



Friends of the Auburn Tower Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 3 Winter 2015

All that Jazz - a fun night



The Janet Arndt Quintet in full Swing

On Saturday evening May 2 the church hall was filled with the sounds of much laughter and happy chatting as we met at our tables to eat, drink and be merry. The occasion was an evening of traditional jazz and swing presented by the Janet Arndt Quintet in a program entitled 'All That Jazz'. The group provided lots of familiar standards from the 50s and 60s, some of which the audience was invited to sing along, and a number of couples took the opportunity to get up and dance. The players were experts on their instruments, which included keyboard, trumpet, flugelhorn, string bass, drums and vocals. They have obviously enjoyed playing together for a number of years.

The occasion, featuring a generous supper, was both relaxing and stimulating and fully enjoyed by those attending. Grateful thanks are due to the enthusiastic committee of the Friends of the Tower who organised such a memorable experience.

with thanks to Ruth and Graham Bartle

*Friends of the Auburn
Tower Inc
PO Box 583
HAWTHORN BC 3122
execofficer@auburntowerfriends.
org.au*

The Committee of the
Friends of the Auburn
Tower Inc.

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Secretary: Elizabeth Bethune
Treasurer: Ken Scott
Daphne Arthur
Pat Rogerson
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Cheryl Pisterman
Contact: 9819 1899

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New Minister at Auburn Uniting

The Reverend Bertram J Mather is the new Minister in placement at Auburn Uniting Church. Bertram was born in Sri Lanka, and trained in the Methodist Church there. He studied for a Masters degree in UK, and moved to Australia, where he joined the Uniting Church. He and his wife Stella, a dentist, have a son, Sam, who is completing his secondary education at Wesley College. Bertram was inducted on 12 March, and had already begun the task of visiting every member of the congregation. Bertram's placement at Auburn is 0.7 of full-time, and in his 'spare' time he is completing a doctoral thesis on Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The Mather family will move into the Manse at 81 Oxley Road as soon as minor refurbishment work has been completed. The Friends welcome Bertram to Auburn, and look forward to working with him to secure the future of the buildings.

Friends' Annual General Meeting 2015

Please keep the date free: this year's AGM will be held on Monday 26 October at 7.30pm. After the AGM, our guest speaker will be Mr Rod Gilbert, a descendant of Mr and Mrs Peter Johns, founding members of the Auburn congregation. He has written a biography of Peter Johns, and will speak about Johns' role in the creation of 'Marvellous Melbourne' in the 1880s.

Vale Enid Speedie

Enid Olive Lorraine Speedie was born on 19 January 1921 in Port Moresby, where her father, a horticulturalist, was working for the government. She had five elder brothers. The family returned to Melbourne in about 1925, and lived in various suburbs, including Murrumbeena, Malvern, Bayswater, Tecoma and Mont Albert. Enid attended Box Hill Girls' Technical School, where she studied shorthand and typing. She worked for ETA Foods (famous for its peanut butter), and, during World War II, was seconded to the Department of the Navy to work in the supply branch in Port Melbourne. After the War, Enid returned to ETA, taking long service leave in the 1950s to travel to England. After her retirement, she moved to Manningtree Road in Hawthorn, played golf and bowls, and enjoyed ballroom dancing at the Hawthorn Town Hall. She joined Auburn Uniting Church, was for a time secretary of the Church Council, and was a founding member of the Friends. As she neared 90 and became more frail, she moved to Uniting Age Well in Box Hill, but maintained her interest in Auburn UC and the Friends. As part of the Wishing Well project, Enid achieved a lifelong ambition to ride in a motorcycle sidecar in 2014. Enid was a much-loved 'maiden aunt' to her many friends, who remember with joy her regal wave, mischievous smile and beautiful handbags.

Enid died on Easter Day, aged 94. Her funeral was held at Auburn on 13 April, and she was buried at Lilydale Memorial Park.

Vale John Crutch

John Hampden Crutch, a long-term member of the Auburn Congregation and a founding member of the Friends, died on 10 June after a long illness, in his 92nd year. He was born in Surrey Hills and enlisted in the Australian Army when he turned 18, in 1941. He served as a gunner with 2 Field Regiment in New Guinea, and was discharged in 1946. He joined Equity Trustees as an office boy, rising through the ranks to become a senior trustee and manager. He married Margaret in 1950, and they have two daughters. John's funeral was conducted by the Rev Bertram Mather at Auburn on 18 June.

Major General¹ John K Forsyth CMG

For this article, the latest in a series on Auburn personalities, we gratefully acknowledge the research of Robert Simpson, a volunteer at the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum, 106 Wharf Street, Maryborough, Queensland www.maryboroughmuseum.org. In this, the centenary year of the Gallipoli landings, we honour one of Auburn's Gallipoli veterans. This extract was edited by Alan Chuck, from whom copies of the full paper are available on request.



John Keatl[e]y² Forsyth was born in Brisbane on 8th³ February 1867. He was a son to William Forsyth and Eliza née Hood. William had been born in Tyrone, Northern Ireland about 1840 and migrated to Queensland in 1863. He married Eliza on 1st December 1864 in Queensland. She had also been born in Ireland in 1831. William was a building contractor and they lived in Fortitude Valley. John attended Fortitude Valley State School and then Brisbane Normal School. (The most important function of the Normal School was that of a training centre where pupil-teachers could see the best and most efficient teaching methods in operation.) After school he joined the clerical staff at a sawmill and later worked in a solicitor's office.

John enlisted in the Queensland Mounted Infantry as a Trooper in November 1885. He rose through the ranks and was commissioned on 18th July 1892 as a 2nd Lieutenant and was promoted to a Lieutenant in the Queensland Defence Force on 4th November 1892. He rose to the rank of Captain in the militia on 22nd September 1896. The Queensland Mounted Infantry in 1896 has Captain John Keatly Forsyth in No. 2 Company, Hammant from 1st July 1896. He was then appointed as a Lieutenant on the headquarters staff of the permanent Queensland Defence Force on 1st August 1897. The Gazette of 1897 noted he was to be a Military Clerk.

On 10th November 1897, in a Wesleyan Methodist Church in Brisbane, John married Catherine McMaster. Catherine had been born in Brisbane on 7th January 1869, a daughter to John McMaster and Catherine McInnis who had been born and married in Scotland. They migrated to Australia in 1855 and settled in Brisbane. John McMaster was an Alderman and Mayor of Brisbane and involved in other government positions. The Forsyths had five children; Kathleen born in 1898, John Hood in 1900, Doreen Mabel in 1903, Evelyn Margaret in 1905 and Stanley William Roulston born in 1907. They were all born in Queensland. All lived to adults, except Stanley, who died in 1908 in Melbourne of pneumonia.

In 1905 he became secretary to Major-General Henry Finn who was the Inspector-General of the Commonwealth Military Forces in Melbourne, which meant the family moved to Melbourne, the transfer being dated 1st February 1907. John served in the 3rd Military District of Victoria on the Instructional Staff from 1st February 1907 to 30th November 1910. He was promoted to Major on 28th May 1908 in the Administrative and Instructional Staff.

After the outbreak of war, John applied for a commission in the 1st Light Horse Brigade AIF and dated the form 24th September 1914. He signed the recommendation himself. His physical description was not written in, but it was noted a medical certificate was attached (and now is not). On 15th August 1914, Lieutenant-Colonel John Forsyth was appointed to the Officer Commanding the 1st Light Horse Brigade and was promoted to Colonel (temporary) whilst in command of the Brigade from 17th September. His records state he was appointed Temporary Colonel for the period while organising and raising the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade and 4th (Divisional) Light Horse Regiment 1st Australian Division in Australia and bringing them to Egypt. His address was given as "Hillside" 10 Bayview Avenue Auburn, and changed to 27 Linda Crescent Hawthorn at a later stage though no date is noted.

John embarked from Melbourne on HMAT Orvieto on 21st October 1914 with the 1st Light Horse Brigade Headquarters. He was listed on the roll as Colonel (temporary) John Keatly Forsyth, age 47, an address of 10 Bayview Avenue Auburn Melbourne, religion Methodist and the date of joining as 15th August 1914. His pay rate was 45 shillings a day in total. On arrival there, command of the 1st ALH Brigade was handed over to Colonel H G Chauvel on his arrival from England. Chauvel had been in England as the Commonwealth representative on the General Staff. John's appointment as OC 1st

Light Horse Brigade was terminated on 12th December 1914. On the 13th, he was to command Division Light Horse (4th Regiment) with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He commanded them in Egypt. There is a picture, in 1915, of him out riding with another officer in Egypt with the description as Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Forsyth, Commander of the First Brigade, Australian Infantry Battalion. On 5th April 1915 he proceeded to join the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force at Alexandria. He commanded the regiment until 19th May 1915, when he was appointed Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General on Divisional Headquarters, 1st Australian Division, and took up the duties with this appointment at Anzac Cove on Gallipoli on 25th May 1915. He continued in that post until they were evacuated to Mudros on 10th December 1915 in the small transport Abbasseih. Forsyth had been told they were going to Imbros, but as no confirmation was received from headquarters, they went to Mudros.



On 26th March 1916 he embarked on the Megantic at Alexandria to join the BEF and disembarked at Marseilles on the 31st. The 2nd Brigade was sent to the front line almost immediately and spent six months in strenuous work. Then they were involved at Messines, and at the Somme and Pozières. At Pozières, the men were being heavily shelled and their own shelling had obscured artillery observers from seeing what was happening. On receiving the message from Jess, General Forsyth answered: "Men must and will fight if necessary. All artillery now turned on to stop bombardment." At Moquet Farm, some of the attacking battalions reached their goal, while others were beaten back. Forsyth decided that the reserve Battalion should be sent to Munster Alley to bomb their way through, but when he heard that a company had been repulsed from the German lines, he countermanded the order, as he realised it offered no chance of success.

In August 1916 he embarked for England on HS St. Patrick from Rouen with a mouth ulcer. The ulcer was probably one symptom of his breakdown in health, which resulted in him being sent to a London hospital.

On 6th October 1916 he was recommended for a CB by Major-General H B Walker who wrote "Commanded the 2nd Australian Infantry Brigade in the two operations in the battle of the Somme (at POZIERES) from 22/7/16 to 26/8/16. In the first operation his

Brigade at first held in Divisional Reserve until eventually absorbed, on the 25th July, when his Brigade was subjected to continuous bombardment, and was very highly tried. Brigadier General FORSYTH has now been in command of his Brigade for over a year, and I am glad to have the opportunity of bringing his service to mention." It was not awarded. On 2nd October 1916, he was to temporarily command "B" Group AIF Depots in England while Lieutenant-Colonel J Lyon Johnson was absent on leave. He was struck off strength of 2nd Infantry Brigade on 12th November 1916 to return to Australia for duty. In mid-December 1916, Base Records sent a letter to his wife advising her that he was returning to Australia and would be in Melbourne about the end of December. On 12th November 1916 he left Portland to return to Australia on the HT Wiltshire for duty in Australia, and arrived in Melbourne on 31st December. Duty in Australia was approved by GOC AIF on 15th November 1916.

In the *London Gazette* of 4th January 1917, at page 253, he was listed in the Despatches as a Colonel in the AIF for his good work. He was also one of the Australian soldiers granted New Year honours by His Majesty the King for distinguished service in the field and was to be a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George as Brigadier-General John Keatly Forsyth, 2nd Infantry Brigade. It was published in some Australian newspapers as well. On 13th April 1917 his overseas service was terminated. For the rest of the war, he served in Australia. On 16th February 1917 he was Commandant of 4th Military District in South Australia and held that appointment until he was re-appointed Quartermaster General and 3rd Military member of the Military Board with the rank of Brigadier-General. He signed his Commission Form on 29th November 1917, being noted as Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Forsyth, Australian Administrative and Instructional Staff. John held the appointment of QMG for the next 4 years and he had a hard task at hand. After the war, all the troops coming home had to have facilities provided for them to ensure an efficient reception. Also all the stores, equipment, supplies and transport had to be disposed of by returning to stores or by selling and Australian military establishments in Australia and

overseas had to close. Then the AMF had to be re-organised due to changes brought about by the war. His application for war service leave gratuity was passed on 9th May 1919.

He was promoted to Colonel on 1920 and to Temporary Major-General in January 1921. John signed for his 1914-15 Star on 11th June 1920, his Mention in Despatches oak leaves on 20th September 1920, his Mention in Despatch certificate on 21st June 1921, his British War Medal on 15th November 1921, and his Victory Medal on 4th July 1922.

He is listed in *Who's Who in Australia* 1922 edition as:

FORSYTH, Brigadier-General John Keatly, C.M.G.; b. Brisbane, 9 Feb. 1867; s. of late William Forsyth, builder; ed. Fortitude Valley State School, and Normal School, Brisbane. Joined Headquarters Staff of Queensland Defence Forces as Lieutenant prior to federation, and held various Staff appointments in Australian Military Forces; organised and took to Egypt 1st Light horse Brigade A.I.F. at outbreak of European War 1914; commanded 4th (Victorian) Light Horse Regiment (in Egypt); appointed A.A. and Q.M.G. 1st Australian Division on Gallipoli, and given command 2nd Australian (Victorian) Infantry Brigade at Gallipoli, July 1915; after evacuation commanded brigade in Egypt and France (invalided; mentioned in despatches, Nov. 1916); C.M.G., 1 Jan. 1917; Commandant of 4th (South Australian) Military District until July 1918, when appointed Quartermaster General Central Administrative Headquarters, Melbourne, and Member of military board. M. Kate, d. of Alderman John McMaster, Brisbane. Address- Victoria Barracks, Melbourne; Linda Crescent, Glenferrie, Melbourne, Vic.

John was placed on the unattached list in July 1922 and lost the rank of temporary Major-General. The 1924 Electoral Roll has them living at 6 Hepburn Street in the division of Kooyong and he has no occupation. He retired on 9th February 1925 with the honorary rank of Major-General and was placed on the Retired List. "Dad", as he was affectionately known by soldiers in the 4th Light Horse, was president of the Light Horse Association. He also attended the Auburn Methodist Church and was an influential member there. He then was secretary, and later on field superintendent, to the Nationalist Federation of Victoria. After transferring to the National Union, he was selected in 1928 as the second candidate in the Victorian Nationalist Party's Senate team.

John Keatly Forsyth died on 12th November 1928 in Melbourne at his home. He had succumbed to pneumonia. An article in the *Narrandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser* contained the following story:

Mr. John Keatly Forsyth, one of the two Nationalist candidates for the Victorian Senate, died on Monday. He contracted a chill a week ago while electioneering. He collapsed and died painlessly at his home. His sudden death has caused a great regret among a large circle of political, military, and civilian friends. General Sir Harry Chauvel said "Major General Forsyth and I first became associated in 1891 in Queensland where we served in the Queensland Mounted Infantry. His sudden death is a great shock to me. We had had almost a lifelong friendship and I regard Major General Forsyth as an organiser of exceptional ability, and one who has given valuable service to the Australian Military Forces." Mr W A Watt, an acting Prime Minister in the war commented "It is my regrettable duty to announce the death of Major General Forsyth. This sad event throws a pall over the elections. Those of us who knew him knew what a splendid character he was. Apart altogether from his gallant career as a soldier, he was a public-spirited citizen of high ideals." The RSL Victorian branch also gave him a tribute "The League stands to-day in the shadow of a great loss. Major General Forsyth was Chairman of Anzac House, a position that brought him into close touch with the League's work and furnished opportunities for service to old comrades. He always maintained that the chief work of the League should be the upholding of the good name of the AIF and the strengthening of the feeling of comradeship among those who served, and the adoption of this view by many branches and branch officers is undoubtedly due to the influence exerted by him during his travels through the state.

At 11am on 14th November 1928, the funeral was held at the Methodist Church in Oxley Road Auburn, where he had been a prominent member for years. Many high ranking officers and friends attended. He was buried in Boroondara General Cemetery,⁴ in the Wesleyan section with the grave location WES C 0336, with full military honours. Buried with him are his wife (11th August 1956) and youngest son Stanley (28th September 1908). *Who's Who in Australia* of 1933-4 has him in a list noting his death. His widow's address was noted in his records as 6 Hepburn Street Auburn in 1934.



An officer who was on his personal staff during the war and remained in close touch with him afterwards, wrote some notes about John and his career. He said it was “a sincere attempt to delineate the character and qualities of a man who was indeed a man and a universally beloved leader. In this capacity of inspiring trust and affection, General Forsyth was seldom equalled and probably never surpassed.” He also acknowledged he had his faults. Actions he faced at Gallipoli included the landing at Suvla Bay, Lone Pine and the demonstration at German Officers’ Trench. If not for his protest, the third line of men would have been mown down as the first two were in that last attack. Such was the devotion of his men that they stayed in the front lines. When they were relieved in the front lines later in August, the sight of the “haggard,

almost emaciated men of the First Division, filing down the gully side by side with the fit and bronzed men of the Sixth Brigade straight from Egypt” coming up the hill. They had refused to go to sick parade and stayed in the line under much hardship. “It was these men whom Forsyth led down the slopes of Anzac to embark for Lemnos. Already there had sprung up between commander and men a bond of sympathy born of dangers and hardships shared.” At Lemnos they paraded past Forsyth and it was with the greatest difficulty that he was able to suppress his emotion and remain at the saluting point due to their poor condition and the gaps in the ranks. This bonded them more together. While at Lemnos John helped to establish a happy atmosphere there which was essential for the rest and recuperation the troops needed. He also noted that British nurses were not treated as well as Australian ones, so he got as many as he could to have them at informal meals at Brigade Headquarters and take them for picnics and donkey rides to boost their morale.

John enjoyed Church Parades and sacred music, but disliked the way the military bands played them. He would conduct the bands himself until they played them as joyous hymns of praise. He was tolerant of all creeds and when a petty difference occurred between Chaplains in the Brigade, he had a heart to heart talk with them in his tent and there was no more hint of differences afterwards while he was in charge. Having a meal on Gallipoli with General Forsyth was like being at a family dinner. “The talk was of home or of cheerful things.” Petty annoyances were put aside by common consent. He had a deep sympathy and ready sense of humour. Strict rules were unnecessary and simple courtesy and fellowship applied.

They were all happy to leave Anzac Cove as was Forsyth, who had the hope of going home to wife and children. But he also felt the loss and frustration, “of wasted lives and wasted days” and would have gone back to take up the struggle, no matter the cost. His men “would have gone with him, gladly and without regret.”

While back in Egypt, he had four horses that were named after his four children. His devotion to his family also applied to his staff, officers and the whole Brigade.



After arriving in France the first three months were a comparatively quiet time, where Forsyth spent time with them encouraging and talking to them. “Forsyth was deeply religious but he never thrust his beliefs on his comrades in a way which could possibly offend them or lead to ridicule. All ranks of his command realised his sincerity and his deep resolution to carry on the war with determination and honour.” At Pozières, where the Brigade lost about half its strength, it did not affect his judgement, decisions and execution; but it did have a severe emotional strain on him which led to a breakdown in his physical health. An illness which had been affecting his strength for some time became more serious and he was transferred to London. His command had been one “of wisdom and justice, of kindly interest in his men and of self-sacrificing devotion to duty.”

He did have issues with British officers due to the faults he could see in them. His bluntness with General Birdwood at one stage at Pozières did not help with his popularity with the higher command. "He was a strong man, mentally, morally and physically. He never passed on blame and sometimes took the responsibility when another should have accepted the blame. When he could not get physically fit enough to return to the front, he was sent home." Two years after his death a plaque was unveiled in his memory at the Methodist Church in Auburn. The ceremony occurred on 28th September 1930, conducted by Chaplain-Colonel Snell, with an address by the Reverend J Thomas. His widow and all their surviving children attended.

John Hood Forsyth (a station hand) married Edna Leatt Pryor in 1933 in Victoria, but he passed away on 29th May 1938 of pneumonia. Many notices were placed in the Argus concerning his passing from family and friends, on 30th May 1938. His funeral left Scots Church at Yea that day following a service there. It is not known if they had any children, but it would appear not.

Catherine and her daughters lived at 6 Hepburn Street in the 1937 roll until the 1949 roll, and then from around the 1954 roll at 10 Hepburn Street Hawthorn until her death on 9th July 1956. She was buried in the same grave as her husband and Stanley. It would appear none of their daughters married. On 17th July 1967 one of his daughters, Doreen Mabel Forsyth of 10 Hepburn Street Hawthorn applied for his Gallipoli Medallion on the official request form, after sending in a letter asking for it to be issued to her.

At her death in 1989, Doreen Mabel Forsyth, the last surviving child in the family, bequeathed money to Legacy and also gave them his medals for them to sell. They are now on display in the Maryborough (Qld) Military and Colonial Museum. His medals are CMG, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory medal with oak leaf.

Endnotes:

- 1 Forsyth's military rank changed many times during his career. For simplicity, the rank by which he is best known, and as shown on his memorial plaque, will be used throughout this article, except where the context otherwise requires.
2. There is considerable confusion over the spelling of his second name, the records being equally divided with and without the second 'e'. For consistency, the spelling adopted on the brass memorial plaque in the Church will be adopted throughout this article.
3. There is also confusion as to his date of birth, both 8th and 9th February being found.
4. The Friends visited the Forsyth grave as part of the Auburn 125th Anniversary in 2014, and were pleased to find it in good condition.

List of Illustrations:

Page 3 Signed photograph, dated 1914

Page 4 Medals and decorations

Page 6 Grave, Boroondara Cemetery

Page 6 Memorial plaque, Auburn Uniting Church

Items from this Newsletter may be reproduced with due acknowledgement

Friends' Event Programme

Wednesday 16 September, 10am – Visit to Bishopscourt

Having visited historic buildings associated with the Crown (Government House), the Legislature (Parliament House), and the Judicature (Supreme Court Library), the Church is next. Friends and their guests are invited to visit Bishopscourt, the home and garden of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne and Mrs Freier. The cost is \$15 per person, which includes morning tea. Proceeds to maintenance of the garden.

We have to submit the names of all attending at least one month in advance, so registration is essential. Please register with Cheryl Pisterman, Executive Officer, not later than Friday 31 July. Please indicate if you are able to provide transport from Auburn to East Melbourne; or if you require transport; or if you require disabled parking in the grounds.

After the tour, which will conclude at about 12 noon, Friends and their guests are invited to stay for an optional lunch in the Pavilion Restaurant in the nearby Fitzroy Gardens, on a pay-as-you-go basis.

In *Early Melbourne Architecture 1840 - 1888* we read:

The severity of this handsome square stone building is lightened by the enriched cornice and white paintwork of the windows. A feature of the house is the arched and pilastered verandah opening on to the spacious lawns. . . The site for Bishopscourt was bought by the Government in 1848, but owing to the gold rush it was impossible to get workmen for the building which was not completed until 1853. The first occupant of Bishopscourt was Bishop Charles Perry.

Bishopscourt's extensive gardens should be at their Spring best in September.

Tower Open

The next Tower Open Day will be on Saturday 10 October, from 10am – 4pm. If you haven't exercised your right of free admission to the Tower, this is your next opportunity.

Renewal time

Friends whose subscription expires on 30 June will receive a reminder to renew their subscription in July; those who are paid in advance will receive a note of thanks, confirming that they are still financial. Members are invited to pay for as many years in advance as they wish. If you are unsure whether you are financial or note, contact Cheryl on 98191899 or execofficer@auburntowerfriends.org.au Please post your cheque to the Executive Officer at PO Box 583, Hawthorn BC, 3122 or if you are at Auburn UC, you may give your payment to Alan, Daphne or Pat.



Membership Renewal/Application 1 July 2015 - 30 June 2016

If you are already a member, please encourage more people to join. Membership applications to:

Executive Officer, PO Box 583, Hawthorn BC, 3122.

I/We apply for membership/wish to renew [delete whichever doesn't apply] membership of the Friends of the Auburn Tower Inc. in the category of:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Individual Adult | \$32 |
| Concession (under 18, over 60, concession card) | \$20 |
| Family (two or more people at the same address) | \$48 |
| Corporate membership | \$200 |

and enclose cheque payable to "Friends of the Auburn Tower Inc" for \$_____.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Address/Email: _____

I wish to receive the newsletter via email: Yes No

Membership is open to all who have an interest in this inspiring Hawthorn landmark, built in 1889. Members will receive a newsletter, reduced admission to concerts and talks, and free admission to the Tower.