

# WILLOUGHBY HISTORY CHATTERS

DECEMBER 2016

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>MUSEUM UPDATE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CORNER</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>VALE DAVID THOM</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FANCY A TAKE- AWAY Pt 2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FANCY A TAKE- AWAY PHOTO</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>COMING EVENTS</b>	<b>6</b>

## WINDING UP FOR 2016

The Willoughby District Historical Society and our museum have had a successful year and we will celebrate our achievements with members and friends at our Annual Christmas Party on Sunday 4 December (see page 6 for details).

The Willoughby Museum has had a good year with two successful exhibitions—'Remembering Rural Willoughby' for the 2016 National Trust Heritage Festival; and 'Word on the Street' for the 2016 Emerge Festival. In addition, we held a Meccano Day on Saturday 3 September, which attracted a good attendance.

The WDHS nominated the 'Place Marking' exhibition developed by local artist Rhonda Pryor for the inaugural Willoughby Visual Arts Biennial in September 2015 for the 2016 IMAGInE Awards for Museums and Galleries in NSW. The presentation of Awards was

held at the Verge Gallery at Sydney University on Friday 11 November and your scribe attended the event.

Six museums, including Willoughby, entered the Museums category for volunteers and up to two paid staff and the winner was the Narromine Aviation Museum for its remarkable achievement in completing and fitting out a large new wing to the museum complex. Given that Narromine is my home town and the museum was represented by the museum's chairman, Peter Kierath, an old friend, I had an enjoyable evening with this group. It also included Ken Smith from Hambleton Cottage Museum at Parramatta, with whom I recently served as an assessor of grant applications to Museums & Galleries NSW. The evening was capped off when Peter Kierath won the only award of the night for Individual Achievement.

## COMING EVENTS

**Sunday 4 December:**  
WDHS Christmas Party  
at 15 Johnson Street,  
Chatswood (see p6).

**Sunday 15 January**  
Willoughby Museum re-  
opens after Christmas/  
New Year break.



A display panel at the 'Word on the Street' exhibition at the Willoughby Museum. Bob McKillop

## MUSEUM UPDATE

As 2016 draws to a close, we can reflect on a satisfactory year in terms of the exhibitions and visitors at the Willoughby Museum.

A pleasing feature in terms of attendance has been the expansion of our schools program during 2016. In addition to 140 Year 9 students from Willoughby Girls' High School, we also had 47 students from Our Lady Delours Public School, 67 from St Thomas' Catholic School and 260 students and teachers from Chatswood High School.

Other groups visiting the museum included Kur-rin-gai Historical Society, an ESL group with teachers, the Baulkham Hills Monday Bus Group and a ninth birthday party for a boy.

Our 2016 Heritage Festival exhibition, 'Remembering Rural Willoughby', explored the role of Chinese market gardeners in the 19th and early 20th centuries, together with the impact of our multi-cultural diversity on the food we eat and our dining habits. Visitation was disappointing, although the visit by students from Willoughby Girls' High School boosted numbers considerably.

Our engagement with local artist Catherine Martin to develop and present her 'Word on the Street' exhibition for the 2016 Willoughby Emerge Festival has been a particularly pleasing experience. With Catherine's large extended family and many friends attending the official opening on 11 September by Mayor Gail Giles-Gidney, it got off to a positive start and we were able to open the museum four days a week during September. If you have not yet seen this exhibition, it will continue into the New Year (see page 6).

The outcome of all this activity is that the Willoughby Museum has recorded 852 visitors to-date in 2016, which is well ahead of the 780 recorded last year, and 4.5 times the number recorded in 2014.

That said, promoting the displays, exhibitions and resources of the Willoughby Museum to the general public remains a challenge for our small group of volunteers. One initiative has been to offer complimentary membership to individuals visiting the museum for the first time until the end of the year, which offers them our newsletter and information about particular events by email.

Mary Thom, Margaret McNaught and lace expert Mary Green have been completing a details assessment of the items in our extensive collection and entering the details into our database. In the process, they have identified a number of important items that require significance assessment.

Mary Thom, Margaret McNaught and lace expert Mary Green have been completing a details assessment of the items in our extensive collection and entering the details into our database. In the process, they have identified a number of important items that require significance assessment.

Enhancement storage of this important collection is a priority and Mary Thom is seeking quotes for two sizes of archival storage boxes for this purpose.

The museum also has an extensive collection of bricks dating from the convict era through the 1960s. Terry Fogarty is assessing the individual bricks, documenting them and photographing the ones that we will retain in order to present a display of bricks from our local brick manufacturers and other examples sourced from local sites.



Two of Catherine Martin's panels in the 'Word on the Street' exhibition. Bob McKillop



Graeme Costin (right) presents Edward Wolfe with a gift in appreciation of his presentation on 8 October 2016. Bob

## MEMBERS' CORNER

A small group of 13 people attended the October general meeting, including our speaker, Edward Wolf.

He spoke on the postal contribution to Australian airmail based on his interest in aviation, philately and history. His illustrated presentation covered the first four decades of aviation airmail services. In this early period of

Australian aviation, companies such as Western Australian Airlines, QANTAS, Australian Aerial Services and Australian National Airways competed for a limited market. Well-known pioneer aviators of the period 1921 to 1934 were covered and the presentation concluded with a leap into international air services.

## VALE DAVID THOM (1931-2016)

On Friday 4 November, a number of WDHS members attended the David Thom's funeral at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium at a moving ceremony.

Born on 4 August 1931, David's parents, Norman and Herrietta Thom, initially lived at Camden, moving to East Roseville during World War II. David attended Naremburn Junior High School before completing his schooling at North Sydney Boys' High School. David commenced an engineering degree at the University of Sydney, but transferred to a Production Engineering Diploma course at the new University of NSW.

He met Mary Thompson at a Church Fellowship dance and they married at the Chatswood Presbyterian Church on 4 February 1956. The following year David and Mary purchased land at Lugano overlooking the Georges River and David set about his dream of building his own home.

David and Mary took over the Heathcote hardware store and ran it together for many years. Following their retirement, they purchased a camper-van and travelled around Australia.

During 1994, the Thoms moved back to the North Shore, renovating David's aunt's house at 35 Darling Street, Roseville. It was this period that David and Mary became actively involved in the Willoughby District Historical Society. David served as vice-president from 2000 to 2010, and Mary was secretary over the same period, becoming vice-president in 2010.

David and Mary were both active in tasks at the Museum from the 1990s, in David's case undertaking maintenance work on the building and using his carpentry skills to enhance the display facilities. During 2002, the carpets were taken up in three rooms and Da-

vid spent many hours sanding and staining the timber floors. In 2008, he constructed the sink unit at the North Shore Mens' Shed for our restored kitchen at the museum.

David's involvement in the Meccano Society resulted in that group initiating special 'Meccano Days' at the museum in 2008, 2009 and again in September this year.

David Thom had many health challenges over the years and he had many periods in hospital over the past year. He passed away peacefully at Royal North Shore Hospital with his family present on 28 October.



David Thom assists mayor Pat Reilly draw the HobbyCo raffle prize at the 2008 Willoughby Museum Meccano Day.



## FANCY A TAKE-AWAY? A History of Fast Food in Willoughby. Judy Peters

### PART 2

#### School Tuck Shop take away

Talking about meat pies brings back fond memories of the Tuck shop for Willoughby Public School located in Oakville Road opposite the Infants' School gate. In the 1960s it was a delight being able to order a sandwich, a pie or sausage roll with sauce for lunch when mum had run out of bread that morning or as a treat on your birthday. You could also order a cream bun or pink iced finger bun for morning tea.

You had to line up and write your name, class and order on a paper lunch bag with a pencil, add up the cost and then put your money inside the bag and hand it to the lady behind the counter. The food would be delivered to the school at the appropriate time, either recess or lunch, and your name would be read out for you to collect your fare. On wet days they brought the food to each classroom for distribution.

#### The Cake Shop

I also remember going with mum after school to the cake shop that was in the arcade of shops on Penshurst Street just down from Oakville Road (now Dan Murphy's) to pick up a jam and cream sponge or date roll for some special family afternoon tea.

The cake shop was filled with such treats as apple slices, vanilla slices, custard and neenish tarts, coloured meringues and cream horns. Mum would occasionally buy me a meringue allowing me to choose which colour, often with coloured sprinkles on them. These treats can be considered as a form of take-away as they were not baked in the home kitchen.

#### The BBQ Chicken era

In the 1950s and 60s chicken was costly and only eaten in restaurants or at Christmas time. In the 1970s with the reduction in the price of poultry came the rise of the BBQ Chicken shop. A strong memory in the 1970s, however, is of mum cooking two roast chickens in the oven at home on a regular basis as the price of the take-away variety was still too expensive.

This subsequently changed and we now enjoy our take away BBQ chicken with chips and a variety of salads. I recall there was a BBQ chicken shop on the west side of Penshurst Street

Willoughby North for some time. By the mid-1980s there was a BBQ chicken shop on the north east corner of Rosewall and Penshurst Streets (now the St Vincent de Paul shop) where my parents would occasionally pick up a BBQ chook for dinner.<sup>1</sup>

This type of shop in Willoughby now seems to have largely disappeared with the exception of Chargrill Charlies on the corner of High and Glover Streets, established 1989, which serves a large variety of take away food including BBQ Chicken, and the Chinese-operated Chargrilled Chicken enterprise at 87 Edinburgh Road in Castlecrag.

#### MULTI-CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Each locality in Australia has adopted the foods of the people who settled in the local area and since World War II these influences have been increasingly diverse. In Willoughby some significant people groups have brought their influence to our restaurants and eateries.

#### Chinese take-away

The next take away food of significance in the area is that of the Chinese. Chinese came to Australia in large numbers during the Gold Rush of the 1850s and later

spread out and settled throughout the colonies.<sup>2</sup>

Chinese people have been living in Willoughby from this era. By the 1880s the suburb of Willoughby was renowned for large market gardens cultivated by the Chinese one land leased from local landowners. The Chinese were law-abiding, kindly and very industrious. In particular there were families who operated the market gardens in Northbridge along Eastern Valley Way at the end of Mowbray Road, and in Willoughby including in High Street and in Penshurst Street behind the houses in Crabbes Avenue.

Brian Day recalls that this Chinese market garden was where the Willoughby Legion Club now stands up until after World War II when the club was built.<sup>3</sup> Later three houses were demolished to make way for Club's car park. Harry Fox, who lived in Crabbes Avenue in one of these houses, remembers the market gardeners well:

When I was a boy there was a market garden behind our house in Crabbes Avenue. We would sneak over the back fence and pick vegetables and be chased away

RIGHT: Charcoal Charlie's Take-away, High Street, Willoughby, April 2016. Judy Peters

BELOW: Botany Chinese Take-away, 336 Penshurst Street, Willoughby, April 2016. Judy Peters



by the Chinese gardeners. I only did it a couple of times and then gave it away. The gardeners would have a long pole resting on their necks with a large watering can at either end. They would hold onto the watering cans with their hands outstretched and walk along watering the gardens. They grew cabbages and other green vegetables. There was a family living there but only the men worked the garden. The children were in my class at Willoughby Public School.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, Chinese restaurants did not become well established until much later. It has been suggested by Michael Symonds, author and food historian, that Chinese takeaway was available in Lane Cove as early as 1956, but this required patrons to take their own saucepan down to the local Chinese restaurant into which they placed your take-away meal.<sup>5</sup>

When we went on family holidays in the 1960s and 70s, most country towns in Australia had a Chinese restaurant, in addition to the more general Aussie take away or café fare for the traveller. As a family we would go to the local Chinese restaurant in Chatswood to celebrate special occasions from the 1970s and we would get a 'doggy bag' of any leftover food to take home.

These restaurants also offered take-away as an option. This was obtained by ordering in person and waiting or phoning ahead and then picking up. Some of our favourite Chinese restaurants were 'The Jade Tree' on the corner of Victoria Ave and Blakesley Street (now Service NSW) and the one was located on the first floor of the south-east corner of Neridah Street and Victoria Avenue. Another one we frequented was 'The Yum Cha' on the north side of Victoria Avenue just up from Archer Street. Later still 'The Moon Terrace' Chinese restaurant opened over the railway line on the top floor of the corner building at the Pacific Highway and Help Street. It is still there today.

When I was growing up, eating out was a luxury not an everyday occurrence, so shops selling take away only are a more recent phenomenon. Since the 1980s, the Chinese population has increased greatly in Chatswood and with the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, a further wave of Chinese have come to our City. Today, take-away Chinese food is available seven days a week from the Botany Chinese Take Away at 321 Penshurst Street in the Willoughby North Shops. The Chinese restaurants and take-aways in Chatswood are now too numerous to name.

#### Middle-eastern influences

As well as the Chinese who came early, the Armenians, who settled in Willoughby from the 1960s and 1970s, brought with them wonderful Middle Eastern flavours. With the Armenian Apostolic Church in Australia based in Chatswood East, the Armenian people have long been part of the fabric of Willoughby. The Persepolis Restaurant at 1/325 Penshurst Street Willoughby North was a favourite for Persian cuisine in the 1990s it subsequently became The Persian Orchid. Raffi's, just around the corner at 104 Victoria Avenue, currently brings the flavours of the Middle East from Persia, Armenia and Turkey to our locality. Several Lebanese and Persian Restaurants now grace the Willoughby North shops including the Tarboosh Lebanese Restaurant and the Persian Flame restaurant which serves wood-fired pizza and kebabs.

Other post World War II migrants who have come to Willoughby show their influence in other ways in the food arena including the Italians, who ran many of our fruit and vegetable shops, but their take-away food influences came later.

Ribs and Pizza became popular in the 1990s with Eagle Boys Pizza and Ribs appearing on Penshurst Street, Willoughby North—but are now gone. The rise of the gourmet pizza in the 1990s saw a reduction in eat-in Pizza Huts throughout Sydney with take away now usually their only offering. Anto's Pizzeria and Italian Restaurant at 321 Penshurst Street just down from Willoughby Pub, family favourites for take away gourmet pizza, pasta and salads, have now operated there for over 20 years. 'Crust pizza' is a newer gourmet pizzeria take away on the opposite side of Penshurst Street.

Many other nationalities have become represented in the local area since the 1980s including food outlets offering cuisine that is Indian, Persian, Italian, Lebanese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean and French, to name just a few.

#### American franchise influence

Australians have been greatly influenced by our relationship with America over the years, and take-away food is no exception. The American fast food chains hit Australia from the late 1960s onwards providing breakfast, lunch and dinner options to the Australian populace.<sup>6</sup>

Willoughby has seen its share of these largely franchised take away chains including a large eat in Pizza Hut restaurant on the corner of Victoria Avenue and Penshurst Streets, Willoughby North and an eat-in McDonalds for some years in the north end of Archer Street Chatswood—both of which are now gone.

An explosion in the take-away food market in Australia occurred in the 1980s onwards with a myriad of choices on offer aided by the introduction of plastic takeaway containers. Shopping Centre Food courts have seen these specialised take-away only chains flourish. Examples of this currently are take away only Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Subway and O'Porto Chicken in the Westfield Chatswood and Chatswood Chase food courts. Chatswood has however a full range of cuisines in both restaurants and shopping centre food courts not limited to these franchises. Perhaps the lack proportionately of otherwise dominating take-away food chain franchises in Chatswood is the result of a lack of local taste for such options, people preferring the more fresh home grown, Asian and gourmet varieties of foods on offer.

With the coffee culture taking off in the 1980s such franchise based firms as Muffin Break and Gloria Jeans entered the scene later, providing largely morning and afternoon tea with some light lunch options. There has been an expansion in the cultural variety of foods in the take away food arena since then. Subway and Boost Juice are more recent take away chains marketing themselves with claims of healthier choices.

#### END NOTES

1. Interview with Brian Day, April 2016.

2. Ward, Beverley (ed), *Tucker in Australia*, Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1977. Calin, Audrey, *Australians in the early Twentieth century*, pp

3. Interview with Brian Day, April 2016.

4. Phone interview with Harry Fox, May 2016.

5. Symons, Michael, *One Continuous Picnic: A History of Eating in Australia*, Duck Press, Adelaide, 1982 p 137-138 & p81

6. Symons, Michael, as above.

## CONTACTS

**WDHS Management Committee:****President:** Paul Storm (9419 7354)**Vice-President:** Mary Thom**Secretary:** Terry Fogarty**Treasurer/Curator:** Bob McKillop**Committee Members:** Joan Antarakis, Margaret McNaught, Don Swonnell, Rob Wilson**Patron:** Gail Giles-Gidney, Mayor of Willoughby City**Newsletter Editor:** Bob McKillop**Willoughby Museum**Our museum is located at *Boronia*, 58 Johnson Street, Chatswood.**Opening hours:** 1-4pm each Sunday.

Admission \$6 adults; \$5 concession; \$2 child, \$10 family.



The Tarboorsh Lebanese Restaurant in North Willoughby is one of the many restaurants with a Middle Eastern flavour that have sprung up in Willoughby. Judy Peters photo, April 2016.

## COMING EVENTS

**Members' Meetings**

**Held at the Willoughby Room, Willoughby City Library at The Concourse, commencing at 2pm on the second Saturday of even months (except December).**

**Saturday 11 February 2017:** WDHS Annual General Meeting with speaker to be advised.

**Tours & Events**

**Sunday 4 December:** Willoughby DHS Annual Christmas event at 15 Johnson Street from 2-4pm. Members and friends are welcome.

**NOTE:** The Willoughby Museum will close from 4 December 2016 until 15 January 2017. The 'Word on the Street' exhibition will remain in place during February and March 2017.

We will be developing a new exhibition for the National Trust Heritage Festival with the theme 'Having a Voice'. Further details will be provided in the February 2017 issue of *Willoughby History Chatters*.

**WILLOUGHBY DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

58 Johnson Street, Chatswood

Phone: (02) 9410 3203

E-mail contact: wdhs58@gmail.com

Editor: rfmckillop@bigpond.com

Website: www.willoughbydhs.org.au

**STOP PRESS**

Membership renewals for 2017 are now due and you will receive a Notice with this issue of this newsletter. Membership fees for 2017 are \$40 for family and \$30 for individual membership.

Facilities will be available at the WDHS Christmas Party for receiving membership payments.



*Members and Friends, come and join us at our annual Christmas Event at 15 Johnson Street*

*Sunday 4th December 2016*

*Explore this important Victorian era heritage house in a relaxing atmosphere and enjoy the entertainment*

*Please bring a plate to share*