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*"History is more or less bunk".
HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916*

"Bunk"

Horse trough reveals intriguing history

Diary Dates 2017

**Museum Open
10am to noon
Monday to Friday**

**Meetings at Museum
22 Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill**

**Thursday 27 April
General Meeting
Morning tea 10am
Meeting starts
10:30am followed by
Guest Speaker:
Duncan MacAuslan:
*History of Balmain
Buses, ferries and
trams***

***See Duncan's story
in the panel on the
right***

The now defunct horse trough on the corner of Park Road and Princes Street at Boronia Park has an interesting and intriguing history.

It is one of about a dozen such watering troughs still to be found in the Sydney metropolitan area and was originally among 700 installed mainly across New South Wales and Victoria in the 1930s. The troughs were the result of a generous gesture from George Bills (see picture), a migrant



from England who established a successful wire mattress manufacturing business in Sydney in the late 19th century.

George and his wife, Annis, who predeceased him, died childless. Following his death in 1927, a trust fund, amounting to around seventy to eighty thousand pounds, was set up to honour the terms of his will. In it, George, a life governor of the RSPCA, stated: "...construct and erect and pay for horse troughs wherever they may

be of the opinion that such horse troughs are desirable for the relief of horses and other dumb animals in Australasia, in the British Isles or in any other part of the world subject to the consent of the proper authorities being obtained".

Most of the troughs, costing \$13 plus transport and installation, were produced out of pre-cast concrete to a standard design. They each have a curved pediment with the inscription: "Donated by Annis & George Bills Australia". How the Boronia Park trough came to be in its present location is a matter of conjecture. What is known is that municipalities able to provide foundations and a water supply wrote to the trust to apply for a trough. So it is likely that Hunters Hill Council was one of the successful

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www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

**GET THE COMPLETE PICTURE
ON WHAT HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL
SOCIETY AND MUSEUM HAVE TO OFFER**

Hunters Hill's Profile

Our first inhabitants, settlers and pioneers, Naming of Hunters Hill, Incorporation of the Municipality, Schools and churches, Bridges and ferries, Local area.

Gallery

A selection of rare photographs of people, places and scenes from the Society's archives.

Publications

Articles and back issues of *BUNK*.

About Us

About the Society, our Management Committee, Contact details and Membership Application.

**We are continually updating our website
to make it more attractive to you**

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.huntershillmuseum.org.au

APRIL GUEST SPEAKER

Duncan MacAuslan has lived in Balmain for 35 years, and is a member of the Balmain Association. He is a former board member of the Historic Commercial Vehicle Association, and is the archivist and curator of the Sydney Bus Museum, and a past president of the Australian Ferry Society.

Duncan has published two books, on the Balmain Peninsula's transport history, and Sydney's horse buses from 1840 to 1920.

HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL
SOCIETY INC

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applicants.

The trough is situated adjacent to Princes Street which was a thoroughfare down to a wharf on the Lane Cove River where logs, farm produce and tanned skins were shipped from local settlements. It is most probable that dray horses conveying materials to and from the wharf were halted at the trough for refreshment.

George's practical concern with the welfare of horses is believed to have stemmed from the fate of thousands of the animals which were brought into military service by the Allied forces in the First World War. At the end of the war, Australia had 13,000 surplus horses overseas which could not be brought home for quarantine reasons.

At the beginning of the Second World War, horses were rapidly being replaced by motor cars, and the need for troughs diminished. Ironically, a modern notice stands immediately behind the historic Boronia Park water trough. It officially declares: "Horse Riding Prohibited." **Chris Schofield**

Convict life on Cockatoo Island

Writer and researcher Sue Castrique addressed our February general meeting on her book *"Under the Colony's Eye"* which focussed on Cockatoo Island in the 19th century.

Cockatoo Island has been portrayed as a place of punishment that housed the worst of the worst... a kind of Alcatraz, from which no-one - except the bushranger Fred Ward "Captain Thunderbolt" - ever escaped. But it did not always house the worst convicts. And the idea that no-one escaped apart from Fred Ward, 'Captain Thunderbolt', was a myth. In 1839 Cockatoo Island was made a penal settlement. It was chosen specifically because it was on Sydney's doorstep. Governor Gipps did not want another penal settlement in some wild remote spot that was difficult to supervise. It was, as he said, 'under the eye of authority'. It was the last penal settlement created in NSW and almost straight away it was the largest. It was consistently overcrowded. At one point in

1856 there were almost 500 convicts in barracks built to hold half that number. Overcrowding created congestion - there was little ventilation, it was congested in the yard and there was little opportunity for cleanliness. as water was always scarce.

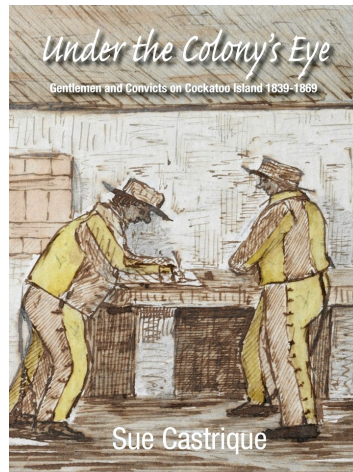
So it's no surprise that escapes happened often. On average there was an escape attempt every

two months by every conceivable method - swimming, climbing through the roof, building boats and hiding them in the workshop, bribing soldiers, faking bomb blasts, and hiding in the privy drain.

Then there was John Massey, a convict overseer, who left Cockatoo Island every Saturday and returned on Monday. He got into trouble in town for stealing a watch. When the court called for his papers, it was found he was supposed to be under lock and key on the island. It's not known how

many of these escape attempts were successful. Some were caught two days later, others got away for years. The most successful just became anonymous.

So, was "Captain Thunderbolt" the only convict to escape? No, but he was certainly the most famous. Sue Castrique's book, *Under the Colony's Eye, Gentlemen and Convicts on Cockatoo Island 1839 to 1869*, can be bought online, directly from the publishers, Anchor Books, at this address: <http://anchorbooksaustralia.com.au/product/under-the-colonys-eye/>

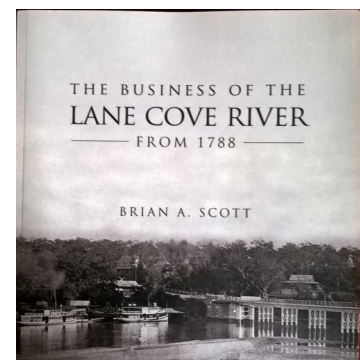


Above: A long-time supporter and friend of Hunters Hill Historical Society, Bill Galvin, was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by the Society in March. Bill has been a regular visitor to the Museum, and has brought along many visitors over the years to view the Society's exhibitions. He is pictured here with committee member, June Beck, who is an old friend.

ADDITIONS TO OUR LIBRARY

The Historical Society has acquired two books with relevance to Hunters Hill. *The Business Of The Lane Cove River*, by Brian A. Scott, examines the many business activities along the shores of the Lane Cove River from 1788 to the present, and the characters associated with them.

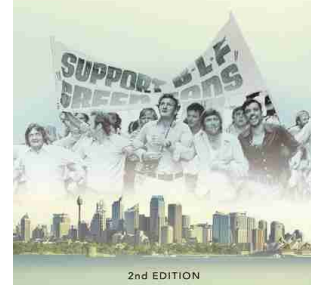
Green Bans Red Union, by Meredith and Verity Burgmann, tells the story of the BLF and its involvement in green bans, including Kelly's Bush.



MEREDITH BURGMANN & VERITY BURGMANN

GREEN BANS RED UNION

THE SAVING OF A CITY



2nd EDITION