



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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**Bro. FRANCIS EDWARD De GROOT and
Bro. Lieut.-Col. ERIC CAMPBELL, DSO, VD.**

It has recently been reported that the sword used by Francis de Groot to cut the ribbon at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge on 19th March 1932 has been located in Ireland. It is in the possession of his nephew, Frank de Groot, and the National Museum of Australia will try to return it to Australia.

The finding of the sword recalls the famous or infamous incident when the NSW Premier John Thomas Lang was scheduled to cut a ceremonial ribbon to open the Sydney Harbour Bridge on that day in 1932.

Francis de Groot was a member of an organisation called The New Guard which was formed as a result of a meeting at the Imperial Service Club on 16th February 1931. This meeting was convened by Lieutenant Colonel Eric Campbell, a Sydney solicitor and eight prominent Sydney businessmen, including Eric Campbell, were present. The object of the meeting was to *"consider the formation of a selected body of loyal citizens that would be capable of handling any disruption of law and order or the breakdown of essential services that may well be brought about as a logical consequence of the State Government's economic policy and projected legislation."*

It was decided that the meeting form itself into an organising committee (with power to add to its number provided any new member was unanimously approved) to ensure the above ideals. The results were :

The New Guard stands for:

1. Unswerving loyalty to the throne.
2. All for the British Empire.
3. Sane and Honourable Government throughout Australia.
4. Suppression of any disloyal and immoral elements in Government, Industrial and Social circles.
5. Maintenance of the full liberty of the individual.

The rise of the New Guard was closely interrelated with three factors: the depression, the political situation and the influence of war service on returned servicemen.

It was estimated that during 1931 and 1932 60,000 men passed through its ranks with a small number of women, largely in an auxiliary capacity, also being involved. Eric Campbell was a very capable organiser with military training and the New Guard was well organised along military lines into localities with local commanders having the ability to make people available when needed.

