

# Newsletter

JUNE 2023 I SERIES 5 I NO. 10

## President's message

Dear members and friends

My goodness we are fifty! Well, there are those of us who may be some months beyond that milestone . But of course, I mean that the Ashfield and District Historical Society has been a vital part of our community for five decades. Few community organisations can make such a claim and, ironically, very few historical societies have maintained strength, and relevance for as long.

So, thanks to our membership and to past and present Committee Members who have committed innumerable volunteer hours to make the Society such an ongoing success.

As local member and Minister for Transport the **Hon. Jo Haylen MP** put it in her letter to the Society on 8 June 2023:

*I warmly congratulate the Society on a successful fifty years of honouring the rich history and heritage of Ashfield and its surrounds. Each generation has a responsibility to protect and reflect on our history. The critical work you do ensures future generations will understand and continue to learn from the challenges and achievements of our past and fully understand the foundations of our community, stretching back to First Nations custodianship of land.*

And now to celebrate and to build towards the next fifty years.

Sadly, April saw the passing of a foundation member of the Society, **John Oastler Ward**, a wonderful man whose life touched so many and saved so much. We owe him a tremendous debt. You will see in the newsletter text of a Condolence which was moved at the Inner West Council on the 20 June 2023.

Thanks to all who have contributed to another lively newsletter.

**Alex Lofts**

# 50th Anniversary of Ashfield and District Historical Society

The Society began in 1973, during a time of changing fashions, bold music and raised environmental consciousness.

Fifty years later, we are still in times of change. The Society is thriving and is still actively involved in what is now the Inner West community.

A luncheon is being held to celebrate the members past and present, and the contribution we have made to local history and heritage advocacy including our significant catalogue of journals over the last 50 years.

As we catch up with old friends, 1970s music and possibly fashion fun will be the go.

Bookings have closed. Thank you to those who are able to attend to celebrate this landmark with us.

The event is sure to be a huge success thanks to the organisation of **Carolyn Carter, Lois Gray, Alex Lofts and Jan & Paul Williams.**



## Upcoming events

### Launch of book on John Jasper Stone

**Sunday 23 July 2023**

**Summer Hill Community  
Centre at 2pm**

**John Jasper Stone** was born in Shoreditch, a poor part of London, and arrived in Australia at age seven, with his parents in 1855, settling in crowded Surry Hills. As a lad, he joined the Public Works Department in Sydney and trained as a draughtsman, later becoming a civil engineer.

In 1888 Stone branched out on his own as a Consulting Engineer, Patent Attorney and Architect and over his working life was involved in many projects across New South Wales.

**Ann O'Connell** has researched and written a book about Stone, with information and images of his buildings, industrial works and patents that have been identified. Among these are several houses in Ashfield.

The book is published with the assistance of a grant from the **Royal Australian Historical Society.**

Please join us for the book launch.

**Please register to attend on our website:**

[Book Launch: Ann O'Connell's 'John Jasper Stone', \(1848-1921\): Engineer, Architect and Baptist – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](http://ashfieldhistory.org.au)

**Cost:**

Members	\$5
Non Members	\$10

**Book early as numbers are limited.**

## Upcoming events

### Land Titles Talk by Carol Liston

20 August 2023

Room 4, Ashfield Civic Centre  
at 2pm

**Associate Professor Carol Liston AO** will educate us on the value of Land Title records, what can be learned from them, and how to effectively search them.



Source: [Geographical Names Board](#)  
[Geographical Names Board of NSW](#)

**Please register to attend on our website:**

[Land Titles Talk – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](#)

#### Cost:

Members	\$5
Non Members	\$10



Source: [Land titles office NSW | Property Registry](#)

## Walking tour of Art Deco in Haberfield

10 September 2023

Meet at Federation Square in  
Ramsay Street  
at 2pm



As part of History Week, **Sue Jackson-Stepowski** and **Gordon Hill** will be leading a walking tour of Haberfields's Art Deco architecture, including the former Cinema.

Numbers will be limited.

**Please register to attend on our website:**

[Art Deco Walk in Haberfield and Inspection of the former Cinema: History Week. – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](#)

#### Cost:

Members	\$5
Non Members	\$10

## Upcoming events

### An Overview of the State Archives

by Christine Yeats

15 October 2023

Room 4, Ashfield Civic Centre  
at 2pm

**Christine Yeats**, former Archivist with State Records Office, will present an overview of Resources of the State Archives.



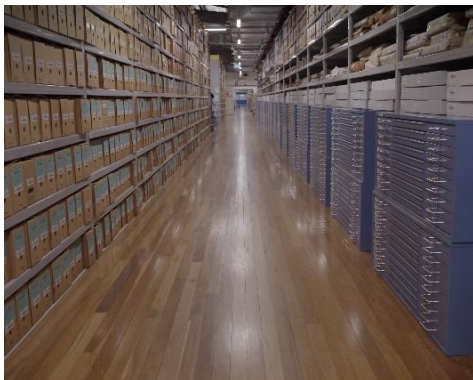
Source: [Christine Yeats | \(phansw.org.au\)](https://phansw.org.au)

Christine will share some of her extensive knowledge of the resources available online through Museums of History NSW.

Please register to attend on our website:

[State Archives/ Museums of History – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](https://ashfieldhistory.org.au)

This is a Members Only event.



Source: [About State Archives Collection \(mhnsw.au\)](https://mhnsw.au)

**For future registrations, see our website.**

#### **Note to Members:**

We are very privileged to have two eminent knowledgeable and experienced researchers coming to address our August and October meetings of the Society.

*Carol and Christine have requested suggestions from members on issues/topics to cover in their talks.*

Please send any aspects of land tiles or researching using the State Archives or other research type questions that you would like covered in the talks by email to

[admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au](mailto:admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au)

by the end of July to enable the speakers to consider them.

### Launch of Houses II Journal

19 November 2023

Room 4, Ashfield Civic Centre  
at 2pm

Join us for the launch of our second *Houses* journal.

As with our first *Houses* journal this publication of the Society contains many interesting stories about houses in the Ashfield area and the lives of the families in times past.

**For future registrations, see our website.**



# Past events

## House Inspection in Summer Hill



At 107 Prospect Road Summer Hill on Sunday **19 March 2023**, about 25 people attended a house viewing (despite the heat).

Attendees enjoyed a tour of the house and a talk by **Lois Gray** and **Sue Jackson-Stepowski** who spoke about the property's history and architectural features.

The talk was held in the impressive lounge area at the front of the house.

While the house can be classified as a Californian bungalow, it has some intriguing features not common in other Californian bungalows: dual entrances from the front porch to the large central lounge area; fine timber detailing on the staircase; and a sunroom off the main bedroom into which you had to step down into via 3 steps.

We heard that this home, known as *Kookaburra* in 1920 and the former house on the site, *Brent Tor* have had some very interesting associations.

The first owner who had *Brent Tor* constructed was **Brent Rodd**, a solicitor after whom Rodd Island was named. His son **Savary T Rodd** (real estate agent) lived here until it was sold when became bankrupt. His wife, Gertrude, was a grand- daughter of **Gregory Blaxland**, of Blue Mountains crossing fame.

The current house was built in 1920 and **Charles and Elsie Hopkins** were the first owners, Charles however was convicted of betting fraud with a paper he owned called *The Tout*.

And so the house was sold to **S B Williams** with the unusual double qualification of pharmacist and dentist. The Williams lived there for over 30 years. His last practice was in Marrickville Road Dulwich Hill.

Given the extreme heat of the day chilled watermelon was a great hit for afternoon tea. Thank you to Marianne for showing us her home.



**Lois Gray**

**Photographs: Heather Warton**

## Past events

### A Saunter down Smith Street

As part of the **National Trust's Heritage Week 2023** the Ashfield and District Historical Society organised a walk, a "Saunter down Smith Street, Summer Hill for members and others who were eager to learn more of the history of the area, its residents and the way the architecture reflects the differing styles and tastes.

The *Saunter* was held in two sessions each of hours on **Sunday 23 April and Sunday May 7 2023**, both being conducted by past Society President **Mark Sabolch**.



The starting point was the John Paton Reserve with some preliminary remarks from Mark. As we wove our way from the Prospect Road end of the strip, criss-crossing where possible, Mark provided a flow of information on sub-divisions and growth along Smith Street.

He also shared with the group images of the developments and buildings in earlier times. He encouraged the group to participate by allowing the walkers to point out features of buildings that were fashionable, changes in building styles, materials used and special features.

Mark readily provided background information of names of first owners and subsequent notable residents and business owners in Smith Street down to Spencer Street while

participants also shared some reminiscences of former residents.

Although traffic in the area including other pedestrians, I am sure that all appreciated more of the history and heritage of Summer Hill through Mark's scholarship and deep knowledge.



I was a participant in the first session of the *Saunter down Smith Street* on 23 April 2023 joining an appreciative audience. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I missed the closing comments by Mark. I hope that the walk and its organisers were warmly thanked.



**Jennifer Broomhead**

**Photographs: Michael Thomson**

## Heritage Report

The ADHS has made submissions on the following DAs but there have been no determinations by Council as yet:

- 20 Clissold Street Ashfield (corner of Fairleigh Street)
- 2 Federal Avenue Ashfield
- 6 Victoria Square Ashfield

The Council finally responded to the major deficiencies and excesses of the DA for proposed additions to heritage item 19 Leopold Street Croydon Park by sending the applicant a 10 page letter pointing them out. The Council suggested the DA be withdrawn - and it was!

The Society has written a letter in support of the Friends of Callan Park objecting to a proposed telecommunications tower next door to Callan Park, in full view from *Kirkbride*.

The Haberfield Association recently asked the Balmain Association, Marrickville Heritage Society and us how we keep track of DAs lodged with Council and whether we felt the consultation on heritage issues through the current process was satisfactory. I advised that I check weekly on the DAs lodged via the Tracking DA facility of the Council. On behalf of the Society, a written submission is then made during the notification period, where considered necessary for a particular DA.

The request from the Haberfield Association (HA) also outlined concerns it has with the DA process and communication with Council. These issues were discussed at a meeting of community heritage groups that was convened by the HA that I attended (as ADHS representative) in late in 2022.

The ADHS, like its neighbouring history & heritage groups will continue to advocate for heritage issues to Inner West Council.

**David Rollinson**

## Ashfield on YouTube

**The St Peters Cooks River History Group** have a YouTube channel and have created some interesting stories, including this one on Ashfield.

A wealth of information and images are presented. See the link:

[Ashfield, Sydney, N.S.W - YouTube](#)

## Inner West Council Built Environment Awards 2023 - Marrickville Medal

The Built Environment Awards Team of Inner West Council advises that submissions are now open for the 2023 Inner West Built Environment Awards (the Marrickville Medal):

The conservation award, which has been awarded annually since 1995, is open to all building works within the Inner West local government area, large or small, public or private, completed in the past three years and having positive conservation outcomes.

***It is an opportunity to celebrate the unique and rich built environment of the Inner West and come together with colleagues to share ideas and stories.***

This year's theme is 'Sharing stories of our built environment' in line with the National Trust Heritage Festival theme.

For further information and to submit an entry, please go to the [Built Environment Awards webpage](#).

**Submissions close on 30 June 2023.**



## Boxed In

ADHS Member, **Ronda Gaffey** wrote in the last Newsletter about the comings and goings she observed on regular walks in her neighbourhood. Ronda has written a follow up story on recent events in Carlisle Street:

Change is inevitable and a changing streetscape is also inevitable as lifestyles evolve and value is placed on having more 'space' and 'open plan' living is a requisite. None of this four kids in two bedrooms and someone out in the enclosed veranda...and one bathroom for all to share!

On daily walks all manner of things are noted - a missing paling, a fresh coat of paint, roses pruned, a riotous dandelion lawn, a revamped garden and the odd pile of dumped rubbish. Recently I was stopped in my tracks seeing a Development Application (DA) notice attached to a fence down the street! I read on and there so definite, so finite an action, the word, 'demolition'. There was a sharp intake of breath and then a loud 'oh no'!



My 'patch' is Carlisle Street in Ashfield, part of an 1892 subdivision which has remained relatively unchanged over the last 125 years or so. Apart from two 1960's unit blocks, there is a further aberration - a box house which replaced an early cottage and soon, there will be another one.

This modest, single fronted cottage has drawn me in since I have come to know something of its history and about **Mrs. Bollinger** who lived there.

Knowing about my research into my house and the Carlisle Estate, **Ann O'Connell** sent me a cassette recording transcript made in 1977\* in which Mrs. B recalls her early life in Ashfield and the neighbourhood she came to know, the families she knew and the children she played with. I have been fond of the house and Mrs. B ever since.

With the demolition of the cottage, something is lost forever, but some wonderful memories have been captured for posterity with Ashfield Historical Society's 1977 oral history recording.

My walks will not quite be the same without Mrs. B's cottage, a place she knew from childhood and a house so imbued with memories of Carlisle Street and its inhabitants. Like Mrs. B who had lived in Carlisle Street since 1909 and in 1977 said: I have witnessed many changes, I know I will too, but it still grates...

At least the new 'box' will complement the 'other box' next door and, it has a slight pitch to the roof design! But just so at odds with the surrounding single and double-fronted cottages and Victorian villas which still dominate and characterise the streetscape.



The DA was approved on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2023.

### Ronda Gaffey

*\*Reminiscences of Mrs E. Z Bollinger of 18 Carlisle Street Ashfield, 1977 - transcribed from audiocassette recording by **Clare Herscovitch**, 2020.*

Thank you to **Colin Webb** for the photograph of 'Mrs. B's cottage in Carlisle Street and for the additional DA research including the image of the proposed dwelling.



# Up Parramatta Road: The Secrets of Sydney's Varicose Vein

***Written by Grace Mitchell and Rose Mitchell, this story was originally published in the Sydney University weekly newspaper, Honi Soit in March 2023. We reproduce it below, with the kind permission of the authors.***

We all love to hate Parramatta Road. With its traffic jams, car horns and unshifting smog, just invoking its name is enough to give anyone a headache. The 23-kilometre motorway has famously been dubbed Sydney's "varicose vein", an ugly cluster of activity that flares to breaking point at peak hour. Cars swerve, drivers curse out open windows, crowds of impatient commuters push their way onto already packed buses, making the simple act of getting home more like a contact sport.

But, there is no denying that this chaotic stretch of road holds a special place in our hearts. Like many Sydneysiders, Parramatta Road has been a recurring motif in our lives. We remember childhood music lessons as we pass through Leichhardt on the 413. We remember our first summer jobs at Kidstuff as we pull up at a stop in Camperdown. We remember learning to drive as we lurch over another pot-hole.

***It's time we give Parramatta Road a second chance. Let us look beyond the traffic and the smog for a moment to reconsider just a small piece of its much larger "hidden" history.***

## **Origins**

Firstly, when thinking and writing about Australian history, it is crucial that we discuss the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories that are alive around us to encompass a broader perspective of our history and our place within this history.

Importantly, the Parramatta Road that we now traverse most mornings was built over a trading path that was used by the Gadigal, Wangal, and Wallumettagal peoples of the Eora Nation and the Burramattagal people of the Darug Nation.

Following the low lying ridges of the area, this path was instrumental in trading resources and also communication between these groups. Yet, little remembrance of the Aboriginal origins of Parramatta Road are present today, highlighting the Eurocentric ways we remember our history.

The Parramatta Road that we now know was officially opened in 1811, but its history as a colonial "road" really began shortly after British invasion in 1788. Parramatta Road began as a three metre wide track that was carved by convicts between 1789 and 1791 to link the settlements of Sydney Town and Parramatta. This track was later widened in 1794 to make way for carriages. Many reports from the early 19th-century indicate that the road was often unkept and in constant need of repair. Nevertheless, for the early Sydney Town colony, the road was a vital means of opening the supply chain between Sydney Town and the inland Parramatta settlement. In this way, the road was the first road in Australia to connect two cities; although hard to imagine today, Sydney Town and Parramatta were once two distinct areas.

We can get a glimpse of the early life of Parramatta Road from the words of early coloniser, Harriet Blaxland, who in 1807 wrote: *My earliest memory of the colony commenced with a journey of 15 miles from Sydney to Parramatta. The road - a cart track only the width of the wheels, the wild natural forest almost closing overhead, still and silent as it was - can never be forgotten.*

# Up Parramatta Road

It is true that these early days of Parramatta Road will “never be forgotten”; remnants of these early colonial days can still be found just around the corner from Sydney University.

If you happen to have an hour off between classes, head over to the University Hall building on the corner of Parramatta Road and Glebe Point Road. Here, you can find the remnant of an original “Boundary Stone” that marked the boundary of early Sydney Town, probably put in during the 1820s under Governor Macquarie. It seems amazing to think just how many individuals have travelled past this remnant of Sydney’s colonial history; Parramatta Road is indeed a physical coalescence of history and the present.

## Battle Bridge

All along Parramatta Road we can find instances of this melding between past and present. One such site is Battle Bridge, a sandstone historical site that has been built over, literally, by the modern day - in other words, concrete. The name “Battle Bridge” itself holds clues as to the history of the Parramatta Road area. According to the Ashfield Historical Society’s Felicity Barry in the Society’s publication, *Along Parramatta Road*, a “plausible explanation [to this name] appears to be that boxing matches were held in this area.”

Located on the border of Summer Hill and Lewisham (just underneath the Taverners Hill light rail station), Battle Bridge has acted as a bridge to cross Long Cove Creek, what is now Hawthorne Canal, since the early 1800s.

In the first half of the 19th-century, the bridge was built out of timber and sticks, following much of the colonial city’s architecture. However, by 1865, the section of the Parramatta Road at Taverner’s Hill was in “notoriously bad [condition]” and “needed ballasting and metalling,” as the Department of Public Works scathingly noted.

Thus, in 1873, the bridge relinquished its timber frame in turn for a sandstone one, a necessity for a bridge that possessed “holes through which a man might easily disappear,” as one brave traveller noted in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald. Between 1922 and 1923, Battle Bridge was widened with steel-beam and brick to accommodate for the advent of the motorcar.

Unfortunately, modern-day concrete ensued and the original bridge remains hidden in view to the many commuters who charge down the hill on the 461X. Yet, if you look closely, you can still see the original wall of the bridge next to the footpath on Parramatta Road, signifying that history is still, for the moment, present.

## The Peek Frean Factory Building

While many today know this site as the Ashfield Bunnings or the indicator that one must “turn off onto that street that gets me off Parramatta Road,” the bright Bunnings-coloured clock tower has a rich history that stems beyond the hardware conglomerate.

Built in 1936, the distinctive clock tower was originally constructed to house the Australian wing of Peek Frean & Company, a British biscuit business. The factory was initially housed in what is now Sydney University’s Faculty of Nursing on Mallet Street. Yet, in 1935, the owners of Peek Frean endeavoured to expand their biscuit bounty, purchasing a large plot of land on the intersection of Frederick Street and Parramatta Road. Construction for the factory was rapid and laborious, with the purchased land having to be levelled before construction could begin.

The factory opened in 1937, with the clock tower added in 1943. Peek Frean & Company operated the biscuit factory, or what became known as the Vita-Wheat building, on this site from 1937 until 1975 when the company was taken over by Arnotts.

The latter continued to make their biscuits products here until 1993. Bunnings have operated on this site since 2001.

## Up Parramatta Road

Like many sites — or sights — along Parramatta Road, the Peek Frean factory building reminds us that history is everyone along this strip of shops, car dealerships, and bus routes. Perhaps next time you venture to Bunnings, see if you can smell the wisps of Vita-Wheats amongst the hammers and magnetic hooks.

### The Olympia Milk Bar

Today, 190 Parramatta Road in Stanmore is just another vacant shop. The windows are plastered with newspaper, the old swing sign is cracked and fading. But, for over fifty years, this shop served as the infamous *Olympia* Milk Bar.

The *Olympia* first opened in 1939 next door to the *Olympia De Luxe Theatre*. Through wide concertina doors, film-goers would spill from the cinema into the milk bar, jostling amicably for space at the bench. Here, they would sip milkshakes and unwrap colourful chocolates, still lost in a Hollywood fantasy beneath the gold lights that sparkled from the art-deco mirrors on the wall. In the 1960's, the cinema transformed into a skating rink and The *Olympia* was filled with a new, but equally enthusiastic, clientele.

By the 1980's, when the skate rink had changed again into Stanmore Twin Cinemas, milk bars had already begun to lose their initial novelty. The steady stream of customers that The *Olympia* once enjoyed dwindled. Eventually, the lights were switched off. Dust settled on the shelves. The bright posters of Streets Ice-Cream and Cadbury's Chocolate faded. In 2017, the shop was closed, and for the first time in sixty years, is now for sale.

Of course, we could go on. After all, Parramatta Road is 23 kilometres! There's the abundant array of weird — or "specialty" — stores, iconic watering holes, and of course the infamous Staccas, which has a whole "hidden" history of its own.

Perhaps we'll save it for our next article. Parramatta Road and its secrets remind us that, when we look beyond the stained windows of our morning 413 or past the grittiness of the road's concrete skin, a hidden world where past and present coalesce is all around us.

### Grace Mitchell and Rose Mitchell



Source: on line story from *The Greek Herald*  
3 April 2021:

[End of an era: Olympia milk bar boarded up as owner moves out after 60 years - Greek Herald](#)



*Art deco Peak Frean's American biscuit factory, corner Frederick Street and Parramatta Road, Ashfield*

Ted Hood, 1911-2000. Taken in 1937

Source: NSW State Library

<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/Yj7Qk4m9/GoELOqbGp4K40#viewer>



# WWII Air Raid

## Shelters in Ashfield

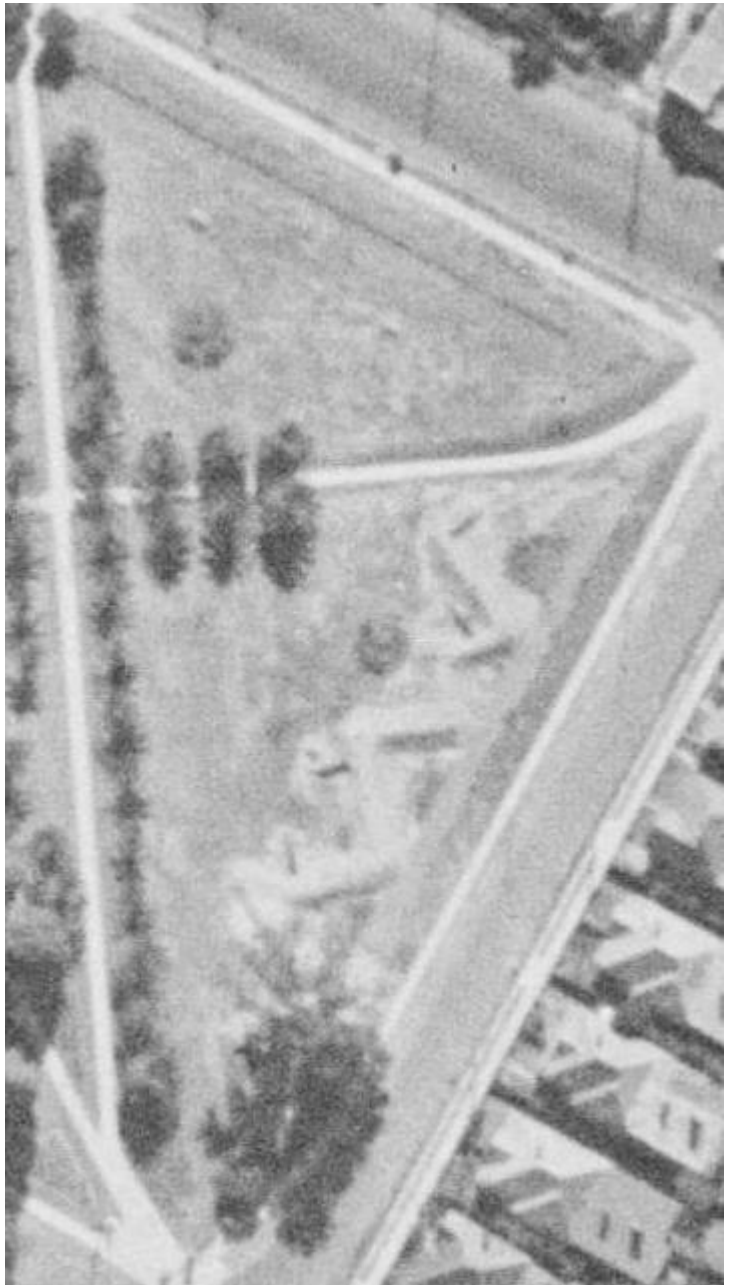
The Ashfield Council Building Application Register for 1942 has some interesting entries. Japanese bombers launched the first Japanese air raid on the Australian mainland in February 1942 when Japanese aircraft bombed.

Between 19 February 1942 and 12 November 1943, the Japanese mounted 97 air attacks on towns and military bases across northern Australia. On the 31 May/1 June 1942, Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour. In June 1942, a submarine lightly shelled coastal suburbs of Sydney and Newcastle<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising that these events unsettled the population and that air raid shelters were constructed in Sydney in response.

The most well-known public air-raid shelters in Sydney were in tunnels constructed under the CBD for the underground rail lines that had not yet been completed, or that never eventuated. Little is known about the private air raid shelters that were constructed by business and private citizens.

In June 1940 a series of model air raid shelters were constructed in the Domain. These shelters were relatively inexpensive and easy to build and were designed to provide protection against blasts and splinters from incendiary bombs. This was done to demonstrate to citizens that they could build shelters in their own backyards. One of the most common designs for an air Raid Shelter was the 'Anderson Shelter'. This was a prefabricated, British-designed but Australian-made shelter.

A search through the Ashfield Council Building Application Register for 1942 reveals that there were quite a few air raid shelters constructed in Ashfield.



The aerial photograph above from Six Maps, taken in 1942 shows the zig-zag pattern of the anti-aircraft trenches that were constructed in Ashfield Park near the corner of Ormond Street and Parramatta Road.

A search through the Ashfield Council Building Application Register for 1942 reveals that there were quite a few air raid shelters constructed in Ashfield.

## WWII Air Raid Shelters in Ashfield

Some of the entries are vague in describing the location, others are indecipherable but some of them are quite specific. The following is a list of Air Raid Shelters from the Ashfield Council Building Application Register for 1942:

- Hodgson P.T.Y. Ltd Lackey Street, Summer Hill
- Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Queen Street Ashfield
- Sydney County Council, Parramatta Road Summer Hill
- H. Patrick, No4 Parramatta Road Summer Hill
- Ashfield Hotel, Liverpool Road Ashfield
- A.W.A., Parramatta Road Ashfield
- Anderson's, No 90 Parramatta Road Summer Hill
- Toohey, Hennessy Street Croydon (Croydon Hotel)
- Estate Tate & Co, 223-5 Liverpool Road (Now West's Club)
- F.H. Paton, (0 Victoria Street Ashfield
- Mungo Scott, Smith Street Summer Hill
- Masonic Hospital, Victoria Street Ashfield
- 93 Elizabeth Street Ashfield
- ? White Carlton Crescent Summer Hill
- Miss W. Beachfare, Liverpool Road Ashfield
- Bourke & Adams, 147 Smith Street Summer Hill
- Perpetual Trustee 337/345 Liverpool Road
- Alt Sphlepherdh(?) 22 Dickson Street Croydon (?)
- W. Coult, 158 Smith Street, Summer Hill
- Orpington & Chandos Stree,t Ashfield
- ? E.M. Miles, 1 Charlotte Street Ashfield
- Ralston, Norton Street Ashfield
- Rew (?) Bororick, Liverpool Road Ashfield
- C.A. Jones, 283-285 Liverpool Road Ashfield

**Colin Webb**

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1. DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2023), *Bombing of Darwin Day 19 February*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 14 April 2023, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/commemoration/days/bombing-of-darwin>

## Demolition of *Penlee*

Clare Herscovitch recently noticed some demolition occurring at 102 Prospect Road in Summer Hill. The former nursing home was being demolished.

Clare writes:

*I seem to recall that the owner of the house donated the home for use by nurses returned from the First World War, for their physical and psychological recuperation.*

*I remember it as the Edith Cavell nursing home, where we pupils of St Patrick's had to go, very reluctantly, to sing Christmas carols to the residents.*

The former house *Penlee*, then converted to a hospital facility was not listed as a heritage item, and was not in a conservation area.

A check of Council's online DA tracker indicates that approval was granted on 8 June 2021 for *Demolition of existing structures, torrens title subdivision of existing allotment into 3 lots and construction of a dual occupancy on each proposed lot.*

A Heritage Statement was lodged and is available the Council's website. This contains information on the history of *Penlee* and photographs of the interior:

[DownloadAttachment \(t1cloud.com\)](https://t1cloud.com)

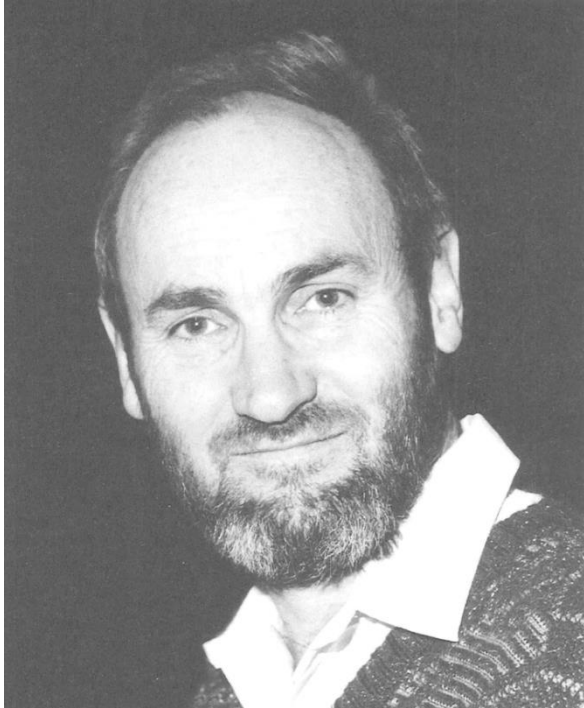


**Photograph: Clare Herscovitch**

**Vale**

## **John Oastler Ward**

**11 August 1940 - 29 April 2023**



**John Ward** was a keen supporter and stalwart of the Society. We were very saddened that he passed away in Canberra in April.

John Ward was a person who tirelessly served to make a difference to our community. In 1977, he was elected as an Alderman, as they were then called, to represent the East Ward of Ashfield Municipal Council (that is, Summer Hill and parts of Ashfield.) He served on Council for eighteen years, until 1995 and was Mayor of Ashfield from 1991 until 1995.

John was motivated to stand for election, in part, because of the large scale demolition of historic buildings, the unchecked destruction of heritage which occurred in the post war decades, in the Municipality, the surrounding suburbs and the city.

Many of the buildings which form part of the contemporary heritage register have survived because of John Ward's agitation, for example, working with Jack Munday and the Builders Labourers' Federation, who combined with residents to Green Ban the demolition of local buildings.

In 1973, John was also instrumental in forming the Ashfield and District Historical Society which will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in June 2023. The Society is still a significant community voice and chronicler of local history, with a membership of approximately 200.

He was a life member of both the Ashfield and District Historical Society and the Haberfield Association, having always supported the listing of the Haberfield Heritage Conservation Area on the state register and the establishment of other HCA's listed in the current Local Environment Plan.

John Ward was a progressive community representative and leader, a defender of left wing politics at all levels of government. He was a generous supporter of those who earned his respect and for causes that he considered to be for the betterment of the social good. He was instrumental in establishing parklands along Hawthorne canal and, in co-operation with Leichhardt Council, tree planting programs along the railway embankments and walking and cycling paths adjacent to the canal, now part of the GreenWay.

John gave up his last car, a clapped out VW Beetle (which he called the blue beast or the rocket) decades ago and, until recently, could be seen cycling through local streets. He looked after locals, especially long term older residents he termed 'the venerables'.



## John Oastler Ward

An imaginative and prolific historian, John was a world renowned scholar, a foremost international authority in his field, publishing many highly regarded books and essays. A Lecturer and Reader in Medieval History at the University of Sydney, he was a much beloved teacher, a wonderfully engaging lecturer, a great wit and raconteur. His humour was notable and sophisticated. He was renowned for occasional appearances in historically authentic mediaeval papal regalia, delivering satiric dissertations and sermons from the Juliet balcony of the Ward family terrace.

Perhaps ironically, John loved the Blues Brothers film and would attend midnight sessions when it showed in the city with his son. He loved trains, travelling far with his life partner Gail and his children to ride in steam engines.

At his funeral, mourners joined in to sing a rambling rendition of Abba's *Fernando*, a favourite of John's which he often sang and hummed about the house. He would have laughed.

Vale John Ward, beloved husband for 60 years of Gail. Much loved father of Hilton, Tara, and Kate. Adored Grandpa of Marcel, Gabriel, and Jessie. Treasured father-in-law of Dina, Walter, and Toby.

*A man of intellect,  
compassion and wit who will  
be deeply missed.*

**An event to honour and commemorate John  
will be on: Saturday 29 July 2023 at 2pm at  
the Ashfield Bowling Club.**

**Alex Lofts**

## Membership matters

Membership fees for 2023 are now overdue. Only financial members will be eligible to receive our next publication.

If you are unsure whether you have paid, contact us at:

[admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au](mailto:admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au)

See our webpage for full details:

<https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/membership-application/>

Fees are \$40 per household and \$30 for concession (Centrelink, DVA and full time student).

If you need postage for either the newsletter and/or publications please add \$10.

Please pay:

- by EFT to our account with your name, initials and reference 'Subs':  
BSB 062-257  
Account Name ADHS  
Account number 0090 0855
- or post your cheque to PO Box 20 Ashfield NSW 1800
- or we accept both card and cash at the **Flour Mills Market stall**, which is held the first Sunday of the month.



Source: [Flour Mill of Summer Hill to host new Sunday farmers' markets - Summer Hill Flour Mill](#)

## Research Rooms

The Society's Research Rooms at Thirning Villa, Pratten Park, Arthur Street Ashfield are open to visitors for research.

The Society's Rooms are open on the second and last Saturdays of each month from 11am until 4pm.

**The Rooms will not be open on Saturday 24 June 2023 due to the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration being held that day.**

## Contact the Society

- Postal address:  
PO Box 20 ASHFIELD NSW 1800
- Email: [admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au](mailto:admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au)
- Website: <https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/>

## Newsletter contributors

Thank you to:

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**Heather Warton**  
**Newsletter Editor**  
**22 June 2023**



Images of the past winning entries in the Marrickville Medal 2022 Awards  
Source: [Built Environment Awards - Inner West Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/built-environment-awards)