



# Probuss Club of Sydney

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## Newsletter

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MARCH 2023

Issue 451

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Gentlemen,*

This is my last President's report, and I can say I have been very honoured to serve this great club as President for a year. As with all Annual Reports, I think it is worth reflecting on what your Committee has achieved over the last year. It has been a real team job in every sense of the word and a great team in my view. I would venture the following as some of our achievements for the year:

- \* Streamlining general meeting agendas to ensure meetings always run to time
- \* Introducing credit card payments for luncheons
- \* Welfare role by Vice President revitalised and well received
- \* Check-in to meetings improved and now includes luncheon numbers
- \* Special luncheon to celebrate 40 years of the Club
- \* Continuation of outstanding Guest Speaker presentations
- \* Continued growth in membership numbers.

Of course, we should remember that we stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us and much of the above was built on the work of previous committees. In closing I would like to thank all the Committee for their service. I would also especially on this occasion like to thank Adrian Pilton for the excellent newsletter we receive. I am sure I speak for all our members in saying I believe the newsletter is excellent.

Thank you and I look forward to an enjoyable AGM.

**Neil Martin**

President

### Note

To Register to attend the March meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club - [click here](#)

**MARCH 7**

**ROBERT WHITELAW**

**The Australian (1838) and Union (1857) clubs: the great survivors of 185 years of Sydney clubland**



Robert is a Sydney University History graduate and a former ANU Research Scholar, who spent most of his professional career as a policy development and intelligence analyst with the Commonwealth Public Service.

He has been a Director of both the Union, University and Schools Club (UUSC) and the Australasian Pioneers Club (APC). For the past 15 years, Robert has also been the Honorary Historian of the UUSC. He has published numerous research notes on the UUSC's history and its art collections, as well as

assisted with access to the Club's archives for members researching family histories and for university scholars. He was editor of the History of the APC, Volume 2 for 30 years.

His presentation will draw on the London origins of that very British phenomenon, the City Club, servicing the needs of the emerging political and professional classes of the 1820s-1830s. The first such club in Australia was the Union Club Hobart (1834), which crashed in the great Depression of the 1840s (only to be revived in 1861 as the Tasmanian Club, which continues today).

The Australian Club (1838) in Sydney just survived the 1840s crash. It was well-placed to benefit from the inevitable agricultural recovery, the new wealth of the Gold Rush and the lively arrival of party politics when self-government was granted to NSW in the late 1850s. In the late 1850s there were short-lived clubs - the Sydney and the Victorian - which attempted to rival the Australian. In 1857, the Union Club Sydney was created with the (optimistic) intention of being a City Club standing aside from politics.

Over the 165 years that have followed, in Sydney the Australian and Union clubs have survived the economic challenges of two world wars and a world depression. They have each experienced successful mergers with other City clubs - in the former case, the NSW club and in the latter the University & Schools Club (as well as the old Millions/Sydney Club). Each has relocated their clubhouses as well as competed with emerging horseracing, yacht and golf clubs.

During the same period, the once-important Reform, Athenaeum and Warrigal clubs disappeared and Sydney women set up their own versions of the city club (the Women's, the Queen's, the Macquarie and the Lyceum clubs).

The talk will be illustrated with historic photos of various clubhouses from the 1830s on, some original membership rolls and will highlight some of the treasures of the UUSC's current Bent Street clubhouse.

It is proposed that a page describing some of the extraordinary artworks and memorabilia will be made available to members interested to do a self-guided tour after the meeting/lunch, subject to room availability and management requirements.

## APRIL 4

### MICHAEL PASCOE

#### Keeping Perspective – Economics, Politics & Life



With five decades in journalism, Michael Pascoe is one of Australia's most respected, experienced and thoughtful commentators on finance and economics, recognised by his peers with the Peter Ruehl Award for Outstanding Columnist at the 2022 Kennedy Awards.

In August 2022 he added another line to his CV – author – with the successful launch of *The Summertime of Our Dreams*. Unusually for him, economics and politics are not the main focus, instead it is a reflection on more personal matters, as he retraces his life and especially a friendship from schooldays and mortality. Another author has commented it is “wise, tender, elegiac...a graceful eulogy for the secret codes of good men”.

Born in Queensland as the son of a rural policeman, then boarding school, Michael's career started as a cadet to The Courier-Mail, studying part time at UQ with majors in journalism and language in the media. Before completion of his final units, he was then offered a job in Hong Kong where he worked at the South China Morning Post for 3 years. On return to Australia, he worked for the Australian Financial Review and Sydney Morning Herald, then Macquarie Radio, before becoming finance editor at Channel 9 for 18 years. He then joined the Seven Network, regularly appearing on Sunrise, as well as being a contributing editor to the Age, SMH and Brisbane Times, plus Mining Monthly.

He is now contributing editor for The New Daily and a regular commentator on radio and television, bringing perspective and rare humour to the “dismal science” and its collision with politics. Along the journey, he has 4 sons, and is a devotee of rugby, skiing and cars.

## FEBRUARY MEETING REPORT

Two guests – Robert Whitelaw and Chris Matthews – were welcomed to the meeting. There were committee reports from Peter James (on Speakers) and David Brand (on events).

### Inductions

#### Ian James



Peter James introduced new member Ian James (no relation!). Peter and Ian have a lot in common: they went to the same university (Sydney) and lived in the same college (Pauls). Ian studied Arts/Law and after graduation worked as a solicitor with a number of major law firms such as Allens, Norton Rose and Minter Ellison.

For the last 17 years he has been self-employed and has acted as a mentor to young people. He is a director of St Luke's and chairman of an accounting firm. He is a keen golfer and skier.

#### Ralph Higgins OAM



Ralph Higgins was introduced at short notice by Jack Blackman because his nominator (Brian Morgan) was unfortunately unable to attend for medical reasons.

Ralph has spent more than 50 years as an Ophthalmic Surgeon, mainly at the Sydney Eye Hospital where he was a visiting medical officer. He is a Fellow of the College of Ophthalmology and a Fellow of the College of Surgeons. He was an AMA NSW Councillor for 6 years. He is a regular swimmer, a bridge player and a retired golfer. He travels extensively.



## Life before Probus

### Richard Kaan



Richard Kaan gave us a scintillating story – in both German and English! - of his early life in Austria during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and his subsequent ‘escape’ to England post war. The story was so interesting that it has been decided to give Richard the opportunity to tell us much more as a ‘guest’ speaker later in the year and therefore there is no report included in this newsletter.

## GUEST SPEAKER

### Anne Dunn Executive Director and Co-CEO Sydney Theatre Company

#### The Excitement and Challenges at the STC



Anne Dunn treated our near record audience with a fascinating insight into the numerous components that combine to make the STC one of Australia’s premier artistic companies, and drive it to new heights with marvellous performances, whilst contributing to its renowned school education programme (boosting literacy, confidence etc) and fostering new talent across the spectrum of theatrical endeavour.

After recalling the history from a start in 1978 based on performances initially at the Opera House, then establishment at Walsh

Bay in 1984, she covered the massive renovation in 2018, which was undertaken in partnership with the NSW State Government to not only reinvigorate the facilities at Wharf 4/5 for STC, Sydney Dance Company and Bangarra Dance, but also to convert the long empty Pier 2/3 into a new home for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Bell Shakespeare Company and the Australian Theatre for Young People as well as the philharmonic choirs, the song company and Gondwana Choirs. It is now a hub for 9 of Australia’s finest performing arts companies.

The renovation works at STC were co-funded by a generous group of donors. The project STC50 was the largest capital raising exercise the company had ever undertaken. The works delivered improved facilities for rehearsals and administration and entirely reconfigured its two wharf theatres to make them more flexible, with state-of-the-art technical capacity and a vastly improved experience for both performers and audiences.

Currently STC employs around 700 people per annum and manages 3 theatres (the 900 seat Roslyn Packer theatre, 380 seat Wharf 1, 160 seat Wharf 2) as well as still being resident company in the 550 seat Opera House Drama Theatre. Across these 4 venues, this year the STC will produce 16 productions, delivering around 700 performances as well as tours to 8 cities outside of Sydney. At any one time there are up to three performances on stage concurrently plus 2 in rehearsal and 1 or 2 on tour (including this year presenting productions at Perth, Adelaide and Auckland).

STC is the largest not-for-profit theatre company in Australia. She described its unusual dual management structure, with 2 co-CEOs, Artistic Director Kip Williams and Executive Director Anne Dunn, who work very collaboratively to create the best art the company can afford.

STC's revenue mix (in a non-COVID affected year) is approximately box office 70%, philanthropy 14% government funding 8%, venue hire, corporate partnerships, F&B etc the remaining 8%. Such a high box office proportion is unusual for national/state artistic companies globally. Many of our members were shocked to hear that the NSW Government subsidy is approx. \$500k, less than it earns from rent as the landlord of the wharf, and despite the huge boost to many businesses located there from the audiences etc. COVID was a crippling financial challenge, with smaller audiences (social distance rules etc), lower bar revenue etc, especially as it coincided with the reopening of the Wharf and higher audience capacity (and budget), plus the need to continue to prepare new plays, and maintain key workforce for the future. Several productions had to be cancelled or postponed. Emerging strongly from the COVID drama, STC ended 2022 with two hit shows in *RBG* and *The Tempest*, plus now is in a fully sold out return season of the hugely successful *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Brochures for the thrilling 2023 season were circulated.

She described how STC exists to make theatre shows, including bringing new Australian works to the stage, staging the best of new international works, reinventing the classics, as well as to introduce these to new audiences. It aims to push the artform forward - to find new ways to tell stories. In an era where competition for attention is now more likely to be Netflix than a competitor theatre company, the need to stay relevant and connected to audiences has never been more real.

Anne fielded a wide range of questions with great eloquence, transparency and candour, highly impressing our members, who were represented by Kim Oates in giving a well-deserved ovation of appreciation for such an interesting talk. As a follow up, STC has generously agreed to host for us a back-stage tour of their Wharf facilities mid-year.

**Peter James**

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### Future Events

Unfortunately, our visit to the Metro Martin Place tunnel on 24 February has had to be postponed due to the upcoming state election. Apparently, the guidelines do not allow 'non-essential government activities in the run up to the election. The visit will be rescheduled to the end of May and those that booked for the February visit will automatically be transferred to that date.

On March 27 there will be a visit to the Penrith Museum of Printing which has some printing presses that are 150 years old and still operating. There is a limit of 20 for the visit so members are encouraged to book soon. The cost will be \$10 per person.

In April we will tour the Garvan Institute in Darlinghurst. Since there is a maximum of 15 persons per tour there will be two visits – one on 21 April and the other on 28 April. The cost will be a donation of \$10 each.

**David Brand**

Activities Director

## ROSS BERGLUND RESIGNS AFTER 24 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP



One of our longest standing members, Ross Berglund has sadly decided to retire due to failing vision and hearing. He is no longer able to enjoy meetings despite a long association with the club where he has provided much enjoyment for members over the years.

Describing himself as 'lucky', Ross exemplifies the adage "The harder I work the luckier I become" for his life has been one of immense industry and civic contribution.

Starting as a chemical engineer trainee with John Lysaght, Ross progressed through a wide range of commercial organisations, including GKN and Gillespie Bros, and others to become either President or Chairman of a number of major industry bodies including The Employers' Federation of NSW, the Confederation of Australian Industry, NSW Work Cover Authority and Deputy Chairman and Vice president of CEDA. He has undertaken directorships of charitable organisations, including Burnside Homes and chairman of The Opera Foundation of Australia. Music and the performing arts have been lifelong interests of both Joan and Ross.

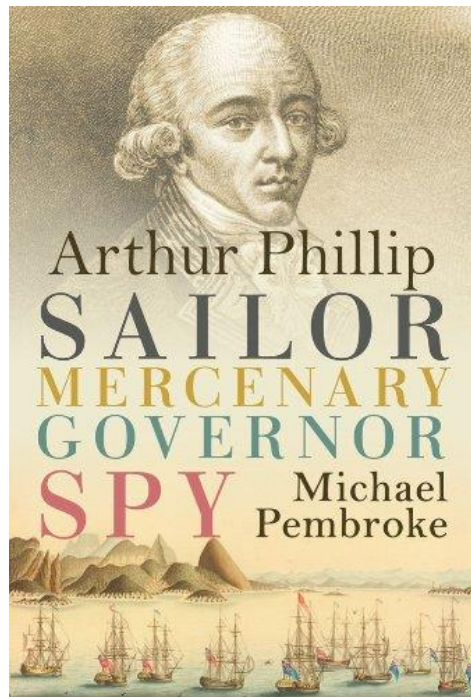
They have been married for 65 years and have 3 daughters, 7 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. Family and home are major focus. Ross maintains a keen interest in botany and for many years has cared for an enormous range of rare and beautiful orchids. He and Joan have travelled widely including adventures to the Arctic and Antarctic twice. He regrets his increasing difficulty reading and the loss of enjoyment with the camera.

Ross was invested as a Member of the Order of Australia in 1989 for "Service to Industry, Commerce and Community". He will be greatly missed by the Sydney Probus community.

***Tony Andrew***

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Arthur Phillip by Michael Pembroke (2013) – 272 pages plus footnotes – non-fiction



This book is living proof that my generation was not taught enough about Australian history. The author has done an amazing job in bringing Phillip to life from cradle to grave. Subtitled sailor, mercenary, governor, spy it deals meticulously with all these facets and many more.

Its great strength is a relatively full coverage of every aspect of the life of Phillip. But from the outside and based on wide research of the documentation. However, in my view, only a skilled novelist, or a Hilary Mantel, can bring the inner workings of a person to life.

A possible disappointment is that only 24 pages out of 272 are devoted to his term as governor. This is because its aim is to focus both on the naval career of Phillip and the times in which he lived. Notwithstanding, the horrific voyage out is covered in detail.

It emerges that Phillip was ideally suited to found a new colony. His varied career up to that date, as well as his humanity, shine through in the way he treated the convicts, as new settlers, far more sympathetically than the Rum Corps. His treatment of the aboriginals was, by and large, humane for a man of his time. From being absolute commander of the first fleet, he had his hands full with trying to reconcile the many conflicts between the Rum Corps, first settlers and native inhabitants.

Although this book was published in 2013, it seems to have had little publicity. However, it appears to have been meticulously researched.



It will appeal to anyone interested in naval history, the Enlightenment and knowing a lot more about the background of our first governor and what happened to him in later life. It is easy to read and provides some fascinating insights into a period we were not taught at school.

**David Castle**

## A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

### Some problems of growing old! (Courtesy of Tony Andrew)

#### Memory Loss 1

A couple in their nineties are both having problems remembering things. During a check-up, the doctor tells them that they're physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember

Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. 'Want anything while I'm in the kitchen?' he asks.

*'Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?'*

Sure.'

*'Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?'* she asks.

'No, I can remember it.'

*'Well, I'd like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so as not to forget it?'*

He says, 'I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.'

*'I'd also like whipped cream. I'm certain you'll forget that, write it down?'* she asks.

Irritated, he says, 'I don't need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream. I got it, for goodness sake!' Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment.

*'Where's my toast?'*

#### Memory Loss 2

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, 'Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly.'

The other man said, 'What is the name of the restaurant?'

The first man thought and thought and finally said, 'What's the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know, the one that's red and has thorns.'

'Do you mean a rose?'

'Yes, that's the one,' replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, 'Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?'

## **Hospital Procedures**

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need my help to leave the hospital. After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator.

On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him. 'I don't know,' he said. 'She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.'

## **Hearing Loss 1**

A man was telling his neighbour: 'I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art. It's perfect.'

'Really,' answered the neighbour. 'What kind is it?'

'Twelve thirty.'

## **Hearing Loss 2**

An 82 year-old man, Morris, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the doctor saw him walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm. A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to him and said, 'You're really doing great, aren't you?' Morris replied, 'Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'"

The doctor said, 'I didn't say that. I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'

## **Medical problems**

A little old man shuffled slowly into an ice cream parlour and pulled himself slowly, painfully, up onto a stool. After catching his breath, he ordered a banana split.

The waitress asked kindly, 'Crushed nuts?'

'No,' he replied, 'Arthritis.'

## Things Today...(From Frank Barr-David)

Only in This Stupid World .....do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage.

Only in This Stupid World .....do pharmacies make the sick walk all the way to the back of the Store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front.

Only in This Stupid World.....do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet Coke..

Only in This Stupid World....do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters.

Only in This Stupid World .....do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight.

Only in This Stupid World .....do they have drive-up ATM machines with Braille lettering.

## PROBUS TRAVEL INSURANCE

### Probus Travel Insurance is available to Members and Family

Members are encouraged to consider Probus Travel Insurance to cover their holiday insurance needs.

A range of plans are on offer and while some have age limits others do not. Applicants should advise of Pre-existing Medical Conditions to have them covered. This cover may incur an additional cost. A Sydney Probus member with an existing heart condition recently received insurance with what he described as a reasonable loading and no limit to the areas to which he wished to travel.

There are specific plans for Cruises, Snow Skiing and Adventures trips. Probus offers a useful [Introduction](#) that will answer initial questions. There is also a helpful link to Customer Support at the foot of the document.

The wide range of options are fully explained in the [Product Disclosure Statement](#). Be warned it is 80 pages long, but many pages refer to situations that will not be relevant to every applicant.

Covid cover is limited, it is suggested one reads this section carefully. At least with some policies, cancellation costs may not be covered.

Here is a link to the [Application Form](#) to show the information required to make an Application. Your Probus South Pacific Number is required. This is accessed this by viewing 'YOUR PROFILE' on the website. All Sydney Probus numbers commence with 543000 . . .

***Tony Andrew***

## ROAD TOLL REBATES

Peter James has provided the following useful information regarding toll rebates:

"I am pleased to say that I have already received a \$178 rebate for tolls under the arrangement announced last month.

I presume that everyone got the details from Service NSW but may have been dubious whether it would work. Anyhow, I logged into their website, set up the connection to my toll (Linkt) account, found that I had already spent more than the minimum \$375 threshold since 1st July 2022 and very easily submitted my claim. Funds were received within a few days."

## HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member, use the following link:

<https://www.sydneyprobust.org/member-documents/>

To view the 'member-documents' page, members must login to the website.

**Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact. You can find the relevant telephone numbers on the club's website.**