

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

CAMPERDOWN DULWICH HILL ENMORE
NEWTOWN PETERSHAM STANMORE

LEWISHAM MARRICKVILLE
ST PETERS SYDENHAM & TEMPE



Our September Meeting Saturday 24 September Coach trip to Mt Wilson

Meet Carpark opposite Petersham Town Hall
8.15 for 8.30 am sharp departure; return c. 6 pm.
Cost \$45 (depending on numbers) pay on the day.
Optional Gardens – Bebeah (\$10) & Sefton (\$15)
BYO lunch & drink – NO shops or cafes at Mt Wilson
Bookings essential Richard 0413 335 897 or MHS
email on back page. Advise if you need to cancel.

Mt Wilson, in the Blue Mountains off the Bells Line of Road, is an area particularly noted for its beautiful gardens, but a prominent feature at Mt Wilson is the 1880s Turkish Bath House and Museum where we will be shown the building (in 2 groups) and hear the story of its origin and development courtesy of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society.

Linking Mt Wilson with our local area is famed retailer Marcus Clark who first traded in Newtown, building an emporium there in 1900; whose family home Sefton Hall was in Dulwich Hill (1890); and whose family worshipped in the Enmore Church of Christ. Clark bought a house in Mt Wilson which he also named Sefton Hall. After he died St George Anglican Church was built nearby as a memorial. We will be able to visit this church.

There will be a chance to visit Bebeah Gardens and Sefton Cottage Gardens (pay your own entry to each). The population of Mt Wilson village is about 100, but the village is without shops or cafes, so visitors must bring their own sustenance. If time, we'll call into a cafe on the way home via Bilpin.

Life Membership for Pamela Stewart

At the launch of *Heritage 16* on 9 July 2022 **Pamela Stewart** was inducted as a Life Member. Joining MHS in 1989, Pamela served on the MHS committee for two terms (1991-95 and 2010-13), including being Junior Vice President for 3 years and Secretary for a year. Her citation reads:

In appreciation and recognition of her outstanding work for the Society, especially in maintaining its membership register and overseeing postal and some local deliveries of the Society's newsletter over many years.



Pamela Stewart with
Scott MacArthur
(photo: Lorraine Beach)

Inner West Council Urban Plan

The NSW government has plans for extensive housing development in Sydney over the next 20 years. After looking about, Inner West Council-appointed planners have proposed the best places for the Inner West's share are North Ashfield, Dulwich Hill (town centre and station), central Marrickville and around Marrickville station. There certainly are good arguments for placing housing near transport hubs, and Marrickville did this in the 1880s.

The results of the investigation are now known as Urban Design Studies (one for each area) and a Heritage Study. These are available for viewing on Council's 'Your say' webpage. Council is seeking your views on these studies. **We urge everyone to look at the plans and comment.** These proposals will change Marrickville and the other areas forever. In Marrickville they will change the character of Fletcher, Francis and Albion streets and Petersham Road in the centre; and south of the railway line, Greenbank, Church, Leofrene, Schwebel, Harriet and Myrtle streets; and Riverdale and Charlotte avenues.

Demolition of all the current housing in these areas will be allowed. No small area. In this diagram the new high-rises are boxed (from IWC website).



Most of the high-rise residential buildings will be 4 to 8 storeys high, with some – Station Street and the corner of Petersham Road and Illawarra Road – being 12 storeys. In development jargon this is called 'uplift'. Petersham Road will become a 'shared green street' that prioritises pedestrian and cycle movements, but at the same time be the access point for all car owners in the high-rises that will be built there. (go to p 3)

Our July Meeting: Colonial Ladies: Lovely, Lively and Lamentably Loose – talk by Judith Dunn

Why is our colourful past so little known? At our 23 July meeting acclaimed speaker and author **Judith Dunn** introduced us to a fascinating array of women convicts from early NSW. Their stories are based on crime reports from the *Sydney Herald* (1831-35), and relate to the Female Factory at Parramatta. Completed in 1821 the factory was referred to simply as Mrs Gordon's Villa or Mrs Gordon's after the matron, Ann Gordon. Within the factory the most severe (Penitentiary Class 3C) was reserved for those women who committed offences while in service. Their punishment: hard labour involving breaking rocks.

Judith initially thought the most common offence would be 'Drunk and disorderly' due to the love of the bottle. However, violent and riotous behaviour was the order of the day. The creative writing of the court and police reports made Judith's talk especially appealing with the charge sheets full of such imagery as 'picking the teeth of the Chief Constable with the leg of a chair' and 'doing a war dance on the military parade grounds.'

Men outnumbered women in the colony 5 to 1 but women were seen as the sexual aggressor. Ellen Driscoll whose 'bane was a redcoat was sent for one month to try Gordon's pills as an antidote'. Mary Doran was reported for being regularly 'bowled out with a strapping grenadier in her bed' and to correct her morals was sent to Mrs Gordon's for 3 months.

Nautical descriptions were common: Ellen Silk was sent to the factory for a month for 'galavanting it with a band of Neptune's own' (a sailor). Mary Hogan was described as 'a gay looking frigate discovered high and dry on the Race Course, stripped of her upper rigging.'

Some women were well acquainted with grog shops prior to transportation. Selina Hallaway, 'a great admirer of blue Ruin' (gin), was sent for a month to Mrs Gordon's temperance society. Winifred Steward, 'resembling a sponge, was sent to the factory for 6 weeks to evaporate the superabundant moisture.'

Husbands and masters had the upper hand. Men could beat their wives with a stick. A displeased husband could take his wife to court. Margaret Duggan, often tormented by her husband and with her property destroyed, when found absent from her husband's domicile was sentenced to 14 days in 3C. The first legal case of domestic violence in the colony involved a 17-year-old who received a thrashing after a pig ate their vegetables. Her complaints to the judge went unheeded and the court decreed she receive 25 lashes and be returned to her husband.

Only the official viewpoint is available. We seldom get the women's point of view. When their voices *do* come through they are strong and feisty. On receiving her sentence in 1831, Catherine Minchine declared 'a better woman never stepped in shoe leather.' Despite transportation and lack of education many women succeeded. Convicts were given 30 acres of land when released and some became successful as innkeepers and in other fields. Judith could only cover a fraction of the stories she had collected. Her book *Colonial Ladies: Lovely, Lively and Lamentably Loose* is a poignant, moving and entertaining read.

Anne-Maree Johnston

Our August Meeting: Gumbramorra Swamp & Tram Vale – talk by Sue Castrique on 27 August

Local historian **Sue Castrique** spoke to around 50 members and visitors with her talk 'Swamp now Marrickville'. The title was taken from an early map of our area showing the extent of the Gumbramorra swamp and the settlement of Marrickville. Via a series of maps Sue was able to show why Marrickville, the settlement, was as wet and prone to flooding as we find it today.

Sue told us that, after Darwin, Sydney is the wettest major city in Australia and one of the wettest capital cities in the world, outside the tropics. This surprising information, along with the fact that Marrickville sits in a basin and low-lying area, gives us a good idea of why we are so often underwater.

Early maps all showed the European interlopers the reality of creeks, streams and swampy ground but they seemed determined to ignore it. The most obvious case of flying in the face of the evidence was the creation of the Tram Vale Estate, subdivided in 1881. The estate comprised Faversham, Fitzroy, Cadogan, Sloane and Shirlow Streets up to Saywell Street. And it would appear that the primary reason for its creation was money.

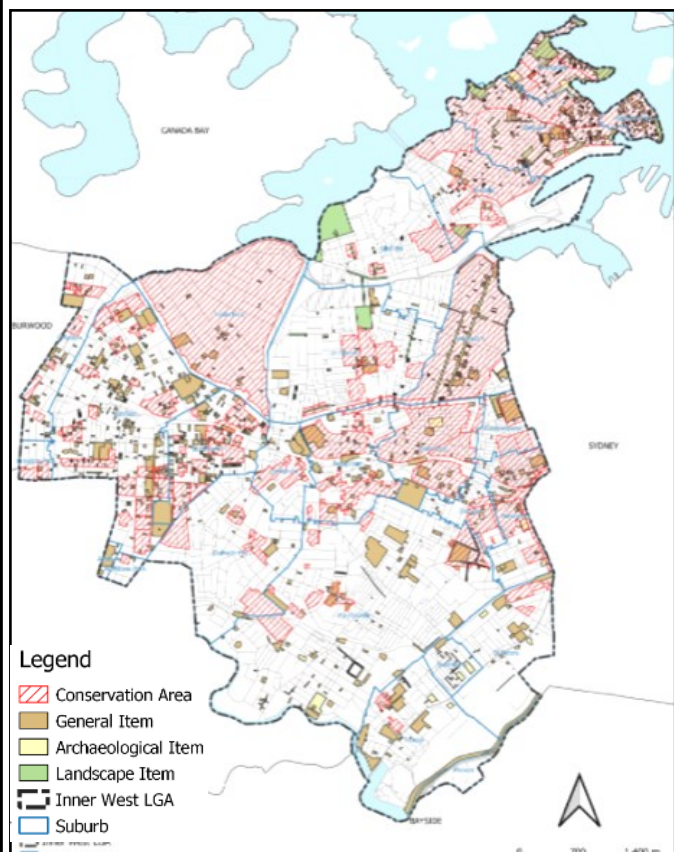
The estate was in the very heart of the Gumbramorra swamp and on top of the creek that drained the swamp. Working class buyers who were targeted (16% of them women) may not have been aware of this because of a previous 3-year dry spell which had masked the presence of water. But they were to be confronted with flooding in 1885, 1887 and 1889, when many were driven from their homes. Major works were then undertaken to solve the problem of flooding and there was a second wave of development in the 1920s. However, the faith in technology and modern engineering was misplaced as there was flooding throughout the 1920s and still more major flooding in the early 1930s. These floods followed the same lines as the 1889 flood.

In the 1930s the large Sydenham Drainage Pit and Pumping Station was created to alleviate the flooding. With the help of maps, Sue showed us that the pit and the large waterhole used by Fowler's Pottery covered the last remnant of the swamp, which had previously been a major water collection point. Fowler's Waterhole was later filled in and is now covered by Lilian Fowler Place and surrounds. The drainage pit remains and is heritage listed, 'the waterhole we had to have', as Sue noted.

In conclusion, Sue wondered what Marrickville would have looked like had we kept the swamp and worked with it in a spirit of caring for country rather than trying to master it. She drew attention to the current work at Addison Road Community Centre where a bioretention pond has been created to follow the course of a very old creek bed to help with flooding and to improve stormwater quality.

Rod Aanensen

The Heritage Study was conducted by heritage consultancy firm GML Heritage. Its brief was to identify places of significance in the Inner West as a whole and then assess whether any should be listed in the Inner West Local Environment Plan (LEP).



This map in the study is most revealing. Other than Leichhardt and Lilyfield, Marrickville, Dulwich Hill, Tempe, St Peters and Sydenham have the fewest Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs). Note all the white spaces.

There are recommendations for a few new small HCAs in Dulwich Hill and Marrickville, and minor extensions of already small HCAs in Marrickville. These are nothing compared to almost the whole of Balmain, Haberfield, Annandale and Stanmore.

The Warren in Marrickville and Pilgrim Avenue in Dulwich Hill are earmarked for further investigation as HCAs. However, it comes off Dibble Avenue, a street built entirely by one builder (George Dibble) who named the street after himself. This street is worth investigation but under these plans all Dibble Avenue homes can be demolished and high-rises built. For a story of both avenues see marrickvilleheritage.org.au/2021/11/14/dibble-avenues-waterhole.

It appears the report's primary heritage focus regarding the demolitions in central Marrickville and south of the railway line relate to Illawarra Road frontages. Here heritage conservation is deemed to be saving the facades of buildings (facadism). But, even with a preserved facade, new buildings can still be 3-storeys high at the street wall (the part that directly faces the street). Any higher development behind them is recommended to sit back 6 metres from the street.

As part of Council's fascination with pubs, the Royal Exchange (Marrickville Road) and Vic on the Park (Enmore Road) Hotels are proposed to be listed as heritage buildings.

Our October Meeting

Saturday 22 October 10 for 10.30 am

Herb Greedy Hall, 79 Petersham Road Marrickville
The Many Lives of Ferncourt – Home, Hospital, School with Rebecca Jones

Local historian **Rebecca Jones** will discuss the historic site now known as Ferncourt Public School. The building was constructed in 1886 by Polish artist Gracius Broinowski and was his family's home for a short time. It then passed through different hands and for some years was The Retreat, the first registered drug and alcohol treatment centre in NSW (possibly Australia) before becoming a school in 1922.

Rebecca will give an overview of the history of this local site, as told in her recent publication, *The Many Lives of Ferncourt – Home, Hospital, School*, whose appearance coincided with the centenary of the school. The book will be for sale on the day for \$35.



Prosna (1886), now Ferncourt School (courtesy SLNSW)

RAINED FROGS INSTEAD OF CATS AND DOGS

It rained frogs at Sydenham yesterday morning.

Nobody actually saw the frogs coming down, but they were everywhere in thousands. Sydney Zoology Professor E. A. Briggs says he hasn't any reason to doubt they came from the clouds.

Little boys and girls caught hundreds of the frogs and put them in dippers, billycans, and boxes.

Peter Ryan, 9, of Railway Road, had about 300 frogs in a dipper.

He said he was going to keep them and watch them grow.

Paul Straney, 12, said: "We've got millions in our back yard."

"Street Was Moving"

Mr. H. Russell, George Street, St. Peters, first saw the frogs on his way home from work at 6.30 a.m.

"It was raining, and the frogs were bouncing out of the splashes," he said.

"The whole street seemed to be moving. It looked very queer."

"I work in a brewery, but I never drink."

"I bent down to touch the road, and dozens of frogs jumped up my arm."

"I brushed them off, and then real-

ised that if anyone saw me they would probably say, 'Oh, it's only Mr. Russell. He works in the brewery and of course its Christmas.'"

Professor Briggs said last night: "Frogs have fallen from the sky many times in other countries, and several times before in New South Wales."

"These frogs, living in shallow ponds, are swept up into the sky by a swirling wind, and are often carried for several miles."

"Then they are deposited in a heavy shower. This phenomenon is likely to occur where there is low-lying ground."

Source: *Daily Telegraph*
27 December 1942, p 20
(trove.nla.gov.au)

Visit yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/inner-west-lep to read the proposals, view recordings of the various webinars outlining the plans and to give your response and ideas. You can also write to Louise Higginson, Inner West Council, PO Box 14, Petersham 2049 or contact her on 9392 5982 or by email <ourplace@innerwest.nsw.gov.au>.

Rod Aanensen

Calendar of MHS events

Saturday 24 September

Coach trip to Mt Wilson

Details on front page

Saturday 22 October

The Many Lives of Ferncourt with Rebecca Jones

Details on page 3

Launch of *Heritage 16* and thanks to our runners

The Society was pleased to launch its latest journal *Heritage 16* on 9 July at the Town & Country Hotel, St Peters. The event was introduced by President **Scott MacArthur** who thanked **Richard Blair**, editor; and **Lorraine Beach**, the designer. Richard was emcee. We heard from authors **Anna Simanowsky** and **Sarah Trevor** (Marrickville Hospital and the new library), **John Atkinson** (Ambulance service), **Mary Barthelemy** (Hurling & Fanny Durack), **Ken Swinbourne** (Petersham air tragedy), Richard Blair (Lewisham plane crash), **Wendy Valentine** (Harry Valentine), **Mark Sabolch** and **Gordon Nurse** (1st Dulwich Hill Scouts). In the absence of **Maureen Fletcher** (*Tivoli* & Reilly family; unable to attend for health reasons), her sister-in-law **Jan Gaynor** spoke. Also unable to attend were **Peter Cousens** (Louis Friedenreich, Master Baker), who lives interstate; **June Peka** (Smiths of *Marionette*), who lives in New Zealand; and **Jan Garaty** (Lewisham Hospital). It was great to be joined by two of the surviving sisters of Iris Thompson, one of the air crash victims at Lewisham in 1946.

As a special gesture free copies of *Heritage 11* (2001) were distributed to members. Publican **Helen Filips** addressed the group pointing out that her husband had noticed a photo of 1970s Jets player **Johnny Bradstock** in Andy Carr's article, 'Crash of the Jets', about the Newtown Rugby League football team. Johnny has been a long time regular patron at the Town & Country. The hotel again put on a top spread (*Heritage 15* was also launched there).

Special thanks to our runners for delivering the journal to locals as well as to afar, especially **Ann Fenton** (Leichhardt and Lilyfield), **Sally Shand** (Earlwood), **Mark Sabolch** (Summer Hill, Ashfield, Croydon and Haberfield), **Annette Robinson** (lower North Shore and Manly) and **Peter Chessell** (Blue Mountains).

Richard Blair



Lorraine Beach, Wendy Valentine & Richard Blair
(photo: Scott MacArthur)

Thought you'd like to know

- The Society congratulates Assistant Secretary **Elda Ribeiro** on accepting the position of Public Officer, which was previously occupied by former Treasurer **Diane McCarthy** from 2001 (except for 2007-09). Go well, Elda!
- The centenary of the death of **Henry Lawson** was on 2 September. See <henrylawsonociety.org>.
- On 14-15 October 1989 a group of MHS members travelled to Mudgee and Gulgong by coach and their names were the first recorded in our **Attendance Book**. This book has recorded attendees at virtually every event held by the Society since, although the original book has been literally joined by a further two books resulting in a tome now c. 4½ cm thick. The third book was filled up at the last meeting.
- The new **Petersham RSL** was opened recently in Trafalgar Street around the corner from the 1961 club. The club, which started in 1924, was originally in the Soldiers Memorial Hall still standing in New Canterbury Road near Crystal Street. It is noted that the architects for the 1961 RSL were MHS member **Shirley Hilyard** and her late former husband David.
- Member **David Bowron** advises that the Army Museum of NSW **Victoria Barracks** in Paddington is open to visitors for free guided tours on Thursdays. Visitors need to be at the Pass Office in Moore Park Road behind the barracks by 9.50 am for a 10 am start. A photo ID is a must. Tours last 1-1½ hours. Unfortunately, the museum is currently closed, but should be reopening soon (entry \$5). Ring David (a guide) on 0447 600 966 for further information.

Spring Trivia Question



Where in the local area is this old photo of rather refined ladies? Contact Richard 0413 335 897 or <marrickvilleheritagesociety@outlook.com>.

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