

The Ryde Recorder

Journal & Newsletter of the Ryde District Historical Society Inc. and Family History Group



Willandra
Wallumedegal land
770 Victoria Road
Ryde NSW 2112
02 9807 7137
www.rydehistory.org.au
rdhs1@bigpond.com

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In This Issue:

- *What's On?* *Page 2*
- *Cockatoo Island Convict Silos by Helen Patterson* *Page 3*
- *A Grand Loyal Orange Lodge occasion at Field of Mars Cemetery: The Funeral of James Sheridan by Margaret Farlow* *Page 5*
- *James York Sheridan by Margaret Farlow* *Page 8*
- *1953: Ryde goes to the Coronation and the Coronation comes to Ryde by Kim Phillips* *Page 10*



See Street, Meadowbank, 1920s
RDHS collection img04082

All Ryde District Historical Society Inc's Local and General History and Family History Group meetings take place at 10 am on the second Saturday of each month (February to November) at historic "Willandra", 770 Victoria Road, cnr Devlin Street, Ryde. Enter by turning left at end of Willandra Street to street parking outside eastern gate of building. Entry door is at rear of building on Victoria Road side.

Society's **Phone Number: (02) 9807 7137** Fridays only (10-2pm) or leave a message at other times.

Editor: Kim Phillips
President: Kim Phillips
Secretary: Betty Willis
Website: www.rydehistory.org.au

Ryde District Historical Society volunteers are willing to carry out research in its archives and resources at \$20 an hour. A fee of \$20 will be charged for the initial research – if longer the applicant will be advised before the work is carried out. Please forward a cheque for this amount with your inquiry. A fee of \$5 will be charged for researchers using the Society's Archives. Photocopying is charged at 20 cents a sheet.

PLEASE NOTE: A \$2 donation will be accepted from visitors to the Ryde District Historical Society's meetings. Everyone welcome.

RDHS membership subscriptions are due in January each year. Membership will cease as at 31 March if unpaid. \$30 individuals, \$40 family, \$25 pensioner/student.

RDHS Banking details: Westpac Bank, Ryde BSB 032088, Account 801289, Ryde District Historical Society

Photographs taken by RDHS at RDHS functions (including Open Days, meetings, workshops, conferences) will be used as the Society sees fit, in brochures, advertising material, publications etc. If you do not wish your photograph to be used, please advise the Society's photographer on the day.

Please note that any conclusions or opinions expressed in the Ryde Recorder are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Ryde District Historical Society Inc

WHAT'S ON?

Saturday 10 June at 10 am	General Meeting – Richard de Grijs ANMM <i>From the First Fleet to the Harbour Bridge: Sydney's astronomical beginnings</i> The voyage of the First Fleet from Britain to "Botany Bay" was more than a convenient way to rid Britain of its convicts. Join us as historical detectives on the trail of William Dawes, astronomer, engineer, surveyor and ordnance officer - from his arrival in 1788 until the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932.
Sunday 18 June 11am – 2pm	Open House <i>Willandra</i>
Wednesday 28 June 10.30am	Visit to Macquarie University History Museum
Saturday July 8 at 10 am	General Meeting – Jenny Joyce "15 Things you are probably doing wrong in your research"
Sunday July 16 11am – 2pm	Open House
Saturday August 12 at 10 am	Annual General Meeting General Meeting – Speaker Angela Phippen
Sunday August 20 11am – 2pm	Open House
Saturday September 9 at 10 am	General Meeting. Speaker – Winsome Baker <i>Royal Ryde Rehabilitation</i>

Cockatoo Island Convict Silos

Helen Patterson

The Ryde District Historical Society's recent excursion to Cockatoo Island/Wareamah in Sydney Harbour reminded me of a small segment in the life history of Ralph Nash (a brother of my great-great grandmother Catherine Coffey née Nash). Ralph, aged 19, and his brother Henry Nash, 26, were engaged in a faction fight in Tipperary, Ireland in 1829 and were convicted of manslaughter. They were sentenced to seven years transportation, arriving in Sydney on the convict ship *Forth* on 26 April 1830. Ralph Nash subsequently had a colonial criminal conviction – for robbery and assault – and was transported to Norfolk Island in 1835, 'for life'. By 1840 his sentence had been commuted to three years and he was transferred to Cockatoo Island in September of that year. It is believed that he may have been one of the 'commuted convicts from Norfolk Island' employed to work on 'the granaries cut out of solid rock' (*Hobart Town Courier*, 6 March 1840).

The convict-built silos, or granaries, on Cockatoo Island are contrary to most people's concept of silos. The usual image of a silo is of a tall cylindrical tower used for the storage of grain or other bulk materials. Silos, however, can also be underground structures. Twenty silos were carved by hand out of solid sandstone on Cockatoo Island between 1839 and 1842, and thirteen of those have survived, either in part or whole. They were designed by Captain George Barney of the Royal Engineers. The heritage-listed surviving silos are believed to be the only group of convict-cut rock silos in Australia – another major group of convict-constructed underground silos are located on Norfolk Island, but they are cut into the earth.

Cockatoo Island Visitors' Centre offers Self-Guided Audio Tours. An obliging volunteer at the Centre later provided us with a transcript of the audio for *Convict Silos*:

The new colony was a land with unpredictable rain patterns and frequent grain shortages. So when Governor Gipps initially deemed Cockatoo Island a perfect place for a prison, he immediately saw its potential as a granary too.

The first convict gangs on the island were put to work carving out silos. Altogether 20 bottle-shaped grain silos were cut into the rock with little more than hand tools. Each pit was roughly six metres deep and seven metres wide and was accessed through a square manhole from above.

A convict was lowered down with his quota of rock to be cut that day. If he never made the quota, he wasn't raised back up ... By the end of 1840, 560 tonnes of wheat were stored away... [Governor Gipps proposed to increase the government store] but grain traders grumbled to the British Home Office. They were outraged that they would not be able to capitalise on shortage. And so, the Imperial government in London decreed that wheat prices must be set by the free market, and they effectively prohibited the use of the silos to store grain.

Before the cessation of wheat storage in the silos, the 'poorer classes' of Sydney were supplied with flour at a reduced price (*Colonial Times*, Hobart, 16 June 1840). The higher prices set by the free market led a correspondent from the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (12 Sep 1840) to comment: 'We have heard that the silos at Cockatoo Island are at last empty. For the sake of the poor we are sorry for this.'

The unused silos were later used as water tanks. The group of silos located near the Clerk of Petty Sessions Cottage consist of three complete and two 'half' silos (halved by the excavation of the cliff face during the Second World War). The symmetrical silos are bottle-shaped with a square mouth and metal plate on the surface of the rock. They held 3000 to 5000 bushels each.



Convict grain silos from above
 Photographer: Helen Patterson



Convict grain silos from above
 Photographer: Helen Patterson

While it is not known whether Ralph Nash was directly involved in silo construction, his name does appear in later correspondence between Cockatoo Island's Superintendent Ormsby and the Principal Superintendent of Convicts (NSW State Archives). On 18 May 1842 Ormsby asked for permission for five named prisoners to have their leg irons removed, leaving a ring. Nash was one of them and was one of three prisoners who 'are remarkably well behaved and have exerted themselves very much in getting up the roof of the Military Barracks notwithstanding their being in irons'. The application was refused because the Governor 'will grant no such indulgence at present to any man at Cockatoo Island'.

On completion of his sentence, Ralph Nash was discharged to Hyde Park Barracks in September 1843. After receiving his Ticket of Leave and Certificate of Freedom in 1845 he moved to the Penrith district and was employed as a wheelwright. Ralph married, had 11 children (of whom 7 survived) and, when he died in 1879, aged 69, he was described as a 'colonist of over fifty years' with no mention of his time on Cockatoo Island or any other aspect of his convict background.

Sources:

Cockatoo Island Visitors Centre, Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour Trust.

NSW State Archives, Cockatoo Island Penal Establishment Entrance Book 1839-1852, and Letters Sent and Received 1841-1851, MHNSW.

Underground Grain Silos, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_Grain_Silos.



Cutaway half of silo from lower side
Photographer: Helen Patterson

A Grand Loyal Orange Lodge occasion at Field of Mars Cemetery: The Funeral of James Sheridan

Margaret Farlow

On 6 September 1923, the *Watchman* newspaper reported the death of Bro. James Sheridan of LOL No. 243. The *Watchman*, a weekly Sydney newspaper, was published between 1902 and 1926, with a mission to represent the interests of the Australian Protestant Defence Association. James Sheridan had been a prominent Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) member for over 60 years. His obituary would go on to detail the history of this Irish immigrant, buried locally in Ryde's Field of Mars Cemetery.

Bro. Sheridan was a native of County Monahan, Ireland. In company with his brothers, William and Thomas, and his sister, Mrs. P. Findlay (since deceased), he landed in Queensland in 1883. On arriving in Sydney, he and his brothers joined 54 L.O.L., and on formation of Annandale they were foundation

members of 243, which opened in 1889, and he continued to be a member until death. For many years he represented Annandale in the Grand Lodge. He was also a member of Protestant Alliance, forming No. 8 in 1884 in Glebe, and was a member of No. 18 when he died. He went to the goldfields at Kalgoorlie, W.A., with Bro. Boyle of 243, and other members of Glebe Lodge, and he many times related their experiences at Twelfth July celebrations in Kalgoorlie, where they received some opposition to their procession to the service. On coming back to Sydney, he accepted a position as overseer of Annandale Council, and remained in same until 1922, when he resigned owing to ill-health, and the last six months he was very ill. The deceased played a prominent part in politics. He was one of the foundation members of Annandale Liberal Party, and when the National Party was formed, he joined that association. He was a Liberal of the old type and was a keen supporter of his principles.

The funeral of the deceased left the residence of Mr. N. Hutchinson (nephew), Lea [See] Street, Ryde, on Monday afternoon for the Field of Mars Cemetery.

The chief mourners were Bro. W. H. Sheridan, L.O.L. 553; Bro. J. Y. Sheridan, L.O.L. No. 6; Mr. J. Sheridan, Botany; Messrs. T. and T. Sheridan, of Carlton; Mr. James Sheridan, Concord; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Hutchison, Mr. P. I. Findlay, and Mesdames Lochard, Pritchard, and Bartholomew, and Bro. Dunn, L.O.L. 553, and many friends, including the Annandale Council, represented by Alderman Bro. Packer, Mr. Ridge, Bro. Colebrook, Mr. Hinsbry (Town Clerk), and ex-Alderman Bro. T. Martin. The employees of the council also attended the funeral. Rev. Bro. Brown, of L.O.L. 24, performed the last solemn rites.

The Orange service was conducted by Bro. C. Young, P.M., of 243, and many members of Annandale Loyal Orange Lodge. Bev. Bro. Brown, in course of an impressive service, spoke of the long service, 60 years, to the Orange Institution, and of the excellent qualities and many actions of the deceased, and said that the life and career of their departed friend and brother were examples, for those gathered round to follow.

James does not appear to have had a family of his own, but family lore said he had close connections with the raising of his many nephews and nieces. It would seem that he spent the last months of his life quite ill, living with Hutchinson family in See Street, Meadowbank, where he died. One of the seven funeral notices inserted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 20 August 1923 was from Mr and Mrs W H Hutchinson, claiming him as an uncle. The *Sydney Sands' Directory* for 1923 and 1924 lists a George W Hutchison at See (or Sea) Street, Meadowbank and by 1926 W Hutchison is listed at a different house, named *Paschendale*, also in See Street.

The will of James Sheridan appointed his nephew, James York Sheridan of *Clutha*, Tyrell Street, Gladesville as his sole executor and tasked him with

'Phone, W1073.

SHERIDAN.—The Funeral of the late Mr. JAMES SHERIDAN (late overseer of works, Annandale council) will leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS AFTERNOON, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
WOOD COFFILL LIMITED.

SHERIDAN.—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. and Mrs. J. Y. SHERIDAN, of Gladesville, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. SHERIDAN, of North Ryde, and Mr. and Mrs. J. E. SHERIDAN, of Kensington, are invited to attend the Funeral of their late dearly beloved UNCLE, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS AFTERNOON, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
WOOD COFFILL LIMITED.

SHERIDAN.—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. and Mrs. JOHN SHERIDAN, Mr. and Mrs. THOMAS SHERIDAN, Mr. and Mrs. JAMES SHERIDAN, and LIZZIE, MAGGIE, BELLA, and EMILY, late of View-street, Annandale, are invited to attend the Funeral of their late dearly beloved UNCLE, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS AFTERNOON, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
WOOD COFFILL LIMITED.

SHERIDAN.—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. HUTCHISON, of Ryde, are invited to attend the Funeral of their late dearly beloved UNCLE, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS AFTERNOON, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
WOOD COFFILL LIMITED.

SHERIDAN.—The Relatives and Friends of Mr. PETER FINDLAY and FAMILY are invited to attend the Funeral of their late dearly beloved BROTHER-IN-LAW and UNCLE, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS AFTERNOON, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
WOOD COFFILL LIMITED.

SHERIDAN.—L.O.L. ANNANDALE, No. 243.—Officers and Members of above Lodge are invited to attend the Funeral of their late MEMBER, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS DAY, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
H. GALE, W.M.
T. E. COLEBROOK, Sec.

SHERIDAN.—P.A.F.S., GLADESVILLE LODGE, No. 18.—Officers and Members of above Lodge are invited to attend the Funeral of their late MEMBER, James Sheridan; to leave his late residence, See-street, Ryde, THIS DAY, at 3.15 o'clock, for Presbyterian Cemetery, Field of Mars.
C. A. HARRISON, W.M.
J. Y. SHERIDAN, Sec.

Sydney Morning Herald 20 August 1923 page 7

arranging, as soon as convenient after his decease 'to erect a suitable headstone and curbing to his grave'. The remainder his estate totalling £461.17.1 was divided in varying fractions between various family members – Madge Hutchinson (See Street), William Hutchison (See Street), Maude E. Sheridan (Tyrell Street, Gladesville), John Ellis Sheridan (Botany), John Sheridan (Carlton), William Henry Sheridan (Bridge Road, North Ryde), Sophie Findlay, Sarah Findlay and Viviana Findlay (all of Johnston Street, Annandale), Robert Findlay (Johnston Street, Annandale) and Peter Findlay (Johnston Street, Annandale).

The evidence that James York Sheridan did carry out this last request - giving his uncle, James, a suitable headstone and kerbing - remains today. The headstone has recently been photographed and transcribed as part of a recent RDHS Digital Project. His inscription reads:

In loving memory of James Sheridan late of Annandale, died 19 August 1923, Age 78 years,
One of the best that God could send, Beloved by all, a faithful friend.



Headstone James Sheridan
Presbyterian Section OP, grave 764, Field of Mars Cemetery
RDHS Mapping Ryde pres-01025

References:

New South Wales Will Books 1800-1952 (Find My Past) - Will No. 121247: Sheridan James [retrieved 6 March 1923].

The Sydney Sands' Directory: Ryde Municipality: 1923, 1924, 1926.

Watchman (Sydney, NSW:1902 - 1926), 1923, September 6. p. 2. Death of Bro. James Sheridan, No. 243, L.O.L. [Retrieved March 6, 2023, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article112237446>].

Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Watchman_\(newspaper\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Watchman_(newspaper))

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## James York Sheridan

Margaret Farlow

The birth of James York Sheridan was registered at Glebe, NSW, in 1888. He was the second son born to William Sheridan (1858-1911) and his wife, Annie York (1860-1896). Both his Irish-born parents were living in Annandale, NSW, when they married at All Souls' Anglican Church, Leichhardt, NSW, in 1885. His father, William had arrived in Queensland about 1883 with brothers, James Sheridan, Thomas Sheridan and sister, Mary (Mrs Peter Findlay).

In 1910, at age 22, James York Sheridan, married Maude Elizabeth Thompson and in the years following they settled in Gladesville with a growing family. *The Sydney Sands' Directory* lists James York living in Western Crescent from 1915 and moving to Tyrell Street by 1920. For a time, he must have worked at Gladesville Hospital, as he is included on a 1927 list of registered of medical employees. In 1928, James made a career change: *The Sydney Sands' Directory* lists him as Secretary, Hospital Association, Trades Hall, Goulburn Street, as well his private residence at 36 Tyrell Street. Subsequent electoral rolls of the 1930s list his occupation as Union Secretary. In 1937, James York Sheridan also began a career in local government, when he was elected to the position of Alderman on Ryde Municipal Council.

Sadly, on 24 December 1940, James' wife, Maude Elizabeth Sheridan, died at age 54. She was buried in the Presbyterian Section at Field of Mars. Less than a year later, on 24 October 1941, James York Sheridan also died. He was aged 53 and was laid to rest with his wife.



Headstone James York Sheridan  
Presbyterian Section E, grave 69, Field of Mars Cemetery  
RDHS Mapping Ryde pres-00367

The story of James York Sheridan doesn't end there. In Gladesville, an unemployment relief program was in the process of constructing a clock tower at the intersection of Meriton Street with Victoria and Wharf Roads. The tower was to serve as a traffic control device. It was designed by Ryde Council's engineer, J C Sutherland. The monument was at the stage where the kerbing and base had been



completed and the brickwork tower underway when a Ryde Council meeting proposed that ‘a suitable plaque be placed on this Clock tower to commemorate the work and services to the Council and the citizens of the Municipality by the Late Alderman J Y Sheridan’. An earlier motion of sympathy had been recorded at the Council meeting of 20 October 1941, which noted the ‘Alderman Sheridan was “beloved” not only by the members of Council, but generally by all classes throughout the Municipality for his kindly manner and his high ideal of citizenship.’ Since that time, the Gladesville Clock tower has been known locally as the ‘Sheridan Memorial Clock’.



Sheridan Clock Tower  
 Photographer: Helen Patterson  
 RDHS collection rdhs-00680.htm

#### References:

- New South Wales, Australia, Medical Registers, 1925-1954* [Ancestry.com database on-line, viewed 6 Mar 2023], Nurses' Registration Board. Register of nurses 1926-1954, James York Sheridan.
- Sydney, Australia, Anglican Parish Registers, 1814-2011* [Ancestry.com database on-line, viewed 6 Mar 2023].  
 Leichhardt All Souls - Marriages - No. 50 : 24 October 1885, William Sheridan and Annie York.
- The Sydney Sands' Directory: Ryde Municipality: 1915-1930*
- Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [Ancestry.com database on-line, viewed 6 Mar 2023].
- Ryde (N.S.W.:Municipality). Council. Ryde Heritage Taskforce. Australian survey of sculpture, monuments and outdoor cultural material (SMOCM).* Ryde City Council, 1997.

## 1953: the Coronation comes to Ryde; and Ryde goes to the Coronation

Kim Phillips

The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place in London on 2 June 1953, making her the 39th sovereign crowned at Westminster Abbey and the sixth Queen. Her coronation was watched by millions of people across the world ... and at least two people from West Ryde were in London for the momentous event.

The *Australian Women's Weekly* magazine held a competition to celebrate the Coronation with the first prize a trip to London (guests of the Women's Weekly), then to the United States for a weekend in New York, flying via Qantas and BOAC and then across the Pacific and back to Australia. And, the winner was: mother of four, Mrs Mary Johnson, from 37 James Street, West Ryde. Mary also won 'a travelling ensemble and afternoon frock by Madame Pellier, a complete nylon lingerie outfit and fashion goods by Prestige, and 12 pairs of Joyce shoes.' Mary, born in Scotland, was accompanied by her English born husband Barry. Mary's story about her near-blind son, Ken, and how his sharing of a moment of triumph became the most wonderful day of her life, had been the unanimous choice of the judges.



OUR CONTEST WINNER, Mrs. Mary Johnson, of West Ryde, Sydney, has been busy preparing for her prize trip. Here she is with Madame Pellier (in centre) and a mannequin in Madame's exclusive salon, where dresses and a coat for Coronation occasions were made for Mrs. Johnson.

*Australian Women's Weekly*  
27 May 1953, page 27

While in England Mary and Barry attended many events. They were guests at the Coronation Ball, held at the Savoy Hotel; viewed the Queen's Procession on Coronation Day; attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace, and the Derby Day dinner at Ciro's Restaurant, all while staying at the Green Park Hotel.

They went to performances at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, saw Margot Fonteyne dance, watched Oscar Wilde's 'A Woman of no Importance.' They visited Stratford-on-Avon and saw the first night performance of 'The Taming of the Shrew' at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. And, to balance their viewing they attended 'Guys and Dolls' and saw American comedian Danny Thomas at the Palladium; Barry went to Nottingham for the opening day of the cricket while Mary remained in London for the Trooping of the Colour. Next, a visit to the Royal Doulton factory, a quick trip to Scotland to visit Mary's family then off to New York on the way back to Australia, staying at the Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan.

Announcing their return on 17 June 1953, a skyrocket soared above James Street. A young neighbour, Patsy Eddows, had saved the rocket from cracker night, and set it off as Mary and Barry stepped out of the car outside their home where they were welcomed home by their children Ken, Dennis and twin daughters Roslyn and Kay.

Our Society holds a collection of papers from Ryde Municipal Council. These cover the late 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s. I checked these records to see what I could find out about how the Ryde District celebrated the coronation.

In April 1953 a special committee was set up by the Council, comprising Aldermen H A D Mitchell (Mayor), R E Pacey, J H Donovan and K J Williams.

On 30 May 1953 a Mayoral Ball was held where around 270 attendees raised £220 for the Red Cross Society. Schools were invited to participate in an essay competition 'The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and its significance'.

On the day of the Coronation, 2 June: 9.30am – a combined church service at St Anne's Church, conducted by the Rev. D Begbie, assisted by ministers from the Salvation Army, Methodist and Presbyterian churches.

10.30am – a combined civic service was held at the Palace Theatre, Gladesville. The service was preceded by a march by Gladesville RSL members. This was followed by a simple ceremony held at the Gladesville Returned Soldier's Memorial Hall.

Council files record 'Displays of flags and bunting generally, and the decoration of business houses, shops and other premises throughout the Municipality, did a great deal to add to the patriotism and gaiety of this historic event.'

On Friday 5 June a Coronation Concert was held in Ryde Park. Invited guests were given booked seats in the official enclosure, parking inside the oval and a supper afterwards. From 7-8pm films (appropriate to the Coronation) were shown, followed by a concert hosted by 2GB's Leon Becker.

The films were:

**Royal Destiny** which traced the life of Queen Elizabeth II from her early childhood. The film concluded with King George VI saying farewell to her as she left on her tour for Africa and Australia. The King died six days later.



Concert ticket  
Ryde Municipal Council records, held at RDHS



**People's Palace** which wandered through Hampton Court Palace and grounds.

**Coronation Ceremony** traced the history of the Coronation from the days of David and Solomon, through the early English royal family and included details what would be included in the coronation ceremony of Elizabeth II.

**FIRST PRIZE**

## I heard him crying 'Mummy!'

By **MARY JOHNSON**

THE most wonderful day in my life sounds perhaps at first very everyday to lots of people—the day my eldest son gained second place in his half-yearly examination.

But, you see, my son was born blind and slightly spastic.

After a series of operations he regained part-sight in one eye, and then the trek to the Education Department began. Too much sight for the Blind School—too little for the Public.

We taught him at home, and at the same time he attended the Children's Hospital for Occupational Therapy.

There is a sight-saving school at St. Peters, but with three younger children I couldn't manage to take my son on the long train journey there every day.

We sent him to boarding-school for partially sighted children, but he had a nervous breakdown.

We met a wonderful man at this time whose steadfast faith in our son's ability helped us over a very rough patch.

After his second eye was operated on at nine years of age, we started in earnest to teach him. Then, armed with his papers, I went to the Department again and asked for part-time education.

While waiting to hear from the headmaster of our local public school we took our son to one of the leading psychiatrists in Sydney, who said: "He is one of the nicest little lads I have met, but he cannot be educated at an ordinary school or play and mix with ordinary boys, and would need private tuition."


We were very upset by this verdict, but our headmaster sent for us, and said he would give him a chance.

He was ten and went into 4A for two hours a day. I took him each day, but let him come home in the school bus.

He had a hard time for a while.

After Christmas he went into 5A and then the pals started coming around—fine boys asking him to play. Our dear lad who had been shunned and laughed at for years to have all these ordinary boys wanting him—it was wonderful!

After the following Christmas he went to 6A. At least, his pass in the yearly entitled him to 6A, but his headmaster suggested his going to 6B as he was going blind



**FIRST PRIZE WINNER, Mrs. Mary Johnson, and her son Ken.**

again in one eye, and the homework wasn't so strenuous.

He sat for his half-yearly exam in June last year, but we didn't really expect anything outstanding.

Then one day (what a day!) the school bus stopped as usual, and I heard him crying, "Mummy, Mummy!"

I ran out wondering what was wrong. Just as he got to the side gate he didn't notice a big stone and fell in the gate, taking the skin off both his hands and raising a huge bump on his head.

But with his report clutched in his hand and tears streaming down his face he kept saying: "Mummy, I came second. I came second!"

I sat on the path with him and we both had a good cry. Silly, I suppose, but to think that he had been able to prove to everyone that he could do things like an ordinary boy at an ordinary school!

How thankful to God his Daddy and I are, not only for ourselves, but for our little lad, because he has worked hard, has had a lot of "throwing off" to fight, and also as a repayment to his eye specialist, his friends, his kind teachers, and headmaster.

I bandaged him up and put him to bed, and he put his arms around me and said: "Mummy, it has been the most wonderful day in my life," and I echoed it from the bottom of my heart.

*Australian Women's Weekly*  
8 April 1953, page 15

The performers were:

Keith Walshe, comedian and 2GB compare; Noel Judd, vocalist; Lilly Connors, radio recording star; Neil Williams, baritone; George Herd, juggler; Lou Campara, piano accordionist. This was followed by entertainment provided by the theatrical group from local company Telephone & Electrical Industries Ltd, Faraday Park, Meadowbank.

The concert was attended by approximately 10,000 people and was deemed to be a huge success.

Supper after the concert was held for 145 invited attendees. The menu for the supper was: best assorted sandwiches (ham, beef, egg etc), cocktail frankfurts with tomato sauce, sausage rolls, fish cocktails, potato crisps, best assorted fancy cakes and pastries, cordials, coffee. The catering was carried out by Sharpe's Catering Service, 2 Tyrrell Street, Gladesville, at a cost of 4/9d per head.

*The Weekly Times* reported on 11 June 1953 that the concert 'by far the largest and best of its kind ever given in this district, was attended by approximately 10,000 people, many of whom brought rugs, blankets, cushions, etc., to keep out the cold.'

The Mayor of Ryde Alderman H A D Mitchell said that the concert was 'a fitting climax to a week of joyful celebration.'

Sources

*Australian Women's Weekly* 8 April 1953, 27 May 1953

Ryde Municipal Council records, held by Ryde District Historical Society