure and style of its presentation. In essence it is structured more like a technical or scientific text than a conventional historical narrative. The material is divided into numerous sub-sections dealing with diverse

aspects, one result of which is a degree of overlap and the repetition of points and information. There is a concluding chapter that synthesises the main issues and trends.

The technical influence is also seen in the use of in-text referencing rather than footnotes or endnotes. This is a matter of personal taste, but I prefer the traditional historians' use of footnotes or endnotes as being less intrusive. In this case, the in-text citations draw attention to the fact that for his historical information the author is understandably dependent on secondary works of historians, such as Grace Karskens in Sydney, Gary Presland in Melbourne and Pamela Statham-Drew in Perth and elsewhere.

What is also noticeable is that a considerable proportion of the scientific references are relatively old, notably from the 1970s to 1990s. This is not my field and it may be that there has been little further research in geological, botanical and related disciplines, but I doubt it and expect that there would be a large volume of more recent literature coming out of our universities.

I am aware that in the area of anthropological archaeology there have been major advances in recent decades and there is little sign of these. For example, the Indigenous occupation of the sites of Sydney and Perth are indicated by the author as about 6000-7000 years ago, although recognising 35,000 years in Tasmania. Modern scholarship dates Indigenous occupation of the southern part of the continent as at

least 40,000 years. Further north the figure of 65,000 years is frequently cited. Here, I recommend readers to see Billy Griffiths, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia*.

More positively, the author has included sections that examine the relationship between landscape elements and Indigenous economies in the various sites.

Topographic reconstruction maps are provided in each chapter. These are useful, overlaying geological, topographical and other natural features with early settlement activities and patterns. However, they would be more valuable if they could have been reproduced larger, as a magnifying glass is required to make out much of the detail.

This book may prove useful as an introduction to understanding the foundation of Australian capital cities for those who have little existing knowledge, and it could help those with an existing knowledge to acquire a better comprehension of the role of the natural environment in Australia's human history.

Don Garden
Hobart

* * *

Heather Goodall, *Georges River Blues: Swamps, Mangroves and Resident Action, 1945-1980*, ANU Press, World Forest History Series, Canberra, 2022, 305 pages; ISBN 9781760464622.

Professor Heather Goodall's impressive environmental history tells how suburban activists fought to save the Georges River in southern Sydney over a 40-year period. The 'blues' of the title refers to seven environmental disputes between 1945 and 1980 centred around the fate of this damaged, yet cherished waterway.

The Georges River activists brought a range of perspectives to their campaigns that, Goodall argues, have been given scant attention in the public mind or in histories of Australian environmental battles. While each campaign was distinctive in its own right, all had elements in common.

Goodall emphasises the suburban nature of the campaigners and argues that environmental histories have tended to focus on middle-class activists rather than the predominantly working-class people of the Georges River. The activities of these mainly Anglo Celtic residents had little in common with familiar tropes of Australian environmental histories such as campaigns run by urban environmentalists – supported by union green bans – or deep green campaigners fighting to conserve pristine wilderness areas.

Goodall challenges the usual characterisation of post-war suburban expansion as an essentially conservative development, with suburbanites showing little concern for much outside their own fences and manicured lawns. The Georges River campaigners were her people, as Professor Goodall grew up on the river in the late 1950s and

1960s. As a result her presence is pervasive, yet unobtrusive, in this story. Indeed, a common element of all the campaigns Goodall analyses is the idea of 'sociality': the river as a place to meet friends and enjoy a range of social interactions – some public, others hidden and illicit.

The historical context of these campaigns is outlined as Goodall takes us back to the time of the pleasure grounds of the early 20th century when the Georges River was the 'picnic river'. Then dramatic population growth and demographic changes after World War II led to rapid development along the river.

At a time of only minimal environmental regulation, the massive explosion of household and industrial waste in these years adversely affected all of Sydney's waterways, including the Georges River. Toxic runoff from the riverside factories and the dumping of garbage to fill in what were considered undesirable mangroves intensified. As Goodall comments, the Georges River campaigns 'were attempting to defend a damaged and polluted river and the scarred remnants of its endemic bushland'.

As the population skyrocketed, homes were established in unsewered areas such as sections of the northern shore of the river and the whole southern shore in Sutherland Shire. Soon faecal contamination became a serious threat, strangely something that does not emerge from the oral histories. Goodall's conclusion that the 'heaviest environmental cost of Sydney's post-

war modernisation was paid by the Georges River', may be correct, but if this is so the grossly contaminated Long Bay at Malabar in the eastern suburbs would not have been far behind.

One of the fascinating aspects of this work is what Goodall describes as the 'entanglements' between 'shifting environments and changing attitudes'. One element of the 'shifting environment' was the spread of mangroves along the river since the 1930s. Making extensive use of oral history and archival records such as aerial photographs, Goodall explores the reasons for this expansion.

In considering changing attitudes to mangroves – central to Goodall's story – she ruefully admits how, in writing this book, she had to deal with how she 'hated and feared' mangroves when growing up in Padstow on the western side of Salt Pan Creek, which flows into the Georges River. She was not alone in the perception of 'these waterlogged places' as 'sources of danger and evil'. By the time of the 1970s campaigns, however, attitudes had changed and mangroves were portrayed as an 'endearingly maternal and nurturing species'.

Unfortunately, this serious environmental history is worthy of better production values. While there are a few minor editorial glitches which careful copy editing would have eliminated, such as being reminded at least three times that the National Park became the Royal National Park after Queen Elizabeth's visit to Sydney in 1954, a lack of creative design detracts

from the overall look of the book. Photos are often unimaginatively laid out, and a larger format would at times have been preferable. While many maps/plans are clear and easy to read, others are too small to read the detail. Professor Goodall's exceptional work deserves better.

Anyone who knows and loves the Georges River will be fascinated by this ground-breaking history, which examines with accessible erudition the impact of human and non-human species on the river. While Goodall focuses on living networks, she also analyses – with aplomb – geological and hydrological questions. *Georges River Blues* is a work of interest to historians, environmentalists, botanists, oyster farmers and bird watchers and is a valuable contribution to the historiography of southern Sydney.

Pauline Curby

Former Councillor RAHS and President,
Sutherland Shire Historical Society

* * *

Brendan Atkins, *The Naturalist: the remarkable life of Allan Riverstone McCulloch*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2022, viii + 190 pages; ISBN 9781742237756.

This book is a fascinating biography of a pioneering scientist of an earlier time, when formal qualifications were rare and unnecessary. Essentially apprenticed to the small group of experienced and similarly unqualified veterans at the Australian Museum in

1898 as a 13-year-old, young Allan McCulloch learned on the job and became a renowned expert on Australia's fish species. He was also a keen photographer, a talented artist and an early science communicator, illustrating his acclaimed public lectures with the ultra-modern lantern slides he had created for the purpose. McCulloch also developed spectacular dioramas that transformed the museum from its previous unexciting array of mounted specimens in glass cases.

Tragically, this gifted but troubled man perished by his own hand at the age of 40. Equally sadly, his extraordinary contributions had been almost completely overlooked until this important book.

Brendan Atkins is an ecologist who has written two earlier books and for nine years edited the Australian Museum's *Explore* magazine. In that capacity, he noticed that McCulloch had contributed articles and illustrations to every issue in that magazine's first few years after its publication began in 1921. He decided to undertake the research that enabled him to write this biography, aiming, as he writes in the preface, to see McCulloch's reputation 'restored, recognised and celebrated'. That lofty goal is certainly achieved by this book.

Eschewing the traditional approach of a linear chronology, Atkins tells the life of this complex man through a series of thematic chapters. The book is beautifully illustrated by drawings, paintings and contemporary photographs, many of them McCulloch's own work, supplemented by a detailed index and a

complete list of sources used, including newspapers and archives.

It is fitting that McCulloch's permanent memorial is on Lord Howe Island. At a time when travel was difficult and dangerous, he first visited the island in 1902 for a seven-week scientific expedition that identified nearly 100 fish species. He returned frequently between then and his death in 1925. As Atkins writes, McCulloch 'was the first Australian scientist to extol the natural values of Lord Howe Island to a general audience'.

McCulloch was also one of the first to recognise the devastation of the island's wildlife that resulted from a 1918 shipwreck that introduced rats to the island. He began the process of restoration that has continued to this day. His public lectures and museum dioramas led to the increasing awareness of the island's importance, which eventually culminated in its World Heritage listing by UNESCO 40 years ago.

As has been the case with successive generations of museum scientists, his understanding of the natural world led him inexorably to activism and conflict with the more conservative figures in managerial roles. Recent research shows that we continue to suffer from this problem of researchers being pressured by hypersensitive managers to steer way from controversial fields of inquiry and to be less public in exposing inappropriate corporate behaviour.

Atkins deals sensitively with the difficult terrain of the museum's interaction with tribal societies in Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait. Many

of the practices that were common a hundred years ago are now recognised as cultural theft; museums around the world are engaging in the return of artefacts and human remains to their proper resting places. McCulloch was a person of his time and his activity, acceptable then, would now be seen as insensitive.

The book also handles respectfully the difficult subject of McCulloch's mental health and suicide. He would now be seen as having the swings between bursts of creativity and bouts of depression that are characteristic of the bipolar. Support for those with mental health issues was even more inadequate a hundred years ago than it is today. Tragically, he visited Hawaii and found it comparatively easy there to purchase the gun that enabled him to end his life.

As with any well-written biography of a figure of historic importance, the book inevitably raises general issues that are still significant today. Documenting the unique flora and fauna of Lord Howe Island led to recognition of its importance, then more recently to a program to rid the island of feral predators and restore its native species. More generally, researchers have an obligation to inform public debate and decision-making with their expert knowledge, while communities need to support research and value its findings, which can help us get back into balance with the natural systems of this planet.

Ian Lowe

School of Environment and Science,
Griffith University

Alan Atkinson, *Elizabeth & John: The Macarthurs of Elizabeth Farm*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2022, xi + 500 pages; ISBN 9781742237565.

This book is an easy read, thanks to the author's mastery of his material and the large typeface. It is divided into 46 chapters grouped in eight parts with an introduction and an epilogue. It has a bibliography, copious notes, and a useful index, as well as a few illustrations, mainly photographs of paintings of the Macarthur family.

Generally the proofreader has done a good job, but the spelling of one name changes from Clark to Clarke and the indefinite article is missing from one sentence. More worrying is citation of an article that has no relevance to the proposition it is meant to support (p 15, note 5). The article was checked because of doubts about Atkinson's proposition. Not all references have been checked and it is hoped that this is an isolated instance of an unfortunate mistake.

Despite several admirable aspects, *Elizabeth & John* is a disappointing effort. Most to admire is the equal weight given to Elizabeth Macarthur. However, the treatment of her role in the marriage and her feelings falls short of being fully satisfactory because of deficiencies in the treatment of John Macarthur. Atkinson casts him as inheriting the best traits of intellect and character from what we now call the Enlightenment – among them self-awareness. This review cannot attempt an extended discussion of problems with this thesis, but a few matters will

suffice to show that the threads that hold it together are few and weak and will surely break when any pressure of analysis is applied.

This review will not attempt analysis of Atkinson's related thesis that Macarthur consciously and successfully applied principles of political economy (largely derived from reading Adam Smith) in his periods of public administration of New South Wales and in his private businesses. But the evidence is very thin. This review also avoids arguments over the rights and wrongs of the insurrection that deposed Governor William Bligh. The focus is on matters not in dispute.

John Macarthur was a serial criminal. He was never convicted, but he was a criminal nevertheless. This is not the anachronistic imposition of modern standards upon a different society and legal system. He was a criminal according to the law and standards of his time. A detailed account and analysis of Macarthur's duelling is beyond the scope of this review, but he took part in three duels, and in each case, according to Atkinson, aimed to hit his opponent. We can be certain of that in the first two, and there is no reason to doubt it for the third. He had murderous intent. He nearly killed Colonel William Paterson in 1801, and was sent to England for trial, which he avoided through fortuitous circumstances. Atkinson does not deal satisfactorily with the man who was prepared to murder on at least three occasions.

Atkinson sets out other matters

having a bearing on Macarthur's behaviour and character but fails to draw necessary conclusions. The worst instance occurs in Chapter 26 – 'The Parlour Scene'. A policeman (Oakes) attempted to arrest Macarthur. At a trial Macarthur cross-examined Oakes, putting a version of what took place. Atkinson accepts that Macarthur's version was false. He was 'intent on closing the gap between what had been done and said, and what, in the best of all possible worlds, he might have done and said'. He comes to the view that 'with wishful thinking ... he recreated entire conversations'.

The man Atkinson reveals here is at best a delusional fantasist, at worst an inveterate liar. It therefore beggars belief that Atkinson concludes: 'The parlour scene, as concocted by himself, showed his honesty on an intimate scale ... a man who *felt* truth ...' (Atkinson's emphasis). Whatever that is supposed to mean, it will not do as character analysis.

We know John Macarthur was a lunatic – certified in 1832. But there are signs of erratic behaviour and thinking much earlier. One aspect of the incident with Oakes gives an indication that by 1808 the family was aware of his lunatic tendencies. Macarthur gave Oakes a paper with his thoughts written on it. When Oakes had gone a little way someone came asking for the paper to be returned. Oakes refused. Atkinson accepts it was not John Macarthur who wanted it back. He thinks it was Elizabeth. But Atkinson does not draw the obvious conclusion that she wanted

to prevent his ravings being made public.

These matters, with others covered in the book, lead inexorably to the view that John Macarthur was one of the least self-aware persons in early colonial New South Wales. Alan Atkinson started his examination of the Macarthurs by asserting that ‘everything we think we know ... needs to be reconsidered’. Much in this book needs to be reconsidered.

Ian Dodd

Member RAHS

* * *

June Factor, *Soldiers and Aliens: Men in the Australian Army's Employment Companies during World War II*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2022, xvi + 327 pages; ISBN 9780522878585.

Non-British refugees, living in Australia when World War II broke out, were allowed to enlist in the Australian Military Forces in 1942, when the nation was desperately trying to increase its manpower to defend itself against a possible Japanese invasion. As uniformed soldiers they served in employment companies providing labour in support of the war effort. Most commonly they loaded and unloaded trains at the interstate railway break-of-gauge or ships at city ports. Their work enabled army personnel to focus on armed defence and ensured the efficient flow of military equipment and supplies within Australia.

June Factor explains the contribution to the war effort made by 4000 members

of 11 employment companies. And she traces the experiences of these unnaturalised Australians working and living as soldiers without guns in wartime and post-war Australia.

Factor began by wanting to find out about her father's war. Saul Factor was an anti-Fascist Polish Jew who served in 6th Employment Company (Aliens). His unit helped fight the Battle for Tocumwal and the Battle for Albury. They did the hard yakka of transshipping bulky military supplies, weaponry, ammunition and, on occasion, fruit and food destined for civilian as well as military use.

Her project grew beyond a simple family history and beyond an account of the exploits of her father's unit. She scoured the official records, conducted scores of interviews and drew on the personal records of the families of men who served in the employment units. She found that many of the men had arrived in the 1930s, some in the 1920s. The majority came from Europe, particularly from Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece and what was called Yugoslavia. A smaller number came from Asia: they served in companies clearly distinguished as Chinese, Javanese (Indonesian) and Timorese.

The demand for labour was such that the physical tests the aliens faced for enlistment were not rigorous. The age limits were generous: men between 18 and 60 years of age were accepted. The base requirement for joining the Australian Military Forces was that all had to swear allegiance to King George VI.

This is an account of war on the home front and local historians will be pleased to note that Factor writes of the ways the members of the employment companies engaged with the local communities where they were stationed. Local communities tended to remain aloof from the 'Friendly Aliens'. They attended the concerts and musicals the men produced but were wary of the soldiers in their midst speaking in a foreign language. They may have felt some disquiet if they saw the portrait of Joseph Stalin next to that of King George VI in the unit's canteen.

June Factor is an accomplished writer, best known for her quirkily titled explorations of children's folklore, such as *Captain Cook chased a Chook* and *Cinderella dressed in Yella*. She describes the crisp daily company report entries, which often contain no more than the three words – 'transhipping, loading, lashing' – as using language with the 'clipped economy of a telegram'.

Factor delights in the observation of one of her informants that 'we had inhaled enough Australian air not to consider our superiors to be our betters'. And the response of another to the insistence that, 'You need to polish up your English' with 'Don't you think my English is Polish enough?' She is conscious of the need to subsume personal experience into a broader general narrative, but keeps the wider story richly studded with individual stories.

Factor looks to how her employment company soldiers fared after their units

disbanded. Politicians disagreed about the level of entitlement foreigners, who served in non-combatant units in Australia, should have to repatriation benefits. They had not risked life or limb, like combatants at the front. Their most frequent injuries were bad backs, crushed fingers or crushed toes.

Nevertheless, Arthur Calwell's Aliens Classification Advisory Committee noted that the post-war nation would stand to gain much by admitting such people into the life of the community on discharge. European refugee soldiers were permitted to apply for naturalisation without paying the regulatory £5 fee. But almost all the Chinese, Indonesian and Timorese who had served as Australian soldiers were deported.

The book is framed as a tribute. Factor fears that the employment companies have become forgotten units and she writes to restore them to public memory. Most readers will already know of the way Australia coped with a large group of non-British detainees expelled from Britain on the HMS *Dunera*. The recent two-volume book *Dunera Lives: A Visual History*, by Ken Inglis, Seumas Spark and Jay Winter with Carol Bunyan (2018, 2020) is a lovingly detailed work which vividly portrays the limbo of internment and traces the subsequent fortunes of the detainees. That work and this book were developed independently of each other, but they are companions.

Factor has a wider brief. She contextualises the accounts Inglis gives

of those Dunera boys who, on release from internment, served in the 8th Employment Company. Nevertheless, her work, like that by Inglis, helps us to understand the experience of being a non-British stranger in war-time Australia, long before the term 'multicultural' was coined.

Bruce Pennay
Charles Sturt University

* * *

Joan Beaumont, *Australia's Great Depression: How a nation shattered by the Great War survived the worst economic crisis it has ever faced*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2022, ix + 565 pages; ISBN 9781760293987.

In her history of Australia's involvement in the Great War (*Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2013) Joan Beaumont ensured that her account was comprehensive, because in her own words, she saw the home front 'as being in a dialogue with the battlefield', and located her narrative within that wider context. There are two reasons why this account of the impact of the Great Depression on Australian society is equally as comprehensive.

In the first place Professor Beaumont is concerned not only with the economic causes and consequences of the Depression on Australian society but also with the political responses, which she carefully demonstrates were woefully inadequate, both from the Scullin and Lyons governments. She

also seeks to show how the Depression and its consequences affected ordinary people. In this context, the chapters dealing with women at risk (chapter 26) and those who were left homeless (chapters 27, 28, 29) are particularly insightful in demonstrating the hardships that the Depression inflicted on so many Australians.

The second reason for the comprehensiveness of this study lies in Beaumont's understanding that the impact of the Depression varied from region to region, from one profession to another and from one class to another. In this context, she argues that the Depression affected some states and some industries worse than others. Rural industries collapsed, but the textile industry was protected by heavy tariffs while food production was sustained by continuing demand. She also records how women, who for whatever reason lacked family support, received very little in the form of government or community organisation help.

There are two arguments that run through the book that I found particularly compelling and important. I have quibbles with them but these relate to suggestions for modification and elaboration rather than disagreement. In one of these arguments Beaumont argues that the nation survived the Depression because of the strength of its democratic institutions and the popular support for them. The argument that the most significant feature in Australian politics in the 1930s was that the centre and therefore democracy itself held firm

in the face of challenges from the (Communist) left and (Neo-fascist/Fascist) right, was also featured in the documentary *The Years That Made Us* (Beyond Productions, Artarmon, 2013), narrated by Chris Masters.

However, Beaumont's argument differs in emphasis because she attributes the resilience of democratic institutions not just to their intrinsic strength but to the relative ideological weakness of the Communist and New Guard alternatives. In particular, she argues that the New Guard was not a fascist organisation, although in my judgment Andrew Moore has argued persuasively that this movement and its leader, Eric Campbell, were strongly influenced by fascism and not sympathetic to democracy. After all, Campbell was an admirer of Sir Oswald Mosley, the unabashed British fascist leader.

The second argument relates to Beaumont's careful analysis of the qualities of resilience shown by the Australian people in facing and overcoming the adversities thrown up by the Depression. I suspect that resilience was a quality that was shared across class, gender and ethnicity, but it also seems clear that resilience took a variety of forms. Moreover, middle-class men and women were not always willing to acknowledge that working-class men possessed this quality.

In chapter 11, Beaumont explores the role of voluntary organisations in providing relief for families in which the male breadwinner was unemployed.

Given the lack of government infrastructure at all levels to provide assistance to the victims of the Depression, these organisations played a major role in the distribution of goods and services. However, as Beaumont acknowledges, the middle-class men and women who staffed these organisations tended to blame the alleged character flaws of the unemployed for their current situations. While they demonstrated resilience they don't seem to have attributed such a quality to their working-class clients.

I suspect that working-class resilience often took different forms that were unlikely to win middle-class acceptance or approval. For example, the families who lived in the shanty town at Menindie, including my aunt and uncle, survived on 'susso', the fruit and vegetables they grew in their own carefully cultivated gardens and the sheep that they stole from the local squatters on carefully organised night-time raids. In other words not only did resilience take different forms but it didn't necessarily always unite Australians either.

Some chapters are essentially descriptive and because they lack an analytical dimension seem to be encyclopaedic in quality. For example, she provides comprehensive summaries about the debates among economists and historians as to the causes of the Great Depression (chapter 11) and the factors behind Australia's emergence from this economic crisis by 1937 (chapter 34) but doesn't develop her

own arguments which propose which causes and factors she considers were most important. Given the impressive knowledge that she demonstrates both of economics and economic history throughout this book it seems to me that she is eminently qualified to make that kind of assessment.

The book ends in a hurry with a teasing and provocative argument that it was not until Chifley came to power that policies were put in place that finally addressed the structural issues related to governing institutions and the economy itself that the Depression had revealed. This is an important conclusion and one that needed further elaboration, especially in terms of listing to which of Chifley's policies she is referring.

Joan Beaumont's book on the Great War has become a standard book on its subject. When I visited the Somme battlefields in 2018 I carried a copy with me and constantly referred to it. Similarly, this book will become a standard reference for all those who are interested in the history of the Great Depression, both academic historians and general readers alike. Because, finally, it is yet another great strength of this book that it is written in a readable style that manages to convey complex ideas and arguments not only to a specialist audience but also to a wider reading public with a curiosity about and love for Australian history.

Richard Waterhouse
School of Humanities, University of
Sydney

Joel Stephen Birnie, *My People's Songs: How an Indigenous Family Survived Colonial Tasmania*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Vic, 2022, xxi + 231 pages; ISBN 9781922633187.

A notable feature of the native title legal system where I have worked as an historian for over 20 years is the presence in each mainland state and territory of at least one representative body (some are called service providers) funded by the Federal Government to assist traditional owners to file claims in the Federal Court and to progress them through the system. The ultimate aim is to get Australian law to recognise what claimants have always known: that they have maintained their own system of law and custom and that connects them to their traditional land and waters.

I work for the service provider in New South Wales, the Native Title Services Corporation, and together with community facilitators, solicitors and anthropologists we engage closely with the claimants to assemble the evidence and either negotiate or litigate an outcome.

The exception to this system is Tasmania, which does not have such an organisation. Consequently, there have only been five claims in Tasmania and none passed the initial stage of registration. It seems that the erroneous belief has persisted within government into the post-Mabo era that Tasmanian Aboriginal people died out with Truganini, relegating the state to the rear in support for native title claims.

This situation came to mind soon

after I began reading Joel Stephen Birnie's *My People's Songs: How an Indigenous Family Survived Colonial Tasmania*. The book is a harrowing account of three members of Joel's own ancestral family from the 19th and early 20th centuries: Tarenootairer (c.1806-1858) and two of her daughters, Mary Ann Arthur (c.1821-1871) and Fanny Cochrane Smith (c.1832-1905). There are three parts to the book, each one a separate biographical account.

Birnie utilises a decolonising methodology to challenge the racist tropes that dominate contemporary accounts, also drawing on family oral history to build an accurate picture of the three women's lives. He demonstrates that despite overwhelming odds, the three women survived abuse, incarceration and forced labour to adapt to colonial life with elements of traditional culture and knowledge of their land and waters intact.

Tarenootairer probably came from the north-east coast of mainland Tasmania and belonged to the Pinterairrer clan. Kidnapped by sealers when she was 12 or 13 and taken to King Island in the western Bass Strait, Tarenootairer withstood a life of beatings and slavery. Rescued by Protector G. A. Robinson and returned to the mainland, she used her tracking skills to assist him in rounding up other Tasmanian clans. Those who were gathered up, including Tarenootairer herself, were eventually incarcerated at Wybalenna on Flinders Island, which became a 'disease-riddled death camp'

for the inhabitants. The survivors were taken in the 1840s to Oyster Cove, where supervision was less onerous and supplies of native foods more plentiful. Nevertheless, conditions were still poor. Tarenootairer died from influenza in 1858, aged only 52 years.

Mary Ann and Fanny both endured significant hardship in their lives as well. Removed from Tarenootairer at an early age, Mary Ann spent many years in domestic servitude. She also accompanied G. A. Robinson to Port Phillip in Victoria before returning to Wybalenna where she and her husband regularly stood up to colonial authority.

Fanny raised a large family with her former convict husband William Smith, eventually settling in a small cottage south of Hobart. She faced persistent questions about her ancestry while maintaining a strong Christian faith that she blended with beliefs from her traditional culture. As late as 1903 she recorded several Tasmanian Aboriginal songs on a phonograph.

The absence of native title in Tasmania may be a blessing in disguise. Claims can take two decades to resolve, placing immense pressure on community members, who experience repeated questioning of their connection by the white legal system. And even after a successful outcome, it is a hard road for native title holders to benefit from their recognition and set up a stable future. The Tasmanian Aboriginal community has taken a different path, successfully lobbying for state-based land rights legislation that does not

require proof of connection.

Furthermore, Birnie's sensitive, insightful and poignant retelling of his family history demonstrates the immense resilience and strength of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture. It's not always necessary to get the white man's tick of approval to show that your culture has adapted and survived to the present day.

Dr Michael Bennett

NSW Native Title Services Corporation

* * *

Patricia Clarke, *Bold Types: how Australia's first women journalists blazed a trail*, National Library of Australia Publishing, Canberra, 2022, xv + 256 pages; ISBN 9781922507372.

This engaging book by long-time journalist Patricia Clarke, who began her own journalistic career in 1951 (yes, 1951), stands as a snapshot of Australian women journalists working up until the author started her own career. To my great shame I had never heard of any of them. Of course I was familiar with the obvious women journalists of the Labour/Labor movement and early feminists (Catherine Helen Spence, Louisa Lawson and Mary Gilmore) but the 13 women included here were a revelation. Some of them had even reached the dizzy heights of accredited foreign correspondents – but not all of them.

While Clarke has chosen to tell this history by means of separate short biographies, there are running themes

that dominate the 13 biographies. These themes are also emphasised in Amy Remeikis's foreword, which also makes some interesting comparisons with the career trajectories of some of our modern/contemporary women journalists, for example, Leigh Sales. Karen Middleton, Katharine Murphy, Laura Tingle, some of whom are television 'anchors' or working in leading major outlets. This would have been impossible for Clarke's 13. Middle-class women in the middle of the 19th century were not expected to work and certainly not in such a masculine and often slightly disreputable environment.

The 13 faced overt discrimination on the ground of sex to the extent that they were banned from many news outlets and if they did manage to get a foot in the door would be limited to the so-called 'women's pages' of most major newspapers. These 'women's pages' were dedicated to the supposed interests of women readers; that is, management of the domestic sphere (including household hints and recipes) and matters of fashion and could even extend to the provision of dress patterns in an age before mass production of women's clothing.

Beyond that, equal pay was not even thought of and one of the 13 wrote for 11 separate mastheads to make a living wage. Towards the end of the period traversed by Clarke, equal pay was technically possible but unlikely in practice as most women journalists were held back by classification into low

'grades' even where their work was clearly equal to their male colleagues. Senior male journalists controlled the grade classification system. And of course married women – including Clarke herself – suffered from the total absence of child care, maternity leave or domestic assistance. Not surprisingly many of the 13 remained unmarried and childless. Below I briefly review three of the thirteen.

Anna Blackwell (1816-1900) was the older sister of Elizabeth Blackwell, the world's first qualified woman doctor. They came from a family of English social activists whose father led them all to pre-bellum America so he could engage in Abolitionist campaigning. She most famously became a foreign correspondent for the Sydney based Fairfax stable, notably writing from Paris during the bloody Franco-Prussian War of 1870. She escaped the siege of Paris in circumstances that would have impressed Lillian Hellmann. Her work was seen as human interest material and unlike her male colleagues, who had various ways of getting their copy back to Sydney, her work was sent by ship, taking over six weeks to reach Australia. When she eventually died she did not merit any obituary from Fairfax for whom she had worked for more than 30 years.

Edith Dickenson (1851-1903) led a much more unconventional life with a background that was thoroughly upper-class/minor aristocracy. After a few predictable years as a wife and mother she ran off with a married man (whose

abandoned wife pursued him for reparations) and their subsequent peripatetic life necessitated her finding paid work. Edith eventually found herself reporting on the Boer War in South Africa, where she was not the principal correspondent (that was a man) but was writing more descriptive eye-witness accounts which again were sent back to Australia by ship while the male correspondent pieces were sent by means of the new telegraphic technology then available. She reported on the establishment of what were probably the world's first concentration camps for civilian women, children and men in South Africa.

Alice Henry (1852-1943), the first woman to be trained and employed as a journalist in Australia, was also trapped in the women's pages of the *Australasian* until in 1893 she met Catherine Helen Spence, who opened up journalistic opportunities for her in Britain and America. From 1903 she edited the American trade union paper *Life and Labor*, advocating labour law reform for women and female suffrage. When she died her unpublished memoir was edited by Nettie Palmer. Her work in America was a long way from the recipe pages she had edited in Australia.

Women's history is often a case of rediscovery. We should be grateful that Patricia Clarke has resurrected these lost heroines.

Dr Suzanne Jamieson

Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Sydney

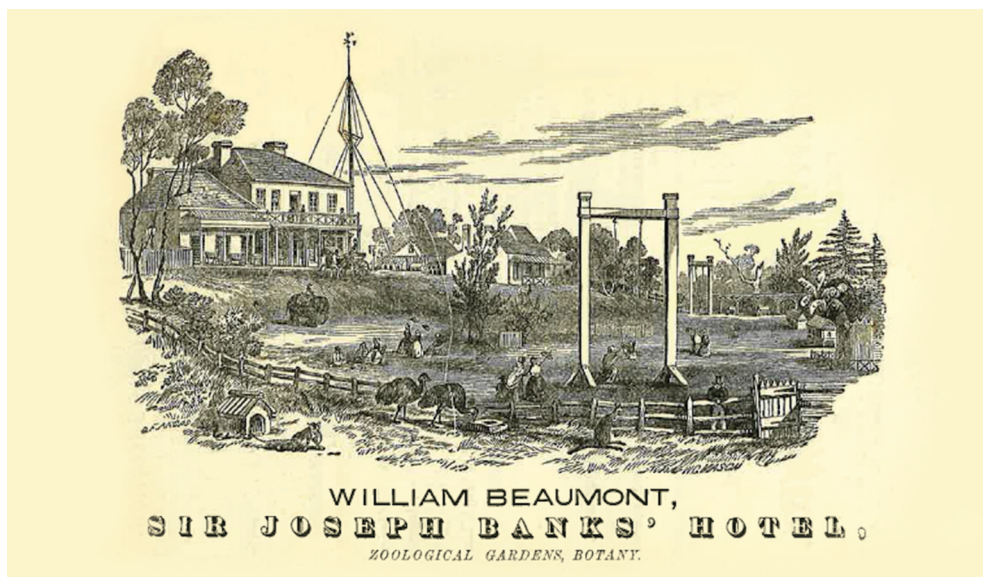
Contributors

Terry Kass PhD is a consulting historian who specialises in heritage and conservation work. Publications include histories of Parramatta and Grafton, surveyors and surveying as well as *Unlocking Land: A Guide to Crown Land Records held at State Archives NSW*.

Mark St Leon PhD is the author of the definitive history of circus in Australia, *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne Books, 2011). Dr St Leon is a Councillor of the Royal Australian Historical Society. His website, The Penny Gaff, is dedicated to the history of Australia's circus and travelling show people: www.pennygaff.com.au

Keith Amos BA, MLitt PhD grew up in Harbord and had a primary teaching career before transferring to teacher education at the University of Technology, Sydney, where he taught subjects related to Australian history. Dr Amos's publications include the books: *The New Guard Movement 1931-1935*, and *The Fenians in Australia, 1865-1880*. He retired from UTS in 2015. Keith is a Fellow of Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society and is currently writing a history of the society for its centenary celebration in 2024.

Matthew Fishburn PhD is a writer and rare book dealer. He is the author of *Burning Books* (Palgrave) and has published essays on colonial history in *The Book Collector*, *Meanjin*, *Archives of Natural History*, *Journal of the History of Collections* and the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*.



IN THIS ISSUE

Touching hands with Anzacs: a re-evaluation of 1920s War Service Homes in NSW
TERRY KASS

Beaumont & Waller's Botanical & Zoological Gardens, at the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel,
Botany Bay 1848-61
MARK ST LEON

Ingleside Powder Works: 'a curious colonial enterprise'
KEITH AMOS

Thomas Wilson Esq and the natural history collections of First Fleet Surgeon John White
MATTHEW FISHBURN

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Cox, *Broken Spear: The untold story of Black Tom Birch, the man who sparked
Australia's bloodiest war*
RUTH KERR

Anthony Webster, *The Foundation of Australia's Capital Cities: Geology, Landscape,
and Urban Character*
DON GARDEN

Heather Goodall, *Georges River Blues: Swamps, Mangroves and Resident Action,
1945-1980*
PAULINE CURBY

Brendan Atkins, *The Naturalist: The remarkable life of Allan Riverstone McCulloch*
IAN LOWE

Alan Atkinson, *Elizabeth & John: The Macarthurs of Elizabeth Farm*
IAN DODD

June Factor, *Soldiers and Aliens: Men in the Australian Army's Employment
Companies during World War II*
BRUCE PENNAY

Joan Beaumont, *Australia's Great Depression: How a nation shattered by the Great
War survived the worst economic crisis it has ever faced*
RICHARD WATERHOUSE

Joel Stephen Birnie, *My People's Songs: How an Indigenous Family Survived Colonial
Tasmania*
MICHAEL BENNETT

Patricia Clarke, *Bold Types: How Australia's first women journalists blazed a trail*
SUZANNE JAMIESON