



Inside this issue:

The case for the library 2

Dock display our best so far 3

Story of the Mobil Oil Depot 4

DIARY DATES

National Trust Heritage Festival

April 2 to April 16  
Mobil Oil Depot at Pulpit Point— in council foyer  
Open Monday to Friday business hours.

Ship building at Morts Dock— in museum.

Open April 2, , 9, 12 and 16—11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

April 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15 - noon to 2 p.m.

Tuesday, 18 April, 8 p.m. Meeting at RSL Hall—Fiona Burn—Women in Wartime.

Tuesday, 27 June, 8 p.m. Meeting at RSL Hall—Murray Brown—Heritage and Conservation.

Tuesday, 22 August, 8 p.m. Meeting at RSL Hall—Keith Vincent Smith—remembering Bennelong.



*When the doors opened at 11 o'clock on 2 April for the National Trust Heritage Festival a group of more than 20 visitors led by guides Graham Percival and Phil Jenkyn was ready to come into the Museum.  
There was steady interest shown all day.*

## Speaker will tell how women broke through boundaries in wartime

At our meeting on Tuesday 18 April Fiona Burn will speak on *Breaking through Boundaries Women and Wartime Records relating to women during WWII in the National Archives of Australia*

Fiona is Assistant Director, Access and Communication, National Archives of Australia, Sydney Office. Her talk describes the records held in the National Archives of Australia which document

the role of women during World War H. The talk will outline the records created about individual women who served in the Defence Forces during the war and correspondence regarding the role of women in the Defence Services. It will discuss records relating to women on the Home Front such as records of Australian Women's Land Army, records of the Manpower Directorate and women serving in the public service. Records created about women classified as "Aliens" (any person who was not a natural born or

naturalised British subject) under Alien Registration Regulations during wartime will be discussed. Records discussed will include

- Service Dossiers for members of the Army, Air force and Record of Service Cards for the Navy.
- Pay History and Allotment Cards
- Correspondence regarding the role of women
- Australian Women's Land Army
- Manpower Directorate Records
- Women in the public service

# The need to keep a Hunters Hill library

I wish to support maintenance of the joint library service with Ryde as the most cost effective way of providing public library services to the residents of Hunters Hill.

My involvement in library services in Hunters Hill goes back to the period 1964-1971 when I was President & Secretary of the Boronia Park Primary and Hunters Hill High P&C Associations and President of the North West District Council of P & C Associations. The P & C Associations wished to improve both school and municipal library facilities and supported the establishment of the Ryde Hunters Hill Library Association. In Hunters Hill the P & C's were successful in obtaining new libraries for Boronia Park Primary and Hunters Hill High. At the municipal level the basic problem that was identified was that the Gladesville branch library was used primarily by Hunters Hill residents of Gladesville and Boronia Park and usage, particularly by students on the week ends and older people in the east of the municipality was limited by access.

The Ryde Hunters Hill Library Association campaigned to overcome this access problem by proposing the establishment of a library on the peninsular with the Fairland Hall as the preferred site. Unfortunately advice of Council engineers was that the Fairland Hall was not structurally sound for library use

At their meeting on Monday 27 March Hunters Hill councilors voted to continue the library service at Pittwater Road, Gladesville pending a negotiation with Ryde Council. About 50 residents, some with placards, attended the meeting.. Among those who spoke was resident John Birch AM and we print his submission here.

and for want of another alternative site the matter remained unresolved. Forty years later the report to Council indicates that access is still probably limiting the use by some Hunters Hill residents of the Gladesville Library, with only 3,287 active registered users about half the per capita rate of Ryde users. However despite the lower percentage of the residents in Hunters Hill registered to use the library the per capita circulation rate in Hunters Hill at 9.6 is still significantly higher than that in Ryde at 8.07.

The report also identifies cost of the service as a major consideration. Library expenditure per capita in Hunters Hill in 2003/04 was \$ 34.11, compared to \$ 35.36 in

Ryde and \$ 51.56 in Lane Cove. The lower figure in Ryde compared to Lane Cove reflecting the economies of scale of a larger municipality. Concern is also expressed that with

only about 25% of the Hunters Hill residents active registered users, although there will also be an indeterminate number of unregistered users, that non users of the library are subsidising the users. This of course is the case with many services provided by councils eg Meals on Wheels, playground equipment etc. and is seen as an important component of their civic responsibility. The alternatives to the existing service canvassed in the Council paper provide far less practical and cost effective solutions.

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Establishing a stand alone service is recognised as much more costly and if established in any new shopping development in Gladesville would still suffer from the access problem. Transferring the joint service

to Lane Cove would only further exacerbate the access problem, and the proposed bus solution seems quite impractical- there are higher priorities for bus

services in Hunters Hill. Lane Cove with per capita library costs 50% higher than Ryde is not likely to offer a long term cheaper alternative service.

A virtual library is canvassed, but without defining how it would operate. The internet is being used to enhance access to library collections, but not to replace them and the limited application of the internet in such areas as e-government indicates the inherent difficulties in using this technology. The cost of computer hardware and software is quite high and fraught with difficulties particularly for small councils like Hunter Hill and I would suggest we should hasten slowly on this option.

In summary the expenditure by Hunters Hill on library services is slightly below the average and the main problem to be addressed is the relatively low percentage of residents who register to use the Ryde Library service. Access would appear to be a significant factor in this and solutions to overcome this should be considered.

*- John Birch*



# Dock story is our biggest feature so far

When the Museum committee saw that the theme of the National Trust Heritage Festival was industry the members rose to the challenge.

Our biggest industry, still mourned by some, was the shipbuilding enterprise at Woolwich operated by Morts. Fortunately, living right next door to the museum in the Congregational Retirement Village is one of Australia's most knowledgeable engineers on the operation of Morts—Keith Murray. With one phone call, Keith instantly agreed to be the convenor of an exhibition for us. He enlisted the help of men who worked on ships at the dock and the result in the display you see in the museum.

To make way for the feature many of the items on regular display were placed into storage and the ship story went on to the walls. The Woolwich Dock area has been talked about in recent decades due to the dispute over its real estate. This was the real story of the engineering brilliance of the men who worked at the dock.

The remarks of visitors have been rewarding for the volunteers who put the display in position and worked with Keith.

The Hunters Hill Historical Society is indebted to Mr. W (Bill) Burrell for not only the

loan of the model of the Pilot Steamer *Captain Cook III*, but also for the various tools which are used by a shipwright.

Mr. Bill Burrell is an excellent tradesman, which is evidenced by the model. He served his apprenticeship at Garden Island dockyard, followed by a period working on the Sydney waterfront. He was a ship's carpenter sailing on various vessels owned by the P&O/Orient line, and a subsidiary of the P&O Company, Union S.S. Company of New Zealand. The *P.S. Captain Cook* was built and engined by Morts Dock, and was a credit to the workmen and an excellent example of the quality of their work. Mr. Bill Burrell used the "as fitted" general arrangement plan drawn by Keith Murray to construct his model. The B class freighters built at Woolwich are the theme of the main display.

The freighters were designed by the Australian Shipbuilding Board to replace the many vessels lost during World War II, and at the same time, the many vessels that were kept in service, despite their age. B Class freighters were motor ships of 6,500 tons, and fitted with Doxford main engine, built under licence by The Commonwealth Marine Engine Works. The Doxford

engine is described in more detail in the Institute of Marine Engineers (Sydney Branch) publication "Work Horses in Australian Waters". Copies are available from the Hunters Hill Historical Society for a donation of \$10.00.

These vessels were operated by the Australian National Line as well as some of the private shipping companies in the general cargo trades. Morts built two such vessels, the "Boonaroo" in 1953, and the "Baralga" in 1954 at Woolwich.

Unfortunately the Australian Shipbuilding Board cancelled the remaining two vessels because of delays in the delivery of the first two, mainly due to industrial action by the workforce and management problems.

## Building the dock

This is the story of the construction of Woolwich Dock by Mort's Dock and Engineering Company Ltd.

It is taken from Dalgety's Review *Docking Facilities at Sydney* 1st January 1901. Port Jackson is the terminal port for the mail steamers of all Australian lines, and vessels of 12,000 tons burthen now regularly enter the port. The Mort's Dock and Engineering Company Ltd. have set about constructing a graving dock for these and possibly larger vessels in the future. Thus a work of the magnitude of the Woolwich Dock becomes of general interest, if not of national importance.

About two miles from Circular Quay, there is a free waterway to the dock and ample accommodation for the berthing of vessels. From a high point of land formed of solid sandstone there is now a huge amphitheatre-like structure 35 feet below water level.

Operations for leveling off commenced in August 1898, and excavating of the dock on the 1st March, 1899. 124,620 tons of sandstone had to be removed in the leveling, and 120,370 tons will have to be removed to complete the dock.

A vessel approaching the dock arrives at the steel 'gate', which is designed to be raised and lowered automatically at any state of the tide.

A vessel enters the filled dock by the aid of an electric capstan, or the ship's winches, and rests against the masonry 'shores' or props. Then the dock is emptied of water by three sets of pumps at the rate of 4,000,000 gallons per hour. This process of pumping out the water takes 2 hours and 10 minutes.

### *Dimensions of the Woolwich Dock*

Length of floor 765 feet

Width of floor 75 feet

Depth of water at high water spring tides 28ft 9 inches

Depth of water at low water spring tides 23 feet

No fatalities occurred during this construction.

The Hunters Hill Historical Society is indebted to the Sydney Heritage Fleet for making available for display the various tools etc used in the construction of steel and iron ships.

On the personal side I am very grateful to my many friends and associates who have assisted me in supplying the various items which are on display.

**Keith Murray.**



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**Keith Murray.**

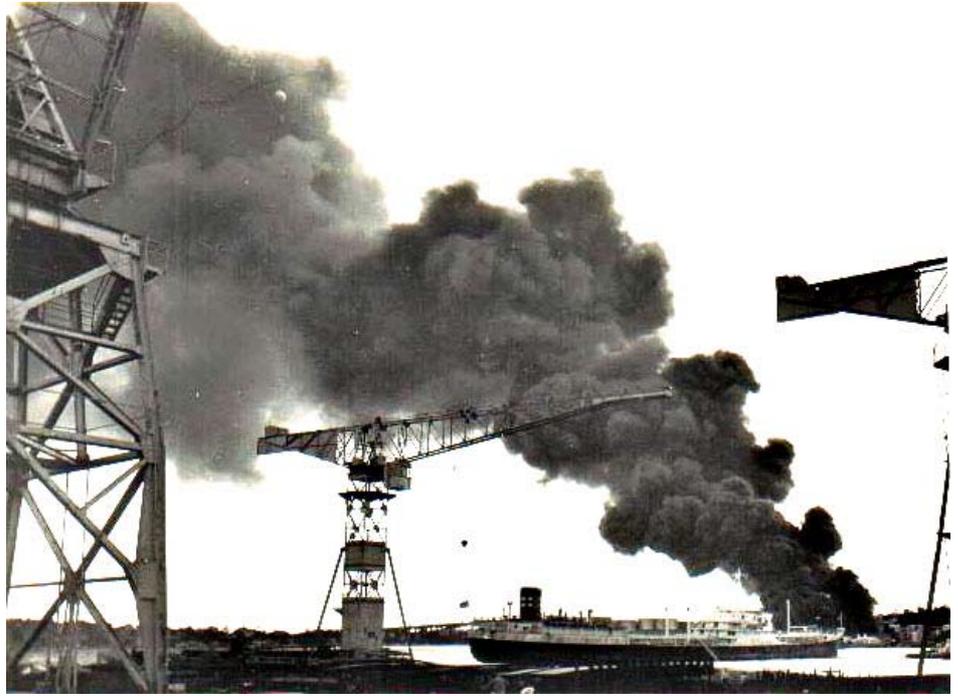
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
HUNTERS HILL INC**

ABN 72012103152

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*Fred Stamp, of Ady Street, Hunters Hill was an employee at Cockatoo Island when the Mobil Oil Depot across the river at Hunters Hill caught fire on 27 October 1964. He found this picture in his archives. It shows a tug pulling an oil tanker away from the depot wharf.*

## Australia's first oil depot on our doorstep

One of our National Trust Heritage festival features is an exhibit on the Mobil Oil Depot.

Pictures are on show in the foyer of the Town Hall.

Facsimiles of news reports of the fire on 27 October 1964 which appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Sun* were obtained from the Mitchell Library.

The museum has very little information on the operation of the depot and would like to receive document or pictures from members.

The first mineral lubricants in Australia were sold by the Colonial Oil Company of Australia from their store at Pulpit Point, Hunters Hill.

### Museum committee

**President** June Beck  
**Vice President** Bob Mostyn  
**Treasurer** Graham Percival  
**Secretary** Jocelyn Glencross  
**Committee** Jan Griffiths, Judith Burgess, Gil Wahlquist.

The oil depot was on the site of the Fern Bay Pleasure Gardens which the oil company purchased from Charles Jeanneret in 1895.

Sailing ships unloaded their cargoes of kerosene, petrol and lubricating oil at a small shed and wharf. The products were packed in wooden cases, containing to drums, each containing four gallons of fuel.

E.C. Dearman recalled that as a ten-year-old in 1904 he paid many visits to the depot and loaded a rowing boat with broken cases which were used in his father's factory, the Lavers Manufacturing Co also in Fern Bay. Dearman Sen. always flew a flag from his home at 1 Nelson Parade and would dip the flag to passing ships. The captain of the ship would dip his flag in reply. The captain was often invited to Sunday dinner and in return the family was invited to inspect the ship, the children dining on lime juice and ships biscuits.

In 1907 the name was changed to the Vacuum Oil Company.

By the time of World War II, the com-

pany employed 3,000 people and had 13 main bulk of seaboard installations. Pulpit Point was one of the biggest.

The name of the company was changed to Mobil. During the peak days of the site there were 350 employed.

There was a spectacular fire on 27 October 1964.

Mobil put the site up for sale in the 1980s and proposed a residential development of 350 dwellings. The site was sold in 1988.

### Would you like to train as a museum volunteer?

The society needs helpers to come on duty when the museum is open. The work is interesting and involves getting to know the museum's resources. You can also help people get an understanding of our exhibits.

Please contact the secretary, Jocelyn Glencross on 9817 2212