

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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october '84

Mark down in your calendar the 4th Saturday of each month which will be our regular meeting date: 10.30 a.m. (finishing by 12.30 p.m.) in the Aldermen's Room, Petersham Town Hall. Our meetings are never formal: there is always plenty of discussion and a break in the middle for people to get to know each other.

OUR NEXT FUNCTIONS

Saturday, October 27

Nick Vine Hall, Director of The Society of Australian Genealogists, will provide information and answer questions about how to research the history of your own family. We will also be able to discuss the history of some of the early pioneer families of our area. Make sure you don't miss hearing this articulate speaker who is an expert on the subject of genealogy.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

November 24

Learning about our locality through Council Archives

December-January

There will be no meetings



OUR LAST MEETING . . .

The emphasis at our first evening meeting was on the St Peter's area.

- Laurel Richardson, from the St Peter's Church History Committee, outlined what has been done to preserve the relics and records of St Peter's, the first church in Australia built (in 1838-39) by free labour. The Committee has set up a museum in the church to house old records, photos and objects such as an 1838 bell and an original sun-dried brick. The Committee also keeps the cemetery (in operation until 1896) in good order, answers queries about family history and is researching the history of the church.
- Admitting to a great fascination for maps, Bob Thompson plans to draw, rather than write, the history of the St Peter's area. Initially he will draw a flat topographical outline map for 1788 and then work up a series of overlays which will demonstrate the use and division of land at later dates, such as 1800, 1850. Bob's research suggests that the 1880s was a significant decade of subdivision for this locality. He believes that the expansion of the brickpits led to a change in the social composition of the suburb. Many of the gentlemen residents sold off their land and worker's cottages were built on smaller subdivisions.
- St Peter's has always been a unique and **well-defined area** dating from the original grant to Thomas Smyth. There's so much history buried in Bob's back yard (slate and other material from the grander houses of the area) that Bob gave up trying to grow vegetables some time ago.
- Drawing upon her wide fund of colourful stories about the early history of Marrickville and St Peter's, Chrys Meader, our indefatigable Secretary and Local History expert, did not disappoint her audience.
- Not everyone was aware that three teenage boys had drowned at Henson Park a long time ago in Daley's Brickpit. Prior to this the locals had dumped dead cows and horses in the derelict pits. Chrys speculated that archaeologists, excavating Marrickville in the year 3000, might theorise about some wierd rituals in the area.
- Chrys also told us about the 150 year old cedar saw (in the Local History Collection) used to cut down cedar trees on the property of large landholder Thomas Moore. Marrickville now appears to have only one remaining cedar tree, behind Ferncourt School.

- We also saw pictures of the castle built by Thomas Holt and his burial vault built in a small sandstone cave on the Cook's River. No one was actually buried there and all that remains of Thomas Holt's empire are two pillars which were re-erected in Richardson's Lookout, a small park in the Warren, in 1963. The vaults, now boarded up, have exercised the fertile imaginations of generations of students from Ferncourt School who have invented many stories about secret **tunnels** from the mansion to the vaults built so that Holt could escape (from the Russians?) to the river. No one has yet found the tunnels.

In the business meeting which followed it was decided that the Society should encourage Marrickville Council to apply for a grant from the Australian Bicentennial Authority to set up Council Archives in the old Council Chambers of the Petersham Town Hall. The President suggested that this would be an appropriate Bicentennial project because the Archives contained much information which would be of interest and value to the general public: the history of houses and streets, maps, letters to the Council from residents, information about past civic leaders, their programmes and policies, and the history of the 'development' of the area.

OUR LAST EXCURSION . . .

Despite a bitter wind and the usual dismal long weekend weather 12 hardy adults, 5 children and 1 baby spent an enjoyable day at Vaocluse House, witnessed a wedding in the gardens, lunched on the beach (but did not swim) at Nielsen Park and returned via the Gap.

FEATURE . . .

Our feature this week is a piece of Family History relating to the Gannon family.

'Who Killed Hannah Jane?' is the title of a book by Tom Molomby and a play screened recently on ABC TV. It is the story of a most unusual case. After being convicted of murdering his wife in 1921, Arthur Peden escaped the hangman as a result of the findings of a Royal Commission and due to the efforts of his counsel, James (Jim) Conley Gannon K.C., member of one of Marrickville's pioneer families. He was born in 1860 at Cook's River, son of coachbuilder Robert Gannon and grandson of Michael

Gannon. He was a member of the Legislative Council and NSW Attorney-General in 1904. Another family member, Barrister Archie McDonell, was also involved in the trials.



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Phyllis McCorquodale(759-5575), who is writing a thesis on dancing in the 1920s and 30s, would like to hear from any persons who might be able to help her with information or records.

St Peter's Church will hold a reunion of the Barden family on October 14 at the 10.00a.m. service. The occasion will also mark the anniversary of the Levi Barden Memorial Window. All are welcome to attend, and afterwards inspect the church, museum and graveyard.

Do you have any sections of our Newsletter that you particularly like or dislike? Constructive feedback is most welcome as is any news that you might want included.

NEW MEMBERS

Eileen Bell, Martin Carney, Lois Conway, Don & Jess Elvy, Bruce Hicks, Ivor Kelleway, Bill Kerameas, Kay Leecount, Jim Masselos. That makes 64 paid-up members. Yes, the Editor can count! Our September total should have been 54 and not 50 as was published.

New members are always welcome but we must offer a special welcome to Bruce Hicks, Bandmaster extraordinaire at the Christian Brothers High School, Lewisham. The school band has been state champions for the past 5 years and were national champions (Australian School Band) in 1982. It's good to see the tradition of brass bands maintained in our area. We used to have a Marrickville Municipal Band but all that's left is an inscribed drum in the Local History Collection.

We also welcome Alderman and Mrs Don Elvy as new members and congratulate Mike Walsh, who was also elected Alderman. Mike joined the Society last month. We are a non-political organisation so there is plenty of room for our other civic leaders, of whatever political persuasion, to join or visit us.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Anne Carolan, Richard Cashman (Editor), Chrys Meader, Gregory Robertson (Layout). Contact us through Chrys(569-1816) at Marrickville Library, Marrickville Town Hall.

