Anna Graves, Chairperson, Prospect Local History Group
Presentation to the Eastern Region History Seminar, 28 February 2026

Reflecting on the theme of today's seminar, it came to mind a number of the ways we use the word 'bridge' in everyday language. So, I thought I would structure my talk around some common idioms which use the word 'bridge', and I have called my talk:

"An Idioms Guide to Local History".

Bridge to the Past

Prospect LHG was formed 20 years ago last year. The current committee provides a **Bridge to the past**.
We connect current residents with the history of their homes, ancestors, and relationships with community, cultural and historical events. We consult with Council on issue of heritage and preservation of the local history of our city.

Bridge the Gap

We had cause in our 20th year to reflect on the need for groups like ours to **Bridge the gap** between what was initially a fairly fluid and relaxed arrangement (where I hear wine and cheese meetings were *de rigeur*) – to one that has the potential to be bogged down by bureaucracy and administration.

It is not a task for the faint-hearted to tackle the Australian Tax Office, Consumer and Business Services, Grant-providers and insurance companies. But it must be done if we are to take advantage of schemes that can support us.

We have also begun to harness more of the technological advancements available to us, seeking to attract committee members with the skills to manage them. To use our skills to encourage more of our neighbours to learn about our city and its rich heritage.

Water under the bridge

We held a wonderful event last year which enlivened us all to strive to secure our group for another 20 years, at least.
It was not always certain that we were going to make it. Like so many other local groups that have ceased to be, we thought we too would be consigned to history.

Our financial viability took a hit during covid, and never fully recovered as we continued to face increasing expenses such as insurance premiums and other financial obligations. It seemed for a while that whatever we raised went straight into the coffers of our insurers.

However, shortly prior to our anniversary event in October last year, Prospect Council's elected members recognized the important role we play in the city, and resolved that we were deserving of support in the form of an honorarium, paid annually, to assist us in tackling the administrative burdens we faced and allow us to get back to the business of history! That came as such a relief and has allowed us to breathe and plan.

Burn your bridges

Things were grim for us, however the reputation we have established over the years, and the way that we carried ourselves professionally meant that we would always be heard.
Burning your bridges is a bad idea – you never know who will be on the receiving end of a call or an email, who you might meet at events like this, or who might end up on local council or in government in positions of power over decisions affecting our viability.

We must always look for opportunities and work collaboratively with those who share our interests, and those who can help us!

And we must work together to achieve our common goals.

Cross that bridge when we come to it?

Is it good enough to say we will 'Cross that bridge when we come to it'? Absolutely not.

We recognize the importance of succession planning – ensuring that our collective knowledge does not disappear in the event of the incapacity or passing of our more senior members, or indeed any members who support the group.

In the aftermath of our 20th year, we can reflect on the contribution of those who have established our group and broken the back of many tasks. We must collect and disseminate the stories they have gathered. Reuse, recycle and republish old articles, use social media to promote the history of our area, the stories aren't going anywhere!

Roles and responsibilities must be delegated so others get an opportunity to deal with issues facing groups like ours.

Information must be pooled and made accessible to those who will carry on the work of the group.

A Bridge too Far?

Might there be a bridge too far? There is no such thing!

Go back to basics, train those to follow in your footsteps, utilise technology, and encourage the younger generation to bring their immense skills to bear and assist with promotion and communication of local history among their peers.

Lean into what appeals to younger community members and work on promotions that cut through. Get them involved.

Then the future of our history is assured.