

MEMBER BECOMES FEATURE WRITER

Society member Anne Wood now has a weekly column in the Illawarra Mercury entitled "Tales from our streets". Much of the material will be familiar to many of our readers and members but the stories so clearly retold by Anne will no doubt find a new audience for details of our past and the Society offers its congratulations to Anne on both her initiative and receipt of an RAHS grant of \$1000.

Anne's work is also good for our old hands at the IHS to look over, for as Frank Osborne reveals in this issue of the Bulletin in his comments about the Brighton hotel, it helps to remind us of extra details about places, events and buildings we have stored away over the years.

Anne Wood's recent article on Caroline Chisholm and Shellharbour gave me much pause for thought.

Years ago I did a little work on the topic and, just last year, was asked by Wollongong Council Librarian, Neroli Pinkerton, whether there was any concrete evidence that Ms Chisholm actually accompanied the settlers whom she arranged to have settled to the Shellharbour district.

I was quite taken aback by Neroli's question because I had assumed this would have been settled conclusively by researchers years ago.

Amazingly, I could find no hard evidence to support the view that Caroline Chisholm was actually on the boat that brought the settlers to Shellharbour.

This raised the possibility that Ms Chisholm may have actually been more an administrator than any active participant in many of her settlement schemes.

Local tradition, one suspects, would support the view that Caroline did come down with the Shellharbour settlers, but trying to prove that this conclusively happened has proved difficult.

I have always agreed with the view expressed by Humphrey McQueen in his *Suspect History: Manning Clark and the future of Australia's past* (Wakefield Press, 1997, p.159) that we should "avoid the mistake of assuming that what is not in the archives could not have happened" but it is still quite salutary to be reminded how little of what may have happened in the past can be recovered with any certainty.