



PO Box 39, Mosman NSW 2088
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<https://mosmanhistoricalsociety.org.au/>

Patron: Gavin Souter AO
 Affiliate Member: Royal Australian Historical Society

Mosman Historical Society – New Committee Members for 2023-2024
ELECTED AT THE SOCIETY’S A.G.M. ON 13TH SEPTEMBER

President: Debbie Higginson	Newsletter: Margaret Szalay	<u>Ex Officio members:</u>
Vice-President: Stephen Palmer	Membership: Margaret Szalay	Library Rep. Donna Braye
Assistant Secretary: Pam Lofthouse	<u>New Committee members:</u>	(Mosman Library Local Studies Librarian)
Acting Secretary: David Carment AM	Robert Clark	Webmaster: Amanda Gosse
Treasurer: Stephen Palmer	Gail Fitzhardinge	
Speakers: David Carment AM	Lyn Tanner	

MOSMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - October 2023

The Society’s meetings are held on the second Wednesday in March, May, July, September & November

We look forward to seeing you at our next Speaker evening on **Wednesday, 8th November** - this is our last meeting for 2023. Next meeting in March.



**JOIN US FOR
 CHRISTMAS DRINKS
 AFTER THE MEETING
 ON 8TH NOVEMBER**

Members are encouraged to invite a friend or neighbour to join MHS each year to grow our membership and help preserve our heritage

DATES FOR THE DIARY
Wednesday, 8th November, 7.00pm
 Speaker: **Matthew Brownlie** will talk about **Scouting in Mosman 1908-2023**
(Details in the attached flyer)

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

Wednesday, 14th March 2024, 7.00pm
 Speaker: *To be advised in the February newsletter*

Meetings are held at **Mosman Library**
 605 Military Road, Mosman NSW

If you wish to attend, please contact David by the Monday prior at davidcarment@mac.com
 Or 0418 857 182 (email preferred)

LOCAL STUDIES AT MOSMAN LIBRARY
<https://mosman.nsw.gov.au/library/Local-Studies>
<https://events.mosman.nsw.gov.au/>

**DETAILS OF UPCOMING LOCAL STUDIES EVENT
 OVERLEAF**

M.H.S. COMMITTEE FOR 2023-2024
 At the AGM held in September, the above committee members were nominated and elected. The Society appreciates their support and future participation.

The committee is most grateful for the long and valued involvement of the following committee members who retired at the AGM:
John Dansie, Noela Gill, Kay Halstead and Perry McIntyre.

**COPIES OF OUR BOOK
 “MOSMAN: TIMES GONE BY”
 ARE STILL AVAILABLE.**

A great Christmas present.
 Mail order form is on our website (above)
 or **RESERVE YOUR COPY** or **COPIES** for pickup at the November meeting ... Contact Margaret by telephone – 02-9904 1829 or Email – cremorne1@gmail.com

LAND TITLE CLAIM AT BALMORAL BEACH

Of interest to residents of Mosman:
<https://www.mosmancollective.com/general/outrageous-100-million-aboriginal-land-claim-made-on-prime-balmoral-beach-reserve>

FEATURE ARTICLES ... overleaf

Topics: Two early houses on Belmont Road: *Alma House*, built by Frederick Smith, still extant and renovated, and *Myahagh*, now demolished, and its first resident, Charles Cowles, Mosman’s second Mayor and an early pioneer of Mosman. Cowles and Myahagh Roads were named in his memory.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY FOR US??

As many of our members have long family connections to Mosman, our President invites you to write a short article with photos, for a future newsletter, on a topic or place of local or family interest to you. Please talk to Margaret – cremorne1@gmail.com or 02-9904 1829.

News Flash: The newspapers and newsmakers of Mosman.

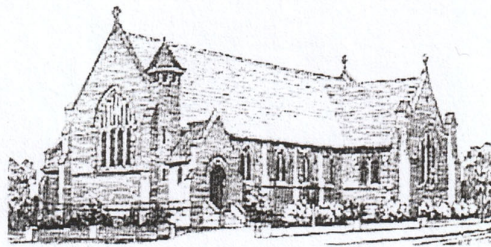
This exhibition looks at the locals behind three of Australia's most significant independent newspapers of the 19th and 20th centuries, Australia's first female war correspondent, Mosman's poet journalist and some local stories that have made memorable headlines.

A Mosman Festival event on view Barry O'Keefe Library

20 October to 17 November 2023.

During library open hours.

AN INVITATION



***Mosman Village Church
Mosman Festival - Recital and Hymn Fest
Sunday 22nd October 2023 - 3pm***

*Organist – Mr Ian Minnett
Trumpet – Reverend Andy Bleach (Senior Assistant Minister)*

Please join us for an afternoon of organ & trumpet music

***There is also a history tour of the church at 10am on
Saturday, 21st October as part of the Mosman Festival.***

(Formerly St Clements Church, located at 144 Raglan Street, Mosman)

**ALMA HOUSE, 114 BELMONT ROAD, MOSMAN,
LATER TO BECOME SYDNEY NURSERY SCHOOL**

Margaret Szalay, 2023



(Source: Realestate.com.au)

Alma was constructed in 1896 for Frederick Smith, a wealthy resident, who was a Councillor on the North Sydney Council, a member of the Masons and also a JP. He did not move there from his home in Blues Point until he was an old man. After his death, the house was sold to a Doctor Frank Doak. Doctor Doak had a lot of connections with Mosman. In later years, Miss Hutchinson established a nursery school in the building, which is thought to be the first school of its type in the municipality.¹ It was later a corporate headquarters until it was sold in 2010 for A\$3.65 million. It is now a contemporary family home for six.

Frederick Smith and his wife, Harriet, married in 1856 in Windsor and had seven surviving children between 1861 and 1878, three children died as infants. Frederick Smith died on 13 May 1914, aged 82. Details from his will indicate that he owned several properties in Sydney – two houses in North Sydney, one in Glover Street, Mosman, and properties in Careel Bay, Pittwater, in addition to *Alma House*.

Following his death, a 1914 newspaper article² about Smith's estate noted its [*Alma House's*] value was A£17,159, in his will sworn in for probate. He appointed his sons Sidney, Arthur and Frederick and his daughter Frances executors and executrix and trustees of the estate. He bequeathed the furniture, ornaments, plate and effects at *Alma* to Frances, which furniture and effects were purchased with her own money. He gave his pony phaeton, harness and all other articles of a similar nature to Frances. The house occupied by his son Frederick in Chuter Street, North Sydney (now McMahons Point), testator was left to Frederick on trust to receive the benefits, rents, etc., until his death, when it goes to his children. He left the property at the corner of Alexander and Atchinson Streets, North Sydney in trust to his son Francis, and the property in Glover Street in trust to his son Arthur for life, both on the same terms as that to Frederick. He left certain property at Careel Bay, Pittwater, to his son-in-law, Harold Trotman Howard, and the remainder of his Careel Bay property to all of testator's children as joint tenants. He left A£30 to the North Shore Hospital, an annuity of A£200 to his daughter Frances, one of A£150 to his friend Rosalie Grigg and one of A£50 to his daughter Isabella, now Isabella Reed. The residue of real and personal estate was to be held in trust for the children after due provision for mortgages, etc. A codicil to the will revoked the provision appointing trustees, executors and executrix and appointed in their place his son-in-law, Harold Trotman Howard, in conjunction with testator's son Arthur and daughter Frances. He further provided that in the event of Rosalie Grigg predeceasing his daughter Frances, the annuity of A£150 should go to Frances, while that of A£50 payable to Isabella Reed is to go to the daughter May Howard, in the event of the annuitant predeceasing May

¹ Information from an oral history recorded by Trish Levido with Robert Hall & Helen Taylor in 2009 about the Sydney Nursery School - <https://www.mosmanvoices.net/oral-histories/>

Howard.²

The house is completed in the late Victorian Italianate style. Large two-storey face-brick Victorian Italianate style residence with slate roof. The house features a two-storey window bay with cement rendered mouldings and quoins.³ The entry porch has a large arch and opens to the two-storey cast iron verandah on the west.

On the eastern side is a two-storey brick addition with a flat roof. Details have been matched to the original building and the addition maintains a benign quality even though it is located in a prominent position. There is a further two-storey shingled, gabled addition on the north west. The garden is set in large grounds.

Alma is historically significant for its association with the establishment of substantial residences in Mosman in the 1880s and also with its use as an early nursing school. It is aesthetically significant as a good example of Victorian Italianate architecture with sympathetic additions, and is prominent in the streetscape.

Alma House was listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999

References:

- “*Alma House*”. *New South Wales State Heritage Register*. Department of Planning & Environment. H00070.
- Local Environmental Plan, 2011
- “114 Belmont Road, Mosman, NSW – Property Sold Price”. *House.ksou.cn*.
- Clarke, Elizabeth (28 May 2020). “Inside the restoration of this once dilapidated 1800s manor home”. *Domain*.
- *The Sun* (Sydney). 7 July 1914. P1, abridged.



‘*Alma House*’ is located at the bend in Belmont Road, near Military Road (arrowed).

The location of ‘*Myahgah*’, is also arrowed on the corner of Belmont & Myahgah Roads, now the site of the public primary school– story follows.

(Map: Mosman Council)

MORE STORIES ABOUT EARLY STately HOMES IN MOSMAN, MANY NOW DEMOLISHED, WERE INCLUDED IN THE SOCIETY’S RECENT PUBLICATION, *MOSMAN: Times Gone By*.

² *The Sun* (Sydney). 7 July 1914. p1, abridged

³ Being ignorant of such things, the author discovered that a Quoin is an external angle on a wall or building; a cornerstone forming the external corner of a wall (Collins Dictionary)

**MYAHGAH, Belmont Road (cnr Myahgah Road) Mosman, later the MENA HOSPITAL
& its original owner, CHARLES COWLES (1837-1923), a Mosman Pioneer**

Margaret Szalay, 2023

Myahgah on Belmont Road was built in 1885 by Charles Cowles, the second Mayor of Mosman; it later became the Mena Hospital. The site was first occupied by Matthew Joyce, one of the 11 listed Mosman residents in 1867. The building was later demolished when the school extended to Myahgah Road.⁴ Charles Cowles and his wife first came to Queensland in 1864 and moved to Sydney in 1865. In 1885 he moved his home from *Hadleigh* in North Sydney to *Myahgah*, Belmont Road, Mosman. *Myahgah* with a slate roof was much more attractive in earlier times.



Lavender Bay, North Sydney, 1875 (Source: Footnote 5)

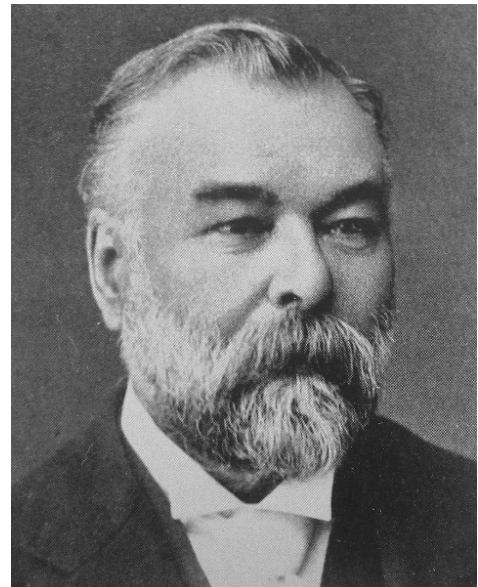


*Mena Hospital, c.1980 (Photo: Rod Sturrock)
(Photos of the original 'Myahgah' not located)*

On moving to Mosman in 1885, the Cowles family were Mosman pioneers. Their new home, *Myahgah*, was one of only about ten houses in the Mosman area. In order to get to his home, Charles Cowles had to drive through what was bush country for the greater portion of the distance from Milson's Point, that being the only point in North Sydney to which there was a regular service from the city. Cowles-Road was made by Mr. Cowles, mainly at his own expense, prior to its being handed over to the Mosman municipal council. Cowles Road and Myahgah Road, both in Mosman, perpetuate the memory of Charles Cowles.

Charles Cowles (1837-1923)⁶, gunsmith and firearms dealer, was born on 8 March 1837 at Topcroft, Norfolk, England, son of James Cowles, publican, and his wife Honour, née Seago. On 28 February 1864 at Walworth, Surrey, Cowles married Cecilia Emma Dunn (1841-1923). With his employer, William Green, they migrated to Queensland in 1864 on the ship *Golden City*.

After moving to Sydney in 1865, Green became ill, and decided to return to England leaving the gunsmithing business he had established at 96 Market Street, Sydney, to Cowles. In 1867, he moved the business to 205 Pitt Street, in small premises adjoining the general post-office site in Pitt-street. On the rebuilding of those premises, he moved in December 1875 to Cannon House, 411 George Street. In 1885 he formed the partnership of Cowles, Dunn & Co. with his brother-in-law, Arthur Dunn. About 1892 the name of the business changed to Cowles & Dunn, by which it was known until after World War II. His son and a partner carried on the business in the George Street premises.



Charles Cowles (Source: Footnote 4)

Charles Cowles was an accomplished shot, a member of the Metropolitan Pigeon Club and in the late 1880s a

⁴ Rod Sturrock, *A Pictorial History of Mosman, Volume 2*, 1980, p84 – also source of the photo above.

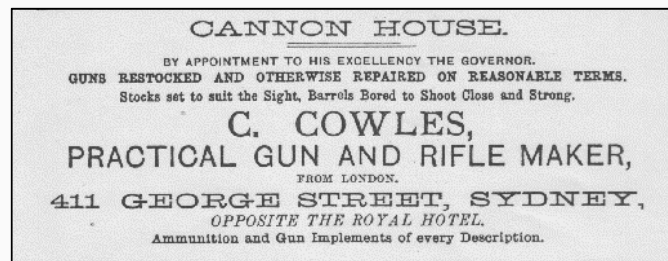
⁵ Photo: North Sydney, 1875 - <https://historicphotos.com.au/collections/sydney-nsw-1/harbour?page=1>

⁶ Biographical information from Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 3, 1969; Trove SMH 27.12.1923; Funeral notice; Ryersons Index

member of the North Sydney Gun Club. He was a member of the Mosman Bowling Club, and was interested in yachting and other sports.



(Town & Country Journal, 1875)

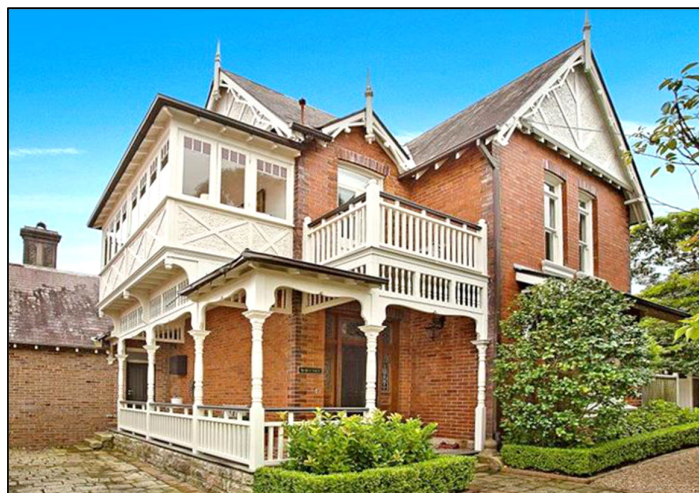


(Country & Post Office Gazette, 1878)

From 1886, he was an alderman of the old St. Leonard’s municipal council, in which he represented Tunks ward. With the late Captain Jenkins and others, he was instrumental in securing the separation of Mosman from St. Leonards municipality. From June 1893 to January 1898, he was a member of the first Mosman Council, serving as alderman and as second mayor. He returned several times to England, the last in 1904, and visited America.

He died at Mosman on 24 December 1923 aged 86, predeceased by his wife by a few months [Cecilia died 24 September 1923, aged 82]. He was survived by four sons and four daughters of their ten children. He was buried in the Congregational section of the Gore Hill cemetery.⁷

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Waveney (Source: dijones.com.au)

Waveney, at 40 Cowles Road (corner of Belmont Road), Mosman, was commissioned in 1903 by Charles Cowles for one of his daughters, and completed in 1905. It is classified as a Federation home in the ‘Arts & Craft’ style.

Also known as 40 Belmont Road, Waveney is on the NSW State Heritage register and is listed as Heritage item 181 in the Mosman Local Environmental Plan. Sadly, there was no such heritage consciousness when Myahagh/Mena was demolished to make way for the expansion of Mosman primary school.

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⁷ Biographical information from Australian Dictionary of Biography; Trove SMH 27.12.1923 Funeral notice; Ryersons Index