



A brief history of **SUTHERLAND SHIRE**

by M. HUTTON NEVE

ABORIGINAL HABITATION

The original homeland of the Aborigines is long lost in "the Dream Time". Who they are racially is still debatable. They came into Australia from the north, gradually spreading southward - estimates of this varying from about 25,000 years up to 70,000-80,000 years. Preliminary archeological investigations suggest that Aborigines had been in the Sydney/llawarra coastal areas probably for at least 7,000 years before the advent of Lieutenant James Cook in 1770. Their tribal organisation was small but compact and peaceful, each tribe having its own traditionally defined "home country".

PORT HACKING

The Port Hacking district was a recognised camping ground where tribes from the llawarra district gathered annually to fish and to hunt the wallaby, opossum and bandicoot in the South West Creek region of the Royal National Park. Here, too, was the ancient "crossing place" for the South Coast Aborigines on their annual walkabout to the northern coastal areas for the winter season. Throughout the whole of the Royal National Park are still signs of ancient

Aboriginal habitation - gunyahs or rock shelters for camping, rock carvings and a few cave paintings. Unfortunately, these sites largely must remain secret to prevent destruction by vandals. As a Bicentennial project, a photographic survey was made of many Aboriginal living sites in the Port Hacking area and other parts of the Shire.

KURNELL AND BOAT HARBOUR

These places were other favourite camping grounds. Recent archeological excavations indicate that the Aborigines had used Kurnell (especially the grassy north-western slopes) for at least 500 years for fish and shellfish feasts. Excavations at Boat Harbour indicate that this had been a popular location for similar feasts for up to 2,000 years before the Colony of New South Wales was founded in 1788.

COOK AND KURNELL

Lieutenant James Cook originally was sent out from England to the South Seas to assist in the scientific observation of the Transit of Venus. He also had secret orders from the Admiralty to seek out the unknown "southern land" of "Terra Australis". Sailing southwest from Tahiti, Cook discovered New Zealand

and circumnavigated it to prove that it was not a part of Terra Australis. Sailing westwards, Cook sighted the south-eastern coast of Australia before turning northwards. He discovered and entered Botany Bay on the afternoon of April 29, 1770. Anchoring his small ship, the *Endeavour*, in the entrance to the bay, Cook sent two boats' crews to explore the harbour. A landing was made at Inscription Point, so named because in 1822 the Australasian Philosophical Society placed a plaque there. Next day, the *Endeavour* moved further into the bay, anchoring off Kurnell. Cook and his party landed, exploring around the bay as well as taking a short walk on Kurnell Peninsula. They left the bay on May 6.

FORBY SUTHERLAND

During the *Endeavour's* brief stay, a Scottish seaman named Forbus (Forby) Sutherland died from tuberculosis. He was buried on May 1 on the beach at Kurnell, just above highwater mark. The approximate site of the grave was located in 1923 by the Royal Australian Historical Society, and marked. Recording Sutherland's death in the ship's log, Cook noted that he had named the northwest point 'Point Sutherland' in his memory.

THE FIRST FLEET

Defeat of the British forces in the War of American Independence influenced the British Government to seek a new outlet for unwanted convicts. Cook's Botany Bay was chosen. The Fleet of six transports, H.M.S. *Sirius* and storeship *Supply*, conveyed Governor Arthur Phillip, a detachment of marines and the convicts to an anchorage off Kurnell between January 18 and 20, 1788. Phillip set a party to clear land for the first settlement. Phillip realised that Botany Bay was quite unsuitable. There was lack of shelter for the ships from prevailing winds, inadequate water and poor soil. On January 24, 1788, two French ships were sighted off Botany Bay, causing Phillip to have the English colours raised on the south side of the bay, near Sutherland Point.

Governor Phillip sailed north to explore Port Jackson, which Cook had noted but had not entered. The First Fleet entered Port Jackson on January 26, 1788.



Cronulla beach in 1905 (N.S.W. Government Printing Office photograph).

FOREWORD

In Sutherland Shire we justifiably lay claim to the title "Birthplace of Modern Australia".

Kurnell, where Captain James Cook first set foot on Australian soil, is located within the boundaries of our Shire and, as such, is the solid basis upon which we lay our proud claim.

During the Cook bicentenary year celebrations in 1970, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, in a memorable visit to Kurnell for the re-enactment of Captain Cook's landing, gave due recognition to the fact and an interested world looked on.

Quite apart from the significance of Kurnell, our Shire as a whole has its own history - one well worth the telling.

Local historian, the late Mrs M. Hutton Neve, (decd. November, 1987) undertook the research and writing of Sutherland Shire Studies No. 1 -

"A Brief History of the Shire".

It was first published in 1971 and since then many thousands of copies have been updated and distributed, and the demand continues to grow.

This publication does not set out to take the place of a text book. Listed at the back are other titles available in the Sutherland Shire Studies series and books suggested as sources of further information.

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PORT AIKEN

Documentary evidence suggests that Port Hacking was actually discovered by Midshipman Aiken of the First Fleet; it was known as Port Aiken and Port Aiken Heads at least until 1870. When the two young explorers Bass and Flinders, obtained permission from Governor Hunter to explore south of Botany Bay in 1796, the Governor advised them of the probable existence of 'a large river south of Botany Bay'. Accompanied by 'the boy Martin' in their small boat *Tom Thumb* they found the river, naming it Port Hacking. Flinders noted that the First Fleet pilot, Henry Hacking, had originally told them of its rumoured existence.

FIRST SETTLEMENTS

First landowner in Sutherland Shire was Captain James Birnie. He was a mercantile trader who had arrived in Sydney in 1806 and settled in Pitt Street. Birnie was 'promised' Portion 1 of 700 acres at Kurnell in 1815. He named this 'Alpha' (or First) Farm, building there a small three-roomed cottage. Birnie worked the farm with a manager and convict labour. The farm was sold in 1828 to John Connell Senior. His son, John Connell Junior, was granted Portions 2 and 3 at Kurnell in 1821 and apparently resided there. As well as these free grants, John Connell Junior also bought several blocks of land. In all, he owned 1,790 acres, most of it in the Kurnell area. Although Alpha Farm continued, John Connell Junior engaged mainly in timber cutting. Over a period of twenty-five years he had cleared practically all the large timber from both Kurnell and Woolooware.

GRANT BY PROMISE

This was the usual way of acquiring land prior to 1830. By way of a certificate, the Governor promised a certain number of acres to encourage emancipated convicts and others to farm. 'Title' to this land could not be given until after official survey had been made. It has been recorded incorrectly that the explorer Gregory Blaxland received a grant of 1,000 acres in the Miranda area from Governor Macquarie, awarded to him for his part in the crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813. Blaxland was promised a grant in the Wollongong area but, as he wished to have land nearer Sydney, Blaxland sold this promise to John Connell Junior, who selected land in the Miranda area. The land remained 'in Blaxland's name until the area had been surveyed and title granted to Connell in 1834. Owing to litigation, Birnie's promise of 1815 did not receive title until 1844.

Other early landholders to obtain land by free grant or by purchase were Owen

Byrne (1821), his son Andrew (1825) and Matthew John Gibbons (1824). All this land was south of Port Hacking. John Lucas was granted 150 acres at the head of Woronora River in 1823. There was practically no settlement until after the first Crown Lands Sales, except in the Heathcote area.

CROWN LANDS SALES

First release of land for sale by the Crown occurred in 1856. This was in an area bounded on the east by Woolooware Road, on the west by the Woronora River, on the north by Georges River and on the south by Port Hacking. John Connell Junior (his father John Connell senior died in 1849) bought several large tracts in the Caringbah/Burraneer Bay areas, as did his nephew, John Connell Laycock. John and Mary Webster purchased a large block at the head of Burraneer Bay. They soon sold it and it was bought finally by Dominic Dolan, son of Patrick Dolan, who had purchased land in the bay which bears his name. Dominic Dolan built a small stone cottage shortly after purchasing his land (1865). This still stands, but it is so much altered as to be scarcely recognisable from the original tiny building. Dominic did not marry, dying a bachelor in 1888. The executors of his Estate subdivided the land and sold it at auction. At Port Hacking, G.I. Gogerly bought a block in 1856. A stone cottage built by Gogerly still stands, the area being known as Gogerly's Point.

INDUSTRY

There was little active settlement prior to 1860 when the Holt era commenced. Timber-cutting was the principal industry, much of it taking place on leased Crown Lands. Itinerant workers carried out shellgathering, especially in the Port Hacking area. The shell was shipped to Sydney for burning into lime for building and other commercial purposes.

Alpha Farm at Kurnell was renowned, especially in the early days, for its fruit and vegetables, with cattle-raising as a sideline. A couple of grants south of Port Hacking were used for grazing of cattle. The only other industry was the mill built about 1825 by John Lucas at Woronora. This watermill was used to grind corn grown by Illawarra farmers. The farmers' small ships sailed up the coast and into Botany Bay, Georges and Woronora Rivers. Thus they saved wharfage and customs dues charged at Port Jackson. The mill was razed by fire in the late 1830s; it was not rebuilt.

SURVEYS

Until the land had been surveyed, deeds of title could not be granted to any of the first landowners. On orders from Surveyor General John Oxley, Robert Dixon, in 1827 undertook the first survey. Oxley's instructions specified that Dixon survey Lucas's land "situated on an unnamed tributary falling in Georges River" (i.e. the

Woronora River), and also the lands of Birnie and Connell:

'You will commence the survey of the outer South Head of Botany Bay, and carefully trace the Shore thereof to Georges River having completed Botany Bay and Georges River you will send your boat around to Port Hacking and take up your Survey at the point you commenced, trace the Coast to Port Hacking which with all its branches is to be traced round, you will particularly note the extent of the Sand Shoals off Port Hacking and the line of direction of the Fairway of the Channel.' (Extract from Letters of Instructions, Surveyor General's Office, February 17, 1827)

Before all this southern survey could be completed, Oxley died in 1829 and Major Thomas Mitchell was promoted to be Surveyor General of the Colony. With the exception of the small portion surveyed by Dixon, Mitchell found earlier surveys to be patchy and sketchy. They were so inaccurate that Mitchell scrapped all previous work and recommended the southern survey from the 'Five Islands' (Wollongong) end. It was the lack of any southern survey that for some years had prevented the completion of the survey of the whole Nineteen Counties of the settled part of the Colony.

THE HUNDRED OF WORONORA

On completion of this survey, Governor Bourke on May 27, 1835, issued a proclamation declaring the Nineteen Counties. One of these was the County of Cumberland. Each County was divided into 'Hundreds'. This was an Old English land measurement. A large part of what is now Sutherland Shire was proclaimed as the Hundred of Woronora, bounded by Georges River, Port Hacking and the Hacking River, the ocean and the Woronora River. It consisted of the 'civil Parishes' of Southerland (sic), Bulgo, Heathcote and Wattamolla. By 1840 the word 'Hundred' appears to have been dropped and the district then was also known as Heathcote. Once the survey had been completed and maps issued, the Government authorised plans for the selling of Crown Lands.

THE HON. THOMAS HOLT

1. Personal Background: A Yorkshireman, Thomas Holt (1811-1888) arrived in Sydney in 1841 with his young bride. Quickly he became a leading figure in Sydney's commercial world as well as in public life. With the opening of the Crown Lands sales in the Shire, Holt invested in a large way, purchasing some 12,000 acres. He acquired this land both directly from the Crown and from original buyers. Patrick and Dominic Dolan, however, declined to sell to Holt. As part of his vast 'Sutherland Estate', Holt

purchased Birnie's Alpha Farm which had been inherited by John Connell Laycock from his grandfather, John Connell Senior.

2. Holt's Experiments: Some of Holt's developmental projects were unsuccessful. Holt endeavoured to establish oyster culture at Gwawley Bay. He had the flats at the head of the bay excavated into channels. French oyster spawn was imported. But the muddy waters and the summer heat killed off the spawn. Well into this century, "Holt's channels" were a landmark. Sheep farming also proved unsuccessful. Most of the flock either died of footrot or had to be destroyed. Lack of sufficient water and succulent grasses meant little success for cattle grazing. Holt's timber leases, however, flourished. The leaseholders finished the job of cutting out most of the large timber in the Woollooware-Miranda-Sylvania area.

3. Coal Mining: When purchasing his land, Holt took out coalmining rights. He knew that the rich Illawarra coal seam passed under Sutherland to Balmain and northwards. He made several test drillings. One was in the Cronulla area; another at 'Harnett's Paddock' near the intersection of Kingsway and Dolans Road. Although Holt obtained expert geological reports, he was unable to locate the coal seam, even at 2,000 feet. This was due, it is believed, to a fault in the traverse of the seam.



Gunnamatta Bay in 1905 (N.S.W. Government Printing Office photograph).



*The Princes Highway and the Kingsway at Gymea in 1937.
(N.S.W. Government Printing Office photograph).*



The Princes Highway at Engadine in 1928 looking south towards where the Post Office is now situated. (N.S.W. Government Printing Office photograph).

4. Sutherland House: Holt intended that his Sutherland Estate should be conducted on English feudal lines. He built a magnificent manor which he named 'Sutherland House'. Completed before the end of 1881, the building was situated on the foreshores of Sylvania between Horse Rock Point and Sandy Point (which was then known as Holt Point and is not to be confused with the suburb of Sandy Point further west). The long drive leading to the mansion on the edge of Gwawley Bay is now the northern part of Belgrave Esplanade. The northern end of the Sylvania Waters complex today engulfs the sites of Holt's large swimming baths and dressing pavilions, his private wharf and boatsheds. The house was gutted by fire in 1918 and the remains were demolished.

5. Holt-Sutherland Estate Co. Ltd.: Holt's many activities led to the formation in 1880 of the Holt-Sutherland Estate Co. Ltd. The company took over a 99-year lease of the Estate. In the early 1880s a financial recession caused much unemployment. A number of families sought to support themselves by taking up small farm leases on the Estate, engaging in market gardening, fruit and vegetable growing and poultry farming. Some of these leaseholders converted their leases by purchases. Others vacated their rented farms and went to the Menai and Heathcote areas when those Crown Lands were opened up a few years later.

FIRST ROADS

1. Mitchell's 'Old Illawarra Road': Prior to the coming of the Illawarra Railway 1885, the only means of internal communication was either by river or road. The first public road was a new 'South Road' surveyed and constructed between 1842 and 1845 by Thomas Mitchell. It led to the 'Five Islands', i.e. Wollongong. The construction was carried out by chained gangs of convicts - the only time such gangs were used in the Shire. This new 'South Road' was the Illawarra Road (now known as 'Old Illawarra Road') which led out of Newtown southward to Arncliffe and through 'Lord's Forest' (Hurstville) to Lugarno where a handpunt was established later. It was here that Mitchell planned to build a bridge. Indeed, some of the buttressing stonework may still be seen on the Peakhurst side of the river. The Illawarra Road followed mainly the ridges of the high land through Menai; thence down the valley to the Woronora River near its headwaters (and adjacent to the site of Lucas's old watermill); thence up to the southern side of the valley (now known as Woronora Road) and along the Heathcote ridges. The 'Old Princes Highway' passing through Engadine is part of Mitchell's original route which terminated on Bulli Mountain where it joined a track from 'Five Islands' settlement. This 'Illawarra Road' was never popular and within thirty years it had largely fallen into disuse. This was due to its steep grades and the isolated surrounding country.

2. Parkinson's 'Main Road South': Surveyor Parkinson in 1864 had completed a new southern line of road. This became known as the 'Main Road South'. It ran from Horse Rock Point, Sylvania, to link up with the Illawarra Road at the Engadine Ridge, i.e. the top of the Woronora Road. Today this virtually is the line of the Princes Highway from Georges River to Sutherland. Before the railway line was built in 1885, the road at Sutherland swung in a south-westerly direction just outside Holt's western boundary and continued south to Engadine on the western side of the present railway track. Later the 'Main Road South' was realigned by the sweeping curve opposite the Council Chambers and continued to Engadine along the present route. The road was re-named 'Princes Highway' after the visit to Australia in 1920 of the Prince of Wales (who became King Edward VIII, thence the late Duke of Windsor). As a result of the changing of the route of the old 'Main Road South', parts of it still remain under other names. For example, the part of the 'old' road at Sutherland on the eastern side of the railway line is now 'The Grand Parade', due north of the Council Chambers; on the western side of the railway line it is now Loftus Avenue as far as Loftus Heights. Between there and Yarrawarrah the remains of the original road have been named Wheatley Road.

ILLAWARRA RAILWAY

This railway line terminated at Hurstville in 1884. The Hon. John Sutherland, a Minister for Works during the 1870s, realised that the only way to open up the 'Port Hacking District' (as the Shire was then known) was to extend the railway across Georges River to the rich Illawarra District.

For more than twelve years Sutherland argued his case in Parliament. He provided practical information and financial data to support his statements. When finance was forthcoming, Sutherland's parliamentary party was out of office. However, Sutherland was back in office a few years after the opening of the railway.

Construction of the railway brought into being on the heights of Como a huge shanty town from about 1880. This housed several hundred workers and their families. By 1881 a public primary school had been opened. It was located approximately where Como Primary School stands today. On the same ridge was built the wooden 'Woronora Hotel'. On the opposite side of Scylla Bay (now filled in to serve as a sports area) was built the imposing 'German Club, catering both for the many German workmen engaged on the railway, and German fishermen who had settled along the Georges River. With the completion of the Como-Sutherland section of the railway, the camp was transferred to Heathcote in 1884-85. The Woronora Hotel at Como was closed and the licence transferred to Heathcote.

Soon afterwards the 'German Club' was licensed as the 'Como Hotel'. This remained in use until it burnt down in 1996. The railway line was extended to Clifton (Scarborough) in 1886 to link with the Wollongong extension.

The coming of the railway developed Como as a holiday centre catering for boating, fishing and picnicking. 'Murphy's Pleasure Gardens' were laid out on the eastern side of the railway station where some of the garden terracing is still obvious.

SUTHERLAND RAILWAY STATION

It was decided to establish a 'railway stopping place' between Como and Heathcote 'at the 14th mile' (measured from the Sydney terminus, then at Redfern) and this was named 'Sutherland Railway Station'. Ceremoniously, the first train steamed in on December 26, 1885. According to the Information Bureau, Department of Railways, NSW, the station was named after the Hon. John Sutherland, the man responsible for the extension of the railway.

A 'road' quickly developed from Sutherland Railway Station to 'Cronulla Beaches'. Here in 1888, Captain Springall built the 'Oriental Hotel' on a 'permissive occupancy grant'. He did not take up his option at the Cronulla Crown Lands Sales and a man named Davies had the hotel in 1895. Soon horse-drawn vehicles were plying for hire between Sutherland Railway Station and Cronulla Beach. The Oriental Hotel became extremely popular for quiet family holidays and for fishing parties.

THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

First in Australia and second in the world, "The National Park" was dedicated on April 26, 1879. It resulted from the efforts of the Premier, Sir John Robertson, to bequeath to the people of this State a national domain for rest and recreation. Eighteen thousand acres were set aside, bounded by Port Hacking, the Hacking River, the ocean, the southern boundary of the civil Parish of Heathcote and the Woronora River. In 1880 the Park was increased to 33,000 acres. Today it is just under 40,000 acres.

Lord Audley, a 'gentleman surveyor' attached to the Surveyor General's Department in 1864, had been responsible for the survey of much of the parklands of The National Park. His camp headquarters were at the confluence of the Hacking River and Kangaroo Creek. When the Park was established this area became known as 'Audley'. Lord Audley became son-in-law to Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General, when he married Mitchell's daughter, Emily, in 1857.

The year 1879 saw the setting up of a Board of Trustees charged with the management, improvement and general supervision of the Park. A resident caretaker was installed in a small cottage. A 'Trustees' Cottage' was built to include a boardroom and living accommodation

for the Trustees as they would spend several days at the Park whilst conducting their administration. The National Park was given the prefix 'Royal' after the visit there of Her Majesty the Queen in 1954.

In 1967 the NSW Government established the National Parks and Wildlife Service (appointing a Minister with overall responsibility and a Commissioner as permanent head) with responsibility for all national parks in the State. For a time, the former trusts were converted into advisory committees. Many of these were amalgamated in 1986.

MILITARY TRAINING

Before the establishment of the Park in 1879, negotiations had been proceeding for a large and isolated area of land for infantry, cavalry and gunnery training. Part of The National Park was selected. Due to its generally undeveloped state, the Trustees agreed that the western approaches be allocated for military use. At the same time, the Government agreed to build a military branch line from the Illawarra Railway into the 'Encampment and Review Area' in The National Park. Opened in 1886, this branch line terminated at a platform which formed the northern side of The Royal National Park Railway Station, now used for trams.

At this time, the area extending westward of the Sutherland Railway line to the Engadine Heights and to the clifftops above the Hacking River was known as 'Loftus Heights'. The junction of the military branch line was known as 'Loftus Junction'. The military forces were composed mainly of volunteers, both foot and mounted militia. Personnel, stores, field guns and horses were transferred to the encampment area by rail for the annual camps. With the advent of Federation (1901) and the formation of the Commonwealth Military Forces, local training diminished, although the Park was used by the New South Wales Field Artillery until just after the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Location of the artillery shoots was transferred from the encampment area to the heights above Audley and the steep hill leading there was known as 'Artillery Hill'.

LOFTUS JUNCTION AND THE NATIONAL PARK

Loftus Junction was also the station for those who wished to visit The National Park. A horse-drawn coach service plied from there via Lady Rawson Drive and over the bridge across Temptation Creek, to join with 'Audley Road'. Initially the fare was sixpence (five cents) per head each way. Named in 1915 after the Chairman of Trustees, Farnell Avenue was laid down by the military authorities and planted with ornamental trees. 'Flagstaff Hill' between the Park Railway Station and the hilltops above the river was an important point for signalling with the heliograph.

The signals were sighted by the various defensive positions around Sydney. The heliograph is a device used for flashing the Morse code by reflecting the sun's rays in a mirror.

INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

Signs of scattered settlement followed the coming of the railway and continual release of Crown Lands. Coastal and river frontage areas became popular as country retreats for wealthy city dwellers. Cronulla was increasing in favour as a holiday and fishing centre. A form of voluntary local government had been attempted about 1888 but little or no interest was shown by the few settlers. Law and order was still administered under the jurisdiction of the Court at Liverpool. Soon after the turn of the century, plans were made to introduce formal local government throughout the State. The Local Government (Shires) Act 1905 provided that the whole of the State (with certain named exceptions) be divided into Shires and named by the Governor.

THE SHIRE OF SUTHERLAND

The State Governor, Admiral Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson, on March 6, 1906, selected the name and proclaimed this district as 'Sutherland, No. 133' (i.e. the 133rd District) and fixed the boundaries.

SHIRE RIDINGS/WARDS

Division of the Shire into three Ridings, A, B, and C, each with two Councillors, was proclaimed by the Governor on March 15, 1906. In 1917 the number of Councillors per Riding was increased to three. Prior to the first Local Government election, provisional Councillors were appointed with Mr. W.C. Danne as Provisional Shire Clerk. After some six months the first Council elections were held on December 5, 1906, resulting in the election of Councillor William G. Judd (President), Robert W. Cook, John Hill, Edward W. Hyndman, Thomas Lehane and Charles McAlister. The Council appointed Mr. J.M. MacFarlane as Shire Clerk.

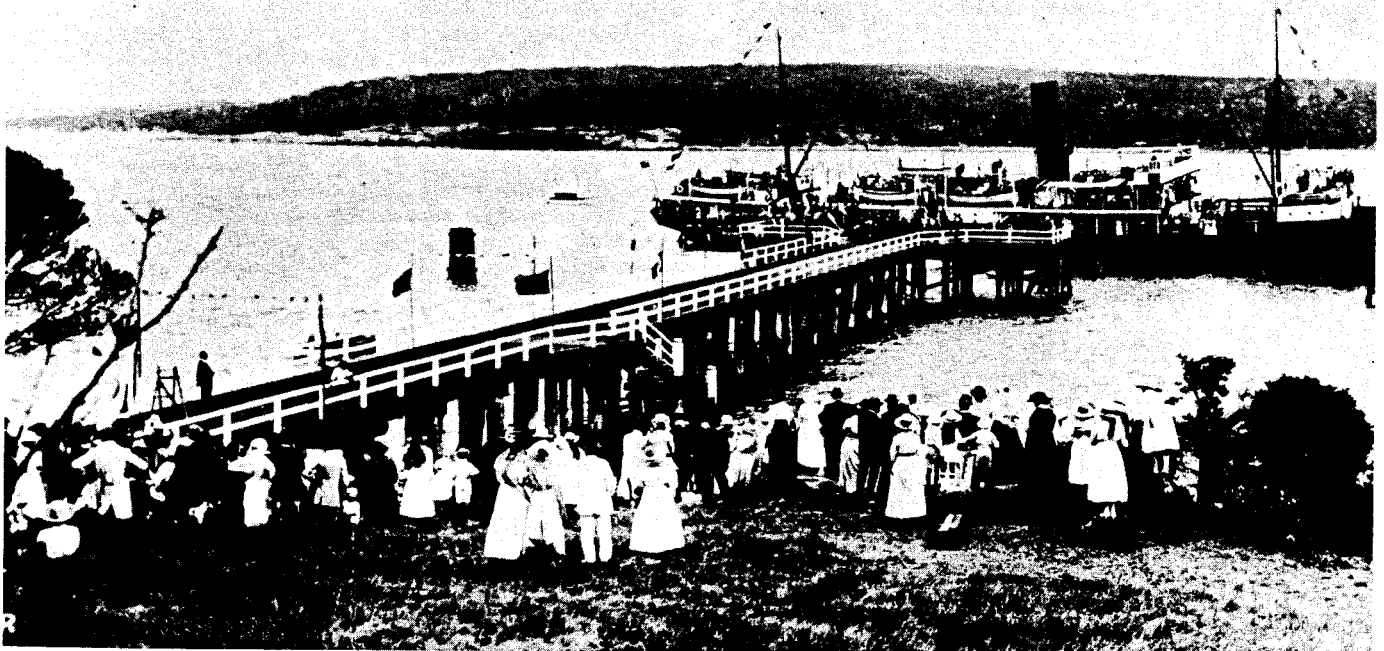
At that time there were 1,600 persons living in the shire. Only ratepayers were permitted to stand for and to vote in Local Government elections. State Legislation later (1927) allowed all adult residents to nominate and vote in such elections. The number of Ridings was increased in 1953 to five - Cronulla, Caringbah, Como, Miranda and Sutherland - with three Councillors to each. A sixth Riding, Engadine, was created in 1968 and the number of Councillors for each Riding was reduced to two. This has continually changed over the years - at present there are five Wards with three Councillors for each. Several titles also changed in July 1993 with the new Local

Government Act 1993: Shire Presidents became Mayors, Shire Clerks became General Managers, and Ridings became Wards.

The first Council meetings were held in a small single storey building, the rear of which for a time served as the Shire Clerk's residence. This building was located in 'Railway Parade' Sutherland (now Princes Highway) between Boyle Street and President Avenue. The first Council Chambers were erected in 1915 at the corner of Princes Highway and Eton Street, Sutherland. Extensive additions were made to the premises in 1929. The premises were demolished in 1965 after the present administration building had been erected.

EXTENT OF THE SHIRE

Under the 1835 proclamation, the western boundary of the district was the Woronora River. With the formation of the Shire in 1906, the western boundary was extended to take in Menai (then called Bangor). In 1919, the suburb of 'Georges River' (the Illawong area) formerly attached to the Municipality of Hurstville, was transferred to the Shire. The Shire has an area of 370 square kilometres, but of this approximately 150 square kilometres covers part of the Royal National Park. The Heathcote National Park comprises a further 23 square kilometres.



The Cronulla ocean wharf was officially opened by the State Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, in January 1919. The wharf jutted out into Port Hacking from the end of Cronulla peninsula.

GROWTH

Provision of adequate roads was one of the first problems to be faced following the inauguration of the Shire. The greater part of the new Shire had been the Holt Sutherland Estate. In this there were only access tracks. The only roads were the 'Main Road South' (the Old Illawarra Road long being disused) and the National Park Road leading from Railway Parade, Sutherland, to the Park. The newly-created Council, with only a small income from rates, found it impossible to cope with the provision of new and adequate roads.

STEAM TRAM

The Sutherland-Cronulla steam tram service was inaugurated in 1911 by the Railway Commissioner as a 'light railway' to provide both a passenger and a goods service between the two places. Not only did the service greatly increase the popularity of the Cronulla beaches necessitating the running of excursion trains from Sydney to Sutherland - but it was of great advantage to the slowly developing business interests in the Shire. The terminus and workshops were at Sutherland just south of President Avenue where the overhead railway bridge crosses Princes Highway and part of the stone walls may be seen on the western side of the highway at this point. From there the steam tram travelled on the southern side of Princes Highway into the Kingsway, thence to Cronulla, where it traversed the main street to Shelly Beach, where there was a turning loop. At Sutherland a branch goods siding went into the local brickworks. At Miranda another siding served the Miranda Co-operative Stores. At the request of the Commissioner for Railways, the Water Board in 1911 laid a six-inch main from Penshurst Reservoir under Georges River to Miranda to provide a water supply for the tramway tank. With the consent of the Railway Commissioner, dwellings along the route could be connected to the main and rated for water.

Increasing motor traffic caused a falling-off of passengers and the passenger service closed in 1931; the goods service ceased the following year. The brick tramway office and waiting room still stands as it was, on Princes Highway at Sutherland, opposite the Commonwealth Bank premises. For many years the office served as an estate agency.

There can be no doubt that the steam tram service was the main cause of the popularity of land sales throughout the central sector of the Shire. It certainly stimulated growth of the small townships which developed to serve these new residential areas. At the commencement of the steam tram service in 1911, the Shire population was 2,896. In 1914 it was over 7,500. By 1931 the population had exceeded 12,000.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

1. **Postal:** The Shire's first post office was opened by Mrs. Honoria Rice at her Sylvania store on August 1, 1883. The mail was brought by punt across Georges River from Woniora (Tom Ugly's Point). Mrs. Rice operated the post office until the end of March, 1909, when Miss Delia Lehane took over. In 1885 the Sutherland stationmaster was authorised to act as 'postal receiving officer'. An official post office with residence attached was built at Sutherland in 1900. A 'postal receiving office' was established in 1906 by Albert Giddings at his Cronulla store. In the same year Giddings secured a contract to deliver mail by horse-drawn vehicle between Sutherland and Cronulla. A 'postal receiving office' also was established in Mansfield's store at Highfield a few years later. The year 1912 saw the opening of the 'Caringbah Post Office'. The continual use by residents of the post office name displaced that of Highfield. Thus the village of Caringbah came into being.

2. **Water:** Except for those people who lived around Miranda, most Shire residents up to 1927 relied on tank water for domestic uses, rain water being collected in galvanised iron tanks of chiefly 500 to 1,000 gallon capacity. In periods of drought, Miranda residents could draw supplies from the steam tram standpipe, carrying it away in buckets. Other residents could buy limited supplies from water carried on the steam trams. Most residential parts of the Shire were reticulated following construction of the Woronora Dam. The work was begun in 1927 and completed in 1931.

3. **Electricity:** Cronulla was supplied with electricity in 1917; it was generated privately by Mr. A.T. Robinson. Several years later the plant was taken over by Sutherland Shire Council. Council's Electricity Dept. was transferred to the Sydney County Council (now Energy Australia) in 1955.

4. **Electric Railway:** Electrification of the railway from Sydney reached Sutherland in 1926. With the cessation of the steam tram service in 1931-32, thoughts soon centred on extending the railway to Cronulla. Motor omnibus operators (buses had replaced the trams) not only had curtailed routes but it was claimed that no efforts had been made to cope with the big numbers of people flocking to Cronulla at weekends and on public holidays. The existence of waterfront commercial enterprises was so seriously threatened that public protest meetings were held. Often referred to as 'Father of the Shire' the late Councillor 'Joe' Monro chaired many of these meetings. It was largely through his continuous agitation that the electric railway was extended from Sutherland to Cronulla. It opened on December 16, 1939.

GEORGES RIVER BRIDGE

Tom Ugly's

From the beginning of the Holt era, the only means of crossing at Tom Ugly's was by hand-punt, first established in 1864. Probably to keep a check on southbound travellers, crossing through his Sutherland Estate, Holt paid the puntman ten shillings (one dollar) a week retainer. With the progress of time, vehicular steam ferries had been established at this crossing to cope with the increasing volume of traffic. But by 1923 motor traffic proved too much for these ferries.

Through the efforts of Councillor Monro, the Georges River Bridge Act, 1923, was passed. This authorised the Council to raise in London a loan of 225,000 pounds, to construct the bridge and to charge tolls. The bridge was opened in April, 1929. The Department of Main Roads took over control of the bridge from the Council in 1947. Council, however, continued to collect toll charges until the loan had been discharged. The toll ceased May 31, 1952. A new duplicate bridge, to the east of the older bridge, was opened in October, 1987.

WORLD WAR II

Except for some artillery and rifle target shoots in The National Park, the outbreak of World War I did not noticeably affect the Shire. Modern warfare brought with it new problems - enhanced by the very real threat of Japanese invasion.

Beaches were protected by barbed wire, gun emplacements bored into the seaward cliff faces, tank traps were built across some major roads with access to beaches and small boats were taken into custody by the Navy to prevent their use by advance parties of the enemy landing in the vicinity of Port Hacking and Botany Bay. Street signs and names were removed, car lights were masked or dimmed, and windows and exterior doors in homes were required to be completely blacked out at night by screening to prevent any lights indicating to enemy aircraft or ships at sea, locations of centres of population. Once again, The National Park became a mecca for training in small arms - this time they were borne by over-military-age volunteers known as the Volunteer Defence Corps. Defeat of the Japanese Naval force at the Battle of the Coral Sea saved Australia from threatened invasion.

POSTWAR YEARS

A host of difficult problems confronted Sutherland Shire with the cessation of hostilities. Many came to the Shire seeking building land. As prices soared, demand for inexpensive land exceeded the supply. One effect has been the appearance of large blocks of high-rise buildings containing home units and rented flats in the waterfront areas of Cronulla and near several railway stations.

In 1939 the Shire population was approximately 19,600. By 1950 it had climbed to 40,000. At the end of 1970 the population skyrocketed to over 150,000. In 1997 the estimated residential population was 206,483.

INDUSTRY

Associated with this growth of population was industrial and commercial development - as well as home-building. Gone are the country township concepts of one-street shops. In their place have arisen large modern shopping centres. The Captain Cook Drive from Caringbah to Kurnell was constructed in 1953 in conjunction with the establishment in 1956 of the Australian Oil Refinery at Kurnell. Not far from John Lucas's pioneer watermill of 1825, the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (now the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation) built its huge research station complex in 1958.

'Industrial areas' have been set aside in defined locations and attractive modern factories, large and small, have been built. Many of them are set amidst landscaped gardens and lawns. One of the most imaginative home-building concepts has been Sylvania Waters (Gwawley Bay). Here, individually designed

family homes have been built around a series of man-made canals. The six-lane Captain Cook Bridge over the Georges River, spanning Rocky Point and Taren Point, was opened to traffic in 1965, replacing the completely inadequate ferry service.

EDUCATION

Provisions of school facilities, to serve primary, secondary and tertiary needs, was allied with the 'population explosion'. The first school in the Shire was built about 1880 to serve the children living at the Como railway construction camp. When World War II came to a close, the only secondary school in the Shire was the Sutherland Intermediate High School, taking pupils to Form III only. There are now nearly 100 schools in the Shire including the Gymea and Loftus Colleges of Technical and Further Education and more than twenty secondary schools. As well as preschool centres, there are schools provided to serve children with special needs.

SHIRE SUBURBS

Alfords Point: This suburb in the Menai district received its first residents in 1984. Its topography made it generally unsuited to agriculture and it was mostly bush before

subdivision. It was named after James Alford, an early landholder.

Bangor: Urban development in what is now known as Bangor began in 1975. Bangor was the original name of the entire Menai district. Before urban development, the area was used for orchards and poultry farming.

Barden Ridge: was part of Lucas Heights until 1996, when the northern section was split away to form the new residential suburb. It was named after the ridge which runs through the area.

Bonnet Bay: named after The Bonnet, a headland overlooking the Woronora River, the development of Bonnet Bay began in 1966 on what was previously almost untouched bushland.

Burraneer: Although Woollooware Road dates from 1858 when Andrew and Mary Webster bought 44ha of land from the Crown, the first subdivision was not till 1889. In 1912, Nathaniel Bull's estate was subdivided into house lots. However, despite scattered development in the 1920s and 30s, when houses such as "Loch Lomond" and "Foreshaws" were built, there was little development until the postwar building boom.



The Miranda Agricultural Bureau produce store in 1920. (N.S.W. Government Printing Office photograph).

Bundeena: Although land on the south side of Port Hacking was first settled in the 1820s, little development took place. Establishment of The National Park preserved most of this area. However, these early grants resulted in the growth of Bundeena and Maianbar.

During the early 1930s there was an increase in settlement in these areas by persons affected economically by the depression. There was a further increase in the years following World War II in establishment of holiday homes and permanent residences.

Caringbah: Port Hacking, Cawarra and Burraneer Bay Roads are amongst the oldest roads in the Shire. They were surveyed by the Lands Department to provide access to the small holdings which existed in the Caringbah area before they were absorbed into the Holt-Sutherland estate. From 1900, sale of estate lands commenced, and poultry and fruit growing were common. Until World War I, Caringbah was known as Highfield. Residential development occurred from the late 1930s and boomed after World War II. At this time, Caringbah was the major centre of the Shire, a situation which ended with the opening of Miranda Fair in 1964.

Como: With the advent of the railway in 1885, Como was favoured by weekend holiday-makers. The 'Como Boatsheds' (still in existence) and the 'Como Pleasure Grounds' were built shortly after this date. They provided boating and picnic facilities. Built at the same time, the small general store is still in use. The Como Hotel was built to house fettlers engaged on railway construction. It was converted in 1890 to a hotel but was destroyed by fire in 1996.

Cronulla: The name 'Cronulla Beaches' was given in 1827 to the several Cronulla beaches by Surveyor Dixon. He did not name the district. After the railway reached Sutherland in 1885, the area became popular as a holiday and picnic spot, especially after the steam tram from Sutherland opened in 1911. The Oriental Hotel, on the present carpark behind the North Cronulla Hotel, was built by Captain Springall in 1888. With the increased popularity of motor cars in the 1920s, Cronulla developed rapidly and many of the buildings in Cronulla Street date from the 1930s, as do St. Andrews Church (1934) and the railway station (1939). In the 1950s and 60s, most of the holiday guest houses were replaced by high rise flats. The Cronulla Bicentennial Plaza was opened in February 1989.

Engadine: Engadine grew as part of Heathcote, with scattered residential development until the early 1960s. The railway station, financed by local residents, was opened in 1920, and in 1933 Engadine was gazetted as a separate town to Heathcote. Until the 1960s Engadine/ Heathcote remained a distinct town, separate from suburbia. At this time, the extensive tracts of vacant Crown land were

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In the 1920s, Sutherland Shire Council advertised the attractions of Cronulla with "picture show" slides.

subdivided and sold for housing, and Engadine became part of Sydney's southward growth.

Grays Point: was first subdivided into residential lots in 1910. Little development occurred and few services were provided until the rapid expansion of the Shire in the 1950s and 60s led to most lots being resubdivided and more extensive residential development occurring.

GyMEA: GyMEA before World War II was an isolated and densely timbered area. One of the earliest landowners in the area was Mr S.W. Gray, after whom Grays Point may have been named. As with many centres in the Shire, the development of this area is mainly postwar.

GyMEA Bay: the first residential subdivision in what is now the suburb of GyMEA Bay was in 1917. Apart from secluded waterside dwellings, little development occurred until the 1950s. GyMEA Bay, named after the flowering GyMEA Lily plant, was given its name in 1855.

Heathcote: Laid out in 'fourteen town allotments' in 1842, the earliest settlement in the whole Shire was the 'Village of Bottle Forest'. It was created on the instructions of Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell, and is the part of Heathcote east of the railway. Here stands 'Heathcote Hall', its high tower framed amongst the trees. It was built by Sydney brickmaker Isaac Harber in 1883, and is a typical example of late Victorian domestic architecture. The first road linking Sydney to Wollongong via Forest Road, Lugarno Ferry, Old Illawarra Road and The Needles ford passed through Heathcote.

Illawong: The first development in Illawong was in the 1880s, when its remoteness made it popular for wealthy Sydney people to build holiday houses, such as "Cranbrook" and "Waitara". It was then reached by boat from Como. There was only scattered residential development until 1980 when the first residential subdivisions took place.

Jannali: Remained virtually undeveloped until the railway station, financed jointly by Council and the Department of Railways, was opened in 1931. Although the railway was already electrified, with regular services to Sydney, it grew slowly as a commuter suburb. In the 1950s, extensive public and private housing estates were built, stimulating construction of shopping and other facilities.

Kareela: Residential subdivision began in 1962 and the suburb has been constructed according to an overall plan. By the mid 1970s development was substantially complete. Originally named Salisbury.

Kirrawee: Came into existence in 1939 when Kirrawee railway station was built. It was originally part of Sutherland. The shopping centre and most dwellings date from the 1950s.

Kurnell: The first land grant at Kurnell was made in 1815 to Captain James Birnie. Birnie never took up his grant, and it was not till the late 19th century that settlement began, mainly as a fishing village. The oil refinery commenced operations in 1955 and attracted further large-scale industries.

Lilli Pilli: Originally part of the farm of Dominic Dolan, residential subdivision occurred from 1909 onwards. Most lots were not built on until the 1950s and 60s, with the large grounds of the original houses, such as 'Moombara' and 'Nuimburra', being broken up into smaller lots.

Loftus: Although the Loftus Junction was constructed for the branch railway to the Royal National Park in 1886, subdivision for building lots did not occur until 1923. However, development was slow until the 1950s, which is when most present development dates from. It was named after Lord Loftus, 1880s Governor of NSW.

Lucas Heights: named after John Lucas, who built a mill on the nearby Woronora River in 1825. Site of Australia's only nuclear reactor but undeveloped for housing until 1986, when the first residential subdivision commenced. The residential area, which covered the northern part of Lucas Heights, became Barden Ridge in 1996.

Maianbar: Consists of two subdivisions. The western one (Fisherman's Bay Estate) was first offered for sale in 1927. The eastern one (Sand Spit Estate) was offered for sale in 1929. Maianbar today still has a considerable proportion of holiday houses.

Menai: First settled in 1840 by Owen Jones, who called the whole district Bangor. The name was changed to Menai in 1910. In 1916, Shackel's Estate along the Woronora River was subdivided for holiday houses. The first church, the Congregational Church was built in 1907 and was known as 'the Church in the Bush'. Menai retained its orchards and poultry farms until, in 1979, the first residential subdivision was constructed.

Miranda: John Connell (of Connell's Point fame) acquired in 1835 a grant of 200ha

previously promised to Gregory Blaxland for his part in the 1813 Blue Mountains crossing. In the 1860s the grant was bought by Thomas Holt. A sheep station was established with the homestead located where Miranda shopping centre was later established. Sheep farming was not successful and gave way to felling of ironbark and blackbutt forests. In the 1880s, the Holt estate began to lease parts of its holdings, which led to the establishment of small farms. The former homestead became the focus for a village. The Miranda Progress Association, established in 1905, persuaded the State government to incorporate Sutherland as a separate shire, rather than being incorporated with Bulli Shire. Residential subdivision began in 1912 and despite the steam tram being opened in 1911 and the railway in 1939, most development has been postwar. Since the opening of Miranda Fair (now Westfield Miranda) in 1964, Miranda has become the major retail centre in the Shire.

Oyster Bay: Subdivision of what was part of Thomas Holt's estate began in 1901. In 1912, the "By The Water Estate", including the area east of Carina Road, subdivided the land into residential lots. Most roads were unmade, and development did not begin in earnest until the late 1940s.

Sandy Point: The Sandy Point Estate was created in 1925 with every lot having a water frontage. Isolation meant that little development occurred until the 1950s.

Sutherland: When the route of the Illawarra railway had been decided upon, speculators moved in to subdivide land along the line. In 1882, the area bounded by The Boulevard, Acacia Road, Grafton Street, Eton Street, The Grand Parade and Oakwood Street was subdivided into lots of 1,360sq.m. In 1886, the area between the railway station and Eton Street was subdivided into forty town allotments, and became the site of a village with a hotel and post office being established. Due to the station, the village became the service centre for the western part of the Shire, and the interchange point for holiday makers en route from Sydney to Cronulla. The limited agricultural capacity of the area meant that development was slow, but when the Shire was proclaimed in 1906, its headquarters were established in Sutherland. Because the Cronulla railway was not opened until 1939, Sutherland became the main population centre, with employment at tile and brickworks, the railway and tramway, Woronora Cemetery, Council and The National Park. Until the 1950s Sutherland had the shire's only public high school.

Sylvania: Around Horse Rock Point the first Torrens Title subdivision in the Shire was undertaken in 1882. It was on land belonging to the Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Co., and was subdivided into land for house lots. The Shire's second school, a small 'penny a week' school, was located at Sylvania but closed after only a short period. Thomas Holt built his home, 'Sutherland House', on Sandy Point at Sylvania.

It was destroyed by fire in 1918. The first ferry between Blakehurst and Sylvania began in 1863, and was replaced by the Tom Ugly's Bridge in 1929. In 1987, the No.2 Tom Ugly's Bridge was opened, duplicating the 1929 bridge.

Sylvania Heights: Along Kangaroo Point Road, water frontage lots were created in 1919. Scattered development occurred until the 1950s when much of the existing development occurred.

Sylvania Waters: Unique in Sydney, built on land created from Gwawley Bay to create a canal subdivision. The first stage of the suburb was offered for sale in 1963 and developed over a 10-year period to its present form.

Taren Point: In 1911 the first residential subdivision took place, but it was not till 1916 that the ferry commenced. Many of the early houses were fishing shacks and weekenders, some of which still exist. The Captain Cook bridge was opened in May, 1965.

Waterfall: Waterfall was a major railway depot from the time of the opening of the Sutherland-Waterfall railway in 1886. A dam to supply water was built on Heathcote Creek, and it was at Waterfall that the steam locomotives took on coal and water. Most of the village's workforce was employed by the railway. The yard is now used for stabling of passenger trains, and there is still significant movement of goods traffic.

Woolooware: John Connell cut a channel from the northern end of Woolooware Road to the deep water of Woolooware Bay in the 1830s, to take the timber from the district by boat to Sydney. Timber-getting gave way to dairying, which continued until the 1920s, when housing began to take over. The opening of the railway station in 1939 accelerated this trend.

Woronora: Bass and Flinders discovered the mouth of the Woronora River in 1795, and in the mid-19th century scattered development occurred around where the road bridge leads to Menai. The first residential development was in 1909, and grew steadily until the mid-1980s, when all available land had been developed.

Woronora Heights: The Geographical Names Board and Council approved the naming of this area in 1985, when subdivision began.

Yarrowarrah: Was originally vacant Crown Land which was subdivided during the 1970s. It takes its name from the Yarrowarrah Heights ridge along which the railway runs.

Yowle Bay: In the 1880s, before the attractions of surfing were discovered, Yowie Bay was the shire's recreation centre. There were numerous weekenders along its shores and its depth allowed boats access at all times. From 1910 residential lots began to be created, but it was not till the 1950s that extensive residential development began.

POPULATION

The first census of the Shire (then generally called Heathcote, but occasionally also Woronora) totalled 66 adults; at the inauguration of the Shire in 1906 the population was estimated at 1,500; in 1997 the resident population was estimated at 206,483.

From 66 residents to what? -
"Mighty things from small beginnings grow".

Some population figures are:

1906	1,500	1961	111,893
1911	3,438	1966	134,091
1914	5,384	1971	151,297
1918	7,082	1976	163,800
1921	7,990	1981	170,050
1933	13,526	1986	175,191
1939	19,566	1991	184,402
1945	27,880	1995	201,500
1951	50,150	2000	211,782
1954	65,608		

Other titles available in the Sutherland Shire:

Studies series are:

- No.2 - Sutherland Shire Council
- No.3 - Geography and Geology and Aboriginal Archaeology
- No.4 - The Development of Commerce and Industry
- No.5 - Shire Reserves
- No.6 - Railways (and Tramways) in the Sutherland Shire
- No.7 - History of Road Transport in the Sutherland Shire
- No.8 - The Ancient River Systems of Botany Bay

A publication of the
Sutherland Shire Council.
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Eton Street, Sutherland, NSW 2232.
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Telephone: 9710 0333

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