



The Kernel

Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society

"Love and Cherish the City in which you live"

Newsletter

February, 2017

President's Report

By John White



Welcome to the 70th anniversary year of the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society!

Our society, founded in 1947 by a small group of people lead by Dr Ivor G Thomas, has lived to see many changes in our town. Dr Thomas observed at the time he suggested forming an historical society, that change was coming, and that it was important the history he saw all around him be recorded and preserved.

There were several objectives set for the society by those founding members, today we continue to reach for and achieve those objectives on a daily basis. One important, though unwritten objective which Dr Thomas must have had in mind, was the inclusion of everyone in the community in the appreciation of Campbelltown's history and heritage. To that end he invited speakers to lecture at society meetings. Each month we continue to invite speakers to address our meetings and inform us on aspects of our past, both local and general topics.

In the coming months we hope to reach out to more community members and we encourage you to invite all your friends and neighbours to attend our meetings and events. As part of our celebratory year we hope to have several events encouraging people to get involved and learn of our proud history, please lend a hand where you can in these events.

As a legacy to Val West, one of our treasured members, I hope that we can offer the community a heritage story writing contest during this year of our celebrations and suggest we name it "The Miss West Heritage challenge."

As part of our continuing endeavours to reach the Campbelltown community, Julie Crowley and Marie Holmes gave a presentation on Campbelltown's history to many residents of Macarthur Gardens Retirement Village on Australia Day. Also in the past week Julie and others took a similar presentation to six infants classes of Blairmount Public School. Both of these were well received.

We already have a number of tour bookings for February and March, the first being last Wednesday and we will welcome a group of over 40 people for morning tea and tour on February 28th. Visitors are coming from many areas and it is a pleasure to be able to show them Glenalvon as well as talk about our historic town.

1947-2017 - Celebrating 70 years

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Finding the McLeans and launching a Grist Mills

1950s. A shortage of housing and building materials in a post war baby boom. To build a house you first have to have the deeds of your land.

In Campbelltown, still a small country town, a family by the name of McLean have settled. Neil McLean has the vision to develop the town and devises a plan to give the deeds to families after just receiving a deposit, thus enabling them to apply for a housing loan. The basic plan has the underlying element of trust...can most people be trusted to do the right thing??

1960s. Campbelltown has more than doubled in size and is heading for 'City' status. The Baby boomers have grown up in a free-range existence and the town has many more clubs and services than it had earlier. The McLean family; Neil, Meryl and their two children, Rosalind and Ronald have left the district and with the passing of time nobody seems to have kept in contact with them.

Our next Grist Mills *Living on the St Elmo Estates: The story of one man's trust* is to be launched at 10.30am, Saturday, 18th March followed by morning tea.

We are hoping to get many of the people who lived on the St Elmo Estates to come and meet up with old friends.

'But wouldn't it be nice to have found some of the McLean family' was our thought as we planned the launch.

A very successful afternoon sitting with my companion Google, resulted in a lead and extreme excitement the next day when Rosalind McLean Fisher answered the phone almost immediately saying 'How can we do this? Where should we meet?'

The answer was the QVB, two days later and over a (longish) cup of coffee she talked of her parents and their lives AND she has replied to say she will attend the launch along with several of the McLean grandchildren.



On Display

A new addition to the furniture collection in the Library in Glenalvon is a secretary bureau which belonged to Dr Ivor G Thomas. It has generously been donated to the Society by Jan Dunphy (nee Bagley), who purchased it from Dr Thomas in the late 1950's.

It is in good condition and has 6 drawers and the fold down desk has 9 small drawers with ivory knobs. (We have not been able to find a secret compartment!) Unusually 5 of the larger drawers do not have handles or grooves so the key is used to open them.

This bureau compliments the 2 other pieces of furniture we have that belonged to Dr Thomas – a handsome bookcase with glass doors and an index card cabinet holding cards with transcriptions of headstones. The cabinet was bought by Dr Thomas from the Turrin family of Kentlyn



Val West

It is with much sadness that we note the passing of Val West on Thursday 9th February at Camden Palliative Care Unit. Val's story was featured in this newsletter last August and in it she told of her interesting life of teaching, travelling and her love of history.

Val was a member, colleague and loved and respected friend to all in our Society where she has been a member for ten years and served on the executive and museum committees. Val enjoyed showing visitors around Glenalvon House, especially the school groups and telling them about the families who lived there. She loved the gardens of Glenalvon, in particular the rose gardens and could be seen on most Mondays lovingly pruning and watering the roses.



As past students of Campbelltown Public School will remember, Miss West taught there for 30 years up to her retirement and many of our members and their children were taught by her. She was so pleased to have been able to attend the 140 Anniversary celebrations of the school in November last year. Val continued to teach and share her knowledge through U3A and the Literacy Group as well as talking to school groups on their visits to Glenalvon, where they were asked to "sit nicely with your hands folded in your lap" – 'old school' ways but imparting good manners and behaviour.

Val is survived by her sisters and brother and their families, to whom we send our sincere condolences.

A Memorial Service was held on Friday, 17th February giving her large family, her friends from the societies to which she had given time and her many ex-students a chance to remember her with love and respect.

Rest in Peace, Val, you will be greatly missed.



Muriel Jones

The wife of our life member Arthur Jones, Muriel passed away late last year aged 93. We are indebted to Arthur for writing these details of Muriel's life.

Muriel Jones soon after coming to Minto as wife of the new headmaster of Minto Primary School in 1962, began making her own contribution to that and other public schools. First as a teacher, deputy and mistress in Infant Departments at Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown; secondly through supporting associations of parents and citizens at those schools and those attended by her five children - Minto Primary, and the

High Schools at Campbelltown and Ingleburn.

For Muriel, being Governor of the 35th District of Quota International Inc in October 1991 was another opportunity to exercise inclusiveness, to reach out to the membership and to bring out the best in others. Not surprisingly she practised it at home. It takes a deep love of others. This she had for her daughters and sons. Equal rights to education and understanding, to differences, to making mistakes or achieving success.

She was a great mother.

No wonder when neither operation nor radiation could be applied to halt her cancer she wanted to pass away at home. Each of her children, Howard, Lynette, Ian, Susanne and Peter agreed to ease her way. With the sure guidance of the Palliative Care Nurses this they did until 27 December 2016, just a few days short of the anniversary of her marriage to Arthur, seventy-two years ago.

James Summers

We also note the passing on February 8th, of James (Jimmy) Summers, aged 89. A one time member of the Society, Jimmy was a long-time member of Campbelltown City Bowling Club. In earlier years he had been a member of St. Peters Church Tennis club and was a close friend of Jim and Stella Vernon, and Geoff and Beryl Vernon. He had worked as linesman with Nepean River County Council along with Geoff Vernon who was an electrician. In an interview with Andrew Allen from Campbelltown Library, Jimmy remembers swimming in the cattle tank with David Milliken, and catching fish and eels.

The Society has a number of items donated by Jimmy, including a school slate from the 1930's

James Summers was the beloved uncle, great uncle and great-great uncle. His funeral was held on Monday February 13th at Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

1947 – Celebrating 70 years – 2017

On July 25th 1947 the initial step for the formation of our Society was taken when Dr Ivor G Thomas gave a supper party to a number of local residents.

There were 21 foundation members including Dr Thomas who was elected as the first president.

The name was chosen from a number of others as the best representation of the area it has now served for seven decades, and many more to come.

It is fitting that the Ivor G Thomas Memorial Lecture this year should focus on this milestone, and also on the man who had a strong love of history and a dedication to Campbelltown.

One of the aims that were laid at this foundation meeting was -

'The acquisition of a site and erection of a permanent building, possibly of Georgian or Macquarie style, as a home for the Society, and museum of historical records and objects.'



How pleased Dr Thomas would be to see us now in beautiful Glenalvon, and this is thanks to the foresight of Hilda Davidson (nee Bursill), who was the last owner of Glenalvon. In 1965 Hilda approached the State Planning Authority with a view to them purchasing and preserving the house.

In this year – the 50th anniversary of her death, we are also remembering and thanking Hilda. Two years after her death the house was purchased by the SPA and then restorations began.

We have formed a sub-committee to gather stories, photographs etc for this event and are asking for members to share their memories of Dr Thomas and the early days of the Society.

If you would like to contribute please contact Kay Hayes on 0418 493 676 or email vicepresident@cahs.com.au

Dates to Remember

Monday 6th March. Open Day at Glenalvon. 10 am to 1 pm.

Saturday 11th March and 20th March. Open Days at Glenalvon. 10am to 1 pm

Saturday 18th March. Launch of Grist Mills - *Living on the St Elmo Estates: The story of one man's trust*
10.30 am at Glenalvon, followed by morning tea.

Saturday 25th March Members Meeting. Time: 1.30pm at Glenalvon
Guest speaker: Peter Plowman Topic: 'Voyage to Gallipoli'
Afternoon Tea will be provided.

*"Presented to C.S.Brownrigg by Campbelltown Friends in
appreciation of services for local institutions
8.10.06" (this would have been 1906)*

The tray of the tea service is so inscribed and the South Coast Times of 27 October, 1906 reported –

Mr CS Brownrigg, District Works Officer has been presented with a silver salver and smoker's outfit on the eve of his departure from Campbelltown. The Hon. John Kidd presided and presented the salver on behalf of the subscribers. Mr Johnson presented the smoker's companion. Several speeches were made.

The service has been recently generously donated to the Society by the descendants of C.S. Brownrigg, arranged by Anthony Brownrigg from South Australia.

Little is known of his time in Campbelltown, but he was obviously held in great esteem. Born in 1852, in Dublin, Samuel Charles Stanley (known as CS) resided in Campbelltown and was District Assistant Engineer. His father William came from County Wicklow, Ireland. In June 1884 Charles Stanley married Leila May Machattie, daughter of a prominent Bathurst family. They had five children and in our collection we have two photos of Stella born in 1888 and died in 1976.

Another article in 1912 tells of an accident CS Brownrigg sustained at Central Station which resulted in him losing his left leg at the knee and his right foot.

He died in Narrandera in 1915. Leila lived in Leumeah Rd, Campbelltown prior to her death in 1943 and is buried in St. Peters churchyard. Their daughters Stella, Valerie and Shelagh are buried with their mother.



Need a Justice of the Peace? Greg Dillon can help you out! Contact him via email on

greg_dillon@iprimus.com.au

We acknowledge the assistance of the office of Dr Mike Freeland MP

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People Profiled

In this issue of the Kernel we are profiling an Executive Committee member. So where better a place to start than to ask our President, John White, to write a little of his life's story.

John White

Like many emigrants, arriving in Sydney was both exciting and a little intimidating. The soon to be replaced iconic impression of most arrivals in the 60's and 70's forever identifying Sydney as the airplane approaches Mascot, "*look at all those red roofs*". Then, the auspicious start to my new life, sit in the plane and be sprayed with insect killer... as one is from time to time.

It was December the 30th, 1969, after a 10 or so hour flight from Hawaii, enduring the hot and noisy tin shed which was then Sydney customs. Having just turned 17, I was most embarrassed by having to stand with my family of 6 while our mountain of luggage was cleared. This was about the time parents had started having fewer children, of course my parents had not stopped at two.

Having no relatives here, my family were met by people my father had known briefly, sometime before. In a station wagon, with trailer piled high and a following sedan, we proceeded to Campbelltown. No motorways then, I think we travelled straight down the Hume Highway. I remember having the chance to inspect every intersection where each red light seemed to stop us. I asked Dad's friend what all the broken glass was at the intersections, no laminated windscreens then and of course everyone was on the wrong side of the road.



Within days we had moved into a house on Kings Road, Ingleburn. Looking out the kitchen window I could see Ingleburn High School across the paddocks, the source of that "little intimidating" I mentioned earlier. Having to start a new school is not good at any time, but at 17 one has to face that challenge alone. I still wonder why the headmaster did not appreciate that I was the only guy in school who wore bellbottom school trousers. If there was one certain thing I was taught during my short time at Ingleburn High, it was how to be an Aussie guy. I began developing (sorry) my interest in photography a year later in the Grace Brothers Roselands Camera

Department. In roundabout and convoluted ways, through various employers, that interest in photography led to my becoming Managing Director of the View-master Ideal toy company in Australia; that was 1981.

The intervening years were filled with friends, flats, parties, travel and marriage. My wife, who many of you know, is the young lass I met on a blind date. Being Scottish she arranged for us to save enough to move from the Lakemba party flat to a first home on Lindesay Street in Leumeah. It was at about this time I started noticing the old buildings around Campbelltown, but being in one's early 30's, there are other things than history to occupy one's time, children for instance.

Two boys arrived in Lindesay Street, the house was small even after we extended it and so we moved. Kanangra Crescent, Ruse was just right while the kids were small. I remember it was a Lyndsay Edmonds Home, it had character and even a tiny hand basin in the WC. While at Ruse, Cub Scouts and T-Ball activities came into my life. Strange how children keep one busy on weekends. The toy business, we had also distributed cameras, involved a fair amount of interstate travel, showing me the Australia I would otherwise have not seen. It also meant I was away from home, a lot.



In 1989 I joined the American Coleman Company as their General Manager for the South Pacific. This job involved an enormous amount of travel. Looking back I guess I was away more than at home during the ten years I was there. We moved again while I was at Coleman, this time to Katherine Street, Leumeah. It was a large two story house with space enough for a dedicated room with one son's drum kit and guitar amplifier(no neighbours complained) and another room with the other son's video games, saxophone and baseball trophies. I even had a room for my souvenirs of New Guinea and the Pacific Islands.

Many have heard me say, my favourite cities in the world are Brussels and Verona. It was in these cities where I actually had enough free time to sightsee the historic buildings in some depth. I learned to enjoy the history of those buildings as well as the stories of their occupants and circumstances. When in England, I found the same enjoyment, but had less

opportunity to sightsee. Whenever possible during my travels I did visit museums and historic buildings, there were many weekends spent between business meetings doing so. For example, during North Queensland sales trips I spent my weekends on Hamilton Island, no museum though. On one island tour, flight connections caused a layover of 4 days, in Tahiti. I must say there is one place I did not enjoy visiting, I had to go there once and never went back. I said at the time it was reverse culture shock. New Guinea gave me a feeling of unease from the start. My distributor there, an Australian, born in PNG, spoke numerous local dialects and had vast experience in the highlands as well as the cities. He employed two highlanders to guard his business premises in Lae. Both slept in a 20 foot container with windows cut into it, both carried their bows and arrows with them everywhere, both had shot trespassers. My guide during visits to retailers of my products gave me a safety talk before we ventured out, always stand facing each other, in other words you watch my back and I will watch yours. He had witnessed men hacked to death on one of his trips through the highlands and was a little cautious. One thing that I regret during all my travels, is not taking a good camera with me. I sometimes bought a Kodak instamatic to snap a few shots on those free weekends, I should have taken thousands of photos and written a travel diary. Next time perhaps.



After I left Coleman I had much more time at home, but of course had missed my sons growing into their teens, another regret. We eventually moved from Leumeah to a more reasonable sized home at St Helens Park where we live today; it's just right. No travel also allowed more time and a developing inclination, to stop and see the heritage around me. I had noticed the sandstone house in Lithgow Street many times, I even took photos over the fence when no one was there. I think it was in 2009 when I was walking by one day with my camera and saw a person enter the driveway. I thought about it a few minutes, then walked up the drive and followed the sounds of voices to the kitchen door, knocked and asked the question we hear at the society all the time "What is this building?". I still enjoy telling people the same thing I was told that day, the story of Glenalvon and the Historical Society who live there. I was given permission to take some photos and also handed a membership application. I have spent most of my time since joining the society learning of the heritage we share here in Campbelltown. I now work at finding ways to encourage others to appreciate that heritage and to discover that the place they live in is worth treasuring.
