



# *MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER*

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## **OUR NEXT MEETING**

Saturday July 27

Aldermen's Room, Petersham Town Hall

Chris Pratten, Environmental Director of the National Trust will broaden our interests by informing us how we can work together with the National Trust. He will be concentrating on recent developments in the Trust and its staffing.

## **FUTURE PROGRAMME**

One of the themes in coming months will be historic gardens. We hope to arrange an inspection of some of these in our own Municipality and visit the garden of Eryldene at Gordon. One of our members, Paula Gard, will be speaking to us about roses. Details of these and other future events will be announced in the next issue of the Newsletter.

## FEATURE . . .

### THE ENMORE EDUCATION OF AN ART HISTORIAN By Joanna Mendelssohn

The Special Education Annexe of Enmore High in Metropolitan Road has an especial association for those interested in Australian history and literature. For it was here that in 1932 and 1933 the young state ward, Bernard Smith, completed his secondary education.

The first school building in Metropolitan Road was originally opened as Enmore Public School in September 1887 and until the end of 1912 only provided infants' education. From the beginning of 1913 to the end of 1932 it had both primary and junior secondary departments. For a short time in 1932 it also operated as a domestic science school. The official Education Department records, however, only show it as a primary school from May 1932 to December 1953.

In The Boy Adeodatus, his award winning autobiography, Bernard Smith describes Enmore High, which operated as an annexe of the Cleveland Street Annexe of Sydney Technical High School, as

*" a depressing enough place at first sight; the windows wired against vandals, the paint cracked and peeling from the cornices. It stood in a tiny yard, asphalted and treeless, in which the sun made only a brief appearance, and was surrounded on three sides by lanes, serving the backs of small terraces that were usually cluttered with garbage bins and straying litter and had become the ancestral home by right of continuous occupancy of innumerable alley cats, authentic first Australians, wiry and agile survivors, which could trace their impeccable pedigrees back to the first fleet."*

It was not a school of great traditions. Smith was typical of its pupils in that he had successfully completed his Intermediate Certificate at Petersham Commercial Intermediate High, but in the Great Depression there were no jobs, especially for boys without fathers. Boys without jobs stayed at school, in the hope that things would improve by the time they sat for the Leaving Certificate.

This particular version of Enmore High only lasted for two years, so it is perhaps understandable that there is no record of the building having had this function.



As with all schools it was the teachers, rather than the buildings, which shaped the way the boys learn learnt. Of the teachers at Enmore High, Smith wrote:

*"Whether by sheer luck or careful selection, they turned out to be an unusually capable lot; all seriously devoted to the subjects they taught, each possessed of a distinct personal style....They were viewed variously by the boys as martinets, good types, eccentrics, or dear old women, but each in his way achieved his own kind of schoolboy respect."*

Three subjects in particular attracted the young Smith. Economics, together with his comprehensive reading, led him towards socialism. English taught him the "beauty of well written prose". History, though, gave him more than knowledge. It gave him:

*"a sense of his place in the scheme of things; it was like standing between two mirrors, a mirror of the past and seeing himself stretching away in both directions; a sense of tradition."*

It is this sense of place that has always characterised Smith's work as an art historian. His first and most provocative book was even called Place, Taste and Tradition. Smith's idea was that events, objects and words can belong to a particular place and time. It is somehow appropriate that this idea was first understood by him in an old school building in Metropolitan Road.

Quotations are from The Boy Adeodatus: The portait of a lucky young bastard., Allen Lane, 1984 .

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\* A PORTRAIT OF YOUR HOUSE: If you are interested in having your house sketched, contact Mike or Georgina Walsh (phone 517 2028). They know an artist who specialises in drawing architecture at reasonable prices. Examples of her work will be available at the next meeting for members to see.

\* Joanna Mendelssohn (519 770) is interested in collecting information about writers and artists who have lived or worked in the Municipality.

## OUR LAST EXCURSION

### EXCURSION TO THE MASTERTOUCHE PIANO ROLL COMPANY

Thirty-two members turned up to what proved to be a fascinating morning at the Crystal Street factory. We were shown a large range of pianos and player pianos, as well as variations on these including the significant player organs. Downstairs there was the recording studio where performances are turned into piano rolls, and the large and complex machines that make the music makers.

The home-made scones that completed the morning were in themselves a justification for saving this part of Marrickville's musical history. There is the possibility that this enterprise, with its many local connections, may be moved to Canberra. If this were to happen it would be a great loss to our Municipality.

Many thanks to Barclay Wright and Bill Denham whose detailed and informative talks added so much to our knowledge of this aspect of popular culture.

### New Members

Jane Studd, Jessica Dawn Pattison (born May 24, 1985 to existing members Cheryl and Neville Pattison). Jessica shares a birthday with two historic figures- Queen Victoria and Jean Paul Marat - with role models like these she can either rule an empire or make a revolution.

## HOW TO JOIN OUR SOCIETY

Only \$7 for individuals, \$10 for households and institutions, \$2 for pensioners and students. For this you receive copies of the monthly Newsletter and HERITAGE, published annually each December. The first issue appeared in 1984 and a few copies are still available at \$2 a copy. Post your subscriptions to Chrys Meader at Marrickville Library Marrickville Town Hall 2204 ( or phone her at 560-9333 Ext. 282). Don't wait until the AGM or the end of the financial year- our rolling membership enables you to remain financial for twelve months from the time of joining.

