

Strathfield District Historical Society

Newsletter

Meetings held first Wednesday in each month excepting January at Strathfield Community Centre, 1B Bates Street, Strathfield West, NSW, 2140

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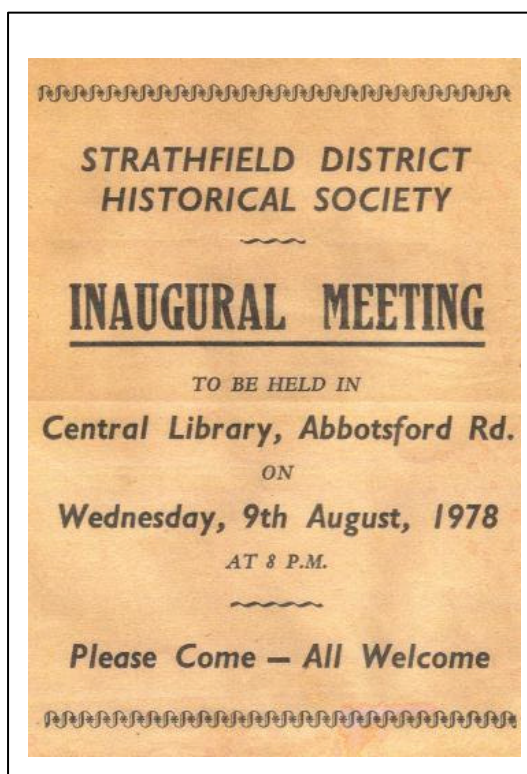
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25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STRATHFIELD DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY by Cathy Jones

The Strathfield District Historical Society was established in 1978 and in 2003, the Society celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. Moves to establish a historical society date back to the early 1970's, when resident groups made many approaches to Strathfield Council to establish a society. The early 1970's saw a growing interest in local history, much motivated by concern that Strathfield was undergoing physical and cultural change, yet little of its' history had been researched, documented or preserved. This concern was not unique to Strathfield, many other local government areas such as Burwood established historical societies in similar timeframes and for similar reasons.



With increasing demand for historical information, particularly from local schools, Strathfield Council produced a booklet entitled 'Some Notes on the Strathfield Municipality' in 1974. Primarily written by former Strathfield Council Town Clerk, James Sandry Matthews and with the involvement of Alderman Helen L'Orange, this publication was the first official account of Strathfield's history and copies are still available from Strathfield Library. Some care should be exercised using this booklet as it contains some inaccuracies, which were uncovered by later and more comprehensive research by the Strathfield District Historical Society. A frequently quoted 'fact' that Strathfield was named after the home of the 'first Mayor John Hardie' is contained in this publication and appears with irritating frequency. The first Mayor was George Hardie, who lived at 'Torrington', while John Hardy, the jeweller, lived at 'Strathfield'. In fact Strathfield was chosen

as the name of the new Municipality prior to the election of the first Council and the election of the first Mayor.

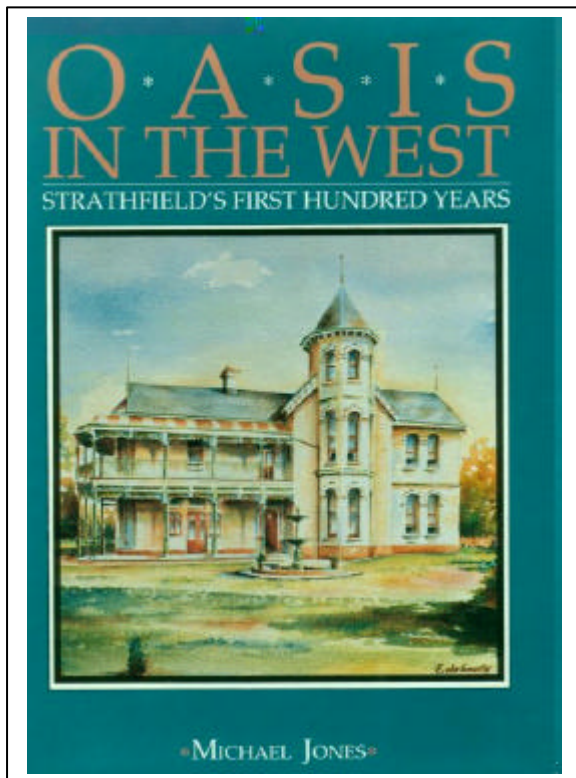
On October 19 1976, Strathfield Council adopted resolution from the Council's General Purposes Committee with recommendations from Alderman Evan Summerfield to investigate establishing a Historical Society. The Mayor's Report of 4th April 1977

recommended the formation of a steering committee with the purpose of establishing a Strathfield Historical Society and that the rear section of the Homebush Hall be made available to the Society.

The Western Suburbs Courier reported on 19th July 1978 that a public meeting was called by the Mayor of Strathfield Alderman Clarrie Edwards to gauge the interest in forming a Historical Society. This meeting was addressed by Mr Harry Harper of the Royal Australian Historical Society, who spoke of the objects and ideals of a society and of the appropriate steps to prepare for its formation. As over fifty residents attended this meeting, it appeared sufficient interest existed to form a Historical Society.

The first meeting of the Strathfield District Historical Society was held on 9th August 1978 with eighty-five foundation members. Guests at the first meeting included Mr Gordon Jackett MP [Burwood], the Mayor of Strathfield Alderman Clarrie Edwards and Deputy Mayor Rod Thurgar. The Western Suburbs Courier of 23rd August 1978 reported that Sir William and Lady Sonia McMahon supported the establishment of the Society by becoming Foundation members. At the meeting, the Mayor handed over the keys to new premises, the former Homebush Library Building at 75 Parramatta Rd Homebush. Office bearers were elected at the first meeting, which included: President: Mr M B Moroney; Vice-President: Mr Brian McDonald; Secretary: Mrs Trudi O'Neill; Treasurer: Mrs Doreen Rich; Committee Members: Brian McDonald, Syd Malcolm, Mary Farr, Julie Corbett, Lorraine McDonald and Joan Reaby. One of the first resolutions of the Society was to seek affiliation with the Royal Australian Historical Society, which was granted and has continued for the last 25 years. The Society requested the patronage of the Mayor of Strathfield and this relationship commenced with Alderman Clarrie Edwards and continues with the current Mayor, Councillor John Abi-Saab.

The Society's first newsletter issued in February 1979. The objective of the newsletter has been publication of research, particularly relating to the Strathfield District. Over the last 25 years, a number of Society members have been regular contributors to the newsletter. Early editions featured the work of Syd Malcolm, who particularly excelled in his comprehensive and detailed research of many of Strathfield's historic properties and estates. Syd also recorded and transcribed many oral histories of long-term residents and through this work, Strathfield gained valuable insight into periods such as late nineteenth century Strathfield, which could not be recorded today as too much time has elapsed. Our knowledge of Strathfield's educational establishments, a major feature of Strathfield, has been greatly enhanced by the contributions of Arthur Hall. Important contributions, notably on 'Mount Royal', were made by Brother A I Keenan of Mount St Mary College. Trudi O'Neill, a former Secretary, wrote many articles such as 'Early Maps of Australia', which contributed another area of historical interest.



Many of the research tasks were performed by Reg Kennedy after the death of Syd Malcolm in 1983. Reg's keen interest in history encompasses many fields. His research ranges from biographical works including Thomas Rose, Simeon Lord, Frederick Meredith and James Wilshire to the long historical series on Parramatta Road. His enthusiasm for heritage conservation shines through his many articles on properties either threatened by demolition or redevelopment such as 'Glen Luna' or 'Fairholm' or his passionate critiques on the changing style of residential buildings in Strathfield. Reg Kennedy provided considerable historical research to the 1986 Council Heritage Study, a critical factor in determining heritage status, and following this work, his writings are notably more focussed on architectural styles and heritage issues. Following Reg's death in 1991,

Lucy Stone was the primary researcher and contributor to the Society's newsletter, a difficult task she performed for over a decade as well as fulfilling all the administrative demands of her role as Secretary. Her outstanding contribution to the Society was recognised in December 2002 with the award of Life Membership of the Strathfield District Historical Society. Since late 2002, I have written this newsletter and when researching and re-reading previous newsletters, I am constantly reminded of the high standard of excellence which has been maintained by the Society over the last twenty five years. All our members have made different and unique contributions to the Society, which reflects the diversity of interest existing within our membership. Without this diversity, the research and collections of the Society would be immeasurably poorer.

The work of artist Ted De Sauty is synonymous with the Strathfield District Historical Society as Ted's illustrations provide the visual focus for the work of the Society. In his paintings, Ted recreated visions of historic properties long demolished including 'Strathfield House' and 'Bickley'. His water-colour painting of 'Strathfield House' appears on the cover of 'Oasis in the West' and his sketch of Strathfield House is featured on the Society's letterhead. Ted's paintings offer a stylish interpretation of Strathfield's past and for many, define the unique qualities of Strathfield.

The Society has had many achievements over the last twenty five years. Formed under the auspices of Strathfield Council, the Society has worked in collaboration with the Council on many projects and events such as the Strathfield Council Centenary celebrations in 1985, many Australia Day Celebrations, Australia Remembers [50th Anniversary of the end of WWII in 1995], National Trust Heritage Festival Events and organising photographic displays. The Society has made considerable research contributions to Council projects such as the Strathfield's official history 'Oasis in the West' [1985], the 1986 Heritage Study [Reg Kennedy] and current Heritage Study [Jan Jenkins and Cathy Jones]. Historical

research provided by the Society has assisted in determining heritage status of properties, which are now maintained for the benefit of our local community. The Society has regularly provided historical research on a wide variety of subjects to the Council, Library, schools, residents and organisations including house histories, family and biographical information. Another area, which is frequently overlooked, is the photographic collection held by the Society. Photographs donated to the Society have appeared in many publications including 'Oasis in the West', Strathfield Scene and in various Newsletters. The Society's photographic collection is critical to any study of the local area and access to photographs is often requested. Photographs of old homes and gardens, also assists in the work of restoring and conserving historic properties in Strathfield.

There are many members, who have not been mentioned, whose contributions to the Society have been considerable. This includes current office holders and committee members; Doreen Rich [President], Peter Bourke [Vice-President], Margaret Thurn [Treasurer] and Committee members Jan Jenkins, Nancy Hardie, Bernice Harkness and Jeanette Harvison. A special mention must be made of Charles Pitt, who has been our honorary auditor for many years.

Throughout the last twenty-five years, Strathfield Council has continued to provide support to the Historical Society, most notably in the provision of meeting and storage facilities. The Council's generosity commenced with our initial premises at the old Homebush Hall on Parramatta Road to the current rooms in the Strathfield Community Centre at Bates St Homebush. Strathfield Council has made provision for the Historical Society in the Local Studies Room of the new Library at Homebush, which will open in early 2004, providing exciting opportunities for the Society in the future.

To celebrate this anniversary, the Silver Jubilee Dinner will be held on Wednesday 3rd December 2003 at Strathfield South Bowling Club from 7pm at the cost of \$20. The dinner will replace the scheduled December meeting and all past, present [& future!] members are welcome to attend. Transport can be organised for those who require assistance.

STRATHFIELD DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE

Strathfield District Historical Society now has its' own website at www.strathfieldhistory.org.au. The site contains information on a wide variety of topics including heritage information, biographies of former Mayors and Aldermen and histories of Strathfield's parks plus much more. An event calendar will be kept updated with information on upcoming events, which allows us to update information quickly and cost effectively for our members. If you do not have a computer, Strathfield Library is equipped with Internet Access and Library staff can show you how to access our new website. Any suggestions for changes, additions or improvements are welcome. Contact Cathy Jones on 9642 3145 or email: crcathyjones@optusnet.com.au

STRATHFIELD HISTORIC TOUR

In association with Strathfield Municipal Council, the Strathfield District Historical Society is hosting the Strathfield Historic Tour on Saturday 8 November 2003 from 10am – 1pm. The Strathfield Heritage Tour is a three hour bus tour viewing many historic sites of the Strathfield District with informed commentary on architectural and social history. The tour cost of \$10 includes refreshments and a tour booklet. Bookings are essential and limited. Please contact either Cathy Jones on 9642 3145 [phone] or email crcathyjones@optusnet.com.au or Jan Jenkins on 9764 1174 [phone]. This tour would not be possible without the support of Trinity Grammar Preparatory School Strathfield, who have most generously provided us with a bus and driver.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES & NEW LIBRARY

At the September 2003 meeting of the Strathfield District Historical Society, Library Manager Lorraine Janson and Local Studies Librarian Margaret Roberts from Strathfield Council discussed plans for the new Library at Homebush. The new Library will include a dedicated Local Studies room, providing resources for researching subjects pertaining to the local area including local history. The Library has offered storage facilities in the Local Studies room to the Strathfield District Historical Society. Access to Society materials will require supervision and permission from the Society to ensure that materials are not harmed. The Society is grateful to be part of the new Library as it will provide opportunities to work closer with the local community in researching, documenting and promoting the history of this district, which is our Society's primary objective. The Society has had a long tradition of working co-operatively with Strathfield Council and we believe that the new Library will provide additional opportunities for joint ventures between the Council and Society such as exhibitions and lectures.

However to achieve these objectives, a project has commenced to archive and index all collections held by the Society, including photographs, documents, books and other items. The objective is to develop a catalogue of all items held by the Society, which will determine what is held, what is missing and allows us to identify materials which should be acquired. This work needs to be done in preparation for the opening of the new Library in early 2004. Therefore if any member is storing any property, which should be part of the Society's collection, or would like to make a donation particularly of photographs, books or documents, please contact Cathy Jones on 9642 3145 or Jan Jenkins on 9764 1174. With improved technology, copies are easily made and originals can be returned to their owners without harm.

While the Society is fortunate that a valuable collection has been developed from previous donations of photographs, books and documents, further acquisitions would be appreciated and are needed, particularly of photographs of houses, people, events, parks and so on. With constant redevelopment and rebuilding in this Municipality, your photographs may be the only record available of previous buildings. Don't think that only pictures of mansions are wanted, any photograph of the local area could be of value.

HOMEBUSH HOTEL - DEMOLITION

Many inquiries have been made about the recent demolition of the Homebush Hotel, on the corner of Underwood Rd and Parramatta Rd Homebush, as there was a general belief that this property was protected by a heritage listing. To provide accurate information to members, I requested information from Strathfield Council's Director of Technical Services Boris Bolgoff. Mr Bolgoff informed me that while this building had been recommended for listing by heritage consultants Fox & Associates in the 1986 Council Heritage Study, Council did not heritage list this property. The heritage listing was further reconsidered by Council in 1998, but again not adopted and demolition orders were approved on 13 July 2000. Many residents have seen copies of the 1986 Heritage Study, which includes an inventory sheet of the Homebush Hotel, and assumed that all properties identified in this study have been heritage listed. However, this is not accurate. Only statutory bodies such as Local or State Government can only enact heritage listings and not all recommendations by heritage studies are adopted for a variety of reasons. A list of heritage listed property is available from Strathfield Council's customer service centre [phone: 9748 9999] and our website also contains information on heritage listings at www.strathfieldhistory.org.au. If members are interested in the heritage process, there is some good documentation available most provided by the NSW Heritage Office, which is available at www.heritage.nsw.gov.au or I can send you information if requested.

The Fox & Associates 1986 heritage study description of the Homebush Hotel stated that it was:

'Built in 1928, this two storey hotel is a symmetrical building constructed of a liver coloured brickwork with contrasting render detail. Between 1921 and 1933 Homebush' population increased by 97% and demand for housing and recreation facilities would have followed. The Homebush Hotel, located on a prominent corner location is well maintained and retains external detailing with a second storey balcony, recessed circular panels, simple brick detailing and a paraquet roof. The Homebush Hotel is of local significance as representing suburban development in Homebush and as an important landmark on a prominent corner location.'

The Homebush Hotel was also significant as it was one of the few hotels located in Strathfield Municipality. Strathfield Council declared most of the Municipality to be zoned residential in 1920, prohibiting the building of hotels and amusements within its' Council boundaries. The Homebush Hotel was built in 1928 but located in the former Homebush Council, which allowed the erection of hotels. Homebush Council was amalgamated with Strathfield Council in 1947.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Strathfield District Historical Society will be held on Wednesday 5th November 2003 at 8pm at Strathfield Community Centre Bates St Homebush. The guest speaker is Trish Skehan, from Concord Heritage Society, who will be speaking about aviator Ross Kingsford-Smith. Reminder that the December meeting will be the Silver Jubilee Dinner and held at the Strathfield South Bowling Club on 3rd December 2003.