

WILLOUGHBY HISTORY
CHATTERS

AUGUST 2017

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COMING EVENTS

Saturday 12 August:
WDHS General Meeting with Elizabeth Butel on the early history of NSW public schools. See page 6 for details.

Saturday 16 September: Opening of Willoughby City Biennial Arts Festival (see page 6 for our involvement)

OUR PRESIDENT IN NORTHERN EUROPE

Welcome home from another world. Northern Europe in the early summer is pretty special...the daffodils are gone, but the tall rambling rose bushes spring from cracks between the pavement and the walls of buildings in the public streets in the old towns. And if not four metre roses, then two metre hollyhocks, pale yellow, pink and even black. The colours and the visuals...natural and man-made...for six fine weather weeks made every day a feast for my eyes. Music fans, food fans, activity fans can all have their delights when travelling, but quiet visuals to excite the imagination can be all I ask for.

The obscenely splendid churches and palaces of Tsarist Russia are so over the top, they explain in a moment why a revolution was needed there, but the legacy is inspiring for millions. Much more digestible were the streets of Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, Helsinki and Stockholm. And it is the details which are so fascinating....crazy roof lines, atlantes holding up porches, the sublime faces of Madonnas, the roses and hollyhocks, overbearing or sensual statuary, art works, spiral staircases, and oddly enough perhaps the totally perfect fine china specimens in museums. It seems fine china table services or splendid huge vases were the diplomatic state gifts of 200 years ago. And each royal ruler had a porcelain works to support the habit, whether it was Vienna, Chelsea, Berlin, Sevres, Meissen or other leading firms. So imagine my

surprise and delight to find in the garden *Belvedere* at Charlottenburg in Berlin nothing but fine china over three floors. One cabinet in particular displayed part of a table service labelled 'Exotic Wildflowers', including a serving tray, perhaps 30cm x 20cm with Australian wildflowers, featuring hakea, bottlebrush, Kurrajong and Banksia, all superbly accurately painted around 1820. And that was the only mention of Austral-

ia for me during my six weeks away.

In Germany I was feted by friends in Berlin, Lubeck and Hamburg for three weeks. How underappreciated and spoken of are these larger German cities; being both satisfying and comfortable.

Still, it is good to be home and I look forward to catching up with Willoughby District Historical Society members and friends over coming weeks.



Above: The serving tray featuring Australian wildflowers, and below a bowl with a Kurrajong flower. Paul Storm

MUSEUM UPDATE

Things have been relatively quiet at the Museum in the winter months. Your curator has been present on Thursday mornings, apart from 13 July when he underwent laser surgery on his left eye, from which there has been a significant improvement.

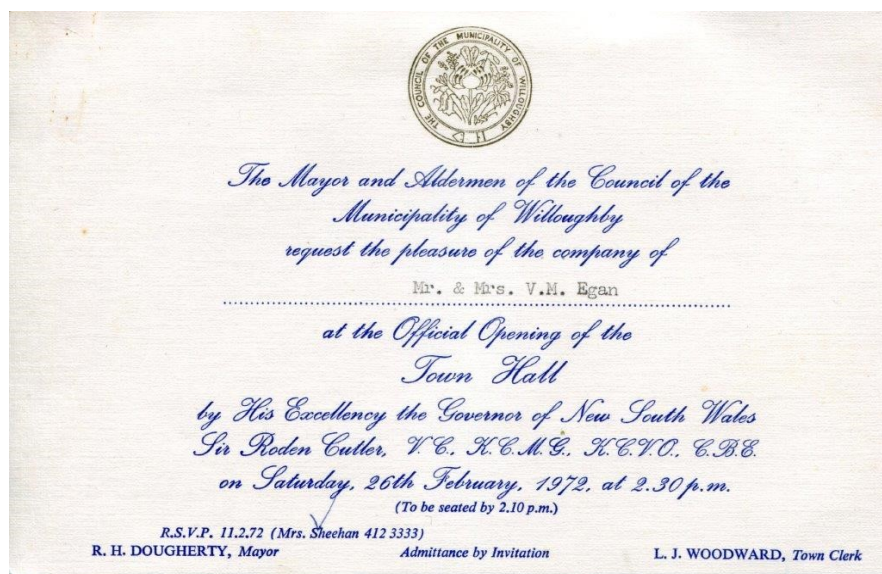
In addition to planning new exhibitions, we have been steadily assessing, researching and documenting collection items in our MOSAiC database. New items are also photographed, while we also aim to update older entries with photographs of the item.

A new laptop computer has been purchased and set-up to facilitate our collection management tasks and the MOSAiC database has been uploaded. If you have an interest in historic objects, photographs, documents or art works, then your assistance with these tasks would be most welcome.

A selection of objects from our collection are presented here.



Doulton Australia Grecian Key brown casserole dish made in Chatswood.



ABOVE: Doulton Australia Grecian Key coffee jug made in Chatswood.

ABOVE RIGHT: Official invitation to Mr & Mrs Vince Egan to opening of Willoughby Town Hall, 26 February 1972.

RIGHT: An Elgen pocket-watch with Fob and Chain.



MEMBERS' CORNER

We welcome Alison Billing of Forestville as a new member. Alison has an interest in prominent early women of the Willoughby Municipality, including the Whiting family and their daughter Evelyn.

There have also been additional new members in recent weeks, namely Ian Rumsey, who joined during a visit to the Museum on 23 July. We look forward to their future participation in our activities.

RITA COOPER, 1926–2017

We are sad to inform members of the passing of Rita Cooper on June 6 last.

Rita was a founding member of the WDHS, becoming a Life Member after serving on the committee and becoming Vice President when Peggy Canfield became President.

Rita lived all her life in Nicholson Street Chatswood and was a nursing sister, concluding her working career as Matron of Balmain Hospital. She had many interests and friends and will be missed.

We reported on her 90th birthday event on Rita's 90th birthday event on the September 2016 in the October 2016 issue of *Willoughby History Chatters*.

Mary Thom



Rita Cooper (left) presents Dame Marie Bashir AC with a bouquet of flowers on the occasion of her visit to Willoughby Museum on 9 April 2009, as Paul Storm, Mayor Pat Reilly and President Peggy Canfield look on. Bob McKillop photo

Walter Burley Griffin tour 26 July

The weather was fine on 26 July for an 18 member tour group of the Griffin Estate in Castlecrag, Harold Reid Reserve in Middle Cove and the Griffin Incinerator in Bicentennial Reserve led by Paul Storm.

The group comprised members of a coffee shop and jazz-exercise group brought together by Paul's old school friend, Kay Ostrowski and the event commenced with lunch at her house in Northbridge.

The group drove in convoy to the lookout in Harold Reid Reserve and then to the Griffin Conservation Area in Castlecrag. Here a selection of Griffin houses were viewed from the streets and the network of walkways that contribute to the international recognition that the Griffin Estate now enjoys on

account of its underlying philosophy of 'Living with Nature' and the design qualities of Griffin's houses.

Moving on to the Willoughby Incinerator, there was time for a cup of coffee and an inspection of the building and the current art exhibition on display.

A short walk took the group to the Henry Lawson Cave, where Don Swonnell gave a presentation on Willoughby Council's project to restore the cave as a venue for poetry readings. The overall program fitted comfortably into the 12 noon to 16:00 schedule allocated for the tour.

The group were favourably impressed with the tour experience, evidently sufficiently so to be planning a follow-up 'Chatswood Ramble' tour next year.

Special thanks are extended to Kay Ostrowski for organising the tour and offering her own home as a venue for lunch. It was a most satisfactory event for the Willoughby District Historical Society that resulted in a welcome financial enhancement to our bank balance.

Paul Storm

HOWARD RUBIE: Cinematographer and community citizen

Howard Rubie was a close personal friend and we engaged in many exploits together. He was born in Sydney on 27 August 1938 and during World War II, he lived with his mother Joan and brother Kerry on a farm near Corowa while his father, Cecil, was in the army. On Cecil's return, the family moved to Coogee, where young Howard established a close relationship with the sea. He became an avid sailor, contesting in the Sydney to Hobart seven times, using that opportunity to shoot dramatic film of the race for Cinesound.

Movie films became Howard's life work, commencing with an attachment at Kingcroft Studios owned by the nephew of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. He moved to Cinesound in the heyday of cinema newsreels, where he ended up as head newsreel cameraman.

Also working at Cinesound was Patricia Freeman, who Howard had first met at the age of 10 when playing in the school band on Saturdays while she was studying ballet on the floor below. They fell in love and married in 1965. The Rubies bought a small fisherman's cottage on the foreshore at Castlecrag and several years later Howard purchased a yacht which he moored at the end of the garden and commenced sailing at every opportunity.

In the early 1970s, Howard Rubie directed all three series of TV's *Spyforce*, which made Jack Thompson a household name. He subsequently established a long partnership with Roger Mirams, the producer of *Spyforce*, and they made several other series including *Mission Top Secret*, *Search for Treasure Island* and *Escape of the Artful Dodger*.

In the 1980s Howard Rubie designed and directed professional courses for the Australian Film Television and Radio School as well as making a valuable contribution

to the board of the Australian Directors Guild. In his latter career, he directed and produced a wide range of television dramas for Reg Grundy Productions in Melbourne.

I first met Howard through the Castlecrag Progress Association, but he was closely involved in most other community groups in the suburb, particularly the Haven Amphitheatre, constructed by Walter and Marion Griffin in the early 1930s, where he had played a significant role in its restoration by the local community in 1975–1976. He remained the leading figure behind the Haven Amphitheatre and directing many of the performances there up until his later years when illness restricted his involvement.



Howard Rubie (right) with friends celebrating Elizabeth Lander's birthday at Tunks Park on 29 December 1996. Bob McKillop photo



Harbour congestion from Howard Rubie's yacht, Australia Day 1997. Bob McKillop

Howard and I went out on his yacht on a regular basis from the mid-1990s, often to view the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, and it was on one of these occasions that our discussion came to the subject of the film *Newsfront*, which I recall as one of the most important Australian films I had seen.

This brought forward Howard's story that he was the young Cinesound cameraman depicted in that film who lost his life in its version, but clearly that person was still very much alive! While Patricia never came on these trips, there were also excursions on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day on which my wife Kerry, Sue Randle and Elizabeth Lander participated.

Howard's work as a filmmaker was recognised by 17 industry awards, among them an Emmy nomination; best in category twice in the *international Prix Jeunesse*; and the Grand Prix at the 1999 Moscow Film Festival. He was awarded Citizen of the Year for the City of Willoughby on 26 January 2007; and on 1 May 2010, Howard was admitted to the Australian Society of Cinematographers' Hall of Fame.

Sadly, Howard Rubie's health deteriorated during 2010 and the following year he spent a lengthy period in the Hospice section of the Castlecrag Private Hospital before passing away on 18 June 2011.

Bob McKillop



Sue Randle (centre) and Howard Rubie (right) on Howard's yacht, Australia Day 1997. Bob McKillop



RIGHT: Howard Rubie receives his Citizenship Award of the Year from Mayor Pat Reilly on 26 January 2007. Bob McKillop photo

CONTACTS

WDHS Management Committee:**President:** Paul Storm (9419 7354)**Vice-President:** Mary Thom**Secretary:** Terry Fogarty**Museum Curator:** Bob McKillop**Committee Members:** Joan Antarakis, 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; \$3 child, \$10 family [Note: latter under review].

Spring will soon be upon us with the sound of leather upon willow, so this scene of a cricket match at Chatswood Oval in the spring of 1978 offers pleasant memories. Martin O'Donoghue collection, Willoughby Museum

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 12 August 2017: Our speaker will be writer and teacher Elizabeth Butel, whose book *Arthur Roberts: a teachers' journey*, explores the history of early public education in New South Wales with particular emphasis on the challenged faced by teachers. Visitors are welcome.

Tours & Events

Biennial Willoughby Arts Festival. Following discussions with Cassandra Hard Lawrie, Willoughby City Council's new Biennial Coordinator, we have revised of our plans for the Spring exhibition at the Museum.

We are preparing a new exhibition, *Museum Kaleidoscopes*, which will utilise a range of objects from our collection to reflect on the potential new meanings cast by household and local items, as well as agricultural and artistic endeavours. Curated by

Rob Wilson, *City Surface* will feature photographs that capture the patterns and sculptural forms of Willoughby City's architectural heritage as pour contribution to the 2017 Biennial Arts Festival, while Terry Fogarty will lead a guided history walk, *Artistic Licence*, that explores Chatswood's former sites of artistic activity.

Bob McKillop will use items from our collection to demonstrate how the people of Willoughby City have embraced new cuisines and eating habits in **Embracing Change**, our contribution to the 2017 Emerge Festival.

If you have ideas or items that may assist, we will be delighted to hear from you.

Cavalcade of History and Fashion: Mary Thom and her colleagues are arranging a special event showcasing 19th Century fashion at the Uniting Church Hall, Clan William Street in Willoughby on Sunday 22 October. Further details in October newsletter.

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LATE ITEMS