

# ON THE STREETS WHERE YOU LIVE



## Burns Bay Road and Fig Tree Bridge

One important milestone in the development of the municipality was the building of the Fig Tree Bridge across the Lane Cove River, thus making Burns Bay Road one of the main gateways to Lane Cove.

The name **Burns Bay Road** first appeared in the Sydney Sands Directories from 1880 and from 1882 in the North Willoughby Rate books. Lane Cove Municipality was formed from Willoughby's River Ward in 1895. The line of the roadway towards the river was one that had existed from the earliest time of European settlement in the Lane Cove River Valley.

Pioneering emancipist William Henry is credited with creating the original line of Burns Bay Road in the 1820s within his 1000 acre leasehold of the area, by the route he made with his bullock drays taking cut timber to his wharf at Linley Point. The naming of Burns Bay Road and Burns Bay itself is thought to come from one of two pioneers with similar surnames, Barnet Burns or Terrance Byrnes.

Terrance Byrnes is identified as 'a squatter on the North Shore'. Byrnes was known to be living in a hut in the area as early as 1831. While Barnet Burns, who had arrived in Sydney in 1828, petitioned Governor Darling for a small grant of land and was granted 10 acres of land in the area to establish a nursery and orchard. There is no evidence that Burns ever took possession of this land grant, as he sailed for New Zealand in 1831, where he acted as an agent trading with the Maoris for flax. Burns returned to Sydney in 1834 on the board the *Bardaster*, under Captain John Thomas Chalmers. It seems that an agreement was made between Burns and Captain Chalmers that his land would be purchased by Chalmers. In December 1834 Burns wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting that the deed of his land be drawn up in the name of John Thomas Chalmers. This deed was issued to Chalmers in March 1836.

The peaceful, quiet waters of today's Burns Bay certainly don't reflect a bay that was originally

known as Murdering Bay. Although the exact origins of this name are unclear, the name occurred from our early history when the Lane Cove valley had a reputation for harbouring the more dangerous elements of colonial society. By the 1830s, it was more commonly referred to as **Burns or Burne's Bay**.

Another important community milestone in for the area was the opening in 1885 of the original Fig Tree Bridge, linking Burns Bay Road at Linley Point to Hunters Hill. It was an opening bridge, built of iron trusses and took one hour to open, with four men needed to work the gear-wheel opening system. The Gladesville and Iron Cove bridges also opened early in 1880s. This three bridge network would remain the only vehicular route to the North Shore until the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932. In 1963 the present Fig Tree Bridge was built fifty metres to the east of the original bridge.



*'Fig Tree Bridge Lane Cove' viewed from tearooms on the Hunter's Hill side looking towards Linley Point, circa 1905.*