

# Newsletter

MARCH 2024 I SERIES 5 I NO. 13

## President's message

Dear Members

The Society recently held our Annual General Meeting at which I reflected on the very successful past year during which our profile and reach in the community has been enhanced. We produced three major publications of excellent quality.

Our talks and presentations have gained the interest of members and the general community and have been very well attended. Our website is a vibrant portal, thanks to **Colin Webb** and Committee members.

As an example of our standing, we were awarded a NSW Parliament Community Recognition Certificate by the **Hon. Jo Haylen MP**. Representatives of the Society were invited twice to ceremonies to commemorate **Quong Tart's** contribution to local and state history.

A highlight of the year was our successful Fiftieth Year Anniversary, attended by the **Hon Penny Sharpe MLC**, Inner West Mayor **Darcy Byrne** and Councillors. At this event we commemorated the passing of founding member of the Society, former Mayor of Ashfield, champion of local heritage conservation and dear friend, **John Oastler Ward**.

We will continue to be a vital part of our local community. But there are challenges ahead. The Society will continue to document our history and defend our heritage – this is what we are here for.

And a last sad update - last week Society Life Member and friend to many in the heritage world, **Chris Pratten** passed away. Vale Chris, we will miss you.

**Alex Lofts**

# Christopher Pratten

## (1934-2024)

### *The passing of a leader*

It is hard to comprehend that **Chris Pratten**, who was 'larger than life', a man with a huge personality, forceful opinions and such a great intellect, has passed away so suddenly.

It is with great regret that we inform you that Chris passed away in Royal Prince Alfred Hospital on Thursday 7 March 2024.

He had been planning to have a 'big party' on the occasion of his 90th birthday in September and despite his revelations that he was declining and feeling weaker, his optimism and sharpness of mind did not indicate his death was near.

Mark Sabolch's oral interview with Chris provides us with great insights into his life, more important now, as he is gone. Thank you Mark for your initiative in doing this interview which I commend to you all.

[Multimedia Publications – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](http://ashfieldhistory.org.au)

Arrangements for Chris' funeral are:

**St Paul's Church of England**

**Burwood Road, Burwood.**

**Thursday 14 March 2024**

**at 11am**

Parking around the church is timed and metered but some parking is available in the carpark off the lane opposite the church in the Woodstock carpark. A light lunch will be provided for family and friends afterwards at the church.

**Notice and photo, Ann O'Connell**



*May he rest in peace*

## Future events

### Who do you think you might be:

### The nuts and bolts of genealogical method

**Sunday 24 March 2024**

**2pm to 4pm**

**Ashfield Civic Centre**

**Kerry Barlow** has an extensive background in education, having taught economics, economic history and education for many years, at high school, TAFE and university levels. She has strong skills in research, having conducted numerous funded projects and published many reports, articles and learning guides on a wide range of social and economic issues.

Kerry's passion also lies in family history and local history research, and she brings her teaching and research expertise to the genealogy field, where she has been teaching family history courses for the WEA for the past 7 years. She is also a member of ADHS.

We are fortunate that Kerry is able to present a talk to the Society on genealogical research methods.

**Please register on our website:**

<https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/event/who-do-you-think-you-might-be/>

**A map showing access to the location of the talk is on the registrations page.**

**Please note:** To foil false registrations please answer the simple arithmetic question on the registration page when you register.

The answer is '7'.

Contact us if you have problems.

## Connections, characters and commerce in Smith Street, Summer Hill

**Sunday 28 April and**

**Sunday 19 May 2024**

**2pm to 4.30pm**

**Mark Sabolch** will lead a walk exploring the value of the local heritage of Smith Street, Summer Hill. There will be two walks held, one in April, the other in May. This event is part of the 2024 *Australian Heritage Festival*.

**Meet at the park outside the Flour Mills, eastern end of Smith Street**

Numbers limited to 15 per walk.  
You must register to attend.

**Please register on our website:**

["Connections, Characters and Commerce" – Smith Street Summer Hill #1 – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](#)

## Conformity and individuality in the Californian Bungalow

**Sunday 23 June 2024**

**2pm - 4.30 pm**

**Summer Hill Community Centre**

This presentation by **Colin Webb** will look at the ubiquitous 'Californian Bungalow' prevalent in the Inner West with a particular focus on Ashfield and Ashbury.

**Register on our website:**

[Conformity and Individuality in the Californian Bungalow – Ashfield & District Historical Society \(ashfieldhistory.org.au\)](#)

## Past events

### 2024 ADHS Annual General Meeting

#### The Society's AGM was held on Sunday 25 February 2024.

The day was perfect and although we were inside, the Summer Hill Community Centre is a bright and pleasant venue.

Society President, **Alex Lofts** welcomed Members and all gathered. The Minutes of the previous AGM held in February 2023 were confirmed.



**Alex Lofts, ADHS President at the AGM.**

Image: Colin Webb

Alex reviewed the fabulous events held by the Society in the, including past year, including our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He advised the gathering that according to the RAHS, the -

#### *ADHS is the longest affiliated historical society in NSW.*

Alex then reminded us of his words first expressed following Alan Croker's talk last year on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sydney Opera House:

#### *Battles are won but return to be fought again.*

Alex noted that this is pertinent today in light of the Planning Reforms recently announced by the State Government. However hard the housing crisis is to resolve; we do not have to destroy heritage to solve the problem.

Treasurer **Carolyn Carter** then presented her report for 2023 – the Society is in good financial shape.

**Susan Thompson** oversaw the election of Society's office bearers and Committee Members.



**Susan Thompson, retuning officer at the AGM.**

Image: Colin Webb



## 2024 ADHS AGM

The nominations were duly seconded, and the new 2024 Committee was welcomed.



The AGM gathering at Summer Hill.

Image: Colin Webb

**Alex Lofts** will continue as President; assisted by **Lois Gray** as Vice President.

The other key position holders are:

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ Treasurer                       | <b>Carolyn Carter</b>    |
| ➤ Membership Secretary            | <b>Carolyn Carter</b>    |
| ➤ Public Officer                  | <b>David Rollinson</b>   |
| ➤ Research Officer                | <b>Ann O'Connell</b>     |
| ➤ Heritage Officer                | <b>David Rollinson</b>   |
| ➤ IT Coordinator                  | <b>Phil Burne</b>        |
| ➤ Web Manager                     | <b>Colin Webb</b>        |
| ➤ Rooms & Collections Coordinator | <b>Clare Herscovitch</b> |
| ➤ Activities Coordinator          | <b>Paul Williams</b>     |
| ➤ Newsletter Editor               | <b>Heather Warton</b>    |
| ➤ Minutes Secretary               | <b>TBA.</b>              |

Returning Committee Members are:

**Murray Cleaver, Ronda Gaffey, Mark Sabolch Jan Williams and Bernadette Williamson.**

Welcome to new Committee Member, **Kerry Barlow.**

**Bob Irving** will continue as the Society's Honorary Architectural Historian.

Thank you to the outgoing Committee Members **Lucille McKenna** and **Nerida Thiering** for their contribution to the Society.

The meeting was advised that **Bob, Lucille** and former Committee Member **Mandy Keevil** have recently experienced health issues. We send our best regards to our good friends.

*Following the formalities, Niall Macken, was the guest speaker, presenting a talk on Hibernian Heritage.*



**Niall Macken.**

Image: Supplied by Niall

**Niall Macken** is an architect and heritage specialist with a Masters Degree in Conservation Studies from the University of York, UK. He has worked on significant historic sites, buildings and precincts in Australia, England and Ireland, within both the public and private sectors. Niall is a Registered Architect and a member of the Australian Institute of Architects, and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.

## 2024 ADHS AGM

He is the Heritage and Urban Design team leader within Inner West Council, a member of the NSW Heritage Council's Heritage Advisory Committee and a member of the Australian Institute of Architects heritage committee.

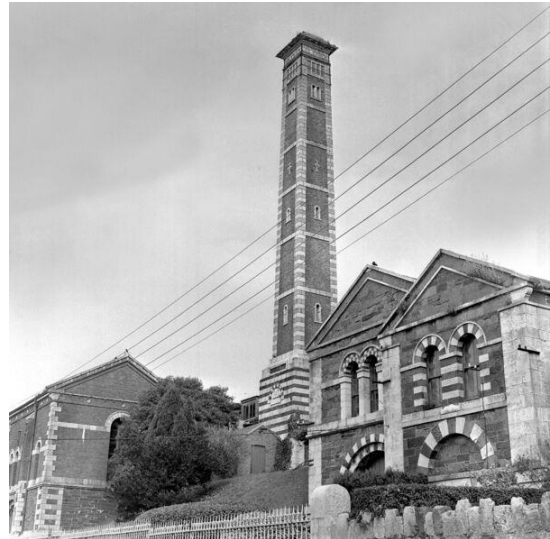
Niall's talk was based on his work on heritage projects in Ireland – his grandparents on his father's side and wife are Irish.

He outlined the Irish heritage legislation, and gave some examples of site that are protected under the relevant Acts. Two important items are identified by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites – **Newgrange** in County Meath, a Stone Age (Neolithic) monument and **Skellig Michael**, a rocky crag off the coast of County Kerry.

Niall spoke about two projects he worked on as a heritage consultant.

The first project was in County Cork, the **Old Cork Waterworks**. Naill explained that Cork is the second largest city in Ireland, and is located on the Lee River. The city was expanding in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and was in need of a new water supply. A site was identified and in 1857 a notable architect of the time, **Sir John Benson** designed a group of polychrome brick and limestone buildings around a courtyard to house the Waterworks. The engines and boilers were in use until the late 1950's

Niall's project was to oversee the restoration of the dilapidated buildings, that although had suffered some damage, were still structurally sound. A conservation report on the history and condition of the buildings, and an industrial archaeology survey were completed. The buildings were converted for use as a Information Centre, meeting rooms and offices.



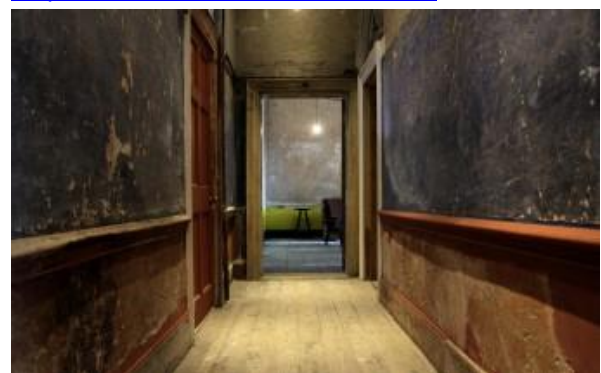
**The Old Cork Waterworks in 1968.**

Source: [Nostalgia: A look back at the Old Cork Waterworks \(echolive.ie\)](https://www.echolive.ie/nostalgia/a-look-back-at-the-old-cork-waterworks)

The second project was to work one of the most single group of intact Georgian townhouses, at **14 Henrietta Street in Dublin**. The townhouses were built for the elite of the day, and notable occupants had lived there. No. 14 had later been converted into tenements.

Part of the challenge of the project was to represent all eras of the life of the building. Today the building is a Social History Museum of Dublin Life. See information and images including that below at:

<https://14henriettastreet.ie/about/>



A sumptuous afternoon tea (I loved that jelly slice Jan!) was enjoyed by all at the end of the event!

**Heather Warton**

# Lydham Hall, Rockdale

**St George Historical Society Inc** invited the Society to attend the **reopening of Lydham Hall Museum**, located at 18 Lydham Avenue Rockdale, held on Sunday 4 February 2024.

**Lois Gray** who represented ADHS at the opening writes: *Lydham Hall*, a State heritage listed item, was built as a rural residence for **Joseph Davis**, a wealthy master butcher. He had first been a publican in Newtown and later was known to have been a generous benefactor to Christ Church, Bexley and an advocate for the establishment of a local school for Bexley.

Davis had purchased 50 acres and 24 1/4 perches of an original 1820's land grant to James Chandler. Initially Davis used the land for resting and fattening cattle prior to slaughtering. It was after 1875 that he appointed Swedish stonemasons, Benson brothers, to build a house on the highest point of the estate from which there were great views of Botany Bay.

The house was finished around 1878 and features stone walls and a blue slate hip roof. It is typical in design of an early Australian homestead – a central hallway flanked on either side by 2 rooms, a staircase to 2 rooms above and a verandah extending around on all 4 sides.

Following the death of Davis the house was sold to Frederick Gibbens, an oyster merchant and trawling magnate. His son in law, David Stead, a well renown naturalist and instrumental in co-founding the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, then resided in the house with his family. His daughter, Christina Stead is considered to be one of Australia's great writers.

The former Rockdale Council purchased the property in 1970 for \$26,000 and it was opened as a museum managed by the **St George Historical Society**.

The furniture in the house is on loan from the National Trust of Australia (NSW) and other donated items on display have been brought together by the Society.

In his opening remarks on the day, **Wesley Fairhall**, President of the St George Historical Society, said that it now 'represented one of the finest small house period collections in Sydney'.

The Museum was closed in 2020 for repair using a State Government grant and the collection was carefully cleaned by volunteers during the closure.

In his remarks at the reopening of the Museum, the Mayor of Bayside Council, **Bill Saravinoski**, said 'it is home to a wonderful collection of fine antiques and period objects' and he 'was pleased to see it open once again after Council undertook some major renovations to the building including replacing the roof'.

Following the opening ceremony, Certificates were issued recognising Society members who had cleaned and catalogued the collection leading up to the reopening. Well done St George Historical Society!



## Historic Lydham Hall Reopens After Renovations.

Source: [St George & Sutherland Shire Leader](https://theleader.com.au/st-george/sutherland-shire-leader-st-george-nsw/)  
[St George, NSW \(theleader.com.au\)](https://theleader.com.au/st-george/nsw/)

For further information, see:

[Lydham Hall Historic House and Museum - St George Historical Society of](https://stgeorgehistsoc.org.au/)  
[\(stgeorgehistsoc.org.au\)](https://stgeorgehistsoc.org.au/)

**Lois Gray**



# Congratulations to Ronda Gaffey

## Recipient of a Certificate of Achievement from the RAHS

Congratulations to ADHS member, **Ronda Gaffey**, who received a Certificate of Achievement in November 2023 from the **Royal Australian Historical Society** (RAHS) being nominated by the **Parramatta & District Historical Society**.

The Award was given for Ronda's:

*... commitment and service since 2014. Ronda's contributions include guiding tours and presenting talks to members and other heritage groups.*

*Since 2015, she worked as a Hambledon Cottage guide and is involved with the Parramatta Female Factory Friends, serving as Secretary, Editor, Publicity Officer, Event organiser and guide.*

*Ronda has also been a Parramatta Heritage Partners Secretary since 2017. The Society recognises Ronda's dedication to local and community history.*



**Hambledon Cottage**

**Located corner Gregory Place and Hassall Street, Harris Park.**

Image: Parramatta & District Historical Society Collection

***Ronda has recently received not one but two awards!***

## City of Parramatta Senior Citizen of the Year

In January 2024 there was even more exciting news about Ronda when she became the **City of Parramatta Senior Citizen of the Year**



**The Hon Lord Mayor, COP, Pierre Esber and Ronda Gaffey.**

Image: City of Parramatta

In part, the citation reads:

*Ronda is one of the few exceptional individuals who are dedicated to the vital work of Parramatta heritage protection. Ronda is a passionate advocate who dedicates her time to preserving history through participation in community organisations such as the Parramatta and District Historical Society and the Parramatta Female Factory Friends.*

Very well deserved.

## ***2024 a year of history milestones!***

Ronda also advises that the **Parramatta & District Historical Society**, now in their 110th year, are commemorating the Bicentenary of *Hambledon Cottage* (c1824), a State Heritage listed site once owned by John and Elizabeth Macarthur. The event will be held on **Saturday 13 April 2024**. There will be a week of activities for all to enjoy- more details soon.



# The character of Fleet Street, Summer Hill



Image: Mark Sabolch

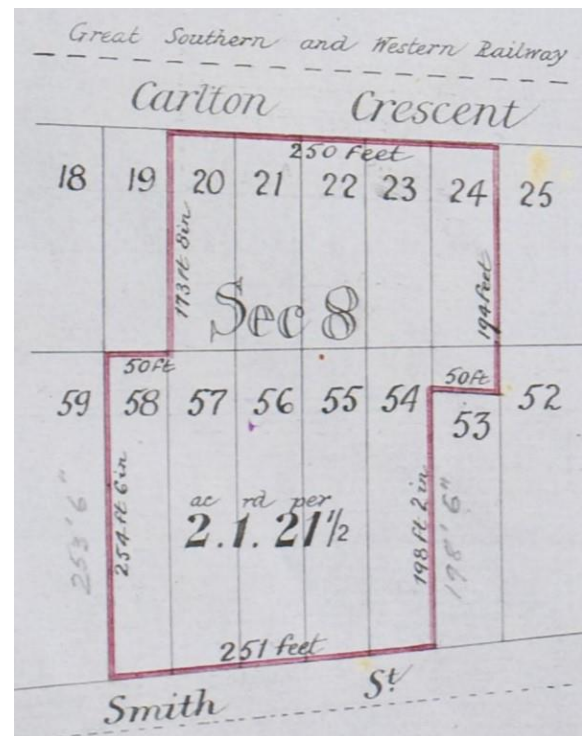
**Fleet Street in Summer Hill**, just off Smith Street, showcases a diversity of house styles, types and sizes. The age of this diversity and character is valued today by its heritage conservation status. This article reviews the original Fleet Street subdivision and examines some of the outcomes of its development.

Fleet Street in Summer Hill is the creation of a local developer, **James Bartlett**. He saw an opportunity that gave him an edge over other Sydney developers. The **Underwood Estate** (from which Fleet Street was carved out) had been established by an Act of Parliament, the NSW Underwood's Estate Act of 1873. Because of its long gestation, land came onto the market in large lot sizes perhaps more relevant for earlier decades than the 1880s.

The first land auction had been advertised by Richardson and Wrench for September 1878, but sales were held up and not registered until 1880.<sup>1</sup> The blocks of land available on the *Underwood Estate* were large and sales were slow, so Bartlett set about creating land parcels better suited to his view of people's needs.

Reference 1. The Richardson and Wrench advertising poster indicating the auction date September 1878, is shown on page 56 of the ADHS journal *Summer Hill*, edited by Chris Pratten. The Certificate of Title for the *Underwood Estate*, Volume 354 Folio 134, lists the registration of the sales of the subdivision, and they start in February 1880 and extend until April 1887.

Bartlett, however, was shrewd. He arranged for nine contiguous lots in the *Underwood Estate* to be purchased. But he didn't buy them himself. The nine lots were transferred from Bartlett's colleagues to Bartlett himself swiftly once the sale was complete. **Figure 1** shows the map of the lots:



**Figure 1: Extract from Certificate of Title: Volume 500 Folio 205, dated 16 July 1880, indicating the properties consolidated by James Bartlett from the original Underwood Estate.**

## Fleet Street, Summer Hill

**Table 1: Bartlett's land purchasers**

Purchaser	Lots purchased in Section 8 of Underwood Estate	Date Certificate of Title signed	Date of transfer to James Bartlett	HLRV reference
William Trinkett	Lots 54 and 55	29 May 1880	7 June 1880	494-235
Charles Washington	Lot 22	29 May 1880	11 May 1880	494-237
George Woolnough	Lots 53, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25	23 June 1880	29 June 1880	498-235

**Table 1**, above shows the nature and timing of this exchange:

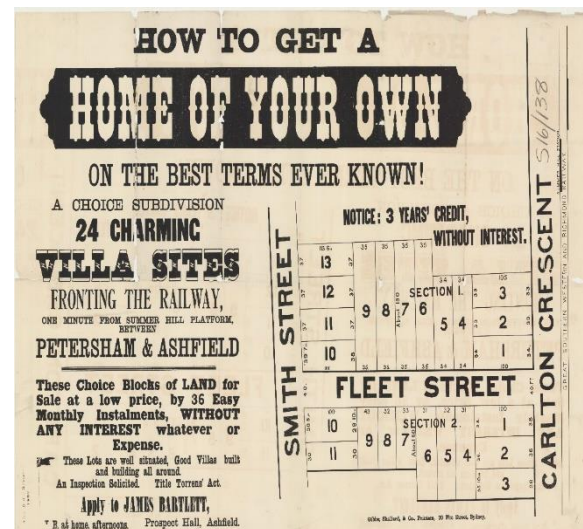
Unlike today, where property transactions are recorded electronically with certification available within a few hours, in the year 1880 the transactions were recorded by hand by clerks using paper folios. The Certificates of Title were written in calligraphy, a beautiful craft that has largely vanished today. As a result of the process, it could take weeks for the paperwork to be finalised, and the certificates issued.

As **Table 1** indicates, however, the transfers of the properties to James Bartlett were still relatively swift. Lots 54 and 55 were transferred to Bartlett approximately one week after the Certificate of Title was issued to **William Trinkett**.

It seems that for one lot, Lot 22, the transfer was undertaken even before the ink on the certificate was dry!

The relative swiftness of the transfers gives the impression that this suite of transactions was pre-planned. By this method James Bartlett acquired two acres of land and set about his own subdivision. He put a road through the middle of his parcel, called it 'Fleet Street', and still had space to carve out 24 new, smaller suburban lots.

The layout of Bartlett's subdivision is shown in **Figure 2**:



**Figure 2: Subdivision Plan for Fleet Street.**  
Source: State Library of NSW Summer Hill FL9106251)

No time was lost before sales were initiated in the new subdivision. Bartlett sold his first Fleet Street lot in November 1880, only just a few months after he had acquired the lots himself! The bulk of the lots, however, are recorded as being sold in 1882 through to 1884, with the last parcel sold in 1889.

How successful was James Bartlett's subdivision? We don't have details on the financial transactions so we can make no assessment on the commercial viability of the development, either for Bartlett or his customers.

## Fleet Street, Summer Hill

However, we do have records of the people who came to the subdivision, either as investors, speculators or owner-occupiers.

For the 24 lots sold by Bartlett, there were 23 separate purchasers coming from a diversity of social backgrounds:

- Half of all the properties from this group of first purchasers were owned for only between 1 and 3 years.;
- The other half of all the properties were owned by the original purchasers for more than six years, whilst five were owned between 28 and 42 years;
- Two people purchased multiple lots, each being lots 1 & 2 on Carlton Crescent, on either side of Fleet Street. These were on-sold to speculative builders within three years who then built multiple terrace houses on each of the lots;
- Eight purchasers were women. One was recorded as a spinster, while the others were recorded as 'a wife' of a man with a stated occupation;
- The 15 male purchasers had stated occupations ranging from gentleman, jeweller, carpenter, bootmaker, grocer, engineer and labourer;
- Only four of the original purchasers were recorded as being in the building trade, being carpenters or joiners, or were in the name of a wife of a carpenter or joiner. Three of these effectively acted as speculative builders and resold their property with a new dwelling within one to four years. However, one carpenter/joiner kept the place (Lot 12 Section 1) and it remained in the family for 65 years;
- Three of the purchasers suffered mortgage stress during the depression years commencing in 1893. Their properties were sold by the power of the mortgagee;
- One lot sold by Bartlett (Lot 9 Section 2) was further divided into two, and each portion was sold to two separate people.

Bartlett's subdivision into smaller lots was likely intended to make the properties more affordable and attract purchasers who were not necessarily particularly wealthy.

By reviewing the occupations of the various purchasers, it seems Bartlett was successful. Following Bartlett's lead, many other of the subsequent Fleet Street property owners also divided their lots into two, allowing for the building of a second dwelling.

Also, it seems that a large proportion of the owners engaged their own builders directly and at different points in time. This helps explain why there is such a diversity in house styles and sizes present in Fleet Street.

Whilst the purchasers of the lots from Bartlett come from a range of social backgrounds, it is interesting to note that one, **William Pearce**, identified himself as a 'labourer'. Despite his apparent low social status, he seems quite resourceful. He did not suffer the same hardship of a mortgagee sale that three of his neighbours did. He and his wife retained his property (Lot 3, Section 2) for 16 years, and sold in 1899 to **Samuel Weirick**, a builder of Stanmore.

One purchaser from Bartlett's subdivision, **Robert Cos**, a grocer, lived on his property for 42 years (Lot 6, Section 2), selling in 1927 to **Leslie and Alma Gregg**.

Bartlett's 1880 subdivision poster advertised a "home of your own". It seems that the subdivision did indeed create homes for people, with some owner-occupiers living many decades in their new abode. The subdivision did, of course, attract a fair share of investors and speculators.

The diversity of house styles, types and sizes visible on the site today is a tangible reflection of the healthy diversity of the aspirations of the purchasers of the estate.



## Fleet Street, Summer Hill

**Table 2 and Table 3** below list the people who purchased lots from Bartlett, and provides a summary of the outcomes from these initial purchases:

**Table 2 showing the land purchasers of lots on the west side of Fleet Street (Section 1)**

Lot in Section 1	Address	Purchaser from James Barnett	Stated occupation	Hlr reference	Time held property
1	Carlton	Mary Ranger	Wife of Joseph Ranger, plumber	940-147	3 years
2	Carlton	Mary Ranger	Wife of Joseph Ranger, plumber	940-147	2 years
3	Carlton	Eliza Nelson	Spinster	574-198	28 years
4	Fleet	William Ronald	Grocer	688-5	5 years mortgagee sale
5	Fleet	Charles Burton	Carpenter and Joiner	538-29	1 year
6	Fleet	Charles King	Jeweller	656-88	3 years
7	Fleet	Phebe Oliver	Wife of Thomas Oliver, civil servant	650-157	2 years
8	Fleet	Louise Locke	Wife of Thomas Locke, bootmaker	706-195	15 years mortgagee sale
9	Fleet	Julius Messent	Bootmaker	706-196	14 years mortgagee sale
10	Smith	William Pratt	Engineer	648-16	22 years
11	Smith	Mary Ranger	Wife of Joseph Ranger, plumber	940-147	2 years
12	Smith	Ellen Chaffer	Wife of Edwin Chaffer, Joiner	586-79	10 years
13	Smith	Frederick Bretnall	Accountant	608-187	19 years

**Table 3 showing land purchasers of lots on the east side of Fleet Street (Section 2)**

Lot in Section 2	Address	Initial Purchase from James Barnett	Stated occupation	Hlr Reference	Time held property
1	Carlton	William Clifton	Gentleman	592-1	3 years
2	Carlton	William Clifton	Gentleman	592-1	3 years
3	Carlton	William Pearce	Labourer	674-120	16 years
4	Fleet	Johanna Ryan	Wife of Thomas Ryan, joiner and carpenter	676-188	6 years
5	Fleet	Jane Two	Wife of William Two	684-238	1 year
6	Fleet	Robert Cos	Grocer	734-28	42 years
7	Fleet	William Terry	Brickmaker	513-122	35 years
8	Fleet	John Wigginton	Engineer	568-219	10 years
9a	Fleet	Albert Curgenvin	Plasterer	674-229	1 year
9b	Fleet	Alfred Trethway	Carpenter	674-228	1 year
10	Smith	Peter Kirkham	Checker	592-38	-
11	Smith	Michael Sullivan	Not stated	Error	nil

**Mark Sabolch**

## Heritage report

Fortunately, an amended set of plans was lodged for **52 John Street Ashfield** which while it is still a new two-storey dwelling, is a better fit in the locality and for its heritage neighbours. This plan was approved.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned that Land and Environment Court (LEC) Commissioner O'Neill had found that the existing Victorian villa at **5 Bruce St Ashfield** had sufficient heritage value so as to warrant its retention, consequently its demolition was not approved and the DA for home units refused. Unfortunately, the applicant has taken a point of law to a judge of the LEC to try and get a review of this decision. The hearing on this is not until June, so the matter remains uncertain.

The flow of DAs for alterations/additions to heritage properties is just starting to return after the January break and I will no doubt be reporting on these in future newsletters.

### David Rollinson

## Vale Stephen Harris

**Susan Thompson** advised the gathering at the Society's AGM of the recent passing of town planner, educator, heritage expert and urban activist **Stephen Harris** (1949-2023). Stephen was a former Summer Hill resident and contributor to the original Ashfield Heritage Study. As a lecturer in the School of Town Planning at UNSW, Stephen inspired my interest in heritage when I was a student.

I commend members to read about his contribution to planning and heritage in this tribute written by **Susan and Dennis McManus**: [https://www.planning.org.au/newsletters?command=article&id=48676&contact\\_id=36067&r=A&message\\_id=11845](https://www.planning.org.au/newsletters?command=article&id=48676&contact_id=36067&r=A&message_id=11845)

### Heather Warton

## TOD policy

The NSW Government in December 2023 released a new housing policy and information on a related proposed draft State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP). The new policy is proposed because of sustained pressure to act on the housing and rental 'crises'. See:

[Transport Oriented Development \(TOD\) Program \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/transport-oriented-development-tod-program)

**Transport Oriented Development** (TOD) has been a planning principle for some time. Areas near transport hubs are favoured for increased density to reduce the need to travel by car and to encourage the use of public transport. TOD is also favoured as infill development near transport to counter city spread on the perimeters of Sydney where there is not enough infrastructure and commuting time is long.

The program has two stages. Stage 1 affects precincts within 1200m of eight metro and railway stations. The precincts will be rezoned between September 2024 to November 2024 to fast-track housing in these areas.

Stage 2 is to be implemented by a SEPP. This targets land within 400m of 31 stations, including **Croydon, Ashfield, Dulwich Hill and Marrickville**. The proposed changes as advertised for comment will allow:

- residential flat buildings in all residential zones within 400 m of the identified stations
- residential flat buildings and shop top housing in local and commercial centres within 400 m of identified stations.

Nearby stations of Lewisham, Petersham and Newtown, Summer Hill are not affected – as yet.

Buildings of up to 6 levels (31m) will be permitted with a Floor Space Ratio of 3:1. Design criteria for setbacks, building separation, visual privacy, vehicle access and communal open space will apply.

## TOD policy

In the Inner West, streets around **Croydon, Dulwich Hill and Marrickville stations** will be most affected.

Streets near on the north side of **Ashfield Station** and streets near the Mall are affected. However, under the current LEP, buildings of up to eight storeys are already permitted (subject requirements in the planning controls) in the CBD and immediately adjacent streets. Previously six were levels allowed and eight if affordable housing was included.

The *Flour Mill of Summer Hill, Luna* in Lewisham and the development of the former Petersham RSL site are examples of TOD.

The government has not excluded Heritage Conservation Areas (HCA) but states that proposals within HCAs will be assessed on merit and that the emphasis will be on good design. For all proposals in the eight Precincts under Stage 1, developers will have the option to select an architect from an appointed panel.

For Stage 2 development, 'Pattern Books' of endorsed housing design will be provided. It does not seem to be mandatory for developers to choose one of these designs, but they will have the incentive of a potentially quicker approval process if they do so.

The SEPP will remain in place until councils 'have completed and delivered a new strategic vision and rezoning for these areas.'

A concurrent and somewhat overlapping **Low and Mid-Rise Housing Reform** was also released by the State government. See:

[Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create low and mid-rise housing | Planning Portal - Department of Planning and Environment \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Portals/0/Files/2024/03/Explanation_of_Intended_Effect_Changes_to_create_low_and_mid-rise_housing_Planning_Portal_Department_of_Planning_and_Environment_nsw.gov.au)

This foreshadows a SEPP that will allow wider permissibility of dual occupancies and residential flat buildings close to railway stations and commercial centres.

The broad definition of a centre being one 'which has a full line supermarket a collection of restaurants and shops' does not bode well for land near local centres not otherwise listed in the TOD policy.

Councils in areas to which these policies will apply were able to make submissions during a targeted consultation period (which closed in mid-February). The consultation on Stage 1 is unclear. Local residents were able to make submissions, but the documentation that was exhibited is quite convoluted and the full implications are not easily understood.

Inner West Council's submission on the policies was discussed at the Council meeting on 5 March 2024, see: [Agenda of Council - Tuesday, 5 March 2024 \(infocouncil.biz\)](https://www.infocouncil.biz/Agenda-of-Council-Tuesday-5-March-2024)

The housing problem is a wicked issue to resolve.

***The blanket 'one size fits all' approach is not a way forward. Detailed in place assessment, which includes local character and context, is needed.***

The rigorous analysis already undertaken by local councils must be heeded. We do not need to destroy the little that remains of our heritage.

People in boarding houses and lower cost rental accommodation must also be protected. Developers will likely target those cheaper buys to demolish; one more reason why allowing developers to lead is most unwise.

**Alex Lofts**



# SHAG tales

In our December newsletter we reported about a scrapbook of news cuttings relating to the **Summer Hill Action Group (SHAG)**, which was recently donated to our Society by past ADHS president, **Doug Benson**.

Mention of this turbulent period brought back strong memories to one of our members, **Simone Cullinan** (nee Nassis). As a nine-year-old girl, Simone witnessed her father's involvement in defending his 'village' and kindly agreed to write down her memories for this newsletter. She also dug out an old photo of none other than our late president **John Oastler Ward**, spruiking the message to resist the developers.

## **Simone writes:**

Here are my memories of SHAG (the Summer Hill Action Group) and Summer Hill in 1985

We moved to Summer Hill in 1978. Mum and Dad had been looking to buy in Ashfield, but it was too expensive. So, when Dad had a win at the Harold Park Trots, they looked to buy in Ashfield's poorer cousin - Summer Hill.

I was 9 years old in 1985 and we lived in a house in Morris Street. Nothing much happened in Summer Hill. If we were bored, my sister and I went to play with the other local kids on the high-speed Merry-Go-Round in Darrel Jackson Gardens. If we were bored AND naughty, Mum gave us 'two bob' each and sent us to the corner shop to get paddle pops with instructions not to come back until they were eaten. Life was simple and uneventful.

But sometime in that year 1985, something began to stir in Summer Hill. While we pretended to be asleep, we could hear whisperings at night from our kitchen between adults, that often became excited shouts.

A man in a distinctive black hat became a regular at our kitchen table. This was the legendary writer **Rae Jones** (later Mayor), who could put words together like no other. Another rather eloquent activist at the table was **John Ward** (also later Mayor) and of course my dad, **Sas Nassis**. The Summer Hill Action Group or SHAG was born.

There were many other men and women involved of course, but let's not forget I was 9 at the time, so only the loudest of these men caught my attention.

Somewhere along the way Dad explained to me that THEY were going to put a 'dirty big high-rise building' on top of OUR carpark at Summer Hill and that WE had to stop them. I guess I became one of the 'WE' because I was given a t-shirt with a picture of the proposed high-rise-building inside a NO symbol to wear.

Many council meetings were held and disrupted, newsletters written, and information distributed to residents explaining the SHAG Mission. A classic David and Goliath story, long before the film *The Castle*.

During this time, I was mostly on the swings with my sister at the park seeing who could go the highest. Occasionally, I wondered if the 'goodies' (SHAG) or the 'baddies' (the Developers) would win the fight.

***One day I was called to action, and this was possibly the most exciting day of my life so far. It was the day of the "Big Rally".***

We assembled at the Fountain in Summer Hill with our protest signs and banners and listened to speakers about why the development had to be stopped. Then we marched up to Council Chambers in Ashfield chanting 'No High Rise, Save Summer Hill.'

## SHAG tales



**John O. Ward wearing the Group's T-Shirt and spruiking the message at the rally to Save Summer Hill and No High Rise.**  
Image: Simone Cullinan

I was giddy with excitement and remember being caught up in the emotion of the day. Together we could make a difference.

Fast forward 39 years and Dad now proudly tells the story to his three grand kids about how SHAG beat the 'greedy developers' and how he played a part. I'm proud to have played my small part too. I just wish I'd kept the T-shirt as proof that I was there!

***I guess SHAG convinced enough people that Summer Hill was worth saving, as the development (thankfully) didn't go ahead.***

### **Ann reflects:**

What a lovely story Simone! Interested members can visit our research rooms to look through Doug Benson's SHAG scrapbook of news cuttings. If you can add photographs or stories about these times, please do! We will be very happy to keep them as a part of our local history collections.

**Ann O'Connell**

## Summer Hill today

As part of the 'Smith Street project' Mark Sabolch recently interviewed **Paul Doueihy**, from *Maurice Dry Cleaners* and **Thomas** from *The Tailor*. Mark loves how these interviews provide a greater depth of understanding of the shopkeepers' point of view of the character of Summer Hill. Here is an extract of **Mark's interview with Paul:**

Every day a remarkable series of activities takes place here at *Maurice Dry Cleaners*. Every morning a set of delivery vans head out to five different venues in Sydney city, picking up clothes that city workers have left for cleaning. Those clothes are brought here to the central hive of the operation in Smith Street. Eighty percent of the business comes from the city venues, being a mixture of shirts and suits. Only around 20% of the business comes through the shopfront at 150 Smith Street.

Paul has invested in the latest technology to make clothes cleaning easy, thorough and efficient. Paul's father, **Mason Doueihy**, an immigrant from Lebanon in 1955, bought an existing dry cleaner business in Summer Hill.



**Paul Doueihy at Maurice Drycleaners.**  
Image: Mark Sabloch

Paul took over the business from his father and it now employs around 20 people, a mix of casual and part time employees.

**Mark Sabolch**

# Heritage reflections from abroad

**Mark Sabolch** has also been travelling, and on a recent trip continued his research on Italianate architecture.

## Mark writes:

I recently arrived home from a fabulous holiday in London and Europe. There is an enormous diversity of Italianate style dwellings in London, it is staggering!

Interestingly, I met up with members of the **Willesden Local Historical Society** in Northwest London, near Wimbledon. They are waging a battle with Brent Council about the proposed redevelopment of a local heritage item, **Altamira** house (known as 1 Morland Gardens). *Altamira* is an Italianate styled two-storey dwelling dating back to 1876, not dissimilar in scale to *Glentworth* in Ashfield.

Brent Council's proposal is to demolish and rebuild for high rise housing (note that in London, the local councils are a significant provider of social housing). In a strange twist of circumstance, Council's own redevelopment approval lapsed in October 2023, and so the fight is now on to oppose the fresh moves by Council to restart the redevelopment process.

Although the chief lesson learned here is that local heritage status is no guarantee of heritage protection, but the other lesson is that when assessing the urgent need for more housing against the needs for heritage protection, even local councils can operate just like any other developer in these situations.

The Chair and Journal Editor of the Willesden Local Historical Society asked me to write an article for their Journal, which I promised to do.

Here is a photo I took of the Secretary of the Willesden Local Historical Society, **Margaret Pratt**, who met me outside *Altamira* one day (a wet day of course. I don't think I ever saw the sun in London).



**The Secretary of the Willesden Local Historical Society outside *Altamira*, northwest London.**

Image: Mark Sabolch

Another interesting lesson is that **Philip Grant**, also from the Willesden Local Historical Society, has started using an 'open email' format to keep a wide range of interested people and ratepayers know about developments. Philip's open emails target Council leadership and really nail the main issues, keeping everyone informed of the responses and keeping the pressure on Council.

Philip also utilises a local electronic newsletter format, **Wembley Matters** to share his thoughts and results of investigations. I encourage you to have a look through some of the other topics of interest. See:

<https://wembleymatters.blogspot.com/2023/12/morland-gardens-report-recommends.html>

Clearly historical societies around the world face similar challenges. We can learn from each other. It's up to us to present clearly to the broader community the enduring value of heritage.

**Mark Sabolch**



## Research Rooms

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

The Rooms are open on the **second and last Saturday** 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.

Please complete the online form and submit it <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:

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PO Box 20 Ashfield NSW 1800.

**Cash payments** can be made at our Rooms on the second and last Saturday of the month.

## Contact the Society

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## Newsletter contributors

Thank you to:

- Simone Cullinan
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- David Rollinson
- Colin Webb

for their contributions to this newsletter.

**Heather Warton**  
**Newsletter Editor**  
**9 March 2024**



**Chris Pratten with Ann O'Connell, & Alan Croker in February 2023.**  
Image: Heather Warton



**Chris at the launch of his journal *Frederick Clissold* in March 2021.**

Image: Colin Webb

## *Remembering Chris Pratten*