

# Swan Guildford Historical Society (Inc.)

founded 1962

Patrons: Ken Wyatt AM, MP | Donna Faragher MLC | Michelle Roberts MLA



**Making History Matter**



## NEWSLETTER

**May – June 2020**

### **Meet the Society's new Committee for 2020 - 2021**

At the 2020 Annual General Meeting held in March, a new committee was elected, including Andrew Minogue (President), Angela Hodson (Secretary), Kathy Feucs (Treasurer), and committee members Celia Miller, Gaye Sweeney, Fay Stockdale, Janet Taylor, Kathy Parker and Marcia Nicholls.

The photo, courtesy of Andrew Kieley, City of Swan Councillor, shows some committee members present on the night. From left to right, Returning Officer Clem Mulcahy, Kathy Feucs, Fay Stockdale, Kathy Parker, Andrew Minogue, Gaye Sweeney, outgoing interim President, Rod Brinkworth.



**COVID 19 pandemic. What we are doing during lockdown**

- The COVID 19 Pandemic has brought many challenges in running the Museum (closed until further notice), but we are using this time to plan ahead, update our website and think of new ways to engage with our audiences. You can keep up to date by following us on social media, subscribing to our newsletter and visiting our website at [www.swanguildfordhistoricalsociety.org.au](http://www.swanguildfordhistoricalsociety.org.au). We welcome any suggestions you may have on ways to engage with our members and followers. Email [curatorswan@bigpond.com](mailto:curatorswan@bigpond.com) at any time.
- **New collection store:** We are extremely excited about the progression of our new collection store and working with the City of Swan to bring this to fruition. The collection store will give us much needed space to house and manage our extensive collection. It will be built to national Museum standards, including having climate control which is imperative for preserving and looking after a collection. We will also have new space to host tours and visitors to the museum, and a place for school and community groups to partake in workshops and educational visits. We are hoping that the building of the collection store will commence later this year.
- **Planned events:** We had to cancel our Convict Walks that were scheduled this month as part of the Australian Heritage Festival. Rest assured, we intend to offer these later this year. We are also ready to install a new exhibition in the Colonial Gaol to complement the Convict walks. Updates on when the Convict walk tours will be advertised on social media, so be sure to follow us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/sghistoc/>) for more information.

## Honouring the ANZACS 2020

In the leadup to Anzac Day, the Society did a series of Facebook posts about Guildford people who enlisted in World War I. One post was on William Bell, who migrated to WA in 1911. The family worked at York before moving to Guildford in 1917. Here his father and brothers took over a cartage business, Bell Brothers, later becoming the largest trucking Company in Australia, Bell Transport.

William Bell enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force with the 5th Reinforcement, 28th Battalion in 1915, sailing to Egypt on the "Themistocles" in October. He trained in Alexandria, then embarked for France in March 1916, joining the front line at Armentieres. He was hospitalised several times due to ill health. He fought at Pozieres and at Ypres. In September 1917 he was wounded at Polygon Wood, and transferred by the 6th Australian Field Ambulance to the 17th Casualty Clearing Station in Belgium, where he died from his wounds.

A man from Queensland saw the post and asked for help. His Grandfather had been an ambulance driver during WWI, and kept Bell's identity tags, safely stored away in a shoebox for over a hundred years. Within a couple of days the great nephew of William Bell was located (coincidentally a Curator, and also a friend of OUR Curator). The tags are now on their way from Queensland to Western Australia, to be reunited with William's descendants.

## Vale Bill Adamson

Bill Adamson, long time member of the Swan Guildford Historical Society passed away in March this year. His wife Elizabeth has provided the following biography.

Bill Adamson was born in Batu Gajah, Perak, Malaya on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1935. His parents were Scottish. His father, also William Adamson, was a rubber planter, as was his grandfather before him. Bill's mother, Mabel, (nee Fraser) was a nurse.

Bill had one sibling, Frances, who was three years older. As youngsters they went to boarding school at Tanglin School, Cameron Highlands. With the advance of the Japanese invasion of Malaysia, they had to be pulled out of school in late January 1942. Bill vividly remembered seeing the bombing of Tapah, and the chaotic road convoy that eventually arrived in Singapore, where they found accommodation while awaiting evacuation from Singapore,

The children and their mother were reunited with family in Scotland where they were home schooled for a year before going to Morrison's Academy, Creiff. Bill followed the family tradition to go rubber planting, and

gradually climbed the ladder of seniority to plantation manager before coming to Australia. His service in Malaya was during the time of “The Emergency”, the undeclared war against the Chinese Communist insurgency. Although Bill was not in Military uniform, he was an Inspector of Police, as he was able to speak three local languages – very useful at that time. He was also married and had two young children, so decided to bring them to Australia and to safety.

Bill had a variety of occupations after that, having a fruit orchard in the Bickley Valley, being employed with the Shell Oil company in the North West, and having a home building company. After a disastrous financial experience with untrustworthy colleagues, his life fell apart when he lost his beloved wife Denise to Cancer. Luckily an old friend came to his rescue, insisting he get back to work for him, which involved finance and much travel.

Bill retired to Parkerville, living quietly on his own. He kept busy as a voluntary Welfare Officer with the WA RSL, advising veterans of entitlements, which was greatly to their advantage and comfort in old age. Through an ex SAS veteran, who was the President of the Malaya Borneo Veterans Association, he was encouraged to join, later becoming President of that Association. His organizational skills helped in the running of the annual commemoration in Kings Park of the Emergency which led to Malayan Independence, or “Merdeka”, for many years. He proudly led the members in the ANZAC Day march until two years ago when the march was too much for him physically.

After being alone for 26 years it was through an old friend from Malaya that he met Elizabeth, who was the Secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group. They were married in Guildford in June 2012, and found much in common. Travelling to Malaya, Singapore and latterly to the Indonesian island of Banka was a joy to them both. Also a trip back to Scotland to do research into his family tree was a feat of endurance – tramping around old churchyards to read headstones for information that might not be found by computer!

Bill fought a brave fight against cancer. He died peacefully at Kalamunda Hospital. He is greatly missed by Elizabeth, Margaret and Peter, David and Leeanne, and Grandchildren Liam, Shannon and Felicity.

The Society extends deepest sympathy to Elizabeth and family.

**er printed courtesy of Hon Donna Faragher MLC, Member for  
East Metropolitan Region**