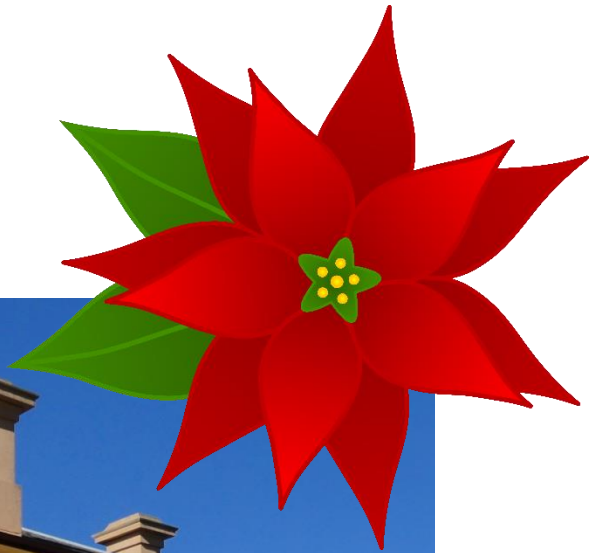




Ashfield  
& DISTRICT  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



# Newsletter



DECEMBER 2023 I SERIES 5 I NO. 12

## President's message

Dear Members

To paraphrase John Lennon's much played seasonal song: 'So this is Christmas and what have you done?...Another year over and...' well, another not quite yet begun. Lennon's question is not aimed at the Society, obviously - because for us the answer is, plenty.

It has indeed been a busy and successful fiftieth year for the Ashfield and District Historical Society. The year has seen three substantial publications, a golden jubilee celebration and regular bi-monthly interesting, informative presentations and events. All are indicators that the Society is vibrant, as is the continued strong support through attendance at our events.

As an aside, I know I have already noted that, at our fiftieth year celebrations, we were told that we are now the oldest *continuous* historical society in New South Wales.

When I mentioned this recently, at a meeting of historical societies from other districts, much consternation and dissent occurred. That meeting is the only forum I can remember attending where participants were clamouring to be older. (I've known mothers of friends who when asked how old they were remained 'thirty and some months' to the end of their lives). Whatever the truth of the matter may be the key word is perhaps 'continuous'. To our colleagues from other historical societies and our own members who read this, here we have a claim worth researching.

Further into his song, Lennon hopes that for Christmas, we have fun, 'The near and the dear ones/The old and the young', to which I would add: those close by and those far flung.

And so to all, have a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year and thank you for a passing year so well spent.

**Alex Lofts**

## Future events

### Save the date for the Annual General Meeting

**Sunday 25 February 2024**  
**Summer Hill**  
**Community Centre**  
**at 2pm**

The Society's AGM will be held in February 2024.

**Niall Macken**, Team Leader - Heritage & Urban Design, Inner West Council will be the guest speaker.

Please join us for presentation of the reports, the election of the Committee for 2024 and a fabulous afternoon tea.

## Past events

### An overview of the State Archives by Christine Yeats

On Sunday 15th October twenty ADHS members and guests were privileged to watch and hear a very extensive and informative presentation by **Christine Yeats**, senior vice-president of the RAHS, who for many years worked at NSW State Archives.

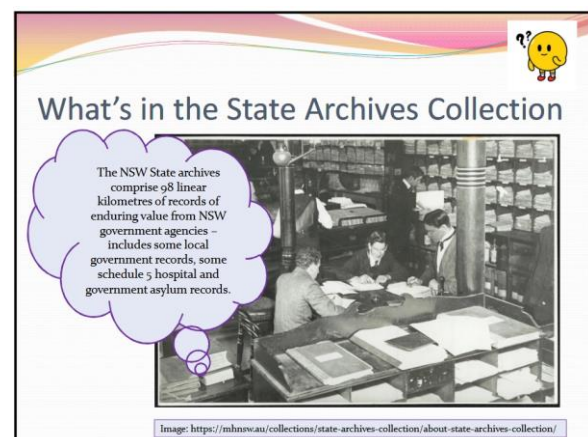
Christine outlined the extent of the 98 linear kms (!) of records held, being NSW Government records and some local council materials plus early records of Schedule 5 hospitals and children's homes, very useful for family history researchers. Each agency has an allocated number which makes searching for any and all of that agency's records quite straightforward as series folders and then particular items can be found.

The records of the Museum of History NSW are now included in the Archives and there is a guide which will take the user to popular topics, one being migration records to NSW. Christine took us through an example – William Dalton, the bushranger!

The Wills and Probate section which includes the hand-written 'will books' in use till 1952 (held at Kingswood) is very useful, with probate 'packets' increasingly digitised. Deceased Estate files (used to assess death duties) exist from 1880 to 1958 and these along with House and Property files add to useful pictures of an individual's possessions (both real estate and personal). Christine noted however that since the privatisation of the Land Titles Office, private brokers now hold recent records.

Christine concluded her presentation by reminding us that (fortunately) Inner West Council and ADHS also have valuable records such as rate books, DA/BA registers and Water Board sheets and these can supplement what State Archives might hold.

Christine answered a number of detailed questions submitted by members, and we all joined in thanking her before enjoying another wonderful afternoon tea supplied by the Committee.



An extract of Christine's presentation

**by David Rollinson**

## Past events

# ICOMOS

## comes to Haberfield

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 21st General Assembly and Scientific Symposium (GA23) Haberfield Seminar was held on 31 August 2023. This was the only professional development event held outside the City of Sydney local government area connected to the ICOMOS GA23 Symposium.

The seminar attracted over 75 registrations, with approximately a third each from international delegates, heritage professionals and local community members. Seminar international delegates were from:

- Canada
- China
- Czech Republic
- Egypt
- Fiji
- Malaysia
- Morocco
- Macau (China)
- Portugal, and
- UK.



**GA23 Haberfield seminar attendees in the Haberfield Library Thursday 31 August 2023**

Australian organisations and NGOs representatives were from the

- National Trust of Australia (NSW)
- Historic Houses Association
- Australian Garden History Society
- Ashfield & District Historical Society
- Marrickville Heritage Society, plus
- staff of three heritage consultancies and three local government areas.

The afternoon sessions examined various diasporas in post-settlement Australia:

- “New Gold Mountain – Chinese miners and market gardeners”
- “The Greeks of Marrickville”
- “Pagodas legacies from the Indian sub-continent”, and
- “Pacifka colonial legacies of the French, Spanish, German and English”.

Councillor Dr **Tim Stevens**, as Professor of International Law at Sydney University which includes World Heritage, provided the Seminar introduction.

**Inner West Council** provided the Haberfield Library venue, catering, and staff digital support, as the seminar was recorded for the ICOMOS e-archives in Paris. Haberfield Association volunteers assisted with set-up, registrations, and **Josefa Sobaski** was the moderator.

By any measure, the Haberfield Seminar was exceedingly engaging, brought people together, generated discussions and created dialogues. All said it was a resounding success.

The Haberfield Seminar was concurrent with the Sydney GA23, attended by over 1600 persons: see [GA2023 Wrap up Video - YouTube](#).

## ICOMOS comes to Haberfield



Vince Crow led a guided walk including access into The Bunyas House c1904

The Sydney Opera House GA23 opening had excellent remarks by Federal Minister Tanya Plibersek MP, State Minister Penny Sharpe MLA and HRH Dana Firas of Jordan. Sydney GA23 will have a lasting legacy for the Australian nation, and for the **Haberfield Garden Suburb** where its values are now firmly known to all the Seminar delegates, both international and local.

### Story & images by Sue Jackson-Stepowski

The Seminar was instigated, and made a reality, by Sue Jackson-Stepowski, initially due to her being the Australian voting member for ICOMOS ISC SBH: Sue is an expert for CIVVIH and CL, plus a member of the GA23 Organising Committee. Sue also organised home stays for GA23 delegates in Haberfield, Dulwich Hill, Newtown and Petersham. After the Seminar Sue & Bron held a welcome BBQ in their home for the home-stay delegates, host families and seminar volunteers.

***A number of ADHS members attended the seminar, which proved to be very engaging. Congratulations to Sue for all her hard work in organising this event in our area.***

## Past events

### Journal launch:

What an excellent afternoon it was on 19 November 2023 for the launch of our latest publication, ***Ashfield History No. 23: Houses of the Ashfield District, Part 2.***

Over 50 people attended the event, held at the Summer Hill Community Centre.

**Alex Lofts** introduced our guest speaker, **Dennis McManus**, a member of our society and a heritage adviser. Dennis is a lifelong supporter of heritage. He was a founding member of the Glebe Society, he worked for the Heritage Council for many years, and was awarded the Order of Australia Public Service Medal for services to Heritage Conservation in NSW. On the local front, he wrote a detailed article about his Victoria Square house, *Portland House*, in our own Houses of the Ashfield District Part 1.

His talk to us was on heritage management in the Wingecarribee Shire, where he now lives. He spoke about the experience of heritage assessment, consultation and protection in the area, and stepped us through NSW Eight Point Heritage Management Program:

1. Establish a heritage committee
2. Complete a heritage study and list the items in your local environmental plan
3. Run a heritage advisory program
4. Manage heritage in a positive way
5. Run a local heritage fund
6. Run a main street program
7. Present educational and promotional programs
8. Set a good example by making sure the council's own heritage items are well looked after.

How straightforward and simple it sounds in point form! However, high level skills in heritage, organisation, negotiation and communication are required, all of which Dennis has.



## Journal launch

Dennis is an engaging speaker, and I think most of the audience would have been happy to hear him expand on his presentation.

The talk was filled with many images of heritage in the Wingecarribee. Not just Georgian and Victorian architecture, but also representatives of architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as heritage rural landscapes, and whole villages.

He illustrated almost 50 examples of heritage, chronologically arranged, which took us from *Oldbury Farm*, established in 1828 by James Atkinson, to the Keith Cottier-designed *Clubbe Hall* built in 1967 for Frensham School, Mittagong.



**Oldbury Farm, Mittagong, built 1826-1828**

Source: <https://architecturepublic.com.au>



**Clubbe Hall; Source:**

<https://www.ohta.org.au/organs/organs/Frensham.html>

It was a fascinating journey, and showed how very rich in built-heritage the Wingecarribee Shire is. Dennis then launched our journal.



**Dennis McManus at the launch**

**Ann O'Connell** spoke about the articles and authors in the journal, and singled out new authors, some of whom were a little embarrassed by the attention!" Ann, of course, and as always, failed to mention her own enormous contribution to the journal, not only as author of five articles, but also as mentor to new authors, and as editor, along with **David Rollinson**.

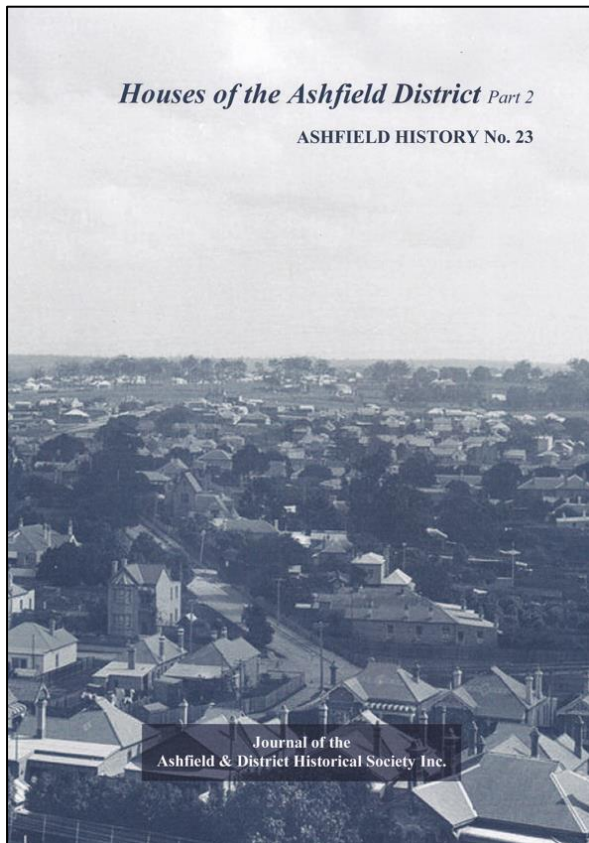


An excellent afternoon tea followed with good conversation. Volume 23 is a weighty tome, but very readable and is recommended to all our members.

**Story by Clare Herscovitch &  
images by Colin Webb**

## **‘Houses’ Part 2**

***Ann O’Connell writes further on the Society’s latest journal Houses of Ashfield District Part 2:***



The recent journal launch was a meaningful occasion for our eight authors, who had all put much time, thought, effort, skill and hard work into a total of 13 journal articles.

Three of the contributors were ‘returning’ authors, but for the other five, it was the first time their work was published in our journal. It was a pleasure working with all our authors and we congratulate them and give our wholehearted thanks.

The ‘Houses’ articles have been researched intensely and the stories, while essentially are about houses, they also include the social histories of the places.

A few of the featured ‘houses’ were grand mansions, however in this issue, there are quite a number of cottages too, which shows that small homes often have interesting stories to tell. All were written out of intense interest, and often of love and connection, and this investment comes through in the authors’ narratives.

The articles were ‘polished’ into shape by drafts, discussion, revision, editing and proof reading. Many thanks to our trusty editor, David Rollinson, and proof-reader Clare Herscovitch.

The saying that ‘every house has a story’ is true and we hope that the stories in this journal will captivate and interest our readers. There are many more houses in the district worthy of the attention, and we invite budding authors to contribute to a future journal.



**Ann O’Connell, major author contributor and joint editor of *The Houses of Ashfield Part 2***

**The preparation of the journal was supported by an Inner West Council grant.**



## Heritage report

After submissions from ADHS and others, Council staff advised the applicant for a 'box-like' new home at **34 Armstrong Street Ashfield** that it could not be supported. The applicant then withdrew the DA.

Similarly, Council has advised the applicant for another 'box' at **52 John Street Ashfield** that it has major deficiencies - we await the result.

After some further plan amendments (and a further objection from ADHS), Council refused the DA for **6 Victoria Square Ashfield**. This is the second DA that has been refused; the applicant originally wanted to demolish the existing dwelling.

Unfortunately, an ADHS submission to keep using chrome framing for a new shopfront at **2-4 Lackey Street Summer Hill** (corner of Carlton Crescent) and thereby re-unify the treatment of the shopfronts of this heritage building, has been ignored. Timber framing is proposed and approved, and it seems that this is also contrary to Council's heritage advisor's advice. My direct request to the DA designer was not responded to.

I gave evidence in October 2023 on the heritage significance of the existing Victorian villa at an on-site Court conference for the Land and Environment Court hearing held on **5 Bruce Street Ashfield**.

This was the second DA appeal. ADHS member **Kerry Barlow** researched Council's records and also checked the NSW Electoral Rolls to establish who was registered at the property at a critical period - thank you Kerry.

The DA was for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a four-storey residential flat building. One of the main issues in the appeal was whether the proposal would result in an unacceptable impact on the heritage significance of the heritage conservation area.

In a very fast judgement issued on 7 December 2023 after final legal submissions on the 29 November, **Commissioner Susan O'Neill** dismissed the appeal on the grounds that demolition of the existing building was not supported. She agreed with the evidence of Council's heritage expert, **Robert Moore** that:

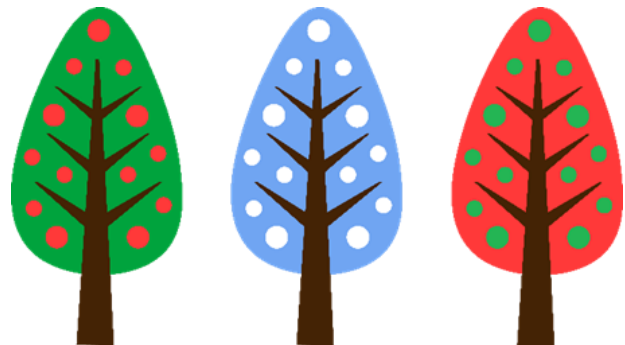
*The removal of the existing building, with its demonstrable part in the historical development of the HCA and locality, and its conformity with the pattern of development in the HCA, would diminish the overall heritage significance of the HCA by removing a building which adds to the diversity and depth of interest in the buildings of the HCA, which conforms to its pattern and character of development, and which reflects its key development period...*

*The heritage item next door would lose the residential context of single-house-per-lot development which prevails in the HCA and which contributes to both its setting and amenity as a heritage property and residential dwelling.*

***The refusal of this application is a significant heritage win for Ashfield and the Inner West.***

I have passed on the Society's thanks yet again to Robert Moore for his longstanding support of the heritage of our area.'

**by David Rollinson**



[free Australia christmas clip art landscape - Bing](#)

# *A Blackbird bicycle affirms a link with Pratten Park, Ashfield*

**Donald Blackman** (1909-1979) grew up at 6 Carlton Crescent Summer Hill and attended the Summer Hill Public School. As a young lad he took up cycling and spent many hours on the cycling track at Pratten Park.

In the 1920s he started winning cycling championship races and in the early 1930s he was one of the founding members of the Ashfield & District Amateur Cycling Club (A&DACC). The following year he started up his own shop at 186 Liverpool Road Ashfield where he took over the Malvern Star agency and his shop became the meeting place for cyclists.



**John Johnson at Pratten Park with his Blackbird bicycle**

From around 1933, Blackman was building his own brand of racing cycle in his shop which he called *Blackbirds*, and these became very popular with local cyclists including champion cyclist **Ron Cazey**. Blackman's cycling career on both track and road continued throughout the 1930s and he represented NSW as part of the State Cycling Team of 1938 and competed in the Australian team in 1938 Empire Games.

It is unknown how many *Blackbird* bicycles Blackman built at the shop, but he continued into the 1950s. One of these Blackbirds was built for **Ron Verrills** in the late 1940s, and he enjoyed some success in the local cycling racing scene. Verrills retained the bike until his death in 2013 when it was sold. Then in 2021, Blackbird enthusiast, John Johnson, bought it along with Verrills' cycling shoes and leather helmet, saddlebag and other items.

On an ADHS open day in November 2023, John Johnson brought his Blackbird to Pratten Park. The late Don Blackman would have been pleased one of his famous bicycles returned to the site of the old bike track.



The Blackbird's head tube bears a red, white and blue transfer showing flags, crown and a spoked wheel. Don Blackman used red enamel paint to write: 'Built by' above the transfer, 'D. Blackman' on the white nameplate and 'Ashfield' below the transfer.

**Story & images by Ann O'Connell**



# The Portonian Walk in Port Adelaide

In the course of my research for an article about William Wilkins in the recently published Houses of the Ashfield District Part 2, I contacted the **Port Adelaide Historical Society** in South Australia.

**Ian Hoffmann** of that society helped me with my query, which was to find whether there is a record of the burial of **Ann Wilkins** who died in Port Adelaide in December 1850. Ann and her husband William were on their way from London to Sydney where William was to begin work at the Fort Street Model School. Their short time in Port Adelaide was a time of illness, distress, death and grief.

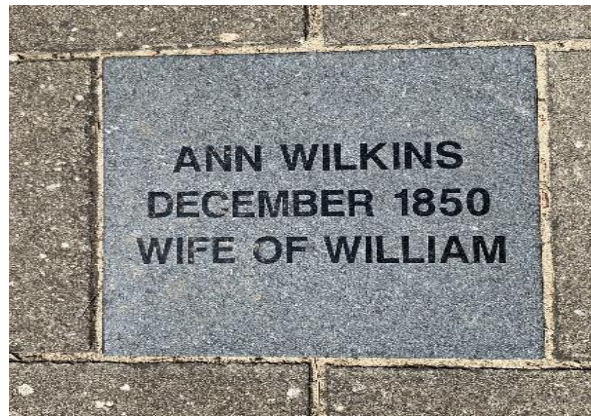
Ann was buried at the Alberton Cemetery in Port Adelaide. From William's letter it seems unlikely that Ann's grave would have had a headstone as he had neither the finances nor the time to arrange for one. I was fortunate that a list of historic burials there had been researched and compiled in the 1980s. After the last burial there in 1922 the area deteriorated and became derelict, and few of the cemetery's gravestones have survived.

It was restored as open space by the Port Adelaide Council in 1990, and is now called **Pioneer Park**, tucked away in a suburban block and surrounded by houses. Within Pioneer Park is the **Portonian Walk**, administered by The Port Adelaide Historical Society. This memorial path provides the opportunity for a permanent remembrance of an earlier burial.

A granite paver can be purchased and engraved with the name of a person who was buried there or who had been an early settler in the Port Adelaide area. The paver requested for Ann Wilkins has now been engraved and placed. Ian Hoffmann kindly sent me the two photos reproduced here:



Part of the Portonian Walk in Pioneer Park, Alberton SA



Paver for Ann Wilkins

I am thankful to the Port Adelaide Historical Society for their interest and help with my enquiries. In return, I was happy to send them my transcription of William Wilkins' letter in which he described his time in Port Adelaide – though his distress and despair dominate his writing, we also read of his impressions of the town, where he stayed and the people he met.



**Port Adelaide 1847**, painted by S.T. Gill;  
Art Gallery of South Australia

## The Portonian Walk in Port Adelaide

Wilkins wrote: "Port Adelaide is a miserable place, with not more than a dozen decent houses in it." I sincerely hope that the good people of Port Adelaide are not offended!

I look forward to visiting Pioneer Park, to see the place Ann was buried, and to think about her young life cut short, and the grief that William described in his letter. All is peaceful now.

More on the cemetery and the Portonian Walk can be found at

<https://www.portadelaide.org/memorial/>.

by **Clare Herscovitch**

## A valuable acquisition: the *Save Summer Hill* scrapbook

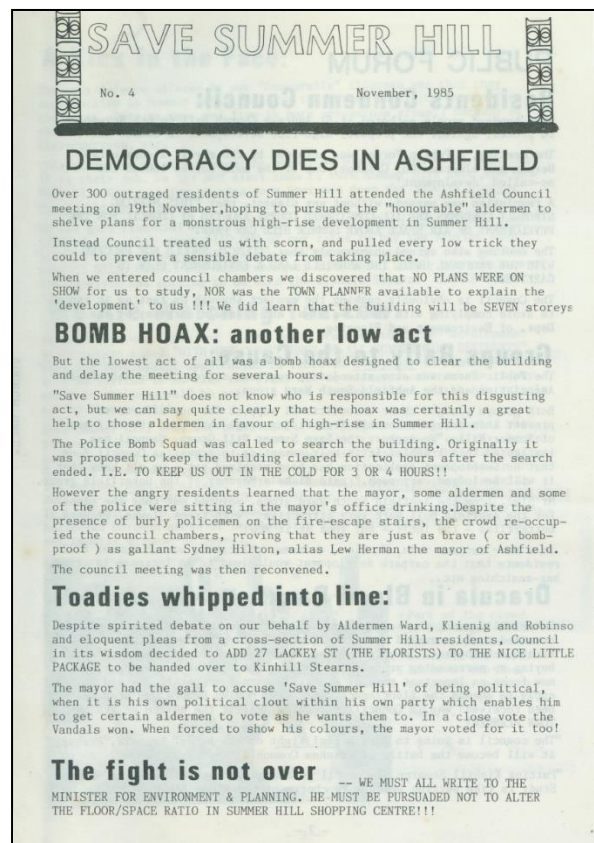
In November 2023, the Society was the recipient of a large scrapbook compiled by past ADHS president, **Doug Benson**. The scrapbook was full of newspaper clippings, letters, flyers, posters, newsletters and pamphlets, collected by Doug in the period from June 1985 through to April 1986. Doug arranged them chronologically, allowing the contents to tell the story of the group.

*Save Summer Hill* was formed in reaction to Ashfield Council's plan to re-zone its major business districts of Ashfield and Summer Hill to allow large-scale development.

The Council began buying up properties between Hardy and Smith Streets with the aim of encouraging multi-storied projects of the size of Ashfield Mall.

In September 1985 the first newsletter for *Save Summer Hill* was printed after an angry Council Meeting where the mayor and aldermen were confronted by over 150 residents of Summer Hill protesting about Council's plan.

Despite the protest, Council accepted a proposal for a ten-storey office building in the supermarket carpark. Battle raged and ultimately *Save Summer Hill* won.



*Save Summer Hill*, newsletter, No. 4, November 1985

This scrapbook tells the story of what transpired and how the Village was saved.

Thank you, Doug, for your integral involvement in the group during such a turbulent time and for compiling such a vivid record of its activities.

by **Ann O'Connell**

# Inner West Urban Photography Awards

It is very pleasing to see the younger generation showing appreciation for the history and heritage of our area. This was evident in Inner West Council's (IWC) Urban Photography Awards when Summer Hill woman, **Kylie Hogan**, picked up a commendation for her photograph of the **Rio Milk Bar** in Smith Street Summer Hill.

The awards were announced at an IWC function held in the Camperdown Commons on 7 October 2023.



**Congratulations Kylie!**

*The Rio Milk Bar* has gained much attention over the last couple of years, after its long-time owner, **George Poulos**, died at age 92 in 2015. George had opened *The Rio* in 1952 and was a 'constant' ever since, selling soft drinks, milk shakes, ice creams, lollies and smokes from within the old façade.

The advertisements covering the front windows were scrawled in texta, made from pictures cut from ice cream packaging or hand-drawn by George. *The Rio* has retained its name but has gone up-market and been re-invented as a restaurant / cocktail bar.

**Story & image by Ann O'Connell**

## Summer Hill

### Flour Mill Markets

Don't forget we will be at the Summer Hill Flour Mill market on **Sunday 17 December from 9 am to 1 pm.**

Come and pick up your copy of *Houses of the Ashfield District Part 2: ADHS Journal No. 23*. Financial members are eligible to receive this free (retail \$25).

You may also renew your membership and purchase additional copies of *Houses Part 2* and other popular journals, which make great Christmas presents. Cash, card or EFT accepted.

Only financial members will be eligible to receive our publication.

If you are unsure whether you have paid for 2023 contact us at:

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

See our webpage for full details:

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

## 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.**



## Membership matters

Our membership subscriptions are for each calendar year so **it's time to renew for 2024**. It's only \$40 for a household or \$30 if you are a Centrelink or DVA pensioner or full-time student.

If you can, please complete the online form and submit it as we are finding that many people are no longer using their landline or have changed mobile numbers.

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

Please add \$10 to the membership fee if you require your newsletters and/or other publications to be printed and posted. We try to hand deliver as many publications as possible in the local area as the postage is quite high (i.e. around \$13 per journal) but if you live outside the local area please add the \$10.

### EFT Payments:

- BSB 062257
- Account No: 00900855  
Ashfield & District Historical Society
- Ref *Your name, initials, 'subs'*
- Cheque payable to  
Ashfield & District Historical Society
- Post PO Box 20 Ashfield NSW 1800.

Cash can be paid at our Rooms on the second or last Saturday; or at the Summer Hill Markets.

## 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:

Carolyn Carter  
Alex Lofts  
Ann O'Connell  
Clare Herscovitch  
David Rollinson  
Colin Webb &  
Bernadette Williamson

for their contributions to this newsletter.

**Heather Warton**  
**Newsletter Editor**  
**9 December 2023**



[free Australian christmas images outline - Bing images](#)