

# MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM  
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE  
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



## Our May Meeting

**Coach trip to Leura – Everglades, Gordon Falls and Leuralla Toy & Railway Museum  
Saturday 28 May**

**Meet opposite Petersham Town Hall at 8.15 for 8.30 am sharp departure. Cost \$50 (pay on the day) includes coach, Devonshire morning tea, tours and entry fees. BYO lunch and drink; wear good walking shoes. Please advise if you have to cancel. Bookings: Ring Mary on 0407 487 157 or email <mary.oakenfull@bigpond.com>.**

Everglades is one of Australia's foremost heritage gardens. Built in the 1930s by Danish architect Paul Sorensen for Henri Van De Velde this treasure sits in 12½ acres of European-style gardens and native Australian bush with breathtaking views over the Jamison Valley in the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains. It has a fine house and grounds with a peaceful ambience. For some of the most incredible views in NSW, you can't go past Gordon Falls lookout and picnic area in Blue Mountains National Park, near Leura. Picnic tables and amenities are available for a comfortable lunch stop.

Leuralla Toy & Railway Museum has the largest collection of 20th century toys, trains and associated memorabilia in the Southern Hemisphere. The toys and trains give a great insight into the past and can offer everyone – from the serious collector to families – a chance to relive their youth. The building, which is surrounded by beautiful gardens, has connections with the family of Dr HV Evatt and includes memorabilia of this famous Australian.

## Trove online database under threat

The future of the free Trove online database with over 472 million resource items is in doubt due to National Library funding cuts. Founded in 2009, in 2014 around 70,000 people a day used the website. Trove is not only useful for academics; it is probably even more useful for non-academics, including genealogists and local historians. It is one of many national cultural institutions looking at reduced staff numbers as it faces \$20 million in cuts by the federal government. Trove is an invaluable resource which must remain accessible. With a federal election at hand, users can raise their concerns with their local federal MP. The Society calls on the federal government to reconsider its cuts to Trove, and for it to provide appropriate funding for this important national asset.

**Tempe House Open Day: Sunday 8 May from 10 am**

**Annual MHS fees are due: details on back page**

## Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 25 June 10.15 for 10.30 am start  
Herb Greedy Hall, 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville**

Members are invited to the Society's 32nd AGM when annual reports will be presented. All committee positions will be declared vacant. Nominations for president, two vice presidents, treasurer, secretary, assistant secretary and up to six committee positions may be made in advance or on the day. Secretary Mary (0407 487 157) can field queries re joining the committee. Members must have paid their 2016-17 membership fees to stand for office or vote if required. Fees can be paid beforehand or on the day. Stay afterwards and mingle with fellow members over our light lunch.

## Access to Local History at Marrickville Library

Several members have brought to the attention of the MHS committee the recent downgrading of Local History in Marrickville Library. The previously designated library area has been grossly depleted of its books and other resources. Most the collection has been relegated to the locked and cramped stack area, only available to users via a staff member – most inconvenient to a researcher requiring a number of books and reports. All filing cabinets of photos, cuttings, articles and reports (known as vertical files) have been transferred to staff areas. Whilst user access is allowed, this is totally unacceptable both for staff and for researchers and other users.

Many libraries across Sydney have quite large local history areas. Campsie Library's local history section has recently expanded! Marrickville's local history facilities *must* be upgraded. We urge members to email or write to the Council if they are concerned.

Eventually, Marrickville will have a new library. Why not convert one or two of the three Council-owned Livingstone Road houses earmarked for demolition? They could surely be adapted as a local history centre.

**Richard Blair and Diane McCarthy**



**Nancy MacAlpine's sketch of Rose Seidler House.**  
Report and photo for our March outing inside.



## Our March Meeting: Harry Seidler houses & Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden on North Shore

Autumn was in the air on 19 March as Society members explored two Harry Seidler houses and the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden on Sydney's upper North Shore. Harry Seidler designed Rose Seidler House, Wahroonga for his mother in 1948-50. Born into a Jewish family in Vienna, classified as an enemy alien and interned in Canada, Harry's studies at Harvard introduced him to some of the leading lights of the Bauhaus movement: Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus School emphasised practical function, art, skilled craftsmanship and stripping away ornamentation. Harry said three principles governed his work: 'comfort, solidly built and a delight to the eye'.

Reunited with his family in Australia Harry built what is described as one of Australia's finest examples of mid-20th century modern domestic architecture. Winning the John Sulman Award for Architecture the house created a furore at the time. It features two main zones: a living area and a sleeping area separated by a family room. All rooms overlook bushland. Timber was imported from North America and the central fireplace built of local sandstone. Curtains rather than walls partition areas. Other innovations include: central inclusive design of the kitchen, internal copper downpipes located behind the wardrobes, and ensuites. Harry chose the cutlery and the Russell White china and imported furniture and appliances such as a dishwasher. The house was eventually donated to the Historic Houses Trust, now Sydney Living Museums, and was opened to the public in 1991.

We lunched at the 123-hectare Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden in St Ives where our guide showed us some caged reptiles and insects; he explained the role of ants in the breeding of stick insects. Along the trails and boardwalks we saw heathland, forest, ponds, waterfalls, their treasured Wollemi pine and a variety of native flowers, among them lemon myrtle, native mint and native ginger bush; we saw frogs, goannas and a red bellied snake. Aboriginal lore tells how stages of flowering of the Gynea lily signifies if whales are migrating up or down the coast.

The day concluded at the Tuck House in Gordon. Built in 1951 by Jim and Margaret Tuck it was purchased by Jyoti Somerville, a conservation architect, in 2000 and has been carefully restored. Harry loved the challenge of steep blocks and access to this house is via a long series of steps. Designed in a perfect square, it maximises space with no corridors. As with the Rose Seidler House a free standing sandstone fireplace divides the living and dining areas. Light floods in and the large windows allow the interior and the outdoors to interact. Many of its features are reminiscent of Rose Seidler House, but Jyoti has also put her own stamp on it. Seidler asked, 'where does nature stop and architecture begin?' His houses reflect an innovative, attractive blending of the two.

Thanks to **Jyoti Somerville** who allowed use of her kitchen for afternoon tea; and thanks to all our other guides.

**Anne-Maree Johnston**

**Note:** Thanks to former MHS President **Geoff Ostling**, who arranged our visits to Rose Seidler House and the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden. Our mystery visit to the Tuck residence was suggested by member **Chris King**, who had resided there in the 1980s. Serendipitously, the **newsletter editor** had many years ago lived with his family in the same street as the Tuck house for some years without knowledge of it; a further coincidence is that our scribe, **Anne-Maree Johnston**, was a close friend of the late Margaret Tuck. She agreed to be scribe before knowing about the Tuck house destination.



MHS at Rose Seidler House  
(photo: Leanne, Sydney Living Museums)



## Our Last Meeting: 23 April

### Sydney's Tramway System: Peter McCallum

If you lived in Sydney in the late 1870s when horses were our equivalent of cars, there were three places in the eastern suburbs in demand – the Sydney Cricket Ground, Randwick Racecourse and Coogee Beach. The trouble was you could only get there, if you lived in the area, by horse drawn tram, horseback or on foot.

A fascinating history of how Sydney's tramway system developed laced with some tramway stories was presented to a full house of Society members by **Peter McCallum**, a long-serving mover and shaker of the Sydney Tramway Museum at Loftus.

Sydney's first trams were horse-drawn, including one running from Redfern to Circular Quay along Pitt Street but by 1879 a steam tramway system had been established. This had problems, however, because the tracks were also used to haul railway freight wagons to supply city businesses. These heavy duty tracks damaged wheels of other vehicles and by the turn of the century, electrification had commenced with most of the network being converted by 1910.

In its heyday, Sydney had one of the largest tram networks in the world with about 1600 cars in service at its peak in the 1930s. In 1945 about 405 million passenger journeys were chalked up. Amongst the most famous, of course, was the strap-hanging Bondi tram giving rise to many stories and expressions. Who hasn't heard of 'shooting through like a Bondi tram'?

As time went on, competition from the private car, private bus operators and bus use, and the perception of traffic congestion led to the gradual closure of lines. Overseas transport experts were called in to advise the city on its postwar transport issues, and recommended closure of the system. Trams were wound down in stages with the last service – to La Perouse – on 25 February 1961. But how smart was this? Trams continued to flourish in Melbourne and elsewhere. By 1997 a tram (known as light rail) service commenced from Central which in 2014 was extended to Dulwich Hill. We thank Peter for his entertaining talk.

**Judy O'Connor**

**Robert Parkinson** is well known for a range of publications on churches, colleges and church organs; his essay, 'History of Marrickville Municipal Symphony Orchestra 1930-1953', features in *Marrickville: a past worth preserving* (2011). He has written a lot on local cinema history and the Society sells *Picture Shows in the Marrickville and Newtown Districts 1898-2012*.

Bob's most recent work is **Orry Kelly: Miss Weston's protégé – The story of a great Hollywood costume designer** (2015). Until recently Orry Kelly was a little known Australian who had a distinguished career designing costumes for over 300 films: he won three Oscars. He also did theatre work. Born in Kiama to a tailor he sailed to the US in 1922 aged 24. His one time flatmate was Archie Leach, who changed his name to Cary Grant.

This timely book coincides with: (a) the recent documentary *Women He Undressed* directed by Gillian Armstrong and produced by Marrickville resident Damien Parer, who has been described as the 'driving force behind the film'; and (b) Orry-Kelly's recently discovered memoir *Women I've Undressed*.

**Richard Blair**

## Autumn Trivia Answer

This grotto is in the grounds of the former presbytery at 40a Thomas Street, Lewisham. Citing a parish history (1887-1937) member **John Mara** advises:

Mother Alphonse and her Sisters of Charity settled into the new convent on 6 June 1923. Previously they had a long and tedious trip to the school. The convent was officially blessed and opened on Sunday 4 November 1923 by Archbishop Kelly. It also housed novitiates. The grotto, a replica of the Lourdes Grotto, was erected in 1933 inside the entrance gates by Mr W Bradley KC, in memory of his mother who died on 12 October 1932.

It is believed the Sisters of Charity remained in the presbytery until the mid-1990s. The commemorative stone in the grotto reveals she was Bridget Bradley (nee Clerkins), formerly of *Glen Viggen*, 40 Thomas

Street, Lewisham. William Bradley (1881-1957) was one of four sons. He was a barrister, who specialised in commercial and industrial law and took silk in 1934. He was a City Council alderman from 1937 to 1948 and a Member of the NSW Legislative Council from 1940 to 1949; he held a number of community posts.

Apart from **John Blattman** and **John Mara**, who have long associations with the parish of St Thomas, only new member **June Warren** correctly identified the grotto. She saw it during a recent tour organised by Marrickville Council. Photo by **Judith Matheson**.

**Richard Blair**



## Marrickville Strong Post ribbon

The Society has been contacted by Donna seeking the value of this ribbon made for the Royal Visit of the Duke (later King George VI) and Duchess of York on 26 March 1927.

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* (18 July 1919, p. 10) is a map of the city of Sydney showing 'tomorrow's Peace March' and a 'key to Strong Posts shown on the map'. Among them were strong posts for Marrickville, Newtown, Petersham and St Peters.

The *Portland Guardian* (24/1/1952 p 2):

Wherever Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh go during their [upcoming] Australian tour they will be cheered by groups of people at strong posts. What does 'strong post' mean? It is apparently a variation of the military term strong point which Webster's dictionary defines as: 'an organised tactical locality composed of two or more combat posts under unified command, usually garrisoned by a rifle company'.

(Of course, that visit was postponed due to the death a fortnight later of Princess Elizabeth's father, King George VI. Queen Elizabeth and the duke visited Australia two years later.)

The ribbon was deemed to be worth about \$30 but we suggested she seek further expert advice. Donna emailed the photo.



## Calendar of MHS events

**Saturday 28 May**  
**Everglades, Leuralla Gardens & environs, Leura\***  
**Saturday 25 June**  
**Annual General Meeting\***  
**Saturday 30 July**  
**Ashfield-Summer Hill walk**

\* Details front page



Recently up for auction, this badge was described as:

WWII 9ct gold Home Service City Of Marrickville Voluntary Nurses badge by Angus & Coote Sydney (7gms approx.); reverse engraved: 'Presented to Miss S. Wright / B. Richards Mayor'; missing pin else VF.

As Benjamin Richards was Marrickville Mayor in 1914, 1919-21 and 1928-9, the badge predates WWII. The auctioneer's estimated value was \$250.

The 'Flying Dutchwoman', **Fanny Blankers-Koen**, 1948 quadruple Olympic Gold Medallist, was invited to race against the 'Lithgow Flash', **Marjorie Jackson**, at Hurstville Oval in 1949. To publicise the event (which Jackson won, though she was over 13 years younger), a scale model of a windmill was built on a vacant block on Forest Road, Hurstville. It was then dismantled. The site was later occupied by the Rural (later State) Bank.

**Peter Phelan** is after a photo of this windmill, having made extensive efforts to find one. Contact Peter on <pjp39@tpg.com.au> or 0407 227 305 if you can help.

The Society congratulates **Reverse Garbage** which in March 2016 celebrated its **40th anniversary**. Based at Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville, Reverse Garbage was established by a group of teachers who wanted to help the environment by diverting industrial 'discards from landfill and by reusing materials in their classrooms . . . Each year it accepts approximately 35,000 cubic metres or 100 football fields of items which may otherwise end up in the rubbish bin'.

## MHS 2016-17 annual fees due

If your fees are due a *green* renewal slip accompanies this newsletter. Please return *intact* with a cheque or money order made out to Marrickville Heritage Society (address bottom front page), unless you're paying by direct deposit (see below). You may renew at AGM. Fees remain: concession \$12, individual/joint concession \$20, household/organisation \$28. You may pay for more than one year; donations help cover increased postage. Ring Treasurer Diane 9588 4930 if you have a query. Direct deposit to MHS bank account details:

**Bank name:** Sydney Credit Union (BSB 802 084)

**Account name:** Marrickville Heritage Society

**Account Number:** 85663

**Reference:** 'Fees' + [your surname/s and initials]

## Former Stanmore Fire Station

The Society is concerned that important features of this building will be compromised by the proposal to convert the former 1886 **Stanmore Fire Station** (originally Marrickville Fire Station; between 2000 and 2005 the home of Mastertouch Piano Roll Company) in Stanmore Road to a hotel. The protection of the heritage values of the building must be given the highest priority as the applicants are proposing to use the 'conservation provisions' of the Marrickville LEP to apply for the change of use to a hotel on the grounds that the new use will provide for the conservation of the building. The only work in the proposal that could be described as a positive heritage outcome for the building is the proposed reinstatement of the watch tower. This worthwhile proposal must be required work in any approval for development, and its completion must be required before an Occupation Certificate can be issued for the new hotel.

When the watchtower and chimneys were removed, the original roofing material would have also been removed. As this is an 1880s building it is likely that the original roofing was slate or tiles, and if further research confirms this, then the original roofing and chimney forms should be required to be reinstated as part of the conservation works to the building.

In regard to the internal works, the proposals to alter the existing room configurations and install new bathrooms and services must be fully reversible. Original interior features and finishes, including the timber stairs and pressed metal ceilings must be retained and restored. The addition of new dormer windows to the main facade roof will have a substantial detrimental impact on the visual integrity of the main facade, and should be refused by Council. Council must require that there is a substantial link between the provision of a new use for the building, and conservation works to protect its heritage values.

**Scott MacArthur**

## MHS publications handback!

When you are next doing a cleanout at home, should you find copies of MHS publications now felt to be surplus to your requirements, you may consider donating them back to the Society. We're thinking, in particular, of back copies of the journal *Heritage*, *Marrickville Remembers* and 3 *Marrickville Potteries*; also, *Marrickville: rural outpost to inner city* and *Marrickville: People and Places*. Ring Diane on 9588 4930 so collection can be arranged.

Also, does anyone collect (or know of anyone else who collects) used postage stamps for charity? Margaret Sinclair long did this but can no longer do so. Please let Diane know if you can help.

We note the passing of member **Fay Young** of Roselands who died on 11 February aged 78. Fay was the sister-in-law of members Ray and Laurel Young. Our condolences to Mervyn and Fay's family.

**President** Ross 0411 688 440

**Treasurer** Diane 9588 4930

**Heritage Watch** Scott 0416 152 501

**Newsletter** Richard 9557 3823