

Interview with Mr Charles Shattles 1979, aged 84. Interviewed by Gillian Broadbent

Mr Shattles lived at 36 Point Road. The house is still occupied in 2006.

At the time of the interview, Mr Shattles had lived in Mooney Mooney for just on 70 years. Before that he lived in Bar Island. He had been born 'just across the river from Peat's Bight' (Bar Island). There was a church there and a caretaker's residence. His father was the caretaker and grave digger when they were living there.

The day before the interview he had returned to Bar Island because he had heard it being said the chimney still standing on the island was all that remained of the old church. He insisted that it didn't belong to the church at all, but to the caretaker's cottage in which his family had lived.

After the Shattles left the Rogers family lived there, and after that it was deserted; later both church and residence were destroyed by fire.

Mr Shattles didn't remember much about living on Bar Island but remembered hearing his mother talking about it. The church was very popular with the river settlements and especially when the Brooklyn Railway Bridge was being built by an American firm and the wives of the men working on the bridge would also attend the church. The only way to get there was by rowing boat; there was no public river transport, and the only sailing boats were the big ones trading in Sydney.

Later big steamboats went up to Sackville Reach on the way to Windsor. Mr Shattles family moved from Bar Island to the other side of Spencer, where they lived for a few years before going to Auburn. They returned to Mooney about 1911.

There were only about four people living in Mooney. Across the road lived the Williams family. Where the schoolmaster's residence is were the Smith family. There were two other places but they were only weekenders.

The main livelihood was fishing and oysters. People have always been scatter in Mooney. There might be up to 10-12 staff at Peat Island. As it became more populated quite a few went to the city to work.

Where is Fairview? It used to be right out where the old ferry dock was, now the abutment to the bridges. All that area from the point right back to here (*actually James Cole owned a fair whack of land between Fairview and Mr Shattles house in Point Road - ed*)

The area was divided by the old mail road which was only a bridle track running up through all the properties. One side, about 150 acres belonged to the Craft family, and the other side belonged to Campbell and Moss from Parramatta. Blundells later bought them out and established a dairy, supplying milk to Brooklyn and Peat Island. (*this division was after Peat's house had burned and been abandoned - ed*)

Crafts kept the name Fairview when they were living there. They came from Mangrove Mountain. There was a tennis club down there and it was called the Fairview Tennis Club. There was also a little hall near the bridge on the hill near the grave where they used to have dances and play euchre. Later a decent hall was built by a man named Ball across the road where Ozzie lives. People would come from miles around - down from Spencer by launch picking people up along the way, over from Brooklyn, but eventually it petered out. Then they pulled the hall down and houses were built. The hall lasted a fair while. It really belonged the DMR. The tennis club was built by some of the staff.

Fairview didn't seem as though it was likely to be a separation. Name used by Crafts lived there. Formed tennis club and called it Fairview. Crafts came from Mangrove Creek. When the property was resumed the Crafts had to leave and the house was destroyed. Old man Craft died, then Granny Craft lived to be about 100 years old. They had two sons, the eldest son went up to live in Mangrove Creek, the younger one built here for old Granny Craft who finished her days there. He built a place for her (*next to 24 Point Road - ed*). She was a great old woman. She could still work even though she was near 100. She had a little vegetable garden. She was born at Mangrove Creek, and Mr Shattles believed she was one of the Wallbanks.

About 1925 the DMR thought about putting in the highway and they resumed all the area belonging to Crafts. Crafts had previously subdivided one section of it, but it hadn't sold well, only two or three blocks.

Mr Shattles was working for the Department as a launch driver and had to meet the valuer in Brooklyn and take him to Mooney to evaluate the property. Blundell decided to give up the other side of the bridle track and the mental hospital took it up and started a dairy of their own. They managed it for a few years, then decided it was better to buy the milk than keep the cows. They also grew a lot of their own vegetables till that fell through too.

The Williams family was just the mother and two young lads as the other two sons were away with their father in Victoria. When they eventually came back to Mooney, the eldest one, George, went to work for the mental hospital and later the second son, Sam, worked there also. Both stayed there till they retired.

Mail

Mr Shattles' father was the mailman in his young days. Mail came from Nth Sydney by horseback to Kangaroo Point. Wednesdays and Saturdays were big mail days and a pack horse was used; other days the rider could carry the mail with him on his mount. The mail would be picked up by boat by an old chap named James Cole who owned all this estate here. James Cole is buried on Bar Island. He either picked up the mail himself or had a man row it over here. Another mailman on horseback and took bridle track to Gosford. Once the railway went through mail didn't go by road any more.

The Road

The road started first in October 1925. It went right through to Gosford two section. Engineer for the Mooney end was Douglas White as far as Mooney Creek Bridge and the second section went from Mooney Creek Bridge to Kariong. Mr Shattles wags at this time employed by the DMR as a launch driver with his father-in-law and on of the Blundells; they were the first three employed when the decision was made to put the road through.

First they had to build shops, stores, etc. The Dept bought a launch and Mr Shattles had to go down to Sydney and bring it back to Mooney. He was employed as a launch driver for the whole five years that it took them to build the road to Gosford, Everything was brought by steamer - cases of petrol, no drums, two 4 gallon tins in a case, 50 -100 cases at a time. All the explosives for the road were carted from Brooklyn, and if anybody from the dept head office wanted to come up on the job he had to cross the river and meet the train. On pay day he had to met the paymasters, and anyone else ticktacking between Head Office and the roadworks. He would also collect anything that came by train, such a small parcels of machinery.

A chap from Brooklyn by the name of Forbes started a bit of a store/eating house for the workmen. Once the roadwork got underway they had camps at one mile intervals over the 14 miles from Mooney Mooney to the Mooney Creek bridge and at every mile they had a camp, with about 300 men, all told to be fed each day. A boy would collect the orders then take them out on horseback to the camps. Point Rd store didn't open till after the road was finished. It was just a house where an old chap lived by himself. The shop changed hands many times.

Road opened in 1930. It followed the old bridle track in parts, especially at the Mooney Mooney end, but when they got further out they found a better route. Mail track was never used in Mr Shattles. To go to Gosford in those days you had to go through Wisemans Ferry, along the Great North Road with a side track leading to Gosford.

Shopping

Before there was a shop in Mooney, everyone had to go to Brooklyn for supplies, but as there were only three families living in Mooney, each one would check with the others and collect orders before rowing over. It took about an hour to cross the river by rowboat.

Services

It took many years for electricity to come through, Mr Shattles thought it was in the early 40s, and the water had been connected only about four or five years before the interview.

Wireless, crystal set (called cat's whisker) ear phones. Dry Battery wireless, later wet battery. Used mainly for news. Main station was 2BL and 2FC.

Spectacle and Peat Islands

The old hands called it Goat Island because of the goats that used to roam there. What we knew as Spectacle Island is now called Long Island. From the river, Long Island looks like a pair of spectacles. Peat Island used to be called Rabbit Island by the old hands. He could just remember it before they cut the top off the hill to flatten the land for building the mental hospital. The residue was used to reclaim the land.

School

Mr Shattles only went to school while they were living in Auburn. There was a school in Brooklyn, on the same site as the present school and a school launch used to run from up the river, starting at the mouth of Berowra Waters and come down and pick up the children along the way. Children from Mooney Mooney would have to walk out to the old ferry docks, where the council managed a government wharf.

Mr Shattles two boys went to school in Mooney Mooney, then the eldest one went to Hornsby High School (? - ed) and the other one went to Gosford. They used to catch the 6.30am vehicular ferry and catch a bus at Kangaroo Point. Eventually the bus came across the river, but it only went up the hill in Mooney Mooney.

The interviewer asked him about the school at Mooney Mooney Creek which according to government records was operating in 1896. Mr Shattles didn't know anything about that. He said there was only one person living up Mooney Creek where the bridge is. He was a man named Creer who had a citrus orchard. He was a bachelor and used to bring his fruit to the railway to send to Sydney.

Cheero Point

The area now known as Cheero Point was once owned by Mr Shattles' father. He sold it to a real estate agent who subdivided it and gave it the name Cheero Point.

The Depression

Mr Shattles felt they weren't too badly affected by the Depression. The oysterers and fishermen didn't get as much for their catch, but they were relatively self-sufficient. Those not employed could go on the dole, but the system was different. During the Depression the unemployed were given food vouchers rather than the actual money.

WW11

There was a garrison at Flat Rock in Brooklyn, and soldiers were stationed at the abutments to the railway bridge, Juno Head on the way to Patonga, then on West Head. River traffic could only go through first or last span of the bridge which was guarded by soldiers top and bottom.

The second bridge was built at the same time as the road bridge. Traffic bridge 1945, Railway Bridge July 1946. There were great celebrations when the bridges were opened. Mr Shattles was working for the DMR on the ferries as a watchman during the war. He had to control ferry traffic, opening the gate, berthing securely, watching to see that the last vehicles were off, guarding the docks. He said one man standing there guarding wouldn't be able to do much, he had only one little revolver. Even though the road bridge was new it was still wartime when it opened and gelignite was planted under the road on the approaches to the dock. If the Japs were to land further north and march on Sydney, someone was detailed to blow up the bridge, but Mr Shattles didn't remember who it was. All cars had to have blackouts shade over headlights. Ordinary cars had to use low beam, but American staff cars would tear around with all lights beaming.

When was Point Rd put in.

It was only a track when Mr Shattles' family came to Mooney Mooney. After the finish of WW1 There were 2 or 3 returned men with selections at Mt White (most of Mt White was Soldier Settlement blocks) came to work for Gosford Council on the road, Ern Cooper, Goldsmith and Philby. One of the Woodburys, brother to the priest, had no truck, just a horse and dray to form little road in Mooney about early 1920.

Mara Crescent

When Mara Crescent was subdivided some people want to name the new street after Henry Thompson. The Thompsons were an old family, having been in Mooney about same length of time as the Shuttles. MC didn't exist. The Council called it Mara. Mr Shattles said the bit of a bay out the back of his house (No 36 Point Road) was called Mara Bay, and he thought the name might have come from there. Or it could have been named after Maria Williams.