



# Peninsula Historian

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

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In our modern, fast-paced lives, we probably do not stop very often to consider history. So it was refreshing to attend the opening of the new park in Howard Avenue, Dee Why on Tuesday 11 March where, because it is named after a past resident, Walter Gors, a recounting and explanation of some local history had to be given. Three generations of descendants of Walter Gors were in attendance.

However history has many facets and we can never know them all. In a brief article on Walter Gors in this issue, a few probably lesser-known ones are recounted.

*Richard Michell*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Almost a year has passed since our last A.G.M., and during my tenure as President I have tried to – if I may say so – get our Society out of a rut where it seems to have been stuck. I have - in my life – been outback more than once in a vehicle that was stuck temporarily in a rut, necessitating a lot of hard work to get it free again to proceed.

### DIARY and FINAL REMINDER

**Meeting at the Curl Curl Community Centre,  
cnr. Griffin and Abbott Roads**

13 May, 2017                      2.00 pm

Hastings Pawsey will show slides and video of his recent three week trip to the Ross Sea area of Antarctica. Hastings is an entertaining speaker so it is sure to be an aural and visual treat.

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

This is now overdue. A renewal form is on the last page.

So far I've not succeeded in getting this Society on the road again. I've talked and talked to all and sundry; I've had many meetings; I've sought hopeful new roads, but I don't think we are any further.

Would an approach to schools generate new blood? What about Social Media – would Facebook, Twitter etc. be the way to go? What about Show and Tell? Can media coverage help? A school approach needs input by us – who can do this? I've been reluctant to chase Social Media as I think it would alienate many of our older, computer-illiterate members. Media help? Again, who of us can take on this task?

Somewhere there is an answer and when we turn 100 very soon, I'm sure we'll have a big party to celebrate our success. In the meantime?

*Phil Colman*

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### NEXT MEETING, 13 MAY

Hastings Pawsey will give a presentation covering his recent trip to the Ross Sea in Antarctica. Armed with his camera, he took pictures and video of the most amazing aspects of Sub-Antarctic Islands, the wild and wondrous Southern Ocean and a number of landings in the Ross Sea area. The trip took 21 days and Hastings describes it as "the most amazing three weeks of my life". From the wild Southern Ocean, the enchanting icebergs and sea-ice, the beautiful sea birds, penguins, whales, all vastly new experiences for Hastings.

In addition to the rawness of nature, he was privileged to visit the hut on Ross Island in the Ross Sea that Shackleton used in 1907 when he walked and almost reached the South Pole. But he turned back just 60 nautical miles from reaching his target. A noble decision and one that is recognised as a true sign of an excellent leader. All members returned safely to the hut which is virtually as Shackleton left it over 100 years ago.

Also on Ross Island, Hastings visited the hut that Capt. Scott used as a base for almost two years and from which he headed out to walk to the South Pole in 1911. Though he

reached it, Amundsen had reached it a month earlier. As we all know, the shattered Scott's party all perished only about 100m from their home base. This hut, like Shackleton's, is almost as left 100 years ago and is a striking example of the hardships those early explorers experienced in their quest for exploration and science.

On the voyage back to Dunedin, Hastings visited two incredible Sub Antarctic islands, Macquarie Island and Enderby Island. Both are maintained in virtually pristine preserved condition and have an unbelievably large variety of flora and fauna. The penguins are breathtaking.

So come along on the 13<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm.

### **Annual General Meeting**

This is advance warning that the meeting after the next will be our AGM. The date will be Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the venue the Curl Curl Community Centre, cnr Griffin and Abbott Roads (enter off Abott Road) and the starting time will be 2pm.



Ernest Shackleton

All Executive positions will become vacant at the AGM. If you would like to nominate either yourself or another Member for one of them there is a nomination form later in this issue. It also lists the positions.

### MONTHLY MEETING REPORT, Saturday 8 April, 2017

A good roll up of Members and guests was entertained by local authot Pam Bayfield who recounted her journey as a writer, the inspiration behind her various books and some of the trials and tribulations of publishing. All of her books have grown out of personal experience or connections, albeit extended by imagination and research into earlier periods of local history.

Attendees were also able to study some very interesting historical items brought along by one of our Members, Bob Moran. Some further information on one of them is in the 'Pot Pourri' section following.

### **Treasurer's "report"**

The advance notice for our AGM in June is elsewhere in this issue. As part of the preparation for that meeting the Society's accounts have been audited. We finished the last year - calendar year 2016 - in a sound financial position with a healthy trading surplus of \$1,261, which compares favourably with a loss of \$809 the previous year. The full accounts will be available at the AGM for inspection if desired.

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Thank you to all who have renewed their membership. Unfortunately time is running out for those who have not. We will send you a personal reminder but, if you do not renew within the next month, this is regrettably the last issue of the *Historian* that you will receive. The renewal form is at the end of the newsletter. If you have special circumstances, please contact us. Contact information is on Page 6.



### **POT POURRI**

#### **The right type**

As mentioned in the report of the last meeting, Bob Moran brought along some very interesting old items for viewing. One was a quite amazing early typewriter, a Blickensderfer. Sold from about 1895 till 1913, this spindly device was portable - it came in a nice wooden box (which Bob also had on display) - and was amazingly advanced for its time. The letters were on a drum, not on individual typebars, an idea reincarnated by IBM in 1961 when they introduced the Selectric typewriter with its "golf ball".

Although IBM did not acknowledge the Blickensderfer as an antecedent for that part of their design, they did give it the credit for the idea of changing fonts or alphabets by simply changing the drum/ball.

Because of the compact drum design, the Blickensderfer had no problem with clashing of the font bars. Thus they did not need to adopt the QWERTY keyboard. Instead they conducted research to find the most commonly used letters. These letters were found to be "DHIATENSOR" and they grouped them together on the bottom row of keys.



Blickensderfer portable typewriter from Bob Moran's collection



Blickensderfer font drum courtesy Bwilson888 (WikiCommons)



IBM font ball (Golf ball)

### Mea culpa

Last issue, in the article on the Salvation Army's *Home of Rest*, I stated in a post script that, with its recent sale, the Army no longer owned any land in Dee Why. I almost immediately realised that this is not true. They still have their Citadel (church) in Fisher Road. My apologies.

### Collaroy Hospital

In the article on Walter Gors Park later in this issue, I mention Miss Elsie Ponton, a teacher at Dee Why Public and other local schools in the 1930s and 40s. In researching that article I noticed that, in 1930, she was transferred from Dee Why School to another location for a couple of months. That location was Collaroy Hospital. This hospital was on the site above Collaroy pool where the Sargood Foundation has recently built a spinal cord injury rehabilitation centre. The following historical timeline is reproduced from their web site.

'1918: Frederick Sargood donates his beach house and its furniture to the War Chest as a place of recuperation for returning servicemen. He stipulates that when it is no longer needed for this purpose, it should be transferred to the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children.

1920-1922: The remainder of the current site is gifted to the Hospital either directly or using publicly donated funds. The Children's Annexe is opened by the Governor of NSW, Sir Walter Davidson, in the presence of Frederick Sargood and his wife Lillian.

1923-1959: With the help and support of volunteers from the community, thousands of children suffering from TB and polio are nursed back to health. Donations enable the Collaroy Children's Convalescent Home Annexe to be expanded.'

With the introduction of vaccinations for polio and TB, the facility was declared superfluous and it became a day care centre for people with an intellectual disability, while successive State governments attempted to have it rezoned and sold off for residential development. In 1999 a Collaroy-based community group felt strongly that the site should return to its original purpose as a place of healing. The Sargood Foundation and its rehabilitation facility are the result of that vision.

Elsie Ponton taught at the hospital in the Winter of 1930. From the timeline above, she would presumably have been teaching children with TB and/or polio.



Sargood spinal injury rehabilitation facility, Collaroy Beach 2016

## ARTICLE

### Walter Gors Park Dee Why

Dick Persson, the Administrator of the Northern Beaches Council, opened the new Walter Gors Park on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April. It is a wonderful addition to the Dee Why Town Centre. As part of the opening he unveiled a plaque which explains a little of who Walter Gors was and why the park is named in his memory.

Very briefly, Walter Uel Gors was born in Orange in 1894 but grew up in New Guinea where his father opened the first branch of the Burns Philp shipping and trading company and played a key role in introducing coffee growing. He enlisted in the Army Medical Corps in 1916 at the age of 21. Arriving in Europe in August 1917 he saw action as a stretcher bearer. He was hospitalised with influenza in November 1918 and returned to Australia in 1919, being discharged from the Army in March 1920. Walter suffered from health problems for the rest of his life from his exposure to gas.

In 1923 Walter became engaged to Jessie Ebdon who was from Jersey, one of the Channel Islands, and they married shortly after. By 1929 they had four children - Isabel, Dorothy, Peter and Alistair - Isabel and Dorothy, the first born, being non-identical twins.

In 1926, when Walter joined Warringah Council as Deputy Shire Clerk, the Gors moved to 38 Howard Avenue, Dee Why. Prior to his appointment he had been Senior Clerk at Randwick Council. During the Second World War Walter was appointed Deputy Chief Warden to formulate a plan to evacuate the residents of the Peninsula in the event of attack by the Japanese. At the end of the war he became Shire Clerk, serving in that position from December 1945 to November 1950 when he reverted to the position of Deputy Shire Clerk because of recurring ill health. He retired in 1957 and died in 1970 aged 76 years.



Descendants of Walter and Jessie Gors  
at opening of Walter Gors Park, Dee  
Why, 11 April 2017 (Photo Adam Yip)

However there is a perhaps lesser-known, tragic aspect to the connection of the Gors family to this location. It was alluded to by John McDougall, a grandson of Walter and Jessie, who spoke at the park opening.

After Walter and Jessie Gors moved to Howard Avenue their children, once they were old enough, attended Dee Why Public School in Fisher Road. By 1934 all four were enrolled (Alistair, the youngest, having commenced kindergarten that year) and they walked the short distance to and from there each day.

On Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1934, Alistair's kindergarten teacher gave him and another boy, Neville Ibitson, an early-mark as a reward for their efforts in class that day, letting them leave at 3.25pm, just before the bell rang, but stressing that Neville should wait at the gate for his older brother and Alistair for his older sisters. However the two boys were very excited and did not wait but

instead raced home together, bursting to tell their mothers. In that excitement Alistair ran out from behind a car as he crossed Pittwater Road and was hit by a truck. He died that night in Manly Hospital from a fracture of his skull.

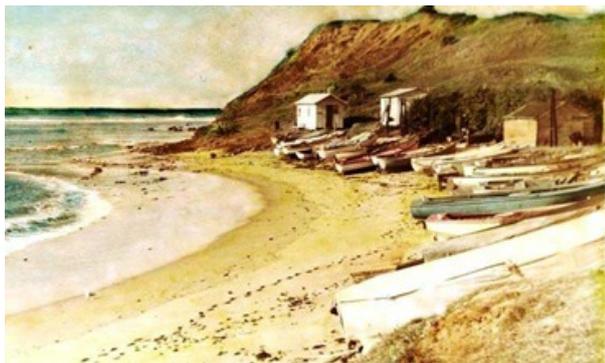
The Gors family found it very difficult to remain at Dee Why with this tragic shadow hanging over them. They moved to Collaroy for a period to recover, before returning. When Walter died some 35 years later, he left 38 Howard Avenue to Warringah Council, to be used for a park. It is very fitting that his gift, made 47 years ago, has been the eventual seed for a large public park which contains many wonderful facilities for young children of Alistair's age. The outcome is perhaps more apt than the Council may realise. The park is as much a memorial to Walter's five year old son as it is to him.

The story unfortunately has a further sad dimension. The teacher who gave Alistair that fateful early-mark was Miss Elsie Ponton. She and her sister Alice were both much-loved teachers in Manly and Warringah in the 1930s and 1940s. They lived in Pacific Parade, Dee Why. Their married sister Vera (Norman) lived immediately behind them, in Sturdee Parade.

At some time after the accident, Elsie Ponton requested a transfer from Dee Why School. In 1938 her request was granted and she moved to Harbord. She and her sister continued to live in Pacific Parade and I can only speculate that she gave up the convenience of teaching at the nearby school to try to escape the memory of that day.

The Ponton sisters left their houses in Sturdee and Pacific Parades to the Inland Mission of the Presbyterian Church. They hoped they would be used for some purpose associated with children. The two back-to-back properties were bought by Warringah Council and, in 1990, the Kiah Family Centre, including a long-day-care facility, opened, thus respecting those wishes. Sadly, the council sold the centre to a private developer in 2013 and a large residential complex, containing some 200 units, is in the final stages of construction. The historical link to children has been broken.

*Richard Michell*



**1930's photo: Jack Tennant, and Walter Gors outside their Hut. (Reefcare)**

Walter Gors was a skilled sketcher and artist. The top painting is a watercolour he did of the hut at Fisherman's Beach, Collaroy that he co-owned with Jack Tennant. It is the most distant hut in the lower painting.



Alistair's sister Dorothy at the opening of the park named in her father's honour, Tuesday 11 April 2017 (see next page also)



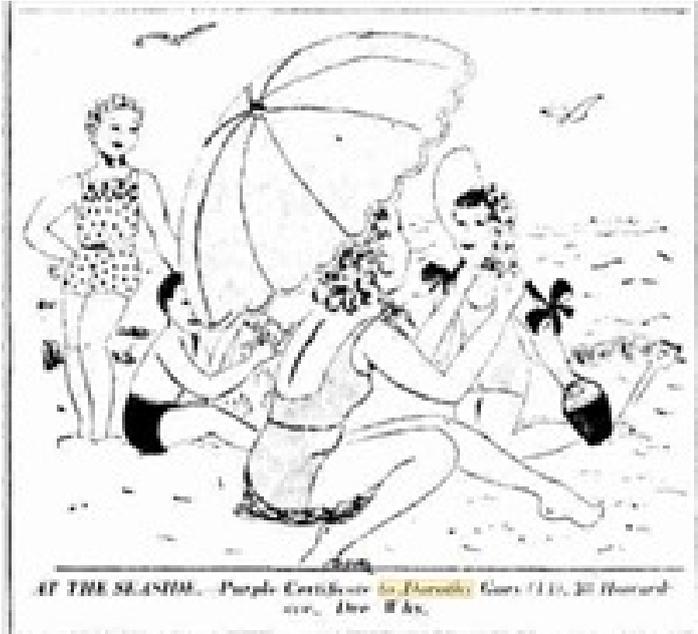
Left to right: Anthony Addison, Vera Norman (nee Ponton) and Alice Ponton in the backyard at Sturdee Parade, Dee Why (Warringah Library)



Warringah Mayor John Caputo (centre) opening the Kiah Family Centre, 1990

## Artistic genes

As mentioned in the previous article, Walter Gors was quite artistic and was a competent painter and sketcher. This skill was apparently handed down to his daughter Dorothy. The (unfortunately poor) reproductions below are of sketches by her at the ages of 13 and 14 years respectively. She won a purple certificate for the first and 10 shillings and 6 pence for the second, a worthwhile windfall for a 14 year old in 1940. Presumably they were inspired by Dee Why Beach and Dee Why Picture Show.



Children's section of the Sun newspaper, Sunday 15 January 1939



Children's section of the Sun newspaper, 7 January 1940



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**MANLY, WARRINGAH AND PITTWATER HISORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

**NOMINATION FORM**

I nominate ..... for the position of .....

Name of nominator .....

Signature .....

Date.....

I agree to the nomination.

Name of nominee .....

Signature .....

Date.....

**Positions open for election**

President

Senior Vice President

Vice President (2)

Secretary

Membership Secretary

Minute Secretary

Treasurer

Editor

Archivist

*Please consult a current office bearer  
for more details of the duties involved  
with each position*

**Membership for 2017  
is now overdue**

# Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

## Membership Application Form - 2017

Title: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (please circle)

Name:

Age group (please tick):  10 – 18  19 – 50  51 – 70  71 – 85  86 – 95

[Note: this information is required for insurance purposes; if two persons included in this application fall into different age bands please tick both boxes]

Address:

State

Postcode

Phone: (Home)

(Bus.)

(Mobile)

E-mail:

Signature:

Date:

MEMBERSHIP FEES	\$20 Single	\$25 Household (2 persons) or Organisation
SUBSCRIPTION:	\$.....	including emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian
	\$12.00.....	If you require Peninsula Historian by post.
DONATION:	\$.....	
TOTAL:	<u>\$.....</u>	Do you require a receipt? Yes/No

### PAYMENT METHODS

- **By cheque or money order**

Please make payable to 'MWP Historical Society Inc' and mail with the completed Renewal Form to:

The Treasurer  
Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc  
PO Box 695  
MANLY, NSW 1655

**[DO NOT MAIL CASH. If paying in person place cash, cheque or money order in an envelope together with the completed Renewal Form]**

- **By Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)**

Account Details:	Commonwealth Bank, Manly
Account Name:	MWP Historical Society
BSB Number:	062-197
Account Number:	00907384

**[If paying by EFT** please ensure that you enter your name in the 'to account description' box and confirm your payment by sending an email to the Treasurer at [treasurer@mwphs.com](mailto:treasurer@mwphs.com). This is essential for your correct identification and is particularly important if your payment is made through a Credit Union)