



President's Report AGM 2005

When earlier this year I was first approached to take on the job of President of the Glebe Society, I showed some reluctance. I had witnessed first hand the great energy and commitment that Andrew Craig and his team gave to the Society. Such dedication has not changed in 2005 and that is what makes the job of President at once demanding and rewarding. A great strength of The Glebe Society Inc is its organisational structure – its various committees. To the members of the Management Committee and of its Sub-committees, most especially their convenors, I offer personally, and on behalf of the Society membership as a whole, deep appreciation for your invaluable contributions. In true form, the convenors of the Sub-committees have provided detailed reports on the year's activities and I trust you have these with you. I will extract a few points from some, but I will not rehearse their detail as you will have a chance to quiz the convenors later.

However, there are some individuals whom I will venture to select out for special mention. Some, like Liz Simpson -Booker take on a myriad of tasks as well as keeping the system (and me) on an even keel with minutes and meeting organisation – such as this AGM. Communication is the game and she excels, along with Cynthia Jones and Bruce Davis and their helpers who keep the Website up, running and improving, and of course Edwina Doe (Ed the Ed, of the Bulletin). The Bulletins get better and bigger and soon will have to come by parcel post! I know who her helpers are and so do you - to all, our thanks. In the fairly short time that Kevin Treloar has been on the committee he has weaved wonders – the membership has kept climbing even after Robyn Kemmis' heroic stint. As at 30 June 2005 it was the highest for some time. This was in large part due to Kevin's amazing social functions – so special and so profitable, adding as they do to the great work of the Heritage team under David Mander-Jones. We are in good shape financially. Kevin is stepping

down as convenor of the Membership Committee in order to further his career. We wish him well and welcome as the new convenors Brian and Cheryl Herden. The very important Bays and Foreshore Committee has lost its vigorous convenor for similar business reasons. Mark is stepping down and Tony Larkum is taking up the strain. Thank you both.

Today marks the opening of the Cross City Tunnel – with all its uncertainties for Glebe. The recent study by Chris Hallam (*Bulletin 7/2005*) of traffic flows in key arteries of Glebe is the more important for the absence of data from the Roads & Traffic Authority. Watch for more data on this increasing threat to Glebe's wellbeing.

There has been a recent change in Sub-committees to the extent that Environment has been joined by Parks and Open Spaces. Andrew Wood has indicated his need to spend longer periods in the US and so he will be stepping down at the end of the year. Andrew has done a great job with calm good sense, necessary as it turns out in the face of some unpleasant events. To Asa Wahlquist double congratulations – for the award of the Peter Hunt Eureka Prize and for taking up the Environment job during Andrew's absence. Mavis and Bill McCarthy were not allowed to escape overseas until they agreed to return as convenor(s) of the Environment, Parks and Open Space. I cannot conclude my specific recognitions without noting the contributions of Bruce – Treasurer, Vice-President, and Chair of the *Strategic Plan for Glebe and Forest Lodge 2005-2010*. He has been a brick – and he might well want to throw one at me for having relied so much on his time and expertise.

This has been a year for communication and collaborations, and coalitions of community groups have been part of this. Jan Wilson's energetic representation in FLAG ensures effective interchange with

most of the community groups in Glebe and local and State Government representatives. The Glebe Society has taken initiating roles in the formation of three new coalitions. The first is a coalition of some 16 resident groups within the City of Sydney Local Government Area, CityRAGs. Foremost amongst its aims is to adopt strategic approaches to protect the City's heritage and environment, to improve residential amenity, and to enhance the social capital of the City of Sydney in general and our neighbourhoods in particular. The major issue in the last month for this group has been the Business and Community Partnerships Program (BCPP) brought to Council by Councillor Marcelle Hoff, after wide consultation. TGSI submissions have been accepted into the finalised funding plan.

This has a close connection to the second collaborative group, the Coalition of Glebe Groups (COGG), which is made up of representatives from The Glebe Society Inc, The Glebe Chamber of Commerce Inc, The Glebe Community Action Group and The Glebe Point Residents Group (see Glebe Society *Bulletin 4/2005*). These groups represent a wide cross-section of residential and commercial Glebe. COGG aims to harness the energies and aspirations of the residents and the business community to provide the City of Sydney Council with agreed advice on such priorities as enhancement of local business activity and preservation of heritage within the Glebe/Forest Lodge community. COGG owes a good deal to the early work of the Glebe Point Road Revitalisation Project. One indicator of the success of COGG is the recent completion of a Marketing and Business Plan for Glebe Urban Village 2005-2008 that will meet Council's requirements under its MOU with the Chamber for the next round of funding for the development of implementation strategies. In this context, the next major area of discussion concerns branding. Submissions from three design portfolios will be considered

in order to judge the best organisation to work with to design a number of basic concepts for logos. The community will be consulted at this stage to help select the preferred logo from a short list.

Blackwattle Bay Advisory Group – The setting up of this body has been discussed only recently with members of the Pyrmont Action Group. The aim is to get a concerted approach to the developments taking place in and around Blackwattle Bay, involving bodies such as SHFA, NSW Maritime and the City Council. A broad membership of stakeholders is envisaged.

There have been many positive changes for Glebe in the last year and these are largely associated with highly effective communication with the City of Sydney – at all levels. Council has listened and has been responsive to the views and needs of residents in a wide range of matters. Robyn Kemmis has played a key role in this regard, covering many activities and concerns. Jenny Underwood has filled admirably the position of Place Manager of the Glebe Neighbourhood Centre, which is so important to the effective interface of the community and Council administration. Some of the advances that have been realised are:

- ongoing development of the foreshore and resolution of the mangroves issue within a consultative framework
- small park upgrades in Glebe, many of which had safety issues at the time of Glebe's transfer to the City (e.g. Minogue Park, Oxley Street Children's Park, Kirsova and Franklin Street Park; and in the near future - Thomas Portley, AV Henry, May Pit; later - Lewis Hoad, and Sarah Penn)
- planned Foley Park upgrade – many thanks to Bobbie Burke and her team
- financial support from the City for the Glebe Youth Service

- pending transfer of the Crown Lands property in Franklin Street
- Land and Environment Court wins such as the Abbey – Neil and his crew, Roelof Smilde
- Council support to fight inappropriate developments such as the Tramsheds - the contributions of Ted McKeown and Neil Macindoe leap out here; and Rozelle Bay proposals – of course, the struggle continues
- and not least - new grants and sponsorship programs to support community services and cultural projects

However, there are disappointments which gnaw away at this new feeling of confidence, e.g.

- slow progress with the Foreshore walk and Blackwattle Bay Park, although some firmer dates are emerging from recent discussions
- the long lead time for commencement of the Foley Park upgrade – first sod to be turned in Jan 2007
- unconfirmed funding for Glebe Point Road upgrade/revitalisation

In fairness, in some cases a significant contribution to delays stems from the consultation process itself – a double-edged sword?

We look forward to continuing close contact with the City Council in progressing some of the following immediate projects:

- appropriate upgrade of Glebe Point Road and St John's Road, and public domain improvements - lights, paths and seating
- planned development of Sydney Fish Markets and foreshore commensurate with its 'state tourist attraction' status; effective interaction with Wentworth Park
- continued support for Centipede and other initiatives designed to help the young people of Glebe to reach their full potential
- stronger education campaigns to drive behavioural change related to issues such as trolleys, littering and dog faeces

- development of a community house, associated with Glebe Town Hall
- progressing the work of COGG
- enlisting the support of the Department of Housing in improving the properties under its control
- the big wish – a place for artistic expression – the Tramsheds?

What of the way forward for the Society itself – its long-term plans for major achievements? Some of the questions we should be addressing are, how do we:

- lift our profile?
- celebrate our history? Some excellent work has already been done by the Heritage Committee
- broaden our membership, especially amongst the younger residents
- make best use of our Website – provide financial and professional assistance?
- lobby effectively all levels of government to ensure the repair and ongoing maintenance of the Glebe Estate
- assess the benefits of Heritage listing for Glebe
- protect the wellbeing of the Glebe against the impact of traffic and inappropriate development.

Many of these questions and more are addressed in the Sub-Committee reports and in the Strategic Plan for Glebe and Forest Lodge 2005 to 2010 (Partnerships to a Vibrant Community). The latter is a document now reaching completion after many evenings' work and discussions by a Committee that Bruce agreed to chair. It includes Jeanette Knox, Liz Simpson Booker, Andrew Craig, Neil Macindoe, and Mack Williams. My thanks to all.

The efforts of the past 2-3 decades are starting to show pay-dirt! Let's not be negative about the slow progress – still obvious – but rejoice in the prospect of some wins and more to come.

- Bob Armstrong

