



December 2023

SUIHAA Newsletter

A Message from the SUIHAA Committee Executive

Welcome to the December 2023 SUIHAA Newsletter.

It has been an eventful final quarter for the SUIHAA Committee.

The SUIHAA Annual General Meeting was held online on 16 September. An updated SUIHAA Constitution was adopted and new members of the SUIHAA Committee were elected. Louise Trott moved from being Treasurer to Secretary. Rodney Thyer was elected as our new Treasurer (see his alumnus profile later in the Newsletter). Anne Gotsis and Tasnim Rahman (IH 2012–2014 and 2016–2020) have joined the Committee as general members.

*Message from
the SUIHAA
Committee
Executive*

We are delighted to announce that the [SUIHAA webpage](#) on the University's website is now up-to-date. The University has agreed to update the page as new Newsletters and other information become available. The revised SUIHAA Constitution will be added to the webpage once it is approved by IH Council at its next meeting on 4 December.

The 2023 Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition received photos from 20 alumni, almost twice as many people as last year. The judges completed their work in October and awarded two top prizes and three runner-up prizes (see the article about the two top photos later in the Newsletter). The runners-up will be featured in the next SUIHAA Newsletter.

Alumni activities planned for early next year include the Walter Westman Lecture and an informal social gathering like the one we held in September of last year. We look forward to seeing you at these two events.

On behalf of the SUIHAA Committee,

Dennis Schatz (*SUIHAA President*)
Louise Trott (*SUIHAA Secretary*)
Rodney Thyer (*SUIHAA Treasurer*)

SUIHAA 2023 AGM

Louise Trott (SUIHAA Secretary)

SUIHAA held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 16 September 2023 via Zoom. The meeting was attended by 21 alumni, and we received 23 proxy forms for voting.

Dennis Schatz gave his President's Report on an active and successful year of engagement with alumni in various modes, via the de Graaff-Elms Roundtable, the Rosemary Berrick Photography Competition, quarterly newsletters, and a face-to-face alumni gathering at The Rose Hotel in Chippendale in September 2022. Dennis indicated his thanks to outgoing Secretary, James Kane.

Louise Trott as Treasurer reported on the balances of the two SUIHAA Commonwealth Bank accounts, yielding a total of \$26,485.40. The amounts paid to photographic prize winners and reimbursement of other expenses totalled \$465.00. Louise noted that the Commonwealth Bank has a rigorous process for changing signatories, and she was grateful to Commonwealth Bank staff who had now 'cleaned' up our bank account data. In the coming year we will open a CommBiz facility to facilitate overseas payments.

SUIHAA 2023 AGM report

Margaret Lemoh gave an encouraging report on the Bo Children's Hospital in Sierra Leone, with news of extra training for medical staff and an upgraded laboratory. However, the beds are all full, the need is greater than the facilities can supply, and funds are urgently and continuously needed.

Greg Houseman gave a report on behalf of the IH Council, which meets twice per annum. Greg reported that the University is working with two IH alumni to be caretakers of the IH Cabin. The University's Infrastructure Division (which has responsibility for the Cabin) looks forward to the Cabin being cared for and used well. Greg gave a detailed overview of the University's plans for the redevelopment of the City Road precinct (including International House), which led to a useful discussion in the meeting.

Harry Bergsteiner had tabled 7 motions for the meeting:

- Motion 1 asking to record the meeting was deemed irrelevant as the meeting was already being recorded.
- Motion 2 that SUIHAA should demand that the University of Sydney abide by the IH Trust Deed failed.

- Motions 3 & 4, which would require SUIHAA Executive members to live in Sydney, Newcastle, or Wollongong, were set aside for Constitutional discussion later in the meeting.
- Motion 5 regarding Committee members to be bound by meeting decisions was deemed self-evident.
- Motion 6 regarding asking members what the SUIHAA Committee should prioritise was defeated.
- Motion 7 that emphasis be placed upon a common Dining Room for the new IH building was passed unanimously.

The proposed amendments to the SUIHAA Constitution were passed unanimously without any requirement regarding where Executive members should reside.

Brian Farmer acted as Returning Officer for the election of office bearers and General Committee members.

Dennis Schatz was re-elected as President. Louise Trott was elected as Secretary. Rod Thyer was elected as Treasurer.

Committee Members elected included: Anne Gotsis; Mike Hirschhorn; Margaret Lemoh (Bo Convenor); Ros Madden.

Greg Houseman (IH Council Chair) Highlights IH as Keynote Speaker at SUPRA Symposium

Greg Houseman, IH Council Chair and IH alumnus (1975–1977), was a keynote speaker at the one-day symposium organized by SUPRA (Sydney University Postgraduate Symposium Association) on 19 October 2023.

*Greg
Houseman's
keynote at
SUPRA
symposium*

The Symposium, organized in recognition of the first international students coming to Sydney University about 100 years ago, welcomed U Sydney students, staff, and alumni with an interest in international student matters to gather and collaborate. The event aimed to bring together presenters and attendees to exchange valuable insights and experiences, all with the goal of enriching the broader international student experience and building stronger bonds within the University of Sydney community.

Greg emphasized the past and future contributions that International House has made and is yet to make to the University. The text of his presentation is at <https://supra.net.au/history-of-international-house/> and more information about the symposium is at: <https://supra.net.au/100-years-of-global-connections-international-students-and-the-university-of-sydney/symposium-100-years-of-global-connections/>.

Article in Honi Soit Regarding International House & Visit to the House by SUIHAA Secretary Louise Trott

Honi Soit article on IH

We thought you should be aware of a [recent article in Honi Soit](#) (the student newspaper at the University of Sydney) describing a stealth visit to the IH buildings, including photos that showed items left behind that makes it appear as if staff had to leave in haste.

As a result of the article, members of IH Council and SUIHAA were offered the opportunity to tour the House to see the situation firsthand. Louise Trott participated for SUIHAA and provides a brief overview of the visit here.

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We walked through all of the common spaces (Wool Room, dining room, recreation rooms, library, prayer room, gym room, laundry) and the working spaces (offices, storerooms, kitchen), as well as the 2nd and 3rd floor bedrooms and bathrooms (as a sample floor of accommodation). We also viewed one of the flats in the Maze Building.





*Recent tour of
IH building*

Overall, the building was secure and mostly dry, although it looked very dated, and worn out, given little visible renovation since the time of building. The kitchen looked clean and untouched since closure, and in the De Graaff Room there was a substantial amount of crockery intact. In the rest of the building all appliances and office equipment had been removed. There were several old television screens throughout, but they were of very cheap brands, of no value. The beds and desks in the bedrooms were in reasonable condition. Overall, most of the items left behind in the building were of little or no value. Even the tables and chairs in the dining room looked chipped and worn out. In general, the university has donated re-usable items to entities within the university where relevant.

The car park and Maze gardens were rather neglected and overgrown, with weeds in the car park and the Maze gardens returning to nature.

The University tradespeople visit the building regularly to undertake necessary repairs, replace light bulbs etc.

Most of the pictures, photographs, plaques, trophies, honour roll, etc. were removed at the time of closure and are in university storage. We asked University staff to have remaining photographs with plaques, and room memorial plaques, taken down, and added to the material already stored for us.

The contents of the Library Room were quite a mess, and it was easy to see that many of the books were of no value. However, some books have book plates with information about donors. The University Library staff will be asked to assess the collection for retention/disposal, and to identify any books of

significance or enduring value. Louise Trott offered to assist with identification of books with book plates if necessary.

We were rather surprised to see the storeroom full of personal belongings left behind by students who had to go home suddenly due to COVID in 2020. However, upon closer inspection it was obvious that these items were of little or no value; clearly the students had deemed the items not worth taking back home. Also in the storeroom was all of the bedding and curtains, which were also looking rather old, faded and ‘tired’. The university Vet School uses old blankets for the animal bedding, so we agreed that this bedding should be offered to them.

In the offices, all the records had been removed in 2020. However, more recently Hannah had found some SUIHAA magazines, which can join the SUIHAA Archival Collection (which is in SUIHAA custody).

This tour was highly worthwhile and it was useful to form a working relationship with the University staff, in order to work in co-operation for the benefit of IH, IH Council & SUIHAA.

Based on the visit, the Chair of IH Council is developing a list of action items with the University to ensure that any items of heritage value are stored securely until IH is reopened.

IH Redevelopment Update

Dennis Schatz (SUIHAA President)

There is not much new to report in this Newsletter, but there should be more to share after the 4 December meeting of the IH Council*. Representatives of the University’s Infrastructure Division will attend and provide the latest update. It will also be an opportunity for council members to share the urgency for redevelopment, especially in light of the recent highlighting of student housing shortage, especially for international students – see a [recent article](#) on this issue in the *Daily Telegraph*. We will continue to share any developments on the progress of the IH redevelopment as they emerge.

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the SUIHAA Committee will be revisiting the recommendations that alumni made to the University in 2019. The goal is to revise and/or reiterate the recommendations to emphasize the characteristics required to have an effective IH in the future that serves IH’s mission to promote the aims and ideals of

IH

Redevelopment

Update

international understanding within the University of Sydney and the wider community. Look for a draft of the revised recommendations in your inbox during the coming months, so that you can provide input into what is conveyed to the University.

Progress continues with shifting the responsibility of the IH Cabin to two IH Alumni, Sean Kristofferson (1991) and Iqbal Qureshi, who will be caretakers until IH is redeveloped. They have the keys to the cabin and report that the cabin is in reasonably good condition. The University requests that the Forestry Commission issue Sean and Iqbal a permit to be caretakers, with the understanding that the University will cover the personal liability insurance required by the permit. The Forestry Commission lawyers are now reviewing this request.

* For those not familiar with the University's structure to manage IH, the IH Council is the official group in the University to oversee IH's budget and policies. The members are appointed by the University's Senate. SUIHAA is a separate NGO (Non Government Organization), with the President appointed to be on IH Council.

SUIHAA Reunion - Save the Date

The September 2022 reunion was such a success that we plan to have another one. Put it on your calendar now!

SUIHAA
Reunion 2024

SUIHAA Reunion 2024
Saturday, 17 February 2024
4:00pm to ????

The Rose Hotel or other site to be determined

More information will be sent closer to the date.

Rosemary Berrick Photo Competition Results **Top Award Winners**

The judges had 50 photos to review this year, almost twice as many as last year. They were easily able to identify the two top award winners, but were challenged to settle on the two runners-up. It was finally decided to give three runner-up awards. The two top award winners are featured in this Newsletter. The photos from the runners-up will be featured in the next Newsletter. Similar to last year, the judges found other photos that deserved recognition. We will share some of these in Newsletters later in 2024. Below are this year's two top award winners:

Bernard Delcourt lived in IH for one year in 1972. He was then a post-graduate student at Sydney University Mechanical Engineering Department and eventually got a PhD in Mechanical Engineering at Adelaide University. He now lives in Brussels, Belgium where he is retired, but very busy with occasional business work, domestic affairs and hobbies. He devotes much time to tennis, photography, music and travelling.



Photo: Joining the Fun (June 2023 in Lons-le-Saunier, Jura, France)

*Rosemary
Berrick Photo
Competition
2023 – winners*



This photo was taken at 7:00pm at the Place de la Liberté in Lons-le-Saunier, Jura, France. People sit lazily around me at full café terrasses, recovering from the heat of their working day. At the far end of the square, excited kids are playing in the water fountains. I tried to capture their playful energy, a contrast to the lethargic demeanour of all the weary adults around me. Photo taken with SONY DSC HX400V camera.

Josh Lee lived in IH from 2007 to 2011, where he studied for a combined Bachelor of Commerce and Law. Since leaving teaching and management roles at the University, he has been doing much travelling between Sydney, Darwin and Vancouver while searching for meaningful opportunities in the analytics and education space.



Photo: Downtown Downpour (February 2023 in Sydney Australia)

This photo was taken a block down the road from my apartment in Pymont, Sydney. A neighbour watering their plants creating the only 'rainfall' on a hot summer's day.



Alumni News: Greg Houseman (IH Council Chair) and IH Alumnus (1975 – 1977) Elected as Fellow of the Royal Society

Greg Houseman, Emeritus Professor of Geophysics at the University of Leeds, and currently Chair of the Sydney University International House Council was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London on June 24, 2022. The Royal Society is effectively the National Academy of Sciences for the UK and, begun in 1660 by charter of Charles II, the oldest continuously existing national science academy in the world.

Below are Greg's thoughts about the experience:

It was a huge and unexpected honor to be one of about sixty new Fellows elected in 2021, across all academic disciplines within the UK and beyond. I was elected in recognition of my research which uses mathematical and computational methods to describe and understand tectonic processes in the continents, and the growth of mountain belts. I also designed and led several multinational seismological experiments in eastern Europe and Turkey, which revealed the active dynamical processes in the crust and upper mantle causing earthquake hazard in those regions – see photo. As Emeritus Professor at Leeds, I continue the computational side of that research.

*Greg Houseman
elected to Royal
Society*



Field group after one of about 100 temporary seismograph stations deployed and maintained for two years

My election to the Royal Society was approved in April 2021 at a point when Covid-19 was causing maximum dislocation, so the admission Ceremony in London was delayed by more than a year, but I was able to attend it along with almost all of the other 60 new Fellows. Prior to the meeting in person, we had a zoom-style meet and greet, in which all 60 were allotted 10 minutes to describe their research. I listened to all (although it went late into two nights, Sydney time), and it was fascinating to see the breadth and diversity of the fields represented and, in some cases, the magnitude of the impact that these people were having in the many technical, medical, environmental, etc. fields that are represented in that group.

The admission process involved a couple of days in London, during which we were shown some of the “treasures” of the Royal Society, like the gold mace given by Charles II, the original manuscript of Newton’s *Principia* and the first edition copy of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. The admission ceremony involves each of the new Fellows signing their name in “the book” – see photo.



Every year the book is expanded to include another page of new signatures and, as it includes the signatures on pages of vellum of everyone who has ever been admitted as a Fellow, it is now quite weighty. It is a nice thought that my signature is now there in the same book with those of Newton, Einstein, Darwin, and many other names that are prominent in the history of science.

As a Fellow, I participate in the review and decision process for award of science grants administered by the Royal Society on behalf of the UK government. I am also Earth Sciences subject editor for one of the major society journals: *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*. These are tasks that can be done remotely; regrettably I don't get to London often enough to participate in person at the meetings of the Society. As a consequence of being a Fellow of the Royal Society, I also seem to get an increasing number of invitations to review or comment on scientific papers, nominations, or grants for other organizations also – all unpaid of course. Just as well that I am retired!

Bo Children's Hospital Update

Margaret Lemoh (SUIHAA Bo Convenor)

The Hospital continues its work as an independent provider of child health care services in Sierra Leone where health care is still woefully under resourced. Patient numbers have increased and with more surgery being done it's becoming urgent to provide more beds for inpatients.

The latest figures on child mortality for Sierra Leone show that child mortality is declining. The current estimate is that 1 child in 9 dies

before their 5th birthday. This is still way too many, but it is an improvement on 1 in 5 before the hospital opened 11 years ago.

Our facilities are gradually being expanded. The laboratory was upgraded last year and now offers a good range of tests. We are now seeking a digital X-ray machine to help diagnostics, especially now that some surgery is being done. We need more beds for inpatients and would like to provide onsite accommodation for visiting volunteers from overseas.

Recently one of the 3 community health officers on our staff was offered a scholarship to attend a short course in tropical pediatrics in Germany next April and May. This will be a great opportunity for him to learn more about tropical medical and pediatric practice. It was the initiative of a visiting doctor from Germany, Dr Marta Alustiza. This is an example of the benefit of visits from overseas health professionals, which give our staff valuable opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills.

In an effort to advertise the hospital more widely and raise some funds we participated in the annual African Music Cultural Festival held in Federation Square in Melbourne from November 17-19. Alison, daughter of Nuli and Margaret Lemoh, organised a stall for the Hospital.



The Festival organisers were very supportive and gave us a stall right near the stage so it was very visible. Elizabeth Hassan, an ex-resident of IH made 7 beautiful dolls that we displayed on the stall and raffled. They attracted a lot of attention. Three winners were drawn each day, giving us airtime on stage and the chance to talk about the hospital.

Another ex-IH resident, Bronwen Bryant, helped out in the stall on two days. While we raised \$2,750 from the raffle, hair braiding and donations, it was publicity we were seeking. It was a great event, a taste of Africa Down Under, and hopefully has spread the word about the work of BCH.

Thanks again to all who have supported BCH to date. Do visit our website <https://www.bochildrenshospital.org.au/donation.php> for more information and keep it on your list of charities. All donations are spent on the Hospital.

Alumni News: Rodney Thyer (1970–1972)



*Rod Thyer: new
SUIHAA
Treasurer*

Rod Thyer is SUIHAA's new Treasurer. He was a resident of IH from 1970 to 1972 when he was an undergraduate student of the Economics Faculty. Rod has been in public practice for many years as a chartered accountant in his own firm which is located in Sydney.

He was an IH Council member from 2009 to 2019 when he chaired Council's Finance Committee.

Rod looks forward to catching up with his fellow alumni in his new role as SUIHAA Treasurer.