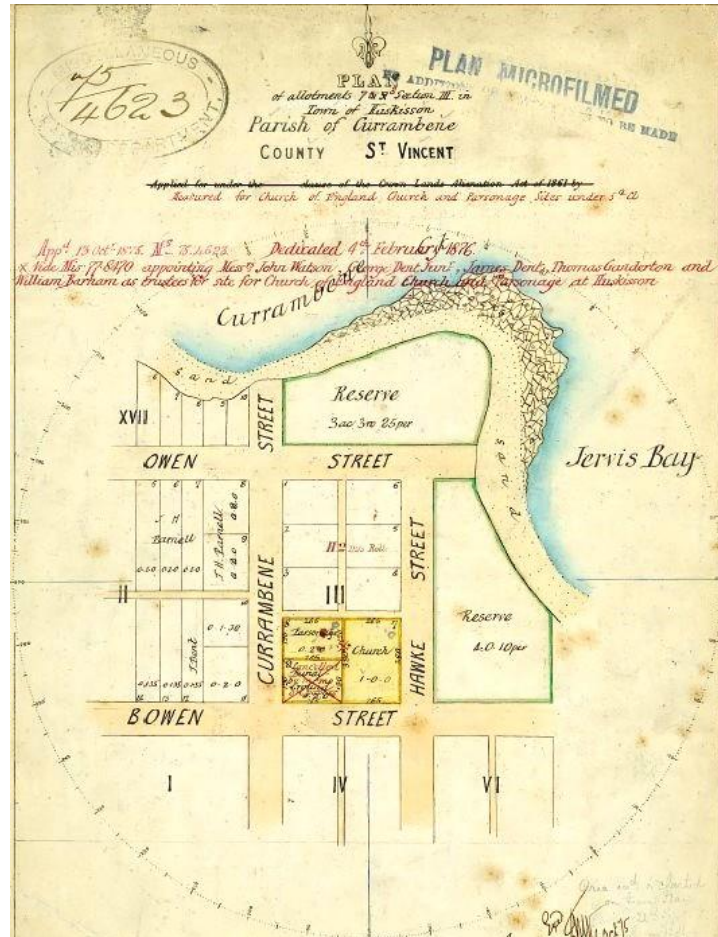


Notes on Huskisson Graveyard

Huskisson Heritage Association. Presented to SCC 29th September 2022 UPDATED 22nd November 2022



The burial Ground

- The government township of Huskisson was laid out in 1840, but there were few European inhabitants until the 1860s when the Dent family commenced shipbuilding on the Currambene Creek.
- The settlement was also home to Aboriginal people, as evidenced by the fact that by the 1880s about half the children attending the local public school were Aboriginal.
- Huskisson Heritage Association believe that the area at the rear of the original village was used as an informal burial ground long before it was granted to the Anglican Church. European burials at the rear of early settlements are not unusual and was repeated in other places – for instance Tomerong is known to have had two informal burial grounds as well as one dedicated place.
- The land is at the highest point in Huskisson and oral history places pre-European burials in this place overlooking both the Bay and the Currambene Creek. There is evidence that this was a burial ground for both Aboriginal and European burials before the land was granted to the Anglican church.

- There was never a consecrated or gazetted burial ground on this site. It is therefore not surprising that for the post 1880 period no formal records of specific placements of burials have come to light in the Anglican Archives. We have not been able to access any possible records held at the parish level.
- There are currently no marked graves. Oral testimony as well as newspaper reports and some official death certificates have allowed reconstruction of some names, but it has not been possible to link names to specific plots
- The Hunter Geophysical Survey Report, commissioned by Navin Officer Heritage Consultants for Shoalhaven City Council, March 2021, located many possible graves. GPR findings are indicative only, and further investigations would confirm or discard some of these possibilities.
- Navin Officer recommended excavation through ‘scraping’ to further verify the presence of graves. Even ignoring cultural sensitivities, this would be irrelevant. The graves are scattered, there is no possibility of matching graves to names, and if half or even three quarters of these ‘possible’ graves turned out to be something else, it remains a graveyard.

Navin Officer Heritage Consultants’ Report: Proposed Rezoning of the Former Anglican Church site, Huskisson, Heritage Assessment and Historical Archeological Research Design, Report prepared for Shoalhaven City Council, Final November 2021.

There is much of value in this report, and the Huskisson Heritage Association (HHA) have modified some of our own findings based on parts of this report. However, it contains some very strange twists and turns in order to undermine the significance of the burial ground at Huskisson and to show that ‘of all those listed [by the Huskisson Heritage Association] most are unequivocally buried elsewhere.’

The report states **‘There is not now, nor was there ever a cemetery designated in Huskisson’** [p.35] No-one has ever argued that it was a ‘designated’ cemetery, if ‘designated’ means formally recognised or gazetted.

Further, the report proposes that there was only one burial on the site, (Exec Summary, iv) and through a contortion of the evidence, places the only documented burial that dates to before the Anglican Church was granted the land on Lot 9, [Jerrinja land] out of harm’s way for the fortunes of any future rezoning or development. [p.41]. In other parts of the report, other possible burials are acknowledged.

These conclusions are well outside anything that makes much sense, given that there are local people today and in living memory with knowledge of and familiarity of graves on the site.

The report makes frequent reference to ‘Christian Burials’, to the impossibility of there being many graves because of the ‘short historical window’ and to the fact that some of the possible graves located by the GPR do not face east-west in the approved Christian manner. All this reads very differently when the possibility of informal village burials and Aboriginal graves are factored in, and all of this points to a longer historical window.

Specific burials

James Golding/King Budd Billy

The report attempts to cast doubt on the cemetery location of the burial of King Budd Billy by belittling the journalistic skill and experience of Mary Salmon. Her 1905 article titled 'Jervis Bay', was one of six articles written for the *Evening News*, in a series 'In the Shoalhaven District'. It was written a month after King Budd Billy's death, contains a studio photograph of him and his wife, Queen Mary [Carpenter], taken by C S Moss of Nowra. Her article claims that:

... the poor old widow was very proud that her man 'had a Christian burial with a minister, in the churchyard whilst (and her satisfaction as accentuated thereby) Jacky, another black-fellow, 'only got buried like a dog out in the bush yonder'.

Mary Salmon, one of the few journalists of this time who was well recognized enough to be granted the courtesy of using her name as a by-line, is specific and careful, even to the point of using parentheses for what she recalled as Mary Carpenter's actual words. While journalists do not always get things right, there is no plausible reason to suppose that it is not an accurate record of events. What possible reason would there be to make this up?

Then, having rejected this highly credible newspaper report, Navin Officer expects us to believe that King Budd Billy was buried at Bilong, relying on a 1928 article in the *Nowra Leader*, written 23 years after his death. This article records the burial of Queen Mary Golding, buried by Rev Thomas Terry at Bilong. The article states that she was buried 'by the side of her royal consort.' This was a nice journalistic flourish, and for the purposes of the current owner of the land, it conveniently gets King Budd Billy out of the Huskisson cemetery. It is written in ignorance of the place at Bilong as a traditional women's burial place. Oral tradition concerning the significance of Bilong as a woman's place and the Aboriginal community's understanding of where James Golding [King Budd Billy] is buried is solidly backed up by contemporary, on the spot, European journalism. There are several other newspaper references to Mary Carpenter's burial at Bilong, but none mention the possibility that she was buried next to her husband.

James Dann/Carpenter Dann/ Boree

There is a death certificate for Jimmy Dann/Carpenter Dann that places him in the 'Currumbene Creek Graveyard Huskisson'. Shoalhaven Family History Society CLD 2675 references his burial as Currumbene Ch (Church) Graveyard, Huskisson. Navin Officer tries to place him at Bilong.

[He lived at what is now the Council carpark next to the Huskisson Hotel overlooking Currumbene Creek, until he died on 10 December 1913. This foreshore area was already formally gazetted as government reserve, but an NSW Land's Department dispensation was given to Dann Carpenter to live there until his death. [MsLs92/3941, SANSW 10/11121]. His death was reported by his son, whose address was also given as 'Currumbene Creek, Huskisson'. Just below this site at the mouth of the creek, a lease to mine shell grit was offered around this time. Shell grit was burnt to make lime for mortar used in building construction and this attracted formal licensing. High levels of shell grit are associated with middens that would have resulted from untold years of Aboriginal occupation of this iconic Jervis Bay vantage point. There is a newspaper report of a corroboree below the hotel in 1890s and oral reports of gatherings as late as the 1960s. [A few years ago, middens were exposed at the northern side of the Huskisson Hotel when excavations were made to install utilities.]

Reference to the Currambene Church is not exceptional. Not only is the graveyard on Currambene Street, but referring to Huskisson by its Indigenous name was incorporated into the lingo until at least the 1920s Huskisson was sometimes referred to as Currambene and at that time it even had a Currambene Cricket Club.

Carl Niclasson

Navin Officer attempt to confuse the location of this burial. On 23 November 1912 Niclasson died on board ship anchored in Jervis Bay. Following an inquest, probably at the pub, he was ceremonially carried by fellow sailors along Currambene Street and buried after a dual language ceremony conducted by a local minister, Rev. Alfred Perkins and Hans Egeness, the captain of his ship. The *Shoalhaven Telegraph* states he was 'buried at the rear of the Union Church' next to a sailor who drowned 42 years previously'. [note this earlier recorded burial pre-dates the granting of the land to the Anglicans]. The straightforward reportage of 'buried at the rear of the church' is muddled by Navin Officer deciding to relocate the drowned sailor to the Jerrinja section of the block and Niclasson possibly '100 meters in a south westerly direction from the rear of the Union Church'.

[The Union church was an earlier 1890s structure that stood on the site of the current rectory. At the time of building the rectory c.1980 this old church, by then used as a church hall, was moved to the south of the rectory, where it stood until the landowner, then acting for the Anglican Church, destroyed it in early September 2019. The original position of the original church is not in doubt. Behind this location, Hunter Geophysics indicated two potential grave sites that Navin Officer queried because they are too large or on the wrong Christian orientation. Locals have said there used to be a grave here with a fence around it.]

Rebecca Golding

The daughter of King Budd Billy and Mary Carpenter died at St Georges Basin in 1935. There is a NSW death certificate that records she was buried in 'Huskisson Cemetery'. This is a clear and precise location, although Navin Officer finds it problematic: 'the exact location of *'Huskisson Cemetery'* is ambiguous as there was no official cemetery in the town. It is possible that it refers to the burial ground near Bilong' (p.41). The HHA does not think so.

Why would she be buried in Bilong when the record states 'Huskisson cemetery'? By 1935 it was frowned upon to bury people 'in the bush', and typically burials occurred in Nowra. This is the latest European record of a burial in the Huskisson cemetery. Perhaps this burial with her father in the Huskisson graveyard was 'allowed' due to her extreme old age, and the poverty of the Great Depression?

Thomas Speechly and Robert Johnson

Navin Officer's report further attempts to muddy the waters by reference to other burials that have never been associated with the Huskisson burial ground. Thomas Speechly is buried at Myola/Bilong, and his grave is extant. No-one has ever queried this. Presumably inclusion of this is to emphasize the role of the Myola/Bilong location. Again, no one ever queried this as a burial place.

The report states that 19-year-old sailor Robert Johnson, who drowned in 1892, was not buried in the Church grounds, but at Tapalla Point, overlooking Jervis Bay. This is true. There is a fine monument there to his memory and the very public circumstances of his burial are well documented. He was a sailor who drowned on duty and the state government approved the unusual site in recognition of this.

Because this burial did not occur in the church graveyard Navin Officer's report claim that it was 'another indication that the grounds of the Union Church/Holy Trinity Church was not a standard well known if unofficial burial place. [p. 36] If the subject land was widely regarded as an unofficial cemetery, then one would also have expected him to be buried there. The fact that he was not,

discounts the speculation that there was an 'unofficial' but accepted burial ground at Huskisson for non - Indigenous people'. [p 84] This simply exposes a failure to understand the historical context of this lone burial on Tapalla Point.

We acknowledge that Navin Officers findings have knocked out some names previously thought to be possibly buried on the site. Those who the HHA's research officer has found probable indications for are:

People believed to be buried in the Holy Trinity Churchyard Cemetery, Huskisson:

- King Budd Billy II, James Golding/Golden/Goulding, age c 90, d1905
- James Dann/ Carpenter Dann/ Jimmy Dann age 65, d Dec 1913
- Rebecca Golding/Goulding d 1935
- Jack (Johnnie) Campbell d 1938
- Mickey Bell d. May,1905

- Unknown Sailor, d 1870
- John Lucy, age 63, Oct 1873
- William Dent, age 1 day old, d 14 May 1899
- Carl Niclasson age 32 d 1912 Swedish Whale Boat Sailor

Further Possibles:

- John House age 4, d 3 Feb 1865
- Arthur Steel, age 2, 3 Aug 1865
- Edward Will Honnor, age 50, d 16 Nov 1884
- Edward Cooper, age 80, Sept 1918

Research is ongoing and as more historical documents are digitised; we anticipate more will be uncovered in future. Many possible burials will always remain undocumented.