

# NOTICEBOARD

JULY 2022



## Lane Cove Historical Society Inc

*(Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society)*

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of Lane Cove the Cammeraygal and show respect to Elders past and present.

**PATRON:** Mayor Andrew Zbic

### Office Bearers & Committee 2021-2022

**President:** E. Prof Frances Christie  
**VP:** Dr Kay Leiper  
**VP, Secretary & Public Officer:** Patricia Madson  
**VP:** Margaret Bergomi  
**Treasurer:** Ajaya Jayarao  
**Convener- Friends of Carisbrook:** Jenny Harper

#### *Committee*

Bill McLaughlin  
Denis Smith  
Clio Wallace  
Karen Aubrey

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### Carisbrook Historic House

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Lane Cove 2066  
Mob: 0434 757 300

[www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au](http://www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au)

[www.carisbrookhouse.com](http://www.carisbrookhouse.com)

**Caretaker:** Terry Eakin  
**Editor:** Karen Aubrey



The work on the restoration of the scullery at Carisbrook House continues though it is not yet complete. The walls have been stripped back and a copper has been installed in the original position, so that the general appearance of the scullery has been recovered. The floor remains unfinished and the walls will need painting, while a sink needs to be installed. It has been an interesting project as it has unfolded and we look forward to seeing the end result.

Members need to be advised that when we next convene in the Lane Cove Library on 26<sup>th</sup> July, the evening will commence with a short Special General Meeting at which we plan to see adopted a new constitution for the Society. The constitution has not been revised for many years and it is felt that a renewal is needed. The NSW Department of Fair Trading lays down the guidelines that all registered societies must follow in creating their constitutions and it even provides a model that may be used. The newly revised constitution, prepared over many months and discussed extensively in the LCHS committee, is now proposed for adoption at the next Special General Meeting of the Society.

We would like to see it adopted at that meeting, so that we can then proceed to the Annual General Meeting, to be held on 23rd August. In a manner required by the guidelines, copies of the revised constitution will have been circulated to all members in advance of the meeting. It will be helpful if members can read this in preparation for the meeting.

I should note at this point that membership fees fall due at the end of June, so that July will be the month to renew. Renewal notices are also being sent out and we ask you please to renew soon, so that you are eligible to vote in the election for office bearers that will take place at the AGM. I should also note that the membership fees for the LCHS for 2022-23 have been set by the Committee at \$35 per individual

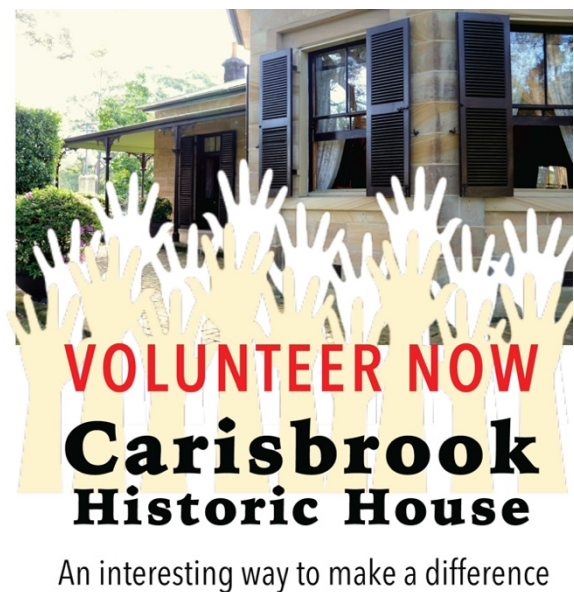
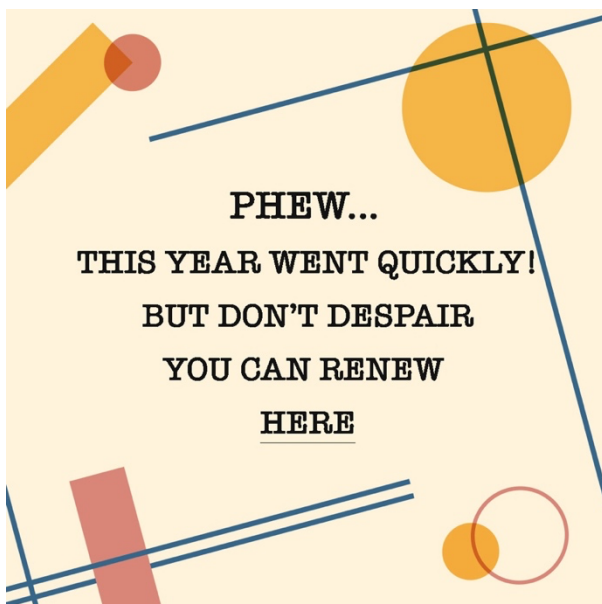
and \$55 per family. Both the latter fees represent increases of \$5 on the previous year, made necessary because of recent increased costs.

Commencing July 2022, the entry fees for Carisbrook House will be raised to \$12 per adult, \$10 concession and \$28 for a family.

After the Special General Meeting in July, we will proceed to listen to our Speaker at the Podium, **Mr. David Hunt**, who will talk about Volume 3 of his entertaining account of Australian history: *Girt Nation, the Unauthorised History of Australia*.

**Until next time,**

**Frances Christie President**



## *Focus on a Member*

### *Pat Madson*

Pat Madson is the secretary of the LCHS and she also manages the Society's extensive body of archival resources, including old clothing, books, old Bibles, household implements, china and pottery, pictures, photographs, newspapers, magazines and memorabilia of many kinds. She also prepares the changing series of displays maintained in the Museum room at Carisbrook.



## *Tour of St Mary's Cathedral June 16 by Karen Aubrey*

It's always a pleasure to read the Royal Australian Historical Society's newsletter which we have access to as members of the LCHS. The excursions that they host are often tempting but this excursion to St Mary's Cathedral was too hard to resist and I couldn't recommend it more highly. My mother was married there many years ago, so I've always thought it was special, but now I know it is special for so many other reasons. St Mary's is the largest Cathedral in Australia dating back to the earliest days of the colony and is one of the world's finest examples of an English-style Gothic revival building.

### **Pictured:**

1. The baptismal font 2. St Mary's Cathedral 3. Stained Glass window 4. Jenny & Judy next to the Ukrainian icon of Christ that has been placed in the Sacred Heart Chapel inside the cathedral as a special focus of prayer for Ukraine and her people 5. Part of our tour group with Barry our guide 6. Another stained-glass window, made in Birmingham, England and brought to Australia in the late 1880's.

### **Resources for more information:**

<https://www.stmaryscathedral.org.au>

<https://www.rahs.org.au>



## *June Devonshire Tea Open Weekend*



Pictured left are Noel Tait & Robyn Stutchbury, both members of the LCHS, enjoying the sunshine with their morning tea at Carisbrook in June. Robyn was a very worthy recipient of a Lane Cove Citizenship Award this year for her involvement in various community activities over nearly 6 decades. In fact, there's probably not a group in Lane Cove that she hasn't assisted in one way or another. You may know that a fire destroyed the University of Sydney's boat shed on Burns Bay in 2006 but you may not know the history behind the new one that has now replaced it. It was Robyn who led the charge to prevent it being built on Cunninghams Reach, it was a hard fought and long battle, but a victorious one for Robyn and her team who were known as the 'Friends of Cunninghams Reach!'

## *From the Collection*

### *The Tomkison Square Piano*

*By Pat Madson*

After Lane Cove Council had acquired Carisbrook House in 1970, members of the Historical Society started collecting period items for the house. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 1970 they purchased a square piano from Speers Auctions of Burwood for \$450, with delivery by “specialists in piano removals” F.M. Olde & Co., costing \$25. It now takes pride of place in the Carisbrook Drawing Room.

Our piano is now a rare item, although many squares were imported into Australia in the early days of the colony. Ours is one of only 280 pianos left from the original 15,000 manufactured by Thomas Tomkison, between 1799 and 1850.<sup>1</sup> While there are quite a few square pianos in Australia, there are only six known to be Tomkison Square pianos. Ours is the second oldest, dating September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1830. It is numbered 9353, and signed by the foreman at the factory, Mr Marshall. The Society has recently had some restoration work done on the piano, with key leads replaced and some hinge leather repaired. The square piano must be played only by skilled pianists, as a gentle touch



is required. When the lid is closed the square piano resembles a table pushed against a wall.

#### **What is a Square piano?**

This piano was developed around 1760 from earlier instruments, mainly the clavichord, the spinet and the harpsichord. It has horizontal strings arranged diagonally across the rectangular base above the hammers, with the keyboard set in the long side and with the sounding board above a cavity in the short side. Johannes Zumpe, a German, who gave his pianos a stronger base structure to resist the pull of the much thicker strings, was the first to introduce the English Square Piano to London in 1766. He combined elements into a small, practical, reliable and comparatively inexpensive instrument. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century patents for



important innovations were taken out, allowing heavier hammers, thicker strings and greater sound as well as extension to 6 octaves.<sup>1</sup> In England and France the last square pianos were made c1866. By then the modern style of compact uprights called ‘cottage pianos’ had become more popular for small rooms.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Who was Thomas Tomkison?**

Thomas was born c1764, son of a jeweller and goldsmith who lived in Covent Garden. He was apprenticed in 1778 aged 14 years to the Worshipful Company of Cooks. It is not known how he went from

<sup>1</sup> [www.friendsofsquarepianos.co.uk](http://www.friendsofsquarepianos.co.uk) accessed 19/05/2022

<sup>2</sup> [www.squarepianos.com](http://www.squarepianos.com) accessed 19/05/2022

the catering trade to musical instrument making, but not all trades had their own guild and music was performed in the eating houses, taverns and coffee houses so there were connections.

In February 1799 Tomkison had a notice printed in *The Times* that *T. Tomkison, Pianoforte Maker, having left Wardour-street ..... now carries on the business at no 55 Dean-street, Soho*. His pianos were being exported throughout Europe with records showing pianos in Scotland, France and Madrid. In 1804 Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia wrote, "I have received two pianos from Tomkison from London. They are truly divine." Tomkison kept up with the evolving technology in piano manufacture during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was a pioneer in both structural and decorative innovation. For example he supported his pianos on 4 legs rather than 6, and he introduced the "French Front" where by cutting back the case sides the performers' hands could be seen. From 1809-10 we find his nameboard cartouches declaring him to be "Maker to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" together with the 'Prince of Wales

feathers'. From 1811 Tomkison styled himself "Maker to the Prince Regent". In 1821 he made a grand piano for King George IV to be housed at the Royal Pavilion at Brighton.

Contemporary advice to travellers also confirms the suitability of his pianos for hot climates: "pianos most appropriate for hot climates were made by Clement, Kirkman and Tomkison". This was due to the reputation of his pianos for structural stability. His pianos went to India, the Americas and Australia. Tomkison ceased building pianos in 1851 and he died in 1853.

A point of interest is that one of Tomkison's granddaughters, Leopoldine Blanche Fauche who had married Richard Bunce (a surgeon) in Paris in 1848, died in Ballarat Victoria in 1878.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>www. jstor.org/stable/44083226 "No maker to be compared" accessed 19/05/2022

<sup>3</sup> Private email from Norman McSween to terry Eakin re Tomkison family history

## Highlights from the June 'At the Podium'

### Don't miss the next meeting in July

[www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au/at-the-podium](http://www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au/at-the-podium)

On 28<sup>th</sup> June our Speaker at the Podium was Mr Stewart Reed, who gave an interesting talk on the many hospital museums in Sydney. Together, they offer interesting aspects of medical practices in Sydney from the early days of settlement to the present. Stewart Reed has constructed a list of these museum with advice about where they are and we are sending this out to members. Stewart advises that you always ring to check that museums are open because since the Covid problems emerged, some are closed at different times. You can download your copy [HERE](#).

### Sydney's Medical Museums



Pictured above are some highlights from the meeting

# Upcoming Events

## 'Girt Nation'

The Unauthorised History of Australia Volume 3

### David Hunt

David Hunt tramples the tall poppies of the past in  
charting Australia's transformation  
from aspiration to nation

-an epic tale of charlatans and costermongers, of bush bards and bushier beards,  
of workers and women who weren't going to take it anymore!



LANE COVE LIBRARY

ENQUIRIES  
0434 757 300

Tuesday  
July 26  
7PM

**You could win \$1,000!**

Submissions may be

- \* a video doco of 7-15 minutes
- \* an essay 5,000-7,000 words
- \* an oral history of 30-45 minutes on video or audio recording, plus written transcription and short written rationale and summary



The Lane Cove Historical Society  
**LANE COVE HISTORY PRIZE**

Entries close 31 August

[www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au](http://www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au)

We have uploaded the winning entries of our History Competitions onto our website, including a transcript and recording of the oral history that Simon Cole did on Les Heap. So, if you were thinking about entering the competition this year and needed some guidance or inspiration you might want to check that out at:

<https://www.lanecovehistoricalsociety.com.au/lane-cove-history-prize>