

# KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



Including:

Ku-ring-gai Family History Group

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

The NSW & ACT Association of

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## DECEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER VOL. 34 NO. 11

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 3**  
**FAMILY HISTORY MEETING**  
**NO MORNING WORKSHOP**  
**2.00pm FAMILY HISTORY CHRIST-**  
**MAS PARTY**  
Please bring a plate of Christmas fare.  
Visitors Welcome



**SEASONAL GREETINGS TO ALL**  
**MEMBERS OF THE KU-RING-GAI**  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**AND HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY**

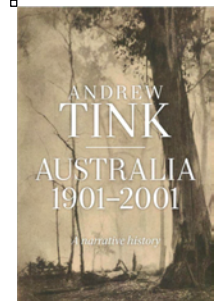


**HOLIDAY BREAK**  
The Research Centre will close on Friday  
December 16th, and reopen on Monday  
January 9th.

**SATURDAY JANUARY 21**  
**2.00pm GENERAL MEETING**, followed  
by *Australia 1901-2001*.

Speaker Andrew Tink AM

Former politician turned history writer, Andrew Tink, returns to talk about his sweeping narrative history of Australia in the 20th century; a period marked by war and depression, but also by many achievements in science, the arts and sport. A story of how a young nation matured is told through the stories of a diverse range of people.



Among his writings are *William Charles Wentworth: Australia's Greatest Native Son* (2009), *Lord Sydney: The Life and Times of Tommy Townsend* (2011), *Air Disaster Canberra: The Plane Crash That Destroyed a Government* (2013), *Australia 1901-2001: A Narrative History* (2014.)

Visitors Welcome

Afternoon tea will be available

The Speakers Program for 2017 is a supplement to this Newsletter. Make notes in your diary. Thanks to Beverley Dunstan who does a really great job assembling such a range of speakers for the Society.

## THE CRICKETER, HIS WIFE AND THE PRIEST

From the 19th to the mid 20th century ingrained prejudices existed between Roman Catholic and Protestant. Each group regarded the other with deep suspicion and resentment. In 1900 into the centre of this strained atmosphere stepped test cricketer Arthur Coningham claiming that his wife had been seduced by a priest within the confines of Sydney's largest cathedral.

At the Society's October general meeting, Dr Anne Cunningham, an honorary fellow of the Australian Catholic University, and author of "*The Price of a Wife*", brought out the religious bigotry and skulduggery subsequently played out in the Sydney courts.



Arthur Coningham

On the eve of his departure with the test team in 1893, Coningham, a lukewarm protestant, married Alice Dowling - a devout Catholic. Their union seemed happy and the couple had three children. Alice was a regular worshiper at St Mary's Cathedral, seat of Cardinal Moran, head of the Australian Catholic Church. His private secretary and dean of the cathedral was Dr Denis O'Haran, a charismatic, tall, good-looking man, certainly attractive to women.

Alice confessed to an affair with O'Haran and that he had fathered her third child, Vincent Francis. Coningham twice wrote to Cardinal Moran, setting out his grievances and asking for compensation. Moran ignored the blackmail, so Coningham sued for divorce, naming O'Haran as co-respondent, and claiming £5,000 damages.

The trial began before Protestant Sir George Simpson and an all-Protestant jury in December 1900. On hearing that the couple were still co-habiting, his solicitor walked out, so Coningham conducted his own case "with skill and confidence", playing on the public distrust of all things Catholic and his wife's

word against that of a priest. Which made wonderful copy in the press, where divorce trials were published word for word.

resources by the withdrawal of Mr. Moss from the case, Coningham seemed to gain wonderfully in energy, and he conducted his own case, with the assistance given by the Judge for the sake of justice, in a very good fashion.

DR. O'HARAN  
(A Sketch in the witness box).

Coningham is pretty well known to the people of this colony as a cricketer. Bowling was his forte. He was a member of one of the Australian Elevens that visited England within the past seven or eight years, and it is said that he was omitted from another eleven because of his incurable propensity for "acting the goat" in the playing field. By profession Coningham is a chemist. Having told how he met and married his wife in 1893, and of their wedded happiness at first, he proceeded to relate how first suspicion began to rankle, and of his searching his wife's boxes and finding a photo of Dr. O'Haran. He taxed his wife, and she confessed to repeated acts of adultery with Dr. O'Haran. Mr. Moss endeavored to have the conversations between husband and wife given in evidence. Objections were raised. The Judge explained to the jury the law on the matter—that the confession of the woman would only be evidence against herself, and that though she admitted committing adultery, that did not necessarily mean that the co-respondent had been guilty of adultery with her.

Coningham's evidence concluded at lunch time.

Truth (Brisbane) 9 December 1900, p. 5

Sydney Catholics were outraged that the judge and jury were all Protestant and that Arthur had the support - financial and political - of the high profile Presbyterian, the Rev Dill-Macky President of the Orange Lodge.

Many hours at the trial were spent determining whether Catholic testimony could

be trusted in a court of law since sins were so easily forgiven in the confessional.

The Church hired Jack Want, one of the best and most expensive Sydney barristers. He would cost the Church more than £2,000. However, as Dr Cunningham had discovered, this was more than covered by nearly £8,000 raised by an enthusiastic laity who believed that the church and O'Haran were under attack by a vicious, immoral and colluding couple.

Cardinal Moran was unwavering in his support for O'Haran and was of the opinion that the Church itself was facing 'the combined strength of and malice of Orangeism and Evangelicalism'. The trial ended; and for twelve hours the jury could not agree. A new trial was ordered.

It soon became apparent that Coningham was being coached by a spy in the Cathedral, so Moran contacted W. P. Crick, MLA and NSW Post Master, for help. Eventually, Crick's assistant, Daniel Green uncovered Coningham's secret ally, known as "Zero".

He was in fact a priest with an implacable hatred of O'Haran. Cardinal Moran had him spirited away and Dan Green became "Zero II", feeding Coningham with misinformation.

Zero II supplied Coningham with two dates which would be 'safe' for Alice to swear to, having been mistaken at the previous trial. A cabman, "who would swear anything for me", swore that he took Alice to the presbytery on those dates. Alice was staying at a boarding house, "Burrilda", whose owner was in dire financial straits. Green purchased Burrilda then Alice was mysteriously laid low after a party, and her private letters somehow disappeared. Such was the skulduggery used by Green.

Much of the second trial, before Justice Owen, was a repeat of the previous one, until Alice stated that she was mistaken in the dates she had sworn to in the last trial. She now believed that misconduct had occurred on the dates supplied by Zero II.

Of course an army of witnesses swore that Dr O'Haran had been present at very public functions on both those occasions. Then the letters which had been stolen from Alice were produced by O'Haran's counsel, claiming them

to be coded messages between Arthur and Alice who claimed the letters were forgeries. Coningham put up a brave resistance, his case was lost, nevertheless, his five-hour closing speech reached new heights of oratory. After 2½ hours deliberation, the jury brought back an emphatic 'No' verdict on the issue of whether adultery had taken place and that there was insufficient evidence to prove conspiracy. Coningham broke down in loud sobs while Dr O'Haran was carried on the backs of a jubilant crowd to St Mary's where a grave Cardinal quietly raised his biretta.

The truth came out the following year, when Dan Green's book, "Zero - Secret History of the Coningham Case" boasted unashamedly that he had bought Burrilda solely to search for evidence against the Coninghams. Green's employer, W. P. Crick, was still Post Master of New South Wales, even after abusing his position to intercept mail and contravene laws of confidentiality.

The Coninghams moved to New Zealand, where Arthur worked as a book salesman until being sentenced to six months gaol for fraud of £6/3/-. In 1912 Alice divorced him for adultery. He returned to Australia and died in Gladesville mental hospital in 1939. Alice Coningham died in 1959.

Their first son, Air Marshall Sir Arthur Coningham, KCB, KBE, DSO, MC,DFC, AFC, died in an air crash in 1948. See: [https://archive.org/stream/Coningham-nsia/Coningham\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/Coningham-nsia/Coningham_djvu.txt)



Sir Arthur Coningham, DFC

Monsignor O'Haran was transferred to the Sacred Heart parish, Darlinghurst, where he devoted himself to helping the poor and unemployed. He died in 1931, leaving an estate of £12,858.

Doug Milne

## NEW MEMBERS

KHS welcomes the following new members:

Michael Adams, Oatley

Gina Francis, Lismore

Joanne Martens, Warrawee

## **November Family History Meeting**

### **11.00am Session**

18 members attended the morning session which was called Sources for Old Occupations and was chaired by Jenny Joyce and Jo Harris. Both had brought along a selection of useful books. Copies of some of the books are in KHS library. A very useful series of books is *My Ancestor Was ---*. Unusual occupations such as 'cordwainer' and 'fellmonger' made an interesting discussion. Jenny also recommended many websites such as Index of Old Occupations and Dictionary of Occupational Terms which can be found by using Google. Ancestry and Findmypast as well as NSW State Records and The National Archives have useful information about occupations. Various members shared sources they had found during their research so that Jenny was able to print out an extensive list at the end of the workshop to help members understand exactly how their ancestors earned their living.

### **2.00p.m. Session**

Jo Harris opened the meeting by welcoming everyone especially our speaker, Keith Johnson. Jo then read an excerpt from Cobley's book for 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1788 when the Fishburn's log reported 'yawl fishing down the harbour, where the natives drove them from the beach' but gave no weather details.

### **Future Meetings**

Jo gave details of the remaining meetings in 2016 and told of speakers for 2017.

### **Volunteers**

Jo emphasised the need for more volunteers for the Research Centre so that the excellent assistance for researchers can continue at the present level, and assured volunteers that there would be training and guidance from experienced members.

### **Book Reports**

Jenny Joyce recommended murder mysteries by Nathan Dillon Goodwin and Steven Robinson available online. She also mentioned the latest book of musters by Noel Butlin.

## **Cemeteries**

Jean Smith reported that *Pioneers of Peace*, an out-of-print book by Jill Lyons about St John's Cemetery is now available as an e-book on St John's Church, Gordon, website. Also that web site has a list of all the graves in that cemetery, plus photos of the headstones.

### **Tours**

Neil spoke about the upcoming program of tours, details of which are in the Newsletter.

### **Speaker**

Jo then introduced the speaker, Keith Johnson who joined the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1962 and the Society of Australian Genealogists in 1964. He served both societies in a variety of roles over the succeeding years, and was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 2003 in recognition of his amazing contribution to Australian History and Australian Genealogy. With Malcolm Sainty he founded the Library of Australian History, ran a bookshop at The Rocks (1997-2009), and is vice-chairman of Biographical Database of Australia.

### **Keith spoke about **The Library of Australian History (LHA).****

As co-director, Keith worked with authoritative authors such as Mollie Gillen, who wrote about the people on the First Fleet, and Michael Flynn who wrote about the Second Fleet. He also reprinted out-of-print books such as *Pioneers of Hornsby Shire*, which was written by a committee so posed a challenge, but ran to 4 editions. In total 120 different local history titles were published. Many biographies were also published, followed by 27 volumes of the *Genealogical Research Directory*, a boon to family historians before the Internet took over. As 1988 and the bicentenary approached the need for books on early Australia expanded rapidly and thousands of biographies were reprinted.

In 2013, *The Biographical Database of Australia - BDA* was launched online with 500,000 entries. All the entries needed to be meticulously checked, as commercial database sites have been found to have up

to 20% of errors. Since 2013, there have been four updates and there are now 450,000 more entries to be added. The site is a commercial one, and in 2017 an Advanced Search button will be added.

Keith's co-director, Malcolm Sainty, has a connection with Ku-ring-gai as his ancestor lived in the Eastern Road area of Turramurra, and he walked to school at Normanhurst until Waitara School was opened.

Keith's first ancestor to arrive in Australia, Jonathan Griffiths, came on the Second Fleet. He lived in the Parramatta area, where two of his children are buried at St John's, and then moved to Windsor where other members of the family are buried at St Matthew's.

One great achievement of LAH was the publication of a pamphlet about Cadman's Cottage, which led to the cottage avoiding the proposed demolition and being preserved as an important early Sydney building. Two publications are *The Mad Folly* and *The Fatal Mistake*, two intriguing titles to tempt all who are interested in Australian History.

After several questions, a vote of thanks was passed by Angela Lind, who presented Keith with a Ku-ring-gai Historical Society bag and two of our KHS publications.

Jo Harris then stunned everyone present by announcing that as of this meeting she was standing down as leader of the Family History Group, which she has chaired for many years.

Notes by Jean Smith

## ST JOHNS, GORDON, MARKS 200th ANNIVERSARY

In 1816, Governor Lachlan Macquarie gave a grant of ten pounds, from which St Johns, Gordon, began.

The first church doubled as a school for the children of early timber cutters and orchardists.

Macquarie's motivation for a school in Lane Cove was for the "cultivation of the morals and promoting the education of children of both sexes, and also to improve the females in

other duties of domestic life", as reported in the Sydney Gazette, June 15 1816.

The first church was built as a result of a petition sent to the Governor through the Bishop of Sydney by 36 local inhabitants. Robert Pymble, William Henry McIntosh and John Brown were appointed trustees and the land was acquired by them for 37 pounds. The church was designed by Edmund Blacket and the foundation stone was laid on October 26, 1872.



St Johns with the Blacket church in foreground

The oldest headstone in the church cemetery dates from 1867, marking the grave of Mary Ann Britton, who died aged 27, giving birth to her fourth child. The child was buried on the family's property which is now Pymble Golf Course.

In those days, infant mortality was high and parents could not afford headstones, but the deaths are recorded in the cemetery register.

[Based on an article in the Northshore Times, October 6, 2016, reporting an interview with Jill Lyons and Sue Dunstan; and other sources.]

## TOUR DESK

**Important** – Our tours are becoming more popular and it is important to make your booking as early as possible. In cases where the tour rapidly fills, and the venue has a limit please complete the Expression of Interest form in the tour folder, and if there are sufficient numbers we can organise another visit. For those venues that do not have a limit we can attempt to organise a larger vehicle. In both cases we rely on the expression of interest form.

The Booking process includes a Tour Description sheet for each tour that outlines timing, any special requirements and pick up site.

Tour bookings can only be made by visiting the Research Centre rooms, and completing a booking and a (new [Blue](#) - once only) indemnity form, if you have not previously

completed one. This includes an opportunity to identify dietary requirements.

There are now two separate **GREEN BOOKING FOLDERS**: one for Exploring Ku-ring-gai Tours, and one for General Tours. The Booking system is the same for each type of tour.

When making your tour bookings, please bring the correct amount or a cheque to cover the planned cost. Change is not always available.

### **STATE LIBRARY**

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December (by train) max persons 20. Details of timetable, etc. are in the booking notes.

Booking open Monday 14 November.

The excursion includes a guided tour by KHS member Patrick Dodd of the State Library exhibition entitled *Planting Dreams: Shaping Australian Gardens*, curated by garden historian Richard Aitken. The exhibition explores the ideas and influences that have shaped the way we make, use, and enjoy our gardens.

After searching through the State Library's collections, Richard has selected more than 150 rare, beautiful and, at times, unlikely objects - spanning over five centuries - to illustrate the rich and inspiring story of garden making.

Patrick has arranged for a brief talk by library staff, outlining recent additions to library's Family History resources. This will commence at 10.30 am and the Library Tour will follow at 11.00 am. It is suggested that participants meet at the library entrance at 10.15am

Cost for the visit will be \$10 (payable on the day.) Lunch will follow at own expense.

Ring Yvette 0414 249 737 to register your interest.

### **ADVANCE NOTICE**

Early tours in 2017 include:

Tuesday 28 February, *Jewish Museum*.

The Sydney Jewish Museum documents the Holocaust and the history of the Jewish people in Australia. The day will also include a visit to the Sydney Synagogue.

Bookings open: 30 January.

Wednesday 15 March, *Kamay Botany Bay National Park and Cape Solander*.

The visitors centre features an art gallery, theatre and historical exhibition covering aspects of European arrival and local Aboriginal history and of course Captain Cook's landing in 1770. Our tour guides will be local historians. Picnic lunch.

Bookings Open 27 February.

Friday 21 April, *Coal Loader, Balls Head and Saw Millers Reserve*.

The tour will take us to the centre at Balls Head which showcases innovation, and enables hands-on learning about sustainability in everyday life. The tour will also discuss the ex-industrial site. There will be a picnic lunch at Balls Head Reserve overlooking Sydney Harbour.

Bookings open: 20 March.

*Exploring Ku-ring-gai* tours will be conducted on 27 February, 13 March, and 10 April. Please indicate your interest on the appropriate Expression of Interest form.

### **TOUR REVIEW**

#### **The Big Dig and Sydney Observatory**

In 1994, a team of archaeologists, historians and four hundred volunteers commenced work on a site in Cumberland/Gloucester Street. For twenty weeks they dug, washed and stored hundreds of artefacts of life in the nineteenth century.



Photo Margaret Holland

Experts were called in to identify and explain drainage trenches, house foundations, roads and pathways. Others reported on the artefacts and on pollens, soils, shells and bones found at the site.

The evidence collected was organized, identified and collated. This information was merged with known documentation of the site and reports were written on life in that area from the times of the first inhabitants.

It was determined that the site needed to be maintained and the construction of Sydney Harbour YHA has been built largely raised on pillars above the remnants, thus minimizing any impact on the site and allowing good visual and physical access to 85% of the archaeology. The Big Dig Archaeology Education Centre is also on the site.

A short walk took us to the Rocks Discovery Museum to learn more of the history of the area. Some short videos showed the story of the Green Banns placed on the area, the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the wooden roads of Sydney.



Photo Morrison Hammond

Our guide at the Observatory, Jeff, a retired astronomer initially showed us the flag staff built to receive signals from that at South Head informing officials of the imminent arrival of a ship. We admired the caretaker's cottage, an old stone building with fabulous views of the city and harbour.

Inside the Observatory, our tour started with a visit to the Planetarium where Jeff pointed out the planets and stars and related them to our astrologic signs. We sat in a circular room under a domed ceiling onto which were projected images of the southern sky and its daily movements.

Then we climbed the stairs to view the stars and planets. We watched as Jeff manipulated the opening of the domed roof to focus the telescope on Saturn so we could each view it and observe its rings. The telescope was then focused on a cluster of stars, the many colours indicating the different ages of the stars.

### AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS MANDER JONES AWARD

The KHS publication, *Rallying the Troops: A World War I Commemoration Vol. II* was judged the winner of category 2A: Best publication that uses features or interprets Australian archives, written by or on behalf of a corporate body." for the Australian Society of Archivists Mander Jones Awards.



David Wilkins Receiving ASA Award 18 October 2016

The award citation reads:

"World War I Writers Group, Ku-Ring-Gai Historical Society, *Rallying the troops: A World War I commemoration Vol. II*

A remarkable work bringing together so much information from a multitude of sources into a coherent local, yet universal, work of sound research. It utilises a range of resources from both government and private archival collections, from Australia and overseas, to create a great local and general history of WW1. The writing, layout, photography and captions were all high quality. We look forward to Vol. 3 in 2017!"

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Our income for this month amounted to \$779. Our operating expenses amounted to \$3,200 leaving us with a deficit of \$2,421. So currently our funds going forward for this year are \$4,134.

### NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

The Newsletter is sent only to financial members of KHS. If you have not paid your membership this is the last issue you will receive.

### WHERE IS IT?

November Answer:

Sainty Reserve is located on the corner of Chilton Parade and Raymond Ave, Warrawee.

This month's question:

Where in Ku-ring-gai is this milestone?



### Newsletter Deadline

Please send email copy for publication to [editor@khs.org.au](mailto:editor@khs.org.au) as early as possible, but no later than 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

Items will only be accepted from members of KHS.

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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.

## DIARY DATES

**2016**

### **December**

Saturday 3, **Family History**

**Workshop: No workshop**

Saturday 3, 2.00pm **Family History**

**Christmas Party**, please bring a plate of Christmas fare.

Monday 5, Tour: State Library

Monday 5, No Mac SIG

Thursday 8, 2.15pm Management Committee Meeting.

Friday 9, Irish SIG 1.30pm

Monday 12, German SIG 1.30pm

Friday 16, Research Centre closes for break

**2017**

### **January**

Monday 9, Research Centre reopens

**Saturday 21, 2.00pm General Meeting, followed by *Australia 1901-2001***, Speaker: Andrew Tink.

### **February**

**Saturday 4, 11.00 am Family History**

**Workshop: TBA.**

**Saturday 4, 2.00pm Family History Meeting**, followed by: *Man made the Cities, but God made the Bush*, Speaker: Nathan Tilbury.

**Saturday 18, 2.00pm General Meeting**, followed by *Sydney Cemetery Adventures*, Speaker: Lisa Murray

Monday 27, Tour: Exploring Ku-ring-gai.

Tuesday 28, Tour: Jewish Museum.

### **March**

Saturday 4, 11.00am **Family History Workshop.**

Saturday 4, 2.00pm **Family History Meeting**, followed by: *Can the Royal Australian Historical Society Collections Help Your Research?* Speaker: Donna Newton.

Saturday 18, 2.00pm **General Meeting**, followed by *Betsy and the Emperor*, Speaker: Anne Whitehead.

## Administration

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Family History Group  
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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 am to 2 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (except the first Saturday of each month when members have a Family History meeting).

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