MEN AT WORK AT MORUYA

There were around 200 people employed at Moruya quarry during the period of the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Among the more important of these were the blacksmiths of whom there were around seventeen and the cream of those were the toolsmiths, without whom the work of the masons would have ground to a halt. It was they who sharpened all the tools for the men working the stone and several of them were Scottish.

The site was powered by electricity obtained from two 205 kW generating sets which were driven by 300 b.h.p. Crossley diesel engines the fly wheels of which were about 3 metres in diameter. There were two air compressors which supplied air for all the tools throughout the site.

Water for the site was pumped from a source about a mile away to seven tanks each holding 4000 gallons and the water was filtered before being stored.

The granite at Moruya was quite similar to some of the stone in north east Scotland but the quality of the stone was much superior. Blocks of stone in excess of 1000 tons were sometimes dislodged. The stone from which the Cenotaph base in Sydney was cut was initially around 2000 tons and one block which was encountered was believed to be around 9000 tons.

The stone from Moruya was used to clad the pylons at either end of the bridge and throughout the duration of the contract 45000 tons of stone in 173000 blocks were supplied with no stone being rejected – a considerable testament to those involved, from draughtsmen right through to the masons at the quarry face and dressing sheds. There were also some 200,000 cubic yards of aggregate supplied during the construction period.

Dorman Long and Co, the contractors in charge of building the bridge were also asked to supply stone for the Cenotaph in Sydney. The monument consisted of 23 stones, the largest of which weighed 20 tons. These were all prepared at the quarry and the inscription "TO OUR GLORIOUS DEAD" was cut by Mr Bill Benzie and Mr Joe Wallace.

On completion of the bridge contract, the quarry closed down, the machinery was sold and removed and the houses in which the workers stayed were also sold. The workers moved on – some returned to Scotland while others stayed on in Australia and New Zealand.