

# The Rush to Rio's Gold

That smiling face is Avoca's Riley Fitzsimmons who's in seat number two in a four man kayak, heading for Rio. "We're defending the gold that Australia won in the K4 in London and so I guess we have the target on our backs," he says. Right now Riley is in Europe, training by competing in a series of World Cups. They won the World Cup at Duisburg in Germany and had to compete in two more world cups before doing seven weeks of heavy training at Szolnok in Hungary, now in progress. Those weeks are what they call the hell weeks or summer slaughter.

Riley reports he likes the second spot. "If number two is not doing his job the whole boat falls apart." Number one is the guy who sets the tempo and Riley passes it on. Their strategy is worked out before the race. "If someone were to change it during the race, that could throw the whole boat out," says Riley. The crew is a mixture of two older paddlers and the young guns. "It's good to be with the older guys who've won before and us younger ones, eager to show we can match it."



What's a day of Olympic training like? Up at 6:00 am for an all-out paddle. Back for breakfast, then the pool, Skype to family, hit the gym and lunch. Then a power nap, a massage and the arvo paddle. Dinner at the hotel and then bed. Not much time for sightseeing though he did love the schnitzels in Germany, loved them a bit too much perhaps. Riley feels they have a great chance to bring home gold from Rio. Avoca will be cheering whether they do or not. Go Riley! And go Loccy Tame too! He's racing in a K2 at Rio and was featured in our last newsletter.

By Emma Livingstone and Lily Cracknell



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Carol Fortey - President of ABCA

#### ABCA NEWS...

The 5 Lands Walk, 2016 is fast approaching. It's on Saturday, 25 June. It is a community festival and cultural walk from Macmasters Beach to Terrigal. For more information and to register go to www.5landswalk.com.au

The Avoca Beach Primary School Fair is also coming up, Sunday 21 August, 11.00 am – 4.00 pm. Rides, raffles, live entertainment, homemade cakes and jams. Please support our local school.

Congratulations to 16 year old Dylan Littlehales, from Avoca Kayak Club, who has secured a place on the Australian Paralympics Para canoe team. He is heading to Rio with his friends Riley Fitzsimmons and Lachlan Tame.

Congratulations to all the Avoca Beach Surf Club competitors at the 2016 Australian Titles. In particular to Fletcher Armstrong, Finn Flaherty, Levi Kasun, Fletcher Cunningham, Sam Hutchinson, "The Zulus", Sharon Brierty, Nikki Drobot and Kristy McQueen who all won gold!

ABCA needs a Secretary. Our current Treasurer is also our acting Secretary. Please contact the acting Secretary at avocabeachca@gmail.com.au if you would like to join our team. All assistance will be offered to the successful applicant.

The Association's AGM will be held on Monday, 1st August.

**Carol Fortey** 

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### Join the Avoca Beach Community Association

Want to help protect the relaxed lifestyle that Avoca's village character and natural beauty offers?

Email us at avocabeachca@gmail.com.au

#### What will Council Amalgamation Mean for Avoca?

There are many unknowns ahead. A well researched article is something we would like in the next issue. Your thoughts for inclusion would be appreciated.

Will the promised efficiencies be achieved? Will the new structure favour developers over ratepayers?

With approximately 331,000 residents and only 15 councillors how will Avoca's issues be resolved?

Please email your thoughts to: avocabeachca@gmail.com.au

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## I Don't Do Portraits

How does one become an artist? It can be a curious journey if Margaret Fortey is anyone to go by. "I always had a pencil in my hand ever since I could hold one," she says.

Marg was born in New Zealand to a very poor family. Her dad was a builder but he had an accident. There was no worker's compensation in those days. It was a good Catholic family. They kept having kids, six in all.

When Marg was 15, she had to leave school and become a mother to her two brothers, ten years younger. Undeterred she went to night school and studied art under a great teacher. After more than a year at home with the boys she got a job as a window display artist for a Mr Cohen who owned a string of clothing stores. This was in Wellington.

Two gay employees, Frankie and Johnnie adopted her. "I was their baby." The boys dressed her up for a drag ball as a flower garden. To her mum she let on that she was going to a church social. There were no gays in Mum's world. Marg looked a treat, covered in flowers and greenery with a watering can for a hat. She loved dancing and would sneak out at night with her friend Gay to various Wellington dives. She won prizes. She became Miss Twist and Miss Gogo.

During the day could be fun too for this rather wild young thing. If she saw people coming when she was dressing the shop's windows she would freeze, as if she was a shop window dummy, then come to life and scare the pants off them.

Tragedy drove them away. She and Gay witnessed a terrible ferry accident from the train. Many people drowned and the morgue was below Mr Cohen's workshop. It was time to leave.

They saved enough money for a one-way ticket to Australia where she found herself work as a nanny in Double Bay for a Jewish matron who took an interest in her art, even offering to take her to New York and put her through art school. But something didn't seem right and besides she had a boyfriend so she passed up that chance.

Her boyfriend, Doug was a drummer. "Are you going to marry him?" her Mum asked. "He's very handsome." "No, there's this other guy." said Marg. The other guy was Steve Fortey who had seen Marg across the street in Coogee where she lived. He told his friend, "See that girl there? I'm going to marry her one day."

"And he hadn't even met me!" They did meet and every time he ran into her Steve would be friendly. After a very long time, outside a pub, the faithful Steve asked, "Where's Doug tonight?" "Oh, I finished with him a month ago." "I've waited two years for you to say that," replied Steve. They married and eventually moved up to Avoca, having kids and then grandkids.

# Margaret Fortey



As for art Marg had sold portraits to the matrons of Double Bay, scoring contacts via Steve who was a lifeguard at the Woollahra pool. But she didn't like doing portraits because she was always painting what somebody else wanted. She'd paint a child and the mother would say, "I'm having her teeth fixed so you might as well fix them now."

Her art career turned around up here when an agent, Peter Messer, saw her work in a show at Wyong and offered to represent her. At that point she became a professional artist.

"It's very hard now because people go to IKEA and buy big cheap prints."

Yet Marg does pretty well. She has in recent years won the People's Choice Award three times at the Annual Gosford Art Prize. She has clients for her large and beautiful paintings on silk in many countries and hangs in many shows, thanks in part to Mr Messer. She's also been a regular contributor to Ephemera, sculpture on the beach for the 5 Lands Walk. Nobody forgets her Volkswagen on the beach. See Marg on the screen on YouTube: Search The Artists of the 5 Lands Studios. M.R.

# – A Local Legend Quentin Riley –

I was not expecting Quentin to invite me to kayak up Saltwater Creek. The 67 year old Avoca legend had a very serious accident a bit over a year ago and I'd heard he wasn't much better.

But there we were, each in our own kayak - well mine was borrowed - paddling up this mysterious creek which got narrower and narrower till we almost reached the Bowling Club. It was like being in another world and on a rarely visited meadow, we saw wild deer.

Later Quentin told me stories about his sporting life. How he and six other mates had kayaked from Hong Kong to the Philippines across the South China Sea, a thousand kilometres in four days. That was back in 1990. It was a fundraising affair for a Hong Kong charity and the Australians set a cracking pace, shepherded by a luxurious mother ship donated by a very rich Hong Kong businessman.

One of the greatest fears was an attack by pirates. The captain of the ship had been attacked four times, the pirates coming from behind in high-speed inflatables. Then they'd shimmy up a bamboo pole and hold a gun to his head till he opened the safe.

Quentin's team helped keep pirate watch when not paddling armed with an M-16. The paddle regime was an hour on and an hour off, day and night. "We had the best time," says Quentin.

He's a tough guy. Just before his accident he was third in the world, second in Australia and first in New South Wales in board riding. He is also a very giving person, having been associated with local surf lifesaving and the nippers all his adult life.

And to think that his branch of the Rileys in Australia began with the theft of a handkerchief and a hat! His great-great-grandfather, John Riley, nicknamed Cowboy, was drinking in a London pub one day when he and his mates ran out of cash (this was in the early 1800s) so they sallied out on the road to commit a little highway robbery and having knocked over their victim, got his silk handkerchief and his hat too, a bonus as the victim fell. Minutes later they were back in the pub, drinking up the proceeds.

Well, they were arrested the next day and sentenced to death. "I have a transcript of the trial," says, Quentin. Luckily, some effective pleading letters got the sentences commuted to life imprisonment and all three found themselves in Australia in 1827.

Here, it seems, prison didn't hold Cowboy John very long. He proceeded to do very well, proving that if given a chance he could leave people's handkerchiefs



Quentin in Saltwater Creek

alone. He bought Riley's Island and built ships there and fathered sons who carried on as shipwrights and captains, one of whom, William, sailed to Sydney every week. William also found time to have seventeen kids, one of whom was Quentin's dad, Clarrie.

Clarence Victor Riley, Clarrie for short, was an equally enterprising little fellow, just four feet nine inches tall. He started a prosperous life as a deck hand on local ferries, soon had his master's ticket and then moved on to land transport, buying up every bus service in the area for a total of thirty buses.

He also owned taxis and perhaps needing an interesting destination for his various passengers, bought two movie theatres, one at Woy Woy and the other at Ettalong. He later built a third picture palace at Umina.

On Saturdays, a young Quentin would rewind the films and rush the reels between Woy Woy and Ettalong so that for the Saturday matinee which was always a double bill, they could use the one movie print in the two cinemas. A bit of reel juggling you could say!

Clarrie bought a new Chevrolet every year, an amazing acquisition at a time when few people had cars. As the wonderful Glenice, his long time partner and wife,



hovers in the background, Quentin tells how he would score the Chev on Saturday nights and offer Glenice the choice of one of three picture theatres for their date.

Quentin trained as a fitter and then a draughtsman, working on parts for boats at Garden Island. Not liking the long travel from the coast every day, he decided it would be better to be a local schoolteacher, teaching wood and metal work. Once in the system, he studied at night, to get an extra degree which added \$6000 to his pay, very welcome since he and Glenice by then had two little kids.

Even though Clarrie was well off, Quentin, it seems, never got a free ride. Clarrie did have a block of land right on the beach between the flags on which he built the couple a house.

"We had amazing summers there," recalls Quentin, "life at its best, me working as a lifeguard for Council in the holidays." They were sporting years too. In 1986 Quentin won every Malibu board competition on the coast. His dad, the pint -sized Clarrie, lived till over 100 in a pink house at the corner of Hillside and Karani.

A friend, Maggie Gillette, reports. "I remember seeing Quentin in the local playground full of parents, babies

and tumbling small children. He had organised discussion on equipment planning and safety. Every aspect of beach life interests him."

For many years Quentin taught wood and metalwork at Woy Woy High School which he loved, riding to school every day from Avoca on his bike or motorbike.

Quentin is also well known as the leader of the No Ship Action Group which opposed the sinking of the Adelaide just off our beach. Whilst the group was not successful in stopping the sinking, a much cleaner ship went down because of the group's actions.

So how did his accident happen? Quentin was in the surf sitting on his board, chatting with some friends when a big wave came up behind. He could see it was going to toss him off and he opted to dive, thinking he had a metre and half of water below him. But the turbulence hid the fact that there was a hard sandbar just below the surface. He hit it with his head and felt something go crunch in his neck.

He knew immediately he had done serious damage but managed to get his board to shore and walked up the beach where luckily he met Sharon Brierty. "I think I've broken my neck, Sharon." Quick thinking Sharon immediately asked the two lifeguards, Toby Cracknell and Josh Barnes, to get a neck brace on him and stabilise his head. This deed more than likely saved Quentin from spinal damage.

In the hospital an x-ray confirmed that he had indeed broken the vertebrae C2 in his neck. They further stabilised his head in a brace called The Halo, hoping over some weeks that the break would mend by itself.

But it didn't and they decided to put in a bolt. The bolt chosen was too long and in fiddling around the artery on the right side of Quentin's head was severed. If that hadn't happened his recovery would have been speedy but as it was, that terrible slip deprived his brain of blood, led to a stroke, three cardiac arrests, numerous complications plus double vision and the general enfeeblement he suffers today. Through all this long saga Glenice and many friends have provided incredible support. It was Glenice who helped him down the slope to the canoe and back for a paddle that day, ever loving and caring.

Quentin is by nature optimistic. When I asked him did all of this strife crush his spirits, he told me a lovely story. One day, six months after the accident, his brother was driving him somewhere and he was basking in the morning sun. Thinks Quentin to himself as he's enjoying the sun," It doesn't get much better than this."

M.R.

Maggie Gillette contributed



# Okay - Avoca is like minded about Like Minds

When the huge storm hit our community a little over a year ago, Avoca Beach was without power for almost a week. But there was a strange exception. Like Minds, the little cafe on the round Drive near the Scout hall corner was spared. It alone had power. It alone was a warm glow in the dark. Nobody knows why, but people were soon flocking there to charge their phones and as the blackout went on, to even camp in the café. Mel was pregnant, with baby Sol about to appear. Still they found the energy to meet the challenge. "We fed people on what we had, improvising. It was like the end of the world," says Mel.

Like Minds had been open at this point for about a year and whilst one can't say that the blackout made the place the well-known community hub it is today, Jimmy who runs it with Mel, says, "We certainly saw a lot of new faces." Mel adds, "It was like there was a halo around the place. Like how we were meant to be."

Mel has a catering background both in Australia and overseas. In the US she worked for a woman



Coffee House Avoca Beach Open Tues - Sun |4339 3219



who catered for the rich and famous. Back in Australia, at the other extreme, they had a little cafe at Hardy's Bay called Garden 2 Plate. When the larger space for a cafe and also an art gallery came up at Avoca, they grabbed it. With a bit of land beside the place where they could grow veggies and have a herb garden, it seemed like the perfect space to become the community hub they dreamt of. It would be a place where people would have not only great coffee but good conversations, make friends and connect with their creativity. "Making food is my passion," says Mel. "Making coffee is Jimmy's."

When they put in the veggie garden, leaving it unfenced, one local said, "You're crazy. People will take your stuff." "That's just what we want," they said. They have worm bins on site and make worm tea which they supply to others. Worm tea doesn't sound appealing but apparently it's good to use on gardens. They hope to be a model for other cafes, especially in the matter of recycling. They have already achieved zero kitchen waste. All food scraps are composted and fed to backyard chooks or snail bins where Mel and Jimmy live up off Hillside Road.

The big challenge is the solid waste." If we are to be role a model for other small family businesses which after all are the lifeblood of the Central Coast, we have to find ways to recycle our solid waste. We'd like people to bring their own coffee cups, instead of succumbing to the convenience of the takeaway cup. We'd like to run our grev water into reed beds in the garden beside the café. Eventually we'd like to be hooked up with a market garden to supply our veggies. At the moment they get produce from a farmer up on Peats Ridge and organic veggies from the company Nurtured Earth, a local Kincumber business. So many projects so many ideas.

How are they doing? "We are making enough to have a nice to life. We ain't rich but rich in life style. And what we love is we don't have to travel. We live a stones throw away and so both of us can spend heaps of time with our little fella, Sol."

How did they come up with the café's name? "While we had three names shortlisted, all embodied the same idea, all were about community bonding. And then, Bingo, We both loved Like Minds." M.R.

# A Piano on the Beach?

Do you know Yantra de Vilder? Chances are you do. Recent winner of a prestigious APRA award she's one of those who's making Avoca such an exciting place to live culturally.

"If you can get a piano on the beach I'll play it," said Yantra to 5 Lands Walk organisers, Pauline Wright and Con Ryan.

That improvised performance has been remembered by many as one of the highlights of the festival and led to Latitude 33, a multi media performance at Avoca Theatre. This composition of Yantras, created for the 5 Lands Walk, connected songs, dances and rituals, all happening globally at latitude 33 degrees south which is where we are on the Central Coast.

Missed the piano on the beach? Perhaps you've been lucky enough to have gone to one of Yantra's intimate house concerts. (Try to score an invite!) One of my favourites was Inga Liljestrom, all the way from Paris, a sultry singer who does amazing things with an old phone. (Watch her on YouTube: Inga Liljestrom, Yantra's house concert.)

If you don't know her yet let's dig deeper. Yantra is a force of nature and I'm off to see her. I walk down the stairs to her colourful and eclectic Avoca Beach home. Statues, sculptures, grottos and mosaics cascade down to the door and punctuate her well kept and productive garden. I knock on that door and she welcomes me, in a sunny kaftan with an equally sunny smile.

"I'll make you coffee", she says. Smash goes a cup and the unruffled Yantra confide, "I'll use it in a mosaic behind the fire place". Artistic moments strike Yantra at any time and often. The Artistic Moment is the topic of her doctorate in creative arts which she is just completing.

Yantra grew up with performance. Her mother Faith was Mr. Squiggles' first assistant. Faith was also the voice of Mouse on the Argonauts. This is before my time but you might recall the Argonauts on ABC radio. In 1950 the Argonauts Club had over 50,000 members who were encouraged to submit writing, music, poetry and



art. Renamed The Children's Hour in 1954, it became one of the ABC's most popular programs, running six days a week for twenty eight years from 1941-69. As a consequence Yantra's childhood home was full of artists and performers. Today Faith, who's in her eighties, is still a house concert regular.

Yantra describes herself as a composer and her resume is impressive. She has worked for the BBC World Service, for a range of community projects in Burma, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, London and more.

If you've seen her conducting the one hundred piece student choir as part of the 5 Lands Walk finale last year at Terrigal, (YouTube: Five Lands Walk Choir) or her performance art piece, Haiku (search for Haiku Yantra on YouTube) at the Regional Gallery you'll know she's all about collaboration and participation. Haiku by the way is another example of Yantra's love of connecting the local with the global. In this case connecting Gosford with its sister city Edogawa in Japan.

Of course Yantra performs in Avoca. She says the moment she walked into the Avoca Beach Theatre she knew she had to play there, and she has.

We couldn't close without mentioning Yantra's collaborations with David Helfgott at the Avoca Beach Theatre. David is the performer who inspired the academy award winning movie Shine. They will be at it again in August but if you want to go book early, they usually sell out. (Search Yantra and David Helfgott on YouTube)

H.P.



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# The Ryan Way. Con and the 5 Lands Walk

Becoming President of 5 Lands Walk was almost a lifetime away for Con Ryan, a young apprentice at the Eveleigh locomotive yards. Con tells an amusing story of an initiation trick they played on 15 year olds like him at the yards. He was invited to try the lung tester. This involved blowing into a brass tube and spinning a propeller fan at the end. An old guy went first and when he ran out of puff, young Con was challenged to not only beat his time but put a week's wages on the outcome as well.

What Con didn't know was that there were two tubes inside the casing. One you had to block with your tongue in order for the air to go through to the fan and in order for what happened not to happen. So Con is puffing away, the fan isn't moving and he's unaware that his face is getting darker and darker from blowback graphite loaded into a second tube. "I could have auditioned for a minstrel show," he says, "all you could see were my eyes. The old hands got a good laugh out of that."

The 5 Lands Walk on which Con has been such a force began eleven years ago. It came from an idea from Helen Polkinghorne who worked for Gosford Council as an activities officer at the time and had done the Cinque Terre walk in Italy. Elio Gatti, also working for Council, then took it over and ran it for five years with Council putting in around \$ 60,000 a year.

The walk became both famous and popular. But Council funds dried up in 2010 which is when Con became President. From then on it's been a matter of finding sponsorship from local businesses whose arms he gently twists. "If you're making a livelihood in the area, you should consider giving back to the area," he says.

The walk has gone from strength to strength, its motto: Connecting People to People and People to Place. This year it has connected with the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce to bring in the folks over there. The Ettalong Beach Diggers Club and the Gosford Classic Car Museum are new Platinum sponsors of the event.



Con Ryan around 15. His apprentice years

Also, for the first time it's connecting with the Northern Beaches via the Fantasea ferry service. Ferries working to a special timetable will bring people over to hook up with buses supplied by Busways. This year Busways will have eleven buses at the disposal of the walkers and in this case will be picking up for the first time at Ettalong wharf and taking people both to the beginning





Con in his home Gym which he shares with friends. Sessions three times a week

of the walk at McMasters and picking up from the end of the walk at Terrigal. Also, as in past years, buses will be looping the walk during the day, picking up those who have had enough or want to skip a section.

Con started out apprenticed as a fitter and turner. He then climbed through a variety of jobs to be head of

a company called Pax. The Pax plant covers many acres at Ingleburn and is in the business of making and packaging all sorts of toiletries and other household products. Says Con, "On average you'd find about five of our products in any Australian home." Pax is big and successful and that has allowed him, in retirement, to devote himself to community activities. But he still keeps one foot in the company door, he says.

Con remains extremely sporty with a gym in his house and a swim every morning, summer and winter. He's been a member of the Lizards for fifteen years, that intrepid group which plunges into the sea just past the surf club every morning and swims across the bay.

Another intrepid lizard is Pauline Wright who is as much a force behind 5 Lands as is Con. See her profile in this same edition of the Newsletter. Con the swimmer made the papers a few months ago because of a shark which he didn't actually see but which was close by. Worries about sharks seem to be outweighed though by the sheer pleasure of the morning swim for him and many others.

5 Lands Walk grows and grows. \$3,000,000 has been spent on Captain Cook's Lookout of which \$280,000 went into the stairs which now drop down from Del Monte to Winnie Bay. All along the walk more and more activities are being added with, for instance, an ever stronger emphasis on aboriginal culture at North Avoca, a fair in Avoca's Hunter Park for the first time and with all the ethnic community activities, nine cultures involved, now centred at Terrigal under the direction of Elio Gatti.

Elio is back on the scene as the cultural director. It promises, as usual, to be a wonderful event. Look out for the huge whale kite flying off Avoca Beach near the Lagoon and look out for the big man, with the close cut crew too. Con will be happy to say, "Hi."

Con suggests that you register on line to avoid the crush by visiting www.5landswalk.com.au

M.R.



# Pauline Wright: She Does Almost Everything

I remember the first time I saw Pauline belting out a bawdy French song, trussed up, buxom and bountiful. I was, let's say, discombobulated.

I knew her face as I had just seen it a few days earlier, arguing a legal matter. These are just two of the many faces of the ubiquitous Pauline Wright. Having studied both law and film making, Pauline expected to work in the arts. They still play an essential part in her life but her livelihood comes from the law. She is also a successful playwright, singer, songwriter and actor, both on the stage and screen.

To my mind, Pauline's most significant achievement has been helping to create our now famous 5 Lands Walk.

Pauline swims with the Lizards. (Watch on YouTube: The Lizard Diaries) They're a group of hardy locals who leap off the rocks each morning and swim across the bay. Do they fear nasty things in the water? Of course but that doesn't stop them. Pauline likens the drive of an athlete to something similar in an artist. "It's about dedication, putting yourself into a thing 100%."

In 2005, Con Ryan (also featured in these pages) asked Pauline if she would write and perform a play for the 75th and a bit anniversary of the Avoca Surf Club. Eternal Recurrents was the result. It was a well researched, historical account of the history of the club, beautifully performed and very well received.

Pauline and Con wanted to do another collaboration for Avoca that brought the surf club and the arts together. They went to talk to Council to see if they could get support. Synchronicity was at work. Elio Gatti had just been employed to pilot the inaugural 5 Lands Walk and was also working at Council. I had come back from doing the Cinque Terre and was keen to get something



similar going here. Elio asked if Pauline and Con would spread their efforts across all 5 lands, namely from McMasters Beach to Terrigal. They thought it a great idea and hooked up with Gavi Duncan and Phil Bligh, Aboriginal Elders, to advise on the project. Pauline was fascinated by their deep culture and the rest, as they say, is history.

"Each land has its own unique identity. Macs is pristine and bushy, Copa is the ancient gathering place for story telling, North Avoca is wild and serene, Terrigal is commercial and partying and Avoca is arts and coffee culture. Perhaps it's from the theatre, or perhaps the theatre is here because this is Avoca."



• Family Law

"I got the artists of Avoca together and they loved being together because being an artist, particularly a visual artist, can be quite isolating."

Another of Pauline's initiatives has been the 5 Lands Art Trail. (YouTube: The Artists of the 5 Lands Studio.) Over 20 artists, not all from Avoca, open their studios to the public a few times year. During the weekend of the 5 Lands Walk chosen artists are invited to paint in the open air along the path of the walk. "People get a chance to see some really extraordinary artists in action." This aspect of the walk has attracted some big prize money and is growing in popularity. Recounting all the things Pauline has done for the 5 Lands Walk, let alone other aspects of her life, can not be captured on this page. Pauline wrote and performed a play about Freda Carlo that was performed at the Avoca Theatre. (Keep your eyes peeled for a return.) This was the first time the theatre was used as a venue for live theatre and since then it's happened guite often.

And next year, as part of her day job, Pauline will be President of the NSW Law Society.

H.P.





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