



MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Our Next Meeting

Saturday, November 22nd, at 10.30am, in the Amenities Room, Ground Floor, Petersham Town Hall, Mrs Betty Viazim will speak about her career in millinery design for stage, film and television.

Christmas Picnic

At 12.30pm, immediately after Mrs Viazim's talk, we will adjourn to the historic cast-iron rotunda in Petersham Park for our annual Christmas Picnic Lunch.

Traditional games such as egg-and-spoon races and sack races will be for children of all ages, while comfortable, sheltered seating (with a magnificent view of the cricketers on the oval) will be available in the bandstand for the elderly and those not so athletically inclined.

Lunch is provided but members and their friends are invited to contribute some item of 'Christmas Cheer' if they are able.

Please contact Anne Carolan (Phone 406.4862) if you would like to assist with the arrangements or if you need transport.

The Editor

At the Society's September meeting, Geoff Ostling was elected Chairperson of the Publications Committee and Editor of the Newsletter. Geoff is head of the History Department at Homebush Boys' High School and can be contacted at 764.3611 (School) or 568.3029 (Home).

Centenary Celebrations

On Saturday, 18th October, the centenary of Marrickville West Public School was celebrated with an Open Day, historical display and official ceremony in the school grounds attended by many former students and local residents. Before unveiling the centenary plaque, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Rodney Cavalier, spoke about a number of issues close to the hearts of members of this Society.

When describing the foundation of the school in 1886, Mr. Cavalier said: "I was interested to read in the history of the school that the original site was covered with big trees - stringybarks, bloodwoods and turpentines and the architect thought about those trees when he was planning the original building. He did not just order that they should all be cut down... (but) made sure that 25 or 30 of the best trees remained in the playground providing shade and a beautiful environment for children of those days..."

He went on to describe how four years later, in 1890, Arbor Day was introduced to encourage the planting of trees by school children.

"Admittedly, some of the expected benefits were a little eccentric to say the least... One early inspector of schools claimed that encouraging school children to plant trees would "stay the tide of intemperance, of horse racing, gambling and lounging idly around public houses - in the modern idiom 'plant a shrub and close a pub'..." and ... "If children were taught to sow and plant and watch and wait for the development of trees or plants of any kind, they must acquire habits of patience, observation and kindness" ... It is these values which lie behind my own enthusiasm for environmental education".

Mr. Cavalier praised the work of John Dengate and the other teachers who prepared the musical history of West Marrickville School as "one of the most creative centenary efforts I have seen".

As a result of our Heritage Society stall at the school's Open Day, several new members joined the Society. Many people from far and near showed interest in the work of preserving the best of the past in our municipality. Our thanks to Verona Rothwell, a former student of the school, Laurel Thomas and Shirley Hilyard for their help during the afternoon, to Bob Thompson for transport and to our Secretary, Chrys Meader for providing the literature to sell or give away.

The centenary celebrations at St. Brigid's were also held on the same day and included specially composed music and a message from the Prime Minister. Next year the Society proposes to hold another Heritage Week concert in St. Brigid's on Friday, 3rd April. It is good to record that St. Brigid's has been classified by the national Trust on the recommendation of the Society's Classification Committee.

Geoff Ostling.

Our Last Meeting...

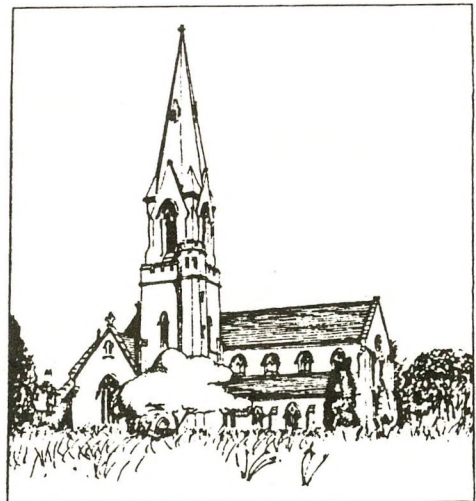
On Saturday, October 25, members of the Society inspected the Camperdown Park and St. Stephen's Church, Newtown.

In the Park the centre of interest was the band rotunda, thought to have been erected in celebration of Australia's centenary in 1888, with its ironwork by the firm of Souter and Martin. There were also the War Memorial, the two National Trust classified Moreton Bay figtrees and the Sullivan R.S.P.C.A. Memorial horse trough, erected to honour James Sullivan, who died in 1924 in an attempt to save his employer's horses from a fire in the stables.

At St. Stephen's we were welcomed by the Rector, the Rev. Don Meadows, who affectionately described the building which some consider the finest of Edmund Blacket's churches. Built in 1871-4 at a cost of £13,000, it replaced the earlier St. Stephen's, which was so inadequate that the gentry sent their servants to St. Barnabas', Broadway, in an effort to relieve the congestion.

Blacket closely supervised the construction of the new church, in the Decorated Gothic style, of Sydney sandstone. He commissioned the geometric-patterned stained glass windows and designed the pulpit, the prayer desk and the pews - those on the right of the centre aisle bearing the word, "Free", to distinguish them from the rented pews, on the left. The organ was commissioned in England and cost the anonymous donor £750. The twelve bells, of an innovative hemispherical design, were on show at the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879-80 before being hung. The church is undergoing extensive restoration; a recent project was the laying of a new slate roof at a cost of \$90,000.

The picturesque cemetery dates from 1849, as does the wooden-shingled Cemetery Lodge. Among those buried in the graceful avenues are Sir Thomas Mitchell, Alexander Macleay and the victims of the Dunbar tragedy.* Originally the cemetery occupied 13 acres, but after its official closure in 1942 it became overgrown, and the brutal murder of a young girl in 1960 so aroused public opinion that nine acres were resumed for a public park, the outlying headstones being brought to lie within the area now surrounded by a sandstone wall.



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At one time it was proposed to transport the church, stone by stone, to Canberra. However, it was recognised that the combination of historic church, cemetery and cemetery lodge was unique in Sydney, and the plan was abandoned, to our lasting joy.

Laurel Thomas

* For a full description of the cemetery, see Chrys Meader's article in Heritage, Number 1, December, 1984.

Classifications Committee Report

For too long the Marrickville area has been overlooked in the classification of sites important to our heritage. It therefore pleases me to report that we have finally had two buildings classified by the National Trust as a result of recommendations from this Committee: St Brigid's Catholic Church, corner Marrickville and Livingstone Roads, and the Bank building on the corner of Crystal Street and Stanmore Road. We also have other applications being considered and hope that they too will be accepted.

At the same time, our interest in classification has been picked up by the National Trust who, with help from us, have classified several other buildings in the Municipality. These are: 135-137 Albany Road, Stanmore; 61-75 Stanmore Road, Stanmore; "Dundoos", Railway Ave, Stanmore; Petersham Fire Station; Salvation Army Hostel, 97 Cambridge Street, Stanmore; 34-38 Gordon Crescent, Stanmore; and 223-229 Trafalgar Street, Stanmore.

We are always interested to hear from members who can suggest other possible classifications. Stanmore is doing well, what about other areas?

Terry Hicks (Phone 569.8990)

New Members

Peter Swain, Helen Blake and family, Madge and Neville Milston, Amy Needham, Dorothy Hargraves, Mrs Godfrey and John Chappell.

How to Join The Society

It's only \$7 for individuals, \$10 for households and institutions, \$2 for pensioners and students. You will receive copies of our Newsletter and our journal "Heritage". Your membership is good for twelve months from the date of joining. Contact Chrys Meader c/- Marrickville Library (560.9333 ext. 282).
