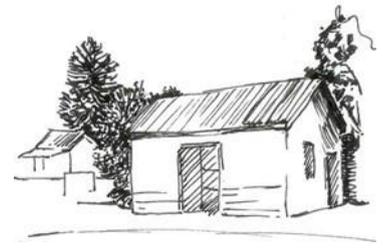


# Bundanoon History Group

## Monthly Newsletter



January 2021

### From the President

For me, January seems to have flown by but somehow it's different this year. Not just because we are in the middle of Covid-19, nor because my 3 years as your president will soon be up, but also because we are talking more loudly about Australia Day and its history.

Many see 26 January as an Invasion Day, going back to 1788 when Captain Arthur Phillip raised the Union Jack at Sydney Cove and formally declared the land a British colony. Phillip had arrived at Botany Bay a few days earlier and then on to Sydney Cove, Port Jackson. (Which became Sydney). However, it wasn't until 1935 that all Australian States and Territories used the name 'Australia Day' to mark 26 January. And it wasn't until 1994 that 26 January became a public holiday across the nation.

I must also confess that as a recent "blow in" I have started to feel uncomfortable with my limited knowledge of Australian history. Slowly becoming aware that the arrival of the First Fleet, back in 1788, was only a miniscule part of the history of this huge continent that I now proudly call "home".

And it has been hard to discover more about the history of the First Nation peoples. Over 500 tribes with different dialects, who have occupied Australia for well over 60,000 years. Long before 1788 when 11 boats from England put some 1500 men, women and children ashore to establish a colony. It's within this context that I have included an article written by Stan Grant, expressing what it means to him on the 26 January to be a First Peoples' descendant and part of Country today.

We also have an interesting piece of local history on the De Meyricks', researched and written by Ian Smith, our Archive Team Co-ordinator.

Finally, two reminders: If you haven't already paid, Membership renewals are now due. And don't forget the AGM in March when we vote in a new Committee: Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President and President. We have so many talented people within the BHG I encourage you to put yourself forward for a position.

Our guest speaker at the March AGM will be Dr Narelle Bower, local historian and author of *Aborigines of the Southern Highlands of New South Wales (1820-1850)*.

Stay safe and best wishes, **David**

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### One perspective on Australia Day

Stan Grant is a journalist and broadcaster for the ABC, Professor of Global Affairs at Griffith University and a well-known author.

***" January 26 is a reminder that Australia still hasn't reckoned with its original sin***



*Because of my father, Australia is better. (Supplied: Stan Grant)*

*Balladhu Wiradjuri gibir. Dyiramadalinya badhu Wiradjuri.*

*This is who I am. Before anything else, I am a Wiradjuri man. I am a proud Wiradjuri man. This is my language, which comes from my father, my babin. Because of him I know where I stand in this world.*

*My country is Wiradjuri ngurrambang. I am Garru — magpie — the animal spirit of my father and, before him, his grandfather, Budyaan. These things are older than Australia; these words, this country, this spirit.*

*January 26 is just a date. But our place is beyond time.*

*When I die, I will go back to my land to rest with my ancestors and become part of something eternal. No flag, anthem or constitution can give this to me or take it from me. I know there is a place on this earth that is mine. This is my inheritance, and all I need leave to my children. This is what is passed down from my father.*

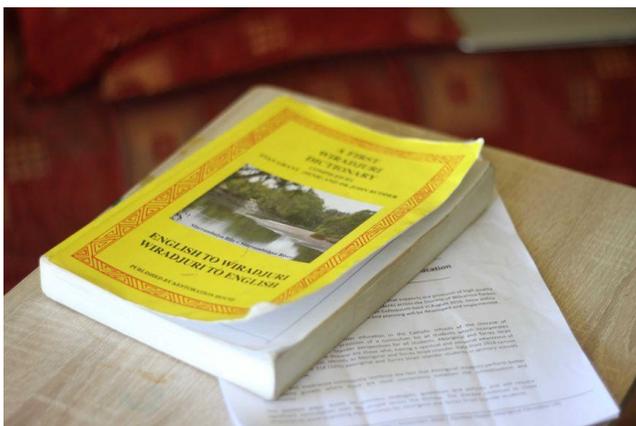
### ***I have been angry for my father***

*He's not well right now, my dad. He is in hospital, fighting to get better.*

*That's what he does: fight. He is a warrior. He has fought to keep our language alive and strong.*

*With his dear friend and linguist, John Rudder, dad wrote the Wiradjuri dictionary — the first time our language had ever been fully written down.*

*Thirty years ago he set out to travel across Wiradjuri country to teach our language to a new generation.*



*Today it is thriving. Charles Sturt University offers a graduate diploma in Wiradjuri language and cultural studies. It is so popular there is a waiting list for enrolments.*

*It has been some journey for my father, who saw his own grandfather arrested for speaking that same language to him when he was a boy.*

*But he is not bitter; he holds no enmity towards Australia or Australians.*

*There have been times when I have been angry for him, when I see the scars this country has left on his body and his soul.*

*But Dad is bigger than that and better than me. He proudly displays at home his Order of Australia medal for services to his people.*

*Because of my father, Australia is better.*

### ***Australia is better for our contributions***

*It is better because of so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have believed in this country even when it did not believe in them. People who have fought in this country's wars, who have represented this country in great sporting arenas, who have worked the roads and the railways and picked the fruit and mustered the cattle.*

*Australia is better because our people have never wavered in the cause of justice, because our people have protested and petitioned, because we have tested this country in its courts and parliaments.*

*It is better because a new generation of First Nations people are raising their voices: smart, angry, insistent and irrepresible.*

*Our warriors are bigger than Australia. They stand as a measurement of what this country can be — and a reminder of what it fails to be.*

### ***This day tells us everything we need to know***

*I choose not to celebrate what is called Australia Day. I have wrestled with the idea. I recognise this country's remarkable achievements and how it has been a haven for **those** fleeing the worst of the world. I am grateful to those of us who have struggled and sacrificed to build this country.*

*But I ask just one question: how can a nation in good conscience mark its national day on the date this land was stolen from the First Peoples?*

*We will change the date when we have earned it, when it means something. Until then we stand diminished.*

*On this day, Indigenous people speak back to Australia even if many Australians still don't like what they hear.*

*I spent January 25 with my father's voice. I gathered with other Aboriginal people for a vigil to mark the night before the ships came. We stood with each other and the spirits of our ancestors who on this day in 1788 stood on the cusp of a new world.*

*We came together because we have survived. Our warriors danced a dance of defiance and strength. We stood together not to mark Australia Day, but who we are.*

*I stood on the harbour foreshore at Barangaroo and heard my father's voice whispering as I wrapped the feathers of the Garru around my arms.*

*I have been asked a lot this year what my thoughts are about Australia Day. I have said enough previously, and will leave it to others to make political cases or protest.*

*But I will say this: I am here because my people are here. Because my father is here, and far away, and I am thinking of him, praying to Baiame that he gets well.*

*Mandang Guwu babin. Thank you, dad."*

**Acknowledgement and thanks: ABC News, published on 25 Jan 2021**

## **Norman and Ivy De Meyrick of 'Ben Nevis'**

by Ian Smith, Archive Team

Norman Cecil De Meyrick was the second son of Frank and Esther De Meyrick; he was born in 1886 at Penrith. His parents lived at Cranebrook near Penrith where Norman's father ran a small school. The family sometime later moved to Bundanoon, most probably to the property 'Ben Nevis'.

By 1916 Norman described himself as a farmer living at 'Grasmere' Robertson Rd, Moss Vale.

In March that year he enlisted in the Army but was discharged one month later 'unlikely to become an

efficient soldier.' At the time he stood 1.8 metres (six foot) tall and weighed 63.5 kilos. (140 lbs) and could be described as tall and lean. He didn't enjoy robust health (which may explain his limited Army career) but was said to be always wiry and energetic to a point that often reacted against his physical welfare. Nonetheless, he was a keen tennis player and later a golfer.

Norman moved to Bundanoon about 1917 residing with his mother Esther at 'Ben Nevis'. He almost immediately became involved in community affairs. In August 1917 he was writing to Council for permission to plant trees in Erith and Hill Streets. Soon after he was complaining to Council about the 'disgraceful way that cows and horses were allowed to wander through the streets of Bundanoon.' This problem persisted for a number of years despite Norman's requests for Council to act against the irresponsible people concerned.

In January 1918 he stood, unsuccessfully, as a candidate for B Riding in the Council elections. In November 1918 he was granted a licence to be an auctioneer; next month he was advertising himself as a real estate agent, and by May 1919 as a stock and station agent. One of his major first ventures as an estate agent was, in 1920, to subdivide the Mt. Russell Estate.

In 1925, Norman married Ivy Cordellia Wallis, aged 32. Originally from Dulwich Hill in Sydney, her family had a strong connection with the Royal Navy, and was connected with the Suttor family of Bathurst. She was a talented artist, her work being displayed in many exhibitions in the district. Norman and his wife Ivy were a devoted couple. Apparently each year they would spend their holidays at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania. Like Norman, Ivy also became closely involved in the community and social life of Bundanoon.

That same year saw Norman assume title of 'Ben Nevis'. Later recollections of the De Meyricks remember the entrance to their property being through an old wooden farm gate approximately at the corner of Panorama and Garland roads; a road wended its way to their house at the top of the hill. Around the house was a large garden that mingled with the bush. One person remembered

'fields of poppies', another that they grew more unusual plants. The garden included rhododendrons, ornamental trees, huge old pines and deodars, camellias, azaleas, a Western Australian flowering gum and walnut trees. There was a small orchard including apple trees. The view from their property over the gullies was described as 'the best in the Southern Highlands'.

1928 was not a good year for Norman as he was inflicted with 'toxic poisoning of the teeth', a condition that nearly killed him. After a long illness he recovered though it had attacked his nervous system leaving him with a partly paralysed right arm.

Undaunted, he returned to his real estate and auctioneering work, including changing his business name to 'Bundanoon Estate Agency'. Schemes he was involved with included seeking approval to subdivide the Williams estate, and promoting the growing of Tung Oil trees in the shire.

His community interests must have taken up a good deal of his time; he became a vice-president of the Bundanoon Rifle Club, and sponsored the 'De Meyrick Cup' to be contested by the club. He was company secretary for the Bundanoon Golf Links Ltd., a company formed to promote golf in Bundanoon. He was involved in Bundanoon's Progress Association and in the Church of England.

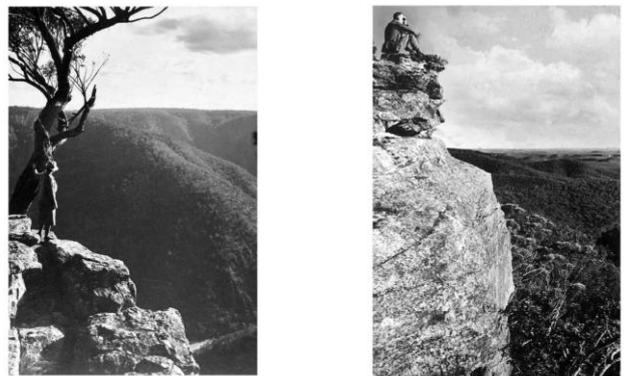
He was also a member of the Gullies Trust, while tourism he thought 'was Bundanoon's one great industry'. Hence, perhaps, his passionate plea in the 'Southern Mail' newspaper in 1929 that the Bundanoon gullies should be referred to as canyons which had much more meaning for tourists and better described their grandeur. Indeed the 'gullies' he said were 'wrongly and stupidly named', a gully he thought was 'an insignificant affair next size up from a gutter.'

Norman was passionate about improving local roads; in March 1924 he addressed a Council meeting urging them to upgrade the Gullies Road while in 1934 he helped form the 'Exeter – Tallong Road League' to upgrade that road. Frustrated with Council inaction, in 1943 he organised Bundanoon residents to voluntarily stone part of Church Street where springs had made the road untrafficable.

He retained an active interest in politics. In 1932 a branch of the United Australia Party (UAP) was formed in Bundanoon, and in 1939 Norman was elected Secretary of the branch. He was also the representative at the UAP Eden-Monaro Electoral Conference in June 1940; next year he was again elected branch secretary, as well as being both Council and Electoral Conference delegate.

In August 1935 his house was threatened by bushfire, the flames being put out by police and residents within 100 yards of the buildings. However, in the 1939 bushfires his house was totally destroyed. In July 1941 Council approved his application to build a new weatherboard cottage; it's not known where he was living in the interim. Fire would again threaten 'Ben Nevis' in 1965.

In later years people described Norman as generous and courteous both personally and in business, a 'terrific fellow, a kind fellow, would help anyone'. Others described him as a 'natty dresser' who sported gloves and a cane, smart in dress and appearance.



COPY reduced size, enhanced.  
LEFT Ida de Meyrick, The Lookdown, Tallong. RIGHT Norman de Meyrick, Jersey Lookout.

*Photographs from the BHG Archive, taken by Ivy and Norman*

Ivy was described as short and stout in appearance, of quiet disposition. A keen horse rider, she'd even collect rents on horseback. When not riding she was remembered as always attired in skirt, blouse and cardigan, plus a felt hat with a narrow brim. However, she could be forthright when necessary; she was well known for having telling policeman Roy White (recently appointed to Bundanoon) after he reprimanded her for double-parking that 'I've been

here for 35 years and I don't want you coming into town and telling me what I can and can't do.'

Ivy died on 3 October 1968 at Bowral Hospital of renal and heart conditions; she was cremated at Wollongong. Her estate included extensive real estate holdings in Bundanoon, Wingello and Sydney.

Norman died on 3 September 1970 of asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema at Wingecarribee Community Hospital at Moss Vale and was cremated at Northern Suburbs Crematorium, Sydney.

Following his death a newspaper obituary said 'he was one of the most valued and best-known citizens of Bundanoon. He exercised his many talents and qualities to advance the interests of the district, he was a devoted local patriot.'

Norman had earlier thought 'Ben Nevis' perfect for a retirement home; however, he bequeathed the bulk of his estate to the Christian Science Church. The executor of his will was Joan Wells who had known Norman for five years; she was also a Christian Scientist. The property was subsequently sold to the developers Cordez Investments then to A.T. G. Development, who subdivided it into what is now Ben Nevis Circuit and the down-hill portion of Panorama Road.

### 2021 Membership Renewals \$10

Membership Renewals are due from 1 January. Please see Treasurer Graham, at the Members Meeting, or make a bank transfer to Bundanoon History Group, BSB 641 800; account no. 017104781.

### Covid Safe Plan for the History Group Monthly Meetings

Thanks to Committee Member Steve Press, the BHG now has a Covid Safe Plan for our monthly meetings at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall or elsewhere. The Plan has been registered with Service NSW and for those with smartphones we have our own QR Code for signing in. And don't worry, if you haven't, we can still sign you in manually at the door.

The Plan has led to a few extra processes –

- There will be a sign at the meeting entrance, asking you not to attend if you feel unwell

- The sign will show the web address for members to get more info on Covid
- Current Covid location capacity regs will constrain our numbers at meetings. For example at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall and Old Goods Shed
- Where members queue to enter, in order to adhere to safe distancing there will be "X" s on the floor
- There will be hand sanitiser on the table where members collect their name badges
- Members (not in the same household) need to sit 1.5m apart
- There will be accessible QR Codes at the entrance for members to scan
- You don't have to scan the QR code, we can manually enter the your details for you on the Service NSW webform
- Unfortunately, you must take your seats on entry. No standing. No mingling
- All members' meetings must be pre-booked
- Members should consider wearing a mask
- Pens will be sanitised between use with disinfectant wipes. Roster books will not be handed around

### Coming Events

#### Mon 1 Feb 10.15 am:

*BHG Monthly Meeting* at the Sunnataram Forest Monastery, Teudts Road, Bundanoon. Guest Speaker, Dr Carolyn Cosgrove on the Edenholme Guest House to be followed by a Thai Curry lunch and a tour of Sunnataram Monastery, which is built on the site of the original Guest House.

**NOTE: Advisable to bring masks.**

**Bookings for this meeting are now full.**

#### Mon 22 Feb: *BHG Committee Meeting.*

**Mon 1 Mar 10.30: *BHG Monthly Meeting and AGM*** at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall. Guest speaker: Dr Narelle Bower, local historian and author of *Aborigines of the Southern Highlands of New South Wales (1820-1850)*