



# KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Incorporating the Ku-ring-gai Family History Centre • Patron: The Mayor of Ku-ring-gai

Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society, the National Trust of Australia (NSW),  
The Society of Australian Genealogists, and the NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc.

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Monthly Newsletter

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Rooms: 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon Meetings held in the Gordon Library Meeting Room - 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon

## *Growing up in Asquith*

A brave group ventured out on a very hot night in a wild storm to hear Bob Davis speak about his entertaining recollections of a happy childhood in Asquith in the 1940s and 50s.

His talk, following the General Meeting of Wednesday January 21, was based on his memoir "Gramma Pies and Gum Trees" published as part of the Hornsby Council's centenary publications program.

It was a night of fond and funny memories, and lots of laughs. Who can remember:-

- rabbit for dinner, caught in the local bush,
- vegies from your own garden,
- going to the local dairy with your billy-can for lovely warm milk,
- swapping your extra beans for neighbours' extra fruit,
- Sunday tradition of a leg of mutton cooked on a cast iron stove,
- not being allowed to have seconds so the meat would stretch to being battered for Monday night's dinner,
- raising pocket money by collecting golf balls, cutting wood, selling vegies,
- your mother crying when your brother went to war,
- your mother swearing when the clothes prop fell, dropping the sheets into the mud,
- waking early in the morning to the sounds of the 'dunny man' (night-soil man) swearing as the dogs barked,
- your first press-button flush toilet,
- crawling under an orchard fence to sneak peaches off the lower branches,
- the many different types of cicadas, especially the prized 'black prince',
- pipe-smoking teachers,
- dunking the girl in front's plait in your ink well,
- rock fight in the old quarry,
- the Watkins man, who like Felix the Cat, could pull anything out of his bag,
- horse and cart deliveries from the iceman, baker, scrap metal man, bottle-o,
- lots of freedom to spend in the bush,
- running around with bare feet,
- Squirt, the diesel locomotive before the electrification of the North Shore line,
- the 'Butterbox' bus to Chatswood where you sat facing each other,

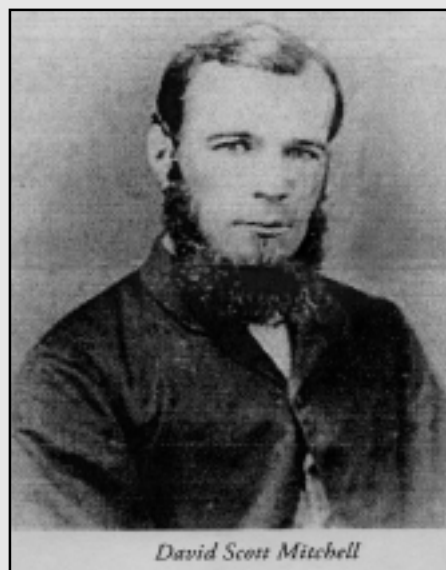
Bob also brought in a collection of lapel badges, most from 1941.

*Jackie van Bergen*

## **Coming Meetings**

**(Gordon Library Meeting Room)**

### **Next Society General Meeting** **Wednesday 15 April at 7.45 pm**



*David Scott Mitchell*

### ***Magnificent Obsession: The Mitchell Library Story***

Emeritus Professor Brian Fletcher will speak on the life and work of David Scott Mitchell, the reclusive bachelor bibliophile whose books, manuscripts and money formed the basis of one of Australia's greatest institutions.

**Supper will be available.  
Visitors welcome.**

### **Next Family History Meeting**

#### **Saturday 4 April**

11 am: New resources - including Sydney Telephone Books 1934, 1935 and 1939.

2 pm: "Mixed Bag" - Speaker Paul Storm talks about his own Family History.

**Afternoon Tea will be available.  
Visitors welcome.**

## Rooms Closures during April

Our rooms will be closed:-

**EASTER:** Friday 10 to Monday 13 April, inclusive, and  
**ANZAC DAY:** Saturday 25 April.

## 2009 Gems of Ku-ring-gai

Two of our members were recognised as **GEMS of Ku-ring-gai** on Monday 9 March. Ku-ring-gai Council created GEMS to recognise the work of women in our community to celebrate International Women's Day.

We congratulate **Jennifer Harvey** and **Kathie Rieth** for this well-deserved recognition of their contributions to *THE HISTORIAN* and other activities of the Society.

## Society Outreach - A Busy Month

March has been a very busy month, with the Society having stands/displays at:-

- St Ives Seniors Day Thursday 5 March.
- A display on Ku-ring-gai Women at the International Women's Day Council luncheon.
- Seniors & Community Living Information Day Saturday 14 March.
- Assisting Janine Kitson with National Trust Gordon Walk 15 March.
- Monday 16 March Jo Harris gave a Family History Talk as part of Council's Seniors Program.
- Another Gordon walk on Tuesday 24 March organised by KHS as part of Council's Seniors Program.

## Volunteers Needed

First, a thank you to the people who assisted at St Ives, and Shirley Luttrell for "signing up" as a Room Volunteer.

We are now looking for:-

- someone who would like to come along on **Tuesdays** to extract items on Built Heritage from Council Minutes, and
- a typist to assist on **Wednesdays** to transcribe historical documents. Please phone Ann Barry on 9144 6480.

## Book for Sale

The society has obtained a number of copies of "A History of North Shore Sydney from 1788 to Today" by Les G Thorne. The book was last reprinted in 1979, and has been out of print for many years. Copies available to members for \$20 each.

## Answers to Quiz (see P. 8)

A 1. (c) - which is why Australia Post is celebrating the 200th birthday of the postal service this year (2009).  
A 2. Most likely (c). Once the letter was placed in the bag and put on the post, it had been "posted".  
A 3. (a) Peter Lalor became the Victorian Postmaster-General in 1877.

Do you have information about the history of Ku-ring-gai that you could share?

Short notes for the Newsletter are invited. We can work with you to adapt your contribution to our Newsletter length, style and format.

Contact Max Farley (mmff2@bigpond.net.au or phone 9499 7113).

## New Computer Resources etc.

The following computer resources have been added since the last Newsletter:-

**Australian Convict Sites World Heritage serial nomination** - slides from the presentation given to the Society by **Patricia HALE** on Wednesday 18 February 2009.

**1853 New South Wales Government Gazette.**

**Update to "Perfect Pictures"** - There are now over 6,200 pictures in our collection.

Publications from the National Trust - 40 years of **National Trust Journals 1961-2001**, plus **National Trust Publications** - Popular out of print publications, conference and seminar papers, technical bulletins, education kits, Trust alerts and selected historical photographs from the National Trust archives photographic collection.

**1934-1936 and 1939 Sydney Telephone Directories.**

*Peter Stehn*

## Recent Acquisitions

If any members are downsizing, or considering a similar activity and are looking for a home for material that would be of interest to the KHS, PLEASE THINK OF US.

Items such as old photographs, photograph albums, books, school magazines, are of interest, as is material similar to that mentioned in previous newsletters.

- There is a steady stream of newsletters from other historical societies, and periodicals (e.g. Australian Family Tree Connections, Australian Heritage) being received, and it is worth casting an eye over these for an area you are interested in.
- *Hill End & Tambaroora Pioneer Register to 1920.* Consulting this in conjunction with *Gold Leases for Mudgee Mining District*, which is available at KHS, may be a fruitful exercise.
- *Avondale Golf Club 1926-1976.* Provides a record of past Presidents, Captains and Associates. There are black and white photos of the course - comparing 50 years.
- *The Women of the 1790 Neptune* by Anne Needham. 78 convicts, plus those who came free.
- *The Good Old Days - Heritage Photographs of the Manning, Gloucester and Great Lakes*, compiled and written by Jim Revitt. Interesting old photos with lots of people named, but no index for quick reference. Has some shipping photos. The photos provide a good impression of the essence of the good/bad old days.

*Bruce Robinson*

## Ku-ring-gai Heritage Issues

When: Monday 11 May 7.30 pm

Where: Killara Uniting Church Hall,  
Corner Arnold and Karranga Avenue

Following **FOKE's** Annual General Meeting, The Hon. Catherine Cusack MLC, Shadow Minister for the Environment & Climate Sustainability, will present a public talk on "The shredding of Ku-ring-gai's iconic canopy". Ms Cusack says "cramming ugly 15 storey buildings into the historic village shopping centres and massive five storey blocks (near) every train station will mean densities are greater than many inner city suburbs..."

## *Family History Course "Using Modern Resources"*

**Starts 10.30 am Thursday 16 April 2009  
at the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society  
Research Centre,  
Old Gordon Public School,  
Pacific Highway, Gordon**

Lasts 8 weeks, with a lecture every Thursday morning, and an assignment to complete before the following week. The course covers the use of books and computers.

The attendee will learn to find all Australian State Births, Deaths and Marriages to make up the framework for their own future family history.

Then, they will acquire the knowledge to flesh out the story with the vast number of resources available in the Research Centre. Were they convicts or were they born here, how did they come to Australia and when, where did they live, how many children, what were their occupations, when did they die, where were they buried, and much, much more.

Cost: \$125 for members of Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, \$150 for non-members.

Includes copious notes and morning tea.

Enquiries: Jo Harris 9489 4393

## **Member Profile - Jackie van Bergen**

Jackie was born on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, but spent most of her childhood near Horsham at Longerenong Agricultural College where her father lectured. She went to Horsham High School, then to Monash University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and Immunology.



Jackie worked as a medical scientist in both hospital pathology and the pharmaceutical industry. As these industries became more automated and less challenging, she moved to sales of high-tech laboratory equipment and then into recruitment of technical staff. After moving to Sydney in mid 2000 with her husband, she worked with an investor relations company doing internet research and event management. It was here that she discovered a talent for proofreading and editing.

Jackie grew up in country Victoria, where most of her ancestors had settled, and where many lived to ripe old ages. She was part of a close family, and was involved in many elderly relatives' lives. Her interest in family history was piqued at a young age by stories passed down from these relatives (stories of convicts, admirals, royalty and other famous people), never knowing if they were true, exaggerations, or fantasy. Her mother, in particular, has many old letters, birthday books, photos and family bibles, but did not take her own family research much beyond these. Jackie took over the computer side.

Until doing the KHS family history course in early 2008, almost all of Jackie's research had been done by talking to relatives and using the internet. Although this resulted in over 5000 entries on her family tree, there were significant gaps. Her focus now is really on filling in stories of their lives, although she is helping a cousin organise a reunion of descendants of the Francis/Collier branch of the family.

Jackie enjoys walking, swimming, yoga and pilates, as well as getting away for weekends to winery regions and historic villages. Jackie has been a member of the National Trust for 20 years, and was active in Trust Connections (for members in their 30s and 40s) in Victoria. She and her husband restored an original Federation house in Brighton East, Victoria, before moving to Sydney.

Jackie works as a proofreader/editor from her home office, and is preparing to renovate her post-war Gordon house, where she lives with her accountant husband Paul and Yr 10 step-daughter Melody. They are all active in the scouting movement.

Joining KHS in early 2008, when signing up for the family history course, Jackie joined the committee in September 2008, and became Secretary after the death of Don Fifer in November 2008.

## **Tulkiyan**

### *in National Trust Heritage Week*

There will be a public Open Day at the State Heritage Listed house **Tulkiyan** during the National Trust Heritage Festival, the theme of which is 'Our Place in Space'.

House tours and an exhibition will focus on the migration experience of the Donaldson and Scott families, who left Scotland in the mid nineteenth century to settle, and prosper, in Australia.

William and Mary Scott Donaldson commissioned prominent architect BJ Waterhouse to design this two-storey residence in Arts and Crafts style in 1913.

Now a house museum, Tulkiyan is a rare intact example of its kind, where furniture, furnishings and family artefacts remain in situ.

When: Sunday 5 April; first tour 10 am; last tour 3 pm.

Where: 707 Pacific Highway, Gordon

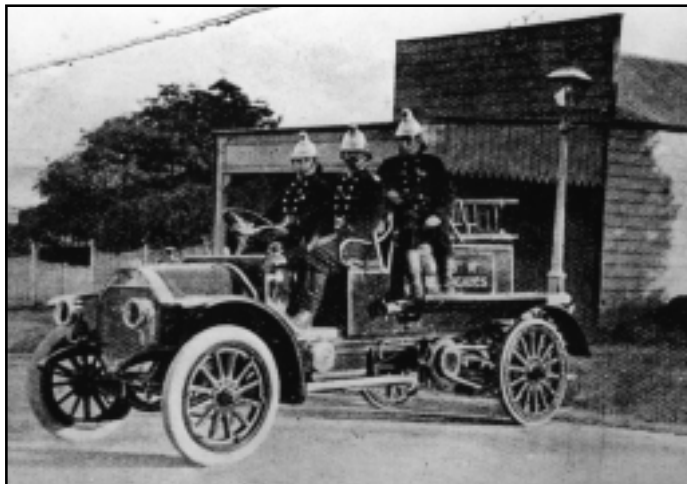
House is accessible only by guided tour of duration one hour; tours run throughout the day.

\$10.00 adult entry includes refreshments; concessions available. No bookings taken.

No wheelchair access; no disabled access to second storey. On-street parking, or five minute walk south from Gordon Station.

Information: Friends of Tulkiyan volunteers; phone 9498 3754 or see [www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/tulkiyan](http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/tulkiyan)

## Fighting Ku-ring-gai's Fires



*Outside the Gordon Fire Station, c.1916*

Ku-ring-gai people join with the rest of Australia in being appalled at the tragic loss of life, animals and property this last month in Victoria as a result of the huge bushfires there. Many of our local people recall only too well the fires that ravaged parts of Ku-ring-gai in January 1994. Though these were certainly serious enough, they were not on the scale of those in Victoria.

Fortunately, there are now official brigades established to try to put out these fires, or at least minimise the damage they can cause. It was not always so.

Organised fire-fighting in Ku-ring-gai began in 1914, and came about as a result of a big fire in Hornsby on Tuesday night, 6 March 1911. Beginning at the back of a grocery store in Burdett Street, it destroyed not only the store, but also the adjoining Bank of North Queensland and a number of other shops. The local policeman contacted the Chatswood Fire Brigade for assistance, only to be told the fire was outside its territory. A similar request to the head metropolitan station in Sydney brought the same result.

A local newspaper, *THE KURINGIAN*, was moved to ask in its issue of 8 April 1911 "*When are we going to take steps to establish a fire station in the (Ku-ring-gai) Shire? ...That Hornsby incident should be a lesson to us all*".

Following the Hornsby fire, a station was established there on 1 January 1914, and was soon followed in the same year in Gordon, when the Gordon Fire Brigade was opened with its Fire Station being a leased wooden shop on the Highway opposite Park Avenue. The shop had earlier been a dressmaker's shop. It had one man and a reel, even though it was supposed to have had six men and an engine. The War meant the engine was not initially delivered, though it did eventually arrive. The station was manned by professional and voluntary fire-fighters, with the volunteers running to the station when the fire-bell rang. An early resident recalled that in 1914 "the fire engine was hand drawn and it was a fine sight to see it bouncing down the main road with the local volunteers pushing and pulling, dressed in garments to suit the time of day or night". A tall "spotting tower" was built in 1915, and had a clear view of

the valley below, which was subject to bushfires as later experience has proven.

The Hornsby fire of 1911 gave impetus to the formation of the Gordon Brigade, so it is of interest to read that in January 1971 it was the Gordon Brigade that was first on the scene when the Hornsby Fire Station was itself destroyed by fire.



*Fire Station Tower, c.1915*

The Station was moved further up to the corner of Bridge Street at Pymble, but is quixotically still known officially as the "Gordon Fire Station".

## Handley Kindergarten History

The Pymble Turramurra Kindergarten at 24 Handley Avenue, Turramurra, has recently released its history from its 1962 beginning to now. It is a beautifully produced hard-cover book of 170 pages that sells for \$30.

Naturally its prime readership will be the many children, their parents and other relatives who have been associated with the kindergarten over its 46 years. Nevertheless the history provides an example of what can be achieved for the community by the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals working together. Mention should be made, too, of the support provided by Ku-ring-gai Council.

For the outsider, particular pleasure can be found in the quoted comments and opinions expressed by many of the children, which reflect the delightful innocence and frankness of childhood. These are dispersed randomly throughout the book.

It is impossible not to be captured by a conversation between four year old K and teacher Miss O'Reilly:-

*K remarks: "That's a nice dress".*

*"Thank you" said Miss O'Reilly, flattered.*

*"It's one of your good ones isn't it?"*

*Taking another look adds, "It's not one of your very good ones though is it?"*

*After another look "It's a bit old," pausing, then, "You've had it for years haven't you?"*

Or: *In Miss Bolger's room the children are discussing marriage:*

*"Will you marry me S?" asks K (girl).*

*"If you give me a biscuit" replies S (boy).*

*"I'll give you a whole packet" says K.*

*"It's a deal, K, it's a deal" replies S.*

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## ***A Gem - The Swain Garden in Lindfield***

Have you visited the Swain Garden in Lindfield? As with many of Ku-ring-gai's gems, it is not readily visible from either Stanhope or Nelson Roads, and therefore many Ku-ring-gai residents do not give it the recognition it deserves.

Not everyone would realise that the Garden was bequeathed by Arthur Swain to the National Trust after his 1973 death. The Trust felt it did not have the facilities to look after it, and offered it to Ku-ring-gai Council. Council decided in 1978 to accept it, but only after some debate because of the maintenance costs involved.

Who was Arthur Swain? He was the son of Henry Swain, who in 1895, founded the once well known bookstore and stationery shop in Sydney. Most members would remember the business before it merged with Angus and Roberson in 1960. Arthur Swain had become Managing Director, and owned a significant area of land in Stanhope Road. His company also bought the Everglades garden at Leura.

In his later years, Arthur Swain developed the Stanhope site into one of the most admired camellia gardens in Australia. We should be thankful that Ku-ring-gai has been home to people like Arthur Swain, who loved the area so much that they were prepared to leave us with a lasting legacy of beauty.

## ***Sharing History***

In the last issue we were pleased to include a story from member David Wilkins about a "walk" he did from De Burgh's to Fullers Bridge along the northern bank of our history-laden Lane Cove River. He now recommends it.

There must be many members who have information, or questions, about the history of Ku-ring-gai they would like to share. As you know, we do not have space for long items more suited to *THE HISTORIAN*, but don't let that faze you. We would work with you to adapt your contribution to our Newsletter length, style and format. You can contact me on 9499 7113 - [mmff2@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mmff2@bigpond.net.au) (*Max Farley*).

## ***More on Telegraph Road***

Members may remember that last year we canvassed the question of the naming of Pymble's Telegraph Road. The *Streets of Ku-ring-gai* book says it was "named by Dr WWJ O'Reilly in 1883 to commemorate the telegraph line from Parramatta to the coast, part of which ran along the road". Confirmation of this had proven elusive. We did, however, discover that this was recorded in a report on the early days of the Hornsby Post Office, prepared by the Postmaster General's Department. Many enquiries, however, failed to find a copy of the report. Diligent searching by our member, Allan Rost, who has had a continuing interest in the subject, finally found the report, and it confirms the story. Someone, not in our Society, had conscientiously filed it, but in the wrong place. It happens.

The relevant part of the report reads "The first telegraph line associated with the North Shore was built in 1870. A thirty-mile line, costing 1116 pounds, branched off the main northern telegraph line at Castle Hill, and was erected along

Telegraph Road, Pymble, across to the coast, and up to Barrenjoey. This line was constructed because of the importance of the "Barrenjoey" lighthouse and Customs station".

Question answered!

## ***Admirable Acts of Contrition***

Few would have noticed Ku-ring-gai's one remaining horse trough, with a small "dog trough" at one side, on the corner of Mona Vale Road and Palm Street in St Ives.



Carefully preserved by Council following representations by the Society, it is just one of 700 or so erected by the Trustees of the Estate of Annis and George Bills in the 1930s. Each carried a plaque saying simply "Donated by Annis and George Bills, Australia". The Trust was charged by the Bills to erect troughs "for the relief of horses or of other dumb animals in Australia, in the British Isles, or in any other part of the world". As a result, troughs appeared not only throughout Australia, but as far afield as America, Ireland, Romania, France, Italy, Syria, India and Japan.

There have been a number of articles written over the years about Annis and George Bills, including in *THE HISTORIAN* in 1999, so the details will not be repeated here. Sufficient to say that George Bills was the son of an English naturalist, and came to Australia with his family in the 1870s with his parents and siblings. George's wife, Annis, was English too. Annis died in 1910 and George in 1930. George had been made a Life Governor of the RSPCA in 1927.

In the 19th century it was legal to export native birds, and the family conducted a business doing so. Later, members of the Bills family turned to the manufacture of wire mattresses, and prospered.

Most people have affection for animals, and many take a special interest in their welfare. The Bills, however, were exceptional in this regard, both during their lifetime and later through their Trust. The question comes to mind, "Why"? The answer is given in an article in the Journal of the Parramatta Historical Society published in 1991. The authors, Geraldine Palmer and Margaret McWilliam, having researched the family, concluded that "Annis and George, a childless couple, were fond of animals and were remorseful at the suffering that had been caused to birds in the early days of their business".

It is a warming story, and we are fortunate to have one of the Bills' troughs in Ku-ring-gai as a reminder of kindlier times.

# FAMILY MATTERS

## **Family History Meeting 7 March 2009**

**11.00 am Session – De-Mystifying “Ancestry.com”**

35 were present when Jo Harris opened the Tutorial Session, welcomed all and introduced Trevor Whitehead, who led the session, with Jackie van Bergen on computer.

It was a most interesting session with Trevor working through and explaining: What is Ancestry? What Resources can you find? General Search. Specific Search. Specific Titles or Collections. The different search windows, different types of historical records in these windows. So many areas within each type of window!! Case studies were then followed showing how to search.

With his final comments, Trevor encouraged all in attendance to *follow up the presentation with personal effort before too long*. Thank you Trevor for your Tutorial.

### **2.00 pm Session**

35 were present when Jo Harris opened the meeting with “On this day in 1826 the first street lamp was erected in Macquarie Place”.

### **Announcements**

Saturday 31 October, Sunday 1 & Monday 2 November – Coach trip to Adelong, Yass, Tumut – 2 nights Tumut – cost tba – non refundable deposit of \$50 pp from April Meeting. Murrin Transcripts – Now \$17.00 each – Request form to be opened out and placed in Jo’s Folder.

Champion – Is anyone researching the name of *Champion*? – Folder with many pages downloaded from the internet left several weeks ago in the Gordon Library – please contact Jo.

Australian Heritage Magazine – a subscription to this marvellous treasure trove of Australian stories would make a great gift to family or friends.

Jo advised that anyone turning 100 in Japan received a “Silver Goblet” – now so many turning 100 the “goblet” has been reduced in size!

Raffle won by Elaine Turnidge, who chose “Australia – the First Hundred Years” being a facsimile of Volumes I & II of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia – 1888.

Jo invited the Group from the “Family History Course” which commenced in April 2008 to share their findings since the course.

Kim Wilcox – Correcting Errors, such as “Helen, Ellen, Elinor” from documents and family members – finding a 3rd cousin in England – Kim’s aim was to give information to his children – he does not have a computer so got the children to assist with the internet whenever possible when there for a meal!!

Marjorie Perry – Immigration and Shipping Records – Numerous places to search on internet, such as Cora Webb; South Australian family members very helpful regarding “Lady Anne” and its arrival in Adelaide – Librarians at Gordon and Ryde were very helpful – need to book for Joan at Gordon but Angela at Ryde (1 Devlin Street) very accessible – Perrys also subscribe to Ancestry.

Jocelyn Brennan-Horley – Since the course Jocelyn has been sidetracked and enjoying researching our display cabinets with Margaret Hoekstra. Under guidance from Jenny Joyce they have learned to scan and print photos for the “Roseville Display” now in the cabinet – the next display to be about Nancy Bird Walton.

Jackie van Bergen – Wills & Probate – researched the Internet and Digger – discovered a long line of hoarders – tried to ascertain whether GGF was married or not – complicated with illegitimate children – Encyclopaedia of Victoria CDs 1844 – Melbourne’s First Mayor – difficulty between Protestant and Roman Catholic religions – witness names on marriage certificates can be a clue.

Jan Mathews – Transcripts – Jan has had great success with information on Transcripts – discovered her father had a sister who was born and died on the same day (no one had mentioned this sister).

Keith Perry – Errors and Checking Information – Keith was an only child aged 8 when his father died in his early 40s – he met an older cousin who unfortunately died when Keith was 12 – his mother’s mother died in 1963 aged 93 and last living relative died aged 103 – basic rule check information from other people – Family Trees on Ancestry or anywhere on the internet should be approached with caution.

Trevor Whitehead – Family in Lancashire – Apoplexy induced by intemperance – assisted passenger lists may show siblings, parents and 4 grandparents in some cases – family in Manchester, GGGF’s parents before 1837 – 1841 Census showed 63 family members.

Kim Mathews – GGF’s second marriage at 66 to wife 23 and had more children – Kim recommended Jo’s course.

Lucille Taylor – has had many disappointments in searching, but has found information regarding Taylor’s Produce Store – at start of course Lucille was overawed with questions but the group soon bonded together.

Graham Crawford – Land Titles Office – a visit entailed many different areas – need index numbers – he was very pleased to be taken around by a staff member and allowed to take digital photos of maps required – Graham has put together an “instruction manual” for a visit to the LTO – copy is available in the rooms.

Jo Harris – Showed a postcard with interesting information re Irene Webb, Enid Webb & dog. At the moment Jo is researching a very difficult family named Power, each generation has members named Morgan and Timothy, Timothy and Morgan, etc. etc. sometimes spelt Poore or Poor – 7 Timothys and 8 Morgans born in Australia – I am glad it is Jo doing this research!

*Based on notes by Elaine Turnidge*

## **Can you help: Who’s Who**

We have received a kind donation of the missing 1980 volume, but are still seeking the 1933, 1935, 1944 editions of Who’s Who. If you can help, please call Jo Harris (9489 4393).

## Family History Web Sites

Last month I described free “starter” sites. Then there are pay sites, either subscription or pay-as-you-go. Three UK pay sites are Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)), The Genealogist ([www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk)) and Find My Past ([www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)). These have similar information but their search engines work differently and the transcriptions are not always the same. Sometimes these give different answers to the same question. Popular information hosted include UK civil registration indexes from 1837, parish records and UK Census 1841-1901. Links to all three pay sites are on the Society page of our Intranet, however you need to have an account established before you can download from the pay sites.

The last sites discussed here are the National Archives of Australia (NAA) ([www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch.aspx](http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch.aspx)) and The National Archives of the UK ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)), known by the acronym TNA. Both provide a wealth of information. The National Archives of Australia provides much information free for download as images. For example, complete service records of many World War I servicemen have been digitised and can be downloaded as high resolution images.

Some records contain hundreds of high resolution images that can soon exceed the download limit of a typical home Internet account. Don't forget that we have a very fast Internet link and an enormous download limit, so make use of the Internet access provided at our research centre.

*Peter Stehn*

## Family History Committee Elections

Jo invited Max Farley to hold an election for the Committee for the next 12 months – all positions declared vacant.

The following members to be recommended to the Society for ratification – Leader Jo Harris, Committee Lyn Done & Stella Green (both absent but willing to stand), Elaine Turnidge, Trevor Whitehead, and Jenny Joyce

### Coming events

Thursday 9 April – Maundy Thursday – Family Tree Maker Q&A Day – 10.30 am \$5.00 members, \$10.00 non-members. We will also discuss merging files. Bring along your questions/problems.

Thursday 16 April – 10.30 am – 8 week Family History Course begins. \$25.00 deposit required - \$125.00 members \$150.00 non-members.

Saturday 2 May – 2.00 pm session will have Gail Davis, Senior Archivist at State Records giving an overview of the “Archives” and then answering members’ questions.

Sunday 3 May – **Volunteers needed** for Society stall at Festival on the Green, St Ives

Thursday 7 May – Coach leaves Bannockburn Oval 8.30 am sharp – visit to State Records at Kingswood. Cost \$38.00 when booking with Jo.

## BUILT HERITAGE

### Fibro homes in Ku-ring-gai

In his book *Fibro Frontier*, Charles Pickett wrote “Fibro is as central to Australia’s built heritage as iron, timber, tile or brick.” However, fibro homes everywhere, not only in Ku-ring-gai, are fast disappearing.



*18 Telegraph Road*

For many years, fibro was regarded by owner-builders and architects alike as a wonder material – cheap, easy to use and “Moderne”. The first fibro, manufactured from cement bonded by asbestos fibre, was made in Austria in 1900. Wunderlich began manufacturing Durabestos sheeting in Australia in 1916 and James Hardie its Fibrolite in 1917. By that time one million pounds worth had been imported from France and Britain, most by Hardies. In Australia it quickly became popular, highly regarded for its economy and resistance to fire and pests. Timber framed houses clad in fibro were easy to erect, easy to extend, and easy to renovate.

The first reference found to a fibro house in Ku-ring-gai was in 1911, when S Lowe of Rozelle was planning to build a villa of timber and fibro cement in Wahroonga. This may be *Neringah*, the two storey fibro house built for Andrew Reid, a director and later owner of James Hardie. Over the following years fibro cement houses were built in every suburb of Ku-ring-gai. Some were designed by architects, including Oliver Harley (architect of our first council chambers), Clarence Seccombe and Augustus Aley who designed two “rough-cast fibrolite cottages”, one in Pymble the other in Killara.

A notable project was the house at 18 Telegraph Road built for the Sutton sisters about 1926. Their brother George had begun working for James Hardie in 1900 and by 1916 was a director. On two separate occasions he applied to Ku-ring-gai Council to build a Fibrolite dwelling. Both applications were rejected because of non-conformity. The house was eventually built: in 1959 it was described as a fibro cottage on brick foundations with a tile roof. The house today has roughcast walls with no apparent use of fibro [see photo].

In Ku-ring-gai most certificates of title issued to property owners contain a covenant that any house must be of brick or stone, with tile or slate roof. However fibro has been used extensively for garages, workshops, outbuildings and laundries, eave and gable linings (e.g., at *Tulkiyan*), and upper floor extensions.

Will we see new houses in Ku-ring-gai built of fibro? Pickett wrote “Its place in Australian heritage is being recognised and renewed.” Some of today’s brightest and best architects are using the new, safe asbestos-free fibro to create innovative, energy efficient and comfortable homes that tread lightly upon our earth.

*Kathie Reith*

## Copy for Newsletter

General copy for publication should be lodged with the Editor, Bob Barry (at bob\_barry@optusnet.com.au), **as early as possible** but no later than the 7th of the month (except November and December), unless otherwise arranged. Copy lodged before that date **will receive preference**, all things being equal. Copy is to be submitted on the understanding that the Society has editing rights and that readers can reproduce it in whole or part with acknowledgement. Material should preferably be in electronic form.

## New Members

We are very pleased to welcome to membership:

Lois Lake	Cammeray
Richard & Lyndall Lander	St Ives
Julie Bonello	Macquarie Park
Rhonda Keniston	Pymble
Katherine Kachor	Roseville
Jan Langley	Killara

We know they will enjoy their time with the Society and that membership will open the door to many friends and activities of interest.

## QUIZ *(Answers on P. 2)*

- Q 1. When was the country's first Postmaster appointed?
- (a) 1788 immediately following settlement;
- (b) 1790 when the Second Fleet brought the mail from England;
- (c) 1809 when Governor Macquarie appointed Isaac Nichols, an ex convict;
- (d) 1838 when Australia introduced the world's first pre-paid postage;
- (e) 1901 when a centrally controlled Australia-wide service became essential.
- Q 2. What was the origin of the word "post" as applied to messages?
- (a) information could be disseminated by being "posted-up" in a public place. The term came to be applied to information that individuals wanted sent elsewhere.
- (b) military "posts" throughout the land were central locations for the exchange of information.
- (c) each village had a pole or post where travelling mail carriers placed and removed bags carrying outgoing and incoming messages.
- Q 3. Which of these Australian identities became a Postmaster-General in the Victorian Parliament?
- (a) Peter Lalor, who led the Eureka Stockade Rebellion;
- (b) John Batman, a co-founder of Melbourne;
- (c) David Syme, a proprietor and editor of Melbourne's Age newspaper.

## Research Centre Hours

The Society's Research Centre is at 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon, adjacent to the Ku-ring-gai Library. The Centre is open to the public from 10 am to 2 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (except the first Saturday of each month when members have a meeting). It is closed over the Christmas period and on public holidays.

## Diary Dates

- Sat 4 Apr** 11 am New Resources including the 1930s telephone books.  
2 pm "Mixed Bag" Speaker Paul Storm talks about his own Family History.
- Thu 9 Apr** 10.30 am Family Tree Maker Q & A.
- Wed 15 Apr** 7.45 pm General Meeting - "Magnificent Obsession: The Mitchell Library Story".
- Thu 16 Apr** 8 Week "Family History Course" begins.
- Sat 2 May** 11 am "More New Resources".  
2 pm "An overview of State Records and Unanswered Questions".
- Sun 3 May** Festival on the Green, St Ives
- Thur 7 May** Trip to State Records Office Kingswood.
- Wed 20 May** 7.45 pm General Meeting - "The story of Pymble Golf Club".

## Administration

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### Appointees

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