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The Granville Guardian

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The next general meeting of the Granville Historical Society will be held at 2.00 pm on Saturday 23 September 2017

At our Research Centre
1A Enid Avenue Granville

Guest Speaker :-

Dr Judith Godden "Crown St Women's Hospital"

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Granville Historical Society

"A Place where heritage & culture are valued & celebrated."

Well another month has gone by; I cannot believe what has happened to this year. It is pleasing to announce that due to the hard work and diligence of the volunteers who have been working to move the Society to our new site, things have been going steadily. Daphne Wiles informed me that she has finished making sure the artefacts are in place and the rooms are marked and tidy.

I would like to thank all members who have helped with this mammoth task. Maxine Kenyon, second in charge of Cumberland Council, dropped in for a site visit last Wednesday. She was very impressed with the layout and the complexity of our holdings. My thanks to Frances Bluhdorn who acted as tour guide, introduced Maxine to the volunteers, and explained each person's role in the organisation as well as showing her in detail our collection.

Cumberland Council also came around to present their concept plan for the new Community, Arts, Cultural and Library Complex. This is a \$20 million dollar project which should be completed by 2019, and being adjacent to our Research Centre, will compliment it. The services now offered from the Youth and Community Centre in the old bowling club will be enhanced, while the basketball courts are to be retained.

The grant that the society received for the promotion of the Parramatta Female Factory is

well under way, the website, photographic display, research and stories are just about completed, and invitations have gone out to guest authors to contribute their stories for the publication to be finished by early 2018. Any members who have ancestors who were either inmates or worked there in both Factories are invited to send their story in, or if you need someone researched please send in the details.

Our Christmas Party has been booked for 25 November 2017, so remember to book the date into your diary. Cumberland Council will soon let us know if we have been successful with our grant application featuring Scottish immigration to Granville.

Our Guest Speaker this month is Dr Judith Godden who will speak on Crown Street Women's Hospital, Surry Hills (1893-1983).

Barry Bullivant OAM President

WILLIAM ROWELL, A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND INDUSTRY
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Back in the days before Bunnings built their huge retail warehouses, the people of Granville bought their hardware and renovation supplies at Rowell's Hardware Shop and Timber Yard.

The proprietor, William Alexander Francis Brown Rowell, was born in Glasgow in Scotland on 16 January 1873 to 34-year-old John Henry Rowell and his wife Margaret Dryburgh Marshall Rowell. He was a six-year-old when he came to Australia with his family in 1879 on the *La Hogue*, a vessel that was a regular visitor on the route to the colonies. More family arrived three years later – an uncle, George Edwin Rowell, 45, wife Lucy, aged 39, and 10 children aged from one to 13.¹

In about 1887, William gained a position with Coates and Harper which operated three timber yards in Parramatta and one in Granville. Coates and Harper had begun trading in 1883 after acquiring the business of Parramatta builder George Coates, and started two timber yards at Granville during a building boom that produced many of Granville's heritage items.

One of the yards was on Sydney Road near the Vauxhall Inn, but the main one was in Railway Parade on the western side of the post office. The branch premises on Sydney Road didn't last long, while the main yard continued to trade well through the early

¹ Scotland Births & Baptisms, FamilySearch.org.; State Records NSW: Assisted Immigrants arriving NSW 1879, Reels 2141, 2490

depression years with William Rowell in charge. When Coates and Harper collapsed in July 1897, Rowell was allowed to take over the business.²



A landmark of sorts - the Rowell site today. The wording on the façade has been changed from Rowell's to Row-li's

Rowell succeeded in building a profitable business, and nine years later purchased a corner block in Good Street opposite the Granville Hotel with the aim of establishing new premises there. He officially opened the new hardware and ironmongers store and timber yard in March 1910.³

As his wealth grew he became well known for his charitable actions. He was a strong supporter of the Granville Presbyterian Church and acted as its secretary for more than 40 years. He was described at his memorial service as a good friend of the sick and bereaved, a faithful worker in the interests of the church, and a man of integrity and industry. He was a keen sportsman, particularly football and cricket in which he excelled as a batsman. In 1935, when the Granville Diggers wanted to build a clubhouse, he offered to sell them part of the 1½ acre block he owned on the corner of William and Blaxcell Streets and back the project with a mortgage.⁴

William married Jessie Fernie Adam, daughter of William and Agnes Adam of Hewlett Street Granville in 1912. There were no children from the marriage. After his death on 9 August 1937, his sister, Jane Henrietta Rowell of 14 Crown Street Harris Park was appointed managing director of William Rowell Pty Ltd. The appointment recognised her hard work for the company over at least 20 years. Official records show Jane and her sister Margaret were active in the business from at least 1920 when they were listed in William's government registration as being persons involved in the business.⁵

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² T.Fowlie, *The History of Granville 1919*, p. 101; T. Kass & ors., *Parramatta, A Past Revealed*, Parramatta City Council, 1996, pp. 214-5; *Cumberland Argus and Fruit Growers' Advocate*, 10 July 1897, p. 2;

³ *Cumberland Argus*, 1906, p. 4

⁴ *Cumberland Argus*, 9 and 16 August 1937, 5 September 1935 p.2

⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August 1937 pp. 9-10; State Records NSW: Index to owners of firms Registered under the Firms Act, 1902.

Some of the members at our August meeting.

