Next Meeting
The next meeting of the Society will be held on Thursday 10th August
2nd floor Conference Room, Stanton Library, Miller Street, North Sydney. Light
refreshments are served from 6.30pm prior to the meeting which commences at 7pm.

Guest Speaker: Dr Lisa Murray
Dr Lisa Murray is a public historian with 20 years’ experience in the field of public history. She is
passionate about making history accessible to the public and is currently the City Historian at the City
of Sydney Council.

Lisa is an award-winning author of social and planning histories and a
regular contributor to debates around public history, including being a
speaker at TEDxSydney 2013. She recently published “Sydney Cemeteries-
a Field Guide”. Currently, in her spare time, Lisa is preparing a new book
on the history of Australian Cemeteries for NLA publishing. In her day-job
at the City of Sydney she is curating an exhibition for the 175th
anniversary of Council, which will open in October.

Topic: Sydney Cemetery Adventures
According to Lisa Murray, cemeteries are wonderful, quiet places for the
living. Whether you’re interested in family history, exploring lesser
known parts of Sydney or finding a beautiful spot for a picnic, Lisa will
explain her comprehensive expert guide has something for everyone to enjoy.

She will reveal the whereabouts of over 100 cemeteries in the greater Sydney area, including
fascinating background essays to help you decode the symbols and types of grave markers you’ll find.

Grave yards aren’t everybody’s cup-of-tea but with a basic understanding of them, one can find a
large amount of interesting information for family history research, as well as discover curious details
about graves while pondering the lives of the names etched in stone.

Welcome to New Member - Mala Seeto

London Transport Day - Sydney Bus Museum – Sunday 6th August 2017 10am to 4pm

Classic London buses will both be running from the Museum to the QVB as we celebrate all things
London. Additional services will operate, all provided by our two genuine red London Transport
double deckers. Films on London’s transport system will be shown throughout the day including
London buses during the war. Traditional Devonshire Teas will be available.

Sydney Bus Museum - Old Leichhardt Tram shed, 25 Derbyshire Road Leichhardt
Tel: (02) 9572 6789 Wednesdays & Saturdays only info@sydneybusmuseum.com
Andrew began his talk by outlining how he came to write his latest book, *Australia 1901 to 2001*, his fourth since retiring from State politics. The UNSW Press approached him to write a book on 20th century Australia but with clear instructions that what was required was a different style of history book, one where there was a continuous narrative from start to finish rather than the normal compartmentalised historical account. Andrew achieved this by using segues from story to connected story, with some 600 stories being included in the book. He then gave members a taste of his new book by relating a number of selected stories from the book.

Andrew first pointed out that while most Australians know that Edmund Barton was Australia’s first Prime Minister, fewer Australians are aware that he was not the first choice. With Federation in 1901 came the need to hold an election for members of the first Parliament and a concomitant need for a Government to oversee this election. The recently arrived Governor General, Lord Hopetoun, wanted to appoint the Premier of NSW, Sir William Lyne (photo), as Prime Minister. However, other senior politicians, like Alfred Deakin and Barton, refused to work with Lyne because he had vigorously opposed Federation right up until the very last moment. As a result, Barton, a strong supporter of Federation, was appointed.

Barton went to the male electorate promising to give women the vote at the next Federal election if he won and which he was able to legalise in 1902. The segue that Andrew then introduced into his narrative at this point was to focus on Miles Franklin, one of the leading novelists in Australia of her time. Her highly acclaimed first novel, *My Brilliant Career*, was published in Scotland in 1901 (no Australian publisher was interested) and was made into a movie in 1979, with Oscar nominated actress Judy Davis in the starring role.

Andrew continued with a story about Major General William Holmes, the uncle of the Headmaster of the local Shore School for 25 years, Basil ‘Jika’ Travers. Holmes, after whom General Holmes Drive near Sydney Airport is named, first led the Australian forces that seized all of the German controlled territory in New Guinea and the Pacific Islands in 1914. He then served on the Western Front until 1917 when he was mortally wounded by a stray shell while escorting the then Premier of NSW, William Holman, on a tour of the battlefield at Messines. He was the highest ranking citizen-soldier to be killed in WW1 (the highest ranking professional soldier to be killed was Major General Sir William Bridges, who founded Duntroon and led the ANZAC forces in their landing at Gallipoli).

1942 was the only year to be given a whole chapter in the book. Andrew explained that this was because it was the only year in the 20th century when Australia was subjected to very serious existential threats. It was the year in which Singapore fell; in which Darwin was heavily bombed; in which the Australian PM, John Curtin, and Winston Churchill continued to fight a cable war over Curtin’s plea for the return the 6th and 7th Australian divisions to defend Australia; in which the critical Battle of the Coral Sea was fought; and in which Sydney was attacked by Japanese midget submarines. The bombing of Darwin was hushed up, reports at that time stating that only 15 people had been killed whereas the real number was more like 252 killed and 400 injured. Andrew was surprised to find in the Darwin Military Museum an order from the commander of the 43rd Battalion defending Darwin that it was expected that Japanese troops would soon land near Darwin and that
the Australian troops were expected to hold all of their areas ‘to the very end’. Fortunately, Curtin’s resolute persistence led to some 35,000 Australian troops being brought home to defend Australia.

Andrew presented the fascinating story of Eddie Mabo, born on the island of Mer (Murray Island). In 1967 he lost his job while working for the Townsville Harbour Board because he was happenstantially shown on TV attending a Communist Party meeting. He then started work at James Cook University as a gardener, where he came in contact with the indigenous historian Henry Reynolds. Mabo was shocked to learn from him that Mer was Crown land, not land owned legally by his people. This was a consequence of the principle of Terra Nullius (nobody’s land), which was the law in Australia for over 200 years. Eddie then fought legal battles over many years until the High Court in 1992 in its landmark Native Title decision overturned that long held principle. Unfortunately, Eddie had died 5 months earlier.

Andrew enthralled members with further intriguing stories about the role of Halvorsen cruisers in the midget submarine attack on Sydney; the last woman to be hanged in Australia (Jean Lee); the kidnapping of Graham Thorne; the TCN 9 opening of TV in Australia from a broom cupboard; the first Vietnam boat arrival; and the opening of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. These, and Andrew’s many other stories, are available in very readable detail by purchasing his latest hard-to-put-down book.

Wading through the Archives

Susan Wade

Boxing Tournament - I think it is interesting to reflect on the Australia media’s frenzy-like attitude to the recent boxing tournament which resulted in Jeff Horn’s win to become Welter Weight World Champion. In contrast a different attitude to public boxing appeared to exist ninety-four years ago.

On 12th February 1923 C.G. Ghys, Esquire, of Mowbray Rd Chatswood, wrote to the North Sydney Town Clerk seeking permission to conduct a Boxing Tournament with Mr. W. Sadler of Clay’s Theatre, to be held in the Ridge Street Theatre on nights to be arranged. He stated they were “quite willing to contribute to the Hospital Funds in the District”.

The Deputy Town Clerk, H. Perry, wrote on behalf of the Mayor, to the Inspector at North Sydney Police Station on 15th February seeking his advice on the matter. Chief Inspector W. Walker responded that he was of the opinion that “such tournaments are objectionable on the grounds they will lead to street boxing contests, cause an undesirable class to assemble at the Hall, and the quiet and good order that now prevails will most likely be disturbed”.

Hence on 8th March the Town Clerk wrote to inform C.G. Ghys Esquire that Council has decided “permission cannot be granted”.

And of course we could amuse ourselves speculating on the number of the undesirable class among the 52,000 spectators who flocked to Suncorp Stadium recently!

The North Shore Bridge - In 1921 as plans for the construction of the North Shore Bridge were being consolidated, the Council wrote to the Sydney Harbour Trust regarding the Railway Commissioners’ intention to remove the Milson’s Point Station to a point higher up the Bay, to a new station at the foot of Glen Street. It was Council’s desire to obtain a lease of the wharf abutting on the existing station, with the expressed wish to “have a voice in fixing fares to be charged by any Company desirous of running a ferry to and from such Wharf”. Permission was not granted.
Note: Construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge began in 1924, resulting in the demolition of all extant dwellings, structures and streets in the Milsons Point Wharf and Alfred Street area (a total of 438 houses were demolished for the construction of the northern approaches of the Harbour Bridge).

Traffic Jams, Alfred Street - I think this next letter gives a very good insight about why the North Shore Bridge was considered essential and why those living on the North Shore were eager for its construction. In June 1923 the Mayor, Alderman G.T. Clarke, wrote to The Superintendent of Traffic stating: “The long queue of motor cars, etc. along Alfred St waiting to board the vehicular ferry is occasioning considerable annoyance to shopkeepers along the route, particularly garages, preventing the ingress and exit of cars. Might I suggest that an Officer be appointed to especially attend to this matter especially on days when the queue is abnormal.”

The Superintendent of Traffic, F. N. Brock, replied that the Inspector General of Police had decided to detail two Constables for Traffic Duty in the vicinity of Milson’s Point and the junction of Alfred and Junction Streets, to attend to traffic matters during the busy hours of the day.

And finally, three items of correspondence which I think reflect issues unique to the era.

Lighters Prohibited - Correspondence in 1922 by Council expressed concern to the Sydney Harbour Trust about “dangers and difficulties attendant upon navigation in busy parts of the harbour in foggy weather”. They replied that they realise the dangers and are “doing everything that is practicable to meet the situation” They also drew Council’s attention to the recent regulation which “prohibits the towing of lighters and punts across the entrance to Sydney Cove between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9.20 a.m.”

Dim view of Gas lights - Correspondence from the Sydney Harbour Trust to Council in July 1921 pointing out that the gas lamps at Lavender Bay Ferry Jetty, (leased by the Council) are very dim each night and in the circumstances asked Council to take the necessary steps to ensure the premises were efficiently lighted.

Jetty Rubbish Harbouring Rats - The Lavender Bay Ferry Jetty was again in the “spotlight” in January 1922 when the harbour Trust wrote again to Council stating a report had been received about rubbish removed from the shore in the Jetty area “was allowed to remain in the adjacent boatshed and provided a harbour of rats”. The Commissioners requested the immediate removal of the rubbish in question, in the public interest.

Outing to Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron 10am Tuesday 26th Sept. Cost $10
Our September excursion is a tour of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron at Kirribilli. The Squadron was founded in 1862 and has occupied its current building, originally owned by the Milson family, since 1903. We will be able to view many historical photographs related to sailing in Sydney and memorabilia including their trophies and cups. The cost of $10 is for morning tea and there is a maximum number of 15 attendees.

To participate, please register by emailing susan.wade@ozemail.com.au or phone 0402172214.