

# AMISA Newsletter

Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts NSW, Inc

Volume 2, Issue 2: September 2014

## AMISA Website

Will launch in the near future

A working party met several times during the year with an aim to launch our web site. We plan to have the web site up and

the achievement of the Association's objectives or which promotes the development of adult education generally.

*The web site will assist AMISA to meet its objectives*

running during shortly.

It will serve AMISA, our members and other people. It will assist us in meeting our objectives:

- a. To foster the preservation and restoration of the social, cultural, educational and physical heritage of active Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in New South Wales.
- b. To encourage and facilitate the recognition and preservation of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts buildings and the revival of inactive Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in New South Wales
- c. To carry out any other activity which promotes

We will give you more detail about the web page closer to the launch.

**We thank the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts for their grant. It enabled the set-up of the web site.**

## Electronic (Email) Contact

We encourage you to provide us with an email address on which we can contact you.

## Insurance revisited

Earlier we circulated information regarding two firms that arrange insurance for Not For Profit organisations:

- Aon Risk Services Australia Limited
  - 1800 806 584
- Community Underwriting

## In this edition

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AMISA Website

Electronic (Email) Contact

Insurance revisited

AMISA Committee 2014

Q & A No 2: Where and how did Mechanics Institutes / Schools of Arts originate?

The AMISA project on WWI Memorials in Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes

Community Underwriting recently advised us they were prepared to offer a 25% discount on public liability insurance. They advised:

"Our security have confirmed that we can offer your members a 25% discount off our standard rates for Public Liability.

“Our offering would be:

“\$10 million cover, total premium \$591.10 inclusive of all charges

“\$20 million cover, total premium \$676.55 inclusive of all charges

“Cover would exclude any trades exposure eg, where trade activities being physically undertaken as we have rated based on Other Community Education.

“Should any other covers be required these would be on an individual basis.”

We attach:

1. Short form liability proposal form
2. Brochure on the products they offer

You should address your correspondence to

Sarogini Millot or Paula Cruden at the address provided and make reference to ‘School of Arts’.

### *Q&A No 2 – Where and how did Mechanics’ Institutes and Schools of Arts originate?*

George Birkbeck, a wealthy Quaker MD, who was a professor of natural philosophy at Anderson’s Institution in Glasgow, from 1799 to 1804, began to offer, in 1800, a free course of Saturday evening lectures for mechanics or artisans [or in today’s terms skilled trade persons], designed to familiarise them with the scientific principles that underpinned the work that they did and the tools and machinery that they used in their everyday work.

The class met with immediate

success [soon some hundreds of mechanics were attending each Saturday evening] and survived its originator’s departure from the institution. In 1822, a number of former participants in the classes begun by Birkbeck, formed a separate body, the **Glasgow Mechanics’ Institute** and invited Birkbeck to be its first president even though he was then no longer living in Glasgow.

He was living in London, where he was practicing medicine. Later the suggestion was made that Glasgow example should also be followed in London. The result was the creation of the **London Mechanics’ Institute**, the development of which became the lifelong work of the man whose name it now bears, Birkbeck College, a college of the University of London.

## *AMISA Committee 2014*

President	Roger Morris AM	Roger.Morris@uts.edu.au
Vice President	Winsome Allen	winsome.allen.au@gmail.com
Secretary	Phil Reed	kim-phil@bigpond.com
Treasurer	Carole O’Brien	obriencarole78@gmail.com
Committee	Harold Barnes Kathleen Bearsby Max Johnson Robert Parkinson	

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In the meanwhile (1821), a similar institution had been founded in Edinburgh called a School of Arts; as we noted in

our last Q & A the term 'arts' as it was used here meant the **practical arts** in much same way

as NSW high schools used the term "**Manual or Industrial**" Arts.

## *The AMISA project on WWI Memorials in Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes*

Last month the world marked the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. By the end of the First World War there were very few people in the countries that took part, who remained unaffected. The war reached out and touched almost everyone's life in some way or other.

As you will have noted from the media there will be a number of events associated with the anniversary over the period from 2014 to 2019 to mark Australia's involvement in this great European war. There will also be a number of publications presenting new perspectives on the events of 100years ago.

By the time of the First World War, the School/Institutes movement in NSW was at its peak both in terms of number of schools/institutes and their level of activity.

During war, soldiers were fare welled and welcomed back home in the local School or Institute Hall, patriotic and fundraising events, and groups meeting to knit socks, to knot camouflage nets or to pack "comfort" parcels for soldiers serving overseas and prisoners of war all used the School's facilities.

In many localities, the School or Institute was the only public building beside the local public school [the other common site of WWI memorials]. Therefore, many of the local War Memorials or Rolls of Honour were located in and/or co-located with the local School or Institute.

Moreover, because of an outpouring of patriotic fervor some Schools or Institutes were renamed as the Soldiers' Hall and the some new Schools of this period were built as Soldiers' Memorial Schools of Arts; for example Campbelltown, Guildford, Liverpool and Sutherland to name but a few.

At the AMISA 2013 AGM Roger Morris "**tabled a proposal for the collection, collation and the publication (on our new website and possibly in booklet form) the illustrated details of local WWI memorials that are in and/or co-located with a School of Arts or a Mechanics Institute.**"

Letters have been sent to some 80 schools and institutes believed to have such memorials. If your School or Institute has received such a letter, could please ensure that the appropriate information is returned as requested, as soon as possible, so that your school or institute is featured in any future publication.

If your School or Institute has such a memorial and has been overlooked in the mail out could you please contact Roger Morris at Roger.Morris@uts.edu.au

It is anticipated that the material needed for this project can be collected, collated, written up and formatted for publication over the balance of this year [2014].

The obvious and most appropriate date for the launch of the publication would be around ANZAC Day 2015 – the 100th Anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli.

Robert Parkinson and Roger Morris are the Principal Researchers and are coordinating a team of AMISA volunteers who will work on this project.

**PLEASE PARTICIPATE IF YOU CAN**



Guildford War Memorial



Berry School of Arts Honour Roll

**A TRIBUTE TO THE RSL**

I joined the RSL 60 years ago in November 1941 at my local RSL sub Branch Thornleigh-Normanhurst. It was a magnificent occasion, I was given a welcome home by my mates at a social event I will never forget, in the old School of Arts Hall, Thornleigh. I was just 16 years of age – what memories! I believe that I was the youngest person to ever join the RSL, having just returned from the Middle East on board HMT *Aquitania*.

EXTRACT from a letter to the RSL NEWSLETTER published in 2001