

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



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Ku-ring-gai Family History Group
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The Royal Australian Historical Society
The National Trust of Australia (NSW)
The Society of Australian Genealogists
The NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc.

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FEBRUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER VOL. 36 NO 1

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 3
FAMILY HISTORY MEETING
11.00am WORKSHOP: *Hornsby Shire
Recollections Website.***

Presenter: Jenny Joyce.

**2.00pm FAMILY HISTORY MEETING
Nutcote. Presenter: Dick Gall**

Cecilia May Gibbs was the daughter of talented amateur artists who migrated to Australia in 1881 and who later arranged for her formal art training in London. Being a single woman in a male dominated field she initially turned her hand to any market for sketches or paintings in order to support herself.

May's love of the Australian bush grew from her happy childhood in WA. It manifested itself in her series of books, cartoons and short stories of which *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot* is the most famous.

Through a series of illustrations we follow May's training in London and her lifestyle after she returned to Australia in 1913 and settled in Neutral Bay eventually designing her own home, *Nutcote*, in conjunction with popular Sydney architect B J Waterhouse in 1924/5.



Dick Gall is a retired Mechanical Engineer who has worked at May Gibbs former home *Nutcote* in Neutral Bay as handyman/gardener for about fifteen years.

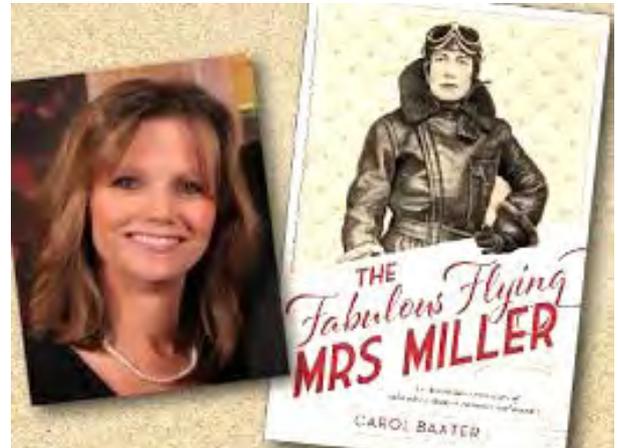
At the North Sydney Council's Australian Citizenship ceremony in 2012 Dick was honoured with the council's award of Citizen of the Year for his volunteer efforts at *Nutcote*.

Visitors Welcome Afternoon Tea Available

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17
2.00pm. GENERAL MEETING
*The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller.***

Presenter: Carol Baxter

When the young Jessie left suburban Melbourne and her newspaperman husband in 1927, little did she know that she'd become the first woman to complete an England to Australia flight or fly the first air race for women with Amelia Earhart, or that she would disappear over the Florida Straits feared lost forever, only to charm her way to a rescue. Nor could she have predicted that five years later she'd find herself at the centre of one of the most notorious and controversial murder trials in United States history.



Carol Baxter is the author of many highly acclaimed books about fascinating people including *An Irresistible Temptation*, *Captain Thunderbolt and His Lady*, *Black Widow* and *The Peculiar Case of the Electric Constable*, published in the United Kingdom and around the world. She lives in Sydney and is a fellow of the Society of Genealogists, and has made previous presentations to KHS in the field of genealogy.

Visitors Welcome Afternoon Tea Available

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

At our general meeting on 21 October we enjoyed a presentation from Julian Leatherhead about the **Hydro-Majestic at Medlow Bath** - an eclectic architectural mix, perched on the escarpment overlooking the Megalong Valley.



Always something of a rich man's folly it was initially the brainsnap of Mark Foy, whose department store was at the height of its profitability and allowed him to indulge any flight of fancy.



The City Stores, Liverpool Street

On a trip to Europe, he became obsessed with the interest of Europeans in their spa towns and the supposed health benefits of the various expensive water treatments to be had in such towns. He came to believe that similar treatments could very profitably be provided in the Blue Mountains and he set about selecting a suitable site, implementing his vision without sparing any expense. For instance, at one stage Turkish coffee was being served by Turks in national costume! Indeed, in a succession of trips to Europe he became entranced with a succession of spas and treatments and other ideas and would come back to Sydney with ideas that he then sought to implement, often based on sketchy research and a few photographs, plus samples of furniture and wallpaper etc that he had acquired to help brief the latest architect or builder he had selected to expand the Hydro Majestic's attractions.

The result was a sequence of buildings with little cohesion - indeed a series of buildings that were ill-suited to be run as one business. They were built where space allowed, and connected haphazardly by sloping galleries etc. to

accommodate the fact that each building simply followed the lay of the land, without regard to how the buildings might be connected!



Salon with Stage

That said, no expense was spared in furnishing and decorating the complex, and the whole was promoted to the wealthy as a place to stay and a place to be seen. It was expensive to manage and run, and over the years a succession of managements went broke trying to run it effectively.

There was a long flying fox connecting the establishment to its farm down in the Megalong valley, where livestock, milk, meat and vegetables were raised for the Hydro's kitchens, and where refuse from the kitchens was composted.

The bedrooms, dining room, library, billiards and smoking rooms were all aimed at wealthy Sydneyans seeking to emulate the ways of the wealthy of Europe. One of the notorious features was "Cats' Alley" a long sloping gallery between two of the buildings, so named because it was used primarily by the wives and mistresses of the men who were partaking of billiards, port and cigars nearby.



The "Cats' Alley "

Foy used the Hydro extensively, and occasionally visited with both wife and mistress, leading to the phrase "More Front than Foy"!

Excursions to Jenolan Caves and Mount Tomah were promoted as features of a stay at the Hydro Majestic. The hotel also featured multiple tennis courts and croquet greens, and even a private horse racetrack.

Special events were often arranged - for instance during the visits to Sydney of the USA's "Great White Fleet" and of the "Ballet Russe".

All in all, this talk was an interesting excursion through the Hydro Majestic era, a spot that deserves a visit to see how the latest millions have been spent on a remarkable part of Greater Sydney's history!

Notes: Graham Lewis

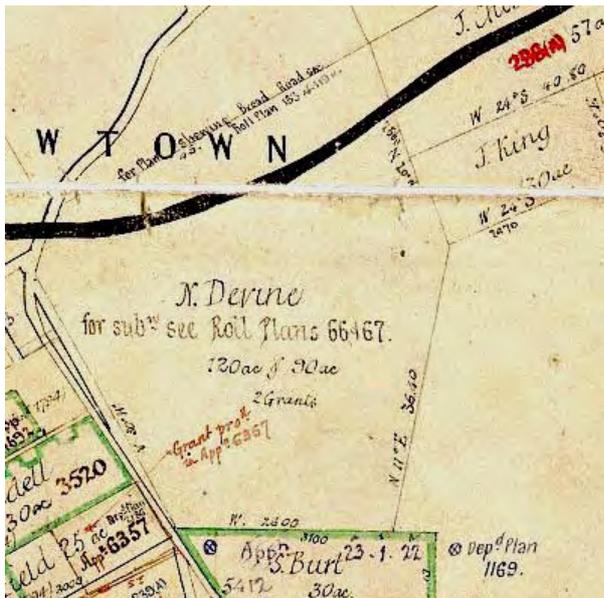
NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Matt Murphy dealt with his book *Weight of Evidence*, an account of the Newtown Ejectment Case, one of the colony's biggest court cases, spanning 10 years.

Scandalous land deals are nothing new in NSW. This case encompassed two trials in the middle of the 19th century and led to an appeal to the Privy Council in London. Some of the colony's most influential figures were involved.

The catalyst was the arrival of a Catholic Irishman, John Devine, in Sydney in December 1846 to claim the estate of his great-uncle Nicholas Devine who died in 1830. By 1846 the estate had been sold off to numerous individuals - many prominent figures in the colony. Many were Protestants, and none willing to relinquish their holdings.

Nicholas Devine had arrived on the Second Fleet as a superintendent of convicts, and in the course of his career received land grants totaling 210 acres, covering the present day suburbs of Newtown and Erskineville. He named his farm Burrin after his home village in Cavan, Ireland.

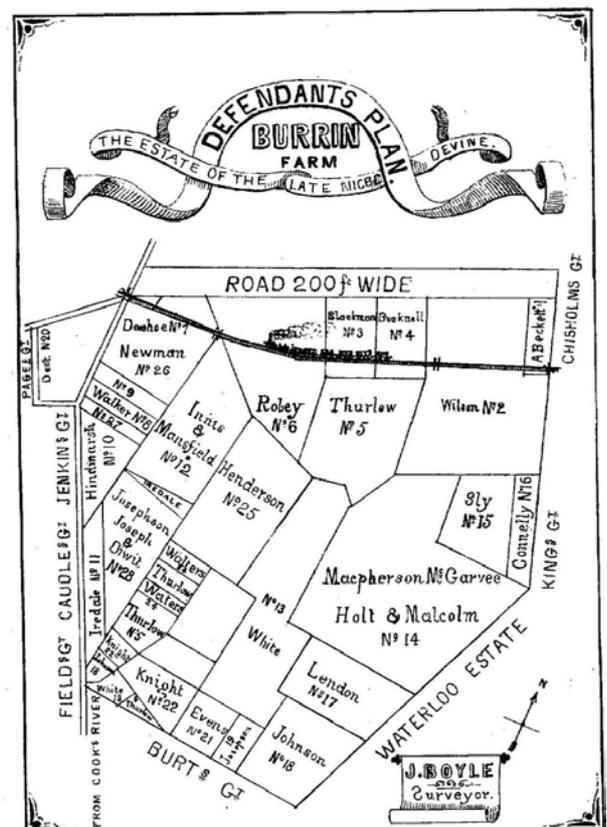


Nicholas Devine's Original Land Grant

At a time when Catholics were forbidden to own property in Ireland, these grants would have been particularly sweet. Devine seems to have enjoyed

the novelty of his position as an Irishman who had authority over Englishmen. His position also allowed him to redirect government resources into developing Burrin Farm. In addition to the grant he was also given a 14 year lease of 8 acres at the head of Farm Cove. This became Devine's first experience of making a dishonest gain from the government's benevolence. Many of the trees and seeds that were intended to be sown on land at Farm Cove went to Burrin Farm. This practise was not merely condoned, but actively encouraged as many others were up to their necks in similar schemes.

When Bernard Rochford took up residence at Burrin Farm, Devine was in his 80s and frail. Over time Rochford seems to have managed to convince people that he was Nicholas Devine and began to style himself as Devine's 'agent', and regularly attempted to sell parts of Burrin Farm. When Devine died in 29 May 1830 his will - dated just three weeks earlier - named Rochford's executor and chief beneficiary. At later trials, a key question was Devine's state of mind. Was this a man able to transact property or dictate the terms of a will?



The Defendants' Plan Extracted from Matt Murphy's book

Rochford was unable to own land as he was an 'attained convict' - one whose death sentence had been commuted to life - and so 'could not hold property, sue or give evidence.'

Nevertheless, he found purchasers for Burrin Farm, who were unaware of his status or chose to ignore it. Most of the sales went through his wife, a free settler.

The 30 defendants included people; of importance in the colony.

After a commission was sent to Ireland to establish John's heirship, the trial commenced in April 1852. John contested the will between Nicholas Devine and Bernard Rochford on three grounds:

1. That Nicholas was of unsound mind, due to old age and being bashed by bushrangers in 1822.
2. The will was a forgery.
3. As Rochford was an attained convict, he could not buy, own, sell, or inherit property.

John Devine lost the case but upon appeal (which went to London) he was granted a retrial. The retrial took place over 30 days in August and September 1857, and was at that time the largest civil court case in Australian history.

Once again, the status and connections of the defendants went against the Irishman. John Devine then threatened to appeal again, but settled for an undisclosed payment. It is believed that the defendants knew that if a retrial was held in a London courtroom, their status in NSW would not be as persuasive.

John Devine died in 1883.



The Area in which the Property Existed

This report is based on the author's notes for the City of Sydney Historical Association, with his permission

NOTE: In English criminal law, attainder or attinctura was the metaphorical "stain" or "corruption of blood" which arose from being condemned for a serious capital crime (felony or treason). It entailed losing not only one's life, property and hereditary titles, but typically also the right to pass them on to

one's heirs. Both men and women condemned of capital crimes could be attained.

For a report from the time, consult:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2959088>

GENERAL MEETING

SPEAKERS PROGRAM FOR 2018

20 January, Craig Wilcox: *Sydney as a British Army Garrison Town.*

17 February, Carol Baxter: *The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller.*

17 March, Sue Rosen: *Scorched Earth.*

21 April, David Wilkins: *Lose Amiens and Lose the War - The Battles for Villers-Bretonneux.*

19 May, Russell Workman: *Memories of the 1960s and 70s.*

16 June, Laila Ellmoos: *The Great Strike of 1917.*

21 July, Frank Wilson: *Menzies and Whitlam.*

18 August, Paul Irish: *Hidden in Plain View: The Aboriginal People of Coastal Sydney.*

15 September, Sarah Morley: *Sydney's Lost Garden Palace.*

20 October, Mark Dunn: *Colonial Brothers: Robert and Helenus Scott of Glendon.*

17 November, David Hunt: *True Girt: The Unauthorised History of Australia.*

Beverley Dunstan, Speakers Programme.

FAMILY HISTORY

December Family History Meeting

2.00 pm Session

Lorraine Henshaw opened the meeting and welcomed members and visitors. After a few necessary announcements she explained the afternoon's activity.

Trivia Quiz

Members were already seated in groups of five or six. Each group was given an answer sheet and the members of the committee took it in turns to read out the questions they had prepared.

The Topics were: - Advertising Slogans; Australian Writers; Australian History; Logos; Television Themes; an Christmas Carols and Songs.

Much discussion occurred within the groups (in whispers so other groups couldn't hear). All the questions were answered, and then the sheets were passed to the next group for marking. There was further discussion about the answers, and what should earn half a point. The winning group scored 49 points, closely followed by the second group which scored 48½ points, a great effort for such searching questions. Congratulations too, to the committee members who put the questions

together and organised the event. It was a fun way to finish 2017 for the Family History Group.

Raffle

The KHS Christmas hamper raffle was won by Doug Milne, who for many years provided the report of the General Meetings.

A sumptuous Christmas afternoon tea followed, with masses of delicious food, plus wine and orange juice. A big "thank you" to all the members who 'brought a plate', and to Margaret Holland and her band of helpers, who set it out so beautifully.

It was a fitting finale to the last Family History Group meeting for 2017.

Jean Smith

THE BRADFIELD SCHEME FOR WATERING THE INLAND

One of Ku-ring-gai's favourite sons, Dr. J. C. Bradfield, famous for his work overseeing the design and building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, was also involved in another significant event in Australian history. This was perhaps not as well known as the Bridge, but it certainly grabbed the headlines in a similar fashion.

In the July 1941 issue of the popular magazine "Walkabout" (and reprinted in "Rydge's Weekly" later that year) Bradfield outlined a scheme for diverting water from the upper reaches of the Tully, Burdekin and Herbert rivers in Queensland into the interior. The water harvested would be used to enhance agriculture and "drought proof" much of western Queensland and northern parts of South Australia.

The Bradfield article created tremendous interest and debate, involving the general public, media and politicians, but was eventually not proceeded with because of what critics termed excessive cost and over optimistic belief in the benefits.

Bradfield's Scheme remains a topic of conversation in rural Australia to this very day, still attracting its adherents and detractors. The Independent Member for the Queensland Electorate of Kennedy, Mr. Bob Katter, remains an enthusiastic supporter.



Image: Dr. J. C. Bradfield – one of Ku-ring-gai's most notable citizens. Submitted by Jo Harris

THE TALE OF THE NEWSLETTER

I have had the pleasure of editing the Newsletter for many issues, but, because of other time pressures, this will be my last Newsletter.

How does it happen? I receive reports of meetings and other Society happenings and events, in a variety of styles. I correct them for grammar and punctuation, and find suitable illustrations. Diary Dates are updated, and layout is worked on.

Once I have completed the Newsletter it is proof read by Judy Hammond (my wife), Yvette Reeve, Margaret and Ray Holland. Corrections are made, and it is sent for printing, for those who receive a hard copy, and for emailing to others. Printing of the Newsletter and envelopes is done by Margaret and Ray, often with assistance from Annet Latham or Peter Stehn. Room volunteers, rostered on the day, plus help from Shirley Luttrell, Pat Pitt, Tony and Mary Karasch pack the Newsletter in the envelopes. They are then taken by Ray and Tony to the mail exchange at Gordon.

A very big undertaking by many people, to whom the Society owes appreciation.

I wish the new Editor well in his undertaking.

Morrison Hammond, Retiring Editor.

NEW EDITOR FOR NEWSLETTER

Warren Dent was born in Sydney, Australia and attended Gordon Public School. After gaining Economics degrees in Canberra and Adelaide and a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, he taught Econometrics and Business Statistics for many years, before entering the private sector, where he worked for three number one companies – Eli Lilly, American Airlines, and Microsoft - creating new businesses and applying information systems to strategic market applications. Married, with four grown daughters, he now lives with his wife Gail in Seattle. Personal interests include boating and tennis. With numerous academic publications to his credit, and hundreds of business presentations behind him, he has recently turned his writing talents to more personal endeavours. Short story mysteries, and longer historical fiction novels are his primary interests. His website is www.warrend.com and email address is warren@krandis.com

Warren made a presentation to our September Family History meeting.



NEW MEMBER

Welcome to our newest member:

Peter Headley, Pymble.

We look forward to your visit to the Research Centre.

If you think that some of your friends may be interested in KHS, get a membership form from the Centre, and give it to them.



EXPLORING KU-RING-GAI MYSTERY TOURS

To the end of November 2017 forty mystery tours had been run, with well over six hundred passengers. Within these numbers there was not one participant who knew all the places of interest shown whilst covering ninety-nine kilometres. There are two tours booked out in February, and one in March.



Some seats are available for the tour on 12 March. Bookings are NOW open at the Research Centre for this tour.

Cost: Members \$45, non-members \$50, including a two course lunch at a mystery location.

For further information ring Jo 0408 439 343 or Susan 0409 981 605.

TOUR PLANNING FOR 2018

Following an excellent series of KHS Tours during 2017, the KHS Tour team is busy locking in the details of our 2018 tour schedule. From an administrative point of view each tour will open approximately three to four weeks before the tour. These opening days, where payments (cash or cheque) and bookings can be made, will generally be a Monday at the KHS Research rooms. The availability of seating and costings will, as in the past, depend on venue size and entry fee, luncheon plans (picnic or café etc.), and availability of

suitable bus size. Generally, the Ku-ring-gai Community Bus provides adequate seating, but for very popular venues the number of seats can be expanded if the Tour Team is advised early. Our Tour Booking desk is able to receive cash and cheque payments on Family History and monthly General Meeting days, if spaces are available.

We do have the opportunity to offer payment by electronic transferred funds (EFT) but only from the day following the close of the scheduled Tour Opening.

KHS ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER BSB 032 083 Account Number 248971.

Please email Yvette – yreeve@optusnet.com.au - if wish to pay by EFT. Yvette will note your booking, and send you your important Tour Information Sheet.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour 08, Thursday February 8.

State Archives and Records.



Bookings opened Monday 8 January - all places have been taken. An Expression of Interest form for a future visit to this very interesting venue is available in the Research Room Tour Folder.

Tour 09, Friday March 23.

Female Orphan School at the Western Sydney University Parramatta.

Opens Monday 5 February.

We have arranged for a guided tour '*The Secrets of the Orphan School*'. There are two static exhibitions available to us at the conclusion of the tour.

'Changing Australia –The Time of Gough Whitlam' and the 'Liberation Prison Project'

Travel will be by bus, and our outing will include a picnic lunch.



Female Orphan School c.1813

Cost: \$65 members, \$75 non-members including venue entry, morning tea, picnic lunch, and transport.

FUTURE TOUR DIARY DATES.

- APRIL, Wednesday 18.
- ANSTO, Lucas Heights. Opens March 19.
- MAY, Tuesday 15.
- Quarantine Station, North Head. Opens April 9.
- JUNE, Friday 22.
- Guided Tour, NSW Government House.
- Opens 21 May.



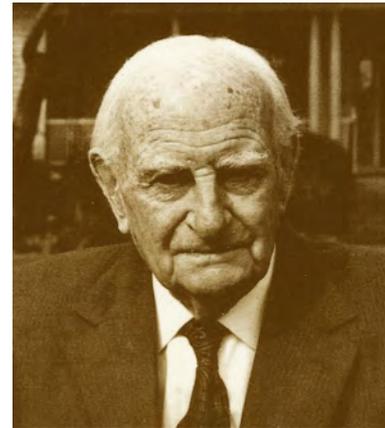
FIRST SIGS FOR 2018

- Irish SIG
Friday 9 February, 1.30pm, Research Centre.
- German SIG
Monday 12 February, 1.30pm, Research Centre.



Proposed Lindfield Village Green

WHO DO THINK THIS?



WHERE IS IT? NOVEMBER

This memorial pillar is situated in the grounds of "Ravenswood" School for Girls on the Pacific Highway at Gordon.



**ON THIS SPOT
THE FIRST WESLEYAN METHODIST
CHAPEL
ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE
HARBOUR
WAS OPENED IN 1855
A HOUSE OF WORSHIP TILL 1879
IT WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1923
THIS PILLAR – ERECTED 1949
IS BUILT OF
STONE FROM THE FOUNDATIONS**

Jo Harris



Ku-ring-gai Town Hall

DIARY DATES

February

Thursday 1, 2.15pm, Committee Meeting.
 Saturday 3, 11.00am, Family History Workshop: *Hornsby Shire Recollections Website*.
 Saturday 3, 2.00pm, Family History Meeting. *Nutcote*, Presenter: Dick Gall.
 Thursday 8, Tour: State Archives and Records.
 Friday 9, 1.30pm. Irish SIG.
 Monday 12, 1.30pm, German SIG.
 Saturday 17, 2.00pm, General Meeting. *The Fabulous Flying Mrs Miller*. Presenter: Carol Baxter

March

Thursday 1, 2.15. Committee Meeting
 Saturday 3, 11.00am. Family History Workshop: Webinar - *Probate*
 Saturday 3, 2.00pm. Family History Meeting. *Captain Moonlight*.
 Saturday 17, 2.00pm. General Meeting. *Scorched Earth*, Presenter: Sue Rosen.
 Friday 23, Tour: Female Orphan School.

April

Thursday 5, 2.15pm. Committee Meeting
 Saturday 7, 11.00am Workshop: *History of Non-conformism in England and Wales*.
 Saturday 7, 2.00pm, Family History Meeting. *Pompey Elliott (1878-1931)*.
 Wednesday 18, Tour: ANSTO, Lucas Heights.
 Saturday 21, 2.00pm. General Meeting. *Lose Amiens and Lose of the War - the Battles for Villers-Bretonneux*. Presenter: David Wilkins.

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If possible, material should be in electronic form, with as little formatting as possible, e.g. no bullets, coloured type, indenting or styles.

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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 10.00 am to 2.00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday (except the first Saturday of each month when members have a Family History meeting).