

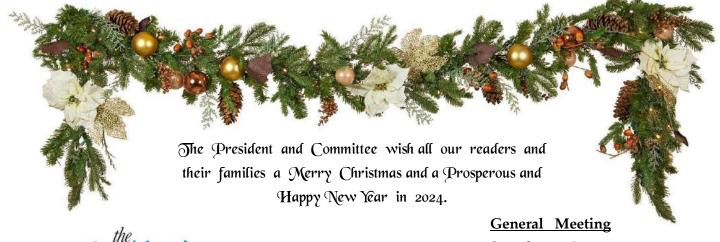


Ku-ring-gai Historical Society

December 2023 Newsletter Vol. 41 No. 8

Patron: the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai

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president's message

Thank you to those members who attended the Annual General Meeting on 21 October. It was an enjoyable meeting and all the formal procedures were attended to fairly quickly.

My thanks to honorary auditor Richard Mossie for his assistance with our financial records, and also for agreeing to continue in that role for the next twelve months.

Many thanks, also, to Neil Falconer for his role as Returning Officer.

The Committee members elected were:

President: Lorna Watt
Vice President: Annet Latham
Secretary: Judith Godden
Treasurer: Marilyn van Eerde

Ordinary Committee Members: Ralph Davis, Morrison Hammond, Geoff Little, Alison Nowland

A big welcome to new Committee member Alison Nowland.

Following the AGM everyone enjoyed a most interesting talk, by our secretary Judith Godden, on 'Lucy Osburn: Controversial Nursing Founder'.

A very Merry Christmas everyone, and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Best wishes,

Lorna Watt

2pm Saturday 20 January 2024

Kosciuszko and Strzelecki

John F. Brock

Opening our Speakers Program for 2024, surveyor John F. Brock will relate how the lives of two great Polish patriots – interwoven by adventure and a dedication to democratic liberalism – had a not-so-well-known Australian connection.

When Strzelecki became the first European to reach the top of the highest peak on mainland Australia, his exhilaration conjured up reminiscences of his Polish

homeland, to which he would sadly never return alive.

The nostalgic vision of the lofty *Kopiec Kościuszki* in Krakow (which was a memorial to the great Polish freedom fighter, Tadeusz Kościuszko) came to his mind – compelling him to name this mountain

in his honour, in a place of freedom and democracy thousands of miles from their home.

Join us for what is sure to be a fascinating look at two most intriguing Poles, as John F. Brock takes us on a fascinating voyage of discovery, up huge mountains and across the hemispheres.



KHS Speakers' program til June 2024

20 January

John F. Brock - Kosciuszko and Strzelecki

Surveyor John F. Brock describes how the lives of two great Polish patriots, interwoven by adventure and a dedication to democratic liberalism, have a not-so-well-known Australian connection.

17 February

James Curran - Australia's China Odyssey:

From Euphoria to Fear

The Australian Financial Review's International Editor and Professor of Modern History at the University of Sydney, James Curran, will speak on the timely subject of his recent book.

16 March

Andrew Rogers - Australians and RMS Titanic

Andrew has an amazing tale to tell of his descent to the wreck of the Titanic in 1998. Since then he's researched all aspects of Australia's involvement in the Titanic disaster, including the intriguing stories of the Australians on board.

20 April

Ross McMullin - Life So Full of Promise

Award-winning historian Ross McMullin shines a light on the lives, and deaths, of some of the promising young men who 'did their duty' in WWI; the impact of their loss on families and friends, and questions what might have been their place in post-war Australian society.

18 May

Paul Storm - The Great Expositions

Prince Albert's Great Exhibition of 1851 saw the beginning of a golden age of 19th century 'expos', celebrating the advances of the age in technology and the arts.

Our speaker is Paul Storm, President of Willoughby District Historical Society and Museum.

15 June

Anne Carroll OAM - Turning the Pages with C.E.W. Bean

KHS member Anne Carroll reflects on aspects of the civil life and works of her grandfather, Charles Bean, editor and writer of the official WWI histories and champion of the Australian War Memorial.

German Special Interest Group

Our German SIG met on Monday 9 October 2023 with 13 members present.

Tony Karrasch gave an excellent update of online German Family History activity over the past two months.

Christine Edwards and Sue Moore updated members on progress with the group's project, *German Ancestors of Ku-ring-gai Historical Society Members*.

Peter Stehn presented an overview of digital and paper resources held by the Society that are useful for German Family History research.

A lively discussion followed on future activities of the SIG. Three items emerged with the endorsement of the Group:

- Conduct a survey of members' research interests to determine future directions of the SIG.
- At each meeting a volunteer member to give a short presentation on their path to German family history research including their experiences, triumphs and failures. Deb Dietz volunteered to present at the December 2023 meeting, and Leonie Powierza volunteered for the February 2024 meeting.
- Tony Karrasch volunteered to give a presentation (planned for the April 2024 meeting) on internment of German nationals in Australia during both World Wars.

The meeting concluded with a chocolate-heavy afternoon tea, with special thanks to Les Jeckeln for the delicious chocolate ice-creams.

The next meeting is planned for Monday 11 December 2023. Visitors (and suggestions for agenda items) welcomed.

For more information see: khs.org.au/german-sig

Peter Stehn

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following members who have recently joined the Society.

Guy **Brookes** from Turramurra Kevin **Dixon** from Grafton

We hope you will find your membership rewarding and look forward to your participation in the many activities we have to offer each year.

INTERESTING KU-RING-GAI SNIPPETS

- Bicentennial Park, West Pymble -



The Bicentennial Park site, bounded by Ryde, Yanko and Lofberg Roads, West Pymble, has had a variety of uses since early settlement in the area.

The land, part of 30 acres, was first occupied from the 1870s by Jonas Lofberg (c1838-1880), a native of Sweden, and his wife, Adeline. On their property they grew orchard crops (strawberries, oranges, grapes) and fodder crops, grazed cattle and ran a piggery. Jonas took his farm produce down the then bush track leading to a ford, near where De Burgh's Bridge was later built. There he used a spit of rock as a rough wharf which came to be known as 'Lofberg's Wharf' from where the Lofbergs operated the *True Blue*, a six-tonner, which they took down to Sydney on the ebb tide and back on the full tide.

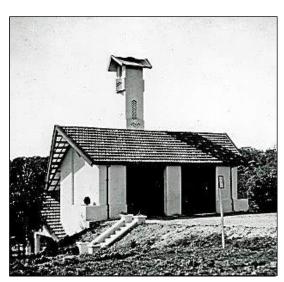
Following Jonas' death, one of his sons, Andrew, continued working the farm with Adeline. A volcanic dyke passed through the property following a line from St Ives to the Lane Cove River and the value of the igneous rock on the property began to be realised. Part of the land was leased for simple quarrying and by the 1920s had taken on in earnest along the section facing Yanko Road.

The Ku-ring-gai Shire Council became interested in the quarry and in 1926 purchased eight acres of land, including the quarry site and its immediate surroundings, from the Lofberg family.

Council established the quarry as a source of stone for the Municipality's roads and structures, and also as a means of income through sales of stone to other parties. Electricity, crushing machinery, storage bins and rock drilling equipment were installed and by 1930 eighty local residents were employed at the 60ft deep quarry which had an output of 80,000 tons of stone material per year.



The Pymble quarry c 1927



Walter Burley Griffin's incinerator

Increased population in Ku-ring-gai brought increased garbage and the problem of its disposal. The next stage of the site's history saw the construction by Council, in 1929, of an incinerator designed by Walter Burley Griffin. Part of the site was also set aside as a night soil depot.

The growing population of West Pymble liked neither the incinerator nor the nearby sewerage plant, and agitated vigorously for their closure. The incinerator and depot finally closed in 1954 and were later demolished, leaving behind a magnificent rock wall in a barren, stony site.

The West Pymble War Memorial Community Hall in Lofberg Road was constructed in 1959, followed by the establishment of other recreational facilities on the site, such as the West Pymble Bowling Club in 1962 and the West Pymble Pool (now known as the Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre) in 1971.

Many proposals were put forward for use of the quarry site, but all were rejected by the local residents. Finally in 1985 Council, working with a community committee, and with the use of Bicentennial Grants of \$2.2m, work began on developing the area as a Bicentennial Park, to be dedicated to the men and women of the first fleet.

The park was designed by landscape architect Bruce Mackenzie whose task was to bring the unrelated site activities together into an integrated recreational area set amongst remnant parcels of forests and creeks. The importance of the site's geological history and the conservation of its more distinctive features as a resource for educational purposes was to be recognised, and a suitable monument placed at the entrance.

The multi-purpose park was officially opened on Australia Day, 1989. Since its opening, it has become one of Ku-ring-gai's largest sports and recreation facilities and plays host to many community events and festivals. The site covers approximately 15.9 hectares, of which 48% is bushland, and facilities include two sportsgrounds (Lofberg and Norman Griffiths Ovals), netball courts, fitness equipment, fenced playground, walking/cycling tracks, and picnic/barbecue facilities.

Lorna Watt

KUPEDIA Update

Volunteers Jill Armstrong and Peter Stehn have been hard at work adding a trove of new material to KUPEDIA - which is the short name for our own Ku-ring-gai Historical Encyclopaedia – available for all members to use on the Society's intranet in our research room.

KUPEDIA started life in 2009 as a digitised version of every article ever published in the Society's esteemed journal, The Historian - published continuously since 1972 and now in its 48th volume; but in recent years KUPEDIA has grown to encompass so much more.

The most recent additions include many historically significant articles originally published in this Newsletter; and the content of our popular book, Women of Ku-ring-gai.

With these additions, KUPEDIA now contains almost a thousand cross-referenced articles on people, places, events, facts and figures relevant to the history of Ku-ring-gai. At the time of writing this article, these currently comprise:

- All 727 articles from The Historian journal, published between June 1972 and December 2019 (48 years). Work is currently underway to import the 24 articles from the recent 2020-2023 Roseville edition
- All 97 articles from Women of Ku-ring-gai: a *Tribute*, published 1999
- 114 historically significant articles originally published in our *Newsletter* since 2005
- 50 documents of clippings from a collection of 19th and 20th century newspaper articles with a

- connection to Ku-ring-gai, kindly transcribed by member Richard Whitaker. Each document contains from two to fifteen separate newspaper
- A unique searchable chronology of historical events relevant to Ku-ring-gai

All content is indexed and searchable, including 2,492 images.

KUPEDIA is a valuable research tool, providing rapid access to the Society's comprehensive knowledge-base a fantastic resource with which to start your research journey!

For copyright reasons access is available exclusively on the Society's intranet, through the computers in our research room at Gordon. It's so easy to use, and volunteers are on hand to assist you if required. Please see our website's Contact page for current opening times.

~ Declutter ~

The Historian has been produced by many many dedicated members of KHS for over 50 years. All suburbs in the Ku-ring-gai Municipality have been covered with stories about houses, families and countless other fascinating aspects of life in Ku-ring-gai in the past.

Anyone who is downsizing, tidying up rooms and has finished reading their *Historians*, could give them to the Society rather than throw them out for recycling. One missing copy the committee would like is Vol 33. No.1, October 2004. All donations can be sent to the Society or taken to the Research Centre on a Tuesday or a Friday.

The 'Korean Guy' Oral History Project

For decades now, Ku-ring-gai Historical Society has been creating and storing Oral Histories. Comprising both written and audio accounts, these serve as invaluable records which preserve the authentic life stories of individuals, both from the recent past and from bygone eras. They offer future generations a unique window into the past, enabling them to connect with the experiences and voices of those who came before.

Over the years, in fact since the 1960s, KHS volunteers have devoted a considerable amount of time to acquiring and preserving oral histories, some in written form and others recorded on cassette tapes and CDs.



A typical Panasonic tape recorder with 90

note-taker At first, а would sit with an older member of the community to record the story of their life, asking a common set of questions on matters of interest. The stories that emerged from this process were typed up, and later saved as computer minute TDK tapes used documents which were throughout the 50s and printed for safekeeping in the Society's records.

Later, with the introduction of cassette recorders, Society members sat with a microphone and asked a series of questions of interviewees that led on to much wider-ranging discussion. The cassettes and CDs arising out of this are kept in the Society's files.

Over the last 12 months, with the President's permission, I have reviewed the entire collection, processing both the written documents and the audio recordings to make them more easily available to enquirers, and to future-proof them for ongoing use by the Society.

I converted all of the existing computer documents to the current version of Microsoft Word, and also checked the accuracy of contents against other records. I then prepared versions in PDF format, one that is likely to remain accessible for a considerable period of time.

I prepared an index of the documents so that the responses to the common set of questions are all readily accessible. In this way we can now see that more than 30 of the interviewees had fuel stoves; that several of them recalled picnics at Hamilton's paddock; and others shopped at Hamilton's store. There are currently 87 documents in this index.

The audio recordings were somewhat more difficult to work with as I had to digitise most of



Hamilton's store at Pymble

Image: Sydney Mail 1904

the cassette recordings, some of were which unfortunately incomprehensible. Despite this, I was excited and motivated by the prospect that members of the Society would more easily be able to listen to voices from the past.

With the help of a computer application that prepared a transcript of each audio recording, I was able to compile another index, setting out the topics addressed and the time in each recording at which they were addressed. For example, Dorothy Widdis started to address the topic of St Swithun's at 15 minutes and 9 seconds into her recording; and Peter Vincent spoke about Church, Fellowship and Sunday School at 6 minutes and 9 seconds into his. Using the Society's standard media player software, one can jump directly to those times, at will, to listen to these topics. There are 1117 separate topics addressed and indexed in the audio recordings.

This lengthy process was actually affected positively by COVID. The need for isolation gave rise to working from home which meant that people increasingly used meeting software. Microsoft developed an application called 'Transcribe' in which a user could upload a recording of people speaking and the software would convert it to a Word document, complete with timestamps as each different speaker had their say. I identified this as being potentially useful for the transcription of oral history interviews, and there were two major impacts. The first was that the timestamp at each turn of speaker meant that there were frequent opportunities to recognise a change of topic, and thus an addition to the index. The second was that sometimes the software produced some somewhat dubious suggestions for text conversions that on occasion were humorous, if not downright hilarious. The software seemed convinced, for example, that many of the interviewees belonged to a so-called 'Korean Guy Historical Society'...

The two indexes, the written documents and the digitised audio recordings are now being added to the KHS Intranet, where they will soon be available for members to peruse and listen to at their leisure in the Society's Research Room at Gordon. Enjoy!

Ku-ring-gai During War

We have many books, documents and records in our Collection but not all are known to members.

Ku-ring-gai During War was compiled by Margaret Wyatt in 1997. Margaret was Council's Local Studies Librarian and an active member of the Society.

The pages of *Ku-ring-gai During War* tell us how World War II dominated everyday living:

- The Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) is claimed to have been born in the Roseville-Lindfield district as a result of a 1938 proposal from the Roseville RSL. The VDC was made up of ex-servicemen and others aged from 45 to 60.
- The Women's Air Training Corps was formed in January 1940 and the legendary Ku-ring-gai resident Nancy Bird Walton was Commandant from May of that year.
- St Ives Showground was occupied under National Security Regulations. A number of military units operated in the area. The 18th Battalion, known as the Ku-ring-gai Regiment, spent considerable time there and built a relief map of the area.
- Avondale Golf Club lost part of its course in 1942 when the Army camped on the fifteenth fairway.
- Air raid sirens were regularly tested at least once each week (Usually it was the steady "All Clear" siren that was sounded rather than the warning wail that alerted residents to take cover).
- Searchlights criss-crossed in the skies every night.
- A pylon on the Roseville Bridge had several holes drilled into it so gelignite could be inserted to blow up the bridge should the Japanese land on the northern beaches.
- Many people and groups made camouflage nets to cover the gun emplacements that were everywhere.
- Voluntary Aid Detachments made up of women (VADs) were formed to give medical assistance wherever needed. All members had to have a recognised First Aid and Home Nursing Certificate. The VADs worked at the Lady Gowrie Red Cross Home at Gordon, the Neringah Red Cross Home at Wahroonga and the RAAF Station at Bradfield.
- Ku-ring-gai residents collected money to buy a Gypsy Moth plane for the RAAF in 1942. It saw service in New Guinea. The plane was named the Too Tool (Aboriginal for "bird").
- Munitions factories making parts for precision instruments were set up in a home at 93 Braeside Street,
 Wahroonga and opposite the Greengate at Killara. The staff was mainly young women.



Roseville Bridge (Roseville baths in the background)



Nancy Bird Walton - Aviatrix

by Dick Whitaker



Then:

Image: Ku-ring-gai Library

Image: Google Street View

Archbold Road, East Roseville c.1925

The heavy labour of road construction is obvious - men with picks and shovels assisted by a horse and cart.

Now:

The red dots show the intersection with Roseville Avenue visible in both images.

How long since you have looked in old family albums? You might find a great 'Then' photo. Get it out and send to the Editor who is waiting to publish. We will provide the 'Now' photo.

A UNIQUE CONNECTION WITH KU-RING-GAI'S HISTORY



These two Cowan brothers are the great, great, great, grandchildren of William Cowan, who was born in 1858 in Lanarkshire, Scotland. He arrived in Sydney in 1887, married Hannah Marie Barr in 1888 and bought the house named 'Lindfield', on the now Pacific Highway, Lindfield. William was a foundation member of 'The Lindfield Chess and Whist Club' in 1901 and became the first Shire President of Ku-ring-gai Council in 1906.

This recently taken photo at the house of their grandfather, John Cowan of Wahroonga, shows the boys learning about chess pieces, whilst sitting on chairs and at a table rescued when the old Chess and Whist Club was demolished several years ago.

Further information about the club is available from *The Historian* Volume 31 No.1 pages 25-37, showing a photo of table and chairs in use by Club members.

Io Harris OAM

DIARY DATES

DECEMBER 2023

Monday 11: 1.30pm - German SIG meeting 15 : 2pm - Research Centre closes Friday

JANUARY 2024

Tuesday 16: 10.00 Research Centre reopens

Saturday 20: 2pm - General Meeting

Kosciuszko and Strzelecki **Presenter: John F. Brock**

FEBRUARY 2024

Monday 12: 1.30pm - German SIG meeting

Saturday 17: 2pm - General Meeting

Australia's China Odyssey: From

Euphoria to Fear

Presenter: James Curran

MARCH 2024

Saturday 16: 2pm - General Meeting

Australians and RMS Titanic

Presenter: Andrew Rogers

APRIL 2024

Saturday 20: 2pm - General Meeting

Life So Full of Promise

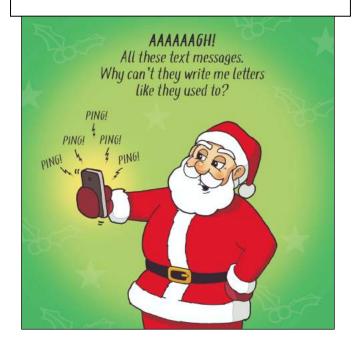
Presenter: Ross McMullin

The Research Rooms

The research rooms are open every Tuesday and every Friday from 10am to 2pm for research and general enquiries.

KHS bank details are as follows:-

BSB ... 032-083 A/c ... 248971



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