

NELSON BAY OUTING 15.3.2010

An outstanding outing to Nelson Bay organised by Irma Foster. On Monday 15th March the Hunter Valley First Fleeters met at Irma's home for a very lavish morning tea with glorious views



extending over Port Stephens. She then whisked us away to the Coast Guard Patrol now renamed Marine Rescue, where we watched a video on early aboriginal life and early history and marine history of Port Stephens with a short guided tour of their museum. We learned that Port Stephens is the drowned estuary of the Karuah and Myall Rivers. Capt James Cook sighted the entrance on 11th May 1770 and named the bay after the Secretary of the Admiralty.



It was first entered in 1791 by the British ship 'Salamander' from the Third Fleet and surveyed in 1795 by Charles Grimes. In 1795 Capt Broughton was driven into Port by a storm and found four escaped convicts living with aborigines. The Brig 'Lady Nelson' visited with Governor Macquarie and his wife on 1st January 1812. Early shipping of timber and wool to Sydney commenced in 1816 with Capt. Corlette in his 60 ton cutter 'Lambton'. The Australian Agriculture Company carried produce from the hinterland to North Arm Cove from 1824 and there was a timber mill at Winda Woppa. They operated 'Karua', one

of the first steamers in Australia. Whalers were frequent visitors and Capt William Cromarty and family were the first settlers in 1824 at Soldiers Point, from where he operated a small brig, the 'Fame'. Notice all the various names used for naming rivers and suburbs etc.

The outer lighthouse on Fingal Island has operated from 1862. The first inner light beamed from a wooden tower in 1872. It was replaced by a cottage and octagonal light room from 1876. There were 14 resident keepers from 1869 to 1986. Red and white sector lights guided shipping into port. A solar-powered version shone across the bay from the old WW2 bunker until early 2003 when it was deemed unnecessary and removed.



And the history goes on...Land was resumed for a naval base for eastern Australia; in 1931 the port was declared too shallow for a naval base. In 1918, Port Stephens City and Pindimar had been planned for the north side of the bay by Burley Griffen, Henry F Halloran and Walter Scott Griffiths. Pindimar was even nominated as a site for the new ACT. The depression and lack of access roads and railway led to its failure. Later in the afternoon I met a descendant of William Cromarty and she was telling me how their land was resumed and then never used for its original purpose.

Over lunch at the Coastal Patrol rooms we viewed the magnificent Yakaba (north) and Tomaree (south) Headlands and looked straight down on Shoal Bay and the mouth of the Bay. We lingered over lunch feeding the beautiful parrots and enjoyed the magnificent view and could have stayed there the rest of the day, except Irma had other things in store for us.



We travelled to the Tomaree Library at Salamander Bay and participated in the Port Stephens Historical Society Meeting. During this meeting we listened to their discussions regarding their celebrations for Governor Macquarie and made many notes. The Historical Society was very pleased to have us as their guests and requested we meet at other times and join together for future excursions and meetings. We swapped email addresses and they are sending us a copy of their Newsletter and requested we send them ours. Perhaps at some time we will invite them down to attend one of our meetings and persuade their President to give us a further talk on the history of wonderful Port Stephens where I am sure at some stage we have all spent many leisure hours.

Thank you Irma for a wonderful, informative day.