



# Media Alert

## 'Fine stream, fine meadow – the Cooks River Project

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **The Dictionary of Sydney launches the Cooks River Project**

Today we launch a series of online histories about the Cooks River valley. Laced with colourful characters and curious facts, the new entries trace life along the Cooks River from Aboriginal times to the present through 14 fascinating articles written by nine expert historians.

Dr Lisa Murray, Chair of the Dictionary of Sydney, says the project is an exciting partnership between the Dictionary of Sydney, Botany, Marrickville and Canterbury councils and the Cooks River Alliance:

"The Cooks River project is not just about environmental and industrial history. It tells the stories of local communities, of places and buildings and of the river itself."

Through links and connections, visitors to the Dictionary build their own experience of history. Navigating to the 1840s we encounter "The Fighting Hen of the Cooks River" who, along with her basket-weaving husband Jo, moonlighted as a bare-knuckle fighter in the woods by the Cooks River taking on anyone who was game for "a side".<sup>1</sup>

At Canterbury Park Racecourse we meet less game individuals who went to watch the horses and where Jim Monk, the gardener's son, established a zoo. Until the outbreak of World War I, patrons could marvel at kangaroos, wallabies, emus, brolgas, curlews, pheasants and kookaburras while the horses sped past.<sup>2</sup>

Today we might think twice about eating the fish from the Cooks River or swimming in its water yet, up until the early twentieth century, fishing,<sup>3</sup> bathing and boating were common along its banks.<sup>4</sup> Navigating its histories, visitors to the Dictionary meet the Kameygal people who first fished the pristine beach and mud flats of Botony Bay. Removed from their land through death, disease and conflict, a community of English, Scottish and Welsh fisherman

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<sup>1</sup> [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming\\_the\\_cooks\\_river](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming_the_cooks_river)

<sup>2</sup> [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury\\_park\\_racecourse](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury_park_racecourse)

<sup>3</sup> [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/test/entry/booralee\\_fishing\\_town](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/test/entry/booralee_fishing_town)

<sup>4</sup> [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/test/bark\\_huts\\_and\\_country\\_estates](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/test/bark_huts_and_country_estates)



took up residence on the northern foreshores. A few weather-beaten cottages of the village of Booralee are all that remain of a community that thrived for over 100 years.

The Cooks River project places these and other histories within the wider picture of Sydney's past. Both familiar and unexpected, they enrich our understanding of Sydney as both a place and a community.

*The Dictionary of Sydney is a not-for-profit community digital history project. The Dictionary's key funding partner is the City of Sydney. Fine Stream Fine Meadow is funded through the Federal Government's Your Community Heritage grant scheme.*

**LINKS:**

**Aboriginal people of the Cooks River Valley by Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/aboriginal\\_people\\_of\\_the\\_cooks\\_river\\_valley](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/aboriginal_people_of_the_cooks_river_valley)

**Bark huts and country estates: European settlement along the Cooks River by Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/bark\\_huts\\_and\\_country\\_estates](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/bark_huts_and_country_estates)

**Booralee fishing town by Joanne Sippel**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/booralee\\_fishing\\_town](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/booralee_fishing_town)

**Canterbury Park Racecourse by Brian Madden and Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury\\_park\\_racecourse](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury_park_racecourse)

**Canterbury Sugarworks by Brian Madden and Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury\\_sugarworks](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/canterbury_sugarworks)

**Damming the Cooks River by Vanessa Witton:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming\\_the\\_cooks\\_river](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming_the_cooks_river)

**First people of the Cooks River by Paul Irish:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/first\\_people\\_of\\_the\\_cooks\\_river](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/first_people_of_the_cooks_river)

**From a fine stream to an industrial watercourse: the transformation of the Cooks River Valley by Lesley Muir:** [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from\\_a\\_fine\\_stream\\_to\\_an\\_industrial\\_watercourse](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from_a_fine_stream_to_an_industrial_watercourse)



**From Sheas Creek to Alexandra Canal by Ron Ringer:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from\\_sheas\\_creek\\_to\\_alexandra\\_canal](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/from_sheas_creek_to_alexandra_canal)

**Industry in the Cooks River valley by Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/industry\\_in\\_the\\_cooks\\_river\\_valley](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/industry_in_the_cooks_river_valley)

**Managing the Cooks River today: The Cooks River Alliance:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/managing\\_the\\_cooks\\_river\\_today](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/managing_the_cooks_river_today)

**Servicing Sydney's thirst by MacLaren North:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/servicing\\_sydney\\_s\\_thirst](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/servicing_sydney_s_thirst)

**The Prout's bridge incident by Brian Madden and Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/the\\_prouts\\_bridge\\_incident](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/the_prouts_bridge_incident)

**Urban growth in the Cooks River valley by Lesley Muir:**

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/urban\\_growth\\_in\\_the\\_cooks\\_river\\_valley](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/urban_growth_in_the_cooks_river_valley)

#### **Further information:**

For further information, contact: Dr Lisa Murray, Chair on 0408 034 237

#### **About the Dictionary of Sydney**

*The Dictionary of Sydney is like no other city encyclopaedia in the world. Based on a permanent historical digital repository, the Dictionary aims to gather resources on every aspect of human habitation in the greater Sydney area from the first arrival of people to the present.*

*Launched in November 2009, it's an ever-growing resource you can trust. The main website at [www.dictionaryofsydney.org](http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org) is just the first of several windows into the historical digital repository that we are building in collaboration with the community. The Dictionary website is a forum for public discussion and controversy, an aide to teaching and learning and a source of information and entertainment.*

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