

Published by Granville Historical Society Inc.



The Granville Guardian

Patron Laurie Ferguson M.P. B.Ec.(Syd) M.A.(Syd)

Volume 19 Issue 1

February 2012

**The next general meeting of the Granville Historical Society will be held at 2.00 pm on Saturday 25 February at our Research Centre
62 Railway Parade Granville
Executive Meeting 1.00 pm**

Guest Speaker

Robert Nash
Two Feisty Women of Colonial Australia - Elizabeth Azire & Mary Ammonet

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

Granville Historical Society

A Place where heritage & culture are valued & celebrated

TO CONTACT US:

62 Railway Parade

Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 9682 1290 (Wed.) 9631 0216

www.granvillehistorical.org.au

Email:

granvillehistorical@bigpond.com

Write to P.O. Box 320 Granville 2142

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello members, welcome to a brand new year! You may not be aware of it but your committee has been working over the break to further cement the society as a viable and strong research centre.

The society has invited Scottish House to join us at our venue; this will enhance our delivery of Scottish history and culture. They will share our facilities for a donation towards the running of the centre. They bring with them their rich Scottish heritage and knowledge which will assist us with overseas research, thus enabling us to further the history of the Scottish immigrants who worked and lived in Granville. Scottish House is due to move in at the end of this month.

Over the break we have been researching and assisting people to research their family histories; we have traced ancestors for seven people, adding to our archives. One of the people we have been doing the history for is the granddaughter of Jack Lang, who was the Member for Granville and NSW Premier. The information and photographs are being added to our archives, with the genealogy that we have collected. This of course has meant we have been 'grave hopping' in Rookwood, St John's & Mays Hill. June has been busy applying for grants to prepare interactive Power Point presentations for schools. They include a virtual tour through Parramatta Park, The History of Granville, and Jack Lang, and are being designed to make use of the National Broadband Network, mainly aimed at primary schools.

Work on the Lebanese Contribution to the Parramatta LGA is progressing with the knowledge that the NSW Governor Marie Bashir had a practice in Pendle Hill during her early career.

We represented the Society at the following meetings: the Parramatta City Council Christmas Dinner at Oatlands House, the NSW Multicultural Disability Services AGM, presentation of the History of Granville at Holy Trinity Primary School, the Granville Rail Disaster 35th Anniversary on 18 January 2012 where we mounted a photographic display and presented the Governor Marie Bashir with a book *The History of Granville*. We also attended the Australia Day cocktail hour at the Parramatta Leagues Stadium hosted by the Premier and Geoff Lee the Member for Parramatta. Next Wednesday we will attend the Parramatta City Council Heritage Committee on behalf of the Society.
Barry G. Bullivant OAM, President.

JOHN KIRK BANN
Accountant, RAAF Pilot, Old Granvillian



John was born on 16 May 1917 at 23 Cardigan Street, Auburn. He was baptised on 29 February 1920, and married Iris Louise Howlett on 8 February 1944. She died on 25 January 2004. John passed away on Christmas Day last, 25 December 2011, at Kiama NSW. He was 94 years old.

John's early life was centered on his parents' fruit farm at Castle Hill. He said his life as a small boy was good 'although his elder twin brothers gave him a few lumps and bruises. 'On the farm after school and at weekends', he said, 'life was also mainly good and we were healthy'. 'We had plenty of fruit and veggies, cows, pigs and chickens, so we had milk for our porridge, cream for our fruit and plenty of eggs.'

Sunday school was a must and he remembered going with his mother on the steam tram along Windsor Road from their farm on Excelsior Ave Castle Hill. The Great Depression of the 1930s hit hard and they could not even give the fruit away so they had to vacate the farm. After leaving Parramatta High School and completing his accountancy examinations, he went to work at Palings piano department. Within a few months the Second World War started so he joined the Air Force in 1940 and eventually attained the rank of Wing Commander.

Barry Bullivant had a dry cleaning shop in Granville for 40 years and says he got to listen to some interesting stories from the locals including the great character John Bann. John went for a daily walk and called into his shop for a chat. He would tell stories from his boyhood at his parents' fruit orchard, such as 'they did not eat their own fruit; he preferred the fruit they pinched from the neighbours as it tasted better.'

From his wartime memories, John told how when flying back to England after a bombing raid on Germany, a young pilot flying alongside him radioed and said he couldn't get his landing gear down. 'Skip', he said, 'what do I do?' John replied, 'Don't worry, just turn your plane upside down and the oil will run down into the landing gear. Then turn the plane upright again'. A few minutes later a voice came over the radio: 'Thanks, Skip; it worked!'

Barry remarked that it must have been scary going up into the battles, John said: 'No, Barry, we always had a couple of Scotches before takeoff and a few more when and if we got back'.

John did not suffer fools gladly. He was an intelligent man whom I had the pleasure of working with at our society although at times he could be a perfectionist. Once he was asked to help me identify photos; one photo he looked at and said 'where do you think the angle of the sun is shining on the trees next to the creek'. I said: 'John I don't care where the bloody sun is shining, please go and get another job'; so after an hour he left

me alone. I'm sure John is up above the clouds looking down at us and enjoying his Scotch, farewell old friend till we meet again.

Barry G. Bullivant OAM

TENT LIFE AT CLYDE IN 1950

Peter Kreminski (formerly Krzeminski) is an Adelaide medical practitioner, the author of a book, *Under false pretences : a family migrates to Australia*. This is the story of the Krzeminski family in Poland and its experiences under the Nazi and Soviet regimes.

Lucjan Krzeminski, aged 45, his wife Helena, and children Eva and Peter, arrived in Sydney in September 1949, under an international program for the re-settlement of World War II refugees and displaced persons in Australia.

Lucjan had begun work as a labourer at the Clyde railway workshops soon after their arrival. In early 1950, he enrolled eight-year-old Peter at Granville Central School (now Granville Public School), although neither spoke English. The family moved to Canley Vale in mid-1950 but Peter continued to attend Granville School, travelling alone by train each day.

He was Dux of the school at the end of 1952, and moved on to Parramatta High School, and thence to Sydney University where he graduated in Medicine in 1965.

Peter has written a two-part article on his impressions of his time at Granville. Here's Part 1, about living in a tent at Clyde:

My father had moved to Clyde in Sydney to work as a labourer in the railway workshops within a few weeks of our arrival in Australia. After about three months, the rest of the family moved as well. Helena lived and worked as a maid/cleaner at the Wesley College of Sydney University and Eva stayed with her, whereas I lived in my father's 2x2 metre tent at Clyde and shared his bed. There was space in the lobby for simple cooking and washing, but of course this was also used by the worker in the other half of the duplex.

We had very limited space in the tent because two of the wooden crates that we had brought from Germany plus one or two large suitcases had to fit in. There was only a tiny surface for writing and doing my homework. We had no books available because the few that we possessed were packed deep in the still sealed crates and so my father had to be inventive. To encourage me to learn English, he would ask me to write down and illustrate stories of his own childhood escapades and to show them to my teacher for correcting.

The workers' camp was on the south side of the railway tracks, on the east of Duck River. There were over a hundred tents and communal ablution and kitchen blocks. Although a men's camp, the authorities turned a blind eye and a few of the men had their wives with them, but I cannot recall there being other children apart from myself.

There were no safety barriers between the camp and the tracks and the Duck River had steep muddy banks and deep holes, but no-one seemed to have died accidentally. In 2010 I was shown family photographs of the camp by the husband of my receptionist; he was

a three-year old and living in the camp in 1951. One surprising feature of the photos was how clean the camp was. In those days there was little rubbish as the consumer society had not yet evolved, but more importantly, people were house-proud and felt personal responsibility for their immediate environment. The other point of interest was how his pregnant mother and her equally pregnant friend stood behind a bush so as to disguise their bulging stomachs.

There were some instances of theft from the tents. There were no locks and one just tied the door flaps when leaving for any period of time. To safeguard our property my father rigged a trap which involved a heavy beam falling on anyone who untied the flap cords in anything but the correct way. Fortunately he soon dismantled it when he realised that it was probably more dangerous to me or even to himself than to any burglar.

Other recollections were the not-unpleasant chemical smells when the wind brought industrial fumes from the nearby workshops and factories; walking home from school and crossing the footbridge across the River and being awed by the rising moon in the east directly before me - it seemed enormous and I was almost convinced it was going to fall; having a haircut given by a fellow worker of my father's who supplemented his income in this way.

February 11, 1950 was my ninth birthday. It was wet and father and I caught the train into Newtown to see my mother and sister. My parents could ill-afford to purchase toys, but I was given the choice of being bought a realistic looking cowboy revolver or a spring pistol which fired harmless projectiles. I chose the latter because it seemed more practical.

One evening my father did not come home. I began to worry and started weeping loudly and inconsolably. It was probably a reflection of how I had felt when lost amongst crowds of refugees in the terrible winter of early 1945 (see *A Righteous Pole* section in *Under False Pretences*). The neighbour came and tried to reassure me. After what seemed like many, many hours my father returned and all was well again.