

MM/10: Mayoral Minute: Richard Hayes Harnett Jnr

MAYOR: Cr Dom Lopez OAM

MOSPLAN REF: 09.07

RECOMMENDATION

That the Mayoral Minute be noted and the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

MAYORAL MINUTE

Richard Hayes Harnett Jnr was born in O'Connell Street, Sydney in 1850 and died in Chatswood on 5 January 1938. His place of final rest had remained an unsolved mystery until now.

Richard Hayes Harnett Jnr was Mosman's first Mayor when the Council was incorporated in 1893, a position he held for two years, and was one of the prime movers in the secession from the St Leonards Borough.

One of no fewer than 16 children, Harnett was the eldest son of two marriages and the only one who joined his father's business in property development, having acquired hundreds of acres of land in Mosman. His father died nine years after Harnett became Mayor and it was Harnett Jnr who was responsible for much street building and residential subdivision in the area. He completed this in about 1907 and Rob Sturrock's 'Pictorial History of Mosman' notes this work as 'an unequalled record of Sydney suburban development.'

Gavin Souter in his 1994 'Mosman: A History' devotes substantial space to the life of Harnett Jnr and his influence on Mosman and I would encourage all to read about his life and times at the turn of the 20th century. Souter quotes Harnett's description of himself prior to the first Mosman Council elections as a 'real estate investor and commercial broker'.

Dare I say it, but from my reading of Harnett, not only from the above books but also 'The Streets of Mosman' by D 'Jack' Carroll, I think it fair to say that Richard Hayes Harnett Jnr could best be described as 'Mosman's first developer!' In fact, the Council's ownership records reveal that there are five very small strips of land still in the Harnett estate in locations as wide as Avenue Road, Cardinal, Cobbittee, Mulbring and Ballantyne Streets!

The great news that I want to advise in this Minute is that by devoted research and a bit of luck too my good friend and the Vice President of the Mosman Historical Society, long time Mosman resident, John Dansie, a retired surveyor, has located the grave of Harnett Jnr. It is an unmarked grave in the Anglican section of Macquarie Park Cemetery in the vicinity of the resting places of former Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, and the pioneer of Australian film making, Charles Chauvel. It appears that one of Richard's sisters, Mary Edith Harnett, is also buried in the same allotment and inquiries in this regard are continuing. By all accounts Harnett did not die with the wealth he accumulated during his developing years, and to a large degree this could have resulted from the depression of the 1890s - time has not allowed further research, but I have asked the Local Studies Librarians for assistance in this regard.

From my discussions with both the administration of Macquarie Park and stonemasons at the cemetery who have long family histories of involvement it was not uncommon during the period of Harnett's death for graves to be unmarked. What is uncommon for Harnett (and his

sister who died four years later) is that their plot is unmarked in the monumental area with the grantee being a W Gibson from Killara.

Many years ago Council took responsibility for the grave of Archibald Mosman which is located in St Jude's Church cemetery, Randwick - annual allocations are made for maintenance to be undertaken as required.

I have personally spoken to Mr Kevin Tyrell, the on-site stonemason at Macquarie Park Cemetery, about the cost of doing something appropriate to mark the grave of Harnett, which he estimates to be in the vicinity of \$10,000. By coincidence, Mr Tyrrell's family business has been responsible for decades for the maintenance and updating of the mayoral marble tablet in the Civic Centre.

The importance of the life and times of Richard Hayes Harnett Jnr were recognised by the former long serving Mayor of Mosman, the Hon Barry O'Keefe AM, QC, when he funded a bust which was unveiled in Centenary Circle in 1993.

I would like Council to give agreement in principle to my liaising with Messrs O'Keefe and Dansie, and of course historian Gavin Souter, to develop a suitable monument and appropriate wording for Harnett's grave at the cemetery and would recommend that this be done in co-operation with the General Manager, and that an amount of \$10,000 be earmarked for the purpose.
