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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - August 2016

Our last speaker meeting was on 13th July. Dr Tanya Evans gave a lively presentation about the centenary of the Spit Amateur Swim Club and the forthcoming book about its history.

Some of the more surprising anecdotes came from the audience. Our past president and swimmer, Pat Mills, once beat Murray Rose in a race. Also, there was a poignant story of a father who learned to swim at the club. When his RAF plane was shot down during WW2 he was the only crew member who could swim and he survived for a week alone before rescue, resorting to his leather watch band for sustenance.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING

Wednesday 14th September at 7pm

Downstairs at Mosman Library

AGM beforehand at 6.45pm - all welcome

Northbridge: Building a New Suburb is the title of a talk by Pam Clifford, also the title of her 2014 book. Northbridge received its name in 1913 but its history is much more than a picturesque sandstone bridge. Pam's stories will include the rivalry with Mosman over a proposed railway to Manly and the lions in Sir Edward Hallstrom's private zoo. See attached flyer.

Nomination of **new committee members** at the AGM is very welcome. See attached *Agenda and Proxy form*

Don't forget the next **History and Snags** daylight saving evening walk and BBQ on 16th November.

3-11 September is **HISTORY WEEK**. Some accessible or unusual functions are mentioned in this letter.

Local Studies at MOSMAN LIBRARY

Taronga Zoo Souvenirs and Views is a History Week exhibition celebrating the centenary of Taronga Zoological Gardens Trust with a collection of posters, mementoes, postcards and guidebooks from the last 100 years. At Barry O'Keefe Library 3-11 September.

Mosman Faces, the library's history of Mosman in film, will have a new story added at the beginning of September. The latest film tells the story of **Leahys' Real Estate** which was started in 1893 by Patrick and Ellen Leahy and is today the oldest business in Mosman. The film tells their story through the memories of descendants and those who have dealt with the agency over the decades. The film can be watched at <http://www.mosmanfaces.net/>

Conscription 1916-1917: the votes that split a nation. David Wilson, professional soldier and military historian, will present a fascinating account of a very a very contentious Australian issue.

At the library Monday 26 September, 7pm. Free but bookings essential at library@mosman.nsw.gov.au or call Local Studies Librarian on 9978 4091

WILLOUGHBY MUSEUM

58 Johnson Street, Chatswood

MECCANO EXHIBITION

Saturday 3rd September, 10am-4pm

Long before the days of Leggo there was Meccano. For one day only, members of the Meccano Society will display their latest creations. Entry to the museum is \$5 adults, \$2 children or \$10 family.

PADDINGTON RADICAL HISTORY WALKING TOUR

Saturday 3rd September, 11am-1pm

From dole riots to secret fascist armies – visit some of the wilder, more unruly parts of old Paddington in History Week with staff from Woollahra Libraries.

Free but registration essential at Paddington Library localhistory@woollahra.nsw.gov.au or call 9391 7988

THE ROCKS DISCOVERY MUSEUM Kendall Lane

Saturday 3rd September to 1st November 10am-5pm
WAR-TIME STORIES

Dawes Point Battery was significant to the growth of the colony especially to the residents of The Rocks. The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority presents many stories of the battery and of the men who returned to The Rocks after WW2. Also, little known ones such as that of Australia's first returned soldier – from the Battle of Waterloo, and first female war correspondent – a nurse in the Boer War. Entry free

REYNOLDS' COTTAGES:

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

28 Harrington St, The Rocks

Sunday 4th September 2-3.30pm

Melissa Holmes of The History Council of NSW will talk on site at this row of sandstone cottages built 1829 by convicts. The story of the residents and their neighbourhood reflects the history of The Rocks and Sydney - a community of Irish Catholic emancipists, through gold rush boom, overcrowded slums, public housing and heritage tourism. Free but bookings essential melzeb@yahoo.com or call 0415 307 342

Celebrate Mosman – Then and Now

Mosman Council have produced a 17 minute DVD about the heritage, beauty, community and changing times of Mosman. It can be purchased for \$10 at Council Chambers reception or the Art Gallery.

100 years ago THE MOSMAN BOMBINGS

In 1916 World War I was in full swing, and over 1000 young men from Mosman had already gone to fight. A number by now had lost their lives, and many more would do so on the Western Front that year. Not surprisingly, anti German sentiment was high. Since the 1880s there had been a steady flow of German migrants to NSW, mostly skilled tradesmen, and a number had settled in Mosman and been readily accepted. This was not to last.

One of these was August Pfafflin who, with his family, arrived in Sydney from Lahr, Germany in 1885. A stonemason, by 1895 they were living at Mosman where he was the overseer of works for Mosman Council, a position he held until his death at his home in Prince Street in 1910. His son Otto was 13 when he arrived in Sydney, eventually becoming a pastry cook. Otto worked in Sydney, Parkes and Kurrajong, in 1908 being elected vice president of his trade union. By 1914 he had a cake and confectionary shop at 69 Belmont Road, continuing the family's long connection with Mosman. In July of that year he won the "Good Shot Baking Powder Competition", resulting in widespread publicity which included his name and address. Without warning, on the night of 28th February 1916, a large explosion wrecked the shop and badly damaged the adjoining residence, though the family was uninjured. Police investigations found evidence that a bomb had been thrown through the open shop window. Despite having lived in Sydney for almost 30 years, being a naturalised Australian with an Australian wife and five Australian born children, the only apparent motive for the attack was that Otto Pfafflin was German.

The following year a similar incident occurred at "Bangoola", the home of Paul Schreiterer at 16 Parriwi Road. In the early hours of 6th January 1917 the family was awoken by an explosion, caused by a gelignite bomb placed in the basement cellar. Extensive damage was caused to the cellar, front verandah, and first floor of the house, and much valuable glass and china was destroyed. Although Mr and Mrs Scheiterer and their five daughters were at home, none of them was injured, although one daughter, Hilda, was thrown out of bed. Mosman and North Sydney police investigated, and Schreiterer and the Government each offered a reward of £50, but it appears that no information was forthcoming.

Paul Schreiterer was a German wool broker who arrived in Sydney from Reichenbach, Germany in 1893 and, though having returned to Europe several times on business, had resided here ever since. In 1895 in Sydney he had married Ballarat born Ida Smith, with whom he had 7 children. When applying for naturalisation in 1922 he was described as being well known in Sydney and of good repute. In his naturalisation application, Scheiterer admitted that, during the war, his sympathies lay with his homeland, but that he had kept his thoughts to himself and said or done nothing to endanger Australia. As required, he had registered as an enemy alien and reported to Mosman Police Station each week. Rumours of late

night meetings of Germans at his house, and signalling to and from the harbour, were investigated and dispelled by police, but perhaps were a catalyst for the bombing. His naturalisation was nonetheless approved in 1923.

It appears that neither of these bombings was ever solved. However in October 1915 a branch of the Anti-German League had been established in Mosman, becoming one of the most prominent in NSW. As well as official conditions placed on German and Austrian citizens on the outbreak of war, this League encouraged many other restraints. Unionists were encouraged to shun German co-workers, naturalised or not, who were now regarded as enemy aliens; German businesses were boycotted. The Sydney Morning Herald of 15 Nov. 1915 reported on resolutions agreed by the Mosman League ... "That the importation of all goods manufactured in Germany, Austria, or other enemy countries be prohibited; ... that all persons of enemy birth employed in the public, naval or military service be at once dismissed; ... to pledge to abstain from purchasing goods of enemy origin, and give preference to goods produced by Britain and her allies". The War Precautions Act of 1914 allowed for the internment of citizens of enemy countries, but this was not universally applied. Many just had their movement within Australia restricted and were required to report to the authorities weekly. However the Anti-German League advocated internment of all enemy aliens for the duration of the war, and their deportation after that. The press widely reported Anti-German League meetings and activities, whipping up hatred against Germans who were perceived as spies and agents, the enemy in our midst. Those who socialised with "The Hun" were seen as having blood on their hands, and the recruitment to the AIF of those with German ancestry was condemned. Activities of German residents were monitored and investigated. It is likely that the two bombings in Mosman were the work of members or supporters of this League.

Despite having been bombed and the offenders never identified, the Pfafflin and Schreiterer families were not deterred from living in Mosman, the latter remaining at "Bangoola" in Parriwi Road until Paul Schreiterer's death in 1939. Following the bombing of his shop in Belmont Road, Otto Pfafflin and his family moved into his mother's home, close by in Prince Street. Before long his young sons were becoming well known as sportsmen, achieving good results in swimming, surfing, and particularly rowing. August Pfafflin was one of Mosman's acclaimed champion eight which won many major rowing races, culminating in the King's Cup in Perth in 1929. After his mother's death in 1920 the Pfafflins moved from the family home in Prince Street, Mosman, to Collaroy, where Otto remained until his death in 1942.

P.M.

Articles from Australian newspapers on Trove.
Naturalisation papers from National Archives of Australia.
National Archives of Australia Fact Sheet 171 - World War I Internee records. Records from NSW Registry of Births, deaths and marriages.
Sands Directories