

**Hunter Living Histories Meeting**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018 1:00pm – 3:00pm**  
**Room X-201, NewSpace University Building, Hunter Street, Newcastle**

**Minutes**

**Start: 1:00**

- 1. Acknowledgement to Country** by Gionni di Gravio
  
- 2. Present:** Gionni di Gravio (chair), Zane Metcalfe (minute taker), Ron Barber, Doug Lithgow, John Witte, Susanne Martin, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Peter Sherlock, Robert Watson, Louise Gale, Bronwyn Law, Keith Parson, Brian Roach, Ian Eckford, Ross Edmonds, Anne Creevey, Maria Pavela, Tom Smith, Kerry Shaw, Amanda Hinds, Jessica Waugh, Russell Rigby, Leslie Gent, Tim Adams, Karen Burgen. Jude Conway.
  
- 3. Apologies:** Ann Hardy, Don Seton Wilkinson, Hugh Watt.

**Visitors:**

- 4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes:** Tom Smith listed twice in previous minutes (Louise Gale, Ron Barber confirmed previous minutes).
  
- 5. Business arising from previous minutes: -**

**6. Presentations**

**Ross Edmonds, the history of the Wickham School of Arts and its danger of destruction by developers.**

Opened 1882. Occupied 100 years, was put to many uses. Case can be made for restoring it purely on the basis of its architecture, even if it's not on the same level of the post office. Its main claim to fame is its connection to Henry Lawson, among others. Mike Scanlon of the Herald has had two articles in the last decade about.

In 1910 Lawson became an alcoholic when he was given 100 pound by George Robertson of Angus and Robertson to write his poetry. Lawson was 16 years old when in Newcastle. Worked

for Hudson Brothers in Wickham, lived in Wickham, may have lived in Bishopsgate St. He decided to learn something before it was “too late” – no such thing as adult education. Not known if he wrote anything while in Newcastle. State Library purchased archives of Angus & Robertson in (1936?), including all of their manuscripts and unpublished works. The State Library has a digitized copy of this available - vol 182, part 2 – search for “fragment of Lawson autobiography” and it will be on page 25. Call number – A1888. *Note: Zane Metcalfe has tracked down this page and confirmed the information. Due to the fragmented nature of the autobiography there are two 25th pages. Keep scrolling for it.*

What can be done with the building? It needs a practical purpose rather than to sit vacant and rot. Some have suggested a tourist information centre owing to its proximity to Honeysuckle and the new Interchange. The Hunter Development Corporation have interest in greenfield sites. Ross believes that public pressure is enough to save it.

Jude Conway mentioned that a kindergarten was there. Was the site of the Newcastle Police Boys Club. Ms. Lester ran a fitness studio there. Jude suggests finding and showing the actual handwritten note about Lawson writing about the school of arts. On a personal note, If you put it into Trove search there was a huge number of meetings there. Wickham Labour party met there, a very busy place in its early days. Jude suggests enriching the history to argue for the heritage of the building. Anne Creevey mentions that the building was used as a hall for Wickham school. Brian Roach asked about where the Aboriginal tree of knowledge is. He thinks it's at the big fig tree, but arguments differ as to what tree it is. Bora ground is likely near rail line to Church Street. There is a post about it on HLH website. Brian suggests adding the Indigenous history to the brief about the importance of the building. Keith Parson advised that the Institute of Architects wrote a book about Newcastle's architecture and the building was mentioned in that. The building is considered to have state significant heritage values. Development corporation disagrees but will not provide information as to why. The building is listed in the Newcastle LEP but that does not offer much protection. Building is structurally sound according to engineers. Might have council support from Green side. Bronwyn Law has documentation relating the Wickham School and Wickham School of Arts – the two are closely linked.

Tom Smith advised that the building is locally heritage listed and would benefit from a condensed statement of heritage significance to update the local heritage significance inventory database as the current entry is very short. Might prevent development. Non-public masterplan

suggests it may be developed. Also concerns for Indigenous and European archaeology. Development does not offer support for the tree of knowledge. Suggestions for building to be used as an Aboriginal cultural centre to protect views from tree to Nobbys. No set timeframe for these development movements.

**Action-** Gianni moved to gather the facts and present them to the development corporation and the council.

**Karen Virgin from Umwelt – Rathmines RAAF plan of management CMP – conservation management plan.**

Updated conservation management plan. Was an existing document from 1998. Mostly focused on land management. RAAF base for 20 years 1939-1952. Whole park is listed as a state asset. The CMP is a masterplan for development and what can and can't be developed. Includes aboriginal heritage. Only 10 original buildings remain. Main hangar was one the largest in Australia. Exists as pieces in storage. There are footprints of old buildings that can be reinstated and redeveloped. Presentation ran through each building that existed on the site. Each surviving one is a significant architectural example of styles and the demands of war. It needs to be repurposed to revitalize the park.

RAAF base at Rathmines is of state and likely national significance – plans for a proposal after the CMP is complete. Best surviving example of its type in Australia. Heritage endorsement would take about 3-12 months.

The plan is still available on the Lake Macquarie council website under "Have Your Say" or a call to the library would acquire it.

Ron Barber offers a contact who spent a great deal of time at Rathmines as a serviceman and has a wealth of information.

## **7. Reports and Updates**

Update – Gianni di Gravio- State records has gifted us 3 views of Newcastle as of this morning. Keith offers that the first photo may be looking down Tyrrell Street, but bridge leads to Carrington. Might be McCormick St. Might have been called Sydney St. Second photo is rail line at Islington. Can see Nobbys on the left.

Gionni wishes to thank Umwelt for the donation to the Vera Deacon Fund. Gionni updated us on his opinion piece for the Herald about the former Newcastle Post Office, see . About the demolition of Ferguson house at Mayfield, managing to save the Venetian fish fountain – albeit in pieces.

Update on NBN Country Report, now fully digitized.

History of rail services by Stephen Miller uploaded to HLH.

**Tim Adams, archaeological update:** Nothing to report.

**Tom Smith- Newcastle Council update:** Between Donald and Beaumont St at Hamilton is now a potential conservation area. A CMP is being prepared for Fred Ash Building. There needs to be more consideration outside the Newcastle CBD for CMP plans. Development pressure is expanding outwards. Round building (outside Newcastle City Hall) and Fred Ash Building is likely to remain in council ownership despite them moving out of it.

**Keith Parsons:** Margaret Henry Memorial Lecture on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. Speaker is Marcus Westbury of Renew Newcastle and This Is Not Art.

**Bronwyn Law** is presenting her grandparent's collection of sheet music from WWI. A musical manifestation of the Face to a Name program – musical performance of the sheet music from WWI.

Wickham School Honour Roll has been relocated to the interchange for display. 'Face to a Name' Wickham is a site that allows you to search names of people from Wickham on the Honour Roll for their service history and links to other biographical information. There are 326 entries in there currently. Photos are incomplete, can submit missing photos of servicemen if they are located.

## 8. Public Advocacy

## 9. General Business -

**Ron Barber:** The Governor of NSW and his wife will be at Fort Scratchley to fire the guns on Sept. 11.

Ceremony in Lambton Park on 20<sup>th</sup> October – time capsule being unearthed from 1918- another will be buried for 2118.

**10. Close: 3.00 PM**

Date of next meeting will be Monday, 8th October 2018 at University Council Board Room, IDC Building, University Drive, 1-3pm.