

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Incorporating the Ku-ring-gai Family History Centre

Patron: The Mayor of Ku-ring-gai

Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society, the National Trust of Australia (NSW), The Society of Australian Genealogists, and the NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies, Inc.

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January/February 2016 Newsletter

Douglas Grant -

A Scottish Aborigine

The talk at our November general meeting was given at very short notice by Tony Griffiths. Tony's subject this time was the life of Douglas Grant, an Aboriginal man of the Ngadjoni tribe, orphaned as a baby when his parents were killed in north-east Queensland in 1887.

He was rescued by two employees of the Australian Museum. One of them, Robert Grant, smuggled him on a ship to Sydney in 1888. He was "adopted" by Grant's Scottish immigrant family, then living in Lithgow, and raised equally as one of Robert and Elizabeth's two children. Christened Douglas after the Duke of Hamilton, head of the Grant clan, and steeped in Scottish culture, Douglas spoke with a pronounced Scots accent which astonished the people he met.

He started school at Lithgow, continuing at Annandale Primary School when the Grant family moved there in 1892. At this point Tony digressed to warn us that we should not believe everything that has been recorded in Wikipedia or even the ADB. For example it is recorded, even at Scots College itself, that Douglas was a student there. This is completely untrue, and Tony believes that it was just another of Douglas's jokes stemming from the idea that, because of Annandale's Scottish connections (through its first resident - Major Johnston), the school adopted the Scotch thistle as its emblem and was locally known as the "Scot" school. While there Douglas received a good education, he wrote well and could draw.

Apprenticed at Morts Dock in Balmain he qualified as a draughtsman in 1910, but there was an undefined problem, possibly related to alcohol,

Continued on page 3

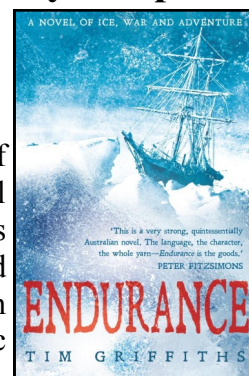
General Meeting

Saturday 20 February 2.00pm

Tim Griffiths

"Endurance"

The Adventurous life of Frank Hurley, official photographer of World Wars I & II, film-maker and member of both the Mawson and Shackleton Antarctic expeditions.



Afternoon Tea will be available

Visitors Welcome

Family History Meeting

Saturday 6 February

11.00 am: Workshop – Protecting and Organising your computer.

2.00 pm: General Meeting, followed by:

Migrants Extraordinaire – The Hennings

Paul Storm, President of Willoughby District Historical Society and Museum, will talk about the Henning family who migrated to Australia and lived in NSW and Queensland. A trail of revealing written material variously survived to be much later discovered: philatelic acquisitions 150 years later proved to have hidden secondary value. Hear see and handle original historic documents in a fascinating story of serendipity.

Afternoon Tea will be available

Visitors Welcome



New Editor Needed

We are sad to report that after so kindly stepping in at short notice and taking over the production of the newsletter nearly eighteen months ago, Julia Green is no longer able to continue in that role owing to family commitments. In the meantime, Jenny Joyce will take over the role as Acting Editor until a new person can be found to fill the role. While this happens the newsletter may have to be cut down in size. If anyone is interested in helping in any way, please contact Jenny. Her details are on the back page.

Special Interest Groups

German SIG

At the last meeting we discussed German research obstacles, the establishment of a group project about our German ancestors and the proposal to compile a *German Research Source Reference*.

Next Meeting: Monday 8 Feb 2016, 1.30pm. (no bookings necessary)

Irish SIG

The next meeting of the Irish SIG will be on Friday 12 Feb 2016 at 1.30pm (no bookings necessary). Bring along details of any recent success stories, and we will talk about ways to find information when the parish registers are missing.

KHS Tours

**** Please Note: A tour folder for information and bookings is in the KHS Research Centre. Bookings can only be made in person at the centre. For further information call the Rooms on 9499 4568**

Fish and Ships

(Thurs 25 February)

Visit to the Sydney Heritage Fleet starting with a tour of the 'James Craig', then board the 1943 motor launch 'Harman' for a short harbour tour and lunch at the Maritime Museum. Cost for the day is \$65 including simple lunch. Note there will be an earlier than usual starting time. Opening date for bookings Saturday 16th January and closing date 15th February. All booking only accepted with payment.

Sydney Tramway Museum, Loftus

(Wed 16 March)

How long since you have ridden in a tram? This is your chance to 'step back in time' and do just

that – along with a tour of this most interesting Museum. Cost for the day is \$50 which includes a packed lunch. Opening date for bookings Monday 15th February and closing date 7th March. All bookings only accepted with payment.

ANSTO Discovery Centre, Lucas Heights

(Tues 5 April)

This is a 2 ½ hour tour of Lucas Heights, an important national asset. Lunch will be at the Como Hotel where you will hear an interesting little story (unrelated to the day's focus but fascinating none the less). Lunch will be at your own cost. As this site is governed by strict security rules there will be some extra information required from visitors. Opening date will be Monday 7th March and closing Date 21st March. All bookings only accepted with payment and in this case the extra information required by ANSTO.



World War I Writers at the launch of the latest volume

Book Launch

The second volume of *Rallying the Troops* was launched by the Hon. Paul Fletcher to great acclaim at St John's Church Hall on the 6th December 2015. About 100 people attended the launch, ably conducted by MC, David Wilkins. Speeches were given not only by Paul, but also by Father Keith Dalby (incumbent of St. John's Church), KHS President Graham Lewis, Mayor Cheryl Szatow, the former Mayor Jennifer Anderson, Major General Gordon Maitland and the principal project coordinator, Kathie Reith.

A light afternoon tea followed the formal part of the proceedings, and books purchased at the event could be signed by the two project coordinators.

Douglas Grant (cont. from page 1)

and he left to work at Belltrees sheep station at Scone, whose owner Henry White was a friend of Robert Grant. In May 1916 he joined the 34th Battalion, AIF where he rapidly rose to sergeant. Then just before the 34th was posted overseas he was moved to the 13th Battalion as a private. Tony found no reasons for the move and demotion and doesn't subscribe to the story that he couldn't go overseas with the 34th or be an NCO because he was an aborigine. There is no mention of his ethnicity in the army documentation.

Douglas's war was short, he sailed for Britain in August 1916 and was wounded and captured at Bullecourt in April the following year. Held in various POW camps, he worked in the coal mines at Wittenberg and at Zollen Camp and he was secretary of the Health Committee, liaising with the Red Cross and other organisations to obtain supplies for the POWs.

Repatriated to England, he went AWOL to visit Robert's cousin, Hugh Grant. There Douglas, with his Scottish burr, joked that *he was a poor wee Scot burnt black from the hot Australian Sun!* Discharged in July 1919 in poor health, he returned briefly to Morts Dock and then to the Small Arms Factory (SAF) at Lithgow. Unfortunately the work dried up and he was retrenched, so 1925 found him looking for work. He walked to Mildura, Swan Hill and Echuca, and even looked for work as far afield as Tasmania

Returning to Lithgow he became the secretary of the RSL, and in 1929 led a delegation protesting against retrenchments at the SAF, he also wrote fluently and extensively about the plight of Aborigines. He laboured for a short while on the Nepean Dams project when, due to stress and alcoholism, he was admitted to Callan Park military hospital. While there he constructed a pond and a model of the Harbour Bridge which can still be seen there today.

Then followed a gradual decline. Returning to Lithgow he suffered racial discrimination and moved to Eastwood and then Surry Hills, working in a cardboard factory near Central Station until 1949. In 1948-49 he lived with an army mate at Dee Why, warmly welcomed by the entire family, however after several visits to Randwick military

hospital he became a resident in the Bare Island War Veterans Home. He died there in 1951 aged 67, and is buried in a military grave in Botany Cemetery.

Douglas Grant was a well-educated and articulate Aborigine with a thick Scottish accent! To his comrades he was cherished as a remarkable figure who proved to be both honest and quick thinking. Tony Griffiths received a rousing applause for his talk and for stepping into the breach at such short notice.

Doug Milne



*Douglas Grant in army uniform 13th Battalion AIF
(Australian Dictionary of Biography)*

Treasurer's Update

The Committee has decided it is a good idea to update everyone on our financial status via the newsletter.

So here is a condensed update of our Income and Expenditure to the end of December 2015:

Book Sales: We launched Volume II of Rallying the Troops on 6th December. We sold 32 books at our launch, of which 18 were follow up sales from Volume I. We have now sold 79 books at a net surplus of \$1,655 so are well on the way to recovering our cost. Many thanks to the hard work of the writers involved in the Rallying the Troops series.

Our book sales for the year to date of all the books available have netted us \$2,654 income for the Society.

Tours: Once again we must recognise and thank the hard work of our Tour Volunteers. Their hard work has netted us \$1,204 a net surplus to date.

Income: As well as this income we have earned \$4,682 from donations, interest, copying and printing, raffles, research and Society bags. However, income from membership amounting to \$13,720 is still our main source of income.

Expenses: Our day to day running costs have amounted to \$7,573 to date.

The above figures mean we have a surplus available of \$14,687 to cover our day to day expenses for the rest of the year and should ensure we have a surplus to carry us forward into the next financial year.

A big thank you to all our volunteers; without their help our Society would not be as successful as it is.

Annet Latham, Treasurer.

Vale

Diana Rose and Peter Perry

We also extend our sympathies to the families of Diana Rose, who passed away on 23 October 2015, and Peter Perry, who passed away on 18 November 2015.

Heather Davidson

(11th September 1931 - 31st December 2015)

It is with great sadness we report the unexpected death of Heather Davison on December 31st 2015. Heather joined the Society in 1995 and was a volunteer and very active member. For a number of years she was the volunteer liaison person and also spent hours filing hundreds of real estate advertisements. She enjoyed many Society trips and looked after Joyce Ryerson when they were on duty.

Heather quietly, practically, cheerfully and generously gave her time in the service of others. Her Scottish parents with her brother, John arrived in Australia shortly before she was born. Her father was with the RAN and the family lived for a time on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour from where she travelled by ferry to Neutral Bay School and later attended North Sydney Girls' High School.

She trained as a nurse in 1950s at RPAH. However, her nursing career finished after she married Ken in 1953 and they raised three children. Together they built their home in Turrumurra in 1958

and moved in shortly before their older daughter was born.

For 17 years Heather worked as an assistant at the Handley Avenue Kindergarten in Turrumurra. She loved this job: it was convenient to home and allowed school holidays.

After retiring from paid work, she became an unstoppable volunteer in diverse areas. She loved her garden and in 2014 was recognised as having been a volunteer with the Royal Botanical Gardens for 25 years. For almost 12 years she gave one day per week to the Lady Davidson Hospital Museum at Turrumurra.

Heather was able to maintain her independence and interest in world affairs, movies and concerts. She was a loyal friend to many and maintained contact with people from her childhood, school, nursing, work and various associations. She was devoted to and had justifiable pride in all her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and was known to all of them as "Heddy".



Show and Tell from Christmas Family History Meeting

Family Matters

November Family History Meeting

11.00am Session: 19 members attended a Q&A session on *File Extensions and Computers in General*. A panel of Jo Harris, Jenny Joyce and Graham Lewis answered the various computer questions.

2.00p.m. Session: Jo Harris opened the meeting by welcoming everyone especially our speaker, Tom Power and his wife, Trish. She then read an excerpt from Cobley's book for Sunday, 2 November which stated that '*3 officers, 8 private marines and some convicts went up the Harbour to Rose Hill to choose a spot for a redoubt and other necessary buildings. Governor Phillip and Mr Alt accompanied them and Lieutenant John Johnston was in charge. Robert Rope was christened, and Mary Bishop and Samuel Day were married. There was hail, dark gloomy weather and dreadful lightning. The temperature was 66 to 68 F.*'

Book Reports

Betsy and the Emperor by Anne Whitehead was recommended.

Cemetery Visits

St Kilda Cemetery's Jewish section was visited via the internet. (Many cemeteries have photos of headstones which can be viewed on the net.)

Speaker

Jo then introduced the speaker, Tom Power, a Roseville resident, and chairman of the Great Irish Famine Commemoration committee. He went to school in Tipperary, trained to be a priest and then a teacher before being sent to Australia. While here he left the priesthood, later married and had two sons.

After the decision was taken to have a monument to the Famine, the first challenge was to decide what sort of monument to have – a statue or something more modern. Once a modern one was selected the next big challenge was to raise the necessary funds. Irish President, Mary Robinson, and Irish Ambassador, Richard O'Brien, also gave their support and encouragement. The monument was intended to cost \$24,000 and take 12 months to build, but took 4 years and cost \$350,000. The monument was to be on the south wall near Hyde Park Barracks. In September, 1998 Mary McAleese, the then Irish President removed the first stone from the wall so building could commence. It was finally opened on 28 August, 1999 by Sir William Deane, the then Governor General whose Irish ancestor, Patrick Deane with wife, Ellen had come out to Australia in 1852.

A vote of thanks was then moved by Noel Blake.

Lucky Door Prizes

'Roots and Branches' by Errol Lea Scarlett was won by Jean Smith; 'Lower North Shore' by Catherine Warren was won by Trish Power; and 'Currency Lass' by Margaret Reeson by Edie McDonald.

December Family History Meeting

2.00 pm Session: Jo Harris opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, saying that this would be an informal meeting with no agenda. There would be a Show and Tell session followed by a Wedding Photo Quiz.

Show and Tell: Ten members had brought along family items to show.

JAN SPARGO – A set of three implements which were 'burnishing agates' used to obtain a mirror finish on bronze.

ELAINE TURNIDGE – Two teddy bears, a 'Chrissy' bear and a 'Heritage' bear, the latter made by Elaine from a variety of scraps of fabric, lace and buttons.

MARIE RUMSEY – Her mother's autograph album, now 97 years old with all the fascinating rhymes so much used at the time.

JOAN STEBBING – Her grandmother's workbox containing all the original items from when she received it at the age of six (140 years ago).

CHERYL KINSEY – Photos of the beautiful wedding dresses her mother had made over 60 years as a dress-maker including Cheryl's own dress.

SHIRLEY MORLEY – A wooden noughts and crosses game made by her nine year old son in 1970s and enjoyed by all the family since.

PETER BIDENCOPE – A photo of his grandfather's shop in Hobart where he was a tailor and hat manufacturer. Peter brought it in a brown paper carrier bag with the shop's name on it.

DINAH WARNER – An Australian Commonwealth war badge made by her father from melted down toothbrush handles while he was stationed in New Guinea in WW2.

ELEANOR DAWSON – A ninety year old photo album containing photos of the delegates of an international expedition in Lapland, her mother being one of the only two women delegates.

JO HARRIS – Her husband John's christening set of a gold knife, fork and spoon in a fitted box, given him by his grandfather.

Wedding Photo Quiz: Jo had requested that members bring along a wedding photo and twenty-one people responded. Each person was given a list of the people in the photos and had to match the name to the numbered photo. This proved more difficult than expected and the highest number of photos matched with the names was eight. The three successful people were Yvette Reeve, Carolyn Darby and Neil Falconer.

A sumptuous Christmas afternoon tea followed with masses of delicious food and drinks. A big thank you to all the members who 'brought a plate' and to Margaret Holland and her band of helpers who set it out so beautifully.

Copy for Newsletter

General copy for publication should be sent to the Editor, (editor@khs.org.au), **as early as possible** but no later than the 15th of the month, unless otherwise arranged. Material should preferably be in electronic form.

New Members

We are very please to welcome the following as new members:-

Robyn Ford, Killara
Joanne Kenderes, Lindfield
Pamela Kiddle & David Havercroft, Mona Vale
Lisa Davis, Killara
Geraldine Boothroyd, West Pymble

Christmas Raffle

Congratulations to member Jeanette Bond for winning our 2015 Christmas Hamper. We understand she and her family had great fun finding all the goodies it included.

Where in Ku-ring-gai would you find this?



Do you know where this is located? Answer next month.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Life Member Max Farley on the publication of his book *Yarramalong Valley: History Notes*.

Research Centre Hours

The Society's Research Centre is at 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon, adjacent to the Ku-ring-gai Library. The Centre is open to the public from 10 am to 2 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (except the first Saturday of each month when members have a meeting).

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Diary Dates

Sat 6 Feb	11.00am	Protecting and Organising Your Computer
	2.00pm	Migrants Extraordinaire – The Hennings
Mon 8 Feb	1.30pm	German SIG
Fri 12 Feb	1.30pm	Irish SIG
Sat 20 Feb	2.00pm	Tim Griffiths – Endurance
Thu 25 Feb		Fish and Ships
Sat 5 Mar	11.00am	TBA
	2.00pm	Reminiscing – Photographs & Postcards from Years Gone By
Wed 16 Mar		Sydney Tramway Museum
Sat 19 Mar	2.00pm	Brian Fletcher – Anglicanism and the Shaping of 20th Century Australia

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	Jennifer Thredgold	9144 6320
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Family History Committee	Margaret Holland	9488 5452
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	Yvette Reeve	9987 0904
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