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# The Granville Guardian

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The next general meeting of the Granville Historical Society will be held at 2.00pm on Saturday 26 September 2015  
At our Research Centre  
62 Railway Parade Granville

**Guest Speaker**

**Video: Angels of War  
WW2 and the people of Papua  
New Guinea**

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## **Granville Historical Society**

*“A Place where heritage & culture are valued & celebrated.”*

The AGM resulted in the same committee being returned, I would like to thank the people who are so dedicated to the history of our area's history and are willing to work to preserve the knowledge. We have a lot of people using our archives for research. The dedication of the team of workers who toil away each Wednesday like they have done for many years is unbelievable.

June and I would like to thank the members for the Life Membership certificates we received. It was a complete surprise and for once I was too overcome for words, you never expect to receive anything like that, you don't even think of a reward for your work because it is done out of our love of the area and the people who have made our history for us to find. Thank you to Daphne Wiles, Frances Bluhdorn, Stephanie Humphreys, Colin Humphreys, Arthur Naylor, Susan Russell and anyone else who was co-opted to keep the secret. We thank our friends at the society.

Holy Family Primary school, has thanked us for lending them the resources for their project on Granville; it was very helpful to them and they appreciated it very much.

I would like to thank Arthur Naylor for all the help that he has given during the year. Arthur has taken over the duties of Betty Higginson since her passing, and has also taken on the responsibility of looking after the rooms when June and I have been off with the flu, thanks Arthur very much for your work and dedication. And Arthur has also continued with his research in his spare time, locating and photographing the Honour Rolls of Parramatta LGA, I think the society will have to supply a set of tyres for his bike.

I have conducted three RSL funeral services in the past

12 months, some of the men were WW1 members, some from WW2. We are building a file of people who were members of the Granville Sub-Branch, and have since passed on, with the view of collecting any history we find of local people. Many of the WW1 soldiers who are listed on the Honour Rolls at Rosehill Public School were members of the Granville RSL Sub-Branch who settled in Granville as part of the War Service Homes scheme.

**MORE ON THE  
RESIDENTS OF  
HIGHFIELD HALL**

**A cast of colourful characters called Highfield Hall home early in the 20th Century. Arguably the most colourful was Ellis S. Joseph, who was described in his obituary published in an international Science magazine in 1938 as “one of the world’s foremost animal collectors”. He was highly regarded in his time, but today he would be condemned for exporting large numbers of rare Australian birds and animals, and contributing to the extinction of the Thylacine, the Tasmanian Tiger.<sup>1</sup>**

**Highfield Hall was built in 1885 by Scottish immigrant William Robison on a 17-acre block of land, located approximately on the southeast corner of the present-day Highfield Road and Blaxcell Street. The postal address is now Guildford but was originally Granville. Later Robison built a smaller cottage known as *Normanhurst* for his step-daughter on an adjacent block of 41 acres. [See *The Granville Guardian*, February and June 2015] After the deaths of Robison and his wife in the 1890s, it provided a comfortable home for a series of high-profile residents.**

**Ellis Stanley Joseph was born in Bombay (Mumbai) India of Welsh parents, and died in the United States on 16 September 1938, aged 66. He had virtually been in retirement for the previous five years because of ill-health. The family moved to San Francisco when he was nine months old, and when only 13, he discovered that money could be made from trading in exotic birds. While on a holiday with his father in Central America, he bought some green parrots in Panama and sold them at a profit in San Francisco. He left home when he was 17, and was in Australia around the time of Federation after bringing a consignment of birds here. When the Australian Parliament was opened in 1901 he was working for the Melbourne Fire Brigade. He then exported some Australian birds, and travelled to India where he bought two tigers and caught two leopards, three spotted deer, and a large number of birds. These he sold in Marseilles, and soon he was supplying animals to zoos throughout the world and in Australia.<sup>2</sup>**

**One of his clients was the Bronx Zoo in New York, the largest zoo in North America. Joseph provided two of the four thylacines that the Bronx Zoo exhibited between 1902**

<sup>1</sup> *Science Magazine*, vol. 88 no. 2286, 21 October 1938, pp. 368-369 accessed 13 September 2015

<sup>2</sup> *Science Magazine*; Interview in *Broken Hill Barrier Miner*, 27 April 1910, p. 6

and 1919. The zoo's first thylacine was obtained from a German animal dealer, and the second came from the Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart via London in 1912. Joseph supplied the third thylacine; it arrived on 7 November 1916 in poor condition, and died seven days later. Joseph purchased another thylacine from the Beaumaris Zoo in April 1917, and re-sold it to the Bronx zoo on 14 July 1917. It died on 13 September 1919. Thylacines were widely exhibited in zoos throughout Australia and overseas between 1850 and 1936 when the last captive of the species died in the Beaumaris zoo in Hobart.<sup>3</sup> Joseph exhibited another rare animal, a platypus, in New York, in 1922. With the assistance of naturalist Henry Burrell, he took overseas several platypus in a 'mobile platypusary' that Burrell had designed. Sadly, only one survived the trip - the first live platypus to be seen outside Australia. It arrived in New York on 14 July 1922, but lived only two months.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph set up his Australian headquarters at Highfield Hall after purchasing the property from Ludwig Deutscher in November 1918. Over the next two years he assembled a consignment of 4,000 Australian birds and animals that he sent to the New York Zoo on the steamer *Bellbuckle* in November 1920. He then imported a big shipment of animals from the United States, including ocelots, raccoons, foxes, skunks, bison, bald eagles, marmosets, owls, mocking birds, parrots, monkeys and white swans. This reached Sydney consigned to the Taronga Park and Melbourne zoos, on 18 April 1921. Joseph claimed to have an affinity with the animals he handled, but was mauled about the face by a chimpanzee named Casey at Taronga Zoo in 1921. He had sold the chimp to the zoo in August 1920, and then went to London, He returned eight months later, revisited the zoo and entered Casey's cage. According to Joseph, the chimp was so overjoyed to see him that it "ravished its affection on him in a barbarous manner". It forced his jaw into its mouth and sank its teeth into his flesh.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph moved back to the United States after selling Highfield Hall for £6,500 in 1926. At about the same time, his neighbour, dairy farmer John Piccles, who had won approval to subdivide his 40-acre farm *Normanhurst* into more than 200 allotments, sold the property to developer Thomas Michael Burke. Burke was the former leader of Melbourne railwaymen in a wage dispute with the Victorian Government, and in 1904 was the secretary of the first "Made in Australia" Exhibition. In 1915 he set up a real estate firm T.M. Burke Pty Ltd to buy land in the depressed market of the war years and subdivide it. The former dairy farm was re-named Norwood Estate; 241 home sites were put on the market in May 1927, but sales were slow and there appeared to be very little building activity on the land as the Great Depression approached. The old cottage on the estate, Norwood House, remained vacant for three years until Dagmar Williams moved in. Meanwhile Highfield Hall was about to enter a new phase as a private boarding school.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *The Thylacine Museum – Natural Worlds*, [www.naturalworlds.org/thylacine](http://www.naturalworlds.org/thylacine) accessed 13 September 2015

<sup>4</sup> *Burrell's Platypusary* in Australian Rural History Online – Manilla Heritage Museum : <http://www.manillamuseum.org.au/burrells-platypusary.html> accessed 13 September 2015

<sup>5</sup> *Cumberland Argus*, 9 November 1918, p. 2; *The Argus (Melbourne)*, 1 November 1920, p. 7; *Evening News (Sydney)*, 18 April 1921 p. 1; *Adelaide Register*, 24 May 1921, p.5

<sup>6</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 December 1926, p. 6; *Evening News*, 27 May 1927, p. 15; T. Hannan, 'Burke, Thomas Michael (1870–1949)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/burke-thomas-michael-5430/text9209>, published first in hardcopy 1979, accessed online 22 September 2015

Rosalie Lutz, a German national who had worked as a teacher at private schools in Australia, including a Presbyterian Ladies College, and a Church of England girls grammar school at Geelong in Victoria, established St Julien's boarding and day school for primary, secondary and kindergarten students in May 1929. Her teaching experience was mainly in languages, particularly French and German, but she also offered tuition in singing, piano, elocution, physical culture, drawing, painting and dancing. She accepted children as young as three, boys up to 12, and girls of all ages. She was born in Germany in 1877 and had retained her German nationality. She first came to Australia in December 1900, but it seems she was a regular traveller and made further entries into the country in 1906 and 1912.<sup>7</sup>

In 1935, the school had 13 girls as boarders, whose parents each paid £3/3/- a month in fees. But there were serious problems. The Granville Council health inspector, Thomas Bleasdale, paid a routine visit and was horrified at the school's condition. He said there was practically no water supply, and the cisterns were unworkable. He declared the premises were in an appalling condition, and recommended a closing order be issued. The council suppressed most of the detail in Mr Bleasdale's report. He said he cautioned Miss Lutz to have these matters fixed within seven days or he would take drastic action. She informed him she had no money to do the work. After another inspection a fortnight later, he was generally satisfied with the situation. With the exception of one cistern which was not working satisfactorily [at the time of his inspection] the whole of the work had been completed practically to his satisfaction. Some of the aldermen wanted to discuss the matter in committee, but were out-voted. One member favoured "a private chat about the matter" and another put the view that the council should not tear one of its ratepayers to pieces. Mr Bleasdale reported that a new efficient water service had been installed, the septic tank had been emptied and was working satisfactorily, the kitchen walls had been cleaned, a blockage had been removed from the kitchen chimney, the rats complained of had been "considerably trapped", and the place generally had been cleaned up.<sup>8</sup>

The school continued to operate until at least 1938. Miss Lutz registered as an alien at Granville police station when World War Two broke out. When it was clear there was a housing shortage in the latter part of the war, she advertised accommodation in half the house, and in 1946 Highfield Hall was converted into flats. Miss Lutz died in 1963, and bequeathed her house to one of her nephews in Germany. He sold it and it was demolished.

Dagmar Williams moved into Norwood House in 1930, and she, too, had a vision of opening a private school. She announced in the *Cumberland Argus* in July 1930 that her boarding and day school would be opening shortly on the Norwood Estate, Rawson Road Guildford, 'business people's children especially catered for'. But there was a small problem about the rent.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1929, p. 1; Assisted and Unassisted Passenger List, Victoria, 1839-1923;

<sup>8</sup> *Cumberland Argus*, 10 October 1935, pp. 1, 8

<sup>9</sup> *Cumberland Argus*, 21 July 1930, p. 5

Eviction proceedings at Parramatta Court on 9 May 1932 were told she had paid only one pound rent in 18 months and owed £90 in back rent. In correspondence tendered in evidence, Mrs Williams warned the landlord: "Don't send any more creepy, crawly, sneaky representatives of the law here, or I'll get someone in to deal properly with them ... Law or no law, I'm going to get justice, if I have to take it in my own hands. Mrs Williams complained at the hearing that the owner had promised to carry out improvements so she could use the premises as a school. She said she only signed the lease on condition that the place was done up. The magistrate replied there was nothing in the lease to support her claim. He gave her three months to vacate the building.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Cumberland Argus*, 12 May 1932, pp. 1, 6