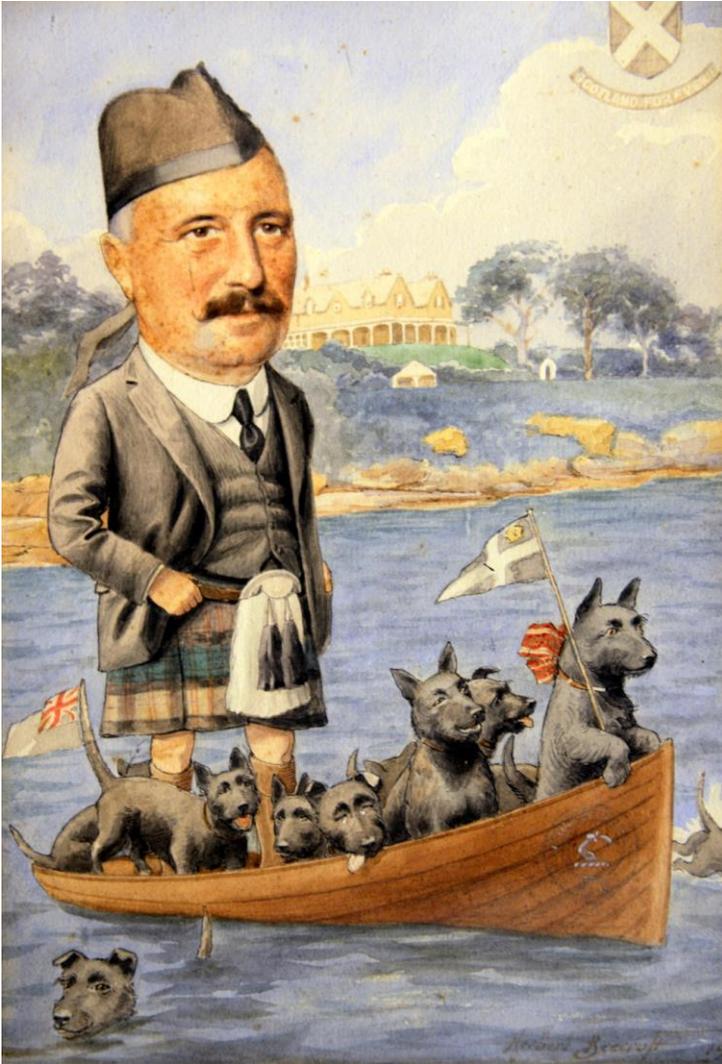


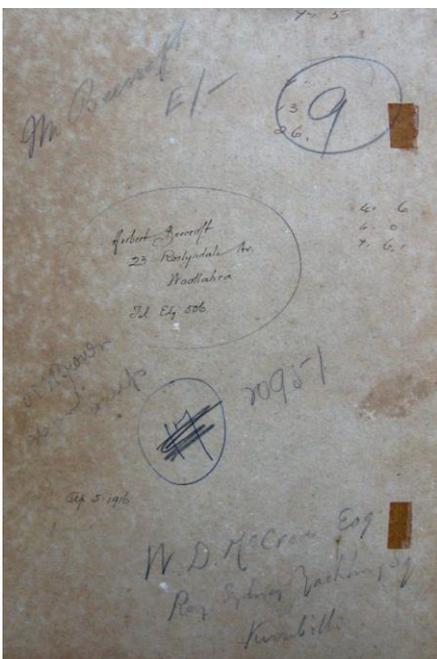
W D McCrea

One of the very few caricatures completed by L. Herbert Beecroft for the RSYS during the First World War was his painting of William Donald McCrea. Activity at the Club at this time was a bare minimum for obvious reasons and Beecroft was busy painting portraits of the Aboriginal Community particularly around the La Perouse district.



Beecroft's drawing tells us that Mr. McCrea was a Scotsman. He is wearing his kilt and on the top right-hand side is a crest with the Scottish colours and a caption "Scotland Forever." McCrea was an electrical engineer. His primary interest was as president of the Kennel Club, with a predilection towards Scottish terriers; hence, Beecroft has filled his boat with dogs. His dogs had cute names and I bet that the one which has the white ensign flying from his tail is "Kirribilli Backstay." Another is looking decidedly seedy, with his tongue hanging out and a tear dropping from each eye. The dog in the bow is holding the RSYS burgee in his paw and has a bow tied around its neck in colours which must signify something. This might be "Kirribilli Crea."

On the bow of the boat is the McCrea Clan crest described as a "A cubit arm grasping a sword all Proper." The motto "Fortitudine" is Latin for with fortitude.



I have also included a picture of the back of this painting. There is Beecroft's name, address and telephone number, 23 Roslyndale Avenue, Woollahra, telephone Edg 506, presumably written in his own writing. The painting is dated 5th April, 1915.

I was intrigued why Beecroft was summoned to the Club to paint this gentleman and while I can't be sure 100 years later, the painting gave me a clue. Have you noticed the drawing of the house in the background? Is it Admiralty House? In fact, it seems to have the gables of Kirribilli House with the verandahs and arches of Admiralty House.

Notice the buildings on the grounds. One looks like a pagoda and the other like large kennel. There is quite a story lurking behind this and I have included an extract from Wikipedia which tells part of it.

The Lawry Family

The next residents of Kirribilli House from about 1858 were Thomas and Esther Lawry. Thomas Lawry was born in 1821. He was employed by the Ordnance Department in Sydney at a young age and remained there for the rest of his life. He was also appointed as a magistrate by the Governor. He married Esther Hughes in 1858 and the couple had two children. In 1859 the birth of a daughter at Sophienberg was recorded in the newspaper so it appears that the house continued to be called by this name after the Lawrys purchased it.

Esther Lawry's maiden name was Esther Matilda Hosking Hughes and she was the step granddaughter of Samuel Terry the very wealthy convict entrepreneur. In 1858 Esther inherited a considerable amount of money from her grandmother Rosetta Terry.

In 1865 Thomas Lawry died at the age of 44. The death notice records that the name of the house was still Sophienberg. Two years later in 1867 Esther married James Taylor who was the Commissary-General of Ordnance. This couple then lived in the House with Esther's two children one of whom was Thomas Terry Trewyn Lawry. In 1891 James Taylor died. By this time the house had been named "Kirribilli" and was located in Campbell Street. In 1900 Esther died and the house was left to her son Thomas.

*Thomas Terry Trewyn Lawry was born in 1864. He seemed to have rather poor health and did not marry. In 1907 at the age of only 42 he died of heart failure. As he had no children he left his property to relatives and others. He made a very complex will leaving Kirribilli house to several people one of whom was Laura Lamont. Laura married **William Donald McCrea** in 1909 and therefore her name became Laura McCrea. Laura and William lived in the House for some time but she then wanted to sell the property. There was some disagreement about the sale with the other beneficiaries and the matter was taken to the Equity Court. The Court resolved that the property should be sold and it was put on the market in 1919. The House was bought by Arthur Wigram Allen who planned to subdivide the land. In 1920 he produced a brochure with a photo of the house and the planned subdivision. There was public outcry about the sale of the house and the Government under the then Prime Minister Billy Hughes decided to resume it. The property has remained in Government ownership since then.*

It is not clear exactly what the relationship was between Laura Lamont and Thomas Lawry but the point is that Donald McCrea lived at Kirribilli House in 1916, a stone's throw from the premises of the RSYS and the McCreas sold the property on the market in 1919.

Monday, 23rd December, 1918 – Sydney Morning Herald

IN EQUITY.

(Before the Chief Judge, Mr. Justice Street)

LATE TOM LAWRY'S ESTATE.

KIRRIBILLI HOUSE TO BE SOLD.

*Laura McCrea, wife of **William Donald McCrea**, of Wahroonga, electrical engineer, as an equitable tenant for life under the will of the late Tom Terry Trewyn Lawry, petitioned for the sale by the Court of Kirribilli House and grounds, and property at Balmoral. The petition was opposed by a large number of remaindermen under the will. In delivering reserved judgment on Saturday his Honor said that the lease of Kirribilli House expired last August, but the rental received was insufficient to meet the outgoing. The evidence indicated that the house is so old and dilapidated that a very, considerable sum is necessary to make it tenable. The petitioner claimed that now was the proper time to sell. This claim was opposed by others with ultimate issue in the property. They alleged that the site was so unique for residential purposes that the land is sure to increase in value in the future, and they asked that the property might be kept in order that they may reap the benefit of this problematical unearned increment. Evidence was given showing beyond all doubt that it is not only proper but consistent with a due regard to everybody's interest that there should be a sale. His Honor authorised the sale out of Court of the Kirribilli and Balmoral properties, subject to the approval of the Master in Equity. The sale is to be by public auction for cash or on terms in the first instance, and if this is unsuccessful then the properties may be sold by private contract. Power was*

given to sell the lands in subdivisions, and also to lay out and dedicate streets.

I was unable to find any links between Mr. McCrea and yachting with the following exception which is quite amusing.

Wednesday, 22nd March, 1916 – Sydney Morning Herald

COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES.

At the Sydney School of Arts, Mr. W. Donald M'Crea gave an interesting resume of the work and history of the Kennel Club council of representatives. There was an attendance of between 50 and 60 persons, who thoroughly appreciated Mr. M'Crea's address. After dealing in detail with the history of the Kennel Club of England from 40 years back, the speaker introduced local matters by saying that the government of the dog world in New South Wales was quite a different proposition from that of the old country. He said:

In this country there are 12 specialist Clubs, 10 being registered with the Kennel Club of New South Wales, and two being unregistered. Though the numbers are so small, the same general principle is involved. Speaking with intimate knowledge of the dog world for about the last ten years in New South Wales, I think there is no place in the dog world which has been so squalid, as far as the dog government is concerned, as this country.

Mr. M'Crea, who is an old yachting enthusiast, makes the following nautical references: "At the end of the year 1913 a band of brave men came forward to try and get this stranded ship into the water again - the details of how they came to get aboard I am not cognisant with - but one thing I do know is that they patched up the old ship in such a way that she seems to have been made almost a new one; they have stiffened her so by the weight of so many hours of serious thought that it looks to me that she is fit now to stand many hard storms. They have re-rigged her with a new set of rules, and stayed her by some strong steelwork of truth and integrity, and, further, the crew of this ship has taken notice of what caused her last disaster "that is, the want of knowledge of the sea they sailed in."

The present kennel, maybe, is not everything one desires. People tell me that some of the crew are new-chums, uneducated in the deadly shoals and currents of the sea they hail in, and that there are two or three old hands who are running the ship their own sweet way. This may or may not be true. I don't know and don't care. What I do know is that the whole lot of them are earnest; none but earnest men could tackle such a job as they have done without being sincere to the very backbone.

We can now air our grievances. It can no longer be said by the humblest member of a specialist Club that he has no voice in the Kennel Club. Every Club member of a registered Club, through their delegates, can now put his cause before the council, and, if approved, will go forward to the committee of the Kennel Club for their discussion. The Kennel Club must hear our voice. If they do not they are not worthy of the trust bestowed on them.

Every earnest man here feels that there are so many reforms wanted in the dog world that it will be difficult to know where to start. We want regulations with regard to the appointment of judges. We want reformation in show and parade management: we want the age at which puppies can be shown - and there are all the different wants of each Club; and then there is the Kennel Club itself - that body wants reforming. I do not believe in a committee being elected for three years. We want an annual election. The Kennel Club wants to be more alive as a controlling body; it wants a committee for regulation of shows, it is at present a very poor controlling body. And the council of representatives has just to worry the Kennel Club of New South Wales until it makes it what the dog men want."

The city of Sydney can be grateful that almost 100 years ago, the government intervened and preserved Kirribilli House and the environs for posterity.

Saturday, 17th January, 1920 – Sydney Morning Herald

KIRRIBILLI.

CHARMING OLD HOME RESUMED BY-FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

Senator Millen, Minister for Repatriation, who is at present in Sydney, announced last night that the Federal Government had decided to resume the Kirribilli House property, prominently situated on Kirribilli Point which was to have been sold in subdivisions this afternoon. The Minister added that notices giving effect to this decision were issued in Melbourne last night. There is no more favoured spot on the foreshores of Sydney harbour than that on which Kirribilli House stands. The grounds are about an acre in extent, and, presenting a high and rocky face to the water, command a magnificent view down the harbour. They adjoin the grounds of Admiralty House, and, though within a few minutes of the Circular Quay, there is a charming and restful seclusion about the old place, with its shady trees and rambling walks, through the once delightful though now sadly neglected gardens, which carries one miles away from the city.

A wonderful picture of pretty Islets, sweeping bays, and verdant heights speckled with the red roofs of the houses, is spread out before one, forming the setting of a great expanse of water. The house itself is a picturesque old-fashioned place, in the cottage style. It has not been occupied for some time, and is in a very dilapidated state. The whole had been subdivided into five allotments, which were to have been offered for sale at auction this afternoon, three having water frontages. There is a total frontage of about 257 feet to Campbell-street, and about 190 feet to the water.

When the McCreas left Kirribilli House, they moved to Turramurra where Donald died on the 6th March, 1934.

March, 2015

