

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN

Our April Meeting

Douglas Grant: 'That Black Digger from the Scottish mob': Talk by Tony Griffiths
Saturday 25 April 10 for 10.30 am
St Peters Anglican Church Hall
187 Princes Highway St Peters

Douglas Grant (1885-1951) was a pure-blood Aborigine from far north Queensland who was raised by a Scottish family from Lithgow. He was well educated, worked for ten years as a draughtsman at Mort's Dock then as a wool classer near Scone. He joined the 1st AIF and spent almost two years in a POW camp. After the war he returned to Mort's Dock and a small arms factory at Lithgow.



But his reputation and talents could not overcome racial discrimination; he spent several years in a military hospital recovering from depression and alcoholism. He had continuing support from his extended foster family, from the family of an army mate, and the RSL. His last days were spent in a war veteran's home. The ADB describes him as an exceptional man.

Tony Griffiths, a retired electronics engineer, has a passion to explore and write about little-known aspects of Australia's military history. He encountered the story of Douglas Grant while researching a history of the government's small arms factory at Lithgow.

Starr-Bowkett Society building, Newtown

As previewed in our December newsletter, a DA for the demolition of the **former Starr-Bowkett Society building** on the corner of Enmore Road and Station Street has been submitted to Council. A new four storey 'shop top' residential building has been proposed to replace it. While the old Starr-Bowkett building had been heavily modified, it is an important contributor to the character and integrity of the King Street / Enmore Road Conservation Area.

The proposed new building is stridently contemporary, with 'flavour of the moment' design flourishes like sliding sunscreens, roof gardens and diagonal shopfront glazing. There is no acknowledgment of its historic built context, and most critically, no respect for the existing parapet height and fenestration of the adjoining Victorian shopfront. The new design is so hostile to the character of the Conservation Area that Council must reject the current proposal and require that the existing building is retained and adapted for a new viable use.

Scott MacArthur

National Trust Heritage Festival: 12 April-26 May
Event guide: nationaltrustfestival.org.au

Our May Meeting

Coach trip to Macarthur country
Saturday 23 May 8.45 for 9 am

Meet opposite Petersham Town Hall. Cost \$40 (all inclusive). BYO lunch and drink. Bookings Lorraine on 9550 6608 (after hours) or 0416 224 4720 or email <lbeach@iprimus.com.au>. Pay on the day but don't let us down. Please advise if you have to cancel.

This day in Macarthur country will include:

- St James' Anglican Church (1876) Menangle: nave believed to be designed by John Horbury Hunt; tower chancel and apse designed by Sir John Sulman and Joseph Power. Hopefully we can climb the belfry.
- Glenmore (c. 1840) which has Macarthur family links; visit the lovely gardens and view historic artefacts. Morning tea provided.
- Burratorang lookout, Nattai: easy nature walk for magnificent views of Lake Burratorang and the Blue Mountains. Lunch here.
- Australian Botanic Garden, Mt Annan: the largest botanical garden in Australia with over 4000 species; visit includes the Wollemi Discovery Walk to see 60 prehistoric trees; and if time, PlantBank (opened 2013).
- . . . and more.

Former Marrickville Hospital site

Council recently rejected a bid for the **former Marrickville Hospital site** from a shelf company apparently backed by a Chinese developer. While the secrecy and haste that the matter was dealt with was alarmingly similar to a Council we thought we had long farewelled, the bid has raised some interesting, but also, depressing issues. The astonishingly high value of the bid would suggest that Council's financial advisors have dramatically underestimated commercial interest in the property. One would therefore hope that a less intensive retail and residential development component of the site would give the Library+Community Centre the 'commercial viability' that Council is so obsessively pursuing.

This 'commercial viability' was also the driver for Council's proposal to demolish the three Livingstone Road Victorian villas (reported in the February-March 2015 newsletter). In its submission to Council, the Society called for Council to withdraw the proposal, and cynically suggested that the demolition of the villas would make the Livingstone Road part of the site more attractive should it be offered to the market. Not long after Council lodged its demolition DA, the overseas bid for the site was revealed involving removal of the villas - seemingly a fait accompli.

Scott MacArthur

Our February Meeting Brisbane City Hall Restoration Project

On 28 February, **Scott MacArthur** (Senior Associate, Tanner Kibble Denton Architects and MHS past President) provided a highly engaging insight into the project that necessitated his move to Brisbane for four years: the restoration of Brisbane City Hall. Designed by architects Prentice and Hall and built (1920-30) at a cost of £1 million, the building occupies an entire city block; its restoration project was an enormous undertaking with a budget of more than \$200 million.

Aside from its civic functions, pageants, royal occasions, orchestral concerts, flower shows and school graduations, Brisbane City Hall had been used as an orientation centre during WWII, a café and a childcare centre. It had undergone many additions, alterations and decorating schemes. The hall was clearly in need of major works, with serious structural issues in addition to cosmetic signs of neglect. The Fire Service declared the building unsafe in 2008.

Scott's presentation included photos of 'before and after', works in progress, details of the works undertaken, both intricate and monumental in scale, and absorbing anecdotes of what had to be done, what was uncovered about its original construction (the building was sinking, the council chambers floor should have collapsed – it was found salt water had been used in the concrete construction, explaining why the slabs and beams were failing). Problems and inspired solutions found by those on the team were myriad, and included how to strengthen the building, installing a concrete shaft for seismic stabilisation, developing subtle lighting and a colour scheme to lighten the interiors and using intumescent paints to avoid the need for fire sprinklers. During works, discoveries were made of evidence that the site had been an Aboriginal meeting place and a council works yard from the 1880s; archaeological findings were recorded and salvaged items installed for display.

Scott gave a wonderful overview of the tasks, constraints and challenges that this multi-faceted project presented. Brisbane City Hall is now a versatile building that meets present day community needs, incorporating features that make it attractive as a commercial venue, enabling its upkeep into the future. This even includes, remarkably, the *Shingle Inn*, an iconic 1936 walnut panelled café taken down in 2002 to make way for a shopping mall, but resurrected and installed in the ground floor of City Hall.

Scott stressed the importance of having the 'right' specialist consultants working on heritage projects, and gave numerous examples of the problems and innovative solutions implemented by the team. He also credited Brisbane City Council who had realised, recognised and acknowledged responsibility for the neglect of Brisbane City Hall, then set about finding the budget to undertake its restoration. He also explained the importance of councils investing in significant buildings – if not councils, then who will build the art galleries, libraries and civic buildings of the future? Marrickville Council has a great opportunity to do that right now, with the current matter of the former Marrickville Hospital site a contentious local issue.

Cont'd next column

We have previously been the beneficiaries of Scott sharing the outcomes of his work with us – 'walk and talk' tours of Sydney Town Hall, the Trocadero at Newtown and Tempe House. This time we had the talk but not the walk – but were nevertheless enthralled. Many thanks to Scott MacArthur.

Lorraine Beach

Our March Meeting

Despite early showers there was a good roll-up on 21 March at Steel Park, Marrickville. We gathered at the Aboriginal Story Poles on the Cooks River bank where **Cath Renwick** introduced **Nardi Simpson**, her sister **Lucy** and Nardi's eight-year-old son, **Luke**. Nardi explained that their country is in Western NSW but they had grown up in Sydney and had come to appreciate the connections between the two areas.

At a stand of casuarinas Nardi, ably assisted by Luke, explained how these trees were used by their people. Because casuarinas were usually the tallest trees, children were told to wait there for their parents, if lost; also, snakes could not move over the needles making these safe places to wait. They related stories about the birds and flora and demonstrated how one grass could be used as a whistle and others were for weaving, etc. Another story told of a man who lost his family and was marooned on Fatima Island. He turned into a pelican and from the island created the river and land.

We paused at Warren Reserve to see the plaque which marks where the Holt family mausoleum was built then walked up to Richardsons Lookout. Here Nardi described how her people managed the river and its banks for food and protection. Luke sang a song which was greatly enjoyed.

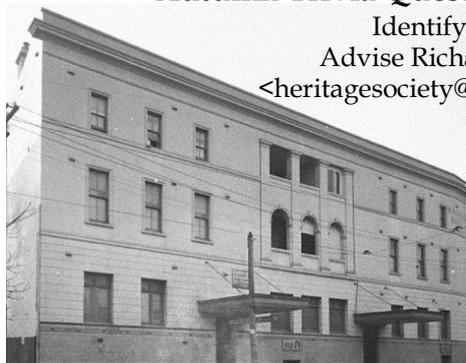
John Butcher, representing the Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign, pointed out aspects of the lookout including the plaque in the ground commemorating 'Sorry Day' events which had been held there. It was from these events that GCPC emerged as a reminder that this country was not born at Gallipoli but was founded 15 years before in peace and as a socially responsible country. John circulated a flyer about the history and hopes for the GCPC; explaining that the proposal for a Peace and Reconciliation Park had been adopted by Council and that consultation continues.

Returning to Steel Park Lorraine and Robert awaited with a welcome drink and sausage sizzle. Many participants commented on their enjoyment of the day and how much they learned.

Mary Oakenfull

Autumn Trivia Question

Identify this local building.
Advise Richard on 9557 3823 or
<heritagesociety@optusnet.com.au>.



Vale: Frances Charteris (1926-2014)

The Society was recently advised that former Chief Librarian at Marrickville Library **Frances Charteris** died on 13 December 2014 in Rockhampton.

Frances had an extraordinary career. In 1947, aged 21 and with a BA, she was one of three staff appointed to the new Marrickville Library Service as the Children's Librarian. In 1955 Frances was made Chief Librarian. She recognised the importance of local history when it was still regarded as not really 'proper history' and began the local history collection. She was responsible for many innovative programs such as: the Recorded Music Club (Marrickville became the first public library to lend records); the Y Club, which provided weekly music programs for young people (Council approved the Y Club as 'a happy alternative to milk bar rowdyism'); the Youth Library, considered a radical idea; a regular box delivery to kindergartens, schools and hospitals; a lending collection of art prints (the first of its kind in NSW); home library service for older people; establishment of Art & Greek Community Language as Marrickville's subject specialisations; in 1977 Marrickville Library employed the first Ethnic Services Librarian in NSW.

Frances was also instrumental in forming several community organisations including:

- Marrickville Art Society (1958)
- Marrick Players Dramatic Society (1958)
- Marrickville & District Historical Society (1966)

When the original Winged Victory was removed from the memorial in 1962 Frances rescued the top half and had it placed in Petersham Council Depot. Her action saved this portion of the Winged Victory for its ultimate destination at the Australian War Memorial.

Frances was married for over 40 years to Turi Schmitt, who died in 2005. She lived in Marrickville for over 50 years. In the 1990s Frances and Turi moved to Rockhampton. Frances was a gifted artist and won many art prizes both locally and overseas. She was still painting - and winning - well into her eighties.

She retired in 1983. I worked at Marrickville Library when she was Chief Librarian. I owe Frances a great debt as she fostered my interest in both local history and art. It was only as I grew older that I realised how significant her work was at Marrickville Library and in the local area. Thank you, Frances Charteris.

Chrys Meader

Editor's Note: Frances joined MHS in 1985. Coupled with her prior membership of Marrickville Historical Society (which she founded) her years of membership were close to 50 years. If anyone has been under-recognised for her achievements in Marrickville, it is Francesca Schmitt (originally Frances Charteris).

Photos clockwise from top right: Shirley Doolan in 2008, Maree Blanchard in Moscow, Maree: performer, Frances Schmitt-Charteris in 1996, Frances in 1950s.

Vale: Shirley Doolan (1930-2015)

Shirley Doolan died in early February but curiously, the date was not given in her *Sydney Morning Herald* obituary (6 March). She joined MHS in 1992, served on the executive and journal committees, wrote for the newsletter, addressed the Society in 1995: 'Humour in the BDM Registers', led a tour of North Sydney and regularly attended meetings. Her essay, 'World sport comes to Marrickville', which focused on some cycling events and the Closing Ceremony at Henson Park during the 1938 Empire Games, was Highly Commended in the Society's essay competition and is in *Marrickville: a past worth preserving* (2011).

After completing an Associate Diploma in Local & Applied History, Shirley became a professional researcher and historian who wrote many books, booklets and articles on local and family history. As an avid genealogist, she became a life member of the Dubbo & District Family History Society, which she cofounded in 1983; she worked voluntarily at the Society of Australian Genealogists. Among her works are three indexes to Bench of Magistrates Courts NSW 1822-1831 and an Index to the Governor's Court 1814-24; also *The story of Bodalla* (1997) and *A brief history of The Dunbar and Catherine Adamson Memorial* (2007). She was committed to the conservation of Camperdown Cemetery, was on the Newtown Project team and was involved in a theatre appreciation group.

In a succinct tribute by one of her children to Shirley in the *Herald* obituary: 'Shirley had an incredible ability to connect people to their stories and loved the challenge of the search. It brought her great joy to share these stories with friends and strangers alike.' Shirley was a valued friend to many. Our condolences to Shirley's children.

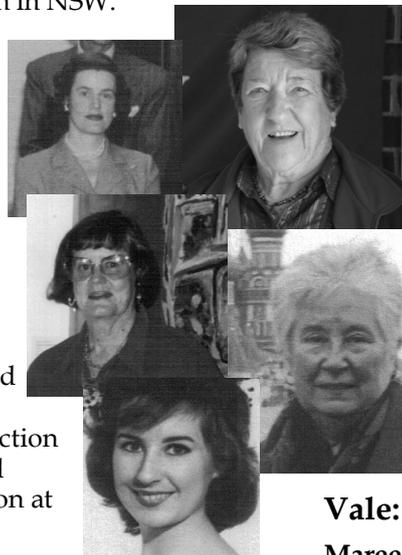
Richard Blair

Vale: Maree Blanchard (1943-2015)

Maree Blanchard died on 27 February aged 71. Maree lived most of her life in Marrickville. Her mother Betty Viazim (1909-98) was a milliner celebrated in the worlds of theatre, ballet and opera, and commercially. She addressed the Society in 1986.

Maree Viazim was a talented child performer with the Helen de Paul Dancing Troup. As an accomplished singer and dancer she performed in revues and cabaret including a 14-month stint in the Philippines and in shows at the Phillip Theatre, the Doncaster Theatre Restaurant, Kensington, and elsewhere. Later, inspired by her mother, Maree made wonderful hats, especially for dolls, and exquisite leadlight windows; but her real passion was making quilts. Here she excelled and became well known, winning many awards and having quilts featured in magazines around the world. She also loved genealogy and did extensive research.

Her obituary described her as an: 'Outstanding woman, performer, artist, quilter and friend'. Maree and husband Terry joined MHS in 1984 and Maree was a newsletter runner for some years. Her funeral was at St Brigid's Marrickville. Our condolences to Terry and his family (photos and most information provided by family friends).



Calendar of MHS events

Saturday 25 April 10 for 10.30 am

Douglas Grant: 'That Black Digger from the Scottish mob' - talk by Tony Griffiths

Saturday 23 May

Coach trip to Macarthur country
Details of both activities on front page

Marrickville Council calendar

Sunday 19 April 10 am onwards

Marrickville Remembers procession along Marrickville Road to Marrickville Town Hall, Anzac service and unveiling of new Winged Victory. Members wishing to join MHS on this march please contact Mary asap on <mary.oakenfull@bigpond.com> or 9560 6409 to give their name and for more details.

All the following at Marrickville Town Hall:

(Free, but book on 9335 2173 or online)

Marrickville Soldiers exhibition 19-27 April 10 am-4 pm

Marrickville Soldiers draws on the writing, photographs and objects of local soldiers who served in the First World War. The exhibition highlights the contribution these soldiers made and the impact of the war on the Marrickville community.

Monday 20 April 6.30-9 pm

Co-WV artist Darien Pullen & AWM curator Anthea Gunn discuss with Andrew Yip (Public Programs Coord'r, AGNSW) Marrickville's two Winged Victories

Wednesday 22 April 6.30-8 pm

Marrickville Soldiers: Curator Clinton Johnston reveals stories of soldiers featured in the exhibition

Thursday 23 April 6.30-8 pm

'Preserving Winged Victory' with Julian Bickersteth, Managing Director, International Conservation Services

Wednesday 6 May 6-8 pm

Marrickville Medal Presentation and other awards

Saturday 2 May 10 am-3 pm

Tails from the Past: Addison Road Community Centre Centenary event

Addison Road Community Centre at 142 Addison Road Marrickville proudly presents its Anzac Centenary event to remember the war horse. Join in to honour the incredible horses who played an often forgotten role. Be transported to a bygone era when horses were part of daily life at this former army depot, as the Australian Light Horse Association performs a concise re-enactment at 11 am.

You may wish to dress up in period costume finery. There'll be a WWI era fete selling antiques and goods from the time, demonstrations, old fashioned games, competitions, historical interviews (from 2 pm), other stalls (including MHS), music and much more.

Gold coin entry. More info at <www.aarco.org.au>.

President Geoff 9568 3029

Treasurer Diane 9588 4930

Heritage Watch Scott 0416 152 501

Newsletter Richard 9557 3823

Information sought on:

1) Hughenden Terrace, 59-67 Cavendish Street

Stanmore by **Megan Hicks**, who is writing an article on the history of this imposing row of three-storey houses between Merchant and Liberty Streets. Recent stories are as important as old ones. Can anyone with anecdotes, memories or photos of Hughenden Terrace or its inhabitants contact Megan on 0428 647 747 or <meganix@optusnet.com.au>? (photo: Megan Hicks)



2) 2nd Dulwich Hill Scouts & Guides by Richard

Blair, who is writing a history (1920-77) of the Cubs, Scouts, Rovers, Brownies, Guides and Rangers which had close links with Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Dulwich Hill. Richard would like to hear from anyone involved with these groups or with relatives who were connected. This work is a spin-off of the centenary history by John Coleman and Bob Irving to appear later this year to mark 100 years since the erection of this church. Contact Richard on 9557 3823 or <blairitage@optusnet.com.au>.

100 years of women police: Maude Rhodes

2015 marks the centenary of women police in NSW. The first two policewomen in Australia were recruited in NSW. Selected from over 400 applicants were Lillian May Armfield and Maude Marian Rhodes, who were appointed on 1 July 1915.

Lillian Armfield served with the NSW Police with distinction for over 33 years. She died aged 86 in 1971 at Lewisham Hospital. Whilst her career is very well documented, little is known about Maude Rhodes. She was born on 21/10/1878 in Keighley, Yorkshire. She was appointed to the NSW Public Service on 15/4/1914 as 'Inspector, School Attendance Officer and Probation Officer' before her police appointment as a 'Special Constable' assigned to assist with matters concerning women and children's welfare. Maude resigned from the police force in 1920 and returned to her former occupation where she remained until 1938.

In 1937 Maude ran as an Independent unsuccessfully in the Sydenham Ward, Petersham Council. Maude's mother Clara owned *Japonica* 79 Station Street Petersham from around 1920. Maude lived there from the mid-1920s and inherited the house after Clara died in 1931. She converted it into two flats and lived there until 1951. Maude married William Tilly in 1947; he died in 1949. Maude died on 24/11/1956 at Kogarah.

Diane McCarthy (with input from retired policewoman **Margaret Thornell**, Council Archivist **Anna-Bella Silva** and **Richard Blair**)