



## A CONVERSATION WITH BOB



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This is an abbreviated version of a book of the same name H004 also found in the Mission Beach Historical catalogue.

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This is an oral history of Bob Bolton who grew up in New South Wales and moved to Mission Beach in retirement. Available on our web page as H001.

Cover images:

Top: Bob Bolton on keyboard for the choir. Bottom: Mission Beach Arts Centre where Bob works regularly as a volunteer.

## A CONVERSATION WITH BOB

Meet Bob Bolton. Bob volunteers at the Mission Beach Community Arts Centre on a Thursday. Bob agreed to sit and have a chat with me and here is what I found out. Every Thursday from 10am to 2pm dedicated volunteer, Bob Bolton, helps in the Gallery Shop at Mission Beach Community Arts Centre.



**Bob Bolton, *Bob Bolton playing the electric piano-Mission Beach Singers, 2018, digital image, personal collection.***

Music has always been a part of Bob's life. His high school years were to have a profound influence on his artistic endeavours. His early years were spent moving and changing schools every few years. Bob found stability and thrived in his senior high school years.

My father worked in the government service, and he was regularly posted to substantial country towns and then back to Sydney and then a year or two later off to another country town. He was an inspector of weights and measures. Because my father went to Sydney High School it was decided that from second year on, I would be at Sydney High. And I stayed with aunts.<sup>1</sup>

Sydney High School has a long history in public education being the first public state high school in Australia, opening the doors in 1883. Moving to the old Moore Park Zoological Gardens, the present school was officially opened in 1928 on land formally known as 'Billy Goats Swamps' and later renamed 'Moore Park' after Charles Moore, the Mayor of Sydney City Council 1867-1869. The Girls School moved there in 1921. In the grounds of Sydney High,

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1. Robert Bolton, interviewed by Susan Foley, digital recording, 22 November 2018, in author's possession.

the sloping land and original infrastructure bear testament to its former role as a zoo.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

### 1950 Grounds 4

1950 School Grounds - Moore Park

Date: 17/08/2007

Size: 840x441

Full size: 1024x705



1950 School Grounds - Moore Park

Sydney Boys High School, *Media Collection-School Grounds-Moore Park*, <http://sydneyboyshigh.com/school/introduction/history>.



History of Sydney, 'Moore Park Zoo Bear Pit' Sydney Girls High School Grounds, <http://www.historyofsydney.com.au/moore-park-zoo>.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bolton, interview by Susan Foley

<sup>3</sup> 'History of Sydney,' Moore Park Zoological Gardens, <http://www.historyofsydney.com.au/moore-park-zoo/>, Accessed 12 December 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Centennial Parklands, 'History of Moore Park', <https://www.centennialparklands.com.au/visit/our-parks/moore-park/history-of-moore-park>, Accessed 12 December 2018.



Centennial Parklands, 'Moore Park's Zoo Colourful History', <https://www.centennialparklands.com.au/stories/2018/moore-park-zoo's-colourful-history>

Sydneysiders really know how to celebrate! Less than 5 ½ years after the victory celebrations and welcome-home parades at the end of World War II, Sydney and Australia were set to party again.



Andrew Catsaras, *The Dancing Man*, Sydney Australia, August 15, 1945, digital image.<sup>5</sup>

1951 was momentous for several reasons. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January the 50th anniversary of Australian Federation celebrations commenced. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April conscription begins as the first call up was

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<sup>5</sup> *Immortalised in a historical reel*. The Northern Star. Swan, Robert .13 April 2013, p1, Trove.

issued under National Service and on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, Robert Menzies retained power after a Federal election.<sup>6</sup>

The Jubilee celebrations were described as a year of rejoicing with bands, flags, guns; bonfires, fireworks, and military parades including historic plays and pageants; religious and cultural festivals; athletic games and vast sporting tournaments and a thousand other demonstrations.<sup>7</sup> Every school child received a commemorative medal.



Museums Victoria Collections, 50th Anniversary of Commonwealth of Australia Schools Medal 1951 (AD), digital image, Museums Victoria.

To kick off the year of celebrations, Sydney Showground next to Sydney High School held a New Years' Eve Party like no other. The Sydney Boys High School, also presented *Collit's Inn* as part of the jubilee celebrations the opening night on 26 September 1951 and closing 28 September 1951.<sup>8,9</sup> The Inn has strong associations with significant historical figures including the Governors Darling, and Bourke, inn keepers Pierce Collits and family, surveyors or road builders and early travellers.<sup>10,11</sup>

*Oh well I was always very keen on theatrics. And I took part in a school production of an Australian musical. The first ever commercially successful musical was in the 1930s and it was called Collits Inn, the famous inn on the way from Bathurst to Sydney. And I would like to be involved in musicals. However, it had to be a hobby rather than a life.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Australia Celebrates Opening of Jubilee Year*, *The Examiner*, 1 January 1951, p1, Trove.

<sup>7</sup> *1951 is Jubilee Year*, *The Sunday Herald*, 31 December 1950, p1, Trove.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick, *Whose turn to shout? The crisis in Australian musical theatre today.*, *Australasian Drama Studies*, 38, April 2001 pp16-28

<sup>9</sup> *Collin's Inn*, *The Record*, Sydney Boys High School, Surry Hills, NSW, 1951, p12.

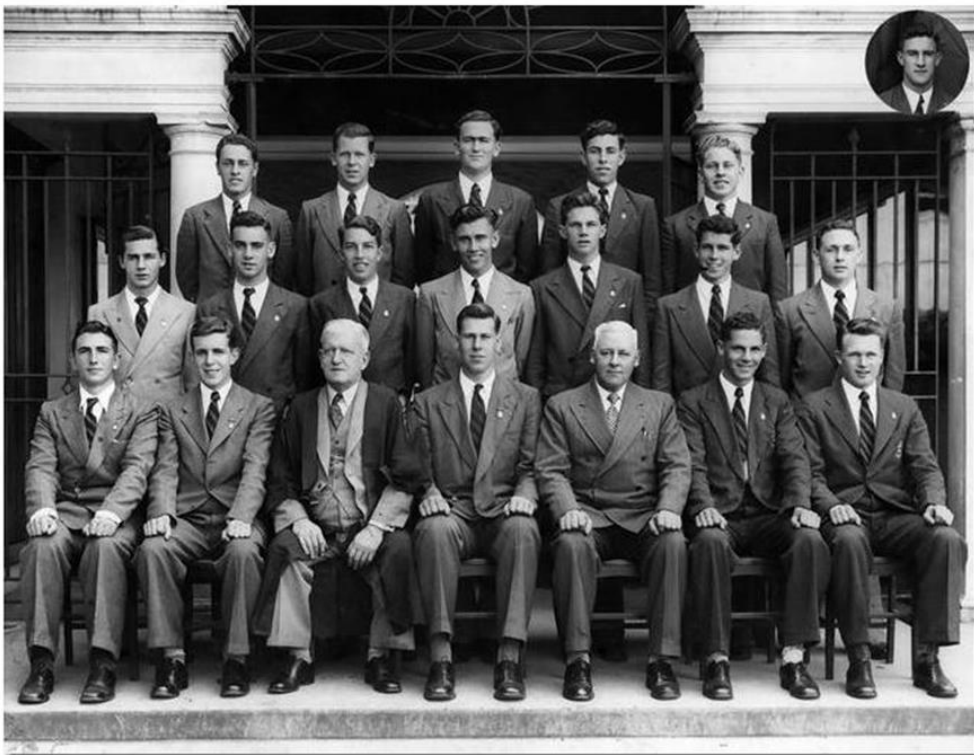
<sup>10</sup> Nancy Gray, 'Dumaresq, William John (1793–1868)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dumaresq-william-john-2239/text2447>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 14 December 2018.

<sup>11</sup> 'Collits, Pierce (1769–1848)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/collits-pierce-1914/text2273>, published first in hardcopy 1966, accessed online 14 December 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Bolton, interview by Susan Foley.



Edward Field's Hotel, (originally Joseph Collits Inn), 1846 Little Hartley, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.



Back Row: J.Donoghue, J.Woodcock, B.Lloyd, D.Denny, E.Coleman.  
Middle Row: A.Taylor, L.Brandon, W.Hazell, H.Smith, W.Leroy, J.McCabe, R.Clark.  
Front Row: R.Bolton, S.Hall (Vice Capt), G.Barr Esq.(Headmaster), M.Stuart (Captain), H.J.Hamnett (Master in Charge), R.Jenkin, W.Taylor,  
Inset C.Smee.

Source: L. Brandon

Sydney Boys High School, 'School Prefects-1953', digital image, [http://www.sydneyboyshigh.com/archives/media-collection/?g2\\_itemId=2062](http://www.sydneyboyshigh.com/archives/media-collection/?g2_itemId=2062), Accessed 11 December 2018.

Bob, the pragmatist, chose a life in the factory over the theatre.

*And then coming at the end of my high school years, I was apprenticed to a Scottish gentleman who was a chemist at Davis Gelatine. I ended up with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Chemistry and worked in the Asia Pacific establishing factories for Davis Gelatine.<sup>13</sup>*

The Davis Gelatine Company opened in Australia in 1917, in Botany near the Mascot abattoirs. The Davis brothers supported the Garden City movement and their factory gardens, when redeveloped, had parklands, tennis courts, bowling greens, a sunken garden and a courtyard garden.

Davis Gelatine continued to expand in Australia and internationally. Malcolm Davis took the business into sealants, paper conversion, food stabilisers and emulsifiers, PVC plastics compounding, gummed tapes and paper coating, wine production, and food essences and flavourings.

The Davis Botany plant was closed in 1990, and the company's interests were merged in Goodman Fielders and in Leiner Davis Gelatin Ltd, which in 1995 opened the successor plant to Botany at Beaudesert in Queensland.<sup>14</sup>



Alan Evans, 'Davis Gelatine Memorial Plaque Unveiled', 7 September 1953

On retirement Bob moved to Mission Beach after a successful career with Davis gelatine.

*I have had three musicals that reached the stage with 20 songs for a 4th one. I got halfway through the book and ran out of puff.*

*I'll get back to that. Having moved to Mission Beach, maybe we can get something started up here in a modest way.<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Bolton, interviewed by Susan Foley.

<sup>14</sup> R. Ian Jack, 'Davis, Sir George Francis (1883–1947)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davis-sir-george-francis-12878/text23261>, published first in hardcopy 2005, accessed online 29 November 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Bolton, interviewed by Susan Foley.

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