

# MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

CAMPERDOWN DULWICH HILL ENMORE  
NEWTOWN PETERSHAM STANMORE



LEWISHAM MARRICKVILLE ST PETERS  
SYDENHAM & TEMPE

## Our next meeting

The committee is yet to move back to conducting 'in person' meetings. We have scheduled another online meeting, a talk, for **Saturday 26 February** at 10.30 am and will advise details by email. If you do not use email but want to know about the talk, contact us (details on back page) so we can advise you when arrangements are finalised.

## Our last meeting: Saturday 27 November The Marrickville bluejackets: local sailors in the Boxer Rebellion (online via Zoom)

We were privileged to have **Dr Peter Hobbins**, Head of Knowledge, Australian National Maritime Museum, talk to us about China's 'Boxer Rebellion' (1899-1901) and the 'Marrickville bluejackets'. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasing western influence in China met violent opposition from a group whose name translated to 'Righteous and Harmonious Fists' — the 'Boxers'. They targeted everything western, but particularly the growing number of Christian converts. Some western dignitaries and missionaries and thousands of Christian Chinese were killed. The conflict gave western powers the opportunity to intervene in China and about 20,000 troops were sent from Japan, Europe, Britain and its colonies, Russia and the USA.

Sailors serving effectively as soldiers were widely called 'bluejackets', based on their uniforms. The 'Marrickville bluejackets' of Peter's talk were Able-Bodied Seaman **William Ernest Gould**, aged 21, of Livingstone Road, Marrickville (his father, James Gould, was a Marrickville Council alderman and was twice mayor); and **Albert John Bennett** (also known as Arthur James Bennett and possibly Alfred James Bennett — research is ongoing) from St Peters.



William Ernest Gould and the China War Medal (1900)  
(photo: Dr P Hobbins & ANMM)

When Australian forces arrived in China the fighting was effectively over and they joined a multinational occupation force.

Peter was excited to discover William Gould's diary had been donated to the Maritime Museum in 2014. It provides fascinating insights into Gould's life in the navy and his experiences in China: the Yangtze River is like 'the Marrickville Flats' in wet weather; most of the troops had no interest in Chinese people or the local culture; they were affected by what they saw of brutal slayings often by the invading troops in retribution; and drunkenness, violence and disputes between the troops were more of a threat than the Boxers. Gould noted he was not too concerned with writing in his diary every day, as everything was recorded in letters he sent home, including to a certain lady named Eva. The letters have not been located.

Gould was evidently interested in some aspects of Chinese life including the language. His diary has Chinese characters for things he might have needed, such as cigarettes, with English translations next to them; and his mess kit (in the Maritime Museum) contains chopsticks.

Every conflict results in 'loot' collection and much has found its way into museums and collections around Australia including the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Gould had brought back an embroidered imperial silk robe that remained with his family until it was donated to the AWM in 2014.

Smallpox was rampant in China; troops were vaccinated but an outbreak on one of the returning ships resulted in transfer to North Head Quarantine Station on arrival in Sydney. Several servicemen died.

Gould's fellow Marrickville man, AJ Bennett, married with three young children, did not come home. One night a shot rang out, thought to be an uprising, but Bennett was found dead, his service rifle nearby. His death was assumed a suicide. He was buried with full honours in the British cemetery.

Gould did return and left the navy soon after. He married Eva and they had nine children. Gould died in 1966, Eva in 1971, and they are both buried at Woronora Cemetery.

Our thanks to Dr Peter Hobbins for his absorbing presentation and for his willingness to deliver it via Zoom to our audience.

**Elda Ribeiro**

## Ferncourt Public School – films and a book

This year, the school in Premier Street, in the area of Marrickville we know as The Warren, will celebrate its centenary. The Society is pleased to have been involved with two recent special projects for the school.

The first was a film-making endeavour where we were asked for help, and committee people **Rod Aanensen** and **Diane McCarthy** responded. Rod explained the project.

In early 2020 the Society was contacted by **Anna Evans**, a teacher at Ferncourt Public School, seeking our assistance with a school project. The students were going to make 'claymation' films and wanted to use Marrickville history as their scenarios.

We provided information for the children and they used their imagination and skills to bring the stories to life. Two of those films were nominated for the 'Film by the City Showcase 2021'.

The first was *The Life of Thomas Moore* by **Alice, Kiyoma, Nina** and **Victoria** in the Years 1-2 section. The second was *Tramvale* by **Audrey, Alex, Shona** and **Steven** in the Years 3-6 section.

Winners of each category were chosen by public vote. The *Tramvale* production was selected by **Murat Dizdar**, the Department of Education's Deputy Secretary, School Performance – South, as his favourite and was presented with the Murat Honourable Mention Award.

Anna and the students kindly forwarded a copy of the award to the Society 'as you were also part of the team'.

Thank you to teacher and students. It is always a pleasure to bring our heritage to the attention of new generations.



Editor: The term 'claymation' is a blend of 'clay' and 'animation' and refers to a filmmaking technique of 'stop-motion' animation where characters made from a malleable substance, typically plasticine clay, are recorded on film then played back in quick succession to simulate movement. The technique dates back to around 1900.

Our second involvement was smaller; in the July-August 2021 newsletter we included a request from MHS member **Rebecca Jones** to find past students from Ferncourt, 'the older the better'. Rebecca has written a history of the school and its site for its centenary year. Here's an update from Rebecca.

Built on Gadigal Country, on land where First Nations

people have walked for thousands of years, Ferncourt Public School will celebrate its centenary on 13 March 2022. One hundred years have passed since Miss Mary Kate Heney was the first Headmistress and opened the doors to the gaggle of young children waiting to be admitted to what was then Ferncourt Infants School. But the history of the site goes back much further than 1922.

*Ferncourt* was originally built as *Prosna* by Polish artist Gracius Broinowski in 1886-87. Broinowski acted as a selling agent and received a commission for showing *The Warren* to the Carmelite Sisters who purchased it in 1886. He used these funds to buy land from The Warren estate to build *Prosna*.

*Prosna* was owned by Broinowski's creditors, AMP Society, from 1889. The house, known as *Jessmont* (also spelt *Jesmont*) from 1892, was rented until 1910, then changed hands a few times in rapid succession until purchased in 1911 by Mary Ann Ratcliffe, wife of Jabez Ratcliffe, a New Science Healer. In sale advertisements, the name *Ferncourt* appeared for the first time. From 1911 to 1921 the property was rented to various people, was a boarding house, and was used as a dairy by Joseph Fitzgibbon. In 1919, Mary Ann Ratcliffe sold it to the Resumed Properties Department who planned to demolish the house to extend the successful soldier settlement housing scheme built on the last remaining 12 acres of The Warren.

Local intervention in 1921 saved *Ferncourt* from demolition. Parents in The Warren locality had a desperate need for a local school; their young children had to travel to Tempe, West Marrickville or Marrickville public schools, often on foot. The Warren and South Ward Progress Association led the campaign to save the building and have it set up as a school. After minor alterations, the school opened with a gala held in the grounds in early February 1922, some weeks before formal classes began.



Students gathered in front of Ferncourt Infants School in 1936.  
(photo: Dulwich Hill Studios, Inner West Council History Services)

The history of *Prosna*, *Jessmont* and *Ferncourt* has been captured in a publication funded by an Inner West Council History Services grant. It celebrates the centenary of the school, but also reaches far back into the history of the site, unearthing the stories of the people who have lived there.

Copies of the book *The Many Lives of Ferncourt – Home, Hospital, School* by Rebecca Jones will be available to purchase for \$35 + postage from 20 March 2022 by emailing Rebecca at [ferncourtpublic100@gmail.com](mailto:ferncourtpublic100@gmail.com)



## Some sad news

We were sad to learn of the death of long time member **Rosemary Wood** in mid-January 2022 after battling a long illness. Formerly of Leichhardt, Rosemary joined MHS in 1990. She served on the MHS committee for four years between 2010 and 2014, including a year as Assistant Secretary and was always willing to assist with the committee's tasks. Rosemary's varied interests ensured a busy life; she regularly attended MHS meetings and was an active member of Balmain Probus. We fondly



Rosemary Wood (photo: Ian Phillips)

remember her quiet, calm disposition, her enthusiasm and cheerful outlook on life, and the warm hearted smile she so readily shared. Our condolences to Rosemary's family and loved ones.

**Laurel and Ray Young** joined MHS in 1996 and although they lived in Padstow Heights they were regular attendees at MHS meetings and outings for many years. Laurel died on 23 August 2021 aged 87.



Laurel and Ray Young  
(photos: Lorraine Beach)

Ray was born in Marrickville. He and Laurel are believed to have met at a dance at Marrickville Town Hall. Laurel's broad range of interests included volunteer broadcaster at Radio 2SER-FM and assisting at the

Sydney University Bookfair. Ray died in 2018 aged 89. We remember them fondly, for their staunch support of MHS, and their amiable company. Our condolences to their children Phillip and Robyn and their families.

**Elizabeth (Libby) Maher** died on 5 December 2021 aged 73 after a long illness. Appointed in 1994, Libby was Marrickville Council's first Heritage



(photo: Richard Blair)

Architect, a position she held for nearly five years, advising Council and the public about heritage-related matters and policy,

assessing heritage-related applications and guiding input into the 1990s Marrickville Heritage Study. She coordinated the Marrickville Heritage Promotions Committee, organised annual Heritage Festival events and facilitated the first Marrickville Medal award in 1995 and those that followed. Libby liaised closely with MHS. Libby later took up a similar position at Woollahra Council where she worked for many years. Our condolences to her husband, Ken, and their family.

On 21 December 2021 a memorial service was held for **Cecil (Cec) Auld Churm**, head librarian at



Marrickville Library (1951-55), who died 6 July aged 95. Cec was awarded the OBE for services to libraries in 1979. He was a lifelong contributor to libraries and humanitarian causes, and well into his 90s still gave time to supporting neuroscientific research.

(photo: Cecil Churm on Facebook)

## Marrickville Town Hall 100th anniversary

Inner West Council has arranged special events to celebrate the centenary of the Town Hall's official opening on 11 February 1922. **Chrys Meader**, local historian, author, MHS life member and local history doyen, will present her talk 'Garden to Pardon', on the evening of 10 February at the Library and Pavilion, a talk on the site's history from market garden to landmark building, through the 'roaring twenties' to present day. Not surprisingly, this talk was 'sold out' at time of writing, and only 'wait list' was an option.

On 11 February there is a Town Hall tour and talk hosted by **Mark Matheson**, author of the perennial *Villas of Marrickville/Newtown*, and performances by Theatre Organ Society of Australia volunteers to demonstrate the Town Hall's Wurlitzer theatre organ (formerly in Prince Edward Theatre in the city). Two sessions are sold out but a third has been announced.

Arguably as well known and loved as the Town Hall itself is the *Winged Victory* statue that stands in its forecourt. **Victoria Johnston**, Council's Arts Project Manager, will talk about this iconic statue that is synonymous with Marrickville and the Town Hall. You might visit Council's website to check for last minute availability of these events, and we hope the content of the talks might be made available for those of us who miss out on attending.

Keep an eye on our website. **Rod Aanensen** is putting the finishing touches to his article about the Town Hall's big anniversary and will soon add it to the website.

## Webwise

The two most recent articles on our website looked at Marrickville's brickmaking industry. The first gave an overview of development of the industry and some of its key sites and operators. The second took a close look at the only remaining open brick pit in our district, now known as the Dibble Avenue Waterhole. The site has recently been restored by the Inner West Council. Both articles received a lot of attention from people just learning about this important part of the development of Marrickville.

Our Facebook page goes from strength to strength with many new 'members'. Please take a look at the page and feel free to contribute with images or your memories of Marrickville and surrounds.

**Rod Aanensen**

## RAHS Certificate of Achievement award

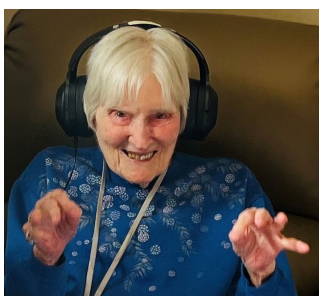
Those who joined the RAHS online event *Exciting New World: Australian Life in the 1920s and 1930s* on 6 November enjoyed three excellent talks, including our President **Scott MacArthur's** enlightening *Architecture in the 1920s: Building for a healthy new world*.

Another highlight for MHS was the award of a RAHS Certificate of Achievement to **Rod Aanensen**. Rod is a long term committee member who, among other things, keeps our website and Facebook page shipshape, answers diverse queries from all and sundry, writes articles, researches endlessly and is one of our most vigilant heritage watchdogs in his customary walks around the district.

Congratulations Rod for your well-deserved award and thank you RAHS for finding a way, in difficult times, to still acknowledge the commitment of people in affiliated societies.



(photo: Scott MacArthur)



Joy Lewis, 103, 'conducting' her great-grand-niece singing 'Happy Birthday'.  
(photo: Brett Johnson)

## We love good news!

Long term member **Joy Lewis**, who lives on the Central Coast, celebrated her 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday on 2 February – via Zoom with her family. Happy birthday, Joy, and thanks to grand-nephew, member **Brett Johnson**, for sharing the occasion with us.



## Was this your payment

A payment was made to MHS's account on 27 January 2022 with the reference: 'IMB M/ship concession \$12', but no name. If you paid this amount around that time, please contact Treasurer Diane (details in box at right) so she can solve the mystery and update your membership status.

## Summer Trivia Question



Not the most beautiful object in the Marrickville area but where is this and what is it?

Contact Richard 0413 335 897 or [marrickvilleheritage.society@outlook.com](mailto:marrickvilleheritage.society@outlook.com)



(photo: Graham Bassett)

## Historic Garden Seat (and more good news)

This garden seat was originally on the verandah of *Tivoli*, the c. 1840 house belonging for several decades to the Reilly family of Cooks River Road (now Princes Highway), St Peters. It has remained in the hands of the family since and now Reilly descendant **Jan Gaynor**, who lives on the Central Coast, has kindly donated it to St Peters Anglican Church Cooks River. This is fitting as **Richard Reilly** was a warden of this church for some 30 years and had a memorial window erected there in memory of his first wife Amelia. The seat will be placed under that window inside the church.

After this generous offer was made by Jan, a clarion call went out to members of MHS and – courtesy of Peter Stevens – members of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society to have it transported from the Central Coast to St Peters. As a result, several offers were made by members of both societies and finally, on Friday 4 February, the seat was collected and duly delivered to the welcoming hands of **Laurel Horton** at the church. Special thanks to **Suzanne Rose** who facilitated the relocation.

Not only is this historic piece of furniture back near where it long stood, but an article has been written about the Reilly family and *Tivoli* and will appear in the next MHS journal, due for publication this year.

**Richard Blair**

## President & Heritage Watch

Scott 0416 152 501 | [sbtarmac@gmail.com](mailto:sbtarmac@gmail.com)

## Treasurer

Diane 9588 4930 | [diane.mccarthy@optusnet.com.au](mailto:diane.mccarthy@optusnet.com.au)

## Newsletter

Lorraine 0416 224 472 | [lbeach@iprimus.com.au](mailto:lbeach@iprimus.com.au)

## Webmaster

Rod 0431 487 375 | [mhsweb@exemail.com.au](mailto:mhsweb@exemail.com.au)