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MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - June 2018

On 9th May, John Ramsland, OAM and Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Newcastle, spoke about Australian writer and later Mosman resident **Paul Brickhill**, author of bestseller stories about WW2.

Brickhill grew up in Greenwich, often getting into scrapes with his mate Peter Finch, and became a journalist for the Sydney Sun. Having enlisted in the RAAF in 1941, he was shot down and spent most of the war in a German POW camp, where he witnessed many atrocities. His experiences resulted in his first book *Escape to Danger* (on which the film *The Great Escape* was based), followed by *The Dambusters* and *Reach for the Sky*. All were highly successful, being translated into many languages and made into films. As a result, Brickhill became a celebrity and a wealthy man.

Despite this success, he stopped writing and disappeared from the limelight, suffering increasingly from post war neuroses and bouts of depression. This condition was not well understood then, and various drug and shock treatments made matters worse. He eventually returned to Sydney in 1959. Following his divorce from model Margot Slater in 1964, he bought a flat in the Stancliff building at Balmoral, overlooking the beach. Although still suffering waves of mental illness, he was known locally as a friendly convivial man, spending his days swimming, walking, and watching the scenery. He died at his Balmoral home in 1991.

NEXT SPEAKER MEETING

Wednesday 11th July 2018 at 7pm
Downstairs at Mosman Library
SYDNEY CEMETERY ADVENTURES

Dr Lisa Murray is the author of *Sydney Cemeteries: a field guide* and will be encouraging us to share her fascination for our cemeteries in her talk. Dr Murray is a public historian and works at the City of Sydney Council where she heads up the history program. She is an award-winning author, curator and producer of walking tours, activations, podcasts and smart phone apps. See attached flyer.

CONGRATULATIONS to

Emeritus Professor David Carment AM
Federation of Australian Historical Societies Fellowship

Only up to three FAHS fellowships are awarded annually in recognition of outstanding contribution to community history in at least two states. David will be entitled to use post nominal letters FFAHS following the presentation on 28th June.

THE MOSMAN MAIL.....now on Trove

Mosman's earliest extant newspaper, is now available online in Trove, the National Library of Australia's digitised newspaper database. Trove provides free online access to approximately 22.5 million pages from around 1250 Australian regional and metropolitan newspapers from every state and territory.

Although The Mosman Mail was published from 1898 until at least 1914, only issues from Sept.1898 to Dec.1906 survive. Until now these were only available on microfilm. The project to digitize The Mosman Mail was proudly supported by the Mosman Historical Society, the Royal Australian Historical Society on behalf of the NSW Government, Mosman Council, Mosman Local Studies Collection in the Barry O'Keefe Library

and the State Library of NSW. We are now able to read, online, Mosman news and ephemera of that era.... for example:-

May 1903 the inauguration of the Mosman Musical Society was announced. An enthusiastic meeting was held in the Town Hall 'for the purpose of instituting a vocal and orchestral musical society', and 60 performing members were enrolled on the night. That Society is still going strong today!

April 1903 we read that 'the Mosman Public School has recently been raised to the dignity of a Superior Public School' thanks to progress made under new head teacher Mr [William Ernest] Black. A new building, able to accommodate 400 students, was soon to be built facing Avenue Road.

July 1905 an anonymous correspondent rejoiced – 'A pound in Mosman at last!... No more straying horses, cattle and goats, to frighten women and children and eat up people's plants and flowers'.

The new digitised format will greatly improve access to this valuable Mosman historical resource.

GEORGE MOSMAN

150th ANNIVERSARY of his death 5th September 1868

George Mosman was the twin brother of Archibald Mosman. While Archibald was developing his whaling station at Mosman, George was establishing his importance to the agriculture community of the mid north coast. We reported in February 2017 that John Dansie had tracked down George's resting place in Pioneer Hill Historical Cemetery at Raymond Terrace.

MHS member **Debbie Higginson**, great, great granddaughter of George Mosman, is the driving force behind a gathering of descendants and friends to commemorate the sesquicentenary of his death. At 11.30am on Saturday 8th September, by George's graveside at the Pioneer Hill Historical Cemetery, a family sponsored plaque will be unveiled, inscribed:-

'George Mosman was a Scottish pioneer who obtained some leasehold land in Seaham in 1829. Subsequently he moved to another property known as "Burrowel" where he died in 1868. His twin brother Archibald Mosman founded a whaling station in the Sydney suburb of Mosman now named after him.'

Afterwards, guests are invited to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the grounds of 'Brandon House' at Seaham near Raymond Terrace, built as the Victorian era home of Dorothea, George's daughter and currently the home of her descendants.

If you would like to attend, Debbie can be contacted for info and directions on 0412 528 451 or debbie.higginson@me.com

Local Studies events at BARRY O'KEEFE LIBRARY

Weaving Tales: writing family history
Thursday 12th July, 10am to midday

Dr. Noeline Kyle, lecturer, author and historian, will focus on how to weave your collected memories, research and local history into a lively, rich and professional family tale.

Free but bookings essential on 9978 4101.

Brian Woolley.....died 4th June 2018, aged 88 years

Committee members are saddened to hear of the passing of a long-standing member who for many years happily arrived early to help set up for our meetings. Brian used to be known as the Cork Man because of his volunteer work collecting corks for recycling. He was a familiar Mosman character, often found at Bridgepoint carrying his pet furry toy.

60 YEARS AGO.....Farewell to Mosman's last tram on 29th June 1958

Sixty years ago, in June 1958, the last trams ran in Mosman. The service had begun in 1893, running from North Sydney to Spit Junction, and over the years, more routes extended around the suburb. With the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, trams were able to go into Wynyard.

By the late 1930s the replacement of trams by buses was under consideration, and though routes beyond the Spit Bridge were converted by 1939, the war then intervened. Reports by overseas experts recommended the phasing out of Sydney's trams by 1960 – this would reduce congestion, as private cars, rapidly increasing in number, banked up behind trams at every stop. Buses were faster, cheaper to run, and could follow more flexible routes. After years of speculation, in 1957 the NSW Government confirmed the imminent discontinuation of Mosman and all other northern Sydney tramways, replacing them with buses in 1958.

Despite the inevitable opponents and pessimists, preparations for the changeover in Mosman were commenced. As far as possible, the buses were to follow the same routes previously used by trams. This was not entirely possible though, as the route to Balmoral departed from the road network below Mulbring Street. From here the tracks ran on a ballast base unsuitable for buses, through a rock cutting in the bush and down to The Esplanade. Plans to convert this to a road were never realised, and instead the Balmoral to Athol buses would run up Raglan Street. Other work was necessary - the road to Athol (Taronga Zoo) Wharf required widening to accommodate both cars and buses, and the terminus at the wharf was enlarged to provide turning space for buses. Parriwi Road also required widening to allow cars and buses to pass safely at its sharp bends. Despite a short timeframe, these upgrades were completed in time for the changeover.

New arrangements were also required in the city. Trams from the North Shore ran along tracks on the eastern side of the Harbour Bridge, then through a tunnel to an underground terminus on platforms 1 and 2 (next to train platforms 3 and 4) at Wynyard Station. The Mosman and Cremorne buses would henceforth start and terminate above there, as they still do, in York and Carrington Streets. Diagrams were published in the press showing departure points of each service, and timetables distributed at tram stops. To avoid congestion, some other northern Sydney buses, such as the Northbridge line, would instead travel across the new Cahill Expressway and terminate in Phillip Street and Martin Place.

A Balmoral to Wynyard tram (a late night, after ferry hours service) was the last to run in Mosman. It departed Balmoral at 12.40 a.m. on a wet Sunday morning of June 29, 1958. Tram enthusiasts, keen to ride on this last journey, joined along the route. From Balmoral the tram travelled through the wet bush cutting and quiet dark streets of Mosman, to North Sydney and across the Bridge into Wynyard terminus. Here, John Alfred records, *"a huge disorderly crowd waited, greeting us with popping flashbulbs, cheers and wild shrieks before making a mad rush for seats"*. At 1.17 a.m. the tram departed for the

depot at Lane Cove, being the last to cross the Harbour Bridge. During the journey revellers souvenired many of its fittings, and having lost its lights, the tram required a police escort for the last part of the journey.

By Monday morning the buses were in full swing. In the following days there were mixed feelings about the changeover. Motorists found that traffic moved more easily without the trams, and bottlenecks on Military Road were greatly eased. The predicted gridlock on the Bridge due to 100 extra buses during peak times did not eventuate. Some passengers, however, especially those boarding at North Sydney and intermediate stops, were very unhappy. During peak hour their buses were already full and passed without stopping, leaving them stranded for long periods. Adjustments were made as a result, with some buses to start at North Sydney and additional peak services to and from The Spit. Rain on the first day of bus services also brought complaints about the lack of shelter and poor queue control at some city bus stops. Overall the changeover went smoothly, and ultimately most passengers came to prefer the more comfortable buses.

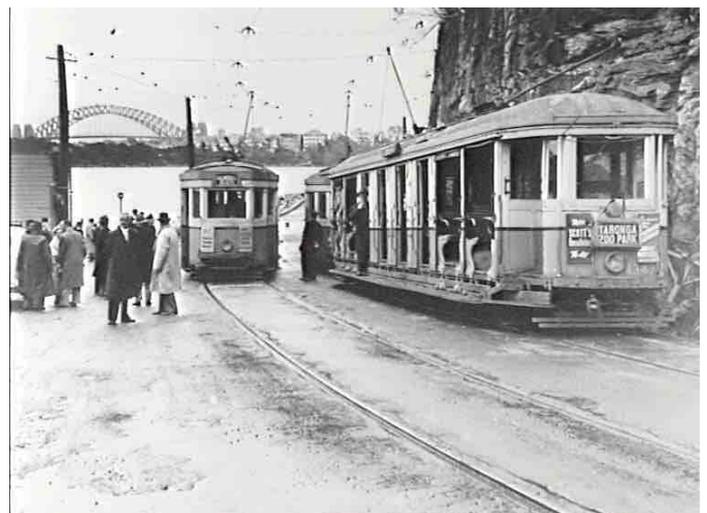
A few of the tram carriages survived as museum exhibits or backyard sheds, but most were quickly burnt. The tram corridor on the Bridge was converted to two extra traffic lanes and the underground terminus at Wynyard became a carpark.

In his Mayoral Minute for 1960, Mosman Mayor Whybrow reported that Council staff had removed the tram tracks from Cremorne to Mosman Junction, and from Spit Junction to Parriwi Road, and replaced them with a smooth paved roadway. With this, most traces of Mosman's trams had disappeared.

P. Morris, Mosman Historical Society.

References:

- ALFRED, John. *Across the Bridge*, Canberra, Traction Publications, 1960
- KEENAN, David R. *North Sydney lines of the Sydney tramway system*. Sutherland, Transit Pr, [1987]
- Mosman Daily – various dates 1957-58
- Sydney Morning Herald on SLNSW EResources – various dates 1957-8



*'Last day of service at Athol Wharf 1958'
(from Trace – Mosman Library Service)*