Peninsula Historian

Newsletter of the Manly, Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

VOLUME 13 No. 3 April 2020 ISSN 1835-7628 (print) 2207-8401 (electronic)

FROM THE EDITOR

Something to read while in lockdown!

Thank you to Keith Amos for providing two items for this issue. He has given a summary of what is known about Aboriginal presence on the northern beaches at the time of European arrival and also an item associated with early surfing at Manly. The former was triggered by the article by William Govett in the previous issue and the latter by the article on Duke Kahanamoku late last year.

Alongside Keith's note on the local aboriginal groupings, I have included a well-known portrait of Bungaree whom Keith mentions. This image does a disservice to a man of quite outstanding intelligence, skills, knowledge and experience. I will include a fuller item on Bungaree in a future issue.

If you are looking for something to do in the next few weeks, please consider writing a piece for the Historian, or just simply asking a question on some aspect of our local history. Hopefully someone will be able to answer.

Richard Michell

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Well, what a changed world in just a month since my last report. I hope that all members and their families are well.

The executive of the Society views the virus situation as serious and has made the decision to avoid any potential physical contact between members. We believe that this is particularly prudent given our demographics. Accordingly we have cancelled our monthly meetings until further notice and have converted our committee meetings to virtual ones, "meeting" via the internet. The Historian will continue so the Society will not disappear completely from your lives.

In late February I attended a reception organised by NB Council to thank volunteers who worked at various venues on Australia Day. Proceeds for the day were distributed by Council amongst the various community groups who participated and we are very grateful to receive our generous share.

In early March I gave some support to the group trying to establish a museum of surfing on the Northern Beaches. They had a stall at the international surfing championship which was held in Manly early in March. More than 450 people signed a petition in support of the museum concept.

Finally, another reminder that our Membership Year runs from January to December If you have not as yet renewed please see the form and/or instructions on the last page.

Richard Michell

DIARY

Meetings held at the NB Council Community Centre on the corner of Abbott and Griffin Roads, North Curl Curl

In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, all monthly meetings have been cancelled until further notice.

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEXT MEETING, Date to be advised

As stated elsewhere, monthly meetings have been suspended until further notice.

LAST MEETING REPORT, Saturday 14 March, 2020

With the virus situation beginning to take off, our advertised speaker, Bill Slessor, understandably decided to adopt a cautious approach and not subject himself to potential exposure, particularly as he was flying home to England that same evening. The attendees understood Bill's predicament and, in his absence, were subjected to a review by Richard Michell of some of the 15 or so theories that exist for the origins of the name Dee Why. Two more theories were revealed by audience members in the course of the talk.

POT POURRI

Some remarks on William Govett's contact with Aboriginal fishermen in 1829

In relation to the article by Willam Govett in the last issue of the Historian, First Fleet chroniclers recorded three Aboriginal clans between Manly and Pittwater: Carigal (or Garigal) around Pittwater, Kayeemaigal (or Gayemagal) at Manly, and Kannaigal (or Cannalgal) near North Harbour. As the usual size of clans was about 50, their total population in our area was probably less than 200. Then, at its peak in 1789, smallpox decimated Aboriginal people by at least half; and this, combined with other European diseases, displacement by settlers and shortage of food, brought about a steep decline in numbers.

In 1815, some Garigal people led by Bungaree were re-located by Governor Macquarie to Georges Head in a failed attempt to convert them to farming: giving it up, they gravitated to Sydney Cove. Also, Sydney's first lord mayor, George Thornton, recollects (as a boy at Manly in the late 1830s) playing with Aboriginal children from the 'remnant of an old tribe of blacks' living at Little Manly Point. So by the time of Govett's writing, traditional Aboriginal society was substantially disrupted on the Northern Beaches - as elsewhere across Sydney.

Important to note, however, is the main theme of Paul Irish's talk to our Society based on his book *Hidden in Plain View*: that surviving Aboriginal people didn't 'disappear' so much as gradually integrate into colonial society. Well-known Brookvale man Bob Waterer (1924-2017), for example, was 80 when he found proof of his maternal descent from Sarah Lewis, a Garigal woman thought to have been (as a child) with Bungaree's group on George's Head.

Keith Amos

Portrait of Bungaree, a native of New South Wales, with Fort Macquarie, Sydney Harbour, in background 1826, Augustus Earle

Australia's first surf board rider

The main article in this issue is from Keith Amos and describes an incident in the surf at Manly in 1911. To date, no definitive evidence has emerged of who was the first person to ride a surfboard in Australia, nor where that seminal event occurred. However, circumstantially, Manly has a good claim to be the location and one of its residents, Tommy Walker, is a very strong candidate for being the first rider, probably in 1909.

Some suggest that Tommy Walker made his first ride at Yamba. The photo that accompanies Keith's article was taken there in 1912. Given his antics on the board, this ride is almost certainly not anywhere near Tommy's first. However it is certainly very close to being the first photograph of a board rider in Australia.

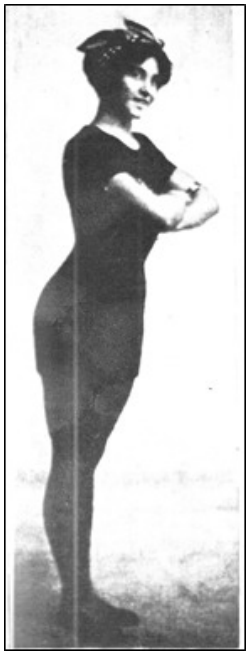
It was taken by Osric Notley who was a draper and professional photographer in Maclean on the NSW north coast and an active member of Yamba Surf Club for many years. He took numerous photographs in the area between 1910 and 1921. Tommy Walker used to spend part of each year in Yamba, working in the sugar mill. He also joined the surf club and thus the pair met. Ii is this fortunate coincidence that has delivered us this photograph and at least one other of Walker on his board from the 1911/12 surf season. Notley actually produced a post card with the other image.

No photograph has yet been found of Tommy Walker surfing at Manly. Reproduced here is one of him standing on the beach with his new board in 1909. How proficient he was at that date is unknown but in a letter to *The Referee* in 1939 he claimed to have won "my first surfboard shooting competition at Freshwater carnival back in 1911". The *Daily Telegraph* of Saturday 27 January 1912 reported "A clever exhibition of surf board shooting was given by Mr. Walker, of the Manly Seagull Surf Club. With his Hawaiian surf board he drew much applause for his clever feats, coming in on breakers standing balanced on his feet or his head."

Tommy Walker at Manly 1909

ARTICLE

SAVED BY A 'SIREN OF THE SURF'



Miss Ivy Schilling: 'Siren of the Surf"
Punch 30 Mar. 1911

As surf bathing became increasingly popular in the early 1900s, rescues and drownings increased, especially at beaches like Manly where large crowds congregated on weekends and public holidays in summer. For years, the Sly brothers (fishermen based at Shelley Beach) were called on to row out and rescue swimmers caught in undertows, and from 1904 the ocean beach was patrolled by Edward 'Happy' Eyre, a professional lifesaver engaged by Manly Council. 'Happy' was on duty when a remarkable rescue took place in March 1911: for the first time anyone had heard of, a male surfer was rescued by a young woman.

All the more remarkable was that the man rescued was Tommy Walker, one of Manly's pioneering exponents of Hawaiian-style surfboard riding, normally a strong swimmer. His gallant rescuer was Ivy Schilling, a pretty eighteen-year-old dancer. Did Tommy fake the need to be rescued, then? - as *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, it appears not. Walker said he had been in serious distress from a stomach cramp, having gone swimming too quickly after breakfast. A journalist recounted the event in detail as follows: -

The customary procedure in the surf at Manly when a channel is formed is for men to be continually rescuing ladies from the dangerous water. This, however, was reversed about 5.30 o'clock yesterday morning, when Miss Ivy Schilling, the well-known dancer of "Our Miss Gibbs" Company, saved Mr Tom Walker, one of the most skilful surfers who frequent South Steyne Beach.

Walker had been shooting the breakers for some time, when a wave carried him into deep water. He states that he was then seized with a violent cramp in the stomach, and threw up his hands. Jack Reynolds, the Manly life-saver, was basking on the beach, not being on duty; and he took no notice of Walker going under for the simple reason that he knew him to be a strong swimmer. Walker said he realised this would likely occur and felt his position to be all the more desperate on that account. Just as he was faced with this ordeal he noticed someone swimming strongly towards him. He was taken hold of, and assisted into shallow water. By this time "Happy" Eyre, the relieving beach attendant, had dashed in to his assistance. Both were surprised to see that Walker's rescuer was a girl. She had handled the emergency coolly and expertly, and there was considerable enthusiasm when she helped the beach attendant drag Walker out of the water. After working on the young man for some minutes he recovered. Walker attributes his trouble to going into the water too soon after breakfast.[1]

News of Ivy Schilling's heroic rescue was reported across NSW and within a week West's Pictures announced it was producing a film clip titled 'Scenes of the Surf' which would include Miss Schilling, the girl who saved Mr Tom Walker from drowning at Manly. There is no indication this came to fruition, although West's did run a picture competition at Camperdown called 'Sirens of the Surf', the winning photo of which was one of Ivy, posing perkily in her swimming costume.[2]

Born in Melbourne in 1892, Ivy had been dancing since early childhood, making her stage debut aged twelve in a Melbourne production of the pantomime Mother Goose. By 1910, she was dancing professionally in early J.C. Williamson musicals in Melbourne and Sydney, including the aforementioned 'Our Miss Gibbs', which had a record run at Sydney's Theatre Royal, extended by demand into Easter 1911. Both in Sydney and Perth, where the musical was staged in 1912, Ivy and her male dancing partner received some of the loudest applause.

Tommy Walker at Yamba, 1912
(Yamba Surf Life Saving Club)

In these same years, Tommy Walker was receiving equal acclaim as a surfboard rider. He is credited with having brought the first Hawaiian surfboard to Australian in 1909. He relates that he purchased it that year for two US dollars at Waikiki, when in port at Hawaii as a young merchant seaman. He and other men displayed surfboard riding at Manly later the same year – at least four years before Duke Kahanamoku's famous board-riding demonstrations at Freshwater

and Dee Why. The *Daily Telegraph*, reported the exploits of Walker and others at a North Steyne surf carnival in January 1912 as follows:

Mr Tommy Walker went out with his Hawaiian surfboard … at a disadvantage. To come ashore in view of the spectators, he had to swim out some distance north of the enclosure, for the undertow swept him southwards at a great rate. The surfboard wave shooting exhibitions are, when the weather is favourable, well worth witnessing. A practical swimmer performs remarkable evolutions on these boards. He will come in nonchalantly upright on the crest of a breaker, or balancing on the board on his head, with his legs aloft. An interesting exhibition of breaker-shooting was given by a number of North Steyners.[3]

Ivy Schilling, meanwhile, gained some unwanted attention in a highly publicised society divorce case in 1913. The suit was raised by Muriel Watt against her husband, Captain Oswald Watt, lately an officer in the NSW Scottish Rifles and former aide-de-camp to Sir Harry Rawson and Sir Frederick Darley (late governors of NSW). Mrs Watt sought divorce on grounds that her husband had mistresses in Melbourne and Sydney, among whom particular evidence was given about his clandestine meetings and outings with Miss Ivy Schilling during 1911-12.

A night porter at the Oxford Hotel said he had seen the couple coming and going from Miss Schilling's room, and that they had taken weekend motor car drives to remote places such as 'Balgowlah', an 'isolated place' with a beach nearby. The housemaid at Captain Watt's Phillip-street flat confirmed that the couple were often together, and that she had found hairpins, and once two pearls, in the Captain's bed. His nickname for Miss Schilling, she added, was 'Bob' [slang for a shilling]. In his summing up, the judge said it was clear that neither of the Watts wanted to continue their marriage and ordered the suit's costs be met by the Captain.[4]

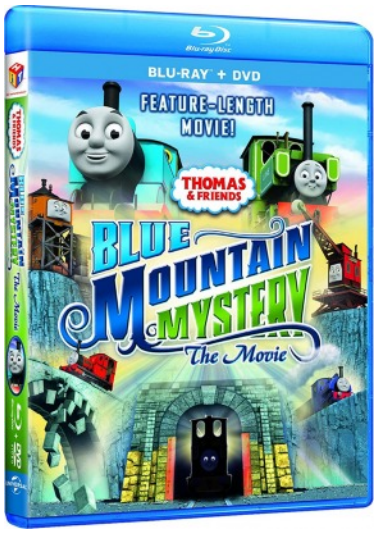
Ivy Schilling went to England in 1914 - altering her surname's German origins to 'Shilling' in the First World War. She found work in vaudeville and soon became quite a star in pantomime and musical theatre in London. Post-war, she returned briefly to Australia where she had the role of a dancer in a 1921 film, '*The Blue Mountains Mystery*', co-directed by Raymond Longford and Lottie Lyell. Back in England, she returned to her stage career and in 1932 married Dr John Ryan, an Australian Harley Street surgeon. She died in her 80th year in London in 1972.[5]

As Pauline Curby points out in her book, *Seven Miles from Sydney: A History of Manly,* Manly Surf Club began a ladies' life saving class in 1910 and examined a number of its members in February for proficiency certificates and bronze medallions.[6] So it may be that Ivy's expertise in rescuing Tommy Walker came from her being one of these trainees. This level of female involvement in lifesaving continued at Manly for some years but lapsed in the 1920s. Some women (notably at Terrigal) were called upon to replace men as lifesavers during the Second World War, however women were not permitted full membership of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia until 1980.

Keith Amos, February 2020

Notes:

1. *SMH,* 24 Mar 1911
2. *Camperdown Chronicle,* 28 Mar 1911; *Punch* (Melb.), 30 Mar 1911
3. *Daily Telegraph,* 1 Jan 1912
4. *Chronicle* (Adel.), 21 Jun 1913; *Sun,* 15 Sep 1913; *Truth,* 21 Sep 1913
5. Schilling, Ivy - People & organisations – Trove
6. Manly Council 2001, p.158



Two movies - which one did Ivy Schilling appear in?

Manly, Warringah and Pittwater
Historical Society Inc.
Established 1924

President
Richard Michell
0417 255 726
president@mwphs.com

Senior Vice President
Kevin Martin
kdm1932@bigpond.com

Vice President
Philip Dart

Patron
Currently vacant

Treasurer
Richard Michell
treasurer@mwphs.com

Assistant Treasurer
Di Farina

Archivist
Jan Tinkler
archivist@mwphs.com

Secretary
Di Farina
difarina@bigpond.com

Membership Secretary
Allan Burrowes
aburrowes@optusnet.com.au

Editor
Richard Michell
0417 255 726
editor@mwphs.com

Webmaster
Bill Slessor

Website
www.mwphs.com
Postal Address
PO Box 695 Manly, NSW 1655

Ivy Schilling lives on

Incredibly you can buy today on Amazon a tote bag with a signed image of Ivy Schilling (Shilling). It is a promotional shot for the Oxford Theatre London's 1919 musical *Maggie*. Ivy is bailing up a cowboy (Ernest Marini).

Be stylish with Ivy S(c)hilling

Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2020

(The membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December)

Title: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (please circle)

Name:

Age group (please tick): ☐ 10 – 18 ☐ 19 – 50 ☐ 51 – 70 ☐ 71 – 85 ☐ 86 – 95

[Note: this information is required for insurance purposes; if two persons included in this application fall into different age bands please tick both boxes]

Address:

State Postcode

Phone: (Home) (Bus.) (Mobile)

E-mail:

Signature:

Date:

MEMBERSHIP FEES **$20 Single** **$25 Household (2 persons) or Organisation**

FEE:	$……..	as above, includes emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian
	$12.00…..	only if you require Peninsula Historian by post
DONATION:	$……..	
TOTAL:	**$……**	**Do you require a receipt? Yes/No**

PAYMENT METHODS

- ***By cheque or money order***

  Please make payable to **'MWP Historical Society Inc'** and mail with the completed Renewal Form to:

  The Treasurer
  Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc
  PO Box 695
  MANLY, NSW 1655

  [DO NOT MAIL CASH. If paying in person place cash, cheque or money order in an envelope together with the completed Renewal Form)

- ***By Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)***

  Account Details: *Commonwealth Bank, Manly*
  Account Name: MWP Historical Society
  BSB Number: 062-197
  Account Number: 00907384

  (**If paying by EFT** please ensure that you enter your name in the *'to account description'* box and confirm your payment by sending an email to the Treasurer at treasurer@mwphs.com. This is essential for your correct identification and is particularly important if your payment is made through a Credit Union)