

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
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MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
CAMPERDOWN HURLSTONE PARK NEWTOWN

OUR NEXT MEETING SHOW AND TELL

Petersham Town Hall

Saturday 25 November 10.30 am

In our homes we all have items of historical or sentimental value – family heirlooms, memorabilia, photos, china etc – that in the event of a fire, would be the first objects to be saved. Some of us may own things that are just plain weird – bought at a garage sale because they were cheap, picked up at a rubbish tip because we were curious, or inherited because we happened, unluckily, to be the last of the line.

For our next *Show and Tell* members are invited to bring along an item (or items), explain its significance or maybe ask what it is. It may relate to the local area or just be significant to you. For **newer members** this is a good chance to meet other members in an informal setting that will be interesting and lots of fun. We will serve morning tea. Our inimitable compere Angela Phippen will keep things moving and award prizes in several mystery categories.

OPENING OF EVE SHARPE RESERVE

Former MHS patron Eve Sharpe was honoured by the renaming of the Liberty Street Reserve Stanmore to the Eve Sharpe Reserve at a ceremony on 14 October. Following speeches by Marrickville Mayor Barry Cotter, local State member and Deputy Premier Dr Andrew Refshauge, Eve's niece Olga Jackson, long time friend Lu Bell and MHS President Peter Cousens, a plaque was unveiled. The plaque, set in sandstone beautifully carved with Australian wildflowers, is a fitting tribute to Eve. Among those also present were Eve's niece Emily Rose, sculptor Cliff Axelsen, past and present councillors, council staff, neighbours and several MHS members.

WELCOME T.O NEW MEMBERS

Anne Morgan, Dulwich Hill; Keith Smith, Lewisham; Pam Clay & John Wright, Derek Hampton, Norma Hayman (rejoined) all of Marrickville; Deborah Croke, Lawson Lobb & Jill Harris, Therese Moryosef, all of Stanmore; Alex Sikkes, Arncliffe; Margaret Broadfoot, Cremorne; Rosalind Torrent, Earlwood.

Some good news that will help combat mediocrity in the design of flats – **any development of three storeys or over will need to be designed by accredited architects** under proposals put forward by Premier Bob Carr. He referred to "lousy, flat design ... [and that] many were bad and getting worse". Marrickville LGA has its fair share of these eyesores!

XMAS POT LUCK DINNER

Saturday 2 December 6 for 6.30 pm

Our annual members Pot Luck Christmas Dinner will be at Bob Hayes' charming Victorian home in Tempe. Close to 422 bus and Sydenham station. Book with Angela or David (9280 2429 after hours) to advise what food you will bring, get address and notify if you require a lift. Barbecue facilities available. BYO drinks. Should be a top night!

TRETHAWAY UP FOR AUCTION

The 1896 heritage-listed Italianate mansion *Trethaway Gardens* in Shaw Street Petersham is to be auctioned this month. This magnificent two storey villa was built by engineer John Britton who called it *Paritana*. His daughters renamed it *Te Whare*, which was later changed to *Trethaway*. A long time function centre, it was the venue for the Society's tenth birthday celebrations in April 1994. The building, which sold for \$1.551 million in May 1998, is of high social and architectural significance.



Trethaway (from Matheson's *Victorian Villas of Newtown/Marrickville*)

Despite assertions that *Trethaway* was built by the Britons of Briton's Brewery, *The Breweries of Australia: A History** (reviewed in October newsletter) mentions neither. British Breweries, later Miller's Brewery, made Briton's Lager from 1935. (Charles Britten ran the Royal Standard Brewery at Tamworth reputed in 1914 to be the largest brewery in NSW outside Sydney. It went into liquidation in 1921. Britten's Brewery operated in Tamworth 1988-94.)

* Retail price of *The Breweries of Australia* has dropped from \$65 to the much more accessible \$29.95!

MHS receives \$2000 RAHS grant: see page three

OUR LAST MEETING COOKS RIVER VALLEY BUSHPLANTS

First the talk . . .

Plant ecologist **Doug Benson**, co-author of *Missing Jigsaw Pieces: Bushplants of the Cooks River Valley**, addressed our Saturday 28 October meeting, using slides, exploring different parts of the Cooks River Valley, looking for remnants and clues of botanical survivors. His surprise at being able to smell the sea when he moved to Hurlstone Park sparked Doug's interest in the Cooks River bushplants. Nature seemed to pervade quietly despite urban settlement and environmental blunders.

Using "extrapolation based on an understanding of the ecological process" (p11), Doug researched and investigated the history of Cooks River and its uses, descriptions and pictorial evidences. He created a comprehensive picture of change in the river's life, from the first visitors' impressions to the foreshore regeneration successes that are now being realised through careful implementation.

Against a backdrop of environmental degradations and subsequent attempts at "improvements", Doug presented some pockets of the Cooks River that have retained and regained some of their former vegetation and the subsequent return to habitat by an increasing variety of birds and other wildlife – the yardstick by which botanists and foreshore regenerators measure their success. He is delighted about the changes that have brought some of the essence of Cooks River and its relationship to the shores and the land it runs through back to life.



Seedlings of Grey Mangrove & seed pods of Sweet-scented Wattle (Drawings: Virginia Bear)

Some original "missing pieces" include Eucalypts (such as Stringybark, Swamp Mahogany, Blackbutt), Acacias and She Oak. Doug bemoaned the recent removal of a magnificent remnant Blackbutt on Marrickville Golf Course. Smaller survivors are Kangaroo Grass, Ferns, Mangroves, Native Cranberries, Tea-tree, Reeds and Bulrushes.

The wonderful thing is that the River is never homogenous through the landscape; it changes as you go along. There are salt marshes, swamps, banks, boulders, mangroves and clearings as well as forests, and evidence in some sections of what has always been there. Particular locales of Cooks River had particular species of vegetation that preferred not to spread too far from their habitats. Finding such remnants still colonising these

locations just shows how hardy these plants are. It seems thousands of years of survival in sometimes harsh Australian conditions readied them for the onslaught of rapid environmental change and urbanisation since early settlement. Doug's talk was a fascinating and enlightening adventure of nature's surprises in our own backyard.

Jan Armstrong

Then the walk . . .

At Girrahween Park, Earlwood after a picnic lunch about three dozen members accompanied co-authors **Danie Ondinea** and **Virginia Bear** on a ramble through Wolli Creek Valley, the largest remnant of bushland in the area and described by Danie as "conveniently beautiful". The Valley is home to migratory and breeding birds and other small animals, and was once home to wallabies and kangaroos. We saw Sydney Peppermints, Turpentine, Sunshine Wattle, Geebung and also "big bad Banksia men"; a wonderful understorey of Bracken Fern, Sarsaparilla, Dianella and shrubby Heath.

Then brief visits to Gough Whitlam Park Undercliffe to view mudflats, Grey Mangrove and other saltmarsh species on a small island; and Marrickville Golf Course near the clubhouse to see sandstone vegetation heath, Weeping Meadow Grass and Dusky Coral Pea, which the casual observer might overlook; our informative commentary broken by sighting an elegant flock of birds above. The upstream Campsie remnant off Second Avenue, formerly Water Board owned land, was a fitting finale with a wonderful variety of native plants. Thank you Danie and Virginia for showing us what Doug had so eloquently described in the morning talk. A wonderful day!

Diane McCarthy

* *Missing Jigsaw Pieces* \$10 at MHS meetings; \$13.10 normal retail price

Jan Orton, Marrickville Council's Environmental Officer is after **historical human interest stories or anecdotes on Cooks River** for a newsletter. If you can help, ring Jan Armstrong (MHS Oral History Group) on 9557 1655.

From the September 2000 Jessie Street National Women's Library Newsletter – "**Sheila Swain** has been honoured by having a building at the Charles Sturt University in Bathurst named after her. She was also one of the committee who raised money to buy historic Vienna Cottage, built in 1871, and have it opened to the public. It is the only tradesman's cottage left standing in Hunters Hill." Sheila, MHS member, facilitated the Society's visit to Vienna Cottage in March 1997.

MEMBER NAME TAGS

Many members were once issued with name tags, which have been lost or mislaid. We have organised fresh tags and are giving members the option of taking responsibility for their tags or leaving them at the end of each meeting. Diane is tag coordinator. Being 'tagged' is optional – only you might be called "hey you"!

RAHS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Communities: the building blocks of history
7-8 October – Yass Soldiers Memorial Hall

Traditionally, in the teaching of Australian history, the topic most often ignored is 'community'. It is so large and often so unmanageable a term. Besides, there may be many communities and groups of people, even in just one country town or city suburb. As white settlement expanded, churches, convents, schools, mechanics institutes, masonic lodges, friendly societies, sports clubs, brass bands, cinemas and amateur dramatic societies were established. Though many continue, what is the future of those now redundant: country cinemas, showgrounds, Masonic temples, Oddfellows halls, and churches? How important it is to find new uses for old buildings and to preserve the records of those who used these facilities, rather than allow them to be destroyed through neglect.

Often when people pass on, or records are destroyed, knowledge about 'communities' dies too. This knowledge is essential for our understanding of the past, and although some conference speakers told tales of woe about the destruction of records and of rescuing minute books and other valuable records from tips and recycle bins, a great deal of excellent research is being carried out by both professional and community historians. The local history or heritage society often plays an essential part in the preservation of records and recording of oral histories of people in the community before they die.

On Saturday afternoon we travelled some 60 kilometres to Galong, to visit the former *castle* of Irish emancipist Ned Ryan who encouraged numerous Irish immigrants to settle locally, including many Irish orphan girls who escaped from the Great Famine. Ned's hospitality became legendary and Galong became a regular stopping place for itinerant workers and swaggies. Near his *castle* (to which he added a chapel, priest's room and numerous outbuildings), Ned established a large Catholic cemetery. With its impressive white marble monuments and surrounded by fields of yellow canola with borders of Patterson's Curse, there can be few more beautiful cemeteries in the world. The *castle* is now St Clement's Redemptorist Monastery and Conference Centre.

At the Conference Dinner we were entertained with Edwardian Music Hall songs by the Yass Repertory Company. The conference ended with a walking tour of Yass's main street, a visit to St Clement's Anglican Church (once closely linked with St Clements Marrickville) and afternoon tea at the Yass Historical Society's excellent museum. **MHS was awarded a \$2000 grant** towards a history of Marrickville potteries, collected by immediate past president and publication editor Robert Hutchinson. I have attended few conferences where every session and speaker provided such useful and thought-provoking material.

Geoff Ostling

INAUGURAL SSROC AWARDS

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) consists of 12 councils and its current President is Marrickville Mayor Barry Cotter. At a function on 17 August hosted by Bob Jelly, Shire President of Pearl Bay from *Seachange* (alias actor John Howard, who made that inspired speech on Reconciliation in *The Games*), SSROC presented a bevy of awards over several categories showcasing the innovation of councils.

The SSROC Winter Newsletter lists the numerous inaugural award recipients including three to Marrickville Council. The judges presented a special award to Marrickville Council for "strong commitment by staff, management and councillors to providing an environment which best supported innovation". Marrickville received a *Highly Commended* for **Tillman Park Children's Centre** in the Innovation Award for Environmental Protection.

In tribute to the late Colin Mills, the highly respected General Manager of Marrickville Council (1990-1997) before his premature retirement and death from Motor Neurone Disease, is the Colin Mills Memorial Award for Heritage Protection. This award was won by Rockdale City Council for creating "a complete architectural style inventory of every residential building in the LGA".

Marrickville Council won a *Highly Commended* for the **Winged Victory Statue**. The SSROC Website describes this project as "a best practice example of protecting important civil artefacts such as monuments and memorials by creating a living history through rigorous conservation and restoration standards, professional historical research and an active community education program. ... [it] is also a tribute to Chrystine Meader's tenacity and long term commitment to protecting the heritage of Marrickville." No one could argue with that, except that the Winged Victory Statue was re-erected in 1988 – twelve living history years ago!

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The **City of Sydney Historical Association** is a welcome addition to Sydney's local history scene. It aims to develop the renewed interest in the history of the city area. The City of Sydney Council has sponsored its establishment but by early 2001 the Association will be run by the membership. 60 people attended the inaugural meeting on 14 October to hear Shirley Fitzgerald on *The Garden Palace: fragments and memories*. The talk on Saturday 9 December is *Christmas Past Revisited: What the archaeological evidence reveals* at The Rocks Visitors Centre 106 George Street at 2 pm. Enquiries Lynda Kelly 9265 9782. email: lkelly@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Ex Olympian **Edith Frances Payne (nee Robinson)**, who lived in Marrickville and Bexley, ran in the 1928 Olympics. She carried the torch on the penultimate Torch Relay Day, but sadly died only days after the Olympic Games finished.

HERITAGE WATCH

St Brigid's Church and Monastery rest on extensive grounds at the corner of Livingstone and Marrickville Roads, the former *Shrublands* Estate. The estate was acquired by the Passionist Fathers in 1915. The large early 20th century estate house forms the core of the monastery. Over the years the Trustees of the Church have leased and sold portions of the site, but the bulk of this uniquely extensive holding in the middle of Marrickville has remained intact as open space.

A series of DAs have now been presented to Council proposing to subdivide the site into three properties, with two to three storey strata title residential development and carparking (some underground) around the church and monastery. While the bulk of the site has been underutilised as a Council carpark and bowling club, the Society is concerned that this precious open space resource is to be forever lost to more townhouses. The proposed works to the monastery will also have an impact on the remaining elements of *Shrubland* house, the extent of which is not evaluated in the application. The Society encourages the trustees of the Church to explore less extreme ways of capitalising on their real estate resource.

Crago Flour Mills The developers of the eastern half of the Crago Flour Mills site Newtown have submitted a DA to Council to convert the silos and some of the other mill buildings to apartments. The scheme cleverly adapts the principal heritage elements of the site to residential use, and proposes to provide public access at ground level with interpretative displays of salvaged machinery from the mills. The Society regrets that a more varied mix of activities could not be incorporated on the site.

Weekley Park (Stanmore) Council's Landscape Department are preparing a submission to Council requesting funding for immediate repair works for the park, and for the development of the park's grass, gardens and landscape structures. The extent of work will be determined by the funding granted by Council. Unfortunately, the funding pool for Weekley Park is shared with Camperdown Park and O'Dea Reserve, both which also require urgent works.

MARRICKVILLE STREETSCAPE SURVEY

Marrickville LGA residents concerned about the state of their streets can formally have their say in a Marrickville Council survey. For a questionnaire ring Zena Jaber 9335 2063; for general information ring Manager Corporate Development Deirdre Bruen 9335 2272. Forms also at Council offices. Closing date extended to 20 November.

Come to Newington's **Twilight Christmas Concert** Sunday 10 December 4.30 pm Newington College Chapel. \$15, \$8 concession.

MHS will have a stall in the Seaview Street carpark at the **Dulwich Hill Street Fair** on Saturday 9 December 10.30 – 4.30.

VALE – LESLIE FAIRBAIRN

Leslie Fairbairn was proud of being born on 12 March 1913, the day the City of Canberra was proclaimed. Les lived most of his life in the Tempe/St Peters and Earlwood areas. From a pioneering family, his great grandmother Charlotte Fairbairn was Marrickville's first postmistress. Several Marrickville streets are named after members of Les' ancestry – Meek, Ruby, Harriet and Charlotte. He was a stalwart of the Methodist (later Uniting) Church and was superintendent of Tempe Park Methodist (now the Coptic) Church, Railway Road Sydenham. He wrote *Tempe Wesleyanism for Heritage 5*.

Les worked in a Camperdown engineering firm for most of his working life. He was a keen gardener and member of the Marrickville Horticultural Society. Les was interviewed for both *Marrickville Remembers* and early this year as part of the Society's Oral History Project. He and his wife Joyce joined MHS in 1986 and they used to



regularly attend Saturday morning talks. It was Les who suggested at an AGM that members be provided with name tags and we adopted this proposal. This gentle man, who always added a presence to our meetings, died on 21 October. Our condolences to Joyce and her family.

MEETING ROOM SOUGHT

Members who attend meetings at Petersham Town Hall will have noticed that our room has reached its capacity to comfortably accommodate us. The storage of the Society's books, journals and filing cabinet has also become a problem as these bulky items are usually placed in the President's home and not everyone has sufficient storage space.

The Committee wants to rectify this problem by finding a suitable venue to provide ample space for meetings, office and storage. The venue should be able to seat about 100 people, be readily accessible at all hours and have kitchen and toilet facilities. Ideally the venue should be close to public transport and free of charge or at a peppercorn rent – remember we are a non-profit body providing a valuable community service. If anyone knows of a vacant hall or meeting room that would suit our needs please write or ring me on 9550 3809.

Peter Cousens, President

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