

DID BELLAMBI HAVE TWO JETTIES?

(On A.H. Fullwood and Visual Illiteracy)

Society stalwarts Warren Bellamy and Phil Presser recently took me by the hand (well, almost), dragged me into Wollongong City Gallery and made me look closely at Fullwood's magnum opus - 'Illawarra from The Bulli Pass (1892)'.

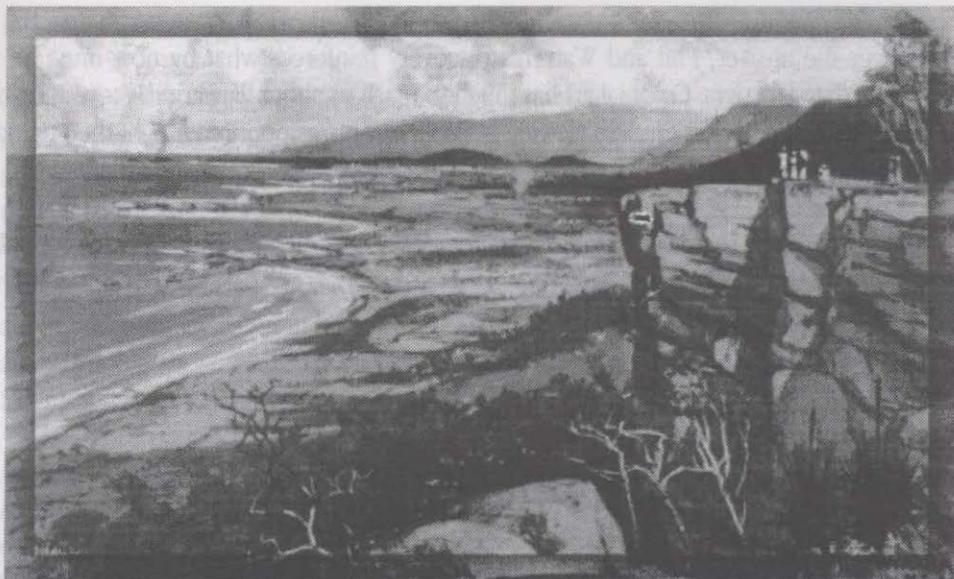
I (and countless others) must have looked at this canvas hundreds of times. I even remarked in last December's *Bulletin* that no-one had yet noted that it contains the earliest image of the Bulli Coke Works.

But now Warren and Phil have noticed two more most fascinating details.

Fullwood has moved the 1872 Wollongong Lighthouse to the top of the Headland near where the current 1937 Lighthouse stands.

Such prescience is uncanny but not really all that surprising when one considers Fullwood's vantage point is some 7 miles away near Bulli Lookout.

In the companion work - 'Illawarra' [from Sublime Point] published as a Greeting Card by Wyewurry (the whole series of 10 Greeting Cards are still available to members at the discounted price of \$2 per card with free delivery) - the Wollongong Light is shown in a similarly unhistorical position.



But what Phil and Warren have also noted is even more interesting. Fullwood paints Bellambi as having two roughly parallel jetties in 1892.

Is Fullwood painting an historic fact or is this merely painterly fancy?

It's an unlikely sort of 'mistake' for an artist to make. Did he paint one, become unhappy with it, do another and then forget to paint over the original?

Most likely not.

Particularly when Phil has uncovered the following Headline from the Tuesday, February 15 1898 edition of the Illawarra Mercury: "DESTRUCTION OF A JETTY AT BELLAMBI [my emphasis]".

The fact that the indefinite article rather than the definite article is used tends to suggest that writer like his local readers is well aware that there is more than one jetty at Bellambi.

Does anyone possess additional proof that this was so? And if it's true was it's destruction in 1898 the reason that all twentieth century photos show only one jetty at Bellambi?

Whatever the answer, Phil and Warren's discovery reinforces what by now must be a home truth for readers. Colonial art has much to teach us about Illawarra History as print and manuscript and that careless viewing is as big a crime as poor reading of the original written sources.

I would love to see the day when *visual* illiteracy was as much frowned upon in schools as the more traditional kind.

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