

An abiding passion for heritage

Many of the National Trust's members joined the Trust 25 or more years ago, actively supporting its work in many innovative ways. One of the longest standing is Dr Philip Rasmussen, who joined the Trust 61 years ago in its founding year. **By Diana Nelson**

Philip joined the Trust at the early age of 16, through his mother, Clara Elizabeth Rasmussen, Honorary Treasurer of the Ku-ring-gai Tree Lovers Civic League. Chaired by Mrs Annie Wyatt, the League had become concerned about the destruction of much of Sydney's colonial heritage, particularly in Macquarie Street. The National Trust was formed by the group on 6 April 1945, and Philip became an active member straight away.

A strong passion for heritage

On graduating from Sydney University with a degree in Dentistry, Philip sailed to England in 1955, where he restored the 1038 AD property *Church House* in Godalming, Surrey (now opened for World Heritage) and joined the schooner *New Endeavour* on its 8 month journey to Sydney. While on board he made the film *Beyond the Discoverers* –

the Voyage of the New Endeavour. His next journey to Australia – for Christmas – was made in a single engine Mooney 21 aircraft, which he flew with two friends, gathering material for his film *East via Katmandu*. Both films were screened to great acclaim at the National Trust headquarters.

One of the Trust's most generous supporters

On settling in Sydney, Philip became a life member of the Art Gallery Society (NSW). He was one of the original Gallery Guardians of the S H Ervin Gallery and was founding Vice Chair of the Friends of the Gallery, becoming Chair a year later – for 13 years. During this time, the Friends organised 169 functions and raised \$365,000 for the Gallery and Trust.

In 1994 Philip received the National Trust Voluntary Service Medal. He retired from the Committee of the Friends to 'make way for younger members', but was elected to the National Trust Council in 1983 where he served for 8 years. He was a member of the Conservation Fund Executive Committee in the 1980s and later Inaugural Chair of the Education Committee, which commenced the education of school students at the S H Ervin Gallery, where thousands of students were involved. When invited to join the National Trust Bicentennial Committee, Philip helped to raise around \$6 million for the National Trust. In 1991, he loaned part of his art collection for the exhibition *A Century of Australian Heritage* at the S H Ervin Gallery, also bearing the cost of curating the 96 works. He went on to donate \$10,000 towards the conservation of Trust property, Woodford Academy, the oldest surviving complex in the Blue Mountains.

Philip and his wife, Lois, were also mainstays of the Women's Committee of the Trust, helping to organise country weekends and making available their beach house, *Wybalena* at Palm Beach many times for National Trust functions.

Summing up his commitment to the Trust, Philip said recently, 'My wife, Lois and I can only wish the National Trust every success for the future of our built and natural environment, and for the continued support of the many friends and members who care for our finest organisation.'

