



## WOLLONGONG'S MIGRATION HERITAGE PLACES



*Issacs as it is today (photograph by Meredith Walker)*

The Migration Heritage Project Inc has recently embarked on an exciting new project to identify, document and assess migration heritage places in Wollongong. The population of Wollongong more than doubled between 1947 and 1961 due to migration yet previous heritage studies of Wollongong have not fully acknowledged migration as a significant historic theme in the City's development. This study aims to begin to address this oversight by investigating the migration heritage of the city in the post world war two period. We hope this will lead to a better understanding of places which are important due to migration.

The project will be an investigation into the impact post world war two migration has had upon the development of the City of Wollongong. In particular the study will investigate the themes of first place of accommodation, womens work places, Wollongong Harbour and worship.

When migrants arrived in Australia their first priority was to find a place to live. If they were displaced persons or assisted migrants accommodation was offered by government or arranged by community organisations, family or friends. Accommodation in the post war period in Wollongong was scarce. It was hard to find building materials and there were long delays in getting homes built. In response to the housing shortages and as part of their agreement with the settlement of migrants, hostels were constructed by industry and by the Commonwealth government.

Finding work was another priority for migrants upon arrival. Work in Port Kembla steel and metal manufacturing industries together with the coal industry was readily available and attracted migrant men to Wollongong. This however led to a large workforce made up solely of men. Women who accompanied the men and their families to Wollongong on the otherhand had limited options and unemployment for women was high. The government attempted to overcome this problem by providing incentives for factories to

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## 2007 MHP MEETINGS

The MHP Committee meets the first Thursday of the month (February-December) at 5.30 pm, Meeting Room 1, Level 10 Wollongong City Council Administration Building, Burelli Street, Wollongong. Members and other interested people or groups are always welcome. The remaining meetings scheduled for 2007 are as follows:

2 August, 6 September,  
4 October, 1 November (AGM),  
and 6 December  
*(Venue for meetings provided through the Wollongong City Council Multicultural Services)*

## MHP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### **Chairman**

Franca Facci

### **Treasurer**

Mendo Trajcewski

### **Secretary**

Fidelia Pontarolo

### **Committee:**

Gregor Cullen

Rina Montgomery

Olga Romano

Giulia Bonacina

Ludwik Ihnat

Peter Bestman

## MHP WEBSITE

Don't forget to visit our website

[www.mhpillawarra.com](http://www.mhpillawarra.com)

## MT KEMBLA MINING HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Saturday 28, Sunday 29 and  
Tuesday 31 July 2007

*(Details Over)*

*(Wollongong Migration Heritage Places continued)*

move to Wollongong and other regional centres. The majority of factories subsequently built in Wollongong were garment manufacturers. The clothing industry became a major source of employment for women in the post war period.

*“Working at Isaacs were the best days of my life. The bosses and the women – all the people; there were all sorts of migrants. I couldn’t understand Greek, Maltese, but I could work out what they wanted - Poles, Austrians, Germans.”* Olga Romano (Member of the MHP Committee)



*Group of workers from Stamina (Isaacs) garment manufacturers 1954 (photograph courtesy of Olga Romano)*

Women also found work in the assorting room at the Tin Mill and at MM Kembla as well as in more traditional jobs such as in cleaning companies and service industries like cooking in the hostel kitchens.

Wollongong Harbour, also known as Belmore Basin has always been a working harbour. The Belmore Basin was constructed using convict labour and the harbour was the first place early colonists arrived when they travelled to Wollongong prior to construction of roads and railways linking the settlement to the rest of the colony. It was a working port where large shipments of coal were exported and at one stage it even had its own coke works. Today the harbour is home to a fishing fleet which has association with migrant families. It is also a place which has symbolic meaning for some Migrant community groups. For instance the Macedonian Orthodox Church holds a traditional ceremony which links the church in Stewart Street to the harbour where a diving for the cross takes place.

The religious practices of each cultural group travelled with them to their new country. When work and home had been established then the communities could focus on creation of places to practice their faith. The large numbers of places of worship demonstrates the diversity of the migrant population of Wollongong. According to the Interfaith Harmony Project there are at

least 25 different religious affiliations in Wollongong. These include Macedonian, Greek and Russian Orthodox churches; Italian Catholics of the Scalabrian order; Islam; Hindu; Buddhist and many others. The church of the Immaculate Conception in Unanderra was the first one established by the Scalabrian order from Italy. The Reform Church in Fairy Meadow was built by the community and for many years had services in the Dutch language.

The Migration Heritage Project would like to talk to anyone who has lived in migrant accommodation, worked in Wollongong Harbour or worked as a migrant woman in the post WWII period or is part of a religious community group who can contribute first hand knowledge to the project. They can email to [lcthom@ans.com.au](mailto:lcthom@ans.com.au) or phone Louise Thom on 4227 1150 or Fidelia Pontarolo [fidelia@ozemail.com.au](mailto:fidelia@ozemail.com.au) (phone 0438 832 094).

The study is made possible through the collaboration of Wollongong City Council, the NSW Migration Heritage Centre and the Heritage Office of NSW together with the Illawarra Migration Heritage Project of Wollongong.

### **MT KEMBLA MINING HERITAGE FESTIVAL Sat 28, Sun 29 & Tue 31 July 2007**

You're Invited and Most Welcome to Mt Kembla Mining Heritage Festival for 2007. Festival events and displays are spread over beautiful Mt Kembla, Kembla Heights and surrounds including for the first time Mt Kembla Oval, for your viewing pleasure, enjoyment and ease of access. Start by parking your vehicle at the "Park & Drive" Free Parking provided at lower Stones Rd. Ride Free All Weekend courtesy of Premier Illawarra to all festival events commencing at Mt Kembla Oval, through the central village and school events and displays on to Kembla Heights and Windy Gully Cemetery. Our Free Premier Illawarra Shuttle Bus Service also runs from Unanderra Train Station via Western Suburbs Club approx every 45 mins ...so don't miss the bus...from anywhere! Lots to see and do from Saturday early...don't miss a bit of this brilliant weekend.....so grab a Festival Program to guide you around all weekend, gather your family and friends together, relax and enjoy yourself and the legendary Mt Kembla hospitality. More information: Mt Kembla Mining Heritage Website: [www.mtkembla.org.au](http://www.mtkembla.org.au)

### **MHP PROJECT UPDATES**

#### **Migration to Wollongong Publication**

Members of the committee have continued to liaise with Meredith Walker to finalise this publication. In researching migration to Wollongong, Meredith has uncovered a great deal of material but unfortunately it can't all be used in this book. Meredith has devoted a great deal of her own time to reduce the size of the first draft and we anticipate being able to publish by the end of the year.

*(MHP Project Updates continued)*

### **Home Movies Animating Heritage**

The VHS footage contributed to the Project is being digitised and copied onto DVD and this DVD will be given to the owners of the footage. This migration of the footage to DVD will go towards increasing the longevity of these precious memories and important historical events.

### **Wollongong Migration Heritage Places Study**

The first consultation will take place on 17 July with the Baltic and Eastern European Respite Group. This consultation will be conducted by MHP members, Meredith Walker and the IECC. (See story on front page).

### **MEET THE MHP COMMITTEE**



#### **Ludwik Ihnat, OAM – Committee**

Born in Germany of Ukrainian parents during WWII, Ludwik's family moved through the DP camps and immigration process through to Naples Italy, boarding the ship "General Black" arriving in Sydney on 13 December 1949 as a six year old with his parents. Ludwik lived in migrant camps at Bathurst, Parkes and Greta until they moved to Thirroul in 1953. Recently retired from BHP Steel with 40 years service, Ludwik commenced as an Industrial Chemist Trainee working in various iron and steel laboratories. On completing studies in chemistry and electronics he then moved into the primary production agglomeration process areas and later into administration.

Ludwik's involvement in community work began in the Ukrainian community in the mid 1970s with the Saturday Ukrainian School and cultural group. Becoming the Ukrainian community liaison person led Ludwik to a deeper involvement with the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council (IECC) in many levels including Chairman (1983-92). The new 1983 management team had brought a significant and much needed change in character and direction to the IECC. Accommodation premises and grants to employ staff

quickly followed in 1984. IECC also played a leading role in consolidating unity among ethnic groups to act as a unified voice resulting in ethno specific daycare funding and acquiring Federal Government funding to establish an ethnic aged home and to purchase the Multicultural Village land site at Port Kembla from Wollongong City Council as some examples.

Currently, Ludwik continues to represent the Ukrainian community and as a volunteer brings aged Ukrainians to the Eastern European daycare. "I also believe that the minority ethnic groups need special attention at this time to record their history in the local area. These groups are fast disappearing due to no new migration, high percentage of intermarriage of their youth and of course a very high integration into the Australian community. I am pleased to say that I have finally located 7 hours of 8mm film of Ukrainian functions, construction of our Church and community centre which have been loaned to the Migration Heritage Project Animating Heritage Project and work on the Migration Heritage Places Study Project is continuing."

Ludwik was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 1989 for his community work.



#### **Peter Bestman – Committee**

Peter was born and raised in Wollongong. His ancestry is English/German but generations have for some time considered themselves Anglos or Skips. Peter works for Centrelink as the Multicultural Service Officer. This means he has fairly constant contact with the multicultural community of the area, and so being involved with the Migration Heritage Project is a natural extension of this. "Having lived in Wollongong all my life including playing soccer for Coniston, worked at the steelworks and attended Wollongong University, makes me extremely aware and appreciative of the areas tremendous cultural diversity. As the area continually changes and evolves to current influences and pressures, I don't want those things that have shaped us to be forgotten. I feel a society is better able

to deal with its current issues if it knows where its "at", and a knowledge and appreciation of our past is important in that."

"On a personal level I dislike things that are bland. In the Illawarra of today, with bit of our past still present, to me adds to the mix. Sydney without its past, its history, would be a very sterile place."

"I feel a tremendous sense of satisfaction with the work the Migration Heritage Project has achieved to date in the saving of the areas important history (in memories, materials etc), that would otherwise be lost. It is gratifying to see the high level of collaboration between the various interest groups of the area (multicultural, government and the Migration Heritage Project)".



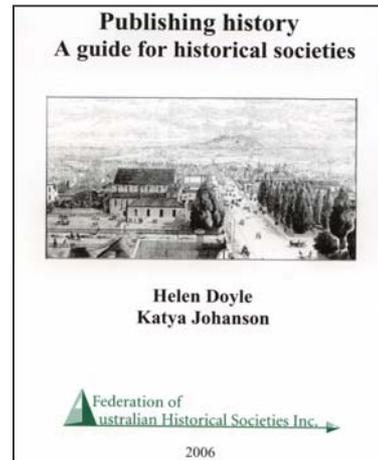
**Mendo Trajcevski – Treasurer**

Mendo Trajcevski has been researching, documenting and writing about the history of migration and settlement of his community in Australia for many years now. He discovered that the history of the Macedonian community is very rich and very little known. In talking with other community representatives who shared similar interest, he discovered the same to be true of other migrant communities. A bit more talking and a couple of meetings later, the Migration Heritage Project (MHP) was formed of which he is the Treasurer.

Since the formation of the MHP a number of local communities have had the opportunity to research and present a part of their history to the community and for their work to now become part of the Australian history of migration.

Mendo would like to see more people looking back into their past and the contribution their community has made to the development of Australia. "No matter how small the community, it has a story to tell. The MHP can provide useful information on how to go about it and possibly assist you in sharing your story".

**PUBLISHING HISTORY A GUIDE FOR HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**



The Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS) has published this booklet which contains extremely useful information for those who want to publish their stories. The contents of this booklet provides information from planning your project, how to publish, editing and design to selling the finished product. If you have never done any publishing this booklet is an excellent guide to get you started. Following distribution to historical societies across the nation limited surplus copies are available for purchase at \$12 per copy including postage and GST. These can be obtained by forwarding a cheque/money order to the Administrative Officer, Federation of Australian Historical Societies, GPO Box 1440, Canberra, ACT, 2601. FAHS website is [www.history.org.au](http://www.history.org.au)

[www.mhpillawarra.com](http://www.mhpillawarra.com)

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

<b>Joining Fee:</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$5.00</b>
	<b>Pensioners</b>	<b>\$2.00</b>
	<b>Organisations</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>
<b>Annual Fee:</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>
	<b>Pensioners</b>	<b>\$5.00</b>
	<b>Organisations</b>	<b>\$10.00</b>

Joining fees payable within fourteen days of receipt of advice of membership approval. Annual fees payable by 30 June of each year.

**The Secretary**  
**Migration Heritage Project Inc.**  
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**South Coast Mail Centre NSW 2521**  
**Email: [mhp@1earth.net](mailto:mhp@1earth.net)**  
**We would love you to join but you don't have to be a member to participate.**

