MEETING REPORTS

DECEMBER 2013 MEETING

Speaker: Jenny Dixon and Harold Cosier
Topic: “Keera Vale” restoration

The speakers for our December meeting focussed on the restoration work which they are undertaking on one of Wollongong’s most historic buildings, “Keera Vale”, a two storey Georgian style building located at 30 Bukari Street, West Wollongong, which was built in 1843-44. The residence was built for Judge Roger Therry, who was a member of the Legislative Council representing the Electoral District of Camden (1843-1845) and a Judge in the NSW Supreme Court (from 1846). A Barrister-at-Law, he was Acting Attorney-General for NSW (1841-43).

The new owners, Jenny Dixon and Harold Cosier, took possession of the property in January 2013 and their talk provided a fascinating account of the residence itself and details of the restoration work they are presently undertaking. The house originally stood on a large holding of land and was built from Sandstock bricks – the exterior was rendered with cement in the 1930s. The home originally had French doors leading to an upper veranda which wrapped around three sides of the house.

Harold and Jenny outlined how they planned to restore this fine, historic old home over the next five years or so. Part of this plan is to restore the exterior of the building to its original appearance. Presently they are carrying out extensive renovation and restoration on the ground floor area whilst living upstairs. They supported their talk with a number of interesting images of their ‘work in progress’ which includes the installation of a replacement internal wooden staircase. The original internal staircase had been removed and a reinforced concrete staircase added to the rear of the building; the house had been divided into two flats.

Their talk created a lot of interest and raised a number of questions with keen discussion between the speakers and the audience. This restoration is clearly a major undertaking and has historic relevance and importance for Wollongong. We look forward to a progress report down the track and wish Jenny and Harold all the very best in their venture.

NOVEMBER 2013 MEETING

Speaker: Tony Larnach-Jones
Topic: National Boer War Memorial

Our November speaker, Tony Larnach-Jones, who is the Deputy National President of the National Boer War Memorial Association, presented a very enjoyable and informative talk.

Tony provided a brief background to the Boer War in South Africa between 1899 and 1902 which involved two stages. Australia’s participation commenced at the outset in 1899 when Britain called upon the colonies of the British Empire to send troops to support its army in South Africa to fight the Boers who had declared war. With the aid of maps and diagrams, Tony’s talk provided a valuable insight into the Boer War and the significance of Australia’s contribution to this war.

Tony referred to the fact that the Boer War was the first war in which the Commonwealth of Australia fought as a nation. Overall, a total of 23,000 Australian soldiers and nurses served between 1899 and 1902. In addition, some 43,000 horses contributed to Australia’s war effort. Nearly 1,000 Australians made the ultimate sacrifice in South Africa. Six Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross and 161 people received other decorations. Australians and New Zealanders often fought beside each other in the Boer War and can be considered to be the first ANZACS. Boer War Day is commemorated throughout Australia on or about 31 May each year.

A National Boer War Memorial to honour and commemorate the 23,000 soldiers and nurses who served in South Africa between 1899 and 1902 is to be erected on a dedicated site at Anzac Parade in Canberra and a national Boer War Memorial Appeal is underway. Tony is playing a leading role in this important project. Much more can be found out about the Boer War Memorial Association at www.bwm.org.au.

Of particular local interest is the Memorial in MacCabe Park, Wollongong, which was erected by the citizens of Wollongong and unveiled at a public ceremony on 2nd June 1902, to commemorate the death of Trooper Frank Andrews who was killed in the Boer War at Ottoshoop in South Africa, August 1900, aged 20 years. An article about this Memorial (originally located outside the Town Hall on the corner of Crown and Kembla Streets) is contained in our IHS November/December 2013 Bulletin.