

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.



DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN

Our February Meeting

Saturday 27 February 10.15 for 10.30 am
Herb Greedy Hall 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville
Emma Dortins: Listing to conserve –
working with Aboriginal Places

A provision designed to protect places of significance to Aboriginal people was added to the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1974. Since then, over 100 places across NSW have been declared 'Aboriginal Places', and more are currently being nominated and researched. Aboriginal Places include, for example, the Three Sisters at Katoomba, Collingwood at Liverpool, and the Dharawal Resting Place: Coast Hospital Cemetery at La Perouse.

This talk will explore the history of Aboriginal Places and discuss how Aboriginal Places protect Aboriginal heritage, along with the legislation that protects Aboriginal objects; and the State Heritage Register.

Emma Dortins has worked as a historian in the heritage field since 2000. She is currently responsible for listing of Aboriginal Places and items on the State Heritage Register in the Office of Environment and Heritage, Sydney Metro Region. She completed a PhD at Sydney University in 2012. She is a MHS member.

Forced council amalgamations

Members of the public are encouraged to make a written submission to the state government's Council Boundary Review by 5 pm on Sunday 28 February. Mail to GPO Box 5341, Sydney 2001 or submit online to <www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au>. Locally, the process of amalgamating Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville councils has begun.

All these three councils clearly wish to stand alone whilst 75% of residents in Marrickville LGA say they don't wish to merge. The question remains as to whether this latest call for submissions is a sham given the recent flyer distributed to households states: 'The Minister has indicated that new council entities can be expected to be proclaimed in mid-2016'.

It stands to reason that having larger councils means *significantly reduced* councillor representation for individuals. Whether there being larger councils is more efficient, saves costs and reduces rates is open to speculation; conversely, it seems demergers within councils in other states are under consideration.

The Editor

From treasurer: A \$20 fee renewal was paid into our Credit Union account on 17 December, without a surname. If this is your payment please advise Diane on heritagesociety@optusnet.com.au or 9588 4930.

Our March Meeting

Saturday 19 March (4th weekend is Easter)
Visit to Rose Seidler House, Wahroonga &
Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden

Meet opposite Petersham Town Hall at 9.15 for 9.30 am sharp departure. Cost \$40 (pay on the day) includes coach and tours. BYO morning tea and lunch. Expected return by 5 pm. Bookings: Valmai 9569 0239 or on <heritagesociety@optusnet.com.au>. Please advise if you have to cancel.

From Sydney Living Museums website:

'When completed in 1950, Rose Seidler House was 'the most talked about house in Sydney'. Designed by the young Harry Seidler for his parents Rose and Max, the house overturned almost every convention of suburban home design. It was, in fact, the promise of designing a house for his mother that brought Harry to Australia, and its success helped launch his Australian, and soon after, international career.

'The radical design, both inside and out, integrated architecture, art and technology in a bold and optimistic vision for a new way of living. Today, still surrounded by bushland with panoramic views of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, the house is one of the finest examples of mid 20th-century modern domestic architecture in Australia, and its furniture and fittings form one of the most complete and intact post World War II design collections in public ownership.'



Lunch in Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden is followed by a guided tour of this 123-hectare urban garden in St Ives. It features heathland, tall forest, sandstone outcrops, ponds, gullies, waterfalls and walks. The day's outing will conclude with a look at some upper north shore houses and other buildings.

Welcome to new MHS members

Margaret Bester, Camperdown; Jackie Kelly, Dulwich Hill; Beau Winter (rejoined), Marrickville; Chris Rizos (rejoined), Petersham; Ron & Maureen Pollard, Balmain; Jane Woolley Reardon (rejoined), Goulburn; June Warren, Hurlstone Park; John Atkinson, Punchbowl.

Launch of Richardson's Lookout – Marrickville Peace Park

On Sunday 8 November some 50 people gathered at this iconic lookout in South Marrickville to witness its launch as a place of peace and reconciliation. After an introduction by **John Butcher** (representing the Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign) and 'Welcome to Country' by **Allan Barnes**, who related some of the local indigenous/European early contact, there followed talks by Marrickville Mayor **Sam Iskandar**, Member for Canterbury **Linda Burney** MP, Member for Summer Hill **Jo Haylen** MP, and Marrickville Councillor **Sylvie Ellsmore** describing current recognition, or lack thereof, of indigenous people. They also thanked all who worked to achieve this future for the park.

The Solidarity Choir's beautiful and meaningful songs



and a poetry reading combined with personal stories and memories of the official guests in providing an atmosphere of peaceful reflection. John Butcher has since advised Council of the difficulty in locating the park: requesting the former entrance be reinstated.

Mary Oakenfull

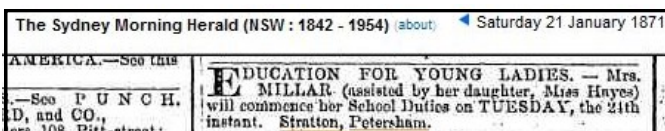
Two Petersham-related queries

Unrelated queries were recently sent to the Society. The first concerns **Roland Villa**, the house where notable architect Edmund Blacket (1817-83) was living at the time of his death. It was in Croydon Street, Petersham. There are Sands listings for **Roland Villa**; however, as house numbers were not given at the time its precise location is unclear, though it seems to have been on the north side of the street and east of Railway Street. It is probably no longer extant. West of this at 30 Croydon Street stood **Prospect Villa**, an 1850s cottage which was regrettably demolished in 2002.

The second query relates to **Stratton**, which was owned by John Henry Miller and his wife Maria Anne Miller (formerly Hayes) and which fronted Palace Street, next to the railway line. Newspaper ads (one below via Trove) reveal Maria Miller and her daughter Maria Emily Hayes ran a girl's school on the property in the 1870s. Surrounding streets are Terminus, Railway and Brighton. Enquiries have so far yielded no knowledge of **Stratton**; however, Sands indicates that Mrs Miller ran a Ladies School called 'Norwood' at Petersham in 1873; and there was a listing for Mrs Marian Miller, Palace Street in 1876. Sands records no listing for **Stratton** as a school in that period (although, a David Stratton lived at 84 Kent Street in 1869!).

Any additional information would be appreciated.

Richard Blair



Our 22 November meeting Cockatoo Island + Addison Road Project

Our final meeting last year on 22 November attracted a good roll-up to hear MHS member **Sue Castrique** discuss aspects of her book *Under the Colony's Eye: Gentlemen and convicts on Cockatoo Island 1839-1869* (2014). Cockatoo is the largest island in Sydney Harbour and was known to the Eora as Wareamah. The new settlers named it Bird Island and Banks Island, but the name which took hold was Cockatoo Island, although the reason for this name is unclear. It was not until 1839 that Cockatoo became a penal settlement – it was the last established in the colony and became the largest.

Superintendent Charles Ormsby was 'an autocrat using the tools of the Victorian civil servant – the regulation, the memorandum and the spyglass'. Ormsby had a fierce temper and was at odds with the engineers who came to work there. Sue discussed the tensions and rivalries; and revealed the island's well kept secret: its bare-knuckle prize fights with convicts the star recruits. It seemed that the worst convicts and most violent men went to Cockatoo.

Several inquiries were conducted in the 1850s though little really changed. But the tyrant that Ormsby was on arrival in 1841 later mellowed and by 1857 he 'cajoled and pleaded' with the convicts. By the time Ormsby retired there was a long history of trouble. Sue explained Ormsby's undoing and discussed a number of convicts from their point of view.

Several members purchased the book, which is highly recommended: \$35 at MHS meetings; RRP \$35.95.

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Some members will recall the walking tours of Addison Road Community Centre (previously an army camp for about 60 years) which Sue co-hosted in 2013 and 2014. Sue's article on Addison Road Army Camp featured in *Heritage* 14. Following her Cockatoo Island talk, Sue showed the DVD she had made as part of the Addison Road Project, when **Mary Oakenfull** and Sue conducted a number of interviews of people with memories of the Addison Road camp and the early days of the community centre. This DVD (which includes some recollections of MHS members **Fred Ellis** and **Judy Finlason**) effectively captures the flavour of those bygone days.

Thank you Sue for your fascinating double helping of broader Sydney and local history.

Richard Blair

2015 Annual Pot Luck Christmas Dinner

For the second year in a row **Megan** and **Alan Hicks** of Stanmore hosted our Pot Luck dinner on Saturday 5 December. **Diane McCarthy** was food coordinator, ably assisted on the night by **Hillary Goldsmith** and **Ian Phillips**. **Joan Frances** won the Lucky Door Prize (bottle of port and a Hutchinson Xmas cake) and **Annemarie Limacher** won the Unlucky Door Prize (a candy gingerbread house created by **Lorraine Beach!**). Megan and Alan generously provided the ham and Megan gave a humorous dissertation. Thanks Megan and Alan, for again throwing open your doors.

In defence of Willie the Boatman

Mark Ludbrooke recently sent the Society this email:

I recently invited a few friends to the Willie the Boatman brewery in St Peters and one of them refused on the grounds that it was inappropriate to name anything after someone of such dubious character.

Do you have any information about the infamous Willie the Boatman?

The query was forwarded to **Laurel Horton** of the St Peters Cooks River History Group. Laurel said when she quizzed Mark about this he claimed that a historical society had objected to a statue being named after Willie because of behavioural indiscretions. Laurel wrote to Mark Ludbrooke:

I don't know where the information about a statue of Willie the Boatman came from. I have never heard of a statue being erected for him. The only objection was when I suggested to Marrickville Council that they name the new boat ramp/steps at Kendrick Park after him as this seemed an appropriate historical connection with someone whose job it was to row people across Cooks River to Tempe House. It was objected to by a woman on the local council.* It was because of the incident at Christmas (1836: listed below) that the councillor (woman) said he was a rapist. If this had been so he would have been given a much harsher sentence and I'm sure AB Spark would not have kept him employed at Tempe House. His comments on Willie's death after 20 years in his service do not support this. Willie is buried in the graveyard at St Peters Church and he is mentioned on one of the information panels there; as the Bible says: 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'.

Laurel provided some information about Willie the Boatman. William Kerr was born in Greenoch, Scotland in 1802. His occupation was a fisherman. He was tried for highway robbery at Glasgow Court of Justice on 27 September 1826, having had two previous convictions. He was sentenced to 14 years transportation and came to Australia on the *Manlius*. He was described as a Protestant and able to read and write. His height was 5 feet 2 inches, complexion was ruddy freckled, hair brown and eyes green. He had a scar in the centre of his forehead under the hair. Upon arrival he was assigned to Alexander Brodie Spark of *Tempe House*. He was known as 'Willie the boatman'. *Tempe House* lay on the opposite side of the river to Sydney and, until the government completed a dam and causeway in 1840, it was Willie's job to row Spark across Cooks River each day. As well as this, there were the many hundreds of visitors who had to be transported at any time of the day or night. Willie is mentioned in Spark's diary. Spark had returned to Tempe after being absent for Christmas:

2nd January 1837: Found that Willie, the boatman, (Thomas) Douglas and (Tom) Jackson, had been very outrageous on Christmas Day, forcing their way into the house in their drunkenness and attacking Mary (Stephens) and Margaret (Skelly). Sent a constable from town to take them into custody.

3rd January, 1837: Entered the Police Office in time to hear one of the men discharged for want of evidence, and the other two, Willie and Jackson, sentenced to an inadequate punishment of five days to the cells on bread and water.

8th February 1848: Alarmed at night by the report that Willie was brought home in a dying state. Mrs S. and I and the servants immediately went to his hut, where we

found him indeed very ill with shortness of breathing. We administered all we could to his comfort by warm foot baths, mustard poultice, and medicines and left him at a late hour somewhat relieved, under the charge of the cook and gardener.

9th February 1848: Aroused at half past one with a message that Willie was dying, and another almost immediately after, that he was dead. I proceeded to the hut, and there indeed I saw a poor man stiffening in death. It is upwards of twenty years since he first entered into my service as an assigned servant, and I can bear testimony to far more fidelity than is usually met with from men of his class.

Laurel advised that an inquest at Newtown returned death by natural causes.

There is no foundation for the allegations. The Society strongly endorses Laurel Horton's recommendation that Willie be formally recognised at Kendrick Park.

* Marrickville Councillor Rosana Tyler

Summer Trivia Answer



Several members correctly identified this photo as being Wardell Road at the intersection of Pile Street. The corner shop is on the Dulwich Hill side whilst the left side is Marrickville. **Annette Robinson** grew up in Pile Street Dulwich Hill and remembers buying broken biscuits from this shop in the 1950s:

The grocer would weigh them out and put them in a brown paper bag – very handy if you wanted to eat a few on the way home. He was rather dapper, with dark hair and a dark moustache but, most of all, he had eyes for Pearl, who lived next door to us. Pearl wore very high heels, tight skirts and had stockings with black seams up the back. She had a pink rinse through her hair before anybody else in the world had even thought of it. Pearl was very good at shining the terracotta tiles on her front veranda; this seemed to be a cue for the grocer to drop in on Pearl when her husband was at work.

Near the white car along Wardell Road was another shop (advertising Goldenia Tea) owned by long term residents, the Curtis family. That shop was eventually closed and it and the house on the property were demolished in the early 2000s. Others who recognised this location were **David Blair, Andrew Burns, Peter Chessell, Peter Chinn, Peter James, Ian Phillips and Elda Ribeiro**. The photos were sent by **Pauline Buchanan** (nee Till), who, like her mother, was born and schooled in Dulwich Hill.

Richard Blair



Calendar of MHS events

Saturday 27 February

**Emma Dortins: Listing to conserve –
working with Aboriginal Places**
Details on front page

Saturday 19 March

**Visit to Rose Seidler House & Ku-ring-gai
Wildflower Garden**
Details on front page

Saturday 23 April

Peter McCallum: History of Sydney trams

Saturday 28 May

Leuralla Gardens & environs, Leura

Saturday 25 June

Annual General Meeting

Tempe House Open Day: Sunday 7 February from 10 am

History presentations by St Peters Cooks River History Group and MHS. All welcome.

The Marrickville Medal is now in its 22nd year. To enter the **2016 Marrickville Medal**, the **Sustainable Building Award** and the **Urban Photography competition** contact Council on 9335 2222 or <marrickville.nsw.gov.au/marrickvillemedal>.

For the first time, this year there will be a **Marrickville Sustainable Building Award** to recognise the contribution sustainable architecture and building works make to our community. Submissions are open to building projects completed within the Marrickville local government area in the last five years with positive sustainability outcomes. These could include ecosystem benefits, reduced carbon emissions, improved air and water quality, resource conservation and reduced pollution or waste.

All entries close on 6 March. The award ceremonies will be on Wednesday 4 May from 6 pm. The theme for the 2016 National Trust Heritage Festival is *Discoveries and Rediscoveries*.



Several MHS members at scenic Burragorang Lookout during our May 2015 excursion to Macarthur country (photo: Deborah O'Donnell)

President Ross 8021 2898

Treasurer Diane 9588 4930

Heritage Watch Scott 0416 152 501

Newsletter Richard 9557 3823

Heritage Watch

Coptic Church, Sydenham

In spite of repeated lobbying by MHS for the past five years, Marrickville Council approved the demolition of the former Coptic church in Sydenham towards the end of last year. Even the impassioned pleas of members of the wider Coptic community could not persuade Council to responsibly deal with this important heritage listed building. Council had been negotiating with the Coptic church for it to take on the multi-million dollar restoration bill to create a new Coptic museum and community facility, and when these negotiations failed, Council felt justified in saying that there was no viable tenant for the building. However, appeals for intervention to the State Government and the NSW Heritage Division by MHS and the Australian Coptic Heritage and Community Services (ACHCS) were granted when the Minister for Planning imposed an eight month Interim Heritage Order on the building on Christmas Eve. This order prevents Council from demolishing the building while the church is assessed for State Heritage listing.

Council quickly removed its temporary fencing from around the church, leaving the site unsecured, resulting in the theft of the commemorative gates from the war memorial fence on Railway Road.

Council should be ashamed of the neglectful and careless manner in which they have managed this potential community asset, allowing it to decay to the point that even a basic restoration will cost in the order of \$2 million dollars. Council must immediately start negotiations with the Federal Government about modifying the stringent conditions that constrain Council's options for restoring, tenanting and possibly on-selling of the building. The ACHCS and the wider Coptic community will be working tirelessly to see the former Church preserved for future uses that could include facilities for the Coptic and the general communities, and Council should be doing all in its power to support this outcome.

Dynamo Auto Electrician Garage, St Peters

The release of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the WestConnex M5 project has delivered a stay of execution of sorts for this landmark building. The project planners have acknowledged the heritage status of the building, and now propose to retain it; but will still acquire the building from the current owners, and force the family business to close or relocate. It appears that the state government will provide a cafe or some other non-automobile related business in the existing building.

The Society is astounded that the state government would buy out and evict a viable local family business that is desperate to continue operating in the building they have owned for decades. Converting the building to a new use will lose an important aspect of the building's significance.

As the WestConnex planners seem to have responded to community concerns by deciding to preserve the building, the Society hopes that with further lobbying **they might be made to realise that retaining the existing use and family owners in the building would be the best possible outcome.**

Scott MacArthur