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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - August 2015

Greetings.....

In July, Dr Richard Reid presented *That Faraway Experience' – Australia's Great War, 1916-1918*. He shared with us some of the many poignant stories of families left at home when young men went to fight in WWI. His extensive research involved both official and personal records.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING

Wednesday 9th September at 7pm

Downstairs at Mosman Library, our speaker will be John Vaughan whose profession is the unique one of flag designer and scholar. His talk, *Australian Maritime and Heritage Flags*, will include a discussion of the 1900 competition to produce Australia's national flag, its significance and design rationale.
See attached flyer.

The speaker meeting will be preceded by the **AGM from 6.45pm to 7pm**. We are seeking more committee members, the necessary qualification being an interest in history. In particular, we seek someone to assist the Secretary with the view of eventually taking on his role. *Please email mosmanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or phone Hon.Secretary David Carment on 0418 857 182. Attached agenda/committee nomination form and proxy form.*

GOAT ISLAND - Tuesday 13th October

A National Parks and Wildlife Service ferry has been booked exclusively for MHS members and their friends. It will depart from the Harbour Master's steps at the western end of Circular Quay at 10.35am, cruise to the island and depart at 12.50pm.

Staff from NP&WS will provide commentary on the island's rich history from the Cadigal people, convict work gangs, gunpowder storage, to more recent fame in the television series *Water Rats*.

It is suggested that we bring picnic snacks and drinks.

Charge is \$35 pp.

Passenger numbers are restricted to 30 so please contact David Carment to reserve your seat asap on mosmanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or 0418 857 182.

MOSMAN BAY - Wednesday 18th November

The other date to note is our summer evening **history walk** with commentary and sausage sizzle.

There is much of interest to explore in Mosman Bay, an example being the evidence of Harnett's old stone quarry below Royalist Road, which provided the sandstone for Farm Cove and for the original Melbourne University buildings.

MOSMAN LIBRARY EVENTS:

September 5-20. *Doing Our Bit: Revisited* is an exhibition looking at the amazing people and stories that have been unearthed as a result of the online 'Mosman 1914-1918' initiative.

Free, on view at the library.

October 7, Wednesday 10.30am to midday. ***More Than Just Listening – the Role of the Oral Historian.***

Dr Margret Leask, theatre and film historian and author, will share her insightful observations on the importance of oral history with reference to specific interviews.

Free but bookings essential on 9978 4090.

November: The library will celebrate its 70th birthday and is inviting residents to bring in photographs of a birthday party they attended in Mosman in the last 70 years, the older the better. Photographs will be copied for display in the library and the original returned to its owner. *Please contact Local Studies Librarian on 9978 4101, deadline 29th October.*

WILLOUGHBY LOCAL GOVERNMENT – 150 YEARS

Another milestone will be reached in October when the north shore's oldest local government celebrates 150 years of existence.

Bob McKillop of Willoughby District Historical Society has been writing the text for *Picture Book Willoughby*, a commemorative book supported by 300 photographs, expected launch date being 23rd October.

MERCHANT NAVY DAY - Thursday 3rd September

During WWII more than 11,700 merchant ships were lost worldwide and more than 3,500 Australian merchant seamen died. During the Vietnam War, the number was over 270 seamen.

At 11am, a memorial service will be held to honour this sacrifice at the War Memorial in Myahgah Road near Allan Border Oval, Spit Junction. the speaker being Commodore Rod Nairn AM RAN (ret.), CEO Shipping Australia.

Our members are invited to attend and a floral tribute will be delivered on behalf of MHS.

MIDDLE HARBOUR AMATEUR SAILING CLUB

The club is proud of its history – its clubhouse is located at The Spit on the old 'hoppers wharf' which was used originally to land blue metal for building Mosman's roads. They have been researching the club's history and have let us know that their findings are now available for interested residents on the club website at <http://mhasc.org.au/history-parent/1945-1961/> and <http://mhasc.org.au/history-parent/1962-2/>

MOSMAN SUPPORTS THE TROOPS - THE ANZAC BUFFET IN WORLD WAR I

On April 11th, 1920, the Anzac Buffet closed for the last time. For almost five years during World War I the Buffet had been a meeting and recreation place for servicemen when in Sydney and, as the transport ships returned, also the point where troops were taken to be reunited with waiting family and friends.

Early in the war the State War Council proposed that refreshments be offered to soldiers passing through Sydney. The call by the Red Cross for volunteers to provide this service was answered by the Mosman Red Cross No. 8 Voluntary Aid Detachment, under the leadership of Miss Annie Alethea Evans, of Belmont Road. She and her VADs secured rooms in the Education Building in Young Street, close to the Soldiers' Amelioration Committee office. Chairs, tables and fittings were purchased with funds raised by the Mosman Red Cross, and in November 1915 the Anzac Buffet opened.

Any man in uniform was welcome to come in to this rest room for a cup of tea and scones, or sandwiches and soup, all available for free. Newspapers, books, games, stationery for writing letters, and even a piano, gramophone and eventually a billiard table were donated for their recreation. The Amelioration Committee paid some of the bills, and the Government provided eight shillings a day, but the catering functions of the Buffet, managed by the quartermaster Mrs Redmond Barry, relied mainly on contributions from the Mosman VAD and their friends. Supporters in other areas such as Lindfield also sent quantities of fruit, vegetables and eggs, and a volunteer staff of around fifty from across Sydney, including boy scouts, joined in to assist the Mosman girls.

Efforts were made to decorate the premises with a womanly touch, with comfortable furniture, but also patriotic touches such as a calendar of all the battalion colours. One visiting soldier produced a black kitten from his pocket – it was duly decorated with patriotic ribbons and made the Buffet mascot! This soon became the place for the men to catch up with old pals, and an enquiry board became a means of recording and tracing missing and wounded relatives and friends. By January 1916 the Buffet was receiving 230 visits a day by soldiers and seamen, some accompanied by their womenfolk.

In August 1916 the Education Building in Young Street was demolished, and the Anzac Buffet

moved to new premises in Ash Street (off Angel Place) at the rear of Challis House. By this time controversy was brewing over the opening of another such facility, also named the Anzac Buffet, by Mrs Vickery. Built by the government and located by the Cathedral entrance to the Domain, this buffet was open longer hours, providing concerts and films as well as refreshments. However unlike Miss Evans' establishment, no ladies except staff were admitted, and there was a small cost for the snacks. Inevitably there was some confusion, Mrs Vickery being asked to change the name of hers to the Domain Anzac Buffet.

Eventually, in December 1916, management of the Domain Buffet was also taken over by Miss Evans and the Mosman VADs. It ran as an extension of the Ash Street branch, until in 1917 a fire in Ash Street forced its closure, after which the Domain Buffet became the headquarters and centre of all their operations.

As the war progressed and soldiers were returning home, the Buffet was loaned to the military authorities as an assembly point on "troop ship" days. On disembarkation, troops were driven to the Anzac Buffet to be welcomed home, while family and friends waited nearby in the Domain to be reunited. The Red Cross provided refreshments and chocolates for all.

During and after the war, over 82,000 men, plus their guests, visited the Buffet, 1,800 on June 11th 1919 alone when four troop ships returned.

Originally planned to close when the war ended, the Mosman VADs instead promised to keep the Buffet running until the last troop ship arrived, thus eventually closing its green gates for the last time in April 1920. Furniture and other goods were distributed to war convalescent homes such as Graythwaite. Shortly after its closure, the building was temporarily used as a day nursery for babies of working mothers, before being demolished. A plaque in the Domain, originally erected by the Mosman Red Cross VAD marks its location.

Annie Alethea Evans who, as commandant of the Mosman No. 8 VAD Detachment, inaugurated and ran the Anzac Buffet from 1915 to 1920, was awarded the MBE for her war service. She died in Mosman in 1937.

Compiled by P. Morris from newspaper articles of the time, accessed on Trove.