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*"History is more or less bunk".
HENRY FORD, Chicago Tribune, 1916*

"Bunk"

'One of the finest docks in the world'

Diary Dates 2017

**Museum Open
10am to noon
Monday to Friday**

**Meetings at Museum
22 Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill**

**Thursday 29 June
WINTER LUNCH
IN THE FUNCTION
ROOM
AT THE
HUNTERS HILL CLUB
12.30 for 1pm**

**Members to pay for
their own meal
BOOKINGS
ESSENTIAL
FOR ADVICE TO HHC
Please phone
Tony Saunders
98171432
Or Museum
98799443
by Friday 23 June**

**Vale
Val Chidgey
Past Committee
member of
Hunters Hill Historical
Society**

Woolwich Dock, or Mort's Dock as it came to be known, was formally opened at 7am on 4 December 1901.

The Mort's Dock and Engineering Company of Balmain purchased the site in 1898, and it took three years for the Hawkesbury sandstone to be excavated.

The company chose the Woolwich site because of its convenient harbour location close to the Government Dockyard on nearby Cockatoo Island. The site occupied 20 acres, was 673 feet in length, had an en-

trance 83 feet wide and a depth of 28 feet nine inches.

The facility comprised locomotives on tramlines on each side of the dock, electric capstans and a 13-tonne steam crane at the entrance. The pumping station was able to discharge over three million gallons of water an hour and empty the dock in two and a half hours.

This prompted the company to describe its

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Special guest at Anzac Day Ceremony

Popular Hunters Hill resident Col Joye AM was the guest speaker at the 2017 Anzac Day Ceremony on Friday 21 April. He shared stories of his visit to Vietnam in August 1966 with The Joy Boys, to entertain Australian troops. Col said the troops appreciated having

a reminder of life back home, taking them away from the conditions they found themselves in. He finished his speech with a rendition of *Bye Bye Baby*, playing the ukulele. *Picture: Col Joye and guests at the Anzac Day Ceremony*



HUNTERS HILL HISTORICAL
SOCIETY INC

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Woolwich operation as "up to date in design and efficiency" and "one of the finest docks in the world". The first ship to enter the dock was the Neotsfield, a sailing vessel of 1820 tonnes, built in Dumbarton, Scotland in 1889.

By 1917, Mort's Dock and Engineering Company employed 1,500 people, many of whom lived at Woolwich, to carry out repairs and maintenance on some of the largest vessels of the time.

The busiest period for Woolwich Dock was during the two World Wars, when many passenger vessels were converted to armed troop ships and repairs were carried out on damaged ships.

After the Second World War, new work declined and the company closed down in 1958.

Chris Schofield

Picture: Neotsfield, about to enter Woolwich Dock. Note the caisson at the end of the dock, a floating watertight structure used as a gate across the entrance of the dock to allow water to be pumped out.

History of transport on the Balmain peninsula

At the Historical Society's General Meeting on Thursday 27 April, guest speaker Duncan MacAuslan of the Balmain Association gave a talk on the history of transport on the Balmain peninsula.

For many years after the Balmain area was settled, the only access was a track that branched off Parramatta Road at the Bald Face Stag at

Petersham and followed what are now Balmain Road and Darling Street. A horse punt over Glebe Island followed around 1857, and the first bridge opened in 1862, with the right to charge tolls.

The first public

transport to Balmain, in the late 1830s, was by boats rowed by watermen. By 1854 Henry Carter Perdriau and two partners controlled the watermen trade, with others relegated to the role of 'taxis' providing after hours trips. He also went into the ferry business. Perdriau's son, also Henry, began importing and cutting up bulk rubber for railway carriage buffers.



Later, he began manufacturing, and opened a plant at Drummoyne (now Birkenhead Point).

Horse buses to Balmain started around 1863, but by the 1880s the citizens of Balmain felt they were badly served, so more operators entered the market, in-

cluding some with vehicles known as wagonettes. The market became overcrowded, and some went broke.

Privately operated steam trams were introduced to Sydney in 1879, but they weren't popular, because of the noise and pollution, and the gong frightened horses. They also couldn't cope with many of Sydney's steep hills, for instance the Darling Street wharf. Cable cars, as used in San Francisco, were considered, but not introduced. The NSW Government began tram services in 1892, and the Balmain line was electrified in 1902. A generating plant was installed at Ultimo and White Bay power stations.

In 1905, Balmain Council approved a private steam-driven bus service between Balmain and Market Street, Sydney. Around 1919, returning soldiers started services using motor buses built on surplus truck chassis.

Above: A Baldwin steam tram at Balmain.

THE DARLING STREET COUNTERWEIGHT DUMMY

In September 1903, a tramline was opened along the steep section of Darling Street, Balmain between Nicholson Street and the ferry wharf. Finally, the people of Balmain and the Inner West had a convenient connection between their homes and city bound ferries without the need to walk down the severe grade from Nicholson Street. To safely negotiate the 1-in-8 grade the NSW Tramways installed a counterweight system. A counterweight trolley running on rails in an underground shaft was connected by a series of cables and pulleys to an aboveground 'dummy' (pictured right). A tram descending the grade from Nicholson Street would run up to the dummy, not attached in any way, and push it down the hill. In doing so, the underground counterweight was propelled up the hill, keeping the tram at a safe speed. The underground counterweight, now at the top of the hill, would then run down, the dummy assisting the tram on the way up.

The pyramid-shaped dummy became a local landmark. When not in use, it sat at the top of the grade in the middle of Darling Street at Nicholson Street, where it became a meeting point and a magnet for young boys.

When the line closed in 1955, the 'dummy' was hauled to Rozelle Depot for disposal. Fortunately, the Sydney Tramway Museum stepped in and this important artefact was saved for preservation at Loftus, in southern Sydney.

