



PO Box 39  
Mosman NSW 2088  
Ph.0418 857 182

Patron: Gavin Souter AO

Affiliate Member: Royal Australian Historical Society

---

## **MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - April 2015**

Greetings.....

At our March meeting, we were treated to a fascinating talk full of surprising revelations such as the fact that rifle practice used to take place at the site of the Alan Border Oval. Neil Gibbin's presentation was on ***The Mosman-Neutral Bay Rifle Club 1915-2015***. The club was created at the time of WWI and is celebrating its centenary and still going strongly.

### **NEXT SPEAKER MEETING**

At 7pm on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, downstairs at Mosman Library, John Dansie will present to us on ***The Roads of Mosman***. John considers the history of our roads from 1830 on, their routes, naming, funding and construction as well as the provision of land, lighting, pedestrian crossings etc. He calls upon 40 years experience as a surveyor with the Department of Main Roads and Roads and Traffic Authority and is the foremost authority on Mosman's roads. *See attached flyer.*

The Society is also planning an excursion to Goat Island in October and a summer evening history walk with sausage sizzle at Mosman Bay in November.

### **SYDNEY HARBOUR FEDERATION TRUST**

The Mosman Sub-Branch of the RSL will be holding its annual **ANZAC Day dawn service** at the Georges Heights Parade Ground from 5.30am to 6.30am on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April. Commander Paul Gall RAN, Commanding Officer of HMAS *Penguin* will deliver the Address. As in previous years, a wreath will be laid on behalf of our members.

The Trust has recently made two 4-bedroom, 2-bathroom, comprehensively restored houses at North Head Sanctuary, Manly available for rent. They are the residences at 1 and 3 St Barbaras Avenue, built in 1937 for the Commanding Officers at the School of Artillery.

The Trust offers many interesting opportunities on a regular basis such as monthly tours of the historical fortifications at Headland Park, Georges Heights and Sunday tours of North Fort at Manly. *Further information from The Trust's website [info@harbourtrust.gov.au](mailto:info@harbourtrust.gov.au) or Ph. 8969 2100*

### **FLAGS and FLAGPOLES**

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May at 11am, we are invited to attend a flag raising ceremony which includes a bagpiper at The Scots Kirk in Belmont Road. The craftsmen at the Georges Heights Mens' Shed have been fastidiously restoring the church's old flagpole and a new flag has been created by flag specialist, John Vaughan. It is a Scottish-Australian flag incorporating a red lion. This will be the first time a flag has been raised over The Kirk for many years and it should be a wonderful occasion.

Involvement with the pole's restoration has lead John Dansie to observe the unused flag pole on Mosman Post Office and on several other post offices in our area. He is currently working on a project to bring them to the attention of the appropriate political figures and hopefully resurrect the practice of flag flying on all our post offices.

## **History feature - THE COAL MINES OF MOSMAN**

It had long been realised that a coal seam ran under Sydney, when in 1876 the NSW Government invited applications for permission to mine for coal on reserves within a twelve mile radius of the city. R.D. Adams successfully claimed all the area beneath the tidal waters of Port Jackson, plus an area of 70 to 80 acres between Bradley's Head and Mosman Bay. However the earliest mine in the district was at Cremorne Point.

In November 1893 an announcement was made that at Cremorne Point, with their second bore, the *Sydney and Port Hacking Coal Company* had struck a seam of good coal, over 10 ft thick, at a depth of nearly 3000 ft. The company made plans to develop a mine with associated wharves, skips and storage bunkers, the area to ultimately become a large coaling station for local and international shipping.

The residents of Mosman were alarmed at the prospect of a coal mine on their doorstep. At a meeting of Mosman Council in March 1894, aldermen argued that a mine and its debris would deface the natural beauty of the area and prove an eyesore to property owners. Progress was slow and opposition continued to increase. At another meeting at Mosman in June 1895, a strong protest was made to the Minister of Mines against the alienation of any portion of the reserve at Cremorne, or any of the foreshores of the borough, for coal mining and shipping, or for any other purpose which would interfere with public access and enjoyment. It would be a disfigurement to the harbour generally and the coal, they argued, could just as likely be reached from more secluded, less populated areas such as Ball's Head [*Newcastle Morning Herald*, 12/6/1895].

The mining company manager, T.S. Huntley, countered that all works erected would be "as sightly and unobjectionable as possible ... and will consume their own smoke". It would, he claimed, be of great advantage to the trade and commerce of the city, providing cheap fuel for shipping and manufacturing, while also creating many jobs [*SMH* 12/6/1895].

Meanwhile, in April 1894, Mr Huntley had also applied to the Mines and Lands Departments for leases at Bradley's Head, on land occupied by the military. Although the company's mineral lease was

under the harbour, a site on land was required for works buildings and for sinking the bores, and for wharves and other associated facilities. By late 1895 the company had been granted a twenty-eight year lease on 6 ½ acres at Bradley's Head for such purposes. Work commenced on clearing timber and scrub along 1500 feet of water frontage. Company plans also showed "an area for miners' cottages, a reservoir and a 37metre smoke stack at what is now Taronga Park" [<http://sydneyforeveryone.com.au>]. By November land was being levelled in preparation for erecting machinery to sink the bore.

This work had not gone unnoticed by Mosman residents who, at the same meeting the previous June protesting against the Cremorne operations, also strongly condemned these developments, the feeling of Mosman residents being "emphatically antagonistic to the converting of any portion of the foreshores of the picturesque borough into an extensive coaling entrepot". Similar sentiment was growing among the general population of Sydney, doubt growing about the wisdom of the Crown increasingly alienating foreshore land for industry, on the grounds of health and amenity. Parliament was encouraged to consider how the value of its own property in the vicinity of coal tips, as well as that of private owners, would suffer in the long term, becoming comparatively useless in future. Colliery companies should be encouraged to purchase, at market price, private land in surroundings more suitable for such an industry. Appeals were made to the Land Court resulting, by November 1895, in the cancellation of special leases granted to the mining company (now known as the *Sydney Harbour Collieries Ltd*) at Bradley's Head and work was ordered to cease.

Mosman's protestors had prevailed, and the company moved its operations to Balmain where, by 1905, a shaft was well under way. From there it was proposed to dig in various directions under the harbour, including towards the coal seams at Cremorne and Bradley's Head. R.D. Adams, the original holder of the Port Jackson coal leases, claimed that the objections had actually benefited the company, as Balmain was a more suitable location than Mosman, the coal being more easily transported from there to the main areas of population, industry and shipping in Sydney [*Australian Town & Country Journal*, 30/11/1901].

Phillipa Morris