in one way but I cannot go where I like not with out a pass now I will tell you what me and another gits to eat in a week we have 20 pound of good flour 18 pounds Good beef 4 ounces of tea 3 pounds of Shouger 4 ounces of tobacca and what Garding Strip we like and we live in a house by our selves so that we go in when we like and out when we like and that more than any of you can git to eat I now but it was not all ways so since I have been hear I have been short a nuff I can tell you but not this last 4 years.

"Dear wife you say that you git a comfortable living but I am a fraud that his a poor living and I know you will send me the best of it and God all mighty bless you with such a living you say you should lick to come to me but I cannot see how I can git you hear but I will tell you what you must do you must ask some person what takes the news paper when there his a emigrant ship a coming to new south wales and weare that is a going to start from and then you must make a plea forion and they will send you and be glad of thee chance for I wish you was hear for I should be conted then that his all I can do at present but I shall have my liberty hin 12 month now and then I will see more about it so I give my best respet to you and all my children but I sospose they are men and wimin now Sarah and William but you never tome how my little James and alizer was but I so spose they forget me now but God all mighty bless you all but I shall see you all again if I live and before long so do not fret so you give my kind love to my father and mother and to all my brothers and sisters and to all my friends so God all mighty bless you all give my kind love to hennery roberts and his wife and children and to yours brothers James his wife and to James woodcraft and I am glad he is at home again for I would sooner be a convict then a soldier so no more at present from me your ever loving husban Charles Cartwright."

(End of Part II)

- Edgar Beale

THE SEARCH FOR THE IDENTITY OF ALEXANDER HARRIS

Whilst in New South Wales (c. 1825-41)

A continuing mystery of Australian history is the identity used by narrator/novelist Alexander Harris during his time in New South Wales between approximately 1825-41.

Manning Clark kicked the controversy off in 1953 when, in the introduction to that years edition of 'Settlers and Convicts' by Alexander Harris, Clark questioned whether there ever was an 'Alexander Harris' in New South Wales as no record of any individual by that name could be found in records of the period.

The mystery was partially cleared up in 1961 when 'The Secrets of Alexander Harris' was published. In the introduction by the real Alexander Harris' grandson Grant Carr-Harris of Canada, and the preface by Alexander Chisholm, the story of Harris was revealed for the first time. However there were many questions still left unanswered, despite the work of Clark, Carr-Harris and Chisholm. Some of the questions still remaining to be answered include:

* Exactly when did Alexander Harris arrive in New South Wales (we know it was approximately 1825).
* What identity did Harris assume upon his arrival in NSW, if he did not use his real name?
* Why did he leave England (his family was financially secure) and then conceal his identity while in NSW?
Why, in his published accounts of his travels in NSW, did he ‘bend the truth’, change dates, omit personal and place names etc., and generally try to cover his tracks, to such an extent that modern researchers cannot often separate fact from fiction in his accounts?

When, and why, did Harris leave NSW (we know it was approximately 1840)?

It is almost unbelievable that Alexander Harris could spend 16 years in NSW between 1825-41 and leave no trace. If he was a convict there would be many official records still extant to identify him; similarly if he was a government official or a free settler some records should still remain. New South Wales was still a relatively small community during that Period and everyman needed some form of identification to show if he was a convict or free. Obviously there ARE records of Alexander Harris’ existence in NSW, but they are not under that name!

Alexander Chisholm found one reference to ‘A. Harris’ in a petition got up at Sydney in 1838, and Harris makes reference to the issues of the petition in ‘Secrets’. Chisholm also found many references to a ‘Henry Harris’ in the Sydney Gazette between 1838 and 1840. Apart from these we have nothing on Alexander Harris’ existence in New South Wales.

Vital clues to Harris’ movements while in NSW are supplied by the tabular, autobiographical notes compiled by Harris to aid him in his writing of ‘Secrets’. These notes are written under the following headings:

Age Year Places Scenes Topics Adjuncts and briefly outline his adventures from 1816 to 1856. For example under ‘1825’ we have ‘Sydney coast and town ..... Emigrate to New S Wales ....’

Unfortunately only a small portion of the notes are printed in ‘Secrets’, thus hampering our enquiries further. However Chisholm notes that under ‘1830’ Harris refers to “the cedar woods and mountains ...” of the Wollongong (Illawarra) area. This piece of information may be just the clue we need to unlock the mystery!

By referring to chapters 11 and 12 of ‘Secrets’, plus the NSW Blue Books, plus Bench of Magistrates records for Illawarra etc., perhaps we can discover the identity Harris used during his time in Illawarra.

What information do these sources supply?

* According to the tabular notes, Harris was in Illawarra (?for the first time) in 1830.

* According to chapters 11 and 12 of ‘Secrets’, Harris took on the post of ‘Clerk to the Bench’ of Magistrates at Wollongong, replacing a convict who had been sacked from the post. Upon arrival at Wollongong he was greeted by the ‘Commandant’ or Magistrate, “ ... who was a military man ... He is a Lieutenant of the Regiment.” It is possible that this refers to Lieutenant George Sleeman of the 39th Regiment, who was Illawarra Magistrate from 4 February 1830 to 5 September 1832.

* The Blue Books record that the Illawarra Bench employed a clerk from 1830 onwards; prior to this there was no clerk referred to in the Blue Books.

* Harris refers to a large building “… now used as a barrack by the detachment of military.” This barrack at Wollongong was opened on the 27th July 1830.

Therefore, sofar we can assume that Harris is the un-named clerk assisting Lt. Sleeman, from some time late in 1830. The mystery still remains!

to be continued.
During these golden years, regular excursions became the pattern; exhibitions were arranged, attracting further donations to the collection; sponsors were attracted for the erection of commemorative plaques around the city, beginning with the site of the first Government House; prizes were offered for papers and essays in Australian History in schools; and historic buildings were saved, such as the Barracks and the Mint.

Professor Jacobs regards 1941 as a turning point in the history of the RAHS. That year a building was purchased at 8 Young Street and used as headquarters until the move to History House in 1970. Once the Society became a landowner its working changed character. Instead of being concerned primarily with history, much of the Council's time had to be devoted to business management, with all the concerns of running a meeting room, library, museum, rents and rates, eventually requiring a paid General Secretary and other staff. However the Society was very fortunate in its selection of General Secretaries with people like Price Conigrave (1941), Harry Harper and Owen Roberts.

Since World War II many other changes have taken place. The library has grown, the whole museum collection was donated to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, affiliated societies have developed all over the State, and the conference of affiliated societies has become an annual event. More recently, the RAHS has been charged with the responsibility of administering the cultural grants for the State Government.

In 1945 the RAHS played a big part in the establishment of the National Trust. The Trust and the Genealogical Society have taken over some of RAHS's spheres of influence.

Professor Jacobs thinks the society has moved away from being a society of the people towards being more academic, a change which she regrets. Despite ownership of a building worth about three million dollars, the finances of the RAHS are deteriorating, so there is now a pressing need for more members to help relieve this situation.

The writer ventures to suggest the most effective way of increasing membership would be to distribute a bundle of membership application forms to each affiliated society.

FWO

The Search for the Identity of
ALEXANDER HARRIS
Whilst in New South Wales (c.1825 - 41)
(continued from October Bulletin)

The next phase of Harris' time at Wollongong is outlined by the following references from 'Secrets':

*Harris states (p.155) that "At length our Police Magistrate was superseded, his Regiment being about to proceed to India." Supposedly this refers to Lt. Sleeman, who left Illawarra on the 5th September 1832, as the 39th regiment was embarking for India.
Harris states (p.155) that Sleeman’s replacement was “...an old major of the same regiment who had just sold out...he had passed forty years in the regiment...” According to official records, Lt. Sleeman was replaced by Captain Francis Allman (1780 - 1860), who would have been 51 at the time, and having joined the army in 1794, was c.38 years a military man. Allman was not a Major, his highest rank being Captain.

*Harris states the “old major” received “1500 dollars per annum” while the Blue Books record his salary as £150 per annum.

Despite the minor discrepancies, we can assume that the “old major” Harris refers to is in fact the semi-retired Captain Francis Allman.

Allman was the Magistrate at Illawarra from the 5th September 1832 until the 7th April 1834, when he was replaced by one William Nairn Grey.

Within ‘Secrets’ (p.158) Harris states that Allman was adverse to inflicting floggings upon convicts, and often the settlers came off the worst, such that Unfortunately the major gave the settlers too many chances to retaliate. They got up a memorial to the Governor.... The Governor at that time (Sir Richard Bourke) being a thorough sub-acid Tory, the major was removed. Not choosing that he should feel that I had meaningly left him to be the scapegoat of my offences, I resigned.”

By “my offences” Harris is referring to the fact that during Allman’s time at Wollongong, Allman “neither knew, nor wanted to know, anything about it [i.e. the business of the Court].... When I had, as clerk, drawn the deposits, I had next to be ‘the court’, and write down at the foot of them what I thought was a proper judgement.... The papers were handed to him (Allman) to sign, and I then read them aloud, together with the judgement ................. As a consequence, the settlers often came off signally ill, whilst the wretched convicts escaped when they were expecting fifty lashes, or a month in the iron-gang.”

What modern records back up these statements? We know that Governor Bourke was all for increasing convict punishments, and would therefore not have condoned Allman’s leniency. Was Bourke a “sub-acid Tory”? The “Memorial” got up against Allman, does it survive to prove that he was “removed” due to public dissent?

Harris states that he resigned following Allman’s departure - what evidence do we have for this? If it is correct, then Harris would have been Clerk to the Bench at Wollongong from late 1830 to sometime after February 1834, when Allman left. By referring to the Blue Books some of the mystery surrounding Harris is removed and at last we get some answers to our questions.

The Blue Books state that from 1830 to 1831 the Clerk to the Bench at Wollongong was un-named, but as from the 11th November 1832 until the 11th November 1834, a certain HENRY A. B. BENNETT is recorded as Clerk to the Bench! Could this, at last, be the pseudonym used by Alexander Harris whilst in Wollongong?

Bennett left Wollongong 6 months after Allman - had it taken this long for his resignation to be accepted and for a replacement to be found?

Fortunately, the Case Books for the Wollongong Bench of Magistrates survive, in part, from March 1833 to November 1834, when Grey took over -
therefore they should bear the handwriting of Bennett = Harris. It will be left up to a handwriting expert to verify if Bennett’s handwriting is the same as that from the hand of Alexander Harris.

To verify if H.A.B. Bennett is Alexander Harris we need to check all surviving references to Bennett in the records, and if there is a degree of overlap in their travels, then maybe at last the mystery of Alexander Harris will be solved!

Michael Organ

"I WOULD SOONER BE A CONVICT THAN A SOLDIER"

PART III

What of the man who wrote these two fascinating letters? Let us now find out what we can of him.

Enquiry of the Bedfordshire County Record Office shows that Charles Cartwright was no angel; few convicts were, despite sentimental views widely held to the contrary. Starting life in youthful innocence when born at Millbrook on 16th January 1805, he was baptised on 31st March 1805. His life of crime began in 1826 when, aged only about eleven, he maliciously damaged Millbrook Church, thereby earning three months in the House of Correction; he got another three months in May 1829 for burning and destroying five wheelbarrows; in February 1833 he received four months for breaches of the game laws and assault; in April 1835 he received fourteen days of hard labour for damaging a tree, and in the following May fifteen months for rioting. So when on 15th July 1837 at the Summer Assizes in Bedfordshire he was found guilty of what, for the moment, we will simply call a serious crime, he could expect a heavy penalty; in his case the death sentence was pronounced, but was later commuted to transportation for life.

The varying descriptions of his crime are typical, illustrating a strange feature in convict records generally whereby offences were often understated. In Cartwright’s case one reason may have been a failure of the clerk of the court to comprehend the technical features of the offence, which he accordingly described in general terms. Other reasons noted by historians for this sort of understatement are fellow-sympathy and a degree of laziness; if one offence is enough to secure transportation or death, why bother about entering more than one? Cartwright’s crime is variously noted as poaching and highway robbery, this latter crime being at this time not a Dick Turpin exercise so much as what we would now call mugging; Mayhew’s famous researches show this. The official record must stand, however; Cartwright feloniously assaulted one Daniel Tingay putting him in bodily fear and danger of his life, and robbing him of half a sovereign and two half-crown pieces. This took place in the early hours of the morning; Tingay was a game-keeper who encountered Cartwright and another man (who escaped capture) as they were using a path through the woods the keeper was guarding. It is strange that this man was carrying on his person what for those days was a large sum of money - perhaps a week’s pay, or more - and that Cartwright and friend as mere trespassers knew of it. In this regard Cartwright’s protestation of innocence in the first letter will be recalled; but in the second he admits that if he had heeded his wife, he would have kept out of trouble, which surely is an admission. It is hard, overall, to conceive any miscarriage of justice. Charlie Cartwright’s previous record does not help him now any more than it did then.