



Peninsula Historian

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

Grateful thanks to Keith Amos this issue for his article on Oxford Falls Public School.

A retired teacher, Keith began his own teaching career in 1960, aged 18, in charge of a small bush school called The Mullion (out of Yass). His memoir about it is on the Hall School Museum's website at: <http://museum.hall.act.au/school/1542/mullion.html> He is now in some demand by other nearby country schools and so why should our own one teacher school miss out?

Keith has now very kindly obliged. In doing so he has made much use of earlier work and archives, particularly those of George Champion. So thanks also to those earlier workers who Keith fully acknowledges in his foot-notes.

Richard Michell

DIARY

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

10 March, 2018 2.00 pm

Dr. Paul Irish *Hidden In Plain View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney*

Paul is a historian and archaeologist with the heritage consultancy MDCA. For over ten years he has been piecing together the Aboriginal history of coastal Sydney with researchers from the La Perouse Aboriginal community.

A motion to change the quorum at Committee meetings will also be put.

14 April, 2018 2.00 pm

Nadine Phipps *Cemetery Supervisor,
Northern Beaches Council*

Nadine will talk on the development of self-guided tours of the local cemeteries. More details next issue.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As advertised, our recent monthly meeting was primarily a forum to allow review and discussion of the survey of Members that we conducted last year. While the survey indicated that we are doing most of the things that Members want it did show that there is a desire that at least some meetings be held further north on the Peninsula. We plan to respond to that desire by holding perhaps a third of our meetings at The Tramshed at Narrabeen in the future, the remainder being at North Curl Curl.

That is the plan. However the renovations to the Tramshed are still not completed, and they will not be for some months yet. So I have to ask at least some of you to be patient and accept the current venue until Northern Beaches Council reopens bookings for Narrabeen.

On another matter entirely, our Constitution specifies that the Quorum for a Committee meeting of the Society is five. As the Committee consists of only six members the requirement for five is quite tight. Some of the members have announced either their resignation from all positions or their unavailability to attend Committee meetings. To boost the numbers back to five, Merryn Parnell accepted nomination late last year. However we still have the situation where we have not had a Quorum at any Committee meeting since last June.

After consultation with the Department of Fair Trading (which is the body that supervises incorporated associations such as ours) they have recommended that we reduce the Quorum. This requires a change to our Constitution and this in turn requires a special resolution to be put to Members at a general meeting.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find the formal notice for the meeting and the resolution that is proposed to be put to it. The meeting is just our monthly one but this motion will be considered before we have our guest speaker, Paul Irish.

The proposed motion reduces the Quorum from five to three, as suggested by the Department. There will be a copy of our Constitution at the meeting but if anyone wishes to see it beforehand please contact me via president@mwphs.com. If you will not be at the meeting you can vote by proxy if you

wish. The form to be used is in the issue. It must reach the Secretary prior to the meeting start time of 2pm.

Richard Michell

NEWS AND VIEWS

NEXT MEETING, Saturday 10 March, 2018

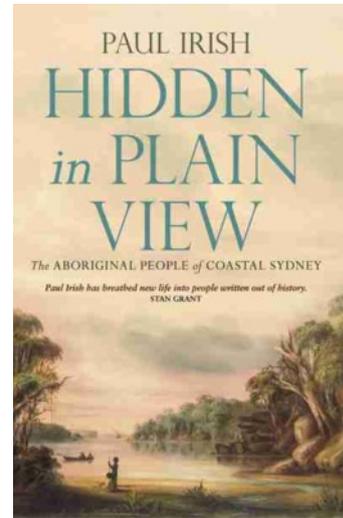
Dr. Paul Irish will speak on the topic “*Hidden in plain view*” which is also the title of his recent book.

Aboriginal people are prominent in accounts of early colonial Sydney, yet we seem to skip a century as they disappear from the historical record, re-emerging early in the twentieth century. What happened to Sydney’s indigenous people between the devastating impact of white settlement and increased government intervention a century later?

Come along to hear the results of Paul’s research.

MEETING REPORT, Saturday 10 February, 2018

A great roll up to be brought up to date with happenings over the Christmas/New Year break, review the results of our Member Survey, do a post-mortem on our Christmas function and learn a little about recent work to sort out our archives. After the usual excellent afternoon tea most attendees remained to watch a video that followed an original 1948 Albion double decker bus from Wynyard to Newport Wharf. It brought back memories for many people.



Albion double decker bus

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Again, thank you to the many who have renewed their membership or who paid last year in advance. For any stragglers, we hope that you will continue your support and renew in the near future. A renewal (or joining) form is later in this issue.

PENINSULA LIVING

Most readers will be aware that our past-President Jim Boyce has provided a short historical article to the monthly *Peninsula Living* magazine. Jim is apparently retiring from that role and our President has been asked to fill the vacancy.

POT POURRI

William Redman

Last issue, in an article giving some background on William Redman - who has given his name to the brand new Redman Plaza in Dee Why - I mentioned that the first issue of the *Sydney Herald* was produced from the rear of a hotel, the ‘Keep Within Compass’, that was located in lower George Street and owned by William’s father, John. I had read this cryptic fact in several publications. A little further reading revealed that some more detail is given in *Company of Heralds* by Gavin Souter, a book that recounts the history of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. On the *Herald’s* beginning it states:

“The *Sydney Herald* had begun publication as a weekly on 18 April 1831 under the proprietorship of three recent immigrants: Alfred Ward Stephens, a 27 year old Englishman; Frederick Michael Stokes, 26, one of nineteen children fathered by a Surrey printer, and himself a qualified printer; and William McGarvie, the 21 year old brother of the Reverend Jon McGarvie who, since his arrival in 1828, had been in charge of a library and stationery warehouse in Lower George Street belonging to the *Sydney*

Gazette. Stephens and Stokes both worked for the *Gazette*, the former as a clerk the latter as a bookkeeper.

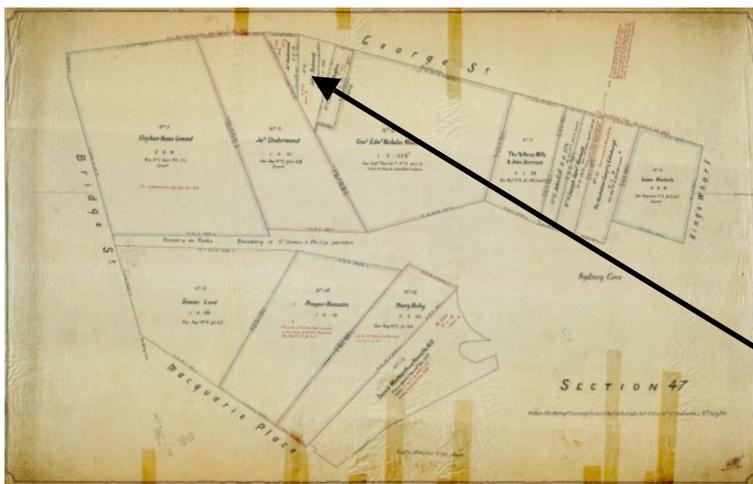
The *Sydney Herald* was first published in a two storied stone building not far from the *Gazette* office in **Redman's Court**, a lane running off the eastern side of George Street about halfway between Bridge Street and what is now Circular Quay. The Herald building stood behind an inn called 'Keep Within Compass' which fronted onto George Street, and near the back of the Herald was a stone jetty leading to an inlet of Sydney Cove which then extended almost as far as Bridge Street.

Only a few yards from the jetty was the mouth of the Tank Stream whose supply of fresh water had drawn the first settlers to Sydney Cove. Rising from sandstone springs on the western side of what is now Hyde Park, the Tank Stream ran north between Pitt and George Streets and in 1831 was still Sydney's main water supply."



The first office of the *Sydney Herald* in Redman's Court, Lower George Street, drawn in 1931 from a photograph of the building, which was demolished in 1916.

The text reads: "The first office of the *Sydney Herald* in Redman's Court, Lower George Street, drawn in 1931 from a photograph of the building which was demolished in 1916.



So remarkably, Redman Plaza in Dee Why is a "direct" descendant of Redman Court, with a 190 year gap in between.

Richard Michell

1835 map of Lower George Street, John Redmond's (that is, Redman's) land marked - with thanks to Michelle Richmond

Notice of Special Resolution

Notice is hereby given that at the General Meeting of the Society to be held on Saturday 10 March, 2018 at 2.00 pm at the North Curl Curl Community Centre, cnr. Griffin and Abbott Roads, it is proposed to move a Special Motion to change Clause 11, Paragraph (h) of our Constitution (known as Objects and Rules) from the current

"11(h) Any 5 members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of a meeting of the Committee."

to

"11(h) Any 3 members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of a meeting of the Committee."

The purpose of the proposal is to reduce the Quorum for a Committee meeting from the current 5 to 3.

If you cannot attend the meeting you are free to vote by Proxy. Please use the form on the last page.

Help needed! (please email archivist@mwphs.com or contact requester direct if they have given details)

Sue Webb: I am trying to trace my grandfather, John Gordon and his wife Elise Mabel. Until around 1960 they were living in Claremont, WA. He was an accountant and had been the president of the Blighty Club there until 1949.

I have recently found him and Elsie on a passenger list travelling from Singapore to Fremantle in 1961 and on to Alexandra Crescent, Bayview, NSW, PO Box 72, Manly, NSW. Do you know if this might have been a residential address or perhaps just a hotel or c/o address?

Sue Gisborne (Daughter of Karlene Ludowici nee Peters): I'm trying to find some historical information regarding the property 27 Ocean Road, Palm Beach, which was formerly owned by my maternal grandfather Thomas Peters.

I know that my grandfather was part of a group of businessmen who purchased Palm Beach lands, and who subsequently owned the beachfront property at 27 Ocean Road Palm Beach.

The home was firstly used by the family as a weekender, then when my grandfather retired, as the family home.

I am wondering whether you could tell me when the land was purchased, and also, when the building was constructed, occupied and later sold (the latter circa 1954). My cousin has the original photographs of the construction period, however there are no members of the older generation alive, and we are trying to be accurate in our recording. Which Council would have been responsible for DAs etc in the early 1900s?

I am interested to research further details when I have more time, and I have family and other photographs of the area which may be of interest to the Society.

ARTICLE

OXFORD FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOL 1928-1986

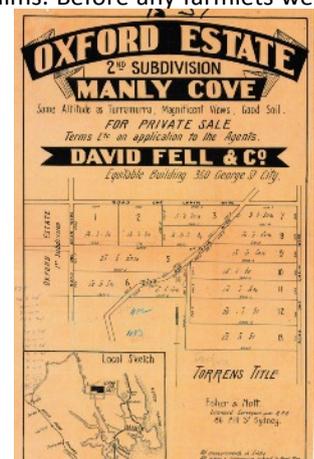
For almost a century one-teacher schools existed in nearly every country district in New South Wales. Beginning in the 1960s, however, small bush schools began to be closed down, primarily due to economies of scale and improved transport. Instead, children went by bus to larger schools with better continuity into secondary education. A unique feature of the one-teacher school at Oxford Falls is that it became the last of its kind in the Sydney metropolitan area.

The Oxford Falls community -

As a small farming community, Oxford Falls was first settled in the early 1900s. The first land grants were towards French's Forest in 1878: one to Lancelot Threlkeld (son of the missionary of that name), an auctioneer; the other to Alexander Bowman, Member for Hawkesbury in the legislative council. In 1885, 194 acres of Bowman's land was sold to the Oxford Land Company, subdivided, then offered for sale as 'Oxford Estate'. Purchasing interest proved minimal. In 1909, the property was acquired by partners David Fell and Horace Robey who increased it to 352 acres, but experienced little improvement in sales. The estate's largely dormant existence, however, lent its name to Oxford Creek, Oxford Falls Valley and the waterfalls on Middle Creek(1).

The valley was officially gazetted Oxford Falls in 1902, replacing its local name Bloodwood Gully which slowly fell out of use. As the valley had quite good soil, Bloodwood eucalypts grew well, along with the Cabbage Tree palms. Before any farmlets were established, timber-getters had visited and named the valley. Around 1890, the Department of Lands surveyed the area into portions of about 10-12 acres. In 1907 the only residents were Daniel and Angelina Carney at Cabbage Tree valley near Oxford Creek, and Alfred Andersen near Middle Creek. Next to arrive in 1908 was John Boyer, a South African, who named his property 'Pilgrim's Rest'.

Boyer relates that timber-cutters twenty years earlier were getting 1700 palings from a big tree, and that a lot of timber was collected by contractors for Ben Jones, a Manly wheelwright and coach builder who owned land in Cabbage Tree valley. By the time Boyer arrived, the land had been subdivided into smaller blocks of 4-6 acres, selling for about 4 pounds an acre. Newcomers around this time included John MacGregor, the Minnisses, Johnstons, Sloanes, Cooks, Martins, Holmes, Whites and Rigbys. Their farmlets typically had fruit trees, poultry, pigs, market vegetables, etc. Other owners were only resident on weekends. Boyer relates they 'would come in, chop a few trees down, run out the line of a fence, and then depart'(2).



After one weekender named Gustav Renz (proprietor of the Australia Café in George Street) died in 1909, his wife Maria decided to reside on their block. She extended it in 1912 by 12 acres, for which she paid 69 pounds. 'Madame Renz', as she was always called, had some pisé huts built on her land for renting. As the Falls were becoming a scenic attraction, some of her clients were probably weekend sightseers. She called her property 'Jerusalem Park' and lived there for about ten years before retiring to a flat in Kangaroo Street, Manly, where she died in 1926(3).

The church hall school -

Between 1915 and 1917, nine children used to walk 3-4 miles to Brookvale School: Lorne Holmes, Bert Martin, Kingsley and Oliver White, Bill and Nell Rigby, Florrie, Grace and Millie Johnston. In December 1924, on behalf of some parents, Viv Hawkins wrote to the Minister for Education requesting that the Department consider opening an Oxford Falls school. There were then 14 families in the locality with 22 children, nine of school age. As this could not ensure an average attendance of ten required for a provisional school, the application did not progress.

Over the next two years the number of schoolchildren increased, and in December 1926 the Department recommended that a school site be acquired without delay. The land was purchased in May 1927 from John Pizzey for 300 pounds. Just over 4 acres in size, it had a northerly aspect and ran slightly uphill from Dreadnought Road(4) : Portion 1099, Parish of Manly Cove, County of Cumberland.

To avoid delay while the school was planned and built, the Department rented nearby St Andrews church hall as a schoolroom for 10/- per week. On 23 January 1928 the first teacher, George Campbell, enrolled four girls and four boys: Rae Smith, Lillian, Gladys and Winnie Stain, George Shepherd, Ernest Flew, Walter MacGregor and Albert Reid. Later that month, Roy and Esther Chappell, George Sutherland, Robert and Keith King, and Roddy and Henry Smith were enrolled; and in February, David Hawkins, Charles Blackford, Albert and Edward Daines, Gordon Prescott, and Jean, Nancy and Clement Perry. In total, 23 pupils attended the church hall school in its opening year(5).

The new school –

A building tender had been accepted from Sellar Brothers of Dee Why, and in April 1930 the Department of Public Works reported that the new school was ready for use: -

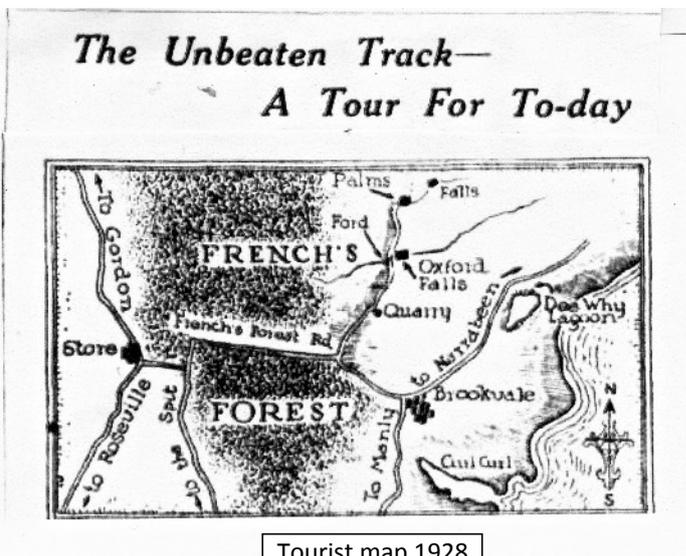
'This is a newly established building upon a new site and comprises one classroom affording seating for 40 pupils, there is also a verandah and a hatroom, the latter having 4 basins for washing purposes. The building is constructed of wood walls on brick piers, is covered with galvanized iron and is well lighted and ventilated.

The cost (inclusive of closets) has been 487 pounds 7 shillings and 7 pence' (6)

Oxford Falls Provisional School was officially opened on 7 June 1930 by Inspector WJ Frazer. For the occasion, the pupils put on a special display of Maypole dancing. The next special event was Arbor Day in August 1931. The Governor Sir Philip Game attended, accompanied by Lady Game, Archdale Parkhill MP, Brigadier General Anderson, Warringah Shire President Hitchcock and Chief Inspector Harkness. The guard of honour included John Boyer representing the Legion of Frontiersmen. The welcoming address was read by a pupil, Gordon Prescott, and a bouquet of flowers was presented to Lady Game by the pupil Joyce Blackford. Lady Game planted a red camellia, the Governor an English oak, and other guests several more trees. Inspector Harkness complimented the headmaster on his splendid work at the school.

When George Campbell began teaching at the school, he would take a tram to Brookvale then walk the last three miles. After he bought a 'Baby' Austin 7 car, his travel to and from school became much easier, though at times there was a new task for his pupils: as late as the 1980s they still remembered having to push-start Mr Campbell's Austin with his 16 stone in it over the rough gravel road(7).

Mr Campbell was highly respected by both the pupils and community. He played a key role in establishing the school and had



Tourist map 1928



Oxford Falls Primary School 1928 with Mr. Campbell



Opening day 1930

served there more than seven years when school was abruptly suspended on Monday 27 May 1935. Boarding his car that morning, at his home in Alexander St, Manly, George Campbell suddenly collapsed and died, aged 63(8).

Changes to the school –

With the Department's approval, the P&C Association had a weather shed built in July 1933: 15 x 8ft in size, 9ft high at the front, decreasing to 7ft at the rear. Due to its dirt floor, some blame was attributed to the weather shed when Diphtheria swept through the school a few months later. This gave rise to a Council health inspection, resulting in a better weather-shed floor, some changes to the water tank and better tank cleaning from then on.

Pupil numbers steadily grew in the first few years and by 1934 the school had an average attendance of at least 20 pupils. This enabled upgrading from a provisional to a public school. Accordingly, it officially be-

came Oxford Falls Public School in January 1935.

Electric light reached the school in March 1939, and in the same year work began on the road from Dalwood Homes at Seaforth to Pittwater Road at Narrabeen - now Wakehurst Parkway. This gave rise in 1940 to correspondence between the Departments of Main Roads and Education regarding the road's expected impact on the school-grounds. It was thought the school building would have to be shifted back from the road, but the matter was left in abeyance when roadwork was suspended during World War 2.

As it happened, although some school property was resumed for the road, the building wasn't moved. 'Lady Wakehurst Drive' was opened to traffic in March 1946 (two months after the Governor, Lord Wakehurst, died). In 1951 Main Roads advised the Education Department that some road widening would have a further impact on the school. Asked to report on this, a district inspector recommended against moving the schoolroom as he thought the school might be closed within two years.

The P&C Association erected a small war memorial in front of the schoolroom in 1951. Thereafter, Remembrance Day and Anzac Day services were held at the school for 25 years, until the former was transferred to a hall at Beacon Hill. Anzac Day dawn services continue to be held at the old school site to this day.

Remarkably, the school building has changed little over nearly a century. The front verandah was glazed-in sometime before 1950, but this was reversed after the school closed and the Peace Park conversion was undertaken. There was also some extra school property bought in 1970 for future expansion (Lot 1, DP52889, 3 acres, ½ perch in size) which has since been sold.

The remaining school years –

After George Campbell, the next two teachers served long terms at the school: James Gallagher nearly 13 years 1935-1947, then William Turner 1948-1960. Tragically, Mr Turner was killed in a car accident at the corner of Dreadnought and Oxford Falls Road, on his way home from school in 1960. His replacement Lester Watkin stayed until he retired in 1969. One highlight Mr Watkin related years later was the unexpected arrival of an ABC television team one day, to film the school for the program 'This Day Tonight'.

Interesting to note is that our Society Fellow, George Champion, stood in for Lester Watkin for three weeks in 1968. Interviewed by the Manly Daily in 2006, George recalled his brief experience as relieving teacher-in-charge: -

'You had to be everything at the school, including teacher and headmaster, and you needed the co-operation of all the kids. There were no problems with discipline. With one-teacher schools you have to train the big kids to help the little kids... After lunch you'd have to whistle the kids out of the bush where they had been playing. They knew the bush very well and they showed me the aboriginal engravings on the hill above the school'(9).

Lester Watkin was succeeded by Ian Witt (1969-73), Philip Harding (1974-76), Rodger Millward (1977), Roger Gray (1978-81) and Stephen Wright (1982-86). As often happens in small schools, pupil numbers fluctuated considerably over the years. At times the school was considered overcrowded, for example in a 1967 inspector's report, whereas a 1978 school photo has only 12 pupils beside their teacher, Roger Gray.

A special occasion was the school's 50th celebration in 1978. A P&C committee to organize it comprised Roy Chappell, Wal

McGregor, Len McIntyre and George Sutherland. The school's history was researched for all to share in a booklet that has greatly assisted this article. It is well-illustrated, includes contributions by former pupils and teachers, and lists all 500 or so pupils who attended, including their years at the school(10).

Although in earlier decades the school had been a useful resource for student teachers' training in Sydney, it no longer served that role in the 1980s, being one of the few one-teacher schools anywhere in NSW. Rather, it had become an anachronism when nearly all schoolchildren were attending bigger schools that were better resourced, more economically viable to run, and offered wider educational and social experiences. In these circumstances, the Department closed the school in February 1986. Eight pupils were attending during the school's final year.

Conversion to Oxford Falls Peace Park –

Following its closure, the school became increasingly derelict while its future use was debated. Then in 1991 the Department announced that it planned to demolish the building and sell the site. This gave rise to a local campaign to save the school led by the Warringah Shire councillors Paul Couvret and Frank Beckman, local MPs Brad Hazzard and Terry Metherell, and Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society. After various ideas were discussed with the Education Department, an agreement was reached on the Council assuming control of the schoolroom and nearby surrounds, and the remaining land being re-zoned as two residential blocks for sale by the Government(11).

Further discussion between Warringah Council and the leading preservationists led to the establishment of Oxford Falls Peace Park, now the site of various functions including the long-standing and well-attended Anzac Day dawn services. Restored to mint condition by the Council, the old schoolroom began its second life as a centrepiece of the Park in 1995.

Endnotes –

1. George & Shelagh Champion, 'Early French's Forest and the Belrose Connection', 2012, unpub. MS - Local Studies, Dee Why Lib.
2. John Boyer, 'Oxford Falls', address to MWPHS, 19 August 1925 - Champion archive.
3. Vera McFarlane, 'Jerusalem Park, Oxford Falls', uni. assignment, 1984 - Local Studies, Dee Why Lib.; *Kyogle Examiner*, 1 June 1926 – Trove.
4. Dreadnoughts were Britain's most superior battleships in the early 1900s. When a Sydney Trust founded to buy one for Australia could only raise half the cost, its funds were diverted to the migration of British boys to Australia. The first 'Dreadnought Boys' reached Sydney in 1911. The scheme halted during WW1, resumed in 1921, and ran till the Depression in 1930.
5. Oxford Falls P&C, *Oxford Falls Primary School, 50 Years Celebration, 1978* - Champion archive.
6. For all Dept. of Educ. records: 'Oxford Falls School', 5/17247.1, NSW Records (summary in Louise Hardy, 'Oxford Falls School', uni. assignment, c1995 - Local Studies, Dee Why Lib.); School history file, staffing record and photo, courtesy of Dept. of Educ., Sydney.
7. Oxford Falls P&C, op.cit.
8. *The Sun*, 27 May 1935 – Trove.
9. *Manly Daily*, 21 March 2006 – Champion archive
10. Oxford Falls P&C, op.cit.
11. *Manly Daily*, 1 June & 13 July, 1991 – Champion archive

Keith Amos



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Established 1924

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Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

Membership Renewal/Application Form - 2018

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]

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Postcode

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(Bus.)

(Mobile)

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Signature:

Date:

MEMBERSHIP FEES

\$20 Single

\$25 Household (2 persons) or Organisation

FEE: \$..... including emailed copy of the Peninsula Historian

\$12.00..... if you require Peninsula Historian by post

DONATION: \$.....

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

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Account Number: 00907384

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Proxy Voting Form

I, _____ being a financial member of the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society Inc., appoint the Chairperson to be my proxy at the General Meeting to be convened on the 14th of March, 2018 and to vote on my behalf on the proposed special motion to reduce the necessary Quorum at a Committee Meeting of the Society in the manner indicated below.

Re the motion that:

“ Clause 11(h) of the Constitution be altered to read:

Any 3 members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of the business of a meeting of the Committee”

- I a) Agree (For)
 b) Disagree (Against) (indicate which proposition **you support**)

Signed _____

Print name

Date _____

Email a scanned copy of your completed form to the Secretary at *difarina@bigpond.com* or mail to **The Secretary, Manly Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society Inc, PO Box 695, MANLY, NSW 1655**. The form must be received prior to Saturday 10 March 2018.