

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

CAMPERDOWN DULWICH HILL ENMORE
NEWTOWN PETERSHAM STANMORE



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Our AGM – at last!

We are delighted to announce our AGM will be held on Saturday 26 June 2021 in **Marrickville Town Hall**, cnr Marrickville & Petersham Roads, 10 am for 10.30 am start. Please attend if you can. Potential committee members earnestly sought and warmly received!

An editor's swansong

In 2020 I moved house after living in inner west Newtown for almost 38 years. Leading up to my relocation I was pleased to be able to take a six-month sabbatical from producing the MHS newsletter and left it in the capable hands of **Lorraine Beach**, who had edited a couple of newsletters when I was previously away and has handled the layout and design of recent MHS *Heritage* journals.



Richard Blair (photo: Lorraine Beach)

My sabbatical was extended by the committee and now, in consultation with Lorraine, I have decided to pass the baton on to her on a permanent basis. Some members may recall I endeavoured to retire from the role in 2014, after 20 years as newsletter editor, but finding no suitable replacement, without too much urging, I batted on. (I use the term 'batted', rather than 'battled', as producing the newsletter has always been a labour of love.)

My predecessor editor was **Judith Matheson** and when she indicated in mid-1994 she wanted to step down, I said I could help whoever took over. Needless to say, no one else came forward, so it became my gig. Back then I didn't even own a computer and despite having done some Mickey Mouse computer courses, I was still computer-illiterate, plus I couldn't type, beyond a two-finger exercise. I acquired a secondhand computer and gradually picked up sufficient rudimentary skills to have some idea as to what I was doing.

Until September 2014 the newsletter appeared 11 times a year and since then six issues have come out annually. Over 250 newsletters have been produced under my stewardship.

Ancillary tasks have included dealing with the printer, oversighting and organising distribution and monitoring with the treasurer the membership list.

I was largely mentored by **Shirley Hilyard**, who reliably and efficiently proofread the newsletter for about 20 years until failing health prevented her from carrying on. Since then **Hillary Goldsmith** has been my extra pair of eyes. So often in my annual newsletter reports, I have paid tribute to **Pamela Stewart**, who sent postals, **Ian Phillips**, who dropped off bundles of newsletters to runners, **Diane McCarthy**, who prepared envelopes and assisted with deliveries, a coterie of drivers, and a band of runners, who have relished roaming the streets of Marrickville and surrounds literally spreading the word on heritage. **Scott MacArthur** has written countless reports on heritage watch matters and, as has been customary, members have always kicked in with write-ups of 'Our Last Meeting'.

As members are increasingly aware, the newsletter is now sent by PDF attached to an email which enables images to be seen in colour, the newsletter to arrive sooner and savings to the Society. Of course, we still post a lot of newsletters to members who are without email or who prefer the hard copy.

I'll still be involved by way of seasonal trivia questions and answers, assorted articles and proofreading, a task Hillary and I will continue to do, as long as required. I'll also be editing the next *Heritage* journal and monitoring the MHS email box.

It's been quite a journey and although I still can't type, it's been a hell of a rewarding one. So, over to you, Lorraine!

Richard Blair

Membership renewals

Membership renewal date is **1 June**; if your fees are due you will receive a notice included with your newsletter. Fees can be paid direct to MHS's bank account (please be sure to include your last name and initials as a reference) or by post. For assistance or to check if your fees are due, phone our Treasurer, **Diane McCarthy** on 9588 4930, or email her at <diane.mccarthy@optusnet.com.au>.

Saying some 'goodbyes'

In the past few months there have been some deaths close to home for our Society and our local area.

Graham and Judith Baldwin joined the Society in 1998, and attended meetings and outings until Judith's death in 2007. Graham died on 25 February this year, aged 86. Member **Ruth Olip**, one of our newsletter 'runners', was a near neighbour. She told us of chats with Graham, his love of travel, the spectacular collection of bromeliads in the Baldwins' Dulwich Hill garden, and the shared care for a stray cat who delivered kittens in his garage. Ruth still has one of those kittens, 14 years later.

Don Elvy, a lifelong Stanmore resident, was among the first to join MHS when it was formed in 1984. He died on 8 April, aged 94. The name Elvy was synonymous with butcher shops (and pianos), starting in Sydney's inner west in the late 1800s. **Richard Blair** told us that he got to know Don in the 1970s, when he worked in an office in Holt Street, Stanmore where Don owned a butcher shop in the same building. Don spent 27 years as an alderman at Marrickville Council, serving into the 1990s. As Richard said, 'That's a long innings'. He lived in the same Douglas Street, Stanmore house where Fanny Durack had lived after she got married.

Newtown Jets supporters, along with many others, and particularly those in the world of rugby league, are feeling the loss and celebrating the life of 'footy legend' **Tommy Raudonikis**, who died on 7 April, aged 70. Tommy played for Australia, for NSW, and for the Jets – a memorable three seasons as captain, wearing their number seven jersey. On Saturday 17 April, the Jets hosted a tribute match at Henson Park in his honour, with a giant '7' painted on the hill.

Some of us will always remember Sydney actress, singer and dancer **Trisha Noble** as 'Patsy Ann' from her *Bandstand** days. She died on 23 January, aged 76. Trisha grew up with her parents – comedian Buster Noble and trapeze artist and dancer Helen de Paull – above a shop on the north east corner of Wardell and Marrickville Roads, Marrickville (since demolished).

Sad losses, all, and we offer condolences to families, friends and loved ones.

Over the years, much has been written about the **Olympia Milk Bar** at 190 Parramatta Road, Stanmore. It is one of the last examples from a bygone era when every suburb and country town had a milk bar. Many were owned and run by Greek Australians. We relied on them, long before cappuccino machines made their way to our shores, multinational restaurants abounded, and a café could be found seemingly on every block.

The Olympia opened in 1939 with connecting doors to the Olympia Picture Theatre, later called the Olympia De-Luxe, then the Stanmore Twin Cinema. A block of apartments is there now.

The owner since 1959, Mr Nicholas Fotiou, believed to be in his 90s, has finally hung up his apron for the last time. Members **Lyn Collingwood** and **Richard Blair** drew attention to *The Sydney Morning Herald* article 'Nick Fotiou, the milk bar owner who was waiting for

customers who would never arrive, has moved out' (Garry Maddox, *SMH*, 2 April 2021).

In its heyday the Olympia was a favourite, patronised by theatre goers and locals alike. One former patron told Lyn Collingwood:

I have fond memories of lobbing over and ordering a cheese burger – Nick always satisfied my palate and immediate hunger. This was during the late 70s and into the 80s. In 1990 I lived and worked in The Empire Hotel and 'lobbed' over to Nick's Olympia quite often.

He – as far as I know – ran the café with his brother. I never met the brother but 'Mexican Pete' (who owned Skewers Restaurant which was a door or two down from the café and a venue where I also worked), remembers that period of time when the pair of them ran the place. The brother died and, very sadly, things went down hill from there on in.

The milk bar is largely unchanged since Mr Fotiou took over, and it was ordered closed by Inner West Council in 2017 needing major repairs. It appears many offers to assist were declined, but Mr Fotiou continued to attend daily. As an abundance of articles describe, an aura of mystery surrounds his story and, in the absence of known fact, speculation bubbles along and legends grow. The Olympia is heritage listed, and needs to be on our collective watch lists.



An excellent book by Effy Alexakis and Leonard Janiszewski, *Greek Cafés & Milk Bars of Australia*, has insightful stories of the families who gave us the culture of post-war milk bars in Australia.

Olympia Milk Bar's interior
(photo: Effy Alexakis)

*Bandstand was a weekly TV variety show, produced at Channel 9's Willoughby (Sydney) studios from 1958 to 1972.

Lorraine Beach

Marrickville Medal 2021

Awarded annually since 1995, the Marrickville Medal for Conservation was one of the first of its kind in NSW. It celebrates built conservation works that contribute to the understanding and preservation of the Inner West's rich cultural and architectural heritage.

The Medal is part of Inner West Council's Built Environment Awards, and the judging panelists were pleased to be able to inspect the nominated properties in person this year, with relaxations of COVID-19 social distancing requirements. Entries ranged from pure building conservation works to residential adaptive reuse from both the commercial and private sectors. The judges were impressed with the high standard of the entries, and the pride with which the owners and designers presented their projects.

The Medal was won this year by conservation works to *The Abbey* in Johnston Street, Annandale.



(photo: Inner West Council)

The Abbey, a local heritage item, was built by John Young c. 1882. The sandstone building is constructed in the High Victorian Gothic style and is considered one of the finest domestic examples of this style in the state. The building has been undergoing an extensive program of conservation and restoration works since 2012, culminating in recently completed works to conserve and repair the stone work, clay tile roofs, lead work and stained glass of the tower, chapel, kitchen wing and stables. The quality of external and internal conservation detailing is exceptional. Conservation architects (Design 5 originally, and more recently Letizia Coppo + Associates) and builder A & DR Illes (Sydney) worked in collaboration and consultation with the most experienced traditional tradespeople in Sydney to produce a textbook perfect conservation project that is also, perhaps most importantly, a family home.

The conservation and rebuilding of the *General Gordon Hotel* in Sydenham was 'Highly Commended' by the Medal judging panel. The locally heritage listed hotel, trading since 1932, was undergoing renovations in July 2018 when it was largely destroyed by fire. Architect Anthony Vavayis & Associates and builder Rohrig (NSW) were able to call on experienced tradespeople and manufacturers, many located in the inner west, to replace missing and damaged wall tiles, brickwork, windows and doors to match originals. Photographs of the ruined building are hung prominently in public areas and historical notes are engraved into the timber bar paneling, reminding patrons and staff of the building's dramatic past. The local community is showing its appreciation for the return of their local watering hole by flocking back to the General Gordon.

The restoration and adaptive reuse of the Victorian villa at **223 Trafalgar Street, Stanmore** as a transitional home for recovering addicts was 'Commended' by the Medal judges. Volunteerism is at the heart of this extraordinary project. The building was purchased as a

rundown boarding house by the current owners (a group of retired Alcoholics Anonymous graduates), who were able to buy and transform the property only through fundraising campaigns and public donations. It is run by a charity and the design and heritage consultants for the project provided *pro bono* professional services.

The house is one of a group of four Victorian villas locally heritage listed. The main rooms and external fabric of the house have been restored, while alterations and additions are concentrated in the non-significant post-war shed at the rear and in the less significant, rear secondary wing. The functional divisions of the original villa are reflected in the new use, with the main accommodation in the former first floor bedrooms, and staff offices, meeting and community rooms in the new extensions. Important works to provide fire safety and equitable access were achieved with sensitive interventions. The architects (BTB Architecture Studio) and builder (Everbuilt) are congratulated for their achievement in saving this fine building for the community.

The careful and quirky alterations and additions to the tiny workers terrace at **71 Bedford Street, Newtown** were also 'Commended' by the judges. The c. 1910 terrace is one in a row of six in the North Kingston Estate Heritage Conservation Area. The alterations and new roof additions to the house converted a single storey terrace with an attic bedroom into a two storey terrace with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and are all but invisible from the surrounding streets. New internal finishes were incorporated in a discreet way to ensure the character and form of the existing home were retained. The original fireplaces and chimneys were retained and restored, while a deceptively tiny but functional bathroom has been inserted alongside the new heart of the house – the dining room and its north facing garden terrace. Dean Williams of Architect George and builders Pacific Projects have crafted an intricate and comfortable inner west oasis.

The jury also 'Commended' the alterations and additions to c. 1880s *Frankfort*, one of the earliest surviving Victorian dwellings in eastern Birchgrove, at 8 Wharf Road. The owners of the property for the last 30 years turned to David Scobie Architects and Fine Point Building Group to strip back years of accretions and infills to reveal the original large sandstone block façades, steep roof form and a detached service wing to the south. The beautiful stonework of the service wing has been stripped of years of paint, and a new steel and glass infill transforms the relationship between the two structures. The roof's domed skylight was replaced with dormers that are more appropriate for the age and style of the building, and provide an elegant and generous attic master bedroom suite with harbour views. The conservation works renewed the damp proofing of the sub-floor, stabilised the chimney and repaired the external stonework, securing the house for future generations.

Scott MacArthur

Photos of all entries are on Inner West Council's website

Webwise

marrickvilleheritage.org.au

Rod Aanensen has written about the proposed demolition of two art deco buildings. The Facebook page, relaxed and informal, allows folk to reach out to the vast 'knowledge pool' of our members. Take a look and join in.

Quirky front gardens competition

This competition was triggered by a photo, sent to us by member **Joyce Roy**, of a garden in Cary Street, Marrickville, snapped during a Society walk in 1993. That garden was filled with gnomes, pigs, wombats and other figures (Jan-Feb 2021 newsletter, p. 4). **Ian Phillips** was first to recall that walk and the photo location, so he earns a 'well done' and a 'scratchie'. The challenge then became to find and photograph a current quirky garden.



Thank you to those who submitted photos, and we hope you enjoyed local walks to seek likely entries. With 'quirkiest, most whimsical garden' as the judging criteria, the garden pictured takes the prize – lunch for two at *Petty Cash Café*.

Congratulations

to member **Hillary Goldsmith**, who photographed the winning Newtown garden. It's filled with humour, art, recycling and 'adaptive reuse' of a host of surprising and unexpected items, and it well deserves the crown in this bit of fun.

Lorraine Beach

Autumn Trivia Answer

It seems to me that some members felt the answer to this was a 'gimme', so didn't bother to get in touch. However, some members did take the trouble to respond and two answered more or less correctly.

Elda Ribeiro (who has scored a trifecta with the last three trivia questions) indicated it as one of the remaining 'towers' of The Warren mansion in Marrickville – the stately home built by Thomas Holt and briefly occupied by his family. Two towers remain at Richardson's Lookout (also now known as Marrickville Peace Park), overlooking Cooks River.

The second responder was **Keith Anderson**, who not only knew the answer, but was also able to give a whole lot more information as he had grown up in nearby Richards Avenue, his grandfather having bought 8 Richards Avenue way back in 1922, not long after it was built. Keith explained this house stayed in his family until 1997, a year after his father died.

Such is the extent of Keith's local knowledge, someone should record an oral history with him to capture his impressive memories relating to The Warren mansion, the Carmelite nuns, the nun's cave, the burial vaults, the Thomas Holt tunnel, the castellated towers, the stink pipes, and the soldiers' resettlement program.

Regarding the 'towers' – which are actually entrance gates – Holt's mansion was demolished in 1919-20. Keith says:

Around 1961 the two towers had found their way down to the bottom of Premier Street where they were in front of an old house and when this house was demolished to allow for the extension of the Choice factory site, someone, probably in Marrickville Council, arranged for their removal to the current site. Curious pals and I watched just as the finishing touches were made to the erection of the towers.

But there's another layer to the story of the entrance gates. Some long term members will recall a walking tour in Hunters Hill in March 1997 led by Ted Green. Permission was obtained to inspect a property called *Cambridge* in Lyndhurst Crescent. In 1958 the owners of *Cambridge*, the Kirkwoods, had purchased two of the Warren entry gates and had them re-erected on their property. In the newsletter report of April 1997 the gateway was described as a 'turreted archway'.

The Department of Education produced a postcard sized photo dated 1982, although the blurb failed to indicate where the structure had come from. A portion of this photo was the one depicted in the March-April



2021 newsletter. The April 1997 newsletter carries a splendid photo of MHS members in front of and under the archway, which by then had been stripped of its intrusive foliage.

The April 1997 newsletter (Vol. 13 No. 9) is on the MHS website.

Richard Blair



Society's anniversary

We've had a birthday!

28 April was the 37th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of Marrickville Heritage Society – held at Petersham Town Hall in 1984.

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