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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - February 2015

Greetings – this is our first newsletter for 2015 after the Christmas and summer holiday break.

Our final function for 2014 was the daylight saving tour of The Spit on 19th November, which featured a number of interesting speakers such as Jim Boyce whose focus was on early transport from The Spit to Manly. It was followed by John Dansie's famous sausage sizzle.

The last evening meeting was one of our best attended. Dr Perry McIntyre presented a lively illustrated talk *Remembering the Great Irish Famine (1845-1850) in Australia* on 12th November. This was followed by the traditional Christmas wine and cake.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING

At 7pm on Wednesday 11th March, downstairs at Mosman Library, Neil Gibbins will be talking on ***The Mosman-Neutral Bay Rifle Club 1915-2015***. The club was created at the time of WWI and attracted 240 residents, 16 of whom were killed. This year it is celebrating its centenary. The speaker has been a member for 30 years and has represented NSW and Australia on many occasions. *See attached flyer.*

Note that access to our meeting area on the ground floor of the library will be via the side door adjacent to the carpark as the renovations are not expected to be completed until April. The Local Studies section of the library is unaffected, and is open and operating as normal.

EXCURSION TO ST ALBANS

North Shore Historical Society have kindly offered us 5 places on their special coach excursion to the upper reaches of the Hawkesbury to visit St Albans (established about 1835), via Wiseman's Ferry and the punt. Date will be 16 April 9.15am to 4.30pm and cost is \$30. *See attachment for full details.*

LOST MOSMAN

Several MHS committee members have been busy researching and composing articles for the *lostmosman.com* website which is well worth a visit. Many of Mosman's interesting landmarks and houses have been destroyed and it is fascinating to read their history and see the before and after photographs. These are the latest additions to the list:

- Lauriston Private Hospital, Mandolong Road
- The Star Ampitheatre
- Edwards Beach shark net
- Lugarno, 507 Military Road
- Beau Sejour, 182 Raglan Street
- Clifton Gardens swimming pool
- 26 Iluka Road
- Myarock, 5 Kirkoswald Avenue

Our 'special feature' article for this issue is the *lostmosman* article on Avenel.

ETHEL TURNER'S AVENEL

Located at 17 Warringah Road, Avenel was a significant historic home in Mosman. Its unfortunate demolition and replacement with a block of home units bearing the same name in 1970 occurred seven years before the enactment of state heritage legislation that might have protected it.

In September 1900 the author Ethel Mary Turner (1870-1958) and her barrister husband Herbert Raine Curlewis (1869-1942), who were living at the still intact Yanalla in Mosman's Harbour Street, purchased a vacant block of land in Warringah Road for 150 Pounds. It had a panoramic view of Middle Harbour and overlooked Chinamans Beach. There were few immediate neighbours yet the block was close to shops and public transport. Ern Thompson was appointed as architect with final plans for a large two-storey house being completed by April 1901. The brickwork was well advanced by July. In September shingling started on the roof and an extensive terraced garden was laid out. Ethel, Herbert and their two children, Ethel Jean Sophia (known as Jean) Curlewis (1898-1930) and Adrian Herbert Frederic Curlewis (1901-1985), moved into Avenel in November 1901.

Already well known as author of the best selling *Seven Little Australians* (1894), Ethel wrote many other well received books while living at Avenel and was an astute businesswoman and publicist. Herbert, also an author, was appointed a judge of the Industrial Arbitration Court in 1917 and a District Court judge in 1928. Jean followed in her parents' footsteps as a published writer. Adrian became a District Court judge and a life saving administrator. He was knighted in 1967.

Ethel's biographer A.T. Yarwood describes Avenel:

At ground level the house was brick but rose to an upper floor and a roof of dark painted shingles. On the southern side of the house facing a broad lawn a small half-hexagonal room jutted out. Situated on the ground floor with access from the dining room, this was later extended to keep pace with the growth of Ethel's library.... On both floors there were large verandahs facing east towards the sparkling waters of Chinaman's [now Chinamans] Beach. When the family entertained, especially during the adult years of Jean and Adrian, the open verandah on the ground floor was set up for dancing with clouded lights and magic lanterns.

In 1911 a half-acre of sloping land adjoining Avenel's block was purchased. Its development together with improvements to the existing garden involved heavy expenditure on labour and materials. A low stone wall and a tennis court were established. A full-time gardener built new paths and laid buffalo grass turf near the tennis court.

Ethel continued residing at Avenel until her death in 1958. She was in frequent contact with Adrian and his family, who from 1939 lived in nearby Hopetoun Avenue.

Further information. This article is a slightly revised and shortened version of one by the same author on the *Lost Mosman* website. For the original article, images of Avenel and a full list of sources see <http://lostmosman.com/2014/11/03/avenel-17-warringah-road-mosman/>.

David Carment