

T Ferris

It is worth reminding readers that L. Herbert Beecroft enjoyed a successful career for many years before he reached Australia in 1905. The following article indicates the breadth of Beecroft's skill with an unusual commission.

Saturday, 12th June, 1897 - Reading Mercury

R.B.Y.C.—The Regimental Journal of the Royal Berks Yeomanry for 1895 and 1896 has just been published by Mr. Herbert Beecroft, of Reading, and the tasteful and well-got-up little volume does him infinite credit. The literary portion owes its production to the Adjutant of the 1st Y.C brigade Capt. Colvin (of the 9th Lancers) and Troop Sergeant-Major Bradley, who have collected a great deal of information regarding the origin and growth of the regiment. It was in March, 1798, that the Abingdon troop was raised, with an establishment of one captain (Edward Child), one lieutenant, one cornet, and 40 rank and file. The Woodley cavalry were raised the same year, officered by Capt. Henry Viscount Sidmouth and Captain Edward Golding, to be followed by the Hungerford troop. The roll of the regiment in 1895 and 1896 is set forth and many other interesting items are given. The value of the work is enhanced by an admirable chromo-lithograph of a captain (1896) and, still more valuable, another showing the uniform of a captain in 1807 — blue uniform, scarlet facings, white braid, with scarlet sash worn round the body, and shake of wonderful pattern. These are from drawings by Mr. Lewis Edwards. There is also a sketch of the standard of the regiment (1794), which now hangs in Abingdon parish church. More than a word of praise is due for the handsome emblematic cover, designed by Mr. Beecroft.

Almost 30 years later, in 1924, Beecroft painted Squadron member T. Ferris. Peter Hamilton, a current Squadron member, provided the following information:

“Thomas (Tom) Ferris was a great-uncle of mine. He was born on the 4th April, 1858, on Goat Island. Tom's father, Thomas James Ferris, was an Inspector in the Police Force and headed the Water Police division. He and his family lived on Goat Island. Tom had six sisters and four brothers. He was an insurance broker. His firm was T. Ferris & Eger. Tom did not marry and lived at the Squadron for many years.”

Wednesday, 27th December, 1911 - The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser

Goat Island: A link with the Past.

BY F. WALKER.

Few residents of Sydney have any idea that the picturesque island, lying almost within a stone's throw of the Balmain shore, contains several most interesting buildings, whose story is intimately associated with the city's past. If any notice has been taken of this isolated spot by passing travellers in the ferry boats, it has been merely of a casual nature, and, perhaps, some little curiosity has been evinced as to the original purpose of the huge stone buildings, of which an occasional glimpse can be obtained, as the steamer moves rapidly past. It is a peaceful and retired spot, as far removed from the noise and bustle of the neighbouring metropolis as if the island had been securely anchored many miles from the coast. But it has had its share of noise and bustle, and if the records speak truly, of tragedy, too. The island, as a place of habitation, came into being in the year 1836, during the administration of Governor Bourke. Just about this time a convenient and safe place for the storage of gunpowder and ammunition was desired, and Goat Island was fixed upon, as being sufficiently isolated from the mainland, and yet not too distant from Sydney in case of need. A large body of convicts were at once set to work, and the whole western face of the island was cut down almost to water level, the material being thus obtained for the construction of the intended buildings. On this levelled area a series of immensely strong erections were subsequently set up, nearly all being flanked on both sides with huge buttresses, and having walls several feet in thickness. The largest building measures 100ft. long by 25ft. in width, but the others are of smaller dimensions. All were covered with, what in those days was considered, bomb-proof material, but our modern pieces of ordnance would now make very short work of this protection. All are in a remarkable state of preservation, the stones showing little or no traces of erosion. A strong stone wall equipped with stone sentry boxes and imposing gateways was constructed on the northern and southern sides of the area, the high cliff on

the eastern side rising to a perpendicular height of about 80ft, and the water frontage on the western side being considered sufficient protection against intruders. When completed, the work occupying about three years, the buildings received their dangerous contents, and explosives belonging to various merchants, as well as the ammunition intended for the use of the military, were taken into storage. The convicts lived on the island, whilst engaged upon this work, and a cordon of sentries with loaded rifles was placed at intervals around the shores, in case of attempts being made to escape to the mainland. As a matter of fact, the sentries were kept particularly busy in this direction, and many unfortunates, attempting to escape from the hard labour on the island, either fell a victim to the bullets of the soldiers, or were accounted for by the numerous sharks which infested the waters of Darling Harbour.



THE date of erection and the name of the then Governor will be found neatly engraved on tablets affixed to the walls of most of the buildings. Though only semi-military in character, the island was garrisoned up to the late 'sixties by a detachment of Imperial troops, the last corps to act there as guards being the Royal Irish. Up till about the year 1884 a quantity of naval stores was also kept in the buildings, but the goods were soon afterwards removed to Spectacle Island. About the year 1900 the explosives belonging to merchants were transferred to hulks, which were subsequently moored in Middle Harbour, and are still there. At the present time, only small arms' ammunition is stored on the island, the heavy gun ammunition and ordnance stores having been removed to the Newington military magazine on the Parramatta River. In the same year Goat Island was vested in the Harbour Trust Commissioners, who have expended a large sum of money in alterations and additions to the buildings. Some few years back the island was claimed by the Federal Government for military purposes, but the State refused to recognise the claim at the time, and ignored the notice to quit.

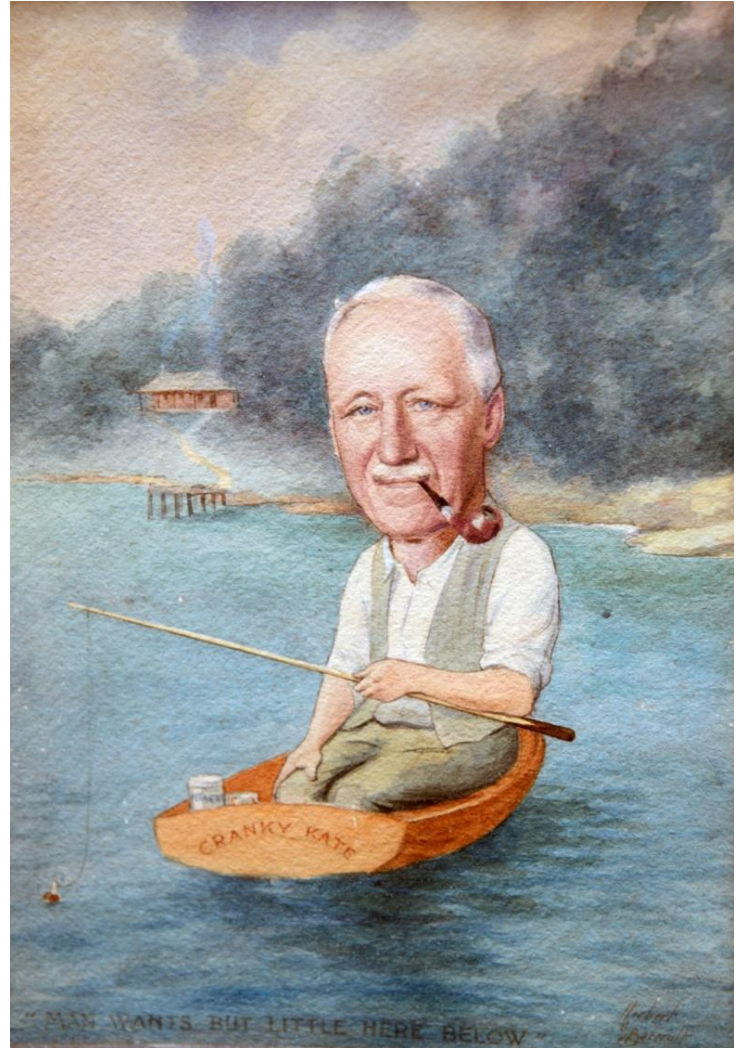
Curiosity has often been shown as to the reasons for the eastern portion of the island, which in this place forms a small promontory, being detached from the main part. Although nothing authentic is known, as regards the intention of those responsible for cutting the channel between, it will probably be found that this was done at

the time of convict occupation either to isolate certain stores, or to provide a residential area apart from the island itself for the commandant in charge. This particular portion was at one time in the occupation of the Water Police, and a number of cells were attached to the building erected thereon. This particular building is now used as a laboratory. Such in brief is the history of one of the numerous islands with which the waters of Port Jackson are provided, and its association with a dead past, but a past which is full of interest, earns for it some pretensions to fame. In this connection a very readable story could be compiled of the history of the remaining sea-girt portions of land, which add not a little to the renowned beauties of Sydney Harbour.

Beecroft's painting of Thomas Ferris is one of his most straight forward. At the bottom of the painting are the words "Man wants little here below." This is a quote from a ballad by Oliver Goldsmith, an Irish novelist, playwright, poet and physician, titled "The Hermit: Edwin and Angelina", dating to 1765. The end of the line is "nor wants that little long." Oliver Goldsmith is best remembered as the author of "The Vicar of Wakefield." Also, have you noticed that the fishing rod is a billiard cue? Clearly, Mr. Ferris frequented the billiard table at the club.

My interpretation of the quote is that Beecroft has drawn Mr. Ferris at peace with the simple pleasures of fishing. The tranquility depicted in the painting with the soft bush surrounds, the blue smoke from the chimneys of the house and the fishing rod lightly held in Mr. Ferris's left hand could be in direct contrast to the name of the boat in which Mr. Ferris sits – "Cranky Kate." Mr. Ferris certainly raced a boat called "Cranky Kate." Maybe he was fierce on the race course, not the first man to turn from a mouse to a lion under competitive circumstances. Notice his jar of tobacco in the stern of the dinghy.

In my research, I learnt that Mr. Ferris owned more than one vessel with the second name Kate. In 1919, I found reference to "Saucy Kate" and "Crazy Kate", then in 1920, "Cranky Kate."



Monday, 20th October, 1919 - Sydney Morning Herald **SAILING.**

YACHTING SEASON OPENS.

*Yachting was formally opened on Saturday by the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and a garden party was held at the Club house at Neutral Bay. At 3 o'clock the boats assembled off the Club house, they saluted the commodore, anchored, and then dressed ship. The fleet consisted of Morna (Sir Alexander MacCormick, commodore), Mischieff (Mr. Arthur J. Milson, vice-commodore), Mistral (Mr. E. P. Simpson, rear-commodore), Oenone (Mr. Wm. Marks), Thistle (Mr. G. E. S. Sandeman), Athene (Mr. D. Carment), Yeulba (Mr. E. Heath), Scotia (Mr. C. T. Brockhoff), Valencia (Mr. H. H. Davies), Mackerel (Mr. Alfred G. Milson), Istria (Col. A. Spain), Kestrel (Mr. R. Marshall), Mischieff (Mr. S. Spain), Thalassa (Mr. J. M. D. Goddard), Maori (Mr. G. S. Littlejohn), **Saucy Kate (Mr. T. Ferris).***

The racing programme included two events. The skiff race was the first of a series of three test races to be held

by the Port Jackson Skiff Club to decide which boat shall represent the State in Queensland this season. There were ten entries, and the race resulted in a win for Dart (P. Mills), with Valete (H. Price), second, and Intrepid (E. Ellis), third. The cutters' race, rowed by boys from H.M.A.S. Tingara, was keenly contested.

Friday, 22nd October, 1920 - Arrow

YACHTING NOTES

(By PELORUS)

The Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron opened the yachting season under a cloudy sky with a silver lining. Rain held off, however, and there was a tidy breeze from the sou'east for the sailing events; for boats of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club, and 16ft skiffs of the Port Jackson and Drummoyne Sailing Skiff Clubs, under the auspices of the Squadron. Commodore Arthur Milson and members entertained a large number of ladies and gentlemen at a garden party at Carabella, and an enjoyable afternoon was spent in dancing and watching the racing from the Club-house and lawn, which form one of the best vantage-places of the harbor, and are the pride of Sydney yachtsmen. There was a good muster of yachts, which, after saluting the Commodore on board his flagship Mischief in Neutral Bay, anchored and dressed ship. Many representative yachtsmen were present. Among the yachts to assemble were: Istria (Messrs. Spain and Barker), Bona (Messrs. Bradley and Towse), Mistral (Mr. E. P. Simpson), Thistle (Mr. G. E. Sandeman), **Cranky Kate (Mr. T. Ferris)**, Revonah (Mr. F. Albert), Berna (Mr. J. Milne), Mackerel (Mr. A. G. Milson), Scotia (Mr. C. T. Brockoff), Hermione (Mr. H. Waters), and Eun-na-Mara II. (Mr. A. Wilson).

Thomas Ferris died in September 1944.

September, 2015