

WILLOUGHBY HISTORY
CHATTERS

OCTOBER 2017

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

MUSEUM UPDATE	2
MEMBERS' CORNER	3
GROUP TOUR GRIFFIN ESTATE	3
Edgar Absalom DEANS 1903- 1991	4- 5
FROM THE ARCHIVES	6
CONTACT DETAILS	6
COMING EVENTS	6

COMING EVENTS

Saturday 14 October:
WDHS General Meeting with Jill Finch.

Sunday 8 October:
Cavalcade of History and Fashion, Willoughby Uniting Church (see p6)

Sunday 3 December:
The annual WDHS Christmas function at the Museum

NEW EXHIBITIONS AT WILLOUGHBY MUSEUM

The Biennial Willoughby Arts Festival and the 2017 Emerge Festival are being celebrated with two new exhibitions at Willoughby Museum.

Rob Wilson's 'City Surface' Exhibition comprises 28 A2 size posters in the Exhibition Room. Each poster is made up of a collage of Rob's photographs beginning with architectural details of South Chatswood from the Museum's 2013 exhibition and new works featuring Artarmon, Willoughby, North Chatswood and Roseville. Also featured are items from the surface of our surrounding streets and CBD buildings.

Our Emerge Festival is a smaller display 'Embracing Change' which comprises objects and A3 size panels in the kitchen and breakfast room that explore the changes in selling and preparing food in Willoughby City since 1878 when Joseph Hammond opened his butchers' shop in Chatswood. Particular attention is given to the contribution made by ethnic diversity to the our food and dining experiences we enjoy today.

While visitation has been modest, numbers were boosted by visits to the museum by students from three local schools as described on page 2.



IMAGES: Top: Two panels from Rob Wilson's 'City Surface' exhibition featuring road and pavement art in Chatswood. **Middle:** Part of the 'Embracing Change' exhibition in the breakfast room with panels and tools from Hammonds' butchers shop. **Bottom:** Some of the 'Embracing Change' items in the kitchen.

MUSEUM UPDATES

Last year we asked the Josef Lebovic Gallery to sell the Society's large double-sided poster of the Walter Burley Griffin designed estate at Jervis Bay. There were no satisfactory bids for the poster from local 'Collectors Lists', so Josef took the poster to the United States market. We recently received news that he had procured a satisfactory sale there and we now have a significant boost to our Society funds from this transaction.

School groups have kept us busy at the museum and in other ways over the past two months. On Monday 28 August, Bob McKillop guided 60 Year 2 students and 10 or so adult supporters from St Thomas Public School in North Willoughby on a walk through the Griffin Conservation Area in Castlecrag. Despite cool weather, the group was well behaved during the two and a quarter hour tour, which covered a selection of the Griffin houses and walkways.

On Tuesday 5 September we hosted six groups of 30 Year 8 students from Willoughby Girls' High School at the museum. The groups were divided into four smaller groups for quick tours of each of our display rooms, with Mary Thom, Terry Fogarty, Paul Storm, Bob McKillop and Don Swonnell serving as guides in the rooms during the day.

On Friday 15 September a group of 20 Year 2 students and two adults from Roseville College Junior School visited the Museum. Paul Storm and Margaret McNaught served as guides for the group. The children enjoyed learning about the historic objects and photographs in the museum collection.



Year 2 pupils from St Thomas Public School in Lookout Reserve at Castlecrag on Monday 28 August. Bob McKillop photo



The Year 2 pupils completed their tour of the Griffin Conservation Area at the Griffin Fountain adjacent to the Ramsay Health Private Hospital in Castlecrag on Monday 28 August. Here they assembled to pose for photographs. Bob McKillop photo

MEMBERS' CORNER

Elizabeth Butel was our speaker at the general meeting of the Society on the subject of school-teacher Arthur Roberts, whose life and works she explored in her 2016 book *Arthur Roberts: a teacher's journey*.

Between 1861–1894 the schoolmaster Arthur Roberts taught at a number of predominantly one-teacher schools along the slopes of New South Wales, including at Croobyar, Glen William, Walcha, Inverell, Scone, Maitland and Louth. He was on the frontier of attempts to establish a national school system in Australia.

Roberts claimed to have been trained in the United Kingdom but there are scant records to support that claim. Notwithstanding this, he was appointed as a Class 2A teacher (Classes 1A & 1B were higher). In those days teachers' salaries were determined by their classifica-

tion as well as the number of students in the school.

Schools needed 30 students in country areas. One third of the building costs had to be met by the local community who were also expected to maintain the premises.

In 1866 the Council of Education was formed to manage public schools. Denominational schools still existed and it is believed that they often poached students from the public schools, could have direct impact on how much a teacher was paid. The curriculum of the day included writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography and a number of minor subjects. Interestingly, history was not taught. Schools were subject to yearly inspections, which could result in promotion or, in the case of Roberts on one occasion, demotion. If a school fell below 12 students, the teacher was no longer paid.

FATHERS' DAY TOUR

Paul Storm led a private family tour on Fathers' Day on Sunday 3 September. A young married couple had requested the tour for this particular day.

Paul took the trio from the museum through Chatswood and North Willoughby, before going to the Harold Reid Reserve lookout in Middle Cove. Select locations in the Griffin Estate at Castlecrag were then visited before going on to inspect the Griffin-designed Willoughby Incinerator.

Significant heritage sites at Artarmon were also included, before going onto *Windsor Gardens*. Paul and the trio were allowed to climb the tower and they then enjoyed a Fathers' Day Concert comprising a dozen or so light classical songs. They then enjoyed afternoon tea with special treats. In appreciation of the tour, the couple donated a book, *A Single Tree*—a collection of real life bush stories and gave a very generous cash contribution to the Society's funds.



The tower at Windsor Gardens provides the opportunity for fine vistas of Chatswood CBD and St Leonards. This photo was taken from the tower in May 2014. Bob McKillop photo

Edgar Absalom DEANS (1903-1991)

Edgar Deans is best known for his role in the management of Walter Burley Griffin's Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) and for his civic duties in the Castlecrag community and with Willoughby Municipal Council over an extended period.

Born in Perth, Western Australia, to Absalom and Annie Deans on 28 November 1903, Edgar moved with his family to Sydney at the age of six. After completing his schooling at Sydney Technical High School, he commenced work at 16 for various firms, including a chartered accountant. Edgar moved to Melbourne to work with various chartered accountant firms and gained his professional chartered accountancy qualifications by correspondence. He subsequently completed a Diploma of Commerce at the University of Melbourne.

By 1926 conflict between Walter and Marion Griffin, then living in Castlecrag, and a group of Melbourne shareholders in the Greater Sydney Development Association (GSDA) had come to a head. To resolve these issues, special meetings of the board and shareholders were held over two days in August 1927 at which detailed accusations against the Griffins were aired and Walter strongly defended his position through his lawyer, Edward Beeby. The outcome was that Griffin formally signed an agreement to cease all litigation between himself and the GSDA board; the chairman Mr B J Parkinson retired from the board and was replaced by Charles John Cerutti; and the Sydney-based company secretary was sacked and replaced by Edgar Deans.

The 24-year old Deans enthusiastically settled into his new role and became a popular member of the Castlecrag community. His attraction to his new surrounds was soon enhanced when romance developed with Amy Kathleen ('Cappy') Mahady, a close friend of Louise Lightfoot who worked as a typist in the GSDA Melbourne office and had been transferred to the Castlecrag office by Griffin. She joined Louise in living with the Griffins at the *Grant House* in The Parapet. Soon the community was awash with the news: "Cappy is going to marry Edgar Deans!" They married in 1929.

In addition to his formal duties as company secretary, Edgar also became closely involved in Walter Griffin's grand project to develop a country club and golf course for the GSDA's proposed model garden suburb at Castlecove. Griffin had first proposed to develop the course in 1924, but there was no further action until April 1928, when Deans reported to the GSDA shareholders that areas of the Castlecove Peninsula were being contoured for a nine-hole public golf course.

This move was strongly opposed by the chairman and Commonwealth Auditor General, Charles Cerutti, who was an active golfer and saw himself as the company's authority on golf course design and management. Griffin established a parallel GSDA board in Sydney that authorised contracts and payments for the project. This generated renewed conflict between the Griffins and Cerutti, backed by a group of Melbourne GSDA shareholders,

which placed Deans in a difficult position. Internal documents indicate that he handled the conflict with maturity, responding in November 1930 to a confidential letter from Cerutti requesting financial details in these terms:

As an individual I have no more right to extract information from the private books of the Company than I have to Burgle the Commonwealth Bank. If it did so and used the records of the Company for my own private purposes or allowed others to do so, I would be committing a grave breach of the trust that is necessarily imposed on my by the Board. I think it is also against your interests as a Director to have personal correspondence with me in this way and to receive information from me in the dark.

Deans became the *de facto* manager of the Castlecove Golf Course and it was a proud moment when he was the first to tee off at its official opening on 12 April 1932. Over the following months he reported regularly to Cerutti on the



Edgar and Cappy Deans in the 1940s. Courtesy Margo Watson

financial position of the company's golf enterprise. Edgar later recalled that he had worked closely with Walter Griffin in developing the course and "when the course was built ... local people flooded out there, particularly on weekends, and we made a lot of money".

1932 may have been a year of great hardship for most Sydneysiders, but it was one celebration for the Deans family. Not only was Edgar vindicated in his belief that the golf course would be successful, but after living in a small flat at Milsons Point and then various houses in Castlecrag for short periods, Edgar and Cappy moved into the GSDA No. 2 house on Edinburgh Road in Castlecrag during that year. Frank and Anice Duncan joined them in the small two-bedroom cottage and things became crowded when Cappy brought home their first child, Kaaren, in 1932. She was the first infant born at Cabarisha Hospital and Marion Griffin referred to her as 'Castlecrag's first baby'. Edgar's sister Joyce came to live with them to help with minding her niece, so she had to sleep in the open pergola at the front of the cottage!

The Duncans moved into their delightful Griffin-designed cottage in 1934, giving the Deans more space in the GSDA No. 2 house for their expanding family. Paul was born in 1934 and a second daughter, Margo, arrived in 1938. Eric Nicholls designed a new house built for the Deans at 170 Edinburgh Road and the family moved there in 1938.

Edgar recalled that he served as secretary of the Castlecrag Progress Association for 13 years and of the Neighbourhood Circle, which met on Saturday nights in the GSDA No. 2 house. They invited speakers and upwards of 20 people attended these social gatherings, while the Progress Association held its meetings at the Griffins' house in The Parapet. Edgar and Cappy were involved in planting trees along the streets and encouraging locals to water them. They were



Edgar Dean hits off to formally open the Castle Cove golf course on 12 April 1932. Courtesy Walter Burley Griffin Society

also active in the movement to establish the Castlecrag Community Centre. Around 1938 they lobbied the Department of Education to buy land for a school at Castlecrag and they organised a demonstration at the shops for this cause. Cappy was also involved in lobbying for a baby health centre which opened around 1939 near Willoughby Park.

With the onset of the 1930s Depression, Edgar worked for the GSDA on a part-time basis and he established his own chartered accountancy practice at this time. He became increasingly involved in civil activities over the years. Following his extended period as GSDA secretary, he served as president of the Castlecrag Progress Association for four years and he played a key role in the establishment of the Willoughby Federated Progress Associations, for which he served as secretary for eight years and president for two. It was therefore no surprise when Deans accepted a nomination to stand for Middle Harbour Ward on Willoughby Municipal Council in 1948. He served on a number of council committees, becoming deputy

mayor for two years and mayor from February 1953 to February 1954.

Edgar took up teaching at the local Technical & Further Education (TAFE) College in 1950. In 1959 he and Cappy Deans moved to Canberra, where Edgar took up a teaching position with the then College of Advanced Education, becoming its Deputy Principal in 1968. Cappy died in Canberra during 1975, but Edgar maintained contact with the Castlecrag community until his death in 1991. The Castlecrag Progress Association and the Walter Burley Griffin Society organised a memorial planting to commemorate his contribution to the community on 5 June 1993 with some 150 people in attendance.

Bob McKillop

Acknowledgement: Thanks are extended to Margo Watson (nee Deans) for her assistance in preparing this article



A view of the Royal Doulton (formerly Mashman) factory on Victoria Avenue Chatswood in 1978. Note the mature date palms, a relic of World War I.

Martin O'Donoghue 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].

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 14 October 2017: Our speaker will be Jill Finch of the Prospect Heritage Trust. She will cover the history of Prospect from Governor Phillip's 'discovery' of the area in 1788 to the present day. Visitors are welcome.

Tours & Events

Biennial Willoughby Arts Festival. The Museum opened a new exhibition *City Surface* for the Willoughby Biennial Arts Festival, curated by Rob Wilson. There is also a smaller exhibition *Embracing Change* as part of the 2017 Emerge Festival. These exhibitions will remain in place for the remainder of 2017 and into 2018 so, if you have not already visited we look forward to hosting you at the museum.

Sunday 8 October: Cavalcade of History and Fashion presents *The Art of Fashion: 1920s evening gowns* at the Willoughby Uniting Church, Clanwilliam Street Willoughby with high tea. Entry \$25; bookings via email at: mdt@optusnet.com.au or phone: 9419 5851.

Sunday 3 December 2017: The Society's Christmas Function will be held at the Museum from 2pm with the usual entertainment. Members and friends welcome. Further details in December newsletter.

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

LATE ITEMS