

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE & PARTS OF

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
CAMPERDOWN HURLSTONE PARK NEWTOWN



2000 CALENDAR OF MHS EVENTS

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY

Let us break their bonds asunder:

Tales from the Divorce Court NSW 1873-1920 with Angela Phippen.

Details in February newsletter

SATURDAY 25 MARCH

Chrys Meader on history of Henson Park & Glenn Bumper Dwyer on history of the Newtown Jets.

(prelude to Heritage Festival 1-9 April
Sport & Leisure in Marrickville)

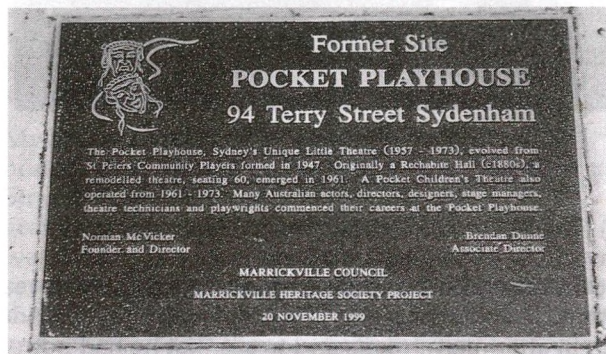
SATURDAY 29 APRIL

Bus tour to the Nan Tien Buddhist Temple Berkeley and more.

POCKET PLAYHOUSE (1947-1973)

PLAQUE UNVEILING 20 NOVEMBER

Terry Street Tempe (formerly Sydenham) had not seen such a gathering since November 1973 when Sydney's unique little theatre the Pocket Playhouse closed. On 20 November over 70 people – former theatre associates, locals and MHS members – gathered for the unveiling ceremony. MHS President Robert Hutchinson pointed out the rarity of such plaques to former Sydney theatres in introducing founder/director Norman McVicker.



Pocket Playhouse plaque in situ (photo: Ed Jones)

ONE THOUSAND YEARS AGO "Christians throughout Europe throng the churches, often surrendering jewels and even waggon-loads of belongings in the hope of being in a state of grace on Judgement Day. Many are astonished that the world does not end on 31 December. In fact the millennium ends at the close of the year 1000, not 999" (Castleden *World History: A chronological dictionary of dates* 1994). **The president and executive trust all members enjoy the unofficial new millennium celebrations anyway and have a Joyous Christmas and Happy New Year.**

The first interviews in our **Marrickville District Oral History Project** will be occur over summer. Interviewees will be contacted by phone and letter. For information about the project contact Marilyn on 9569 0959.

IF YOU OVERLOOKED PAYING YOUR FEES you should receive a reminder slip with this newsletter. If payment not received by late January, this will be your final newsletter. Fees in box below.

HOW TO JOIN THE SOCIETY

Ring treasurer Diane 9588 4930 for information or a brochure, or simply send a cheque or money order with name/s, address & phone number to Marrickville Heritage Society PO Box 415 Marrickville 1475.

Annual membership is only \$10 concession \$16 individuals or joint concession and \$22 households or organisations. There is a monthly newsletter and our journal *Heritage*; talk or outing on fourth Saturday each month. We are a thriving, proactive organisation keeping watch on the built and natural heritage of the Marrickville LGA.

Norman spoke about the early days and philosophy of the theatre expressed in a popular song "make your own kind of music even if nobody sings along". The number of people involved with the theatre (including patron May Hollinworth, a contemporary director) in every possible way was staggering, only matched by Norman's amazing ability to adlib and recall these manifold contributions. Norman sees the plaque as a memorial to all those who played a part in the Pocket.

Norman invited Brett Johnson who, encouraged by his aunt Joy Lewis, frequented the Pocket as a child and is now Arts adviser to the Premier, to unveil the plaque. Brett expressed his admiration for theatre people in that "the magic you get from theatrical experiences is rarely matched in real life or by the other Arts." Brett insisted "Uncle" Norman co-unveil the plaque – the veil being the theatre banner which flew from one of the three flagpoles in front of the theatre.

At St Peters Town Hall over champagne afternoon tea, theatre memorabilia was on show, a memory book circulated and old friendships renewed. Thank you Marrickville Council for input (unfortunately not one Council representative attended), Geraldine O'Brien (Herald), Bob Hughes (Radio 2BL) and Adrian Nesbitt (The Glebe) for publicity, site owner Gabriele Famler for endorsing our proposal, Sofianto Li for making the video, the MHS committee for organising the event and above all Norman McVicker for your unstinting drive and inspiration. A wonderful day of reunion, memory and celebration.

Richard Blair

POCKET PLAYHOUSE APPRECIATIONS

1) I write in appreciation of the efforts which culminated in the unveiling ceremony at the site of the former Pocket Playhouse. I felt a powerful sense of shared experience. For me, the Pocket Playhouse provided opportunities for both professional and personal development. You are to be congratulated for acknowledging what is essentially intangible – the product of collective imagination.

Stephen Riley (who learnt about the event in the SMH & has joined MHS)



*Joy Lewis & Norman McVicker
at St Peters Town Hall (photo: Richard Blair)*

2) Thank you for inviting me to be present at the unveiling of the plaque to commemorate the Pocket Playhouse and its long history in Terry Street. It was wonderful to see Norman McVicker again after many years, and to see that he had not changed a bit. His memory seems remarkable for a man who, he tells me, is nearly eighty. I thought it was an amazing feat for anyone to talk for almost an hour without notes. Mind you, I don't recall him ever being lost for words.

I promised to write something for the book you were passing around. I couldn't apply myself to the task on Saturday as I had too much catching up to do with old friends I hadn't seen for maybe 30 years. I was a Stanmore girl, working at Marrickville Library in 1961 when the Chief Librarian, Frances Charteris* talked me into auditioning for the Pocket Playhouse. I went to an open reading, and the play Norman had decided to do as the theatre's contribution to the Municipality of Marrickville Centenary Year Celebrations was Terrence Rattigan's *The Sleeping Prince*. I don't remember being nervous when I had to read, but I certainly nearly fell through the floor when I found I had been given the female lead role, that of the showgirl, Mary Morgan.

The part had originally been written for Vivien Leigh, the famous English actress who will be remembered forever for her performance as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*. She was the former wife of Sir Lawrence Olivier and they had performed together many times on stage and in film. She was visiting Australia again with the Old Vic Theatre Company at the same time we were doing *The Sleeping Prince* and it is now common knowledge that she attended a performance at the

Pocket with her companion and new leading man, John Merivale.

What nobody knows is how nervous we all were. Hands were shaking too much to deal with props, and pins went into flesh instead of fabric. God only knows how we got through the night but we did. After the show we all assembled on stage for a photograph to be taken of Norman with the cast and the fabulous star. I still have the photograph and if you look very, very closely, you can just see my feet. The rest of me was totally obscured by the gorgeous mink-clad Vivien Leigh. Which is pretty much how I felt on the night.

I often think of the Saturdays when I would work from nine to noon at Marrickville Library, put on my makeup in a cab on the way to a performance of a children's play, doing I think, two shows in an afternoon, then all the cast ordering a Chinese meal to eat in the dressing room before changing our makeup for a different production that night. The theatre was our life. It had to be. We have to thank Norman McVicker for the training he gave us and for his own incredible dedication to the theatre.



Noeline Brown, Kevin Peatfield, Peter Potok (partly obscured) & David Brown (photo: Verona Rothwell)

I do remember a performance of *Hansel & Gretel* where the wicked witch fell off the top of a ladder, onto the point of her witch's hat, causing her to utter a very unusual word to be heard in a children's play in Sydney in 1963. It also made a mess of her hat. And I was reminded on Saturday that in the same play, Hansel played by John Gillies, and I as Gretel, used to select children from the audience to share the cage in which the witch kept her victims to fatten them up for her cooking pot. On one occasion a little boy found show business just too overwhelming and he showed his distress by creating the most enormous puddle all over the stage. I will always remember the Pocket Playhouse with great affection and Norman with great respect and gratitude.

Noeline Brown

* Frances is a MHS member living in Queensland

3) It was such a pleasure to be invited to, and to attend, the ceremony last Saturday afternoon to commemorate the site of the Pocket Playhouse. I compliment the Society for their initiative in this

project and Richard Blair deserves special mention for his interest and care in his organisation of the function and for such a pleasant realisation of plans which I believe date back to August 1998. The plaque is an eloquent and fitting way to memorialise those whose efforts helped to establish the unique quality of this small, but vital, component of the theatrical history of Sydney.

I remember it was said that people should walk over broken glass to get to this theatre because of the endeavour, sincerity, and quality of the productions. And listening to Norman's speech on Saturday, which included his roll call of those who had been involved in the formation and growth of the Pocket, brought back many happy memories, some sad, but all of them suffused with a sense of pride at having had the chance to be a small part of that number.

Barry Zietsch

4) I have very happy memories of my association with Noprman and the Pocket so it's wonderful that a plaque has been unveiled. For many of us who work in Show Business professionally it was a very important and prestigious training ground.

Max Donithorne-Sims

5) My love for theatre and the Arts began and was fostered at the Pocket. Whatever talent I may have had as a director was instilled in me in Norman's small theatre (from Memory Book).

John Gillies

6) Well worth commemorating the Pocket Playhouse – one of the cradles of Australian culture (from Memory Book).

Bob Marshall

WAR MEMORIALS PROJECT UPDATE

As indicated in our last newsletter MHS received a Heritage Office grant for local history and archives in support of heritage administered by the RAHS under the Heritage Assistance Program for \$750 to survey, transcribe and publish the *War Memorials of St Peters* with associated material. No money will actually be received until it can be shown the grant has been appropriately spent. The project refers to the memorials of the former St Peters Council area incorporating St Peters, Sydenham and Tempe.

We are still collecting material for the entire LGA with subsequent planned publications covering the former Council areas of Marrickville, Newtown and Petersham, order yet to be determined. Memorial boards are being found not only on walls but often in storage, in disused halls and under stairwells. These memorials have been removed at some stage, but not replaced, or replaced by a new rendition of the former boards, as at Petersham RSL. We hope to record every known local memorial, with the former St Peters municipality having first priority. Anyone knowing of such boards or other memorials in the LGA can advise coordinator Angela Phippen (9280 2429).

Many members heard Angela speak about our project at the last AGM. Angela recently addressed the Department of Veteran Affairs Conference at The Powerhouse Museum and the South Sydney Heritage Society in Newtown, focussing on specific issues relating to the quest for war memorials. With waning church populations and new church congregations of diverse ethnic persuasion taking over, one cannot expect the same level of interest by new congregations. Angela advocates a **statewide and possibly a nationwide database be established before data is lost forever**. This would also enable material collected in the Marrickville area to be compared with memorials from other areas.

SOCIETY SNIPPETS

* Vice president **Peter Cousens** again hosted our **annual Pot Luck Dinner** on Saturday 4 December – a wonderful evening of conviviality and gastronomic delights. It was especially pleasing to see Joyce and Fred Ellis again. Thank you Angela and David for your fantastic kitchen management and Peter for again allowing us to enjoy the ambience of your Newtown home.

* Incidentally, congratulations Peter on coming third in Council's **annual Spring Garden Competition** for "Best small garden".

* **Raffle winners** were Ellie McKenzie (Diana pottery donated by Robert Hutchinson), Audrey Furney (liqueur muscat from Peter Cousens) and Fred Ellis (heritage jam from Pip Preston).

* Thanks to those who donated goods or assisted on our **Newtown Festival stall on Sunday 14 November** – Robert Hutchinson, Peter Cousens, Richard Blair, Shirley Hilyard, Ellie McKenzie, Ina Penning, Joyce & Fred Ellis, Sue Miller, Pip Preston and Gwenda Welsh.

* Congratulations to MHS founding member **Chrys Meader** on her appointment to Manager Library Services Marrickville Library. Chrys has had a long association with the library and was its first local studies librarian.

* Welcome to new local studies librarian **Antoinette Buchanan**. Antoinette has broad library experience, lives locally and has joined MHS. She would love to hear from members on 9335 2170.

* We commend Marrickville Council on its new-look **Marrickville Matters**, though distribution still remains a problem with many parts of the LGA rarely, if ever, getting deliveries.

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HERITAGE WATCH

* MHS has lodged a further submission in response to the heritage report commissioned by Council for the former **Eversleigh Hospital site** in Petersham, which makes no mention of adaptive reuse and shows no regard for buildings of heritage value. Clearly it is the Hospital Trustees' objective to *optimise financial return*. But it is surprising that the heritage survey seems to have adopted this objective as well.

* Heritage Watch committee members attended two recent park management community consultation meetings:

a) Issues relating to dog owners – major park users – dominated the meeting over **Camperdown Memorial Rest Park** on 29 November, whilst heritage-related matters concerning the cemetery and surrounding walls left too many unanswered questions. The planned three wall openings may increase vandalism and impact on remnant vegetation.

b) The HW committee strongly supports Council's proposals for the **Marrickville Golf Course and associated parks** (meeting 1 December) and encourages interested members to inspect the proposed management plan at Council and provide written submissions. Proposals include creating a public walkway / cycleway ten metres from the river bank.

* Whilst some members are still angered at the alterations to Walter Liberty Vernon's exquisite **Newtown Post Office**, at least the sandstone sills and string course are being reinstated. Its still a mystery why the changes were made especially as piled against the enlarged windows inside are stacks of paper – not the most inspiring sight!

* Further down Erskineville Road is the **1928 Erskineville Post Office** soon to be demolished for a three storey building with three shops, including post office, and six units above. Part of the facade will be retained along with the public forecourt; permission for overhanging verandahs was refused. This was characteristic of many 1920s post offices "designed in a restrained Georgian Revival idiom punctuated by classical elements around the main entrance." Go see it before it is PO'd.

* It's not quite in our area, but someone needs to keep watch! The delightful 1938 art deco statue **Imhotep** has been removed from its plinth outside Gloucester House RPA Hospital, Camperdown. We have been informed that Imhotep (see October 1995 newsletter) has been put in storage for safety reasons during the current hospital renovations.

* The renaming of Petersham Pool to the **Fanny Durack Petersham Pool** is a fitting tribute to our first female Olympic gold medallist who lived the last 30 years of her life in Douglas Street Stanmore. Fanny was honoured by MHS in an article by Richard Cashman in *Heritage* 4 (1988); and in the Mary Haire play *Dive Divas* about Fanny and Annette Kellerman performed at both this and the Annette Kellerman Enmore pools earlier this year.

* A giant brickbat to the Australian Board of Control for allowing the name of the 106 year old **Sheffield Shield** to be changed to *The Pura Milk Cup* – a cow of a thing to do, but beautifully satirised by Leunig ("Christmas will now be called *King Calypso Cordials*, New Years Eve *Pressure Ace Hydraulic Hoses* and summer renamed *Big Horizon Asphalt Supplies*").

* After three sleep-interrupted nights watching our boys beat the Frogs, the editor recommends the Davis Cup be renamed the *NoDoze Pep-up Iron Person Scud Woodies Cup*!

2000 MARRICKVILLE MEDAL

The Marrickville Medal is awarded annually during the Heritage Festival by Council's Heritage Promotions Committee to recent building or conservation work which contribute to the cultural heritage of Marrickville. Eligible works for the 2000 Medal should have a public or commercial focus and include restoration or adaptive reuse projects, buildings that have been restored, conserved or renovated during the last three years. They may have undergone minor or substantial alterations or it may be a completely new building. Single buildings or groups are also eligible. Residential projects are **not** eligible this time, but will be in 2001.

Anyone may nominate a project, with the property owner's permission, and previous unsuccessful nominations may be re-entered. **Nominations close Friday 3 March 2000.** The Marrickville Medal will be presented during the Heritage Festival on 2 April 2000. For nomination forms and further information contact Council's Heritage Officer Catherine Macarthur on 9335 2114.

Rachel Jackson (Convenor Medal Panel)

SUMMER TRIVIA QUESTIONS

a) What Marrickville LGA landmark and well known brand of sportsgear have the same name?

b) John was born in Marrickville. Three people in this 1953 family photo achieved fame in Hollywood. Who are we? (Mystery prize for correct answers to Richard 9557 3823.)





Shirley Hilyard receives Certificate of Achievement from Heritage Council Chair Hazel Hawke October RAHS conference as reported in November newsletter (photo: Mari Metzke)

DOWN MEMORY LANE: LeCLOS LANE MARRICKVILLE

The dead end lane running off Sydenham Road between Silver Street and Illawarra Road had never been named. It was the lane running behind our house at Silver Street when I was born in 1944. However it was over 30 years earlier that Marrickville became part of our family story.

My mother's family moved to Marrickville from Narrabri shortly after my mother was born in 1910 and for the next 20 years lived in various houses in Victoria Road, Illawarra Road and Calvert Street. My mum could remember as a young girl seeing her uncle march past the old Marrickville Town Hall in Illawarra Road on his way overseas to fight in World War I. My mother and father met at a carnival in Enmore Park. Mum was working at the Metropolitan Knitting Mills and Dad at Malleable Castings Foundry. They were married in St Clements Church in 1932 and moved into the house in Silver Street not long after my brother was born in 1933.

I can remember as a child Mum would do her best to stop me playing in the dirt and stone lane, but we kids loved our lane. It was the lane we rode our bikes in. I can't remember a car in the lane then. It was the lane where we built our bonfire and let our crackers off on Empire day. The lane had stables where the horses from the Emery and Bradshaw bakery on the corner of Illawarra and Sydenham Roads were housed. My brother had the job of feeding the horses and cleaning out their stalls after school and weekends.

During the 1950s when I was about ten and attending Marrickville boys primary school at the old town hall in Illawarra Road, my father became live-in caretaker of the two storey residence-bakery. It had four bedrooms and two big living rooms separated by huge wooden folding doors. So down the lane, across Sydenham Road and into the bakery we went. My brother started working there as a baker and with the fourth bedroom it

meant my grandmother could come and live with us.

My grandmother loved the pictures and now that she was living with us, would often take me with her for company. We went to all the cinemas within walking distance – the *Kings* down the bottom of Marrickville Road, *Hoyts* in Illawarra Road and now that we lived the other side of Sydenham Road, we even went to the cinema in Addison Road on the corner of Wemyss Street, since demolished.

The weeks leading up to Christmas were always a good time. Hams were wrapped in thick dough and baked in the ovens all night. During the days along with the breads, Christmas cakes were baked. The smell of the hams and cakes was just mouth-watering. During the Christmas school holidays I was often allowed to go and help on the delivery carts. In those days we would not only deliver bread to the shops but also home-deliver even one loaf of bread every day just like the milkman would home-deliver a bottle of milk. It didn't take long for trucks to replace the horses and carts. Then the lane was tarred over and the stables sold. A factory now stands where the stables were.

My brother married his sweetheart who lived six houses up the lane from us when we lived in Silver Street. As the 1950s came to a close, my grandmother died. During the 1960s the bakery was taken over, sold and then demolished. A service station was built on the land and is still there. Mum and Dad bought their own little home and we moved all the way back to Silver Street; back to the neighbours and lane we knew so well. The lane now provided rear entry to our backyard for the family Austin.

I was at Dulwich Hill High School. Mum went back to work for "Pauls", a small knitting mill in Chapel Street, and Dad started work for the SCC at their Buckley Street depot. It was while Dad was working for the SCC that the lane finally got two streetlights. Some of the neighbours had already left Marrickville for a "nicer and cleaner place to live" when in 1969 my father died suddenly. Mum continued to live in Silver Street for the next 28 years joining the Marrickville Combined Pensioners and was elected President, a post she held for many years, and was awarded the NSW Premiers Award for her work in 1992.

Mum died in April 1998 aged 87. After her death her neighbours went to Council to have the unnamed lane behind her house named in memory of my Mum and Dad who lived all those years in Marrickville, the place they liked so much. LeClos Lane was passed by Council and the sign was attached to one of the two light poles the week before Christmas 1998.

Wayne LeClos

Gourmet Australia Day lunch including drinks and coffee at Darling Mills Restaurant, Glebe organised by Australiana Society outlined in last newsletter has been adjusted down to \$60 a head. Details Ian 9888 1409.

OUR LAST MEETING SUMMER HILL WALK

Although overcast Saturday 27 November was a pleasant day for strolling the streets of Summer Hill (and part of Ashfield). We gathered at the former post office, a delightful Federation Freestyle building, to join our guides architectural historian Bob Irving and Chris Pratten of the Ashfield & District Historical Society.

Chris took great pains to dispel the old theory (incorrectly repeated in last newsletter) that the name of the suburb is a corruption of *Sunning Hill* originally a 1803 property owned by Henry Kable. That land now comprises the suburbs of Haberfield and Dobroyd Point. First use of the name *Summer Hill* within the present boundaries was the Richardson & Wrench land subdivision of 1876.

Our walk included three very different churches, two of which were accredited by our guides as co-holders of the *Ashfield's Finest Building* crown. The first was the Victorian Academic Gothic St Andrews (Stage 1 1885, Stage 2 and tower 1905, A L Elphinstone Jr Architect) which is a joy to behold both inside and out. It is a marvel of fine brickwork (blond and red) with sandstone dressings and columns. A splendid triple arch divides the sanctuary from the nave.

The other was the Inter-War Romanesque Chapel of the Good Shepherd (1940-1942, Clement Glancy Architect) within Cardinal Freeman Village. Internally this is a large T-shaped plan with painted walls and barrel-vaults. It is astonishing that something of such size and quality could have been erected during the War years! We have attended an excellent performance of Handel's *Messiah* here and the acoustics are equally superb. You have heard, occasionally, of churches being converted into dwellings? Well, St Patrick's church is not only the oldest extant building in the suburb but was, in fact cleverly converted from an 1874 house.

Other highlights of the day included visits to the two storey Victorian-Italianate house *Hillcrest* (1890) where we experienced the delights of Chris' nearly completed restoration. Then to the marvellous Federation-Queen Anne house *Buninyong* (1900) where restoration is still in hand. Here hosts John and Caroline Stott treated us to a sumptuous morning tea.

Those who missed the walk can purchase the A&DHS book *Summer Hill* edited by Chris Pratten (\$20 from Summer Hill newsagents). Our sincere thanks to Bob and Chris for sharing their knowledge, expertise and infectious enthusiasm, and to the Stott family for their bountiful hospitality.

Rob Allen & Peter Witt

BOOK CORNER

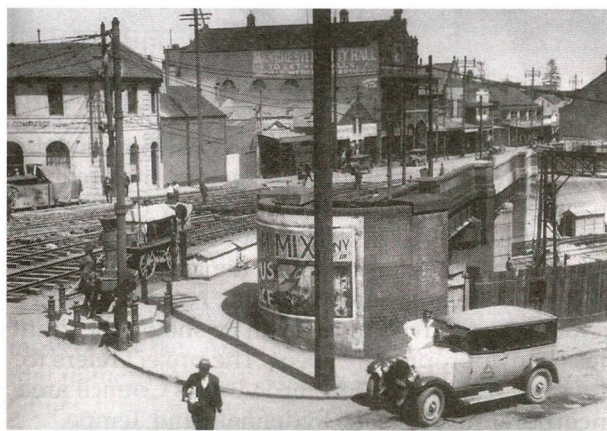
* Strathfield Council and the authors invite MHS members to see Jeff Angel from the Total Environment Centre launch *Missing Jigsaw Pieces – Bushplants of the Cooks River Valley* (\$11.95) by Doug Benson, Danie Ondinea and Virginia Bear at 5 for 5.30 pm on Wednesday 15 December at Ford Park (off James Street) Strathfield South. Doug, author and Senior Plant Ecologist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, has spoken twice to the Society. Danie is a habitat consultant and member of our Heritage Watch committee. The book will be available from Marrickville Council, the Royal Botanic Gardens and at next year's MHS meetings (only \$10 for members).

* * * * *

* *A Pictorial History of Canterbury Bankstown* (\$19.95 published by Kingsclear Books) co-written by Joan Lawrence, Brian Madden and Lesley Muir (all MHS members) will be launched on Thursday 16 December at 10.30 am at Canterbury Library, 14 Amy St Campsie. RSVP Chris King 9789 9380.

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* And hot off the press also published by Kingsclear Books in its excellent pictorial history series is Alan Sharpe's *Pictorial History of Newtown* (\$24.95). This title somewhat redresses the lack of publications on Newtown recently, but it also covers Alexandria, Camperdown, Darlington, Erskineville, Macdonaldtown, St Peters and Waterloo. Splendid large, old photographs are complemented by informative text. Perhaps we will see a Marrickville area book sometime!



Relaying tram lines at Newtown Bridge 1927 looking down Enmore Road (State Rail Authority)

PRESIDENT Robert 9568 3079

TREASURER Diane 9588 4930

HERITAGE WATCH Scott 9559 5736

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT Marilyn 9569 0959

WAR MEMORIALS PROJECT Angela 9280 2429

HERITAGE 11 Mark 9559 5502

NEWSLETTER Richard 9557 3823