Botany Historical Trust NEWSLETTER JUNE 2024



Robert Hanna

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Readers

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone for their good wishes during my recent hiatus due to a few health issues which are ongoing in the short term.

Our Senior Vice President, Chris Hanna, has been acting President and I thank him for stepping up and looking after the Trust affairs. He has done a great job!

Since its inception in 1994, the Trust has had five Presidents: Josh Wiggins, the retired chief engineer of Botany Council; Nancy Hillier, a local environmental activist, Jacqueline Milledge a local resident and lover of history, Anne Slattery a former Botany and City of Botany Bay Councillor and local historian and, then myself Rob Hanna.

This year sees the Botany Historical Trust celebrate its 30th anniversary, which is a significant milestone, so I thought it was appropriate to reflect on some of our highlights.

The Trust was established by the Honorable Ron Hoenig, MP, during his time as Mayor. Mr Hoenig was the Mayor of Botany from 1981 to 1996 and Mayor of the City of Botany Bayfrom 1996 to 2012. In 2012 he was elected to the NSW State Parliament representing the seat of Heffron. He is a life member of the BHT. The Trust aims to "encourage and ensure the preservation of the history and heritage of the Botany area".

In its first year, the Trust worked with the former Municipality of Botany Council to establish the George Hanna Memorial Museum at Mascot Library. Since then, the museum has hosted many exhibitions about the area's history. Other significant achievements of the Trust include:

- Recording oral histories from local residents about their memories of growing up and working in the area. These recordings have now been digitised so that they can be accessed in the future when cassette players are no longer available.
- Researching and documenting the origins of the street names in the greater Botany area.
- Supporting the research and publication of *Lauriston Park: the forgotten village* by Georgina Keep.
- Winning a grant to support the research and publication of *Postings* from the Front: The City of Botany Bay and World War I and upgrades to World War I heritage signs in Daceyville and local war memorials.
- Hosting lectures, book launches, and heritage walks about the history of the local area.
- Winning a grant to upgrade the interpretive signs and World War II Memorial at Arthur Park, Botany.
- Supporting the Nancy Hillier Memorial Lecture.
- Supporting the re-naming of 'Eastlakes Reserve' as 'Jack Mundey Reserve'.
- Assisting in judging the entries in the annual Ron Rathbone Local History Competition.
- Providing advice to Council on development applications for sites and places of historical significance.

If you would like to join the BHT, please phone **02 9366 3882** or email **local_history@bayside.nsw.gov.au** or

Robert Hanna

President, Botany Historical Trust

THE COMMITTEE



Robert Hanna President **Christopher Hanna** Senior Vice President

Jacqueline Milledge Vice President

Richard Smolenski Treasurer

Vacant Secretary **Jo Jansyn** Councillor

Jennifer Muscat Councillor

Warren Hensley Committee Member

Carole Nestor Committee Member

Vacant Committee Member We have Committee Member positions vacant and we invite members to apply. If you are interested please email: **council@ bayside.nsw.gov.au** for the attention of the Botany Historical Trust



Mascot's Miracle A talk by Dr Peter Hobbins

The roaring of planes overhead from nearby Kingsford-Smith Airport provided a fitting backdrop at Mascot Library on 11 May 2024 as Dr Peter Robbins gave an engaging and informative talk titled:

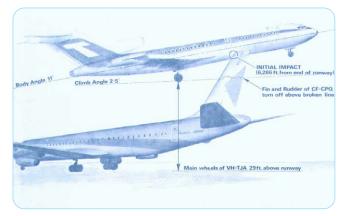
"Mascot's Miracle: the 1971 airliner collision that nearly took 240 lives".

An historian of science, technology and medicine, and a passionate advocate for community history, Dr Hobbins was joint winner of Bayside Council's 2023 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition with his account of two jet airliners colliding at Kingsford-Smith airport in 1971.

To an audience of 30 community and BHT members, he talked at length about the incident - how this could have happened at Australia's main airport, the community panic and aviation downturn worldwide, and the resistance by commercial airlines to fit their aircrafts with flight recorders that today routinely assist with accident investigations.



Dr Peter Hobbins



An illustration of the collision from the Air Safety Investigation Branch Report of 1971



A Trans-Australia Airlines Boeing 727 aeroplane, one of the types of aircraft involved in the collision.

Dr Hobbins' full entry for the 2023 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition can be read here: www.bayside.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/hobbins_peter_-_entry.pdf

Samera Kamaleddine

Children's & Youth Librarian

HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM 2024

On 13 February 2024, Bayside Council opened nominations for the inaugural year of the Historical Markers Program. The Historical Marker Program aims to create visibility and awareness of the history and cultural heritage of the Bayside LGA to build a sense of belonging and connectivity in the community.

The program was inspired by London's Blue Plaques scheme which was established in 1866.

Each financial year, Council will fund the production and installation of up to five (5) historical markers nominated by community members or community organisations through a nomination process. The historical marker will be installed at the nominated building, site or place in Bayside's Local Government Area.

The Historical Markers Program nominations closed on Monday 25 March 2024 and we received a number of entries. The nominations will be researched by staff before being assessed by the judging panel. Up to five nominations will be recommended to Council with the winners being announced in June 2024. The Markers will be installed later in 2024.



Bayside Council invites high school students and adults to participate in the

2024 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition

A competition for works of original research on any aspect of the history of the Bayside Council area.

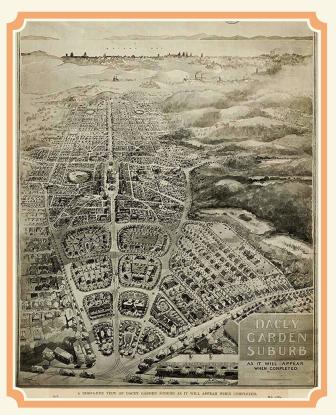
Open Category | Prize Pool \$6,000 High School Category | Prize Pool \$2,000

Entries are now open and close at 5pm on Thursday 18 July 2024.

Entry forms and guidelines are available at: www.bayside.nsw.gov.au/ronrathbone

Enquiries: local_history@bayside.nsw.gov.au

Looking Backward: DACEYVILLE AND A TIME OF IDEALISM IN PUBLIC HOUSING



A Bird's-eye view of Dacey Garden Suburb as it will appear when completed', NSW Housing Board, 1918

As we walked home I commented on the great variety in the size and cost of the houses. 'How is it', I asked, 'that this difference is consistent with the fact that all citizens have the same income?' 'Because', Edith explained, '... The rents which the nation receives for these houses vary, according to size, elegance, and location, so that everybody can find something to suit.'

(Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* from 2000 to 1887, 1888)

I would say build houses. Go and create an agency that buys land and builds houses very, very quickly and sells them very, very cheaply. I think we don't want to [do that] anymore.

(Cameron Murray, 28 April, 2023).¹

This article is a shorter version of Ian Hoskins' essay that was a joint winner of Bayside Council's Ron Rathbone Local History Competition in 2023.

In Edward Bellamy's utopian novel, *Looking Backward from 2000 to 1887*, a resident of Boston wakes from a deep sleep to discover he has time travelled from 1887 to the beginning of the 21st century. In the year 2000 income was no barrier to good housing for economic class had been levelled by the provision of a standard allowance that permitted the rental of any house one required. Through an ingenious communistic 'Nationalism', both individual choice and equality were satisfied.

Bellamy's vision had immediate appeal in the Anglophone world. Remarkably municipal socialism sprang up in cities across the United States where ruthless capitalism had just reached its zenith in the so-called 'Gilded Age'. Edward Bellamy helped to usher in an alternative way of thinking about society.² But in the 21st century, when the book is set, Looking Backward is an intellectual curiosity at best. Australian urban economists, such as Cameron Murray from the University of Sydney, desperately imagine solutions for an intractable housing crisis, possibly the worst in the country's history. While few believe in a single answer or the 'quick fix', Murray urged a massive publicly-funded building program. Build houses, he urged, 'very, very quickly'. Speaking on ABC radio in April 2023 he was responding to the newly-elected Labor Government's incentives for 'build to rent' projects, announced in the lead-up to the Federal Budget. Such proposals to assist State-based housing schemes were, the economist contended, part of a 'pretend game' that never actually helped renters.

As Murray spoke there were more than 51,000 people waiting for social housing – once called public housing – in New South Wales alone.³

The housing crisis of the 2020s is not Australia's first. The Depression of the 1930s badly affected the supply of housing while the world war which followed it diverted labour and material until the late 1940s. The result was a dearth of dwellings well into the 1960s.

Half a century earlier Sydney's ballooning population caused a squeeze in its older 'inner suburbs'.

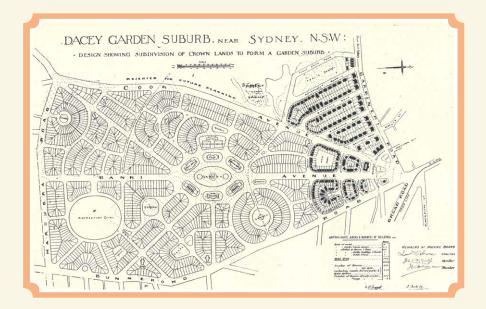
William Foggitt's 1914 plan of Daceyville shows a far more curvilinear street pattern. Australia's first cul-de-sac is shown in red. SLNSW Home ownership in those years was the exception rather than a realisable dream, and the parlous position of renters was exacerbated by their relative powerlessness to negotiate adequate accommodation.

That crisis, nonetheless, prompted an extraordinary level of optimism and action on the part of the first Labor Government in New South Wales. They established a Housing Board in 1912 expressly to build affordable rental dwellings – a practical measure that was also intended as a model for private enterprise.

The ideals underpinning this period of reform were carried forward in starts and stops for more than 50 years.

When Cameron Murray bemoaned the reluctance to build public housing – 'we don't want to anymore' – he was implicitly recalling the work of the Housing Board and its successor, the Housing Commission of NSW, which addressed the crisis of the 1940s, '50s and '60s. In the context of the portfolio of problems confronting Australia's Federal and State governments in 2023, Murray's panacea appeared hopeful in the extreme. But in this he was echoing the idealism of the first urban reformers. Where Edward Bellamy's future was rosy and 'looking backward' from the year 2000 provided a reassuring sense of utopia achieved, the reality of life in Sydney's current housing crisis prompts wistful comparisons to decades past when housing was affordable and governments built homes to rent and sometimes buy. Looking backward from 2023 confirms that progress has stalled.

This essay focuses on the showcase project of the early 20th century; the governmentfunded 'garden suburb' called Daceyville ... [which] emerged out the idealistic ferment created by writers such as Edward Bellamy [and those he influenced including the English town planner Ebenezer Howard].





The aesthetic interest created by a curving street is evident even in this early photograph of Daceyville with its still immature street trees. SLNSW

The conceptualisation, realisation and subsequent history of that remarkable project provides insights into the thinking that made such an enterprise possible, and perhaps the attitudes that have led to the current housing impasse.

The Labor Party came to power in New South Wales in 1910. Their Housing Bill was passed two years later in early April 1912. It was championed by the State Treasurer, John Rowland Dacey. The Act created the Housing Board which was to administer land acquired by the Government for the erection of houses and other buildings, and the creation of parks and reserves.

It did not specify the type of houses or the nature of the development, nor the ideal behind the policy, but Dacey made that clear in an impassioned speech in parliament in support of the legislation. The day is past when free Australians were content to be herded together in terraces of mere dog-boxes. In some of the suburbs they are compelled to herd together like flies, and the time has come when we should create a garden city and provide houses of an up-to-date character at the lowest possible rental.⁴

JR Dacey died just days after his Bill was passed...

The memories of people who grew up in Daceyville in those years from inception to the 1930s were recorded by [the author] in the 1990s. Together they allow further understanding of the meaning of 'Looking Backward'. Like many recollections of Australian childhood, they are imbued with nostalgia and a fond sense of difference in old ways and old days.

Space and freedom were evoked as is often the case with suburban or rural memories. But these memories were also site specific. There was a general sense that Daceyville's street layout and architecture were different because the former was not simply a grid and the latter had a uniformity. There were no front fences – an innovation aimed at fostering community trialled in the suburb.

... For cousins Clarice and Nancy, Daceyville was classless. (Clarice) 'It was a working-class suburb ... there was no class consciousness at all...' (Nancy) '...simply because there was just one class ... (Clarice) '... and they were all working-class people.' ⁵

The good times seemed to end in the 1930s. The Depression is the most obvious reason for this. But it was also noted that some original 'good' families moved on either because of the economic climate or generational change. Both spoke of an end to the original model community.

The model suburb very nearly did not survive to see the 1970s. Plans were begun by the Housing Commission to demolish the place and replace it with high rise flats like those at Waterloo. Protests ensued and a Daceyville Preservation Society was formed. The dispute erupted at the beginning of the rise of heritage consciousness in Sydney. Unionled 'green bans' were imposed on the redevelopment of The Rocks, still despised by many. That action became famous and the precinct was preserved to become a much-loved part of the city. Less well-known is the assistance Jack Mundey and his Builders Labourers Federation gave to the residents of Daceyville.



The passage of the New South Wales Heritage Act in 1977 was a confirmation of the turn-around in official and popular sentiment.

Accordingly subsequent plans to redevelop Daceyville focussed on sympathetic in-fill development rather than demolition. These were implemented by the Urban Renewal Group of the New South Wales Department of Housing (formerly the Commission). A detailed historical walking tour of the suburb was printed and, in 1994, the Department published a short history of its own achievements. Daceyville was featured at the beginning. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles, wrote in his foreword: 'Much can be learned from the way in which public housing has developed. It is important for the planners and designers of today's housing to reflect on that history'.6

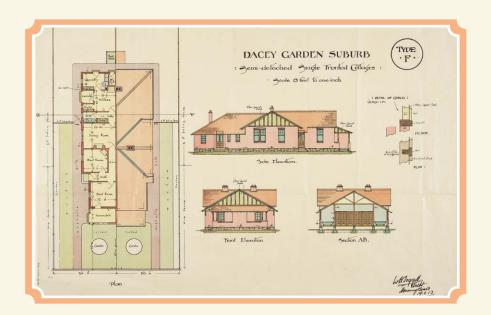
> The 1912 drawing of a Type F semi-detached dwelling showing original colour schemes and roof finish. SLNSW

It was an exhortation to look backwards with appreciation. But poignantly, 20 years later, the Government would begin selling off its heritage public housing stock, ostensibly to generate revenue and free up resources for building and maintenance elsewhere. In 2021 and 2022 seven houses [in Daceyville] were sold by the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation for between 1.1 million and 4 million dollars, having been assessed as either 'past their economic lifespan, heritage constrained, high value or are too costly to maintain'.7

Daceyville Public School shortly before or after completion in 1922. The half-hipped roofline, half rendered walls and turret are all characteristic of Arts and Crafts architecture. SLNSW

It is probable that Daceyville will be sold off entirely in the next two decades. With the price of real estate in such a prime location it is certain that this will shift the demographic dramatically. Daceyville will be gentrified as many other former working-class areas around Sydney have been since the 1970s.

In any case it is interesting to ponder what visitors to that model suburb will understand, 'Looking Backwards' from the year 2042 to 1912.



References

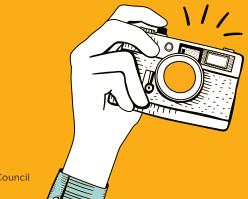
- ¹ Cameron Murray, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Sydney, 'PM', ABC Radio National, 28/4/2023.
- ² Garrett Dash Nelson, 'The Splendor of our Common and Public Life', *Places*, December 2019 https://placesjournal.org/article/edward-bellamy-urban-planning/?cn-reloaded=1, accessed 15/7/23.
- ³ https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/expected-waiting-times, accessed 30/4/2023.
- ⁴ New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Session 1911-12, Vo.44, Series 2, p.3251.
- ⁵ Hoskins, *Cultivating the Citizen*, p.282.
- ⁶ New South Wales Public Housing Design: A Short History, New South Wales Department of Housing, Sydney, 1996.
- ⁷ GIPA Request 23 -2539, 2022, New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

Local Talent on Exhibition

The winners of the 2023 Bayside Photography Competition will go on exhibition at the Mascot Library & George Hanna Museum from mid-June, before going on display in Sydney International Terminal.

The competition attracted amateur photographers from across the LGA and produced some creative, and stunning works of art. More than 15 photographs have been selected from the winners and finalists to be enlarged and displayed at both Mascot and the International Airport.

It is well worth a visit, and you might just get inspired to enter Bayside's 2024 Photography Competition which will go live for applications in September.









Memories of the Poyal Easter Show — Alan Nicholas

Our family always went to the first Saturday of the Royal Easter Show every year. With free parking in Centennial Park, our father would find a spot somewhere between the horse floats.

Our routine was to start looking at the horses then start travelling anti-clockwise around the pavilions. First there was the Arts and Craft pavilion for the cakes and paintings, then onto the Pavilion with the region's artistic and agricultural displays. We always visited the Hall of Industries to watch Aunties Nola and Merle work on the WD&HO Wills cigarette making machines. Next stop was the cattle sheds and then holding my nose as we walked through the pig pavilion.



Alan (left) and Glenn Nicholas at the cattle stalls, Royal Easter Show, c.1960.



Alan and Glenn with their haul of showbags outside the Royal Agricultural Society Office window, which shows all the trophies to be won, c.1958.

Lunch time saw us walking down sideshow alley and listening to the drum of the Jimmy Sharman Boxing tent before risking our full stomachs on a few rides like the Wild Mouse and Ghost train. My brother Glenn and I walked around the Show dressed in Cowboy or Combat hats and blowing on our musical Kazoos bought on the day.

Finally, it was time for the big showbag pavilion. We always went to the Sweetacres stall last, as our cousin worked there and we bought MinTieS or Jaffa bags, that seemed to be over filled, very heavy bags. Once loaded with showbags it was off to find a spot in a stand to watch the ring events. Hopefully we would be seated in time to see Uncle Sid Nicholls driving in the trotting races. There was show jumping, polo and, to finish off the night, the rodeo. Some years they would have special attractions such as Fiji's Police Band or the NASA Jet Pack flying across the stadium.

Our meal at night would consist of a Scott's Pie with Tasmanian Hot Chips. There was always a queue for the hot chips – somehow because the potatoes came from Tasmania, they were thought to be extra special.

When the last horse left the ring, we trudged back to the carpark in the dark with showbags that seemed to get heavier with every step.

The following days at home were spent reading all the comics collected in the showbags, breaking the pathetic little toys from the bags, and getting into trouble for eating our way through the lollies too quickly. Often, we would go back on a Wednesday to see Uncle Sid in the Grand Parade. When I was six years old I got new boots, jodhpurs and a new hat to ride in The Grand Parade with my uncle, who led me on one of his winning horses.

If you have memories of the Royal Easter Show that you'd like to share, you can email **local_ history@bayside.nsw.gov.au** or post them to **Local History, Bayside Libraries, PO Box 21, Rockdale NSW 2216.**



Alan with his new outfit on a champion horse before the Grand Parade at the Royal Easter Show, c.1956.



Born in 1944, Christine Moss can trace her roots back to Booralee Fishing Village, where her greatgrandfather, James Thompson, lived and worked as a fisherman in the 1890s. Christine grew up in Trevelyan Street, Botany, but would visit her grandmother, Sylvia Thompson, and her Uncle Alex in Luland Street, Botany. She loved to walk down Booralee Street with her cousin, Beth, climb up and over the sewer wall and play on the beach.



Christine (standing) and her cousin Beth playing in the sand at the end of Booralee Street, after a seawall was added c.1947.

Her uncle, Alex Thompson, was Dux of Botany Primary School in 1928. Much to his mother's horror, he collected his medal in bare feet. Alex worked for Herbert J. Yates Tannery and was the manager when it was gutted by fire in 1957.

Her mother, Iris Moss (nee Thompson) contracted German Measles when she was three months pregnant with Christine. This probably led to Christine being born deaf. She wore a hearing aid from when she was three years old, which enabled her to attend Banksmeadow Primary School. Christine and life-long Botany resident, Charmaine Piaud, both learnt ballet at Anne Holmes Dance School in Botany. Although Christine could barely hear the music, she could feel the vibrations of the dancers through the wooden floor and keep in time with that rhythm.

In 2011, Christine had a cochlear implant, which combined with her ability to lip-read, made it much easier to participate in conversations.



Alexander Thompson's medal as Dux of Botany Public School, 1928.



As a young child, Christine had speech therapy at the Deaf Clinic (which was later called the Acoustic Laboratory) located in Customs House, Circular Quay. While waiting for the 338 or 310 bus to take them home, Christine's mother would buy vegetables from the 'Barrow Man' who pushed his wheelbarrow around the Quay. The fresh peas came wrapped up in newspaper, and Christine recalls sitting at the very front of the double decker bus shelling the peas where no one could see them, so they were ready to cook for tea that night.

Christine's first job was as a machinist at Selby's Shoe Factory in Redfern. In this way, she followed in the footsteps (pun intended) of her mother and Aunt Joyce, who both sewed shoes at the Enoch Taylor & Co. Factory in Bay Street, Botany. Christine's father, Albert Moss, was also in the shoe business, having trained as a bootmaker. However, after serving in World War II, he became a truck driver for the Bunnerong Power Station.

In 2000, Christine moved to Burrill Lake where she is an active member of the local historical society. She has made several donations to the George Hanna Museum collection, some of which are included in the exhibition Home Sweet Home: Mascot and Botany 1920-1960. She says: "Botany will always be in my blood, for I have watched it grow from a small village with lots of tanneries, wildflowers and not many houses, and transform from a working man's suburb to what it is now. No one can take these memories away from me."

Booralee Street, Botany, flooded with water, c. 1930. Iris Moss (Christine's mother) is on the left.

If you have a local story that you'd like to share, please email **local_ history@bayside.nsw.gov.au** or post it to **Local History, PO Box 21, Rockdale NSW 2216**.

Alison Wishart and Christine Moss



Botany fisherman and their boats at the original mouth of the Cooks River, 1938. Christine's great-grandfather, James 'Jim' Thompson is seated, second from the left. The other fishermen are William 'Trapple' Duncan, Harry Jones and James Smith.

VALE ALICE McCANN

I knew Alice McCann as both a friend and a colleague for almost 50 years. Alice was a devoted parent and dedicated P&C President when I taught at JJ Cahill Memorial High. Later, I worked with Alice on the Executive of the Botany Historical Trust Alice McCann was the first Vice President of the BHT and by the time I joined, she was the long standing Senior VP. Alice McCann was an extraordinary woman, who devoted her long life to family, community, JJC and the BHT. She was passionate, forthright, knowledgeable and above all, loyal. No one knew more or cared more than Alice about the heritage of her beloved community of Mascot and Botany. Alice McCann never sought personal recognition or reward. Alice was simply a wonderful woman, a great Australian and a treasured Life Member of the BHT.



Alice McCann with Anne Slattery, Jacqueline Milledge, The Hon. Ron Hoenig, MP and Bayside Council General Manager Meredith Wallace, 2022.

Thank you Alice. Rest in Peace.

Anne Slattery, Former BHT President

VALE DR PETER ORLOVICH



Dr Peter Orlovich received a certificate for being a judge in the open category of the Ron Rathbone Local History Competition, 2023.

Dr Peter Orlovich, beloved Archivist of the BHT, died in April. Peter devoted his life to researching Local History, the preservation of archives, the education of emerging archivists and librarians, and to the BHT. In 1973, he established the first course in Archives Administration in the southern hemisphere at the University of NSW and taught the course until it was discontinued in 2000. He then continued to teach it as a short professional development course for nearly 20 years. He is fondly remembered for supporting migrants to study Local History and by his many students. Dr Peter Orlovich personified the definition of "a scholar and a gentleman." He never complained and never stopped advocating for the BHT and the importance of archives and Local History. His doctoral thesis was on NSW land records and his knowledge of Local Government records was prodigious.

In addition to his knowledge and wisdom, Peter was a warrior: quiet, strong, patient, and persistent in his mission to save the records of Botany's Local Government administration and to make them accessible to everyone. This was his great legacy. Peter Orlovich was a foundation Member of the BHT in 1994, representing the community on the Executive. He led the project to research and compile information about the history of Botany's place names, which is an invaluable resource. This dovetailed with his 50 years of service on the Geographical Names Board of NSW.

Dr Orlovich was a judge of the Ron Rathbone Local History Prize since 2006 and the archivist of the priceless Seaborn Broughton and Walford Foundation's theatrical library. This collection included the famous Tin Tookie Puppets, the original scripts of many Australian playwrights, and the records of NIDA. Peter was truly a "Renaissance" man.

Peter Orlovich was a wonderful family man, who would on occasion bring in lovely "treats" cooked by his wife, Phil. Peter was devoted to academia, to his profession and to the BHT. He was an outstanding Australian and the most loyal and supportive of friends. Vale Peter Orlovich.

Anne Slattery, Former BHT President

BAYSIDE COUNCIL DAWN SERVICE 2024



Members of the Botany RSL Sub Branch and Bayside Councillors



THEIR NAME LIVE TH EVERMORI THIS STONE LDERMAN W.D.STEPHEN

16" DECEMBER 1922

Botany War Memorial, Booralee Park, 25 April 2024



BHT Senior Vice President Christopher Hanna laying a wreath on behalf of the BHT





www.bayside.nsw.gov.au