

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY.

12th June, 1964.

Dear Friend and Member,

The next meeting of the above Society will be held as follows:-

DATE: Friday evening next, 19th June, 1964, at 8 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

GUEST SPEAKER: Mr. Frank O'Grady - author and distinguished member of the Royal Australian Historical Society who is at present engaged in writing a full length Novel of the epic journey of the Queensland Explorer Kennedy and his aboriginal companion Jacky Jacky. Mr. O'Grady will speak on some of his research.

A light supper will be served.

T. J. McCarthy,
PRESIDENT

R. W. Rathbone,
HON. SECRETARY.
LW4813.

AN OIL COMPANY WITH A SOUL.

One of the most consistent enemies of Historical Societies and those interested in the preservation of relics of our earlier days are the Oil Companies - those people who seem to have unlimited capital and a passion for building Service Stations wherever some fine reminder of the district's beginnings has managed to withstand the passing of the years.

Sydney is now dotted with these establishments invariably standing on the site of something dear to the heart of those people who believe we can learn much by the preservation of the more important of these buildings and relics.

Last year our own district suffered just such a loss when the beautiful Iliffe House, Rosevale Villa, was demolished.

However, the Oil Company concerned has approached this Society for a photograph and details of the building which they can hang in the office of the B.P. Service Station which now occupies the site. Whether this is an indication of a latent interest in the preservation of some of this nation's heritage or a sop to a somewhat uneasy conscience is not clear at this stage, but the fact that they have shown even the slightest interest is at least encouraging.

SUCCESSFUL OUTING TO LA PEROUSE.

Although the weather was far from ideal, twenty-four members of the Society and their friends visited the newly established Randwick Historical Society's Museum on Bare Island one Saturday afternoon recently.

The old fort on Bare Island has ceased to be used as a War Veteran's Home and is in the process of being converted into a most interesting and attractive Folk Museum.

So keen are members of our sister society to make this venture succeed that its Secretary, Mrs. Moore has even taken up residence on the island.

For the benefit of those members of the St. George Historical Society who were not able to make the trip we can recommend this excursion - admittance to the Museum being 2/- per person.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS SOCIETY.

As requested at the last meeting, the dates of meetings for the remainder of the year are listed below.

Friday - June 19th
August 21st
October 16th
December 11th.

All will be in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, Rockdale, unless otherwise notified.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE.

Your membership subscription to the St. George Historical Society for 1964/65 is now due.

Membership rates are as follows:-

First member of the family - 10/-.

All additional members of the same family - 5/-.

Would you please complete the attached form and let me have it before the Annual Meeting in August.

R. W. RATHBONE,
Hon. Secretary.
LW 4813.

HISTORICAL JOTTINGS

There can be no doubt that during the short time Captain Cook remained in Botany Bay in April and May, 1770, he was active in exploring the various bays and nooks around it, and the George's and Cook's rivers which flow into it from the west; and it is certain that Sir Joseph Banks, Dr. Solander and the astronomer (Mr. Green), were delighted with the newness and variety of the flowering plants and the gigantic trees, as much as the strange-looking animals then seen for the first time by British-born men. The huge gum trees and dense undergrowth were justly taken by them as indications of the richness of the soil. They were charmed by the picturesque scenery and variety of the birds and their gay plumage. The land was to them a land flowing with "milk and honey", and their enthusiastic praises were almost boundless. Captain Phillip and his companions took a much more practical view of the new country in which they were to found a colony. They were settlers, not visitors. The enormous trees were not only valueless, but they also entailed heavy labour in connection with the work of clearing the land before it could be made habitable for civilised beings. There was very little succulent grass, as the scrub was so thick that there was only room for grass here and there in small patches. The bay was shallow - too shallow for ships even of the moderate tonnage of those days. The Endeavour and the other larger vessels of the fleet lay only just inside the heads, and were barely sheltered from the rollers of the Pacific Ocean. It is true there was deeper water in George's River, but investigation disclosed that it would be impossible to take advantage of this deeper water owing to the presence of "shallows" in Botany Bay, and so the future capital of the new settlement was started in Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, instead of Kogarah or on some portion of the western or southern shores of Botany Bay. Even if the boat harbour, named Port Jackson by Captain Cook, had not existed, the settlement would never have been made.

The difficulties apart from the shallowness of the bay, would have been sufficient to have caused the removal of the settlement which actually took place. The labour of clearing the timber away before the land could be cultivated would, with the small force under his control, have been sufficient to induce Captain Phillip to seek a spot where the conditions were more favourable. An open or lightly-timbered plain, where the grass had room to grow, would have been searched for, and the heavily-timbered and scrubby lands would have had to wait until the population increased. It may be considered that three reasons combined prevented the first settlement from being formed in some part of the country where the southern suburbs of Sydney now stand. The land was too rich with the growth of centuries to be used without labour, and the labour of clearing it would have been not only severe, but also unproductive. And thus, instead of Kogarah and the surrounding district being, as it perhaps might in other circumstances have been, the site of the parent city of the State, it is now among the progressive municipalities of the suburbs.

TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES

In these days of concrete and bituminous-surfaced roads a journey from Kogarah to Sydney is one devoid of difficulty and may be accomplished in quick time. Before the constitution of the Main Roads Board in 1925, or up to the time that the Board reconstructed Cook's River Road, the condition of that road was atrocious - it was little more than a right-of-way. Mud alternated with dust as the weather was wet or fine or the Municipal water-cart was in use, while potholes were as plentiful as holes in a collar. Motorists looked upon most of our roads as a "nut and bolt or spart part department" owing to the number of fragments of motor vehicles to be encountered along our thoroughfares. This state of affairs was thought to be a disgrace to those supposedly in charge of the upkeep of our roads, but even this rough condition of the highways was far superior to that which was encountered by the pioneers of the district. There was a time when the only means of reaching Sydney from Kogarah was by way of Punch Bowl (now spelt Punch-bowl) Road, through Enfield to Liverpool Road - a lengthy journey compared with that of today via Prince's Highway or General Holmes Drive along the foreshores of Botany Bay. The cause of this long journey of years ago was the absence of trafficable roads and the fact that Cook's River had to be forded. Early records contain the information that "the first bridge across Cook's River 'lower down' was Thompson's Bridge, built by Mr. Thompson, a solicitor, some 60 years ago (about 1830), which was afterwards replaced by Undercliffe Bridge."

Commenting on the transport difficulties between Kogarah and Sydney some 74 years ago, a writer stated that "like most of the suburbs of Sydney, Kogarah has suffered severely from want of good roads and consequent means of communication with the city." In early times residents were compelled to head Wollie Creek and Cook's River, and to get to Sydney by way of Canterbury or Enfield, and thence on the Parramatta or Liverpool Roads. Even by taking this round-about way, it was very difficult to get through the bush with vehicles, and most of the carriage was done by means of pack-horses. An occupant of Sans Souci at Rocky Point House, who established a still, carried the liquor he manufactured in kegs slung one on each side of a pack-horse, and covered the kegs with bags and rushes. The Rocky Point Road is said to have been first cleared by order of Governor Gipps who was in office from 1838 to 1846. Sir George seems to have taken a deep interest in the morals of the settlers. He frequently attended service at St. Peter's Church, and one day, when he met Mr. Robert Cooper, of Rocky Point House, he said, "How is it I've not seen you at church recently?" Mr. Cooper explained that it was almost impossible to get through the scrub. "Pooh!" returned his Excellency, "that is no excuse. Here, take this order and get some men from the stockade to clear a track; and don't let me have to complain of your absence again." As a result a track was cleared from the Cook's River dam to Rocky Point (Sans Souci) to enable Mr. Cooper and his family to go to church. For many years there was merely a bush track, in some places almost impassable for vehicles. At a ridge known as Cobbler's Pince (the steep pinch on Prince's Highway between Kogarah and Cook's River, generally known as Arncliffe Hill), carts, gigs, etc., had to skirt the ridge, and wind in and out among the rocks and scrub for a mile or more until the obstruction was passed, and then make their way back to the cleared track.

The first to cross Cobbler's Pinch with a vehicle is said to have been Mr. Berghofer, who went from Sydney to take possession of his farm with a German waggon and four horses about the year 1862. Mr. Berghofer found it impossible to follow the winding of the track round the ridge with such a team, and therefore he decided to attempt to make his way over the pinch. In this he was successful, but he met with misfortune further along the road when his waggon capsized owing to a wheel of the vehicle going into a hole. From Mr. Berghofer's experience it would appear that the dreaded Cobbler's Pince was not much worse to negotiate than the road itself.

Road Trusts and Toll Bars

Before the advent of municipal government the roads were under the control of Roads Trusts. The first of these Trusts was formed under the Parish Roads Act (4 Victoria, No.12), passed by the Governor-in-Council in 1840. It provided that trustees might be elected for three years, and that these trustees should have power to erect toll bars and levy tolls. It also provided that a rate not exceeding 6d. per acre might be struck on all lands within a distance of three miles of a road. The permissive principle in vogue to a large extent in early years of the colony appears to have been the base of legislation in New South Wales from the first establishment of local government in the colony. The Parish Roads Act might have formed a good basis for a more complete local government measure, but for the fact that all its provisions depended on the word "may" instead of "shall". The Rocky Point Road Trust, which was almost the only one in the colony which attempted to carry out the provisions of the Act, found that the rate of 6d. per acre could not be enforced, as the Act provided no means of compelling defaulters to pay. The want of roads in the district, however, was so great that the majority of the residents in Kogarah did not raise any dispute against the rate, which they might have done had they taken legal opinion as to the wording of the Act; and, therefore, this Act remained in force in the district long after the levying of rates by similar trusts elsewhere had been abandoned. The first road trust for this district consisted of Messrs. J. B. Carroll (Chairman), Patrick Moore, J. Moore, William Beehag, and James Beehag. The first Government vote for our roads was dated May 20, 1864, and was for £60.

Before this grant for roads was given, however, a toll had been established by the road trust near the Cook's River dam, and the money collected had been expended principally in cutting down and levelling the huge rocks on top of Cobbler's Pinch, and in building a bridge over Muddy Creek (on Prince's Highway between Kogarah and Rockdale). This bridge was opened on February 20, 1862. It was composed of large logs with smaller logs or saplings laid across and covered with earth and stones. The building of this bridge marked the abolition of one of the

difficult places to negotiate on the road from Sydney to Kogarah, and today is an up-to-date structure, it having been rebuilt in 1933 by the Main Roads Department after having been practically swept away by an unusual rainstorm during the year. A road committee was formed in the early days of the district in connection with Kogarah Road, which branches off Rocky Point Road, where for many years a license was held for the Prendergast's Inn, and ran to the punt at Tom Ugly's Point. Kogarah Road and Rocky Point Road are now known as Prince's Highway, the only portion of Rocky Point Road now bearing that name leaving Prince's Highway at Moorefield Racecourse and extending to Rocky Point, Sans Souci. The site of Prendergast's Inn was in the vicinity of Moorefield Racecourse. The Kogarah Road Committee consisted of Matthew Carroll, Patrick Moore, and Joseph Clarke, and the first Government vote of £35 for making and repairing the road was granted on October 3, 1860.

A dispute arose in 1869 between residents along Forest Road and the Rocky Point Road Trust, the residents claiming £100 from the toll receipts for making their road. The residents on the Muddy Creek Road not to be outdone, claimed £50 for their road, and as the trustees could not see their way to divert these large sums of money (a large amount in those days) from the use for which they had been collected, the dispute waxed warm, and resulted in the toll being abolished at Cook's River Dam by Mr. William Forster (Minister for Lands in the Fifth Cowper Ministry). Determined not to be deprived of such an easy means of revenue, a toll was shortly afterwards opened on Rocky Point Road south of Cobbler's Pinch, or near where Spring Street, now joins Prince's Highway. This new position for a toll bar thus allowed traffic using Forest Road to go free as the toll was situated a little beyond Forest Road towards Kogarah, and thus residents of the latter road were not in any way entitled to any of the revenue collected.

The road trust was abolished in 1876, the last trustees having been Messrs. J. B. Carroll, Joseph Twiss, Thomas Mascord, James Hickey, and William Bush. Mr. Samuel Schofield served three years on the Trust, and other gentlemen were elected and served for longer or shorter terms. Mr. J. B. Carroll was also one of the trustees of the road from the southern side of George's River to Bottle Forest.

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

Pioneer Publicans of Kogarah

The old hostelries of Kogarah, like most of the inns of the early days were distinguished for their free and easy sportive spirit and hospitality. The hotel was always one of the earliest business institutions where, before more appropriate and convenient meeting-places were to be found, people went to discuss matters of moment.

It is interesting to take a backward survey of those earlier hostelries, most of which have ceased to exist. The oldest hotel of the district, perhaps, was "Prendergast's Inn", which was situated on Rocky Point Road, and which, record tells us, went out of existence in 1863. Also on Rocky Point Road was Beaver's Gardeners' Arms Hotel, which has also gone out of existence, but the building still stands on the corner of Rocky Point Road and Prince's Highway. Not far distant along that road was English's Hotel, at the corner of Webber's Road, now English Street. This hostelry was known as the Kogarah Hotel.

At Sans Souci was situated the "Rocky Point" Hotel, which was conducted by Mr. William E. Rust, one of the oldest colonists for more than 40 years. The "Sea Breeze", that well known hotel at Tom Ugly's Point, has much history connected with it.

The Three Peters

When the Kogarah-Sans Souci tramway was inaugurated in 1887 Mr. G. Hughes who conducted boat-sheds and store at Rocky Point, now known as Sans Souci, interested himself in the erection of swimming baths at Rocky Point. The matter was taken up by Kogarah Council, the then Mayor favouring the site, but Alderman Myles McRae advocated their erection at Oatley Bay. As no decision was arrived at Mr. Hughes received promises from local residents to subscribe sufficient funds for the erection of the baths. By an oversight he paid the deposit, which

had been handed to him by Mr. Peter Herrmann, for the lease of the required area in the name of the latter. Mr. Hughes intended to form a company, and urged Mr. Herrmann to call a meeting of intending subscribers. After some delay Mr. Hughes was informed by Mr. Herrmann that there was no necessity to call a meeting as he had arranged with Mr. Peter Moore and Mr. Peter Ballman to construct the baths. When the baths were erected they were known for a time as the "Three Peters' Baths". Since then the area has been resumed for park purposes, and Kogarah Council's municipal baths near the old site now caters for thousands of bathers in the summer season.

Pioneers of the Early Days

The old homestead of the English family - pioneers of 1852 - was built in 1854 by Mr. Dennis English on the land now occupied by the South Carlton Public School. The original old slab hut stood at the rear of the house, the front portion of which was built with some of the first stone taken from Blake's quarry. The home was the rendezvous of many friends, one of the regular callers at the homestead being old Jimmy Lounes, the "father" of an aboriginal tribe which existed in those days. Jimmy's mission to the homestead was to ask for food, which was never refused. The old English paddock (which eventually became Kogarah Park) was used by residents of Glebe Point and old Parramatta Street as a picnic resort. Picnics would be arranged overnight and, with concertinas and mouth organs, bus loads of picnickers would journey to Kogarah, where they were welcome to enjoy the hospitality of old Granny English. It is said that Larry Foley stayed at the old homestead, the night before he fought Sandy Ross. The old estate was used as a racecourse before Moorefield was known, and many a race was won by the jockey Billy Kelso. Mr. and Mrs. Dan Phillips, another old pioneer family, lived close handy to the English home. They had a quince orchard, which many old hands still remember. Miss Doll Phillips was champion lady walker of New South Wales. One particular match was against a French woman for six days "go as you please". From the old English home came Alderman James English, Alderman Patrick English, and Alderman John English, the latter at one time being Lord Mayor of Sydney.