

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



OUR NEXT MEETING

The history of Chinese settlement in

Australia since the 1850s with King Fong

25 August 10.15 for 10.30 am

Herb Greedy Hall 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville

The Chinese have been an important part of the history of Australia. From the first wave of Chinese migration during the gold rush in the 1850s their fellow European immigrants received preferential treatment. As victims of the White Australia policy, the Chinese were never given permanent residence, and so lived in a kind of no man's land. Gradually times and attitudes started changing and the 1970s brought a more multicultural society and a greater acceptance of our Asian neighbours. Today the Chinese are an integral part of our society, making a huge contribution in all walks of life.



Chongshan Society (pronounced joong saan): early group of businessmen from Canton who were instrumental in looking after the early settlers from China; most of the early Chinese settlers came from Canton

King Fong OAM, who is vice president of the Chinese Australian Historical Society, was born in Fiji and emigrated to Australia in 1946 as an eight-year-old. He was brought up to satisfy the responsibilities of a Number One son – hard work, civic responsibility and keeping face for the family. He had to live up to the high standards of his father, who believed that even first place was not good enough: one must always try harder!

The refurbished **Newtown Hotel** in King Street on the corner of Watkin Street is in the process of wonderfully reversing a trend. It has **reinstated its balcony on two sides**. Will other pubs follow suit?

Stop Press! Old town hall lions replaced: see page 3

History Week 2012: 8-16 September

Details of local events in next newsletter

Wolli Creek Valley under threat

From **Wolli Creek Preservation Society**:

'The proposed duplication of the M5 East Motorway Tunnel is the threat posed to the Wolli Valley bushland by the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS, ex RTA). Plans for a cut-and-cover tunnel east of Bexley Road would wipe out a rare stand of remnant rainforest, wreck the natural creek line and destroy two hectares of high-priority bushland where restoration work has proved highly successful. Exploratory drilling could happen at any time.

'The Western Gateway bushland of the Wolli Creek Regional Park has high biodiversity values and includes some unique species. There are rainforest trees that you only usually see in the Royal National Park and there are beautiful patches of orchids. The six years of bush regeneration work we have done, supported by funding from the NSW Environmental Trust and involving lots of volunteer and professional hours, has produced fantastic results.

'The community has fought for three decades to prevent the construction of a surface motorway and to have the bushland of the Wolli Creek Valley declared a Regional Park. **It is the last large area of natural bushland in the inner southwest of Sydney** and plays an important part in the sustainability and health of Wolli Creek and the Cooks River catchment generally. We need to go on opposing developments in the name of "progress" that threaten local biodiversity and undermine our community's achievement.'

For further info or to find out how to get involved ring 0431 914 553 or check <www.wollicreek.org.au>.

Shake up to state planning laws

The government is discarding SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy) 65 established in 2002 and most other state environmental planning policies adopted by the previous government. Planning Minister Brad Hazzard says 'the government will completely overhaul the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. We are developing a planning system that for the first time will put community participation at the forefront of planning decisions about how our cities and towns will grow and develop.'

A green paper, *A New Planning System for NSW*, with 23 ideas for change, is available for public comment. To lodge a submission or find out about community consultations, go to <www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/newplanningsystem> or ring 1300 305 695 for further information. Submissions close 14 September.

Heritage Watch in brief and sundry matters

The **Majestic Theatre** (1929) in **Petersham** has been handsomely refurbished as residential and commercial space. Every effort is said to have been made to retain its architectural heritage with the heritage-listed facades and foyer preserved. There are 27 units and six shops. Developer: Growthbuilt.

St Barnabas Church Broadway has been rebuilt in a contemporary style (architects: Francis-Jones Morehen Thorpe) and reopened after the 1858-59 church was damaged beyond repair by fire on 10 May 2006. Some remnant masonry and tablets have been affixed to a wall in the courtyard whilst the iron entrance gates, a font and some inscribed memorial stones are also on view. The original church was designed by Arthur Crux with modifications and additions between 1863 and 1913 by William Kemp, Edmund Blacket, Arthur Blacket and Cyril Blacket.

Marrickville RSL entrance sculpture

Marrickville Council meeting of 17/7/12 unanimously carried motions that: '1) Council writes to the developer of the Marrickville RSL site and requests that the sculpture that was formerly attached to the wall of the entrance be sympathetically reused in the new development, or that the developer consider donating the sculpture to Marrickville Council; and 2) if the sculpture is donated to Council, that a report be drafted with options for its reuse in an appropriate public place within the municipality.'

Barry Humphries on the developer's trick

Just as comedian Spike Milligan supported heritage conservation in his local London suburb, North Finchley (see MHS February 2006 newsletter) so comedian **Barry Humphries** was recently quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (7/7/12, p. 3) as saying: 'The old Sydney trick is to let a building become derelict so that it's easier to pull down. Let it really decay. Then the deal with the developer is done and they wait until [the building] is falling down when they say, "why would you want to keep that?" I'm extremely cynical but it's a wasted opportunity, Sydney, isn't it? But it's still a lovely place to live.' He said he was proud to have been part of the push to save the Queen Victoria Building in the early 1970s.

Talking of Barry Humphries, **Geoff Ostling** is an inveterate theatre goer and recently attended one of the alleged final live shows ever of Dame Edna Everage. What Geoff didn't expect was being hit just above the eye by one of the Dame's flying gladioli. A witness claims that our stoic newly-elected president didn't bat an eyelid!

Meanwhile **Pamela Stewart** was recently at Circular Quay with her grandkids watching a talented busker doing Punch and Judy. The constable in the show was called *Bumper Farrell*, though Pamela doubted whether this meant a thing to most of the audience!

*This was **not** a sign on display at our recent AGM; rather it was a sign on exhibit at the Emu Plains museum on our May visit (photo: Richard Blair)*

Things not so sweet at Darrell Lea!

News that Australia's 'largest privately owned confectionery manufacturer and retailer' Darrell Lea has been placed into voluntary administration perhaps comes with little surprise in an age where no business is safe. About half the Darrell Lea stores Australia-wide are to close involving many job losses.

In 1917 British immigrant Harry Levy (1876-1957) and wife Esther started making confectionery at the back of their fruit shop in Manly. 'Darrell Lea' effectively started in 1927 when Harry opened his first shop in Sydney's Haymarket. In 1930 he relocated to Pitt Street. He changed his name to Lea and called the firm 'Darrell Lea' after his youngest son. In 1935 he opened a factory at 1 Cumberland Street (now next door to BridgeClimb) under a barrel-vaulted arch of an approach to Sydney Harbour Bridge: the carved stone lettering 'Darrell Lea Chocolate' remains just visible under paint. The Kogarah factory opened in 1963.

In the 1950s Harry's son Montague Lea bought *Woerden* on the corner of Cambridge and Merchant Streets Stanmore and changed its name to *Montague Gardens*. (*Woerden* was built by William H Paling in the 1870s; a later owner was Francis Crago, who also owned the Federal Flour Mill, Newtown; the mansion was demolished in 1979 and became a reserve.) Darrell Bernard Lea died in 1990 and Montague died in 2002.

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The advertisement for **Indian Root Pills** on the side of McConnell's shop (photo in July newsletter) prompted member **Ray Edmondson** to email:

'Patent medicines of the 19th and early 20th centuries are an arcane interest of mine. WH Comstock Co of the USA and Canada made the Indian Root Pills. The Pills were heavily promoted in Australia - I remember my father took them - and it's possible that Australia was the last redoubt of the company after patent medicines went out of fashion in America, or were prohibited by law because of their sometimes poisonous ingredients or their over-the-top claims.

'Originally Indian Root Pills were promoted as a fabulous cure-all, discovered by young Dr Morse during his forays among the Red Indian tribes, and the most extraordinary claims were made for their efficacy. In fact, all they ever were was a simple laxative, and Dr Morse never existed. The whole thing was a testament to the power of advertising.

'I remember as a child seeing ads for the pills on the side of buildings around Stanmore and Enmore. The company's advertising budget must have been prodigious. And these were all hand-painted signs, tailored to their specific location: not manufactured signs just stuck on the wall.'

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OUR LAST MEETING

The Big Dig Archaeological Centre

Big Dig Education and Interpretation Officer **Alison Frappell** was our host for the Society's visit on 28 July. Her PowerPoint presentation was followed by a tour of the site. The excavation started in 1994 on what is the largest urban archaeological site in Australia covering two city half-blocks in The Rocks. The newly-built Sydney Harbour YHA hostel (Youth Hostels of Australia has a 99-year lease on the site) has been constructed in such a way that 85% of the remains are clearly visible. This is one of many reasons why the site has received several awards including a Jury Commendation for Innovation from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation – an award never before won by a hostel.

In the early 1800s the area was overcrowded. Families lived in tiny houses with open cesspits, inadequate drainage and often no rear lane access necessitating the emptying of the cesspits by bucket carried through the house. We learnt about George Cribbs, a convict-turned-speculator and one of the area's more colourful characters. Arriving as a convict in 1808, before long he was selling meat and buying land. He established his own little empire until he owned almost half the site, part of which became a slaughter yard for his butchery. Artefacts from this trade and other household items were found in a disused well. Many are on display and give an interesting insight into how one family lived.

Despite the slum conditions some of the artefacts discovered (fine china, empty bottles for various oils and clear glass) suggest that some households were perhaps reasonably well off. Also found was a vessel to distil alcohol. The well became contaminated, possibly as a result of runoff from the slaughter yard, and by 1818 was being used as a dump. The well filled up, and was covered over and forgotten.

George Cribbs – who married three times, once bigamously – was declared bankrupt in the late 1820s, his property was subdivided and sold off. He is remembered by Cribbs Lane. Cutting across the site is Carahers Lane with some of the original flagstone still in place. Visitors cannot walk over the sites but there are viewing areas and interpretative boards. Our tour concluded with a splendid panorama from the top of the hostel. Thanks to **Alison Frappell** for her enthusiastic presentation.

The **Rocks Discovery Museum** is in a restored old warehouse behind the Orient Hotel with exposed beams and chiselled sandstone walls. It has four permanent exhibitions: Warrane (pre 1788) whose name derives from the traditional landowners of the Sydney Cove area, Colony (1788-1820), Port (1820-1900) and Transformations (1900-present).

Iain Carolin

Note: Thanks to **Iain Carolin** for coordinating our visit to this historic site. **Alison Frappell** conducts 'curriculum-based programs for primary and secondary students focusing on developing historical skills and understanding by exploring the history of the site through its archaeology'. **Editor**



Our June newsletter reported on the 2012 Marrickville Medal winner for the restoration of the former Marrickville Town Hall (1879). Now the work is virtually complete with new guardian lions placed in situ at the entrance. The original lions were stolen in 1990 (photo: Ian Phillips)

82,000 days since First Fleet!

Everyone knows that it's just over 224½ years since the arrival of the First Fleet, but vice president **Iain Carolin** has located a site by which he's calculated that on 30 July 2012, 82,000 days had elapsed since the First Fleet landed in Port Jackson on 26 January 1788; or, if you prefer, about 11,714 weeks or nearly two million hours. The site can also advise how many minutes and seconds this is (although it's not clear whether Iain factored in the precise time of landing, presuming that this fact was recorded!). To work out how old you are in days, minutes etc., go to www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.htm.



From left: Rosemary Wood, Mary Oakenfull, Richard Blair, Wendy Tibbetts, Lorraine Beach, Diane McCarthy, Fred Ellis, Ian Phillips (photo: Hillary Goldsmith)

Below: MHS members at the Big Dig (photo: Lorraine Beach)



Calendar of Events

Saturday 25 August

The history of Chinese settlement in Australia since the 1850s with King Fong

Details on front page

Saturday 22 September

Inspection of Egyptian Room, Petersham

**World renowned virtuoso Jonas Nordwall
plays the Wurlitzer Theatre Organ
Marrickville Town Hall
Sunday 26 August 2 pm**

TOSA members \$20; Seniors \$25; non-members \$27.50; children and students free (if booked by phone); group booking for 10 or more adults \$20 per person. Bookings Theo 0410 626 131. Website <www.tosa.net.au> for further information.

Out of the (Marrickville) vaults

Clinton Johnston (Coordinator History Services) and his colleagues **Rachelle de Casanove** and **Sarah Clague** shared some of the Marrickville History collection with history lovers on 25 July at Marrickville Library. Items like an old inscribed metal snuff box from the Clarence Hotel Petersham (on corner of Parramatta Road and Crystal Street), a 1937 illuminated address presented to Mayor Lilian Fowler on becoming the first female mayor in Australia in 1937, and pieces of Diana Pottery were appropriately handled with the presenters wearing gloves. PowerPoint was utilised to present the business records of Vicars Woollen Mills, data relating to the Waratah Flour Mills in Dulwich Hill and letters from the Victor Levitt Postcard collection (1916-19), though some of this original material was available for inspection. The Levitt collection (donated by MHS member Keith Levitt and his family) consists of post-cards and other correspondence sent home during the First World War years. Valuable material indeed.

Such is the value of some of the items in Council's collection that they have been found by heritage specialists to be of national significance. We look forward to seeing more Collection items in the future.

Friends of Tempe House

Members who have visited *Tempe House* in recent years would have seen the impressive restoration both to John Verge's creation and to the adjoining St Magdalene's Chapel. One of our newest members, **Ross Berry**, has just established Friends of Tempe House and has been given a \$3000 grant towards his work on Tempe House by AGL ('AB Spark was Treasurer and a founder of AGL amongst other things'). Ross has also set up a blog <<http://friendsoftempehouse.blogspot.com.au/>>. Its narrative begins: 'Welcome to my very first attempt at a blog and welcome to the blogsite for the Friends of Tempe House. For you out there in cyberspace who aren't aware of Tempe House please read on!'

Ross is available to conduct guided tours for a nominal charge to cover the costs levied by the owner, Australand.

Fanny Durack celebrated

Congratulations to Marrickville Council for marking the centenary of Fanny Durack's historic 1912 Stockholm Olympic swim (which made her the first woman to win a swimming gold medal at any Olympics) at Petersham Park near the Fanny Durack Pool on Sunday 15 July. Both MHS and the Cooks River Valley Association had stalls whilst children took part in 'heritage' races and a sausage sizzle was provided. Display boards and speeches further honoured Fanny who spent the last 30 years or so of her life living in Stanmore. A celebratory 'gold medal' was given out, the bonus being able to eat the chocolate inside.



Contrary to the claim of real estate reporter Jonathan Chancellor (*Title Deeds Domain*, SMH 18/9/04, p. 3H) and cited in the October 2004 and the last newsletter) Fanny's family never lived in Marrickville. Another Durack family, possibly related, lived at 5 Esk Street.

Offer to members re 2012 RAHS conference

The annual RAHS conference is on 20-21 October at St George Rowing Club, 1 Levey St Wolli Creek (address is confusing as the building actually overlooks Cooks River). The theme is "'Saturated With Filth and Corruption': NSW History?"

The committee usually subsidises two representatives to these conferences and will do so again this year, but given this conference is virtually on our doorstep the committee would like – as a one-off – to subsidise some MHS members to attend as well. We propose that the Society pay 50% of the fees to attend for either the whole weekend or for the Saturday or Sunday only. We are as yet unaware of the fees, but last year the fee was \$115 for the weekend and \$80 for either Saturday or Sunday. It is likely the fees will increase slightly. The fee includes attendance at all talks, handouts, morning and afternoon teas and lunch.

There will be a limit to the number of spots, so if there are more applicants than we can cater for, we'll need to have a ballot. Also, we could only allow one person per household. Should attendees wish to attend the dinner on Saturday night or other associated events where payment is required, they would need to make their own arrangements. To register your interest or for further info contact Richard on 9557 3823 or email <heritagesociety@optusnet.com.au> by 27 August.

Note: Proposed talk by Grahame Bond at Marrickville Library has been cancelled

Publications report will appear in next newsletter

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