

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



OUR NEXT MEETING

Society's 30th anniversary celebration at Petersham Park rotunda near Station Street Saturday 22 March 10.15 for 10.30 am

- 10.30** Welcome to members and guests by President Geoff Ostling; vocal quartet from Fort Street High School; snippets of Petersham Park history (mini-talks)
- 11.30** Talk by Andrew Tink (details at right)
- 12.15-12.30** Picnic lunch accompanied by jazz pianist Roshan Kumaraje from Fort Street; cutting of cake to follow (dual toast)

RSVP 18 March (for catering): Mary 9560 6409 or <mary.oakenfull@bigpond.com>. Please advise if you have to cancel. Rain, hail or shine the event is on.

'Valdemar': 396 Marrickville Rd Marrickville

The Society is particularly dispirited that the villa 'Valdemar' at 396 Marrickville Road has been so defaced by its current owner under the guise of turning it into a child care centre, that its heritage significance has been 'irreversibly eroded'. 'Valdemar' was built by James Wall in 1913, and until recently was a feature of the rich residential precinct of Federation villas, bungalows and period civic buildings around Livingstone and Marrickville Roads, and nearby David Street. In spite of the Society calling for protection of this property since 2005, it was not individually listed or included in the adjacent David Street Conservation Area.

So apparently there was nothing Council could do to stop the owner from rendering and painting the tuck pointed brickwork, and replacing the original timber framed windows with aluminium. This is all deemed to be 'Exempt and Complying Development' under the State Government's Environmental Planning Policy. It appears that the State Government will be extending the scope of the Exempt and Complying Development provisions as a way of 'freeing up' the planning regime in the state, since its proposed changes to the Planning Laws have been thwarted in Parliament. Back in 2007, the Society called for 'vigilance... to prevent the loss of any more of these important items of Marrickville's built heritage'. This unfortunately will not be enough to stop the vandalism of 'Valdemar' being visited on all of our unprotected period houses - goodbye tuck pointed brickwork, timber framed leadlight windows, slate roofs and tessellated tile porches. The defilement of 'Valdemar' shows that there is now a pressing need for Council to extend its Conservation Areas to put a brake on the unfettered sterilisation of our vulnerable Federation and Victorian building stock.

Scott MacArthur

Guest Speaker: Andrew Tink on William C Wentworth

Described by Manning Clark as 'Australia's greatest native son', **William Charles Wentworth** was a man of rat cunning, great intelligence and sharp wit, who wrote the first book by an Australian to be published, was joint editor and proprietor of the colony's first independent newspaper, and founder of Australia's first university. With ruthless energy and a volcanic personality this 'convict brat' was an unrelenting advocate for trial by jury, self-government and an Australian Confederation. He has a strong claim to be a founding father of modern Australia. (photo online).



Since retiring from state parliament in 2006, **Andrew Tink** has written *William Charles Wentworth* (2009); *Lord Sydney's life & times* (2011), subject of his MHS talk in February 2013; and *Air Disaster Canberra* (2013).

1892 Newtown Post Office closes

After serving Newtown since 1892 the Queen Anne style Walter Liberty Vernon **Newtown Post Office** closed on 1 March 2014. The writing was on the wall for this beloved building in the 1990s when it was sold by Australia Post. The insertion of three full-length windows at the ground floor front in 1999 (November 1999 newsletter) failed to enhance its appearance, despite other worthy restoration work. As advised in the July 2013 newsletter the post office building is to be redeveloped. The post office has relocated to the former site, now redeveloped, of the funeral directors TJ Andrews at 21-25 Enmore Road.

'Altona' 38 Gordon Crescent Stanmore on sale

For over 50 years the St Vincent de Paul Society has owned and run a boarding house named **Xavier House** - 'a city home for country boys' - at **38 Gordon Crescent Stanmore**. They recently closed this facility and the house is about to go on sale. Built in 1886 it was named 'Altona' in 1890. Described on the Heritage Council of NSW website as 'a classic



Italianate residence of Sydney of the 1880s, "Altona" is an excellent example of the craftsmanship of the era'. It is on the Marrickville LEP 2011.

(© Google Maps)

OUR LAST MEETING

Alexander Brodie & Frances Maria Spark of Tempe House: talk by Dr Robert Brodie Spark

In the wake of Ross Berry's November talk, 'The works of John Verge', Society members (plus a visitor from Chattanooga, USA), represented by Ross, welcomed Dr Robert Brodie Spark. Ross also assisted Dr Spark in his handsomely illustrated presentation on Saturday 22 February (both are MHS members).

Robert is the great, great grandson of Alexander Brodie Spark, who was born in Scotland in 1792. Alexander's father, James Brodie, was the 21st Chief of Clan Brodie. Alexander came to Australia in 1823 and was soon a leading businessman and active in the affairs of the Colony. As his fortunes continued to improve in the 1830s he commissioned colonial architect John Verge to build two houses: Tusculum at Potts Point and Tempe House. Spark chose to live at his country estate, which was named after the Vale of Tempe in Greece; the house was completed in 1836.

Frances Maria Biddulph could trace her family back to the Norman invasion of 1066. Her maternal family Burnet were lairds of Crathes Castle, Scotland and she had a direct line to King Edward III, who was also Robert Spark's 16th great grandfather. Frances's family migrated to the Cape Colony, South Africa when she was 12 years old. She married Dr Henry Radford before her 16th birthday and they came to Australia settling in the Hunter Valley. Dr Radford was recalled to active service in India in 1829 and the whole family went with him. This was a tragic time with the death of five of their children. Back in Australia, Henry died in 1836 leaving Frances a widow at age 28 with three young children, although with assets.

Frances knew AB Spark from her time in the Hunter Valley in the 1820s and they moved in the same social circles in Sydney. This culminated in the exchange of a marriage proposal and an acceptance letter on 9 April 1840. AB was a firm but fair man, described in this exchange of letters as 'whimsically dignified'. They were married at St Peters Anglican Church in 1840. AB Spark had been instrumental in fund raising towards the building of this church.

Frances had six more children, all reaching adulthood, and although the 1840s depression almost ruined Spark, they lived in reasonable comfort at Tempe House until his death in 1856. He was buried in St Peters Church graveyard. After Tempe House was sold Frances and her children moved to Surry Hills and she later lived in Potts Point. She died in 1887. Frances had a privileged life, but also one of personal hardship. Whilst Alexander's life is well documented, Robert spoke at length about Frances, demonstrating she was not a mere footnote to the life of Alexander. Robert concluded his talk with the later history of Tempe House – especially about the Sisters of the Good Samaritans, active occupants for almost a hundred years – and its more recent restoration.

PS from a golf widow: Golf historians regard AB Spark as the first person to have played golf in Sydney at Grose Farm where Sydney University now stands. Spark's diary records that on 1 June 1839 he played with his friend and neighbour, [Lesslie] Duguid.

Diane McCarthy

Three (or four) cheers for: Lotte & Bert Ferres . . .

Responding to a note enclosed with the February newsletter to **Lotte and Bert Ferres** (both over 90), Bert asked son Gary to ring the Society to say thanks. Gary did. Lotte joined the Society in 1988. In 1995, while living at Sans Souci, Lotte wrote to MHS of happy memories visiting relatives in Marrickville and Dulwich Hill in the late 1930s. Her grandfather was John Hardy, who was a Marrickville alderman for 18 years between 1889 and 1914 and who lived in Fairfowl Street, Dulwich Hill. Lotte and Bert (married for over 64 years) later moved to Bransford but now both reside in a nursing home.

Peter FitzSimons in his 24 April 2012 Sun Herald column wrote that he'd recently visited Bert Ferres, who was a Rat of Tobruk. Peter wrote: 'On the night of November 29, 1941, at the Battle of Ed Duda, Bert Ferres was strong enough to charge straight at a German machinegun nest that was sending an enfilade of fire at his 2/13 Battalion and, through use of grenades and his Bren gun, take it out. He was awarded the Military Cross for his efforts.'

. . . and Fred Ellis & Michael Skennar

At the **Addison Road Community Centre (ARCC)** Morning Tea on 26 February following presentations by key staff in relation to the ARCC and their Talking History Project, and a speech by Marrickville Mayor Jo Haylen, a number of former service personnel shared some of their memories of military service and the former Addison Road Army Camp.

Included were two long term MHS members – firstly, **Michael Skennar**, who served in World War II, post-war Japan and the Korean War; and secondly, **Fred Ellis**, who recalled his years of proud army service with the 14th Battalion during World War II including tours of duty in New Guinea. Fred must have spoken for 15-20 minutes, and by the time he said, 'I'd better shut up now', it seemed he still had much more to say. Hearing Fred talk off the cuff and with such clarity was one of my most moving experiences in 29-years of MHS membership. To the credit of ARCC and as part of its Talking History Project the recollections of many service veterans have been recorded for perpetuity.

Richard Blair



Autumn Trivia Question

What were and where in the Marrickville LGA are these unrelated buildings? Richard 9557 3823 or email as per bottom back page.



Sydney's hard rock story: the cultural heritage of trachyte by Robert Irving, Ron Powell & Noel Irving (Heritage Publishing, Sydney & Leura, 2014, 196 pages, 245 ills incl. 25 col. photographs, RRP \$29.95)*

The 24/2/14 *Sydney Morning Herald* (p. 33) Cryptic Crossword clue 13-across: 'Darwin cyclone swallowed hotel – The Empty Rock' (8). The answer is the subject of this just-published book. The media release says it all:

'What is trachyte and how did it come to be the unsung hero of Sydney's building stones? The answer is found in this fascinating story of how a hard stone quarried in the New South Wales Southern Highlands became the city's most important stone after sandstone. The title provides an apt description: trachyte was *Sydney's* hard rock. Sandstone with all its virtues was the premier building stone of Sydney's early and middle years but trachyte had qualities sandstone lacked and so it perfectly complemented the "yellowblock" of our heritage buildings. Sydney's hard rock provided what sandstone, with all its beauty, could not.

'This tough, distinctively coloured igneous stone was first quarried at Mount Gibraltar near Bowral in the 1880s and soon began appearing in the kerbs and gutters along the growing city's streets. Soon it was adopted by builders and architects and it can still be seen overhead in the keystones of great buildings as well as underfoot, in myriad small and large scale projects throughout NSW and beyond. Its importance in the city is why the authors have called their tale *Sydney's Hard Rock Story*.

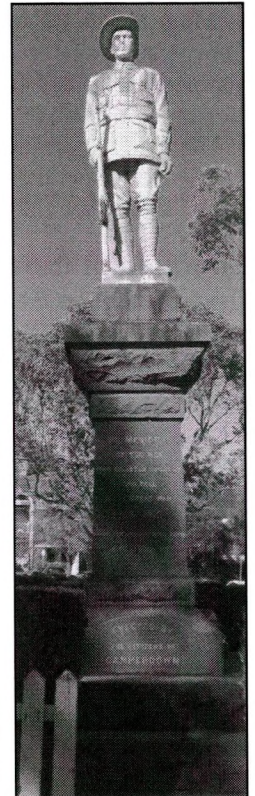
'The book traces trachyte's extensive uses, starting with its geology and some of the dramas of Bowral's "Gib" and its quarrymen. It continues by examining its basic, utilitarian beginnings like kerbing. After designers were awakened to its qualities they used trachyte to create some of our finest commercial streetscapes, as well as, monuments, foundation stones, commemorative plaques and paving. A special feature of the book, showcasing many fine and surprising examples of this stone, is the illustrated trachyte walk in central Sydney.'

* * *

The chapter 'an array of memorials and monuments' includes many local examples where trachyte is used: the Sullivan RSPCA memorial and the pedestal of the soldiers memorial in Camperdown Park; the drinking fountain and horse trough, City Road, Darlington; the base of Gilbert Doble's Winged Victory, Marrickville, and the pedestal of his memorial, Pyrmont; the trachyte obelisk in front of the Newtown High School for the Performing Arts; entrance to former Newtown Town Hall; the soldiers memorial at the Tempe Bus (formerly Tram) Depot, Tempe; and the sewer vent shaft base, Premier Street, Marrickville.

Robert Irving (a MHS member) is an architectural historian who lectured in architecture at UNSW. He has written or co-written several books including *Identifying Australian Architecture*. **Ron Powell** is an architect, landscape architect and stone consultant who, until recently, oversaw the maintenance of state-owned heritage stone buildings and monuments. **Noel Irving** is a research assistant and picture researcher who has worked on many publications. He was on Sydney City Council's Sandstone and Trachyte Committee.

A marble statue of an Australian soldier, with rifle, stands on top of the Bowral trachyte pedestal of this memorial in Camperdown Park. The pedestal is a tapered and polished square prism resting on the base of margined rock-faced trachyte supported on a shaped and partly polished pedestal (photo: Robert Irving).



* *Sydney's hard rock story* will be on sale at MHS meetings

Rod Cox has a convincing theory about the mystery 1879 cricketer in the SAG's December *Descent* and the last MHS newsletter. If Flossie is derived from Florence, in 1883 (four years after the date of photo) a Florence Margaret Payten Bayliss married **Edward J Commins** (born 1852). He died in 1927 and she in 1941, and they are buried in the Anglican Church, Ashfield cemetery. Rod suggests the photo is of Edward prior to his marriage to Flossie, who, some time after the photo was taken, wrote her name on it. Also, the Harnleigh estate had a cricket team, for which Edward may have played. Rod found on Trove, 1895-96 references to the team in the *Evening News*. What do you reckon, Ralph?

Vale – Monica Sheehan

Monica Sheehan was so touched when several MHS members attended a Back to Kelly's Bush celebration on 16 June 1996 (see July 1996 MHS newsletter) that she became a MHS member and remained so, even though she had no other known affiliation with Marrickville. So highly regarded were the group of women called the Battlers for Kelly's Bush that the 1996 celebration was also attended by former NSW Premier Neville Wran, former local MP Rodney Cavalier and unionist Jack Munday, who was central to this unlikely 1971 alliance to save that piece of Hunters Hill bushland from development – **the result of the world's first ever Green Ban**. When Monica renewed her MHS subs last October she wrote that she 'was responsible for persuading Jack Munday to impose the Green Bans'. A book *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush* (1996) relates the saga. The Battlers were awarded the Honorary Freedom of the Municipality of Hunters Hill on 14 October 1996 at a special presentation held in their honour.

As well as being a former President of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush Monica was involved in several groups and organisations in the Hunters Hill area which culminated in her being made Hunters Hill Citizen of the Year 2011. Monica died aged 95 on 12 February. Our condolences to Monica's family.

Richard Blair

Calendar of Events

Saturday 22 March

**MHS 30th anniversary celebration featuring
Andrew Tink talk on WC Wentworth**
Details on front page

Saturday 26 April

**History of flooding in Marrickville Valley
and Cooks River**

Saturday 24 May

Addison Road (former) Army Camp tour

Journey at Discovery Point: 5-6 April

On the weekend of 5-6 April (10 am-4 pm) Australand offers free entry to visitors to **Tempe House** and **St Magdalen's Chapel** near Wolli Creek station. St George Art Society will show artworks and sculpture; historical displays and publications from Marrickville Heritage Society, St George Historical Society, Friends of Historic Houses Trust, Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and various social groups from the wider Wolli Creek area. High Tea available at Discovery Point Café.

Commemoration of 175th anniversary of the first burial in St Peters Church Graveyard Saturday 5 April 2-4.30 pm

- Permanent information panels installed in graveyard to be unveiled
- Graveyard walk
- Powerpoint presentation on Victorian death and mourning at 2.30 pm
- Organ Recital 3 pm
- Sausage sizzle, afternoon tea.

More Heritage Watch

Despite strong opposition from local residents and MHS, demolition of the **Sydenham Station Masters cottage** and the removal of over 20 trees at the hands of Railcorp occurred in February. The DA for demolition was refused by Council in April 2011, but was later approved by a Joint Review Planning Panel although the final determination was deferred, pending investigation of possible soil contamination.

Council has approved a DA for 'Homersfield' (1888) at **2 St John St, Lewisham** (see August 2013 newsletter), subject to conditions to erect a 2-storey house. Under consideration were the MHS and other opposing submissions and 'Council's codes and policies, the interests of the community at large and the reasonable expectations of the applicant'. We should not assume, of course, that the matter being before the Land & Environment Court was a factor in Council's decision!

Under the **Sydney Park Draft Plan of Management 2014**, City of Sydney Council is planning to upgrade the park which is likely to include a city farm and farmers market, a childcare centre, the city's largest stormwater and water harvesting project, frog ponds, nature trails and the conservation of the Bedford-Austral heritage brickworks. Bravo! We trust that interpretive signage will be installed on the brickwork site. More details on the City of Sydney Council website.

Richard Blair

Redevelopment of the SVdP Marian Centre, former Lewisham Hospital, 2C West Street

The St Vincent de Paul Society has generally been a careful steward of the Lewisham Hospital complex since the hospital closed in 1987. As well as being an administrative centre for the SVdP Society, it provides important social welfare resources and facilities for our community, retaining a viable use for these important heritage protected buildings. However, MHS was concerned about the recent proposals for the redevelopment of the Marian Centre, one of the largest buildings on the site, prominently overlooking Petersham Park. The Marian Centre includes the much extended original 1911 Private Hospital designed by Herbert E Wardell, architect for the major buildings on the site. From the notification documents that Council released as part of the DA consultation process, MHS was concerned that the extent of demolition and new works in the project were poorly defined.

Following a meeting on site with the SVdP Society, their architect, Council officers and Councillors from the Development Assessment Committee (including the Mayor), MHS was reassured that the SVdP Society's main intention was to restore the original Wardell building and update some of the ageing service facilities. The 1930s-40s Camillus Centre hospital wing, though, seems set for demolition. MHS has requested that further information about how the new services are installed in the most sensitive heritage spaces should be provided to Council prior to final construction approval being granted.

Scott MacArthur



*The 1911 Herbert E Wardell building, Lewisham
(photo: Scott MacArthur)*

Marrickville History Services presents: Walking tour of Stanmore

Saturday 15 March 11 am from Stanmore Library
Spots still available

Bookings: aleem.aleemullah@marrickville.nsw.gov.au
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