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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - June 2016

Our last speaker meeting was on 11th May. Dr Ian Hoskins, North Sydney historian and author, gave an illustrated talk about his research which became the basis for his book *Coast: A History of the New South Wales Edge*.

His search for depictions of the coast in artworks of the pre-photographic days of the colony, found them to be almost non-existent indicating little appreciation and interest. This is in sharp contrast with today's attitudes reflected in massive real estate values.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING

Wednesday 13th July 2016 at 7pm
Downstairs at Mosman Library

Swimming with the Spit: 100 Years of the Spit Amateur Swim Club is the title of a community funded book soon to be published. **Dr Tanya Evans**, the presenter, is a contributor and prominent history academic and author.

The small suburban club made an enormous impact both locally and internationally. Members will be encouraged to recall their experiences both at the original Spit baths and the Balmoral ones.

See attached flyer.

For your diary - the date for the next **History and Snags** daylight savings evening walk has been set at 16th November. While the location is the Alan Border Oval, there is much of historical interest in the near vicinity (such as Mosman Square), and these will be included in the talk.

Response to search for PERIER descendents

In April's issue we sought information about the Perier family regarding a donation of early 20th century postcards exchanged by Charles Perier and family members. As a result we were contacted by a Society member who had rescued diaries of Charles' brother Albert from a council cleanup in Cremorne. She had donated them to the **National Film and Sound Archive** and shared this interesting response from Sally Jackson, a curator from that Archive.

Sally wrote "*Albert Perier's work in the first days of cinema in Australia and his career as a photographer is covered only briefly in Australian film histories and yet he, with his business partner Gustave Neymark, were showing films in Melbourne in October 1896. These diaries, regardless of which years they cover, will be invaluable research items and very welcome additions to the National Collection. A.J., or Mons as he was known, was an "explorer" when it came to photography and always looking at whatever was new or innovative in his field. His son Reg Perier was a film maker. We hold most of Reg's film output*".

MOSMAN MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

Dr Charles Gay, MHS Vice-president, has spent several years compiling a comprehensive list of Mosman, Cremorne and Neutral Bay medical practitioners 1975-2011. Many have moved during their career to different practices and the location of those practices has also changed so the task has been a painstaking one.

The list, which also includes specialist doctors, can now be viewed on the MHS website.

NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, 6 Macquarie St Winter Solstice Talk. 6-8pm Tuesday 21 June

It is 200 years since the completion of the **Rum Hospital** and Mr Paul Brunton, Emeritus Curator of the State Library of NSW, will be talking on its history and survival and how the colony's first hospital came to be Australia's first legislature. You can also visit the public galleries of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council Chambers.

Free but bookings essential.

Ph.92302047or dps.education@parliament.nsw.gov.au

STATE LIBRARY OF NSW - Max Dupain

Photographer Max Dupain is most famous for his iconic images *The Sunbaker* and *Bondi 1939*. These images are just two in his personal collection of over 28,000, which was recently acquired by the library. As they were taken well before the age of digital photography, the size of this collection is striking especially as it joins the library's existing archive of his architectural and advertising work of approx. 155,000 images, as well as studio portraits and his collection on the Ballet Russes, donated to the Library after the photographer's death in 1992.

The State Library of NSW acquired the personal collection, spanning a 60-year career, from Jill White, Dupain's most trusted and long serving studio manager, making it now the proud custodian of Max Dupain's entire body of work.

Among his personal negatives is a fascinating visual record of Penrith in Sydney's west from 1948. Richard Neville, the State Library's Mitchell Librarian, explains Dupain's interest in the suburb: "*Max was commissioned by the local council to provide photography for a brochure promoting the tourist, agricultural and residential potential of this outer Sydney suburb with a population back then of just 15,000*". A selection of these images, capturing the people, streets, shops and the Nepean, will be on display in the Library's Amaze Gallery till 28th August.

ROSMAN FERRIES, MOSMAN BAY

Many Mosman residents will be familiar with the little red and cream charter ferries, their names starting with 'R', which have plied Sydney Harbour for over a century – Rosman Ferries. In the 1903 electoral roll Charles Frederick Bentham Rosman's occupation was given as a jeweller, of Shadforth Street, but there was a need in the growing suburb of Mosman for more maritime services, so he took advantage of this opportunity. Rosman secured a lease on waterfront land below Mosman Street, beyond the Mosman ferry wharf where he established a boating business. In 1906 he was importing marine engines and components and selling them from his Regal Oil Engine Co, Mosman Bay, and from 1910 was listed as a *boat builder* and *boat proprietor* in Sands Directories. In 1909 he was advertising new skiffs for hire, and boats taken care of.

Charles Rosman Jnr recalled that his father started a ferry service by rowing passengers across the harbour, but a more formal service appears to have come into operation only after his father's death, aged 47, in August 1914. Elizabeth Rosman took over her husband's business, assisted by her son Charles Jnr who was 16 at the time, gaining his ferry ticket at 18, and younger son James. A small article appeared in the Catholic Press in January 1915 extolling the pleasures of a Rosman motor launch cruise on the harbour. By 1916 the options included day or evening cruises on the harbour or Parramatta River, on launches fitted with electric light and each with a piano on board. The *Rex*, seating 99, could be hired for £4/10/-, otherwise the smaller *Regina* or *Regal*.

For a short time in 1921 Mrs Rosman ran launches from Mosman to Fort Macquarie in opposition to Sydney Ferries, whose service to Mosman was seen as inadequate. Her three motor launches *Royal*, *Rex* and *Regina* could accommodate 350 passengers and provide a faster and cheaper journey than the larger ferries. Services ran at 15 minute intervals during peak hour from 6.30am, and half hourly during the day. Mosman Council approved the service on a three month trial. After a month the service was carrying up to 1400 passengers a day. Difficulties arose with Mosman Council over the position of Mrs Rosman's pontoon. No suitable solution could be found so the service was discontinued. Mrs Rosman, recognising the demand for opposition ferries, looked further afield. Eventually her son James operated a service on the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers, three Rosman launches supplementing the Sydney Ferries timetable in that area.

By the late 1920s Charles and James had taken over management of the business from their mother, Charles running the services from Mosman Bay for the next sixty years. Rosman Ferries' main business was on secondary routes such as carrying dockyard workers to Garden Island, workers to the Harbour Bridge construction site in the 1930s, charters for picnics and weddings, or sightseers watching sailing races. *Radar* was the first ferry in Sydney to be granted a liquor licence, often being used for harbour cruises for American servicemen on R & R in the

1960s. For some years the ferries assisted schools, being used for the "Lessons Afloat" program and, until 2006, providing transport for North Shore students attending Eastern Suburbs schools. Despite their being more expensive to build, Charles Rosman Jnr always preferred timber vessels as they are quieter and easier to repair, so quickly paying for themselves.

It was not all smooth sailing for Rosman Ferries. They had their share of groundings, collisions and rivalries resulting in fines and prosecutions, plus accidents and injuries. Charles suffered burns and lost a finger while working. By far the worst accident occurred when the *Rodney* capsized in February 1939, resulting in the loss of 19 lives. The ferry had been following the US cruiser *Louisville*, the majority of passengers being young women. Although Charles argued otherwise, a Marine Court found that the *Rodney* was overcrowded, with too many on the upper deck, resulting in the vessel listing dangerously when the passengers moved to one side to wave to the US sailors, eventually capsizing. Rosman was found negligent, resulting in his ferry master certificate being suspended for 3 years. The ferry *Rodney* (renamed *Regis*) was arrested by the mortgagee. This put Rosman under severe financial pressure but it was later released and he was able to remain in business.

Charles Rosman Jnr operated Rosman Ferries until 1986 when he retired, aged 88, after losing his license following a collision in fog. He was born in Shadforth Street in 1898, then lived on the Mosman Bay site from 1908, firstly in a residence above the family boatshed below Mosman Street, then in each of two blocks of flats built by the family, adjacent to the business. In April 1998 the Mosman Daily published an invitation for his old friends and clients to attend Charles' 100th birthday celebration. Meanwhile Charles was preparing for a cruise to Alaska - his 25th since retiring! He died at Mosman in May 2004 aged 106, having lived and worked in the suburb across three centuries.

In 1987 the business and the ferries ***Radar* (1947)** (see below), *Royale* (1974) and *Regal II* (1981) were sold to the Matthews and Williams families. Rosman Cruises are now operated from McMahons Point by the Noakes Group. Five heritage vessels operate charters in the familiar red and cream livery, the *Proclaim* (1939) and *Lithgow* (1927) having also been added to the fleet. The Rosman tradition continues.

P. Morris June 2016. References available on request

