

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
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& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



OUR NEXT MEETING

Freda Backes on the Australian Lebanese Historical Society: the first 10 years

Saturday 22 October 10.15 for 10.30 am at Herb Greedy Hall 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville

Freda Backes was raised in Braidwood where her paternal grandparents had founded a small business in 1912. Although interested in history, Freda only started thinking about her heritage when older family members started dying: they were leaving behind tangible evidence of their Lebanese identity and their early life in Australia, as immigrants or children of immigrants.

The **Australian Lebanese Historical Society** was founded to record this aspect of Australian history. Freda was a founder member of this Society and was President for ten years. Freda will speak about the evolution of the ALHS and some of the surprising things she and fellow members discovered about themselves and their forebears when they began to get serious about their history. She has also been a member of the History Council of NSW and a committee member of Randwick and District Historical Society.

Marrickville Council turning 150 on 5 November

'Marrickville Council is one of the oldest councils in the Sydney metropolitan area. Today Marrickville Council employs over 500 people. Back in the 1860s Marrickville Council was a very different operation. The Council Clerk and the Inspector of Nuisances were the sole officers of Council. The Council Clerk's main function was to regulate Council proceedings and also act as the Overseer of Works, Rate Collector and Property Valuator. The Council offices opened 4 hours per week between 3-5 pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Council only met 4 times a year and the first by-laws of the Marrickville Municipality, gazetted on 26 April 1862, stated that these meetings would be held at noon on the last Saturday in the months of January, April, July and October.

'As the population of the area grew so did the functions of Council. By 1882 there were 1,935 ratepayers and 1,400 houses. Council revenue was £2,921 annually. Council employed the Council Clerk, the Inspector of Nuisances and an Overseer of Works. There were also about 60-80 people employed doing road and street maintenance. The Council offices were open longer hours from 9 am to 4 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and from 7 pm to 9 pm every Wednesday. The largest increase in workload was to the elected aldermen, who now had to attend meetings every second Monday at 7.30 pm.

'The first public park in the original Marrickville Municipality was proclaimed on 4 May 1886 as Marrickville Park (now Enmore Park). Marrickville Council began to employ gardeners. The majority of parks were created in the first half of the 20th century. During the 1890s local development increased dramatically and new positions were created such as the Foreman of Works to assist the Overseer and the Pound Keeper, who had the responsibility of impounding stray horses, cows and sheep. Today there are jobs at Council that would never have been imagined in the 19th century. Some jobs such as Inspector of Dairies and horse trough cleaner disappeared when the need for these type of jobs no longer existed. Other jobs have remained basically the same — only the technology is different.' (This 2008 account from Marrickville Council's website)



See back page for details re concert and various other Council events.

Old Marrickville Town Hall (1879) in Illawarra Road in 1912; and Gerald Halligan, first Mayor of Marrickville. He served from 1861 to 1863 and again in 1866, and as a councillor (1861-72). (Council's website)



Our Last Meeting: Camden, its museum, Mt Annan and a Hindu temple

A kaleidoscope of experiences was in store as our full bus set out under leaden skies on Saturday 24 September. Our first stop was Camden Museum, 'the place to go for the best parties in Camden', according to John Wrigley, President of Camden Historical Society, in his warm welcome. Camden Historical Society (formed in 1957) began with a one room museum in 1970, but in 2000 the museum was relocated to the current site. It was refurbished in 2007 becoming a purpose-built two storey museum when the old fire station was incorporated into the Camden Library and Museum complex (also housing the Camden Area Family History Society) with a glass ceiling galleria. Rent free, it is entirely run by volunteers.

This social history museum of the Camden District is an outstanding exemplar of what dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers, who are passionate about the history of their local area, can achieve. Its collection of some 3,000 items has been digitally catalogued and meticulously kept files and a well-stocked reference library are available to researchers. Items are displayed with restraint and imagination. Labelling has been kept to the minimum and large storyboards are designed to attract and inform the 2,000 school children who visit each year.

Downstairs, a display of aboriginal artefacts, including the breastplate given to Murrandah, chief of the Burra Burra tribe, is a reminder of the importance of the Camden area as a meeting place for the three tribes who inhabited the surrounding plains and foot-hills. Upstairs, there is an extensive collection of tools used by local farmers and skilled workers. Many items document the lives of the district's dairy farmers. Numbering 350 about 50 years ago, they were major contributors to the town's prosperity, still evident at Camden's main intersection which has substantial bank buildings on three of its corners; the oldest and grandest dating from 1878.

At our lunchtime sojourn at Mount Annan Botanic Garden the colourful display of paper daisies was the backdrop for one group of picnicking members, while the more practical of us sat at lakeside picnic tables. After lunch, MHS vice-president Silas was our guide for a leisurely drive around the extensive garden complex, though we left the bus for a walk up to the unique Sundial of Human Involvement, with an outlook to Mt Annan whose slopes are still covered in the African Olive which once infested much of the area. This 'branch' of Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden was opened to the public in 1988 to conserve and display Australian native plants and protect rare Cumberland Plain Woodland. It is very much a work in progress.

Our final stop — the Mukti-Gupteshwar Mandir Hindu Temple in Minto — was a place of contrasts. Along the cool marble floor, the eye was drawn to the main altar, but side alcoves were attracted with bright fabrics, gold and silver ornaments and colourful fruit offerings. These featured some of the numerous

deities which comprise the Hindu religion, a synthesis of ancient beliefs which the British colonial masters of India 'invented', making it one of the most modern of religions. This was a unique opportunity to be voyeurs and we were appreciative of the warm welcome we received.

It was a most enjoyable and relaxing day out. Many thanks to organisers **Pamela Stewart, Rosemary Wood** and **Silas Clifford-Smith**; **Camden Historical Society** for hosting our visit and **John Wrigley** for his informative talk. Apropos the museum, we were left us wondering enviously 'if only'!

Jan Garaty

Note: Thanks also to **Diane McCarthy**; **Ted Green** (coach lollies and book donation for lucky seat prize, won by **David Cunningham**); and **Empire Cafe**, 469 Marrickville Rd, Dulwich Hill (donated coffee cups).

Apropos Jan's insightful 'if only' remark, in the wake of visits this year to diverse local museums at Willoughby, Baulkham Hills and Camden, MHS members frequently ask whether Marrickville will ever have a museum. Perchance to dream perhaps, though with Marrickville Council seeking input into its future library, what an opportunity to incorporate a social history museum! — **Editor**

Convivial group at Mt Annan (ph: Diane McCarthy)



Vale

Our condolences to Shirley Hilyard whose sister **Marie Colbron Conroy** of Avalon died aged 84 on 6 September. Marie joined MHS in 1999.

We note the death of **Henry Venables** of Petersham in July 2011. Henry, a MHS member since 2005, was for many years the organist at St Benedict's Catholic Church Broadway.

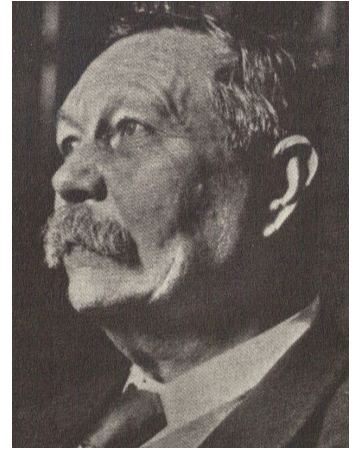
Art historian and critic Emeritus Professor **Bernard Smith** died in Melbourne on 2 September aged 94. His *Sydney Morning Herald* obituary described him as 'a "Lucky Young Bastard" who went on to a great and successful life'. That description stems from Joanna Mendelssohn's biography *The Boy Adeodatus: the portrait of a lucky young bastard* (1984). Bernard was the answer to our trivia question in April 2006, having attended Enmore Public, Enmore High and Petersham Commercial Intermediate High Schools.

Vale on 27 September to **Edna Spurway** aged 101, last surviving great granddaughter of Maria Ann Smith, better known as 'Granny' Smith, of apple fame.

Spring Trivia Answer: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle talks in Dispensary Hall

Prolific author **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (1859-1930), best known for his creation of Sherlock Holmes, had a lifelong interest in spiritualism which was enhanced after his son Kingsley died of pneumonia in 1918. He wrote several books on spiritualism including *The History of Spiritualism*. Conan Doyle and his wife toured Australia and New Zealand to give a series of lectures on spiritualism between November 1920 and January 1921. One such lecture was delivered at the Dispensary Hall, still standing at 80 Enmore Road Newtown. Founded as the Combined Enmore and Stanmore Spiritualist Church in 1913, the **Enmore Spiritualist Church** claims to be the oldest Spiritualist Church in Australia.

Richard Blair



The Sydney Morning Herald Monday 31 January 1921, page 9 reports:

Conan Doyle Farewell Address and Review of the Tour

'One of the closing incidents of a tour which has in some respects been quite unique, in the history of Australia, took place at the Dispensary Hall, Enmore-road, last night, where Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle attended the weekly service of the Stanmore Spiritualist Church, and were presented with an Illuminated Address.

'To the uninitiated and curious there appeared nothing very uncommon in a spiritualist service. There were the old familiar hymns, "Lead Kindly Light," and others equally well known, formal prayers, and a reading from the Bible. One had to follow the prayers closely to discern anything unusual. It was much like an ordinary church service till, at the conclusion, the lady who conducted it—Mrs. Eleanor Morrell—indicated various members of the large congregation, and declared that she discerned personages, whom she intimately described, close to them, and recounted "messages," which these discarnate entities desired to transmit. These embraced solicitous advice as to methods of breathing, and their effect upon the general health, exhortations to "seek the light," and other intimate matters.

'Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle, from behind a table laden with roses, faced a congregation largely comprised of women, and of manifest earnestness, and joined heartily in the devotional exercises. A memento of his "splendidly successful mission on behalf of spiritualism in Sydney," the address presented to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was bound in morocco and delicately illuminated with Australian emblems, and watercolours of Sydney Heads and the Town Hall, where Sir Arthur's principal lectures had been delivered. It was set out that the committee and members of the church desired to show their loving appreciation of his work, recognising in him "a specially chosen leader endowed with power to command attention from the most obdurate minds," and their hearty rejoicing at the knowledge that he had decided to consecrate his life "to the spread of our glorious gospel, which contains more proof of the eternal love of God than any truth yet revealed to man." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle expressed the gratification that he felt at the success that had attended his tour. This he attributed not to himself but to the cause that he represented. He had, he said, just received a letter from Mr. Carlyle Smythe, who had managed the tour. With his father, Mr. Smythe had handled every lecturer of repute who had come to Australia for the past 30 or 40 years, so he spoke with authority. "The general conclusion," he wrote, "is that for an equal number of lectures yours has 'proved' the most prosperous tour in my experience. No previous tour has won such consistent success. Beginning with the splendid push-off in Adelaide to the great boom in New Zealand and Brisbane, there has been a dynamic progression of enthusiasm. I have known nothing parallel to it."

'Those who know anything about the cost of travelling and hotels nowadays would realise what a heavy financial burden such a tour as this entailed, with a party of seven. However, he was quite prepared before he came for complete failure, and sent a considerable sum of his own money forward in order to be independent of any receipts which might be taken at his lectures here. But he found that in spite of the enormous expenses they were something like £700 to the good. As he had frequently said,

he did not intend to take a penny piece out of Australia. On the contrary, he was leaving a good deal of his own money in it. But that £700 would be devoted to the cause entirely. Of this sum he intended to hand £100 to the editor of the "Harbinger of Light," in Melbourne, for propaganda purposes. He had also handed £50 to the spiritualists of Brisbane, for whom he laid the foundation of the first spiritualist church, which was to cost £10,000. After certain other small gifts for spiritualist purposes there would be about £500 left. This the spiritualists of Australia could dispose of as they considered most wise, but he would suggest that they should form it into a lecture fund, and bring out well-known speakers who would keep them in touch with what was going on, on the other side.

' "I thank all Australia," concluded Sir Arthur, "for its goodness to us. You cannot go through a great country arguing and fighting your way as we have done without occasionally being rubbed the wrong way. Fair fighting is all right, but sometimes things happen which one does not feel to be quite in the game. If any such things have happened they have, so far as I am concerned, gone by the way. Of course, I must write my book; but I have no ill-will to anyone in this continent. My wife and I have had practically nothing but kindness, and will carry away the most pleasing memories. Our only hope is that we may leave a few behind us." '



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday 22 October

Lebanese settlement into Australia:

talk by Freda Backes

Details on front page

Saturday 26 November

Launch of MHS essay competition publication

In recognition of Marrickville Council's sesquicentenary, its Ordinary Council Meeting on **Tuesday 18 October at 7 pm** will be at the **old Marrickville Town Hall, 96 Illawarra Road Marrickville**. As this town hall was decommissioned in the early 1920s, it's been quite a while since the last council meeting there.

To help celebrate Marrickville Council's 150th Anniversary, **Marrickville Symphony Orchestra** is holding a free concert 'recalling the heyday of the 1930s, an assortment of musical highlights will make this an astonishing night of music and entertainment.'

When: Friday 4 November 6:30 for a 7 pm start

Where: Marrickville Town Hall

RSVP: Bookings are essential. Ring 9335 2222

An exhibition, 150 Years of Marrickville Council will run **4-27 November** at the library and other venues including the concert.

Forthcoming Marrickville Library events

Tuesday 18 October 10 am

Balmain Cemetery Records project presentation by the Central Coast Family History Society (see article)

Thursday 27 October 6.30 pm

Architecture Talk by Shaun Carter (Carter Williamson Architects) - *Infill buildings in older suburbs* (part of the Sydney-wide Architecture on Show Festival)

Friday 11 November 2 pm - *War art and the First World War*

Bookings required 9335 2173

Archival Reference Centre events in November

Wed 2 November 2 pm Out of the Archives

Wed 9 November 2 pm House History workshop
ARC, Petersham Town Hall

Bookings required 9335 2173

Residents are invited to share their thoughts and ideas for the **new library proposed for the old Marrickville Hospital site** by completing an online survey or leaving comment on the online discussion forum (details on Council's website). Details of the three community consultations in late November will be in next newsletter.

Essay competition book launch 26 November

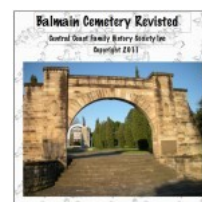
The Society ran a very successful essay competition in 2007-08 after we decided to publish all essays in a book. The fully illustrated book (almost 200 pages including extensive index) is with the printer and will be launched at the Society's meeting on Saturday 26 November. This is by far the most ambitious publishing project the Society has undertaken and although the book has been a long time coming, we believe the wait will have been well worthwhile. Formal invitations are being sent to authors and we hope that all authors can attend together with as many members and friends as possible. The launch will be held at the normal meeting time and will be catered. Authors will receive a complimentary copy of the book, which will sell for \$35 a copy.

Balmain Cemetery revisited

On Tuesday 6 September at Leichhardt Town Hall, Leichhardt Council held a conference *Creating Community Information: People Places & Events* whose guest speakers included MHS members Roslyn Burge (*The greening of Leichhardt utilising oral history*) and Bruce Lay (*Public art & community activism*); Ian Hoskins who reprised his talk on Sydney Harbour; and architectural historian Dr Peter Reynolds who gave a reappraisal of the suburb of Birchgrove.

There were also two edifying presentations on erstwhile local cemeteries. One was presented by Patrick Callaghan on Balmain Catholic Cemetery (1868-1902), of which not a trace remains, though Patrick has uncovered data on 879 burials there out of a likely 1500. The second presentation focussed on Balmain Cemetery (1868-1912) which stood on 11 acres, where Pioneer Memorial Park is now. As indicated in a leaflet: 'Memorial to whom? What stories are hidden here? Actually, 10,608 stories.' Marlene Davidson, June Dawson and Lorraine Greve from the Central Coast Family History Group discussed the project which has resulted in a DVD, compiled by June and Lorraine, which is 1900 pages long.

The group are presenting their project at Marrickville Library on 18 October (see box at left). The DVD is \$48 (incl postage): PO Box 4090 East Gosford NSW 2250, phone (02) 4324 5164 or email <orders@centralcoastfhs.org.au>; also payable by direct deposit.



Weather permitting, MHS will hold its usual stall at this year's **Marrickville Festival** on Sunday 23 October from 11 am.

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