



ROCKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

VOL. 1. NO. 1.

FEBRUARY, 1962.

GRATIS.

NEXT MEETING:- COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE TOWN HALL,
PRINCES HIGHWAY, ROCKDALE.

FRIDAY EVENING NEXT, 16th February, 1962.
at 8 p.m.

GUEST SPEAKER:- MR. LIONEL WATT will speak on the subject
"The History of Fires and Fire Brigades of
N.S.W. with special reference to the
Rockdale Fire Brigade."

THE ROCKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

AIM:- " To encourage the study of Australian History, particularly that
relating to the Rockdale Municipality."

PRESIDENT:- Mr. J. I. Swann, 38 Ethel Street, CARLTON.

VICE PRESIDENTS:- Mr. W. Foster, 13 Hillpine Avenue, KOGARAH.
Mr. C.W. Napper, 156 Frederick Street, ROCKDALE.

HON. SECRETARY:- Alderman R.W. Rathbone, 53 Bruce Street, BEXLEY.

HON. TREASURER:- Alderman C.C.W. Nairn, 104 Staples Street, KINGSGROVE.

COMMITTEE:- Mrs. T. Doutney, Miss I. Wheeler, Mr. N. Guess.
Mr. J. Nightingarl, Mr. J. Ellison.

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MEMBERSHIP RATES.

"The Annual Subscription shall be 10/- (ten shillings) due and payable on the
first day of July each year. The membership for all other members of the
same household shall be 5/- (five shillings). Any member failing to pay
within three months of the due date shall be deemed to be unfinancial."

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SPECIAL APPEAL.

This year (1962) the Rockdale Council will publish the Official
History of the Rockdale Municipality. It is anticipated that there will be
at least 24 pages of photographs in this volume.

A search of the archives of the Mitchell Library and the Government
Printing Office reveals almost a complete absence of any useful photographs.

Any members who know of old families who may have photographs of the
Municipality in its early days are urged to contact the Secretary without delay
so that these photographs may be obtained.

THE ROCKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TASKS FOR THE NEW SOCIETY.

Precis of a talk delivered on 12th July, 1961, by Mr. W. FOSTER (Councillor of the Royal Historical Society of N.S.W. and Headmaster of the James Cook High School, Kogarah.)

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The chief task of any newly formed Historical Society is to add to the information already in existence.

The Rockdale Historical Society has an almost unlimited field in which to work.

James Cook, discoverer of this part of Australia and possibly the first white man to set foot in what is now the Rockdale Municipality, is comparatively unknown yet a wealth of information on him is available.

The same may be said of Arthur Phillip.

This district is particularly rich in family histories. Those of James Chandler whose estate "Bexley" covered a huge portion of the Rockdale Municipality and Alexander Brodie Sparkes whose home "Tempe House" still stands would each make a first class lecture.

No one has yet written a history of the Rockdale School of Arts yet all its records are still in existence. Only the Rockdale Methodist Church has written a history of its existence. The history of State and Federal Politics in this area is untouched despite the fact that this district produced some of the most colourful personalities of the early years.

Accuracy must be the keynote of all research. "Everything is wrong until it can be proved right".

Where can this information be obtained?

Thanks to the foresight of David Scott Mitchell, Australia has an unrivalled collection of its early history. Mitchell was an assiduous collector of Australiana. When he died in 1907 he left over 70,000 volumes and 6,000 manuscripts and diaries on Australia plus £70,000 for additional purchases. Australia, thanks to Mitchell, is the only country in the world which can trace its origins from its original beginnings. Today the collection numbers some 150,000 volumes.

Always go to the Mitchell Library where original manuscripts, newspapers and Statistical register and the Historical Records of N.S.W. are available. Secure a reader's ticket and the rest is up to you.

Other places to obtain information include the Railways' Department Historical Society, the Registrar General's Department for early land grants and transfers. The Lands Department. The records of various churches, Municipal records and newspapers.

All are available to the genuine student of history.

THE ORIGIN OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN N.S.W.

By F.J. Larcombe, M.Ec. Lecturer in Tutorial classes at the University of Sydney in Local Government.

Precis of a talk delivered on 18th August, 1961.

Local Government as we know it today began about 1858 although the first Sydney Council was elected in 1842. This was shortlived, mainly because the opposition of the free settlers (Exclusionists) to the participation of freed convicts (Emancipists) made it unworkable.

When it was abolished in 1853, it had become known as a "forum for low jokes and lower wit noted for its burlesque and inherent worthlessness."

The fact that it took seventy years to establish a system of local government was in no small measure due to the fact that N.S.W. was a penal settlement where the Government was relied upon for everything where there was a general reaction against taxation of any kind and a noticeable unwillingness to pay rates.

However, an inadequate water supply, lack of fire control, constant danger to health by unhygienic practises, appalling roads and a complete absence of lighting tempered this resistance.

In 1858 the first Local Government Act to apply to the whole State was passed. Fifty signatures could form a municipality. Rating was based on the assessed annual value of a property at a flat rate of 1/- in the £. This was subsidised by the Government.

This system had many weaknesses. It resulted in pocket municipalities. Rich areas became richer while poor areas remained poor. There was also no way that Councils could compel people to pay their rates. Many therefore ceased to exist.

At every stage municipal government was resisted and by 1906 less than one percent of the state was covered by local government.

In spite of this one newspaper correspondent of the early 60's claimed that N.S.W. had been gripped by "Municipal Mania - there being now more Mayors than horses."

Certainly there were some comical situations. Randwick became the first suburban municipality although it had only 40 houses and an orphanage. Every householder offered himself as a candidate at the first election and everyone was subsequently elected.

A new Act in 1867 gave councils the power to regulate traffic but they continued to remain uneconomic and chronically short of money.

Local Government in N.S.W. was a creation of the Government not a demand of the people and it was created for the convenience of the Government. It has always been the "Cinderella" having little real power and inadequate means to carry out its responsibilities.

Every lucrative source of income basically local including such common avenues as Land Tax and Motor Vehicle Registration Tax has been filched from local authorities

From this continual source of frustration stems the succession of moves for a Greater Sydney Council with real power and some hope of financing its responsibilities

It is interesting to note that the first move for a Greater Sydney Council came from Alderman Griffin, Mayor of Hurstville in 1898.