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Bro. NORMAN SELFE, M.I.C.E., M.I.M.E.
(1839 - 1911)

Norman Selfe was born on 9 December 1839 at Toddington in the English county of Middlesex. ¹

He received his education at Kingston-upon-Thames after which he accompanied his parents to Sydney where the family arrived in January 1855.

At the age of 17 he became apprenticed to the engineering firm of Peter Nicol Russell and Co. where he later became Chief Draughtsman. ² Whilst with the firm, he ventured into naval architecture with the design of gunboats for service in the Maori wars in New Zealand.

Selfe left Russells' and joined in partnership with James Dunlop and was responsible for the design and construction of major civil engineering installations for the Australasian Mineral Oil Co., the Western Kerosene Oil Co. and the Australian Gaslight Co.

In 1869, Norman Selfe was appointed Chief Engineer for Mort's Dock and Engineering Co. One of his first jobs was the design of the machinery for the 500 tonne vessel *Governor Blackall*.

In 1870, Selfe was a foundation member of The Engineering Association of New South Wales where he served as President from 1877 to 1879. He published a number of papers in the Association's proceedings. ³

In 1882, his brother Henry, also an engineer, joined the Association and he also published papers including *On Our Harbour Steamers* in 1888. ⁴

They were contemporaries of the aviation pioneer, Bro. Lawrence Hargrave.

In 1876, Selfe set up in private practice and quickly established a reputation as an outstanding and versatile engineer.

There were no diploma or degree courses in engineering in Sydney in those days and those who practiced as engineers were largely, self-taught and very practical.

Selfe designed some fifty steamships including two torpedo boats for the New South Wales navy. He also designed the *Wallaby*, the first double-ended screw driven ferry and, it is believed that he was the first to instal a compound steam engine in an Australian-built boat.

He became expert in dock design and he built the first concrete quay wall in Port

