CHAPTER 5
THE GOLDEN YEARS: 1900-1946

It is a temptation in any historical study to use the turn of a century to define a transition from one era to another. In Australian history this temptation is compounded by the event of federation of the Australian colonies on 1 January 1901.

The emergence of the "golden years" of the Manly ferry certainly cannot be pinned to a specific year such as 1900. The transition through recovery to substantial growth can be defined not only by events specific to the service - the end of competition and the amalgamation of 1896 and the sale of the tugs in 1898 - but by general economic circumstances. The continuing growth of Sydney and the recovery from the depression are more evident points of definition. The drought of 1895-1903 fettered the rural base of the economy, but industrial growth increased. B.K. de Garis noted:

That a reasonable measure of prosperity had been regained by the turn of the century despite [the drought] and without the leadership of a central government, testifies to the resilience of the colonists and suggests that the weaknesses in the economy which the depression had exposed were not as deep seated as has sometimes been suggested. Within less than a decade considerable economic diversification had been achieved .... Investment was diverted from those sectors which had been overemphasised during the boom into neglected or entirely new industries, the development of which was further assisted by technological innovation.1

The Manly ferry was to benefit from this technological innovation, ensuring at least during the period covered in this chapter, that it remained an adequate, indeed the best means of communication linking the suburb with the city. Supporting factors were the sheer growth of Manly, the ferry's immediate catchment - leaving aside for the moment the additional growth of Warringah. Manly's population increased from 3,200

in 1891 to 7,600 in 1906, then surging up to pass 20,000 in the 1920s and 30,000 in the 1940s\(^2\). This substantial permanent population, so eagerly sought by Henry Gilbert Smith, secured the company's patronage base - at least while it held the technological advantage over other transport modes - and reduced the effect of unpredictable and seasonal fluctuations in excursion traffic. Patronage of the ferry increased sevenfold during the period covered by this chapter, and in 1900 there were five steamers with a capacity for carrying 4,500 passengers at an average maximum speed of 13 knots whilst in 1946 there were seven vessels, with a capacity for 10,500 passengers, averaging a maximum of 16 knots. The cargo trade also grew, but went into demise during this period: five cargo steamers came and went. Growth in profitability was less marked, annual profit rising from £7,424 at 30 June 1900 to £24,034 at 30 June 1946, the latter figure having been fairly typical of profits since the 1910s - which means a gradual lessening of profitability in real money terms. (The peak net profit was £37,617 at 30 June 1937.) In fact, inflating costs had taken their toll and dividends fell again over the period from ten percent (peaking at 13 1/3 percent) to five percent (1948).\(^3\)

The years 1900-1946 do represent the "golden years" for the service in as much as 1899/1900 saw the first substantial boost to profitability after the disastrous 1890s as well as the ordering of the first of the ten large steel screw steamers which carried the service through three-quarters of the twentieth century, and 1946 was the last good year before the long post-war decline. However, no history can be so clearly defined and several other chronologies both overlap and occur within this era:

(a) **Up to c1910** The conclusion of the long initial development period (since 1855) during which regional urban growth was effectively confined to Manly. The beginnings of the next period were becoming apparent in the

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various mooted tramway/railway proposals - all originating at Manly wharf and thus extending rather than threatening the role of the ferry.

(b) 1910-1920s Commencement of the Warringah development period with extension of the tramway from Manly wharf to Narrabeen (1910-1913) and Harbord (1925). The first proposals for railway connection of the peninsula direct to the city were made in this period. The first serious sign of an alternative route to the city appeared with the opening of the Spit Bridge (1924) which, associated with the use of the motor lorry, rapidly brought the ferry's cargo trade to an end (1928). The "great event" of this period, the First World War, had no concurrent effect on the ferry but its consequences included technological improvement of the internal combustion engine and the motor lorry, bus and car, all successive threats to the ferry. 4 These years saw the Port Jackson Company's greatest "boom" of profitability.

(c) 1920s-1939 These were very prosperous years for the service but not so much so as the 1910s. The Great Depression had only a slight dampening effect on the company. When taken in conjunction with the good patronage enjoyed during the two world wars it might be concluded that, in times of adversity, the ferry, like the cinema and other cheap entertainment, becomes an "escape", at least for those reasonably cushioned from the worst effects of the event. (A current parallel is the great increase in recreational patronage of the ferry during the current recession, more of which in Chapter 6.) Although the ferry trade rose again in the late 1930s, the first signs of trouble had appeared: the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (1932), direct government bus services to the city (1938) and rising costs. The company took its first look at diversification and started to capitalise on the growth of Warringah by purchasing property in the Palm Beach area. During the 1930s the rest of Sydney's ferry

services (essentially those of Sydney Ferries Ltd.) virtually collapsed under the impact of the Harbour Bridge.

(d) 1930–1945 An "Indian summer." 5 During the war years all of the company's previous patronage records were broken, an annual patronage of nearly 14 million being reached by 1946. 6 Factors bearing on this would have included wartime petrol rationing, "escapism" (including service leave) and the absence of direct physical threat to the ferry service. However, the period was also marked by material shortages and rising costs. In 1942 the company commenced ferry operations and general businesses in the Palm Beach area and, with the end of war in 1945, expanded this part of its business in earnest. The next era, commencing 1945/46 is dealt with in the following chapter and may be termed, without irony, the "planning and decline" period. In 1945 the first government initiative to plan the growth of Sydney and its suburbs was implemented - the formation of the Cumberland County Council. Regrettably the peninsula received the benefit of no substantial transport planning initiatives and the Manly ferry crumbled under the impact of high motor car usage. Even the government bus system, in line with demand, reoriented itself from Manly wharf directly to the city. After 1946 the steamers lost their technological advantage.

The Port Jackson Company itself saw internal changes which give some support to the notion of an era. Soon after 1900 the "founding fathers" departed from the scene. Thomas Heselton, who had left the board of directors in 1896, died in 1902. John Woods retired as Chairman in 1900 but remained on the board until his death in 1904. John Randal Carey

5. For the application of the concepts of the "golden years" and an "Indian summer" to an estuarial excursion business, I am indebted to (and an interesting parallel may be drawn with) A.J.S. Paterson's books _The Victorian Summer of the Clyde Steamers (1864–1888)_ and _The Golden Years of the Clyde Steamers (1889–1914)_ (Newton Abbot 1972 and 1969). However, the Clyde's disposition of historic "seasons" was quite different to and a lot earlier than Sydney's.

served one final term as Chairman, succeeding Woods from 1901 to 1902, then retired from the board in 1904.

Although the company had been a limited liability (public) operation since 1877, the continuing presence of these founding personalities gave its directorship a heavily proprietorial aspect. With their passing by 1904, the company was more solidly "public" and the era of the managers began.

The beginnings of this change can be traced back to the 1893 annual general meeting which saw shareholder R.E. Kemp's abortive motion to prevent Heselton and Carey continuing in office. Then in 1896 Heselton lost office and the shareholders urged the appointment of a General Manager. The trend was perpetuated by the intake of debenture-holders from the former Manly Co-operative Steam Ferry Co. Ltd. in 1896. One of these, H.E. Stevenson, was to become a director (1897-1898) and in 1903 he moved unsuccessfully "that it is not conducive to the success of the Company to pay the Manager a smaller salary than the Accountant, and the anomaly should not be continued." Little wonder that in 1899 Secretary/Manager William Smellie, to quote the minutes, had "gone to a better job." (The same general meeting voted the faithful Chouting a higher salary to act as Secretary/Manager.) Smellie's successors, James A. Fitzsimons (1900-1901) and Duncan Dowie (1902-1905) also served suspiciously short terms as Secretary/Manager.

It is likely that the winds of change arrived in 1905 as the first of the four managers who took the company through to 1974 was appointed. This was Frederick John Doran who served as Manager 1905-1920 and as General Manager 1920-1925. Doran was followed by the brilliant Walter Leslie

7. PJS Co./PJ Co-op S Co. Minutes of General Meetings 1881-1907.
8. ibid.
9. Details of changes of directorship and management are from PJSMS Co. Half-yearly and annual reports, and from Minutes of General Meetings 1881-1907, 1920-1962. A detailed listing of directors and senior staff may be seen at Appendices 4 and 5.
Dendy (General Manager 1925–1947, Managing Director 1947–1948) who steered the operation through some of its best years. The troubles of the post-war years were inherited by Brigadier Claude E. Cameron (Managing Director 1948–1964) whilst the exploration of new directions (hydrofoils, offshore support services) was undertaken with John Clissold Needham as Managing Director (1964–1974).

Although the period 1905–1974 might be described as the era of the managers, the Chairmen of directors were always prominent on public occasions, and boards were constantly consulted by their managers, having the final say on important matters. The debenture-holders provided one Chairman, S.C. Sadler (1903–1904). In 1907 the debenture-holders were offered the option of shares or cash and the company was reconstructed as the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. The successive Chairmen were Archibald Howie (1904–1908), J.J. Eyre (1908–1913), Hunter McPherson (1914–1931), Howie's son, the Hon. Sir Archibald Howie, K.B., M.L.C. (1932–1943) - a prestigious personality leading the company in its most prestigious years - , H. Norman Pope (1943–1950), H.W. Knight (1950–1964) and R.W.G. Hoyle (1964–1972).

10. Biographical information is available on the following personalities:
Archibald Howie Born c1854. Emigrated from Glasgow 1880. Started a building firm (built Sydney Art Gallery, Mitchell Library, Long Bay Penitentiary). Managing Director of Howie, Moffat & Co. Ltd. Only son was Archibald (Jr.). Died 25 June 1923. (Obituary SMH, 26 June 1923.)

Hunter McPherson Longest-serving Chairman. Born Dundee, emigrated to Victoria as a child. Apprenticed to an engineering firm. Became a hardware merchant. In 1881 established a branch of his father's firm (Thomas McPherson & Son) in Sydney. Lived at Kogarah 1887–1902 (and Mayor several times). Father was Mayor of Melbourne, brother was Premier of Victoria. Died 10 July 1932. (Obituary SMH, 12 July 1932.)

For much of the twentieth century the company would have employed 200-300 people at any one time, the majority of these being traffic and engineering staff. Administrative staff numbered less than ten in Dendy's period.\(^{11}\) The other significant personages in the history of the operation were the Superintendent Engineers (often also known as Works Managers, though these two functions have now been separated). It has already been noted that J.R. Carey, a director, went to Britain to oversee the construction of *Commodore* and *Fairlight* but that James Richmond, as Manager/Engineer in the 1880s dealt with the construction of *Brighton*. After Richmond there is a big void in company records concerning engineers and the next Superintendent Engineer is recorded as W.A. McNicoll who served from 1909 until his death in 1914, a period during which the most refined of the first series of double-ended screw steamers were built. After another gap\(^{12}\) there appears the Scottish-born Donald Cameron McMillan who joined the company in about 1916, serving as Superintendent Engineer 1928-1951. McMillan is indubitably the most significant. Working in conjunction with Dendy's talent for naval architecture, McMillan's administration produced the three fine Scottish steamers of 1928 and 1938, and most significantly, the introduction of diesel-electric propulsion in the 1930s and 1940s. It must be borne in mind that the chief (mechanical) engineer in a transport operation essentially "designs" and maintains its running equipment. In a compact operation such as the Port Jackson Co. the chief engineer obviously worked closely in conjunction with the manager and directors, not to mention naval architects and shipyard draughtsmen.

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\(^{11}\) Recollections of Mr. George Marshall. See also *SMH*, 23 October 1952, which noted that staff had been reduced from 294 to 231 between 1946 and 1952. Company records on staff are lost.

\(^{12}\) George Marshall recalls the name R. Burnside from this period.
"design staff" as such could not be maintained. However, it is a fact that the achievements of the ferry chief engineers remain virtually unrecorded compared with those of their railway counterparts.

The company's "engineering innovation" period was over by 1950, by which time the three sets of diesel-electric machinery for re-engining steamers had been acquired and Barrenjoey's conversion to North Head was underway. Thus a roughly corresponding "golden" engineering era also existed for the company. During this period, in its continuing pursuit of technological advantage, it developed and refined a fast double-ended type of screw-propelled ship, capable of navigation in deep-sea conditions. This achievement, unique at the time in the world, has passed unrecorded in Australian maritime history.

Having roughly defined the "golden years" of the Manly ferry it is necessary to record the events of those years.

1. **Fleet Development 1900-1927**

The Port Jackson Company entered the year 1900 with a reconditioned but rapidly aging fleet of paddle-steamers and the near-new screw steamer *Manly* (II), as noted in the previous chapter. In 1898 shareholders had received their first dividend since 1893 and in 1899 the company placed an order worth £21,960 for a new steamer with Mort's Dock & Engineering Co. Ltd. The rise in profitability has been noted above.

The new steamer was SS *Kuring Gai*, designed again by the ubiquitous Walter Reeks. She was built of steel with an iron frame (the latter reflecting the slower development of Australian shipbuilding technology) and joined *Manly* as a revolutionary prototype. At 171.5 x 31.3 x 14.7 feet she was longer, broader and deeper than *Manly* and in many respects totally different from her predecessor. Her metal construction made her a much

sounder vessel than Manly but, unfortunately, Reeks chose to experiment with his diabolical camber keel which he had also employed on some of his designs for the Balmain New Ferry Co. in order to reduce resistance of the "forward" propeller. As Captain Jim Ireland, who served on her, recalled, she would in certain situations, such as berthing, swing around without warning, pivoting on the lowest point of her keel.\textsuperscript{14} Aside from this "Achilles heel" (so to speak) she was thoroughly successful, being limited only in the long term by her capacity of 1221 passengers. Kuring Gai's design (excepting the keel) was virtually repeated in the next series of steamers - including the broad beam, built-up steel bows with stylishly curved hances, gangway exits on the promenade deck (introducing two-deck loading) and permanent sun deck to carry the navigation bridge.

\textbf{Kuring Gai} was launched at the Mort's Dock Balmain yard on 8 November 1900 by Mrs. John Woods. Unfortunately the launching caused the death of a dock diver, John Rodrick.\textsuperscript{15} Kuring Gai entered service at 10 am on Saturday, 11 May 1901. Her actual cost came to £23,789. By 1928 she had become too small for the service and in that year she was sold to Newcastle where she served on the Walsh Island ferry until 1934. She was then hulked and in the Second World War taken to New Guinea as a store ship, later being towed back to the Hunter River. She was abandoned at Hexham and the hull of this historic vessel may still be seen under the Coal & Allied coal wharf at that location.

The years 1900-1906 were significant ones for the company's boats. The construction of Kuring Gai highlighted the transition to a new, faster and more commodious type of vessel for the service. However, concurrent with the advent of Kuring Gai the company nearly lost its two best vessels in accidents which demonstrated the ever-present dangers of Sydney Harbour.

\textsuperscript{14} Recollections of Captain James Ireland.
\textsuperscript{15} Australian Coal, Shipping, Steel and the Harbour, 1 November 1938, p. 7; I. Brodsky \textit{Sydney Looks Back} (1957), p. 220.
On 7 August 1900, *Brighton* collided with the collier *SS Brunner* off Chowder Bay whilst on a lightly loaded trip to Manly. By a navigational error subsequently held to be primarily the fault of *Brighton*'s master, the ferryboat came across the bows of *Brunner* and was impaled forward of the port paddlebox. Water flooded through the enormous opening in her hull and she began to sink. *Brighton*'s master, Captain Setterfield, acted promptly to run the boat onto the beach at Chowder Bay. She was refloated on 14 August and returned to service on 10 November. No lives were lost although some passengers were momentarily trapped in one of *Brighton*'s saloons.

The collision had uncanny similarities with the sinking of the excursion steamer *PS Princess Alice* by a collier on the Thames River, London, in 1878. *Princess Alice* was the same size and type of ship as *Brighton* but was probably of lighter construction, not being built for sea-going purposes. *Princess Alice* was hit in the same way as *Brighton* but the impact and the inflow of water caused her back to break and she sank immediately with the loss of about 640 lives. The Coroner's inquest into the London disaster noted that an inrush of water into the large central (engine-room) compartment caused the vessel to founder - also the case with *Brighton*. The lessons of the London disaster for Sydney ferry services were obvious but appear to have been largely ignored. Admittedly the size of ferryboats in relation to their carrying capacity presented some inherent problems. Propulsion machinery was of such a size that the engine-room and boiler compartments was bound to take up a substantial proportion of a small boat's hull. In addition there was no way (at least until the invention of inflatable lifeboats such as are provided on the *Freshwater* class) of providing lifeboats for anything

16. *D. Tel*, 21 August 1900; *Star*, 8 August 1900.
18. *ibid*. 
between 1,000 and 2,000 passengers on a harbour ferryboat. Basically, reliance has been placed on providing lifejackets for all passengers together with the principle perfectly expressed by Sydney Ferries Ltd. Manager W.G. Todd in 1904 said that "you are always within two minutes of the shore on either side ...." 19 Admittedly Brighton was to successfully apply Todd's principle in practice, averting what, in different circumstances, would have been a major tragedy.

Sydney Ferries Ltd. continued to rely on compartmentalisation (ranging from its minimum standard of five watertight bulkheads 20 to the "honeycombing" of the 1922 2,000 passenger steamers Koompartoo and Kuttabul 21) and on provision of buoyant tanks throughout the boats. However, most of their vessels were of timber construction and all of the above precautions were rendered useless when their SS Greycliff was hit by a liner on 3 November 1927, off Bradley's Head. Greycliff was simply smashed to pieces taking 39 people down with her. The survivors relied on floating wreckage and passing boats. 22 The Manly vessels relied more on the integrity of their steel construction and this was vindicated when Bellubera was hit heavily by the freighter Taurus on 18 October 1950, suffering serious damage only to her timber superstructure. 23 Manly ferry-boat collisions on the harbour have in fact been with other ferryboats and harbour craft, the "protagonists" being more equally matched and therefore


20. Ibid.


22. F.K. Crowley Modern Australia in Documents v 1 (Melbourne 1973), p. 433. The vulnerability of a small ferryboat to rapid foundering was illustrated by the recent sinking of MV Karrabee (22 January 1984).

23. SMH, 19 October 1950, 20 October 1950. It may be further noted that on 28 February 1970 Bellubera collided with and holed the hull of the frigate HMAS Parramatta with no serious damage to herself, which says much for the structural strength of the Manly boats.
rarely bringing about a sinking.

An additional danger on the Manly service, that of foundering in a heavy sea, was illustrated when SS Manly suffered engine failure in such conditions on 30 June 1901. After nearly drifting onto North Head she was secured by Brighton and towed to North Harbour. Even there she dragged anchor and was blown onto the beach where waves commenced to break over her, the passengers being rescued by line and boat. She was towed free the next day. 24 It was ironic that, at the time of these events, someone at the launching of Kuring Gai said: "When you get a good ship under you, there is no room for fear." 25 To the contrary, there has always been enough "fear" to prevent many using the Manly ferry in rough weather and, while most of the boats have been well-constructed, it is doubtless more a matter of luck that no more incidents as serious as those of Brighton and Manly ever occurred in revenue service. As recently in 1973 South Steyne, though an excellent sea-boat, carried up to 1,685 persons on the harbour and 1,000 persons on ocean cruises with lifeboats holding a total of 53 persons and rafts for 802 persons. 26 However, without the obligatory reference to the Titanic, it is fair to say that the statistical probability of fatal loss of such well-found vessels as the Manly boats, given their operating conditions, was extremely slight. Considering the number of passengers carried, Sydney's ferry services as a whole have had a remarkable safety record.

In spite of the Brighton and Manly incidents, however, safety was not a keynote of fleet upgrading in the 1900s. Vessel modernisation and replacement of paddle-steamers was a foremost objective, of which

25. SMH, 30 April 1901.
Kuring Gai was the first manifestation. In 1904 the company announced that tenders had been called in Australasia and Britain for a new steamer similar to Kuring Gai.\(^{27}\) Mort's Dock was again the successful tenderer and construction of Binngarra was commenced at Mort's Woolwich yard. Binngarra was a refinement of Kuring Gai and the first of six steamers of similar lines constructed by Mort's for the company. Her leading dimensions were 190.5 x 31.7 x 13.5 feet, with a maximum capacity of 1,372 passengers.\(^{28}\) She was launched on 18 July 1905 by Mrs. Archibald Howie and entered service at 3 pm on Sunday 29 October 1905 (setting a pattern repeated in all subsequent steamers of being brought into service in time for the peak summer season). Although based on Kuring Gai, Binngarra's design details were executed by Mort's Dock and she introduced the graceful lines which characterised the twentieth-century Manly boats. As well as being longer than Kuring Gai her other modifications included a normal straight keel and the placing of the wheelhouses at the ends of the sun deck, near the bows. This last feature represented the final stage of an evolutionary process. Paddle-steamer "bridges" were literally that - a bridge between the paddle-boxes. In a double-ended boat this meant that the funnel obstructed the view in one direction. (Indeed, in the case of Brighton and Princess Alice, two funnels obstructed the view in both directions.) Binngarra introduced the modern bridge to the service with consequent improved navigational safety.

One area in which Binngarra did not match Kuring Gai appeared to be that of speed. Whereas Kuring Gai produced a trial result of 15.66 knots, Binngarra managed only 14 knots. Her successors, with lengthening, propeller improvement and increase in engine power managed to produce up to 15 knots. However, it seemed that Reeks' camber keel might have produced

\(^{27}\) PJ Co-op S Co. Half-yearly report, 30 June 1904.
\(^{28}\) SRBS, 43/1905.
the desired result at the expense of handling. As handling is critical in a ferryboat there was evidently no alternative but to revert to convention. However, the matter of obtaining increased speed from a double-ended boat was explored for some years and was partially resolved by the introduction of diesel-electric propulsion.29

Notwithstanding this slow progress to higher speed, the significant fact to emerge with the introduction of Binngarra was that the company had four boats of higher average speed (Binngarra, Kuring Gai, Manly, Brighton) with which to run a faster timetable.

Earlier in this chapter the average maximum speeds of boats in 1900 and 1946 were compared. However, it is the economical cruising speed which determines how “fast” a timetable will be. In any public transport undertaking a timetable must be geared to the speed of the slowest vehicles in the fleet. Ideally the entire fleet should have identical capabilities and in 1905 the Port Jackson Co. was in a position to speed up the service through utilising a fleet of equal capability. (To run a half-hourly timetable three boats were needed for running, plus one in reserve, plus, for preference, one or two more to account for refits and accidents.) Concurrent with this change was the removal of unsuitable vessels from service. This was achieved without the need for disposal by separating the cargo from the passenger service, the venerable Brightside being

converted to a cargo boat in 1902. Subsequently *Fairlight* was converted to a cargo vessel in 1908 when *Brightside* was destroyed by fire. In 1911 *Fairlight* was joined by *Narrabeen*, by which year *Burra Bra* and *Bellubera* had joined the fleet of passenger steamers. In 1905 over £8,300 was expended on reconditioning of *Brighton*, including installation of new boilers. This ensured her retention in service until 1916, by which time she was the last passenger paddle-wheeler operating on Sydney Harbour. Her departure marked the passing of an opulent Victorian age on the harbour.

Equipped with a faster fleet of boats, the Port Jackson Co. upgraded the timetable to a half-hourly service throughout the year in 1906. This general frequency of service was to remain unaltered until 1973. One important comment which may be made regarding the published Manly ferry timetable is that, unlike virtually every other public transport timetable (including most other Sydney ferry services), it has always shown only departure times from each end, but not arrival times. The ostensible reasons for this must include variable sea and weather conditions and differing vessel performance. However, the Manly ferry operators have never been overly keen to publicise journey times probably for fear of attracting criticism of "slow" trips. From the operator's viewpoint, turnaround time is the significant factor and if a boat can be turned around in three-quarters of an hour (wharf to wharf), then three boats can run a half-hourly service. By corollary, if the operator wants to run no more than three boats and one or more of them takes an hour to turn around

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30. Although fitted-out for cargo-carrying in that year, she may well have been undertaking this task since 1900/01. See PJS Co./PJ Co-op S Co. Minutes of General Meetings 1881-1907.


32. PJS Co./PJ Co-op S Co. Minutes of General Meetings 1881-1907. "Half-hourly" refers to the overall frequency. Trips may be more frequent, and unevenly spaced, in peak-hour.
(such as was the case with the paddle-steamers), then an uneven three-quarter hourly service might be maintained. It is essential to understand the relationship of vessel speed and turnaround to appreciate the significance of the 1906 timetable change and the reason the timetable has changed little since then.

Reference has been made (Chapter 4) to the alleged one hour trips of the Brightside which would mean an average speed of seven knots. To achieve a three-quarter hour trip (let alone terminus-time which requires at least five minutes) means a fleet standard average of 10.5 knots. As the paddle-steamers (excepting Brighton) were hard-pressed to achieve a maximum speed of 12-13 knots it is easy to understand how the fleet of four passenger boats which ran prior to 1896 could not uphold a faster timetable, even if the demand was there. As information on journey-times is not forthcoming from company sources, one must turn to other areas of reference, the most significant one at this time being the advent of the Manly tramway system with its precise operating requirements. The tramway system, which opened in 1903, will be described more fully below. However, it can be noted here that the tram timetable had to be adjusted on 1 February 1906 as the steamers had quickened their journey from 40 minutes to 35 minutes, reflecting an increase in the average speed to 12 knots.\(^{33}\) That journeys made by different boats were in fact far from even in time is demonstrated by the difficulty of determining placement of crossing loops on the Brookvale extension of the tramway due to variable arrivals of boats at Manly wharf.\(^{34}\) Doubtless the advent of a formal public

\(^{33}\) K. McCarthy "The Manly tramways - NSW 1903-1939 (Part A)" Trolley Wire, v 20, no 5 (1979), p. 11. It must be kept in mind that to achieve such an average speed, the actual journey speed, once clear of the wharves, must be a knot or more higher.

transport system at Manly encouraged the Port Jackson Co. to produce a consistent standard of performance and the journey time of 30-35 minutes (12-14 knots average), within a 45 minute turnaround, has prevailed virtually ever since. The higher speeds obtainable from boats built in the 1920s, 1930s and 1980s have been applied to making up late-running rather than to meeting the utopian goal of a 30 minute turnaround. However, an attempt in the 1930s to rise to a 16 knot average will be described later in this chapter.\textsuperscript{35}

Subsequent to Binngarra, the Port Jackson Co. acquired a fleet of steel double-screw saloon steamers built to the same basic design - indeed often referred to as the "Binngarra" or "B" class. These were Burra Bra (1908), Bellubera (1910), Balgowlah (1912), Barrenjoey (1913) and Baragoola (1922).\textsuperscript{36} Of these, the virtually identical Bellubera, Balgowlah and Barrenjoey were the longest (210 feet) and fastest (15-16 knots) and represented the most successful refinement of the original Walter Reeks design. However, an omen for future developments became apparent in the fact that Baragoola cost more than twice as much ($80,000) as her three predecessors of 1910-1913 (approximately $30,000 each). By the 1920s costs were rising heavily but none more so than the cost of local shipbuilding. Baragoola marked the end of Port Jackson's relatively brief period (1886-1922) of ordering local construction. All subsequent orders (excepting reconstruction of Barrenjoey, 1948-1951) were made overseas. Nevertheless, there is no question that the service obtained good value from the Mort's Dock boats. Bellubera, Barrenjoey and Baragoola were

\textsuperscript{35} Constant running of a double-screw vessel at over 16 knots (the minimum average required for a 30 minute turnaround) becomes grossly uneconomic. Fuel consumption and mechanical wear would not be justified by prevailing passenger loadings. George Marshall recounts that Dee Why and Curl Curl "running free" (that is continuously, not to a timetable) shifting Anniversary Day crowds in 1936 completed trips in 22 minutes. This remarkable achievement required an average speed of over 18 knots (the vessels' theoretical maximum).

\textsuperscript{36} SRBS, 47/1908, 27/1910, 66/1912, 56/1913, 14/1922.
subsequently converted to diesel-electric propulsion (after operating several decades as steamers) and served into the 1970/80s. These beautiful-looking symmetrical, sleek boats became indelibly impressed upon the image of Sydney.

The advent of Baragoola (and the simultaneous disposal of Manly) gave the company a complete modern fleet of steel vessels capable of meeting the 30-35 minute trip requirement. The next step up to faster boats in the 1920s/30s will be discussed below.

The story of the cargo steamers, which flourished briefly in this period, is in some respects a preamble to the later difficulties of the passenger service. It has been noted that, after the turn of the century, Manly cargo was taken off the passenger boats and placed on the old paddle-steamers which were converted for this purpose - that is, basically, fitted with handling masts and derricks. As the paddle-steamers expired with age two purpose-designed screw-propelled steamers were acquired, the first being Ben Bolt (1912).\(^{37}\) The larger Narrabeen (II)\(^{38}\) was designed and built for the company in 1921 but the timing was disastrous. The motor lorry had emerged in strength after the First World War (from 877 in NSW in 1916 to over 24,000 in 1926) and in 1924 a road bridge was completed at the Spit, joining Manly-Warringah to the north shore. Ben Bolt was sold in 1923 and in that year (even before the opening of the bridge) Hunter McPherson advised shareholders, that the cargo service was experiencing losses due to competition from lorries and Sydney Harbour Trust wharf rental charges.\(^{39}\) In 1924 the Spit Bridge caused further

\(^{37}\) *SRBS*, 5/1908.

\(^{38}\) *SRBS*, 26/1921.

\(^{39}\) RJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 27 July 1923. The company had its own cargo wharf at Potts Point in addition to the ones at Manly. Cargo trade was removed from the passenger wharf, Circular Quay, on 1 October 1907 to a wharf at Bennelong Point, then later to Potts Point.
losses, but the company was unwilling to give up the lease on the Manly cargo wharf - presumably in order not to provide an "opening" at Manly for a possible competitor. A condition of the lease was to maintain an efficient cargo service. By 1925, Narrabeen was also employed in other lightering duties on the harbour and in 1926 she was fitted with passenger accommodation to take fishing parties to sea. On 31 December 1927 the cargo service was closed and Narrabeen was sold soon afterwards. The company's business had now become more specific than at any stage in its history - operation of a passenger service (together with associated trading and catering support) between Sydney and Manly.

Finally, mention should be made of two passenger vessels chartered for speculative services initiated between 1904 and 1913. The first service was between Manly and the Spit, operated by the Port Jackson Co. on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays commencing 17 December 1904 and operating until 1909. SS Woy Woy, a wooden steamer 84.2 feet in length, was chartered for the service which, it must be surmised, was only a brief financial success. Passengers were encouraged to take a round trip, utilising the Manly ferry one way and Woy Woy and the North Sydney-The Spit tramway on the other journey. It is likely the service only operated in summer. The other service was initiated jointly with the Watson's Bay and South Shore Ferry Co. Ltd. and operated on Saturdays,

40. ibid., 31 July 1924. Shareholders were told at the 1921 Annual General Meeting that the cargo trade had made little profit during its operation as a separate service.

41. ibid., 17 July 1925, 30 July 1926.

42. ibid., 27 July 1928. SRBS, 26/1921. The Manly cargo wharf was sub-let by the company to the Manly Pier Amusement Co. in 1930. See Minutes of General Meeting, 7 August 1931. See also C.W.T. Henderson "Before Spit Bridge", Manly Daily, 7 February 1974.

43. SRBS, 31/1901.

Sundays and holidays connecting Watson’s Bay and Manly wharves. The wooden steamer SS *J.W. Alexander* (78.2 feet) was chartered for the service which commenced on 2 November 1912 and operated over the summer of 1912/13. Again, despite lack of documentary evidence, it would seem that this service was unprofitable though the Watson’s Bay Co. constructed their last vessel, SS *Woollahra* (1913), with built-up bulwarks evidently to operate the service. However, the service ended before *Woollahra* was completed. These two ventures represented attempts to extract the most from the excursion market and, with their restricted timetables, could not be considered proper ferry services.

2. **Company Administration 1900-1946**

The company's fleet expansion produced a need for financial restructuring. In 1905, in addition to the £8,300 expenditure on Brighton there was the purchase of *Bingarra* at £23,564. Paid up capital and debentures at that time amounted to £61,745. In order to relieve the company of its debenture burden to the former Manly Co-operative Steam Ferry Co. shareholders, *Brightside*, *Fairlight*, *Narrabeen*, *Brighton*, *Manly* and *Kuring Gai* were mortgaged to Kelso King, a director of Mort's Dock & Engineering, on 17 February 1903 to secure £28,000 at five percent interest. The mortgage was discharged on 13 August 1906. Soon afterwards, the debenture-holders, representing the "interests" of the former Manly Co-operative Steam Ferry Co. Ltd., were offered conversion of

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45. See timetable and leaflet, Appendix 7.
46. SRBS, 16/1909.
their debentures to shares or cash. This offer being accepted, the company was reincorporated as the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. on 19 August 1907, nominal capital being £250,000, with shares to the value of £88,000 having been issued.

There is little biographical information on F.J. Doran's administration of the company, but it is apparent that, not only good business, but sound administration produced the best financial results in the history of the service between 1909 and 1918. In the latter year the Bulletin recounted the company's success. It noted that the paid-up capital of £211,212 in 1918 had been built up largely by profits. Users of the Manly ferry had not only provided "handsome dividends for shareholders" (13 1/3 percent between 1911 and 1918) but had presented the company "with every one of the splendid steamers added to the service, and have further helped it to pile up a cash surplus of over £125,000". The profits of the years 1909-1913 alone paid for Bellubera, Balgowlah and Barrenjoey, and provided £72,164 in dividends and £24,000 of cash. After decades of struggling to build up business, the ferry company was now exploding with money. It is obvious that the company knew, on previous experience, that such extravagant evidence of profitability would fuel Manly Council's long-standing argument concerning the monopoly on the service. Accordingly, the financial statements shown in the half-yearly reports performed amazing somersaults, presumably to throw eager critics off the scent. Category headings in the balance sheets were chopped and changed; huge reserves suddenly disappeared - not all into new steamers. The astute Alex Jobson commented on this flurry of "creative accounting" in his investment column

50. PJS Co./PJ Co-op S Co. Minutes of General Meetings 1881-1907. Memorandum and Articles of Association (of the company), 1907.
51. PJ&MS Co. Half-yearly report, 30 June 1908. See also record book of "Shares issued in lieu debentures", 1907.
52. Bulletin, 8 August 1918.
53. ibid.
in the *Sun*: "There is no doubt that this company is doing wonderfully well", even though it was consistently understating its profits. At 30 June 1911 he calculated the net profit at £24,477, rather than the officially stated £7,018. Jobson felt that the company would not fool anybody by understating its wealth, but, from the lack of recorded response, it appears Manly Council was sufficiently obtuse to overlook this area in which they could have exercised considerable bargaining power - and the many company shareholders living in Manly were hardly likely to complain about the situation.

The "creative accountants" managing this wealth were Doran and Dendy. F.J. Doran was born c1863 and was described in his regrettably slender obituaries as having a "waterside background". An accountant by profession, he was a keen yachtsman and cyclist and was employed with James McIntosh & Sons prior to the Port Jackson Co. As stated earlier, he was Manager of the Port Jackson Co. 1905–1920 and General Manager 1920–1925. On his retirement he left by ship for Britain but only reached Durban where he died from pleurisy and heart failure.

W.L. Dendy was born c1877 and was also a yachtsman, owning and racing numerous yachts. He was born in Adelaide and lived in every mainland state prior to joining the Port Jackson Co. in 1899. He became the company's Accountant in 1907 and General Manager/Secretary in 1925. He appears to have been extremely talented in a number of areas, not only as a manager/accountant but as a naval architect. His obituary noted his

54. *Sun*, 16 September 1911. Using Cannon's inflationary rule-of-thumb of 20:1 (see METRICATION AND DECIMAL CURRENCY notes above) - raising the base and final years to 1911 and 1983 - £24,000 represents about $1 million profit today. In 1912 the new boat *Balgowlah* cost about £29,000 (say $2.2 million in 1983). *Queenscliff* (1983) cost $9 million. In addition, labour and material costs in 1983 are proportionally much higher than in 1911.

skill as a boat designer and rigger and he effectively designed the last Manly steamer South Steyne (1938). He became an associate member of the prestigious Institution of Naval Architects upon the recommendation of Henry Robb, builder of South Steyne. His report on his 1937 visit to Britain and the U.S., fortunately still extant, reveals profound engineering knowledge and a lively, witty mind. A rare photograph of him (see Appendix 7, P3) shows a huge, balding man, and George Marshall recalls his high-pitched voice and a propensity for ripe language if something went wrong. Dendy was also very active in public relations and, although no direct evidence exists, it is apparent in a company with a tiny office-staff (these being concerned with traffic, finance and staff matters) that Dendy was the originator of the wave of publicity which brought attention to the ferry service from the 1920s to the 1940s: the green colour scheme, the Manly pool, the mass of leaflet and publications (including even a bushwalking guide) reminiscent of the great English railway companies, and the idea of cruising South Steyne (which did not come to fruition until 1953). It is likely that Dendy originated the advertising slogan: "Seven miles from Sydney and a Thousand Mile from the City". His administration also saw the expansion of company interests to the Palm Beach area. When this remarkable man died on 3 July 1948, aged 71, he was still serving as Managing Director.


57. W.L. Dendy Report to the Chairman and Directors re visit of General Manager to England, and the Placing of Contract for the Building of a New Vessel for the Service, 2 August 1937. The company had also sent him to Britain in 1927 in connection with ordering of Dee Why and Curl Curl, to Britain, Europe and the U.S. in 1930 to study transport developments, and to Britain in 1946 to again study design developments in shipping, together with diesel propulsion and radar. These tours reflected the company's continuing interest in retention of technological advantage.

58. George Marshall concurs with these observations. The Chairman's report of 26 March 1954 (Minutes of General Meetings, 1920-1962) mentions Dendy's investigation of operating South Steyne at sea. For examples of publicity material produced during Dendy's management, see Appendix 7.
Doran, with Dendy as Accountant, took the company through its years of outstanding profitability, but it was Dendy who had to contend as manager with an increasing rise in costs and the need to operate the service at maximum efficiency. However, Dendy's forthrightness and strong will showed through clearly even when he was company accountant. Two memoranda by him in the company records\textsuperscript{59} indicate that, not only might the astute accounting of the 1910s have been largely his work (only the lack of written evidence from Doran preventing confirmation of this), but that the reconstruction of the company into two companies in 1920 was basically Dendy's idea.

In one memorandum\textsuperscript{60} Dendy gave a clear exposition of the company's problems in publicly reconciling its huge wealth with its status as a public utility:

> Asked for an opinion - I should say that at this stage of the company's existence, that any question of watering the stock should be given the greatest consideration. Other Company's are doing it certainly - some may regret it later, should a slump ... occur. But apart from that, they are not Public Utilities (as the Ferry Coys' were termed by [the 1918 and 1919 Royal Commissions of Inquiry into the affairs of Sydney Ferries Ltd.\textsuperscript{61}]) and also are not bound down by Councils too, and we must not forget the fact that the Manly Council if it learns that the Coy is making too much extra profit out of the increased fare, has the same right under [the agreement to use Manly wharf] to ask the Directors for a Conference to be held for a reduction of fares - as we have to ask for one for an increase.

\textsuperscript{59} W.L. Dendy: Memorandum, July 1920, and pencilled (draft?) memorandum, undated (in Finance Accounts 1906-1963).

\textsuperscript{60} Pencilled memorandum, undated (but, from events referred to, c1920).

\textsuperscript{61} NSW - Parliamentary Papers 1917/18 V, 1919 IV. These Royal Commissions, which resulted from assertions that Sydney Ferries Ftd. was exploiting its monopoly position through increasing fares and restricting services, made the Port Jackson Co. quite nervous. However, like Port Jackson, Sydney Ferries concealed themselves in a thicket of devious accounting and the Commissioners made little headway, preferring to conclude only that more government control was necessary. However, the devastating effect of the Harbour Bridge on Sydney Ferries Ltd. effectively dissipated any government interest in the ferries. See M.B. Standley The Role of Ferries in Sydney's Public Transport System (Dip. thesis 1977), pp. 19-21. See also P. Spearritt Sydney Since the Twenties (Sydney 1978), p. 155: "The condition of
Dendy went on to note that nationalisation of the ferries was a plank of both the National and Labour parties and that the company should not do anything, such as paying large bonuses, which would attract attention to it. "The Directors must admit", he wrote, "that our Company would be the easiest taken over by any other body - having only one wharf at each end and admitted to be even on the Coy's present showing, one of the best paying propositions in Sydney." 62 In his memorandum of July 1920 Dendy recounted how he had given the Chairman (Hunter McPherson) a written statement suggesting formation of a separate company (to be the Port Jackson Investment and Insurance Co. Ltd.) having the same directors and share-holders but taking over some of the capital (nominally £300,000) and conducting the insurance and investment aspects of Port Jackson's business. Dendy noted that Doran advised him "several times" that forming a second company "was a big mistake and that it was going to make a lot of extra work for nothing." 63 This seems to reveal a classic battle of wills. The Directors accepted Dendy's recommendations and the two companies - the investment and insurance company and a new Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. - were incorporated on 28 June 1920. 64 The Investment and Insurance Co. was eventually liquidated in 1933 consequent upon a reduction of capital in the Steamship Co. 65

Public transport was a particular concern of Labour members in the interwar years. Much of this concern was based on the assumption that a greater proportion of their constituents used public transport ...." In this context, such concern would not extend so much to middle-class Manly, unrepresented by Labour, and the Manly ferry would not have received the scrutiny accorded to Sydney Ferries which served working-class areas such as Balmain.

62. W.L. Dendy: Pencilled memorandum, undated. At the General Meeting of 28 July 1921, Hunter McPherson announced that, in future, information given in the company's published annual reports would be "lean" due to official inquisitiveness. Not until 1929 did the reports again become more than a balance sheet and notice of meeting.


64. Memoranda and Articles of Association: the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. 1920; the Port Jackson Investment and Insurance Co. Ltd. 1921.

The background to Dendy's administration (1925-1948) is one of steady profitability until 1947 when net profit fell from £24,034 (1946) to £5,159. Prior to this, the only bad year had been 1927 when profit was £2,727 and no dividend was paid. A rise in season ticket rates in 1927 appeared to correct this adverse financial situation.  

66 Earlier, in 1920, the single adult fare had risen from 4d to 5d. In 1921 it was put up to 6d (children 3d, later reduced to 2d then 1d in the 1930s). In the early 1930s profits slumped a little in the wake of the depression but never fell below £14,000 (1931). As noted earlier, profits were booming by the late 1930s. Unfortunately so were costs. In 1915 the company made its first public reference to increased running expenses which (together with reduced revenue) were said to result from the war.  

67 Coal costs were always a factor in this regard. However, labour costs were coming into consideration, the first manifestation being a bitter but successful week-long strike of firemen, deck-hands and wharf-hands from all Sydney ferry companies in 1913 in support of a 48 hour week.  

68 In 1918, the Bulletin noted the effect on company profitability of the cost of coal and stores and Wages Board awards,  

69 and a later Were's analysis observed that between 1913 and 1920 coal rose from 10/6 to 30s per ton and the company's average wage bill rose from £3/8/3 to £4/5/10 per week.  

70 Were's noted that the 1927 slump in profits was due to increased costs.  

71 Nevertheless,

66. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 27 July 1928. All profit figures are from annual reports. A complex structure of season tickets was operated with weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly tickets with different rates for men, women, apprentices and children.  


68. D, Tel, 22 March 1913 et seq. Captain Jim Ireland, whose reminiscences are cited elsewhere, lost his job with the Port Jackson Co. as a result of being a "ring-leader" in this strike. He went on to later become a master with Sydney Ferries Ltd.  


70. Were's Statistical Service (PJ&MS Co. information bulletin), 7 August 1935.  

71. See also Bulletin, 11 August 1927.
constantly rising patronage — encouraged particularly by improvements such as new boats, enclosed promenade decks, advertising and the Manly pool — largely offset rising costs. No major adjustments to rates were required until after the Second World War, the 6d trip fare remaining in force until 1947. Rydges journal reviewed the history of the company in 1940 and paid it an investor's tribute: "... with consistently high dividends, the company has proved to be one of the most profitable share investments in New South Wales." 72

Port Jackson's reward for running a good public transport system at a large profit was covetousness on the part of the allegedly "public-minded", as noted earlier. In 1920, Manly Municipal Council approached the company to ascertain the cost of acquiring the fleet, plant and buildings (then undervalued at about $150,000 and by 1921 valued up to $380,000). As Council's rates revenue in 1925 was only $62,000 and a few years earlier it had had to raise a loan of $60,000 to construct the Spit Bridge, it was perhaps fortunate that the company replied that the operation was not for sale. 73 Public opinion, in as much as it is reflected in/moulded by (according to interpretation) the popular press, would appear to have regarded such attempts as laughable — certainly in regard to the Manly ferry with its public impression of polished efficiency. Government/municipal undertakings were considered to be instruments of bureaucratic inefficiency to the conservative-minded. The length of time over which such attitudes prevailed was demonstrated both in a Sun editorial of 1915 which concluded that "socialistic management of the Manly ferry would bring about loss" 74 and in the 1962 cartoon at Appendix 7 (C2). In retrospect it would seem that any attempt to

72. Rydges, 1 October 1940.
74. Sun, 16 December 1915.
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Rydes, 1 October 1940.
Sun, 16 December 1915.
nationalise the Manly ferry would have met considerable popular
opposition, but as we have seen, the company was not so confident of its
security from takeover.

Manly Council's continuing interest in municipal ownership of the
ferry stemmed from the long history of fractious relations between Council
and the company. As in the nineteenth century (and discussed in Chapter
4), debate revolved around fares, timetables and subsidies, with the sub-
lease of the wharf being used as Council's bargaining tool. In 1915 a
conflict erupted between the two bodies when the regular three-year lease
came up for renewal. Manly Council rejected the company's offer of £2,050
rent per annum, plus a subsidy of £1,000 per annum for three years, rising
to £1,500 per annum for the next three years. A stalemate was reached and
only a threat from the Sydney Harbour Trust to take over the lease and
intervention by the Minister for Local Government forced Council to
accept the company's offer.75

Friction between Council and the company continued into the 1930s,
though rarely publicly. (The company must have been surprised to see
Manly Council, in the 1927 Official Jubilee Souvenir, describe the Manly
ferry as "the finest in the world.") Under Dendy's management of the
company there was a conspicuous move to increase the attractiveness of
the service, elements of which will be described later. However, the
company was concerned that Manly was losing its "glitter" and that the
large subsidies paid to the council were not producing tangible improve-
ments. In 1925 the council was approached over the lack of enticements
for children at Manly76 and, in 1927, the poor state of parks and reserves

31 December 1916.

76. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 17 July 1925.
was noted in 1928, the company's agreement with Council evidently started to break down, as season ticket rates were increased in spite of Council opposition and the subsidy was reduced to $1,000 per annum, to be used solely for the maintenance of the Manly Municipal Band. Indeed, as the company considered the band to be the only attraction in Manly, particularly on Sunday afternoons and evenings, its maintenance was the only factor that prevented termination of the subsidy. By 1929 the company had obtained a virtually unconditional lease on the wharf.

In 1931, the company well-and-truly put Manly Council in the shade by constructing what was to become the suburb's major attraction for many years: an enormous enclosed bathing area in Manly Cove adjacent to the wharf. Opened in December 1931, the pool and its mass of play equipment were designed and built by the company and its workers at Kurraba Point. Photographs in company archives suggest that some of the concepts for the pool were derived from a similar establishment at Eastern Beach, Geelong (Victoria). The company was hardly immodest in describing it as the "finest swimming pool in Australia" and it placed Manly again firmly ahead of other Sydney beach resorts. In June 1933, a dressing pavilion with refreshment rooms was completed (again designed and built by company staff) adjacent to the pool. Admission to the pool was free, but a small charge was made for use of the pavilion. By 1935, a quarter of a million

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77. *ibid.*, 5 August 1927.
78. *ibid.*, 27 July 1928.
80. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 5 August 1932. See illustrations and publicity material at Appendix 7. See also Spearritt *op. cit.*, pp. 236-238.
81. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 31 July 1933.
people annually were using the pavilion, and the company claimed a substantial direct influence on ferry patronage. At the 1933 Annual General Meeting, Chairman Archibald Howie gloated in relation to the success of the pool:

We are particularly fortunate as we are now outside any control or interference from the Council and entirely independent of those congratulatory comments from some Aldermen seeking a little cheap publicity. Future Aldermen will be somewhat diffident about reproaching the Company regarding this venture as they had the opportunity for the taking.

The last comment referred to Council's rejection of an agreement to take over the pool after 12 years at cost less depreciation. The company's final tilt at Council was in 1934 when it offered to lease from Council the new surf pavilion on the ocean beach "to uphold standards." Needless-to-say, Council rejected this "charitable" offer.

As noted previously, Manly Council's reaction to the Port Jackson Co. over time appears to have been based primarily on distrust of its monopoly status. However, the fact that Manly owed its viable existence to the ferry service has been exploited by the Port Jackson Co. over time, though never to the explicit (and suicidal) extent of stopping the service to prove the point. Manly Council's exercise of power through the wharf lease appeared to have been a classic case of "squeeze" and the company's fear of nationalisation may have been enough to make it acquiesce. It is possible that the company's revolt in the 1930s was not unrelated to the major impact of the Harbour Bridge on Sydney Ferries Ltd. and the consequent diminution of the "ferry monopoly" as a political bogey. In effect, Port Jackson was reasserting the fact that Manly was a "company

82. ibid., 2 August 1935. Appendix 6, T3. The company owned, and sub-contracted, its refreshment services, both shore and ship-based. In 1938 over half-a-million people were using these services. ibid., 29 July 1938.
83. ibid., 31 July 1933.
84. ibid., 26 July 1934.
creation" which happened to have fallen into other hands (local government) since 1877 and was not being well looked-after by those caretakers. In the 1930s, the company, at the height of its prestige and power, demonstrated to the "caretakers" how to set up and run a proper seaside resort. In view of the services and publicity material produced by the company, it must be admitted that it "ran" Manly very well, and continued to do so (later in conjunction with the local Chamber of Commerce) in similar fashion up to the 1960s. Until very recent years, Manly Council devoted more attention to the residential amenity of its ratepayers than to supporting local business through development of tourist facilities. The photograph at Appendix 7 (P3) showing the diminutive Mayor of Manly (requisitioned for the opening of the pool and pavilion in 1933) wedged between the substantial figures of Howie and Dendy aptly illustrates the Port Jackson Company's triumph.

For the remainder of the 1930s and until 1945/46, the company entered the "indian summer" described earlier. Patronage grew phenomenally during the late 1930s, with growth continuing unabated during the Second World War, peaking at 13,854,282 passengers in 1945/46. 85 However, rising costs and, later, wartime operational difficulties (including the harbour boom, fuel shortages and the blacking-out of lighting on boats which reduced patronage at night) combined to somewhat reduce profits and dividends. New passenger wharves (those now existing) were built by the Maritime Services Board at Circular Quay and Manly in 1940/41 and the wharf lease was transferred to the direct control of the Board. In summers, 20 minute timetables were required to move the crowds.

However, the most important step taken by the company in these years was actually to look closely at developments in Manly-Warringah (including the closure of the tramway and opening of government bus services - to be

described below) and to participate actively in those developments. Accordingly, in 1933, the company acquired a waterfrontage and wharf at Newport on Pittwater, causing "some surprise and dismay to other ferry interests". In 1942, the Palm Beach business of W.J. Goddard and Sons, including a general store, liquor licence and marine repair and ferry services, was purchased as a going concern. In 1944/45 further property was acquired in the Pittwater area, including a 55 acre guest-house retreat, "Currawong", at Little Mackarel Beach. Again, wartime shortages prevented much development of the Pittwater assets but at least the company was set up and ready for post-war expansion.

3. The Manly Tramway 1903–1939

During the nineteenth century, the Manly ferry had developed very much on the basis of a "walking distance" catchment at Manly. For excursionists, Manly was a natural destination, while residential development was generally concentrated at Manly. However, residential expansion to the north (Harbord, Dee Why, Narrabeen) and to the west (Balgowlah, Seaforth) began to take place. In addition, horse bus and later motor bus services developed to meet the needs of excursionists along the coastal strips. In 1879 a government tramway system was introduced to Sydney, under the control of the Railway Commissioners, and by the 1890s electric trams had been introduced. In 1899 a Manly to Pittwater Tramway League was established and successfully lobbied the government to introduce a tramway system to Manly, construction of the first section of a Manly-Narrabeen tramway being initiated in 1901.

86. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 31 July 1933. See Appendix 6, map M5.
87. Ibid., 7 August 1942.
88. D.R. Keenan Tramways of Sydney (Sydney 1979), pp. 5-8.
90. SMH, 27 April 1901.
On 14 February 1903 the first section of the tramway, steam operated, opened from Manly wharf, via the Corso to North Manly. As traffic did not meet expectations, horse operation was substituted from July 1903 to October 1907. In 1910 the line was extended to Brookvale and in 1911 a tramway was constructed from Manly to the Spit, this and the Brookvale line being electrified in that year. A punt (not for the use of passengers) was introduced at the Spit in 1912 to transfer cars between the Manly and North Sydney tramway systems when required. Passengers had to cross on the vehicular punt or, after 1924, walk across the Spit Bridge. In 1913 the tramway was extended to Narrabeen and in 1925 a branch was opened to Harbord. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works examined in 1921/22 the feasibility of extending the system to Mona Vale, pursuant to a request by Warringah Shire Council, but in view of the mounting losses on the existing system (totalling £107,177 between 1903 and 1922), recommended against extension. On 30 September 1939, the Department of Road Transport and Tramways closed the entire Manly system and replaced it with buses. The tramway also carried freight between Manly cargo wharf and goods yards at Balgowlah, Brookvale and Narrabeen between 1913 and 1924.

The Manly tramway was a natural extension of the Manly ferry and

92. ibid., pp. 8-14.
95. Keenan op. cit., p. 82.
96. Report of 10 January 1924. (NSW - Parliamentary Papers, 1924.)
obviously strengthened the ferry as the line of communication to the Manly-Warringah district. The system was integrated by combined ferry-tram tickets and reciprocal advertising. However, the opening of the Spit Bridge was the first chink in the armour and, aside from loss of the cargo service, the Port Jackson Co. noted in 1926 the threat of competition from cars and buses using the bridge. However, contrary to common belief, the Spit tramway did not pose a threat to the ferry even though one of the reasons advocated for its construction was to provide an alternative route. The journey took much longer (over an hour, even after the opening of the Harbour Bridge), had too many breaks and was more expensive, although the tram (and later the government bus) provided a useful alternative when the ferry was suspended due to rough weather.

The replacement of the Manly trams by government buses was seen by some as "basically no more than the substitution of one form of transport for another." However, the Port Jackson Co., with its characteristic uncanny foresight, saw by the early 1930s that the development of Warringah would bring about a reorientation of the transport system to the district. Ostensibly, the Department of Road Transport and Tramways replaced the tramway with buses due to the continuing losses incurred by the former.

99. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 30 July 1926. The bridge was initially subject to a toll, which would have constrained traffic.
102. See, for example, Department of Road Transport and Tramways Special Tram Notice No. 29, 1932 (SRA Archives). It was also something of a tradition for those too timid to face the challenge of the high seas to "take the tram".
104. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meetings, 5 August 1932, 31 July 1933.
(An interesting attitude by today's standards when "losses" are interpreted as a necessary "social subsidy.") However, it would not be misplaced to speculate that the Department foresaw that development of the region would require the greater flexibility provided by buses. Indeed, by the time the tramway closed, government buses were running from Warringah to the city via the Spit and Harbour Bridges. Another "flexibility" aspect apparently overlooked by tramway historians was that mentioned earlier in this chapter: the effect of ferry late-running on the extensively single-tracked tram system. With a 15-30 minute frequency on all lines, passenger confidence may have been eroded over the years by missed or delayed trams.

In conclusion it may be said that the trams served a natural and useful role in "expanding" the Manly ferry to cater for early twentieth-century residential and recreational development. However, regional growth and reorientation of travel patterns were to overtake the restricted tramway system.


The line of communication from Manly to Pittwater was a very old one, as noted in Chapter 2, and the expansion of settlement and recreational activity northwards from Manly was only limited by what was feasible for daily travel or one-day or weekend outings. This was very much a factor of the transport available. Coach-and-horse operations between Manly and Newport (Pittwater) were initiated as early as the 1880s and several hostelries developed en route. By 1907 motor buses were operating north from Manly and later from the tram terminus at Narrabeen. An idea of what might have been feasible for daily commuting is given by

105. Keenan op. cit., p. 15.
adding the Manly—Narrabeen tram journey-time (37 minutes) to that for the ferry (30—35 minutes), plus waiting and walking times: a rather hefty journey. Harbord, more feasibly, was 13 minutes by tram from the wharf.

Warringah (incorporated in 1905) did not develop extensively until after the Second World War, when an enormous building boom and industrial development took place. However, coastal areas developed fairly rapidly after the First World War, erection of "weekenders" being the major characteristic. This development was checked somewhat by the depression.\footnote{109}

In the 1920s Harbord, Brookvale and Dee Why had just become urbanised whilst further up the coast were farmlets and orchards interspersed with small settlements.\footnote{110} It was at this time that D.H. Lawrence took a tram to Narrabeen and left an immortal word-picture of the Warringah coast:

[ Narrabeen terminus] was the end of everywhere, with new 'stores'—that is, fly-blown shops with corrugated iron roofs—and with a tram-shelter, and little house-agents' booths plastered with signs—and more 'cottages'; that is bungalows of corrugated iron or brick ... beyond the backs of which lay a whole aura of rusty tin cans chucked over the back fence .... There was something indescribably weary and dreary about it. The very ground the houses stood on seemed weary and drabbed, almost asking for rusty tin cans. And so many pleasant little bungalows set there in an improvised road, wide and weary—and then the effort had lapsed. The tin shacks were almost a relief. They did not call for geraniums and lobelias, as did the pretty Hampstead Garden Suburb 'cottages'. And these latter might call, but they called in vain. They got bits of old paper and tins.\footnote{111}

The attractions in fact lay beyond the "weekenders": the winter sun as "warm as an English May", the sand and "the pure, long-rolling Pacific.\footnote{112}

Though Lawrence was disturbed by the sheer vacancy of this chaotic freedom,

\footnote{108. Keenan \textit{loc. cit.}}
\footnote{109. Warringah Shire Council \textit{Warringah Shire, NSW} (Sydney 1977).}
\footnote{110. C. Whitham \textit{The Book of the North Shore} (1927) (MS. Mitchell Library), cited in Spearritt \textit{op. cit.}, p. 43.}
\footnote{111. D.H. Lawrence \textit{Kangaroo} (1923) (Penguin edition 1971), p. 31.}
\footnote{112. \textit{ibid.}}
it is certain the locals were not so philosophical.

The Port Jackson Co., as noted earlier, played a part in this northward expansion by establishing its "PJ" shops, ice-works and ferry services in the Palm Beach peninsula in the 1940s. These businesses should have been well-served when government bus route 150 (Palm Beach-Wynyard) was commenced on 4 October 1938. This was followed by direct services to Church Point and Newport in 1944.113 Government bus services in Sydney commenced in 1932 - pursuant to the State Transport (Co-ordination) Act, 1931 - with route 144, Manly Wharf-Cremorne Junction (later extended to St. Leonards).114 Other routes opened in the 1930s complementing (and later replacing) the tram links to Manly wharf: routes 136 (Curl Curl and Dee Why), 137 (Balgowlah), 140 (North Manly), 142 (Brookvale, Narrabeen and Palm Beach) and 143 (Manly Vale).115 The 1938 direct service to Wynyard was initiated after local agitation. Although this and the 1944 services linked only the very remote areas of the Manly ferry catchment to Wynyard, in 1950 services were introduced connecting parts of Balgowlah and Curl Curl with Wynyard.116 This commenced a process of erosion of the original ferry catchment which will be described in the next chapter.

W.L. Dendy had moved to forestall this process in about 1930 by planning for the company to take over the district's private bus services and co-ordinate them with the ferry. However, this plan was overtaken by the 1931 legislation and the subsequent nationalisation of private bus services.117

113. Willson loc. cit.
114. G. Travers From City to Suburb (Sydney 1982), pp. 7-8.
115. ibid., p. 33.
116. ibid., p. 34. Willson op. cit., p. 98.
117. Information given to Mr. R.E. Dyer by Mr. T.B. Sorrell (both Port Jackson Co. Accountants - see Appendix 5).
The disposition of Manly-Warringah passenger traffic in the 1938/39 year (when the ferry attracted 12.5 million passengers) was as follows:

Tram (Manly wharf-Narrabeen, Harbord, The Spit) 4,599,402

Government Bus 5,064,296

Comprising: 136 Wharf - Dee Why and

137 Wharf - Balgowlah 1,177,715

140 Wharf - North Manly and

143 Wharf - Manly Vale 1,712,432

144 Wharf - St. Leonards 1,038,841

142 Wharf - Palm Beach 656,663

141 Wharf - The Spit 259,550

157 Wharf - Church Point 141,924

150 Wynyard - Palm Beach 77,171

Three interesting points emerge from these figures. Firstly, it is obvious that the direct bus service to Wynyard (bypassing as it did the immediate ferry catchment, other than Balgowlah, was not yet a significant threat to the ferry even though the figure given is not for a full year. Secondly, the Manly-north shore link (route 144) was emerging as a significant alternative travel movement to the Manly-city corridor (cf. 1976 figures in Table T8, Appendix 6). Thirdly, even allowing that some of the landward public transport patronage to Manly did not transfer to/from the ferry, it is evident that perhaps 70 percent of journeys to/from the ferry at Manly were by public transport. In 1974 the figure was about 30 percent. (Table T5, Appendix 6.) This change reflected, not so much growing use of the motor car to reach the wharf (probably less than five percent in 1938 to 28 percent in 1974), but increased incidence of walking (probably 20-25 percent in 1938 to about 40 percent in 1974).

The significance of this development is that the ferry catchment has shrunk back to within virtual walking distance of the wharf. The development of

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118. R.K. Willson *Manly-Warringah Omnibus Services* [nd]. MS
Warringah, although partly stimulated by the Manly ferry, ultimately proved to be an illusory benefit to the ferry.

5. Fleet Development 1928-1940

By the 1920s the passenger ferry fleet had been consolidated at the level of seven steel saloon steamers capable of maintaining a half-hourly (or more frequent) service with a trip of less than 35 minutes. The only significant physical changes to the vessels in the 1920s, apart from improved officers' accommodation, was the installation of cafeterias in all boats apart from Kuring Gai and Binnagrra. These somewhat claustrophobic dining areas, located below the main deck, were contracted to caterers (such as Mrs. Carr who advertised her "Carr-way") and even featured silver cutlery monogrammed with the company's insignia. They attracted some opposition from Manly caterers. In 1926 the proposal to enclose the promenade decks of the steamers was first mooted, though enclosure of Bellubera, Balgowlh, Barrenjoey and Baragoola was not effected until 1930/31. The company subsequently attributed considerable significance to the enclosure in reducing the number of people leaving Manly in winter.

By the mid 1920s, Kuring Gai and Binnagrra had become unequal to the

119. PJ66 Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 17 July 1925, and unsourced newscirpping (1925) in newscirpping files. Advertisement in J.C. Williamson Ltd., Magazine, January 1929, p. 41. Recollections of George Marshall and Mr. O.J. Hubbard. Mr. Hubbard recalled (in letters to the author, 20 January 1977, 18 February 1977) that there was time for only one sitting in these cafeterias on a trip and that the reasonably cheap (up to 2/6) and quick meals included eggs with steak, bacon, ham or sausages, eggs on toast, fish and chips, meat pies, toast and tea. "Chocolate Boys" distributed ice creams and chocolates for sale around the boats.


requirements of the service and a decision was made to order two replace-
ment steamers. Local quotations received were too high and accordingly
Dendy and McMillan were sent to Britain to arrange the design and
construction of the vessels. Diesel propulsion was considered but
rejected, presumably due to the then limited development of marine
diesels. 122 On this occasion, the Port Jackson Co. was looking for faster,
more capacious vessels to counter, not only the perennial grumblings of
Manly Council, but the threats of the Harbour Bridge and a railway link to
Manly. First suggested by Dr. J.J.C. Bradfield, the railway proposal
received fresh impetus when Railway Commissioner Fraser advised Manly
Council in 1923 that it would be built within ten years. 123 Late in 1928
Dee Why and Curl Curl were delivered from Scotland in a new Bristol Green
colour scheme which was to give the Manly ferry one of its most enduring
images.

The company and the public were delighted with the boats which at
799 tons and 220.0 x 36.1 x 14.8 feet were considerably larger than their
predecessors. Tremendously elegant, Dee Why and Curl Curl could attain
18 knots, carry 1,587 passengers and had two tall funnels to exhaust four
boilers (which, uneconomically, had to be operated by two stokers, although
only two boilers and one stoker were needed for normal service speed).
The vessels had enclosed promenade decks and cafeterias. 124 Hunter
McPherson described them as "splendid carriers, fast, excellent sea boats,
economical to run, wonderfully easy to handle under conditions." 125 Their

122. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 5 August 1927.
123. Unsourced clipping (20 April 1923) in PJ&MS Co. newsclipping files.
Note also Bulletin, 19 August 1926: "a railway to Manly and its
environs is inevitable; and its probable effect on [Port Jackson's]
earnings needs to be calculated now."
124. For detailed information on these vessels, their design and construct-
ton, see: R.K. Willson "Dee Why and Curl Curl" The Log v 10, no 2
(1977), pp. 35-45; E.H. Mitchell op. cit. See also Appendix 1A for
statistics and illustrations.
125. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 26 July 1929. See also SBBG,
21/1928, 24/1928.
entry into service attracted considerable extra patronage. There is little doubt that these vessels, together with enclosure and upgrading of the rest of the steamers, and the construction of the Manly pool opened the way for the company's patronage boom of the 1930s. Kuringai Gal and Binningarra were sold and Burra Bra was relegated to a reserve boat. The vessel cafeterias were closed by the mid 1930s, probably because obtaining a sit-down meal within a half-hour trip was not a very attractive proposition, particularly below decks without the superb view.

Presumably emboldened by the success of Dee Why and Curl Curl, the company's next step, following the depression, was to announce in 1935 its aim to achieve a service of 16 knot (average service speed) vessels with a 25 minute trip. To this end, Bellubera (whose boilers were virtually at the end of their life) was to be fitted with diesel-electric propulsion - the first such installation in Australia. If successful, £180,000 was to be spent converting the rest of the fleet over the next three years. Bellubera re-entered service in 1936 and was generally successful, achieving the desired 16 knots. However, there were some problems with the diesel generators and it may have been that the company was persuaded to await further development of diesel technology before implementing further conversions. (In his 1937 overseas tour, Dendy found the diesel plants then available to be generally unsatisfactory and ruled them out for the next vessel, South Steyne. One wonders whether the obvious patriotism manifested in his report on the tour prevented his consideration of the more advanced German diesels.) Bellubera was gutted by a fire at

126. PJ&MS Co. Annual report, 30 June 1929.
127. Here's Statistical Service (PJ&MS Co. information bulletin), 7 August 1935.
130. W.L. Dendy Report to the Chairman and Directors, 2 August 1937.
Kurraba Point works on 16 November 1936, resulting in the deaths of two employees. However, her engines were not damaged and she was rebuilt and returned to service in 1937. In that same year Dendy proceeded to Britain to design and order what was to be the company's last steamer.

**South Steyne** (1,203 tons, 217.0 x 38.25 x 14.9 feet, 1,781 passengers, 17 knots) was, in basic terms, a more economical and slightly more sophisticated version of Dee Why and Curl Curl. However, the genius of Dendy and the Scottish builder's chief draughtsman, John Ashcroft, produced one of the most superbly beautiful examples of ship design. Whatever **South Steyne** may have lacked in major technical innovation she compensated for in pure image. Totally devoid of any ugly aspect, she was one of the great twentieth-century passenger ships and became famous throughout Australia and overseas - a remarkable publicity coup for the Port Jackson Co. In effect, Dendy had produced the ultimate Manly steamer. At a cost of £141,526, she was paid for in full out of revenue.

It must be said, however, in terms of the bold advances hitherto made by the Port Jackson Co. (and notwithstanding the hubris surrounding **South Steyne**), that the vessel marked a slight retrogression. Whilst in Britain, Dendy, backed by professional advice, was working on designing **South Steyne** as a turbo-electric boat. Given the problems experienced with diesels, this would have combined the reliability of steam propulsion with the economy and efficiency of electric drive and independent screws - a perfect solution, it seemed. However, in a move which unfortunately has no documented explanation, the directors intervened and instructed Dendy to order conventional steam propulsion. Accordingly the design was recast and the result was a boat pushed 'mefti'ciently through the water with nine-

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133. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 1 August 1941.
134. W.L. Dendy Report to the Chairman and Directors ..., 2 August 1937.
teenth-century technology. Only the research of the British National Physical Laboratory allowed South Steyne's employment of that technology to be more advanced than Bimmasına. In addition, overcompensation for stability by squaring the hull amidships gave South Steyne a wash which, among other accomplishments, lifted the entire Sydney Ferries Ltd. fleet from its moorings at McMahon's Point. According to her, she was restricted to 14 knots in the inner harbour which dampened Port Jackson's claims to "the largest and fastest ferry in the Empire". However, it is easy to ridicule a god — in fact South Steyne performed superbly the role for which she was designed (including ocean cruises) from 1938 until she was put out of service by a fire in 1974.

The 16 knot service never eventuated, although, as mentioned, Dee Why, Curl Curl and South Steyne had the capacity to undertake "sprints" in the event of late-running or when large crowds had to be moved. It is possible that the technical difficulties experienced led to abandonment of the proposal for a "16 knot" fleet, but it is more likely that rising costs came heavily into consideration. In 1939 Archibald Howie was moved to say:

'It's quite easy for people to criticise and say that our boats travel the same speed year after year — it must not be forgotten that it's a far different proposition driving a ship through water, than it is to drive wheels on land, and to obtain even half a knot more speed out of a vessel, means an increase of something like 15% in fuel consumption and the Company could not shorten the time of journey by very much, without increasing rates — in other words, the public cannot have it both ways, i.e. fast trips with cheap fares.'

Remaining fleet upgrading before 1946 included fitting of Baragoola with oil-burning equipment (she had to revert to coal during the war) and new propellers designed at the National Physical Laboratory, which gave her an

135. Recollections of Captain James Ireland. This incident occurred on a trial speed run before South Steyne entered service.
136. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 4 August 1939.
increase in speed.\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Burra Bra} was laid up in 1940 and sold to the Royal Australian Navy.

6. Manly in the Twentieth Century

In its published reports of 30 June 1911 and during the 1930s, the Port Jackson Co. made repeated references, almost in wonder, to the "increasing popularity of Manly as a residential suburb". For an operation so long dependent on excursion traffic for its wealth - traffic easily affected by weather and fashion as constant references in the reports indicated - this development must have been quite heartening. By 1935 there was only a nine percent difference between the winter season-ticket sales (the "hard-core" residents) and the sales for the January-February peak.\textsuperscript{138} Population growth during the first half of the twentieth century was in fact quite incredible. Manly's population increased from 5,035 in 1901 to 33,455 in 1947. Warringah grew from less than 2,000 to 33,176 in the same period.\textsuperscript{139} However, it should be noted that Manly's population was concentrated in 15.2 square kilometres whilst Warringah covered 263 square kilometres. (The actual concentration was even higher as both local government areas contained extensive open space reserves - comprising 30 percent of the area in the case of Manly.) Manly's high population density, occurring as it did relatively early this century, was in fact due to extensive residential flat development. Spearritt notes that Manly was the sole exception to the usual near-city pattern of pre-war flat development. The percentage of flats to total housing at Manly increased from 19.5 percent in 1921 (exceeded only by North Sydney) to 30 percent in 1933.\textsuperscript{140} Unprecedented at this time for a suburb so far from the city

\textsuperscript{137} PJ&MS Co. Annual report, 30 June 1940.

\textsuperscript{138} PJ&MS Co. Annual Report, 30 June 1935. See also Minutes of General Meeting, 28 July 1928.

\textsuperscript{139} See Appendix 6, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{140} Spearritt \textit{op. cit.}, p. 71. See also R. Cardew "Flats in Sydney: the thirty per cent solution?" in J. Roe (ed.) \textit{Twentieth Century Sydney} (Sydney 1980), pp. 69-88.
tre, this development was a tribute to the efficiency of the ferry
ervice, not to mention the continuing popularity of Manly as a seaside
esort.

The district remained firmly middle class and politically conservative,
hough never so upper middle class as the south shore eastern suburbs or
he upper north shore. Manly seemed particularly to have been the home
 the "self-made" capitalist: its residents comprised a high percentage
of employers and self-employed but a lower percentage of the university
educated. It would appear that Manly and its hinterland in the twentieth
entury attracted the upwardly socially-mobile elements of the lower middle
class who, with less education (or educated pretension), possibly found
peal in Manly's Brighton-like vulgarity of taste, not to mention the
illy appeal of the sun and the sea. Their counterparts on the north shore
monstrated in their architectural taste and leafy environs their
ultivated preference for "Hampstead". More recently, a higher proportion
ency has been recorded in Manly than in its hinterland where home-
nership is stronger, but this would be partly explained by Manly's
us as a seaside resort. However, it could be surmised that the nature
ental has changed over the years: whereas now the tenants would be
riminantly resident commuters, several decades ago they would have been
resident excursionists." The Port Jackson Company's references in the
30s to reductions in the number of people leaving Manly in winter
uggests the existence of a life-style which must have since expired:
iding at this commuter-resort only during the summer months and
urning to "Sydney" to "dig in" for winter. The only two groups who

143. The company's references were quite specific. It was clearly not referring simply to a reduction in excursion patronage from Sydney.
could have indulged in this practice were those established and wealthy enough to maintain two residences and those presumably single and free to exercise mobility through tenancy. No study has been made of this phenomenon. The mobility brought about by the motor car since 1945 has changed many established patterns considerably. One more interesting recent development is a higher concentration of unemployed at Manly.144

Table T8 at Appendix 6 illustrates the high level of local employment in the district, nearly 50 percent of work journeys made by Manly-Warringah residents in 1976 being local. This thesis naturally gives much attention to the role of the ferry in carrying the district resident to work to work in the city. However, in spite of most of the statistical evidence being quite recent, it is obvious that suburbanised work has always been strong in Manly by virtue of its status as a tourist resort and therefore a centre of tertiary industry (hotel, transport, retail and other services). Ian Manning's analysis of the 1971 census145 reveals a concentration of public service and retail employment in Manly. The latter category, together with private service employment (hotels, restaurants etc.), is also strong northwards along the Warringah coast. Manufacturing employment, largely a post-1945 phenomenon, is conspicuous in Warringah's substantial industrial areas at Brookvale, Dee Why and (more recently) Warriewood Valley. Overall, Manly and Brookvale could boast more than 15 jobs per hectare.146

Despite the above evidence of a certain social diversity in Manly-Warringah (sufficient to set it apart from the north shore "bankers belt" mould), the district upheld unerringly the notorious political geography of Sydney - conservative north of the harbour, Labour south of the harbour.147

146. ibid., p. 44.
- until quite recently. An unbroken succession of conservative members
of parliaments in the district was ended in 1978 when a Labour member was
returned to the state seat of Manly. One reason for this change, to be
discussed in Chapter 6, was the appalling state of the ferry service
during those years.\footnote{148} Prior to this, however, the Manly ferry, as the
epitome of a successful private enterprise, must have represented the jewel
in the crown of Manly's conservatism.

In summary, it can be said that the development of Manly and its
hinterland in the twentieth century represented a microcosmic, though
slightly untypical (due to the resort factor) example of the ascendant
Sydney suburb. It has been noted previously that the population of the
suburbs soared past that of the city in the late nineteenth century.
During the present century the city central business district itself became
pre-eminently commercial and, unlike the nineteenth-century situation,
inconsequential as a residential area.\footnote{149} One effect of this for the Manly
ferry would have been that it had to increasingly attract its excursion
patronage not so much from the city and near-suburbs but from other
suburban areas - doubtless a factor influencing the Port Jackson Co. to
introduce, in 1934, rail-ferry-tram tickets available from any suburban
station.\footnote{150} However, although the excursionists became increasingly far-
flung in their origins (which, in the long-term, has evidently done nothing
to dampen Manly's popularity), the city centre remained a powerful
attraction influencing Manly-Warringah resident journeys until the onset of

\footnote{148} For further background see J. Power (ed.) Politics in a Suburban
Community (Sydney 1968). K.I. Turner, in this volume ("A profile of
Manly", pp. 33-54), notes that the long history of isolation from
"overseas Sydney" encouraged an early evolution of community organis-
ations and a strong sense of local identity. See also P.W. Gledhill
Manly and Pittwater (Sydney 1946), pp. 81-82.

\footnote{149} See M. Kelly "Picturesque and pestilential: The Sydney slum observed
1860-1900" in M. Kelly (ed.) Nineteenth-Century Sydney (Sydney 1978),
pp. 66-80; A. Birch and D.S. Macmillan The Sydney Scene 1788-1960

\footnote{150} PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 26 July 1934.
the radical urban changes after 1945. (See Chapter 6 on both these
points.) As Spearritt notes, "decentralisation of the City's functions
and facilities was a slow process,"\textsuperscript{151} and, despite its depopulation, the
CBD provided much of the white-collar employment, shopping, culture and
entertainment for its suburbs. Prior to 1945, Manly was exceptional
among Sydney's suburbs in providing some facilities, notably recreational,
to rival the attractions of the city. However, in recent times (as
Chapter 6 describes) the district has ridden that great suburban boom -
aided by the motor car - which has enabled it to provide nearly 50 percent
of its residents' employment and much of their shopping and entertainment
needs.

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The period of the Manly ferry 1900-1946 has been that least-discussed
in subsequent histories (such as those of Gledhill, Swancott, Andrews and
Clark). The preference has been for some nineteenth-century history
followed by general eulogies of the twentieth-century boats, ignoring
their operational context. The imbalance is unfortunate because these
were the service's years of greatest strength and achievement.

Like some benevolent private government the Port Jackson Co. provided
not only a complete transport service, but indeed its own segment of
Sydney life. Its fleet of efficient boats not only transported people but
provided them with food and serenaded them with musicians. Residents could
buy a wide range of discounted seasonal tickets and excursionists could
purchase combined ferry-tram and rail-ferry-tram tickets. At Sydney,
turnstile (electric from 1931) fed passengers smartly to and from the
ferry and at either end an efficient street transport system outside each
wharf whisked them to their destinations - though the company was badly
let down by the government's failure to complete Circular Quay railway

\textsuperscript{151} Spearritt \textit{op. cit.}, p. 222.
station until 1956, having ripped up Circular Quay to construct it in the 1930s. At Manly the "playground of the South Pacific" was cultivated, with the company laying on its magnificent pool and pavilion and, later, its services in the Pittwater area. Although the Harbour Bridge undermined the viability of most other Sydney ferry services, the Manly ferry demonstrated that it could continue to prosper as a major privately operated urban public transport system, an institution the motor car was later to deal a fatal blow.

Unfortunately, the Manly ferry's strength and prosperity during its "golden years" left it at a psychological disadvantage during the drastic changes in circumstances after 1946. The public, the government and even the company itself eventually failed to come to grips with the unthinkable - that the ferry was losing its viability and, in commercial terms, should have been closed down or at least subsidised. The Manly ferry, partly through the publicity machine of the Port Jackson Co., had become part of Sydney's popular urban culture, an accomplishment shared by no other local public transport system.¹⁵² This status, though reflecting wonderfully on the history of the service, created a barrier which prevented clear and rational thinking on its future after 1946.

¹⁵². The following quotation concerning the Great Western Railway in Britain also fits the Port Jackson Co. virtually to the last detail, providing evidence of the British antecedents on which Port Jackson's methods were based: "Part of the secret of its popularity, and a reason why the Great Western will be long remembered, was its superb handling of public relations, which led to its image with the public at large of reliability and efficiency. Its staff were always smartly dressed, and passengers felt that there was something very special about travelling on the GWR. The company also produced its own books of engine classes, names and numbers, books on its prestige services .... Thick handbooks, called Holiday Haunts, were issued and provided a fascinating mass of information about the areas served by the GWR. The Great Western was successful and admired because everybody, from the chairman to the engine cleaners, cared." M. Oldham (ed.) The British Book of Railways (London 1978), p. 27.
CHAPTER 6

DECLINE: 1946-1974

From 1855 to 1946 both the Manly ferry and Manly operated and developed in virtual isolation. This is hardly to say that they were not influenced in one way or another by other aspects of Sydney's suburban and transportation development, as discussed in previous chapters. However, the ferry in particular, as a major single-purpose line run by its own operator, lends itself to examination as an independent entity. It stands apart even from other Sydney ferry services in its long retention of technological advantage in a context where it was partly, and could have been totally superseded by transport technologies utilising the landmass which parallels its waterway - namely, rapid transit by rail, light rail or expressway. It is only the history of deficient transport planning and unco-ordinated development in Sydney which has allowed the Manly ferry to survive - and indeed to account for some 50 percent of Sydney ferry traffic at present, compared with about 15 percent in the 1920s (Appendix 6, T4).

After 1946 the isolation ended. The universal and multi-directional mobility of the motor car created an urban movement pattern which destroyed the more constrained movement lines of a public transport city. In Chapter 5 it has been noted that isolated Manly, whose travel movements were traditionally linked to the city by the ferry, was starting to "break out" in another direction - towards North Sydney and the north shore - by virtue of the 144 bus (and even before that, via the tramway system). Post-Second World War Sydney has become a city with a multiplicity of complex travel movements with many originating and destination points, a fact which appears to escape those more recently advocating a return to a public transport city. The central business district (Sydney city) is still a major white-collar and service employment destination and is the focus of

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the major public transport task today. However, table T8 (Appendix 6) illustrates that, in 1976, what is currently the City of Sydney local government area accounted for the destinations of only 23.36 percent of Manly-Warringah resident workforce destinations. Unfortunately comparative figures for, say, 50 years earlier are not available but it can be assumed that the transformation was radical. Table T7 (Appendix 6), showing that 77.37 percent of commuters leave the district by motor car (1976), demonstrates the major reason for the change. Extensive suburbanisation of work has made impossible a return to at least the traditional type of public transport city.

Examination of passenger flow and journey destination surveys in the Sydney Area Transportation Study\(^2\) demonstrates strikingly that, while public transport journeys (particularly train and ferry) are concentrated on the CBD, private vehicle journeys are extensively cross-regional with a relatively low concentration on the CBD. The Manly ferry is now a small part of Sydney's minority mode of urban transport – public transport\(^3\) – and is of little relevance to the travel needs of Manly-Warringah (though it has enough inherent attraction to make it far from irrelevant). It took nearly 30 years, however, to recognise the extent of the ferry's diminution. The events of those troubled 30 years are described in this chapter.

1. **Planning a Suburban Boom 1946-1983**

Communication is the essence of the modern suburban city. As noted in Chapter 1, transportation was a major factor of the industrial revolution, both as its product and major stimulant. Suburban Sydney


\(3\). See comparisons of the journey to work in Sydney 1901 and 1971 in I. Manning "The journey to work in Sydney in the 20th century" in G. Wooterspoon (ed.) *Sydney's Transport* (Sydney 1983), pp. 179, 191. In 1901 the percentage proportions are: train (11), ferry (5), tram/bus (19), carriage/cycle (9), walk (56). In 1971 they are: train (19), ferry (1), bus (13), motor car (60), walk/cycle (8).
developed by virtue of transport technology and by 1880 the population of the suburbs had passed that of the Municipality of Sydney. (Appendix 6, T1). However, suburban development was very much a product of private speculation, and recognising, planning and servicing that suburban growth was something which took many decades to develop. The Greater Sydney movement of the early twentieth century was the first substantial recognition of Sydney as a suburban city. However, establishment of a government body with responsibility for considering and planning in conjunction all elements of urban growth did not come until the formation of the Cumberland County Council in 1945.

Transportation fared badly in this laissez-faire environment and indeed continued to do so until the 1970s. Nineteenth-century urban transport (which did not, in practical terms, include the railway) was in private hands until the development of the extensive government tramway system in the last two decades. Government energies were directed to rural expansion through railways and ports. Alan Roberts notes: "the general trend in the timing of major metropolitan works for public transport was delay and avoidance if possible. Cheaper alternatives were preferred, such as the turn to tramways to satisfy the strong demand for metropolitan passenger trains in the 1870s". Both the delay and avoidance and the cheaper alternatives have been the predominant characteristics of government transport planning in New South Wales virtually ever since. The major break in this history of procrastination came between c1910 and 1932 when the Harbour Bridge and its associated underground railways (and electrification of suburban railways) were designed and built out of dire

6. A. Roberts op. cit., p. 36.
necessity, largely under the inspiration of Dr. J.J.C. Bradfield—probably Sydney's greatest urban visionary. Ferries received the benefit of no attempted urban transport planning until the 1950s.

The Cumberland County Council, established in 1945, was essentially an amalgam of local government interests, though with a professional staff of town planners and other specialists. It produced a planning scheme for Sydney which failed to account for a number of subsequent developments, notably substantial population growth and, of course, transport patterns. It adopted without question the Department of Main Roads' predominantly radial road plan and yet proposed some circumferential railways, thus partially negating the best potential of both systems. Manly-Warringah was given nothing other than an expressway reservation linking it to the city. Ferries were recognised only as a means of relieving the load on the Harbour Bridge: "not so much a matter of physical planning or building as of co-operation between the different transport authorities."

The government was given an opportunity to restructure ferry services in 1951 when Sydney Ferries Ltd. finally gave up trying to revive their once-great ferry system and sold its ferryboats (for £1) and workshops to a reluctant government. The McGirr Labour government simply set up a Sydney Harbour Transport Board for ownership purposes and empowered it to make agreements with other bodies to run the services. This it did with the only large remaining body of expertise—the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. A subsidiary company, Sydney Harbour Ferries Pty.

8. See D. Winston Sydney's Great Experiment (Sydney 1957).
10. Winston op. cit., p. 51
Lt., thereafter maintained much of the former Sydney Ferries Ltd. services with the help of a government subsidy. However, in 1952 the government made one gesture to the limited sentiments of the Cumberland County Plan concerning ferries and announced a transport co-ordination scheme, a major element of which would be to feed harbour-side bus routes to ferry wharves.12 Two co-ordination schemes were introduced in 1952 at Mosman and Manly. Rather indiscreetly, the Director of Transport and Highways, Mr. Reg Winsor said (according to the newspapers) that the object of the scheme "was to avoid the possible collapse of the Manly ferry service" (a similar factor applying at Mosman).13 Commuters between Narrabeen and Brookvale, hitherto enticed onto the new direct bus services were cut off and directed back to the ferry. As the real reason for the change had been revealed at the beginning in an extraordinary public relations lapse, it was little wonder that opposition to the scheme in Manly-Warringah was intense.14 After a short life (30 March to 5 October 1952) the Manly-Warringah co-ordination scheme was abandoned, as were further co-ordination proposals (though thorough servicing of ferries by harbourside bus routes remained an established fact thereafter).15 At this time there was too much public resistance to modal interchange, a factor which must have influenced subsequent government transport "planning" and created the pessimism which preceded the successful opening and operation of the truncated Eastern Suburbs Railway.16

15. Travers op. cit., p. 92.
Transport planning became quiescent in the wake of the co-ordination schemes. However, the next step when it came in the 1970s was an enormous one. The successor to the County Council, the State Planning Authority, produced the somewhat vague Sydney Region Outline Plan in 1968. However, the plan suggested the need for extensive surveys of the movement of people and goods and measurement of the capacity of different transport modes. This led to the epochal Sydney Area Transportation Study (SATS), completed in 1974, which was the first comprehensive survey and analysis of Sydney's transport requirements. Unfortunately for its own subsequent reputation, the study recommended a scale of transport upgrading which, in total, was unachievable, both in terms of finance and the history of procrastination referred to earlier. Its recommendations for Manly-Warringah included the Warringah expressway, upgraded roads, the Warringah railway, and upgraded bus and ferry systems (including new ferries up Middle Harbour to the Spit and Roseville Bridge). Any two or three of these systems would have handsomely provided for the district, but SATS laid out everything possible. Accordingly the Urban Transport Advisory Committee (URTAC), set up in 1973, was briefed to review SATS in pragmatic terms, which meant upgrading and achieving the most from the existing system; major capital works were placed outside the realm of possibility.

The Labour government elected and in office since 1976 has acted essentially along the lines recommended by URTAC. The Manly ferry passed to government control in 1974, enabling it to be fully co-ordinated with other government transport resources. Initially this co-ordination almost amounted to abolition. Between 1973 and 1976 over one million passengers


were lost to the service (Appendix 6, T3), and the government had only two boats over 50 years old (plus the hydrofoils) with which to operate it. In 1974 a government bus route between Wynyard and South Curl Curl was initiated, intruding further than ever into the ferry catchment; replacement of night ferry services with buses was considered. Express ("transit") lanes were also introduced on the main road into the city, shortening journey-time and giving the buses a considerable additional advantage. Only popular feeling appeared to prevent the final (admittedly economically rational) step of completely replacing the ferry with buses (excepting the more remunerative hydrofoils which would provide a "prestige" express service). The Labour Government has adopted a different policy and has purchased new ferryboats, preferring the principle of continuing to make the most of the traditional catchment. Current government policy is to prevent further residential land-release in Warringah to avoid overloading the road-based transport system. Sydney's suburban boom is currently being channelled into western/south-western Sydney and increased housing density. These are the "cheaper alternatives" to major transport capital works in Manly-Warringah (though the belated policy of increased density, it should be noted, is itself a product of the consequences of "avoidance").

On all the evidence it seems that major capital expenditure on a permanent public transport facility for Manly-Warringah is unavoidable. The road system is good but the continuing need for an adequate public transport system to the CBD has not been met. In 1952 the Cumberland


21. See, for example "Save the ferries, save Manly" leaflet, 1976 (Appendix 7).


County Council conceded that a population in Warringah Shire of 125,000 would justify construction of a railway.\textsuperscript{24} By 1976 the shire population had reached 169,000.

In 1981, the NSW Government set up a Commission of Inquiry into the question of proposed abandonment of the former Warringah expressway reservation.\textsuperscript{25} The Commissioner, Mr. Kirby, recommended abandonment of much of the corridor but suggested that provision be made for construction of a Warringah railway, noting that the district is "public transport poor" and that rail is potentially the best option to improve access to Warringah.\textsuperscript{26} Presently bus travel between the city and Newport/Palm Beach can take longer than a train journey to the lower Blue Mountains, even though the latter is twice the distance. If given the option, Kirby noted, people would "quickly abandon the bus in favour of the train."\textsuperscript{27}

In the case of the Manly ferry, Kirby noted its extreme time disadvantage compared to other modes, particularly to those with destinations a substantial distance from either wharf. (See Appendix 6, T5, T6.) Of the Manly ferry, Kirby wrote: "They [the ferryboats] have an important role in assisting the Peninsula to realise the recreational and tourist potential which it undoubtedly has. But they are unlikely to play more than a subsidiary role in satisfying commuter needs for the journey to work."\textsuperscript{28}

In other words, the ferry retains an aesthetic attraction which is relevant to excursionists, but has largely lost its technological advantage, which is relevant to commuters. (More will be said of this later in the chapter.)

\textsuperscript{24} Manly Daily, 13 March 1952.


\textsuperscript{26} ibid., p. 227.

\textsuperscript{27} ibid., p. 212.

\textsuperscript{28} ibid., p. 251.
It would be facile to say that Kirby’s report is a statement of the obvious. In fact, utilising the wealth of statistical material gathered in the last decade, he has brought masterful powers of analysis to bear on Manly-Warringah’s urban predicament, namely: that the district’s original link to “overseas Sydney” was (and still is) at its extreme southern end; that it has developed substantially northwards with high internal employment self-sufficiency supplemented (since 1945) by high personal mobility; but that it has failed to develop an efficient alternative CBD-link which passes more centrally through Manly-Warringah. It has taken from 1945 to 1983 to achieve a clear written exposition of the district’s transport problem. How long will it take to implement a solution?

Essentially Manly-Warringah is a manifestation of Sydney’s long, unplanned suburban boom. The Port Jackson Co. contributed to that boom but ultimately became its casualty. No amount of government planning could have saved the ferry as a viable private operation, but earlier awareness and action could have resolved the predicament by 1954 rather than 1974.

2. **Company Administration 1946-1971**

With hindsight the considerable problems of the Manly ferry since 1946 can be perceived. However, it is important to note that public perception of the service, 1946-1973, was quite different. As stated earlier, the company was in many ways a victim of its own image, an image it continued to successfully cultivate until the Brambles takeover in 1972. The vessels were always smartly painted and maintained (although the astute observer would have noted that varnish was replaced by paint on all but the “flagship”, South Steyne, and many other economies were effected). Great pains were taken to ensure that a vessel always stood by to ensure that no trips were cancelled through mishap or lateness - a marked contrast to government transport. No new displacement-hulled
vessels were acquired, but Barrenjoey and Baracoola received diesel-electric conversions. In the late 1960s the company renewed its reputation as an innovator by introducing hydrofoils, the first in Australia. Nevertheless, on three occasions the company approached the government to take over or at least subsidise the ferry. Such moves resulted simply in public disbelief, as illustrated perfectly in the cartoon at Appendix 7 (C2), until when in 1974 Brambles pushed the message home ruthlessly.

On the other hand it may be noted that the company was hardly in a position to mount an extensive public campaign to draw attention to its problems. To do so would have inevitably led to loss of confidence in the company’s stocks. As described below, the company moved instead to quietly restructure, ultimately subsidising the ferry with its other operations. However, the continuing “public utility” millstone and a certain amount of loyalty to, and pride in its traditions, prevented it taking the course adopted by many other Australian shipping companies — abandoning its original area of business. Its traditional Manly customers, however, showed by their patronage of land transport modes a distinct lack of genuine concern for the ferry.

The company’s first flurry of activity after the Second World War centered around the Palm Beach activities and pursuit of upgrading of the Manly fleet. The Palm Beach businesses were thoroughly prepared for post-war war trading by the beginning of 1946. Three “PJ” stores (at Palm Beach, Newport and Newport Beach), the Narrabeen iceworks and “Currawong” retreat were open and by the end of 1945 the launch Seeka (ex Rover) had been purchased and the launch Currawong had been built at the company’s Kurraba Point works. Profits were reported to be good from these

activities. By 1949, the company had seven passenger launches in service (including Rambler and West Head, also built at Kurraba Point) and had routes extending all over the Hawkesbury estuary, from Pittwater to Patonga, Brooklyn and Bobbin Head.

The Manly ferry, on the other hand, soon ran into problems. Patronage fell by more than three million between 1946 and 1949 and, with it, revenue. Costs rose: in 1939 the cost of earning £100 was £73; in 1947 it was £93. Post-war supply difficulties sabotaged the objective of having the whole fleet converted to diesel-electric or oil-burning steam by 1949. Purchase of new vessels to replace Barrenjoey and Balgowlah (whose boilers were near the ends of their lives) was considered and quotes were obtained in Britain and Australia. However, the cost of even one vessel was prohibitive - £386,000 with a possible rise to £486,000. In the event a decision was taken to convert Barrenjoey and Balgowlah to diesel-electric propulsion and new engines for these and replacement generators for Bellubera were ordered from Britain at a cost of about £150,000. The conversion and reconstruction of Barrenjoey became a nightmare. She lay at Mort's Dock for three years (1948-1951) awaiting the engines and other materials, the final cost amounting to £261,772; the original estimate was £185,000. It was a disaster for the company whose

30. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meetings, 10 August 1945, 16 August 1946.
SNH, 3 May 1946.

31. See map MS, Appendix 6, and timetable Appendix 7. For a short history see A.M. Prescott "The Pittwater and Hawkesbury River Ferry Services of the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd." Australasian Shipping Record v 13, no 6 (1927), pp. 311-317. See also SNBS, 1/1948, 14/1951, 15/1951, 13/1953, 23/1957, 24/1953. Falcon, the original vessel of the fleet acquired from Goddards, was not registered; nor was Patonga, purchased c1950. In 1943 a proposal to run car-ferries had been announced but this was not proceeded with (Mirror, 5 November 1943).


33. ibid., 17 November 1949.

34. ibid., 15 October 1952.
profits, though fluctuating somewhat, were declining in real terms. Dividends were cut from eight to five percent and in 1952, 1953 and 1956 actual losses were recorded (of £4,874, £10,671 and £12,680 respectively), the first since the 1890s. Drastic measures were taken in 1950. The balance of the new diesel-electric machinery was put into storage at Kurraba Point, conversion of Balgowlah being out of the question. Much of the company's extensive landholdings at Manly and Palm Beach were sold, as were less profitable subsidiary interests - which meant much of the Palm Beach businesses which were just starting to come good as the post-war boom got under way. Most of the ferry runs operating on Pittwater were sold (and with them Falcon, Currawong and Swanilda - the latter two returning to the company in 1952 consequent upon a mortgage foreclosure) in addition to "Currawong" estate and Palm Beach businesses (excepting the two iceworks and one "PJ" store). Much of its remaining property and all of its Manly boats were mortgaged to the CBC Bank from 1950 to 1973.35 In 1950 the company was reconstructed in order to revise its Articles of Association. Authorised capital remained at £300,000.36

By 1951, the company was able to announce that its economic measures had "made a substantial contribution to an improved financial position" and that possibilities for further economies were limited.37 "The real solution", it was noted "lies in obtaining greater patronage of our services by the travelling public and initial steps towards this end have been taken, as we believe that ferry services generally, if properly co-ordinated with land transport, can make a major contribution to the solution of the City's transport problem."38 Then followed the

37. PJ&MS Co. Annual report, 30 June 1951.
38. Ibid.
1952 co-ordination scheme, described earlier.

The company's temporary return (before the losses of 1952 and 1953) to good fortune was somewhat illusory, its actions being based on a commercially disastrous philosophy. Henry William Knight, an engineer, had replaced Pope as Chairman following the latter's death in 1950. His response to suggestions by more astute shareholders that the Palm Beach interests be expanded owing to the development boom in the district was that:

The subsidiaries ... must be secondary to the Company's main function, that is, the maintenance of an efficient ferry service between Sydney and Manly. ... This company has got no money for development ... It is a matter of survival ... and the only way of survival is with the Manly ferries where it started, and it has got to go back to that. And all assets outside that have got to be sold, and the money brought back into the company. 39

Never at any time in its history was the company less astute, although it noted, perhaps with irony, in 1959 that the earning power of its shares was so low that it was effectively immune from takeover. 40 At the same time, it must be said, the revival of profitability of the Manly service was pursued with great vigour.

Some costs were recovered from regular fare rises attuned to inflation. The long-prevailing 6d fare rose to 7d in 1947, 9d in 1948, 1s in 1950, 1/4 in 1952, 1/7 and 1/9 in 1956 and 2s in 1959 (concession and season tickets rising accordingly). By the end of private operation in 1974 it had risen to 45c (4/6). 41 Like all transport fare rises, these changes brought public opposition (see cartoon Cl, Appendix 7) and must have reduced patronage (table T3, Appendix 6), but in fact they barely kept pace with rises in the average wage. 42 Diesel-electric propulsion

40. ibid., 4 September 1959.
42. Spearritt op. cit., pp. 157-158.
was a boon, with North Head (ex Barrenjoey) costing 40 percent less to run than South Steyne. By 1960 the last set of diesel–electric equipment had been fitted to Baragoola. Subsidiaries returned useful profits (£5,194 in 1952/53) – including the government fee for managing inner harbour ferries through Sydney Harbour Ferries Pty. Ltd. – as did Her Majesty the Queen through her 1954 visit. However, the company's most memorable and successful achievement was the initiation of ocean cruises in South Steyne. Inaugurated on 1 November 1953 (initially under charter) and maintained until 1973, these cruises carried 15,000–25,000 persons a years on 30–35 annual summer Sunday cruises to Broken Bay (and from 1954, on Boxing Days, to follow the H.bart yacht race southward). Harking back to the past, the company also examined excursion venues on the harbour but found a lot of factors had changed since the pre-war days of harbour excursions. People were in the process of discovering the motor car and television; many of the old resorts, such as Clifton Gardens, had fallen into decay. In 1960, purchase of the former Sydney Ferries Ltd. showboat Kalang was considered but was ruled out on the grounds of cost (up to £40,000) – a wise decision as she proved to be a commercial failure.

Despite the difficulties of these years, however, the company could be very generous. In 1954 when a good profit (£29,609) was recorded after two years of loss, a bonus of 25 percent of a week's wage was paid to all staff of over six months service. This profit, the largest until the mid 1960s, resulted from a combination of increased fares, the Royal Visit, economies of the previous two years, and the ocean cruises.

The first approach to the government for assistance came in the wake of the failure of the bus co-ordination scheme (which made little

43. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 27 February 1953.  
44. Ibid., 16 September 1960.  
45. PJ&MS Co. Letter from C.E. Cameron to all staff, 26 August 1954.  
difference to the Company's earnings). On 27 February 1953, the largest extraordinary general meeting in the company's history was told by H.W. Knight that the company had proposed three options to the government: a statutory corporation run by the government and the company; a subsidy for basic wage increases; or a rise in government bus fares. These proposals were rejected by the Cahill government. 47 The company persevered with its standard level of service to Manly, though in 1957 it reduced the evening frequency to 40 minutes to enable operation entirely by two diesel-electric boats. 48 By this time only 32 percent of passengers held season tickets, an ominous indication of loss of permanent commuter traffic. 49

In addition, after waiting 20-30 years for completion of the city rail loop (Circular Quay station), the company found that, when opened, it made little difference to ferry patronage. 50 A ten-day strike at the Brookvale government bus depot in 1957 (affecting Warringah bus services) increased daily ferry patronage by 70 percent, bringing in £4,000 extra revenue. 51 This illustrated the gains made by buses at the expense of the ferry. In 1962, with profits again dwindling, the company approached the government a second time with a suggestion that the government acquire the boats, with the company running the service in the same way as the inner harbour ferries. Shareholders were advised that complete liquidation had been considered, except that the old, unique and purpose-built vessels were unsaleable, no other operation in the world having a requirement for

47. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 27 February 1953. SMH, 28 February 1853.
48. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 13 September 1957. See timetable Appendix 7. Note the 40 minute turnaround, attributable both to number loadings and to the efficiency of the diesel-electric boats whose running time is 30-33 minutes.
49. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meeting, 31 August 1956. It should be borne in mind that not all commuters purchased season tickets.
this type of boat. In addition, it was likely in this event that the government would legislate to compulsorily acquire the boats for a token price, as it had done with Sydney Ferries Ltd.\textsuperscript{52}

The Heffron Labor Government responded to this more emphatic approach according to the established principle of delay and avoidance. After rejecting the suggestion on the grounds of cost it offered the company the use of the Sydney Harbour Transport Board workshops at Balmain for servicing of the ferryboats - the only option left to the government, short of direct subsidy or takeover. Agreement having been reached on this, the historic Kurraba Point works were closed and additional lay-ups were established at Balmain. By the end of 1964 the move was complete.\textsuperscript{53}

The Kurraba Point site was purchased by the government for parkland.

In 1963, for the first time since 1946, patronage of the Manly ferry rose slightly to 5,178,000. Quite remarkably, it was to hold steady at about 5,300,000 until 1972, the year of the Brambles takeover, when it fell again. This was partly a result of new initiatives by the company, to be described below, but probably also consequent upon a rise in Manly's population accompanying new high density flat construction. After 1971 Manly's population fell slightly.\textsuperscript{54} Inner-harbour ferries experienced a similar check in their decline in the wake of new flat development in suburbs such as Mosman and Neutral Bay.\textsuperscript{55} Port Jackson's Palm Beach services by 1960 had settled down to comfortable profitability within a clearly defined role. The relative wealth of the Pittwater district has meant that even residents isolated from roads (on islands and on the

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\textsuperscript{54} Appendix 6, Tl. Spearritt \textit{op. cit.}, p. 71.
\end{flushleft}
Ku-ring-gai peninsula) possess boats and the "commuter" value of the ferries has declined over time, most business being made from excursionists. In 1966 the Brooklyn-Dangar Island service was acquired along with MV Kilcare Star (renamed Barrenjoey). In 1960 a rival boat repair firm was taken over, becoming the subsidiary Palm Beach Marine Service Pty. Ltd., allowing rationalisation of Port Jackson's boat repair business and landholdings at Palm Beach. Most significantly, in 1964, there was a company coup.

By 1961, three of the company's large shareholders were R.W.G. Hoyle, a Sydney solicitor, Bjarne J. Halvorsen, a member of Sydney's famous boatbuilding family and long-standing proponent of new ferry technology, and Captain John C. Needham, whose family owned the Sydney ferry company N.D. Hegarty and Sons Pty. Ltd. Needham, English-born, had previously been Chairman of the Burma Inland Water Transport Board, had spent much of his working life revitalising water passenger services, and, like Dendy, was publicity-minded. These men had been privately investigating the feasibility of hydrofoil operation for some time. Needham and another shareholder, R.E. Martin, were elected to the company board in 1961 and in 1964 Hoyle and Halvorsen were elected. Hoyle became Chairman and Needham Managing Director. H.W. Knight, the previous Chairman, and C.E. Cameron, Managing Director, resigned from the board.

57. Ibid., 30 June 1961.
60. SMH, 1 April 1964. Sun Herald, 5 April 1964. Claude Cameron, aged 69 at retirement, had joined Sydney Ferries Ltd. in 1923 and became one of that company's senior executives prior to joining Port Jackson in 1946. He held a bleak but perhaps realistic view of the future of the ferries, noting the superior coverage and convenience provided by buses. He was not enthusiastic about new technology such as hydrofoils. (Sunday Mirror, 26 March 1961.) Cameron died in 1983.
The initiatives of the new regime were set in motion immediately. By late 1964 a 72 passenger hydrofoil was ordered from Japan, entering service on 7 January 1965 as MV *Manly*. It took 15 minutes to do a trip at a flat fare (no concession) of 5s. Three more hydrofoils - 140 passenger Italian boats - were ordered between 1966 and 1972. These vessels could not replace the conventional boats because of their size and premium fare, but they recaptured much of the former technological advantage of the ferry by making the optimum use of its open, clear waterway (that is, once initial problems with harbour debris were overcome by the Maritime Services Board). That a market existed in Manly for this type of express service was evidenced by the fact that by the mid 1970s they had come within striking distance of equalling the patronage of the conventional boats (Appendix 6, T3) - taking account, however, of the drastic run-down of the conventional service after 1972. The hydrofoils also operated excursions in their early years, including one by *Fairlight* to and at Newcastle in 1968. Other excursion activity was cultivated. In 1964 *South Steyne* received a cafeteria, cocktail lounge and liquor licence for its ocean cruises. In 1965, in a move unprecedented in the company's history, *North Head* was sent to Melbourne to operate cruises on Port Phillip during that city's Moomba Festival. The operation was very profitable and *North Head* was sent south for two further summers, 1966 and 1967, accompanied on the last occasion by *Manly*. However, the 1967 operation was marginal and, in the case of *Manly*, a loss, and no further Port Phillip excursions were undertaken.

63. PJMS Co. Annual report, 30 June 1964.
64. *Ibid.*, 30 June 1965, 30 June 1966, 30 June 1967. An excellent film of *North Head*'s first voyage to Melbourne is held in the State Rail Authority Archives. The company file on the Port Phillip excursions, sighted but not studied by the writer, was destroyed by Brambles.
The most radical and long-overdue change came in 1967 in the name of diversification. In that year a new company, Tidewater Port Jackson Marine Pty. Ltd., was formed in which Port Jackson held equal partnership with an American company, Tidewater Marine Service Inc. The company was to operate a special type of supply vessel/tug to tend offshore oil-drilling rigs then being established around the Australian coast. Needham was appointed Managing Director of the new company and the first of its vessels, MV Austral Tide, was delivered in 1968 followed by several subsequent vessels (Appendix 2C). Tidewater had a radical effect on the company's profits which increased from $57,786 in 1968 to $111,528 in 1971, laying it open, as will be described, to corporate takeover. By 1971, shareholders were earning 15 percent dividends.

The Port Jackson Co. was restructured in other ways during the 1960s and early 1970s. Palm Beach Marine Service commenced manufacture of hydraulic steering equipment and by 1971 was obtaining substantial orders. Further subsidiaries were formed to manage specific aspects of the company's business. A joint venture with a British company, Port Jackson Hovertravel Pty. Ltd., was formed in conjunction with a speculative hovercraft venture which eventually did not proceed. In 1969 two companies, Port Jackson Hydrofoils Pty. Ltd. and Palm Beach and Bobbin Head Ferries Pty. Ltd. were formed to administer those two aspects of the company's operations, commencing business on 1 July 1970. One conspicuous result of this restructuring was that the conventional Manly

66. ibid., 30 June 1968.
67. ibid., 30 June 1971.
68. ibid., 30 June 1968.
69. ibid., 30 June 1969, 30 June 1970. In addition, there was a holding company, Marine and Auto Supplies Pty. Ltd., and a company to administer the increasing travel requirements of Port Jackson staff, Port Jackson Travel Pty. Ltd.
ferry operation was isolated as a business from all other areas of business. Unfortunately, as the published accounts were consolidated (and the working accounts are either destroyed or unavailable) it is not possible to determine relative profitability. However, it is fairly certain that by 1970 the conventional Manly ferry was unprofitable. References were made in the annual reports to increasing labour costs (this being the most labour-intensive of the operations), maintenance costs on the life-expired vessels, and the inability to raise fares further due to the need to remain competitive with artificially low government bus fares. In 1970 the company was sufficiently emboldened by its new corporate viability to declare that:

As a public utility it has duties and responsibilities to the public. Loyalty to company patrons is no longer involved since the advent of competitive Government transport. On the other hand it is a public company with shareholders to consider and a profit to be gleaned. It is not sensible that a profitable subsidiary company should support an unprofitable section of the same company namely, the passenger ferry.70

The writing was on the wall. Whatever might have been said publicly, the future of the Port Jackson Co. in 1970 seemed to be (apart from its other substantial interests) as an operator of hydrofoils between Sydney and Manly. Government buses would take over the role of the conventional boats. But for the factor of losing office at the most critical time, the Askin-Willis Liberal Country Party government (1965-1976) almost helped to achieve this.

3. Fleet Development 1946-1972

Aside from the important innovation of hydrofoils, the major theme of the company's last quarter-century of Manly ferry operation was how to obtain the most from old hulls. Diesel-electric machinery was a major innovation, of course, and it is a tragedy that the company never had the

70. PJ&MS Co. History of the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company Limited [1970]. Mr. R.E. Dyer, the last Manager and former Accountant
opportunity to try this excellent, simple and economical method of propulsion in a new hull. Only the high purchase cost of electric engines prevented this method of propulsion being fitted to the new Urban Transit Authority vessels. As it was, the 1949 British Thompson-Houston/English Electric equipment has proved its worth by serving in North Head and Baragoola without serious fault to the present time. This equipment was ordered following Dendy's final overseas inspection tour in 1946.

On hulls, H.W. Knight was to tell shareholders in 1960:

I think there will never be another vessel purchased for the Port Jackson company in the lifetime of any member here. Our boats ... lend themselves to being maintained completely for the life of any member here .... when plates are corroded, we will have them taken out and new plates put in and the depreciation will take care of the major work in regard to future replacement of engines and hull.

North Head, which has now been in the water nearly 70 years, may well outlive many of those present at the 1960 meeting. The development of electric welding has enabled effective strengthening of steel members and facilitates replacement of plates. North Head was actually the only fully-developed model for this policy. Taken out of service as Barrenjoey in 1948, she was returned to her original builders, Mort's Dock, gutted and rebuilt with new steel superstructure, twin funnels and flared bows in general impersonation of South Steyne. The company publicised her as a new boat and she certainly looked the part. Balgowlah was taken out of service for similar treatment in 1951 but the financial difficulties of that time destined her for the shipbreaker. Bellubera had her original

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71. Information from Mr. W. Heading, Superintendent Engineer (Ferries), UTA.
diesel equipment renewed between 1952 and 1954 but again was not rebuilt. In 1958, *Baragoola*, which had run on her original boilers since new, was withdrawn and re-engined at Kurraba Point. Except for a single short motorship funnel, she too retained her 1930s appearance, returning to service in 1961. *Curl Curl* and *Dee Why*, somewhat large for post-war patronage, were allowed to grow old gracefully in their original state, being withdrawn in 1960 and 1968 respectively. Both vessels have since been broken down and scuttled. 73 *South Steyne* perhaps suffered the most, being altered insensitively by the 1964 regime: the cocktail lounge, a canvas awning, and a radar mast destroyed much of her symmetry. Other general post-war improvements were made to the boats: in 1948 the pre-war colour scheme was generally restored, brightening them up; electro-hydraulic steering was fitted; and crew accommodation was expanded and improved. 74 Radio-telephone equipment was fitted in the 1950s, improving operations considerably, although, with the later exception of *South Steyne*, boats still blundered about in fogs (generally safely but with occasional groundings) without radar. An experimental radar installation on *South Steyne* in 1950 had proved unsuccessful. However, as noted earlier, in the public perception they were still fine boats to travel on.

The only new Manly boats in the company's post-war history were the hydrofoils. However, the question of new conventional boats was never entirely eliminated. In 1965, when the financial situation began to improve considerably, J.C. Needham was to observe that the *South Steyne*/*North Head* design format was likely to be the basis of a new conventional ferry in a composite fleet, including hydrofoils. 75 A design for a new

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74. PJ&MS Co. Minutes of General Meetings, 16 August 1946, 27 August 1948.
75. J.C. Needham "Ferry services of Sydney Harbour" *Australian Transport* v 12, no 5 (1965), p. 54.
vessel, not unlike *North Head*, was even prepared. However, emphasis was given to establishing a viable hydrofoil operation and in the early 1970s, when new conventional boats might have been considered, the company was taken over.

The hydrofoils were the wonder of the age and renewed the Port Jackson Company's reputation as a stylish innovator. Coming as they did contemporaneously with Sydney's "skyscraper" boom, they helped initiate the image of Sydney in the 1970s and 1980s as the fast, modern and progressive commercial and tourist centre of the South Pacific (viz. the characteristic poster showing a hydrofoil in front of the Opera House). In the wake of the hydrofoils, Sydney Harbour came alive with tourist cruise operators with smart modern-looking boats. A great advantage of the hydrofoils was that they did not have to be designed for the service and could be readily purchased or sold overseas. *Manly* was a standard Supramar PT20 design built in Japan and was more experimental in nature, being sold as a result of her non-standard size by the Public Transport Commission in 1978. From *Fairlight* (1966) the fleet has been standardised at the 140 seat PT 50 type built by Rodriguez in Italy.

An interesting phenomenon to develop since the introduction of the hydrofoils, unprecedented in the operation's history, was a wave of nostalgia culminating in the campaign to preserve *South Steyne*. The old boats had survived so long that, by the 1970s, they attracted a good deal of affection and, ironically, a large portion of the tourist traffic. The hydrofoils settled more into the role of a commuter-express. It must be

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79. See Save the *South Steyne* poster, Appendix 7. For one of many examples of letters to the press, see W.E. Cuffe, *SMH*, 19 January 1981.
said, of course, that the most memorable impression of the claustrophobic journey in a hydrofoil (other than the initial surprise of seeing familiarly sedate harbourside scenery move past so quickly) is the incredible shortness of the Sydney-Manly journey. Not even the motor car could challenge the wharf-to-wharf time - leaving aside the factor of ultimate destinations. After 110 years of "steaming" to Manly it must have seemed like the arrival of the aviation age. However, like aircraft, hydrofoils have costs associated with high performance and require premium fares. The concentration of affluent population in Manly gave the hydrofoils commercial viability at these fares. It was the first time in many years that Manly boats had been able to give a good return on their operating and maintenance costs. Before the takeover, Needham was even able to announce the prospect of the company running a hydrofoil service between the Fijian islands. 80 However, this new "golden age" for the line was not to come.

4. The End of a Private Enterprise 1972-1974

On 12 November 1971 a takeover bid for Port Jackson worth $1,572,000 was made by the large, expanding transport and industrial services group, Brambles Industries Ltd. 81 From small beginnings as a Newcastle provedore in 1875, Brambles had grown since the the 1950s into a corporate giant with interests in road and sea transport, security, industrial, and other services. 82 In the press announcement Brambles' Chairman, R.A. Dickson, described his company's plans for expanding its marine division which commenced with the purchase of Fenwick Holdings Ltd. (the Port Jackson Company's rival tug operators of last century) in March 1970. 83 Brambles'

80. SMH, 12 February 1972.
81. SMH, 13 November 1971.
82. See D.L. Manuel Men and Machines (Sydney 1970).
83. SMH, 13 November 1971.
General Manager, W.J. Holcroft, "made it clear that a large part of his company's interest in the deal centered on Port Jackson's activity in servicing offshore oil rigs" (Tidewater) but added that he saw "excellent growth prospects" for the ferry services. He stated:

We believe the services are under-utilised at present and we would hope to expand. Hydrofoils would enter into our overall plan. We do not plan to interfere in the way the services are run. We would prefer to see ourselves in the role of benevolent bankers. 84

 Brambles offered three of its shares for two Port Jackson shares, representing $2.62 for each Port Jackson share (Port Jackson's last sale price being $1.50 a share). On 23 November the Port Jackson Co. issued a statement which declared that its board opposed the offer "which it considers is not in the best interests of shareholders", the offer being "less than a reasonable value for the shares and their underlying assets." 85 This was supported in detail by a statement issued on 8 December in which several points were made. Basically, the directors contended, the offer did not reflect the achieved and potential profitability of the company, particularly the results of Tidewater which had increased from a loss of $20,000 in 1968 to a profit before tax of $204,000 in 1971. In addition, they said, the offer did not take into account the asset backing of Port Jackson's shares, which the company had recently valued at $3.53 per share. Thus, the Brambles offer underestimated the company's asset value by $498,000. Finally, the directors pointed to the potential reduction in shareholders' income if they accepted the offer and the lack of a cash alternative to the offer. (The directors and their families owned or controlled 33.6 percent of the company's issued capital at this stage.) 86

However, on 11 February 1972 Brambles came back with an offer of

84. Ibid.
86. PJ&MS Co. Circular letter to stockholders, 8 December 1971.
$2,112,000, representing $3.52 for each (§1) Port Jackson share.
Evidently the offer was adequate, for the directors accepted it and
recommended it to the shareholders. During the course of the offers Port
Jackson shares had risen from $1.50 to $2.95 on 11 February.87 The shares
were last listed on the exchange on 19 April 1972, after more than 90 years
of trading.88 The Board of Directors was replaced by Brambles men with
R.A. Dickson in the chair. However, Needham remained as Managing Director
until 1974.89 All Port Jackson subsidiaries became direct subsidiaries of
Brambles, which also took up the joint interest in Tidewater Port Jackson
Marine Pty. Ltd. Mortgages on all vessels were discharged on 9 January
1973,90 the subsidiary Port Jackson Hydrofoils Pty. Ltd. was made
ineffective (a cost-saving measure) and the hydrofoils were transferred
back to the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd.91 The hydrofoil
Curl Curl, ordered before the takeover, arrived in Sydney on 28 February
1973 and in March inaugurated a service between Circular Quay and
Gladesville which, after a short time, proved to be unviable and was
terminated. No other innovations occurred in the ferry services and the
Fiji hydrofoil plan evaporated as Brambles seemed to have no interest in
that type of venture. By contrast, Tidewater acquired two more vessels in
1972/73.

In 1973 it was evident that Brambles had set the closure in motion.
On 20 May of that year South Steyne sailed on her last ocean cruise. After
this she was restricted, by regulation, to harbour use. A survey of her
plates had found some considerable wear which meant that some plates would

87. SMH, 12 February 1972.
88. SMH, 20 April 1972.
91. On 3 March 1972. Information from PJ&MS Co. Also SRBS, 21/1965, 32/1967,
have to be replaced before she could resume ocean cruises. This work was not done (bar temporary repairs). Brambles was reducing maintenance on the vessels to cut costs and its public image began to suffer in this respect, a situation compounded by lack of explanatory or refutatory statements on its commercially justifiable actions. By 1974 the visible condition of the conventional ferries was so bad that one journalist was moved to write: "Drop your eyes to the ferry in which you are travelling, a transparently ancient, shabby, slow and worn-out boat ...." In September 1973, Brambles sold all four hydrofoils to the finance company FNCB-Waltons Ltd. and operated them on lease, a move designed to avoid tying up capital.

In late 1973 the Port Jackson Co. announced that it planned to replace the four big ferries "in the next few years" at a cost of over $1 million per boat. To meet this outlay the company would seek government assistance and the General Manager, T.F. Gibson, would discuss the matter with the Transport Minister, Mr. Milton Morris. At the same time it was stated that the 63 year-old Bellubera would be the first vessel to be replaced. Three months later it was obvious that there would be no waiting for replacements to arrive, for on 29 November Bellubera made her last voyage after serving 59 years. On 11 December came the news that the number of conventional ferry runs between the Quay and Manly between 9 am and 4 pm Mondays to Fridays would be reduced to a 45 minute (two-boat) frequency, the reason given being a decline in the number of passengers. "The people of Manly are served too well," a company spokesman was reported as saying. The single adult fare had risen to 45c on the

ferry and 70c on the hydrofoil on 14 May 1973, an increase of 5c within a year. To cap off a year of growing concern, Gibson wrote and informed the Herald that the replacement cost of the old vessels would be, not $1 million, but $2.5 million each. 96

At the beginning of 1974 it was announced that Baragoola would be withdrawn on 7 February. 97 This move, which would have rendered a proper conventional ferry operation impossible, finally precipitated the inevitable government action. On 20 January Morris laid down the government's terms in rather immoderate tones. The government would seek to acquire the ferries for a nominal sum. The takeover, said Morris, would be on the government's terms and they would not pay out millions for a worn-out fleet. An alternative would be not to renew the service's licence when it expired in March. He also said that Brambles had apprently intended to dump the service on the government ever since the 1972 takeover and that it was not the government's job "to bail private companies out of unviable enterprises to their profit." He noted that the former company had carried the ferry service by subsidising it with profits from their oil rig supply and other operations. 98 A little later a public meeting in Manly resulted in a petition of 20,000 signatures urging the government to take some positive action, and a Save the Manly Ferries Committee was formed. 99 From the amount of public support suddenly emerging from Manly, the company must have thought it had erred in calculating the 1973/74 patronage of the conventional boats at a mere 3,376,989.

On 26 February 1974 the government announced that it would take over the Manly ferry. Brambles had said they would stop running the conventional

boats by November (though assuring a three-boat service until then). To prevent this the government would take over the service on 1 December, and in the meantime would wholly subsidise all of the service's direct and indirect costs between 1 March and 30 November. The government had a purchase option of $25,000 on each of the three remaining big vessels and an option to take over the lease on the hydrofoils by 31 May. So the old company entered its last months of ferry operation with South Steyne, North Head and Baragoola wholly subsidised by the government, Bellabera out of commission, and the lease for the four hydrofoils transferred to the government. Symbolically, on 27 May a storm destroyed the Manly pool enclosure - one of the major contributions made to Manly by the company in its heyday.

On 14 August the government announced that it would buy and refit two of the three big ferries at a cost of up to $400,000. This would mean that one ferry would go out of service, but a survey was said to have shown that users of the service could be accommodated by two conventional boats and the four hydrofoils. (It was not stated that the effect of this would be to give people the choice of waiting longer for a ferry or paying more for a hydrofoil in peak hours.) It was also announced that two new 800 passenger inner-harbour ferries (these were to be MV Lady Wakehurst and MV Lady Northcott) would be delivered later in the year and were of a modified design which allowed them to be used in the Manly service. Within a few months both were a familiar and frequent sight on the run, but only as relief when one of the old boats was out of service. Finally, it was announced that the purchase options on the three big ferries expired on 28 August for South Steyne, 3 October for Baragoola, and 18 November for

100. SMH, 27 February 1974. Manly Daily, 30 May 1974. It has been suggested that Brambles had an interest in retaining the profitable hydrofoil service but that the government deemed this unacceptable. Andrews The Ferries of Sydney (1975), p. 55.
North Head. The three vessels would be docked and inspected between 26 August and 20 September. 101

On 23 August 1974, South Steyne was withdrawn from service for inspection. The cost of running this steamer now exceeded that of the diesel-electrics by five times and she had the least chance of being acquired by the government. 102 On Sunday 25 August at about 5 pm, when South Steyne was lying moored at Balmain depot, a fire started in the fan-engine room on the main deck and spread to the promenade deck where it consumed seats and life-jackets, causing bad charring to timber-work and paint before being extinguished by the fire brigade. As the fire appeared to have been started deliberately it was investigated by the Police Arson Squad, but no further information was made available. 103 South Steyne was later sold by the company on instructions from the underwriters and has since been the subject of continuing restoration work. She is currently at a Ballina, NSW, shipyard being refitted for operation as a tourist vessel.

On 28 August 1974, Morris announced that the government had decided not to buy South Steyne and would buy and refit Baragoola and North Head. 104 By 2 October Baragoola had been sold to the government 105 and was replaced by Lady Wakehurst on 10 October so that she could be refitted at Balmain and repainted in the blue and white colours of the Public Transport Commission (the government body set up in 1972 to control all of the state's public transport). For another month North Head presented a lonely spectacle, the last vessel owned and operated in the service by the old company and the last to carry the green and white livery (albeit streaked

105. SRBS, 14/1922.
with rust) in service. She was sold by 20 November and, when Baragoola returned, went off for her refit and new colours. Withdrawal of South Steyne resulted in an immediate reduction of the timetable to a constant 45 minute (two-boat) service throughout the day, regardless of demand or peak-hours. Patronage evaporated, either to the hydrofoils or to other transport (see Appendix 6, T3), and some three years of acrimonious debate and agitation ensued in Manly before a half-hourly three-boat service was restored by a Labour government in 1978.

At midnight on Sunday 30 November 1974 the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd. handed over the management and operations of the Manly ferry service (together with the subsidiary inner-harbour services and most of the company's staff) to the NSW Government, 98 years and one month after Carey, Woods, Watson, and Collier had formed the Port Jackson Steam Boat Co. Ltd. to operate the service.

The Port Jackson Company did see out its century, but by that stage was only a shadow of its former self. Coincidental with the termination of the ferry operation a rapid disposal of assets took place, for Brambles were, as always, only interested in Tidewater (which became a Brambles subsidiary in 1976 following the acquisition of a controlling interest). On 31 October 1974 Palm Beach Marine Service Pty. Ltd. was sold as a going concern. On 29 November the Palm Beach ferries were sold to Gordon and Sandra Davey who continued to operate the service. (The company Palm Beach and Bobbin Head Ferries Pty. Ltd., which had been inoperative since mid-1974, was sold to the same operators in December.) The Port Jackson Company's last two ferries, Bellubera and South Steyne, were sold, respectively, in March and April 1975. By April 1975 the company had

106. SRBS, 56/1913.

107. Information on this and other subsidiary changes provided by PJ&MS Co. and the NSW Corporate Affairs Commission.


moved to the Brambles offices at 1 Alfred Street, Circular Quay and Tidewater now had its headquarters at 75 Circular Quay East. The company's old offices at No. 2 jetty were taken over by the PTC. The interest in the inoperative Port Jackson Hovertravel Pty. Ltd. was disposed of in 1975 and Port Jackson Hydrofoils Pty. Ltd. and Port Jackson Travel Pty. Ltd. were liquidated on 29 June 1975. Sydney Harbour Ferries Pty. Ltd., inoperative since 1974, was absorbed into another Brambles subsidiary on 8 August 1977. The last major Port Jackson asset to be sold was the Manly pool pavilion, and in June 1983 Brambles converted the company to a proprietary limited company, the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Pty. Ltd.

In public relations terms Brambles came out of the closure episode badly, its heavy-handed approach and the coincidental fire on South Steyne contributing to its then-popular reputation as an ogre. It must be admitted that it was indiscreet with a sensitive part of the city's ethos, but, that it was obliged to be so indiscreet was solely a consequence of government obtuseness. By the same token, one does wonder whether governments since 1946 were being entirely obtuse or whether they realised that the Port Jackson Co. had not only set up a public utility but almost a city patriotic institution which they would find very difficult to unload. Brambles were left no option but to set off a crisis to goad the indecision-makers into action.

5. Resurrection?

Nearly ten years have elapsed since the end of private operation of the Manly ferry and, although this study deals essentially with the period up to 1974, it is relevant to examine very briefly how government, when finally given the opportunity, dealt with its new transport charge.

110. SRBS, 1/1948.
The Public Transport Commission inherited most of the staff of the Port Jackson Co. (and Sydney Harbour Ferries Pty. Ltd.) and hence, fortunately, a body of practical expertise - albeit a somewhat demoralised body. By the same token, the ferries now had access to the Commission's marketing, public relations and other co-ordinated services. Government policy altered radically with the change of government in 1976, though implementation was somewhat vague until analytical work by URTAC and other bodies had been completed and firm directions established. The Liberals initiated design work on a new conventional Manly boat in 1975 but otherwise made no attempt to expand the service. The natural process of the preceding years was allowed to continue, with the upgraded bus services further eroding ferry patronage. Ferry fares were increased twice in 1975, to 50c (hydrofoil 80c), then to 55c (85c). In the wider area, other Sydney ferry services had been drastically reduced and, on some routes, Sunday and evening services were terminated. To consolidate the hydrofoil service, however, a further hydrofoil, Palm Beach (built 1969), was acquired in 1975. Age and deteriorating maintenance were taking their toll on the hydrofoils and Palm Beach at least ensured a reliable service - which could not be said for the conventional boats. By 1976 the government was able to announce that weekday use of the conventional boats had fallen more than 20 percent in two years, but that hydrofoil patronage had risen slightly. Total patronage in 1976 had fallen to 3,990,009, with conventional ferry patronage exceeding that of hydrofoils by little more than 600,000 (Appendix 6, T3). Not all of the conventional ferry passengers drifted away to hydrofoils and buses - many changed to their cars. A Manly resident wrote to the Herald in despair:

112. SMH, 30 May 1975.
The Manly ferry service has been reduced to a point where it is no longer useful or reliable, and there is a "don't care" attitude which never prevailed under the flag of the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company. From the Manly commuters' point of view the Public Transport Commission has been a disaster, and if the ferry service is not restored quickly the point of no return (of lost passengers) will soon be reached.  

In May 1976 a Labour government was elected, partly on a policy of improving public transport, and in June reduced all fares - Manly fares falling to 45c on the ferry and 70c on the hydrofoil.  

In January 1978, when Lady Wakehurst had been returned from Hobart (where she had been deployed since the Tasman Bridge collapse), a half-hourly three boat timetable was restored utilising North Head, Baragoola, Lady Wakehurst and Lady Northcott (one of the latter two being a stand-by). The government was rewarded by winning the seat of Manly in the election of that year (not necessarily entirely for that reason). An additional hydrofoil, Long Reef (built 1969), was acquired in 1978, allowing replacement of Manly and standardisation of the fleet. The only problem in this "great leap forward" was the age of North Head and Baragoola and, accordingly a contract was placed in 1979 for a new conventional boat, followed soon afterwards by a contract for a second boat.  

Patronage was transformed, rising to an incredible 7,747,000 by 1981/82. Of these, 5,869,000 travelled on the conventional boats and 1,878,000 on the hydrofoils. Hydrofoil patronage had peaked at 2,169,000 in 1980. However, the figures are totally deceptive. The bulk of the increase has come from recreational rather than commuter patronage. For example, morning peak trips on the conventional boats have increased 34 percent between 1976 and 1981 and decreased 23 percent on the hydrofoils in the same period; a net increase of 11 percent. Total patronage in that

115. Gwen Wilson, SMH, 29 March 1976,  
period increased 94 percent. As in the past, waves of excursionists
certainly contribute to the viability of the service - as long as the trend
lasts. Admittedly figures are not yet available to illustrate the long-
term effect of the new boats, introduced in 1982 and 1983. (New vessels
have traditionally had a positive short-term effect.) However, it is
evident that the commuter catchment/attractiveness is now severely
constrained, variable by only a few percent. There is nothing in these
recent figures to contradict the earlier-expressed hypothesis that the
ferry has largely lost its technological advantage and is irrelevant to the
commuter transport needs of the bulk of Manly-Warringah.

The most interesting development, in the light of the above figures,
is the enormous boom of recreational patronage which, unfortunately, it
would be premature to analyse. However, coming as it does during an
economic recession, it has its precedents in the Second World War (not a
recession, but a "troubled time"), the 1930s and the 1890s. Lowering of
fares and improvement of the service would have been influences, and the
movement away from the expensive hydrofoils to the cheaper ferryboats
could also have an economic cause. One can also speculate that the recent
civic improvement of Manly, growing harbour-oriented tourism (particularly
with overseas visitors), and the traditional free (or cheap) entertainment
factor are additional influences. Undoubtedly, the factor of the "poor
man's ocean cruise" - a trip on the Manly ferry for its own sake - would
be stronger than ever in a recession.

The new ferryboats Freshwater (1982), Queenscliff (1983) and
Narrabeen (under construction) are interesting vessels in that they embody

119. In a 1976 survey, Manly Municipal Council found that a majority of
summer trippers on the ferry came from the western suburbs of Sydney,
particularly on weekdays. Altogether, about 25 percent of Manly
tourists came on the ferry; if the ferry was withdrawn, annual tourist
numbers would drop from four million to three million. Manly
extensively the technology of the late twentieth century and are by far the best-equipped and most comfortable Sydney ferryboats ever built (perhaps making allowance for Brighton's saloon passengers on the second point). Design-tested at the British National Physical Laboratory like their predecessors, they embody every refinement to enable them to undertake their designated task with even greater efficiency. Capable of a 30 minute trip on one engine, they can open up to 22 minutes if required on two engines (naturally, with loss of economy). Good sea boats, they are certificated to carry 550 passengers at sea and (unlike South Steyne) are fitted with adequate lifeboats and sophisticated navigational equipment. In short, they are first rate commuter boats with additional earning capacity on the side. They would have suited the service perfectly in the 1930s/40s. In the 1980s they will carry millions of excursionists, with a commuter business on the side, and, because society has not come to terms with the effect of technology on employment (and for safety reasons), they will run with seven crew rather than the two or three with whom it is theoretically possible to operate the boats. Ponderously they will maintain the tradition of the Manly ferry for their (probable) several decades of life.

To be fair, their introduction was inevitable because there was no way the "other solution" could be implemented before the long lives of North Head and Baragoola expired. Road capacity would be severely strained by the additional cars and buses needed to carry Manly ferry passengers and, on Sydney's past record, a Warringah Railway (let alone the decision to build it) may take the life of these new boats to see its first train. The initial political decision and the capital expenditure are the major obstacles. The perspective that appears to be overlooked is that an eight-car electric train carries more passengers at twice the speed and half the

cost of one of these ferryboats - but without the aesthetic advantage.

In one respect the Manly ferry has almost come full circle. In the early years of the great motor car boom (1950s/60s) it seemed unthinkable that large numbers of people would ever go back to riding on the leisurely boats for their own sake. Now, like the 1850s and 1860s, the Manly ferry - utilising its aesthetic rather than technological advantage - is receiving a large part of its support from an excursion boom. If the government has the wisdom to look back at the long history of the service it will realise that it is very likely in a second "Indian summer". A succession of bad seasons will expose the raw fact that the commuter catchment is as fixed as it has been since the 1950s. In view of the fact that Warringah is unlikely to suffer a diminution of its huge population (and has great scope for increase) and Manly is as intensively developed as it comfortably could be, the government should reassess the district's transport services in terms of present movement patterns. In the context of such replanning the Manly ferry could possibly be amenable to return to private operation on the following terms:

(a) that government-subsidised commuter transport to the city be by means of a Warringah Railway (or high-capacity rapid transit system) with feeding to Manly-Harbour being transferred from Manly wharf interchange to interchanges at Balgowlah and Brookvale;

(b) that any market for express high-speed transport between Manly and the city be provided at premium fares by a licensed hydrofoil/jetfoil/hovercraft operator running to a regular timetable on a commercial basis; and

(c) that an operator or operators of harbour excursion craft licensed to carry passengers across the Heads be permitted to use Manly wharf on scheduled excursions.

The operation at (b) above was certainly viable during its period of
private ownership but could now be doubtful, while (c) would be sufficiently lucrative on a weekend/summer holiday basis to justify a regular timetable. As (c) involves termination of the regular Manly ferry, ending a tradition dating to 1855 - a move still deemed socially undesirable - the Warringah Railway would have to be previously established to "win away" the patronage.

The above scenario, based as it is on commuter needs and transport economics, does not, however, take fully into account a most critical factor. The town centre of Manly, which is off the main track of Manly-Warringah external travel movements (via the Spit and Roseville Bridges and Mona Vale Road), is dependent even today for its commercial strength and tourism on the fact that the Manly ferry terminates there. A common fear of Manly businesses is that the centre would not be a "village" if the ferry stopped. It is not so much the ferry that matters, it is the psychological reassurance of manance which a private operation attuned to the market may no longer be able to give. Accordingly, notwithstanding construction of a railway (which incidentally would render the hydrofoil operation a doubtful proposition), the government would be obliged to maintain the ferry tradition both for its remaining inherent advantages and to assure the continuing prosperity of Manly. Ironically, it may be that Manly Council should now pay subsidies to the ferry.

For an historian to prophesy is perhaps professional heresy, but the above scenarios are not prophesy - quite the contrary, on the course of past events they would be unlikely to occur. However, they are suggested as alternative patterns of development which most logically evolve from the changes of the past half-century. The scenarios are presented to demonstrate in practical terms the fallacy of the evident popular view.

121. Sun, 16 October 1962. See also figures on tourism fn. 119 above.
that history is something rigidly disconnected from the present, lacking continuity and relevance. From the history of the Manly ferry and the suburban region it fostered come a number of facts, patterns and trends which together help to indicate solutions to present problems. Many recent "professional" planning studies of situations such as this stand condemned for their obvious ignorance of the substantial (rather than token) background to the problem examined. Many of the "answers" lie in or extend from that historical background. When the time comes that the Manly ferry will be pronounced resurrected, it must be questioned whether the historical dichotomies of the service - commuters/excursionists, technological advantage/aesthetic advantage - have been fully considered. At the same time, when revival of ferries is advocated as a "solution" to urban transport problems, it must be questioned whether the historical development of travel movements and catchments has been considered. As the Herald wrote in one of its more perceptive editorials: "you can lead a commuter to water, but you can't make him travel on it." 123


123. SMH, 15 April 1982.
CHAPTER 7

MANLY AND ITS FAMOUS FERRY:

A CONCLUSION

On face value, writing a history of the Manly ferry appears to involve a company history of one of Australia's several famous shipping concerns, with the addition of a nebulous "splash" of local colour. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the Manly ferry, in its own right, was a remarkably distinctive component of Sydney's development as a suburban city. It is fair to say that no other community in Sydney grew so singularly for so long through one transport system. An obvious determinant of this was geography which endowed the water route with directness and the land route with impediments. Early parallels were to be found in harbourside communities which ferries cultivated during their initial period of technological advantage (1831-1880s), communities such as Hunter's Hill, Balmain and Mosman. However, the Manly ferry held on, in spite of bridge-construction, by cultivating at different times and in different ways both its aesthetic and technological advantages.

It would be appropriate for a separate study (namely a history of Sydney Ferries Ltd. and its predecessors) to examine whether the Sydney-North Sydney ferries held any real comparison to the Manly ferry as a profound stimulant of suburban society. Certainly they held a technological advantage and made possible development of the north shore, but a theme worth exploring would be whether the Manly ferry was a convenience whereas the North Sydney ferry was an inconvenience (to be borne until construction of a bridge). Such a short journey-time certainly invokes connotations of a "floating bridge". Most importantly, the Manly ferry held a profound aesthetic advantage, not only in its sublime journey but in its role of transport to the pleasures of a resort.

A number of subsidiary points emerge in this study. Firstly, there
is the "Englishness" of this entire suburban institution. Henry Gilbert Smith was inspired by the example of Brighton and his nostalgia for it. The Port Jackson Co. (and some of its guiding forces such as the patriotic Dendy) behaved very much in the manner of the British railway companies and estuarial shipping excursion lines in cultivating patronage to their particular suburb/resort. Even as late as the 1960s, it could be observed that Manly was "slightly more British, older, less Roman Catholic and more Anglican than the NSW average."¹ This has changed with the emergence of a more cosmopolitan Australian culture, a process which, as D.H. Lawrence observed, must have been assisted by the force of the great Pacific and the heat of the Australian sun wearing down the pretensions (and the life) of "Hampstead".

A second point was the importance of "Melbourne money" in getting the ferry service established, a fact which must reinforce the common assessment of Victoria as the late nineteenth-century economic centre of Australia.² This major investment kept the ferry ahead of its requirements at a critical period and ensured that nothing but continuing growth of the suburb and its transport service would follow.

A third point, raised many times in this thesis, is the incredible innovatory nature of the Port Jackson Co. which gave it enormous capacity for survival and growth. However, the history of innovation was not constant and indefinable. Its three main periods appear to have been in the 1860s/70s when astute businessmen acted resourcefully to build the service up, in the 1920s/30s/40s when the influence of the remarkable Dendy was exercised, and in the 1960s when a new group of businessmen attempted to remodel the service to the requirements of a new era of technology. The period 1899-1922 when a new type of steamer was evolved

and introduced was a period of engineering innovation, but this was innovation pushed from behind by the momentum of growth which the service had stimulated in the late nineteenth century. There were in fact two definable points of depression in the history of the company (excluding the events of 1974). One was in the 1890s when the original astute businessmen grew old and lost touch, the other was in the 1950s/60s when the company almost ran out of human "steam". In this regard it may be noted that the Managing Director, Claude Cameron, whose gloomy views on the inevitability of buses and impracticality of new marine technology have already been noted, was a veteran of one earlier ferry "depression" - the long, painful collapse of Sydney Ferries Ltd. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the post-war management was affected by an air of depression, reinforced by declining patronage and profitability.

These three subsidiary points highlight the complexity of the human endeavour of which this enterprise was made. Major external forces such as booms and recessions are significant determinants of events (often, as noted, in unpredictable ways). However, so much depends on which personalities are in crucial positions at any particular time. This begs the inevitable question of what Dendy might have done were he alive in the 1950s/60s and faced with some of the repercussions of the urban myth he had helped create.

In summary it may be said that the Manly ferry demonstrated the importance of a theme largely ignored in Australian Historiography: namely that maritime technology played a significant role in Australian economic development - through technological advantage - and was even significant in social development in Sydney through its stimulation of urban growth. It may also be said that in having an aesthetic advantage, the Manly ferry has demonstrated the impact of popular mythology on perception of economic realities. The ferry company (aided by popular
newspapers and the like) cultivated the myth in its own interests, yet became a victim of the myth (the immortality of the famous Manly ferry) when the pattern of urban development changed in a way that made the ferry largely irrelevant. Many current problems in urban planning (and its political guidance) stem from lack of perception of these changes, a symptom, perhaps, of a society cut off from perceived continuity with its past.

This thesis has examined essentially the quantitative Manly ferry and its quantitative effect on the development of Manly. The question of the mythology and the aesthetics has been addressed briefly in Chapter 1 in considering the role of many bibliographical resources in perpetuating the mythology rather than analysing the history of the ferry services and local communities. The question of defining the myth remains, however, and it is a question amenable to no direct answer. The Women's Weekly once gave expression to the myth in a way that "says it all", yet quite flatly, stating that "the ferries are part of Sydney's character and tradition."3 Half-a-century earlier a newspaper with greater perception noted that people have been going to Manly

so long that they have lost the active consciousness of why they go ... though the factor that makes up its popularity is the splendid trip across the harbour .... Manly, in spite of its many attractions would not be one-half as well patronised if it could be reached by land.4

An underlying element here is that the Manly ferry has an inherent aesthetic attraction which causes people to use it for its own sake.

The simple truth seems to be that putting a person in a boat and sending them across the water really does serve to transport "a thousand miles from care". Whether this applied to a crowded commuter grind of 50 years ago, when a novice could be unjustly glared out of his seat by

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its "regular" incumbent, is uncertain. A ferryboat is really a place to 
be philosophical and the fortunate person to benefit most in that regard 
is the master on the expansive, silent bridge. Jill Hellyer's words, 
though one deck down, could well apply to the closest point to the sky:

Oh! what the others were missing, pressed crowded, seeing 
the harbour second-hand through a window, bored 
with the trip and waiting resignedly to reach 
land, while their sticky children scrabbled their feet, 
But out on the upper deck the four of us each 
drank deep from the common cup and rose at the wharf replete.

Another view of the Manly ferry, during the years of the Second World War, 
has come from a correspondent:

It was always relaxing and refreshing to be on a ferry. 
They had their own charm for an age that needed respite 
from the war - sun, salt, seagulls and a breeze .... one 
could feel a balm to the soul, the war would end - someday. 
And life would go on. After losing schoolfriends when a 
navy ship was lost, it was upsetting to think of the ocean 
and being on it. Then one day you took the ferry and part 
of the hurt went.6

Other travellers formed a cult centered on the boats, as illustrated in 
Peter Tranter's beautiful tribute to Curl Curl:

Sometimes she would dawdle at the wharf for five or six 
minutes after sailing time, waiting for some vital person 
or package to arrive. Down in the engine room there would 
be a good deal of muffled shouting, and the clanking of 
unseen but plainly massive machinery; while from time to 
time jets of steam would soar unexpectedly from the 
exhausts. The regulars would rustle their papers and 
ostentatiously look at their watches, and mutter to each 
other that it was "on again". Nobody ever really worried; 
the Curl Curl always got in on time. Then the bell would 
ing, the lines snake in, the telegraph jangle. The ship 
glided slowly out, and a couple of minutes later a cloud 
of filthy, oily smoke (she burned coal tar) floating down 
to leeward would signify that No. 2 boiler was on the line 
and ready to steam. Then the telegraph would jangle 
again, and the engines settle down to a fast, happy beat 
that sent the bow-wave rolling half-way across the harbour.7

5. From "Nuns on the Ferry" by Jill Hellyer. Reproduced by permission. 
An economic assessment of the Manly ferry, such as that largely made in this work, must be tempered by consideration of the undeniable fact that it was an institution created by a human society at least partly for its own sheer enjoyment.