Burnside Historical Society Inc.

NEWSLETTER
December 2019

Volume 39, No 4

Website: www.burnsidehistory.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/burnsidehistory

From my Desk

Welcome to the December 2019 Newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and peaceful festive season. I would also like to acknowledge those of you who have contributed in one way or another to the Newsletter's production and distribution, in particular Elizabeth Rogers. Elizabeth has decided to step down from the Newsletter Subcommittee and Colin Harris and I will miss her company at our quarterly meetings and her wonderful editing skills. Thank you so much, Elizabeth.

Each issue of the Society's Newsletter will now be registered with NED (National eDeposit) which will allow it to be searched through Google, Trove and national, state and territory library catalogues. eDeposits are 'digitally preserved for the community and future generations to become an important part of Australia's memory'.

The deadline for the March 2020 issue is **Friday 17 January.**
Contributions should be sent to jlbrown@internode.on.net.

Judy Brown (Newsletter Compiler)

IN THIS ISSUE

President's message	3
Condolences	4
2020 Program of meetings and events	5
From the Ground Up - creating our dream home	7
Margaret Preiss's 90th Birthday	16
Kensington Gardens - the suburb and reserve	18

Membership fees are $45 family and $30 single, due in April each year. Subscriptions may be sent to the Treasurer at the Society's address, paid at a monthly meeting or by a direct bank transfer.

The Society gratefully acknowledges annual grant funding from the City of Burnside to help support the production of this Newsletter.

President's Message

We are already into Summer and have enjoyed our last meeting of the year, another fabulous quiz night. I hope that you enjoyed an evening of fun and friendship and were able to brush up on your South Australian and Burnside history!

We warmly welcome three new members to the Society. Dr Eva O'Leary, Jen Tilley and Tim Tilley have recently joined and we look forward to seeing them at our meetings. Please make them feel welcome.

I am pleased to share the news that, since my last report, Michelle Toft has been appointed by the Burnside Council as its Historical and Cultural Officer. Michelle has excellent qualifications and experience in this area and we look forward to working with her.

Since 2013 the Society has been busy raising awareness of the need for the restoration of Osmond Gilles' grave and raising funds to facilitate this. Gilles was South Australia's first Colonial Treasurer and a Burnside resident. The persistence of Anne and Ross Both and Meredith Ide has paid off as next year the restoration of the grave will begin. Our congratulations go to them for their determination to see this notable Burnside resident recognised and his grave restored as a memorial to him.

There are many members of the Burnside Historical Society, both past and present, who have contributed and are still doing so much for the Society. I find it very rewarding to be part of such a great team of friendly and helpful people.

Cheers for now,
Derek Bransbury

Osmond Gilles

Condolences

The death of our member **Mary Vashti Wilson** was recently announced. Mary joined the Society in 2001 and served on the Committee between 2006 and 2010. She was an active participant and amongst other things played a key role in bringing to fruition the BHS and City of Burnside Linden Lodge plaque on Greenhill Road. Mary lived on Sydney Street opposite the Burnside Village shopping centre, and hosted many Committee meetings at her house.

The Society has also recently lost **Fred Silz**, husband of Liz Silz. Fred joined the Society in 2015, but had been battling illness for some time. Liz has been a member since 2012 and organises the Society's Newsletters for distribution to members. Our sympathies are extended to Liz and her family.

New Newsletter Subcommittee member required

As mentioned earlier in the Newsletter, Elizabeth Rogers has stepped down from the Society's Newsletter Committee. Elizabeth has been a longstanding member of the Committee and is a past Newsletter Editor and Society President. Possessed of outstanding editorial skills – and a wicked wit – Elizabeth has enlivened the Newsletter Committee's meetings over many years and she will be sorely missed.

Judy Brown (Compiler) and Colin Harris (Editor) remain as the Committee for the moment, but are most anxious to find a replacement for Elizabeth. If you have an interest in writing and editing and would like to help with production of the Newsletter – a really important part of the Society's activities – please get in touch with Colin on (08) 8331 3571. No previous experience is necessary, but a keen eye for proof-reading is a help.

2020 Program of Meetings and Events

Celebrating 40 years of promoting and recording history in Burnside

MEETINGS of the Burnside Historical Society are held in the Burnside Community Centre, corner of Portrush Road and Fisher Street, Tusmore (car park and entrance off Fisher Street) at **7.30 pm** on the third Monday of the month, unless an alternative time or venue is notified. Admission is free and supper provided. Visitors are most welcome.

Monday 17 February – Dr Bruce Munday

Look Mum – no mortar! Dry-stone walling in rural South Australia

Dry stone walls and structures are very much part of the South Australian cultural landscape. Although resistant to fire, termites and even earthquakes, many have been lost to development pressures. This presentation will explore some of Burnside's dry stone assets and what they tell us of our history. It will also show that there is something of a resurgence in what might have been thought of as a dying craft.

Bruce Munday began his career with a research background in physics, but he quickly found that a penchant for esoteric research cut him off from many of his friends. In response he moved to teaching (where he had a captive audience) and with his wife Kristin moved to the Adelaide Hills. There they raised sheep, cattle and three children. Bruce later established his own business as a communications consultant in natural resource management. His well-received book *Those Dry Stone Walls* was followed by the award-winning *Those Wild Rabbits*.*

*Both books will be available for purchase on the evening.

Monday 16 March 7.30 pm – Melissa Ballantyne and Dr Darren Peacock

Planning and heritage protection

Like many councils, Burnside has in its current Development Plan a listing of contributory items, buildings which collectively add to a historic area's character. A new Planning and Design Code is proposed to take effect from 1 July 2020 and there is a high level of community concern about whether historic conservation zones and contributory items will retain their current level of protection.

Melissa Ballantyne works for both the Environmental Defender's Office and the National Trust and has a keen interest in the preservation of our natural and built heritage through law and legal policy reform. She has been closely following the planning reform process and is an active commentator on the issues that are arising. Darren Peacock is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Trust of South Australia, a role he has held since 2015.

Monday 20 April AGM – Helen Chadwick
Burnside in the Archives: researching local government at State Records

Monday 18 May – Ash Wright
The Lewis Family: from Burra to Benacre and Beyond

Monday 15 June – Stephen Larkins OAM (Colonel ret.)
The Virtual War Memorial – the Burnside connection

Monday 20 July – Anne and Ross Both
Osmond Gilles: Colonial Treasurer and Businessman, Pastoralist and Philanthropist

Monday 17 August - **BHS 40th Celebration** - Colin Harris
Growing up in Burnside – memories, stories and anecdotes

Monday 21 September – Stuart Symons
Modernist Adelaide: Hip and happening architecture 1950s-70s, including Burnside

Monday 19 October – Geoffrey Bishop
Icon of the Barossa - Chateau Tanunda: the Origin of a grand winery

Monday 16 November – John Foumakis
"The Antiques Road Show" comes to Burnside

Ally Preiss, Bob Stace and Meredith Ide
BHS Program Committee for 2020

From the Ground Up – Creating Our Dream Home

Society member Peter Cooper suggested that his friends Kevin and Margaret Meegan's house building project would make a good story. During the 1950s Kevin...built his own HOUSE.

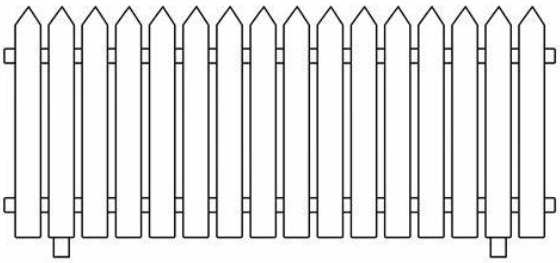
Earlier this year, Meredith Ide heard the story from Margaret and Kevin - the resources required, the help they got from others, stages in the building process; outside and in, finally evolving into a family home. It was certainly a labour of love.

The beginnings

Kevin and Margaret were engaged in 1955 on Kevin's 21st birthday. Kevin was a survey draughtsman, working full-time and studying the subject *Structures* part-time at the School of Mines, on the corner of North Terrace and Frome Road. His lecturer was Frank (Pop) Ide. Margaret worked in the Commonwealth Bank five days plus Saturday morning, a common employment pattern then, for £4 per week. They had no car, only a motorbike. This period was still in the Post WW2 austerity days, when materials were in short supply and society was struggling to meet the housing needs of returned soldiers and immigrants.

Kevin and Margaret were looking for a block to buy. Wattle Park was opening up as a new suburb with the removal of vineyards, but on inspection they decided it was too boggy. New residents would also have had to pay for kerbing and all services as these were not provided then by private developers. They finally settled on Brigalow Avenue, one street back from the Kensington Gardens Reserve (formerly Piles Paddock). Existing houses in the area varied in style, from bungalow and Tudor to return verandah and freestone. Kevin and Margaret found a suitable block for £695 - a reasonably high price back then - measuring 85 feet by 175 feet at Lot 281 (25) Brigalow Avenue.

It was a lovely large allotment and one of the few vacant blocks in that area. Roads, footpaths and gutters were already in place, with all services; water and sewer, electricity and gas ready for connection from the street. The block behind was also vacant so Kevin and Margaret could see through to the large Reserve. The block was fenced with timber palings on all sides**.**



The work begins – clearing, building approval, trenching, foundations and helpers!

Huge scotch thistles had to be cleared from the block; a mighty task done by Kevin. An original olive tree on the block still remains in the backyard. The soil was good and Margaret's mother started planting tomatoes and other vegetables. Half a dozen almond trees were planted (birds ate the first crop). Plans were required by Council. Architectural assistance was out of the question due to the expense. At the time Council was very particular about whether the house was built to required standards and would complement the area. Kevin and Margaret acquainted themselves through observation, by visiting houses under construction and gaining a sense of spatial aspects. They also examined different current styles and plans from *The Small Homes Advisory Service* as well as magazines that were popular at the time and gave a lead to desirable planning and designs. In the end they did not copy a specific design, but incorporated a number of the trends then current.

The final plan was simple with a good layout, large open spaces, big windows and an external appearance compatible with its position in the street. It was a marriage of size, design and economy complemented by straightforward building principles.

Digging the trenches

Trenching for foundations was ready to commence on 28 April 1956. A Council Inspector came out and pressed some soil in his hands and recommended three steel rods in the foundations for RB3 clay soils. A family friend from the CSIRO also came and likewise pressed the soil. He recommended four steel rods for the soil and this advice was followed. Digging the trenches for deep beam foundations was a huge task, so too the laying of the required reinforcing rods which were ordered and cut by hack saw – no electric tools available then. This was all done by Kevin. Two rods were inserted deep in the ground, the main body of rods then bent around them to enable the assembly of cages. These were placed in the trenches such that the rods would sit correctly within the concrete mix. Steel spikes and wooden boards were set on the edges of the trenches, placed to provide steps correctly graded across the sloping levels of the land. Imagine the horror when it rained steadily the night before the planned foundation day. Rain was filling the trenches. Kevin and Margaret were out at their block before sunrise with every means available, including buckets and syphons, bailing out water. Imagine their relief when the rain cleared to cool, dry weather for the big day!

Foundation Day - 28 April, 1956

Foundations were a mammoth task, a whole day project. Very large heaps of sand and gravel had been delivered to the front of the block ready for this day, along with a large stack of bagged cement. Two large Lightburn concrete mixers were hired from a building hire company. It was trial and error mixing the cement, sand and gravel. This was shovelled into the machines by hand – no Readymix then! The cement used was precious as there was a limitation put on its use.

Pouring the concrete foundations

A team of seventeen helped, including Kevin, Margaret and their parents, a cousin and some of Kevin's school friends and workmates. It was heavy work wielding large, heavily laden barrows of concrete along the narrow avenues between the boards and steel supports before neatly emptying them into the trenches. The men had to be strong and to be careful not to trip over the spikes. There were no Occupational Health and Safety laws then. However Kevin gave definite instructions to those helping with this difficult task and monitored their efforts with praise, gratitude and encouragement.

Women used shovels and garden tools to work concrete along the trenches. A request was made to a Churchill Road company for more bags of cement. There was a much needed lunch break for rest and to keep up morale – everyone was hungry and a barbecue on an old wood stove already on the block under the olive tree led to much cheer and fun. Laying the foundations was certainly a different type of exercise and everyone learnt new skills. Mountains of cement and sand were gone in a day and so was Kevin and Margaret's money! They paid for materials as they went with their building project. After the foundations were laid, they had to start saving again for the next stage.

Brickwork, scaffolding and lintels

Levelling up took some weeks using a spirit level and bricking up the steps across the foundations for the damp course was to begin. The damp course consisted of three courses of well-fired red clay bricks. The mortar was damp proof cement admix-coloured black. The purpose was to prevent any damp rising into the brickwork of the house. At this time there was discussion about the difficulties of sourcing bricks. It was decided to use Paringa steam-cured cement bricks for outside walls because of their clean cut edges and availability, while good quality second-hand red bricks were selected for internal walls.

One load of clay bricks for internal walls was bought from demolition on the Salvation Army site in Linden Park. Margaret and her mother cleaned off the mortar, clay being easier to remove than cement. Others came from the Glen Osmond pottery. Kevin knew how to source materials! Kevin would ride his motorbike to Glen Osmond Brickworks (now Ridge Park) in his lunchtime to pay for bricks. There were no pallets in those days so outside wall bricks were normally neatly hand stacked and inside wall bricks dumped – no forklifts back then. The final delivery of bricks was simply dumped instead of hand stacked as they should have been and discarded as they were chipped.

A pile of dumped second-hand bricks awaiting cleaning

The next task was building the walls. Corners and internal walls were built first. Galvanised ties were fixed between the outer and inner brick courses. Kevin laid all the bricks. There was discussion about window styles. Big customised, steel window frames supplied by Perry Engineering, Mile End were installed in keeping with the times. The window frames were held by the inside walls.

Lintel above the long lounge window

Scaffolding was innovative but rudimentary. There were few hiring places with little choice of materials to use. A post hole borer was used to place the vertical posts in the ground. Board rails were nailed to the outside of the poles for additional support and 44 gallon drums were used to gain additional height; 12 gallon drums on top and 4 gallon drums to prop up the scaffolding – "a very expensive set-up," Kevin said laughing. The three foot walkway sat on board rails supported by putloks, which are cross-supports inserted into the brickwork. Walk height was achieved around the house then, and because of its considerable height 'Cyclone' scaffolding was hired for the chimney and front lintel.

Conquering the chimney

Chimney work was problematic but overcome. The 'Cyclone' scaffolding was erected to a considerable height. No instructions were provided from the hire company so observation was needed for safe erection and a platform built at wall height to enable the bricks to be laid up to full chimney height. The internal bricks for a chimney needed to be laid to a special pattern to avoid a down flow of smoke from into the house. In other words, it must 'draw' well. This was another learning curve as the correct ways to adapt to house position, wind direction etc. had to be learnt from articles published and adapted to the needs of their particular chimney.

Kevin and Margaret's chimney did 'draw' well, so it was another achievement for Kevin. Ingenuity was required to lift the mixed mortar for brickwork up to Kevin high on his platform. A pulley was devised and Margaret's father would fill buckets, place them on a small carry platform and pull the load up to Kevin. When the chimney was completed there was much celebration and a tree was tied to the top. This is a European tradition, a celebration and a wish for good fortune.

The width of the house was 55 feet. The Council at that time required lintels to be concrete, reinforced with steel rods and poured in situ. As there was a very long front window in Kevin and Margaret's house (approximately 15 feet), achieving this pour high up was not easy. It had to be completed in one pour then left to cure for a month. Kevin's motorbike came in handy picking up and carting building items. For instance, he strapped steel lintel bars on to the side of his motorbike!

There were no progress payments from the bank until all the walls were at full height and windows fitted. Kevin and Margaret achieved wall height after 18 months of building. After due inspections in November 1957 the first Progress Payment was made from the South Australian Public Service Savings and Loans Society (formed 1949). This meant that they could employ and have help with the tiled roofing and other tradesmen such as electricians, plasterers and plumbers.

Taking shape

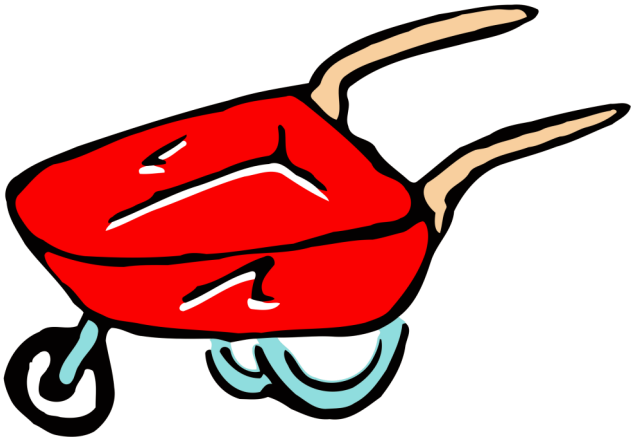
Now for the second fix. The carpenters arrived to install the architraves and roof. Timbers for this work were obtained from SA Salvage and Kevin worked with Owen Bockman, the roofing contractor. Practical help was welcomed. Owen lived in the next suburb (Rosslyn Pk) and became good friends with Kevin after walking past and observing 'The Project'.

Margaret and Kevin were asked several questions. The first was whether a Building Inspector from the Burnside Council ever came around to see that they were following the plans and to check the quality of the work. No Inspector came**.** The second was in relation to securing their property against theft of materials and for safety ever an issue. Kevin's reply was that they were conscious of security, especially with the bricks in short supply in stacks and piles on the property. However, they had smaller loads delivered due to staggered payments and neighbours on both sides kept an eye on the block.

The Project completed

In all, it took two years on weekends to complete the build from Anzac Day 1956 to Easte**r** 1958 when Kevin and Margaret married. Kevin carried Margaret over the threshold. Fortunately Kevin's studies in *Structures* included a lot of Maths. He and Margaret were realistic, and were prepared to learn new practical skills on the job. They were interested in the building tasks and found them very satisfying. They attempted and succeeded in building their house with determination, resilience, patience and the help of family and good mates. Even some timely and useful advice from a passerby (who had worked on sheep stations) on how Kevin could lay half bricks very neatly, was appreciated. One day while working, Kevin heard the driver of a passing 1924 Chev Tourer with side curtains loudly exclaim, "They've got it ahead of them!*"* People were no doubt in awe of these young house builders.

The house that Kevin and Margaret built sat on bare earth. Now to develop the garden....



Margaret's achievements

There were unique achievements for Margaret, who documented the whole project using her Box Brownie camera. Venetian blinds were fashionable at the time and as the front window was unusually long, the venetian blind had to be customised to fit. They wanted it to fit across the width with no break. Such a long blind had never been made before. Margaret took a photo when it was installed and entered it into a competition being run by Rainsfords. It won second prize, a very good Hanimex slide camera, projector and screen. It has provided a treasure trove of family life and a source of great enjoyment. Margaret also wrote jingles, one of which won a prize of a very neat double carport which just fitted in beautifully with their house design. Another jingle won a GE electric stove with a see-through glass oven door – something quite upmarket then!

Compiled by Kevin and Margaret Meegan with Meredith Ide

Has any reader constructed their house within the Burnside Council area, mostly through their own knowledge and skill? Do let the Society know through our contact page at www.burnsidehistory.org.au.

Margaret Preiss's 90th Birthday

On 31 August Margaret's family and friends gathered at *The Feathers Hotel* to celebrate her 90th birthday. Her daughter Lyn shared highlights of her Mother's life. Margaret has always been the quiet achiever and supporter behind her very active husband Ken, who she met as a 14 year old and married at 23 years. She is very tolerant, humble, independent, loyal and supportive of her family - four children, including Society member, Ally, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Margaret is a foundation member of the BHS

She has many long-term friends and has embraced new friendships over the years with neighbours, geocaching, walking groups and other interests.

She lived as a child in Knightsbridge Road, Knightsbridge, has always been proud of her neighbourhood in the City of Burnside and has a remarkable knowledge of its history. Lyn said, "I'm sure she remembers what was on this site before the hotel was built and probably has a photo!" The family are very proud of the work she continues to do caring for the environment in Ferguson Conservation Park.

Margaret grew up during the war years and has always been careful not to waste money, but she has also been very generous supporting her family. Ken recounted in his memoirs that "During the Victory in the Pacific Day as a young woman working in Miller Anderson's millenary workshop, Margaret felt quite daring throwing a whole roll of toilet paper out the window as a streamer to the crowd below." Later she always enjoyed being creative, sewing hers and the children's clothes and assisting with arts and crafts when her children were growing up.

She enjoyed many travels in Australia and overseas with Ken (though mainly in the pursuit of his interests!). Her first trip interstate was as a 19 year old to The Grampians with Ken and his parents. Later summer holidays were enjoyed at the family holiday house at Port Elliot, with many bushwalking adventures with the Goannas (a walking group) and travels to remote locations with her young children. One of the latter included climbing Ayers Rock (Uluru) in 1958 with no safety chain. Margaret is admired for her commitment to her health and fitness, still walking with a Sunday morning group and taking regular walks around the neighbourhood. Her motto is *keep moving* which is an inspiration to us all and as you can see it has paid off! She learnt to swim in later years and enjoyed swimming at Port Elliot after that.

A toast was given to wish Margaret all the best and for continued health and happiness.

In 2014 Margaret participated in the Society's Oral History Project for 1945-65. You can listen to her memories of that period on CD by asking at the Information Desk at the Burnside Library.

Meredith Ide

Left: a very young Margaret

Below: Margaret at her 90th birthday celebrations

Kensington Gardens - the suburb and reserve

When Kensington Gardens was being subdivided, the developers gave 40 acres to Adelaide's Municipal Tramways Trust in return for a guarantee that the Trust would extend the tramway to the site. Adelaide's first electric tram was opened in 1909 to travel along Norwood Parade to Kensington. A couple of years later the line was extended to Kensington Gardens Reserve (once known as Pile's Paddock). The Tramways Trust provided the entertainment on a weekend afternoon on a rotunda (bandstand) for locals and to encourage transport by tram. The first baby health clinic to operate in Burnside was established in 1917 in the Eastwood Methodist Church. The rotunda in the Kensington Gardens Reserve was later enclosed for a local Mother's and Babies' Clinic. Margaret Meegan and Meredith Ide each took their babies in prams to the Clinic, but a few decades apart.

From *The Paddocks Beneath* Elizabeth Warburton
and *150 Facts about Burnside* (www.burnside.sa.gov.au)

SUBS RENEWALS FOR 2019/2020

All subscriptions fall due on **1 April each year**: Subscriptions may be paid at our monthly meetings, by direct bank transfer, or posted to the Treasurer at the Society's address indicated on the inside back cover.

Subscription Payments by Direct Bank Transfer

Bank Name	**BankSA**	Account Name	**Burnside Historical Society**
BSB	**105 086**	Account No	**330298840**
Your Name	Ensure that this field shows **your name** clearly		
Amount	$30 for a single member or $45 for a family		
Message/Reference	Please also enter **your name** in this field		

Please **never** pay your subscription as an over the counter deposit.

The Society welcomes donations made by members. These extra contributions to our funds will be put to good use in our ongoing projects to record the history of the City of Burnside.

Burnside Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 152 Glenside SA 5065
burnsidehistorysoc@gmail.com

OBJECTIVES - The objectives of the Society shall be:

- to arouse interest in and to promote the study and discussion of Australian and South Australian history and in particular, the history of the City of Burnside;
- to promote the collection, recording, preservation and classification of works, source material and artefacts of all kinds relating to Burnside history;
- to assist in the protection and preservation of buildings, works and sites of historical significance in the City of Burnside;
- to co-operate with similar societies and other bodies throughout Australia;
- to do all such things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of any of the above objectives.

OFFICE-BEARERS FOR 2019-20

President: Derek Bransbury 0413 173 384
Vice-President: Vacant
Secretary: Margaret Ford OAM fsquared@bigpond.com
Treasurer: John Thomas AM john@johnthomas.com.au
Public Officer: Margaret Ford
Committee: Bob Stace, David Monceaux, Ross Both, Anne Both
Meeting apologies: Please phone Membership Officer Ally Preiss on 0409 716 582 or email aapreiss@live.com.au
Newsletter Subcommittee Judy Brown (compiler), Colin Harris PSM (Editor)
Contributors: Apart from the Newsletter Subcommittee, we are fortunate to have members who contribute occasional items and their names appear with articles in the relevant issues.
Distribution Organiser Liz Silz 8364 0855
Program Subcommittee: Ally Preiss, Bob Stace, Meredith Ide
Plaques Subcommittee: Colin Harris PSM (Chair), Ken Lawson, Dave Monceaux (co-opted)
Mines Subcommittee: Meredith Ide, Dave Monceaux
Osmond Gilles Grave Restoration Subcommittee: Anne Both, Ross Both, Derek Bransbury, Meredith Ide
Publicity: Derek Bransbury
Recordings of Burnside topics: Help wanted
Audio: Dave Monceaux

Front cover: *BHS member Margaret Preiss, who celebrated her 90th birthday this year, pictured in her teen years*

Disclaimer
Views and opinions expressed in articles in the Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Burnside Historical Society Inc. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of articles printed, responsibility is not accepted for any errors they may contain that are out of the Society's control.

The Privacy Act
A member's personal information collected by the Society, for example name, address and telephone number, will only be used for forwarding of the Newsletter and relevant information concerning the Society. The information will not be shared, sold or given to any third party without the member's consent.

Any e-mails will be treated as above. However, any information sent by e-mail will be at the sender's risk and the Society will not be held responsible for any unintended use or disclosure of this information.