

WHO IS ON THE COMMITTEE?

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

PRESIDENT/SECRETARY

GLENN DICK

[glenn dick@outlook.com](mailto:glenn dick@outlook.com)

0411 840 940

VICE PRESIDENT/

TREASURER

DAVID BAWDEN

[dbawden77@gmail.com](mailto:dbawden77@gmail.com)

0412 011 292

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LYN WORKMAN

STEVE O'CONNOR

HONORARY MEMBERS:

ANNA UNDERWOOD:

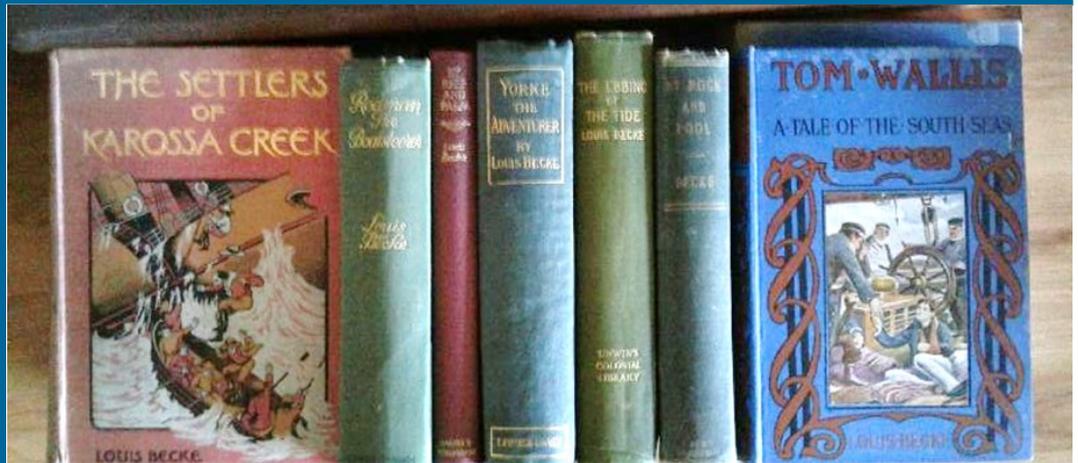
Family history; W.A.

ALLEGRA MARSHALL:

Becke historian and attendant to his grave at Waverley Cemetery, Bronte, N.S.W.

DR. CHRYSOPHER SPICER:

Cultural historian, author and Senior Research Fellow at James Cook University, Cairns, QLD.



THE LOUIS BECKE SOCIETY (PORT MACQUARIE) INC.

“NOTES FROM A SOUTH SEAS LOG”

PRESIDENT’S “DESPATCHES”

by Glenn Dick

Firstly, another year is slipping by once again. Progress has remained slow on a range of topics to be dealt with, but we’ll get there!

1. At our last ordinary Committee Meeting (19 February 2021) we agreed to pursue, via the Lands Department NSW, the naming of the small cove off “Flagstaff Hill” – “The Louis Becke Cove”. This is to be followed up, as well as the sculptural arrangement in the same vicinity. (Port Macquarie Hastings Council’s Cultural Steering Committee.)

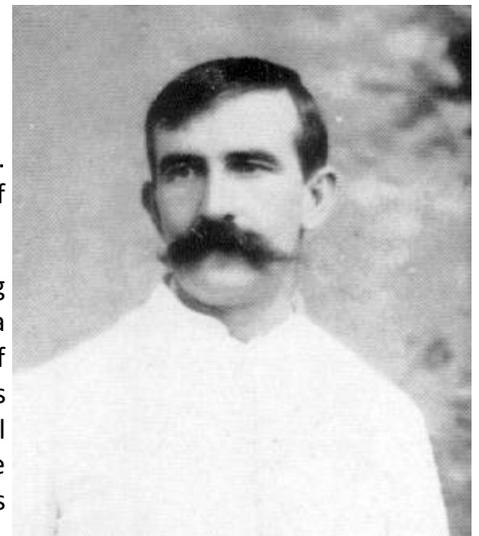
2. The idea of a suitable plaque to hopefully be placed on the corner of Owen and Williams Streets (Luxor Building – the site of the original Becke home) also requires attention.

3. The Glass Display Cabinet to be placed in the Historical Court House, has not yet been achieved. David Bawden and I intend on meeting up with the staff at the town Library to see how we can work with them to promote the Becke project.

4. David and I set up our display for Australia Day 2021 with some keen interest shown to the project. We were also delighted to sign on a new member - Sue Richardson - another Becke family descendent. Ian Goulding kindly lent us his ship models and Lyn Workman some fabulous shells. David Matin’s books were sold from which we retain a small commission.

5. The Port Macquarie Bicentennial 10 day event was also somewhat of a let down as a number of interesting projects were ‘canned’. So we were very disappointed to say the least. Covid has impacted so many activities over the last 16 months.

6. For those who are interested, I have a major exhibition opening at the Glasshouse Regional Gallery in Port from 10 July – 5 September. The works are based on the first 20 years of Port Macquarie being established as a British Penal Colony (18 April



Louis BECKE 1896 (from the front piece of “Pacific Tales”, published by T.Fisher Unwin, in 1896)

**PRESIDENT'S "DESPATCHES" continued**

1821). All welcome. This is an endorsed Council Bicentennial Event.

7. A date has been set for our AGM – Saturday 4 September 2021 at 10am - venue David Bawden's residence. Relevant documents will be sent to all financial members 1 month prior.

8. On a good note, our membership base is steadily growing including 2 overseas members, Bill Kipp from Florida, whose interest in Louis Becke developed when he served with the USA navy in the Marshall Islands and Jennifer Fuller, who is an Associate Professor of Jackson State University in the USA. I have recently made contact with a Mr. Julian Croft from Armidale. Julian is a member of The Association for the Study of Australian Literature. We have had brief discussion regarding our Project and Julian and I will be meeting soon. This contact was made through Chrystopher Spicer.

All for now.  
Glenn Dick  
President

**Louis Becke** died on the 18 February 1913 while staying at the York Hotel, King Street in Sydney. The contemporary press had it that he died at work, with pages of a started manuscript scattered at his feet. \*

Friends at The Bulletin arranged for a funeral at Waverley Cemetery in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. William MacLeod, an artist and a partner in The Bulletin authorised the burial. To this day, he is listed on the records as having the "Rights of Burial".

Later that year, in November, there was a notice in the Sydney Morning Herald (written by W Farmer Whyte) to ask people to donate to a memorial headstone for Louis (which was duly erected). Louis had many friends in the "Literary World".

One of the most famous was Henry Lawson. Becke had lent him some money to get married "impulsively" to Bertha Marie Louise nee Bredt on 15 April 1896. And Lawson did not forget this kindness and wrote a poem after Becke had passed away.

This poem was published in The Bulletin on 27 February 1913, nine days after Becke's death.

\*Ref: "A Biography by Dirk H.R. Spennemann"

Poem to Louis Becke by Henry Lawson  
[From the Bulletin]

*They're at their age-long harvest still -- the angel Death  
and Time —*

*But ebb or flow, we all must go, and leave the broken  
rhyme.*

*Wide blue with whitecaps here and there-the glory of  
the day —*

*A space of seascapes wond'rous fair, in Islands far  
away;*

*Faint silver on the distant reef, on skylines scarce a  
fleck,*

*But fleecy clouds of best-relief that welcome Louis  
Becke.*

*Who'll miss the well-loved stuttering speech? Who'll  
mind the distant date*

*When by the mast and palm-fringed beach those  
halting words had weight!*

*Who'd dream those sad, kind manly eyes, when traders  
were "in holts,"*

*In summer Isles of Paradise could glint behind a Colt's?  
We only know "By Reef and Palm" — the world he  
made his own —*

*(The later wounds, without a balm, are better never  
known).*

*We live and fight by day and night in carking care and  
strife,*

*And take our pen in death to write the story of our life.  
Farewell, my friend — 'twill ne'er be told — or told in  
printed line*

*(Your destiny in days of old was strongly linked with  
mine).*

*I trust my track shall run as true, though come it late or  
soon,*

*When my name shall be missing, too, from "Some Birth-  
days in June."*

[Reprinted in *Henry Lawson, Collected Verse, volume 3: 1910-1922*, edited by Colin Roderick, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1969, p. 95]



*Louis Becke was mostly single and definitely “fancy free”. He was able to go whenever and where-ever he desired – to islands that had a reputation for cannibalism, piracy, mutineers - where very few “white” folk ever ventured. Louis much preferred to be around “authentic” local islanders than his fellow “white man”.*

### “Why I became interested in Louis Becke” by Allegra Marshall

I'm a passionate and long term (+40 years) Pacific Island traveller, collector of Pacific artefacts and an avid reader of true-life tales.

On a lazy Sunday afternoon in 1983, I came across a rather interesting looking book in a dusty Sydney shop. It was written by a fellow called Louis Becke. I'd never heard of him before. It looked interesting and was only \$10 - so I grabbed it. I went home and read it from start to end without putting it down. Louis was clearly ahead of his time - not just having voyaged to remote islands in the Pacific - but also having lived and worked there for fairly long periods of time (sometimes up to 2 years!). As opposed to writers like Robert Louis Stevenson, (who had sailed with his family and quite a large entourage on his “Casco” to “safer” and rather more “civilised” parts of the Pacific - such as Hawaii, Tahiti and Samoa), Louis Becke was mostly single and definitely “fancy free”. He was able to go whenever and where-ever he desired – to islands that had a reputation for cannibalism, piracy, mutineers - where very few “white” folk ever ventured. Louis much preferred to be around “authentic” local islanders than his fellow “white man”.

I managed to find a few more Becke books over the years. They weren't easy to find (now they are almost impossible to find). It wasn't hard to imagine myself in his stories. I'd already commuted to many areas of the Pacific alone, on cargo ships and to remote islands as well. I also preferred being around locals than tourists. I was hooked!

I think Louis and I might have become friends had we lived in a different century and had some adventures of our own!

One of the books I found, a more modern edition of one of his best sellers, *Pacific Tales*, had an introduction. It was noted that Louis Becke was buried at Waverley Cemetery which is just around the corner from Randwick where I was living at the time. So I wandered over and asked the office manager for a map. It took me a while, but I eventually found the grave. It was overgrown with magnificent weeds and extremely neglected. I felt a bit sorry for Louis! So I started to go once a month to weed and maintain his final resting place. Occasionally I'd plant something colourful – a reminder of his time in the islands where he would have seen and smelt hibiscus, frangipani (“tipanier”) and other tropical flowers such as ylang ylang daily. I started checking the phone book for the name BECKE, to see if I could find a relation who could perhaps give me a hand every now and then. No such luck! No response. So I kept going there as often as I could.

Over the years I continued to find more Becke books to complete my collection. And I kept reading. In 2015 I went to Port Macquarie and contacted a local historian to see whether he could help me find anything about Louis – where he lived, played, went to school and so on. That was a wonderful day out and it wasn't difficult to feel Louis's presence and his love of the ocean and adventure. It was all around him! Port Macquarie

had had an indigenous community prior to being settled and then a convict past. 20 ships had been lost all along that coast over time. No wonder Louis was keen to discover the Pacific. It was right on his doorstep!

Since that visit in 2015 a lot of exciting things have occurred. Around this time, there was an advertisement in the SMH to promote a Becke Reunion in Townsville. I was able to connect with the organiser, Anna Underwood, a descendant of Cecil, an older brother to Louis. Cecil went to North Queensland as a bank manager to the 1870 gold rushes. So a relative at last! I am absolutely delighted that finally, after all these years that Louis Becke is starting to be known and loved by so many other wonderful people. I now show people Louis's grave and know his life story so well. His stories are now being recognised and he will finally gain the attention of the Australian Literary Public - as he truly deserves.

*Allegra Marshall May 2021*



THE LATE MR. LOUIS BECKE. (1913, November 15).  
*The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842 - 1954), p. 8.  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15466002>

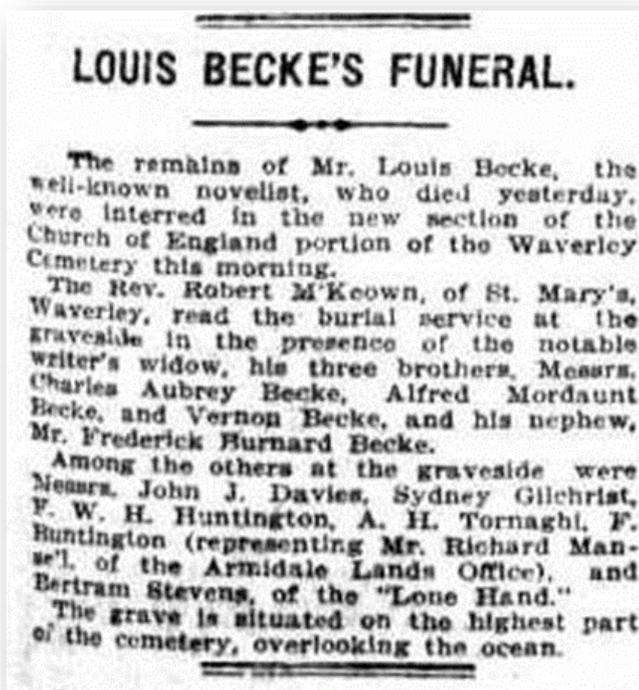
*"It is fitting that some effort should be made to have his name held in honour and remembrance"*

## THE LATE MR. LOUIS BECKE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir,-There lies at rest in the Waverley Cemetery one whose name is well known throughout Australia, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands, and a movement has been started in Sydney with the object of erecting a suitable headstone over his grave. The late Mr. Louis Becke has a distinct place in Australian literature, and his stories of life in the South Seas will be read, we believe, by our children and our children's children with the same interest and delight as they have been read by us. It is fitting that some effort should be made to have his name held in honour and remembrance. His friends and admirers scattered throughout Australasia are very numerous, and we feel sure they will count it a privilege to subscribe to this memorial. Henry Kendall, Daniel Henry Deniehy, and other Australian men of letters are buried in this same cemetery at Waverley, and their admirers have erected enduring monuments over their graves, a proof that we are not lacking as a people in appreciation of our men of worth and genius. Louis Becke deserves some memorial, too; and we write these lines in the hope that they will come under the notice of his friends, and of others who, never having met him, have yet some regard for him and his work. We shall gladly acknowledge any contributions sent to us. We are, etc..

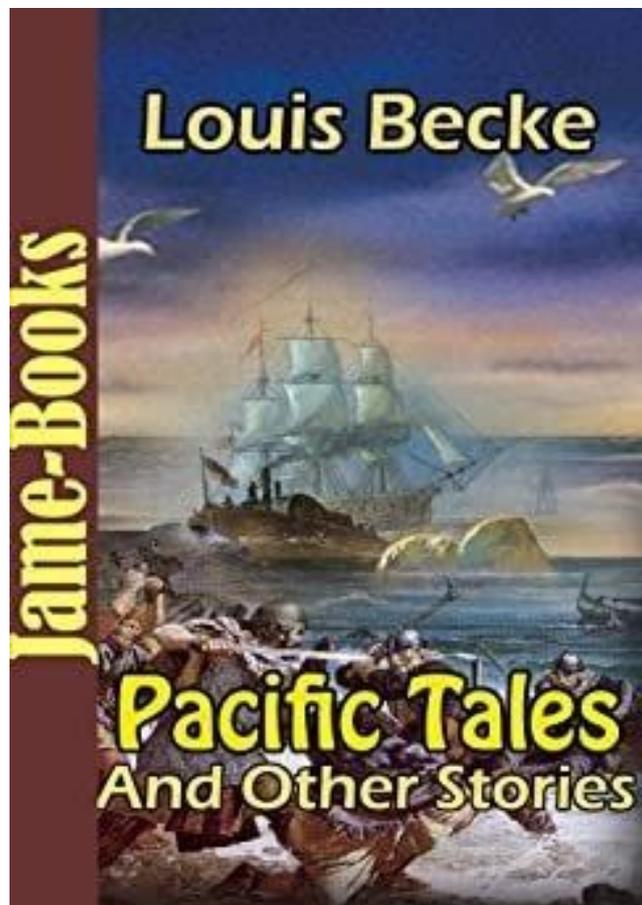
W. FARMER WHYTE,  
 PERCY S. ALLEN.  
 Joint Hon. Secretaries, "S.M. Herald" Office.



1913 'LOUIS BECKE'S FUNERAL.',  
*The Sun* (Sydney, NSW : 1910 - 1954), 19 February, p. 9.  
 (FINAL EXTRA)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228699017>

Courtesy Anna Underwood



Cover image of Louis Becke's "Pacific Tales"

## LOUIS BECKE'S FUNERAL.

The remains of Mr. Louis Becke, the well-known novelist, who died yesterday, were interred in the new section of the Church of England portion of the Waverley Cemetery this morning.

The Rev. Robert McKeown, of St. Mary's, Waverley, read the burial service at the graveside in the presence of the notable writer's widow, his three brothers, Messrs. Charles Aubrey Becke, Alfred Mordaunt Becke, and Vernon Becke, and his nephew, Mr. Frederick Burnard Becke.

Among the others at the graveside were Messrs. John J. Davies, Sydney Gilchrist, F.W.H. Huntington, A. H. Tornaghi, F. Huntington (representing Mr. Richard Mansell of the Armidale Lands Office), and Bertram Stevens, of the "Lone Hand."

The grave is situated, on the highest part of the Cemetery, overlooking the ocean.

## History of Waverley Cemetery where Louis Becke is buried.

The Waverley Cemetery story begins in **1859** when the "Municipality of Waverley" was inaugurated. This isolated outpost of the commercial centre of Sydney grew quickly attracting industry and manufacturing like soap and candle making, shoe making, dairy and even emu farms! The actual cemetery was officially discussed in **1863** and in **1868** Waverley Council agreed to manage this new enterprise. The first purchase of land to start the cemetery took place in **1875**, design and styling of the landscape took place including important drainage, roads, fencing drawing on the popular "Gardenesque" movement. It opened on the 1 August **1877** and the first interment took place in the afternoon of 4 August. Since that time more than 83,000 interments have taken place in 50,000 gravesites and memorials over 16 hectares. Waverley has amassed a significant collection of high quality memorials and monuments and is the resting place of many influential and significant men and women who helped develop Sydney NSW and Australia on the international stage. It has recently been announced that this Cemetery will be listed on the State Heritage Register. It is also protected with a listing as an item of heritage significance in the Waverley Local Environmental Plan (LEP), the State Heritage Inventory, and the Register of the National Estate and by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

Condensed from Waverley Cemetery site:  
[https://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/recreation/places\\_of\\_interest/waverley\\_cemeteries](https://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/recreation/places_of_interest/waverley_cemeteries)

## FRIENDS OF WAVERLEY CEMETERIES

Cemeteries have friends!

The members of the Friends of Waverley Cemeteries are not ghoulish individuals who hang out for Halloween! They are ordinary everyday people who may individually have an interest in genealogy, social and local history and the preservation of the memories and deeds of pioneers and other notable Australians buried in the cemeteries or may simply have relatives interred in either Waverley Cemetery and/or South Head Cemetery, the two cemeteries in the municipality under Waverley Council's care.

The Friends of Waverley Cemetery volunteer group was formed 22 years ago on 13 September 1998; an initiative of Martin Forrester-Reid the then Cemetery Manager.

Members of FoWC guide a walking history tour of Waverley Cemetery every Saturday. Shortly the FoWC will be expanding tours to include South Head General Cemetery. Monies raised from these tours are returned to the cemetery, as the tour fees pay for monumental restoration.

Recent projects have included restoration work on the monuments of William Bede Dalley, Oscar Eliason and Louis Becke

The Friends work with Cemetery management to promote these State Heritage listed cemeteries. Apart from tour guides other members have taken on other roles as researchers, guerrilla weeders, photographers; some have adopted a grave and regularly maintain and weed that individual allotment.

The Friends of Waverley Cemetery (FoWC) name change to the Friends of Waverley Cemeteries was approved at a special general meeting of the volunteer group held electronically between 22 March - 5 April 2021.

The FoWC are passionate about the two State Heritage listed cemeteries in the municipality and in preserving them as national icons and examples of Victorian era Cemeteries.

The very core of any cemetery, whether it is a church yard cemetery, such as St. Jude's at Randwick or a General Cemetery such as South Head Cemetery or Waverley Cemetery, are the people who are buried in them. These individuals each have stories to tell; their lives made an impact on and helped mould and produce the society we are today. They deserve to have their stories told and they deserve to have their resting places acknowledged and cared for.



Any cemetery with the ocean as its background has an innate beauty. Waverley Cemetery with the predominance of white marble monuments against the blue of the ocean is particularly beautiful. Depending on the weather the cemetery's mood will change; it can be foreboding when the weather is unsettled or it can be calming and be a place of deep reflection and peace on a sunny autumn day.

Cemeteries are not just about the dead – they are for the living to admire, to enjoy, to learn from and appreciate because they are part museum, part outdoor sculpture gallery.

The value of Waverley Cemeteries is beyond the value of real estate. Waverley Cemeteries are living history. They are a resource that all, who live in or who are holidaying in Sydney, should visit or better still, take a guided tour. Those members of the Friends of Waverley Cemeteries who are regular guides are passionate about sharing their knowledge.

For further information or expressions of interest in becoming a member contact [friendsofwaverleycemetery@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofwaverleycemetery@gmail.com) or check out our fb page

<https://www.facebook.com/FoWCBronteNSW2024/>

Gregory Ross

President/Secretary

Friends of Waverley Cemeteries

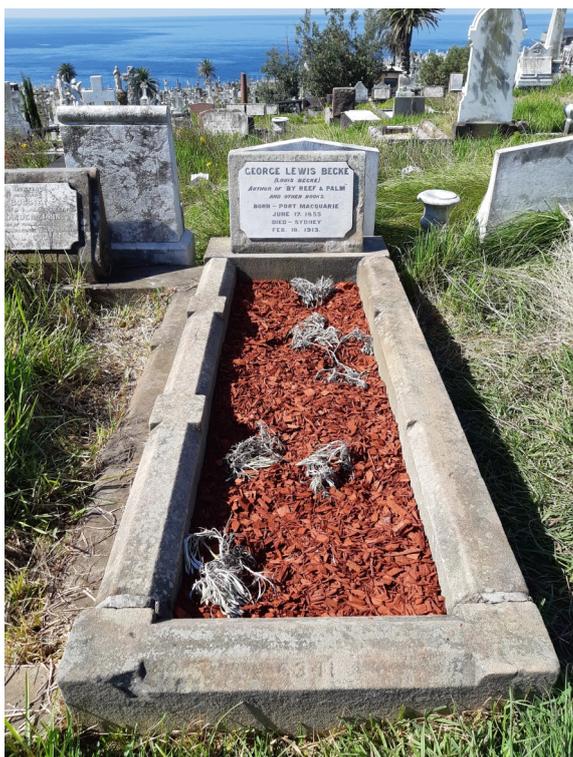
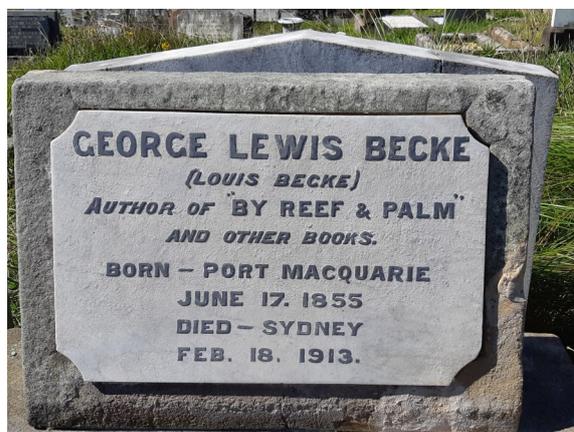
*The very core of any cemetery are the people who are buried in them. These individuals each have stories to tell; their lives made an impact on and helped mould and produce the society we are today. They deserve to have their stories told and they deserve to have their resting places acknowledged and cared for.*

## LOUIS BECKE HEADSTONE RESTORATION PROCESS

(by Allegra Marshall)

I've been tending Louis Becke's grave at Waverley Cemetery for over 35 years. Louis, our much underestimated Australian writer, is now finally "on the map"! A lot has happened since the mid 1980s - in particular in the last 5 years or so. Persistence pays off! Since meeting the first family member Anna Underwood, quite a few more family members have been emerging. I also became a member of the Friends of Waverley Cemeteries (FOWC). Then our wonderful, enthusiastic and persistent President, Gregory Ross took an interest in Becke and his books (Louis wrote almost 40) and now includes Louis on the Cemetery Tour. More recently we were lucky to find the most amazing stonemason in Sydney - David Asher Brook. David did more than the call of duty! He even fixed the cracked sandstone. Thank you to the FoWC for its financial contribution to the restoration of Louis Becke's headstone and Waverley Cemetery for processing the paperwork and permissions with alacrity. The final result speaks for itself and my dream has come true.

Two photos of the headstone (before and after) taken in Feb 2013 and in April 2021.



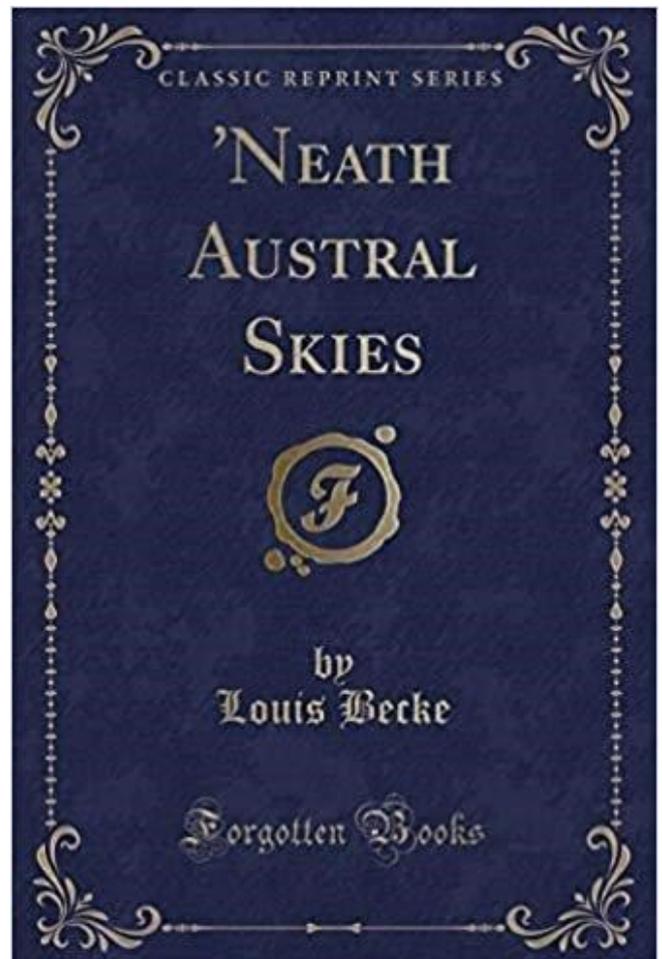
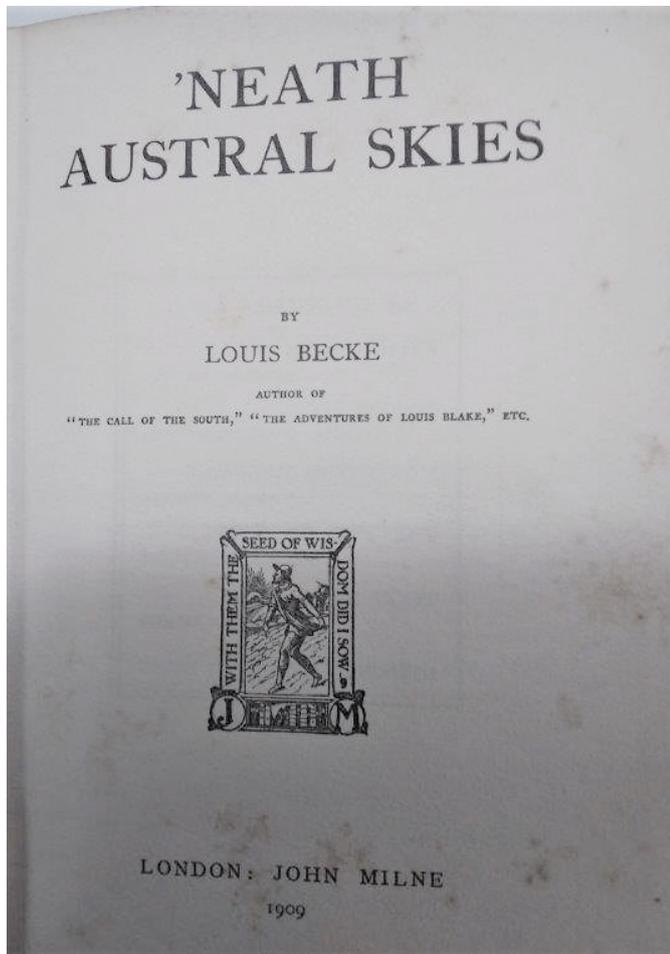
### Future Goal for Louis Becke gravesite

There are a number of plaques like Henry Lawson's (pictured below) around Waverley Cemetery and we would like to put a similar one on Louis Becke's gravesite. If anyone would like to contribute to this project (or to the grave restoration that was substantially funded by Becke family members) please contact Allegra Marshall on: [legropeoz@hotmail.com](mailto:legropeoz@hotmail.com)



## LOUIS BECKE STORIES SET IN EARLY PORT MACQUARIE AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT

SUMMARIES BY DAVID BAWDEN TAKEN FROM “’NEATH AUSTRAL SKIES” PUBLISHED IN 1909 BY JOHN MILNE, LONDON.



### An Adventure with "Grey Nurses"

Setting: Nobbys Beach at Port Macquarie.

This thirteen page story tells of an escaped convict who hid in the blowhole cave at Nobbys Beach and perished there in 1851. It also tells of the tragedy of the two school teachers who drowned there on New Year's Day in 1886, in front of their families and students. The story elaborates on the Memorial at the top of Nobbys.

The main story is set with fourteen Cornish miners who were digging for copper nearby. It tells of how their supervisor got himself into trouble whilst fishing at Nobbys when he fell into the hole and nearly was eaten by three grey nurse sharks who were stalking him.

### A Reminiscence of the Bush

Setting: Lake Innes, Port Macquarie.

This eleven page story tells the story of a man, who after chasing gold in North Queensland returns to the Pacific Islands. He returns to Port Macquarie and with an old friend works a mine finding very little gold and losing their invested money. On his journey home, the man comes across the old mansion which belonged to Major Innes. He meets one of the Innes's daughters who has lost her mind. She is waiting for her mother, father and brother to return.

## LOUIS BECKE STORIES SET IN EARLY PORT MACQUARIE AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT CONTINUED

### A Coastal Tramp

Setting: Along the coast around Nambucca Heads.

This nineteen page story is about a tramp who travels around the rivers and the bush surrounding the Nambucca area. He spends time with timber cutters at their camp, shooting and fishing with them. The tramp tells of the large numbers of snakes including the bandy-bandy snake which has black and white stripes and is poisonous.

### Captain Bolter's Escape

Setting: Port Macquarie

This eleven page story is of a son who was in the Merchant Navy and returns to Port Macquarie to see his mother. (Note: The son, Tom Drake is an alter ego of Becke, as is Tom Denison. They both appear in several of Becke's stories). Tom hears from his mother that a friend, an old Sea Captain called Sam Bolter, is now living in Port Macquarie. The Captain is engaged to a local woman with a very bad reputation. Tom takes it into his own hands to save his mate and scares off the woman's evil family.

### Lots O' Time

Setting: Port Macquarie

In this twenty one page story, the author gives is a general outline of Port Macquarie around the 1870-1880's period. He writes of the Old Cemetery (at the end of Horton Street) and how the residents thought that the cemetery was haunted by ghosts. Two of them were convicts who, whilst building a wall near the church, had quarreled. One killed the other with a spade then went to the cemetery and hung himself from a wild honeysuckle tree there. The third ghost was a young lady who used to visit her husband's grave every day at sunset. She had fallen asleep only to wake up with a large black snake lying across her knees. The shock was so bad that "she lost her reason and died a few days later!"

Over the summer months, the author writes that it was positively dangerous for anyone to walk about the cemetery due to the number of deadly black and brown snakes that infested the place. (One day he killed 7 and saw 20 more!)

At the exposed rocks at Town Beach, the author saw an octopus attack some people on the exposed rocks. It weighed over 40 pounds which is about 18 kilograms.

In the author's view, most of the residents in the 1880's at Lots O' Time (Port Macquarie) were "too lazy to live"!

*Photo of Port Macquarie Post and Telegraph office taken in the 1880's. It was taken about the time of Louis Becke visiting Port.*

*Image from "The changing face of Port Macquarie" by David Martin published 2017.*



## FROM THE TREASURER

### Memberships Due

You are reminded that a membership is from June to July yearly. **Membership funds are now due.** No need to fill out forms for renewals. Please make a direct transfer (with thanks) to:

**Louis Becke Society**  
**BSB 932-000 (Regional Australia Bank)**  
**A/C 500203408**

OR please send cheques/money orders to my postal address: 11 Rafael Crescent, Port Macquarie, NSW, 2444.

New members may like to contact the Treasurer for a membership form (dbawden77@gmail.com). There will be a membership form attached as well if you would like to forward on.

Membership costs - Adults \$20; Family \$30; Student \$15; Local Business \$100; Corporate \$250. New overseas members are able to transfer funds by **Xoom, a Pay Pal Service**. This will also be included on the Membership Form.

In these Covid Times, membership plus donations has been our main fund raiser. It has enabled us to buy a tent for outdoor promotions. These funds are vital to our ongoing promotion of Louis Becke and his achievements from the 1880's to 1913.

Thank you to all our current members for your ongoing support.  
Your contribution is very much appreciated.

David Bawden  
Treasurer

### **THE LOUIS BECKE SOCIETY (PORT MACQUARIE) INC** A NOT FOR PROFIT COMMUNITY PROJECT

To foster a greater recognition and understanding of the life and writing of the "adventurous" Australian author LOUIS BECKE, born Port Macquarie 1855 and died in 1913 in Sydney. Recognized internationally within his lifetime, he writes mainly about his 20 or so years travelling in the Pacific during the 1870's-90's as well as historical accounts of Colonial Australia.

The Louis Becke Society needs more members to be able to commence various short and long term projects. We would really appreciate it if our existing members could please recruit some new members!

Please contact David Bawden. [dbawden77@gmail.com](mailto:dbawden77@gmail.com)

*This Newsletter has been prepared and edited by Allegra Marshall & Anna Underwood and kindly typeset by Gregory Ross, (President of the Friends of Waverley Cemeteries; Waverley Cemetery is where Louis Becke is buried).*

*Louis Becke has many readers in Australia and around the world. His books are very collectable items. For general enquiries, please contact Allegra Marshall on [legropez@hotmail.com](mailto:legropez@hotmail.com) or Anna Underwood on [anna.underwood@bigpond.com](mailto:anna.underwood@bigpond.com)*