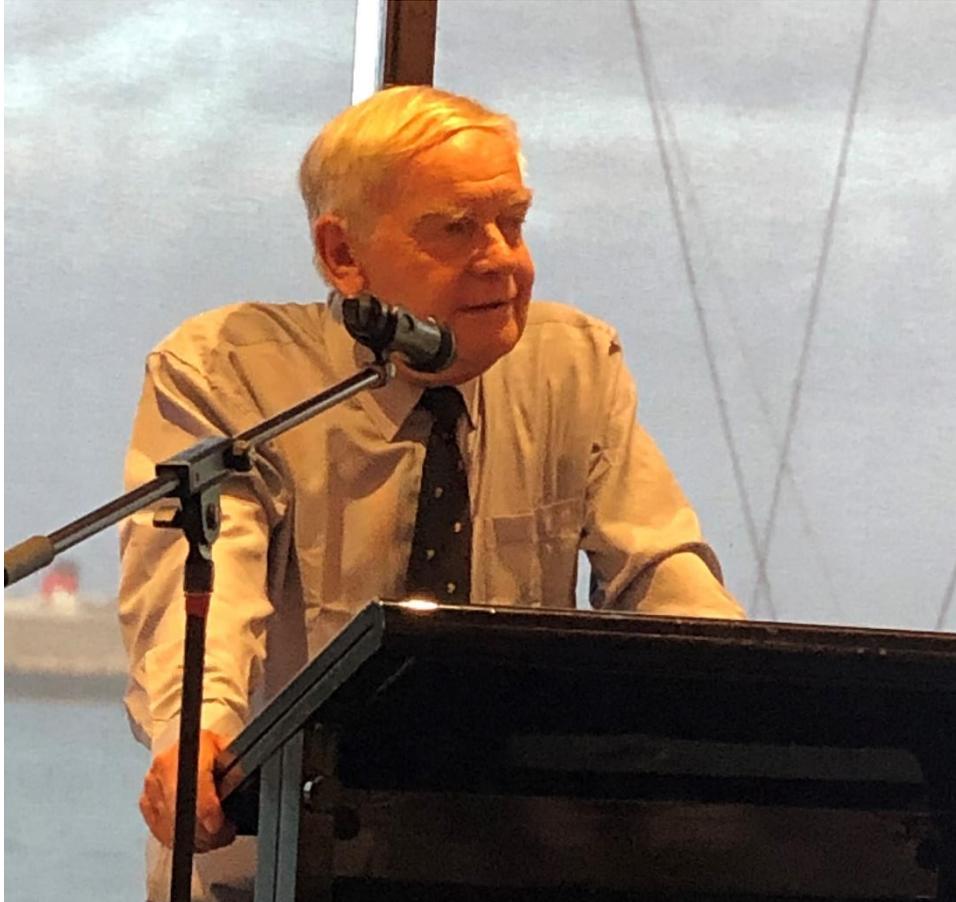




**'The wreck of the Dunbar and a North Shore connection' with Historian John Lanser
By James Merrington**

John Lanser gave an excellent and compelling presentation about the wreck of the Dunbar to 55 attendees on 27 February.



The story: the Dunbar was launched in 1853 for London shipowner Duncan Dunbar. She was built for trade to Australia in response to the Australian gold rushes. The Dunbar was on her second voyage to Sydney, when on the night of 20 August 1857 after an 81-day voyage, the ship approached the entrance to Port Jackson from the south. Heavy rain and a fierce Southerly gale made navigating difficult and the ship's captain, James Green, mistook his position and drove the ship on to rocks some 400 metres south of the Gap.

There were 59 crew and 63 passengers on board. The ship was driven against the cliffs of South Head and rapidly broke apart. The force of the gale caused the Dunbar to break up. There was only



one survivor, James Johnson, who managed to get ashore and find refuge on a rock ledge. He was found alive some 36 hours after the ship foundered; the remainder of the passengers and crew drowned and their bodies and the ship's wreckage filled the harbour.



Lanser also recounted how many in Sydney were affected by the wreck. A procession of carriages transported the dead past 20,000 people who silently lined the streets to St Stephen's Church in Camperdown where a mass funeral was held. Shops closed and a day of public mourning was declared. St Stephen's still holds a commemoration ceremony annually on the Sunday closest to the anniversary.

The wreck of the Dunbar resulted in the building of the Hornby lighthouse in 1858 on South Head.

Lanser spoke about many key players in the Dunbar's history. London based Duncan Dunbar was a prosperous shipowner and owned 39 ships whose main trade was to bring migrants to Australia and New Zealand. He also told us more about James Johnson and how he became Newcastle's Harbourmaster.

And there is a North Shore connection - a local father and son, George and Dick Green, claimed salvage rights to the Dunbar as the remains of the hull had washed up on a beach in Middle Harbour. Green subsequently moved the hulk to his yard in Lavender Bay and recovered the timber to make numerous items of furniture. Many of the recovered artefacts are now kept at the Australian National Maritime Museum. The ship's bell was recovered and donated to St John's Anglican church in Darlinghurst Road near Kings Cross.

There was a small surprise at the end of the riveting presentation - our speaker seemed to have extraordinary insight and passion for this piece of Sydney's history. Not only is John an incredible researcher but we found out that he was a third great grandson of the salvager George Green.