

MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER – August 2014

VALE

The Society extends its sympathy to its Patron, Gavin Souter, on the recent death of his wife, Ngaire. Like Gavin, Ngaire made important contributions to the knowledge of Mosman's history through her various publications. The Society was well represented at her funeral.

UPCOMING MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Next speaker meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 10th September downstairs at Mosman Library. Anne Cook will speak about "The Mosman Parks and Bushland Association, 1964–2014". It was through this movement that the famous sisters, Eileen and Joan Bradley, developed their bush regeneration practices, which revolutionised conventional methods and became the basis of today's major business of bushland management. Please see the attached flyer for more information.

Annual General Meeting of Mosman Historical Society, will take place at 6.45pm on Wednesday 10th September, 15 minutes before the speaker meeting. All members are invited to attend especially those who would like to join the committee. Attached is an agenda and committee nomination form, also a proxy form.

November speaker: An authority from the New South Wales Police on crime in Mosman.

For your diary: On Wednesday 19th November 2014: DAYLIGHT SAVING EXCURSION TO THE SPIT. Discover the history, inspect the plaques, and enjoy our famous MHS sausage sizzle. Starts 5.30 pm. More info in October.

New members

We welcome new member, Tanya Evans, and returning member, Gail Fitzhardinge.

LOCAL STUDIES AT MOSMAN LIBRARY:

The next exhibition at Mosman Library celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Mosman – Neutral Bay Rifle Club. On display from 6th to 21st September 2014.

OTHER EVENTS:

If you have missed out on previous occasions, the Friends of Gore Hill Cemetery are again organising the popular Spring Tour of the heritage-listed Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery at St Leonards. Many North Shore pioneers are buried there, and much restoration has recently been carried out.

DATE: Sunday November 2nd 2014

TIME: 10.30 am – duration 2 hours

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL. Contact John May: 9906 5106 (after September 15th)

MOSMAN PAST..... 100 YEARS AGO: ELECTRIC LIGHT IN MOSMAN

One hundred years ago, in 1914, Mosman was gearing up for the introduction of electric lighting. Since 1887 gas was available to light homes and streets, but the cheaper, cleaner and more efficient electric power was still in its infancy in Sydney. Since 1893 electric trams had run through Mosman on power generated by the Railway Commission. By 1900 this authority also provided power for several individual electric lights along the tram routes, one each at the intersections of Spit and Military Roads, Military Road and Macpherson Street, and Avenue Road and Clanalpine Street.

At a meeting at Willoughby in 1893 Mosman Mayor Harnett praised electricity as an illuminant, and advocated its adoption for lighting the Borough (SMH 3/11/93). A co-operative venture was initiated in 1902 between the lower North Shore councils to achieve this objective, but progress was slow. Though suburbs south of the harbour were being electrified, lack of a reliable source of power on the North Shore was a problem. The North Sydney Lighting Bill of 1909 saw the matter as being "of considerable importance not only to North Sydney, but also to the outlying districts of Mosman, Willoughby and Lane Cove" (Evening News 24/7/10). Still little happened other than meetings and conferences between councils and progress associations, and representations from prospective suppliers. Though all agreed on the need for the electric scheme, no agreement could be reached on the action to be taken. To complicate matters, by 1912 the overwhelming need for a garbage destructor in the area became entangled in the plans, discussions and negotiations, and although all agreed on the need for an electric light and power scheme, agreement on the location of the destructor could not be reached. Further delays resulted.

Who was to provide the electricity service was under serious consideration by 1913, the main contenders being the North Shore Electric Lighting Co., and the City Council, which by then had extended electric lighting south of the harbour as far as Homebush and Botany. Mosman Council awaited a decision by North Sydney but those aldermen could not agree, calling instead for yet another conference. On March 11th 1914 the Evening News headlines reported that "Mosman Wants Electricity: North Sydney too Slow: Will Act Independently". "For years the question of electric lighting has been dangling before the Council and public without any progress at all" said the Mayor, Ald. Walker. Engineers from the City Council addressed Mosman Council, while their rivals addressed North Sydney. Lane Cove and Willoughby signed a contract with the City Council, and by June 1914, after further consideration and legal advice, Mosman did also, ensuring that Mosman would have electric light and power within twelve months. Not until February the following year did North Sydney come to an agreement and sign up to the same scheme. By July 1914 the City Council had authorised £7,000 for the erection of poles and wires in Mosman, and by 1915 houses were being connected to the service. Not until 1920 however were gas streetlights replaced, the whiter, brighter incandescent electric light finally supplanting the soft yellow gaslight. The electric light was much cheaper, costing the Council just £2/10/- per light per annum, rather than £7/5/- for gas.

All did not run smoothly of course – during the 1920s power failures in Mosman were becoming chronic as demand exceeded supply. Mosman Daily headlines reported “Electric Light Fails: Mosman Plunged into Darkness” (8/11/1925) and “Electricity Again Cut off in Mosman: Power Failure” (22/7/1929). Additional Mosman sub-stations and more electricity supplied from Bunnerong helped improve services. In July 1933 large crowds witnessed the official opening of the White Way – the switching on of brilliant electric lighting along the shopping strips at Spit Junction and Mosman. It was hoped this modernisation would bring visitors to the area and encourage residents to shop locally, while also being a symbolic fight against the darkness of the Depression. (SMH 8/7/33). Street lighting gradually spread to all the streets and lanes of Mosman. The next major change came in 1961 when the old round incandescent lamps began being replaced by the brighter, longer lasting fluorescent streetlights, and now the energy efficient lighting we know today.

P.Morris