



Newsletter

DECEMBER 2025 | SERIES 5 | NO. 20

President's message

Well my goodness, it's almost Christmas again. I do not have a physicist's deeper understanding of how time permeates the universe, but I do know it seems to pass all too quickly.

Sometimes I think that I should adopt the approach to life of Joseph Heller's character, Dunbar, in Heller's great antiwar novel *Catch 22*, who attempted to have time seem to move more slowly by becoming profoundly bored. But then that would be counter to the Ashfield and District Historical Society's unwritten ethos of staving off ennui, even if for a few precious hours, by organising absorbing events. As we did again, for yet another busy year, about which you can read in this and previous newsletters.

And to thus retreat world, for all of us, is counter to the Society's more conscious ethos of protecting heritage and documenting our history. For that and so much more hard work undertaken this past year, done voluntarily.

My congratulations and profound thanks on behalf of all to our hard working Committee, **David Rollinson, Carolyn Carter, Jan Williams, Colin Webb, Paul Williams, Murray Cleaver, Ann O'Connell, Kerry Barlow, Linda Da Rosa, Peter Schulz, Clare Herscovitch, Heather Warton, Phil Burne, Joy McIntyre and Lois Gray.**

Special thanks as well to **Bernadette Williamson** who continues to organise market stalls for the Society. None of that is to diminish the intelligent and wonderful company these people provide.

President's message

A date to place in your diary is for the **Annual General Meeting** to be held on 8 February 2026 at 2pm in the Summer Hill Community Centre.

New nominations for the committee would be most welcome. **Kerry Barlow** will be giving the address and **David Rollinson** will be launching Kerry's wonderful new publication on the Federal-Fyle Heritage Conservation Area.

At our extremely well attended 2025 AGM, **Brian Scales**. Inner West Council Community History Officer launched our publication, *Summer Hill Village*, which has been very positively received.

In development is a new publication on the history of Liverpool Road, for which the Society was successful in gaining a \$5,000 grant from the Inner West Council, thanks especially to **Ann O'Connell**. If you have any relevant items of history relevant to Liverpool Road, please contact Ann through the Society's email admin@ashfieldhistory.org.au.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the following wonderful newsletter (a list is on page 21).

We will of course have a full and challenging year in 2026. The impact of changes to State and local planning laws, for example, are pending.

But we also have planned a full schedule of events to interest you. I won't outline our coming events now as, to prevent us becoming a little like Heller's Dunbar, we need things to look forward to. And to disclose what is to come could be just a little like the Grinch who tells a young child that Santa Claus is true only in imagination.

Which leads me to wish you all a happy, safe and merry festive season and a happy, positive New Year.

I hope to see you at our events next year or just around town.

Alex Lofts

Future events

ADHS Annual General Meeting

8 February 2026 Summer Hill Community Centre 2pm

The Society's Annual General Meeting is one of the key events of the year. The President will present a report on the activities of the previous year, and new Officer Bearers and Committee Members will be elected.

Our guest speaker will be Committee Member **Kerry Barlow**, who will present a talk: ***Convicts, Speculators and Settlers - Who would have guessed about this early history of Ashfield!***

Kerry has an extensive background in education, having taught economics, economic history and education for many years, at high school, TAFE and university levels. Kerry also 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. Some of her passions lie in family and local history research, and she used her teaching and research expertise to develop genealogy courses for the WEA, which she taught for 8 years until recently. Currently she is writing brief articles for the ADHS Journals and enjoying learning much more about our local cultural and social heritage.

At the AGM, **David Rollinson** will launch Kerry's book on the *Federal-Fyle Heritage Conservation Area*.

This will be available for financial ADHS members to collect on the day.

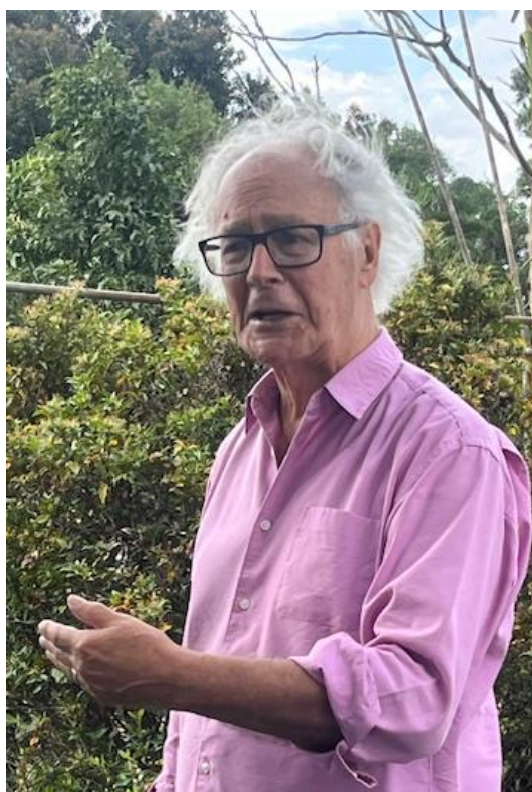
Past events

The history and drama of Callan Park

Held on 28 September 2025

Callan Park! For anyone who has lived in Sydney for any length of time the two words, *Callan Park*, invoke a sense of foreboding and mystery. Today the precinct is jointly owned by the NSW Department of Health and Greater Parklands Trust, but, tragically, since its closure as a public health institution in 1994 the condition of some of the facilities has been eroded through neglect.

We were fortunate to participate in a tour of Callan Park, organised in association with the Friends of Callan Park led by **Hall Greenland**. Hall has been a stalwart of the **Friends of Callan Park** for decades and was a fabulous tour guide.



Hall Greenland, President of Friends of Callan Park, was our knowledgeable and energetic tour leader

The group of about 23 met at the *Writers Centre* near the entrance to the Callan Park Conservation Area and Buildings on a very pleasant Sunday afternoon. Callan Park is a 60-hectare heritage listed precinct in Lilyfield, located on the western side of Balmain Road. Most people in the group had some knowledge of Callan Park.

Hall provided us with a brief history of Callan Park. Originally the area was purchased by Crown Solicitor and Police Magistrate **John Ryan Brenan** in 1839. It was in a beautiful location overlooking the Parramatta River which became a focus of social life. John Brenan built *Garry Owen House* which has now been restored and is occupied by Writing New South Wales.

John Brenan became bankrupt in 1864 and the land was subsequently purchased by **John Gordon**, renamed *Callan Park*, and prepared for subdivision. The New South Wales Government purchased Callan Park as a site for a new 'lunatic asylum' that, surprisingly, was to be designed according to the enlightened views of the American **Dr Thomas Kirkbride**. Kirkbride believed that such places were to be a therapeutic environment, treating patients with compassion and respect.



The buildings were to be large, ornate and spacious with expansive parklands promoting a connection to nature. This was not the image most of the group had of Callan Park.

Visit to Callan Park

Colonial Architect **James Barnett** worked in collaboration with Inspector of the Insane **Dr Frederick Norton Manning** to produce a group of some twenty neo-classical buildings, completed in 1885 and subsequently named the *Kirkbride Block*, offering progressive patient care.



Most of the sandstone used to build many of the buildings in the early years of Callan Park was quarried on the site and, while many of the buildings are remarkably intact with slate roofs, copper downpipes and wide and spacious verandahs creating and linking several large courtyards some are clearly showing evidence of demolition by neglect.

There is still evidence of the landscaping initially undertaken to create the beautiful grounds, which included lakes and ponds, water courses, Japanese Gardens and rainforests.

Most of the historic buildings have been fenced off to prevent access.



Interestingly, to raise funds for the restoration of the buildings, sections of the Kirkbride complex have been turned into film sets.

After circling the *Kirkbride complex*, Hall took us through the grounds to the waterfront of Iron Cove, across the sporting fields and past the Bay Run to *Broughton Hall*. Sadly, this two-storey building built in 1842 is in a parlous state of neglect suffering from vandalism and fires. In the First World War, ANZAC casualties of 1915 were offered the site as a convalescent hospital for shell-shocked soldiers.

Currently, some of the buildings formerly associated with *Broughton Hall* are now used by WHOS (We Help Our Selves) as a drug and rehabilitation unit.

Below are some of the beautiful but largely unknown landscape features in the grounds of Callan Park.



Visit to Callan Park



Image: Lois Gray

This was a wonderful tour of the grounds of Callan Park. We were unable to see inside most of the buildings, but the view and experience was fantastic. If anyone is interested in going on a tour they should contact the Friends of Callan Park through their website:

<https://www.callanpark.com/history/> .

Otherwise, the grounds are open to the public and the whole precinct is a hidden heritage treasure of the Inner West that is well worth a visit.

We are thankful that The Friends of Callan Park have been advocates for protecting Callan Park for over 25 years

The Friends have been pushing for the establishment of a Callan Park and Broughton Hall Trust to ensure proper planning, governance and sustainability.



Image: Lois Gray



Image: Roslyn Burge



Image: Lois Gray

Colin Webb
Images by Colin Webb and where noted Lois Gray & Roslyn Burge

Visit to the Parramatta Female Factory

Held on 25 October 2025

Early on a mild October morning a small group of ADHS members, comfortably attired, clutching hats and water bottles met on Ashfield station awaiting the suburban train for Parramatta, joined by several other members enroute.

The ease and convenience of this short journey was a reminder of the importance of this historic rail line in 1855, linking Sydney and the Colonial centre of Parramatta, first settled in November 1788, months after the First Fleet arrival, under **Governor Arthur Phillip**, and successively developed by **Governor Macquarie** et al.

We used the newly opened Light Rail (Dec 2024) from Parramatta station (one of Sydney's oldest stations, built 1860) to reach Parramatta's historic North Precinct, which includes the **Gaol, Female Factory and Female Orphan School**.

We travelled along Church Street, the original main street, observing the mix of historic and modern architecture, and the pavements crowded with a multicultural mix, and we were teased by exotic food aromas.

The designated meeting spot for our tour was the Commemorative Wall (a Bicentennial project). This was a short walk from the light rail stop, and on approach the imposing **Greenway** designed Factory and adjoining buildings created an atmosphere of a long-lost period, highlighted by the scattered bright red uniforms of the attending NSW Corps and colonial women in mop caps and aprons.

Many of the buildings were constructed in locally quarried sandstone, which upon closer examination displayed the varied colour tones and the craftsman's skill.

Our tour guide was our own ADHS member **Rhonda Halcoop**, a passionate and active member of the Parramatta Female Factory Friends.

Rhonda is a proud descendant of female convicts on both maternal and paternal sides. She led us on a most interesting and informative tour of the site, very comfortably paced catering to the varied ages and physical abilities among the group.



A Marine smoking a replica of the Lady Devonshire pipe. A replica but dates from the 1820s

Rhonda detailed the history of this National Heritage Precinct, which was submitted in 2023 to the UNESCO World Heritage Register. A total of 24,960 female convicts were transported to NSW and Van Diemen's Land, and an estimated 9,000 women went through the factory system between 1804 and 1848.

There were 13 Female Factories established in the Colony. Parramatta, in 1818, predates the others and was the model, and is the earliest site still in existence.

Parramatta Female Factory visit



The Pipe in detail

The first female convicts were accommodated in a room above the Parramatta Goal Green from 1804, where women worked and slept. The numbers of transported women grew, and soon this “factory” was severely overcrowded.

The second Parramatta Female Factory was purpose built to house and provide work for the many convict women being transported. The foundation stone was laid by Governor Macquarie in July 1818 and the women moved in 1821.

The next phase was commenced by **Governor Brisbane** in 1823, with renovations and a new building providing 3rd class sleeping quarters, which remains part of the site. Later in 1838 **Governor Gipps** added cells.

There was a Factory class system: 1st class: returning from or awaiting assignment. 2nd class: minor offences or reward for improved behaviour. 3rd class: re-offenders, insolent or bad behaviour.

Punishment to control behaviour was harsh - hard labour, confinement to solitary cells, diet of bread and water, head shaved, the wearing of metal collar etc.



Group at the annual ceremony at the Memorial Wall

For Factory work the women spun and wove wool, linen and “Linsey-woolsey” for blankets, “slop clothing”, sails and woollen stockings. They also plaited straw for bonnets, did laundry and sewing for colonists as well as domestic duties.

The Factory was also a lying-in hospital, a place of secondary punishment for Colonial crime, and a “Marriage Bureau”. The only source of female companionship in those early years for emancipated male convicts, single soldiers etc was clearly the female convict population.

The hospital was the first dedicated women’s Health Service in the Colony, providing early nursing and midwifery practice. The most common diseases treated were lung problems, typhus, “itch” and diphtheria.

Some of the Factory women were allowed to bring their children when transported, but from the age of 3 years they were sent to the Orphan school for girls and boys to training school at Cabramatta.

From 1842 the Catholic Orphan School was established for Catholic children. They were trained in “useful” skills – housework, cooking etc for girls, farm work or trades for boys.

Parramatta Female Factory visit



Main building with the clock tower - this building is a lot newer, dating to around 1883-5. In the foreground is a Greenway building that has been restored and dates to the 1820s

The Factory was the site of the first female worker's riot in Australia in 1887. Other riots have been identified, the provocations being poor living and working conditions, reductions in food rations etc.

The compound accommodated a productive vegetable garden. From outside the compound wall we looked across to the Orphan School and beyond to the Norma Parker Correctional centre.

We also were able to view through the softening purple haze of the flowering Jacaranda, the Parramatta River, which was below the western wall of the precinct, shaded by the surrounding Eucalypt trees.

The vista continued over the river to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Parramatta Park, which includes Old Government House, monuments, and Aboriginal heritage sites and was the first people's park in Australia. This peaceful rural scene was in stark contrast to the cruel horrific lives being endured by those women living in the Female Factory.



Close of up of the clock tower. As mentioned above, the building is not original, but the clock is! It was salvaged from the original female barracks when they were demolished. The clock dates to 1821 and was made in London by "Thwaites and Reed"

These women demonstrated a tenacity and resilience despite their loss, dislocation, and trauma of separation. They questioned authority, valued mate ship, all part of the "Australian" character today. An estimated 1 in 5 Australians are descended from these women

Parramatta Female Factory visit



Detail of the roof of the laundry area, with the original wooden shingles showing

We gathered in the small Museum and shop front to view the available books and wares. Rhonda reiterated the importance of preserving this site for future generations and passed around some informative brochures. The gathering dispersed to partake of various refreshments on offer at the Friends' stalls, and to continue wandering the site at our leisure.



The original dormitory

Source Parramatta Heritage Centre

<https://historyandheritage.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/parramatta-female-factory-bicentenary-1821-2021>



Internal detail of one of the oldest buildings remaining on site. The 3rd class barracks from the 1820s. The window is a detail that led historians to believe it was a Greenway design

Our thanks and gratitude for Rhonda's excellent tour were expressed by us all.

The tour was concurrent with this year's 198th annual Riot Day organised by the Parramatta Female Factory Friends.

<https://www.parramattafemalefactoryfriends.com.au/>

Information partly from Parramatta Female Factory Friends *Fast Fact Sheet*.

Jan Williams

Images by Oliver Williams & Paul Williams

Show and Tell afternoon

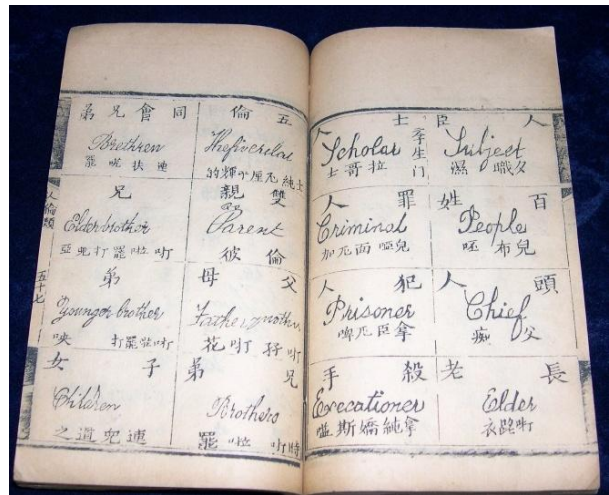
Held on 16 November 2025

On Sunday afternoon 16 November, the Society held our very popular Show and Tell event at the Summer Hill Community Centre.

There were about 35 people in attendance and **Lois Gray** started proceedings promptly at 2.00pm. Lois announced that there were prizes on offer for the oldest and most unusual item and a prize for a mystery item. Lois handed the floor to **Ann O'Connell** who showed and explained some items from the ADHS collections. Ann identified that, while the Society is not a museum, we have gathered several important items relating to Ashfield's history that are of significance, some of which are kept in secure offsite storage and brought out for display on special occasions.

Items owned by Quong Tart

One item that Ann discussed was a **cup, saucer and spoon** from Quong Tart's Tea Rooms. She also brought along a Chinese Australian dictionary which **Quong Tart** had given to one of his employees, an item that appears to be the only one of its type held in any repository around the world



Both items are of great importance, significant enough to be considered for registration in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World. We will have to consider that suggestion and apply for a grant to engage an expert to produce Statements of Significance.

George Andrews' Illuminated Address

(Arthur) **George Andrews** was a well-known funeral director who operated his business at 237 Liverpool Road Ashfield, and at Newtown, for 42 years.



Show and Tell afternoon

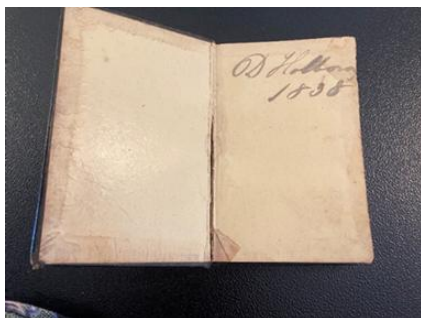
The Illuminated Address was presented to George Andrews by a group of prominent citizens of Ashfield on him retiring from the business and moving away from Ashfield to Beecroft in 1929. Addresses such as this one were hand painted and the text personalised to express the sentiments of those presenting it to the recipient.

There is a second page to the Address which has the signatures of many local citizens. The dark red textured leather encases the Address and is embossed in gold. It was donated to the Society by the executor of George Andrew's will.

Daniel Holborow's Dictionary

In 1870 **Daniel Holborow** (1818-1896) bought *Gads Hill Villa*, now in Highbury Street in Croydon but originally fronted Liverpool Road. The house remained in family ownership until the 1950s. Holborow was elected as one of six aldermen for the inaugural Ashfield Council in 1871 and was later elected as the Mayor on 23 July 1874. He served as an alderman on Ashfield Council for 15 years. He was still Mayor in 1879, when a deputation was made to **Henry Parkes** to urge him to acquire a large portion of the *Underwood Estate* for a public park for Ashfield. At an imminent Richardson & Wrench auction of the Estate, Parkes organised **Henry Moses** to anonymously bid on behalf of the government on 15 acres of land on the crest of Parramatta Road. This land formed **Ashfield Park**.

The dictionary was published in 1836 and was owned by Holborow in 1838 when he was only 20 years of age.

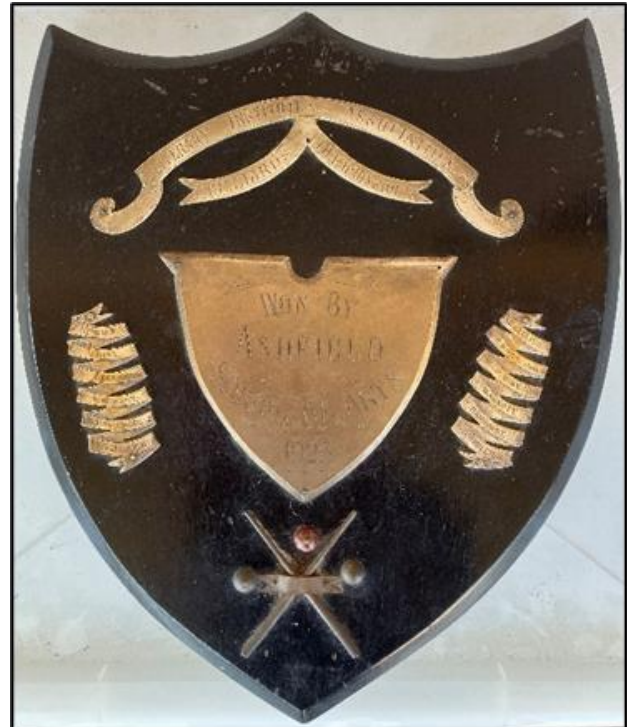


Ashfield School of Arts Collection

On 13 April 2007, by invitation, the Society salvaged as many historical records, documents, photographs, honour boards and trophies as possible from the old **School of Arts** building on Liverpool Road.

The contents of the building appeared to have been abandoned and untouched for about twenty years. As a result, the Society has a collection relating to the now defunct organisation, however much of the larger items, such as honour boards were returned and placed in situ into the Ashfield Literacy Learning Centre established by **Bill Crews**.

Society member, **David Rollinson**, brought along a **School of Arts Literary Institute Association Billiards Championship trophy** which was won by Ashfield in 1925 and spoke about the engagement of the school's members in various competitive events.



Show and Tell afternoon

Members and friends of the Society also brought along a vast array of other old and valuable items. There were heirlooms, collectables and other personal treasures. Items of note included a silk shawl that **Lois Gray's** grandfather had acquired for her grandmother in Paris in 1918, a couple of sets of colonial era hand cuffs, a glass pavement tile (as used in the inner city to assist in illuminating basement areas of multi-level buildings), scientific instruments, porcelain urns, antique dolls, a Chinese teapot with insulated case, various collections of postcards, playing cards, sheet music, a cast iron nail.

There was an iron mortar from 1862 that **Kevan Murray** brought along. In the photo below Kevan is showing **Lois Gray** an oriental work of art that he had also brought to the event. The mortar is at bottom left of the image.



The afternoon was our very own *Antiques Road Show*, and there were lots of participants displaying family mementos and other items of historical importance. The afternoon was declared a great success and was enjoyed by all who came along. It was suggested that we should have a similar event in future years.

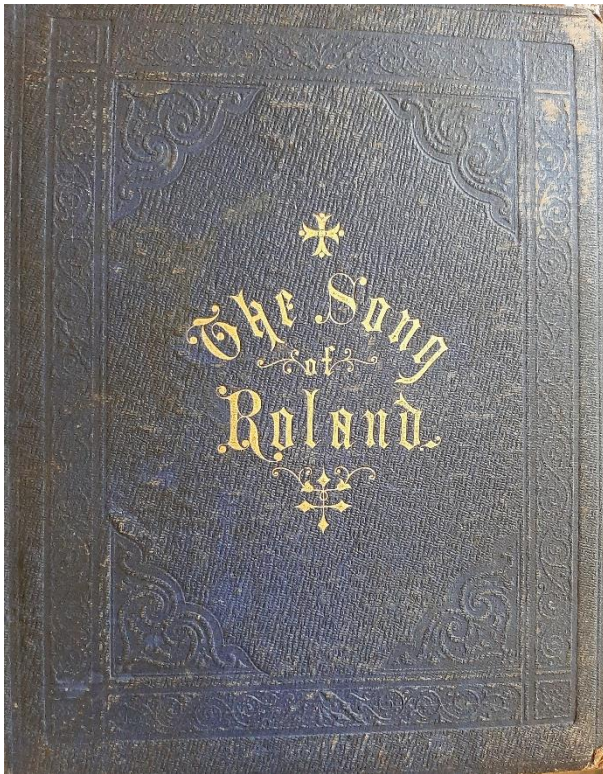


Murray Cleaver & Ann O'Connell
Images by Murray Cleaver

Solving a mystery

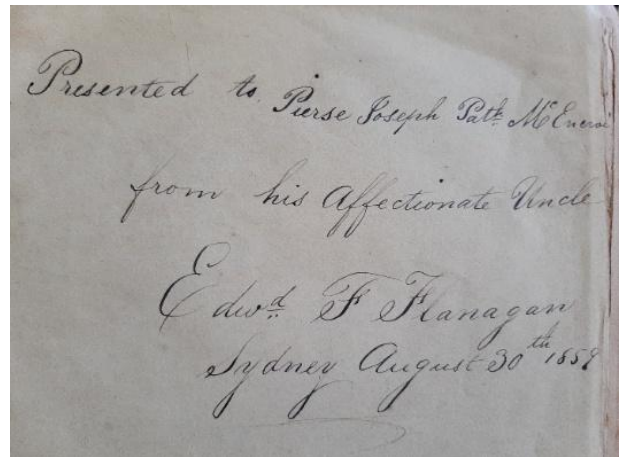
Kerry Barlow presented a mystery book at the recent Show & Tell

A book *The Song of Roland* had been given to my son in 1996 by the sister of my recently deceased next-door neighbour, **Clair McEncroe**, whom we had been friends with since our move to Ashfield in 1992.



There is an inscription on the front page – “Presented to Pierse Joseph Patrick McEncroe from his affectionate Uncle Edward F. Flanagan, Sydney August 30th, 1859”.

Lila Clair Cousins, a milliner, had married **Dr Francis McEncroe** in 1934, but was a widow by 1973. Her parents had built the house at No 15 Wallace Street in about 1920, and she lived there until her marriage. When her father died in 1953 she and her husband moved back to the house, so she had spent most of her life in that same house.



But the mystery was how Dr Francis McEncroe is related to Pierse McEncroe and Edward Flanagan?

Detective Barlow was on the case!

The research set me on a genealogy trail which would turn up some very interesting McEncroe connections with a Catholic Archdeacon of Sydney, a shop-keeper and clerk at the Female Factory at Parramatta, and a well-known convict portrait and landscape painter.

I built a family tree to enable me to establish the connections between Dr Francis McEncroe and the two people named in the front cover of the book. It turns out Francis’s uncle was **Pierse McEncroe** and his maternal great grand-uncle by marriage was **Edward Flanagan**.

Once I had the key people in place I then delved into their history and discovered some fascinating background stories.

Francis McEncroe’s father, William, was one of 10 children born to Edward McEncroe and **Margaret Dalton**, all born in Sydney between 1846 and 1869. Pierse was the eldest and William the youngest of Edward’s children born to his second wife Margaret.

Solving a mystery

Edward and his first wife Johanna had arrived in Sydney from Tipperary in 1837 on the *Lady McNaughten*, known as the “plague ship”. The ship was hit by typhoid fever on the journey, with many passengers and the ship’s doctor dying before it had reached the coast of NSW. The surviving passengers and crew were quarantined at the North Head, being amongst the first group of people to be sent to the recently established facility.

Edward’s background was a tobacco spinner and the following year, 1838, he applied to the Colonial Secretary for the position of storekeeper and clerk at the Female Factory at Parramatta, to which he was appointed.

The ship’s record indicated Edward had a relative already in the colony, the **Reverend John McEncroe**, who I found had arrived in 1832. It is highly likely they were cousins, rather than brothers, given their NSW death indexes show different fathers’ names. Rev. McEncroe served in Baltimore, in the US, prior to coming to NSW. Between 1837 and 1842 he had volunteered to work in Port Macquarie, especially administering to the convicts stationed there.

It was during this time he must have encountered **Joseph Backler**, whose convict indent showed he was an artist and landscape painter. He had been sent to Port Macquarie in 1835, as a re-offender, and stayed there until he had received his ticket-of-leave in 1843.

By 1844 Backler was back in Sydney but also touring NSW to obtain commissions for painting work. He was known to paint copies of other portraits and it seems he was commissioned to paint copies of portraits of Edward’s parents Pierse McEncroe and **Margaret McAuliffe**. A family member had posted these on Ancestry, with the signature and dates on the rear given as **J Backler** 1837 and 1838, respectively.

Given those dates, it is highly likely that the owner of the original portraits, copied by Backler, was the Rev John McEncroe.

Rev McEncroe’s father had died when he was a very young child, so it is possible Pierse and Margaret McAuliffe helped to raise him. Perhaps he had the portraits copied to give to Edward and his family.

The State Library of NSW holds about 30 portraits and landscapes completed by Backler, many of them painted in Port Macquarie whilst he was still a convict.

The Rev McEncroe became the Archdeacon of Sydney, serving in a number of parishes, the last one being St Patrick’s Church Hill. He was responsible for establishing the Catholic newspaper, the Freeman’s Journal in 1850.

He died in 1868 and, following a huge funeral procession, was buried in the Catholic section of the Devonshire Street Cemetery, in the same vault as **Archbishop Therry**. The original St Mary’s Cathedral had burned down just a few years prior, but obviously, on completion of the new structure, the contents of the vault were re-interred, as both priests are buried now in the crypt of St Mary’s Cathedral.

So, how did the Book come into the hands of Dr Francis McEncroe?

The fact that neither Edward Flanagan nor Pierse McEncroe (junior) had children may account for it; also very few of Pierse’s nine siblings survived beyond their teenage years and of those who did only two others married.

Kerry Barlow

Images by Kerry Barlow

An unusual trophy

On 16 July 2019, the Society received an email from Chris at Coffs Harbour Salvation Army Family Store informing us that a donation had been made to their organisation of an old butter dish dated 1898 engraved with the words *Ashfield WHH Assoc.*

Did we want it? We certainly did! Thank you!



In summary, it was packed up and put it on a top shelf for safe keeping until I called in to collect it the following month. By that time, I had found out that 'WHH' was an acronym for the *Wednesday Half-Holiday (Assoc.)*.

The **WHH Association** was adopted by a great many towns in NSW from the early 1880s onwards.

The purpose was to lobby all shopkeepers and their employees to agree to close their shops at 1pm every Wednesday so that they could get some regular rest and recreation.

Up until that time there was commonly an expectation that shops should be always open for business to earn (deserve) patronage. As a result, many shop employers and their employees worked extremely long hours, and the association believed that over-work created ill health.

In Ashfield, the formation of the WHH in about 1895 meant that regular social gatherings, picnics, sports days, bike racing and other outings were held and even a WHH cricket team was formed. If a shopkeeper refused to close on Wednesday afternoon they were frowned upon, and their reputation would suffer. Residents were urged to support those shops who closed at 1pm with their custom at other times.

The efforts of the WHH groups paved the way for future regulation and improved working conditions and was an early forerunner of the 8-hour day.

Here is the story about the butter dish and how it came to be a trophy.

On Wednesday 9 March 1898, the *Ashfield WHH Association* organised an annual picnic at the Mortlake Pleasure Grounds and on that day the Ashfield Shops were closed ALL day and hundreds turned up at Mortlake for a day of sports, food, music and dancing.

At the picnic many races were held involving countless contestants who were shopkeepers and shop employees. Prizes for the winners were donated by shopkeepers and local citizens.

An unusual trophy

A 36-year-old **Thomas Louis Llewellyn** entered as a contestant in the 'Employers' Handicap, a running race of 100 yards in the fourth of ten heats. He was a tailor whose shop was near to the top of Hercules Street Ashfield, just down from Liverpool Road. Thomas had mobility issues, but it seemed that the handicappers had made a huge mistake in giving Mr Llewellyn a start of 45 yards.

It was reported that:

He, greatly to the surprise of the spectators, showing a form of speed, that was practically marvellous for a man who has been a cripple for some years! He was heartily cheered at the finish!

Thomas Llewellyn went on to win the semi-final and final and was later awarded the engraved silver butter dish trophy at a presentation evening which involved music, dancing and refreshments, held in the Ashfield Town Hall later that month.

Second prize for the race was another trophy, third was a bale of hay and fourth prize was two sets of horseshoes.

Since the Society received this elaborate butter dish, several similar (but not so extravagant) examples have been seen in NSW country museums including at Mudgee and Sofala, but none of the others relate to the WHH Association.

The butter dish has uncovered the group's existence in Ashfield, and from what we know may be the only surviving trophy for the Association, therefore holding some measure of cultural significance.

It was on display at the ADHS Antiques Roadshow on Sunday 16 November.

Ann O'Connell

Image by Ann O'Connell

Remembrance

Sunday

On Sunday 9 November 2025, the **Ashfield Returned Servicemen's Leagues, Sub-Branch** held a solemn and dignified Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Club. It was well attended by current and veteran service people, and representatives from local schools, other organisations and members of the community.

Many dignitaries rose to speak, with one young man, the Captain of Ashfield Boys' High School, **Duncan Stockwell**, capturing the close attention of all present.

Duncan's speech was poignant and personal:

... More than a century ago, the guns on the Western Front finally fell silent after four long years of conflict. The First World War claimed millions of lives, including over 60,000 Australians, young men and women who had travelled far from home to serve a country still finding its place in the world. Their courage, their sacrifice, and their belief in something greater than themselves became a foundation for what we now call the 'Australian Spirit'.

But Remembrance Day is not only about the First World War. It is about every Australian who has served in the Second World War, in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and in countless peacekeeping and humanitarian missions around the world. It is about those who fought, those who supported, those who returned forever changed, and those who never came home.

For me and my family, we have a long rich history of service for this nation.

My great grandparents saw action in Tobruk and New Guinea during WWII. My great uncle was a spitfire pilot and tragically died during training off Dover.

Remembrance Sunday

More recently my grandfather and grandmother met in the army while serving in the Survey Corps and my grandfather spent 12 months at Nui Dat in Vietnam.

When we pause for one minute's silence, we remember the individuals behind the number of Australians who showed extraordinary resolve. They were farmers, labourers, nurses, teachers, clerks and apprentices just like many of us. They came from cities and country towns, from families who waved them off not knowing if they would return. Many did not.

Remembrance Day asks us not only to recall the past, but to understand its meaning in the present. We live in a time when the world still knows conflict, where peace can never be taken for granted. Remembering those who served is also a commitment, a promise to strive for the peace and understand that they fought to protect. The values that carried Australians through war, courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice are not just words in history books. They remain a part of who we are today. They remind us that even in the hardest of times, we are stronger when we stand together, when we care for one another, and when we work towards something greater than ourselves.

As we bow our heads in silence today, may we each take a moment to reflect not only on what was lost, but also on what was given. And may we honour that legacy, not just in works, but in how we live our lives, how we treat each other, and how we contribute to our community and our world.

Thank you.

Ann O'Connell

Image by Ann O'Connell



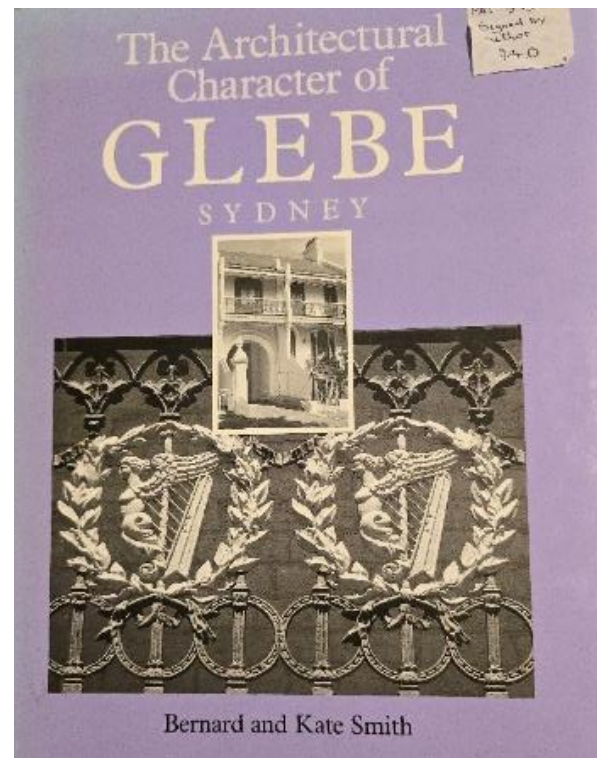
Book review

The Architectural Character of Glebe Sydney

by Bernard and Kate Smith

Reviewed by Mark Sabloch

One of the most remarkable things about this book, first published in 1973, is that it remains just as fresh and relevant to readers today as it was on the day it was written.



The book cover of the 1989 reprint.

Bernard Smith (1916-2011), considered the founder of Australian art history, was Emeritus Professor of Contemporary Art at Sydney University.

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Together with his wife, **Kate Smith** (1915-1989), he offered perceptive and articulate observations on the architectural styles prevalent in Glebe. Fortunately, many of these architectural trends are also evident in the Ashfield district.

The chapter on the Victorian Italianate style, for instance, offers a level of description and categorization that I have not seen elsewhere. Smith breaks down the Italianate style into multiple sub-categories, enabling readers to better appreciate the distinguishing features of these dwellings. His descriptions are succinct and his analysis objective. In discussing the asymmetrical Italianate villa, for example, Smith gets straight to the point: "In its simplest Australian form it consisted of a transformed Regency double-fronted house with central hallway; one half advanced, the other half recessed."

One of the earliest examples of the asymmetrical Italianate style in Glebe, according to Smith, is *Ramelton House*, built in 1874 by prolific Glebe builder **David Elphinstone**.



Ramelton House by David Elphinstone. This is how it appeared in Smith's 1973 book. It has since been restored to its former glory with reinstatement of the balcony

Elphinstone, who constructed over 174 houses in Glebe and served as an alderman on the Glebe Council from 1881 to 1886, left a significant architectural legacy. *Ramelton House*, since renovated, features the classic Italianate advanced wing with a prominent bay containing a pair of arched windows.

ADHS members may recall that Elphinstone also worked and later settled in Summer Hill in the 1880s and built the house that **Chris Pratten** owned on Prospect Road.

One of the great strengths of Smith's book is the extensive use of pictorial examples, superbly cross-referenced in the text. The inclusion of street addresses encourages readers to visit and see the buildings firsthand, reinforcing the descriptive analysis with tangible evidence.

Smith's book offers valuable insights into two different but closely interrelated important aspects of Australian architectural history

First, Smith has made a significant contribution to the terminology used in Australian architectural discourse. He is credited with coining the now widely accepted term *Federation style* as he questioned the accuracy of labelling certain buildings as *Queen Anne* (its previously accepted descriptor).

As he notes, *Queen Anne* is an unsatisfactory label for the results of their innovations – and is even more misleading when applied to the Australian style which flourished between 1895 and 1915.

By refining the language used to describe this style, Smith enhances our understanding of the unique architectural identity that emerged in Australia at the turn of the century

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Second, he explores the transition between the Italianate and the Federation styles (especially in the period 1890 to 1900), observing how certain buildings embody elements of both. While some structures are best described as Italianate with Federation features, and others as Federation with Italianate influences, Smith identifies a distinct group of buildings he terms Transitional.

“At their best,” he writes, “these transitional buildings contrive to produce satisfactory effects by a judicious combination of elements of the two styles.”

His analysis is supported by numerous photographic examples that illustrate the subtle blending of architectural features during this period of stylistic evolution. From my own observations, I’m pleased to say, there are many stunning examples of this transitional style here in the Ashfield district also.

Despite the book’s age, it remains a hugely valuable resource for contemporary readers.

Smith’s detailed treatment of each architectural style—supported by narrative explanation and visual documentation—makes the book a great resource

While architectural styles often emerge as part of global trends, their significance only becomes meaningful when understood in a local context. By learning about Glebe’s character, we learn more about Ashfield. Smith makes a timeless contribution to the study of Australian architectural heritage.

Mark Sabolch

Images by Mark Sabolch

Heritage Report

Inner West Council, at its meeting on the 30 September, passed the staff recommended **Our Fairer Future** plan but with several amendments which reflect community and localised resident opposition, particularly in parts of Marrickville and Dulwich Hill.

Some areas removed from the Ashfield Town Centre (south of Liverpool Road) were left unchanged as well but an area north of Pratten Park and extending east towards Victoria Street will see changes. North of Ashfield Rail Station will mainly see increases in height limits in existing flat zones but there have been rezonings as well with some heritage de-listing.

Heritage items in areas of Ashfield that have been rezoned have had their heritage listing removed. It is fortunate, however, that through the major efforts of persuasive evidence presented, spearheaded by Committee member **Kerry Barlow**, councillors decided to keep the boundaries of the Federal-Fyle HCA intact.

Any proposed planning changes that affect Croydon have been deferred pending discussions with Burwood Council on their plan – Croydon being split between both Councils.

There seems to be a bit of a lull in new DAs, even in Haberfield, and what is submitted remains alterations and additions to existing houses.

The Inner West Local Planning Panel approved a modified (but still extensive) set of plans for **12 Federal Avenue, Ashfield** at its 14 October meeting.

David Rollinson

Christmas cheer

Another year coming to a close, so we can all take a breather and think about 2026. On Sunday 7 December, the Society held a Christmas event at the home of Peter and Joy in Haberfield. The gathering at Joy and Peter's lovely home was a delight. Good company, terrific food, and even a friendly dog to join in.

The weather proved perfect – the heat has mercifully left us (albeit I guess temporarily) and the threatened rain did not fall.

Thank you Joy and Peter for being such thoroughly great hosts, and thank you to those who brought such an array of interesting and enjoyable food

Jan and I now wish you a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas, and hope you welcome in the new year in style!

Paul Williams



Images: Heather Warton & Paul Grech

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 10am until 3pm

Please note the new opening times.

Membership matters

- \$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 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!

- **EFT payments:**
BSB: 062257
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Ashfield & District Historical Society
Ref: [Your name, initials] subs
- **Cheque payable to:**
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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.

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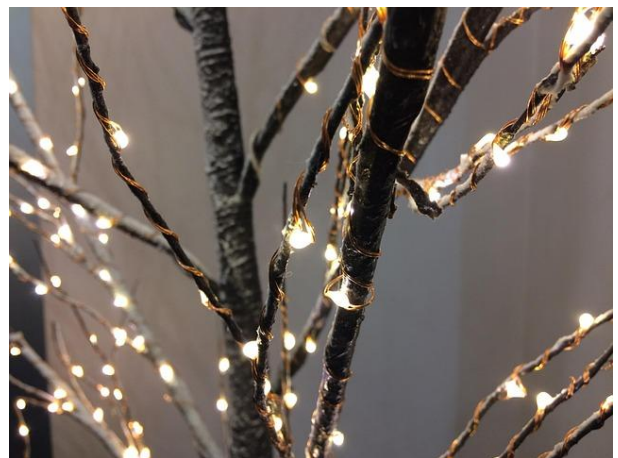
Newsletter contributors

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for their contributions to this Bumper Edition!

Heather Warton, editor
12 December 2025



Source: Pixabay