MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - April 2018

Local historian, Jacqueline Dwyer, was our speaker on 14th March. In the centenary of the end of WWI, it was timely that she spoke about her family's involvement along the Western Front.

Jacqueline's grandfather Georges Playoust was one of several wool buyers from the Flanders region of France and Belgium who emigrated to Australia in 1880s . Many settled in Mosman establishing a prosperous and vibrant French community. George raised 10 children here, including Jacqueline's father Jaques. When war broke out in 1914, Jacques and several siblings and cousins were conscripted by the French army to fight on the Western Front. Three died in action.

Our speaker's book about her research is called **Flanders in Australia: a Personal History of Wool and War**, also the title of her talk.

And a book hot off the press by committee member Perry McIntyre, is **FREE PASSAGE: Convict Family Reunion in Australia 1788-1852**, Anchor Books Australia, 2018.

MHS is seeking members who might like to join the committee. Email *mosmanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com*

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING
Wednesday 9th May 2018 at 7pm
Downstairs at Mosman Library

The subject for our next meeting was also a Mosman resident as well as a journalist, Royal Australian Air Force Spitfire pilot, prisoner-of-war, celebrated writer (*The Great Escape*, *The Dam Busters*, *Escape – or Die* and *Reach for the Sky*), **Paul Brickhill.**

Presenter **John Ramsland** OAM is Emeritus Professor of History at The University of Newcastle. He has published extensively and widely on social, cultural and educational history, Aboriginal Studies, child social welfare, marine history, historical biography, the impact of modern industrial warfare, and on the historical significance of sport. His book **Flying into Danger: The Paul Brickhill Story** was published in 2017. Copies will be for sale following the talk. *See attached flyer.*

NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dr Ian Hoskins has presented to us several times and is a favorite with our society members. The North Shore Historical Society have let us know of an upcoming talk he will be giving at Stanton Library on Thursday 17 May 1-2pm entitled **A Sober, Industrious Law-abiding People.** Those were the words of Sir Henry Parkes. describing the 70 or so Chinese who made their home in North Sydney, according to the 1871 Census. They were barely visible in historical records and largely outsiders. Dr Hoskins has been researching the history of Chinese market gardeners and storekeepers 1870-1932, who they were and where they lived and worked.
Bookings: northsydney.nsw.gov.au Ph: 02 9936 8400

90th Birthday of the Royal Flying Doctor Service
SCOTS KIRK MOSMAN Friendship Dinner
Tuesday 15 May 6.30 for 7pm
at Mosman Returned Servicemen's Club

Clyde Thomson AM,GM, is a former pilot and CEO of the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Broken Hill, He will be guest of honour, together with his partner, author Debbie Hunt. Clyde was recruited as a pilot to the service in 1974 by Rev Fred McKay, successor to Rev John Flynn. He has achieved many changes to the service including the expansion from 3 aeroplanes to a fleet of 22 modern planes. He is also a dynamic speaker.

Tickets $50 each, all profits to the RFDS South-Eastern Section). Tickets must be purchased before 6 May from Helen Egan 9969 3815, Ann 9904 9994, Lyn 9969 5947.

Local Studies events at BARRY O'KEEFE LIBRARY

Monday 23 April
Linga Longa or Emoh Ruo: What's in a name?
Before houses were assigned a number they were identified by a name. If you have wondered about the name of your home, the Mosman Local Studies Collection may have the answer. *You can book one of the limited places for a 30 minute session on 9978 4101*

Wednesday 16 May 7-8.30pm
Plated up: Australian Community War Memorials on Ceramic Ware.
Lieutenant Colonel Paul Simadas will talk about local memorials to WWI, how their depiction on ceramics was a lasting reminder of the importance of remembering. *Refreshments provided: Free but bookings essential on events.mosman.nsw.gov.au*

Monday 28 May 7-8.30pm
Private Ryan and Sgt Wilkinson
New stories of the Great War continue to emerge. Douglas Newton and David Wilkinson present two very different stories of very different men.
Refreshments provided: Free but bookings essential on events.mosman.nsw.gov.au

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Vale **Dianne Margaret McInnes Krummel**

We sadly report the passing of Di McKrummel on 8th April. Di was a hard working and valuable committee member of MHS over two decades and a friend to many members.

Di McInnes attended Queenwood School and in 1960s spent time in Alice Springs before marrying Robert William Krummel and moving to Nelson, New Zealand. After other moves elsewhere, she returned to the family home in Botanic Road and immersed herself in contributing to many community endeavours.

The funeral will take place on Wednesday 18th April 1.30pm at Scots Kirk, 9 Belmont Road.

CLIFTON GARDENS HOTEL

Originally named the Clifton, the hotel at Clifton Gardens was built by Duncan Butters in 1872 and a publican's license granted in 1873, one of the first in Mosman. The Clifton Hotel stood near the present day bus parking area off Morella Road, overlooking the beach and picnic area at Chowder Bay.

The early years were marked by the excessive drinking and riotous behaviour of visitors arriving on weekend excursion ferries, and the police were often required to restore order. David Thompson, who acquired the license from Butters in 1879, also had problems with drunk and disorderly patrons, his licence being amended in 1882 to disallow dancing, deemed to be the cause of the unruly and immoral behaviour.

In an attempt to improve its reputation, Thompson rebuilt and reopened the hotel in 1885, renaming it the Chowder Bay Marine Hotel. The three storey building had forty rooms, providing accommodation, bar and dining room, and nearby were also a large dancing pavilion, picnic areas and pleasure grounds. It was advertised as having all modern conveniences, being the ideal holiday resort for visitors who wished to be within easy reach of the city.

David Thompson died in 1900, and in 1905, the hotel and pleasure grounds were purchased by the Sydney Ferries Ltd. Many improvements were made and the circular swimming enclosure was added. The hotel, renamed the Clifton Gardens Hotel and with the associated pool and picnic grounds, prospered until the mid 1930s, though at times larrikin elements still caused problems.

The accommodation business began to suffer following the opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1932 – no longer was Clifton Gardens a secluded, out of town destination. The growing influence of motorcars meant holiday makers could venture further afield. Advertisements for the hotel changed emphasis, focusing on features such as availability of garages, and it *being "only 12 minutes to the city via the Harbour Bridge".*

From the late 1940s the business was ailing, though many social events were still recorded there, and it was a popular venue for viewing weekend yacht races. Until 1949, Sydney Ferries Ltd was the main shareholder, but they were in financial difficulties and sold out soon after this, the hotel then being leased to Tooth & Co. until April 1950.

Although not actually for sale, opportunities for other uses were always open for consideration. With extensive accommodation comprising 30 guest rooms, a further detached bungalow, separate staff and manager's quarters, laundry, garages, bar, large dining and kitchen facilities, the hotel was considered for use by various government establishments requiring such accommodation, but nothing eventuated. Instead, in April 1950, it was sold to an American, Mr J.L. Herbert of the Canary Club Restaurant Ltd.

Herbert planned to build a luxury tourist hotel on the site at the cost of £1 million. The scheme included a six storey building containing 76 ensuite rooms, a cabaret and ballroom, a beachside beer garden for 5000 patrons reached by an escalator, and fresh and saltwater swimming pools. However the Minister for Building Materials, due to post war shortages, would not grant a permit for the materials required as they were more urgently needed for housing, schools, hospitals etc.
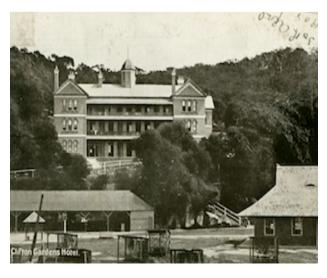
The future of the hotel remained in limbo. It was in need of maintenance, and new owners and ideas were sought. Several proprietors came and went. Fire destroyed the staff annex in 1958 and other outbuildings were demolished. An application in 1959 for a multi-storey block of home units on the site was refused. In 1965 the hotel was again for sale, but by then many local residents supported moves to demolish it. Noise, traffic, vandalism, and difficulty accessing the park below via the hotel grounds were the main objections by residents. Fights, bad behaviour of patrons who continued drinking in the reserve after closing time, and even an armed hold-up, made it one of the worst trouble spots for local police, and placed a stigma on this otherwise quiet area.

Resident opinion as to its possible future use varied, some wanting sub-division for housing, others still favouring the luxury hotel plan, and others preferring the land be used as a park. Although still a popular meeting and drinking spot, in 1966 the hotel was closed. An application was made to Mosman Council to convert it into a convalescent home, and another in 1967 for a new 4 storey, 152 room convalescent hospital - both were refused.

Ultimately, despite still being structurally sound, the Clifton Gardens Hotel was demolished in 1967. The hotel site, grounds and pleasure gardens were incorporated into Clifton Gardens Reserve, once part of the County of Cumberland green belt. The hotel is commemorated by a plaque on a rock in the park on the site it once occupied.

P. Morris, Mosman Historical Society

*Information from Mosman Library Local Studies
Clifton Gardens and Historic Buildings files*

*Clifton Gardens Hotel after its renaming in 1905 by new owners, Sydney Ferries Ltd.
(from a black and white postcard in Mosman Library's collection)*