as the Labor candidate for the State seat of Bulli in a by-election in which he was successful. At the age of 70 John Sweeney became Bulli’s M.L.A. and remained so until 1947, when at the age of 84, by many years the oldest member of the House, he retired and very soon after died.

John’s widow had been his first cousin, Virginia Standen. Her mother Ann Rudd and her mother’s sister Elinor had married two brothers, John and James Standen. One of Virginia’s brothers-in-law was John Henningsen. The Henningsens were an old Woonona family owning a number of properties in the area: a bakery on Princes Highway, Woonona, the land on which Woonona High School was later built, the Bulli Billiard Saloon. John Henningsen also owned Stockbank House after the depression of the 1890s brought an end to its first stage as a bank.

Some of those, poring over each other’s photographs, chatting about past times and enjoying their tea and cakes at Stockbank, had come from as far away as Brisbane for the occasion. Violet Standen, nee Henningsen, was born in Woonona; now living in Brisbane she is 85. Patrick Gleeson, widow of Virginia, nee Standon is 87. They had reared six children and were well known and respected in Woonona for many years. Most still lived in the Illawarra district. All were descendants of John and Ann Rudd and by the marriage of several sets of first cousins all had connections with each other, with Stockbank House and with John Sweeney, M.L.A. for Bulli 1933-1947.

Melvina Oehm, Daughter of John Sweeney and Virginia Sweeney nee Standen, recalled many aspects of the connection. Her aunt Nell, her father’s sister, became the mother of a federal M.P., Charles Morgan and the grandmother of another state parliamentarian Kevin Morgan. Nell herself was a woman of great energy and political dedication: at 88 she was the first person in the Austinmer house moved and renovated by the Lions Club of the area. (The house had been built many years before by brother Edward Sweeney). At 93 she was the oldest living ex-pupil of Austinmer School at its centenary celebrations in 1969. While in her nineties, two weeks after an operation for breast cancer, she travelled from Sydney to Thirroul by train for a function in honour of her son Harry Sweeney and attended by Rex Connor and Gough Whitlam, and was still talking politics in the early hours of the morning. Her death at 97 was noted in the press of 1973: Pioneer Labor Woman Dies . . ., a worker for many charitable bodies and church activities.

Melvina and all the other Rudd descendants at Stockbank House in September all looked as if they were headed for a healthy old age.

W. Mitchell

REMINISCENCES OF JOAN WAKEMAN

Some of the Aboriginals had their own fishing boats. I don’t know how many. I know Mickey Booth had one. He used to have one on the lake. Not on Hill 60, I don’t think. I think the Timbreys had the fishing rights there once.

Tom Thumb Lagoon was a favourite place. It was filled with fish. It was really beautiful, even cockles, mussels, everything was in there. Spoilt you know, the Steelworks ruined everything, it’s all gone now. You’ll never go back to those beautiful days, advancement is all they’re thinking of these days, isn’t it.

When they began to build the Steelworks there were no negotiations with the Aboriginal people. It was just taken. I think Wentworth had the land then. Wentworth Street, Port Kembla is called after him. He was one of the early explorers, Wentworth. They’re still in the area, I think, the descendants that is. They owned half of Hill 60 I hear. Wentworth was the man I think that sold the land to the Hopkins brothers. I don’t know where he got it from, or stole it from somewhere.
The Aboriginals were never consulted in those days, just pushed back. Even when the Army wanted Hill 60, the Aboriginals had to get off. We went to Koomaditchie, but it's not the houses there now. They've pushed a lot of it back now, where the old people used to live. There was white and black people living there, but there were a lot of black families that loved that hill there. There were the Andersons, the Bells, my dad and Uncle Jack Tattersall, the Timbreys, the Walkers, a lot of them, they were pushed off Hill 60 and on to ther, which is Koomaditchie, now.

Koomaditchie was previously known as the Official Camp, but where the Aboriginals used to have their houses it was always known as Frog's Hollow. It was because of all the frogs. Of course, my Uncle Jack Tattersall, he wrote a lot of letters away to Council when it looked like us getting pushed off Koomaditchie. We had our shacks all through there as well. Even the tracks going back to the real early days of our Tribe. Those tracks were there, everywhere. Going through to the beach. Worn right in. Well the Council wanted that, they just took that, put us in the places down there at Koomaditchie and then, that was the end, the last of the Tribe living together when they pushed Koomaditchie away.

There used to be great sandhills all along the beach, my children used to play on them. They took it over to Hawaii. I don't know if they wanted it for their own beaches or what. Yes, it went to Hawaii. There's another lot going now, very shortly. We didn't know where it went to until my grandson joined the Seamen's, he's a seaman and he found this all out, but that's where it went. It was only last week when they sent more over. So they would have nice golden sands over there now I suppose. Come to Port Kembla.

I had to stay at school until I was 14. I wasn't happy with the Aunty that had me. She was very cruel to me, very cruel woman, she didn't like me. She had white skin you know, pretty high up in the Masonic Lodge and all that. I was the blackest out of all the kids and I'm sure she hated me because of that. Oh, she'd give me some terrible treatment, cruel treatment. There wasn't a thing that could be done. Aunty Di, died on the 12th July this year and they didn't tell me, she hated me right till the day she died. Because I was black, these silly things. What she used to do to me after I lost my mother, she used to get me up, hold me by my legs under the shower, now this is the cruelty I had to go through. The Welfare, nobody would step in, well the son used to hold me up under the shower, he is still alive today, Wally, he'd be 70, get me down under the water, I'd be fighting for my breath, and I'd come up, this was because I used to wet the bed. Down, under, up again, every time I'd wet the bed, then they'd throw me on the cold cement. Like that, because I'd wet the bed. She was a cruel old woman, but no one took any notice, no one cared then, if we were treated cruelly, if we were bashed, if we were killed, we just had to put up with it.

Well, I ran away from her. Every time I ran away, I always made back for the Illawarrah. I always wanted to come back home. They sent me to Cootamundra. I used to walk, I was about 12, I'd walk, never got very far. Once, I got down here on a train. I'd get as far as Sutherland walking. But I was determined I was going to get back home. All the time she was very cruel to me, she was horrible. The Welfare Board was established then, but they didn't take any notice of Aboriginal children being flogged in those days. I ran away, and I was sent to Cootamundra Girls' Home. I was like a run-a-way train, always trying to get to Port Kembla. I loved it.
They used to make you chop wood up there, I'd never seen anything like it until I went out there, the sledgehammer and the wedge, we got to chop wood like that. There were lots of children, they were all Aboriginals, it was an Aboriginal Children's Home. I still ran anyway, when I'd get back, they'd give me a flogging for running away. There was a good detective there, Detective Humphries, the last time I ran was because the Matron was very cruel to me, very cruel people in those days. Because I ran away, as we went through the linen room, I had to take all my clothes off, I didn't know why I had to take my clothes off, when I got into her living room she had this big stock whip with the tails on the end of it, and she raised it, it must have been instinct because I grabbed the whip, pushed her and ran back through the linen room, grabbed my clothes, I only got my dress on and I'm away. Detective Humphries picked me up and he took me back. He ended up getting the Aboriginal Protection Board up there. A lovely lady, a Mrs. English, she really cared about the Aboriginal kids, a lovely person. Matron Hart ended up getting the sack, over me. That's the way the kids used to get treated out there, very bad.

I kept running away from there, because, as I said, I always wanted to come back. This was my area, I love it. I didn't know how I was going to get back from there, but I was determined I was going to get back. But I never did, not until I was seventeen. They took me to Sydney and they said, 'Would you like to go to a Station?' I didn't even know what a Mission Station was. I was at the Girl's Shelter, I was about 14 or 15. I thought it was a sheep station and I said that I'd like to go, because I loved animals, still do. Anyway, next thing I'm at a Mission Station at Boggabilla, out past Moree. It was the first time I had ever seen a black child, you wouldn't believe it. I was really kept away from my family. The only time I came down, was for week-ends and for our holidays, but I had never had time to see a black child. I don't know if there were many around, but this was beautiful little baby, a little bull-blood. I was that excited, I used to go over every day, just to see the baby.

My Aunt kept me away from my Aboriginal people, the only time we came down was for week-ends and now and then, on our school holidays. We'd come down, we'd always come to Hill 60. That's where all our people were. I was only at the Mission Station for about 12 months. I was about 17, and ended up marrying out there. It was a pretty rough life out there on the Mission Station. Different to my kind of area here, different climate altogether, dry. And the way we were living, I didn't like it. No, sea, that was it, no fish, as soon as I was able, I was straight back here, down to my father. He was living in the Official Camp, that's Koomaditchie, the Official Camp it was called. I don't know what it was official for, they've taken it all back now.

To be continued