Ashfield & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

50 YEARS 1973-2023

Newsletter



JULY 2026 I SERIES 5 I NO. 22



President's message

Happy Mid-Winter to all. Brrr...I did see some sun recently and made the most of it. But I must admit, that as I 'mature', I find it more difficult to love winter as much as other seasons.

There are some good things ahead, however, to warm the cockles of one's heart. Before I get to that and on a joyful note, **Bob Irving** (or Mr. Robert Irving OAM) the Society's Honorary Architectural Historian, recently celebrated his one hundredth birthday, a marvelous milestone.

Ann O'Connell has written an article (overleaf) and I won't add detail here, except to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Bob, a wonderful man who has done so much to champion the conservation of our heritage. Bob Irving's significant legacy is his role in in the recognition and conservation of that urban fabric, handed down to us by previous generations and which we hope to pass on to the generations which follow.

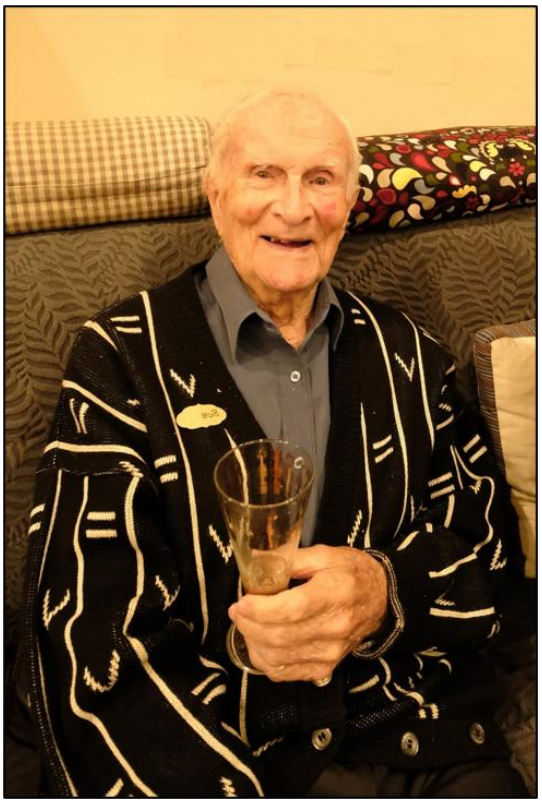
On other pages there is plenty of winter reading to follow and many people in our Society deserve thanks. Without diminishing their substantial contributions, I want, on your behalf, to especially thank Heather Warton, who finds time in a busy life to chase down articles, compile and format them into an excellent newsletter. We have, of course, reports on the full selection of interesting events to read about and book into in the coming months, and reports on the highly successful and well-attended events held in the recent past. This and so much more.

The upcoming journal on the history of Liverpool Rd will be another interesting and formidable publication with some excellent contributions. But that is not my story to tell. I am looking forward to its publication. There will hopefully be other news to come. But I'm not a spoiler and news of such will have to wait. Keep warm and happy reading. See you at our coming events or around about.

Alex Lofts

Happy 100th Birthday Robert Irving OAM!

On Sunday 5 July a large group of family and friends gathered in Dulwich Hill to celebrate his centenary of years well spent at a party held in his honour. It was a joy to watch the interactions between his beloved adult children, Roger, Sue, Noel and Will, their children, and extended family all focused on the man loved, admired and respected by all.



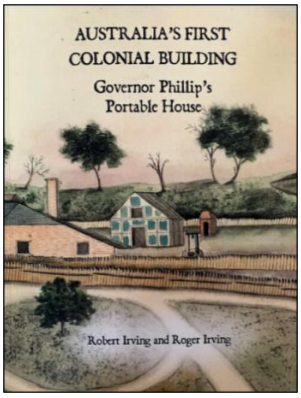
The Society has been privileged to have had Bob as our Honorary Architectural Historian for many years and in that time, he has been eternally generous with his time, knowledge and expertise in all matters concerning architecture, planning and heritage matters.

He has presented talks on architecture, led walks of our streets delivering insights into the style and fabric of our built heritage, written skillful and engaging articles for our books and journals and attending our functions.

He has supported and nurtured other Society members, particularly our committee, and freely given his advice on specific heritage matters.

Bob's documentary work in Ashfield over many years, particularly with the Ashfield Heritage Study and Ashfield Town Centre Study, resulted in a huge volume of records, which has given our Society an abundance of reference material. The boxes of his inventories and the hundreds of photographs are catalogued and often accessed. We are most thankful for his foresight in lodging them with us.

With the assistance of his sons, Roger and Noel, Bob completed yet another book on architecture which Roger launched at Bob's 100th Birthday celebration. This book had been progressively worked on over several years and was a most satisfying achievement to have it published, particularly being launched on such a significant day.



Australia's First Colonial Building: Governor Phillip's Portable House is a beautifully prepared publication with clear text and skillful graphics which complement the many colonial illustrations and paintings that bring the past to the present. The book delves deeply into the extraordinary construction of the earliest building in the Colony in 1788. We marvel at the level of study of the fabric and assembly of this prefabricated house that is explained in such fine detail.

For those wishing to purchase a copy of Bob's book, please email Ann at research@ashfieldhistory.org.au for details. Cost is $30.

Congratulations Bob on your latest achievement and on the occasion of your 100th Birthday.

Best wishes from all of us!

Ann O'Connell

Past Events

The Greenway & Long Cove Creek Walk

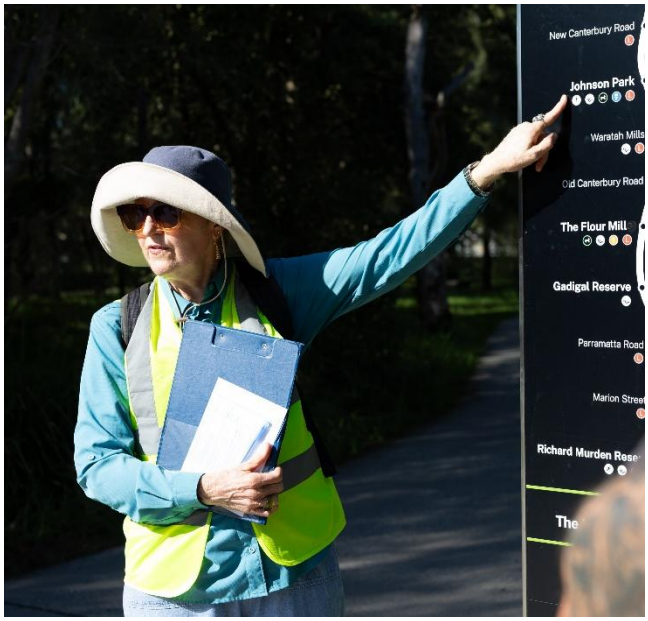
Held 19 April and 17 May 2026

The ADHS held two very successful and fully subscribed guided walks along the recently connected GreenWay path on Sunday 19th April and Sunday 17th May 2026. The GreenWay passes through an extraordinary urban landscape with dense local history. The aim of both walks was to explore the complex relationships between the biodiversity corridor, the often-hidden Long Cove Creek, and the surrounding and evolving built environment. The first walk included a focus on the history of Victorian houses along the route, with the second having a focus on bushland restoration.

Tour leaders **Mark Sabolch** (past president of ADHS and member of inaugural Inner West Environment Group; author of the *Hawthorne Canal, The History of Long Cove Creek*) and **Susan Thompson** (local resident and Professor of Planning at UNSW who uses the GreenWay as an outdoor classroom - read her paper here) were joined by **Alex Lofts** (ADHS President and former Ashfield Councillor and Chair of the GreenWay Community Forum) and **Mark Matheson** (local historian and author of the award winning book *Victorian Villas*) for the first walk.







Tour Guides Alex Lofts (Left), Mark Sabolch (top) and Susan Thompson (above)

On the second walk, Mark Sabolch and Susan were joined by **Jo Blackman** (co-convenor of the Inner West Environment Group who actively undertake bushcare along the GreenWay).

The GreenWay Walk





Tour Guides Jo Blackman (top) and Mark Matheson (above)

Starting at Johnson Park in Dulwich Hill the tour featured many aspects of the GreenWay. A few of the many highlights included the historical children's playground 'Rocket' in Johnson Park (Haberfield based heritage consultant and ADHS member **Susan Jackson-Stepowski** has written about the history of these rockets in Australia.

There was a sighting of the rarely seen upper reaches of the Long Cove Creek; active Bush Care sites at Waratah Mills and Gadigal Reserve, and the residential development at Lewisham West, the Flour Mills and associated community spaces and intersection with the newly completed GreenWay.





Gadigal Bush Care site

The GreenWay Walk



The GreenWay by Waratah Mills



GreeWay by The Flour Mill and light rail

Tour participants heard from Mark Sabolch about the engineering innovations of the Whipple Truss Bridge and the complex community advocacy to retain a section for the education of future generations. Jo talked about her work on IWEG bringing back, what was thought to be irretrievably lost, biodiversity to the inner west.



Mark Sabolch and rail history

Susan spoke about the history of education associated with the GreenWay for both primary and tertiary students, also noting public art features along the route with their added social connection benefits.

The themes of complexity, compromise and community advocacy were repeated throughout the tour. This continues today but doesn't detract from the fact that the GreenWay is an amazing achievement on a global scale. It represents many years of advocacy by community and local government and offers hope for the future in its demonstration of environmental stewardship, support of active travel, championing community involvement and celebration of local history and Indigeneity.



Long Cove Creek

The GreenWay Walk

Public art on the GreenWay



Lords Road underpass mural



Long Nose Bandicoot sculpture



Birds of a Feather



Gadigal Wangal mural



The GreenWay under construction, image from IWC website

Lots more information about the GreenWay is available on the Inner West Council website:

https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/greenway

Story & images by Susan Thompson

The mysterious world of land surveying

Held 28 June 2026

Heritage Land Surveyor **Kevin Song** spoke on the mysterious world of land surveying, explaining the meaning of the survey marks we see in odd places, and describing the arcane process of land identification.

Kevin Song is a Croydon based surveyor. Kevin purchased some of the ADHS journals at our stall at the Summer Hill Mills Sunday Market recently. After talking with one of our members at the market, Kevin was invited to speak about surveying as a Society event.



Here is a summary of his presentation:

Surveying includes the exact laying out of each specific piece of land or area as it has previously been recorded. This in known as a Title Deed. These are all held at the Title Office and are known as Deposited Plan Nos. When surveying old works, a calculation sheet can be used to cross reference all information.

These old surveys are held on a deposited plan and usually had alignment marks, also known as reference marks. Reference marks can be in the form:

- Pins in concrete or stone
- Bolts
- Pins or engravings in trees (dated c. 1878).

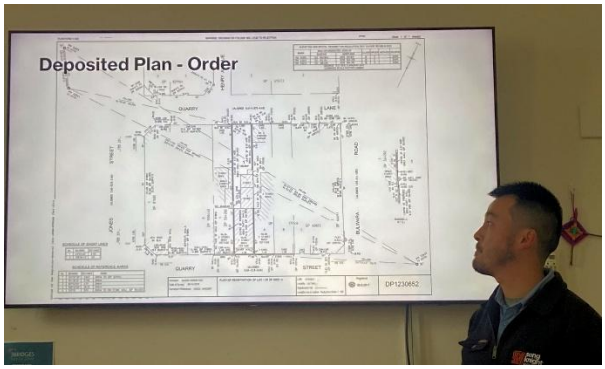


The types of surveys are:

- BOUNDARY - confirm or re-establish legal property lines
- DETAIL OF TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY- capture existing levels, contours and site features for design
- CONSTRUCTION SET OUT - precision mark foundations, walls and structures on site
- AS BUILT WORKS, AS EXECUTED SURVEYS - verify building works for councils or certifier sign off.
- SUBDIVISION OR STRATA SURVEYS – to create new titles/divide land legally
- TRIANGULATION - method using triangles formed by using three known (control) points.



Land surveying talk



Some surveying terms are:

- BENCHMARKS - a survey mark having a known location and elevation
- CONDITIONAL LINE - An agreed line between neighbours that may have/ or may not have been surveyed, but not granted
- CORNER - The beginning or end point of any survey line
- LANDMARK - A survey mark made on a permanent feature of the land, eg tree, stone pile etc

Some surveying acronyms are:

- BRL Building Restriction Line
- FD Found
- IRF Iron Rod Found
- RM Reference Mark
- NTFP Nail on top of fence post
- PK Point known

Many thanks to Kevin for providing a most interesting and informative presentation on surveying.

Story by Helmut Kals
Images by Ann O'Connell

A number of members have reported that they have now become aware of survey markers in their area

In fact **Kath and Paul Crittenden** found the two pictured below in Smith Street near to the Fleet Street intersection Summer Hill, on their way home from the talk:





Future Events

The Federation style

13 September 2026

Summer Hill Community Centre

2pm

For History Week, **Mark Sabolch** will explore the cultural trends that enabled the Federation style to replace the formerly popular Victorian Italianate.



It's sometimes said that the Federation period house is Australia's own style. But is it really? This illustrated talk will explore the origins of the Federation period house, so prevalent in the Ashfield district.

The house style that had been previously popular was the Victorian Italianate. However, by 1895 there were significant cultural changes that promoted new ways of looking at the world, and the idea of Federation was only one of them. Mark's talk will explore the cultural and social influences that drove an evolution in house style away from the Italianate style. Who were some of the key people that shaped public opinion at this time?

Mark Sabolch is a long-standing member of the Ashfield and District Historical Society and author of the *Hawthorne Canal – the History of Long Cove Creek* published in 2004. Recently Mark has been researching the origins of the architectural house styles prevalent in Sydney's inner west.

Members $5
Non-members $10

Save the date

See our website for information and bookings for these upcoming events later in the year:
https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/our-events/

Glentworth tour

11 October 2026

Victoria Street, Ashfield

2.30pm

Daf Hewson will lead guided viewing of accessible parts of *Glentworth* and the *Cardinal Freeman Village*, followed by Choral Vespers in the magnificent Chapel afterwards.

Federation house tour

18 October 2026

Tintern Road, Ashfield

2pm

A close view of **Caroline Stott's** remarkable Federation house. **Mark Sabolch** and Caroline will collaborate in explaining significant features of the style.

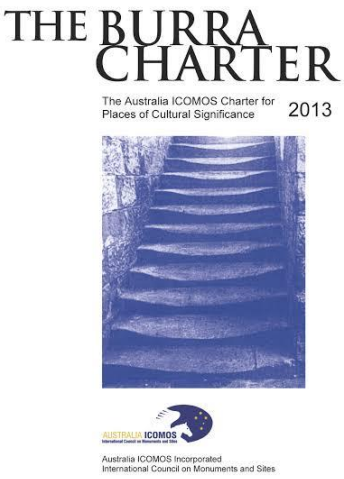


Image from Australia ICOMOS website

Save the date

The Burra Charter

8 November 2026

Summer Hill Community Centre

2pm

Bronwyn Hanna, historian and heritage consultant, will explore *The Burra Charter* – its origins, promulgation, amendments, and its effect on Heritage recognition.

Heritage Report

An on-site Land and Environment Court (LEC) conciliation conference was held on 12 June for the appeal seeking to increase the number of boarding house rooms proposed at **55-63 Smith Street Summer Hill**. I attended and spoke at the conference on the increased deficiencies in design and major impacts on neighbouring properties. The conference has been adjourned till mid-July, with the applicant considering whether he will make some amendments.

There have been over 20 objections to the new DA to increase the proposed height and room numbers of the approved co-living redevelopment of the dry cleaners at **150 Smith Street Summer Hill**. Council's Architectural Design Panel has also raised concerns.

Following a letter from Council staff, some revisions have just been lodged to the DA for **1 Victoria Square Ashfield**.

Meanwhile, unsuccessful on three LEC appeals, the applicant for **5 Bruce Street Ashfield** has now sought a pre-DA meeting with Council staff on a new proposal to retain/restore much of the front of this Victorian villa, convert it to three flats and demolish the rear to allow an addition of three x 3 storey flats. A new two storey dwelling is also proposed in the front yard of the villa. It will be interesting to see the staff's response!

David Rollinson

ANZAC Day in Ashfield

Members of the Society, including the President**, Alex Lofts** attended the ANZAC Day Service in Ashfield Park hosted by **Ashfield RSL Sub-Branch on 19 April 2026**. A moving speech was given by Ashfield Boys High Year 11 Student, **Kay Couzens**. The event was held after the publication of the last Newsletter, so this is a little after the event, but Kay's words are below:

Good morning distinguished guests, veterans, members of the Ashfield RSL Sub-Branch.

My name is Kay Couzens, and I stand before you today as a proud student of Ashfield Boys High School. It is an honour to join you in commemorating ANZAC Day a day that holds deep meaning for our nation and for communities like ours.

On the morning of April 25th, 1915, during World War I, thousands of Australian and New Zealand soldiers landed on the shores of the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. What was expected to be a swift and strategic operation became a long and difficult campaign. The terrain was harsh, the conditions unforgiving, and the resistance fierce. For eight months, the ANZACs endured extreme hardship facing not only enemy fire, but also disease, exhaustion, and isolation.

Over 8,000 Australian soldiers lost their lives at Gallipoli, and many more were wounded. Yet, despite the challenges and ultimate withdrawal, something powerful emerged from that campaign. It was there that the ANZAC spirit was forged defined by courage, endurance, mateship, and a sense of duty.

But the story of the ANZACs does not end at Gallipoli. Australian servicemen and women went on to serve in battles across Europe, the Middle East, and beyond. From the Western Front in France and Belgium, to the deserts of North Africa during World War II, and in more recent conflicts and peacekeeping missions, Australians have continued to serve with dedication and bravery.

ANZAC Day in Ashfield

As we reflect on this history, it is important to remember that war is not only about battles and victories. It is also about loss the loss of young lives, the grief carried by families, and the lasting impact on those who returned home. Many soldiers came back with physical and emotional scars that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Today, we live in a world that can feel uncertain. Around the globe, conflicts continue, tensions rise, and many people face instability and fear. While our lives here in Australia may feel far removed from those battlefields, these challenges remind us that peace should never be taken for granted.

In times like these, the values shown by the ANZACs remain just as important as ever. Courage is not only found in war, but in standing up for what is right. Mateship is not only forged in battle, but in supporting those around us our friends, our families, and our community. And resilience is not only about enduring hardship, but about facing an uncertain future with strength and hope.

For my generation, these lessons are especially important. We are growing up in a rapidly changing world, where global events can shape our lives in ways we cannot always predict. But by remembering the sacrifices of those who came before us, we can find guidance in how to respond with compassion, with integrity, and with a commitment to peace.

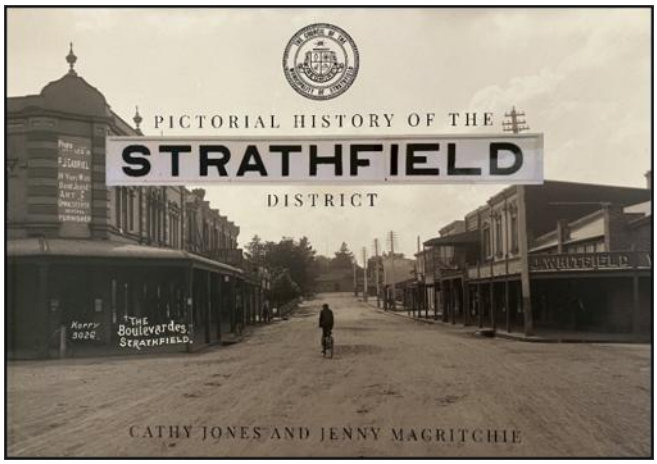
As students, we may not wear uniforms or serve on the battlefield, but we carry forward a different kind of responsibility: to learn from history, to respect those who have served, and to contribute positively to the world around us.

To the veterans here today, and to those represented by the Ashfield RSL Sub-Branch, we thank you. Your service and sacrifice have shaped the nation we live in today. We are deeply grateful.

As we stand together in remembrance, let us honour the past, recognise the challenges of the present, and commit ourselves to building a more peaceful and united future. Thank you.

Book Review

Pictorial History of the Strathfield District



This beautifully presented publication of 280 pages contains 314 photographs with informative and insightful text which present the history of Strathfield. Not coincidentally, the book was launched in December 2025 which was the 140th anniversary of the incorporation of Strathfield Council in 1885.

The book was a joint project between **Cathy Jones**, the long-term secretary of the **Strathfield-Homebush District Historical Society** and **Jenny Macritchie**, the Local Studies Adviser of Strathfield Council. The presentation and design of the book is outstanding, thanks to the talents of Council's graphic designer **Evita Bourbon**.

The images were gathered not only from the local Historical Society and Council, but from a forensic search of public state and public libraries, archives, societies, museums, universities and other collections. The images help tell the story of various aspects of the development of Strathfield – the contents listing of 36 topic areas is far too many to recount here!

Book Review

Needless to state that settlement, Council formation, town planning, architecture, transport, education, religion, sport and much more are covered in this comprehensive publication.

The ADHS has purchased a copy of the book for our library not only due to our appreciation of images and story but also as so much of Ashfield's early residents had business, familial or sporting connections to the Strathfield area.

The book is on sale at Strathfield Library, at the low cost of $30.

Ann O'Connell

Update from the Friends of Callan Park

The **Friends of Callan Park** are friends of the ADHS, and bring news of a proposed Master Plan affecting this iconic Inner West open space and historic place:

There is so much to discuss as Callan Park enters a changed environment. The changes to the Callan Park Act have now gone through the Lower House in the NSW Parliament and head for the Upper House where there is a logjam of government business.

Those changes – as they stand at present – eliminate key protections and reduce the scope for an effective say by the community. How we respond to this is a crucial discussion.

The **Draft Callan Park Foreshore Master Plan has been released -** visit the project webpage

Submissions have closed, but read the FOCP's submission, here:

Submission to the Callan Park Draft Foreshore Master Plan - Friends of Callan Park

Art Exhibition

Ann O'Connell and **Lois Gray** attended morning tea where Society was presented with a drawing of Thirning Villa on Wednesday 29 April at the Gallery on corner of Percival and Myrtle Streets Stanmore.

Three artists had done drawings of various buildings in the Inner West.



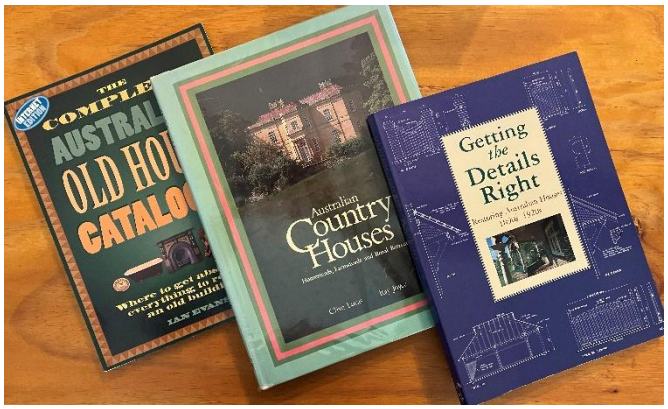
The artist, Sorrel Trevarthen (middle) with Ann O'Connell (left) and Lois Gray (right)



Story and images by Lois Gray

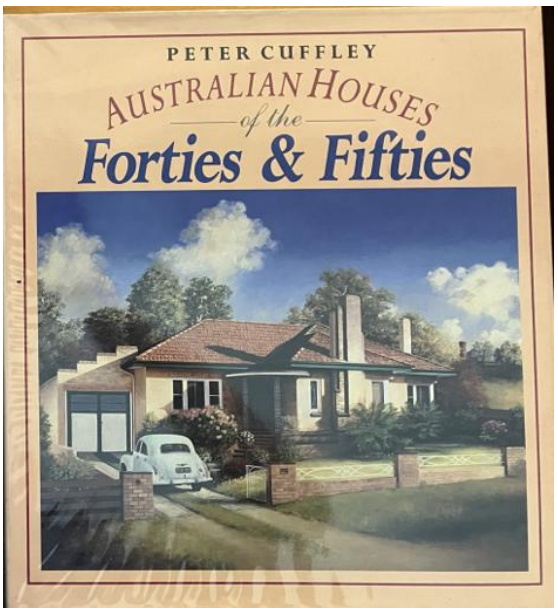
Donation of books

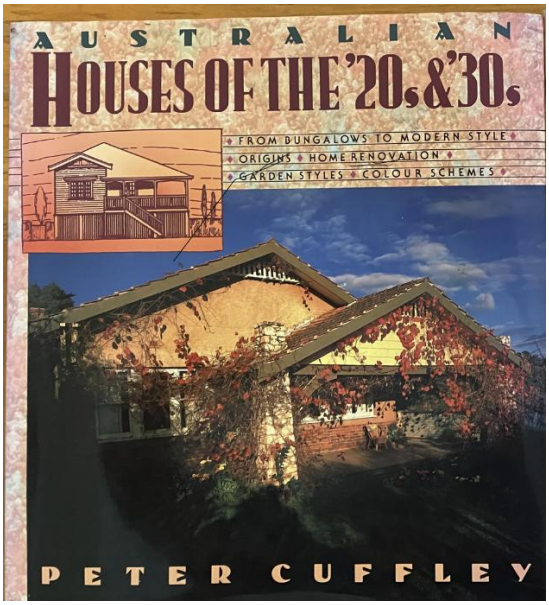
The Society's research rooms are often visited by residents wishing to either research their homes or work out the best ways to restore, update or renovate them. Our Library contains a range of books on the subject of Australian Architecture which is an excellent resource for these researchers.



ADHS member **Kerry O'Donnell** whose career as a teacher at TAFE included courses on Art and Design and including Architectural Design, has donated a collection of very valuable books:

- *The Complete Australian Old House Catalogue*, by Ian Evans, published 2000
- *Australian Country Houses, Homesteads, Farmsteads and Rural Retreats* by Clive Lucas and photographed by Ray Joyce, published 1987
- *The Federation House, Australia's Own Style* by Hugh Fraser and photographed by Ray Joyce, published 1986, reprinted edition. 1997
- *The Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture* by Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds, published 1989
- *Getting the Details Right; Restoring Australian Houses 1890s – 1920s* by Ian Evans and drawings by NSW Department of Planning, published in 1989





- *Australian Houses of the '20s & 30s* by Peter Cuffley, published in 1989, reprinted edition 1990
- *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties* by Peter Cuffley, published in 1993
- *Australian Colonial Crafts, Floorcoverings, Textiles, Furniture, Facsimiles* by Susan Hunt, published by Historic Houses Trust NSW in four articles throughout 1985.

Many thanks Kerry

Storey & images by Ann O'Connell

News from the RAHS

I guess, like a few of our readers, I am a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS), and I have been for many years.

On Tuesday 14 April, it was my great pleasure to attend the RAHS AGM, in person. It was also held via Zoom.

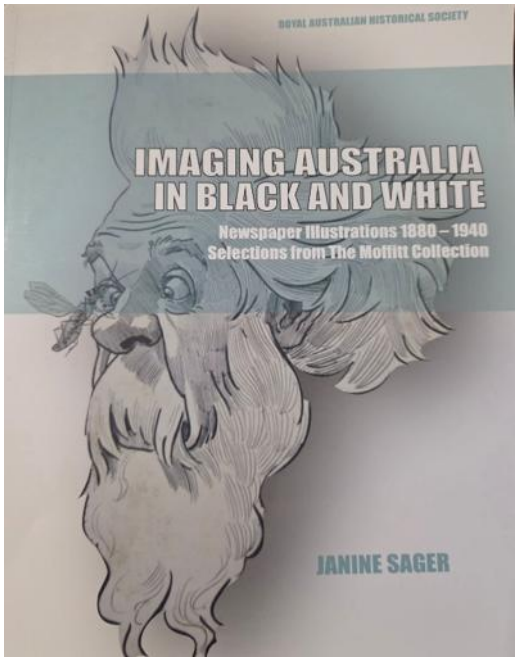
As part of the formal events, the RAHS President, **Carol Liston AO**, presented a very interesting and entertaining talk focusing on a few ex-convict women entrepreneurs.

The women in focus, did not have children in the colony, and so their stories are less visible. However, thanks to the work of Carol, their stories are now becoming more visible. Those interested in finding out more, can watch the presentation on YouTube, here:

2026 President Address: Convict Women in the Archive - Carol Liston

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uiHNDVaqg0

Members who attended also received a copy of RAHS publication *Imaging Australia in Black and White; Newspaper Illustrations 1880 – 1940 – Selections from The Moffitt Collection* by **Janine Sager**.



The work features images collected by **Herbert Moffitt** (1877 – 1953) who the author describes as "a Bohemian artist who became a judge".

Justice Herbert Willian Moffitt, wasn't always a lawyer. His varied career included working as a freelance artist producing drawings and cartoons for Sydney newspapers and journals. It was through this work that Moffitt became associated with many of the best-known artists and illustrators of his time. This included a group of Sydney artists, who were referred to as the "Bohemians of the Bulletin", and their work included the production of black and white images. Moffitt became a collector of their work and book displays a number of these images. His collection was left to his family, and so this legacy survives.



Syd Miller, Judge "Herb" Moffitt, 1939 (charcoal and pastel

News from Haberfield

Haberfield Association & Haberfield's 125 Anniversary

Just as the Commonwealth of Australia turned 125 this year, so too did the Inner West "garden suburb", Haberfield. To commemorate The Haberfield Association is holding two 125th Anniversary Events. The first is a garden walk on Sunday September 13. The second is a Haberfield Day lunch on Saturday October 3. For more information, please contact The Haberfield Association at contact@haberfield.asn.au.

Stories & images by Linda De Rosa

Good Vibrations for Seniors

Judith O'Connor, a ADHS Member brings news of a new radio program for Seniors:

I am part of a team that runs a new radio program specifically for Seniors We receive funding from Inner West Council and have been nominated for a community award.

*The program is called **GOOD VIBRATIONS** and it goes to air every week on community radio 2RSR as well as other stations in the Newcastle and Illawarra areas.*

If you'd like more information please contact

- Mary Labrie: mary@timewarppstrudios.com. Ph. 0428210084 or
- Judith O'Connor: judithoc@bigpond.net.au. Ph. 0419414361.

Research Rooms

The Society's Research Rooms at *Thirning Villa*, in 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
  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
- Website: https://ashfieldhistory.org.au/

Newsletter contributors

Thank you to:

- Ashfield Boys High School - Tim Owen, Head Teacher HSIE / Year 8 Year Advisor and Kay Couzens, Year 11 student
- Linda De Rosa
- Lois Gray
- Helmut Kals
- Alex Lofts
- Ann O'Connell
- David Rollinson
- Susan Thompson
- Jan & Paul Williams

for their contributions to this Newsletter.

Heather Warton, 28 July 2026