

DID YOU KNOW?

Tall Tales and Truth of Manly's Wildlife!

- **1788 NINE BLACK SWANS A SWIMMING?**

The wanderings of Captain Arthur Philip record his expedition took three days to pass through the wetlands of Manly Lagoon. Sergeant White records "that we fell in with a small saltwater lagoon on which we found nine birds that, whilst swimming most perfectly resembled the rare avis of the ancients, that this the black swan, We discharged several shots at them."

- **1790 A WHALE CAPSIZED A BOAT IN SYDNEY HARBOUR?**

This resulted in the drowning of a midshipman and a marine. In revenge the whale was pursued and harpooned several times. One month later its carcass washed up in Manly. A number of local Aboriginal rock engravings feature whales. In 1999, when a southern right whale visited Sydney Harbor she was the first of her kind to do so for more than two centuries.

- **1837 THE FIRST MARINE LIFE IN AUSTRALIA WAS PAINTED IN SPRING COVE BY DR. JAMES STUART?**

He was one of the first doctors at the Quarantine Station, he took lessons from Conrad Martens to perfect his skills. At the time the marine life was drawn, many of the commonest fishes were not yet known to science, often not even generically named. Dr. Stuart as a naturalist/painter ranked with the best of all time, remembering that Audubon and Mrs. Gould were contemporaries. Of his 200 odd paintings held by The State Archives, one quarter are of Australian birds. Many of these paintings dating from the 1830s of wallabies, bandicoots, etc. could have been done on North Head.

- **1838 THE YELLOW-FOOTED MARSUPIAL MOUSE, (ANTECHINUS STUARTII) COULD HAVE BEEN NAMED BY DR. STUART AT NORTH HEAD?**

- **1865 GUESS WHO BROUGHT RABBITS TO MANLY?**

"Mr. George Smith [of Undercliff, next to the National School], formerly Mayor of this city [Sydney], has procured a lot of rabbits from the Barwan Park Warren Geelong (Victoria) with the intention of turning them out at the Quarantine Station.

- **1868 CLONTARF WAS WORLD-KNOWN AS PROLIFIC OF NATURE'S BEAUTIES?**

Clontarf "the spot selected for the holding of the Royal picnic is one, than which none lovelier can be found having a broad sweep of meadow fringed by grand myrtle trees, bordered by a long sandy beach and backed by thickly wooded hills."

- **1870 WALLABIES WERE PLENTIFUL IN ASHBURNER ST.?**

A small creek flowed along what is Ashburner Street today and there were lilli-pillies and large vines.

- **1871 AN UNEARTHLY MONSTER WITH EXTENDED JAWS AND BRISTLING WITH GREAT TUSKS, SNORTING AND ROARING**

frightened a former Mayor of Sydney, walking on Manly Beach one evening. The 'monstrous animal about ten feet in length reared over him and moved away a short distance on two enormous flappers and swam out to sea where it was later seen among the rocks at Blue Fish'. From the description this animal may have been a bull elephant seal.

- **1871 A PORPOISE ABOUT SEVEN FEET LONG WAS STRANDED HIGH AND DRY ON MANLY BEACH?**

It was captured by Mr. Skinner and in the afternoon he was floundering about on the deck of the Phantom at the Circular Quay, with plenty of life in him, after an absence of twelve hours from his native element.

- **1871 MONSTER SUNFISH LARGEST SPECIMEN KNOWN?**

"A few days after the capture of the monster sunfish, stated by Mr. Krefft, of the Sydney Museum, to be the largest specimen known, Ben Skinner (its captor) harpooned a second larger one near North Head. The fish dragged the boat seaward for about half a mile, at an immense speed, and it was not until 2 hours later that the fish was hauled in. It was preserved and shipped to England to the British Museum."

- **1871 CREATURE WITH VERY SHAGGY HAIR OF A NUT BROWN COLOUR WITH HEAD AND TUSKS LIKE A PIG AND A MANE LIKE A LION, FOUND NEAR MANLY PIER?**

Mr. Skinner tried to capture this animal, it was 'about seven feet long, having four legs or flippers, leaving his foot-prints in the sand as large as a plate, with long tail and whiskers, (probably Australian fur seal).

- **1870s CHRISTMAS BUSH TREES WERE 25 TO 30 FEET HIGH BETWEEN THE KANGAROO AND THE CEMETERY?**

"the hills all round Manly were a paradise of native flora and I can remember in the sunken places between the rocks, from the Kangaroo as far as the burying ground (cemetery) beautiful Christmas bush trees 25 to 30 feet high which in season used to be one mass of red flowers. It was a wasteful time for no-one had realized that Australian florals are unique and that there is nothing like it in any other part of the world. At Christmas time men would go out with carts and ruthlessly hew them down and bring them to Manly selling them to shopkeepers to tie on the posts of verandahs for a few miserable days of decoration after which they were finally burnt. The Church pews used to be decorated with Christmas bush also. The Ivanhoe Park Pavilion became famous as the main venue for the Manly Wildflower Shows which attracted large crowd.

- **1880s THE PINK FLUSH OF WILDFLOWER BLOSSOM DIFFUSED OVER THE MANLY PENINSULAR?** Frances Myer in “Beautiful Manly” describes the wildflowers of Manly “the stranger may see upon any sunny morn of this season, the pink flush of blossom universally diffused over the Manly peninsular as if a warm red light broke through from the whole surface of the earth, as if indeed the great flat hill were lit by a crimson inner glow”.

CAN YOU PICTURE OUR 1880s PICNIC PLACES WITH THEIR WATERFALLS, GROTTOS, BOULDERS LIKE TABLES, GREAT TREE TRUNKS, MAGNIFICENT PORT JACKSON FIGS?

And Myer describes

North Harbor (North Harbor Reserve) - “Tis’ the ideal spot for a picnic, a ten acre reserve containing the creek and the waterfall in its centre and the broad bright silver beach.

Dennison’s Creek only a mile and a half from Manly Wharf past the Haunted House and around the creek some magnificent specimens of Port Jackson figs.

Ivanhoe Park ..”look towards the natural grotto in the hill and beyond with the great tree trunks and boulders like tables”

- **1930s CAT-LIKE SPOTTED MARSUPIAL CARNIVORES COMMON IN MANLY?** These marsupials (Eastern quolls) were common enough in Manly for visiting American museum collectors to obtain specimens.

- **1936 RARE OCTOPUS, WITH A PINK BODY AND MAGENTA SPOTS CAUGHT AT SHELLY BEACH?** A rare octopus, one of the largest of only ten known in the world to science, was caught by a local fisherman, Mr. G. Sly, at Shelly Beach. The octopus identified by the Australian Museum was almost four feet from tip to tip, with a pink body with magenta spots and a golden iridescence. ‘The eyes were strangely human and of a brilliant violet colour.’ Mr. Sly cut it up for bait.

- **1956 MANLY WHERE IT ONLY RAINED TO REPLENISH THE FISHING TIDES?** -read this verse from a Tourism map of Manly with a picture of a Sun

You can depend on
me in these parts
and I’ll be up to
take your breath
away down by the
foam and in the
dew on the grassy

banks and through
the pines, against
the sky and into
every window
when I’m needed
and always in
every heart in this

village by the sea
and if I’m late, you
can still depend on
me, And if it’s rain
you need, I’ll step
aside for him to
saturate the lawns

and wash the
streets and then of
course besides,
replenish all the
Fishing Tides.