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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - February 2018

Our speaker on 8th November 2017 was Guy Cooper, a person with 25 years executive involvement with Taronga Zoo and currently Executive Patron, his subject being **TARONGA ZOO - a History and Intimacies**. We were privileged to hear stories from Guy's personal experiences with the zoo, which had never been publicly told. He certainly painted a vivid picture of the realities of importing large animals such as elephants from Thailand to Mosman.

The talk was followed by our annual end-of-year 'party' with Christmas cake, wine and relaxing chat.

On 15th November 2017, a group of about 35 members and friends met at the old Hospital on the Hill, Georges Heights, for another **daylight saving walk**. An unplanned attraction on the balmy evening was the calm perseverance by Anne Fernandez when a family of kookaburras mistook her foam microphone muffler for food. The walk finished in the artists' precinct with an entertaining talk from Paul Delprat about the history of the Julian Ashton school and the traditional sausage barbeque provided by top chefs John Dansie and Peter Alderson.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING
Wednesday 14th March 2018 at 7pm
Downstairs at Mosman Library

Jacqueline Dwyer is a local historian, descended from a wool buyer who arrived in Australia in 1889. He was one of many who came from the Flanders region of France and Belgium, several of whom settled in Mosman to create a vibrant French community here. Their life of peace and successful commerce was disrupted in 1914 by WWI.

Our speaker has published a book about her research called **Flanders in Australia: a Personal History of Wool and War**.
See attached flyer.

LOST MOSMAN
The Balmoral Tram
Footbridge, Mosman Bay, Mosman
Bangoola, 16 Parrawi Road, Mosman

Committee members continue to add interesting articles to the Lost Mosman website. *See lostmosman.com.*

The latest entry is **The Balmoral Tram**, which ceased operation in 1968, 60 years ago. The service was one of the last ones running on the North Shore following the decision to remove tracks and change to buses.

The picturesque **Footbridge** was also demolished in 1968 when repairs were considered too costly.

The grand old mansion **Bangoola** was demolished in 1988 to make way for 8 luxury home units. It had been built in 1905 and in 1917 a gelignite bomb exploded in the basement, the result of local anti-German sentiment.

Local Studies at BARRY O'KEEFE LIBRARY

Doing our Bit, Mosman 1914-1918, has become a valuable on-line resource of information about the wartime experiences of local people. It was conceived to fulfil that role as a commemoration of the centenary of WWI. Work on the 4-year project continues this year with special reference to the conflict during 1918.

There will be a new instalment this year to another on-line project, **Mosman Faces**, focussing in 2018 on immigrants who settled in Mosman. This is a contribution to the Australian Heritage Festival which begins annually on 18th April, the International Day for Monuments and Sites and will draw to a close in 2018 on 20th May.

There are already many interesting entries on **Mosman Faces**. One features transcripts of reminiscences about the much-loved **Mavis Sykes** (1909-1997), who taught ballet in Mosman from 1920s to 1993. Another is from **Marlene Reid** who moved to a boatshed at The Spit with her family in 1967. She is a keen and fond observer of the changing people and events over her 41 years there.

50th Anniversary of Mosman Tornado Mosman's changing landscape

The item in November's newsletter, about the tornado of 14th November 1967, triggered memories from many long-term Mosman residents. One reader responded regarding the diary quote '*Dick Gooch's service station on Spit Road looks like a bomb ruin*'.

She remembered the service station on the North-east corner of the Spit Road intersection with Stanton Road and '*according to my father (Harry Mack), in the 1920's it was just a block of land with a horse grazing on it. Dad used to pat the horse every morning on his way to Shore*'. She also remembers shops - a hairdresser, butcher and a newsagency on the southern corner where there is now a parking area.

The corner is shortly to change again when the pedestrian crossing to Parrawi Junction shops is removed and traffic lights installed at the Stanton Road intersection as part of B-Line bus modifications.

BALMORAL WALK for seniors Thursday afternoon 12th April

You might like to join a Mosman Council walk of about 1.5 hours duration, guided by MHS's David Carment. It involves a leisurely stroll along Balmoral's Esplanade focussing on people associated with the area's historic features, beginning about 20,000 years ago and extending until recent times. Topics covered include Aboriginal inhabitants, European explorers and pioneers, artists, swimmers, sailors, teachers, students, picnickers, and mystics. *Contact Rebecca on 9978 4093 or R.Allan@mosman.nsw.gov.au.*

MOSMAN'S MIGRANT HOSTEL

By 1950, Mosman Council was experiencing a severe labour shortage. The post-war building boom and new light industry on the lower north shore provided plentiful employment opportunities for unskilled workers. This left the Municipality with insufficient manpower to attend, in particular, to the repair and maintenance of roads and footpaths. Advertisements in the Mosman Daily, offering above award rates and the chance to work close to home, attracted few suitable applicants. As a result, Council began investigating the possibility of employing New Australians through the Commonwealth Employment Office.

Following World War II Australia had accepted a large number of displaced persons from Europe. Many of these were initially housed at the Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre near Wodonga, Victoria. Here they had English lessons, and employment opportunities were sought. Mosman Council minutes in October 1950 record that their request for 25 to 30 men from this source had been approved, provided suitable accommodation was available in time for their arrival.

Council had hoped existing Army or Navy buildings could be obtained to house these workers. None were available, so arrangements were made for construction, at an eventual cost of £6,500, of new prefabricated buildings and amenities at Rawson Park. The migrant hostel was completed by September 1951, and the first 15 New Australians arrived from Victoria on the 25th of that month.

Council Minutes report that they arrived in the early hours of the morning, being met at Central Station by the Overseer and Engineer, then taken to Rawson Park for breakfast. By 11 am they were at work. More arrived in the following days. The men were required to pay £4 per week for rent and meals at the Rawson Park hostel, and to break even on the cost of catering, with careful supervision of meals and purchasing, a minimum of 23 occupants was required. Numbers at Mosman varied, the maximum being 32.

They were employed on a 2 year contract to the Commonwealth Government but could request a transfer for family or other reasons, in which case replacements were sent. While here, they were encouraged to continue learning English, Mosman Evening College advertising classes in "English for New Australians" where students would "receive instruction in English and Elementary Civics" (M.D. 7/2/1950).

The New Australians were mainly employed on road and footpath repairs, with training provided by Council overseers. By 1952 the scheme was in full swing, safeguarding the Council against labour fluctuations and enabling great progress to be made on the essential works program.

The Council had expected the labour shortage to last anything up to 6 years, but by 1953 the situation had greatly improved. By investing in new labour saving equipment and initiatives, staff previously occupied by

labour intensive activities could also be freed up for other work. A new mechanical street sweeper had been purchased, able to cover many of the 72 miles of Mosman streets much more efficiently than the horse and cart team which it replaced; a mechanised weed cutting apparatus greatly facilitated the care of parks and verges, and perennials rather than annuals were to be planted in Council gardens.

Although the migrant scheme had worked efficiently, after much discussion Council decided to discontinue use of the hostel at Rawson Park in July 1953.

At the time of the hostel's closure, Balmoral Baths were being gradually rebuilt following destruction by a severe storm in July 1948. The cost of building the proposed new bathing pavilion was, however, beyond reach. Instead, the hostel buildings from Rawson Park were incorporated into this project. At the Council meeting of 14 July 1953, Mayor Ferris advised that the hostel had closed and the migrant living quarters would be used as the new dressing sheds at Balmoral. They were subsequently transferred by road to The Esplanade and re-erected at the Baths.

Whether any of the New Australians remained in Mosman working for Council or other employers, were re-employed elsewhere by the Government, or returned to Victoria, is not known.

P.Morris. Mosman Historical Society

References:

Mosman Council Annual Reports 1951,1952

Mosman Council Minutes 1950-1953

Mosman Daily, various dates

Municipality of Mosman: 1952



Mosman Migrant Hostel

From a Mosman council publication:
Municipality of Mosman 1952