

Vale - A.P. 'Peter' Doyle

7 April 1921 - 19 December 1994

Committee member Peter Doyle passed away at Wollongong Hospital on the morning of Monday, 19 December, after a short illness. He was survived by four daughters and a son, whilst just a week before his death he also held in his arms a new-born grandchild. Peter was well-known as the Research Officer for the Illawarra Family History Group (since 1985), and a member of the IHS committee since 1991. He was a descendent of Andrew Doyle, who had arrived in New South Wales as a convict in 1803, and went on to be a prominent settler of the Hawkesbury district. Printed below is a copy of the eulogy read at his funeral by Michael Organ.

Peter Doyle

I knew Peter Doyle during the last decade of his life - in a period when he was heavily involved in family history research and aspects of Australian history in general. We both shared an interest in family history and local history and I first met him in association with the Illawarra Family History Group, which was formed back in August 1984. Peter was one of the founding members (No. 40) and an integral part of its operations right up until his recent illness. He was still writing letters and answering inquiries early in November of this year, just over a month ago. As a committee member of the Family History Group since 1985, its long-time honorary research officer, Journal editor and contributor, he was one of its core officers, working diligently with his colleagues towards its ongoing success.

As part of my association with him, in 1987 Peter and I set up a small publication enterprise entitled Illawarra Historical Publications - to facilitate the issue of works relating to Illawarra history and his own Doyle family history. This was a very fruitful and enjoyable collaboration, culminating in the publication of his 180 page 'The Hawkesbury Doyles' during 1992, of which he was immensely proud. From 1990 he was also a committee member of the Illawarra Historical Society and an honorary Research Officer, assisting with enquiries, journal articles, and at the local Museum.

Peter was an indefatigable worker - full of an extraordinary amount of energy for one his age, and always ready to help with a research enquiry. He used his retirement years not to put his feet up and relax, but to begin a new career, as, one could say, a full-time family history researcher. He

became a de facto employee of Wollongong City Library, and was especially familiar with all the various computer programs and databases to aid the family historian. Practically every morning of the week he would be down at Wollongong City Library assisting inexperienced family historians in their task - using his wealth of knowledge to aid in this often difficult, time-consuming, endeavour. Patience was needed in such work, and Peter had an ample supply of this virtue - though it was not unlimited in this elderly gentleman, and he did not suffer fools lightly.

When not at the library he would be home answering letters, working on his own researches, preparing the Family History Group Journal, and fostering his many phone contacts; working at all hours of the day and night. As correspondence would develop over many months, or even years, the initial informal 'Dear Sir/Madam' would be replaced with something more friendly and intimate, and as a result many friendships developed.

During those 10 years that I knew him, Peter unselfishly assisted thousands of people in their family history research, making many, many friends along the way, and developing contacts all around the world. It goes without saying that his research skills, enthusiasm, and friendship will be sadly missed. His own family history research and his work with the Illawarra Family History Group, and the Illawarra Historical Society, are just some areas of the rich legacy he has left us - providing a resource which will be used for many years to come by those interested in Australian history.

I can only say that I was indeed honoured to have known and worked with Peter. He was especially gracious with my own family on the few occasions he found time to visit, and took much joy in the fact that I had named my first son Andrew - this being the name of his own forebear 'Andrew Doyle' who had arrived in Australia as a convict in 1803.

We loved this wonderful old man dearly and are saddened that he was taken from us too soon and too quickly. May he now rest in peace. Thank you.
