



PO Box 39, Mosman NSW 2088

mosmanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

<https://mosmanhistoricalsociety.org.au/>

Patron: Gavin Souter AO

Affiliate Member: Royal Australian Historical Society

Mosman Historical Society—Committee Members 2023-2024

President: Debbie Higginson
Vice-President: Stephen Palmer
Assistant Secretary: Dr Pam Lofthouse
Acting Secretary: Prof. David Carment AM
Treasurer: Stephen Palmer
Speakers: Prof. David Carment AM

Newsletter: Margaret Szalay
Membership: Margaret Szalay
Other Committee members:
Robert Clark
Gail Fitzhardinge
Lyn Tanner

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Library Rep. Donna Braye
(Mosman Library Local
Studies Librarian)
Webmaster: Amanda Gosse

MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - April 2024

The Society's meetings are held on the second Wednesday in March, May, July, September & November

We look forward to seeing you at our next Speaker evening on **Wednesday, 8th May** and afterwards at our social gathering for tea/coffee, biscuits & chat.

GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS

Welcome to new MHS members....

Peter & Maria Abrahamson, Peter O'Neill

Members are encouraged to invite a friend or neighbour to join MHS each year to grow our membership and help preserve our heritage.

PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Wednesday, 8th May 2024, 7.00pm

Speaker: Dr Ian Hoskins will talk on
the history of the Orpheum Theatres
(Details in the attached flyer)

Wednesday, 10th July 2024, 7.00pm

Speaker: Paul Storm will speak on
the Blau Family (Details in the next newsletter)

Meetings are held at Mosman Library

605 Military Road, Mosman NSW

If you wish to attend, please contact David by the

Monday prior at davidcarment@mac.com

Or 0418 857 182 (email preferred)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Monday, 4th March 2024

The Society's history walk in the Rangers Estate, followed by a sausage sizzle in Reid Park, was enjoyed by a large group of members and friends. (see over)

Wednesday, 11th March 2024

Members enjoyed a fascinating talk on the 'Queen of Nations' shipwreck near Wollongong in 1881.

SOCIETY NEWS OVERLEAF

MOSMAN: Times Gone By

Our book on early Mosman has now been reprinted due to popular demand. If interested, please contact Margaret on 02-9904 1829 or margaret@cremorne1.com

FEATURE ARTICLE ... overleaf

Following the Society's History Walk in Mosman's Rangers Estate on 4 March, this month's feature article is the history of "The Rangers", the mansion after which the estate was named, courtesy of an article by Rod Sturrock, in his book, "A Pictorial History of Mosman, Vol 1", with new information and images added.

Pam Lofthouse's more detailed E-booklet on the history of the Rangers estate is now available on the Society's website.

LOCAL STUDIES AT BARRY O'KEEFE LIBRARY

(see also <https://events.mosman.nsw.gov.au/>)

<https://mosman.nsw.gov.au/news/library-news>

DETAILS OF UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

OVERLEAF

SHELF LIFE: A SELF-PUBLISHING WORKSHOP

Do you have a family or local history, memoir, or biography, novel or cookbook waiting to be published? Join award winning publisher, Margaret Szalay and find out how to publish your book with advice on editing, design, obtaining quotes and marketing.

Tuesday 23 April, 10.30am–12.30pm **Free event** | Bookings essential

BOOKINGS WITH LIBRARY: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1165964>

FACES IN THE CROWD: MORE MOSMAN STORIES.

It's astounding how many fascinating and significant people lived and worked in Mosman. This exhibition features Les Peterkin, teacher, potter, namesake of a portrait prize and director of the innovative Sydney Festival Ballet Company, which performed at the Cremorne Orpheum. Harry J. Weston, designer and commercial artist, and Elizabeth Reimer, designer, and manufacturer mid-century costume jewellery. Respected by their contemporaries, each established successful businesses, and influenced the development of design and culture in the local and wider community.

Wednesday 24 April – Sunday 19 May, during Library opening hours

Free event | No bookings required.

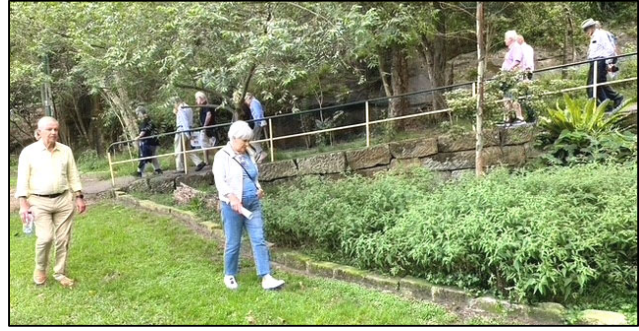
LINGA LONGA AT EMOH RUO

Before the use of numbers, residences were identified by a name.. Have you ever wondered if your house had a name? Mosman Library is offering its popular 30-minute session where staff will take you through the historic records to find the name of your home. It may be the most exciting 30 minutes you have ever spent!

Thursday 16 May 2024 10am to 6pm Please call (02) 9978 4101 to book.

SOCIETY NEWS

Monday, 4th March 2024 – 34 members & friends enjoyed our History Walk in Rangers Estate



Photos: David Carment & Margaret Szalay

VALE

Emeritus Professor Doug Saunders (1939-2024) MD BS FRANZCOG FRCOG FRACS AM

Professor Saunders, a member of Mosman Historical Society for some years, died in January 2024, aged 84. Professor Saunders was born in Mosman and lived here most of his life. He established the first Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at Sydney's Royal North Shore Hospital for the University of Sydney and the first specialized Fertility Clinic at RNHS. The clinic achieved the first IVF pregnancy in NSW in 1982, and is one of the most successful in Australia. He was one of the founders of the Fertility Society of Australia.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) on the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2001 for *"service to Medicine, particularly in the area of infertility, to the development of standards of practice and health care for women, and as a teacher, researcher and clinician."*

He is remembered as a loving father, and for his loyalty, integrity and generosity. The Society offers its condolences to his wife, Margie, and his family



“THE RANGERS”, BRIERLEY ST, MOSMAN

From an article by Rob Sturrock, in his book, “A Pictorial History of Mosman, Vol 1”, 1983¹
(with the images as published in his books, or as noted) Additional information by Margaret Szalay, 2024

Archibald Mosman is considered the first ‘permanent’ resident in Mosman. The second long-term resident was wealthy Oswald Bloxsome. He arrived in Australia in 1838 with his wife Henrietta and 12-year-old son Oswald, and soon purchased land holdings in the New England area.

In 1844, he bought 40 acres of Mosman land for £100, originally a land grant to Joseph Moore, and he erected “that dear, fair, quaint old home, *The Rangers*”, built by architect, John Frederick Hilly. Often described as “an Elizabethan mansion”, it was also recorded as “the pride of the North Shore”. When streets were formed, *The Rangers* faced Brierley Street, on the corner of Spofforth Street.



Bloxsome's residence, The Rangers
(Mosman Local Studies Collection)



Oswald Brierly's cottage
(Mosman Local Studies Collection)



C.E.S. Tindall's 1909 copy of The Rangers' wall mural, the original of which was painted on a wet day by Oswald Brierly in return for Bloxsome's hospitality (Mitchell Library)

On its dining room wall, a beautiful mural, measuring 18 feet by 12 feet (*image left*), was painted by Oswald Brierly, who later became Marine Artist to Queen Victoria and was knighted.

He had been a passenger on the little vessel pictured, *HMS Rattlesnake*, and vividly portrayed a storm they encountered off the island of Timor in 1848.

Bloxsome built a cottage in his garden at *The Rangers*, which Oswald Brierly used on his visits to Sydney between 1848 and 1850.

When *The Rangers* was demolished in 1914, attempts were made to remove the entire wall and painting, but they failed and it disintegrated – a sad end to such a masterpiece. A small copy of it by C.E.S. Tindall is in the Mitchell Library (above); fragments of the original have since been found in a shed in Sydney.²

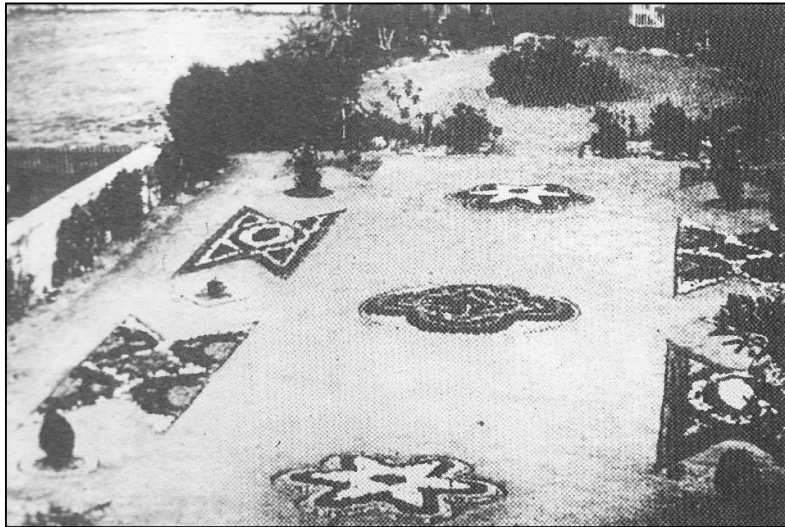
¹ Copies of Rob Sturrock's Pictorial History of Mosman, Vols 1 & 2, are still available at local bookshops & newsagencies.

² Information from: <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brierly-sir-oswald-walters-3054>

Mosman historian, Jack Carroll, wrote that:

Bloxsome's wife had an aversion to the continued service of the convicts who had toiled and built the residence. She induced him to engage a shipload of Bavarian migrants in their stead. Their tuneful folk singing in the evenings brought great appreciation from the many guests and from the whalers and dockers from across the Bay.

Much of the forty acres of the surrounding grounds contained formal gardens of lawns and imported plants. The team of gardeners who tended it were Bavarians, and it was described as "a little bit of England, set in the Australian bush".



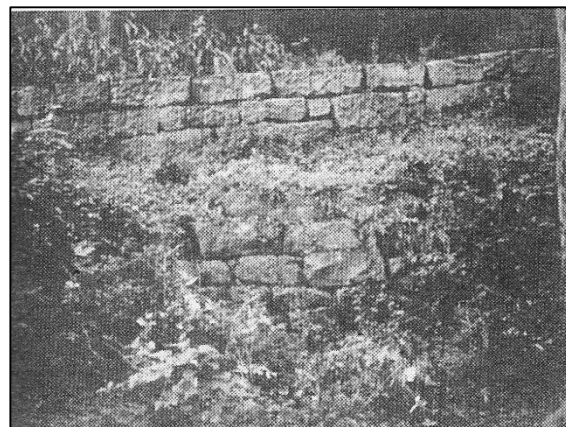
Time and money were not considered in maintaining the formal gardens at The Rangers

In Reid Park today, beneath the shady trees, the track is still in use that Oswald Bloxsome once drove on by carriage from his jetty to *The Rangers*. At the lower end of the track, close to where the old jetty stood, may be seen today part of the original stone wall and track, close to where the old jetty stood, but about 2 metres below the present park level.

High on an adjacent rock, its base once lapped by the tide, may be seen an inscribed plaque. The correct date on the plaque should be 1845.



Where Bloxsome's track meets Reid Park today



The higher wall is the present track, the lower wall was the original track (Photo 1983)

The Bloxsoles returned to England in October 1856, and in later years, *The Rangers* had several owners and occupants, including Stuart Russell, a pioneer of the Darling Downs, whose lavish parties held there out-rivalled even those of the Bloxsoles. Fireworks sometimes cost £100 per night (~\$28,700 today), “with suppers from Compagnoni’s”.

“In its time, every celebrity of note including three members of the Royal Family, was entertained at *The Rangers* and many important citizens of the time resided there.”

One wonders if the celebrated guests also, once travelled the old bush track, looking much the same today as it did 130 years ago, from a row boat, or did they arrive on horseback via Billy Blue’s Ferry, along different bush tracks?

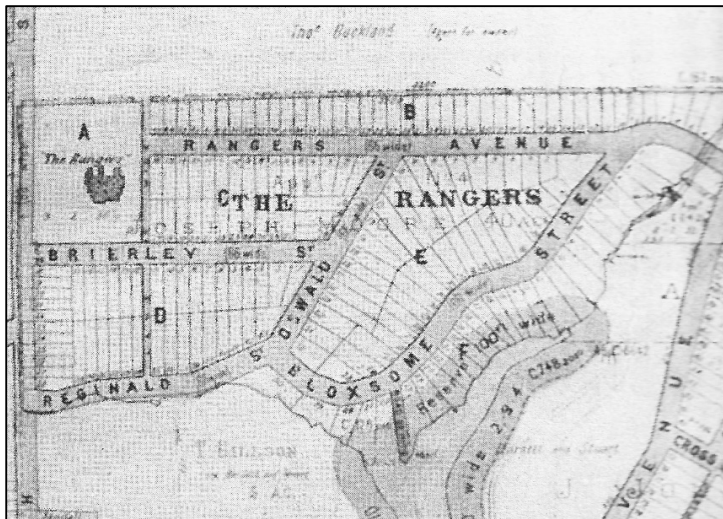
There was a third choice after 1871 when the ferry service commenced and Stuart Russell formed the lower section of Avenue Road. It connected *The Rangers* with the ferry wharf, crossing the creek immediately above the waterfall and allowed coaches to drive to the ferry.

We drive across the same watercourse today at the same spot, on a similar little bridge, almost where Rangers Avenue now meets Avenue Road.

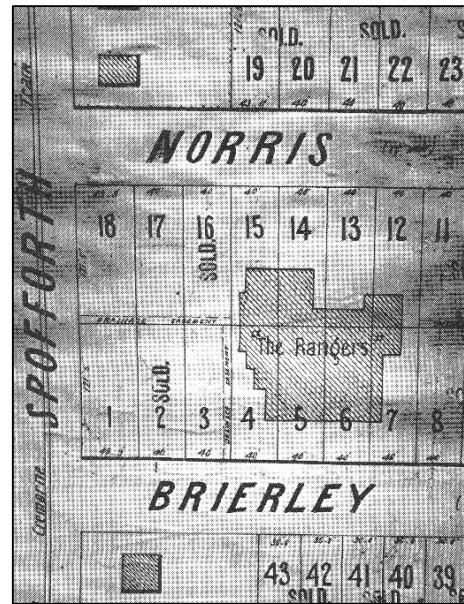
In 1886, most of *The Rangers* estate was subdivided as house lots, with just the old mansion and about 3 acres remaining. An auction was held, but none were sold until the 1889 subdivision and auction. It was a sad occasion for many, particularly those who had roamed the 40 acres of exotic trees and gardens, “like a little bit of England”, and the “old gardener reduced to tears as he stood contemplating the loss of the vineyard in which he had so often laboured.”

In 1914 when *The Rangers* was about to be demolished, and its last 3 acres subdivided, conservationists were very evident and several moves to preserve the famous old mansion failed through lack of funds. Its fate was regretted by many and a newspaper reported:

It is melancholy to think that its lawns should be cut up, its timbers felled, its flowers destroyed, its very walls, with their great artistic treasure broken down and demolished and its fine collection rudely dispersed.

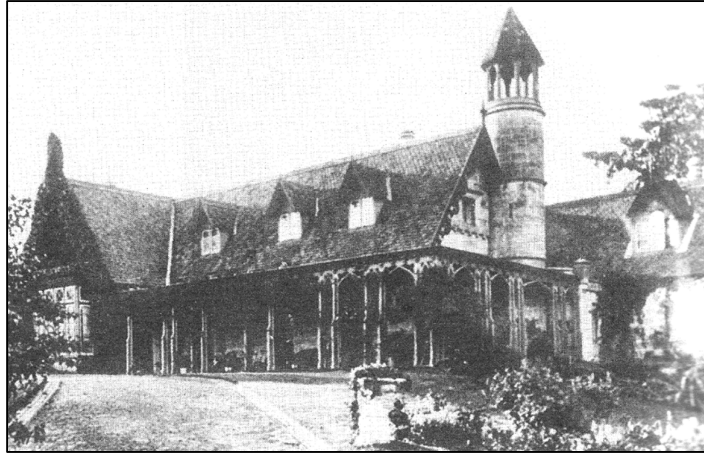


Plans of *The Rangers* Estate, 1886, with *The Rangers* on just 3 acres on the corner of Brierley & Spofforth Street. Bloxsome Street was never constructed due to the steep terrain.



Portion of the last “*Rangers* Estate” subdivision in 1911, with the site of the mansion spread over eight of the homesites. Norris Street is now Rangers Road.

**Extract from an article by Edward Ancher in 1909
published by the Royal Australian Historical Society.**



The Rangers, photographed by Edward Ancher, c.1905

Edward A Ancher, who had visited *The Rangers* before its demolition, wrote an article for the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1909³:

The old mansion had a distinctive tower, Elizabethan gables, turreted chimney pots, and a roof of old mellowed blue and red tiles. The house was ivy-covered with velvet lawns and dainty carpet gardens. From a broad verandah, one entered the great stone-paved, oak-roofed hall, and a dining room with mullioned windows, arched roof, and an old manorial fireplace. Upstairs are quaint little rooms reached by a winding stairway, terminating in a miniature tower, one of the architectural features of the house. On a wall in the dining room, Sir Orwald Brierly painted his famous picture of HMS Rattlesnake in a squall off Timor – the painting covers the 20-foot width of the room, up to the roof.

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³ This article was reprinted in 1976, with permission, in the MHS's booklet, *The Romance of an Old Whaling Station*. This booklet is held in Mosman Library.