

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN

OUR NEXT MEETING

Words Can Be Bullets: a political history of New Theatre with Lyn Collingwood
Saturday 25 August 10 for 10.30 am
Herb Greedy Hall 73 Petersham Rd Marrickville

Newtown's New Theatre which turns 75 in October is the oldest theatre company in continuous production in NSW. Lyn Collingwood's illustrated talk on the theatre's history focuses on the people who helped build the enterprise and keep it going for over seven decades. The theatre's role as a political and social activist is also explored, especially the occasions it fell foul of the law.

NEW THEATRE REVIEW



In 1980 Lyn joined the New Theatre first as an actor and later playreader, secretary and director. To mark the 75th birthday she is working on projects such as a Saturday morning Kids' Club and Sunday daytime performances of plays which have been banned or censored (see website: www.newtheatre.org.au). A life member, Lyn processes the theatre's archives for inclusion in the manuscript collection of Mitchell Library where almost 300 boxes of New Theatre records are stored and is planning to begin writing the history of the New next year. Lyn has been a professional actor and Equity member since 1975, working in all areas of the entertainment industry, including a stint since 1999 as the gossipy Colleen in *Home and Away*. She also found time while studying Historical Archaeology at the University of Sydney to write a thesis on the Vicars Woollen Mills site (now Marrickville Metro) and the centenary history of Camdenville School, Newtown which her daughter attended.

Three 'Be Prepared' Cheers for the centenary of Lord Baden-Powell's famous trial camp at Brownsea Island, Dorset. B-P's *Scouting for Boys* first appeared in January 1908 after which the first Scout troops were formed in the UK. As for Australia's first troop, there are various 1908 claimants – Mosman, Petersham, Waverley and Malvern (Melbourne) – but apparently no absolute proof.

MHS ESSAY COMPETITION

It is anticipated that the society's Essay Competition will be formally announced with full details in our September newsletter. The competition, which carries generous prize money, will be open to non-MHS members and will have broad publicity. The competition will close in late February 2008.

Tasmania's Natural & Built Heritage Tour Thursday 8 - Sunday 18 November

Calling all members! There are still ample vacancies for this tour. No doubt some members have deferred their decision pending (a) an itinerary, and (b) a clearer approximation of costs. These are now both available (subject to change) whilst some fine tuning is still to be done. Included will be inspections of a range of historic properties, a day tour to Port Arthur, the historic railway trip from Queenstown to Strahan, and a full-day boat trip on Macquarie Harbour and up the Gordon River. A flyer, which contains an application form, will accompany the August newsletter. We have extended the date for the deposit (\$500) until 17 September with the balance due by 10 October. During the temporary absence of tour leader Geoff, direct your enquiries to Keith on 9564 6948.

150 YEAR COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE FOR WRECK OF THE DUNBAR

St Stephens Church 189 Church St Newtown
Sunday 19 August 10 am

Details on back page

DUNBAR MONUMENT APPEAL

With the 150 year commemorations of the Wreck of the *Dunbar* this month an appeal has been launched to raise funds to remove graffiti and for the restoration of the grave and monument in St Stephen's cemetery to the 121 people who perished on 20 August 1857 in what has been described as Australia's worst ever peacetime disaster. The cemetery is maintained by the Camperdown Cemetery Trust, but has limited income. Donations can be made to the National Trust of Australia (NSW) Camperdown Cemetery Restoration Appeal. Details 9557 2043.

OUR LAST MEETING

An Illustrated Walk Through Old St Peters with Mark Matheson

Around 34 people did the walking tour round St Peters on the 28th last month. We walked in a spiral route visiting twelve places between the church and the station including the edge of Typhoid Valley, an 1886 nightsoil lane, Daley's empty garage (1928), the frivolous dog from 2005, the vacant lots and disused factories and many places we would normally spurn.

Our guide asked us to think on how the village of St Peters could be compared to the village of Botany, how a misspelling made Unwin's Bride Road and how a misspelling – or mishearing – of the name for the Burrawang plant made a new name Barwon. Thanks to the picture-bearers – Sue, Ted and Keith – who held up photographs and drawings of some of these places as they were and to Ian for handling the audios.

Our guide asked us to imagine the villagers at the parish pump in May Street, the dancers in Foresters Hall, the town hall with its backbiting and insults, the brick pits with their shocking number of industrial accidents, dynamite and six drowning children, and to imagine the roar of the surf from Botany Bay as Henrietta Heathorn heard it in 1848.

The vibrancy of all those people scurrying about their lives of work and play and prayer has been replaced with the dangerous vibrancy of motor cars scurrying with unceasing noise and soot. And this was a theme of the walk, how a walking track evolved into a through-road to bring benefit to the town but evolved further to become Sydney's first highway and killed the town. How this place had been considered desirable for fifty years, then highly undesirable for a hundred and now somehow seemed to be teetering on the brink again for almost twenty.

The leaflet, based on the walking tour, is available (\$1) from Mark Matheson (9559 5502).

HERITAGE WATCH

163-185 Parramatta Road, Camperdown

This row of 12 Federation era workers terraces are under threat of demolition and redevelopment by the NSW Department of Housing (DoH). The houses are part of the former Johnstons Creek corridor road reservation abandoned recently by the Roads and Traffic Authority. The terraces are currently home to a number of public housing tenants, in spite of the poor maintenance and neglect by the DoH (that it describes as 'natural obsolescence'). The DoH has recently commenced studies to examine the redevelopment potential of this site for its potential use for medium density housing to accommodate some people living with disabilities in a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings. The DoH has requested that Council rezone the land to facilitate this, and justify the proposal by claiming that the buildings are not sufficiently significant to justify individual listing at a local level.

The response by Council's Heritage Advisor has concluded that: *"The subject buildings retain social and historical significance, through their association with the re-alignment of Parramatta Road and demonstration of the historical evolution of development in the area. The substantially intact buildings also retain some aesthetic*

significance, making a positive and unique contribution to the character of the streetscape, which is otherwise dominated by commercial and industrial development. A comparative analysis of Federation dwellings was carried out [in a Conservation Assessment commissioned by the DoH], which revealed that the subject buildings do not present as unique examples of the style within the local area.

The conclusions of this analysis are challenged. The subject buildings maintain a key location on Parramatta Road, which is more significant than any of the comparable examples provided in the heritage report. They are also one of a few examples of buildings/groups of buildings, to have remained following the early 20th century re-alignment of Parramatta Road. Demolition of the subject buildings is considered unacceptable on heritage grounds. Any development proposal for the site should involve the maintenance of the subject buildings in their current context. Furthermore, such development should be sympathetic toward the existing buildings and not impact on their integrity as potential heritage items or character within the Parramatta Road streetscape."

Council's Heritage Advisor has also noted that these buildings were identified by Fox and Associates in 1986, and again in 1997 by Tropman & Tropman Architects (in the Heritage Study Review), as having heritage significance and the potential to be listed as an individual heritage item. They are also part of the Parramatta Road Retail Conservation Area under Marrickville LEP No. 111.

The Society calls on Council to reject the rezoning request from the DoH. Further, the Department of Housing should repair the buildings while they consider more appropriate uses for them.



Photo: Danny Aarons
12/7/07 The Glebe

St Mary and St Mina Coptic Orthodox Church Railway Road Sydenham

Following the application of an Interim Heritage Order on the former Wesleyan church by the NSW Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor, the building has now been nominated for listing on the State Heritage Register as being significant to the people of NSW as the first church in Australia used by the Copts. It has also been claimed, as part of the nomination, that it was the first Coptic church outside Egypt. The nomination is currently being processed by the Heritage Office.

Given the local, state and potentially international interest that this building is generating, the Society calls on Council to urgently undertake repair works to the building to prevent further damage from rain, birds and termites. Tarpaulins over the missing roof tiles and a pest exterminator would be a welcome start.

Review of the NSW Heritage Act

The NSW Government has announced a review of the Heritage Act 1977. The panel of experts Planning Minister Frank Sartor has appointed for the review will include lawyer John Whitehouse, the key architect of the original Act. The justification for this review, as explained by Mr Sartor is 'to protect our heritage values without an unnecessary regulatory burden. It's about striking a balance.' The disastrous 2005 Productivity Commission Report on duplications between State and Commonwealth heritage laws was also cited as a reason for the review. The Minister has asked the review panel to prepare a draft discussion paper in the next few months which will be released for public comment.

The concern is that, as with the Productivity Commission report, words like 'balance, efficiency, regulatory burden' are all code for anything that gets in the way of developers making bigger profits. Unfortunately, a likely outcome of this NSW heritage review is that it will suggest there is too much regulation, it is onerous for private property owners, heritage protection is inflexible and it is stymieing development. While there might be some lip-service paid to the community value of heritage, poor funding and need for co-ordination and consistent systems, as with the Productivity Commission Report, there will be no action that increases heritage funding or protection. Indeed, it is highly likely that existing heritage controls will be weakened.

The Majestic Theatre Petersham

Council has received an application for the adaptive re-use of the Majestic Theatre for use as a Hotel and Restaurant. A recent application to unsympathetically convert and extend the building for apartments was not accepted by Council. The proposed development is an adaptive reuse of the existing building fabric retaining significant portions of the building and adapting other parts sympathetically for a new hotel / restaurant use.

The proposal appears to involve minimal changes to the building, retaining the present volumes of the former cinema auditorium and the entry foyer areas. The significant façade to New Canterbury Road is retained and conserved with no significant changes beyond the removal of the existing (non-original) high level windows set under the cantilevered awning and the lowering of the central entry doors to allow for disability access. The foyers are retained, conserved and adapted to allow for the new use. The existing windows are to be removed and replaced with decorative screens to match the original glazing patterns that have previously been removed. These screens will open to the former projection room that is to also have its low flat roof behind the parapet removed for an open area for smokers, as now required in all NSW hotels.

Internally the proposed changes comprise inserting a ramped access from the foyer to the existing concrete floor level, the relocation of the existing Bar into the main volume of the Auditorium and the introduction of new interconnecting stairs to the galleries and balcony areas.

The Society commends the applicant for appearing to

understand the essential heritage qualities of the building and for proposing a new use building and for proposing a new use and conversion works that retain these elements. The proposal is an opportunity for a sustainable future for the building and an interesting new venue for Petersham.

(all Heritage Watch reports from) **Scott MacArthur**

RECOGNITION OF HISTORICAL BOND

In honour of the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele, on 2 August at Petersham Town Hall, a civic reception welcomed a delegation from Zonnebeke, Belgium to co-sign a Recognition of Historical Bond between the municipalities of Zonnebeke and Marrickville. There were 117 Marrickville men killed in the Battle of Passchendaele (12 July to 15 November 1917) during World War I. (Zonnebeke is about 10-15 km north east of Ypres and Passchendaele is just north east of Zonnebeke.) The Belgian delegation included the Zonnebeke mayor, one of his councillors, their wives, and the Belgian Consul. Marrickville Mayor Morris Hanna and several Marrickville councillors were also present as were descendants of some of the bereaved and MHS members. An exhibition relating to the event was on view.

Marrickville Council historian Chrys Meader was contacted last year by the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 for information about the Seabrook brothers – Theo, George and Keith, from 64 Margaret Street Petersham – who were all killed on 20-21 September at Polygon Wood. Chrys and her assistants have compiled a detailed list of the 117 known men of the Marrickville LGA (incl. former municipalities of Marrickville, Newtown Petersham and St Peters and the suburb of Camperdown) who died during the battle.

Among the dead was Henry Schwebel, 29, who was killed in action on 11 November 1917 at Zonnebeke. His father, George Schwebel renamed the family house in Illawarra Road (on the site of Centrelink at number 373), *Zonnebeke* in his honour. This house had been built in the 1860s by George's father Adam Schwebel from stone from the Schwebel quarry. *Zonnebeke* was demolished in 1965. Two other Schwebel built houses which still stand, were built and named *Zonnebeke* – the quarrymaster's house, near Wharf Road Marrickville; and a house in Undercliffe Road Earlwood (sourced from information provided by Chrys Meader, Marrickville Council History Centre).



'Zonnebeke' in Illawarra Road Marrickville on the site of today's Centrelink; demolished in 1965
(from Marrickville Council History Collection)

CALENDAR OF MHS EVENTS

Saturday 25 August

Words Can Be Bullets: a political history of New Theatre with Lyn Collingwood
Details on front page

Saturday 22 September

Tour of The Mint with Robert Griffin

Saturday 27 October

Resurrect the dead: Recent archaeology at Camperdown Mem. Rest Park: Denis Gojak

Marrickville Council's History Week - All free / limited places / bookings essential

• **Saturday 15 September 10.30 am-12.30 pm**

A Theatre & Literary Tour of Newtown & Enmore
Meet: Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, cnr King & Australia Streets: A four km walking tour of relevant sites including a visit to the iconic Enmore theatre.
Bookings Chrys 9335 2287.

• **Wednesday 19 September 10 am -12.30 pm**

Bus Tour of the literary and theatre sites of Marrickville LGA from Petersham Town Hall: Follow the trail of hidden plaques, murals, trees and tombstones connected with writers such as Henry and Louisa Lawson, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and others, including the famous Australian poet who taught at Stanmore Public School. **Bookings** Glenn 9335 2152.

• **Friday 21 September 11 am- 12.30 pm at Stanmore**

Library: Launch of the Historical Literary Guide to Marrickville LGA + photographic exhibition and talk on the many local authors connected through their writings or residence. **Bookings** Michael 9335 2183.

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St Peters Walk with Laurel Horton

Saturday 15 September 2-4 pm

From St Peters Church 187 Princes Highway, St Peters (opp. McDonald's). Join Laurel for this free tour and relive the past through the history of its people and places. Enquiries & bookings 9558 7504.

Rotary Club of Marrickville

As Society President, I recently attended a meeting of the Rotary Club of Marrickville, as an invited guest speaker. The Marrickville branch of Rotary International has been active in encouraging and fostering the 'ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise' in our area for over 50 years. On behalf of the Society, I was delighted to receive a generous donation from Rotary. I would like to thank the Rotary Club of Marrickville for their generosity and hospitality. I particularly valued the insights that Club President Aris Dendrinis offered, as Manager of a local real estate agency, about the increasingly high esteem many home buyers and owners have attributed to our area's stock of intact historic houses. It was heartening to hear that, from his experience, people were increasingly appreciating the quality of construction and character of these houses, especially when compared to new project homes and 'McMansions'.

Scott MacArthur

WRECK OF THE DUNBAR 150TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE & COMMEMORATIONS

St Stephens Church 189 Church St Newtown
Sunday 19 August 10 am

10 Service / 11 Graveside reflection – bells tolling and name reading / morning tea / 11.30 Dunbar Folk Opera performed by the New England Regional Art Museum / 12.15 pm Folklorist Warren Fahey / 12.30 Kieran Hosty on newly-launched book on the Dunbar / 12.45 lunch / Dunbar Cemetery tours on the half hour starting from 1pm / The Dunbar Bible and other possessions washed ashore on view / food & drink stalls / MHS stall. All welcome.

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Note: The performance of the **Dunbar folk opera** (advertised in July newsletter) for Saturday 18 August at St Stephens Church has been cancelled. However the opera will be performed at St Stephens on the 19th (as above) and at the National Maritime Museum over the weekend, including Friday 17 August at 6.15 pm when Kieran Hosty's book on the Dunbar shipwreck will be launched. Bookings essential 9298 3644.

Old Marrickville Town Hall

Restoration works at the Old Marrickville Town Hall are progressing, under the new owners, Atlas Hall Pty Ltd as Trustee for The Greek Atlas League of NSW. The NSW Department of Housing sold the State Heritage Register listed property to the Earlwood based group for \$20,000 on 27 October 2006.

The Society has been advised by the NSW Minister for Housing that the *'work is being undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Heritage Council of NSW, Marrickville Council and in accordance with a report prepared by the NSW Department of Commerce in March 2005, which identified the required restoration works. Works are being supervised and executed by appropriately skilled people.'* (Parliament of NSW Hansard – Questions & Answers Paper No. 6: Response to Question on Notice by Ms Sylvia Hale MLC, 31 May 2007 (session 541).

The Society is monitoring this project closely.

Scott MacArthur

Marrickville Council's 2007-08 Budget has broadened the range of Council fees and charges which will provide concessions as well as extend the range of residents now eligible. Holders of pensioner concession cards or C'wealth Health Care cards will now be eligible for concessions for Council services, including: swimming pool entry, learn to swim and aquarobics classes, replacement garbage bins, resident parking permits, certain development and building fees, certain information requests involving the reproduction of records, plant prices at the community nursery, use of library fax facilities, arts, sports and recreation programs at the Debbie & Abbey Borgia Centre. More information from Council on 9335 2222.

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