



Peninsula Historian

Newsletter of the Manly, Warringah &
Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Jim Boyce, our President, has spent some time in hospital in the past week. We all wish him the very best and a speedy recovery.

As you will surely have noticed, Jim is a major contributor to our newsletters and his absence creates a substantial gap. There is no President's Report this month and there will not be a monthly meeting during July.

Thank you to the authors of the various articles in this issue - Keith Amos, George Champion, Shelagh Champion, Rose Cullen and Jim (I had two of his articles in the pipeline). I welcome all contributions - small or large - so please send them in.

As has been mentioned previously, there is a lot of work (and expense) in producing and mailing hard copies of the Newsletter. If you possibly can, please take it in electronic format. You will then see it in full colour and can print off a hard copy if you want one (presuming that you have access to a printer).

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

WARRINGAH AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS

At "THE DEFENCE OF SYDNEY MONUMENT 1939-1945"
North Head Sanctuary Lawn
72nd Anniversary Commemoration Service
30 May 2014

Manly Warringah Pittwater Historical Society was invited to the *Wreath and Book Laying Ceremony*, the initiative of our Member, Prime Minister Tony Abbott, now in its twentieth year. Among more than 80 district organisations, The Hon Bronwyn Bishop Speaker, Mayors Jean Hay and Michael Regan, State member Michael Baird, represented by Kerryn Baird, swelled the congregation to over 300 for a service led by Rev David Taylor of Manly Freshwater Roman Catholic Parish.

It is singular dedication that Tony Abbott, Prime Minister would host this Ceremony, conduct proceedings and stay ready to meet, greet and shake hands with all who attend-

ed. There is too, something from the event that must lift Australian pride - the faith, trust and peaceful enjoyment. Where else in the world does the first Minister attend a public event where it was hard to identify the presence of escort or security?

Warringah Australia Remembers, held under peerless blue sky, the Sun so bright the cheeks cried out for relief whilst the body rejoiced in the near summer warming. We would not have had it otherwise; idyllic for this annual outdoor event that the media and wider public let slip. There are few opportunities to take the children of today to glimpse the world of long ago, when peace in our time was the goal of our leaders.

The service, held on Friday 30 May, commemorated Sydney becoming a target for attack by enemy forces in a world that was yet to come to terms with the futility of imposing will by force. Even today governance turns to armies to meter out "Jack-boot" suppression of freedom, recognition and rights. As we pause in moments like this we in some respects enjoy make-believe that the way we are, the place we live, is wider spread than truth does show.

The Monument is on the Memorial walk through the former Artillery Museum on North Head.

Jim Boyce

DIARY

July

Saturday 12th, no meeting

August

Saturday 9th, to be advised

POT POURRI

PETERS ICE CREAM

It is remarkable that a small business stated in the early 1900s in Manly from a mother's ice cream recipe has, in the last month, been acquired by a French food company for approximately \$450 million. When Fred Peters, an American born in Michigan, started selling his ice cream - made on his premises in Whistler Street, Manly - he can have hardly envisioned that his small enterprise would career through a number of ownerships to finally repose in the arms of R and R, the largest producer, by volume, of ice cream in Europe and the second largest in the world.

Peters has had a number of owners, the last being Pacific Equity Partners, a private equity group, but two years previously it was owned by Nestle, the large Swiss food company. As with many other food sectors, the Australian market for ice cream has been dominated by the large international food companies but using brands that were established by small Australian companies. Streets, the brand with the largest market share, is owned by Unilever and with the R & R-owned Peters, control approximately 90 per cent of the market.

The story of the progressive development of Peters through the Australian corporate world is a good example of how many Australian enterprises have grown from small beginnings. In the late 1920s, the Peters brand began to be recognised all over Australia. It was at this point that Fred Peters launched it as a publicly listed company but he did it by establishing the Peters company initially in Victoria and then with separate publicly listed companies in other states. The Tasmanian operation was run from Victoria but Queensland and Western Australia were managed by independent Peters companies.

Fred Peters died in 1937 and, by that time, all but Western Australia had been consolidated into the Victorian company which was renamed Petersville. Petersville expanded into a number of sectors in the food industry and merged with HC Sleigh, which up to then had been notable for marketing the Golden Fleece brand of petroleum and a fleet of cargo ships.

The company, through the 1970s and early 1980s, took on the shape of a conglomerate, operating in a number of sectors beside food. It was at this stage that Petersville was acquired by the Adelaide Steamship Company, the corporate takeover vehicle of John Spalvins. Spalvins, like Alan Bond and Christopher Skase, who rode the heady times of the late 1980s, experienced a financial collapse and sold the business to a smaller conglomerate, Pacific Dunlop. They also experienced financial difficulties and the ice cream business,

Apparently the opening of Peters' ice cream factory



in Manly in 1907. The text appears to call the original company the Peters American Delicacy Company. Fred Peters is the man seated at the table. (From Peters website, Ed.)

which had always been a profitable enterprise, was purchased by Nestle.

Thus Peters Ice Cream is an interesting example of the twists and turns of Australian business, with some unfortunate deviations in its financial control. The stability of its profit stream made it a target for financial interests whose focus was elsewhere. The company is still Australian managed with its HQ at Musgrave, a suburb of Melbourne, and when approached by the Historical Society to purchase a copy of the centenary history publication, it immediately sent us a free copy. One hopes that Fred Peters looks down on its history with some satisfaction.

Jim Boyce

THE MEANING OF LIFE

In the March issue, Merryn Parnell asked the question "when is something worth preserving?". She was conscious of the fact that something that is relatively "new" today will one day be relatively "old" and inherently of more interest. At the time I stated that it might be easier to answer the question "what is the meaning of life?". Rose Cullen from the Local Studies section of Warringah Library has risen to the challenge and tackled the tougher of these two questions. Her response is reproduced below.

How old is historic? Local Studies can help

'How old does something have to be to be historically interesting?' was the question asked in the March Newsletter. It seems daunting, but yes, everything is historically interesting if we keep it for long enough. Most everyday things are abundant when they are new. But many years later these same things can seem very old, very historic and are very rare. It is in the limbo zone between being new and being old that things seem unfashionable and uninteresting and are often thrown away.

This is a somewhat perplexing but oft-acknowledged phenomenon. The magazine *Australian House and Garden* gave a neat summary in an article in April 1971: "It's an intriguing fact that recently superseded designs – be they of furniture, clothes or cars – are, almost without exception, regarded as no longer of interest. But the further they recede into the distance, the more historically desirable they become. And sought after."

But it's not just objects of design; it's documents and everyday items too. Think of our telephone bills. They seem like a ubiquitous piece of ephemera and many of us won't keep them for decades. But in a hundred years time we probably won't have paper telephone bills. Sorting through my late father's papers I found a bundle of rates notices and telephone bills for my Great Grandmother's house in Maroubra dating from the 1920s to the 1960s. Very historically interesting, but we can't keep everything ourselves forever. What to do?

Think of a library! Some everyday things are suitable for particular library collections, especially if the library doesn't hold anything similar. With my Great Grandmother's documents I contacted the local studies unit at Randwick City Library Service and they were very glad to receive the documents.

This is where I need to declare my allegiances. I work part-time as the Assistant Local Studies Librarian at Warringah Council Library. The local studies unit of the library collects photographs, ephemera and small objects relating to Warringah. We keep these things for research purposes and for displays. We are interested in everyday objects. They don't have to be ancient items. They just need to tell us something about life in Warringah. So when you're sorting through old things and weighing up whether to keep or toss, spare a thought for the local studies collection.

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Statue of Sir Richard Bourke

GOVERNOR BOURKE

Shelagh Champion writes:- The statue of Sir Richard Bourke, which stands outside the Mitchell Library wing of the State Library of New South Wales, is inscribed as follows:

"The statue of
Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B.
is erected by the people of New South Wales to record his
able, honest, and benevolent administration from 1831 to
1837.

Selected for the government at a period of singular difficulty,
his judgment, urbanity, and firmness justified the choice.

Comprehending at once the vast resources peculiar to this
colony, he applied them, for the first time, systematically to
its benefit.

He voluntarily divested himself of the prodigious influence
arising from the assignment of penal labour, and enacted just
and salutary laws for the amelioration of penal discipline.

He was the first governor, who published satisfactory ac-
counts of the public receipts and expenditure.

Without oppression, or detriment to any interest, he raised
the revenue to a vast amount, and from its surplus, realized
extensive plans of immigration.

He established religious equality on a just and firm basis, and
sought to provide for all, without distinction of sect, a sound
and adequate system of national education.

He constructed various public works of permanent utility.

He founded the flourishing settlement of Port Phillip, and
threw open the unlimited wilds of Australia to pastoral enter-
prise.

He established savings banks, and was the patron of the first
mechanics institute. He created an equitable tribunal for
determining upon claims to grants of lands.

He was the warm friend of the liberty of the press. He
extended trial by jury after its almost total suspension for
many years.

By these and numerous other measures for the moral, reli-
gious and general improvement of all classes, he raised the
colony to unexampled prosperity; and retired amid the rever-
ent and affectionate regret of the people; having won their
confidence by his integrity, their gratitude by his services,
their admiration by his public talents, and their esteem by his
private worth."

*Shelagh recorded the inscription in March 1993
It appears that the memorialists could have also said that he
was a very handsome man. Ed.*

ARTICLES

Continuing our series on prominent members and contributors to our Society over the past 90 years.

ROSS McCOWAN

Ross and his wife Joy joined our Society during the Presidency of Captain Clive Henderson 1962-1964, which was well before 1971, when the Society's membership lists first began to be recorded.

They lived in their delightful family home in Anzac Avenue Collaroy. It was here, during Ross' term of office as President, that regular monthly committee meetings took place. Some years ago they moved to the Willandra Villages at Cromer. Before retirement Ross was the Personnel Manager for the Water Resources Commission and Joy was a teacher at Harbord Public School.

Ross was elected President of our Society from 1983 to 1986 and for a second term from 1987 to 1989. Joy also served as a most competent secretary for the Society.

Ross brought considerable stability to the Society. He had a likeable unassuming manner and was always attentive to and considerate of the views of all members. He continued the Society's popular annual dinner.

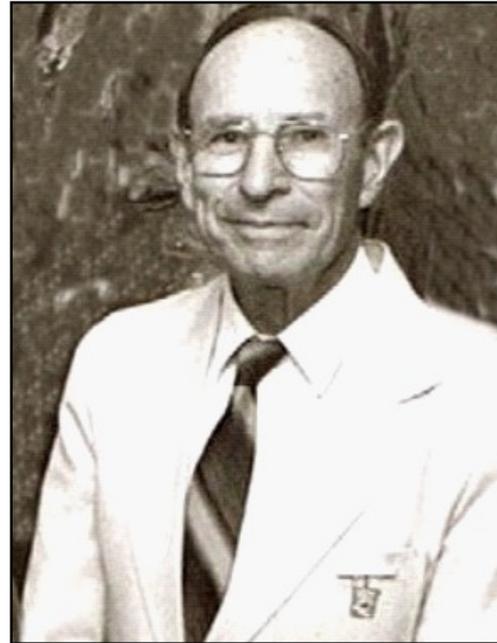
On Tuesday, 18th September 1984 Ross arranged the 60th Anniversary Dinner for the Society at the Manly Golf Club. It was attended by Sir Roden Cutler, our then patron, and Lady Cutler as well as a large number of Society members and visitors. Ross gave the opening address of welcome.

To accompany this celebration Ross compiled a booklet of the Society's major activities from 1924 to 1984, which was distributed to those attending the dinner.

In 1986 under the presidency of Hazel Woolston, the Society appointed a publications committee consisting of Joy and Ross McCowan and Hazel Woolston, with the intention of providing regular issues of a Society journal to be known as the "Manly Warringah Journal of Local History". These journals were designed to allow members to contribute their articles on a number of local historical subjects.

The first issue of the journal became available in January 1987. Journals continued to be published until 2006 and several articles were contributed by Ross himself. The journals proved to be most popular and provide a valuable collection of articles which otherwise may have been forgotten.

It was Ross who in 1988 updated both the Society's letterhead and badge design.



Ross McCowan

In recognition of their outstanding contributions to the welfare of the Society, Ross and Joy McCowan, and Hazel Woolston were all made Life Members of the Society in 1988, these awards having received the unanimous endorsement of the membership at an ordinary general meeting.

George Champion, March 2014

GWEN GORDON (1927- 2013)

Local historian of Freshwater-Harbord and nearby districts

I first met Gwen while teaching at Harbord Public School in the 1970's. Both of us had been born and raised in Harbord and had a mutual interest in the district's history. When it came to Gwen's attention that I'd written a history of Harbord School, she introduced herself to me at the school one day offering to place her extensive photographic history of the district in the school library to help educate the children.

Gwen's father had built their family home at 89 Wyndora Avenue in the 1920's, where she had been born and raised. Her primary schooling was at Harbord Public and her secondary education at Manly Girls' High. She met and married her husband, Charlie, whilst serving in the Womens Auxiliary National Service (WANS) - called the Women's Land Army - at Griffith during World War 2. After the war they returned to her family home at Harbord where they raised a son, Ray, and stayed for the rest of their lives.

Growing up in the 1930's, Gwen experienced the last years of old, semi-rural Harbord: scattered timber cottages facing sandy roads, paddocks here and there, Davison's dairy oppo-

site Harbord School, horse-drawn deliveries of bread, milk and ice (for ice chests before fridges), a few general stores, and Freshwater beachside men's surfing clubs that were called 'camps'. Returning post-war, Gwen witnessed the steady growth and closer settlement of Harbord, and by her middle-age became a keen local historian, assiduously photographing old buildings before their demolition, collecting reminiscences, recording the foundations of clubs, services, schools and churches, etc., always driven by a strong sense of responsibility that her local community's past should not be lost.

When Gwen spoke with me at Harbord School in 1975, I suggested that we refine and publish her collection as a local history and for two years, assisted by a small committee, this was undertaken. The official launching of her book *Harbord, Queenscliff and South Curl Curl 1788-1978* took place in the newly-opened school assembly hall, attended by over 400 local residents. We printed 1500 initially, followed by two reprints, eventually selling over 4000 at printing cost.

In recognition of her work, Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society's then president, Geoff Johnson, recommended that Gwen be made a Fellow of the Society, which was awarded in 1980. Encouraged by this, Gwen launched into a similar history of neighbouring North Manly, which became a monograph titled *North Manly from Early Days to 1984*, published with the Historical Society's assistance. Then in 2000, assisted by Warringah Council, Gwen revised and updated her earlier history - now titled *Harbord, Queenscliff and South Curl Curl 1788-2000*. These were her major works, alongside of which she wrote numerous shorter pieces such as 'North Manly: Search for Identity', for inclusion in *Warringah History* (1988), a bicentennial project edited by Malcolm Prentis; and '*The Kiosk*', now *Freshwater Restaurant: Harbord's most historic building*' (2001). Copies of all these were carefully lodged by Gwen in the MWPHS archives, with Local Studies in Warringah Council Library, and in the Mitchell collection of the NSW State Library.

Although by nature a rather shy person, Gwen could also be a staunch conservationist, as revealed in her *Kiosk* monograph. Gwen had long recognized the historic value of the old Freshwater Beach kiosk as her district's oldest standing building - built in 1908 - so when it came close to being demolished in 1979, she took a leading role in organizing a 'Kiosk Action Group'. This group stirred the Council, local politicians and community members into ensuring its preservation, the result being that the Kiosk now stands fully restored as a high class restaurant.

Another instance of Gwen's active citizenship relates to her suburb's name. Since the early 1900's, the local community had been divided over whether their district should be named Freshwater after the beach precinct, or Harbord after an 1886 real estate development (so named after Miss Judith Harbord, sister-in-law of the NSW Governor, Lord Car-



Gwen Gordon

ington). As a suburb, Freshwater officially became Harbord when its post office opened in 1923 and accordingly the school was renamed Harbord Public. Then in the early 1980's, partly on the urging of Gwen and MWPHS, the beach and nearby reserve officially reverted to Freshwater. Following on from this, in about 2003, Gwen became involved in a chamber of commerce push which eventually succeeded in having the whole suburb renamed Freshwater in 2008.

For over forty years, Gwen was the 'go to' person for anyone wanting accurate historical information about the wider Harbord area. Her interest, she said, began at home and grew naturally over time. Describing her initial inspiration, she once observed: '*I like to think that my family were the original contributors because of yarns exchanged around the tea table... Then there were the teachers and pupils who came to Harbord Public School during the 1930s. They all helped me to store in memory the Harbord of those years.*' Beyond this, she collected everything that charted past and current changes in her local environment: old photographs, maps and real estate brochures, official records, extracts from books and newspapers, reminiscences and diaries from elderly residents, and so forth.

Over the many years that I knew Gwen, she was always an active, community-minded citizen and a lovely-natured person: quietly mannered, unassuming and very generous. My last chat with Gwen was at the centenary celebration of Harbord Public School in 2012. Predeceased by her husband Charlie, she had coped with a failing heart in her advanced years and died from this on 2nd June 2013, aged 87.

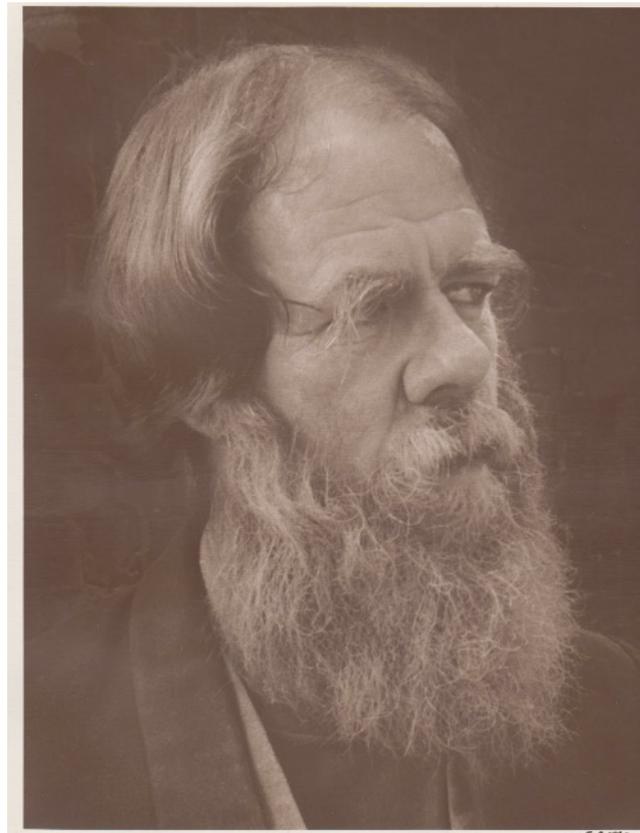
Keith Amos, November 2013

SECRET SITES

Well the last secret site apparently stumped everyone. It is a substantial building but where and what is it? It is the Baptist Church in Greenwood Avenue, Narrabeena.



For some variety, and given that we are celebrating figures and personalities associated with our Society over the past 90 years, who is the somewhat-serious-looking person in the photograph below?



WHAT'S ON

Manly Art Gallery and Museum

Current Exhibitions

[THE MAKING OF MIDNIGHT OIL: 20 June - 7 September 2014](#)

Developed by Manly Art Gallery & Museum's Ross Heathcote in consultation with Midnight Oil drummer Rob Hirst, *The Making of Midnight Oil* features stage costumes, posters, previously unseen film, documents, lyric sheets, music industry awards, band instruments, memorabilia and photographs - sourced from public and private collections, including Hirst's own personal archive. Other former members of Midnight Oil have made significant contributions to the exhibition.

The Making of Midnight Oil will be an opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in 'the stuff' that goes toward the making of the band's 25-year career and will include displays that should fascinate diehard fans as well as material that alludes to a broader recent social history.

Two special highlights will be a hitherto unseen montage of film by award winning director David Bradbury featuring the Oils performing at the 1981 Tanelorn Festival in Stroud, NSW - the only known footage of this concert - and the band's personal 'home movies' filmed on Super 8 while on tour in the early 1990s.

There will also be a specially commissioned segment by renowned local film maker Robert Hambling on the making of the band's iconic 1982 album '10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1' featuring interviews with members of the band and producer Nick Launay.

The Making of Midnight Oil is funded by Visions of Australia and Arts NSW.

Mona Vale Library

14 July - Aboriginal Guringai Festival - Joeys Package - Didgeridoo Show, Face Painting and Craft

10 July - FREE Author Talk - Elizabeth Postle talking about A Healing Hug for Alzheimer's Caregivers

14 August - Author Talk - Doug Purdie talking about Backyard Bees



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