

NEWSLETTER

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Auction of 'Arnott-Holme'

By Cathy Jones

The Strathfield-Homebush District Historical Society has become aware of the proposed auction of 'Arnott-Holme', 65-69 Albert Road Strathfield by estate agents, Belle Property. Until recently, this property was a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) education office. The property is owned by the NSW Government, having been purchased in 1954 for £12,000 by the NSW Department of Education for the purposes of establishing a school for disabled children. Though the use of the premises later changed to a TAFE education office, the property has been maintained in the Strathfield area for nearly 70 years as a public educational institution.

On October 28 2021, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that up to 19 TAFE campuses across NSW have been earmarked for sale. The Strathfield property was not mentioned in the article or other public reporting. Therefore, the erection of an auction notice on the site and no other public announcements, generated significant public concern about the future of the property and the privatisation of a publicly owned asset.

It is obvious from the response of many concerned local residents that there has been no community consultation regarding the sale of this publicly owned asset. According to an article in the Daily Telegraph, the State Government identified various education sites in Strathfield for disposal in a 2020 Business Case. In this report, 'Arnott-Holme' was valued at \$15 million and the Chalmers Road Public School was valued at \$14-\$18 million. It was also proposed to move this school to the Strathfield South Public School site.

The Society has sent a letter dated 25 August 2022 to Jason Yat Sen-Li MP, Member for Strathfield, requesting that he make representations to the NSW Government and Department of Education regarding this process, which appears to have not included any transparency regarding the closure of the TAFE office and plans for disposal of a public asset.

The property has significant historical and heritage value to the local community. It is a heritage item listed on Strathfield Council's Local Environmental Plan and is recognised by the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) Register of Significant Buildings in NSW as an item of historical and heritage significance.

'Arnott-Holme' was built in 1900 as a home for its owner William Arnott, founder of Arnott's Biscuits, Australia's largest biscuit company. The Federation style house occupies a large site set within a mature



Figure 1 Photo of 'Arnott Holme' by Cathy Jones 2022

garden landscape. After Arnott's death and until it was sold in 1954 to the Department of Education, it was owned and/or occupied by a number of prominent residents including Harry Jackett MP and Arthur Cozens, a merchant for British-American Tobacco Company and father-in-law of tennis champion Daphne Akhurst, whom the Australian Open Women's Trophy is named.

Annual General Meeting and 2021-2022 in Review

The Annual General Meeting has been called for Sunday 25th September 2022. A separate notification of the meeting and call for nominations of committee positions issued to members.

The Secretary's report of activities for 2021-2022 is as follows:

An online Strathfield History Talk via Zoom held on Wednesday 8th September and Saturday 11th September 2021. The talk was given by Cathy Jones with support from other members in hosting the session. Over 70 people participated in the webinars, which was very successful. Copies of presentations were posted online.

The Society prepared and held an exhibition on the Historic Houses of Strathfield at the Ironbark Gallery, Strathfield Council Library & Innovation Hub from December 2021 to February 2022. This exhibition was supported by Strathfield Council.

The Historic Houses of Strathfield explored the rise of the mansion houses in late 19th century and their eventual fate in the 20th and 21st centuries. The stories of the houses and the associated people also reflect the social, economic and political changes which occurred over a century of development in the Strathfield area. The Society also developed a short promotional video and a video of images (shown in the Exhibition space).



The exhibition opened at Strathfield Library by Heritage Architect, Clive Lucas OBE on Thursday 16 December 2021. An address was also given by Strathfield Council's then Chief Executive Officer, Henry Wong.

The talk that supported the exhibition was cancelled due to COVID. Council has requested that the exhibition be re-shown in December 2022 to February 2023. The talk will be rescheduled and held during this time.



Figure 2 Advertisement for the Opening Night of the Industrial Heritage of Strathfield Exhibition

The Industrial Heritage of Strathfield Exhibition, *Minding Our Business* was held from June to September 2022 at Strathfield Library as a joint exhibition by Strathfield-Homebush District Historical Society and Strathfield Council. The Society provided research, photos and objects for the exhibition displays. The Society also developed a short promotional video (for YouTube) and a video (shown in the Exhibition space).

This exhibition explored the many businesses which were based on the Strathfield district from the 19th century, usually located close to rivers or transport such as railways and major roads. The district's central location facilitated transportation of materials and goods across Sydney and beyond from businesses as diverse as Arnott's Biscuits,

EMI/HMV records, Ford Car manufacturing, Textile factories, Flour Mills, Cattle and Sheep Stockyards and Brickworks. Industrial development also supported growth of worker populations and housing in the southern and northern ends of the Strathfield Council area in the early to mid 20th century.

The well attended exhibition was opened by Cr Matthew Blackmore, Mayor of Strathfield at Strathfield Library on Thursday, 16 June 2022. The event was also attended by the Deputy Mayor, Cr Karen Pensabene and Councillors Cai, Hall and Datta.

Two talks were held on the Exhibition on 31 July and 5 September 2022. Cathy Jones spoke on the history of Arnotts Biscuits and Jenny Macritchie, Council's Local Studies Advisor spoke on the History of the Homebush Saleyards.

Society Newsletters have been published bi-monthly. Newsletters were also circulated to neighbouring Societies at Burwood, Ashfield and Canada Bay.

The Society website at <https://strathfieldhomebushhistory.org> is being expanded with a growing collection of information for members and the public. Notices about actions taken by the Society such as those pertaining to heritage issues are published on the website. An online archive via eHive <https://ehive.com/collections/202145/strathfield-homebush-district-historical-society> of objects held by the Society is publicly accessible.

A digital historical archive has been developed and held on a closed access Google Drive, which covers a wide range of documents and images. All members are provided with access to the Drive. Documents are incrementally being added to the Drive.

Society physical archives are currently stored at the Dutton Community Centre in Augusta St Strathfield. Work is progressing on archiving and digitising records, though due to COVID-19 and time constraints, progress is slow. Beyond provision of storage space for archives, the Society does not have any physical premises.

Peter Smith, former member of the Strathfield District Historical Society died in July 2021. Smith, was former Alderman (1991-2000) and Mayor of Strathfield (1996-1997). Peter was a finance broker but best known in the local community for his outstanding community work across many organisations including Rotary and organising the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. Another former member Marlene Doran also passed away in late 2021. Marlene was involved for many years in a variety of community and charitable activities and received an OAM for her services to local history and establishing local banking services through the Bendigo Bank. Cathy Jones wrote obituaries for Peter and Marlene, which were published online.

In the next year, the Society will endeavour to grow its membership, digitise and develop inventories of its archives, participate in activities promoting and advocating on history and heritage and work cooperatively with other Societies and with Strathfield Council.

Museums of History NSW Bill 2022

Significant legislative changes affecting the NSW State Archives and Sydney Living Museums are about to take effect. The Museums of History NSW Bill 2022 was passed by the NSW Legislative Council and returned to the Legislative Assembly on 11 August 2022. The Bill repeals the Historic Houses Act 1980 and amends the State Records Act 1998. It transfers most of the functions of the State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales to the new entity Museums of History NSW, along with its staff. The Bill was supported by the government and the opposition. To date, it has not received assent of the Governor.

Museums of History NSW will bring together archive collections and the landmark buildings of Sydney Living Museums (SLM), including The Mint, World Heritage-listed Hyde Park Barracks and Rose Seidler House. As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on September 19 2022¹, “in a last-minute intervention, an open letter has been circulated to all lower house MPs opposing the Bill. It’s been signed by architect Clive Lucas, historian Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, Professor Lucy Taksá, former chair of State Records NSW, Alan Ventress, a former director of State Records NSW, and Dr Peter Watts, founding director of the Historic Houses Trust, a predecessor of SLM. This group claims that this proposal carried serious integrity risks for public accountability and governance of the archives. The group wrote that “MPs should be alarmed that no state archives anywhere in the world are managed under the arrangements proposed in this bill, with the collection split between two agencies and two pieces of legislation”.

Ahead of the institution’s creation, it was announced the Museum of Sydney, site of the Sydney’s first government house, would be transformed into an Indigenous cultural space.

2022/23 Membership renewals

Membership renewals are now due. Payments from 1 July 2022 will cover until June 2023. Membership fees help pay for necessary expenses such as RAHS Affiliation fees, lodgement fees to Department of Fair Trading, website costs etc. Membership fees are: Individual \$15, Corporate \$50, Concession \$10 Family \$25 (one household) and Not for profit organisations/schools \$25. Fees can be paid by fund transfer to the

¹ Morris, L, (2022, September 19), ‘Controversial plan to merge museums slammed as ‘bizarre’ by experts’, Sydney Morning Herald, viewed at <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/new-museum-body-labelled-a-risk-to-nsw-state-archives-20220912-p5bhav.html>

Death of Queen Elizabeth II

On 8 September 2022, Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms, including Australia, and the oldest living and longest-reigning British monarch, died at the age of 96 at Balmoral Castle in Scotland. She was succeeded by her eldest child, Charles. Charles III was proclaimed King Charles as head of state of Australia on 11 September 2022 at a ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra.

A state funeral service was held for the Queen at Westminster Abbey on 19 September 2022, followed by a committal service later that day at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. The Queen was interred in the King George VI Memorial Chapel at St George's. A commemorative public holiday was announced in Australia for the 22 September 2022.

The Queen celebrated her 70th Anniversary or Platinum Jubilee of her ascension to the throne earlier in 2022. The Queen visited Australia on sixteen occasions. She is not known to have visited the Strathfield district, though on her 1954 tour, she visited the nearby Concord Park and the then Concord Repatriation Hospital (now Concord Hospital).



Figure 3 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW : 1876 - 1954), Saturday 6 February 1954, page 4

A speech from the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese is reproduced below²

With the passing of Queen Elizabeth the Second, an historic reign and a long life devoted to duty, family, faith and service has come to an end. This is a morning of sadness for the world, for the Commonwealth and all Australians. It is a day of profound sadness and grief for the Royal Family who have lost a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. The person who for so long was their greatest inner strength.

Australian hearts go out to the people of the United Kingdom who mourn today, knowing they will feel they have lost part of what makes their nation whole. It is a time of mourning for the people in Britain, across the Commonwealth, and indeed around the world. There is comfort to be found in Her Majesty's own words: "Grief is the price we pay for love."

This is a loss we feel deeply in Australia. Queen Elizabeth II is the only reigning monarch most of us have known—and the only one to ever visit Australia. And over the course of a remarkable seven decades, Her Majesty was a rare and reassuring constant amidst rapid change. Through the noise and turbulence of the

² <https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/media-centre/queen-elizabeth-ii>

years, she embodied and exhibited a timeless decency and an enduring calm. Her Majesty served our nation and the Commonwealth for 70 years.

She is the longest-reigning monarch in British history and, remarkably, the second longest-reigning monarch of a sovereign state in world history. Her life of faithful service will be remembered for centuries to come. From the moment the young princess became Queen, Her Majesty's dedication to duty and service over self were the hallmarks of her reign. Performing her duty with fidelity, integrity, and respect for everyone she met. We saw those qualities each time she visited our shores — and she graced us on 16 occasions during her reign, travelling to every state and territory across our vast continent.

Her first visit, with Philip, began on the 3rd of February 1954 — just eight months after her coronation. It was the biggest single event ever organised in Australia and it remains a defining moment in our nation's history. Some 7 million Australians — or 70 per cent of our population at the time — turned out to catch a glimpse of the young Queen passing by. Queen Elizabeth II was a wise and enduring presence in our national life. Sixteen prime ministers consulted with her — and sixteen governors-general served in her name.

Throughout her reign, Queen Elizabeth II showed a deep affection for our country. As she said at the Sydney Opera House in the year 2000:



Figure 4 Railway Bridge on Parramatta Road decorated for the Queen's visit in 1954

"[S]ince I first stepped ashore here [...] I have felt part of this rugged, honest, creative land. I have shared in the joys and the sorrows, the challenges and the changes that have shaped this country's history. Her Majesty celebrated our good times, and she stood with us during trials and hardships.

Happy and glorious, but steadfast too. In particular, we recall the sympathy and personal kindness she extended to Australians afflicted by tragedy and disaster — from floods and bushfires to wars and a pandemic.

Her words and presence were a source of comfort, hope and solace for millions of Australians. Queen Elizabeth II has been a wise and encouraging guide, always wanting the best for our nation and greeting each change with understanding, good grace and an abiding faith in the Australian people's judgement. From her first trip here, it was clear Her Majesty had a special place in our hearts. And we, in hers.

In the coming days, the Governor-General and I will be heading to London where we will meet The King. We will convey the sorrow of Australians as well as our best wishes to him, and the Queen Consort, as he takes on his duties as Sovereign. Today marks the end of an era, the close of the second Elizabethan age. This time of mourning will pass, but the deep respect and warm regard in which Australians have always held Her Majesty will never fade. May she rest in eternal peace.

Connecting Aeolian Generations

From our neighbouring Society, City of Canada Bay Heritage Society, a new exhibition at their museum, 1 Bent Street, Concord on 2, 3, 5, 8, 12 & 15 October from 10:00am to 4:00pm. The exhibition will be officially launched on Saturday, 1st October at 6:00 pm. If you would like to attend please email heritage@canadabayheritage.asn.au as soon as possible as places will be limited.

Nestled in the cradle of the Tyrrhenian Sea between Naples and Sicily, the Aeolian islands of Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Stromboli, Panarea, Filicudi and Alicudi were forged by the clashing of tectonic plates.



Ongoing seismic activity and the decimation of Malvasia vineyards lead to a mass migration in the early 20th century to countries like Australia, where today some of these families span four generations.

Known in Sydney for their Italian fruit shops, Aeolians established a vast number of independent businesses in their newly adopted home – some becoming household names such as Mezzapica Cakes and Gelato and the Mediterranean House reception centre. They have also become leaders in the community with prominent Aeolian figures including journalist and political commentator, Bob (Bartolomeo) Santamaria; co-founder of AIE and former councillor and Mayor Drummoyne, Rossario (Ross) Maniaci; artist Vergil (Virgilio) Lo Schievo; singer Natalie Imbruglia; and founder of JB Hi Fi, John Barbuto.

By 1921, Aeolians were the largest regional group to become naturalised Australians and by the 1950s the community swelled to 30,000. With a desire to support newly arrived relatives, the first regional Italian society, the Circolo Isole Eolie was founded in 1903 and operated until WWII. Reborn in 1971, the Associazione Isole Eolie continues to hold events focused on culture, food and family.

From the 1950s, the City of Canada Bay Council and the Municipality of Lipari formalised a Sister City partnership to foster cultural and educational links. To celebrate 25 years of this relationship, a monument was erected in Piazza Eolie at Fred Kelly Place in 2013. From Volcanoes We Sailed: Connecting Aeolian Generations was developed in collaboration with the Aeolian community of Sydney to celebrate Aeolian Italians in New South Wales. Curated by Cristina Neri, the exhibition From Volcanoes We Sailed was first developed in collaboration with the Aeolian community of Melbourne and the Immigration Museum of Victoria in 2016.

This Exhibition, sponsored by the City of Canada Bay, was a featured component of the 2022 Ferragosto Festival.

Agricultural Shows in NSW

The Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) has launched Competition, Community, Country: Agricultural Shows in NSW, a new website that aims to introduce the history of NSW agricultural shows to the public, including students, teachers, and researchers. It is located at <https://www.rahs.org.au/competition-community-country-agricultural-shows-in-nsw/>

With a focus on local history, particularly regional history, this website offers a new way for individuals to learn about and connect with their local community. As RAHS President Dr Iain Stuart explains, 'the aim of the website is to encourage people to learn more about the history of agricultural shows, which are a vital part of the social fabric of regional and local communities across New South Wales. We don't know enough history about the shows and we hope through focusing on them we can shine a light onto this important part of New South Wales' History.'

The Agricultural Shows' homepage contains five different themes for people to explore. The topics were chosen through a collaboration between RAHS staff, Councillors and a Macquarie University intern. The themes highlight the social, cultural and educational significance of agricultural shows in NSW, from the early colonial period to today. The website is also a platform for members of the public to share their own stories of going to the show, which are highlighted in the Community Contributions section. The website themes are academically researched, and additional resources on agricultural shows can be found in the online reference bibliography.

Agricultural Shows was launched on 1 September 2022 and will be regularly updated with new information and content from our councillors, members, affiliates and more.

The launch of Agricultural Shows coincides with the launch of Country Calling: History on the Land, a special online event to be held by the RAHS on the 22 October 2022. Country Calling will feature a morning session on making history with Aboriginal peoples, and an afternoon session on the history of agricultural shows. More details for booking <https://www.rahs.org.au/event/country-calling-history-on-the-land/>

