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Part I.

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Sydney's Ferry Boats.

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(Read before the Society, October 30, 1934.)

With the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge the dream of a century was realised, and in the short time which has elapsed since that great event Sydney has settled down to an entirely changed set of conditions with regard to her transport problems, and is taking the change as a matter of course.

Prior to March 19, 1932, Sydney possessed the finest ferry services in the world. Circular Quay was one of the busiest places in the city, the hub of Sydney, as it had been for nearly a hundred and fifty years.

With the cutting of the silken ribbon all that was changed. An arch of steel had linked the northern with the southern shore, and the whistling ferries blowing "cock-a-doodle-does" as the mighty structure was declared open were like so many doomed gladiators shouting "*Ave Caesar Ave, Morituri te salutant.*"

We alone of this generation have seen the rise and fall of the ferries; we alone can realise how the ferry services of Sydney progressed and reached the zenith of their importance. Others will see their retrogression. One thinks of the line:—

"And one by one crept silently to rest."

Gradually many of the others will follow, but before they do, before they are forgotten, before a new generation comes which knew them not, I come to sing their Swan-song to you who have known them and loved them as I have.

I am well aware that there are many omissions and many shortcomings in this paper, but I shall welcome any information from members and others which will assist me in compiling a further paper on the subject.

Before any description can be given of the ferries of the past thirty years—"our ferries" so to speak—the story of the development of ferry services during the preceding century must first be told.

Transport across Sydney Harbour by boat dates from the very earliest days of the settlement, and it was not long before a more or less regular service of ships' boats travelled between Sydney and North Shore, to aid settlers in seeking succulent grass for their stock and the coarser grass for thatching, both of which grew there in greater profusion than on the southern shore.

But the young colony was not very long in being when the outpost at Rose Hill was established, and communication between there and Sydney had to be maintained. Being a nautical community, this was arranged for at first by ships' boats, and any attempt at road communication was frowned on by those in command. But ships' boats belonged to the ships, and, as these had to be sent away within a short time of their arrival, the uncertainty of having a boat available when required constrained Governor Phillip, in spite of his instructions not to permit shipbuilding, to construct one locally, for the special purpose of establishing regular communication with the distant settlement at Parramatta.

Instructions issued to Phillip dated April 25, 1787, read:—

Whereas it is our Royal intention that every sort of intercourse between the intended settlement at Botany Bay or other place which may be hereafter established on the coast of New South Wales and its dependencies, and the settlements of our East India Company, as well as the coast of China, and the islands situated in that part of the world, to which any intercourse has been established by any European Nation, should be prevented by every possible means:

It is our Royal Will and Pleasure that you do not on any account allow craft of any sort to be built for the use of private individuals which might enable them to effect such intercourse, and that you do prevent any vessels which may at any time hereafter arrive at the said settlements from any of the ports before mentioned from having any communication with any of the inhabitants residing within your government, without first receiving a special permission from you for that purpose.

Accordingly on December 30, 1788, the keel was laid of a ten-ton ferry, to be known as *The Rose Hill Packet*, in a boathouse built for the purpose about on the site of the present Custom House, that was afterwards allotted to Rev. Richard Johnson as the only place available for divine service.

Built of local hardwood, the *Rose Hill Packet* was rather heavy and unwieldly, and when after being launched on October 3, 1789, she took up her run, she was more frequently known by her nick-name, *The Lump*, than by her official title. Unfortunately no picture of Australia's first shipbuilding venture is extant, so we know nothing for certain of her appearance. Indeed very little is recorded of this remarkable vessel; she is noted as needing repairs in September, 1800, but after that she entirely disappears from the records.

It would seem, too, that Phillip still further disregarded the Royal Will and Pleasure in the years which followed, for not only were several keels laid for Government vessels, but, from whatever sources they were obtained, privately-owned boats became available for hire within five years of the establishment of the colony. Of these, those who regularly plied between Sydney and Parramatta were obliged to be licensed and their owners to enter a bond for the due performance of their duties. The amount of this bond was £50 for the licensed waterman himself and £25 for each man employed by him. Prior to the introduction of these regulations, passenger boats like the Government punt for the transport of heavy cargo came and went at the caprice of their owners or depended on the vagaries of the wind and tide. But with the licensing of approved boatmen they were ordered to leave each end daily at 11 o'clock a.m.

Despite the Royal ban, shipbuilding continued, with the boats being made larger to meet the needs of increasing

traffic. So much was this the case that on March 16, 1811, Governor Macquarie issued an order that:—

Vessels arriving from the Hawkesbury, Parramatta or Kissing Point must go to the Market Wharf in Cockle Bay instead of the Hospital wharf as heretofore.

There would appear to have been little or no change in the general condition of things except that, not only were licensed ferrymen plying to Parramatta River ports, but more or less regular services were run to the North Shore by the famous "Old Commodore" Billy Blue. In fact in cases where it was only necessary to make a personal visit to town, unimpeded by baggage, people came from as far afield as Pittwater to Sydney by way of Blue's Point instead of the long way by road *via* Parramatta. The more adventurous even came by way of Manly when conditions were favourable.

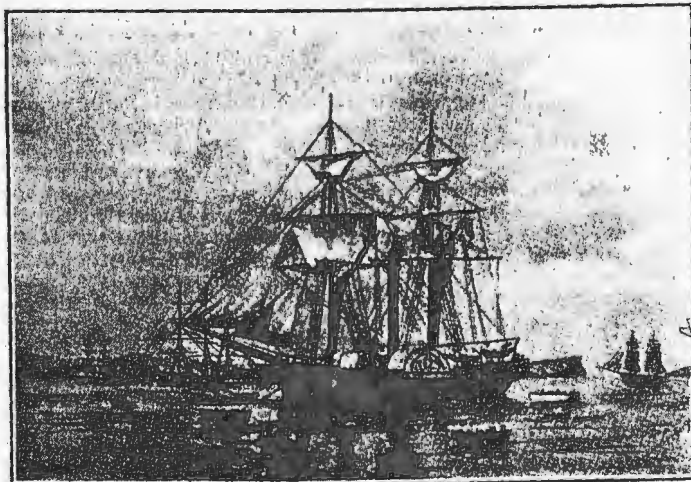
The first regular Manly ferry, however, appears to have been that established by one Barney Kearns, or Kerrins, who plied for hire at regular intervals from Middle Harbour (Balmoral) to Bilgooley (Balgowlah)—in other words, North Harbour; Condamine Street, throughout its length, being then part of the road to Pittwater.

Exactly when this service was commenced is somewhat uncertain, but it was a going concern with a fixed rate of one shilling and sixpence per head and a regular timetable in 1830. (There is some evidence also of a ferry of some sort between Folly Point and the other side of Middle Harbour about this time—perhaps some member will be able to give me some information on this point.)

The year before that, however (1829), saw a definite move made to shorten the distance between Sydney and Pittwater, as the result of a public meeting held in 1828 to urge the Government to establish a vehicular ferry across the harbour at its narrowest point, *viz.*, "between the Five Docks and Kissing Point." Reporting this meeting, the *Australian Quarterly* pointed out that "the whole project could be carried out for the sum of £130, including the appurtenances." In a footnote the journal adds: "Some people were of the opinion that a punt should be established between Sydney and Billy Blue's Point, but we hasten to point out that we are planning

for the present and not for our great-grandchildren—posterity must look after itself."

The old Bedlam ferry replaced the original Kissing Point ferry soon after its inception, but its appearance in 1854 would be little, if any, different from that of an earlier day. Contemporary reports of the complaints made by the users of the ferry concerning the sins of omission and commission by the puntman are probably responsible for the issue of the notice in the *Gazette* during 1834 calling for tenders for "the leasing of tolls and ferries, including Bedlam Ferry."



Arrival of the "Sophia Jane" in Sydney Harbour, May 15, 1831.
—(From painting by Dickson Gregory.)

Then steam came to Sydney. This was the most spectacular and epoch-making event which occurred on Sydney Harbour between the launching of *The Lump* and the recent opening of the Bridge. The laurels have been awarded to the *Sophia Jane*, which was, as the *Sydney Gazette* of May 17, 1831, said at that time, "the first vessel to turn a paddle in Sydney Harbour"; but credit must be given to local enterprise, local skill, and local labour for having really put steam on the harbour. This was only twelve years after the first ocean-going steamer had made a trip of any length, and seven years before

the first British steamer had crossed the Atlantic.

The Smith Brothers were the first to take their courage in both hands and send to England for an engine. In the meantime they proceeded to have a boat constructed in which to install it. A wooden vessel of some forty tons and copper-fastened was built by Millard, of Neutral Bay, and launched on March 31, 1831, six weeks before the *Sophia Jane* arrived. Reporting the event, *The Australian*, of April 1, 1831, stated:—

Yesterday the first steam vessel that ever appeared in this country was launched off amidst flying colours and the acclamation of some hundreds of spectators in boats whom the novelty of the scene drew to the spot, from Mr. Millard's the builder's slip at Neutral Harbour North Shore at the top of the water: and soon she floated in her native element. This maiden specimen of steam naval architecture does infinite credit to Mr. Millard. She is a beautiful model and appears to be well constructed for a clipper of light draught, she measures near 400 tons [Obviously a mis-print for 40.—H. N.], and will carry a 10 h.p. steam engine . . . she is to ply with goods and passengers between Sydney and Parramatta and will prove a valuable acquisition to both places. We wish her owners Messrs. Smith & Brothers every success which the enterprise deserves. In about four weeks more the *Surprise* so she is christened will be ready to enliven the Parramatta River.

Unfortunately this last prediction was not realised. The final touches, together with the fitting of engines, occupied not four, but eight weeks, with the result that the *Surprise*, the first steam ferry, was not the first steam vessel in Australian waters.

The little "clipper" was 80 feet in length and drew only two and a half feet of water. She ran her first trip on June 2, 1831, and took three and a half hours to go from Sydney to Parramatta. Later on she did better, averaging about four and a half miles per hour. She ran a regular ferry service between the two places on week days during the remainder of that year, at fares of two shillings and two shillings and sixpence (first class) each way. On Sundays and holidays she ran harbour trips. This practice of running harbour excursions on Sundays by this and other later vessels roused the indignation of a correspondent in the *Colonist*, who wrote that:

These Sunday trips are run by a company of ungodly men who are willing to fill their pockets with the fruit of their own profaneness.*

**Colonist*, March 12, 1833.

The *Surprise*, however, did not fulfil the hopes which her coming had raised, so after the end of 1831 she was taken off the river and refitted for the trip to Hobart, whence she departed on February 1, 1832. There she became Hobart's first ferry boat, and was also used for towing.

The *Sophia Jane* must be mentioned again at this juncture, though she was not at any time regarded as a ferry boat, yet, like many of her contemporaries, she made trips on the Parramatta River and on the Harbour. Built in 1826 by Barnes and Miller, pupils of the famous James Watt, she was intended for the English Channel trade. She was described as "one of the fastest vessels ever built; she frequently towed ships of the largest class." Her length is given as 126 feet, beam 20 feet; tonnage, 250 by measurement and 150 register. She was of fifty horsepower, and in smooth water could steam eight miles per hour. She was mostly engaged in this country in the Newcastle trade, and in towing. After ten years' service here she was broken up, and her engines were fitted into a locally-built hull, slightly longer and of less beam, and renamed the *Phoenix*.

This latter vessel was not used as a ferry any more than was the *Sophia Jane*, but comes within the scope of this paper in that another boat, the *Kangaroo*, was built for the Parramatta River trade, because the *Phoenix* had been built for the Newcastle trade. The differences between the rival proprietors, however, were mutually settled, and the *Kangaroo* went to Melbourne to start Melbourne's ferry services. It is interesting to note in passing that she carried on this work for sixty years before being broken up.

The success of the *Surprise*, that is to say, of a vessel built purely for harbour traffic, would seem to have been the starting point for the establishment of regular ferry services in Sydney, for scarcely had the *Surprise* been taken off the run than one of the Singletons conceived the idea that a less expensive method of propulsion might succeed where steam had apparently failed. Early in 1832 he laid the keel of a boat 80 feet long and 12½ feet beam of 37 tons measurement, drawing two feet of water, and capable of carrying twenty tons of cargo.

She was named the *Experiment*, and was propelled by paddle-wheels driven by horse power. For her owner she was a costly experiment, as after the construction of some £1500 on construction, etc., and running for two months, he sold the hull for £400. Nevertheless, she was able to do the trip from Sydney to Parramatta in three and a half hours or less, and her subsequent history shows how well she was built. She was bought at the end of 1833 by Edye Manning and fitted with a 12 horse-power engine. She was commissioned as a steamer on April 9, 1835, and ran as a passenger and cargo boat and as a tug for the next five years, with only two days "off" for overhaul. In 1846 she went to Brisbane to inaugurate the Brisbane to Ipswich service, and, after three years thus engaged, was made a hulk and her engines transferred to the *Hawk*. In the meantime, in 1833, as the result of a meeting held on April 13 of that year, the Australian Conveyance Company was formed, and it was decided to immediately build a boat at the cost of £2000 for the Parramatta service. The new steamer was named the *Australia*, and was of 12-18 horse-power. She was launched in 1834, and so successful was the project that in February, 1836, the company paid a dividend of 38 per cent. Time, however, was not the vital factor in those distant days than it is now, and, in spite of the rapid transport afforded to riverside dwellers by the advent of steam, sailing craft were still used to a considerable extent. These vessels could carry produce and cargo more cheaply, and thus gave definite challenge to the steamers.

Another factor which entered into the position at this time was road transport. In spite of the bad condition of the Parramatta Road and the immensely greater safety of river transport owing to its immunity from bushrangers, the road claimed its share of inter-urban traffic. About this time, too, the establishment of a vehicular ferry across the Parramatta River at the Five Docks (Abbotsford to Kissing Point) had given road communication on the northern side of the harbour a definite fillip. In 1834 the Government notified this ferry among others for tender, thus further bringing it under public notice. The result of these factors in combination, however, was to extend

the settled area and to arouse keener competition, and the time factor now began to enter. In addition, North Shore began to wonder why it was so far from Sydney.

The Ryde punt enters the picture in the year 1836, and in the following year another new steamer, the *Rapid*, joined the fleet. She was an iron steamer built of plates brought out from England, and fitted with a copper boiler. She was the first double-ender in Sydney, and her relatively high horse-power (twenty) enabled her to do the trip from Sydney to Parramatta in the amazingly short time of one and a half hours.

After a long and useful career, during which she had her share in other services than the Sydney-Parramatta run, she went ashore at Glebe Point. Here her engines and boilers were removed in 1853, and, like Pegotty's House in Charles Dickens' story, she became the home of an old boatman. Suggate, the ferryman, and his family lived there for many years, until the Council removed her in order that the sea wall might be completed.

Two other boats came on the scene at about this time, viz., the *Kangaroo* and the *Raven*. Mention has already been made of the causes which led up to the building of the former, and her subsequent transfer to Melbourne to take up running between Melbourne and Sandridge (now Port Melbourne). A somewhat similar set of conditions led to the *Raven* being built. She, too, was intended for service on Sydney Harbour, but after satisfactory arrangements had been made to avoid unnecessary competition, the *Raven* went to Brisbane. Wrecked on the way back to Sydney on one trip, she was repaired sufficiently to enable her to be towed to Sydney, but on arrival here, as it was found that the hull was too badly damaged to be worth repairing, she was dismantled and the engines were fitted subsequently to a vessel called the *Ballarat*, built at Pyrmont in 1854.

The year 1840 is to be remembered also, in that it was in that year that Jules Joubert first came to Sydney. Although he did not at once enter into active control of a ferry service, his association with Hunter's Hill and its ferry services makes the date memorable.

In 1841 the keel was laid for a vessel which marked the inauguration of a definite regular ferry service between

Sydney and the North Shore, and from then onwards the question of trans-harbour transport would seem to have been dominated entirely by steam.

In 1842 the *Princess*, a double-ended steam paddle punt fitted for the carriage of vehicles as well as passengers, commenced running between Dawes Point and Blue's Point "at regular intervals between dawn and dusk. Fares passengers 3d, Horses 1/- carriages and carts 2/6d."

In spite of the great convenience which this service must have been to the people of North Shore, the "regular service" only lasted about fifteen months. The reason for this may have been that, whereas the trip to Parramatta wharves took longer, it always included cargo in each direction, the trip across the harbour might be only for one or two persons and might involve a return trip without a passenger at all. Moreover, in the interval between trips the larger boats could tow sailing craft up or down the harbour, and thus turn to account time which was a source of loss to the *Princess*. Thus, after bravely carrying on for a little over a year, she was taken off and her engines removed. They were afterwards installed in a flour mill at East Maitland, a recent announcement in the Press having recorded the termination of a life of usefulness.

The demand for steam shipping continued, however, and the same year saw the importation and assembling of a new iron vessel, the *Emu*, a goodly steamer of 65 tons, 94 feet long, 14 feet beam and 6 feet deep, drawing three and a half feet of water, and propelled by two 14 feet paddle wheels driven by a 30 horse-power engine. She was a great success from the beginning and a keen rival to the *Australia*, so much so that when another competitor, the *Comet*, entered into competition, the *Australia* was withdrawn from the Parramatta trade and commenced a service to Balmain, Five Dock, and Farryowen (Iron Cove).

The *Comet* was a wooden vessel built at Clarence Town in 1843. She was 99 feet long, 15 feet beam, 6½ feet deep, and drew three feet of water. Her 35 horse-power engines drove 14 feet paddle-wheels. She ran on the Parramatta River until 1852, when she was bought by a

syndicate of which the late T. S. Mort was a member. In the following year she was resold for £3100 and sent to Melbourne.

This syndicate would appear to have created somewhat of a corner in harbour transport in the 'fifties, a condition of affairs brought about no doubt by unprofitable or illogical competition ten years or so earlier. For example, soon after the *Comet* was put in commission, the *Native*, 60 feet long and 12 horse-power, was launched in 1844 with disastrous results, until the rival vessels came under the same proprietary.

About this time, too, a double-ended paddle boat called the *Waterman*, 50 feet long with an 8 horse-power engine, ran to Balmain. The *Australia* was already catering for this trade to some extent, but by 1845 we find the *Gypsy Queen* running to Johnstone's Bay, while in the same year Thomas and James Gerrard had a steamer built for them by Chowne to run from Windmill Street to Blue's Point. This was the *Ferry Queen*, a small paddle-wheel steamer for the conveyance of passengers only, but catering for the transport of vehicles and cattle when occasion demanded by towing one or two punts alongside.

With her advent uninterrupted ferry communication with the North Shore may be said to have commenced. So successful was this venture that two years after the *Ferry Queen* was commissioned another vessel of 12 tons, *The Brothers*, was built for the service, while a little later the screw steamer *Agenoria* was built and put on the run as well as doing harbour trips and towing.

For the next five years or so the boats then available seem to have been sufficient to cope with the requirements, but in 1851 a further movement took place. Changes in ownership in the meantime had been effected. Waterhouse had bought the *Ferry Queen* from the Gerrards, and a Mr. Hall had commenced an opposition service with an iron vessel, the *Herald*, in 1849. The *Herald*, however, found towing more profitable than ferrying at times, with the result that there was always a glorious uncertainty that one might have to wait the return of the boat from towing a ship out through the Heads before one could cross the Harbour.

In 1851, however, the *Agenoria* went to Melbourne, where she ran for many years. The *Gypsy Queen* took up the Dawes Point to Blue's Point run, to be joined by the *Victor* in the following year, while the *Ferry Queen* and the *Herald* catered for the Milson's Point traffic when nothing more profitable offered.

On September 21, 1852, "a new steam ferry boat, the *Star*, was launched from the slip at Balmain."* With 25 horse-power engines high pressure (35 lbs. per square inch), she would seem to have gone mainly into the Parramatta service, for she is noted as one of the steamers which would conform to the new time-table published in the *Sydney Herald* in 1853 notifying the public that "The hours of starting this week will be as follows:—From Parramatta 8 a.m. and 1.30 p.m., and from Sydney at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. from Phoenix Wharf."

The year 1853 marked the beginning of the activities of the syndicate previously referred to. They bought the *Emu* and the *Comet*, together with the engine and boilers of the *Rapid*, for £5500; put a new boiler in the *Emu* and ordered two new boats in frame in England, the sale of the *Comet* for £3100 being a nice offset to this expenditure.

In the following year the first of the new boats, the *Black Swan*, was ready, and early in 1855 the *Pelican* also took her place on the harbour. In 1856 the *Victoria* was purchased. Alterations and repairs were effected, which added £1000 to her cost price of £3575, but she was evidently a good proposition, because a further sum of nearly £3000 was spent on lengthening her in 1860.

This syndicate also bought the *Star*, though they did not keep her very long. Nevertheless, during the period she earned nearly her original cost, and was sold for over £600 more than her purchase price. Other vessels operated by the syndicate later were the *Peri* and the *Peal*. Both of these were purchased in 1865, and I mention them here merely in passing, as we shall see them later in another activity. It might be fitting to refer here to the difficulty which sometimes arises in arriving at the fate of some of these boats, as often there were two or more boats of the

**Vide Evening News*, September 21, 1902: "From the papers of 50 years ago."

same name. For example, an *Emu* was converted into a schooner in 1846. I cannot trace this boat at all, except that she was obviously not the steamer we have just been considering. One *Emu* is identified definitely by the record in the *Newcastle Herald* of December 5, 1934, "from files of 50 years ago," stating:—

A message from the master states that the paddle steamer *Emu* has become a total wreck at the entrance to the Bellenger River. This vessel was built in England in 1842 for Messrs. Manning and Byrnes.

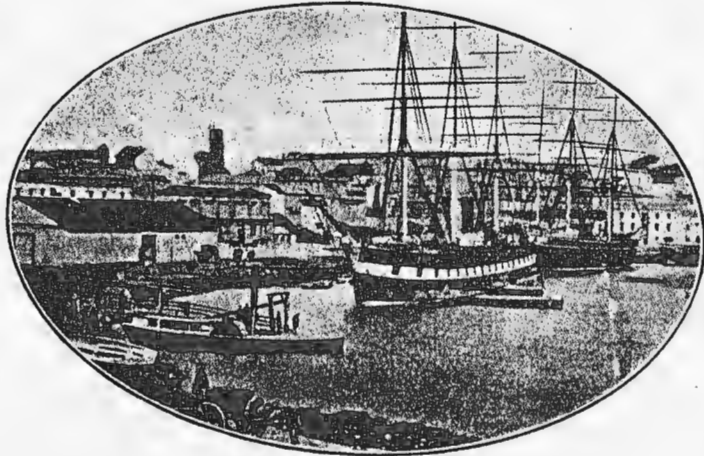
Another *Emu*, a vessel of 131 tons, was wrecked at Crowdy Head in 1888, she being a much larger vessel; there was also a tug *Emu*—a paddle-boat some time in Sydney, but mostly at Newcastle, and only lately gone out of service. Again, there was the double-ended paddle-ferry boat which came from Victoria and ran to Manly. She was laid up in Neutral Bay for many moons, but was refurbished during the 'nineties and was re-named the *Brightside*.

Similar confusion seems to have arisen with regard to the *Ferry Queen*, some old records referring to her as the *Faery Queen*. A steamer called the *Fairie Queen*, owned by one W. Manton, was built in Melbourne in 1841, but was never in Sydney. Gerrard Brothers' boat was not built until 1845, and, if by any chance was named the *Faery Queen* to commence with, the "ae" was soon changed to "er" to read *Ferry Queen*.

Later on I will refer to the *Courier*, which ran to Watson's Bay. She was a screw steamer some 90 feet in length, and commenced running in 1888; she is still afloat, and is used for towing in the harbour. In the same year, however, as the Sydney vessel was commissioned, a much larger vessel was built in Melbourne for the "Bay" trade, and is still running carrying passengers. In view of the number of boats which commenced life in one port and finished in another, it is easy to see how these mistakes arise.

Reverting to the cross-harbour traffic, 1855 saw a more or less regular service maintained to Milson's Point by the *Herald* and the *Ferry Queen*, while the Dawes Point service continued as before. The necessity for two lines

of boats to North Shore was due, not so much to increasing population on the north side of the harbour as to the ships which lay over there either waiting for cargo or taking ballast; but by 1860 the population had increased sufficiently to induce James Milson, Charles Firth, Francis Lord, William Tucker and Thomas Laurie to form a company, The North Shore Ferry Company, to run a regular



Circular Quay, Sydney, in 1866. The auxiliary vessel is the "Great Victorian" and the paddle-wheel ferry steamer is the "Herald."
—(Photo. by H. R. Allerding.)

service between the recently formed Circular Quay and Milson's Point. Legal difficulties cropped up to militate against the new company, but these were overcome in the following year by the conversion of the company into a limited liability company, and thus the parent of the present Sydney Ferries came into being.

This was to be a passenger ferry pure and simple, and the service was commissioned by the "*Commodious ferry steamer Kirribilli*" carrying sixty passengers and running a regular time-table, between dawn and 7 p.m. (fare, three-pence) and between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. (fare, sixpence). This boat was followed soon afterwards by the *Alexander*, capable of carrying seventy-five passengers, and within the next few years the *Nell*, *Gomea*, *Galatea*, and *Coombra* were added to the fleet.

Other steamers added later were the *Nautilus* (1873), *Parramatta* (1874), and in 1878 the company was reconstructed under the name of The North Shore Steam Ferry Company Limited, which took over the following vessels from the old company:—*Gomea*, *Galatea*, *Nell*, and *Coombra*; and also acquired the *Darra* and *Florence* and the vehicle-ferry *Bungaree* which, by this time, had commenced to run from East Circular Quay to Milson's Point, supplementing the efforts of the *Transit*, which had commenced a vehicular service during the early 'sixties. Built originally as a steam yacht, the *Florence* had been running an intermittent service for the previous five years as a ferry to Mosman and Neutral Bay.

In 1879 the new company showed its enterprise by ordering the first double-ended screw-propelled vessel ever built in Australian waters. The principle of screw propulsion had largely superseded paddle-wheels for single-ended craft following the test made by the British Admiralty in 1845 between two 800-ton vessels, *Rattler* (screw) and *Alexto* (paddle), when the *Rattler* towed the *Alexto* backwards at the rate of two and a half miles per hour, though her engines were going full speed ahead.

Early in 1879, however, the first double-ended screw boat was launched at Liverpool for the Liverpool-Birkenhead service. The same year the *Wallaby*, designed by the late Norman Selfe, was built in Sydney, and provided accommodation for three hundred and eight passengers. She was a peculiar model, having no outside seats on the lower deck, the walls of the cabins fore and aft being flush with the "skin" of the ship, while the main deck was extended beyond this line in the form of a wide sponson. She was also the first, and for many years the only ferry, to have both cabins fitted with glazed windows. All the other boats were glazed only in the after or ladies' cabin, the forward or smoking cabin being fitted with large open "ports," and which sometimes were covered in wet weather by canvas curtains. She was declared by "experts" not to have been a success, but as she is still running perhaps they were mistaken. At all events, two years later the company built the *Alathea* on the double-ended screw principle, but finding after an accident to one propeller that the speed was increased

from six and a half to nine knots when running with only one propellor, she was converted into a single-ender. This was regarded as a victory for the experts, and no further double-ended screw boats were built until the ill-fated *Kangaroo* was constructed in 1890.

In passing it might be mentioned that Mr. Selve's brother, the late Henry Selve, tried to persuade the Balmain Company in 1887 to build a double-ended screw boat, but the idea was turned down after vigorous discussion, while almost the exact design was incorporated many years later in the *Lady Mary*.

The *Cygnets*, *Ganet*, *Halcyon*, and *Pheasant*, all single-ended screw boats which, with the *Alathea*, formed the Parramatta River fleet, were built respectively in 1882, 1883, 1884 and 1887, but these, with the exception of the *Ganet*, took no part in the communication with the North Shore. This service was extending, and it necessitated the construction of larger, double-ended paddle-steamers. The *Cammeray* was built in 1884, and the *Waratah* and *Bunya* the following year, while the *Victoria* and *St. Leonards* followed a year later.

Up to this time the bulk of the North Shore traffic was landed at Lavender Bay, and various suggestions, including hydraulic lifts and a funicular railway, were put forward to avoid the inconvenience of passengers having to negotiate the long flights of steps. The problem was solved in 1886 by the construction by the Government of a cable tramway from Milson's Point to the heights of North Shore at Ridge Street. This was afterwards extended to Crow's Nest, with the idea of eventually joining up with the newly constructed railway from Hornsby to St. Leonards.

The extension of the railway to Milson's Point in 1893, however, settled the question in another way, but caused so great an increase of traffic to Milson's Point that soon the Milson's Point and Lavender Bay services were divided. Before this, too, the fare had been reduced to one penny each way. An all-night service (fare, one shilling) was inaugurated in 1844, and reduced in 1895 to sixpence.

While this great progress was going on in the development of ferry services to the North Shore, there was

marked activity in other waterside suburbs, necessitating ferry services in other directions. Parramatta, though by now served with a railway, still clung to its waterway; moreover, there was still a huge hinterland on each side of the river which could only be served conveniently by means of river craft.

Mention has already been made of Jules Joubert, who came to Sydney in 1840. He, finding that the ordinary trading boats did not cater adequately for the requirements of Ryde, Hunter's Hill, and Clarke's Point, purchased in 1860 the steam yacht of the late Sir P. N. Russell, the *Ysobel*, and ran her as a ferry to these parts. Later we shall meet him again in connection with ferry services to "The Hill." Meanwhile, on April 7, 1866, "An Act (Vic. 29) to incorporate the Parramatta River Steam Company" was passed, and this company, under the leadership of Mr. Charles Jeanneret, came into being to run a passenger service from Parramatta to Darling Harbour. While this was conducted with paddle-boats they ran right up into the town, as they only drew two and a half to three and a half feet, but when they were replaced by screw boats the deeper draught made it necessary to terminate them at Queen's Wharf. In order to connect this new terminus with the town a tramway was laid down between the wharf and the Park Gates, authority for such being granted under an Act (Vic. 45) passed in August, 1881.

The steamers engaged in this run have already been enumerated, and no addition to those mentioned was made until the construction of the *Bronzewing* in 1901, except a small boat which was put on to maintain a supplementary service up Tarban Creek in 1866, and which was replaced by the *Una* in 1898. When the Sydney Ferries took over the Parramatta Ferry about 1906 the terminus was transferred to Circular Quay.

With the establishment of the Parramatta service by Jeanneret, Ryde was served better than ever before, and allowed Joubert to concentrate on the shorter run from Hunter's Hill, which by this time had increased considerably in population.

A small paddle-wheel steamer, the *Womerah*, ran on the Lane Cove River in the 'seventies, and in 1877 she

was replaced by the *Egeria*, a small screw boat. In 1884 Joubert placed the *Pearl* in commission, and this service was gradually augmented by the addition of the *Rose* and *Shamrock*, among others, until Joubert sold the ferry to the Balmain New Ferry Company about 1906, and the single-enders were replaced by double-ended boats of the "Lady" class. Up to this time, or shortly before, the Lane Cove boats, like the Parramatta ferries, landed their passengers at Darling Harbour, but soon after the change of ownership they, too, were brought round to Circular Quay. In the good old days a frequent service was maintained, and on week-ends and holidays large numbers of trippers visited the Avenue picnic grounds or sought the upper reaches of the Lane Cove River by means of the launch ferry which ran from Fig Tree to Fairyland and Fidden's Wharf.

The Balmain New Ferry Company was bought out by the Sydney Ferries Limited, and this company still maintains the service. At this juncture we must go back to the Balmain services of an earlier date. Reference has already been made to the paddle-steamer *Waterman* in the 'forties and the *Gypsy Queen* somewhat later, but even before this the *Experiment* had been running to Balmain on Sundays. James Entwhistle and William Marshall ran a service in partnership under the name of the Balmain Ferry, but on March 19, 1853, this partnership was dissolved, and Mr. Henry Perdriau carried on with the *Waterman*, of which he was part owner, and other boats. An advertisement in the Sydney papers of 1855 read:—

BALMAIN STEAM FERRIES.

Fast Iron steam ferry boats between Crooks Wharf Balmain and Erskine St, Wharf. Fare 2d after 7 p.m. 3d. G. Bonamy.

Another advertisement in the same year announced:—

The steamer *Star* will commence on Wednesday to run as a ferryboat on the new route between Waterview Dry Dock and the Phoenix Wharf, Erskine St, leaving the Dry Dock at 9 a.m. calling at Grays Wharf and Darling Street, and will continue running throughout the day to half-past six. The hours from the dry dock and half hours from Sydney. Sharp P.O. time.

A paragraph in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of July 24, 1856, records that:—

The Balmain Steam Ferry Company added another vessel yesterday to its already compact little fleet and her builder; Mr. Booth of Balmain, appears to have done full justice as far as strength and model are concerned. Her dimensions are 76 ft. long 14'6" beam and 5' draught. She will be propelled by a 25 h.p. condensing engine from Messrs. Duff and Co. Glasgow. At the launch Miss E. Buchan christened the vessel with the usual ceremony naming her the *Premier*.

Increasing population called for further extension of the ferry services and for larger and faster boats; moreover, the entry of the 'buses running to the Railway Station in competition was another factor. The result was that by the 'eighties double-ended paddle-steamers capable of carrying two hundred, three hundred and up to four hundred persons, were being built. Among these were the *Telephone*, *Waterview* and *Bald Rock*, whilst later the *Lincoln* and *Memel* were added to the fleet, and the service was maintained until the "New" Company took over and gradually replaced the paddle-wheelers with screw boats of the "Lady" class. The first of these was the *Lady Mary*, followed by the *Lady Hampden*, *Lady Manning*, and others. One of these, the *Lady Chelmsford*, has recently been converted to Diesel, and the experiment seems to portend a new era in ferry development in Sydney.

While these changes were taking place, the service which had been begun with the *Australia* after her withdrawal from the Parramatta run, a new service had been commenced, namely, to Drummoyne, Fivedock, Leichhardt, Glebe, and Balmain. The boats employed in this service were many and the time-tables varied and spasmodic. The *Rapid* was one of them, and we have already seen her end. The Pyrmont ferry and the filling in of Blackwattle Swamp had a considerable effect on the nearer portions of the area served by this ferry, and it was not until the establishment of the line run by the late Mr. Henley, father of Sir Thomas Henley, that a really regular time-table with suitable boats was run. This service reached its zenith during the 'nineties, when it was maintained by the *New Era* and the *Birkenhead*. The establishment of the electric tram service, and its extension to the suburbs served by the ferry, gradually led to its decline.

While all these changes were taking place "up stream," other and even more momentous changes were being effected in the expansion of other services. In the late 'fifties Cremorne had been "discovered" as a picnic resort, and steamers ran there regularly on Sundays and holidays from Phoenix Wharf and from Woolloomooloo, and while old Tom Mullhall, the boatman, ran the only "regular" ferry to Mosman on week days (at £1 a trip) in 1859 and 1860, in the latter year the *Black Swan* and the *Peri* ran regularly on Sundays and holidays from Woolloomooloo for threepence each way, while the *Herald* and *The Brothers* took passengers from Circular Quay for one shilling return.

In 1864 an attempt was made to establish a ferry to Neutral Bay without much success, but in 1871 the *Herald* ran more or less regularly on week days. The year 1873 saw the *S. Y. Florence* calling there *en route* to Mosman as already mentioned, making a trip about every two hours, while the late Mr. Harnett carried on an intermittent service for the next six or seven years with various steamers, including the *Alcona*, *Golden Rose*, *Speedwell*, *Zeus*, and *Matilda*. This service was taken over by Chapman and Shipley in 1878 and run with the *Katie* and *Pacific*. In 1881 Jeanneret ran the *Eclipse* and the *Osprey*. Three years later the North Shore Ferry Company entered the Mosman trade, and acquired the Chapman and Shipley interests for £500. The following year, 1885, the Neutral Bay Ferry Company was started in opposition with the *Ganet* and the *Florrie*, but ran only for about a year. The North Shore Ferry Company took over and replaced the existing boats with the *Lily* and the *Lotus*, which maintained the service until they were replaced by larger boats in the early nineteen hundreds.

How well these wooden vessels were built is evidenced by the fact that most of them have lasted to the present time. The *Katie* was still towing coke lighters when I saw her last, the *Ganet* is anchored in Hen and Chicken Bay, and the *Florrie* was running until comparatively recently on the Clarence River with the Neutral Bay sign still up. This little vessel had a remarkable history; built originally by Rock Davis, at Brisbane Water, she was intended for the mail service from Newport to Gosford.

(In the days before the construction of the Hawkesbury bridge and railway connection between Sydney and Newcastle, the mails went first by road *via* Peat's Ferry and later *via* Manly, Newport and Gosford.) Now Davis had the boat and Jeanneret had the wharf at Newport. A stalemate thus having been created, Jeanneret threatened to bring up another boat from Sydney, but having none suitable he eventually bought the *Florrie*. When the railway was extended to both sides of the river the link was completed by the *General Gordon*, carrying mails and passengers; the Newport-Gosford service was no longer necessary, and the *Florrie* came to Sydney, to run up Tarban Creek.

Following on the development of the northern suburbs, larger and more modern boats were added to the North Shore Company's fleet. The double-ended screw principle having been proved, the *Kangaroo* was built in 1891 for the Milson's Point service. She was fitted, however, with triple expansion engines, and, the trip being too short to enable her to use them to the best advantage, she was placed on the Mosman run. She was an ill-fated ship, having been burned twice to the water's edge.

The *Waringa*, *Wallaroo*, and *Carabella* soon followed, and these, with the paddle steamers then in commission, served the needs of the "Shore" until the *Kirribilli* and the *Kurraba* were put on in 1901. With these steamers may be said to have commenced the "Golden Age" of ferry steamers on Sydney Harbour. They emerged as the prototype of the fast, commodious, electrically-lighted, glassed-in (upper and lower deck) comfortable ferry which found its highest expression in the magnificent two thousand-passenger boats, *Kuttabul* and *Koompartoo*.

What a contrast from the draughty, open-cabined, old paddle-wheeler, lighted by a noisome oil lamp which cast furtive shadows as it swung to and fro, while a lurid glow came up from below where the engine-room flare lit up the engine gratings like the bars of some dungeon prison of the Middle Ages!

The amazing growth of the northern suburbs during the past thirty years made larger ferries and more frequent services necessary, and some idea of the enormous number

of people travelling by them may be gathered from the fact that, in addition to those travelling by vehicle punts, etc., over forty million passengers per annum were carried on the cross-harbour ferries in the year immediately preceding the opening of the Bridge. And what a fleet of boats was necessary to transport them—*Kummulla, Kareela, Kanimbbla, Koree, Kubu, Koscuisko, Kai-Kai*, to name only some of them, all having passed into the Limbo of Forgotten Things!

So far no mention has been made of water-borne traffic to the south shore of the Harbour, but it, too, must have its place in this story. The posting of a look-out and Signal Station at South Head in January, 1790, with the establishment of a fishery under the control of "Pilot" Barton in 1792, and the erection of a fire-beacon in 1793, made some sort of communication essential, and as the road was not constructed until 1811, this must have been carried on by boat. Like the Parramatta establishment in the first instance, this was probably effected by ships' boats, but, like that run again, locally built boats must soon have been utilised for the purpose. I have not been able to ascertain what these boats were, but as the southern foreshores did not lend themselves to cultivation the need for ferry services was not felt after the building of the road. Governor Macquarie, however, who was responsible for the road, was also responsible for starting the fashion of picnics at Watson's Bay, and so when steam boats commenced to run "tourist" trips on Sundays, Watson's Bay was sometimes included in the list of places visited. Various tugs took passengers there during the 'fifties and 'sixties, and regular trips were run on Sundays and holidays "to this delightful rendez-vous," in which a prominent part was taken by "the favourite steamer, *Herald*." The *Black Swan* was another of the boats engaged in this service, and no doubt others will be remembered by some members of this Society.

When the building erected originally as a Custom House, and which still forms part of the Vaucluse Council Chambers, was converted into an hotel, it had many attractions to offer trippers, including a menagerie and a bowling alley. Early in the 'eighties a regular service was inaugurated with morning and evening trips daily, and more

frequently at week-ends. The *Swansea* and the *Golden Rose* were prominent in this activity, and two steamers more than sufficed for the purpose even when regular day trips were instituted. Later in that decade an opposition company, under the aegis of the late Sir John Robertson, was started under the name of The Watson's Bay and South Shore Steam Ferry Company. This company ran the *Bee* and the *Oceana*, and made calls when required at Darling Point, Double Bay, Rose Bay, and to ships lying at anchor. In 1887 the *Courier* was added to the fleet, and soon after her advent, the opposition—that was Harmer's original ferry—disappeared. By this time the population of the "Bay" justified a more or less through service, and, as the cable tram to Ocean Street and a 'bus service to Point Piper had made their appearance in the very early 'nineties, the South Shore wharves were discontinued.

Various interruptions, however, occurred at intervals to disturb the time-table. The *Courier*, for instance, was taken off every time a P. and O. mail steamer came in, being used thus to land the passengers and mails. She was frequently let for picnics, and Watson's Bay had to go without or be satisfied with a tug or other down-and-out which could be hired for less than the *Courier* was making. With the subdivision of the Vaucluse Estate, however, the increasing traffic called for larger boats and better conditions. The little old *Bee* gave place to the *Bald Rock* that was purchased from the Old Balmain Company. (The *Bee* went to Brisbane under her own steam to engage in river traffic there.) About 1901 or 1902 the *King Edward* was placed in commission, and the *Oceana* was sold to the Manning River Ferry Company. She was wrecked on the Manning bar on her way to take up her new duties. (To give an idea of the size of these boats, I must point out that the dimensions of the *Oceana* were 64 feet long and 16 feet beam, whilst she drew about five feet of water and was fitted with a 10 horse-power engine. She carried about two hundred passengers when fully loaded. The *Bee* was about half the size and the *Courier* about twice the size of the *Oceana*.) Later additions to the Watson's Bay steamers were the *Vaucluse*, the ill-fated *Greycliffe*, and the *Woollahra*. The whole

fleet was afterwards taken over by the Sydney Ferries Limited, and various boats of their fleet have maintained the service since, though at the present time there is no regular time-table to Watson's Bay. Of the older boats, the *Bald Rock* went to Melbourne for the Williamstown run; the *Courier* is still on Sydney Harbour, stripped of her cabins and fittings, towing lighters. Alas, how are the mighty fallen!

There remains now only Manly to consider within the scope of this paper. Like Watson's Bay, Manly began its communications with ships' boats dating from the time of Captain Phillip, but as Manly itself and the intervening country was not suitable arable land, the place was only used as a "port" by the few who went to Pittwater by other than the road or by sea *via* Broken Bay. The ferry established by Kerrins in 1830, already noted, would seem to have been the first regular service, and, while the ungodly may have visited Manly on the Sunday and holiday excursions by the various steamers engaged in that trade, it would appear that the village did not get regular trips even on Sundays until the 'fifties, when the Newcastle boats made a trip there much as they do now on Saturdays to the Hawkesbury. Later in the decade other boats entered into the running, making early and late trips. *The Brothers* ran in 1854, as also did the *Black Swan*, *Pelican* and *Herald* in the next two or three years. A syndicate was formed to exploit the possibilities of a regular service every day, with an improved time-table for week-ends, and the boats engaged therein were principally the *Black Swan* and *Bredalbane*.

In 1858 the regular steamer ran so successfully that she earned £1600 in three months, not including holidays. As the result of this venture a public meeting was called for March 1, 1859, to complete the formation of a company to be known as the Brighton and Manly Beach Steam Ferry Company, with a capital of £15,000 in £10 shares.

Three weeks later "The fast Iron Paddle Steamer *Phantom*" was offered for sale in the Sydney papers. She was described as:—"A double header with five rudders, steams 14 statute miles per hour, suitable as a ferry boat to North Shore, Balmain, Cremorne, Manly Beach, Parramatta, or Macleay River. Unequaled in the

Colonies. Length 120 ft. beam 13 ft. draught 3 ft. 5." Her shallow draught made her an unpleasant boat in which to travel across the Heads, and how she came from Melbourne under her own power is a miracle—it could have been no pleasure trip. In satisfying the demands of the Manly service she was joined in the early 'seventies by the *Mystery* and, later still, by the *Emu*, of which mention has been made.

Passing rapidly over the years, we come to the formation of the parent of the present Port Jackson Ferry Company, which combined ferrying and towing services. Their tugs comprised the *Port Jackson* and *Irresistible* (screw) and the *Commodore* (paddle); the ferries were the *Fairlight* and *Narrabeen*, to be joined later by the *Brighton*. On Sundays and holidays the tugs were pressed into the ferry service, too. In the early 'nineties competition arose between the Port Jackson Company and the newly formed Manly Ferry Company. Almost anything which would float was utilised to convey passengers to Manly at absurdly low fares. Such competition could not last for long, and, a compromise having been effected, the two companies amalgamated to form the present company.

The new steamer *Manly* was constructed on the latest lines and capable of making a fast trip between Sydney and Manly, and from that time on progress has been rapid both as regards the ferry and the suburb. The *Kuringai* followed the *Manly*, and these, with the paddle-wheelers, sufficed for a while, but soon the demand for faster and larger boats necessitated further additions to the fleet and the withdrawal of the slower paddle-steamers. The later boats included *Barrenjoey*, *Balgowlah*, *Burrabra*, *Bilgola*, *Bargoola*, and the two latest additions, *Dee Why* and *Curl Curl*.

Before concluding, some reference should be made to the vehicular ferries over various portions of the Harbour. We have already seen the establishment of the punt at Abbotsford and its gradual movement down stream, until it became the Bedlam ferry, to be superseded in its turn by the Gladesville Bridge. Ryde punt came next, and it is still running, though it, too, will be relegated to the limbo of forgotten things when Huntley's Point Bridge is.

completed. The Spit was crossed by means of a hand punt, later changed to steam, but now bridged by a serviceable if ugly structure. The long queues which once waited to cross the Harbour on the Dawes Point-Blue's Point and Fort Macquarie-Milson's Point punts now wait no longer. The *Princess* came and went; the *Herald* towed her vehicle punt; the *Transit* made history in her day; and the *Bungaree*, *Warrane*, *Barrangaroo*, *Benelon*, *Kamilaroi*, *Killara*, *Kedumba*, *Kalong*, *Koondooloo*, *Kara Kara*, and *Kooraangaba* all carried their living freight, and now they, too, have passed. Soon Charon and his ferry will follow, when increasing traffic makes necessary a bridge across the Styx!

Perhaps a new era may be about to dawn in connection with water transport on Sydney Harbour because of the introduction of small mobile units propelled by internal combustion or Diesel engines, and capable of a high speed between points. These vessels may do for water traffic what the taxi and the motor 'bus have done for land transport by taking the place of the large, and, to some extent, unwieldy steamer, just as the motor vehicle is eliminating the cumbersome tram.

My thanks are due to various contributors to the Royal Australian Historical Society *Journal* on marine subjects, to the Society's Library, The Mitchell Library, the management of the Sydney Ferries, and Manly Ferry Company for much material for this paper, and in a very special manner to Mr. J. K. S. Houston for such material and assistance that has made him almost a joint author. In spite of the wealth of material examined, there are many gaps which make the story far from complete, and from the available material much has had to be omitted on account of the exigencies of time and space.
