

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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A Ripping Yarn - A Spy in the ABC?

Our Speaker at the January general meeting, Greg Clancy, spun us a ripping yarn which stemmed from a story told to him when he was eight, by his uncle Jack. Jack was a pilot and owner of a light aircraft and took the mystery woman central to Greg's story on a recognizance and photographic flight from Sydney to Newcastle in 1939. Her name was Annette Wagner and it has been suggested that she was spying for the Nazis. Greg has published his research as *Hitler's Lost Spy* (Sunda Publications, 2014).

Born in 1912 in Switzerland, Annette Wagner was seven when her mother died and she was sent to live with a cousin in London. As a teenager she moved to Geneva and enrolled in a business course after which she visited South Africa working as a missionary, meeting and marrying Robert Wagner, then with the French Civil Service in Madagascar. Robert was born in Alsace when it was part of Germany, though it later reverted to France, and it appears that he had strong pro-Nazi sympathies.

Annette contracted typhoid fever and was in hospital in Madagascar for six months until early 1938 when she moved to Australia to recuperate, staying with relatives at Cockle Creek near Newcastle. In Newcastle she secured a job as a presenter of short travelogues on ABC's 2NC and profiting from this experience she went on to present regular programs on Sydney stations 2BL, 2FC, 2GB, 2CH and 2UW, sometimes as a fashion guru billed as *Renee Laval*. In Sydney she stayed in *The Manor*, the Theosophical Society mansion overlooking the harbour at Clifton Gardens. From there Annette could have easily spied on the shipping entering and leaving the harbour.

Greg Clancy's research suggests that, in addition

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General Meeting

Saturday 19 March 2.00pm

Anglicanism and the Shaping of 20th Century Australia

Drawing on extensive primary sources, Emeritus Professor Brian Fletcher speaks on how the Anglican Church in Australia played a major role in shaping the nation after Federation, despite its own internal diversity and division.



Afternoon Tea will be available

Visitors Welcome

Family History Meeting

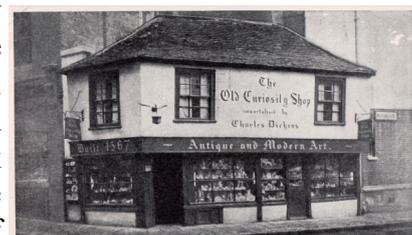
Saturday 5 March

11.00 am: Brickwall help

2.00 pm: General Meeting, followed by:

Reminiscing – Photographs & Postcards from Years Gone By

Pat O'Brien and Dorothy Warwick from Holroyd Local History Research will make a pictorial presentation and take us for a walk down memory lane with plenty of opportunities for your own recollections.



Afternoon Tea will be available

Visitors Welcome

Special Interest Groups

Irish SIG

Members of the Irish group met and heard about how one of our number has been able to “meet” new relatives and take her family tree back a few additional generations as a result of things she learnt at our last meeting. The next meeting will be on Friday 11 March at 1.30pm. All welcome, no bookings necessary.

Mac SIG

Next meeting Monday 7 March 2016, 2pm in the KHS research rooms. Join in a session to look at ways to better understand your Mac: trouble shooting, keeping up to date, including a look at "The Missing Manual" full of useful tips and tricks. All welcome, no bookings necessary.

KHS Tours

**** Please Note: A tour folder for information and bookings is in the KHS Research Centre. Bookings can only be made in person at the centre. For further information call the Rooms on 9499 4568**

Sydney Tramway Museum, Loftus

(Wed 16 March, 8.15am til approx 4pm)

How long since you have ridden in a tram? This is your chance to ‘step back in time’ and do just that – along with a tour of this most interesting Museum. Cost for the day is \$50 which includes a packed lunch. Opening date for bookings Monday 15th February and closing date 7th March. All bookings only accepted with payment.

***** NOW FULL but waiting list available**

ANSTO Discovery Centre, Lucas Heights

(Tues 5 April)

This is a 2 ½ hour tour of Lucas Heights, an important national asset. Lunch will be at the Historic Como Hotel where you will hear an interesting little story (unrelated to the day’s focus but fascinating none the less). Cost for the day will be \$45 which includes a light lunch. As this site is governed by strict security rules there will be some extra information required from visitors. Opening date will be Monday 29th February and closing Date 21st March. All bookings only accepted with payment and in this case the extra information required by ANSTO.

Save the Date

There will be a trip to the **State Archives** at Kingswood on Wednesday 18th May. Visitors will need a Reader’s Ticket, but these are easily available online. More information next month.

If you cannot commit to a tour before it is full, or you miss out on a tour, please put your name down on the Waiting List. A place may become vacant, or in some cases we may be able to reorganize the planned Transport to engage a larger bus.

A Spy in the ABC (cont. from page 1)

to arranging meetings with Nazi sympathisers at *The Manor*, Annette may have used her broadcasts to pass information to the enemy: "When she commenced each program, she would read out phoney cables from Paris, in French," Greg said "which was a strange thing to do considering most people couldn't speak French and it was suspected that she might have been slipping messages into the French."

By this time Annette’s interest in military establishments, ports, steelworks, meetings with Germans and her broadcasts had brought her to the attention of Military Intelligence. Greg’s Uncle Jack was questioned about the flight to Newcastle and her photography of the port and the BHP Steelworks. She was placed under surveillance and despite her protests that she was a Swiss national married to a French citizen she was removed from air when war was declared. Her file is available and has been the source for much of Greg’s research.

Although she was a suspect there is no hard



evidence that she was a spy, however after leaving Australia in 1940 and divorcing her husband in Madagascar she then returned to Paris to work for

Left: Annette Wagner
(Renee Laval)

German intelligence. After the war it appears that Robert Wagner disappeared, then in 1946 Annette was brought into police headquarters for questioning as to her husband's whereabouts. During the questioning she jumped from a third floor window to her death – so ending a life clearly sympathetic to the Nazis and possibly one of Hitler's spies.

Doug Milne

February Family History Meeting

11.00am Session

Jo Harris opened the meeting and welcomed all to the Workshop "General Computer Questions – Protecting and Organising your Computer". Jenny Joyce showed us how she backs up her computer, and Jenny and Jo each showed how they file their documents, photos, etc. Thank you Jenny and Jo.

2.00pm Session

Jo Harris opened the meeting, welcomed members, new members and a visitor. Jo gave a special welcome to our Guest Speaker, Paul Storm, who is President of the Willoughby District Historical Society and Museum.

Book Reports: Angela Lind 'Merchant of Sydney'; Jenny Joyce 'Sydney Harbour Bridge' and 'Lost London' both with wonderful old photos; Jo 'Bride of an Anzac' which was borrowed by Lorraine Henshaw.

Jo and Yvette Reeve visited army headquarters at Pymble for the "Gemmas Anniversary" and laid a wreath on behalf of the Society. Tony and Jan Spargo visited Campbelltown Cemetery to look for James Ruse's grave and headstone but were unsuccessful. At today's meeting they were informed the headstone was in the Campbelltown Historical Society's Museum. Elaine Turnidge spoke about her granddaughter Rebecca's wedding for 5th March. Patrick Dodd spoke about a visit on Australia Day with his wife Gillian, Jo and Yvette to St John's Cemetery at Parramatta when a sheaf of wheat and a cabbage were placed on Henry Edward Dodd's grave. (Henry Edward Dodd was the colony's first farmer and had grown a twenty-six pound cabbage, presenting it to Governor Phillip).

Jo then introduced Paul Storm, to speak about "Migrants Extraordinaire – The Henning Family".

How did he discover "The Hennings"? They fell into his lap through his interest in philately when he obtained envelopes, letters and early NSW diaries

1840-1900 belonging to Annie Henning. Annie, sister of Rachel, kept a diary for two years. Rachel's letters had already been published previous to the discovery of Annie's letters and diary. There were three other children in the family, Etta (Henrietta), Amy and one boy, Edmond Biddulph and they were a comfortably off happy family.

Janice Beavan, a visitor who came with Paul, read from one of Rachel's letters to Etta, dated August 28th 1862 – clearly a "very appealing family". (Janice was very surprised and delighted to meet up with member Margot Wood, as she had been Margot's bridesmaid in London and had not seen Margot for quite some time).

Patrick Dodd thanked Paul for his most interesting talk and presented him with one of the Society's bags and a special publication.

Five "Lucky Door" prizes were won: *Margaret Cribb* chose 'My God It's a Woman' signed copy of Nancy Bird Walton's autobiography; *Margaret Boyanton* chose 'Journey from Venice – A Memoir' by Ruth Cracknell; *Gillian Dodd* chose 'Diary of a Girl in Changi' (1941-1945) by Sheila Allan; *Joan Stebbing* chose 'Certain Lives – the compelling story of the hope, tragedy and triumph of three generations of women' by Margaret Reeson (Playford Family); *Judy Bidence* chose 'From Strength to Strength' a signed copy of Sara Henderson's autobiography.

Afternoon tea was enjoyed by all.

Based on notes by Elaine Turnidge.

Treasurer's Update

Due to the holiday season January was a quiet month. There were no tours this month but our WWI book is still proving popular with the sale of 4 more books (\$157). Copying, donations, research fees & interest amounted to \$97.

Our big expenses this month were renewal of Ancestry (\$3,200) replacement of a computer (\$388) and a deposit on sturdy new bookshelves for the room (\$3200). General office expenses amounted to \$427.

So this month we had a deficit of \$6,961 which was expected. Overall we still have a surplus of over \$7,000 to cover expenses to the end of the year.

Annet Latham, Treasurer.

Copy for Newsletter

General copy for publication should be sent to the Editor, (editor@khs.org.au), **as early as possible** but no later than the 15th of the month, unless otherwise arranged. Material should preferably be in electronic form.

New Members

We are very please to welcome the following as new members:-

Jennifer Gordon, Turrumurra

Jilliam Fisher, Turrumurra

Oscar & Marie Oberholzer, Roseville Chase

Milkmaids Reserve

Did you recognise Milkmaids Reserve from El-lalong Road in North Turrumurra?

Coming Soon!

Some new bookcases, which should help us remove the piles of books all over the floor. Thank you very much to Jennifer Thredgold for investigating the options and managing the purchase on behalf of the committee.

Where in Ku-ring-gai would you find this?



Do you know where this is located? Answer next month.

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).

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Diary Dates

Sat 5 Mar	11.00am	Brickwall Help
	2.00pm	Reminiscing – Photographs & Postcards from Years Gone By
Mon 7 Mar	2.00pm	Mac SIG
Fri 11 Mar	1.30pm	Irish SIG
Sat 19 Mar	2.00pm	Brian Fletcher – Anglicanism and the Shaping of 20th Century Australia
Wed 16 Mar		Sydney Tramway Museum
Sat 2 Apr	11.00am	TBA
	2.00pm	The Ku-ring-gai Art Society
Sat 16 Apr	2.00pm	Gordon Mar – Chinese Coolies in France

Administration

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	Jenny Joyce	9440 2131
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	Lorraine Henshaw	9988 0522
	Margaret Holland	9488 5452
	Jennifer Thredgold	9144 6320
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Family History Leader	Jo Harris	9489 4393
Family History Committee	Margaret Holland	9488 5452
	Jenny Joyce	9440 2131
	Yvette Reeve	9987 0904
	Jean Smith	9498 4468
	Elaine Turnidge	9899 2635

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Book Reports	Richard Facer	9988 0823
Book Sales	Margaret Holland	9488 5452
Computer Systems	Peter Stehn	9489 9488
Catering	Margaret Holland	9488 5452
	Vicki Williams	9415 8833
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	Lorna Watt	9440 8010
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Welfare Officer	Elaine Turnidge	9899 2635
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