

The Old School Report.

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From the editor – You might have heard that after eighteen years of sterling service as a member of MIHS, Olwen has decided to resign because of her commitments elsewhere. She will be greatly missed and we can only hope that she will be able to rejoin at some point. I have offered to take on the task of producing the newsletter and can only hope to do as good a job as did Olwen. Like Olwen, I will (hopefully) receive contributions from members which will reflect the range of interests of our Society. Please contribute any items of interest, photographs, historical anecdotes or any other material you find interesting. Liz Bretherton's article in the last newsletter, a history of Werribee Mansion, was a fascinating study and I hope that others will be encouraged to contribute material.

Since Olwen usually included a comment about the nature and importance of history, I will follow her example with a quote from Confucius:

“Study the past if you would divine the future”.

I think we'd all agree with that advice.

Coming events

Monthly Meeting 2.00 pm at the RSL on Monday October 29th.

A Night at the Museum 6.30 pm Tuesday October 30th. The Society will be hosting the Rotary Club.

Advance notice: Christmas Lunch at Café 22, Pambula at 12.00 noon on December 12th

Crimes of the Convicts.

When I was teaching Year 9 history at Eden High and we started studying the convict period of Australian history, I would be told every year by at least one student that convicts were sent to Australia for stealing loaves of bread. This gave me the perfect opportunity to introduce the First Fleet database and let the students research this claim. They found, to their surprise, that there is no record of anyone being transported for stealing bread. They stole everything else but not bread.

So what did they steal? Here are some 'occupations' expressed in the 'thieves cant' of the late 18th century:

Abbess – was a woman who ran a brothel.

Adam tiler – received goods from a pickpocket and ran off with them.

Autem divers – picked pockets during church services in church.

Avoir du Pois lay – stealing brass weights from shop counters.

Badgers – robbed people near rivers and then threw the bodies into the river.

Cloak twitchers – lurked around alleyways and lanes to snatch cloaks from people riding past on horseback.

Divers – pickpockets.

Dog buffers – stole dogs and sold their skins.

Fire priggers – offered their services at building fires to allow them to enter the building and steal goods.

High Pad – a highwayman.

Hoist – burglar's assistant. Someone who helped the burglar enter a house via the window.

Jarkmen – counterfeiters of certificates.

Ken cracker – broke into houses.

Resurrection men – stole bodies from new graves and sold them to medical students.

Rum dubber – picked locks and broke into houses.

Water sneaksman – stole from ships on the rivers of London.

Whispering dudders – offered to sell poor quality good, legally obtained, as smuggled wares.

It's clear from this list that the convicts had their own language and were not innocent, poverty-stricken unfortunates. They were professional criminals who would have scorned the very idea of stealing bread. Usually, my students came around to this view after they had studied the evidence.

From Our Collection.

The painting on the mantelpiece (and some detective work).

As a lover of ships and maritime art, I was drawn to a very appealing picture of a nineteenth – century paddle steamer which stands on the mantelpiece of the main entry to the Museum. I mentioned the picture to Shirley and we became most interested in finding out more about it. Alas, there seems to be no record of the picture's acquisition so any information anyone has will be most welcome.

We wanted to find out whether the picture was a painting or a print. Some smudging in one corner of picture suggested that it might be a painting, as did the name, G. Rowney, London, on the picture itself. G. Rowney is the name of a firm of artists' suppliers in London, established in 1789 and still in business. The backing for the picture is pre-cut card supplied by Rowney. We thought that an art supplier *probably* wouldn't sell prints and that the card was bought by the artist, who then painted directly on to it. However, further research suggests that Rowney did sell prints so our picture could be either,

Some writing on the picture names the ship *SS Illawarra* of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company (the famous 'Pig and Whistle Line' which operated the Eden-Sydney run from 1858 to 1955). So that's that, we thought. Not so. There were *two* ships named *SS Illawarra*. One was built in 1853; the other was built in 1878. Which one did our picture show? At this point Shirley directed me to Mike Richards' book, *The Pig and Whistle Run* (Lawrence NSW, 1997), which described both vessels. The earlier ship had a single funnel and the later one had

two funnels. Since our ship had only one funnel, she must be the *Illawarra* which was built in 1853.

Illawarra number 1 was built at Blackwall, London by C. J. Mare and Co. She was a two-masted paddle-wheel steamer of 166 tons. She was used by the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company from 1853 to 1863 when she was sold to 'overseas interests'. Sadly, she was wrecked on the Volcano Islands in the Philippine Sea in 1864. However, in 1858, she had a moment of fame when she transported a force of police under Inspector Read to the seas off Gabo Island to search for the mutineers from the American whaler *Junior*. ("Death on the 'Junior'", Imlay Historical Society, 1984). The mutineers were captured by the Pambula police and tried in Boston in 1859. All received lengthy gaol terms.

My Culture, My Story – Betty Frauenfelder.

Betty was born on 3 February, 1935 in Lil Cousemaker's Nursing Home on Pambula Beach Road. Her mother was Edna Dunn and her father Fisherman Don Mitchelson. Don penned salmon in Merimbula Lake for transporting to city markets, firstly where Fish Pen Road begins and later in the vicinity of 'Mitchies'. Betty sold salmon for 6d to visitors who would catch them off a line her father had baited. Her childhood home was known as 'the red roofed house' at the end of the causeway and she grew up there with her younger brother, Donnie.

Betty started at the Merimbula Public School (now the Old School Museum) in 1941. The Principal was Mr Henderson and Betty's teacher was Miss Kent. In 1946 she went on to Bega to St Patrick's Convent School where she also learnt the piano. Betty said, "My grandfather wanted me to play the piano and also become a lady-neither really worked!". Then in 1951 Betty completed a Commerce Certificate proudly accomplishing 80wpm on an old Remington typewriter.

Late in 1951 Betty started work in the office of the Merimbula Bacon Factory. Here she met Max Frauenfelder, an accountant there, and they married in 1955. Betty's mother gave her the block next door as a wedding present and she and Max built what became known as 'the White House'. Here they raised their three children, Margo, Rodney and Mark.

Betty returned to work at the Bacon Factory in 1965 and over the years also worked at the Norfolk Pine Motel, Merimbula Newsagency and the Do Drop In (now Crankys) before she and Max established Elizabeth Lodge holiday units in 1976. They went on to open Tween Waters Tourist Park in 1982 and operated it as a family business until they retired in December 2001.

Betty and Max were inveterate travellers and according to their grandson Tom *'almost travelled the world two times over'*.

Some of Betty's Memories of Early Days in Merimbula.

- I learnt to swim at an early age. My father tied a rope around my waist and lowered me over the jetty. He would hold me at the right level until finally I did swim.
- I remember the steamboats 'Cobargo' and 'Bergalia'. They would blow their whistle coming into the Bay and everyone would rush out to the wharf to see them unload and load.
- Chub and Lil Travers owned the local store and Jock, Chub's brother owned the bakery. There was Molly Schafer's Cafe and a Post Office. There was also a petrol station. Molly's Cafe sold papers and groceries and had very nice meals.
- My Dad had one of the few cars in the area. It was the same as Molly Schafer's.

- Saturday mornings were busy in Pambula. It had the only Bank, the CBC. The farmers would come into town to cash their pay cheque and stay on to eat, drink and go to the 'pictures' at the Pambula Hall. Mr Tom Robinson ran the show which was in black and white and often broke down!
- The Pambula Butter Factory was functioning along with all the others in the area.
- For balls we got all dressed up. We went to old time dances in Twyford Hall and Mrs Ford played the piano.
- There was no electricity only lanterns and lamps. We did our homework by these.
- There was tank water only. Showers didn't exist and I remember taking baths in the big tub beside the open fireplace.
- You had to book a phone call!
- We would fly to Sydney in a DC wrapped in a rug. The windows were open and it was very cold.
- The 'William Dawes' was sunk by the Japanese in 1943. The American soldiers were brought into the hotel jetty. I remember seeing them walk along with blankets around them.
- During the war we had trench practice. There was one at school and one at home. At night we had to cover our windows with dark cloth as we often heard planes flying over. We had armed soldiers in front of the house. Every boat was up on the bank and they were protected.
- The Empire Gladstone ran into rocks off Haycocks in 1950. We went out on Jack Warn's 'Lass' to see it. Dad later bought the 'Lass'.
- I joined Dorothy Gale's dancing school and when I was 12 we travelled to different towns to entertain. I also taught Sunday School for the local Church of England.



'Tap Girls' - Betty is on the far right.

- Growing up in Merimbula all those years ago was really wonderful, free and easy. The only sad part was my brother Donnie's death in 1951 when he was 13. He was accidentally thrown from his pony. I was 16 and my whole life changed. I had intended to go nursing at the Camperdown Children's Hospital but stayed in Merimbula with my parents.

That's it for this issue. The next will appear in February 2019 and will contain some more examples of the thieves' slang of 1811; another example of 'My Culture, My Story'; the first part of 'Wings Over the Valleys: Pioneer Aviation on the South Coast and anything anyone else would like to contribute. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Andrew.