

## ASHET annual general meeting Tuesday 15 April

ASHET's 2010 annual general meeting will be held at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney, on Thursday 15 April at 6 p.m. Light refreshments will be served at 5.30 p.m. before the meeting. The meeting, expected to be brief, will be immediately followed by a joint meeting of ASHET and the Royal Australian Historical Society, with a talk by Tony Dawson.

Each member is entitled to appoint another member as proxy by notice given to ASHET's public officer no later than 24 hours before the time of the meetings. Go to ASHET's website <http://ashet.org.au/> to download a proxy form. Send the form to ASHET's public officer who is the secretary, Ian Arthur. ASHET's Constitution requires that no member may hold more than five proxies.

The following business will be conducted at the annual general meeting:

Confirm the minutes of the last preceding annual general meeting, and special general meeting held in 2009:

Receive committee report on activities during 2009:

Receive and consider financial statement:

Elect office bearers and ordinary committee members.

In accordance with ASHET's Constitution no other business may be conducted at the annual general meeting.

Copies of the the committee's report and the financial statement that will be presented to the meeting are included in this issue of *ASHET News*.

## Election of office bearers and committee members

At the close of the ASHET annual general meeting on Thursday 15 April 2010, all the present office bearers and committee members retire. Office bearers and committee members for the coming year will be elected at the annual general meeting.

Nominations are called for election to the following positions:

- President,
- Senior vice-president,
- Vice president,
- Secretary,
- Treasurer,
- Three ordinary committee members.

Nominations must be in writing, signed by two members of ASHET and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. They must reach the secretary by Thursday 8 April, seven days before the date of the meeting on 15 April. A nomination form may be downloaded from the ASHET website <http://ashet.org.au/>.

## Proposed ASHET/RAHS tour to Darling Downs: Call for expressions of interest

Following the very successful study tour to the NSW Outback in August 2009, a 13-day study tour to the Darling Downs is now proposed. It will depart on 16 August 2010. The tour will explore the distinctive history and heritage of this vast plateau on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range in southern Queensland.

The tour will have a pace and travel distances similar to those of the 2009 tour to the NSW Outback with stays of 2 nights in each Goondiwindi and Roma, and 5 nights in Toowoomba. While based in Toowoomba there will be day trips to the Railway Workshop Museum at Ipswich, Highfields Pioneer Village and several local villages of note. The Tour Leader will be Rob Renew (who was previously Principal Curator, Science & Industry at the Powerhouse Museum) and the Tour Manager will be Mari Metzke.

For more information about the tour, click on Darling Downs Tour and download the details from the ASHET website. <http://ashet.org.au/>



If you are interested in joining the tour, please email us on [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au) with your contact details (name, phone, and preferred email) and likely accommodation needs (double, twin share, or single). Expressions of interest close on **Friday 30 April**. If you have questions, please call Mari on 9247 8001 or Ian Arthur on 9958 8397.

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## ASHET Events

**Tuesday 30 March 2010**

**Talk by Noni Boyd**

***Walter Liberty Vernon: NSW Government Architect***

Sydney-based heritage consultant Noni Boyd will speak of the work of Walter Liberty Vernon who was NSW Government Architect from 1890 to 1911. During this period he was responsible for many of the landmark Sydney buildings including the Mitchell Wing of the State Library, the Art Gallery of NSW and the old Fisher Library at the University of Sydney. Noni will look at the way Vernon's work at the University of Sydney was influenced by both Pugin and Blakett.

This event is a joint activity of ASHET and the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS).

**Venue:** History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Time:** 5.30 for 6 pm

**Cost:** \$8.00 Includes light refreshments on arrival

**Bookings:** phone RAHS on (02) 9247 8001 or email [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au)

**Thursday 15 April 2010**

**ASHET annual general meeting and talk by Tony Dawson**

***E. G. Stone – Expert in Concrete***

The brief ASHET annual general meeting at 6 p.m will be immediately followed by a joint meeting of ASHET and the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS), with a talk by Tony Dawson. Non-members of ASHET may attend the annual general meeting but may not participate in the business of the meeting.

Edward Giles Stone was born in 1876. He joined the NSW Public Works Department in 1892 and studied engineering at Sydney Technical College. In 1906, after five years with the Sydney Harbour Trust Commission, he went into private practice, specialising in reinforced concrete. His first major contract, the erection of the Dennys Lascelles Austin wool store in Geelong, came in 1910, and over the next twelve years, most of them in partnership with E. J. Siddeley, he built many large reinforced concrete structures in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania.

In 1923 Stone turned his attention to cement manufacture but his attempts to produce cheap cement, initially in Tasmania and then at Port Kembla, met with little success. Undeterred, he moved to Narrabeen where he established a pilot plant for making lime and cement from calcareous sand dredged from the lagoon. He also toyed with some novel designs ranging from dams to non-inflatable tyres but none proved very practicable.

Stone died in 1947, leaving as testimony to his career a variety of reinforced concrete structures, including some that now enjoy official heritage status.

Tony Dawson is a former Associate Dean of Science at UTS. As a member of the Manly, Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society he has published on various subjects including two books on the history of surveying in NSW.

**Venue:** History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Time:** 5.30 for 6 pm

**Cost:** \$8.00 Includes light refreshments on arrival

**Bookings:** phone RAHS on (02) 9247 8001 or email [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au)

**Tuesday 27 July, 2010**

**Talk by Ann Moyal**

***The Telegraph Revisited***

To a nation the size of Australia, the telegraph was the most important technological innovation of the nineteenth century. Ann Moyal, author of "Clear across Australia: a history of telecommunications" will speak of the way the telegraph transformed life in Australian by facilitating better business and media contact, improving the way the military and the science communities communicated and providing a more friendly way for families to keep in touch.

This event is a joint activity of ASHET and the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS).

**Venue:** History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Time:** 5.30 for 6 pm

**Cost:** \$8.00 Includes light refreshments on arrival

**Bookings:** phone RAHS on (02) 9247 8001 or email [history@rahs.org.au](mailto:history@rahs.org.au)

## Other events, not ASHET

**Friday 9 April–Saturday 10 April 2010**

**Two day workshop on the history of surveying and measurement**

***Friday, Australia's Greatest Surveyors-General  
Saturday, The World's Greatest Surveyors***

This two day workshop features Australian and international speakers, and is pre-set in connection with the International Congress on Surveying and Measurement being held in Sydney in April.

Registration of the workshop is open to members of the public, and is separate from registration for the Congress.

For more details including the program and information about registration, go to <http://www.fig2010.com/program-overview.php> and download the brochure.

**Venue: Friday:** Old Government House, Parramatta:

**Saturday:** Dixon Room, Mitchell Library Macquarie Street Sydney

**Time:** Two full days

## Talks at the Powerhouse Museum: not ASHET events

**Sunday 21 March, 2pm – 3pm**

Talk by Steven Sherwood, University of NSW, Climate Change Research Centre

**Global warming: old science, new science, controversies, and solutions**

Recent events have witnessed growing rifts within society about whether climate change is a real problem, whether we truly know that greenhouse gas emissions are causing it, and what if anything should be done. Political pressures are presenting grave challenges to the integrity of the scientific enterprise and the methods by which findings are communicated to the public. In the midst of the increasingly noisy discourse, it is more important than ever to identify clearly what is and is not known.

In this talk Steven Sherwood will describe some of the lesser-known but crucial aspects of the science of climate and what it has to say about global warming, including the historical development of the science, a clear identification of what is now known beyond doubt and what remains uncertain, and some observations on past episodes where scientific findings were “inconvenient.” Join Steven to consider what the physical and economic sciences tell us we would have to do if we want to avert unprecedented transformation of our planet.

**Wednesday 7 April, 12.30pm - 1.30pm**

Talk by Kerrie Dougherty, Powerhouse Museum

**Red Rovers: the Lunokhod lunar rovers**

Today we are familiar with sophisticated robotic explorers roving the surface of Mars, but many people are unaware that the first robotic rovers were exploring the Moon thirty years ago. Originally developed for the USSR’s lunar landing program that was racing to the Moon in competition with the US Apollo project during the 1960s, the Lunokhod (Moonwalker) roving vehicle was then used as a lunar explorer in its own right, after the cosmonaut landing program failed to beat Apollo 11. Remotely driven from Earth, Lunokhod 1 was launched in 1970 and covered 10.5km during its operational life. Its successor, Lunokhod 2, was launched in 1973 and roamed over 37km across the lunar surface. Curator of Space Technology, Kerrie Dougherty, will tell the story of the Lunokhod rovers from their origins in the Soviet lunar landing project to the fate of Lunokhod 2 in an auction of Soviet space artefacts. Presented as part of the Yuri’s Night international celebration of space.

**Sunday 11 April, 2pm – 3pm**

Talk by **Kerrie Dougherty, Powerhouse Museum**

**Apollo 13: NASA’s finest hour**

The crew of NASA’s third lunar landing mission, Apollo 13,

named their Command Module Odyssey; but their ‘odyssey of exploration’ instead became an odyssey of survival when an oxygen tank rupture on the way to the Moon crippled the Command Module and required the crew to use the Lunar Module as a lifeboat. Working in a race against time, with diminishing spacecraft resources and power, NASA’s Mission Control team devised ingenious make-do solutions to keep the crew alive and return them safely to the Earth. In this next instalment of the Powerhouse Museum’s Apollo 40th Anniversary series of talks, Curator of Space Technology, Kerrie Dougherty, looks at the “successful failure” of Apollo 13, a mission rescued from disaster by the courage of the crew and the resourcefulness of NASA’s ground engineers, scientists and technicians.

**Sunday 18 April, 2pm – 3pm**

Talk by **Morris Jones, Space analyst and author**  
**NASA’s new future**

NASA, America’s space agency, has just undergone its most radical shakeup in 50 years. Plans for landing on the Moon have been scrapped, but a bold new future is emerging. What will NASA do in the decade ahead? Can private companies take us to the Moon and beyond?

Dr Morris Jones, an Australian space analyst, author and regular commentator on spaceflight, will shed light on NASA’s new future.

**Sunday 25 April , 2pm – 3pm**

Talk by **Kerrie Dougherty, Powerhouse Museum**  
**Eye on the cosmos: the Hubble Space Telescope**

On 24 April 1990, NASA launched the Hubble Space Telescope, the first and best known of its four “Great Observatories”. One of the most important scientific instruments of all time, Hubble overcame initial technical problems with its mirror to produce a wealth of magnificent images of the cosmos that are both scientifically valuable and breathtakingly beautiful. The space telescope has proved to be vital research tool for astronomers, its discoveries helping to resolve some long-standing questions of astrophysics and revealing new cosmic mysteries to research. Curator of Space Technology, Kerrie Dougherty, presents this talk in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Hubble Space Telescope. Kerrie will outline the fascinating history of this project, with roots stretching back to the 1940s, and highlight some of its most important discoveries and amazing astronomical images.

**Venue for all Powerhouse talks:** Target Theatre, level 2, Powerhouse Museum,

**Cost:** Free with Museum admission (\$10 adult, \$6 concession, free for Powerhouse members).

**Bookings:**

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/talks/>

## Committee Annual Report 2009

### ASHET membership

At the end of 2009, ASHET had 91 members, a net decrease of three over the year. In addition there were 23 registered members of families. Of the members at the end of 2009, 70 lived in the Sydney area, 10 elsewhere in NSW, 7 in Victoria and 4 in Queensland.

### Meetings and other activities

ASHET held a series of meetings during 2009 at History House in Sydney jointly with RAHS, and conducted visits to places of interest. The events were as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Tuesday 24 February, 2009                       | Talk by Carroll Pursell<br><i>Technologies of Play: Surf boards and skateboards in the United States</i>                           |
| Wednesday 25 March 2008                         | Talk by Paul-Alan Johnson<br><i>Augustus Alt: Soldier, Engineer, Surveyor and Isopsephist.</i>                                     |
| Thursday 23 April, 2009                         | Talk by Alan Perry<br><i>Changes in Furniture Manufacture in Australia during the 20th Century</i><br>ASHET Annual General Meeting |
| Tuesday 19 May, 2009                            | Talk by Jean Rice<br><i>Eveleigh Railway Carriage Workshops</i>  |
| Wednesday 24 June, 2009                         | Talk by Frank Nicholas<br><i>Charles Darwin's visit to Australia</i>   |
| Thursday 16 July, 2009                          | Talk by Jenny Horsfield<br><i>The Edgeworth David family; burdens of love and duty</i>   |
| Saturday 25 July 2009                           | Tour of Sydney Heritage Fleet Shipyard, Rozelle Bay<br>ASHET members only  |
| Thursday 13 August, 2009                        | Talk by David Woodbridge<br><i>Braille: two hundred years and going strong</i>   |
| Monday 17 August, 2009–Saturday 29 August, 2009 | Tour of outback NSW: Jointly with RAHS   |
| Tuesday 8 September, 2009                       | Talk by Anne Arthur<br><i>The canned jam scandal</i>   |
| Thursday 17 September, 2009                     | Visit to Kavenagh Balloons, Mt Kuringai<br>ASHET members only  |
| Wednesday 14 October 2009                       | Talk by Ken Bennett<br><i>The Burrinjuck Dam Centenary</i>   |
| Tuesday 24 November 2009                        | Talk by David Craddock<br><i>The centenary of powered and unpowered flight in Australia</i>  |

### ASHET committee

At the annual general meeting held on 23 April, 2009, the committee elected in April 2008 retired and the following office-bearers and committee members were elected, to serve until the close of the following annual general meeting to be held in 2010.

President	Ian Jack
Senior vice-president	Mari Metzke
Vice-president	David Craddock
Secretary	Ian Arthur
Treasurer	John Roberts
Ordinary committee member	Felicity Barry
	Ian Bowie
	Rob Renew

The committee met four times during 2009.

### Special general meeting

ASHET held a special general meeting of members on 23 April 2009. The meeting resolved to amend ASHET's constitution to provide that a person would cease to be a member of ASHET if they failed to pay annual membership fees for two consecutive years. The amendment was registered by the Registry of Cooperatives and Associations on 1 May 2009.

### Journal contents project

Progress during the year with the project to digitise and display on a web site the complete contents of two series of historic Australian engineering journals was further delayed. By the end of 2009 all of the scanning was complete for the full sets of the *Journal of the Sydney University Engineering Society* and the *Minutes of Proceedings of the Engineering Association of New South Wales*. In addition, the full texts of two volumes of each of the two journals had been posted on the Sydney University Library website, where they are available for free access and downloading. The full texts of the complete sets of both journals are expected to be on the website early in 2010.

### Website upgrading project

ASHET applied for and received a grant under the 2009 RAHS Local History Research and Publication Grant Program of \$850 towards the cost of project to upgrade the ASHET website and provide a number of new features. ASHET's committee agreed to supplement this with \$650 from ASHET's funds to meet the expected cost of the project.

ASHET engaged Alison Stevens of Redwine Publications, which specialises in electronic communications and website design, to provide professional services in connection with this project. She commenced work on the late in 2009 and we expect the project to be complete early in 2010.

The upgraded website will include a set of ten self guided tour brochures that relate to the history of engineering and technology in the Sydney area. In their original form these brochure were prepared by Ian Arthur in 2001 and 2002 for the Sydney Engineering Heritage Committee of Engineers Australia, with the intent tht they should be published in hard copy form. This did not eventuate, and for some time, but not currently, they were presented as pdf documents on the Engineers Australia website. Ian has updated and reformatted the guides for inclusion in the upgraded ASHET website.

### Electronic history project

In October 2009, ASHET's committee decided to undertake this project. The aim of the project is to develop and start to implement a strategy for ASHET to make the best use of electronic means of communication both in its existing activities, and also in possible new directions that are compatible with its objectives as a society.

We have engaged Alison Stevens to provide professional services to assist us with this project, and plan to start work on it early in 2010, with completion before the end of the year.

## Income and expenditure statement for the year ended 31 December 2009

INCOME	2009	2008
Members' subscriptions	1,840	2,150
Donations	850	0
Income from meetings & activities (net of expenses)	3,897	612
Bank interest	358	819
	<u>6,945</u>	<u>3,581</u>
Less: EXPENDITURE		
	413	412
Insurance	260	479
Telephone & internet	180	165
Affiliation fees	28	78
Postage	108	169
Stationery & office supplies	84	44
Filing fees	0	5
Bank fees	0	0
Other expenses	0	0
Table of contents project		
	<u>1,072</u>	<u>1,352</u>
<b>SURPLUS</b> for year		
Balance brought forward	17,139	14,910
Surplus	5,873	2,229
Balance carried forward	<u>23,012</u>	<u>17,139</u>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
Cash at bank	4,577	978
Cash at bank – on deposit	18,545	16,161
Less Subscriptions received in advance	<u>-110</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>23,012</u>	<u>17,139</u>

## Linden Observatory added to State Heritage Register

Addition of the Linden Observatory to the State Heritage Register early this year preserves the legacy of amateur astronomer and telescope maker Ken Beames.

ASHET members visited the telescope in 2007 and there is an article about it in *ASHET News* for January 2008. To see the article go to the ASHET website, <http://ashet.org.au/> Beames died in 1989. Shortly beforehand he had made a new will. This will created a Trust which had the purpose of preserving his telescope and observatory, and using his property for education in astronomy, especially for younger people.

This will was challenged by his daughter, Barbara Beames, and the costs were taken from the estate. The Trust was faced with the task of preserving what remained of Mr Beames' possessions, using the property as specified in the will, with almost no income.

Because the Beames' telescope was based upon electrical technology which had become outdated, and because the public could not be allowed to use the telescope at night for safety reasons, it was decided to purchase another large telescope which would be much easier and safer to use. A 76cm (30 inches) visual telescope was purchased from manufacturers in



*Ken Beames' telescope at Linden*

the United States of America.

The main tasks facing the Trust have been the need to preserve, catalogue and display the various artefacts, documents and items of interest which belonged to Mr Beames. Lack of income has been the main cause for whatever lack of progress the Trust may have suffered. As friends have often said, there was nothing at Linden Observatory that a million dollars could not have fixed.

## David Scott Mitchell and the Mitchell Library

2010 is the centenary of the opening of the Mitchell Library in Sydney, described by its Librarian Elizabeth Ellis in 2007 as 'the greatest single cultural bequest ever made in Australia'.

David Scott Mitchell, born in Sydney, was the only son of Dr. James Mitchell and his wife Augusta Maria Frederick, née Scott. In October 1852 he became one of the first undergraduates of the University of Sydney where he won scholarships in mathematics, with prizes also in physics and chemistry; he also played cricket outside the university. In December 1858 he was admitted to the Bar but never practised.

Mitchell had been reared in a cultivated household and possessed independent means; he preferred books and intellectual interests to business or politics. By the age of 30 he was collecting books, buying at auctions and seeking out items of particular interest, mainly English literary works, including many fine editions which in 1900 exceeded 10,000 volumes. From about 1886 he turned almost solely to the record of Australia and its surrounding region. Book-collecting became his all-absorbing purpose. His aim was to gather a copy of every document he could that related to Australia and also to the Pacific, the East Indies and Antarctica.

After 1895 he was aided and encouraged by H. C. L. Anderson, the principal librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, which, apart from Mitchell, had the best Australasian collection. In 1898 Mitchell offered to bequeath his collection to the library trustees. Mitchell's conditions, which included the provision of a new building to house the collection, were eventually met, and with support from the premier, J.H.Carruthers, the Mitchell wing of the new library building was begun in 1906.

Mitchell died in 1907 and bequeathed to the library trustees his



*David Scott Mitchell*



*Mitchell Library*

entire collection with an endowment of £70,000. When opened on 8 March 1910 it had some 60,000 volumes and much other material. It remains unrivalled in its field and is one of the great national collections in the world.

The principal source of information for this note is the entry on Mitchell in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. For further reading go to the Australian Government Culture Portal at <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/davidmitchell/>.

## 100 years of Australian currency

At the time of Federation in 1901 the Australian Constitution, Section 51(xii), gave the Commonwealth Parliament the right to legislate with respect to 'currency, coinage, and legal tender.' But it was not until 1910 that the first Australian silver coins were issued, with bronze pennies and half-pennies the following year. All these coins were made at the Royal Mint in London.

Until this time Australia used the currency of other countries. For the first few years of colonisation in New South Wales, the situation was chaotic. In 1800 Governor Gidley King declared that a number of coins, including Spanish dollars, Dutch guilders and Indian rupees, as well as British coinage, were legal tender, with values expressed in pounds, shillings and pence. In 1825 British currency became the official currency of Australia.

The Sydney Mint, a branch of the Royal Mint, opened in 1855, housed in a building in Macquarie Street, built between 1811 and 1816, that was formerly the southern wing of the Sydney Hospital, the oldest public building remaining in Australia. Between 1855 and 1870 the Sydney Mint produced gold coins of an original design carrying the words 'Sydney Mint, Australia'. From 1870 it minted British gold coins. It was the first branch of the Royal Mint outside England. In 1919 the Sydney and Melbourne Mints between them were making all Australian coins. The Sydney Mint closed in 1926.

The Melbourne Mint, built between 1869 and 1872, was another branch of the Royal Mint. Until 1916 it minted only



*Melbourne Mint*

gold sovereigns. It produced the first Australian coinage to be made in Australia in 1916, and from 1926 until it closed in 1967 it minted all denominations of Australian currency. The Mint, one of Melbourne's best colonial buildings, was designed in Italian Renaissance style by Australian architect J.J.Clark, and now houses the Royal Victorian Historical Society.

The Perth Mint was built in 1899 as another branch of the Royal Mint, to refine gold and mint sovereigns and half sovereigns to be used in the colony. It remained as a branch of the Royal Mint until 1970, when it became a statutory authority of the Western Australian government. It is now a corporation wholly owned by the Western Australian government. It continues to refine gold and produce commemorative Australian coins.



*Perth Mint*

Australian mints were unable to meet the need for new coins during World War II. In 1942 and 1943 American mints in Denver and San Francisco produced Australian silver coins and during the same years the Bombay branch of the Royal Mint produced Australian pennies and half-pennies. The Royal Mint in London produced Australian currency during 1951, again to meet a shortage of capacity in Australia.

Following the introduction of decimal currency in 1966, the Canberra, Perth and for a short period the Melbourne mints melted down large quantities of the pre-decimal currency, recovering the silver from the silver coins and recycling the bronze coins into new decimal coins. Even before this, melting down pre-1946 silver coins was quite profitable, and large quantities of silver coins were officially withdrawn for melting down and recycling. Also many silver coins were illegally exported for melting down. By 1963 only one-half of one percent of the pre-1946 silver coinage remained.

The Royal Australian Mint was opened in 1965, to prepare for the introduction of decimal coinage in February 1966. It was the first mint in Australia not to be a branch of the British Royal Mint. Initially it shared with the Melbourne Mint the production of Australian decimal coinage. Once the initial demand had been satisfied the Melbourne Mint closed.

At the time of introducing decimal currency, 1,2,5,10, 20 and 50 cent coins were issued. In 1984 one dollar coins, and in 1988 two dollar coins, were introduced. In 1991 the one and two cent coins were discontinued. The Australian 'silver' coins now contain 75% copper and 25% nickel. The 'gold' one and two dollar coins contain 2% nickel, 6% aluminium and 92% copper. In 1966 round 50 cent coins were minted with 80% silver, 20% copper. They were superseded by the twelve sided 50 cent coin introduced in 1969, which has 75% copper 25 % nickel.

This short summary does not cover Australian banknotes. Australia has been a pioneer in the production of polymer banknotes involving new technology, and this could be the subject of an interesting article.

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