



# The Royal Society of New South Wales

## Bulletin and Proceedings 313

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### Future Events 2008

Lectures in Sydney are held in Lecture Room 1, Darlington Centre, University of Sydney at 7 pm on the first Wednesday of the month with drinks available from 6 pm.

**Wednesday 2 April**

#### **Annual General Meeting at the Darlington Centre**

The Annual General Meeting, will include the Annual Report of Council and Election of Office-bearers for 2008/9

The President will deliver his Presidential Address entitled: *Innovation*

### Southern Highlands Branch

**1.30 pm Saturday 5 April**

#### **Global Warming and the Cosmos**

**Clubbe Hall, Frensham, Mittagong**

#### **Please note:**

The Branch's AGM has been postponed till May. Please see subsequent Bulletins for details.

**Wednesday 7 May**

**Prof Phil Hogg**

#### **Imaging of dying cells in the body**

### **Annual General Meeting of the Royal Society of NSW**

**Wednesday 2 April 2008 Conference Room 1, Darlington Centre, University of Sydney**

#### **Presidential Address: Innovation**

*The past 12 months have seen a great deal of activity for the Royal Society: the publication of a volume on one of the Society's leading lights, Prof. Archibald Liversidge, the opportunity to reclaim Science House for science, the commencement of a project to compile and publish a full history of the Society, and our involvement in the establishment of the Royal Institution (Australia) and the Royal Societies of Australia, not to mention our full year of monthly lectures.*

Our 2008 AGM will give members the opportunity to review the year and discover more of these many interesting initiatives through the Presidential Address and discussion. We invite all members to take an active role in these initiatives either by nominating for Council or by joining the relevant committees formed to oversee progress.

### **John Hardie, President of the Royal Society of NSW**

John Hardie is a Chief Learning Design Officer in the Centre for Learning Innovation, a unit within the NSW Department of Education and Training. He is currently co-ordinating the Centre's online services and information management activity, and is responsible for the management and maintenance of its Internet and Intranet sites. He was previously a manager of learning resource development for TAFE resources, but has also managed the development of resources for schools (languages).



*John Hardie, President*

From 2001 to 2004 John managed one of the three Regions of the NSW Adult Migrant English Service. This included managing the delivery of English language programs through TAFE and Community colleges for newly arrived migrants over the whole of rural NSW.

Originally trained as a geologist, John has spent most of his working life in the field of education, particularly distance education and open learning.

John has been an active member of several professional associations, including the Australian Society for Educational Technology and the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia. His involvement with the Royal Society of NSW dates back to 1972 when he joined as an Associate Member while still a student. He has served on Council for many years, as Councillor then Hon Secretary and Vice-President for several years. He served previously as President in 1994/5.

### **Patrons**

**His Excellency, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (ret'd), Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia**  
**Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO Governor of NSW**

## Royal Society Studentship

The Council of the Royal Society has decided to reinstate its Studentships in order to acknowledge outstanding achievements by individuals working in a science-related field. Students studying in any tertiary course within NSW are eligible to apply. The award consists of an engraved plaque acknowledging your achievement, a \$500 prize and a one-year complimentary membership of the Society.

Applicants should send the Society a statement outlining the significance of their work, an abstract of around 500 words, and a brief curriculum vitae, including details of your professional experience.

Winners will be expected to deliver a short presentation of their work at the December Meeting of the Society and prepare a paper for the Society's journal. Applications should be sent to:  
**Royal Society Studentships, Building H47,  
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, NSW 2006, AUSTRALIA**

**Closing Date: 31 July of each year**

**The publication date for  
Archibald Liversidge, Imperial Science under  
the Southern Cross  
has been delayed until the end of 2008.  
However, the pre-publication offer remains  
open. The Bulletin will keep you informed  
of progress of this major historical work.**

*Members of the Royal Society, the Geological  
Society of Australia and other affiliated  
societies are invited to take advantage of the  
pre-publication price of \$39.95 for a limited  
number of copies of Prof Roy MacLeod's  
Archibald Liversidge, Imperial Science under  
the Southern Cross. It is anticipated that the  
recommended retail price will be in the order  
of \$65. To reserve your copy, contact The Royal  
Society office now (see below).*

## The Eureka Prizes

The Australian Museum's Eureka Prizes are once again up for grabs. There are some 20 prizes in the categories of Research and Innovation; Science Communication and Journalism; Science Leadership, and School Science. Why not encourage some of your talented colleagues to nominate? Better still, why not nominate yourself? Go to [www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka](http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka) email: [eureka@austmus.gov.au](mailto:eureka@austmus.gov.au) or phone Roger Muller at the Museum: 61 2 9320 6230

**Entries close 2 May 2008**

## The Science for Science House Project

### **Science House is up for grabs!**

A Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority advertisement titled 'Unique Leasing Opportunities' which included Science House prompted the Royal Society of NSW to take the initiative and claim it for science - all science.

The listing stated: '157-161 Gloucester Street, 2,268 m<sup>2</sup>. A heritage listed ornate brick building with award winning architectural design and large open plan areas.' It called for 'Expressions of interest' (EOI) from commercial businesses 'who want to tell their own story in The Rocks.'

In fact, Science House is heritage listed not just once, but on a number of grounds. The Statement of Significance from The NSW Heritage Office Website tells us that 'Science House and site are of State heritage significance for their historical and scientific cultural values. The site and building area also of State heritage significance for their contribution to The Rocks area which is of State Heritage significance in its own right.'

The building of Science House was the result of the cooperative effort of an alliance of scientific bodies, including The Royal Society of NSW, the Institution of Engineers, Australia (IEAust), and the Linnean Society of NSW. The idea had been discussed as early as 1890s, but it wasn't until 1920 that a push for an alliance

between scientific bodies grew to the point that a committee was formed in 1926 to pursue the matter. The building, which had been custom built for the use of scientific organizations, was completed in 1931 and it did indeed become the hub of science as the home to the leading scientific and technical bodies of New South Wales.

As many readers will no doubt recall, in February 1971, the NSW Government released the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (SCRA) plans for the redevelopment of The Rocks area. This would have seen Science House demolished as part of an extensive area from the Cahill Expressway through to George Street. However, led by Jack Mundey, the building unions placed Green Bans on the redevelopment in December 1971 and the 'Scheme for the Redevelopment of Sydney Cove' was eventually dropped.

By this time the government had resumed Science House and the owners, The Royal Society and the Linnean Society used the compensation they received to purchase alternative premises. The IEAust moved elsewhere. Science House became Sports House, which was used for the organisation of various sporting events such as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games. The beautifully engraved façade remained emblazoned with 'SCIENCE HOUSE' as it does today.

Around this time, awareness of science went into the decline that continues and the Royal Society lost much of its standing. There are probably many causes, but fragmentation into interest groups was obviously one. Rather than 'Divide and rule' for science, it became 'divide and lose the plot'. In the past the NSW government has been notorious for its lack of funding and unsympathetic attitude towards science. Currently there seems to be change in the air. There have been a number of encouraging new NSW government proposals including the NSW Science Communication Initiative and its three components: Science Promotion with its NSW Scientist of the Year Awards; Science Careers, and Science Knowledge

Elsewhere in Australia there is also a glimmer of hope for science. Already the Rudd Government is showing a renewed interest with initiatives such as Minister Kim Carr's announcement of a charter to protect scientific debate. The South Australian Government, through Premier Rann, has devoted the heritage-listed, Old Stock Exchange in the centre of Adelaide to housing the Royal Institution and the Australian Science Media Centre.

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*Science House was the winner of the inaugural Sulman Prize for Architecture in 1932, which was presented in January 1933 to its architects, Peddle Thorpe and Walker.*

## Meet our Councillors

### Robyn Stutchbury

BSc(Hon), Dip Ed, Grad Cert Sci Comm

I was one of those bizarre children who loved to spend time pulling the family clocks apart – without putting them back together; pulling my bicycle apart – and putting it back together; using my chemistry set to perform ‘experiments’ such as producing ‘cobalt weather indicators’, and using my developing kit (my first ever ‘swimming trophy’), to develop and print photographs taken on my Box Brownie.

When I wasn’t doing these, I was threading my collection of bones on wire so that I could hang the skeletons from the ceiling. These were collected mostly from the banks of the Parramatta River, which kept me well supplied with a variety of carcasses from the Homebush Abattoirs upstream. Rats, mice, possums, cats and dogs and a variety of birds were also readily available from the river and surrounding ‘bush’ and so sparked my love of natural history.

After I failed history in the Intermediate Certificate (I loathed the beheadings of the French Revolution) and topped physiology, maths and art, the school in its wisdom decided that for the Leaving Certificate I should do Ancient and Modern History and no maths. Science was out of the question because I was considered a ‘dumb-bum’ – my words not those of my methodist ladies’ school. The only solution was to drop out of school and pursue my love of science through the now TAFE system.

From there began a journey through a giant learning curve that continued through the University of Sydney, the teaching of secondary school science, my mature-age science degree in geology, my adventure as Education Officer at the Geological and Mining Museum and into the world of science communication through my own business, Peripatus Productions Pty Ltd.

I have presented courses in all four Sydney Universities, prepared academic courses for such as UNSW’s MBT and had fun managing Science in the Pub and Science in the Bush as government-funded communication initiatives.



Robyn Stutchbury

## Science for Science House

*continued from p2*

Here in NSW it will take the concerted effort of all scientists and supporters to help with these changes. The first step should be to reclaim Science House for science so that it can be established as the NSW Science Centre: a place for meetings, registered offices for scientific organisations, library, conference facilities, and a media centre for science communication and journalism. Archival records of Australia’s scientific heritage should be used for rotating exhibitions or displays showing the work and achievements of Australian scientists. This would be used for out-of-school activities as well as the general public. Distinguished scientists would be invited regularly to address the community on matters of scientific concern, such as climate change. This will happen only if all scientists work as a unified force. Now almost 80 years after the opening of Science House, it is time to include the missing link to its heritage listings: the learned societies that gave rise to it. It will take years before the lease comes up again. Now is the time to act.

We call on all scientists, scientific organisations, and concerned citizens to sign a petition demanding that Science House once again becomes the centre for all science in this state.

### What have we done so far?

We have discussed the initiative with a number of leading scientists. The Royal Society of NSW was not in the position to prepare an EoI at such short notice and so instead, we wrote to register our interest in the building. We included that our proposal was an alternative to a ‘commercial’ use for the building and proposed that the building should be used by scientific and cultural bodies for a vast range of activities.

We need to form a consortium of scientific organisations drawn from professional societies, corporate scientific practices and academia. The consortium would have a managing council and board with an executive director and staff, a chairman and executive of council.

## Another inspiring project for the Society

***Historian author Dr Peter Tyler submitted a proposal to the Council's February meeting to write A Distinctive and Valuable Spirit, A history of the Royal Society of New South Wales. Aimed at a broad readership, it will be a thematic treatment of a comprehensive contextual history of the Society.***

The suggested working title – *A Distinctive and Valuable Spirit* – is quoted from a comment about science by Professor R. Hanbury Brown in 1986: ‘Science, particularly basic science, does have a **distinctive and valuable spirit** and ... it is a spirit which a society like ours, ruled largely by the values of economics, would do well to encourage.’ This seems a particularly apt description of the Royal Society of New South Wales. Any Royal Society history must strive to be a serious, balanced account based on thorough research, avoiding the pitfalls both of journalistic sensationalism and turgid intellectualism.

The report on 2006 Cultural Heritage research project recommended: ‘That a comprehensive history of the Society be commissioned to trace its origins and development over a period of 185 years, placed into the broader context of Australian history.’ At various stages over the past hundred years, members of the Royal Society have published histories of the Society up to that date. These provide a valuable chronological account of the main events and personalities involved. However, because ‘insiders’ who were not primarily historians wrote them, they tend to be light on contextual settings, and do not attempt to interpret the underlying reasons for particular occurrences. In other words, they answer the questions ‘who’ and ‘what’ and ‘when’, but are weaker in explaining ‘how’ and ‘why’.

The recommended retail price of the book will be about \$60 and it is proposed to apply for funding from a number of sources to assist with its writing and publication. Peter Tyler said that he was particularly enthusiastic about this project because of his Society membership and the extensive work he had already done on the Society’s books and archives through the Community Heritage Grants over the past two years.

*Continued p4*

## *The history project continued from p3*

The first task in this project will be an oral history compiled from interviews of leading members of the Society, as well as people from the worlds of government, commerce and education who have had interactions with the Society over many years. Because of the close links between the Royal Society and Mitchell Library, the Royal Society Council hopes to be able to engage in a co-operative project with State Library of New South Wales in the oral history recording, cataloguing and storage of interview records. Funding support for this aspect of the history project could come from the Royal Society itself and the scientific community.

The project will be supervised by members of the Professional Historians Association, of which Peter Tyler is President. It is estimated that around 20 interviews will be needed with some interviews conducted by trained volunteers who are knowledgeable about scientific matters. The State Library might be in a position to provide training in oral history recording techniques.

### **Members**

*You are invited to contribute articles and notices to the Bulletin. Do you have comments to make? Are there events coming up that we should all know about? Please send in your contributions by the end of the first week of the month to the Society's office (contact details p4).*

### **Members**

*We are still calling on volunteers to help, please contact Val at the society's office. Also thank you all for the many donations.*

### **Contact your office bearers**

John Hardie President	02 9363 9360
Clive Wilmot Vice President	02 4886 4199
Prof Peter Williams Hon Sec (Editorial)	02 9685 9914
Christine van der Leeuw Hon Librarian	02 9680 3598
Trevor Danos	02 9036 5282
Prof Heinrich Hora	02 9547 1424
Jill Rowling	(02) 9697 4484

## **Annual Dinner and the Society's awards**

This year some 60 members and their guests were honoured to have, Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, the Governor of NSW and Chancellor of the University of Sydney, present the awards at the Annual Dinner of the Society held at the Forum Restaurant in the Darlington Centre at the University of Sydney on Friday 14 March, 2008. She was accompanied by her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie.

**The Edgeworth David Medal** was presented to **Dr Stuart Wyithe** from the School of Physics, University of Melbourne for his work at the leading edge of most major subfields in cosmology. In particular he has made distinguished contributions to understanding the formation of the universe.



*Society award winners with Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales and (LtoR): President, John Hardie; Vice Chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown, Royal Society Medal; Dr Stuart Wyithe, Edgeworth David Medal; Professor Sue O'Reilly, The Clarke Medal, and Professor Matthew Colless, The Burfitt Medal.*

**The Burfitt Prize** winner is **Professor Matthew Colless FAA**, Professor Matthew Colless, Director of the Anglo-Australian Observatory and Adjunct Professor in the School of Physics at the University of Sydney. He has made major contributions to astronomical research in the fields large-scale structure and motions of galaxies.

**The Clarke Medal** was won by **Professor Sue O'Reilly**, an internationally renowned geologist and Foundation Director of the Australian Research Council National Key Centre for Geochemical Evolution and Metallogeny of Continents (GEMOC). Her research interests cover the understanding whole-mantle dynamics through time.

A highly guarded secret of the occasion was the surprise presentation of the **Royal Society Medal** to Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney, **Professor Gavin Brown**, who was obviously delighted by the gesture. It was awarded as a mark of appreciation from the Society for the many years of support given by Professor Brown and in particular, arranging suitable accommodation for the Society's office within the university campus.

John Hardie President	02 9363 9360	Prof Jak Kelly Vice President	02 9419 6877
Clive Wilmot Vice President	02 4886 4199	Alan Buttenshaw Hon Sec (General)	02 9569 0236
Prof Peter Williams Hon Sec (Editorial)	02 9685 9914	Marian Haire Hon Treasurer	02 8467 3575
Christine van der Leeuw Hon Librarian	02 9680 3598	Prof Tony Baker	02 9514 1764
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