

BLUE MOUNTAINS HISTORY JOURNAL

Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations



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Blue Mountains History Journal

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EDITORIAL

Issue 5 of **The Blue Mountains History Journal** contains three papers plus a brief account of the late John Leary. Two papers relate the histories of prominent and iconic buildings in the Blue Mountains, the Paragon Café in Katoomba and the Victory Theatre in Blackheath. The third paper concerns the life of a rather sad individual who drafted several detailed maps for the Blue Mountains City Council which set new standards for other cartographers. The final contribution is an appreciation of the achievements of the founding President of BMACHO.

Associate Professor Ian Jack has a well deserved reputation for documenting the history of heritage listed buildings and this issue contains his splendid account of the iconic Paragon Café in Katoomba. Not only does he deal with the ownerships of that business, but also he has written about the parts of that building on the ground floor that are readily accessible by the public and then he describes the factory that is upstairs where the famous Paragon chocolates were made.

Since 1915 Blackheath has had a building that has been a cinema but served many other purposes and is now a multi-vendor market of antiques. Discovering the history of ownership and the travails of operating businesses in that building has been a long term research project for John Lanser. The result of his endeavours is a paper that is meticulously documented with over 150 references and ten footnotes - a new record for this Journal. The history of that building spans almost a century and there many aspects to that account which made for a long paper - almost the biggest that we have ever published.

Brian Fox is a retired cartographer with whom I have been privileged to collaborate from time to time. On this occasion it is appropriately about Victor Coleman who, on either side of World War II, drew maps that are in a style that was new at the time and which subsequently have been reproduced many times. Initially we worked independently on various aspects of the life of Victor Coleman but with limited overlap so combining our efforts made sense as a more complete history of the life of that draftsman has been the result. Victor had a sad personal life which is revealed as best as available documentation has permitted.

John Leary was the President of BMACHO when he died in July 2014. To some extent that organisation has been widely regarded as 'his' for he was one of the initiators of it and was President for all but two years of its existence. The short paper written by Jan Koperberg is an account of John's work in relation to BMACHO and is an appreciation of his efforts rather than a formal obituary. This account has been produced by one who, as Secretary and Treasurer of BMACHO, has worked closely with John for a long time - who better to write it ?

For the convenience of readers, at the end of this issue there is a cumulative list of the papers that were published in Issues 1 to 4.

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THE PARAGON CAFÉ, KATOOMBA.

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Abstract:

In 2016 the Paragon Café in Katoomba will celebrate its centenary. During its first thirty years, the Simos family created an institution which stood out among the Greek cafés of Australia for its stylishness and flair. Its Art Deco features, the work of distinguished and well-chosen architects, designers and artists, have survived with unusual integrity in three downstairs salons. But as well as its public face, the Paragon has a contrasting industrial space upstairs, where for eighty years its renowned chocolates have been manufactured and its baking accomplished. Much of this early machinery, imported from the world's best suppliers, is still upstairs, though no longer all *in situ*. It is this combination of Art Deco public space with industrial archaeology which gives the Paragon exceptionally high significance.

Key Words: Paragon, Café, Restaurant, Art Deco, Simos, Blue Mountains

INTRODUCTION

The Upper Mountains are well supplied with icons both of the natural environment and of the European built environment. The built environment from the later nineteenth century onwards relates overwhelmingly to the tourist industry: the railway which brought city-dwellers up from the plain for holidays, the hotels and guest-houses, the cafés and restaurants and the homes of those who serviced the visitors. Among these places of heritage significance, one particular café stands out.

The Paragon Café in Katoomba was presciently named by Zacharias Simos in 1916 (Simos 1916). There are many Greek cafés in New South Wales, forming an important heritage genre. But no other surviving Greek café in the state has comparable stylishness, integrity and wealth of aesthetic and industrial heritage.

The Paragon dates from quite near the beginning of a new phenomenon in Australian cities and country towns, the Greek café. Although the Greek diaspora,

especially to America and Australia, had begun early in the nineteenth century, it had gained momentum only from the 1870s: over the following century over three million Greeks, both men and women, emigrated. The primary reason for many leaving their homeland in the late nineteenth century was economic, exacerbated by a sharp decline in the price of staple exports such as figs and currants and the wholesale replacement in some places of olive-groves by vineyards. But political problems with the Ottoman Empire and a degree of racial exclusion within Greece and its islands were also significant (Tamis 2003, pp.16-17).

A number of these late Victorian and Edwardian émigrés from Greece, often with experience of the United States as well, direct or indirect, created a new café experience in cities and towns throughout Australia. The Greek café has been described by Leonard Janiszewski as 'essentially an evolutionary amalgam' of the Greek coffee-house and the American oyster saloon and soda parlour with the familiar fare of the existing British-Australian steak-house (Janiszewski and Alexakis 2002, pp.14-18). That is to say, the Greek café was Greek enough, but was intelligently multicultural in attracting and retaining an Australian clientele.

There were a few areas of Greece which supplied a remarkably large proportion of successful migrants to the antipodes. Three quite small islands, Kastellorizo close to Turkey, Ithaca in the Ionian Islands to the west of Greece and Kythera to the south, were the origin of over 40% of all Australian-Greeks in the earlier twentieth century (Tsounis 1975, p.22).

The Kytherans in particular built on the success of their fellow islanders, the Kominos brothers, Athanasios and Ioannis, who had pioneered the Greek fish shop and oyster bar in Sydney in the 1870s and 1880s. After the death of Athanasios in 1897, his brother, now called John Comino, developed a chain of premises, both wholesale and retail, to sell oysters and other seafood both along the coast and in many

country towns, including Katoomba (Turnbull and Valiotis 2001, pp.19 & 21). The family grew and throughout the first half of 1912 two Comino brothers published advertisements for their Cosmopolitan Café in Katoomba. They described their new café as ‘The Palate Pleaser’, as ‘The Epicures’ Rendezvous’ and as ‘The Paragon of Mountain Restaurants’ (Figure 1; Comino Bros. (1912a to 1912b)). The café was called the Cosmopolitan, but it was also a paragon of its kind.



Figure 1. Advertisement for the Comino brothers’ Cosmopolitan Café in Katoomba (Comino Bros. 1912a).

Comino’s Cosmopolitan Café was a two-storey building on Main Street, Katoomba. This was the original line of the Great Western Highway and is now called Bathurst Road. The new café was shrewdly sited in the commercial development close to the railway station. Katoomba had only begun to take its present shape in the early 1880s, when the large land-holding of James Henry Neale, acquired in 1877 and 1878, was sold and sub-divided (Figure 2). Neale was a master butcher and Sydney politician, who had been a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1864 until 1874. He bought portions of land at Katoomba partly as a speculation, partly to build himself a country retreat. His fine house called *Froma* was the first private residence, where the Cultural Centre now stands (Woods 1997, p.79).

It was Neale’s successor, Frederick Clissold, who effectively created the modern street system. Parke, Katoomba and Lurline Streets ran north-south. The southern edge was defined by Waratah Street, running east-west, while the Great Western Highway and the railway defined the northern limit (Figure 2).

Frederick Clissold, who was the critical catalyst for change, had made his fortune as a fellmonger in Newtown and a woolwasher in Canterbury in the late 1860s and had lived in some style in Ashfield at *Mountjoy*. After retiring to England to restore his health in the late 1870s, Clissold returned to New

South Wales and became a wealthy property dealer in the 1880s, with a famous stable of race-horses (Coupe 1988, pp.79-81). Although Katoomba was only one of his many short-term investments, Clissold is the real founder of Katoomba’s central business district which was so dependant on the two long parallel streets, Katoomba and Lurline. There was an increasing concentration of commercial premises and tourist facilities within Clissold’s rectangle, with many churches and places of entertainment, as the 78 allotments created in 1881 were, over two decades, purchased and developed.

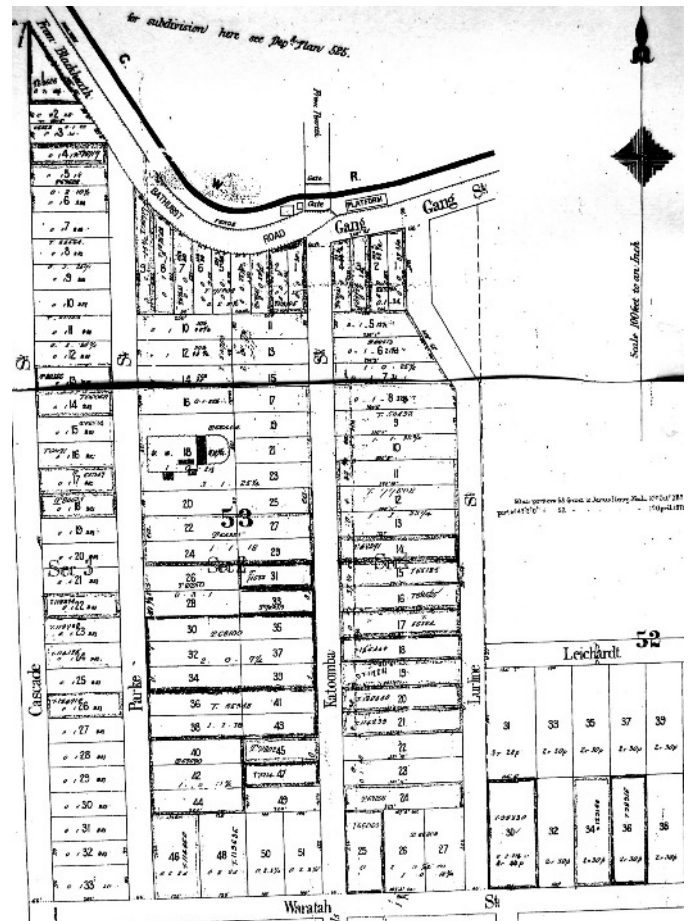


Figure 2. Sub-division of J.H. Neale’s estate in Katoomba, 1881. The streets are already named. (Department of Lands 1881).

But there was still a lot of free space in Katoomba when the Comino brothers opened the Cosmopolitan Café. A marvellous photograph of the partially developed town, published in 1907, was taken from the most spectacular of the early consolidations, the Carrington Hotel (Figure 3).

The Carrington, re-named after the governor who visited in 1886, took up a great deal of space. But during the period from the 1890s up to the First World War, the whole area around the great hotel was developed. This was all quite close to the railway station, along Katoomba, Parke, Lurline and Main

Figure 5. First advertisement for the Paragon, 15 September 1916 (Simos 1916).

He instantly made a speciality of ‘late suppers’ to attract patrons of the various shows and dances in Katoomba, while for those who stayed quietly at home he offered to deliver fresh lobsters and oysters anywhere in the Mountains (Simos 1916).

Is the name he chose an index of Greekness? Certainly the names of Greek cafés in Australia were often derived from their owner’s homeland. There are lots of cafes called the Acropolis or the Parthenon or the Marathon (Janiszewski and Alexakis 2002, p.15). The Comino brothers had described their café in Katoomba as the ‘paragon of Mountain restaurants’ but they had not named it the Paragon. They called it the Cosmopolitan, which gives nothing away at all (Figure 1).

The name Paragon was not unusual as a name of a catering establishment as well as a puff about its quality, but it did not have an exclusively Greek connection. There were Paragon hotels and cafés in Sydney (Anonymous 1916, col.2) and in country towns such as Mudgee (Anonymous 1915) and Helensburgh (Nathan 1919). The cinema in Leura at that time was run by Paragon Picture Proprietary and the printery in Katoomba, just across the road from the Paragon Café, was the Paragon Printing Works (Gilbert 1916; Buchanan 1919). Most people assume that Paragon is a Greek name and indeed there is a classical Greek word *παράγων*, but ironically it means ‘misleading’, where something can easily be mistaken for something similar (like false gold). The English meaning of ‘a model of excellence’ comes from Old French. So Zac Simos, like the Cominos, was not playing the ethnic card when he chose the name of his Paragon Café and Oyster Palace.

Simos did not try to name his café in any American style either, although he was advertising from the outset his ‘American fountain drinks’ (Simos 1916), following the example, in particular, of the Anglo-American Company, founded in Sydney by three young American-Greeks in 1912. The First World War saw the triumph of the American soda bar, recreated in Australia by Greek migrants (Janiszewski and Alexakis 2002, p.15). Simos was quick to join the trend.

Elsewhere in the state there were lots of Greek cafes which chose American names, such as the Californian or the Golden Gate or the Monterey (Janiszewski and Alexakis 2002, p.15). In Bathurst Road, Katoomba, just round the corner from the Paragon, G.D. Comino had leased Thomas Trimbell’s refreshment room at nos. 90-92 and opened the Acropolis café in 1917, but in 1919 Comino changed the name to Niagara with the ‘latest model Iceless Soda Fountain’. When the Poulos brothers, James and Peter, bought the lease and then, in March 1922, the freehold, they continued to use the exact wording of Comino’s advertisement (Comino 1918; Comino 1919; Simos 1922; Katoomba Rate Assessment books). The Niagara still enjoys its American name today and is still a flourishing restaurant, although its interior fittings have been much altered.

Figure 6. Advertisement for the Paragon as a Sundae and Candy Shop (Simos 1921).

Simos was a significantly early exponent of American-style soda drinks with fancy flavours. In 1918 he fell foul of the law for combining raspberry syrup (imported from America) with too much sodium benzoate, but survived the fine of £2, about

\$150 today (Anonymous 1918a). When he advertised for young girls as shop assistants in 1918 and 1919, he described the café temptingly as a ‘soda fountain’ (Anonymous 1918b; Anonymous 1919).

The description was manipulated skilfully. In 1921 the Paragon was advertised as a ‘Sundae and Candy Shop’ (Figure 6). Although he was still only the lessee, Simos extended the size of the main room, the one familiar to us all today and opened a private room behind for private suppers and other functions. His advertisement for that appeared in the *Blue Mountain Echo* in 1922 immediately below the Poulos Brothers’ advert for the Niagara (Simos 1922). Simos and the Poulos family remained good friends, although the Paragon and the Niagara were keen rivals.

Simos worked hard at publicity. In 1922 there was a long article in the local paper, probably written by himself, which presented the Paragon as

“... the acme of good taste and modern ideas presented by an enterprising proprietary that believes in nothing but the best”.

There were

“... dinkie little cubicles furnished in ... seductive style, where a ... pair can comfortably ensconce themselves ... after the dance or the pictures”

and in addition to the café, he opened a ‘dive’ (his expression) in the basement of the King’s Theatre and boasted that

“... the young fellow who doesn’t take his girleen to either place ought to make way for the chap who will” (Anonymous 1922).

In December 1924, just as the Poulos brothers had done two years earlier, Simos purchased the freehold of the property he was leasing from the former rector of St. Hilda’s and also acquired the adjacent shop, no.67, for almost £10,000, the equivalent of some \$600,000 today (Katoomba Rate Assessment Book).

Zac was a true entrepreneur. He leased no.67 as a health food shop to Mrs Palmer and continued to develop no.65 (Katoomba Rate Assessment Book). His brother George, who had joined him, was a master confectioner and Paragon chocolates quickly gained a fine reputation, which they have kept to this day. In the mid-1920s, the chocolates were manufactured in the basement of Soper Chambers on the other side of Katoomba Street (nos. 118-120) in a white-enamelled chamber of vaunted hygiene. This building had been erected in 1921 by Soper Brothers, the real estate agents, and Simos had at the same time purchased Soper’s previous premises next door and

continued to lease them out as a commercial investment (Katoomba Rate Assessment Books).

Simos used all modern means to promote the Paragon and its home-made products. Packaging was important and the Paragon style of box, still in use today, was already distinctive (Figure 7). Moreover, if one bought a pound of chocolates in 1925, one got half a pound of Peanut Brittle free. Made on the premises, the Peanut Brittle was advertised as ‘a dandy candy’ (Figure 8). Alternatively one could enjoy waffles made with the latest American recipe, bathed in genuine imported maple syrup (Anonymous 1925a).

There was an advance in sophistication in the 1920s. Where once Simos had advertised for a ‘young girl’, a ‘smart girl’ or a ‘young respectable girl’ to help in the Paragon, by 1925 he was seeking ‘two refined girls’ (Anonymous 1918b; Anonymous 1918c; Anonymous 1925b). In 1926 he was offering



Photo: Ian Jack 10 Dec. 2012 courtesy of Robyn Parker.

Figure 7. A box for 1 lb. (450 g) of chocolates, surviving from the Simos period.



Figure 8. Advertisement for the Paragon’s Peanut Brittle (Anonymous 1926c).

personalised Easter eggs, with the child's name impressed on the chocolate: the chocolate egg displayed in the Paragon window was claimed to be the largest in all of New South Wales (Anonymous 1926a).

All this promotion, together with the purchase of the freehold at the end of 1924, built up in 1926 to a massive make-over of the Paragon, at the cost of £5,000, some \$300,000 in modern money. The shopfitters used were Harry and Ernest Sidgreaves, then working out of Redfern (Lucas 1975). This family company is still in existence, still a major force in retail design (Anonymous n.d.). Under Sidgreaves, the main front room was doubled in length, with a new soda fountain constructed patriotically in Australian marble (Low 1991, p.77). Much of the glass shelving with its distinctive adjustable brackets remains in place today.

Aesthetic considerations were strong. For the main public room, Zac Simos ordered wall panels, 'artistic plaques' in white or cream, framed in gold (Anonymous 1926b). These panels were replaced in 1947, but the decorations and the style of the Paragon in 1926 were of an elegance which distinguished it from most of its rivals and more was to come.

The area just behind the Paragon bar is now a sort of hallway, but in 1926 it was an elegant private supper-room: this is why it has such fine period detailing like the surviving light fitting (Figure 9). And behind this supper room was a new change room for 'the girls' who worked in the café. Further back again was the kitchen, much as it is today (Anonymous 1926b). Upstairs was transformed at this time. The front section was fitted out for Zac Simos' own bachelor accommodation. There were three industrial sections to the rear. The machinery was largely imported: just

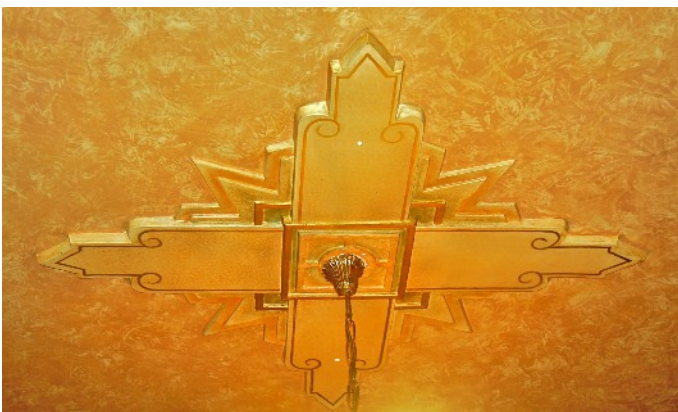


Photo: Ian Jack, 10 December 2012.

Figure 9. Art Deco light-fitting on the ceiling of the hallway behind the main saloon of the Paragon.



Photo: State Library of NSW - PXA 975/18.

Figure 10. The Paragon's *chocolaterie* when the early machinery was still in use, c.1960.

like the soda fountain equipment downstairs, the upstairs equipment was strikingly cosmopolitan. The Simos family, headed by Zac, Mary and George the confectioner, took pains to acquire the best equipment available from Europe, America and Australia.

Upstairs at the Paragon today is a revelation. Few people have been aware that there was anything of heritage value upstairs. When a decade ago, I led a team which reviewed the heritage listings in the entire City of the Blue Mountains, we were not shown even the stairs going up. It is one of many benefits of Robyn Parker's stewardship of the café in the last few years that she instantly recognised how the survival of so much evidence for the Simos' bakery and *chocolaterie* gave the Paragon so much of its distinction. This survival adds substantially to the already commanding heritage significance of the building.

The earlier chocolate-making machinery and some of the baking equipment was unfortunately dismantled and stored in a short corridor upstairs about ten years ago, but we know what much of it looked like when it was in situ (Figure 10).

In 2013 a group from the committee of the Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology (ASHET) examined all this equipment. The assessment of its significance is still a work in progress, but it is clear that the rarity of such a collection of inter-war equipment in Australia gives the Paragon material impelling interest.

Of the three industrial sections on the upper storey, one was for refrigeration, where the ice-cream was made and stored. A huge, state-of-the-art refrigerator

was connected to the soda fountain to ensure that drinks were icy cool.

The second section was the new bakehouse, with tiled walls and floor. A new dumb waiter was installed to bring the cakes downstairs. This dumb waiter survives impressively intact although Council regulations prohibit its use (Figure 11). Critical pieces of baking machinery remain in store upstairs. Star Machinery of Alexandria and Small and Shattell Pty Ltd, Melbourne-based engineers who advertised on their notepaper in the 1930s that ‘*Our specialities are bread & pastrycooks, biscuit & confectionary machinery*’, along with Star Machinery of Alexandria, are among the few Australian firms patronised (Figure 12; Context 2012, p.5).

A major French/Swiss firm, Kustner Frères of Lyon, had been making baking equipment, among many



Photo: Ian Jack, 10 December 2012.

Figure 11. Dumb waiter in the upstairs bakery, intact but disused.



Photo: David Craddock 10 April 2013.

Figure 12. Name-plate of Small and Shattell Pty Ltd of Melbourne, c.1930s. Preserved on machinery upstairs in the Paragon.



Photo: David Craddock 10 April 2013.

Figure 13. One of the name-plates of Kustner Frères et Cie, based in Geneva and Paris, c.1930s. Preserved on machinery upstairs in the Paragon.

food products for the world for fifty years since the 1880s (Figure 13). There is also another piece of equipment from this firm when it was located not in Lyons but in Paris and Aubervilliers (de Senarcien n.d.). Kustner Frères, with their administrative headquarters in Geneva and Paris, published extensive catalogues between the wars promoting their *Matériel chocolat* (Kustner Frères n.d.). These were no doubt familiar to Zac Simos and his brother who transferred the Paragon chocolate factory from the basement of Soper Chambers, introducing a state-of-the-art forced-gas boiler and “... a draught of cold, dry air for cooling purposes” (Anonymous 1926b).

The original marble table-top in the *chocolaterie* survives *in situ* and shows the regular cuts made by the Paragon’s chocolate-makers over decades of use (Figure 14). The custom-made and very practical tray-compartments under the benches are still usable.

The principal confectionery equipment was made by the leading British firm of BCH (Figure 15). What became the major modern firm called fashionably

BCH had originated in the mid-nineteenth century in the separate work of William Brierley, Luke Collier and Thomas Hartley in the mid-nineteenth century. Luke Collier was a specialist confectioner from 1835; Brierley was a brass-founder, specialising in confectionery work from 1844 onwards; and Hartley was also an independent specialist in chocolate-making. The Brierley and Collier firms amalgamated in 1913 and this firm joined forces with the Hartley family in 1924. Operating out of Rochdale in England the Brierley-Collier-Hartley firm went from strength to strength and finally became BCH (Link4Life n.d.). Simos seems to have ordered this equipment from the firm in the decade after its final amalgamation of 1924.

It was clearly time to establish a dynasty and in 1929 Zac Simos went off to Europe. During this visit, he became engaged to Maria, the American-born daughter of café proprietors called Panaretos whom he chanced to meet on his own home island of Kythera when they were all on holiday. The Panaretos family visited their native island regularly. Mary was fifteen years younger than Zac: she was born in Maryland five weeks after Zac reached Australia. So it was not a question of childhood sweethearts reuniting on a romantic Greek island. The actual marriage did not take place on Kythera, moreover, and did not happen until June 1930 in the United States. Zac then returned to the Paragon with his bride (Braith 2014, p.1; Low 2005 p. 361).



Photo: David Craddock 10 April 2013.

Figure 14. Marble table-top in the *chocolaterie*, up stairs in the Paragon, displaying cutting marks and still in use.



Photo: David Craddock 10 April 2013.

Figure 15. Name-plate of BCH (Brierley Collier and Hartley), leading English manufacturers of chocolate-making machinery since the mid nineteenth century, c.1930s. Preserved on machinery upstairs in the Paragon.

Maria was known as Mary in Australia and became something of a legend in Katoomba, an indispensable contributor to the Paragon's continuing success. As a widow after 1976, when she was 64, Mary Simos managed the Paragon until 1987 (Braith 2014, p.2). Her American upbringing contributed to the complex influences evident in the way in which both America and Europe contributed to the Australian Greek café. Her influence is evident in the way in which Katoomba scenery was deftly worked into the packaging of Paragon products (Figure 16) and in the grandiloquent display panel which put the café on a plane with Caruso and Shakespeare (Figure 17).

Mary's influence is likely also to have been considerable in the further improvements made to the fabric of the Paragon in the 1930s and 1940s, changes which confirmed its iconic status.



Photo: Ian Jack 10 Dec. 2012 courtesy of Robyn Parker.

Figure 16. Box for half a pound of Paragon home-made biscuits, featuring the Orphan Rock, the Bridal Veil Falls and the Three Sisters.



Photo: Ian Jack, 10 December 2012.

Figure 18. The bar created by Henry Eli White in 1936 in the Blue Room.

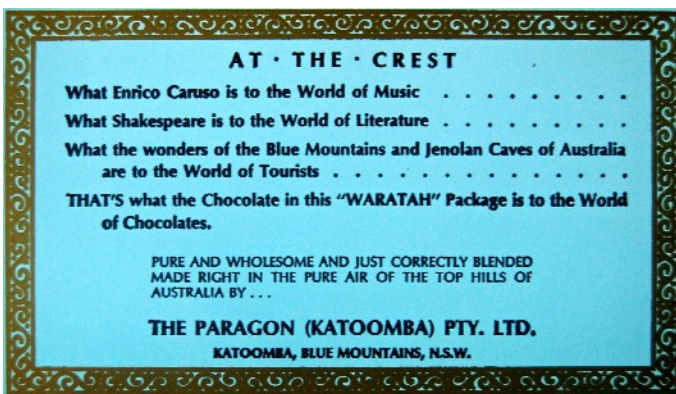


Photo: Ian Jack 10 Dec. 2012 courtesy of Robyn Parker.

Figure 17. A display card likening the pre-eminence of the Paragon's Waratah chocolate to the position of Caruso in singing and Shakespeare in writing.

Two important function rooms right at the back of the Paragon were created, the 'Banquet Hall' in 1934 and the 'Blue Room' in 1936, designed by the theatre architect Henry Eli White (Figure 18; Low 1991, p.77; Low 2005, p.361). White had also designed the Capitol in Sydney in the mid-1920s and the lavishly Art Deco State Theatre which had opened in 1929 (Thomas 1990, p.468). His smaller scale work at the Paragon was his last major achievement. The two private rooms for functions are remarkable today, not only for their décor, one pre-Columbian, the other 'ocean liner', but also for their very mood lighting.

The final stage in the remodelling of the public area of the Paragon was at the end of World War II, when the Danish sculptor, Otto Steen, was commissioned to carve a series of classical figures in alabaster to be attached to the maple-wood walls of the main café.

Steen is an interesting and under-rated artist. He had trained as a stone-carver in Copenhagen before he

migrated to Australia in 1927 at the age of 25. In Sydney he trained with Rayner Hoff at Sydney Technical College and from 1932 until 1935 he assisted Hoff with the sculptures in the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park (Hunt 1981, p.3; Sturgeon 1978, p.136; National Trust (n.d.)). In 1939 he sculpted the dramatic figure of the winged horse, Pegasus, high on the new Amalgamated Wireless Australia building in York Street, Sydney, and soon afterwards he produced the two life-size plaques of a mother and child on the frontage of the King George V Memorial Hospital in Camperdown (Jahn 1997, pp.138 & 150).

Steen's name has remained over-shadowed by his mentor, Rayner Hoff, but Henri van de Velde of *Everglades* knew about him, possibly through his Danish gardener, Paul Sorensen, and in the late 1930s commissioned Steen to do some of the most attractive work at his Leura estate. Steen produced a full-size bronze of a classical nude man in the porch of the Garden Theatre along with the Bacchus fountain nearby (Figure 19). In quite a different genre, Steen's first commission at *Everglades*, in 1936, had been a set of seven witty plaques on non-classical themes in the dining-room (Figure 20; Le Sueur 2000, p.26; signage at *Everglades*). Van de Velde, and Zac Simos too, would have been aware of the Art Deco reliefs of dancers with which Steen had just adorned the Trocadero, the spectacular *palais de dance* in George Street, Sydney, opened in April 1936 (Wotherspoon 2008; National Trust signage, *Everglades*).

The dozen alabaster friezes which Steen executed in low relief for the main dining area in the Paragon a decade later in 1947 continued the classical Greek themes and they are exceptionally fine (Braith 2014, p.2). The scenes include the judgment of Paris among



Photo: Ian Jack, 4 April 2014

Figure 19. The Bacchus fountain at Everglades, created by Otto Steen in 1938.



Photo: Ian Jack, 4 April 2014

Figure 20. Otto Steen's plaques on the dining-room wall at Everglades, 1936.



Photo: Ian Jack, 17 July 2014

Figure 21. Otto Steen's alabaster plaque of Icarus in flight, 1947. In the main saloon.



Photo: Ian Jack, 17 July 2014

Figure 22. Otto Steen's alabaster plaque of the judgment of Paris, 1947. In the main saloon.

the three jealous goddesses, a voluptuous Venus with her son Cupid, Pan with his pipes, a centaur and Icarus in flight (Figures 21 & 22).

The richness, style and integrity of the public rooms at the Paragon distinguish it among Greek cafés. The details are a rich resource for further study, while the scene upstairs possesses raw materials for industrial research. Although the chocolates made on the premises today emerge from more modern equipment, they are still sold in boxes decorated as they were eighty years ago by the Simos family. The sheer aesthetic of the artefact combines happily with its traditional design.

This combination of the industrial and practical with an impelling aesthetic is the true value of the

Paragon, the reason why 'Friends of the Paragon' are in process of formation, the reason why a determined attempt has been mounted to put it on the State Heritage Register. The Paragon is an exceptionally well preserved Art Deco café, full of rich associations with the broad genre of the Greek café outside Greece, a tribute to the good taste of Zac and Mary Simos, their architects, artists and interior designers, whose work is so legible today. The *chocolaterie* and bakery in the upper rooms give the café a different and highly significant dimension. The Paragon is a rare archaeological resource as well as a monument in the built environment of upper Katoomba Street, nestling comfortably under its flamboyant neighbour, the Carrington.

Acknowledgements

The help of Robyn Parker, Linsi Braith, David Craddock and Ian Arthur is gratefully acknowledged.

Abbreviations

n.d. no date

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BLACKHEATH'S VICTORY THEATRE

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Abstract.

The Victory Theatre is situated in the Blue Mountains at Blackheath and is now a retail outlet divided into booths displaying antiques, jewellery, books etc. At times it has been a cinema, a concert hall, a dance hall, a boxing arena and a roller skating rink. Herbert Neate opened the building in 1915 as the Arcadia Picture Palace but it has also been known as the Arcadia Hall (1915), Arcadia Theatre (1923), Blackheath Talkies (1932 see Fig. 9), Blackheath Picture Palace (1938), Blackheath Theatre (1939), Victory Theatre (1945) and the Victory Theatre Antique Centre (1996). The travails of operating this venue for almost a century are documented.

Key Words: Arcadia, Victory, theatre, cinema, movies, Blackheath, Blue Mountains.

INTRODUCTION

Oldest of only three cinema buildings remaining in the Blue Mountains, the Victory Antique Centre at Blackheath (Figure 1) is also one of three commercial historic buildings in the village (the others being Gardner's Inn and the Ivanhoe Hotel).

Byrne (2013) noted that

"The facade ... is representative of the Free Classical architectural idiom employed by architects during the first and second decades of the twentieth century in the design of cinemas" (NSW Heritage Office 2001, p.4-5).



Figure 1. Victory Theatre, 2012. Extract from an advertising flyer.

Most of its characteristics survive although glass doors have replaced the original shutters, and the external steps (Figure 2) which accessed the former projection room (or bio box - *trade term*) were removed in the late 1990s. The influence of the arts and crafts movement is evident in the pressed metal ceiling of the gallery level space once occupied by the bio box (Figure 3) and the partly exposed original proscenium (Figure 4), along with the original tiling of the present coffee shop which operates in the former foyer.



H.T. & L. Collier Collection.

Figure 2. External staircase to the bio box & a float in the 1970 Rhododendron Festival Parade.

Jana Byrne, in the September-December 2013 issue of *Antiques and Art*, contended that the theatre's cultural significance is its exemplification of the growth of Blackheath in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Byrne 2013). Historically it is associated with former prominent residents of the area, Herbert Neate and Reginald Delaney. Originally called Neate's Hall it was, from the outset, more a community centre than a dedicated country cinema, hosting concerts and dances, prize givings and political meetings, farewells and welcome homes.

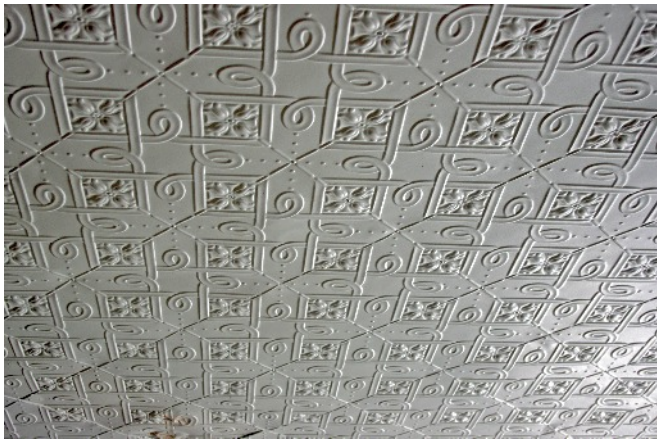


Photo: John Lanser

Figure 3. The Projection Box Ceiling.



Photos: John Lanser

Figure 4. Details from the Proscenium.

For much of its life it was known as the Arcadia Picture Palace but it was never palatial. Unable to afford steam heating it used, at first, open fires in drums to fend off freezing winter temperatures so

“It paid to be early and get a seat near a drum if you could stand the smoke.” (Smith 1996, p.21).

This, and similar economies engaged the early proprietors in ongoing battles with bureaucracy in the persons of fire department inspectors, a vexation they shared with many small cinema operators in the first half of the twentieth century.

Neate's hall

On 19 November 1879 land in Govetts Leap Road was granted to Patrick Higgins and by 1885 W. Evans had established a boot maker's shop there. On 25 February 1886 the site was acquired by Francis Bertie Boyce (CoT 1879)*, a clerk in holy orders who in July 1914 transferred lots 5 and 6 of Govetts Leap Road to Herbert Robert Neate (LTO 1914; [Figure 5](#)), youngest son of John George Neate, a turn of the century Blackheath pioneer. John's elder sons, John (junior) and Claude, established Neates' Stores, while Herbert, a fruiterer turned estate agent, would later be elected first mayor of Blackheath (Dec.1919 – Dec.1921; Rickwood & West, 2005, p.586) when it became a municipality (Birt 1995).

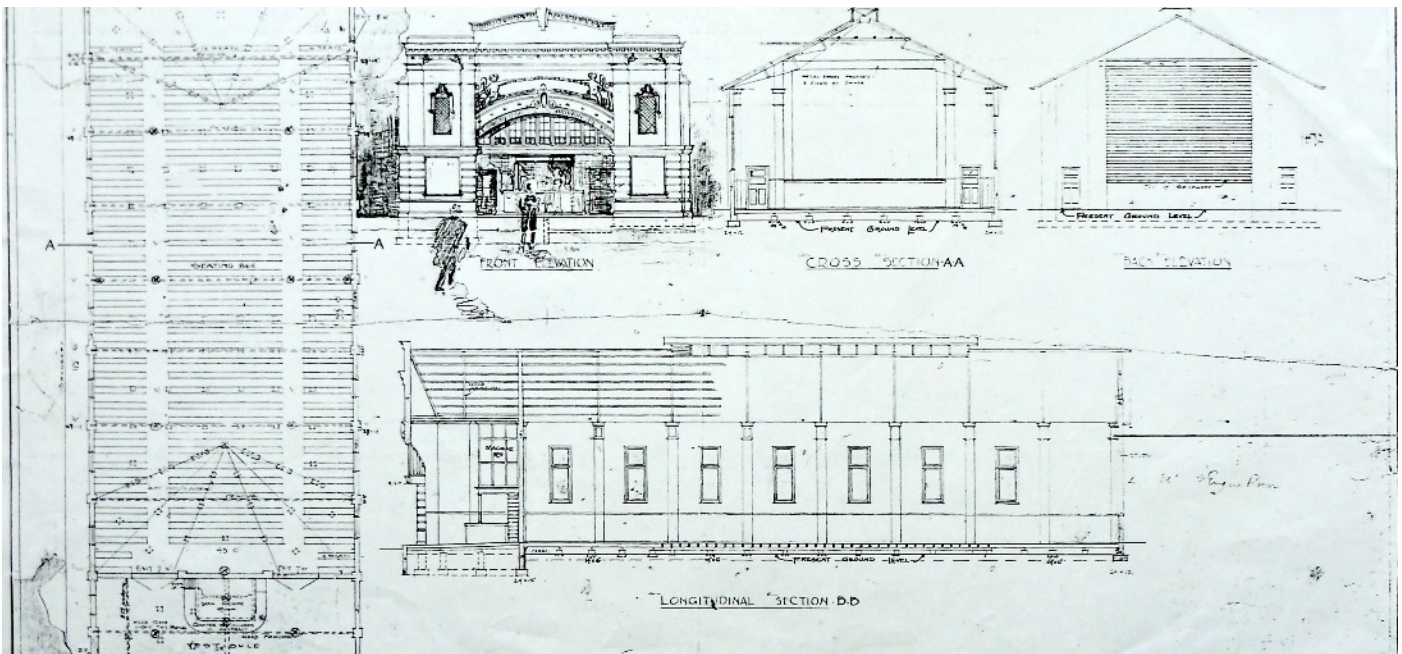


HR. Neate 1st Mayor Blackheath Council (provisional 1919) 1920-1921. P.

Figure 5

BMCC Local Studies Library PF 139
<http://photosau.com/bluemountains/scripts/home.asp>

* Boyce, after whom Mount Boyce (two kilometres north of Blackheath) is named, was ordained in 1869 and appointed to the then important parish of Redfern in 1884. A Canon of St. Andrew's Cathedral and later archdeacon of West Sydney he was a leader of the NSW Council of Churches and a prominent figure in social work and temperance. A fellow of the Australian (later Royal Australian) Historical Society, he viewed the British Empire as a great moral force in the world and helped to bring about the proclamation of Empire Day in 1905. He died in Blackheath in May 1931.



Hassell and Stockham (1914).

Figure 6. Plan of the Arcadia Theatre.

Just two months after acquiring the land, Neate demolished two shops standing on it and had plans (Figure 6) drawn by Sydney architects Hassell and Stockham (NSW Heritage Office 2001, pp.2, 3 & 5) for the construction of a hall which, the *Blue Mountain Echo* enthused, with

"... up-to-date refreshment rooms ... on the opposite side of the street ... that part of Blackheath should be vastly improved." (Anonymous 1914).

Little is recorded in the contemporary press about building progress, the concurrent construction of the grander Empire Theatre in Katoomba (revamped in 1936 to create a smaller theatre and then renamed the Embassy) commanding all the press coverage; indeed, even the erection of St. Hilda's Anglican Church seemed a more newsworthy local event. However, on Friday 22 January 1915 a paid advertisement in the *Blue Mountain Echo* (Anonymous 1915a; Figure 7) announced that the building would open next day with a "Grand Entertainment" (Anonymous 1915b) to be followed by a "plain and fancy dress skating carnival" five days later.

Although Neate's hall opened as the Arcadia Picture Palace the programme did not include the screening of any films. There is no contemporaneous account of the big night because the *Blue Mountain Echo*, still preferring to devote space to what the Empire was offering, recorded only that the event **would** occur but did not, in its following issue, confirm that it **had**.

GRAND OPENING NIGHT.

Arcadia Picture Palace
AND SKATING RINK,
BLACKHEATH.

SATURDAY NEXT, 23rd JANUARY, AT
 8 P.M.

The SKATING RINK will be opened by a
PLAIN AND FANCY DRESS SKATING
CARNIVAL,
 On THURSDAY, 28th JANUARY.

Good Prizes for best Fancy Dress and
 also best Comic Costume, both Lady and
 Gent.

Figure 7. *Blue Mountain Echo*, 14 May 1915
 (Anonymous 1915a).

From subsequent sporadic press reports we know that in May 1915 "Belgian Day" was celebrated there (Anonymous 1915c,d; Figure 8) and in September the same year that newspaper reported that for the wedding reception of Pearl Delaney and R.L. McLean "... the Arcadia Hall, ... had been transformed for the occasion into a beautiful and spacious drawing room scene, ..." (Anonymous 1915e).

On 2 October 1916 an investiture was held in the theatre as part of the local "queen" competition (Anonymous 1916).



BMCC Local Studies Library PF 493

<http://photosau.com/bluemountains/scripts/home.asp>

Figure 8. Celebrating “Belgian Day” 1915 at Blackheath.

On more serious municipal matters, the building hosted a public meeting in January 1917 (Figure 9) to hear the views of the candidates in the Shire elections (Anonymous 1917a).

Concerts for worthy causes were regular occurrences, one being staged in March 1917

“in aid of the permanent memorial to Blackheath lads who have enlisted.” (Anonymous 1917b)

and a month later

“A grand, sacred and classical concert [was] held in Arcadia Hall ... in aid of the Blackheath Soldiers’ Memorial fund,” (Anonymous 1917c).



H.T. & L. Collier Collection - (Yeaman 1976, p.194).

Figure 9. South side of Govetts Leap Road in 1917. N. Delaney’s “Normanton” and Butchery next to the Arcadia Theatre.

A Good Friday night soirée in 1917 featured

“... the beautiful singing of Misses Hilda Mackey and Annie Moodle ... from the studio of Mr. Malcolm M’Eachern.” (Anonymous 1917d)

and when the War Chest Flower Show was held there in January 1918 the building was reported as being

“... , a fairy bower of beautiful blossom, ...” (Anonymous 1918a).

April 1918 brought

“A plain and fancy dress social ...” (Anonymous 1918b)

and Empire Day was celebrated on Queen Victoria’s birthday, 24 May (Anonymous 1918c).

Well after this came the first report of any film screening; it is an incidental mention in October 1918 that

“At the pictures on Saturday night, presentations were made to Corporal T. Macdougall and Pte. J. Hine, on the eve of their departure for the scene of the action.” (Anonymous 1918d).

Of course the War was all but over by then and nine months later

“Mr. H.R. Neate kindly lent the Arcadia Hall for speeches of the dinkum type, and patriotic songs ... Dancing followed ... until midnight.”

as part of Peace Day celebrations (Anonymous 1919b).

Physical specifications

The Board of Fire Commissioners (BFC) and the Chief Secretary’s Department (CSD), which shared responsibility under the Halls and Theatres (later the Theatres and Public Halls) Act for the safety of public entertainment venues, may have been a nagging nemesis for the theatre’s operators but their files have left us with a useful description of the theatre and account of its usage. In July 1924 Third Officer Lister recorded that the building was 132 feet (40.2 m) long and 50 feet (15.2 m) wide, of brick construction with an iron roof. At the rear was an engine house (of wood with iron roof) containing a petrol engine and dynamos for lighting the main hall. The projection box of

“wood, iron and asbestos sheeting [was] situated in the vestibule outside the main hall”

(where the coffee shop now is) and

“fitted with regulation shutters” (BFC 1924).

There was no permanent stage but one could be created by placing a small moveable platform in front of the screen. Thus equipped, the hall was noted as being used for

“picture shows, dances and socials” (BFC 1924)

but not for stage performances (IoT 1928c). That came later.

New owner: Delaney

In July 1924, following Lister’s report, the BFC wrote to Neate recommending improvements to the fire appliances, the installation of oil-lit exit lamps and the clearance of

“accumulated rubbish, broken chairs, old boxes and other flammable material”

at the rear of the hall which were considered "a danger to the rest of the building." (IoT 1924). It is unclear if any of this had been attended to when, just three months later, Neate sold the theatre to Reginald Delaney, a local butcher, (LTO 1924) whose father Nicholas displayed in the family shop a sign:

"In God we trust, all others pay cash." (Yeaman, 1976, pp.44, 195 & 329).

Delaney, whose sister Marjorie acted as pianist for silent film presentations (Smith 1996, p.20), was an enterprising exhibitor. To promote the screening of *The Ten Commandments* in October 1925 he decorated his sports model Vauxhall car with advertising material (Anonymous 1925d), and the trade magazine, *The Exhibitor*, noted that he had outlaid

"... a large sum of money on improvements, consisting of two Cummings and Wilson machines, a stage and a number of tip-up chairs. The comfort of his Patrons is cared for in every way; three fires have been installed, and coffee and hot pies are on sale during the interval" (Anonymous 1925c);

the theatre, it concluded, was

"One of the prettiest ... on the Western Line."

Delaney seems to have been inventive, too. Films were supplied on spools which could hold only about 15 minutes of running time, so a 90 minute feature required up to six spools which were successively loaded onto, and alternately run through, side-by-side projectors. Achieving a seamless "change over" from one machine to the other was a challenge often not met by projectionists, but *The Exhibitor* noted that Delaney had

"A great idea ... for the changing over of machines. ... a halfpenny is inserted in the last few turns of film and immediately it drops the Assistant Operator cuts off one machine and the Operator opens up the other. This obviates the 'Right-oh' signal which is often heard in many theatres, ..." (Anonymous 1925c).

The BFC, however, was interested in more mundane matters. In March 1927 it recommended a blanket and a bucket of water be added to the chemical extinguisher in the bio box, while for the auditorium it required that a fire hydrant with 50 feet (15.2 m) of two and a half inch (63.5 mm) hose be installed

"because this hall is licensed to hold 999 people and a water service is now available." (IoT 1927).

Although advised of this recommendation Delaney had obviously not acted upon it when he leased the theatre to Hugh David Gallagher on 4 November the same year (LTO 1927).

New Management 1: Gallagher.

In April 1928 the BFC complained that

"nothing has been done to provide a hydrant" (IoT 1928a)

and the CSD asked Gallagher to

"be so good as to intimate the cause of the delay." (IoT 1928b).

Delaney hit back, pointing out that the theatre was used for screenings only twice a week in summer and not for stage performances. He argued that the risk of fire was small and sought a dispensation (IoT 1928c), but the BFC was not to be moved; it again pointed to the seating capacity of 999 as justification for its demands (IoT 1928e) and determined that

"the Chief Officer will enquire personally into the matter" (CSD 1928).

When Senior Station Officer Grayhurst inspected the theatre in June he found the recommendations had still not been carried out. He interviewed Gallagher, who explained that Delaney had called for tenders (IoT 1928d) but a month later Delaney again asked for the matter to be held in abeyance for six months

"because the theatre is only used once a week in winter, the average attendance being 196, and although licensed for 900 there is seating only for 700 and there has only been a full house once." (IoT 1928f).

Grayhurst would have none of this. He rejoined that boxing tournaments were also held one night a week in winter (albeit poorly patronised) but screenings were held three nights a week in summer with attendances ranging from 300 to 900 so that

"if this matter is held in abeyance for the period asked the warmer months with the larger audiences will have passed and the same reasons for asking it be further held in abeyance will be apparent." (IoT 1928g).

He recommended that installation of a hydrant proceed and when nothing had been done by November 1928 the BFC demanded that Delaney

"comply immediately" (IoT 1928h)

and sent Fourth Officer Digby to show Delaney precisely where to install the hydrant (IoT 1929a). In April 1929 Grayhurst was gratified to find the hydrant "installed and ready for immediate use." (IoT 1929b).

New entertainment: boxing.

Grayhurst's assessment of poor attendances at the boxing tournaments seems at odds with contemporaneous press reports. In July 1928 the *Blue Mountain Echo* editorially reminisced that

"In pre-war days, the noble art of self-defence boomed on the Mountains. ... , and tournaments thrived at intervals."

It lamented that

"Since the war, no attempt has been made to revive the sport, ..."

before noting, with approval, that

"... Mr. H.D. Gallagher, proprietor of the Arcadia Theatre, Blackheath, [would] make the effort ... " with "a Novice Tournament." (Anonymous 1928c).

It seems that not everyone shared the *Echo's* approbation because in a pseudonymous letter to the editor some weeks later 'Old Sport of Hat Hill Road' felt impelled to champion the proposal, evoking the Anzac spirit in his challenge to opposition by

"well-meaning but non-athletic persons ..." "... lounge-lizards, whose only physical recreation was learning the steps of latest Negro dances." (Old Sport 1928).

Gallagher fought on but embarrassment struck when, at the inaugural tournament a week later, expected contestants from Lithgow did not show up and the crowd had to be satisfied with some *ex tempore* exhibition bouts (Anonymous 1928d). Blaming vehicle breakdown for their no-show, the missing-in-action "Lithgowites" (as the *Blue Mountain Echo* always classified them) made amends a fortnight later when

"A big crowd was present ... three or four carloads coming from the capital centre [Katoomba] ..."

to see local boy Jack Carter take on Jack Gillham, "the Lithgow pug," in a welterweight bout. They would have been disappointed, for Carter proved

"... unable to stay the distance ... suddenly caved in in the third (round)" (Anonymous 1928e).

Disingenuously *The Blue Mountain Echo's* report declared, that

"Carter fought brilliantly for the better part of three rounds, but was sadly out of condition" (Anonymous 1928f)

and when a return bout for a stake of £20 was foreshadowed the *Blue Mountain Echo* promised that

"This time he will be fit and well, and confidently expects to make a better showing." (Anonymous 1928f).

How well placed was this confidence is not recorded in later issues of the *Blue Mountain Echo*, but it was able to report that Bathurst's Johnnie Dundee, having lasted only until the fifth round against Lithgow's Albert Lorenzo on 27 September when

"A good crowd attended the entertainment" (Anonymous 1928g),

improved to a mere points defeat by the same opponent just six days later (Anonymous 1928h), and from press reports of other contests it is clear that the promotion of pugilism was proving profitable for Gallagher.

Other entertainments

The pages of the *Blue Mountain Echo* afford a snapshot of the theatre's importance as a centre for the community in the first two decades of the twentieth century. For a start, those who did not share Old Sport of Hat Hill Road's scorn of being

"... mealy-mouthed about a bleeding nose, or a bruise or two." (Old Sport 1928).

could find other more refined relaxation at the Arcadia (which, of course, took its name from Greek mythology's vision of harmony with nature). At an Education Week concert in 1923, in aid of the Alexandra Hospital for Children,

"... the spacious Arcadia theatre was taxed to its utmost capacity, ..."

to see and hear pupils from Blackheath, Springwood, Penrith, Katoomba and Leura perform

"... many attractive ... choruses ... [while] ... the Grecian Dance, by two winsome lasses ... artistically draped, was gracefully executed.";

there was

"loud and continuous applause." (Anonymous 1923).

By 1924 the theatre was said to be

"... proud in its acquisition of a stage and handsome drop curtain ..." (Anonymous 1924).

In April 1925 the Blue Mountains Amateur Dramatic Society performed two comedies which the audience "thoroughly appreciated" (Anonymous 1925b), and in November the same year the Boys of Boddington presented a farcical revue, *Oh Mum!* (Mills & Fraser 1925). A few weeks later pupils staged the operetta *Snow White* to raise funds for the Blackheath Public School (Anonymous 1925f) and "The house was a good one" that gave "unstinted applause" to a concert by students of St. Joseph's Convent (Anonymous 1925g). Another "good attendance" greeted the annual Presbyterian Church concert in January 1928 when a "tableau" entitled *Spring is Coming* was "well received" (notwithstanding the concert being held at the height of summer) (Anonymous 1928a).

The Blackheath Musical Society, and its emanation 'The Minstrels', used the theatre regularly for fund raising concerts during and after World War I. The cause was worthy and the concerts were popular but a more politically correct era would balk at the March 1931 "Grand Nigger Minstrel Show" which featured a litany of local legends: Alderman (later

Mayor) Harry Collier played “Tambo” to tourist bus proprietor Claude Rolfe’s “Bones” with the role of “Interlocutor” taken by livery stable proprietor Herb Boyd (Anonymous 1931c).

Predictably, patriotism loomed in many comings and goings marked at the Arcadia;

“... the brave lads who donned the right garb early in the conflict.” (Anonymous 1919a),

many of whom, just a few years before, would have left from this theatre to join a theatre of war, were now being welcomed safely home. There were also public rallies in the theatre where patriotism was never far away. At the annual United Memorial Service in 1928 the Reverend R.S. Pickup

“... dwelt upon the sacrifices made by our soldiers that the Empire might survive, ...” (Anonymous 1928b).

Three years earlier another man of the cloth, Reverend Henry Worrall, had given it a rather different twist in his lecture on “Prohibition as a patriotic question” (Anonymous 1925a). From the ranks of civilian service W.D. Vincent, former editor of the *Blackheath Bulletin*, was given a public farewell in March 1925 and the same courtesy was accorded to Lance Wilson, former senior clerk of the Council, in November of that year (Anonymous 1925e). In June 1926

“... a large and representative gathering ...” of citizens braved “... bitterly cold Westerlies ...”

to honour the departing Walter Laws, resident of 30 years, founding alderman of the Council, faithful organist at the Presbyterian Church and former headmaster of the Public School (Anonymous 1926). The theatre was filled again in June 1927 to bid farewell to a later headmaster, Thomas Mitchell, when he left to take up a promotion to Bourke (if moving from Blackheath to Bourke can be considered a promotion).

New technology: sound

The pages of the *Blue Mountain Star*, which commenced publication in January 1929, are a testament to how unequal Gallagher's advertising budget at the Arcadia must have been to compete with what the Katoomba Empire had at its disposal. Before going into its annual winter hibernation, the Arcadia's 1929 cycle of Saturday/Monday/Wednesday programme changes was being publicised in a modest three column inches of classified advertising on page two**. The Empire's offerings, on the other hand, were prominently proclaimed in display advertising which occupied one third of the back page, often supplemented by smaller block notices inside the paper. Yet despite

this, the Arcadia screened new releases concurrently with, and occasionally ahead of, the Empire*** while fitting in the occasional live performances (e.g. Anonymous 1927) and roller skating (Anonymous 1929c). Then on 5 October almost the entire back page of the issue was taken up trumpeting "Talkies!" (Anonymous 1929b) and thereafter, for several months, the Katoomba theatre's changing programme was emblazoned across at least two thirds of the back page, again with small block advertising inside. Perhaps it was the Empire's lopsided contribution to the paper's advertising budget which ensured the allocation of so much editorial space to letters from readers uniformly praising the technology and testifying to their favourite talkie.

On the other hand, the Arcadia's installation of sound passed unreported by the *Blue Mountain Star* and there are large gaps in the surviving copies of the *Blackheath Bulletin*, which surely would have noticed. Anecdotally, sound arrived not with a bang but a whimper when the film failed to turn up on the 7 p.m. train for the scheduled screening and the disappointed audience had to come back the following week, (Smith 1996, p.20) but the date and programme for the event are not known****.

What is known is that, like so many theatres designed in the days of silent films, the Arcadia had serious audibility limitations, with the result that impressive echoes were not restricted to the environs of the Three Sisters. As early as 1916, Prime Minister Billy Hughes had complained, while addressing a rally in the theatre, that “This hall has bloody awful acoustics.” (Smith 1996, p.21) but by November 1930 the *Blackheath Beacon* was applauding that:

"Even the acoustic properties, which in the past were somewhat defective, have been scientifically attended to, ..." (Anonymous 1930a)

** January 1929 offered *Sorrell and Son* supported by *Guardians of the Wild* on Saturday 19th, followed by *Underworld* and *A Woman in Pawn* the following Monday. February brought *Get Your Man* and *Shooting Stars* (4th), *Four Walls* and *Lost in the Arctic* (6th), *My Best Girl* and *Burnt Fingers* (9th), *Way of All Flesh* and *The Flag Lieutenant* (11th), *The Cameraman* and *Homesick* (13th), *Home James* and *The Dove* (16th), *Sporting Goods* and *The Bushranger* (23rd) and *Phyllis of the Follies*. The March slate included *Red Hair*, *What Next?*, *Excess Baggage* and *Blindfold*.

*** Buster Keaton's *The Cameraman* and *Homesick* both screened at the Arcadia in February 1929 a week ahead of the Empire (Anonymous 1929a).

**** Delaney's son, James, recalls the Australian built Cummings and Wilson equipment (which included sound on disc facility) and the regular visits to the theatre of Mr. Cummings, who was a firm friend of his father.

apparently by hanging heavy navy baffle curtains from the ceiling (Smith 1996, p.21). A former patron appreciatively recalls that

“they made great acoustics, no need for a microphone.” (pers. comm. Lorraine Home to Peter Rickwood, 25 October 2014).

By December of that year the *Blackheath Bulletin* was doing its best to improve patronage with a weekly advertorial called "Our Picture Show." The December 4 issue enthused that:

"Manager Laws of the Arcadia Theatre, is determined that Blackheath patrons should have an opportunity of viewing the latest film successes. For the week-end an especially attractive programme has been arranged including one of the latest silver screen successes, “*They Had to See Paris*,” featuring Will Rogers. The supporting feature will be “*Simbra*” which took four years to create.” (Anonymous 1930b).

For the following weekend, *Rio Rita* (with Bebe Daniels and John Boles),

"in the second portion of the programme ... in natural colours,"

was promised (Anonymous 1930c) with prices at 1s 6d (front stalls), 2s 1d (back stalls) and 2s 7d (centre). It was reported that

"Owing to the heavy costs of procuring the popular sound pictures, management has been compelled to eliminate the Wednesday concession, ..." (Anonymous 1930d).

A week later *One Mad Kiss* was given simultaneous release in Sydney, Katoomba and Blackheath

"so it will be realised that the Blackheath picture control is right up to date." (Anonymous 1930e),

a boast made with some justification.

Christmas Eve 1930 brought the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* and forty eight hours later Boxing Day patrons were offered

"... the world famous all-talking special ‘*Hit the Deck*.’ ”

for which

"The management claims ... that [it] has amazed audiences everywhere.” [with] “... hundreds of beautiful girls, cast amid gorgeous scenes of natural colour. The ‘Hallelujah’ number is a feature of the production.” (Anonymous 1930f)*****.

Gradually more editorial space was given over to "Our Picture Show" and by January 1931 plot synopses for *The Sea Wolf* (screened 31 January; Anonymous 1931a) and *Lillom* (screened 7 February; Anonymous 1931b) were being provided.



John Lanser Collection

Figure 10. Photograph of Blackheath Talkies.

New management 2: Laws

In August 1931 Reginald Delaney transferred the title of the property (Figure 10) to Marion Dawson Delaney, his wife (LTO 1931). Over the next 10 years, management of the Arcadia becomes difficult to follow because the BFC and CSD files do not always reconcile, either with title searches at the Land Titles Office, (which records only registered leases, not mere licence agreements), nor with company registrations. Thus, CoT (1889) records a lease to William White and John Snelling Field on 2 December 1927, which expired 28 June 1939. According to the LTO, the lease to Gallagher lapsed in August 1934 but he had clearly ceased to be actively involved well prior to that. The aforementioned Sidney Laws had been managing the theatre from at least as early as 1930 and he was still there as late as November 1933 when he responded to the BFC's complaints that an inspection the month before (in October 1933) of the Blackheath Talkies (as the theatre had temporarily come to be called) found that

“a quantity of inflammable trade timber and lumber was underneath the stage”

and there was

"no record of the screen or curtains being treated with fire retardant.” (CSD 1933).

The ever vigilant BFC demanded that treatment be carried out (BFC 1933a) and Mr. Laws promised it would (BFC 1933b)

Eighteen months earlier, Laws had been forced to fend off the CSD when it complained about seating barriers at one end of rows in the higher priced section which would

***** Twice weekly program changes saw *Wild Company*, *Second Wife*, *Scotland Yard*, *Rich People*, *The Delightful Rogue*, *Too Many Crooks*, *Fall Guy* and *Disraeli* screened in the following weeks.

"compel all occupants of these rows ... to leave by the end which is not obstructed" (CSD 1932a) in the event of the theatre needing rapid evacuation (CSD 1932b). Thinking laterally, management retained the barriers but reduced the seating, a follow-up inspection finding that there were now only five seats per row so

"the Regulations of the Act [were] not infringed." (CSD 1932c).

New management 3: Doyle and Gearin

In August 1934 Mrs. Delaney leased the theatre (reverting to the name Arcadia) to Ralph Raymond Doyle (LTO 1934)[#] and in June 1935 she sold it to Michael Gearin of Vaucluse, Sydney (LTO 1935). He seems to have operated it for just 18 months but that was time enough for him to have his turn at being reprimanded by the authorities. On 13 March 1936 District Officer Neville's annual inspection again complained about

"inflammable trade waste under the stage with the rear of the theatre a dumping ground for rubbish and the premises not in a clean and tidy condition." He found one exit door nailed up and could not find the regulation fire blanket in the bio box; however he was satisfied with the alternative means of escape from the projection box situated over the vestibule and noted that the projection ports were equipped with automatic metal shutters (essential to contain the spread of fire if the volatile nitrate film went up) (BFC 1936).

The offending rubbish had been removed when the next inspection took place on 30 April 1937, but now the bio box's metal shutters were malfunctioning. Of far greater concern, however, was that the primitive open fires in drums in the auditorium had been replaced by

"four coke burning bogie stoves resting on loose bricks a few inches above the wood flooring which is not protected with any fire resisting material."

Unsurprisingly, those stoves were considered

"a serious fire hazard owing to the likelihood of hot ashes dropping onto the floor" and the lack of guard rails imported

"a further danger of the public receiving burns by coming in contact with these unprotected stoves." (BFC 1937a).

The CSD demanded they be replaced by

"steam or other suitable heating means"

if permanence were intended, but was prepared to tolerate the coke stoves

"as a temporary expedient provided they were stood on asbestos mats over-sheeted with iron

trays [and] protected by proper guards." (BFC 1937b).

Nothing like this had been arranged when the inspector called again in July that year. Despite the theatre being closed for some weeks during the winter, he found workmen engaged only in carrying out repairs to the seating arrangements (BFC 1937c). It reopened on 14 August 1937 (CSD 1937a) yet the next inspection (on 8 October) found two of the offending coke stoves were still there (albeit now resting on asbestos and enclosed within wire netting), the bio box shutters were still secured by string and the screen frame remained non compliant with fire regulations (BFC 1937d). The BFC bluntly declared that if its requirements were not satisfied consideration would be given to cancelling the theatre's licence (BFC 1937e).

New management 4: Katoomba Theatres Pty Limited

While all this was going on, the lease had been transferred (some time in 1936) to Katoomba Theatres Limited (CSD 1936)^{##}, a company controlled by Joynton Smith (of *Smith's Weekly*) which, since the 1920s, had operated both the Embassy and Savoy theatres in Katoomba (Anonymous 1934). During much of that time the Blackheath and Katoomba cinemas had engaged in the common practice of saving money by sharing the cost of hiring just one print of a film and swapping it between screening venues, one theatre programming it before the interval, the other after the interval. Reels are said to have been shuttled by motor cycle to a handover point east of Medlow Bath and there were occasional disasters if one rider arrived late or brought the wrong reels (Smith 1996, p.21).

Katoomba Theatres Limited responded promptly to the BFC's threat to its license by promising renewal of the stoves and confirming that new shutters for the ports were on order (CSD 1937b). By March 1938 a *Sonora* sound screen (perforated with small holes that were invisible to the audience but which allowed sound to pass from speakers behind the screen) had been installed by Harringtons (suppliers of theatre equipment), the screen frame was now of hardwood, the stoves were out, the new ports were in, the theatre was

"in a clean and satisfactory condition"

[#] The lease expired "by effluxion of time" in October 1942 (LTO 1942).

^{##} The lease appears to have been renewed on 27 September 1940 when it was registered (the earlier lease had not been) as dealing C949574. In October 1942 it expired with (or merged in) the sale from Gearin to the lessee: dealing D161751.

and it's licence was renewed, grade "C" (BFC 1938). Other comforts were added in February 1939 when new toilets were approved

"because sewerage reticulation is now available."
(CSD 1939a).

A dispensation in the number of urinal stalls for men was sought, again on the basis that although licensed for 900 (which required seven stalls) actual attendances were only 500 to 600 (needing just five stalls). This time the "under patronised" plea found favour, the dispensation for five stalls was recommended, although visiting them after dark could present problems! When they were inspected in March 1940 they were described as being

"12 feet 6 inches (3.8 m) of flat back urinal, **but no lighting**" (my emphasis) (CSD 1939b).

An insight into the screening policy at the Blackheath Picture Palace, (the latest rebadging), comes from a police report of 6 February 1938, by which time the lease was held by one F.E. Lloyd, c/- Savoy Theatre, Katoomba. Constable First Class Alfred Jury noted that pictures had been showing

"twice weekly but from 26 December (1937) screened four nights weekly"

and that other activities included

"community singing for three nights during October (1937)." (CSD 1938).

From 25 February 1939 the venue was advertising itself, separately from the Savoy and Embassy, simply as the Blackheath Theatre (e.g. Anonymous 1939a), and by November licensee Lloyd had been replaced by N.H. Tiller, secretary of the Blackheath

Masonic Lodge (CSD 1939c). He was promptly told to install additional lighting, either battery or oil powered (CSD 1939d), to which he attended in February 1940 by providing

"electric lamps with battery current supply and magnetic switch in case of failure of general lighting system." (CSD 1940).

An inspection in March 1940 found all satisfactory, but the report directed that the extinguishers be recharged (BFC 1940): that action was carried out as Katoomba Theatres reported ([Figure 11](#)).

The next battle with the BFC came in 1941. The curtains, screen masking and scenery had not been treated with fire retardant material when inspected in March (BFC 1941a), nor in October (BFC 1941b), nor in August the following year when the BFC again got pushy:

"finalise without further delay." (BFC 1942).

Once again inactivity in the face of the regulator's requirements seemed to coincide with a change in control, for in October 1942 Michael Gearin sold the theatre to the lessee, Katoomba Theatres Pty Limited. Problems persisted into 1943 when in April the exit doors in the bio box were found to be not self-closing (BFC 1943a) and, although this was rectified by September that year (BFC 1943b), the masking and curtains were still testing as inflammable as late as February 1944 (BFC 1944a). Not until October 1944 had the theatre complied (BFC 1944b) and the annual inspections thereafter routinely reported the building as

"clean, tidy and well maintained." (BFC 1945-1955).

Consolidation with Corne family interests

In June 1945 Katoomba Theatres Limited changed its corporate name to Blue Mountains Enterprises Pty Limited and the name of the theatre to the Victory (presumably in deference to the end of WWII). In February 1951 The Victory theatre was sold to the Corne family^{###} which, trading initially as Blue Mountains Theatres, also operated Katoomba's three theatres - the Savoy, Embassy and Trocadero - as well as the Leura Liberty (LTO 1949; CSD 1951a). The CSD file reveals that it was necessary to obtain the approval of the NSW Cabinet for the transfer because of a fear that there was occurring

"a greater aggregation of picture palaces in one interest." (CSD 1951b).

In fact the Chief Secretary of the time, while recognising a doubt that section 13 and regulation 5 of the Theatres and Public Halls Act allowed the minister to withhold consent, noted that:

^{###} Max, Miriam, Leslie, Lionel, Gerald, Robert and Ashley.

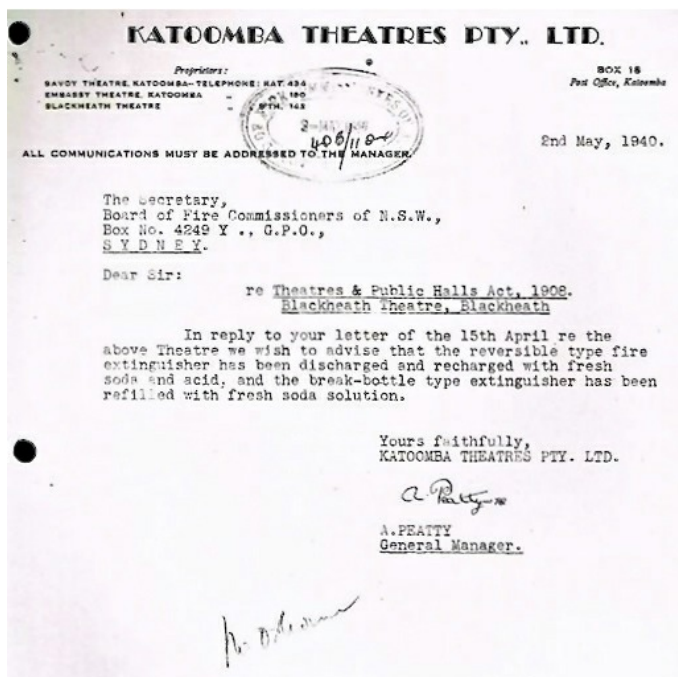


Figure 11. Letter: Katoomba Theatres to the Board of Fire Commissioners of N.S.W.

"Recently applications have been received for the transfer of licenses to companies already holding the licenses of a considerable number of cinematograph theatres. This aggregation of licenses in the one monopoly is most undesirable and clearly against public interest. At the present time a situation is fast developing in which cinematograph theatres will be largely controlled by a few large companies and I consider that legislation should be enacted to overcome this tendency to monopoly control."

After pointing out that of the total of 225 theatres within Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, Greater Union controlled 42 and Hoyts, 99, he recommended that

"... the Theatres and Public Halls Act be amended to remove any doubt as to the power of the minister to withhold his consent to such transfers where they may be inimical to public interest" (his emphasis) (CSD 1951c).

In April 1951 plans for a free standing engine room behind the building (presumably to provide an ancillary plant to cope with the post-war power blackout problems) were submitted (CSD 1951d). Approved a month later the plant was commissioned in February 1952. Two years later, (as part of a conversion to widescreen), alterations (CSD 1954a) were designed by Guy Crick (of Crick & Furse, the architects responsible for the art deco Kings circuit). The upgrade included adding a new awning and remodelling the vestibule front of house to incorporate a small shop (where the present counter for the cafe now is). The ticket office was placed between two sets of steps leading into the auditorium wherein raked seating, a new ceiling, remodelled walls with proscenium splays and a new bio box were created (CSD 1954b). Entry to the bio box, which had previously been removed from vestibule level to a gallery above it, was via an external staircase on the car park side of the building (Figure 2).

Extensive as this sounds, a letter in the CSD file from CSR, certifying that

"the Cane-it (*sic*) used is flame proof," (CSD 1954c)

confirms that the refit was a cheap job and at least one patron's recalled reaction to the result concurs:

"Horrible florescent lighting strips were installed and (on) each side of the stage-screen area the wall was angled and strip lights there also. The whole inside was painted yellow. It was very modern but on looking back it really was trashy." "..." the floor was raised on a slope after the back

stalls area to create the lounge area, better viewing and seating there also, but in doing that steps were needed to get into the theatre. You could tell when anyone was entering the theatre as clop clop up the steps." "The walls were relined with that cardboard stuff that buckles after a bit of damp gets into it." (pers. comm. Lorraine Home to Peter Rickwood, 25 October 2014).

Some recycling of equipment appears also to have taken place as part of the refurbishment: in June 1954 the theatre received a second hand screen as a hand-me-down from the more upmarket Katoomba Embassy (BFC 1954) and the two Cummings & Wilson Senior projectors were swapped with two C&W Juniors from the Trocadero (Hodgkinson 1996). The improvements reduced the seating capacity from 900 to 600 (CSD 1954d) but that did not pose a problem as television was on the way!

Behind the scenes, the Corne family had also been reshuffling its assets. In April 1954 the title to the Victory was transferred to Cornell Theatres Pty Ltd and in May 1955, titles to the Savoy and Trocadero were transferred to Blue Mountains Theatres Pty Limited; the Victory and Liberty were licensed to Blackheath and Leura Theatres Pty Limited as lessee (CSD 1955).

Closure

On Thursday, 5 May 1960 the *Blue Mountains Courier*, headlined:

"SHOE FACTORY Site Chosen".

and wrote

"Goldberg Footwear Pty. Ltd. this week decided to buy the Victory Theatre, Blackheath, for their Mountains shoe factory.

'Subject to legal formalities being satisfied on both sides,' the factory will open towards the middle of June said the Director of the Women's Division of Goldberg's, Mr. J.N. Wagstaff." (Anonymous 1960e).

There had been speculation about something like this for weeks (Anonymous 1960d). By the late 1950s, of course, all cinemas were confronting the menace of television and the community hall-styled Victory would have been the plain sister alongside the art deco Savoy, Trocadero and Embassy in the Corne circuit. The theatre, which had been screening five sessions weekly (four nights and a Saturday matinee) was down to three nights (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) and one matinee by February 1960, and Saturdays only (2 and 8 p.m.) by April that year (Anonymous 1960c). Nonetheless, it shared with the

Savoy the social experiment of screening, on 24 February 1960,

"'Blue Jeans' – a motion picture that faces the facts of youth!"

Teenagers were told "DON'T MISS IT!!" and parents were challenged

"YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS IT!!"
(Anonymous 1960a).

The Congregational Church apparently took up the challenge and

"As a sequel to the teenage problem picture, 'Blue Jeans' ... organised two lectures on sex, ..."

at which

"a doctor, a police officer and the Rev. T.D. Carty" spoke. Potential teenage patrons, perhaps hoping for a little hands on experience in the back rows were, however, doomed to disappointment, for the lectures were segregated, one for fathers and sons, the other for mothers and daughters (Anonymous 1960b), making them a rather less satisfactory substitute for the film.

Concurrently with the Goldberg announcement, Les Corne (who was, by now, Mayor, thus giving the theatre a municipal connection at both the beginning and end of its life) said the final screening would be on 21 May 1960. That left just time for one last hurrah when the Victory (in tandem with the Savoy) held the Mountains premiere, on May 6 and 7, of *On The Beach* (Anonymous 1960f; [Figure 12](#)).

It would probably be too much to suggest that the programming of *Hell Bent for Leather* as the supporting film for the last night was a tilt at the building's foreshadowed future. The main feature was *Visit To a Small Planet* (Anonymous 1960g), which is clearly the way the *Blue Mountains Courier* saw the closure. It did not even report the event in its following issue, giving priority, in its roundup of 'Higher Mountains Highlights', to an occurrence a few doors further up Govetts Leap Road where:

"Prolonged excitement prevailed at Blackheath's New Ivanhoe Hotel – when the canine pet 'Scamp' had a litter (6) of identical puppies."
(Anonymous 1960h).

Perhaps the conversion of the community's hall and cinema into a shoe factory was properly seen not as a 'highlight' but as a lowlight.

Afterlife

The "legal formalities" referred to by Goldberg's Mr. Wagstaff must have fallen over, for the shoe factory never did set foot in the theatre. After its licence expired in January 1961, it was leased in September 1960 to Baxter's footwear but the premises remained



Figure 12. Advert. - *Blue Mountains Courier*, 5 May 1960 (Anonymous 1960f).

disused until December 1963, when it was re-licensed to hold a cabaret on New Year's Eve (CSD 1963). The Certificate of Title (CoT 1955) records a lease to Barton Footwear Pty. Limited on 27 January 1961 which expired 30 June 1966. By this time the curtains and projection equipment had been removed (CSD 1964a) and in May 1964 the Corne interests were negotiating to sell the theatre to Blackheath RSL (CSD 1964b)####. That too faltered and the building was eventually purchased by Emu Textiles Pty Limited on 11 March 1966 (LTO 1966; CoT 1955) for a webbing factory run by Peter Wotis (the concrete pads on which the machinery were mounted remain below the carpet; one in the eastern aisle is marked by a large cross of yellow tape) then it changed hands again in a mortgagee sale to Glam Manufacturing in November 1969 (LTO 1969).

In January 1971 it was purchased by Zenewig (Stan) Boris, (LTO 1971; CoT 1971) a delicatessen proprietor well known for his horseradish sauce, who then leased it to one Jim Green. He reportedly altered the interior to set up small cubicle shops around the walls for arts and craft stall holders and added a gallery, but "it made no money." (Baumgarten 1966). Ownership passed to Henry Thomas and Lois Collier in November 1977, (LTO 1977), Lois becoming sole proprietor in 1982 on the death of her husband. Successive lessees were Jim Green and then Nickel & Green c.1979 followed in May 1982 by removalist R.J. Allen who used the premises for temporary storage of furniture.

Leura RSL had been reported, in March 1960, to be half way to raising £4,000 to purchase the Corne-controlled Liberty at Leura. David Gerrard next leased it from October 1984 to c.1996. By 1990 the building had become a barn of

bric-a-brac interspersed with quality antique furniture with a café at the rear of the building. Following a fire in the early hours of 4 January 1991 (Anonymous 1991) Malcolm Turner was engaged to construct the mezzanine floor. In 1992 David Gerrard unsuccessfully applied to the Council for permission to hold an “All Male Revue”.

It was refurbished in mid-1996 (Figure 13) as the present Victory Theatre Antique Centre (Figure 1) where, as recently as November 2013, browsers in the retail area above the vestibule once occupied by the bio box (Figure 14) could still look through the surviving projection ports to an exposed section of the pressed metal proscenium (Figure 4) at the south-eastern (back) corner.

The ports were bricked up in 2013 but the proscenium remains in place, albeit largely obscured, while at ground level, behind the stock on display in one shop halfway along the southern side (Figure 15A), the fire hydrant, about which Reginald Delaney went so



Photos: John Lanser, 29 May 1996

Figure 13. The Bio Box in 1996 prior to refurbishment. [Note that the brick wall facing the audience is unbroken except for projection ports.]

many rounds with the BFC in 1928 and which never fired a water jet in anger, can still be seen (Figure 15B).

A head lease was held by Edward Greenwood from 1996-2003 and in 1996 the café was moved to its present position and under a sub-lease the Victory Café has been operated by Tai Ti (Terry) and Margaret Kay Tan from 1999. The head lease passed to Upper Mountain Developments from 2003-2013 and in 2013 to Victory Theatre Pty. Ltd.

Postscript

Jana Byrne (2013) contended that cinemas can be grouped into

- those purpose-built
- converted existing buildings;
- community halls which doubled as picture houses.

In the Mountains, Katoomba’s Savoy and Empire/Embassy fall into first category, Hazelbrook’s Scout hall (built 1927, but to specifications which complied with the Halls and Theatres Act, (Goodlet 2006, p.76) and now also an antiques shop), is an example of the second, while Blackheath’s Victory belongs in the last. The Victory’s life as a cinema was preceded, and always punctuated, by community usage (e.g. Figure 16), many instances of which have already been noted. Among others, the town’s Flower Shows were held there annually for many years (e.g. Anonymous 1930f), Blackheath Musical Society was performing Gilbert and Sullivan operettas in the theatre well into the 1950s##### and Osborne Ladies College, which operated at Blackheath from 1923 to 1958 (Brasier 2013, pp.40 & 46), used the Victory to present plays staged with

“.. elaborate costumes [hired] from theatrical costumiers in Sydney at, presumably, great expense.” (Hanstock 2005, p.39).

The Victory’s story, thus, is typical of what was the movie going experience for inhabitants of Australian regional and country communities in an era when ‘Saturday night at the pictures’ was an event. Lacking the picture palaces of major cities and larger suburbs, they shared often humble halls with other forms of entertainment, always testing bureaucratic patience as they pushed fire regulations to the limit ... until the tidal wave of television finally doused their projector lamphouses for good.

Performances over two nights of *The Gondoliers* (1953), *The Mikado* (1954) and *Ruddigore* (1955) were promoted as part of the annual Rhododendron Festivals when they were much grander events than they are now; see the souvenir programmes for those years.



Photos: John Lanser 2013

A Upstairs location of the Projection Room.

B Projection ports prior to bricking up.

Figure 14. The Projection Room or Bio Box.



Photos: John Lanser 2013

A A booth with hidden treasures.

B The Fire Hydrant.

Figure 15. The location of the Fire hydrant is behind the displays in A.



H.T. & L. Collier Collection

Figure 16. Beauty Queen Pageant in 1953.
[A rare photograph of a live performance in the Victory Theatre.]

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Lynda Collier for providing Figures 2 and 16 and information on ownership changes in recent years; Lorraine Home is thanked for her personal recollections.

Abbreviations

BFC: Board of Fire Commissioners
 CoT: Certificate of Title
 CSD: The Chief Secretary's Department
 IoT: Inspections of Theatres and Public Halls
 LTO: Land Titles Office
 SRNSW: State Records New South Wales.

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A METICULOUS DRAFTSMAN* AND ENIGMATIC CHARACTER: VICTOR E. COLEMAN (1911-1976)

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Abstract

Victor Coleman was a draftsman employed by the Blue Mountains Council in the 1940s. His cartographic skills were such that the maps of the Blue Mountains that he drew endured for more than three decades being used as the bases for numerous editions of tourist brochures. His life was complex and troubled. Victor was an illegitimate child born in Australia, whose Italian father was killed in WWI. In adulthood, Victor change his surname from Castoldi to Coleman and twice enlisted in the Army where he had a colourful career. He became an alcoholic and had a partner of similar inclination; he was just 65 when he died.

Key Words: Victor Coleman, Draftsman, Draughtsman, Maps, Blue Mountains.

INTRODUCTION

Official maps such as those issued by Lands & Property Information (and its predecessors) at Bathurst, and by most commercial organisations, seldom identify the persons who drew them. But there have been some useful maps of parts of the Blue Mountains issued by other organisations, and even private individuals, with the cartographer identified. These were particularly common before the 1:31 680 topographical maps came into use after 1969. Detailed survey plans are not under consideration here, and nor are the maps produced by Myles Dunphy which almost always dealt with the terrain frequented by intrepid bushwalkers.

Maps devoted to the villages and nearby tracks are our concern, and names of cartographers and draftsmen of such that readily spring to mind (and listed alphabetically) are: Isaac Le Pipre Barrow, Victor Edward Coleman, Nin(ian) Muir Melville, Herbert Edward Cooper Robinson, John Edmund Miller Russell, Cyril Corbett Singleton, Oliver Trickett and more recently Geoffrey James Sadler. Most of these did not put their given names on their

maps so some are known by the 'words' formed by their initials, e.g. HEC Robinson and JEM Russell. The lives and contributions of each of these individuals warrant exposure but here we are discussing the draftsman/cartographer Victor Edward Coleman.

VICTOR E. COLEMAN'S LIFE

In trying to establish biographical details (given in an Appendix), Victor Coleman and his family members have proven to be somewhat of an enigma. We encountered blind ends in our research, several of which are mentioned to alert future researchers of those information barriers.

Victor Emanuel Castoldi was born at 49 Flinders Street, Moore Park on 15 June 1911 and his illegitimate birth (NSWFH 2014b) was registered twice (NSW BDM 2014) under both Castoldi and Donnelly (his mother's maiden name); at that time, his mother was aged 19 and his father 24. His paternal grandfather was named Emanuel (NSWFH 2014c) but the combination of his given names suggests that he may have been named after Victor Emanuel III, King of Italy (29 July 1900 – 9 May 1946; Wikipedia 2014).

Seven months after Victor's birth, his parents were married at the Sacred Heart Church, Darlinghurst, on 7 January 1912, when both still lived in Flinders Street (NSWFH 2014c).

Pedder Scrivener (1947) stated that Victor was a British Subject but that reveals little for in 1911 all persons born in Australia were subjects of the British Empire. His infancy, his schooling and his early teenage years remain mysteries to be unlocked. Tantalisingly, an E. Castoldi attended the St. Patrick's College (Goulburn) Dance in July 1928

* Spelling varies being either draftsman or draughtsman. We only use draughtsman when quoting from records.

(Anonymous 1928) when Victor would have been 17 so of the right age to be that person - but was it he? When aged 18 he passed an Introductory Art Course (Anonymous 1929, col.1.) being listed as Victor Edward Castoldi so he had commenced to Anglicize his name by changing Emanuel to Edward. When a map that he drew was published in 1937 (Figure 2) it was in the name of V. Coleman (BMCC 1937; Coleman 1937) so in some year between 1929 and 1937, most probably about 1933 when he was 22 and had passed 'the age of majority', he completed the Anglicization of his name by adopting a new surname (but retaining the initial letter), however that change was never registered. No record has been found of his mother having had a legally recognised second marriage but from 1925 she was in a *de facto* relationship with a Mr. Xenophon Colman (NSW Electoral Rolls North Sydney/Lane Cove 1922-1947). Hence Victor appears to have taken his 'adopted' step-father's surname but with a different spelling. Both Fay Castoldi and Xenophon Colman were alive on 30 January 1955 when Victor stated that he "went home" ... "straight to my parents' home" (NAA 1955, p.13) from which it would seem that he regarded Xenophon as a father figure. That address was 21 Kenneth Street, Longueville, Sydney (NAA 1955, p.15).

1. Employment

NSW Electoral Rolls (Macquarie/Katoomba, 1937-1939) list a Victor Edwin Coleman who lived at Albion Street, Katoomba and was a 'draftsman'. That second name is surely a clerical error for the residency does fit with the fact that in 1937, a V. Coleman drew a map entitled *Katoomba* (Figure 2; Coleman 1937; Fox 1999, pp.90, 102 & 160) which was completed when he was in his early twenties and was probably working under contract to the Council.

2. First Military Service

Coleman's activities during WWII are puzzling, there being nothing known of him in the first three and half years on that war. He appears to have enlisted in the Australian Army at East Burwood, Victoria, on 25 February 1943, [Service Number 2900271 (NX161595)] yet his "Locality of Enlistment" is given as Longueville (AMF 1915). He would have been 31 at the time and the stated 'Next of Kin' was his mother, curiously named as Florence Coleman and not as Colman nor Donnelly.

According to the NSW Electoral Rolls (Macquarie/Katoomba), Victor Edward Coleman lived at 33 Parke Street, Katoomba from 1943-1947; these dates are not incompatible with Army service as

for electoral purposes a fixed abode would be needed rather than one that might change often according to the whim of the Army.

3. Post WWII

He was a Sapper in the 2nd Australian Field Survey Company when discharged from the Army on 11 March 1946 (Army 2014). The first initiative by the Katoomba Municipal Council (which became the Blue Mountains City Council in 1947) to employ a specific person to produce detailed maps for the purpose of promoting tourism, led to Coleman being engaged for at least part of 1946 as proven by several of his maps bearing that year. It seems likely that his employment continued into 1947 but that must have ceased by August 1947 when Victor Coleman was working under contract (Soper Bros. 1951a) drafting a map of the City of Katoomba (Soper Bros. 1951b).

Conflicting with the Electoral Rolls, Scrivener (1947) stated that in 1946 Victor Edward Coleman lived at 14 Lovel Street, Katoomba; he did not own the house so must have rented one of the two flats into which it was divided. Then from 1949-1951 he lived at *Grandview*, Miles Avenue, Katoomba and in the NSW Electoral Roll the stated occupation was 'draftsman'; but no evidence of his employment during those years has been discovered. On 20 August 1951, while on holiday at Coolangatta (Anonymous 1951a), he was "down in the dumps" when at Tweed Heads he attempted suicide by slashing his left wrist (Anonymous 1951b); in court "He was admonished by Mr. F.C.H. Tompson, S.M., and discharged." ... "He told Mr. Tompson he regretted his action and would not attempt such an act again."

Just five months later, on 30 January 1952, he re-enlisted in the Army (NAA 1955, p.25).

4. Second Military Service

Victor Edward Coleman (Figure 1) rejoined the Army for a three year term (NAA 1955, p.16) and served in the Australian Military Forces, Eastern Command, Australian Headquarters, Cartographic Unit at Bendigo, Victoria from 30 January 1952 (NAA 1955, p.25) to 31 January 1955 (NAA 1955, pp.13 & 16).

In 1954 he was registered in the electoral division of Bendigo (Victoria 1954) as residing at 215 Barnard Street which fits with the location given in his authenticated Army record. But then no subsequent enrolment of Victor Edward Coleman has been found until 1968 when his name appeared in the NSW Electoral Roll (Bennelong/Lane Cove).



(National Archives of Australia: B2458.)

Figure 1. Military photograph of Victor Edward Coleman.

His partner had a cancer operation whilst they were in Bendigo (NAA 1955, p.23) and when discharged from hospital was incapable of looking after herself so Victor's Commanding Officer gave him time off every day to get her meals etc. (NAA 1955, p.14). On 31 January 1955 he travelled by train from Bendigo to Sydney in order to be discharged from the Army (NAA 1955, p.13); his partner was supposed to accompany him but was too ill (NAA 1955, pp.16 & .23). On arrival at his parents home he received a message concerning the deterioration of his partner's health so he borrowed a car and drove back to Victoria (NAA 1955, pp.16 & 24), reaching Bendigo early in February. As he had to return the car he must have driven his wife back to Sydney, where initially she was admitted to Prince Alfred Hospital. Next she was "committed to Gladesville" [no dates known!] whilst he resided with his mother (NAA 1955, pp.15 & 24). [We have been unable to gain any information about his partner after she was admitted to Gladesville Hospital to which the term 'mental' was already associated in 1955.]

Later Victor stated

"I thought I would be automatically discharged because nobody ever bothered me" and also he believed that he would be "discharged administratively" (NAA 1955, p.14) so instead of contacting the Army he got a job (NAA 1955, p.14, para. 11). His partner being in Prince Alfred Hospital in early February 1955 (NAA 1955, p.24), he caught a train to Katoomba, most probably to seek employment but whether he was successful in getting a job is not known. When questioned about his home "after your wife was committed to Gladesville?" (NAA 1955, p.15, para. 2) he replied at Longueville which suggests that any employment at Katoomba before he was hospitalised in August 1955 was not continuous.

He was admitted to the Royal North Shore Hospital for three weeks (NAA 1955, pp.14, 15 & 24), during which time a member of the Eastern Command Provost Company phoned his mother in order to track him down. So after being released from hospital he surrendered to them at Victoria Barracks on 2 September 1955 (hence he must have been admitted to hospital about 11 August). He was kept under close arrest for 21 days (NAA 1955, pp.5, 7 & 19) and on 16 September 1955 he went before the Army Medical Board and was diagnosed with 'Chronic Alcoholism and Liver Degeneration' (NAA 1955, p.27).

Coleman Victor Edward: Service Number – 2/900271: Unit – Unallotted List, Australian Military Forces was Court Martialled at Paddington on 23 September 1955 (NAA 1955, p.3) for "Deserting Her Majesty's Service" from 28 January until he surrendered on 2 September 1955 (NAA 1955, pp.22 & 24). But it was a sad case of unfortunate circumstances so after being found 'Not Guilty of Desertion' but 'Guilty of Absence without Leave from 30 January until 2 September 1955', he escaped punishment (NAA 1955, pp.5, 7 & 19) although presumably his Army career was ended after 10 October, the date that the Case Diary of the Court Martial was signed (NAA 1955, p.6).

5. The late 50s.

Geoff Sadler revealed that Coleman's term of employment with the Blue Mountains City Council just overlapped with his own for a few months in 1956. However that recalled episode could only have happened if Coleman had rejoined the BMCC soon after being released from the Army in October 1955. Geoff Sadler most probably joined the Council when Schools broke up in December 1955 and was 16

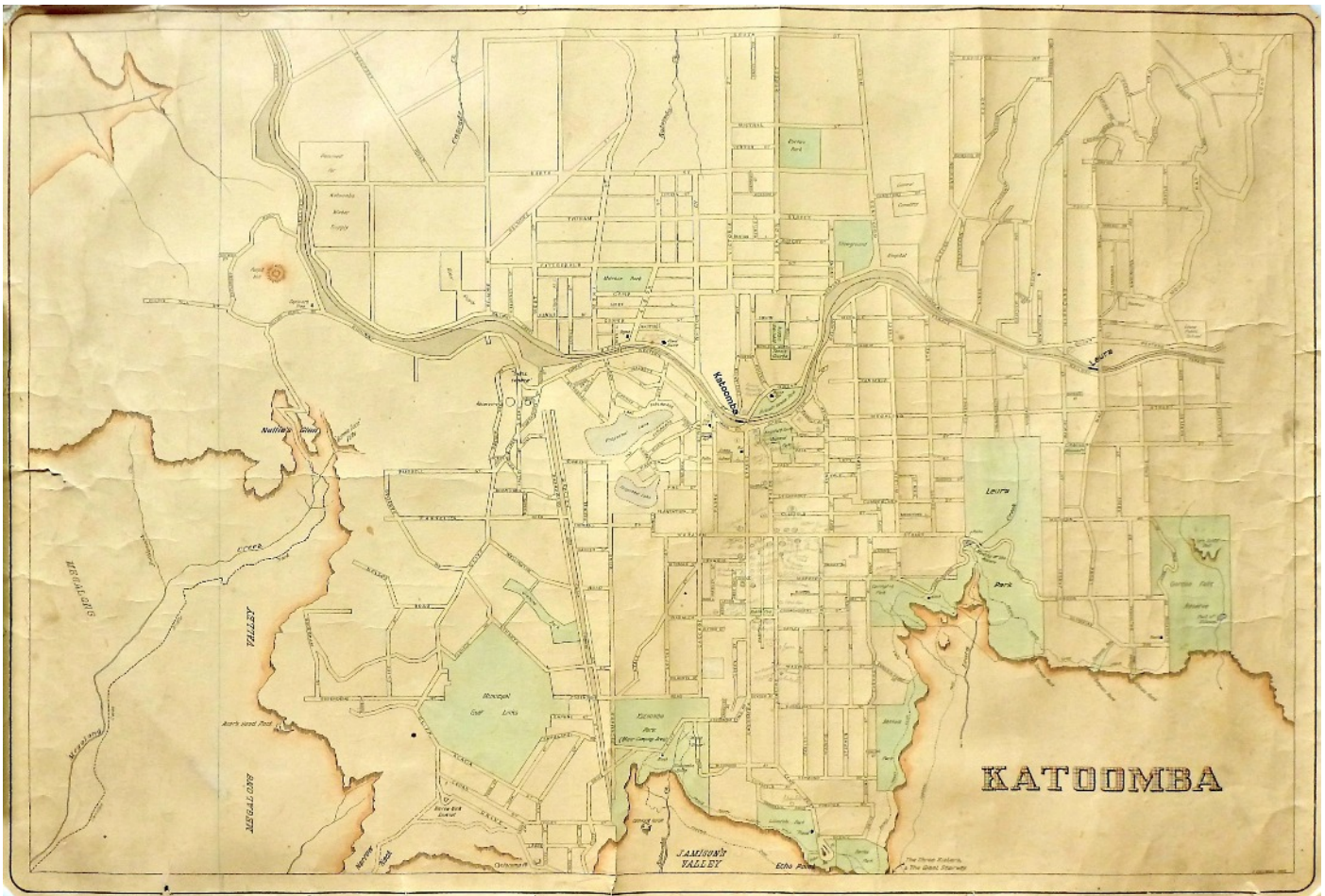


Figure 2. Coleman's 1937 map of Katoomba.

(Mollenauer 2005?), hence Coleman might have been employed into early 1956.

His whereabouts in the latter part of the 1950s has not been uncovered and what occupation he had for almost two decades is a mystery.

6. The 60s & 70s

The revision of Victor Coleman's *Katoomba-Leura Tourist Map* that was made in 1960 (Fox 1999, p.162, items 233 & 235) has to have been done by another person as Coleman had long ceased to work for the Council.

He is listed on the NSW Electoral Rolls (Bennelong/Lane Cove) in 1967-1969 with his occupation given as 'draughtsman' and his residence as 21, Kenneth Street, Longueville; no other person was registered as living in that house with him and nobody at all in the years 1959-1966 and 1970-1972.

Victor probably moved to Yass in 1974 for he is listed in the NSW Electoral Rolls (Hume/Yass) for 1975 & 1976 as

"Coleman, Victor Edward, War Veterans Home, Glebe Street, Yass 2582, draftsman, M".

It is that address which is recorded as his residence on his death certificate even though he died at Greenwich Home of Peace Hospital on 25 September 1976 from "carcinoma lung, cerebral metastases" (NSW BDM 1976). He was buried on 29 September 1976, in Grave 197, Row 14, Presbyterian Section E, Field of Mars Cemetery and like all graves in that row it is unmarked and listed as '(Grass)' (SAG 1994).

Marital Status

Victor Coleman has been remembered as a rather troublesome alcoholic (Kanellis 2014) who did not get on with his mother and in c.1947 he is said to have married another alcoholic named Margaret - but no record of this 'marriage' has been found. He was not married when his first term of Army service ended on 11 March 1946 (Army 2014), but the 'Statement of Service' in 1955 records "Marital Condition ... Married" (NAA 1955, p.25). His next-of-kin on all of his Army Records was his mother (NAA 1955, p.15); curiously his 'wife' (NAA 1955, p.15) never became his next-of-kin which suggests an informal relationship. On the other hand, his death certificate (NSW BDM 1976) recorded him as divorced yet there is no entry for him in the list of NSW divorce

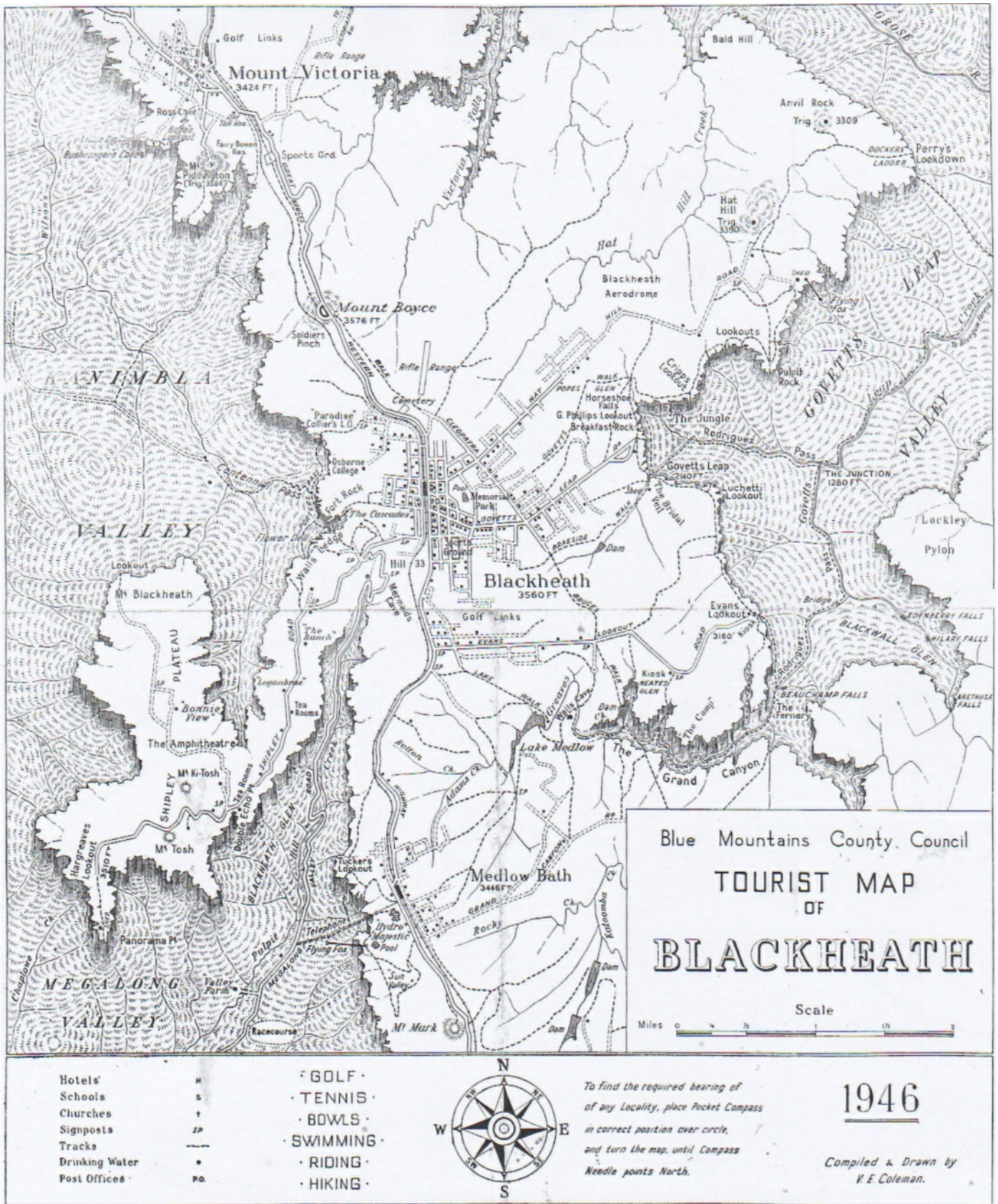


Figure 3. Tourist Map of Blackheath, 1946.

cases up to about 1963 (pers. comm. John Fox, 5 December 2013).

THE COLEMAN MAPS

In the mid-twentieth century, Victor Edward Coleman prepared exquisite, and very distinctive, maps of the villages of the Blue Mountains that are

more detailed than most previously published. He had a systematic approach to scale and to uniformity of detail; his use of extensive shadow and hatching to give the illusion of cliff lines and valleys produced a three dimensional ‘feel’ to his maps that stamped them with his particular cartographic trademark.

In 1937, Coleman drew a map entitled simply *Katoomba* (Coleman 1937; Fox 1999, pp.90, 102 & 160) which is distinctive because of the use of road casements (i.e. double lined roads) and watercolour tinting of undeveloped parks etc. plus shading to highlight the relief displacement of the cliff lines (Figure 2). It was the base for a second map issued that year by the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC 1937) which although drawn at a smaller scale, and with roads represented by only a single line, additionally had on the reverse side an index of streets and parks to assist visitors. Other variations of Figure 2 were issued by Soper Bros. (Soper Bros. 1951b) and Goyder Bros. Estate Agents (Coleman, no date) but Coleman's name is not on either map. The Three Sisters, the southern ends of ridges and also the eastern part of Federal Pass are additions to the first of these which it is certain that Coleman drew (Soper Bros. 1951a); the Goyder map bears such a striking resemblance to his 1937 work (Coleman 1937) that it is a safe inference that he drew that too.

The cartographic skill of Victor Edward Coleman is better displayed in four tourist maps that were drawn immediately after the end of WWII and were registered for copyright with the NSW Government Registrar of Trade Marks on 15 January 1948 (Ferns & Aubrey 1948). They are reproduced here (Figures 3-6; Coleman 1946 a,b,c,d) – albeit in much reduced sizes.

The *Tourist Map of Blackheath* (Figure 3) is known to have appeared in 18 distinctly different publications (and 25 if minor printing differences are counted); no doubt a similar count could be made for each of the other Coleman tourist maps. The *Katoomba-Leura Tourist Map* (Figure 4) was also printed colour, firstly in dark blue with red icons (BMCC 1946) and later (BMCC 1948) in three colours, green for parklands, blue for water bodies and red for places of interest.

In October 1946 a large (86 cm x 106 cm) and more

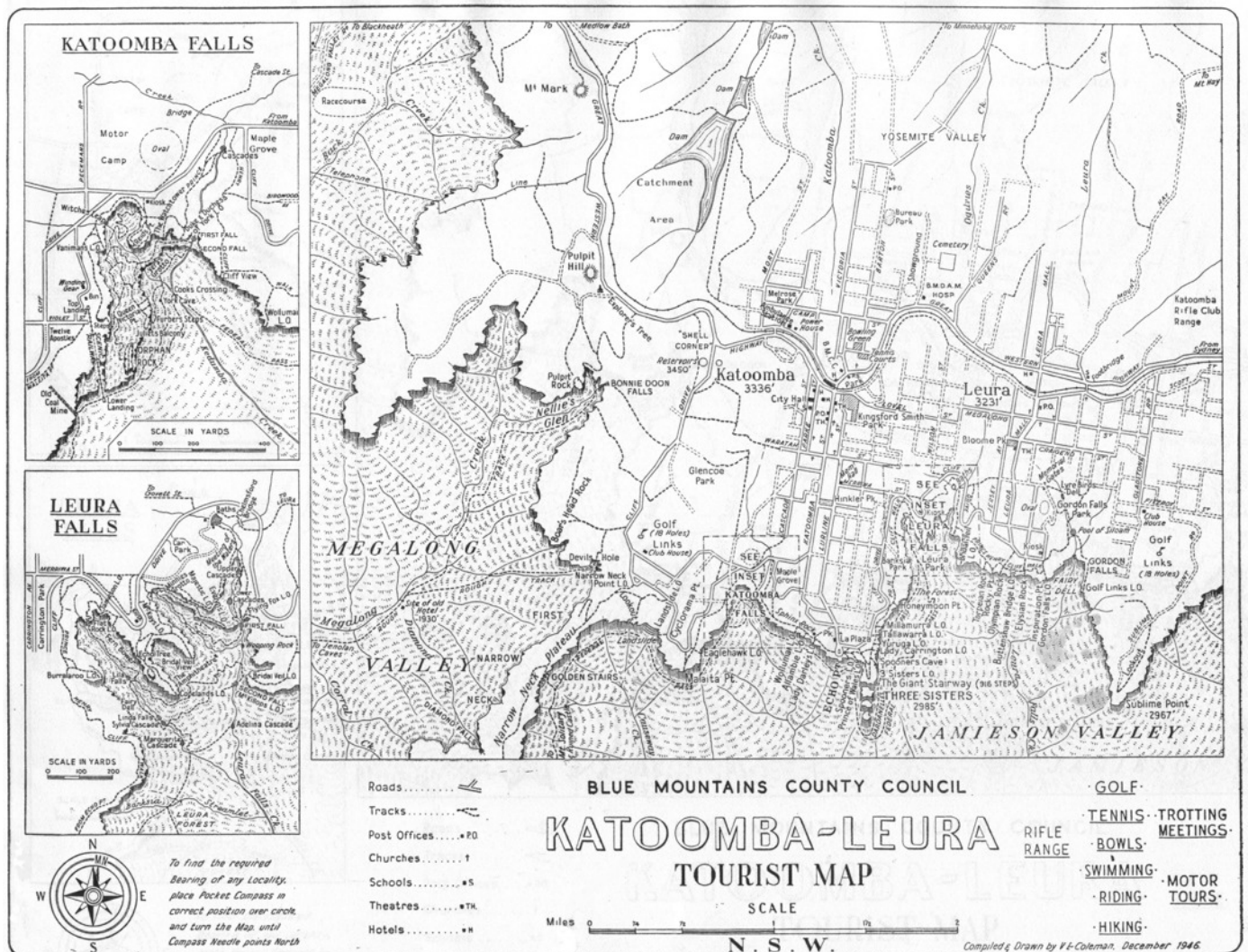


Figure 4. Katoomba-Leura Tourist Map, December 1946.

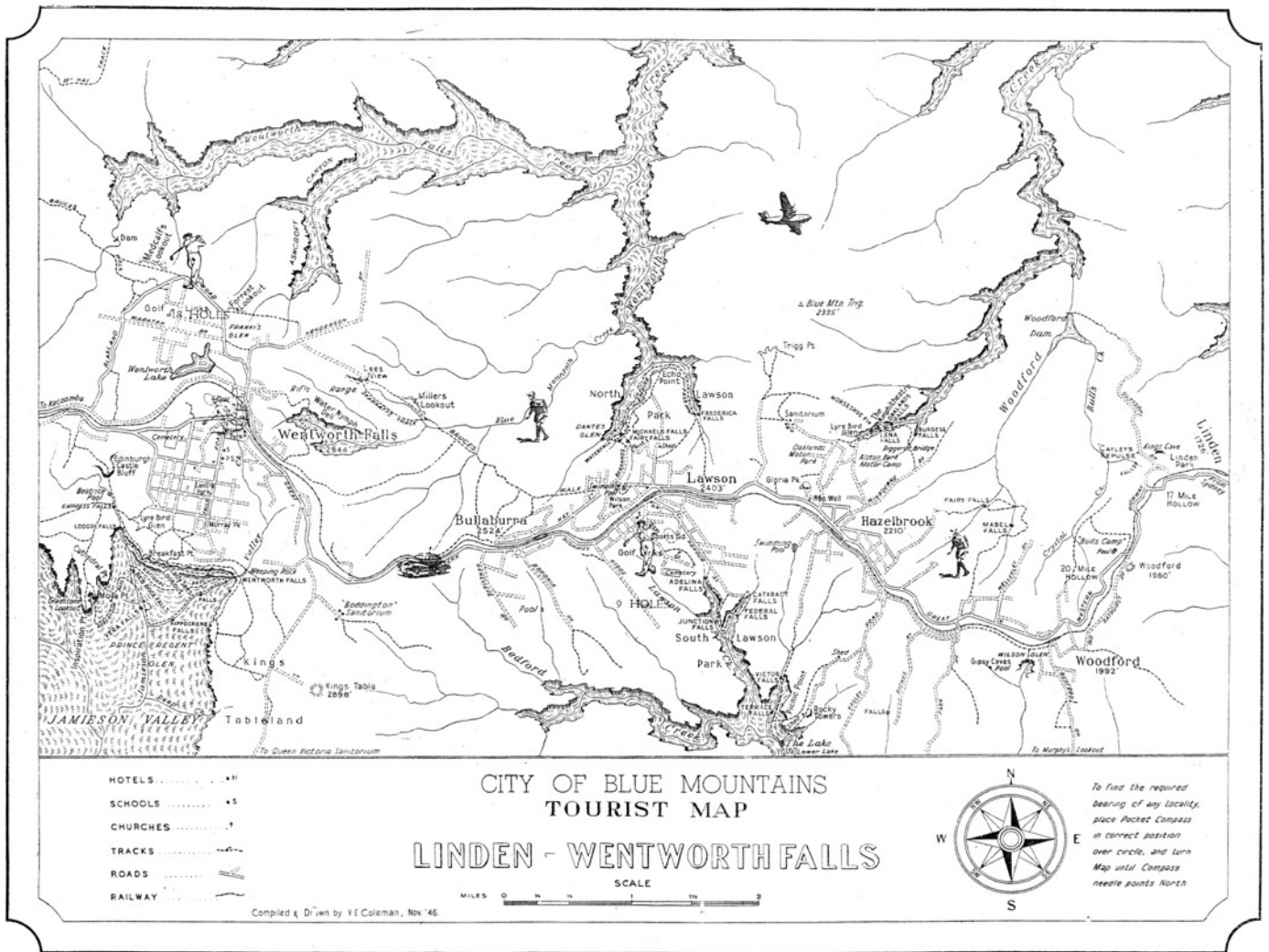


Figure 5. Tourist Map Linden - Wentworth Falls, November 1946.

general map of the entire Blue Mountains City Council area was produced by Coleman (1946e) at a scale of 1 inch to a mile. It covers an area from Emu Plains to Little Hartley, and well north of Bilpin to Mt. Cookem in the south; red lines represent the local ward boundaries.

Coleman's maps became the bases for many of the post WWII tourist maps issued by the Blue Mountains City Council, by various Oil Companies, and by Hotels and Guest Houses so making Coleman a person of importance in the history of cartography of the Blue Mountains. His drafting style changed between 1937 and 1946 during part of which he was in the 2nd Australian Field Survey Company; his later style would still be acceptable today.

Conclusion

The life of Victor Coleman is a sad tale of an illegitimate child, a father killed in WWI, a change of name, a body racked by alcoholism and a partner of

the same ilk. Maps compiled by the NSW Government Railways, the Lands Department and various newspapers had for some time promoted the Blue Mountains but it was Coleman's mapping skills that enabled the general public to grasp what the mountains had to offer. His style of mapping spanned three decades which in itself proved the worth of this man's cartographic skill.

Acknowledgements

We thank John Fox for undertaking some searches for us at NSW State Records.

Abbreviations

- AMF Australian Military Forces.
- BMCC Blue Mountains City Council
- NAA National Archives of Australia
- NSW BD&M NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages
- SAG Society of Australian Genealogists



Figure 6. Tourist Map Emu Plains - Falconbridge, August 1946 (Scrivener 1947).

APPENDIX

Summary of Family information.

- b. Florence Fay DONNELLY c.1892 at Gilgandra, NSW (NSWFH 2014a) or Melbourne, Victoria (NSWFH 2014b); parents James (Commercial Traveller - deceased by 1912 (NSWFH 2014c)) and Mary (née JACKSON) (NSWFH 2014a) or born at Melbourne, Victoria (NSWFH 2014b).
- m. Florence Fay DONNELLY to Ferruccio (*sic*) CASTOLDI 'Wharf Labourer' on 7 January 1912 at Sacred Heart Church, Darlinghurst, registered in Sydney (NSW Marriage Registration 91/1912; NSWFH 2014c).
Residence: 27 Underwood St., Paddington (NAA 1915).
- b. Ferruccio CASTOLDI 28 April 1887, Milan, Italy (NAA 1915, p.41; NSWFH 2014b) parents: Emanuel CASTOLDI & Eremina PEREGO (NSWFH 2014c).
- b. Victor Emanuel DONNELLY or CASTOLDI (later known as Victor Edward COLEMAN), 15 June 1911 at 49 Flinders Street, Sydney, registered at Sydney on 12 August 1911 (NSW Birth Registration. No.23805/1911); parents Ferruccio CASTOLDI & Fay DONNELLY (spinster)(NSWFH 2014b).
[1911 accords with his age at death.].
An Army Service record for No.2900271 (Anonymous 2014) states the name as Victor Edwards COLEMAN (second name incorrect) and "Date of Birth 15 Jun 1912" which is a year later than the true date.
The Army service record for No.2/9900271 in the Court Martial papers gives "Date of Birth 15 Jun 1914" (NAA 1955, p.25) which is three years less than the truth. When he enlisted in January 1952 this would have made him 37½ years old whereas actually he was 40 and 1 month and that may have been beyond the enlistment age - hence it seems that he fudged it!].
- m. Victor E COLEMAN (NAA 1955, p.25) to Margaret ??? (Kanellis 2014) but there is no record of that event.
divorced: (NSW Death Registration No.24056/1976; NSW BDM 1976) so post-1955 and pre-1976 but where there is no record that divorce proceedings were actually initiated!
- d. Victor E COLEMAN 25 September 1976, Greenwich Home of Peace (NSW Death Registration No.24056/1976) age stated to be 65; no birth date given; parents not stated. His name is not in the Probate Indexes (1947-1985).
buried: 29 September 1976, Field of Mars Cemetery, Presbyterian Section E, Grave 197, Row 14, (and like all graves in that row it is Unmarked and listed as '(Grass)' - SAG 1994).
- d. Ferruccio CASTOLDI 8 September 1918 [in action in France when killed by a shell (NAA 1915, pp.5, 20 & 42); AIF 31st battalion (Infantry)]
buried: initially at Poeuilly, 8 miles ESE of Peronne, France (NAA 1915, pp.17, 42 & 47) and later re-interred in the Bancourt British Cemetery, 6.5 miles ESE of Peronne (NAA 1915, p.31).
- d. Florence Fay COLMAN 19 June 1973, at Ryde Nursing Home, West Ryde of acute bronchitis and bronchopneumonia (Anonymous 1973a,b) (NSW Death Registration 54109/1973; NSWFH 2014a) registered at Ryde, aged 81; parents: James & Mary A. (née DONNELLY).
cremated: Florence Fay CASTOLDI (known as COLMAN) on 21 June 1973 at Northern Suburbs Crematorium (NSWFH 2014a).
Florence Fay CASTOLDI had a *de facto* relationship lasting at least 41 years from ?1925-1966 with
b. Xenophon George COLMAN born in Greece in 1923 (NAA 1923).
d. Xenophon COLEMAN 29 January 1966 at St. Leonards (Cvetkovich 1966)

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AN APPRECIATION OF JOHN KENNETH LEARY OAM (1 September 1934 – 10 July 2014).

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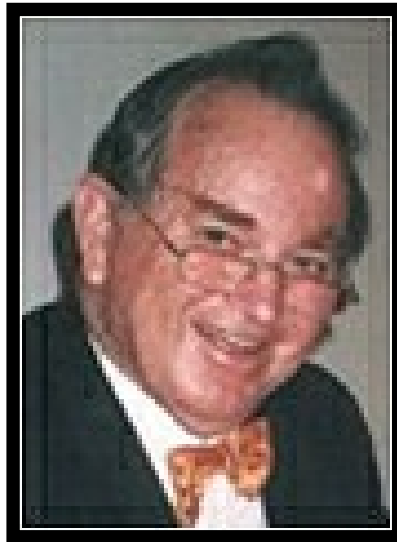
Key Words: BMACHO, President, Obituary, Leary, Blue Mountains

Many of you will know that for his last twelve months, John had been the carer for his wife of 57 years after Nanette sustained a brain injury in a fall in their home and has difficulty with mobility. Although John had helped with many things in the home, he had never entered the kitchen, other than to make basic toasted sandwiches, tea and coffee. However, over the last year John developed his culinary skills, along with a lot of help from their daughter Tanya, and their sons Richard and David.

Although John was busy looking after Nanette, he kept up his voluntary work not only leading the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations Inc. (BMACHO) as President, but also and in his rôle as a respected founding member of the Blue Mountains City Council's (BMCC) Heritage Advisory Committee, and being on the Editorial Board of the *Blue Mountains History Journal*. In addition, he has edited and published 32 editions of the BMACHO newsletter *Heritage*, and also edited a military newsletter *Stand Easy*.

John was President of BMACHO from 2007 to 2011, being succeeded by Pamela Smith. When she resigned at the AGM in 2013, John took on the rôle again and remained President until his death. He had a comprehensive knowledge of the many issues facing BMACHO and its members. He had an encouraging, and focussed, determination to listen to the point of view of all members and was eager to conduct workshops covering issues that they were facing in order to make their efforts more efficient and enjoyable. John was always grateful to be able to

readily access the advice, knowledge, and historical and heritage experience of Ian Jack, our Vice-President. Committee members, and members of our member organisations, were always thanked for their help and given praise for what John considered a "job well done". We thank you John for a "job well done" and we will miss your guidance and cheerfulness.



John when thinking ahead, had asked a reliable and responsible committee member to take over the newsletter at some stage. We hope this will evolve, as it would be a nice gesture to continue the *Heritage* newsletter as a memorial to John.

John was instrumental, along with Barrie Reynolds, Ian Jack and Peter Stanbury in lobbying the Blue Mountains City Council to form the BMCC Heritage Advisory Committee.

At the funeral service at Leura Memorial Gardens on Wednesday 16 July 2014, John's brother, Frank, who is very close in age to John, spoke about their early lives as little boys, where they explored the bush together and were dressed identically, which made people ask if they were twins. It was enlightening to hear the children of John and Nanette Leary talk so fondly about their father. They are obviously a very, very close family and have enjoyed some wonderful experiences together. They have a lifetime of memories from which to draw and they have the photographs to go with the memories, not that the memories need refreshing as theirs are very much at the forefront.

"People must learn what counts in life if not the mere fact that we have lived, it is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead." – Nelson Mandela.

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