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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 28 August 2010 at our Research Centre 62 Railway Parade Granville Executive Meeting 1.00 pm**

**Guest Speaker:  
Sandra Lee**

Our Centre is open every Wednesday from 10 am to 4 pm and on the fourth Saturday of the month for personal research. Visitors and members of family history societies are welcome. A fee applies for non-members

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## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

“A place where Heritage and Culture is valued and celebrated”

We have been particularly busy this month, with three of our workers out of action. Daphne Wiles is progressing slowly, making progress a bit at a time. Members inquire regularly and many have travelled out to see her. Frances Bluhdorn, her daughter, has been keeping us up to date. June Parkins has been in and out of hospital, but seems to be able to bounce back from every setback; I don't quite know how she does it. Maureen McManus has had her trip to hospital and although her recovery has been slow she has been bolstered by the many people who sent cards and messages. David Eglon has had another setback but is soldiering on. Our thoughts are with you all and members are thinking of you. We hope you all improve and feel better soon.

The Parramatta Heritage Centre has agreed to let us mount another display which will last three months. It was to have been held in 2012, but has been brought forward twelve months, and will open in Seniors Week in March 2011. It will be focused on the Camellia area with Duck Creek and Duck River the feature, but the tributaries such as A'Becketts Creek, Clay Cliff Creek, and the Parramatta River will get a mention. We have formed a partnership with the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation to weave the story of the places and people who lived near the rivers, together with the businesses that built near the river and utilised the resource. The Darug group will assist us with images and history, advice and artefacts. Sandra Lee and her husband Terry, the driving force behind this group, have donated some of their publications to us and we have bought some others, so we now have a rich library of resources to allow members to study. This alliance will continue after this display because each of our groups will work together to document the history of our area. The Aboriginal clans

have descendants who live in Granville, and they have a rich family history. Sandra has accepted our invitation to speak at this meeting. We have also formed an alliance with the Parramatta Art Society who will take part in the display by supplying us with paintings of Parramatta, Duck Creek and Duck River.

We have received a grant from Fachsia, a volunteer grant that allows us to purchase badly needed equipment to further our work. The launch of our Talking Book – *The History of Granville* by Thomas Fowlie - will be held on Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010. The book is in the Daisy format that requires a Daisy player. Seventy-five copies will be distributed to residents of the Parramatta local government area who are vision impaired. We have also had it prepared in MP3 format which can be played on most CD players, although you will not be able to manipulate around the paragraphs like the Daisy version. This is the first local history in Australia that has been used in this format. It will also be a useful tool for people who have dyslexia. The book will be distributed to the local libraries and legal deposits. If you have not received an invitation to the launch and would like one please ring and we will arrange it.

We have had the Old Guildford Public School photographs printed, and found a new recruit in Clifford Howard, a new member, who has been working on mounting all 200 of them. June has now sacked him, we have run out of tabs, acid free card and time to put them into the database, thank you Clifford. Thanks to Arthur Naylor who despite taking over the management of the database has managed to scan, and enhance the soldiers of WW1 from the Parramatta & District Soldiers book. We have printed them, Clifford is mounting them and John Scarborough is entering them in the database. Two new recruits Bill and Jason Coleman as well as George Pearce are working on the display images, collecting old and taking modern ones of the area. The middle room girls are working hard and are motoring through the Metcalfe and Morris folders, making a searchable file. This is a mammoth task, thanks to the middle room girls and boys and the front & back room boys, who are working very well.

As I said before, Sandra Lee is our Guest Speaker this month; her topic is ‘Being Darug in 2010’.

Barry G Bullivant OAM  
President

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| <p><b>DEATH OF DOCTOR JOHN<br/>SHEEHY</b></p> |
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The death occurred on 18 August last of Dr John Edward Joseph Sheehy, who had served the people of Harris Park as a solo medical practitioner for 53 years. He was aged 90.

Dr Sheehy conducted his GP practice from his historic two-storey Federation home *Tregothnan*, on the corner of Good and Crown Streets. He was born at Dubbo in 1919, the son of a country stationmaster and a nursing sister. He was educated at St Stanislaus College Bathurst, and graduated from Sydney University in 1944. After his marriage to Jean Arantz at Annandale in 1946, he began practising as a GP at

*Tregothnan* two years later. He retired from the practice in 2001, and his final years were spent at the Crown Gardens nursing home opposite his home. In 2002, Doctor Sheehy was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community as a general practitioner and as a benefactor and fundraiser for the arts and education.

*Tregothnan* was built in the early 1900s for solicitor Charles Edward Byrnes, a member of a prominent Parramatta family. Some of our members have personal memories of its being used as a private hospital between 1940 and 1945.

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| <p><b>THE SINKING OF THE S.S.<br/>AUSTRAL IN SYDNEY<br/>HARBOUR IN 1882</b></p> |
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The 5,524 ton steamer *Austral* was the newest and finest ship on the England to Australia route when it arrived in Sydney on its maiden voyage on 30 June 1882. Less than five months later, it was sitting on the bottom of the harbour in Neutral Bay.

While regular ocean steamship services were operating in many parts of the world by the 1840s, sail dominated the emigrant ship trade to the Australian colonies. Accommodation on these ships was often very poor and they took up to five months to reach their destination. But in 1851 the discovery of gold boosted the number of incoming passengers, and created a demand for bigger and faster ships. The first steamships appeared on the route after the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) was awarded the mail contract for a bi-monthly service to Sydney and Melbourne in March 1852. It lost the rights a few years later, but agreed to a new contract for a monthly service in 1858. This was changed to a fortnightly mail service in 1879.<sup>1</sup>

P&O had to contend with competition on the route when the Orient Line began a new monthly service to Australia in 1877. The inaugural trip by one of its steamers, the *Lusitania*, took only 40 days, 10 days faster than the previous record passage. The Orient Steam Navigation Company was formed in February 1877 as a partnership between London shipbrokers and shipowners Anderson, Anderson and Co. and F. Green and Company with the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) which had services to the west coast of South America. The new line began to put together a fleet of modern steamships that would meet the particular requirements of the Australian trade. It chartered four ships from PSNC, the *Chimborazo*, *Cuzco*, *Garonne* and *Lusitania*, all about 4,000 tons, and built in 1871. They were larger and more powerful than any other steamer travelling to the colonies and each had a capacity of about 450 passengers. The service proved so popular that in 1879 the company increased the frequency to fortnightly and added six more ships, including a new vessel built at the John Elder shipyard in Glasgow, the 5,386 ton steamer, *Orient*. This began the

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Maber, *North Star to Southern Cross*, T. Stephen & Sons, Lancashire, 1967, pp. xi-xii, 2, 11, 13

tradition of Orient Line ships using names prefixed with ‘OR’ which continued until 1931.<sup>2</sup>

John Elder built a second vessel for the Orient Line in 1881. This was the 5,524 ton *Austral*, which had accommodation for 550 passengers, including 120 in first class and 130 in second class. It provided them with a level of comfort not previously available. There was a large promenade deck for saloon passengers, a dining room said to be superior to those in Sydney hotels and cafes, and a separate galley for each class of passenger. Dynamo-electric machines generated electricity to light up the whole ship. P&O reacted to the competition by ordering two new steamers for the route, *Rome* and *Carthage*, in 1881. It claimed in advertising that it had better first and second saloon accommodation on its steamers, and that it didn’t carry third class or steerage passengers. On Orient Line steamers, on the other hand, more than half the passengers were in third class.<sup>3</sup>

The *Austral* departed Plymouth on its maiden voyage to Australia on 20 May 1882, arriving in Sydney on 30 June. Among the 403 passengers were 18 young Scots – skilled ironworkers recruited by Hudson Brothers for their Granville engineering works at Clyde. They included William Baillie, R. Johnston, John Neilson, William Picken and John Walker. The names of the other 13 are not known and there appears to be no passenger list extant, but they most likely included A. Anderson, J. Sorlie, Peter Adams, David Rae, J. Hotchkiss, and W. Mair, who were members of the first Granville soccer team that comprised mainly former Scots. Most of the men did not stay long at Hudson’s, but John Robert Neilson remained there for 42 years, and was a member of Granville Council for 13 years in the early 1900s. William Picken also worked at Hudson’s for some time, and later was employed at the Eveleigh railway workshops for many years.<sup>4</sup>

The *Austral* left Plymouth on its second trip to the colonies on 16 September 1882, and reached Sydney on 3 November. Unlike the maiden voyage, the passage was not all smooth sailing. The ship was delayed for a week at Simons Bay in South Africa because of a smallpox outbreak ashore, and mechanical problems forced her to proceed on sail alone on part of the leg from the Cape of Good Hope. (The ship’s four masts were rigged to carry sails in case of engine failure) After disembarking its passengers and cargo in Sydney, the *Austral* was moved from Circular Quay to the Orient Line’s moorings in Neutral Bay. Late in the evening of 10 November, the steam collier *Woonona* pulled up alongside and began loading coal through four of the *Austral*’s metre-wide coal ports. Coaling proceeded for almost four hours without incident until the *Austral* suddenly developed a list, and its starboard coal ports became submerged. Water gushed in so quickly that the ship sank in less than 20 minutes. The crew of almost 80 officers and men were asleep when the alarm was raised, but most escaped by jumping into a lighter alongside the ship. Five seamen however were trapped below deck and drowned.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1877, p. 4, 9 August 1877, p. 4, Maber, pp. 100-102

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1882, p. 7, Maber, p. 11

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1882, p. 7; W.F. Kay, ‘Early Granville’ in *Granville Jubilee* booklet, 1935; *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers’ Advocate*, 5 September 1929, 19 June 1915, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1882, p.8, 28 February 1883, p. 5

The City Coroner conducted an inquest in the deaths and found the captain and three others had committed grave errors of judgment in failing to take better precautions for the safety of the ship. The Marine Board of New South Wales opened an inquiry into the cause of the sinking, but terminated it on learning the Board of Trade in London was planning its own investigation. The British inquiry censured the ship's captain and chief officer but declined to take any action against them.<sup>6</sup>

Salvage teams re-floated the *Austral* on 1 March 1883 after she had spent four months sitting on the harbour bed, and towed her to Cockatoo Island for temporary repairs. The ship was taken back to the Clyde shipyards in Glasgow for re-fitting, and resumed the service between London and Sydney in November 1884. She made her last voyage on this route in 1902, and was then sold for scrap. From 1906 to 1909, the Orient Line was known as the Orient Royal Mail Line, and in 1919 P&O acquired a controlling interest in Orient.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1883, p. 5

<sup>7</sup> Mabey, p. 335; TheShipsList, <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/orient.html>, Accessed 25 July 2010