



# Newsletter

DECEMBER 2024 I SERIES 5 I NO. 16

## President's message

Dear Members

Well, that year passed quickly, but again, it was a very full year for Society. Our events continue to be fully attended, and I thank the Society's very able committee for organising speakers, talks, walks and tours of such high interest (and with such wonderful afternoon teas).

As in past years our events had a broad focus, from heritage specialist Niall Macken's detailed talk on Hibernian Heritage, to a highly informative presentation of genealogical mythology, by our very own Kerry Barlow, to Mark Sabolch's walking tours of the people and places of Smith Street Summer Hill, then Colin Webb's wonderful, illustrated talk on California Bungalows.

As reported in this newsletter, a tour of Trinity Grammar, a tour of the Malvern Estate Croydon held jointly with the Burwood & District Historical Society, and a visit to *History House* were all successful events. And finally, a house tour in Summer Hill and a Christmas Party. No wonder the year seemed to go quickly!

We are now planning for 2025 and have already a draft schedule of events but if you have any suggestions of interest, please feel free to forward them.

Our first and very important event for 2025 is the Annual General Meeting to be held on Sunday 9th February 2025. At the AGM we will be launching our latest and very important Journal chronicling the history of people and places in Summer Hill. Our guest speaker will be Brian Scales, the Community History Officer for Inner West Council. I hope to see you there.

## President's message

That leads me to something of importance to all who have an interest in our local area, particularly built heritage.

The Inner West Council is presently formulating a revised Local Environment Plan, or LEP, which is (with the associated Development Control plan, or DCP) the principal planning instrument for land use and development in the Inner West. This comprehensive document will go on public exhibition early in 2025 and you will be able to comment or make a submission in the 'Have Your Say' section of the Inner West Council website.

As you know there is much pressure being placed on Councils to dramatically increase the supply of residential dwellings, but I believe this should not be done at the cost of what remains of our built heritage.

I wish you, your families and loved ones the very best for the coming festive season and that you have a fulfilling new year.

I hope you enjoy this, the last of our newsletters for 2024.

**Alex Lofts**

## Future events

**Annual General Meeting  
Sunday 9 February 2025  
Summer Hill Community Centre  
At 2.00 pm**

The Society's AGM will be held on 9 February at the Summer Hill Community Centre, 131 Smith Street, Summer Hill.

A sumptuous afternoon tea will of course be served after the formalities.

The 2025 officer bearers and Committee will be elected. We welcome people to nominate for the Committee.

***Our guest speaker will be Brian Scales who will also launch the Society's latest journal: Summer Hill Village***

Brian studied history at the University of Sydney doing Honours in American History, although he laments that it was not Australian History and then a Graduate Diploma in Information Management – Librarianship at UNSW.

After an early career in academic and special libraries, he worked in teaching and translation for several decades before joining the National Archives of Australia in late 2010, working at the Archives' National Office in Canberra in an information and records management training and communications role.

From September 2014 to April 2023, he was Manager, Public Engagement at the Archives' NSW Office. The NSW Office Public Engagement team is responsible for providing access to and promoting the use of records in the National Archives' custody at its NSW repository located in the Sydney suburb of Chester Hill.

Since January 2024, he has been a Community History Officer with Inner West Council Library and History Services, based at Ashfield Library.

***Financial Members of the Society will be able to collect a copy of the new Journal at the Meeting.***



## Past events

### Guided tour of Trinity Grammar School Held on 28 September 2024

The School's Archivists, Alison and Tracey, met a group of about 25 Ashfield & District Historical Society members outside the school's main gates in Prospect Road.

We learned that the impressive gateposts and gates had adorned St. Andrews Cathedral until the construction of Town Hall station and the widening of George Street made them untenable at that location.

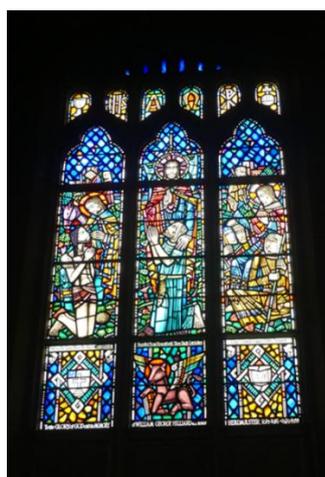


**Alison Doran, Archivist for Trinity Grammar**

Alison then took us to admire *Hurlstone*, currently the Headmaster's residence, as she described its provenance, but as an active residence, it was not open to view inside. However, we were able to see the cast iron water pump dating from the house's construction as we progressed along the old driveway past what was once the rear garden of *Hurlstone*.

Climbing some stairs to the upper level of a building which now occupies what used to be a graveled driveway where the teachers' cars were daily parked beneath a row of ancient Moreton Bay Figs, we were treated to a view of the adjacent Number One Oval, hallowed ground now sadly occupied by rows of temporary classroom buildings. Here Alison and Tracey gave a thorough account of the history of the site and School, before conducting our group via the Wilson Hogg Assembly Hall/Theatre and Compass Courtyard to the central Quadrangle.

Our tour was unfortunately constrained by the imminent extensive building works which precluded access to much of the Western parts of the School, so Alison and Tracey explained the historical aspects of the area before continuing to the peaceful atmosphere of the Chapel with its traditional Gothic furnishings and progressively installed stained glass windows.



From there it was a few steps along the colonnade, with another view of *Hurlstone*, to the Dining Hall, no longer the hive of activity of the boarding-school era, but intact from its heyday with polished wainscoting and furnishings and endowed with imposing portraits of past Headmasters. A refreshing afternoon tea had been provided, and we chatted with our hosts, before heading home.

**Paul Williams**

**Images: Colin Webb**

# Walking Tour of Malvern Hill Estate, Croydon

## Held on 20 October 2024

It was a pleasant Spring afternoon when we met in front of the Masonic Hall Croydon. It was a large group of at least 26 people who registered on the Society's webpage or with **Burwood & District Historical Society** or just came along. It was a joint function for both Societies.

**Burwood Council** is keen to raise awareness of the significance of the conservation area given the potential threat it might be facing with the Government's intention to seek increased housing opportunities close to railway stations.



**John Johnson**

A representative from Burwood Council Library made some introductory remarks, welcoming attendees and introduced **John Johnson** and **Cecily Gray** who led the walk. John has written a book on the Malvern Hill Conservation Area which he expects will be available in the new year.

John touched on the early development of the area mentioning persons owning the large estates whose names are enshrined in the fabric of the suburb

- Daniel Holborow - *Gads Hall*
- Samuel Dickinson - *The Hall*
- George Murray - *The Lee*
- Anthony Hordern - *Shubra Hall*.

Malvern Hill was developed in response to the Garden Suburb Movement. Subdivision proceeded in two phases – May and September 1909 creating large blocks and applying a residential covenant with conditions on use and building materials. Many blocks were sold complete with architect plans. It resulted in Federation style homes of complex designs, featuring multiple gables, tall chimneys and spacious verandas.

By 1912 Californian bungalow elements were being introduced – low pitched roofs, squat chimneys, dark brick rough cast walls, deep verandas with heavy supporting columns. Close proximity to the railway station ensured it was a desirable area to live. The walk commentary focused on the social history aspects rather than the architectural features. Some remembered snippets are relayed here.



**Former Masonic Hall, Fitzroy Street Croydon**

## Tour of Malvern Hill Estate

Starting at 2A Fitzroy Street, the Masonic Hall, now known as the Imar Youth Charitable Community Hall, owned by the Lebanese Maronite Charitable Organisation, is indicative of the cultural change that has occurred in the suburb.



The walk moved to the former Croydon Post Office, complete with the original post box outside, now a shop (Adora Cream Chocolates). Its prominent position marks the entrance to The Strand on the western side, the first area to be developed (1913), followed by the eastern side in 1917. Along with the original Canary Island Date Palms in the centre of the street, The Strand is one of the most intact shopping strips in Sydney. Nos. 1-27 and 2-32 are listed as part of the Conservation Area.

It is interesting to note that there was a motor garage (**EA and HO Comer**) at No. 34, at least from 1925. This was taken over by the Roy Bros in 1926, who also established a motorcycle dealership at No. 30. The Roys accumulated a few properties in The Strand and eventually moved the motor garage to the western side, where a motor mechanic operates today.

From The Strand we moved to Dickinson Avenue where nos.1-19 on the western side are in the Burwood local government area, the eastern side being within the Inner West.

The elegantly styled house immediately facing The Strand, No. 1 Dickinson Avenue, was one of the first residences to be built and has been used in recent years as low-cost seniors living with 30 furnished rooms. It would be wonderful to have it restored to its former glory



**1 Dickinson Avenue Croydon**

No. 5 has had land subdivided off for a 1960's home (5A) now rendered and painted grey, and No. 7 (*Cavendish Lodge*) has been modified for an assisted living boarding house. Otherwise, the street displays the original architecture and subdivision pattern.

A Californian bungalow (*Willandra*), at No. 22, (Inner West LGA) was pointed out as being the home of **Albert Francis Lenartz**, the composer of the 'I like Aeroplane Jelly' jingle. In 1938 it was played up to 100 times a day on radio and turned out to be longest running advertising jingle in Australian history.



**22 Dickinson Avenue Croydon**

## Tour of Malvern Hill Estate

We were welcomed into the grounds of No. 19 (*Pahiatua*), a two-storey Federation home with Victorian features internally, which has been very faithfully restored. Unfortunately, the large group size prevented us from going inside. Being a large block, the property once included a tennis court.



***Pahiatua*, 19 Dickinson Avenue Croydon**

Our tour then turned the corner from Liverpool Road into Malvern Avenue. The homes here nos. 1-23 and 2-36 remain intact, displaying a mix of the Federation and Bungalow styles.

Notable in this area was **Sir Bertram Stevens**, former Premier of NSW 1932-1939. Sir Bertram and Lady Stevens first lived at No. 26 (*Hillcrest*) and later moved to No. 15 where the land extended west to Chelmsford Avenue. When the Stevens fell on hard times, land to the rear of the property was subdivided.

Stevens had trained as an accountant, was a Public Service Inspector, and Director of Finance in the NSW Treasury before entering politics. He served as Treasurer in 1929, so it is hard to imagine that Stevens was poor at his death. John spoke of the State funeral organised for Bertram by former Premier **Jack Lang**, with whom he had clashed when in the Department of Finance. The funeral was conducted at the then Croydon Methodist Church on the corner of Malvern Avenue and Murray Street where the Stevens attended.



**15 Malvern Avenue Croydon**

The Minister at the time was renowned for giving a sermon in support of the New Guard. The Church itself is an impressive mix of red brick Federation and gothic styles designed by prominent architect **Alfred Newman**.

Our walk finished at the Church, leaving more of the conservation area for another day perhaps. There is so much that could be explored in this Conservation Area. It will be interesting to read John's book, when published, to find out more.

***Congratulations to Burwood Council and Burwood & District Historical Society for their support in seeking to inform the populace of our valuable conservation areas.***

**Lois Gray**

**Images: Colin Webb**



## ***A visit to History House*** **Held on 14 November 2024**

On 14 November, a group of ADHS members attended a very enjoyable talk, morning tea and tour of the historic town house at 133 Macquarie Street in Sydney which is the home of the **Royal Australian Historical Society**.

The Vice President of the Society, A/Prof. **Carol Liston**, noted its establishment by dedicated volunteers as long ago as 1901 but without a place to call its own. Many years later, in 1941, premises were made available in a former wool store in Young Street from which time cataloguing of manuscripts, glass slides and photographs commenced, forming a substantial collection.

The Society moved to what is now *History House* in 1970 after extensive restoration and construction work was carried out. The reception area includes the entrance hall and adjoining drawing and dining rooms which have been decorated and furnished in period style and showcase cedar timberwork with mahogany detailing and parquet flooring. Magnificent!

A large proportion of the Society's collection is housed on the first and second floors and includes journals, newsletters, diaries, books, press clippings, letters, reminiscences and scrap books as well as the Society's quarterly *HISTORY* magazine and biannual *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*. Other reference materials in hard copy include the Sands Directories and the Post Office Directories followed in time by street directories from the 1920's covering the Sydney region with some regional directories also available.

Importantly, the Society's collection contains cemetery records which contain headstone transcriptions, the Consolidated Index of NSW Parliamentary Papers covering local issues of the time, and the NSW Statistical Register.

This includes data on education, travel, domestic rents, meteorology, council rates, births, deaths and more.

The thousands of photographs in the collection include many of the Garden Palace in the Royal Botanic Garden, destroyed by fire in 1882, and the Sandhills (Devonshire Street) Cemetery upon which Central Station was built from 1901.

Photographs from the Aadastra Aerial Survey from 1937, particularly of Sydney and the east coast of NSW, are also well represented.

Over 7,500 glass slides, produced using photographic film, record historic places and events including the State funeral of William Charles Wentworth in 1873. Donations of larger objects including pistols and the Ranken family landau were made by the Society to other museums such as the Powerhouse Museum and the National Museum of Australia.

It is a credit to the Society's Librarian, **Donna Newton**, that these items are catalogued and can be accessed by the public (apart from rare books) in a relatively small space. The Society is also working on an online register, starting with its book collection, possibly operational next year, and a general history database.

While much historic data is now available on-line, this is not possible with all records and hard copy reference material can convey context and a different perspective.

A/Prof. Liston noted that understanding how information is collected, how and where it is stored and why it has not been digitised may in fact assist historical research.

***An outing enjoyed by all who attended, with thanks to the Royal Australian Historical Society***

**Clare Herscovitch**

## House visit to Californian Bungalow in Summer Hill Held on 17 November 2024

Inspecting this wonderful Californian bungalow was an extraordinary privilege. The house is a prominent and stunning feature in its environment with a wonderful history. We learnt a lot about the history of the house from the owners Richard and Susan.

What was truly remarkable was the extent the owners have gone to preserve the architectural heritage of the house. The interior of the house has been preserved and restored, where necessary, to retain its original features.

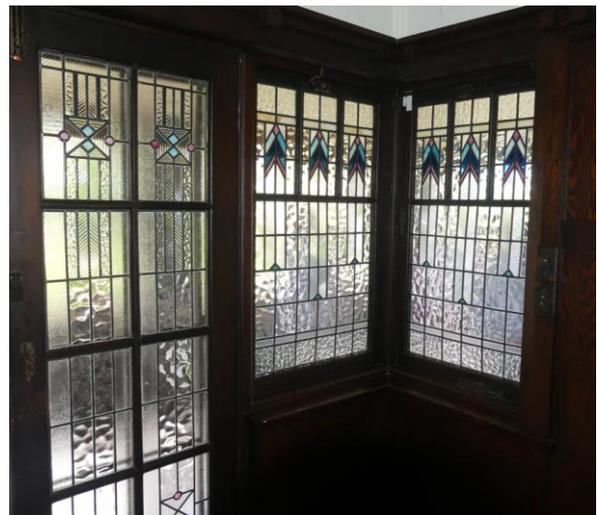
One of the features of the living/dining room is a stunning hand-painted frieze above the picture/plate rails. Some of the elements of the frieze have been highlighted with gold leaf as have some of the details in the plaster ceiling panels.



The original dark woodwork in the doors, windows architraves and skirting board is a great feature of the interior of the house and has been meticulously maintained, as have many of the other features of the house to create an atmosphere that makes one feel that the house is almost entirely original.



One particular feature of this house is the use of leadlight. The leadlight is very geometric and uses minimal colour, typical of many Art Deco houses. In this house it is used in almost all windows and doors, internal and external, and in the bookcases on either side of one of the fireplaces.



We had a simple afternoon tea on the front verandah after the inspection.

**Sue Jackson-Stepowski** thanked the hosts who were extraordinarily generous to open their home to members of the Society.

**Joy McIntyre**

**Images: Colin Webb**

## Party time!

**Held on 8 December 2024**

Our President **Alex Lofts** and his wife **Louise** again graciously hosted the Society's Christmas Party in their lovely Victorian terrace in Summer Hill. It was a steamy day, and the weather looked uncertain so the universal decision to congregate on their undercover back terrace was justified, as it began to rain later in the afternoon. Our group of about 18 people conversed in comfort, under the sleepy supervision of Henry the dog, who was not at all inconvenienced by the unaccustomed throng.

The healthy green of the garden contributed a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere, as we sampled a table laden with a variety of tempting nibbles, salads and sweets provided by members to accompany barbequed items expertly cooked by Alex. Most chatted and lingered long after hunger was satisfied.



*We had a wonderful afternoon! Thank you again, Alex and Louise, for your generous hospitality.*



**Story & images: Lois Gray**

# Heritage Report

After local objections including one from ADHS, plus Council staff concerns, the plans for a sizeable pavilion addition to the heritage item bungalow at **19 Leopold Street Croydon Park** were amended to reduce the roof height and incorporate more appropriate design elements. The footprint is still considerable but acceptable and the rear two-storey stables/garage will now be retained. The DA has now been approved.

An objection was lodged to the DA **for 22 Wellesley Street Summer Hill** noting the failure to improve the street appearance of this dwelling in conjunction with a large rear addition. Council also had concerns, and the applicant has now withdrawn the DA.

Without any comment from ADHS, it is pleasing to see that Council staff have also been seeking improvements to the DA design for **2 Rosemount Avenue Summer Hill**.

Council successfully sought changes to **14 Herbert Street Summer Hill** and this DA has now been approved.

ADHS has lodged objections to the sizeable pavilion addition proposed for **12 Forbes Street Croydon Park** and the design of a duplex redevelopment of **18 Drynan Street Summer Hill**.

The DA to demolish the modest inter-war bungalow at **40 Lucy Street Ashfield** and build a 'copy' but with a basement garage and two-storey rear addition, was subject to a number of objections including from ADHS. The applicant has now appealed to the LEC, with a hearing in March 2025.

Meanwhile, yet another DA to demolish the dry-cleaning business at **150 Smith Street Summer Hill**, has been lodged, this time, to build a four storey co-living development of 30 bedsits and a small shop.

This has met with numerous objections, including from ADHS and the Council's Independent Design Excellence Panel. Straight after the 40-day deemed refusal period, the applicant lodged a LEC appeal – hearing dates are awaited.

**David Rollinson**

## Free table

ADHS has a charming table no longer required at our Rooms. We are offering it free to a good home. It even has a scorch mark from an unattended iron, to give it that historical feel! It measures 135x75 cm, and 78 cm high.



Please email the Society if you are interested and wish to have a look.

## 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

## *2025 membership fees are due*

Membership of the Society is for the calendar year so our 2025 membership fees will be due in January 2025.

Each year your membership covers a free copy of our latest publication, quarterly newsletters, discounted entry to any of our events, plus free assistance and advice for research and access to our rooms at Thirning Villa in Pratten Park.

You must be a financial member to vote at the AGM in February 2025.

## Types of Membership

- \$40 for standard household membership - no postage
- \$30 Concessional membership (DVA, Centrelink, fulltime student) - no postage
- \$50 for standard household membership - with postage
- \$40 Concessional membership (DVA, Centrelink, fulltime student) - with postage.

Household membership entitles all members of your household to participate in Society events as members. We do try to hand deliver to local members, but this is not always possible. As you would be well aware, \$10 for the postage of newsletters and journals is a bargain!

## Method of payment

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

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

***To join or renew please complete the online form and submit it to:***

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

## 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:

- Lois Gray
- Clare Herscovitch
- Alex Lofts
- Jan McIntyre
- David Rollinson
- Colin Webb
- Jan Williams
- Paul Williams

for their contributions to this newsletter.

**Heather Warton**  
**20 December 2024**

