

# Local Government Week Exhibition



Local Government Week is an opportunity for reflect on the rich and diverse history of the Marrickville Local Government Area, one of the oldest councils in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Today Marrickville Council employs over 500 people. Back in the 1860s Marrickville Council was a very different operation. The Council Clerk and the Inspector of Nuisances were the sole officers of Council. The Council Clerk's main function was to regulate Council proceedings and also act as the Overseer of Works, Rate Collector and Property Valuator.

The Council offices opened 4 hours per week between 3-5pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Council only met 4 times a year and the first by-laws of the Marrickville Municipality, gazetted on 26 April 1862, stated that these meetings would be held at noon on the last Saturday in the month of January, April, July and October.

As the population of the area grew so did the functions of Council. By 1882 there were 1,935 ratepayers and 1,400 houses. Council revenue was 2,921 pounds annually. Council employed the Council Clerk, the Inspector of Nuisances and an Overseer of Works. There were also about 60 - 80 people employed doing road and street maintenance.

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The Council offices were open longer hours from 9am to 4pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and from 7pm to 9pm every Wednesday. The largest increase in workload was to the elected alderman, who now had to attend meetings every second Monday at 7.30pm.

The first public park in the original Marrickville Municipality was proclaimed on 4 May 1886 as Marrickville Park (now Enmore Park). Marrickville Council began to employ gardeners. The majority of parks were created in the first half of the 20th century.

During the 1890s local development increased dramatically and new positions were created such as the Foreman of Works to assist the Overseer and the Pound Keeper, who had the responsibility of impounding stray horses, cows and sheep.

Today there are jobs at Council that would never have been imagined in the 19th and early 20th century. Some jobs such as Inspector of Dairies and horse trough cleaner disappeared when the need for these type of jobs no longer existed. Other jobs have remained basically the same; only the technology is different.

This small exhibition gives a glimpse into the history of Council operations. Photographs can be purchased in electronic form - please contact the Marrickville Historian at [history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au](mailto:history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au) for further information.

# The First Mayor of Marrickville

## The First Mayor of Marrickville

Gerald Halligan was born in Ireland in 1821. He migrated to Australia in 1848. Halligan quickly obtained a job as Clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office. Halligan worked in the NSW Public Work's Department from 1859 to 1882, rising to the position of Chief Clerk.

Gerald Halligan was the leading figure in the establishment of the Municipality of Marrickville. Marrickville was proclaimed a Municipality on 5 November 1861 with a population of six hundred people and one hundred and thirty buildings

The first election was held on 9 December 1861. Gerald Halligan was unanimously elected as the first Chairman. He held the position from 1861 to 1863 and again in 1866. Halligan served as a Councillor from 1861 to 1872.

Gerald Halligan arrived in Marrickville in 1856 and purchased a large property on the corner of Victoria and Meeks Road. The property was named Geraldine.

Halligan died in 1886, aged 65 years and was buried in the Balmain Cemetery. Halligan's obituary described him as "a very old and respected civil servant and a resident of Marrickville for over thirty years". Gerald Halligan was survived by his wife, Mary (known as Maud) and twelve adult children.

Gerald Street and Gerald Lane are named after Gerald Halligan. Maud Street is named after his wife.



*Photograph Marrickville Council*

# The First Marrickville Town Hall



*Photograph Marrickville Council. The photo was taken c. 1912.*

The First Marrickville Town Hall - 96-106 Illawarra Road, Marrickville

The original Marrickville Town Hall was opened in 1879 as a single storey building. It was designed by John Michael Despointes, an architect and local brick maker.

In 1883 a second storey was added. The plans were prepared by Blacket & Son Architects.

Marrickville Council built a new town hall in 1922 in Marrickville Road. Council sold the original building to the Department of Education. It opened in 1923 as Marrickville Boy's Junior Technical School. The Junior Technical School transferred to Dulwich Hill in 1949. The building was then occupied by the Boy's Primary Department of Marrickville Public School. In 1985 it was declared surplus to the needs of the Department of Education and acquired by the Department of Housing.

In 1993 the building was sold at a nominal cost to the Jessie Street Women's Library Association. Under the terms of the sale the Association had to restore the building but was unable to find the funds. The building was returned to the Department of Housing.

In 2006 the building was sold by the Department of Housing through a public submission process to the Atlas Hall Pty Ltd as Trustee for The Greek Atlas League of NSW. Restoration works are progressing.

The former town hall is a listed item under the NSW Heritage Act. The old town hall provides an important physical record of the early history of the Marrickville Local Government Area from its origins as a small village.

# The Original Petersham Town Hall



*Photograph Marrickville Council. The photo is c. 1937*

The Original Petersham Town Hall - Crystal Street, Petersham

The question is often asked why there are so many former town halls in the Marrickville Local Government Area (LGA). Another frequently asked question is why are Marrickville Council's Administrative offices located at Petersham and not at Marrickville?

The Marrickville LGA is an amalgamation of several Councils. On 1 January 1949 the former Municipalities of Marrickville (1861), Petersham (1871) and St Peters (1871) amalgamated as the Marrickville Municipality. In 1968 parts of Camperdown and Newtown were incorporated into the Marrickville Municipality. All of these former Councils had their own town halls.

The original Petersham Town Hall was built in 1882 and enlarged in 1910. This photograph was taken prior to its demolition in 1937. The old war trophy gun from World War One can still be seen.

The new Petersham Town Hall was opened in 1938. The only portion retained of the old building was the clock in the tower. The clock had been presented to Council by Alderman Paling in 1886.

Petersham Town Hall is listed as a heritage item. It is a very good example of late 1930s Art Deco style civic architecture.

After the 1949 amalgamation Marrickville Council moved its offices from Marrickville Town Hall to Petersham Town Hall. Petersham Town Hall was a more modern building compared to the twenty seven year old Marrickville Town Hall.

# The First Woman Mayor in Australia

The First Woman Alderman and Mayor in Australia

Elizabeth Lilian Maud Fowler, known as Lilian Fowler, became the first woman alderman in NSW and the first woman Mayor in Australia.

Lilian Fowler was born at Cooma on 7 June 1886, daughter of Charles and Rebecca Gill. According to one story, the young Lilian decided on a career in politics when the local Inspector of Nuisances confiscated her marbles when she was playing with them on a public footpath.

Lilian Fowler moved to Newtown in 1911 after her marriage to Albert Fowler, a bootmaker.

Lilian Fowler was elected to Newtown Municipal Council in 1928. Fowler served as an Alderman on Newtown Municipal Council from 1928 to 1931 and from 1934 to 1948.

Lilian Fowler was elected Mayor of Newtown, becoming the first woman Mayor in Australia on 7 December 1937. In recognition of this achievement the Australian Labor Party presented her with an illuminated address signed by former NSW Premier Jack Lang.

Lilian Fowler was elected to the State seat of Newtown on 27 May 1944. Fowler was the third woman to enter the NSW Legislative Assembly. She served as the Member for Newtown until 22 May 1950.

Lilian Fowler was awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE). Lilian Fowler died at Camperdown on 11 May 1954 and was buried at Rookwood Cemetery.



Alderman Lilian Fowler in 1928. Photograph Marrickville Council.



Illuminated Address presented to Lilian Fowler on 7 December 1937. Original donated to Marrickville Council by Lilian Fowler's daughter and held by Marrickville Library and History Services.

# The Council Steam Roller



*Photograph Marrickville Council.*

## The Marrickville Council Steam Roller

This photograph was taken in 1925 in Stanmore Road. It is a wonderful photograph of work practices in the 1920s.

Stanmore Road - New Canterbury Road was the boundary between the original Marrickville Municipality and the former Petersham Municipality. It became a main road under the Mains Road Act, 1924, and became the first main road in NSW to be reconstructed with concrete. The Department of Main Roads paid for the construction but the work was done by Marrickville and Petersham Councils.

Work on pouring the concrete commenced on 3 April 1925 at the Enmore Road - Stanmore Road intersection.

# The Modern Council Truck



*Photograph: Marrickville Council. Howarth Studios, Marrickville, c. 1940*

## The Modern Council Truck

This photograph was probably taken in the 1940s. Marrickville Council's truck fleet numbered six trucks and four are lined up here on parade at the Council's depot in Cecilia Street, Marrickville. Marrickville Town Hall can be seen in the background.

From the 1920s onwards Marrickville Council gradually replaced its horses and drays with motorised vehicles. Council did use horse vehicles into the late 1940s, particularly during World War Two when petrol was heavily rationed. Council usually contracted out to local carriers when a horse and cart was needed for works.

Council also owned a few horses, which were stabled at Riverside Park (now Marrickville Golf Course). The last Council owned horses were rounded up and sold in 1958. Unfortunately during the "last round up" two horses bolted. They were later successfully rounded up on the Princes Highway at Tempe after causing a massive traffic jam for two hours.

The Council depot at Cecilia Street, Marrickville was also sold. The site was redeveloped for home units in the late 1990s.

# Inside Marrickville Council's Incinerator

## Inside Marrickville Council's Incinerator

This photograph was taken c 1927 inside The Destructor, an incinerator operated by Marrickville Council at its Marrickville depot.

The Destructor was built in 1912. It was a local land mark, standing 43.5 metres tall. The Destructor was economical to run, costing in today's currency about fifty cents for every ton of rubbish burnt.

It took only Marrickville Council waste. There were severe penalties for staff if they removed, for personal use, any waste which was headed for The Destructor. However, the penalty was not applied when Council staff saved this small abandoned kitten from a terrible fate in The Destructor. The kitten survived and lived a long life as the worker's pet cat. It was known as Indestructible, or "Des" for short.

The Destructor was phased out in 1948 and later demolished. Marrickville Council then sent all of its waste to land fill.



*Photograph Marrickville Council, 1927.*

# Henson Park



*The waterhole. Photograph Marrickville Council c.1928.*

## Henson Park

Henson Park is the largest enclosed sports ground in the Marrickville Local Government Area. It was established in 1933 on the site of Daley's brick pit. The creation of Henson Park still ranks as one of Marrickville Council's largest works.

Thomas Daley operated the Standsure Brick Company from 1886 to 1914. The brickworks occupied 9 acres (3.6 ha). When the brickworks closed the pits filled with rain and ground water. The largest waterhole was known as "The Blue Hole" and was 40 to 80 feet in places (12.2 to 24.4 metres). Marrickville Council purchased the site in 1923 as it was a serious danger. Unfortunately nine young boys drowned in the old water hole.

Henson Park was officially opened in 1933 with a cricket match between a representative Marrickville Eleven team and a North Sydney District team, including Don Bradman. Although the Mayor of Marrickville, Alderman Rushton, bowled the first ball, North Sydney won the match.

Cricket may have been the first sport played on Henson Park but the park is better known as a rugby league field. It is the home ground of Newtown Rugby League Club, one of the founding rugby league clubs. Newtown is still a team in the Premier League.



*Construction of the cycling track. Photograph Marrickville Council c.1933.*

Henson Park was named after William Henson, Mayor of Marrickville in 1902, 1906 to 1908 and his son, Alfred Henson, who was an Alderman of Marrickville Council from 1922 to 1931.

Henson Park hosted the cycling events and the closing Games ceremony of the 1938 British Empire Games. The Sydney Morning Herald (14/2/1938) reported the awesome scene of athletes and officials from all the competing nations standing in ordered lines under their country's banner on Henson Park. Sir James Leigh- Wood, Chairman of the British Empire Games Federation, read The Call to Youth to assemble in 1942 for the good of humanity and the peace of the world. This Call to Youth would never be answered as most would be fighting around the world in World War Two.



*Photograph Marrickville Council c.1936.*