



STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES:

APPLYING THE “SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION” THEORY

The Archives recently received this photo of a family group having afternoon tea in front of “The Hermitage”, a home in Point Piper. It was taken about 1907.



What does the image have to do with PLC Sydney? The three ladies – sisters -- attended our College between 1895 and 1902, as well as a fourth sister who is not in the photograph.

Edith Marjorie Barton is pouring tea and her husband, Gordon Dixon, is sitting in the rocking chair next to her. Ursula Barton seems to be giving something to the dog and Olive Barton is holding her teacup at the extreme right.

The Barton sisters were all boarders from Wellington, NSW. They sat for Trinity College music examinations, played tennis and basketball, were members of the Student Christian Union, and their names frequently appeared on the term’s Roll of Honour and in the annual list of prizes.

But it is the fourth gentleman from the left, who appears to be looking down at his pipe, who is arguably of greater interest. He is the sisters' cousin Andrew Barton Paterson, better known as the poet "Banjo" Paterson (1864-1941).

Edith's granddaughter tells us that the sisters, while students in Croydon, would occasionally visit their poet cousin who lived with their grandmother at "Rockend", a large sandstone house on the slopes of the Parramatta River in Gladesville. The girls' uncle would collect them from the College and drive them in a pony trap drawn by three little ponies (Dot, Dan and Doodie) to the Parramatta River. There they all boarded the punt to cross the river and from the shores of Bedlam Point drove up to their grandmother's home. Today "Rockend" is better known as the "Banjo Paterson Cottage Restaurant".

Certainly the photograph is interesting in itself for learning about fashion, social customs and architecture, but knowing "the story behind the picture" not only brings it closer to us, but also increases its interest and value to us.

