



MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Postal Address PO Box 415 Marrickville 2204

Coming Events

Wednesday 30th December A relaxing evening harbour cruise on a comfortable yacht 'The Grand Trio'. From 6pm sharp to 10pm, the cost is \$10 per person. Please bring your own picnic supper to eat ashore when we visit Clarke Island. The Raffle will be drawn on this cruise. The yacht departs Commissioner's Steps (in front of the Maritime Services Board Building) at Circular Quay West. Bookings and enquiries to Anne Carolan (406 4862).

Wednesday 20th January A cruise around Botany Bay to view the ships of the First Fleet. The 'M.V. Mirabel' will leave the St George Motor Boat Club, Wellington St Sans Souci at 9am and return there for lunch. Cost is a reasonable \$20 including luncheon, children \$12, pre-schoolers free. Bookings and enquiries to Anne Carolan (406 4862).

Friday 5th February 7.30pm. Quarterly Evening Meeting. Karen Wilson, Senior Botanist, National Herbarium, Botanical Gardens, will speak on 'The History of Botanical Collecting'. Karen Wilson will examine the rise of interest in natural history and will talk about the collections of Sir Joseph Banks, Robert Brown and J-J Labillardière and others. The talk will be illustrated.

Saturday 27th February Phyllis McCorquodale has studied the history of popular dance in Australia. In the 1930s Marrickville Town Hall resounded with ballroom dancing and spectacular 'swing' concerts. Phyllis' talk - with slides - will be held in the Petersham Town Hall Amenities Room at 10.30am.

Death of Gary Nicholls

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Gary Nicholls on 2 December. Gary was an active member of the Society from its inception and was a member of the Executive for three years, providing legal advice when necessary. Gary, who lived at the former Fowler house in Camperdown, contributed two very valuable articles on Fowler Potteries to 'Heritage'. Gary was prominent in community activities in the Camperdown area, was a member of the Board of the Marrickville and Royal Prince Alfred Hospitals and was elected an Alderman on Marrickville Council in September 1987.

Richard Cashman

Coming Events (continued)

Sunday 6th March We are hoping that all descendants of our Pioneers and former residents will 'come back to Marrickville' and share their memories at our special Picnic Day. Among those who are taking part are the Meeks family, the Braddocks, the Fairbairns and the Schwebels. The picnic will be held at Richardson's Lookout over the river valley at Holt Crescent, The Warren from 11am till 4pm. Please bring a picnic basket. Further details from Richard Cashman (569 6836) or Bob Thompson (558 5352).

Friday 29th April our Bicentennial Heritage Concert, the fourth in our annual series of concerts held in conjunction with St. Brigid's Church. To be held in the church, Marrickville Road from 8.15pm. More details from Paula Gard (569 9928), Verona Rothwell (523 3750 after 6pm) or Anne Carolan (406 4862).

Successful Jumble Sale

Congratulations to Tony and Judy Deguara, Bruce Welch, Paula Gard, Geoff Ostling and many Society members who helped on the day, for raising \$304 for Society funds.

New Members

Claire and Robbie Johnson; Sue Jaundrell; Evelyn Prineas; Tertia Jensen; Pauline Patterson; Chris and Carol Moran; Laurie Hindmarsh; Graham and Edwina Smith; Clare Herscovitch.

Our Last Meeting...

The November meeting began with a 'sneak preview' of the Calendar of Events planned for 1988 by the Marrickville Municipality Bicentennial Committee. This was presented by the Mayor, Barry Jones, and Chrys Meader, in their capacities as Chairman and Secretary of that Committee.

Not least among the planned events is the opening, on Saturday 5 November, of the Archival Research Centre in Petersham Town Hall. It was a great pleasure to meet Rhona Clement, appointed in May as Information Coordinator/Archivist. She has undertaken the huge task of sorting, cataloguing and storing the archives of the councils of Petersham, St Peters and Marrickville from 1861 to 1948, the year when the three were amalgamated. Most of the archives are official council records such as minute books, lists of ratepayers, property documents, records of licences issued and maps of ward boundary changes. It is planned that these will be available to the public for research (for example, into family history or ownership of property) and to school children for special local history projects. However, there is much work to be done first.

Rhona spoke feelingly of the preparation and storage requirements of fragile papers up to 120 years old. Everything has to be cleaned of dust ("we wear masks"), insects and mould ("all archivists have to have tetanus injections"), and this sometimes means careful vacuuming of every page of huge bound volumes. Some of the restoration is given to professional conservators, but most of the work is done by the archivist.



We then had another 'sneak preview' - this time of the work in progress on the Archival Research Centre itself. On the first floor of Petersham Town Hall, the old Aldermen's Room is the new archives storage area, now with thermal and humidity control, ultra-violet window screens and special archival shelving; and next door to it, the former Council Chamber (pictured) is being restored as a magnificent research and

reading room. The 1930s décor has been faithfully followed, even to the carpet specially woven to the exact pattern of the original.

After the meeting we held our Christmas Picnic in Petersham Park - with Christmas cake, Santa Claus, sack races and presents. It was a great way to finish the Society's year. Thanks to the Social Committee for arranging the picnic and a very merry Christmas to all!

Laurel Thomas

The Oldest House in the Municipality

Which house do you think is the oldest in the municipality? It could be the Mill House at 34 Victoria Road which is now part of the Metro Shopping complex. It is a pretty timber house with attics lit by two dormer windows each side of its steep iron roof which it is believed still has shingles underneath. There is some evidence which suggests it could have been built as early as the 1840s although not many houses were built then - Sydney was suffering a severe depression for most of it. But it is more likely that it was built in the 1860s when building revived after the gold rush dislocation of normal Sydney life.

It is believed that it is a brick nogged timber house. That is, the bricks were used for insulation but were too porous to be exposed to the elements and so the house was timber clad. The National Trust has classified this house. It has been an important part of Marrickville's industrial history since it was purchased by John Vicars & Co, the textile firm in 1894. The Duke of York (later King George VI) was entertained in the house on his visit to the mill in 1927.

But there is another stronger contender for the title, which is also classified. Mary Reiby, the outstandingly successful convict shop-keeper, built an impressive house, Stanmore House, between 1847 and 1855 for her daughter, Elizabeth Jane, and her husband, Captain Joseph Long Innes. It had 13 rooms, kitchen, laundry, stabling, loft and first-rate cellarage although it has long been converted to flats which conceal its handsome symmetry behind dark brick additions. Mary Reiby's own house, which was built earlier on the same 9 acres she purchased from the Pencilville estate, itself part of Page's original land grant, has been demolished.

It is most likely that Stanmore House is the oldest house remaining and that hidden behind later additions is a beautifully designed house. There are a few clues to it which can be glimpsed from Enmore Road where it is partly hidden behind the shops at 90-92.

Do you know of another house which is as old or as distinguished? Please write to let us know of any suggestions.

Barbara LeMaistre

How to Subscribe to the Society

It's only \$7 for individuals, \$10 for households and institutions, and \$2 for students and pensioners. You will receive copies of our Newsletter (either posted or delivered to your door) and our Journal Heritage. Your subscription is good for twelve months from the date of joining. Write to The Secretary, PO Box 415, Marrickville 2204. The editor would also like to hear from members with contributions to the Newsletter. Please contact Mark Matheson (559 5502) or Geoff Ostling (568 3029).