

Evening News (Sydney, NSW : 1869 - 1931), Saturday 22 July 1905, page 8

IN THE SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT.

VI.

JERVIS BAY.

(WRITTEN FOR THE "EVENING NEWS"
BY MARY SALMON.)

The story of Shoalhaven would be incomplete without including Jervis Bay, which fifty years ago was the political centre of the Shoalhaven district, where the first election under responsible government was held. Only nine electors were present, as in those days only freeholders



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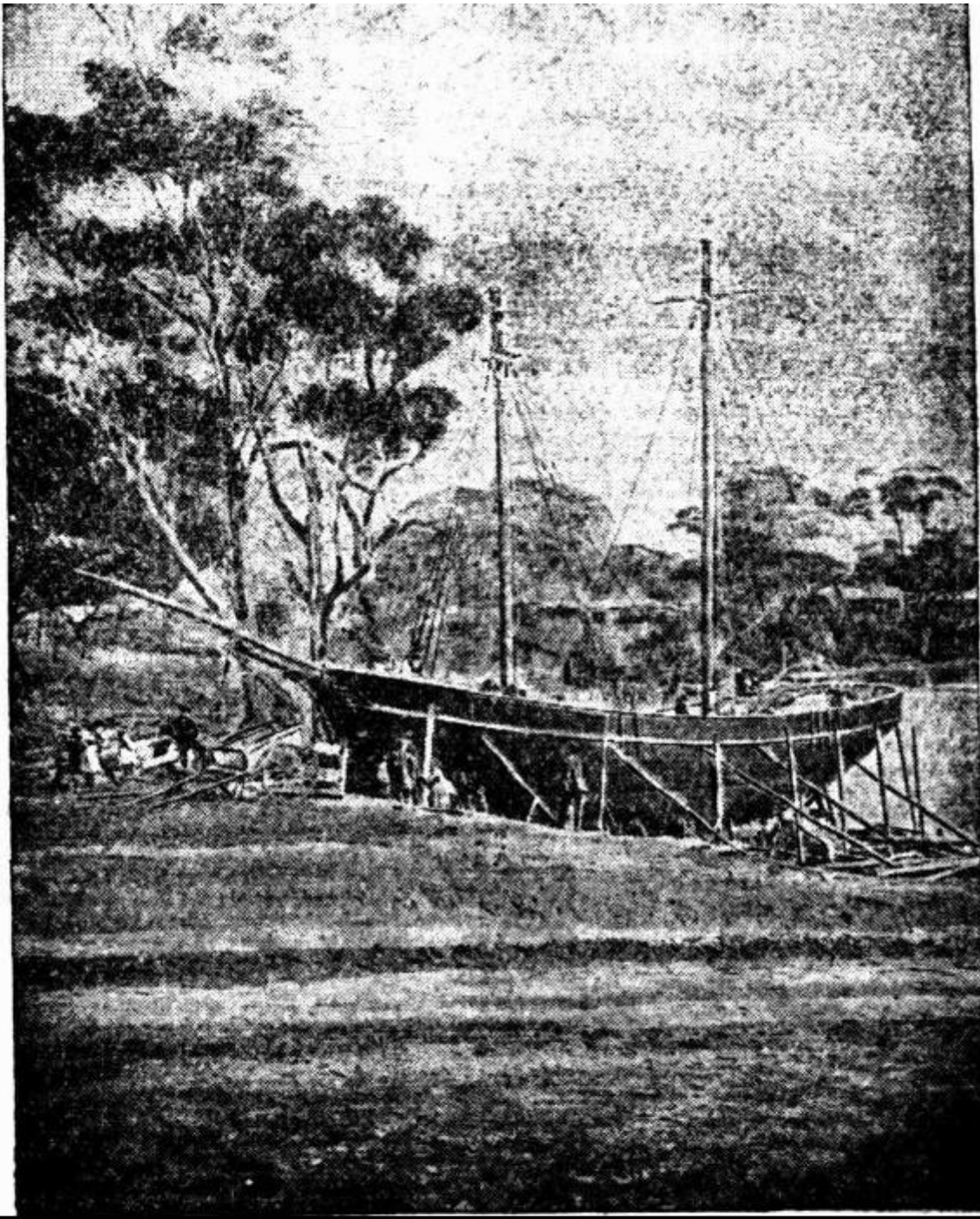


"JIMMY," KING OF JERVIS BAY, AND HIS QUEEN.

(Photo by C. S. Moss, Nowra.)

of a certain value had votes, and the Rev. Dr. Laing, who was a most inveterate enemy to Mr. Alex. Berry, came by boat to the bay for that first election, as he would not go into the Shcalhaven by the canal made by his adversary.

Close by the Currumbene Creek, called by the aborigines Coorombong, on the west side of Jervis Bay, was the old Government township of Huskisson, which had been pegged out in very early times into streets, with a square that might either have eventuated into a park or into a market place. It got as far as having two public houses, a few weatherboard cottages, some bark and slab huts, and, some say, a post office; but this is unlikely in such back times when letter writing and receiving were looked upon as unnecessary luxuries except upon rare and extraordinary occasions. Huskisson began its career as a little dropping-in station for whalers, when the longing for a spree ashore became irresistible, and it was

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THE RELIANCE, BUILT AT JERVIS BAY.

(Photo by C. S. Moss, Nowra.)

also the terminus of the great wool road by which the early pastoralists sent their fleeces down from Braidwood, even from the snowy districts from beyond Monaro. Here the weary teams unloaded and rested before beginning the lightened return journey. When the timber

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lightened return journey. When the timber trade and shipbuilding began to flourish at the bay, it was thought Huskisson would go ahead, and some people were rash enough to buy building allotments there.

Strange as it may seem, of the originally placed township there is now no trace, save one large Norfolk Island pine tree, that stands alone, as a stranger and a foreigner, among the native gum and hardwood trees that abound in the district, and which have again taken possession of their own in turning into forest what the State had surveyed and pegged out, and where early settlers had made temporary habitations.

The settlement moved nearer the mouth of the creek, and now right along the west of the bay, close on to the cliffs, and by the beach, is the small town of South Huskisson, where boat-

building and timber-getting forms the principal industries.

Not long ago the Lord Mayor of Sydney (Alderman Allen Taylor) visited the bay on the search for hardwood sleepers, and decided to give the contract to a local man there. Then the village woke up; indeed, unusual excitement prevailed, for a big order from Sydney meant good work for the firm, and constant employment during this winter for the hired men in the settlement. There are few, if any, "casual" labourers in these localities, for there is seldom scope for outside folk to knock out a living.

Six teams, laden up with "sleepers," drawn each by fourteen bullocks, gave life lately to the peaceful little-frequented roads between Nowra and Jervis Bay. The timber-getters have to go well back into the bush, far off the main roads, for the blackbutt and other hardwoods. They fell, saw, measure, and dress the sleepers there, and then bring them along on a sort of trestle or scaffold, which rests on the wheels of the original dray. Six teams on the road, one behind the other, made a fine sight, and

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helped to make one realise how essential the country is to the city; how we are fed and supplied by the rural districts, and how the energy and enterprise of the man on the land makes the whole State go "forward." Bullocky Bill's language may be lurid as he "explains" the patient oxen out of the deep, soft, treacherly rut; but his accomplishment of a load of heavy timber at the Jervis Bay wharf is a far more creditable performance than many a city man can show for a day's work.

Germany has a school verse that every boy learns:—

You cannot pay with money
The million sons of toll—
The sailor on the ocean,
The peasant on the soil,
The labourer in the quarry,
The hewer of the coal;
Your money pays the hand,
But it cannot pay the soul.

Ship-building has gone on for many a long day in Jervis Bay, from locally-got timber, the Dents, father and sons, who have carried on building successfully for years there, being the chief family who dwell in South Huskisson. The picture shows on the stocks the *Reliance*, launched on October 14, 1903, built by Mr. James Dent. With the exception of her spars, the timber was local. Her length was 93ft, breadth 23½ft, depth 7ft 2in, overall 104ft. She was a topsail schooner, and was employed in the Solomon Islands, being re-named the *Relic*. Many smaller boats have also been built, also oil launches, and at the present time an order for a vessel of considerable size has just been received.

Fishing is one of the chief industries, and beautiful schnapper, flathead, and every variety of South ocean fish abounds. They are taken by carts to Nowra, and thence by train to Sydney. There are visions in the minds of the most optimistic dwellers in the district of the extension of the train to Jervis Bay. That, it is

tion of the train to Jervis Bay. That, it is stated, would be a great advantage to large ocean liners to take in coal, which would easily be brought from Illawarra by train. The beautiful bay, which, it is proudly said by the settlers, "could hold all His Majesty's navy, or

thereabouts," would then enter into competition with Newcastle, and become a busy seaport. At present the only vessels of large size that come in at Point Perpendicular are the warships, for practising purposes, and a few trading boats between the South towns and Sydney.

It was from the mouth of Currumbene Creek that the poor little Jessie, with Captain Gittens aboard, had got her load of timber on the trip when she collided, and though the captain was saved, the young lad, his companion, who had waved "goodbye" to his friends on the creek the morning before, was lost.

Along the east side of the bay is a safe shelter, commonly known as the "Hole in the Wall," where the depth of water close by the shore, also its position in regard to winds, makes people foretell a fine future for that part as a likely seaboard town.

Jervis Bay was so named by Lieutenant Bowen, when he sailed down the coast and gave what was called an "eye draught," for he did not land. George Caley, in a somewhat pompous letter to Mr. Joseph Banks, also speaks very promisingly of the district that after a hundred years has developed so comparatively slowly. He says that some enterprising individual "backed by national opulence," will open up the tract "at present absolutely impassable, composed of dense forests, wooded right to the seashore." The first warship that visited the bay was the armed surveying cruiser the Lady Nelson, when Lieutenant Grant sent a series of very interesting letters to Governor King about 1801. Of course, he mentions the aborigines, who, he says, were very gentle and quite willing to be friendly. They all came to the white man with requests to have their beards cut. "We went eight miles

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have their beards cut. "We went eight miles inland," he says, "and came upon some aboriginal 'kennels' (as he calls their whares). Here and there we picked up a skull, and at one place saw signs of there having recently been held festivities. He lays stress upon their kindness; but a Sydney aboriginal, whom they had with them, held a different opinion, for he refused to land, saying, "They kill me, they cook me, and eat me."

"Royalty at ease" shows Jimmy, the old King of Jervis Bay, who only a few weeks ago died, and his queen, indulging in an imported pleasure, that of smoking a pipe, which did not prevent their living to a ripe old age. The poor old widow was very proud that her man "had a Christian burial, with a minister, in the churchyard; whilst (and her satisfaction was accentuated thereby) Jacky, another black-fellow, only got buried like a dog out in the bush yonder."

As a tourists' resort, no more beautiful spot could be imagined. About two hours' drive from Nowra, over well-made roads, where the trees meet like in an avenue overhead, it certainly is now the watering place of the district. A good hotel, close to the beach, and several boarding houses provide for travellers, whilst some of the Shoalhaven residents have small fishing lodges and summer shelters along the shores. The photographs are by Mr. C. S. Moss, of Nowra.