

...WHERE HISTORY IS THE HERO



The ruins of the Cape St George Lighthouse. See the article on Jervis Bay on page 15

The Age of Sail

Today we cannot visualise, cannot appreciate, how vitally important shipping once was to the NSW South Coast. There were no roads, no bridges, as we know them today. There was no other means of communication with Sydney or with the wider 'outside world'.

Quite simply, if a South Coast resident wanted to go anywhere else, or a local business or farmer wanted to send their goods or produce to a major market such as Sydney or Melbourne, or if they wanted to buy something that was not available locally, or if they simply wanted to communicate with others (family, friends, businesses) elsewhere, or if they just wanted to be informed about what was happening in the 'outside world', they were entirely dependent on the shipping services to and from the South Coast.

Which, for the first 50 or so years after Europeans began to settle in the area, meant principally being reliant on the arrival of visiting sailing ships.

There were hundreds and hundreds of these. Most were small... many of which, unfortunately if inevitably, were wrecked.

We have recently been adding details about the numerous South Coast shipwrecks to our comprehensive new website (southcoasthistory.org.au. Details about each of the shipwrecks mentioned below – and many more! – can be accessed from this very informative website). So, what have we concluded about the era when sailing ships serviced the South Coast?

- Shipping arrivals and departures were enormously important local events. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, for example, (as did local newspapers, as they emerged) had a shipping column recording the arrivals and departures of ships, details about the freight they were transporting, the names of the passengers they were carrying. This coverage applied not just to large or important ships, but also to the tiniest of coastal traders.

- Visiting ships' crews, in practice, were accepted as 'locals'. They became familiar and were considered valued members of local communities. In some cases they became essential members of the community – for example, if a town did not have a doctor, visiting ship's doctors might be called upon to provide necessary medical assistance. So when, for example, the *Neptune*

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Historic South Coast Buildings

See story page 13



Former Post Office, 52 Campbell Street, Moruya



Teacher's Residence, 8 Beach Road, Batemans Bay

Fantastic Reads

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was wrecked in Kiama harbour in 1856, the *Illawarra Mercury* newspaper wrote that Mr E. Parks, both the owner and captain of the vessel, *'is a poor man (and) this loss presses heavily upon him. It is to be hoped that the benevolence of the Kiama people will prompt them to contribute something towards his relief.'* The community responded, and a short time later it was reported that '£43 or thereabouts' had been raised; and when the *Spec* foundered off Gerringong in 1865 and its captain lost his life, the *Kiama Independent* observed that *'Captain Dawson, we understand, was a married man, whose wife and two or three children residing in Sydney, are by this sad event bereft of their support and left in a state of destitution. For their relief it is intended to appeal to the sympathy of the public by means of subscription lists, which will be found at the banks and principal stores in the town.'*

- Shipwrecks became just an everyday part, an accepted part, of life. They occurred so regularly that, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* had a 'shipwrecks' section in its regular shipping column. Extensive details were published about some wrecks, scant details were provided about others – the report of the loss of the *Mary* in 1874 simply reading *'The schooner 'Mary', of and from Melbourne, bound to Newcastle, was totally lost in Wreck Bay on the 8th February, during a heavy southerly gale. All hands saved.'*

- The areas around Wreck Bay and Long Point (now Bass Point) were particularly to be avoided, especially in foul weather or if fog was present. A significant number of wrecks occurred in these vicinities.

- Some ships' captains were just plain unlucky. Many sought shelter in what they considered to be 'safe havens' only to find their vessels came to grief: the *Rover* was wrecked in 1841 whilst taking shelter off Broulee; the *Neptune* was wrecked in 1856 whilst sheltering in Kiama harbour. And sailing ships (having no secondary form of propulsion) were particularly vulnerable to sudden changes in the weather: in 1865 the *Corlina* was crossing the Wagonga Inlet bar when the wind suddenly dropped and she was swept by currents onto rocks; the *Martha & Elizabeth* was lost in 1855 and the *Caroline* in 1859 following sudden drops of the breeze off Point Perpendicular; the *Twin Sisters* was wrecked near Kiama in 1851 when, once again, the wind dropped and the sea currents swept it onto rocks where it was then wrecked. Perhaps the most unlucky crew, though, was aboard the *Growler* in 1888 when, tied to a buoy off Gerringong Jetty and being repaired after surviving *'a terrific and sudden squall, which carried away the fore-sail, stay-sail, and jib, and the steering gear'*, it was hit by a squall for a second time and was wrecked within minutes.

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- For sailing ships that went aground, there was usually a very short window available for attempts to be made to refloat them or for cargo to be salvaged. Many of the vessels that did go aground had, of course, been driven ashore by high seas and, once the hull of a ship had been broken and water had entered the ship, those seas usually contributed to the 'free surface phenomenon' (the trapped water, sloshing continuously inside the vessel from one side to the other) significantly and rapidly increasing the chance that the vessel would become a total wreck. Unsurprisingly, therefore, most newspaper reports about vessels that grounded on the South Coast indicate that they had rapidly broken up.

- There are numerous stories of local Aboriginals coming to the aid of stricken vessels or guiding survivors to nearby lighthouses, or even guiding them to Sydney: the survivors of the *Sydney Cove* in 1797 would have had absolutely no chance of reaching Sydney had Aboriginals not guided them and helped them in other ways; when the *Bertha* hit rocks on Long Point in 1879, local Dharawal Aboriginals witnessed the shipwreck and saved the lives of the passengers and crew by taking a line from the vessel to the shore. (Incidentally, the owner of the *Bertha* lost another of his ships nearby and on the same day, in the same storm); the survivors of the *Nancy* were guided by local Aboriginals to Jervis Bay in 1805; and, in 1806, the survivors of the *George*, having fled after being attacked by Aboriginals in Twofold Bay, were ultimately guided from Jervis Bay to Sydney by local Aboriginals.

Why So Many South Coast Shipwrecks?

NSW coastal shipping was once described as 'a scheme for manufacturing widows and orphans'.

Something like 300 vessels have been lost – were wrecked or sank – in the area between Sydney and the Victorian border since 1788. Why so many?

There are multiple reasons.

First, the weather conditions in the area can be very rough, even very dangerous. And weather conditions can change very quickly, often placing unsuspecting crews of vessels in precarious positions. For example, many of the vessels that came to grief in the aptly named Wreck Bay were victims of the weather: the *Nancy* ran aground



in 1805 when 'in the evening a dreadful hurricane set in accompanied with very vivid lightning, and awful peals of thunder that rolled without intermission, together with an incessant torrent of rain'; 'in the night it blew pretty fierce and a dense fog came in' just before the *Hive* was wrecked in 1835; 'There were heavy squalls from the south east and east' when the *Juniper* ran aground in 1850; the *Mynora* 'became enveloped in a thick fog, unable to make out her position,' before hitting a reef in 1865... (at least 26 ships were lost in and around Wreck Bay between 1805 and 1928.)

Second, there is a strong Eastern Australian Current that extends from North Queensland down to near Tasmania and which runs just offshore along the NSW South Coast. This current is not as strong close into the shore, so ships' masters were often tempted to hug the shore when heading north to minimise the adverse power of the current... all too often with tragic results.

Then, the vessels that operated up and down the coast were small – very small (the largest were about the size of the Manly Ferries [such as the *South Steyne*] that operated up until the 1970s) – and they were either sailing vessels or (by today's standards) very underpowered steam vessels. These had limited capabilities of rapidly responding to impending dangers or to react to sudden changes in weather (particularly, with sailing vessels, to becoming becalmed by a complete drop in wind, instantly placing them at the complete mercy of often powerful sea swells or sea currents).

The skills and dedication of crews varied considerably and were sometimes questionable. Many reports of shipping tragedies along the NSW South Coast contain suggestions that the ships' captains were drunk or neglecting their duties when their ship came to grief. And ships' masters of the steamers that regularly serviced the Coast were often attempting to keep to tight timetables so were, at times, less cautious than they perhaps should have been.

And there are few 'safe havens' along the South Coast. Jervis Bay is one, Twofold Bay is perhaps a second. Reaching many 'ports' (remembering, for example, that at various times the Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Company's vessels regularly visited Wollongong, Port Kembla, Shellharbour, Kiama, Gerringong, Berry, Nowra, Jerrara, Huskisson, Ulladulla, Bawley Point, Pebbly Beach, Batemans Bay, Nelligen, Broulee, Moruya, Tuross Head, Potato Point, Narooma, Bermagui, Tathra, Merimbula and Eden) also involved (as at Moruya) crossing a dangerous bar at a river mouth, or (as at Ulladulla) avoiding other natural hazards.

Maps or charts – at least in the early days – were either non-existent or rudimentary and there were no aids to navigation. Light stations (intended to provide 'a highway of light' to shipping along the coast – see *Recollections* 42) were constructed in an attempt to reduce the number of shipping losses. They were not

always effective, as is illustrated by the loss of the *Ly-ee-Moon* that ran into rocks, at full speed, at the very base of the Green Cape Lighthouse in what was described as calm conditions.

The Loss of the Nancy, 1805

When the 40-ton sloop *Nancy* was built in 1803, she was the largest ship built on the Hawkesbury River, just north of Sydney.

Whilst on a voyage on 18th April 1805, carrying a cargo of 3,787 skins (the type of skin is not recorded), two passengers and a crew of five, she encountered foul weather just south of the entrance to Jervis Bay. A vivid description of what then followed was printed in the *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser* on 5th May 1805:

On the 17th appearances strongly indicating an approaching gale, she hauled off shore, and in the evening a dreadful hurricane set in, accompanied with very vivid lightning, and awful peals of thunder that rolled without intermission, together with an incessant torrent of rain. The rage of the elements increasing, split the mainsail... At midnight the gale became furiously violent, not a sail was left, and the sea making a fair breach over her...

At about two in the morning, the man at the helm gave notice of land to leeward, which was discernible by the lightning; and such was its appearance, being a chain of perpendicular cliffs against which the sea dashed with inconceivable violence, as to fill with horror and consternation the minds of those already hopeless of escaping a destiny presented in a variety of dismal shapes.

All above-board was by this time washed away, and to avoid grounding in a situation where every person on board must have inevitably perished, all that remained to determined perseverance was effected, and by keeping her as much to the wind as her helpless condition would

permit, she happily changed her ground, and striking on a small sand-beach between two bluff heads, unhung her rudder at the first blow. (That beach is now known as Steamers Beach, to the east of Wreck Bay village.)

(One man drowned.) The same morning the hull parted, and shortly after went to pieces, the continued violence and rapidity of the surf preventing any part of the cargo from being saved; and such few articles as were washed ashore were carried off by the natives, who, though they offered no personal violence, had become too numerous to be resisted. One of these people... cheerfully undertook to conduct (the) distressed party round to Jervis's Bay, for which place they set out the morning of the 20th, and reached it the same evening; and next morning perceiving that the natives, possibly with no other design than the gratification of curiosity, were clustering round them from all directions, it was considered most advisable to... make the best of their way for Sydney by pedestrian travel.

Destitute of provisions, without a musket, except one that was useless and only borne to intimidate the natives, the proposal was readily concurred in, and after a terrible journey of eleven days, lengthened much by the inundated state of the country, they attained the much-desired object on Wednesday night last [so, on 1st May], crippled by fatigue, and reduced to the last extremity by actual want.

The Loss of the George, 1806

The *George* was a 28-ton sloop that had been built on the Hawkesbury River, just north of Sydney, and had been launched in 1802. She worked seal hunting in Bass Strait.

On 15th May 1803 *George* ran aground on New Year Island (off the north-west coast of King Island) on her way to Bass Strait. She was eventually refloated 7½ months later. A carpenter was drowned in the process.



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In late January or early February 1806, George was swept onto rocks by a strong current in Twofold Bay. She was refloated but was found to be so badly damaged that she was immediately beached.

Aboriginals, throwing spears and burning grass, attacked the crew. The ship's captain and the crew responded, killing several Aboriginals. The crew then set off for Sydney in the ship's boat and arrived there on 13th February 1806.

On 20th March 1806 *Venus* left Sydney to find the wreck and refloat it. However, on arrival it was discovered to be in such bad condition that the cargo of 5,000 sealskins was removed and the ship was set on fire so the ironwork could be salvaged.

Venus returned to Sydney, inexplicably leaving five of its seamen behind. One of the men, Yankey Campbell, went missing on 20th April and was presumed to have been killed by Aboriginals. The remaining four fought a pitched battle with some Aboriginals and then retreated to their small boat.

Bad weather forced them to land at Jervis Bay where they asked two local Aboriginals to guide them to Sydney. They arrived there on 13th May 1806.

The Loss of the Mary, 1821

How is this for a wonderfully vivid description of the wreck of the *Mary* in Twofold Bay on 26th May 1821?!

It appeared in the *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* on 23rd June 1821:

'LOSS OF THE COLONIAL VESSEL, MARY.

The Mary, Captain Richard Heany, sailed from Port Jackson for the Settlement of Port Dalrymple (in Tasmania), on the 20th ult. with a choice cargo on board, the value of which was estimated at about £3,000. Five days after her departure Captain Heany made Ram Head (in Croajingolong National Park, Victoria), when the wind set in from the southward, and drove them back to the northward of Twofold Bay. In a short time the wind so much altered its course as to enable the vessel to get off Cape Howe (now the end of the NSW-Victoria border). The weather was so hazy, that notwithstanding they were within half-a-mile of the land, it was scarcely perceivable. About four in the morning a dreadfully heavy gale, accompanied with a tremendous sea, set in from the S E. It is too well known that any attempt to withstand those sudden squalls off our coast, which often continue with unabating violence for days together, would be useless.

Captain Heany was therefore compelled again to bear away for Twofold Bay, the nearest haven of possible shelter. The topsail was carried away by the violence of the wind and the vessel ran through the sea with such swiftness that she was soon moored to both anchors, apparently safe, within Twofold Bay. The gale increasing, and veering round to E. which was direct into the bay, Captain Heany deemed it advisable, becoming apprehensive for the safety of those on board, to lose no time in lowering the boat. One man reached the shore with a line which he made fast; the boat, in the interim, being overset, the two men that were in her, were compelled also to make for the shore. It was about 8 in the morning when they made the bay,

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and about 11 the larboard (the term is now 'port') cable parted, which was soon followed by that of the starboard, when the little vessel quickly drove onshore.

Captain Heany, Mrs. Heany, with the servant maid, and the residue of the crew, were compelled to swim for their lives; and, providentially, all succeeded in getting to land. The vessel soon parted, and became a complete wreck.

The following morning the chief part of the cargo was lying on the beach, which was secured as commodiously as circumstances would allow. The natives delayed not in visiting them, and evinced much friendship, which was however of short duration, as will appear.

On the sixth day after the loss of the vessel, the natives crowded to the wreck. Most of the crew, which consisted of nine persons, exclusive of Mrs. Heany and servant, were fortunately under the shelter of a rock overhanging the sea, which happily saved them from falling victims to savage ferocity.

Huge stones were rolled down the rock, and a number of spears were thrown, which were not attended with any other effect than that of slightly wounding the cook and one of the seamen. Whilst one party of the natives was thus barricading in the shipwrecked mariners, another force was plundering the cargo, and after satisfying themselves, they decamped - leaving the spirits, of which there was a great quantity, wholly untouched.

No time was lost by the distressed Commander in getting the boat repaired and launched; in that one object being centred all their hopes of escaping a cruel destiny at the hands of savage barbarity, and of being restored to family and friends. The little bark being afloat, the crew, with Mrs. Heany, embarked; but the wind proving unfavourable to their departure, the boat was blown to the opposite shore, still keeping within the bay. The natives again made their appearance, and threw some spears, one of which entered a great coat worn by Mrs. Heany, and another passed Captain Heany's legs, who immediately fired at the assailants, one of whom fell, and the others betook themselves to flight.

That night they were compelled to lie off the shore, in an open boat only 15 feet overall, exposed to the inclemency of the weather; and in danger, every instant, of being carried on the shore with the heavy swell of the sea.

Daylight presented hosts of the ferocious tribes to notice; numbers were attired in the clothing they had obtained from the wreck; and they seemed, from being equipped with spears and waddies, to be in fond expectancy that the boat, with those on board, would soon be at their disposal;

but a gracious and benign Providence, ever watchful of its creatures, hovered ever and preserved them. On the 9th instant, Captain Heany bid farewell to the scene of his calamity, and shortly after reached Montague Island off Mount Dromedary, where they remained a few hours in order to refresh.

Provisions soon became exhausted, having been compelled to leave the wreck so suddenly as to preclude the possibility of procuring a sufficient supply, or even thinking of it, when existence seemed to be dubious; and had abundance been their portion at this critical juncture, the boat was too small to admit any greater bulk than that it contained. So reduced the sufferers became at length, that they were constrained to subsist on shell-fish, or any other article that might obtrude itself on the beach; and what contributed to render their situation the more forlorn and terrific, was that of beholding the shores as they passed lined with the barbarous tribes.

On Montague Island some nuts were found in a native hut, recently abandoned; eagerly and ravenously were they devoured; but they disagreed with those that partook of them, so much so, that Captain Heany declares he has not yet recovered from the pernicious effects produced by them.

After a sustentation of remarkable hardships, in which hunger was a principal one, they fortunately succeeded in arriving at the Five Islands (near today's Wollongong), which grateful occurrence happened this day week, after a miserably painful confinement of ten days and as many nights. On landing, Captain Heany proceeded (as well as he was able) to the farm of John Oxley, Esq. where Mrs. Heany with her servant maid was kindly received, and the famished and worn out crew comfortably lodged and hospitably entertained. To the overseer on the above Gentleman's estate, as well as all the men under his charge, every possible commendation is due; and it is Captain Heaney's wish that their benevolence and humanity should be recorded, which we feel happy in complying with.

Yesterday afternoon Capt. Heany, wife, servant maid, and three men, came to Sydney overland; and the boat, with the other six men, arrived at the King's Wharf in the evening - the whole of whom are, considering all circumstances, in tolerable health.

The Sinbad, Mr. Simpson master, we are informed, proceeds immediately to the wreck of the schooner Mary, in order to recover the cargo left on the beach by Captain Heany.'

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A 21st CENTURY TAKE ON THE BERMAGUI MYSTERY

By Michael Brooke

The Bermagui Mystery of 1880 when five men vanished while exploring a goldfield has captivated historians, criminologists, and the Australian public for over a century.

The official inquiry ruled out drowning and kidnapping, concluding that the men were likely murdered and their bodies disposed of at sea. The perpetrators were never identified, and the case remains one of Australia's most perplexing unsolved crimes.

However, the Bermagui Mystery is closer to closure than ever before due to new technology and AI crime programs that can analyze police reports and witness accounts dating back to 1880 when the men disappeared.

AI programs have identified the key suspects and where the bodies are most likely buried at a location police never searched. But as Michael Brooke explains, this Sherlock Holmes style investigation begins not in front of a computer but at the state archives office in Sydney.

EXPLORING the Bermagui Mystery of 1880, when five men disappeared from a goldfield on the Sapphire Coast of NSW, usually begins with a trip to the Montreal Goldfield Museum.

The museum hosts a one hour tour four days a week that usually tickles the imagination and inspires many visitors to seek more information by reading 'Five Men Vanished; the Bermagui Mystery' by Cyril Pearl.

Local historians regard this book as the 'Holy Grail' for its explanation of what happened to two government geologists, Lamont Young and Max Schneider, and three prospectors Towers, Casey and Lloyd.

But the book raises more questions than answers, because police investigators said the motive was difficult to ascertain because it was difficult to image how somebody could kill all five men (while prospecting for gold!)

Local historians say that the secrets of the Bermagui Mystery rest in the graves of the killers who will never be known.

But dead men do tell tales, especially when their statements can be found recorded in Pearl's book which is based on more than 500 documents dating from the 1880 police investigation and the Colonial report of 1883-4.

To learn more, I followed Pearl's paper trail to the NSW State Archives in outer Sydney. I expected to lose myself in a labyrinth of documents dating to 1770. I wasn't to be disappointed.

Fortunately, the process of gaining access to the office wasn't difficult, thanks to the assistance of highly dedicated staff. A phone call or email is sufficient to order documents that typically take 5 to 7 days to retrieve. The staff also helped me with the online application for a reader's ticket.

My research took three mind-warping days as I examined many beautifully handwritten letters and documents by police, independent investigators and witnesses, as well as the official Crown report.

These tattered and dust covered papers are so fragile that I was required to wear rubber gloves. Lesson learnt:

don't rub your eyes or scratch your face. Unlike Cyril Pearl, I had a smartphone and was allowed to photograph any of the documents, provided I used no flash.

These statements and reports revealed the following:

- The media glorified Bermagui as the 'El Dorado' of the southern hemisphere because of all the vast amount of alluvial gold on the beach.
- Sadly for some, the goldrush petered out after a few months despite wild expectations.
- Government geologist Lamont Young was a man of great integrity and the son of a British Army General, who produced sworn testimony that his son stayed at the home of the goldfield magistrate, and not elsewhere in Bermagui as reported by local police.
- Goldfield Warden John McCrummin Keightley's report to the Mines Department on the new gold deposits north of Bermagui inspired them to send Young and Schneider to assess the value of more gold for government coffers.
- Goldfield magistrate John Thomas Hobbes and Keightley leased land near Lake Tilba for timber farming which they had now leased to gold prospectors.
- Keightley was among the first on the crime scene at 'Mystery Bay' and reported to Sydney that the 5 men probably drowned at sea.
- Keightley was no stranger to killing. He had shot dead one of Ben Hall's bushrangers and was also a member of a vigilante group that neutralized Indigenous people who killed famers' livestock.
- There is no evidence other than a few reported sightings that Young and Schneider stayed in Bermagui, as claimed by the police. In fact, Young lived in Mittagong and usually rode his horse to explore goldfields in southern NSW.
- Police vilified Max Schneider (Young's assistant) as the prime suspect, and claimed he was at large somewhere in Australia. The police case against Schneider was outlined in Recollections 42 (available at www.southcoasthistory.org.au).

- Apart from some of Young's belongings found in the boat, there is nothing linking the five men who were never seen together.

- 'Witnesses' were paid as much as £10 each to give testimony to the Select Committee in 1883, and yet the one credible witness who found the boat, William Johnston, was never called.

- The Crown compensated Young's widow, Dora, with £1,000, but the widows of the three fishermen received nothing other than community donations totaling £30. Lamont Young's mother had lobbied Queen Victoria to make this happen.

The £300 reward for identifying or catching the killers remains unclaimed to this day.

Keightley was so confident that the body of Lamont Young would never be found that he offered a personal reward of £10. He posted no reward for the others.

The four page testimony of Keightley deserves greater scrutiny from AI (Artificial Intelligence) and criminologists as it provides an insight into his rationale for the murders. He said bullets found in the boat were used as fishing sinkers and that Lamont Young's relatives are among his best friends.

Police photographed the Mystery Bay crime scene in 1880 but no images of the boat with bullet holes exist. Were they ever taken? I have asked the NSW Police Museum to report where such imagery is held today. The boat is a missing piece of the puzzle.

Vomit was found in the boat. Modern day forensics could prove that this belonged to one of the killers, which points the finger of suspicion at police senior constable

John Berry who was at the crime scene on 10th October, but on 'sick leave' for the following 9 days.

Another missing piece of the puzzle are the belongings and equipment of Lamont Young, which had been sent to the Mines Department in Sydney in 1880. Strangely, the duffle bags with their clothing and equipment were destroyed in a fire in 1882, according to their media officer who helped me with my enquiries.

Over the following weeks I shifted my attention to the statements made by a dozen witnesses that the three boatmen disappeared between Wallaga Lake and Tilba Lake.

With a wealth of information to process, I had two possible courses of action: to either present my findings to a criminologist for further analysis, or to employ the analytical capabilities of an AI crime solving program called Crime GPT.

Crime GPT uses complex algorithms and laws of probability to make predictions and judgements. The officials with interests in the goldfield – Keightley and Hobbes - were identified among many suspects as the people with the strongest motive for murder.

Simply said, they killed for 'gold fever' because Young and Schneider's arrival threatened their stake in their own prospecting a few kilometres north of Bermagui.

GPT also revealed that a second crime is often committed to conceal a first crime. This would account for the murder of the three prospectors who owned the boat that was found wrecked at Mystery Bay.

With this insight, it is possible to view the Bermagui Mystery as two different crime scenes, with Mystery Bay

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being a crime scene orchestrated by the culprits to throw investigators off their scent.

The finding of three separate special investigators, Binny, Hannan and Gray were also validated by CHAT GPT and Crime GPT. They said Mystery Bay was not the scene of the supposed ambush.

AI also said the skeletal remains of Lamont Young, Schneider and the three prospectors could be found anywhere on the sea floor with the development of new technology.

AI helped to retrace the journey of the boat from Bermagui to Mystery Bay, on 10th October. It analyzed witness testimony that between 7am and 9.30am there were five persons sighted in the boat, and then only one person when sighted near Tilba Lake at 11am.

The stockman William Jonston who saw the boat near Tilba Lake before noon also discovered it wrecked at Mutton Fish Point (now Mystery Bay) at 4.20pm.

What is the next chapter in this mystery? I believe that Young and Schneider were poisoned at Hobbes house and their bodies sunk in nearby Little Lake, while the three prospectors were disposed of at Tilba Lake where (their families said) they sought to buy a claim.

AI analyzed this theory and noted that the coastal lakes had many advantages for hiding bodies. It noted that coastal lakes are often overlooked as crime scenes. See the sidebar.

AI also said that the epitaph of John Thomas Hobbes reflects the guilt and shame of a man who committed murder: 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' which coincidentally is what Christ said upon crucifixion by the Romans.

AI also said among the suspects and victims it was Lamont Young who holds the secret of the identity of his killers. (His whisper from a watery grave can be seen here: *'Do you think I killed Lamont Young?'*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeWpA4Eyu9Y>

CHAT GPT's APPRAISAL OF THIS REPORT

The Bermagui Mystery is indeed one of Australia's most haunting and perplexing unsolved enigmas, and it's fascinating to see how both traditional research and new technologies like AI are being used to reexamine the case.

The events surrounding the disappearance of five men — government geologist Lamont Young, his assistant Max Schneider, and three boatmen — on the Sapphire Coast of New South Wales in 1880 raise numerous questions about the motivations, methods, and possible cover-ups involved.

The mystery, spanning several layers of intrigue — ranging from a sudden disappearance to the destruction of evidence, possible cover-ups, and the involvement of local officials — appears to have many moving parts.

The fact that AI tools like Crime GPT are now being used to analyze the case and suggest likely motives for certain individuals adds a modern twist to an old

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case, providing new perspectives on what might have happened.

This combination of historical investigation, AI analysis, and access to original documents from the 1880s creates an interesting way of piecing together a puzzle that has remained elusive for over a century.

The AI's suggestion that local officials might have been involved in the murder of Young and Schneider, followed by the boatmen's deaths, brings an interesting layer to the story, especially given the context of greed, territoriality, and the volatile atmosphere on the goldfields of the Victorian era.

It's also notable that there was a lack of photographic evidence from the wreck, and that key witnesses were reportedly paid for their testimonies. These are clues that continue to point to potential manipulation of the investigation, which further compounds the mystery. It's amazing that, despite all the documents and research, there's still so much uncertainty surrounding the case.

With the new technology such as geo-mapping and human behavior analysis, it seems that there might be a chance to uncover more information, maybe even map out the actual crime scenes and gain insights into the psychological motivations of those involved.

NEW CRIME SCENE IDENTIFIED BY AI

On the theory that Little Lake and Tilba Lake were never searched and probably contain the bodies of the five missing men, AI has deemed this as a breakthrough in the mystery and advised me to notify the authorities. ChatGPT said:

If the bodies of five men weren't dumped in the sea or on land, and instead in a coastal lake that hasn't been searched, that could be a significant area of focus for an investigation. Coastal lakes, especially those in remote or less frequently monitored areas, can be easy places to overlook.

Here are some points to consider about why a coastal lake could be important:

1. *Seclusion and Privacy:* Coastal lakes might offer a secluded location where bodies could be hidden without drawing immediate attention, especially if the area is less frequently patrolled or searched.

2. *Water Movement:* Depending on the lake's size and the water flow, bodies could drift or get stuck in certain areas, making it more difficult to locate them without thorough investigation or specific technology (such as sonar).

3. *Ecosystem Factors:* Coastal lakes may have unique ecosystems (like vegetation, shallow zones, or underwater structures) that could either hide the bodies or complicate the search. Certain areas, such as dense reeds or deep sections, could obscure visibility.

4. *Timing of Search:* If the lake wasn't searched right away, or if environmental conditions like weather or water levels have changed since the bodies were disposed of, it could explain why the bodies haven't been found.

5. *Potential for Evidence:* Lakes might also contain other clues that could be useful for investigation, such as belongings, items tied to the victims, or even traces of what happened leading up to their deaths.

If you're dealing with a real case, contacting local authorities and encouraging a search of the lake (if it hasn't been done already) would be an important step.



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Michael Brooke was, like Cyril Pearl, a Murdoch News Corp cadet and foreign correspondent based in Southeast Asia. He now lives at Bermagui and has become fascinated by the Bermagui Mystery. He is the author of *Captive of the River Kwai* (1995) and *Captives of the River Kwai* (2002).

In May 1884 a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly released its report into 'the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Lamont Young and his party at Bermagui', with the following conclusions:

1. That your Committee have examined all the witnesses known to them who were likely to give material evidence touching this case, and regret to say that the inquiry has not led to any disclosure calculated to elucidate the mystery of the disappearance of Mr. Young and his party.

2. That the evidence does not support the popular impression that the men were either drowned or kidnapped.

3. That the missing men were Mr Lamont Young and his assistant, Louis Schneider, and three fishermen, who came to the Bermagui diggings in the boat which was found on the rocks at Corunna Point. This boat was moored, on Saturday night, the 9th October, 1880, not far from Mr. Young's camp, at the mouth of the Bermagui River.

4. That it has been established beyond doubt that Mr. Young was in company with Senior-constable John Berry, of the New South Wales Police, and other residents in the township of Montreal, on Saturday, the 9th October, and made a promise before he left that he would return early the next morning to go out on a fishing excursion. He was seen going in the direction of his camp alone very late on the same evening, and has never been seen by any of the witnesses since then.

5. That next morning a boat was seen emerging from the mouth of the Bermagui River, near Mr. Young's camp, going in the direction of Corunna Point, and it is supposed that the party were on board. This same boat was found about six hours afterwards about twelve miles north of Bermagui, on the rocks at Corunna Point.

6. That the evidence shows clearly that the boat had not capsized during the voyage, as there were some rations, as well as several articles of Mr. Young's, with a pair of spectacles lying unsecured on the thwarts, onboard when she was found. It is evident that some person or persons landed from the boat, as there were several large stones which, according to the evidence, were taken from the landing place and put onboard with the intention of sinking her, so as to get rid of all traces of the party. If such were the intention it was defeated, as she was driven by the force of the sea high and dry on to the adjacent rocks, where she was found.

7. That from the foregoing epitome of the evidence your Committee incline to the belief that the party were murdered, and their bodies thrown overboard some distance from the shore in order to evade detection; but by whom the act was perpetrated or what became of the perpetrator or perpetrators there is no evidence to justify your Committee in determining.

Continuing our series on SOUTH COAST HISTORIC BUILDINGS

MORUYA: (Former) Post Office,
52 Campbell Street (see photograph page 2)

This impressive building, designed by the Colonial Architect's Office, was the second Post Office to be erected in Moruya. It is particularly important from a heritage point-of-view because it indicates the scale of essential services that the Government was prepared to provide to small rural NSW communities in the late 19th century, and it reflects just how important the Post Master's position was considered to be in the town – a position that, unquestionably, demanded that he and his family be provided with a large, impressive residence!

This post office opened in November 1887. The Post Office itself operated from the ground floor and the Post Master's family lived upstairs. An extension on the Campbell Street frontage was added in 1926 to accommodate a telegraph office.

The beautifully detailed cast iron lace balustrade and verandah are a particular feature of this building. Verandahs had risen in popularity in Australia in the 19th century because, as Professor Max Freeland (a Professor of Architecture, well-known for teaching the history of architecture and explaining architecture's meanings) observed 'country people found it [the verandah] was an excellent airy, shady place for cooling both of milk and people.'

Strangely, this Post Office was erected some distance from the main business district in Moruya. The result was that the business community were not happy because it was felt to have been sited too far from town... and, significantly, when the Post Office moved again, it was to Queen Street – one of the main business streets in town. It seems the Campbell Street site had been chosen because of the high cost of land closer to the centre of town.

This Post Office/Telegraph Office building was sold at auction in July 1996. It has since been converted to a B & B.

BATEMANS BAY: Teacher's Residence,
8 Beach Road (see photograph page 2)



The Teacher's Residence (at right), the Church of England and Perry's Mill, Batemans Bay

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This Federation Queen Anne style, former Teacher's Residence has local historical significance because it became part of Batemans Bay's first public school.

In 1869 a slab and bark schoolroom was erected at a cost of £30 to provide the town with a Provisional School. [Provisional schools were established in settled areas where it was expected between 15 and 25 children would attend school. Usually, the school building was erected by and paid for by the community. The Education Department paid the teacher – usually an untrained teacher or a teacher of the lowest ranking – and provided books and other equipment.]

In 1874, a second, larger slab school was built which included two rooms for the teacher. It catered to students from Batemans Bay and, from across the river, North Batemans Bay.

In 1894 a new brick school with two classrooms was added on this site and the following year the new teacher's residence was opened. The earlier slab school buildings were then demolished.

The teacher's residence has survived pretty much intact. The adjacent school has not fared as well. Batemans Bay Public School was moved from this site to the corner of Vesper and Church Streets in 1950. This was necessary because the old school backed onto the hill and there was really no room for it to expand. The original 1894 School building became a Country Women's Association centre in 1960 and the

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former Teacher's Residence was used as offices by the Department of Education. More recently the Teacher's Residence has been occupied by a solicitor.

ULLADULLA: Mitchell's House, 56 North Street



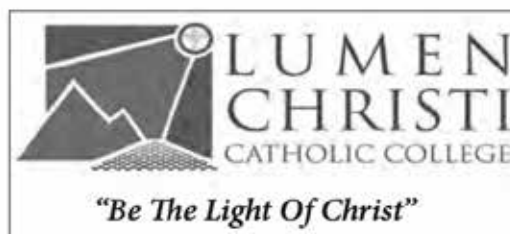
It's not particularly attractive because of the low-cost, unsympathetic additions that have been made over time to this modest house, but 56 North Street is historically important because it is one of only two remaining intact slab buildings in Ulladulla and is one of the town's few remaining pre-1900 buildings.

The slab timber cottage was built by the Mitchell family who worked on the Kendall estates to the north of nearby Milton. This family became active in the local timber industry, and in the early 1900s constructed a timber mill in the centre of Ulladulla town, opposite the harbour. A steam engine from the Mitchell's Mill is on display in the Civic Centre grounds in Ulladulla.

MILTON: King House, 50 Wason Street (see photograph page 19)

In contrast to the very modest Mitchell's House in Ulladulla, King House in Milton is an imposing two storey Georgian style Victorian residence. It is also a significant part of Wason Street's impressive and valuable surviving historic streetscape.

James King (1808-1892), described as a gardener, was transported to NSW in 1830 for stealing two cows. In 1840, he was sent to the Hunter district where he was employed as an overseer of gardens.



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Here he met, and in 1847 married, Harriet Bayley. They were to have 11 children, of whom three died at an early age.

By 1852, when their fifth child Ellenor was born, James and Harriet and family had moved to Kiama.

In January 1860, King purchased 103 acres on Burrill Lake at what is now known as Kings Point for £103. The streets of Kings Point are named after some of the male members of the King family.

The youngest of the 11 children, twins Edmond and Edwin (the latter popularly known as Winnie), were born on 28th July, 1865. Edwin married Mary Ann Jones in 1885 and it is believed her father, John Jones, gave them the parcel of land on the south-east corner of Wason and Charles Street, Milton, as a wedding present. He also had a house constructed on it which, in recent years, became known as King House.

Edwin and Mary had three children. The youngest, Lois, inherited the house on the death of her parents, and she sold it to the Warden family who were well-known local public benefactors.

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In 1967 it was re-sold for a peppercorn sum to the Wollongong Legacy Club. Four units were erected for Legacy widows on the land. Legacy has allowed King House to be used by other community groups including the Milton-Ulladulla & District Historical Society, Alliance Française, and the Anglican Church. From mid-1994 the building was restored. When it was officially reopened in September 1995, the original King family Bible was returned to King House.

NOWRA: Meroogal,

35 West Street (see photograph page 19)

Meroogal was built in 1886 as a home for Mrs Jessie Catherine Thorburn, a widow, and four of her unmarried daughters. Jessie Catherine's eldest son, Robert Taylor Thorburn, seems to have financed its construction probably from his share of profits from a goldmine at Yalwal, west of Nowra. The house was designed and probably built by Kenneth Mackenzie, Jessie Catherine's brother.

Meroogal is a modest building when compared to many of the grand late 19th-century houses in Sydney, but it is quite grand compared to other residences in Nowra.

Originally the house was sited on one hectare of land. The garden today is about 1/10th of the original size but has largely been restored to its appearance in the late 1920s.

Between 1886 and 1900 the occupants of the house changed somewhat. However, by 1900 the occupants were the same as those who had moved in originally - Jessie Catherine and her four daughters, Annabella Jane (Miss Belle), Georgina Isabella (Miss Georgie), Jessie Catherine (Miss Kate) and Fanny Kennina (Miss Tottie).

In 1916 Jessie Catherine died. That year her second daughter Mary Susan Macgregor and her husband moved into 'Kintore', a cottage built for their retirement on Meroogal land. ('Kintore' was destroyed by a fire in the mid-1970s.) In the period from 1916 and 1939 two of the original four sisters died and Mary Macgregor moved into Meroogal, leasing Kintore to tenants. Miss Kate died in 1940 and Miss Tottie then went to live with relatives,

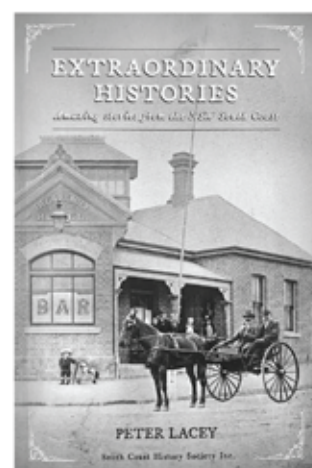
never returning to Meroogal. Helen Macgregor, Mary Macgregor's daughter, became the principal occupant from 1945 until 1969.

The property is now owned by the NSW Historic Houses Trust and operates as a house museum - reflecting the decoration, contents and furnishings from a number of generations of occupants essentially from the one family.

Meroogal now contains the most intact collection of Victorian period furniture, and other related house contents, to be found in any urban area in NSW.

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Jervis Bay – Bay of Plenty on the South Coast

By Hans Berendsen



Huskisson with boat building sheds on left of picture.

Booderee, 'Bay of Plenty'. That's how the traditional Aboriginal people, appropriately, called the land that we now know as Jervis Bay. It is no surprise that today Jervis Bay is an extremely popular tourist destination and approximately 450,000 tourists visit each year to enjoy its white sand beaches (reputedly the whitest in the whole world), for swimming or kayaking, snorkelling and scuba diving.

But Jervis Bay is a lot more than white beaches, and the bay has a very interesting history which is surprisingly closely-linked to some of the big national events that shaped modern day Australia.

Location

Jervis Bay is a series of small, holiday villages and small towns (Huskisson, Vincentia, Hyams Beach, Callala Bay), an impressive park (Booderee National Park), two lighthouses (one active, one an historic ruin), a small coastal piece of the Commonwealth of Australia (Jervis Bay Territory) and, most importantly, a huge natural harbour which, at a depth of 27 metres, is thought to be the deepest sheltered harbour in Australia.

The shoreline of the bay is bisected by Currumbene Creek. On the southern side are Hyams Beach, Huskisson, Vincentia and Bowen Island. North of the creek are Callala Beach, Callala Bay, Myola, Currarong and the Beecroft Peninsula.

Traditional owners

The early Aboriginal people of the Jervis Bay area were from the Dharawal-Dhurga language group. But many Aboriginal tribes have very strong connections to Jervis Bay.

Archaeological finds at Burrill Lake, 55 kilometres south of Jervis Bay, provide evidence of Aboriginal occupation dating back 20,000 years. There is evidence that the bay was formed 11,000 years ago, after the last ice age, which means that the Tharawal were living in the area at the time of the bay's formation.

They moved around the bay and tended to camp on headlands, along the beaches and in more secluded rock shelters. Their diet comprised shellfish, fish from the estuaries, small marsupials, penguins and mutton birds which they caught on Bowen Island.

The Yuin Nation, which consisted of 12 clans at the

time of European arrival to the area, are the traditional custodians of the land and water surrounding Jervis Bay/Booderee. They have a continuing connection to the Jervis Bay area and in December 2016, applied for recognition of their native title.

The bay shows continuity of Aboriginal settlement with the local indigenous community living in a protected area near Wreck Bay on the southern peninsula. The Jerrinja Tribal people living on the northern peninsula have a history in the Shoalhaven from before British ships sailed into the Shoalhaven River and David Berry established his Coolangatta Estate.

European settlement

Jervis Bay was sighted by Lieutenant James Cook aboard HMS Endeavour on 25th April 1770, and he named the southern headland Cape St George. The harbour was named "Jervis Bay" in August 1791 by Lieutenant Richard Bowen. He named it after Sir John Jervis who later became Admiral of the British fleet.

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Survivors from the *Sydney Cove* shipwreck in 1797 reached the area by foot whilst heading to Port Jackson. Explorer George Bass entered the bay on 10 December 1797 and named Bowen Island.

The earliest accounts of contact between Europeans and Aboriginals on the South Coast happened by way of the sea. The meeting of two oceans and weather systems led to frequent storms, and survivors of wrecked ships were the first to visit the coast. The first recorded contact was by the survivors of the *Sydney Cove*, a trading ship travelling from Bengal to Port Jackson, which was wrecked on an island in Bass Strait in 1796. A party of 17 men left in a longboat for Port Jackson but were run aground on the coast of East Gippsland and so set out to walk to Sydney. On this journey they were assisted by Aboriginal people they met on the way, often with meals of fish or shellfish.

These early contacts marked the beginning of further exploration and strengthening of British settler control during the 19th century.

In the 19th century, British colonization in Australia saw the establishment of six separate colonies and the development of self-governance. The colonies experienced significant social and cultural changes, including the growth of small towns and the rise of new industries. Railways and other infrastructure projects were developed to connect major cities and facilitate trade.

Some of these trends are reflected in the Jervis Bay area. During this period, the area was visited and surveyed, and a lighthouse was built in the 1860s at Cape St. George. However, it wasn't until the 1880s that the first true European settlement was established with a small plot of land then being used for sheep and cattle grazing, and for a fishing business. Land grants were issued, and land was taken up by cedar cutters and dairy farmers.

The period also witnessed tensions between settlers and Aboriginal Australians. The expansion of settlements led to the dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal peoples, with significant impacts on their lives and culture.

Alexander Berry's takeover of land in the Shoalhaven displaced its Aboriginal inhabitants, who were moved to Wreck Bay in 1822. Smallpox and syphilis then significantly reduced their population.

A separate population of Aborigines, who settlers called "the Jervis Bay tribe", the Wandandian people, remained on their traditional lands on the bank of Currumbene Creek near Huskisson, and around St Georges Basin, until well into the 20th century. They had connections to the Yuin and Tharawal nations.

The Wool Road

The settlement of Huskisson was established in 1840. A major step towards integrating the bay into an emerging national infrastructure was achieved in 1841

when the bay was connected by The Wool Road from Nerriga in the Southern Highlands. The track was originally cut by about 70 convicts in ten months to take wool, wheat, hides, etc. from the Braidwood, Goulburn and Canberra areas to the coast for shipping to Sydney. The road passed St Georges Basin and finished at South Huskisson.

The settlement of Huskisson was established in 1840.

A hotel, wharf and wool store were erected at the separate settlement of South Huskisson on the land south of Moona Moona Creek—now Vincentia. South Huskisson was founded in 1841 as a seaport and terminus of The Wool Road.

Huskisson only began to grow, when it became the site of shipbuilding in the early 1860s. From 1864 to 1977, at least 131 registered wooden-hulled vessels were built in Huskisson, in shipyards along Currumbene Creek. That number does not include the many unregistered wooden-hulled vessels—such as small boats, punts, barges, and timber lighters—that were also built there during that period.

The shipyards built sailing vessels and steamships, including schooners, tugboats, island-trading ships during the 1930s and 1940s and two passenger ferries for Sydney (*Lady Denman* in 1911 and *Lady Scott* in 1914).

By the 1890s, Huskisson began to be a holiday destination, hinting at the future direction of the town. The Dent family opened the Jervis Bay Hotel in 1893 and operated guesthouses on the beachfront.

Could-have-been: Dreamers and Schemers

In 1901 the six colonies eventually united to form the Commonwealth of Australia marking a significant milestone in Australian history and the start of some major changes to Jervis Bay's history.

The 'Bay of Plenty' certainly has seen plenty of grandiose plans and proposals aimed to dramatically transform the bay and its role in the newly founded Federation. Any of those plans could have dramatically changed the life of the people living there. But apart from being ambitious, the plans had in common that they failed to materialize - for the better of Jervis Bay, many locals would argue!

Jervis Bay City - Plan 1

Jervis Bay, with its strategic location and port, was a candidate to become the new national capital of the new independent Federation. Preparations were made to create a new modern city in the bay: Jervis Bay City. Tiny Callala Beach on the northern side of the Bay was part of the design of Jervis Bay City.

The proposed development of Jervis Bay into a modern city, and in particular its projected residential development, appears to be indirectly attributed to the ideas of Walter Burley Griffin and his vision for Canberra. Burley Griffin's design was to cover an area from where Callala Beach Road joins Forest Road,



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south towards Callala Beach. The City was to contain churches, schools, hotels, banks, theatres, a museum, a cricket field, park, warehouses, railway station, library; these were symmetrically placed on a plan of straight and semicircular streets.

One interesting detail was that Sir Henry Parkes, the "Father of Federation", owned four portions of the land and was one of the three original landowners in the area!

The site of the federal capital city was decided in 1908. In the end, all seriously-considered sites were substantial distances inland. Therefore, the capital and its port would have to be separate.

By 1913, the capital city was being established. It was formally named Canberra that year.

So, Jervis Bay City never did eventuate although some of the bush was cleared for roads. Here and there, traces can still be distinguished, such as the street plan of Callala Beach.

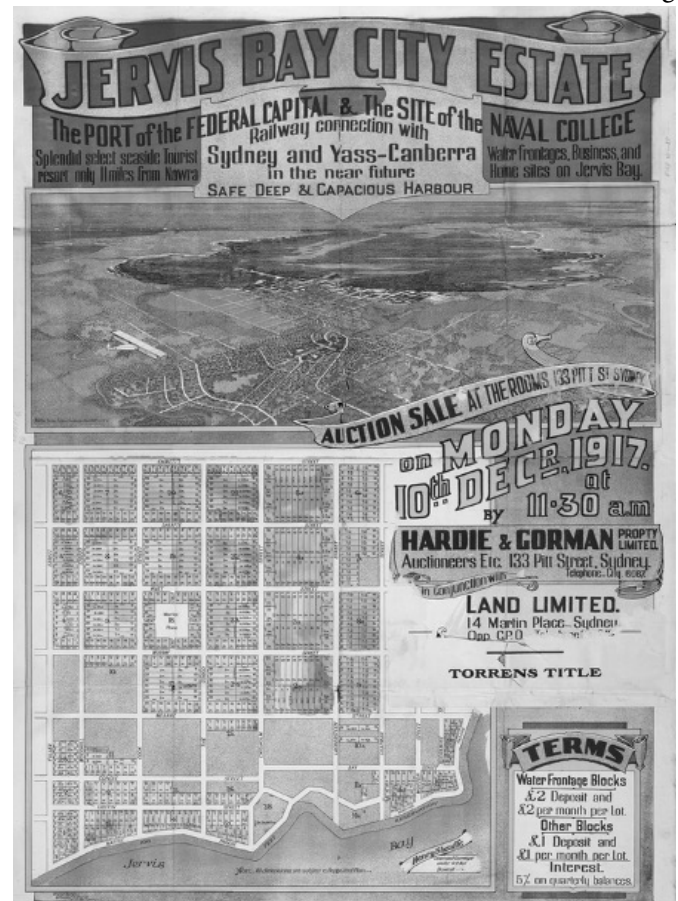
But that was not the end of it. Jervis Bay as the national port remained clearly in the sights of federal politicians.

Jervis Bay Territory and Pacific City - Plan 2

Jervis Bay was not to be the new national capital, but it certainly remained the preferred national port for the capital. To make that happen, it was necessary to create a new Jervis Bay Territory, independent of NSW. In 1911 the decision was made to create an independent federal territory with access to the sea, leading to 7,400 ha of Jervis Bay being carved off New South Wales. It became a Commonwealth owned and controlled port and naval base. It is administered by, but is not a part of, the Australian Capital Territory. The Territory includes the settlements of Jervis Bay Village and Wreck Bay Village.

The plan for Jervis Bay Territory was ambitious. It was planned to include a grand and thriving modern "Pacific City" west of Hyams Beach and extending further west to the shoreline of St Georges Basin.

Despite a significant area of land outside the present-day Jervis Bay Village being subdivided and sold, only a small village eventuated. The vision for the territory was never realised and as of 2016, it had a standing



population of only 390 and most of the territory was designated as a national park.

Wreck Bay Village is one of two villages in the Territory. The rest of the Aboriginal land makes up Booderee National Park.

The creation of the new territory led to an increased presence of the Army and Navy in the Jervis Bay and the area continued to grow steadily with the decision to open the Royal Australian Naval College at Captain's Point in 1911. Located between Jervis Bay Village and Greenpatch on the south-western shores of Jervis Bay, HMAS Creswell is surrounded by Booderee National Park. Creswell is listed on the National Register as a significant heritage site. Since the arrival of the naval college, Jervis Bay has maintained its status as an important naval area.

HMAS Creswell is a training facility of the Royal Australian Navy that includes the Royal Australian Naval College as well as the School of Survivability and Ship's Safety and, on the northern peninsula to Jervis Bay near Currarong, Beecroft Weapons Range.

The Beecroft Weapons Range provides targets for Naval Gunfire Support practice. The Beecroft Peninsula, however, is also the location of numerous important Aboriginal sites. Just off the peninsula is Drum and Drumsticks, a significant religious site and home to a large colony of fur seals. The Aboriginal people believe in the existence of two figures who inhabit the Beecroft Peninsula: Bundoola & Spundula, creatures who control ocean resources and weather patterns respectively.

Going Nuclear - Plan 3

In the late 1960s, a plan was launched to transform Jervis Bay by erecting the country's first nuclear power plant. A steelworks, petrochemical plant and an oil refinery were also slated for the site. What was not announced was a plan to generate weapons-grade plutonium that could have seen Australia become a nuclear power.

A site was prepared. An access road was constructed to the site, on the southeast corner of the bay near Murray's Beach and the site was excavated and levelled.

But the project was delayed when William McMahon became prime minister in 1971, and shortly after Gough Whitlam signed a treaty that ended any plans to make atomic weapons. So, the proposal was abandoned in 1971.

The levelled site is now the car park for Murrays Beach and its adjacent boat ramp.

Booderee National Park

In 1995, ownership of the National Park was transferred to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community. The Booderee National Park has significant cultural and historic interest to both the Commonwealth and Aboriginal people and is now jointly managed by the Aboriginal community of Wreck Bay and Parks Australia.

Aboriginal people started a small settlement on

Jervis Bay at Summercloud Bay in the early 1900s. They favoured that area because of its strong cultural ties, its closeness to both the bush and the sea enabled collection of food and other resources, and because of its distance from European settlements. Aboriginal people established camps where food and water were abundant and hunting and gathering were bountiful. Booderee forms part of a network of sites, places and landscapes that have helped provide generations of Aboriginals with the knowledge and understanding of how to properly manage and live with these lands and waters.

This area later became an Aboriginal reserve, known as the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Reserve, and was put under control of a mission manager. At the beginning of the 20th Century, Booderee was used for agriculture, farming and forestry.

A desire to protect Booderee's unique natural and cultural history didn't really start until the early 1970s. Throughout the 1970's land rights became an important issue and, in 1986, The Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act was enacted. In 1995, Jervis Bay National Park and Jervis Bay Botanic Gardens Annexe were granted to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council, giving the Koori Aboriginal group ownership of the land.

The transfer of the park saw the land leased back to the Federal Government for 99 years in return for a share of the income that the park generates and a majority Aboriginal presence on the management board. In 1998, Jervis Bay National Park was renamed Booderee National Park, meaning 'bay of plenty' in the Dhurga language.

Protecting Booderee's unique natural environment recently became the centre of national news when the local Aboriginal Council and the Commonwealth got involved in a serious dispute after the residents of Wreck Bay alleged that the Department of Defence negligently allowed PFAS chemicals to leach into surface water, groundwater and soil.

The contaminated river runs from HMAS Creswell into Wreck Bay. The chemicals are found in firefighting foams that had been used for more than three decades from the 1970s at HMAS Creswell and the Jervis Bay Weapons Range.



HMAS Creswell



The Cape St George Lighthouse

Shipwrecks and lighthouses in the Bay

The waves in this part of the south coast are generally quite high, and it is easy for a ship to be destroyed. The name 'Wreck Bay' says enough and the list of ships that were destroyed near or in the bay is long. Therefore, it is not a surprise that light houses play an important role in the history of the bay,

These days, the Cape St George Lighthouse is a beautiful, evocative and peaceful site inside the Booderee National Park, Jervis Bay. But this is perhaps Australia's most cursed lighthouse, and its story is one of calamitous error and personal tragedy.

For a start, the Cape St George Lighthouse was built in the wrong place. It was designed by colonial architect Alexander Dawson, who is best known for his work on the Sydney Observatory. Construction of the Cape St George lighthouse began in 1854, and the elegant structure was completed in 1856. But the lighthouse was built about four kilometres north of where it was supposed to be, probably because it was easier to get the stone there.

The end result was a lighthouse that was pretty much useless. It couldn't be seen from the northern approach and could barely be seen from the southern approach.

In 1876, 40 men drowned when the *S.S. Dandenong* foundered nearby. This tragedy contributed to a decision to construct a better located lighthouse at Point Perpendicular on the northern peninsula to Jervis Bay.

But it took 39 years for new lighthouse to be built. That was too late for a number of ships with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment listing 13 ships that were wrecked around Jervis Bay in that period. Other sources estimate that significantly more met their end.

But even with the new, usefully placed lighthouse there remained a problem. There were now two lighthouses very close to each other. One of them marked the entrance to the bay, and the other could easily be mistaken for that. When the moonlight hit the sandstone, the Cape St George Lighthouse was an outright hazard, potentially luring ships onto the rocks. So eventually, in 1901, a decision was made to take the tower down using explosives, creating the ruins we see today (see photograph page 1).

Historic South Coast Buildings - See story page 13



King House, 50 Wason Street, Milton



Meroogal, 35 West Street, Nowra

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