

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC

CAMPERDOWN DULWICH HILL ENMORE
NEWTOWN PETERSHAM STANMORE



LEWISHAM MARRICKVILLE ST PETERS
SYDENHAM & TEMPE

Our September outing

Saturday 27 September 10.15 for 10.30 am

Taronga Zoo: a guided history tour

Meet: Information Desk located at the zoo's main entrance plaza off Bradleys Head Drive, Mosman

Getting there: Ferries from Circular Quay; zoo shuttle bus from ferry wharf up the hill to the main entrance. City-Mosman bus #100 from QVB to the zoo. Drive and park (\$24 fee for all day parking).

Tour duration: About 90 minutes, then at your leisure till closing time at 5.00 pm.

Cost: \$67 includes dedicated guides and all day entry to the zoo

Bookings are essential.

By email to Caite — caite@internode.on.net

By phone or text to John — 0409 837 504

BOOK and PAY no later than 20 September.

MHS account: BSB 062 199 Account 1081 8000.

Include your name as the reference.



The 1916 Edwardian Baroque entrance building, one of Taronga's heritage-listed buildings. Extensive restoration, conservation and upgrade works to zoo facilities have been undertaken and are ongoing. (Photo: Maxim Kozlenko, Creative Commons)

Step back in time to 1916 as you're welcomed through the gates of Taronga Zoo for just sixpence, embarking on a captivating heritage tour that weaves together the zoo's rich past, present and future.

Discover iconic landmarks like the former seal pools – now home to playful Capybaras and a vibrant kids' playground – and stroll through the Blue Mountains Bushwalk, once the site of the monkey pits. Marvel at the historic Floral Clock and the majestic Elephant Temple, where stories of Jessie's arrival in 1916 and

the legacy of Taronga's elephants unfold, culminating in their recent journey to Monarto Safari Park in South Australia. Explore the remnants of the Moore Park Aviary, the old Aquarium, and heritage-listed seating near the giraffes.

This immersive experience highlights not only the animals that once roamed these grounds but also those who call Taronga home today. With a focus on conservation and the zoo's living legacy, even the heritage-listed plants become storytellers in a journey that celebrates over a century of wildlife care and environmental stewardship.

A unique tour, curated specially for our Society's visit to Taronga Zoo.

Our October meeting

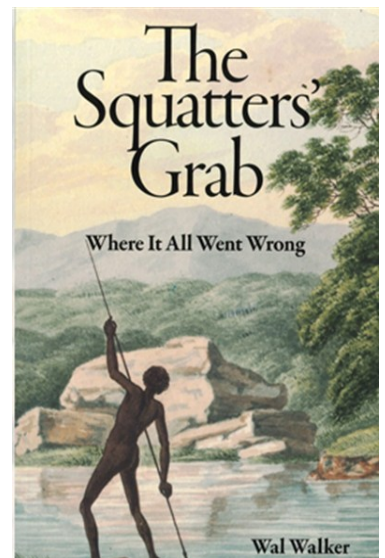
Saturday 25 October 10.15 for 10.30 am

The Squatters' Grab: where it all went wrong A talk with Wal Walker

**The Pavilion, Marrickville Library
Cnr Marrickville & Livingstone Roads**

Author and researcher **Wal Walker** states that all colonial governors appointed by the British government were under an obligation to the Crown to protect the lives of Indigenous Australians. His book *The Squatters' Grab* traces the failure of governments and colonial administrators to discharge their obligations; failure that permitted the ascendancy of squatters, with violent dispossession and massacres of the Aboriginal people.

It is nearly 60 years since anthropologist WEH Stanner talked about the 'cult of forgetfulness' and 'the great Australian silence' – not just a collective failure to acknowledge the atrocities but opting to not think about them at all. Many accounts of these awful events exist as evidence. To



explain how and why it all happened, and how it might have been done differently, Wal Walker's *The Squatters' Grab* examines the evidence and the failures, to understand why and how it all went wrong.

Wal describes himself as 'a researcher, trained as an economist, who has become an historian through exposure, travels throughout Australia, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa'. We've asked Wal to bring along copies of his book on the day.

The painting on the book's cover is called 'Two Aborigines spearing eels'. It's by Joseph Lycett and is dated 1820. Lycett was a convict artist sent to NSW for forgery and while he was employed in the Police Office in Sydney, under D'Arcy Wentworth, he forged promissory notes which he printed on a small press in the Police Office; these were distributed around Sydney by a colleague. Both men involved were convicted and sent to Coal River (now Hunter River), Newcastle as secondary offenders. The commandant at Coal River, Captain Wallis, was an amateur painter who had travelled to the colony on the same boat as Lycett. Wallis had a great respect for Lycett, allowed him the freedom to paint and encouraged him to record the life of the local Awabakal Aborigines.

Inner West Council's 'Fairer Future' Plan

From the outset, let's get a few things clear. First, increased density is necessary and inevitable in the inner west. Second, highrise development is an essential and logical land use to achieve increased density but it is not the only one. Third, the groundswell of opposition to IWC's recently released housing strategy is not about opposing change, density or growth – it is about expecting governments to get it right.



IWC's plan has been launched as an alternative to the state government's housing reforms – the Transport Oriented Development (TOD) program – requiring local government areas to develop plans for increased housing. IWC's plan would greatly surpass the state government's TOD target: from 7,800 dwellings in 5 years to 35,000 in 15 years. From the documents on council's website we could not find the reasoning for exceeding the state's

targets to such an extent, but critics of the plan claim there is a report saying the TOD 'did not offer enough incentive to developers'.

As we struggle to identify anything that is fair in the plan, IWC's proposal is now widely referred to as 'an unfairer future' plan. The plan was to be put to a vote at council's 19 August meeting, but in response to strong resistance the vote was deferred to the September meeting to allow further consideration and input from a concerned community.

From IWC's website, these are the positives promoted for the 'fairer future' strategy:

- Provide diverse housing options, including affordable, family-friendly apartments
- Create vibrant, walkable communities while preserving the unique character of our neighbourhoods
- Make sure that more young people, renters and essential workers can live here now
- Our children and grandchildren will have homes here in the future.

The first two already exist in the inner west, more so than most parts of Sydney – but the proposed strategy may adversely impact them. The second two relate directly to 'affordability' and market forces. More on that later.

From numerous speakers and authors, these are the negatives:

- IWC's website had the notification documents from end May but newsletters advising of the scheme were delivered to households **the day before** consultation ended
- Over 1,100 pages formed the notification documents, including hard to interpret maps informing of proposed zoning changes, in some cases from single-storey to 11-storey residential
- The documents are only in English
- Landowners whose properties are affected by proposed zoning 'uplifts' were not notified
- About 35,000 additional homes are proposed in the Inner West LGA; 22,000 are to be in the areas of Marrickville, Ashfield and Dulwich Hill. Little seems 'fair' about this distribution.
- 2% of built accommodation will be required to be 'affordable' – in other words, available for rent (or purchase) at 80% of market value. What has become of the existing requirement of 15%, which seems to be easily sidestepped? And what mechanism exists for monitoring that this outcome actually happens?

On 27 July a community 'protest' meeting was held at Gumbramorra Hall in Addison Road Community

Centre at Marrickville. MHS committee member **Ian Tyrrell** attended that meeting and reports that it was jam-packed and standing room only. At the meeting the most telling testimony, he says, was from a pregnant young mother who has just purchased a tiny overpriced semi only to discover that her street is to be rezoned for 11 storeys. Is that fair? She wanted a tiny backyard for her baby and now she will be facing highrise around her.

IWC has the second lowest people to area park space in the entire state, and it is well below international standards for local government areas. The answer to that would be for governments to buy a proportion of these houses and turn them into parks, but that won't happen. Ian also points out that this scheme will be enormously disruptive and unfair to many older and newer residents alike. Whole blocks will be turned into concrete jungles with no future possibility of increasing park space, and trees and gardens lost to demolitions, sacrificed for high density. Car parking, already difficult, will be impossible, so the implication is that metered parking must be introduced. OK for the owner if there is off-street parking but what about visitors and tradespeople?

It may well be included among the 1,100-odd pages of documentation in the strategy, but we have not found any mention of plans to increase services for an additional 35,000 homes: child care, primary schools, high schools, medical services, hospital capacity, to mention a few. How and when will this be achieved, and by whom?

Of course there is more – like plans to use council and government land for low cost housing developments but meanwhile a Dulwich Hill carpark is apparently to be sold by council to a private developer. Or a scheme to 'allow for increased development on church-owned land if at least 30% of the resulting housing is provided as not-for-profit, affordable, and managed by a community housing provider in perpetuity'. Amalgamation incentives would allow developers to build up to 22 storeys, favouring large scale developments at the obvious expense of demolishing existing older housing – reducing much of the 'diverse housing' allegedly being promoted, instead creating highrise canyons where it's hard to envisage the 'vibrant walkable communities' and 'unique character of our neighbourhoods' continuing to exist.

High land acquisition costs and ever-increasing construction costs mean that new developments will come at a high cost too – potentially creating an even greater issue of 'gentrification' rather than making housing more affordable. And yet it seems local and state governments think this policy will work to contain or reduce house prices, when it is widely held that unless and until affordable housing is again

accepted as a government responsibility, with provision of low cost public housing a priority, affordable housing cannot be a reality in the inner west. And meanwhile, with the futile justification that supply will increase affordability, towers will gradually replace the smaller, older buildings that house the very businesses that produce the lifestyle that has made the inner west so appealing.

A comment from the protest meeting: 'Lots of bad outcomes and for what?' This is the opportunity to build areas that benefit existing as well as future residents. There is no need to sacrifice the amenity, lifestyle and character of existing neighbourhoods. It takes skill, experience and talent and it is the responsibility of government, not developers, to ensure good outcomes.

IWC has a huge responsibility not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. We have an extension of time, until at least 23 September, to urge that this scheme receives more in-depth consultation and consideration of potential alternatives.

Lorraine Beach

Our July meeting

Saturday 26 July

Louisa Lawson walk with Sue Castrique and Michelle Scott Tucker

It was a bleak, damp morning when a group of almost 40 of us met in a small park to learn about Louisa Lawson (nee Albury) and her connections to Marrickville.

This park is one of very few places dedicated to an amazing, almost forgotten woman who was a tragic victim of the prejudices she fought so hard to expose. If she is remembered at all it is as the mother of the poet and author Henry Lawson. However, she is much more than that. Michelle Scott Tucker and Sue Castrique led us, skilfully weaving together a tale which would help us discover Louisa and why she is celebrated in Marrickville.



Our walk started from Louisa Lawson Reserve. Gloomy weather was countered by the park's exuberant and colourful mosaic of the cover of Louisa's magazine *The Dawn* (Photo: Lorraine Beach)

Louisa Lawson (1848–1920) was born and married into rural poverty and died in poverty, yet through her intelligence, drive and determination she achieved so much as an Australian poet, writer, publisher, suffragist and feminist.

The second of 12 children, Louisa was educated at Mudgee National School where she could have been a pupil-teacher. Instead, she was kept home to help to care for her younger siblings. In 1866, to ease the burden on her family, Louisa married Norwegian Niels Hertzberg Larsen (later anglicised to Peter Lawson) a handyman and gold digger. They lived in tents following the gold until they selected 40 acres at Eurunderee where Louisa grew fruit and tended cattle.



Louisa Lawson and her son Charles William in front of the Lawson family's bark hut, Gulgong area, c. 1870
(Photo: Mitchell Library, State Library NSW)

Between 1867 and 1877 Louisa bore five children. Peter was often away, either at the goldfields or contract building with his father-in-law.



Louisa Lawson c. 1880s
(Photographer unknown; State Library NSW collection, a4219070)

In 1882 Louisa and her children moved to Sydney, where she did laundry and sewing and managed boarding houses. In 1887 she used money she had saved to purchase shares in the radical pro-federation newspaper *The Republican* which she and son Henry edited. In 1888, she started the magazine *The Dawn*, to publicise women's wrongs, fight their battles and sue for suffrage. It combined reporting on women's issues with household advice, fashion, poetry and short stories.

Louisa included her own political editorial and created an instant commercial success.

Louisa championed many causes for women, particularly working women. In 1889, she launched a campaign for female suffrage and established the Dawn Club where women could meet to discuss reforms and gain experience in public speaking. She persuaded the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts debating clubs to admit her and encouraged other women to join. In 1891 the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales formed, and Lawson allowed the League to use *The Dawn* office to print pamphlets and literature free of charge. In 1893 she became the first woman elected to the board of management of the SMSA. When women were finally given the vote in 1902 with the passing of the NSW *Womanhood Suffrage Bill* (also known as the Women's Franchise Act 1902) Lawson was introduced to the members of Parliament as 'the mother of suffrage in New South Wales'.

Much of Louisa's passion and drive was built from her personal experiences – being taken out of school, the drudgery of raising her siblings and her own children alone and in poverty, being excluded as a woman from joining the council of the school in Eurunderee or the Printers' Union, of being swindled by the GPO taking over her invention of a mailbag buckle. She ended her life again alone and in poverty in a simple stone cottage on the edge of the Gumbramorra Swamp. She died in Gladesville Mental Hospital.

From the description of Louisa that Michelle painted it is easy to see why she should be celebrated but why in Marrickville? Sue was able to join all the dots together as she described the development of early Marrickville, especially its waterways.

We walked from Louisa Lawson Reserve down to Excelsior Parade where Sue introduced us to Thomas Holt (1811–1888), an English-born Australian pastoralist, company director and politician. Holt, the son of a Yorkshire wool merchant, emigrated to Sydney in 1842 and made a fortune in the wool industry. He was a director of numerous colonial companies and invested extensively in pastoral land. He built the gothic stone mansion, 'The Warren', which he used as a hunting lodge, on land in Marrickville overlooking the Cooks River. Excelsior Parade was the driveway of the original property.

Although Holt was long gone and the property subdivided, Holt did two things that connected him to Louisa Lawson. He rerouted the stream which had crossed his property, and he built a small primitive stone cabin down near the river on the edge of swamp land. During the 19th century the suburb of Marrickville edged up to the swamp and was built

over it. The swamp's creeks were channelled into pipes and concrete storage pits, waterholes were filled in and stormwater was directed into trunk drains and pumped away. Sue described this for us and showed us many of the schemes, often badly engineered, designed to alleviate flooding.

Two of the most significant were the Eastern and Western Stormwater Channels who many believed would stop the flooding of the area. It was here on the edge of the Eastern Channel that Louisa moved to the small stone cottage built by Holt on what was Renwick Street, on half an acre which she hoped to subdivide and sell. Her early optimism faded as the land continued to flood and the council prohibited the subdivision. She had a small orchard and grew native flowers. In 1897, her cottage and garden were almost certainly flooded by the creek, which inundated most of Marrickville. Sue told us a newspaper reported that a woman on Renwick Street refused to leave her cottage even when the water was a metre deep – and she thinks it was perhaps Louisa.

We began our walk in the small park in Roach Street, Marrickville named in her honour. The Louisa Lawson Reserve contains a large colourful mosaic depicting the front cover of *The Dawn*. This mosaic was commissioned by our late member **Chrys Meader** who was Marrickville Council's Local Studies Librarian. At the gate are four large stones and a plaque that reads: 'Louisa Lawson (1848–1920) Social Reformer, Writer, Feminist and Mother of Henry Lawson. These stones are all that remain from the walls of her home in Renwick Street, Marrickville.'

We ended our walk at the bottom of Renwick Street near the location of Louisa Lawson's former cottage.

From Michelle and Sue we had learnt why the Louisa Lawson Reserve is so significant, not only for the amazing woman it celebrates but how she connected with Marrickville and its early development.

'Tricia Blombery

Note:

This walk was a collaboration between MHS member Sue Castrique and Michelle Scott Tucker, conducted for Inner West Council during Heritage Festival 2025 and reprised for MHS. We thank them for a wonderful educational experience. Michelle's story published below with her permission gives further insight into Louisa Lawson's life – and a glimpse into a morning's work for our two generous historians.

Exploring Louisa Lawson's Old Stone Cottage

Late last year I spent several delightful hours in the company of writer and historian, Sue Castrique. We'd not met before. But, hearing that I was writing a book about Louisa Lawson, Sue reached out to me online and kindly invited me to Marrickville to learn more

about the place where Louisa Lawson lived for the last 15 or so years of her life.

I can't begin to tell you what a wonderful morning Sue gave me. We were two women who began the day as strangers but definitely ended as friends. Given our common interests, once we started talking, we didn't seem able to stop!

Sue met me at Sydenham Station and began by pointing out the shallow valley we stood in. She explained how the earliest housing developments – workers' cottages built in the late 1800s out here on what was then the rural outskirts of Sydney – were constantly subject to flooding. Then she drove me across to Mackey Park, a sports field wedged in the corner of Marrickville formed by the Cooks River and the railway line. We hopped out of the car to sit beside the river – tide high, fish jumping – and reimagined the soccer field before us as the swampy wetland it once was, part of the traditional lands of the Gadigal peoples.

Sue traced the lines of creeks for me, now buried in the stormwater system. From a sheaf of papers in her bag she produced a treasury of photos, paintings, maps and title deeds. We looked up the hill to where a mansion, a rich pastoralist's folly, had once stood.



The Warren, Cooks River residence of the Hon. Thomas Holt, March 1870 (Courtesy State Library NSW)

Now the hill is covered with suburban houses, old and new, but 'The Warren' had been a Victorian Gothic declaration of wealth with over 30 rooms, filled with art and sculptures. Even the stables were built of sandstone quarried on the property.

'The Warren' was the heart of a grazing empire consisting of millions of acres [including in northern NSW and Queensland], and it had its own gatehouse down on the river flats, a small but solid bluestone cottage about 500 metres away as the crow flies.

Thomas Holt, the rich pastoralist who built the mansion, left the colony in 1881 and in 1884 'The

Warren' was subdivided. Carmelite nuns bought the mansion and the surrounding 12 acres (5 hectares) but they failed to pay their debts and in 1922 the then derelict mansion was demolished, with the land used to provide housing for returned soldiers.

Sue took me to where the house used to stand.

All that remains today is a quiet suburban thoroughfare called Mansion Street, and a small grassy park containing two castellated pillars salvaged from the front of 'The Warren', now incongruously standing sentinel over nothing at all.

All the power of that place – and it was substantial – emanated not from the ridiculous pillars but from a natural rock formation providing a perfect lookout point across the river, over the former wetlands and eastward towards the coast. Shaded by a magnificent fig it seemed obvious that the lookout rock had, for thousands of years, been an important place to the Gadigal. I hope it still is.

But it was the mansion's bluestone gatehouse cottage that Sue and I were really interested in. In 1901 Louisa Lawson would buy that stone cottage and in 1905 at the age of 58 – after quitting her newspaper *The Dawn* and leaving central Sydney – she moved in and lived there until a year or so before her death in 1920.



The Old Stone Cottage (photo: courtesy Sue Castrique, from Colin Roderick, *The Real Henry Lawson*, Rigby Publishers, Adelaide, 1982, p 183)

By 1905 the Old Stone Cottage, as it was called, was bordered on one side by a row of workers' cottages and on the other by the railway line. A large, open concrete drain – an attempt to reduce flooding in the area – also ran between the cottage and the train line. Located right at the end of Renwick Street, the cottage was on a larger block than the nearby cottages, leaving room for fruit trees and a substantial garden. Behind the cottage, wetlands and seasonal lagoons led down to the Cooks River, only a couple of hundred metres away.

Tackling the Richardson Crescent road bridge on foot, Sue and I looked down into the drain and, to our left, onto what had been the back of Louisa's property.

The drain, once a wonder of engineering, has become an overgrown, liminal place, lined with wild-sown exotic trees (privet, peppercorn, a date palm festooned with roosting ibis). It's beautiful, in its own wild way.



Louisa Lawson's former property was where the warehouses now stand (Photo: Michelle Scott Tucker)

Then we walked around the block to the easternmost end of Renwick Street.

It's mainly lined with industrial workshops. A hive of small businesses crammed between the railway line, the drain, suburban houses and a busy road. The street veers a little to the south at its very end, tracing the ghostly outline of Louisa's front boundary.

But there's no trace of Lawson's cottage now. The short lane or driveway that once led to her cottage on its almost half an acre is long gone, under the concrete. And a poorly matched pair of warehouses – one of them a graveyard for taxis – entirely cover her former property. As Sue and I stood on the footpath peering at the warehouses, a diffident, kindly man on a forklift drove up to see if we were OK. Dark beard, a friendly smile, and an accent that hinted at countries far from here. We're historians, we said, a famous woman used to live here. He nodded and then proceeded to tell us about the history of this place, this suburb – his place, now.

It was wonderful.

He spoke about the floods, and the river. He told us about convicts, hinted at lunatics and speculated about ghosts and bushrangers. Then he wished us well and, needing to get on with his work, drove away on his forklift.

Sue and I spent the rest of our morning speculating too. We talked and talked, swapping theories and ideas about how and who and why.

When Louisa Lawson lived in the Old Stone Cottage it was still very much on the urban fringe, in open countryside. Sue was taken by how similar that countryside was to the country around

Mudgee, where Louisa was born and lived until she was 35.

From her cottage in Marrickville, Louisa had direct access across the wetlands to the Cooks River and thus to the fish, ducks and eels that lived there. She had fruit trees and a vegetable garden – all of which, Sue and I thought, helped to put food on her table when her savings were so meagre.

‘She was poor,’ remembers one of her neighbours then, a working class child. ‘Poorer than us.’

The Old Stone Cottage may look pretty to modern eyes but it certainly lacked indoor sanitation and probably didn’t have running water. Every cooked meal relied on a wood-burning fire – we’re not even sure if a stove was installed. The Board of Health had raised concerns about the property during Louisa’s tenure and the Lawson family sold the cottage after her death to BHP By-products Pty Ltd, which established a tar distillery on the site. The cottage seems to have been demolished in the 1950s or 1960s.

Finally, Sue took me up the hill again, to the opposite end of Renwick Street, where it crosses Illawarra Road and becomes Harnett Avenue. There we visited another little park – this one dedicated to Louisa Lawson.

At the entrance to the park is a low stone wall, built (according to the plaque) with blocks salvaged from the Old Stone Cottage. And in the centre of the park is a beautiful mosaic depicting, in blue and pink and gold, the front cover of *The Dawn*.

That was wonderful too.



The Dawn mosaic, Louisa Lawson Reserve, Marrickville
(Photo: Michelle Scott Tucker)

In fact the whole expedition was a wonderful, precious gift – helping me to walk where Louisa walked, and showing me the place, the landscape, where she lived.

I’m deeply grateful to Sue Castrique for reaching out to me and generously sharing her deep, insightful and fascinating knowledge of Marrickville, and of the Old Stone Cottage.

Michelle Scott Tucker

Note: Michelle’s biography of Louisa Lawson will be published in 2027. Articles about Louisa and the writing of her biography are published on Michelle’s website every month or so. MHS members can have those articles emailed to them when they’re hot off the press; go to this web page <https://michellescotttucker.com/journal/> and click on the button that says ‘Follow’. Sue Castrique’s book *Gumbramorra: a history of water in Marrickville* will be published in 2026.

Vale: Yvonne Johnson

Yvonne Kingsbury Johnson was born on 5 August 1925 and died on 10 July 2025. Member **Brett Johnson** always kept us up to date with the activities of his aunt, our late member **Joy Lewis**, the elder sister of his mother Yvonne. Upon Joy’s death, aged 103, Brett enrolled his mother as a member. Our May-June newsletter featured a great photo of Yvonne reading her newsletter. Now we sadly report that Yvonne has also passed away, just short of her 100th birthday.



Yvonne Johnson and Joy Lewis in 2020
(courtesy Brett Johnson)

Some months after Joy had passed away we received an email from MP Jo Haylen’s team advising that Joy’s passing, and her contribution to our local community, had been acknowledged in parliament by Ms Haylen. As **Richard Blair** commented: ‘She’d have been chuffed that she was mentioned in despatches in state parliament.’

Joy and Yvonne were, in Brett’s words, ‘proud Marrickville girls’. We’re proud of them, too. Long lives well lived.

Lorraine Beach

Vale: Del Stone (1921-2024)

Delcia (known as Del) **Doreen Stone** (nee Hewison), late of Sydenham, died on 8 December 2024 aged 103. She spent her final years in a nursing home in Arncliffe.

Del and husband **Harry** joined MHS in 1996 following a walk around Sydenham led by MHS member **Peter McLaren**. The walk included an inspection of Harry’s garage/workshop which was full of memorabilia and working machinery.



Del Stone riding a carousel during MHS's 2012 visit to Fairground Follies Antique Mechanical Music Museum (photo: Lorraine Beach)

Del and Harry regularly attended MHS meetings for many years. They became local heroes when, in the mid-1990s, the federal government set about acquiring houses in Sydenham mainly in George, Henry and Rowe Streets and Railway Road on the pretext of noise relating to the installation of a third runway at Kingsford Smith Airport. All 152 acquired houses were demolished and in hindsight it remains debatable whether the removal of all this housing was necessary. Del and Harry resisted all offers and continued residing at 88 George Street, where Harry's family had lived for over 100 years. Harry's oral history was the basis of an article that appeared in *Heritage* 13 (2010). Harry died in 2014 aged 93.



Del and Harry Stone with Harry's vintage FJ Holden, 1996 (photo: Richard Blair)

Del grew up in Kogarah and worked for the Commonwealth Bank for many years. Her family background included newspaper proprietors and a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly. Del was an active and independent woman who, in her younger days, travelled widely around Australia and overseas. Del was quietly spoken, unassuming and well regarded in the community. Del and Harry had no children.

Richard Blair & Rod Aanensen

Vale: Bob Simpson AO (1936-2025)

We remember **Robert Baddeley Simpson** (known as Bob) who died 15 August 2025 aged 89.

Bob's fame as a cricketer (batsman, spin bowler and slip fieldsman), captain and coach is well documented, but it is worth recording that he was born in Robert Street, Marrickville, attended Marrickville West Public School and Tempe Intermediate High School where at the age of 12 he captained the school's cricket team.

According to Meader, Cashman and Carolan in *Marrickville: people & places* (1994, p 183):

Appearing for St Clement's church Marrickville team in the Under-16 competition, Simpson was good enough to play for Petersham-Marrickville first grade team a week after his fifteenth birthday. He played for Petersham-Marrickville and subsequently for Western Suburbs.

Bob Simpson played for NSW at 16 and went on to captain Australia in 29 Tests in the 1960s. He retired from Test cricket in 1968. In the wake of World Series Cricket, in 1977-78 he was persuaded to captain Australia in another 10 Tests at the age of 42. In a series against India in which Australia won three Tests, Simpson made 7 and 89 in Brisbane, 176 and 39 in Perth and 100 and 51 in Adelaide.

He became a successful coach for the Australia team and later, an administrator. He received many accolades for his illustrious career. Indian cricket writer Avijit Ghosh wrote that Simpson always emphasised the importance of fitness 'and was regarded as amongst the finest of all slip fieldsmen of all time. He also epitomised grit.'

Bob is honoured locally in the Sports Walk of Honour in Marrickville Park.



Bob Simpson (courtesy Cricket Australia)

Richard Blair

Vale: Alex Kolozsy 1938-2025

Dr Alexander Sandor Kolozsy CDVA died on 8 July 2025 aged 87.

Dr Kolozsy is best known locally as the sculptor who was in charge of the project to restore the Winged Victory in time for the Bicentenary of 1988. Three articles about the Winged Victory appeared in MHS journals in the 1980s.



Dr Alex Kolozsy (courtesy of his Facebook page)

The statue, the work of local sculptor Gilbert Doble, was erected in front of Marrickville Town Hall in 1919, but was taken down in 1962 after being deemed unsafe. The lower half of the sculpture was not retained. As outlined in Cashman & Meader, *Marrickville: from rural outpost to inner city* (1990, p 31):

Born in Transylvania, of Hungarian parents, [Kolozsy] migrated to Australia in 1958 and achieved international recognition as a figurative sculptor. Working from old photographs and using models he re-created the lower half of the Winged Victory, altering the figure's stance to strengthen the statue. The re-creation was completed in September 1988 and, after a bronze cast had been made in Melbourne, the two halves were welded together.

The Winged Victory was returned to its location on 1 November 1988. Sadly, its comeback only lasted 20 years as, after again being deemed unstable, it was taken down in April 2009, to be eventually replaced by a new Winged Victory. The upper half of the original statue was relocated to the Australian War Memorial where it was unveiled in 2015 in the First World War Galleries.

Dr Kolozsy had a distinguished career as a sculptor, staging numerous exhibitions (one of the most recent in 2019 in Blacktown where he had resided

for many years), accepting regular commissions, and being awarded several accolades. In 2018 he was knighted as *Vitéz* (Order of Merit) by the Hungarian Parliament.

Richard Blair

2025 National Trust (NSW) Heritage Awards

The NSW Heritage Awards is a signature event of the National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival, and has been conducted annually for more than 40 years in partnership with the NSW government through Heritage NSW. This year's celebration recognised 20 winners across 10 categories as well as individual prizes and special category awards.

Congratulations are extended to all participants and recipients of awards, some of whom are special to our locality.

We particularly congratulate MHS member **Dr Lisa Murray** who received the 2025 Cathy Donnelly Memorial Award for 'outstanding endeavours and achievements by a female heritage professional'.



Dr Lisa Murray (Photo: courtesy of National Trust)

The National Trust indicated that:

Dr Murray volunteered with the National Trust Cemeteries Committee in 1996 while completing her PhD, and worked with the organisation fulltime from 1997 to 2001. She joined the City of Sydney as a research historian, became City Historian in 2010, led the city history program and co-curated key engagement projects. She has since rejoined the Cemeteries Committee and continues her work as a consulting historian.

Dr Murray wrote *Sydney cemeteries: a field guide* (2016) and spoke to the Society about this topic.

In the Architecture category, Fig Tree House, Marrickville (architects Potter&Wilson), winner of the 2024 Marrickville Medal, was shortlisted; the award went to the former workmen's dwellings in Lower Fort Street, Dawes Point (architects Neeson Murcutt Neille).



Old Bega Hospital (photo: Chris Bennett/Evolving Picture)

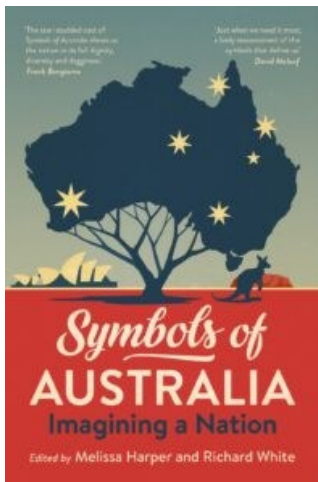
The coveted Judges' Choice Award went to Old Bega Hospital (Design 5 Architects; Director, MHS member **Alan Croker**).

The revival of the hospital after a fire over 20 years ago was described by judges as 'sensitive, elegantly resolved and a project that sets the standard for heritage conservation'. Judges also noted its ability to 'balance the delicate question of when to retain and when to replace'.

Richard Blair

Our Last Meeting Saturday 23 August Symbols of Australia: Slippery and Unsettled with Richard White

An audience of about 40 enjoyed a highly informative and engaging presentation by **Dr Richard White**. He built it around the book he co-edited with Melissa Harper, *Symbols of Australia: Imagining a Nation* (New South Publishing, Sydney, 2021). It is an updated edition of an earlier work first published in 2010.



According to Richard, our national symbols never stand still. They are 'slippery and unsettled' because of their changing depictions, growing or fading popularity and shifts in their meaning. In fact, some of them had faded in the 11 years between editions of the book and new ones emerged.

Enter the beloved democracy sausage!



Election day can entail more than just voting at your local polling booth (Photo: courtesy of The Funding Centre)

Richard started with tattoos. Fifteen years ago, the Southern Cross was the most requested tattoo; now it is the most removed! The Holden car, iconic for decades after 1948, ceased production in 2017. Others like Uluru grew in prominence over those years through the prohibition on climbing and the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Before moving to the more formal symbols, Richard demonstrated how the Akubra has been a fixture as Prime Ministerial headwear in recent years with one exception. [Scott Morrison widely favoured a baseball cap.]

Richard displayed the numerous manifestations of the National Flag since 1901. It was the Union Jack at first. The earlier versions of our current flag underwent gazetted changes in 1903 and 1908 and became the formal national flag in 1954. Until then the Union Jack had precedence over all other flags in Australia. The flag did not fly alone without the Union Jack above Parliament House until 1964. Its merchant maritime equivalent, the 'people's flag,' the red ensign appeared often in the 2021 anti-vax rallies.

Likewise, the coat of arms. The 1908 version was controversial because of the English Cross of St George alone on the shield, much to the chagrin of Australians of Scottish and Irish heritage. The current coat of arms replaced it in 1912.

The national floral emblem, the golden wattle, goes back to the 19th century. It comfortably trumped the waratah because wattle is across all states and always blooming in at least one of them. Blooming in spring, it became a symbol of the new nation, and of cheerfulness; and more recently for Prime Minister Albanese, it points to our national resilience.



Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Australia's national floral emblem (Photo: pmc.gov.au)

In 1999, it became a symbol of mourning when Governor-General Sir William Deane dropped 14 sprigs of wattle into the Saxeten Gorge near Interlaken in Switzerland in memory of the young Australians who drowned in a flash flood while canyoning there.

Other 'unofficial symbols' are even more unstable. Federation brought forth commercial adoption of Australian flora and fauna across the single national market, especially in food and beverages such as Rosella Tomato Chutney, Emu Bitter and Billy Tea carried by a kangaroo with a swag!



Other slippery and unsettled symbols include:

- The rising sun was particularly popular around Federation, identifying the newly emerging Australia and its progressive social policies and reputation for democracy, egalitarianism and social justice. It is evident to this day on the gables of Federation houses.
- The badge of Australian Army forces, based on an arrangement of swords, became commonly known as 'the rising sun'; its popularity waned during World War II – it was Japan's national symbol – then declined abruptly in the 1950s-60s after the adoption of Australia's *Flags Act 1953* which in turn had the effect of encouraging more use of the flag as a symbol.
- Miss Australia was a Minerva figure like the UK's Britannia, America's Columbia and France's Marianne which had disappeared by the Great War.
- The lifesaver arising in the 1920s represented modern Australian manhood but by the Sydney 2000 Olympics it was a throwback symbol.
- The Holden was a symbol of modernity and later of nostalgia.
- Vegemite, from World War II, occasionally rejuvenates; for example, 'Bartymite.'
- The billy, once a symbol of mateship, is disappearing now.

- The boomerang has less currency now due to awareness of cultural appropriation.
- In 2010 the Rainbow Serpent was popular but by the book's second edition it had retreated due to First Nations' concerns.
- Two centuries ago, the kangaroo represented Australia's oddity to Europeans. Later shown boxing, it stood for pugnacity or resilience. Now kangaroos are more commonly associated with nature's fragility in the face of climate change. Even the Qantas kangaroo has undergone subtle revamps.

A lively Q&A brought a most fruitful morning to its conclusion.

John McGrath

Note: This is the fourth time Dr Richard White has generously given his time to delivering a presentation to the Society. We think he now holds the record!



A big thank you to our members

We're delighted to share that our membership register indicates Marrickville Heritage Society currently has 355 members.

Most of you have already renewed your membership, for which we thank you. Contact us if you're unsure if your membership is due.

Your support means so much and helps us keep our local history alive and accessible for everyone.

A very special thank you also goes out to many of you who added a donation along with your renewal. Your generosity gives us that extra boost to run events, care for our collections and share more of Marrickville's stories with the community.

We're so grateful to have such a passionate group of people behind us. Here's to another wonderful year of celebrating our shared heritage together!

Scott MacArthur
President

Calendar of MHS Events

Saturday 27 September

History Tour, Taronga Zoo: a curated visit
Details on front page

Saturday 25 October

The Squatters' Grab: where it all went wrong
A talk with Wal Walker
Details on front page

Saturday 22 November

Show and Tell
Preceded by a lawyer's talk on wills, estates and dispersal of memorabilia
Details in next newsletter

Saturday 6 December

Pot Luck Dinner
Details in next newsletter



Artist Carol Ruff (Photo courtesy of carolruff.com)

Check out the website of this accomplished artist.

This seasonal trivia question proved to be a stumper for MHS members.

Richard Blair



Winter Trivia Answer

If you've attended a MHS meeting in the past 20 years (that has not been held at Marrickville Library), you have probably been in the building that displays this 1996 mural by artist **Carol Ruff**. This building is **Herb Greedy Hall** and the mural is on the exterior (approx.) north face. Titled 'World Instrument Mural' it depicts a range of exotic musical instruments and was commissioned by Marrickville Council.

Earlier, in 1990 Marrickville Council commissioned Carol to paint at Enmore Swimming Pool the 'No Third Runway Mural', which was reflective of the times. It appears that mural has gone with the pool's rebirth some years later.

Carol Ruff has an impressive body of work across Sydney, but her murals can also be seen in Melbourne, Adelaide, Townsville, Alice Springs and Port Moresby.

Carol has held numerous solo exhibitions and participated in group ones, she has her own gallery in Clovelly, and as a singer/songwriter and ukulele player she has produced CDs.



Spring Trivia Question

Where in our local area was this?

Text Richard on 0413 335 897 or email him at: marrickvilleheritagesociety@outlook.com

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