

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

CAMPERDOWN DULWICH HILL ENMORE
NEWTOWN PETERSHAM STANMORE



LEWISHAM MARRICKVILLE ST PETERS
SYDENHAM & TEMPE

Our next meeting

Australian National Maritime Museum:

a guided tour with Dr Peter Hobbins

Saturday 28 May 10.00 for 10.30 am start

Meet: Forecourt of the Museum, 3 Murray Street, Darling Harbour (western end of Pyrmont Bridge)

Cost: \$25/\$20 or a 'Discover NSW' voucher

Pay on the day at the Museum.

Bookings: Iain 0400 473 252 (after 6 pm) / email cariaa07@hotmail.com

Limited numbers so *please* advise if cancelling.

Join a personalised tour with MHS member **Dr Peter Hobbins**, who happens to be Head of Knowledge at the museum! This waterfront museum holds the country's leading collection of maritime artefacts and one of the largest museum collections of floating vessels in the world. Accessible by public transport – bus, train and light rail – and paid parking nearby. Our visit will include time in the Vaughan Evans Library, which contains a surprising amount of local and family history information, as well as the expected maritime resources. Some Marrickville-related items from the museum's collection will be available for inspection. Peter will take us through the main museum and vessel displays, with some focused commentary and time for questions. The formal tour will be one hour, and then you are free to roam to your heart's content, all day if you wish.



Australian National Maritime Museum (photo: ANMM)

Marrickville Medal 2022

Submissions close on 30 June 2022 for Inner West Built Environment Awards, the Medal awarded annually since 1995 for building works large or small, public or private, completed in the past 3 years and having positive conservation outcomes. MHS President **Scott MacArthur** will again be a member of the judging panel. An event for the award ceremony will be announced in coming months. Details and entry form on Council's website.

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 25 June Marrickville Town Hall – 10.00 for 10.30 am start

Our AGM is time to elect a new committee and we have an important request—if you have *ever*, or even *never*, considered you might help out on the committee, this year is when we really need you. Our Treasurer and Secretary are both retiring after many years so we have gaps to fill. Our Treasurer says you need basic bookkeeping knowledge for that role—it's flexible, 'learn as you go' for all committee positions, in a supportive team. If you can help out, even in part, and even for just one year, please talk to a committee member and put your hand up!



Our oldest member?

Belated happy birthday wishes to **Margaret Sinclair** – 108 in March! MHS stalwart since 1988, famed for 'heritage marmalade' and devilled eggs at Pot Luck, Margaret rarely missed a meeting when living at Petersham, and is now in retirement.

Time to renew membership

Membership renewal date is 1 June each year. If you received your newsletter by post, and your renewal is due, an orange-coloured notice will be enclosed; if by email, a renewal notice is attached. Cheques or money orders should be made out to Marrickville Heritage Society and sent to PO Box 415 Marrickville 1475.

Please note changed MHS Bank Account details:

Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA)

Account name: Marrickville Heritage Society

BSB 062-199 Account No. 1081 8000

Important – add Reference: Your surname and initials

If you need assistance with renewal, or to check if your fees are due, email <diane.mccarthy@optusnet.com.au> or phone 02 9588 4930.

Diane McCarthy, Treasurer

Important notice for those who receive newsletters by email

If you have changed your postal address in the last 2 years, please tell us. We are close to finalising the next journal – *Heritage 16*. We want to ensure yours goes to the right place!

Our 26 March meeting: a Lewisham walk

Not even a short burst of heavy rain could dampen the enthusiasm of some 30 'walkers' who assembled for **Mark Matheson's** Lewisham walk. It was the first 'in person' event MHS has organised since Covid's impact and we cancelled this walk, previously scheduled for March 2020.

Mark noted this area was one of the first attempts by Governor Arthur Phillip to find agricultural land, made essential by the famine gripping the colony in the 1790s. The origin of the name 'Lewisham' is cloudy. One version is that it was named after an early settler's younger brother; another that it was for the London suburb of that name. The landmark Lewisham station was built in 1885, and not without its suffering. A nearby plaque honours the lives of workers killed during its construction. The station's tunnel was constructed in 1930 and the £8,000 cost was paid for by the local council.

We traversed numerous streets, all with a fascinating history and housing diversity, from grand mansions to early workers cottages so representative of the times. One of the most striking streets is The Boulevarde. This was the first boulevarde in Sydney; a design with wide streets and parkland envisaged to attract residents who wanted to avoid the smaller blocks of most estate subdivisions. Originally The Boulevarde had plantings of Moreton Bay fig trees on either side; some of these trees still adorn the wide roadway.

An integral part of colonial life was the involvement of the 'church' in various parcels of land ownership; for example, the 32-acre holding of land, still owned by the Catholic Church, which basically ran from Lewisham station to Parramatta Road. One such area, slangily, was known as 'Irish Town'.

In the 1880s Catholic Archbishop Cardinal Moran pressured the colonial government to allow the church to build a hospital on the eastern side of the station. Moran subsequently arranged for the Little Company of Mary to run the hospital, which later became the large establishment known as Lewisham Hospital.

A less pious arrangement occurred on the southern side of the station in Victoria Street near the intersection with Railway Parade, where three inns were built, but no trace of them remains today.

At what is now Summer Hill, a large stone works was established, shaping trachyte, a fine grained, light-coloured stone, quarried near Mittagong and sent by rail to the Sydney plant.

These were just a few of the fascinating stories of Lewisham that Mark has compiled over the years, and our assembled group was delighted to have been able to take part in the revelations.

Keith Sutton

Our 23 April meeting: Show & Tell

The brevity of notice didn't deter 39 members who made a cosy gathering place in the commodious space of Marrickville Town Hall. President **Scott MacArthur**

called upon **Laurel** and **Bob Horton** to accept their Life Membership of the Society, planned for them at last year's AGM which, due to Covid, was ultimately conducted via Zoom. Their citation acknowledged their outstanding work in preserving and promoting the history and heritage of Sydenham, Tempe and St Peters, especially in relation to St Peters Anglican Church Cooks River, and their enthusiastic support of the Society over many years. Their tireless work in local history extends well beyond our local areas.



Bob and Laurel Horton, Scott MacArthur and their award

Then it was 'on with the Show & Tell', and we were educated, intrigued, moved and entertained with a variety of artefacts and their accompanying stories. **Scott MacArthur's** c. 1900 copper boiler was first up, unearthed, literally, from its burial in his backyard; then **Anne Peterson's** beautiful Luther book, pewter beer mug with cobalt blue cut glass bottom and pair of c. 1899 knife rests. How time has changed attitudes – **Ros Torrent's** heirloom ivory necklace and a fur coat, all the rage in the 1970s, now rarely see the light of day; and **Lyn Collingwood's** 1950s cigarette case, from her student job in a city arcade kiosk selling smokes and souvenirs, still with a few left from when she 'quit' more than four decades ago. **Greg Jones's** grandfather, a Tempe tram driver, had a tough life and few things of value, but Greg had framed his Life Saving Certificate dated July 1928. He treasures it as a reminder of his grandfather, and for its charmingly antiquated language.

Joyce Roy's table cloth and place mat have a poignant history; a gift from her Latvian friend who came to Australia after living through Russian occupation of her country, and the hardships of displacement and years in refugee camps, including in Germany, in the 1940s. The thread used for embroidery was harvested from cast off clothing.

Megan Hicks still uses a cast brass bell with clapper of a RAF signet ring that she found as a child 'put out for a Council cleanup'; and a bark painting bought in a local shop during a scientific expedition into Arnhem Land would be 'unaffordable' today. Around 1900, thousands of roof tiles were imported to Sydney from Marseille, France, and **Iain Carolin** found one at his Sydenham house. **Shirley Maguire's** welded steel shoe last, used by her father in repairing the family's shoes, does duty as a

door stop now. **Laurel and Bob Horton** had visited Stanley Howard's granddaughter who gave them his letters (published in 2005 as *Stanley: A Young Man's Colonial Experience*), his travelling inkwell and a silver biscuit box given to him by the church choir in 1878.

Murray Sinclair had photos of skirting boards from an 1822 house he is working on restoring in The Rocks, Sydney. He told us of his grandfather, Alexander Mackay, who had more than his share of adventure: born in Scotland, came to Australia, went to Russia as part of his work; captured by bandits and imprisoned for 6 months; to be executed next day, in absence of any payment for ransom, he escaped – in winter, with a broken leg and no shoes. Murray's photo shows the bandits, later captured, lined up for execution by guillotine. **Andrew Burns** has a c. 1920s picture book *'Sydney from the Air'* with a photo of Bondi Beach and Rose Bay separated only by sand dunes. A favourite possession, but too big to bring along, is a timber bench from the ferry *'Barragoola'* (sadly now lost – awaiting restoration, sunk in the harbour).

Alex Oonagh-Redmond is chagrined that her Penny Black stamps, on letters posted in 1841 and saved by her father, a doctor in Northern Ireland, have been franked. 'Worthless', says Alex, 'maybe 100 pounds or so – worth thousands if they were unfranked.' She still treasures them though! **Pamela Stewart's** father was a member of Sydney's Volunteer Defence Corps during WW2 and when Japanese submarines raided Sydney Harbour in 1942 fragments of shells landed about their Rose Bay home. Pamela's father gathered them up, and she has these and other mementos from wartime Sydney. Browsing pays off: **Richard Blair** bought a rare original 1840 Land Grant document – a Petersham property, owner AB Spark. And despite his recent relocation and the necessary disposal of books and decades' worth of collected items, he still has his shoebox full of bus tickets from the 1950s – over 700 at last count!

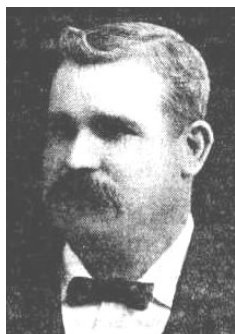
It wasn't about prizes, because everyone deserved one, but we had 5 on hand, and they went to Joyce, Alex, Megan, Lyn and Anne.

This was a most enjoyable meeting: members taking the floor; sharing so much history in snapshots; so many stories; time for interaction and catching up. Our thanks to all, and to Scott for his foresight in taking notes and recording proceedings.

Lorraine Beach

Tragic Tales: 3 women who made the General Gordon Hotel

Sydenham's General Gordon Hotel, nearly destroyed by fire in 2018, reopened in 2021 under a new, and female, licensee, Sarah Lewis. She is not the first, as she acknowledges – that was Bridget Smyth. But did you know there were 3? All of Irish origin; all women who overcame tragedy with tenacity.



Thomas Smyth (Trove)

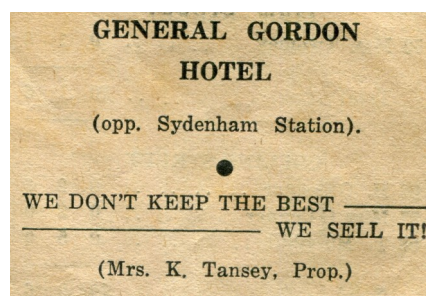
Bridget's husband, Thomas, acquired the license in 1895 when the hotel was a 3-storey building with verandahs and iron lace on the corner of Sydenham Road and Bolton Street.

After his death at 45, in April 1913, Bridget became licensee till 1922.

The Smyth family, including Thomas's brother Frank, resided in Sydenham for many years. Frank's

2 daughters, Mollie and Ronnie, were well-known locally and educated as boarders at Sts Peter and Paul Convent in Hillcrest Street, Tempe. In March 1923 Bridget successfully appealed a fine (in default of a month's imprisonment) for allowing drunkenness on the premises in December 1922. In 1924 she was a witness in a well-publicised divorce case (the husband had rented a room there). She died at Coogee on 27 June 1928 aged 61. At least two of her sons remained at Sydenham: the youngest, Jack, died in unusual circumstances at La Perouse in 1930.

Margaret Gleeson succeeded Bridget. Also a widow and left to run a family hotel, she became a successful publican. In 1917, daughter Kathleen (Kate) Gleeson married James (Jim) Tansey at St Benedict's, Broadway, in a double ceremony with son John Gleeson and May McGrath. In 1926, Jim was killed instantly when the car in which he was a passenger, driven by his brother-in-law John, swerved to avoid a dog and overturned. At the time of his death he was 34 and a barman at the Gordon. Kate Tansey moved in with her mother. In early 1929 Margaret suffered a stroke, dying some months later.



Ad in *Sts Peter and Paul's Reminder*
No 16 Tempe May 1939

Soon Kate's sister, Mary Clarke, joined her following the sudden death of her husband, Edward Clarke aged 31, in February 1930, almost 6 months after their mother. The sisters too, had a brush with the

law, in 1931, when it was alleged they served drinks to 2 men after hours. Charges were dropped when it was explained the men were 'stepping out with the ladies'.

The families were prominent in Tempe parish. In 1914 the Smyths donated a Carrara marble baptismal font to the new (1913) church to commemorate Thomas. In 1927 Kate donated a monstrance; and her brother, a large statue of St Therese, in memory of Jim.

In 1932 Kate was permitted to transfer the Gordon's licence and built the current hotel on the corner of Burrows Avenue and Swain Street. It opened with an offer of free beer between 5.15 and 6 pm on 13 December. In 1950 her only child, John Tansey, married. Kate retired about 1955 and died in 1972; Mary in 1959.

Mary Barthelemy

Calendar of MHS Events

Saturday 28 May

Australian National Maritime Museum

Details on front page

Saturday 25 June

MHS Annual General Meeting

Details on front page

July – TBA

Details in July-August newsletter

Saturday 23 August

**Gumbramorra Swamp – a talk with
Sue Castrique**

Details in July-August newsletter

Autumn Trivia Answer



(photo: City of Sydney Archives & History Resources)

The **Sunshine Bread Company** was at 4 Sarah Street, Enmore, just behind what was then a school. The photo looks roughly east from near Edgeware Road.

The location was correctly identified by **Ron Smith, Ross Phillips, Ian Phillips, Peter Chessell** and **Liam Morgan**. Ron attended school there and in nearby Metropolitan Road in the 1940s; Peter and Liam attended Enmore High in the late 1950s and 1966-71 respectively.

A history of the masthead company was written in 1952 titled *40 Years of Progress: 1912-1952 Hackshalls Limited* (available online). Hackshalls had owned a biscuit company on Parramatta Road, Camperdown since 1891. This eventually became Australia's Weston Biscuit Company and operated until 2004.

Hackshalls became incorporated in 1912 beginning operations in Mascot. In 1922 it opened a biscuit factory in Suva, Fiji, and in 1925 the company bought the 80-year-old Hardman Bros Pty Ltd Biscuit Manufacturers of Sarah Street, Newtown (Enmore), though the biscuit factory continued to operate under that name. Ron Smith remembers the biscuit factory and says you could buy a bag of broken biscuits for threepence, and it would make you the most popular kid in the school that day. There were large fires at the factory in 1940 and 1943.

Hackshalls also built the Southern Cross Flour Mills and the Sunshine Bread Company there. The company bought up a number of bakeries across Sydney and established factories and branches at Rozelle, Burwood and North Sydney, as well as subsidiary companies in Camperdown and Randwick. In the company history of 1952, the Sunshine Bread Company was claimed to be 'the most up-to-date bakery in Australia'.

Newspaper notices indicate that all Sydney companies went into liquidation in 1965; however, **Liam Morgan** recalls there was definitely still baking there in the late 1960s when he attended Enmore High. He thinks the business may have been taken over by Tip Top but is not sure. It remains unclear when the factory buildings were demolished.

There long stood schools on this site and in upper Metropolitan Road, Enmore which had many guises and several name changes. It became Enmore Boys High School in 1955 and went co-ed in 1977 before closing in 1989 to become TAFE Design Centre Enmore. The factory site was largely absorbed by the Education Department, but the remainder bordering Simmons Street became open space which is now the Enmore Fenced Dog Park.

Winter Trivia Question

Talking of dogs, mechanical canines are on guard at three locations in the former Marrickville LGA. Do you know where they are, what year they were installed and, for bonus points, what is the official term for street edifices like those they are standing on? Contact Richard 0413 335 897 or MHS email (bottom of this page).

Garners Avenue metal box revisited

We now have clarification to the trivia answer relating to the cast iron metal box in Garners Avenue, Marrickville (see March-April 2022 newsletter). **Jamie McCarthy**, husband of Diane, who correctly identified the box's location, worked for a time with Sydney City Council. Part of his job was to check out these 4-way electricity boxes and spray them internally to clear out cockroaches and other pests which caused the wires to fuse out, often resulting in blackouts.

Megan Hicks – who has a keen fascination for street graffiti and curious street objects – also correctly identified this box; however, her relevant email had gone into some black hole. Contrary to my description of the box *not* being the 'most beautiful object in the Marrickville area', Megan retorted with 'it is also not the most un-beautiful. I love it and am astounded that it has survived'.

Richard Blair

President & Heritage Watch

Scott 0416 152 501 | sbtarmac@gmail.com

Treasurer

Diane 9588 4930 | diane.mccarthy@optusnet.com.au

Newsletter

Lorraine 0416 224 472 | lbeach@iprimus.com.au

Webmaster

Rod 0431 487 375 | mhsweb@exemail.com.au