

# MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

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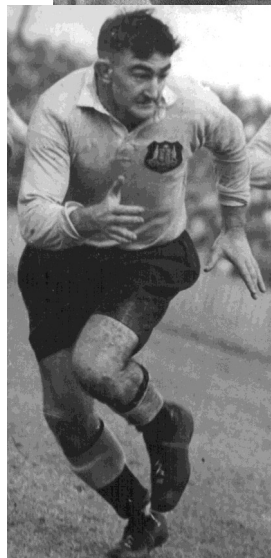


## OUR NEXT MEETING

**Saturday 21 April 10.15 for 10.30 am**

**Bumper Yarns: The life and times of Frank 'Bumper' Farrell — talk by Larry Writer**  
**Herb Greedy Hall 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville**  
(Note: meeting a week earlier than usual)

'Fighting was just something kids did on the rambunctious streets of Marrickville' according to Larry Writer in his colourful biography of Frank *Bumper* Farrell, who grew up in a house (later demolished) at 70 Premier Street Marrickville. It was Bumper's early training ground for a career in the police force where he became the 'roughest, toughest street cop Australia has ever seen'. From the late 1930s to the mid 1970s he kept the peace in the lanes and streets of Darlinghurst, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo and Kings Cross, home to brothels, SP bookies, gambling dens and street thugs.



Larry's talk will make reference to some characters in his earlier work, *Razor*, a recent TV miniseries. Bumper was also a star Rugby League player for the Newtown *Bluebags* and Australia.

For 12 years from 1977 **Larry Writer** was an editor and writer for Australian Consolidated Press including from 1981 to 1984 ACP's European Editor and London Bureau Chief. From 1992 to 2003 he was a writer, editor and London Bureau Chief for Time Inc. In recent years he has been a freelance journalist and

author of several books including *Pleasure and Pain*, *First Blood* and *The Australian Book of True Crime*.

As a bonus we will also be joined by Bumper's daughter, **Maureen Elsegood**. Larry's biography will be on sale.

**Save Windsor's historic Thompson Square**

## History Forum – all welcome

Marrickville Library and History Services invites members to a History Forum on **Saturday 14 April 10 am-1 pm at Herb Greedy Hall, 79 Petersham Road Marrickville**. Join heritage professionals, historians and other groups. The forum aims to:

- 1) explore Marrickville's history, including the built heritage, migration and social history
- 2) unlock community perceptions and values for history and heritage, and help design programs and events that meet local community interests and needs
- 3) discover the unique, exciting and significant aspects of Marrickville's history, most valued by the community.

Light refreshments. Bookings essential on 9335 2138.

## State Records city office closure

In a state government cost-cutting move, the State Records Authority of New South Wales will close its city reading room at 2 Globe Street, The Rocks on 30 June. Mark Dunn and Dr Lisa Murray, on behalf of The History Council of NSW, have protested stating:

'That the access to records is fundamental to the study of history . . . State Records is one of NSW's key cultural institutions and an invaluable research facility for any historian's investigations into aspects of the functioning of the state, from colonial and convict history, through all the permeations [sic] of the state's role in people's lives. The cuts will downgrade the archives, undermining its position as a key cultural institution, limiting access for key user groups, and hampering the organisation's role to inform and support state government, especially in its ongoing role in the state's digital archives as well as guiding digitisation of records.'

RAHS President, David Carment, has also expressed concern on behalf of RAHS. The Western Sydney Records Centre, 143 O'Connell Street Kingswood, will continue to operate (Monday to Saturday; 9673 1788).

Due to dissent among councillors regarding the scale and estimated costs of the three proposed designs for a **new Marrickville library**, the matter has been deferred. This follows a thorough and extended period of consultation with the public.

**15 April 2012: Centenary of sinking of RMS Titanic**

## Our Last Meeting Antique Mechanical Music Museum

Assembled outside an unremarkable St Peters factory, few of the 56 folk attending our outing on Saturday 24 March imagined the wonderland revealed as the steel roller shutter slowly lifted. Accordion music filled the air, and as the roller shutter closed behind us, tiny sparkling blue lights overhead and lighting adorning the exhibits created an instant night-time fairground atmosphere. For the next two and a half hours we were transported to another world and another time.

**Craig Robson**, creator and proprietor of this extraordinary interactive museum, describes his work as 'a passion'. His collection is exceptional, containing exhibits that are variously rare, award-winning, or one-of-a-kind surviving examples, all painstakingly restored. Craig's knowledge and appreciation are not just of the rare nature of the mechanical instruments, or the atmosphere they create, or the music they play — some of which he describes as 'the happiest music on earth'. He's right about that — you certainly can't help but feel happy listening to it. He provided detailed descriptions of their histories and the inventiveness and skill of design, engineering, art and craftsmanship that has created these music machines, the barrels and books that direct the notes to be played, the wonderful array of structures that house the mechanical instruments and the skills and workmanship that have helped to restore them.



As early as the Greeks and Romans of ancient times, mankind has worked at devising mechanical means to emulate people playing musical instruments. Organs, both pneumatic and hydraulic, can be traced back to as early as 200 BC but in the 1500s the first mechanical music instruments were built, allowing music to be produced without a human performer.

The collection is wide-ranging in content and scale, as well as in the genre of music played. Built for many purposes, whether for indoor use, such as concerts, cafes and dance halls, or outdoors, such as street organs, fairgrounds and carnivals, it is an enchanting display of fascinating pieces. Dating from about 1870, the oldest exhibit is a weights-operated machine in an exquisite cabinet. The Scopitone jukebox treated us to an unforgettable Neil Sedaka rendition of *Calendar Girl*, complete with colour film clip. These machines, made in France from the 1950s to early '60s, were banned in the USA as during this era they were considered 'too bawdy'.



Said to be the only remaining organ of its kind in the world, the *Taj Mahal*, a 101-key Mortier dance organ, 26 feet long and 20 feet high, with an elaborate architectural façade of columns, domes and turrets, is adorned with larger than life beautifully carved

figures. The *Golden Lion* concert organ, built in Belgium in the 1920s and used in glamorous dance halls in Europe, spent many years on the streets of Alkmaar in The Netherlands. Just a few more of the highlights were: the fairground organ from the Black Forest area of Germany (1908) which plays piano, bass, pipes, drums, violins, trumpets, cymbals and bombardons; a Wurlitzer Photoplayer, built for theatre use, with piano, violin and flute, drums, bells and sound effects such as horses trotting; an exquisite Hupfeld Phonoliszt Violina, found in a chicken barn, its beautiful oak cabinet restored, with piano and three violins; and Marrickville's contribution — a *Diana* ceramic jug that plays *Waltzing Matilda*.



Not all that we saw, heard and learned can be covered here, but a few more things demand a mention: the delicious lamingtons that accompanied our morning tea and coffee; a gorgeous original gypsy caravan, designed to be drawn by one horse, built in c. 1904, a survivor of the bushfires that devastated Marysville, Victoria in 2009; and the unforgettable carousel, France, 1898 — the merry-go-round that revealed the child in us all.

Our thanks to **Craig** and his partner **Jenny**, for their hospitality and a most memorable morning; and to **Richard Blair**, for his discovery of this gem tucked in between St Peters and the Alexandra Canal. You can view details of this huge collection on the museum's interactive website: <[www.fairgroundfolies.com](http://www.fairgroundfolies.com)>.

**Lorraine Beach**

**Note:** Special thanks to those who chauffeured other members on the day.

**Photos** (Lorraine Beach; clockwise from left):

Craig Robson explains some dynamics of wind-up music boxes; a hearty wave from Del Stone on the carousel; Shirley Hilyard on the carousel gondola reminiscing with (l to r) Ted Green, Geoff Ostling and Ellie Zinsmeister



## Heritage Watch in brief

Council has approved the DA for **St Clements Church Marrickville** to remove seven pairs of pews. Conditions require the pews be retained by the parish and suitably stored. This is a much modified DA from the one which went before Council early last year.

Despite overwhelming opposition by the community and Marrickville Council, the NSW Planning & Assessment Commission (PAC) has approved AMP Capital's expansion plans for **Marrickville Metro** with conditions. Although considerable modifications have been made to what was originally planned, the upgraded Metro is still much larger than most of the community wanted.

The PAC has also approved the **Lewisham Towers** DA subject to conditions, including more green space and probably fewer units than proposed. In both this and the Metro campaigns, MHS took a low profile due to the lack of heritage concerns. The local press has provided broad coverage of both developments.

The Society again ran a stall at the annual **Health & Wellbeing Expo** at Marrickville Town Hall on Wednesday 28 March. This well-organised event attracts a diverse range of local healthcare and service agencies. Thanks to Diane, Ian, Pamela and Richard for showing the flag.

The proposed stall on 17 March at the Alex Trevallion Plaza was cancelled due to rain. To be rescheduled.

The Australian National Placenames Survey March newsletter, *Placenames Australia* (p. 11) reports:

'Surely a contender for the weirdest placename in America is Zzyzx, a settlement in the Mojave Desert of California. At least, we are assured so by Henry Campbell in his book *Whatever Happened to Tanganyika?* (mentioned in our September 2011 issue).'

'Apparently it's pronounced ZYE-ziks, and was a health resort founded by a radio evangelist named Curtis Howe Springer. Henry Campbell reports that Mr Springer wanted it to be the last word in both luxury and the English language. We imagine that he achieved the latter aim, at least!'

## NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award

At the Heritage Volunteer Award ceremony on 9 December 2011 at Parramatta (see February newsletter), the following was stated:

'The knowledge and protection of history and heritage in the Marrickville area is substantially enhanced by the research and advocacy undertaken by the Marrickville Heritage Society. Through their both topical and entertaining monthly newsletter and through organised talks and tours, the Society is instrumental in promoting awareness and understanding of heritage throughout the community. Across their 400 strong membership base, the Society is fortunate to have an array of professional qualifications and experience as a resource from which to draw upon. Since their inception in 1984, the Society has maintained a strong public focus on heritage and is dedicated to raising its profile in the community by advocating and campaigning for heritage protection and conservation.'

## Autumn Trivia Answer

Most of us have driven or walked past the shop at **121-123 New Canterbury Road Petersham**, on the corner of Hunter Street, numerous times. According to *Sands Directories*, in 1882 Alfred A Davis was listed as a stockman of Windsor Road Petersham (later Dulwich Hill). In 1883 Alfred A Davis was listed as a butcher in New Canterbury Road on the corner of Frazer's Road (later Frazer Road, then Hunter Street). He was listed there until 1898 when Vivian A Davis was listed; Vivian was listed there until 1905. After that, several butchers were listed there and in the last edition of *Sands* (1932-33) the listed butcher was named Carson. It is not known when a butcher shop last operated there, nor when the bull was polled, but it seems a green-grocer operated there in recent decades.



A street number (110) first appeared in *Sands* in 1895, but by 1904 it was renumbered as 113. From 1916 the numbers on the building ranged from 119 to 123 with occupants consecutively being a grocer, a fruiterer and a butcher.

When Alfred A Davis opened the butchery, there were other Sydney butchers named Davis. Whether there is a connection with Davis Meats is not known, but given AA Davis lived in Windsor Road, he was likely connected to Davis's pig farm that operated in that area — Davis Street, Dulwich Hill was named after the farm owner whilst two early mayors of Petersham were named Davis: WL (1885-86) and Henry (1901-03). Now *there's* a research project!

Sadly, in 2011, Council approved a DA for demolition of the building. Despite submissions by Council's Heritage Advisor and the Society, the RTA plans to widen the road at this intersection and this apparently overruled any heritage considerations. So the building with its handsome curve, bull and sculptured motifs will be lost to yet another bland but more utilitarian building, whose likes are changing for the worse the character of our shopping centre streetscapes in terms of aesthetics and heritage conservation.

Congratulations to **Graeme Napier** who has often appreciated this edifice while stuck in traffic, and **Barbara Forsyth** who bemoans the loss of this former butchery. **Graham Hunt** is commended for his research into other local butcheries, including the 1880s shop at 74 Palace Street (corner of Brighton Street) Petersham which has a bull's head moulding to the corner parapet and has been listed as being a building of local heritage significance.

Richard Blair



## Calendar of Events

**Saturday 21 April**

**Larry Writer talk on Frank Bumper Farrell**  
(meeting a week earlier than usual)  
Details on front page

**Saturday 26 May**

**Coach tour to Penrith Valley & Emu Plains**

**Saturday 23 June**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Saturday 28 July**

**Big Dig Archaeological Centre**

**Marrickville Library and History Services**  
**Heritage Festival talks at Marrickville Library,**  
**corner Petersham and Marrickville Roads**  
**Bookings for talks 9335 2173**

**Exhibition: 16-29 April 10 am-8.30 pm**

***Marrickville: Industry and Innovation***

Marrickville has a long history as a manufacturing hub, with numerous industrial sites dotting its timeline. This display will explore the 1935 Marrickville Manufacturers Exhibition and the history of such companies as Fowlers Potteries, Sydney Steel, Vicars Woollen Mills and General Motors.

**Monday 16 April 11 am-12.30 pm (talk)**

***Brickmaking in Marrickville: Innovation and Invention***

Drawing on his book *The Brickmasters 1788-2008*, **Ron Ringer** traces the history of brickmaking, and explores innovations and social impacts, looking at companies including Austral Bricks.

**Wednesday 18 April 6.30-8 pm (talk)**

***The New South Wales school buildings of William E Kemp, 1880-1896* with Kirsten Orr (UTS)**

**Monday 23 April 11 am-12.30 pm (talk)**

***New ways with oral history – illuminating our past with words: Paula Hamilton*** (School of Public History, UTS) highlights what's new in the practice of Australian oral history and demonstrates some of the more notable innovations.

**Thursday 26 April 11 am-12.30 pm (talk)**

***Marrickville Vietnamese Butchers Project***

A group of UTS students documented the unique story of Marrickville's first Vietnamese butchers

**Thursday 26 April 12.30-2.30 pm (talk)**

***The Dictionary of Sydney***

***Future Sense: Writing for new information technologies***  
Introducing the Dictionary of Sydney as an inventive example of an online, digital repository of historical information and stories about Sydney. Introductory workshop follows to develop the basic skills required to write historical articles for online repositories.

**Saturday 28 April 11 am-12.30 pm (talk)**

***Stephanie Jones – Industrial photographer***

Also a corporate photo book specialist, **Stephanie Jones** discusses her published work on a Petersham factory and her upcoming work on Marrickville architecture; and shares some of her techniques in the visual recording of historic and heritage architecture.

## Marrickville Medal Awards

**Marrickville Town Hall**

**Thursday 26 April from 6 pm**

Medal entries will be exhibited and the winner announced, along with the winners of the Special Achievement Award and the Marrickville Urban Photography Competition. Guest speaker is **Maria Walsh**, CEO, Royal Australian Historical Society. Refreshments served. Bookings 9335 2222.

## *The Force: 150 Years of NSW Police*

(12 May-7 October)

**The Justice & Police Museum**

**Cnr Albert and Phillip Streets, Circular Quay**

'From wooden rattles and phrenology to taser guns and forensics, policing in NSW has continued to expand and develop according to the needs, attitudes and technology of the day. This exhibition celebrates 150 years of policing through a rich collection of photographs, objects and film footage. It charts the formation of specialist units, the science of crime investigation, the role of women in the force, changes in police duties and equipment, and also, pays tribute to the thousands of officers who have served their community.'

MHS Member **Dot Sullivan** has been invited to the opening of this exhibition as a guest in honour of her great grandfather, Constable Prince Francis Little, who resided at the Water Police Station on this site when it opened in 1857. Dot's grandfather, Charles Silvester Little, was born there in 1864 (see Feb 2008 newsletter).

Museum run by Historic Houses Trust and open daily.

## **St Peters Cooks River History Group**

**Saturday 14 April 2-4 pm**

***Tempe Walk***

**Saturday 21 April 2-4 pm**

***St Peters Graveyard Tour***

St Peters Anglican Church, 187 Princes Highway

**Tours free, but bookings essential: 9558 7504**

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