



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

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Bi-Monthly Bulletin.

October 1964.

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY.
9th October, 1964.

Dear Friend and Member:

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

Date: Friday Evening next, 16th October, 1964, at 8 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Business: Reports of Executive Committee.

Guest Speaker: MR. ANGUS McSWEEN.

Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society.

Please make every effort to attend. A light supper will be served.

P. Geeves.
President.

R. W. Rathbone.
Hon. Secretary.
LW.4813.

NEXT OUTING:

Our next outing will take place on Sunday, October 25th, to Windsor and the Hawkesbury District, details of which appear overleaf.

We will be leaving Rockdale Town Hall at 9 a.m. sharp and would like to have some idea of how many people will be attending. Please ring the Secretary at LW.4813 if you are coming or if you need transport. Non member friends will be most welcome.

BIG CHANGES AT ANNUAL MEETING:

Considerable changes in the office bearers of the Society was the main feature of this year's Annual Meeting. They resulted -

Patrons:	Mr. T. J. McCarthy Ald. C. C. W. Nairn
President:	Mr. P. Geeves
Vice Presidents:	Mr. C. W. Napper Mr. G. Eardley
Hon. Secretary:	Ald. R. W. Rathbone
Hon. Treasurer & Publicity Officer:	Mr. D. Sinclair

Two meetings of the Executive Committee have already been held and a programme of meetings, outings and aims for the coming year will be put to the next meeting.

NOVEMBER: ALL-DAY TRIP TO THE MACDONALD VALLEY.

Leave Rockdale Town Hall 7.30 a.m. Return between 6-7 p.m. Approx. 180 miles. A strict timetable must be adhered to, if all interesting points are to be seen. We recommend that children under 12 years are not taken.

Lunch: A cut lunch, including tea/coffee, will be provided at the Settlers' Arms Inn, St. Albans, if booked in advance. Cost will be advised later.

"Shell" petrol available at the Settlers' Arms Inn.

Full details in next month's leaflet.

HAWKESBURY EXCURSION

- 10.15 a.m. Address at St. Matthews C. of E. - Foundation stone 1817, in use 1820, consecrated 1823, - Greenway masterpiece - interior note stained glass windows, George IV Bible, Pipe Organ 1840, Lighting, kerosene 1867, gas 1884, electricity 1916. Pioneer tombstones of Andrew Thompson, Henry Kable, Richard Fitzgerald, Thomas Arndell, William Cox, John Brabyn, John Tebbutt.
- 11.0 Toll House. Erected 1813-16 - Longest wooden bridge in the colony at that time. Tolls collected till 1887.
- 11.15 Court House. Erected by William Cox 1822 to Greenway design. Macquarie portrait, cedar furnishings - social centre for meetings, church services etc.
- 11.40 Thompson Square - Macquarie Arms Inn 1815, wall of condemned bricks 1818, Daniel O'Connell Inn 1842, Doctors Residence about 1840's, Wharf for early river trade, Bridge replaced ferry in 1874.
- 12 noon. Hawkesbury Historical Museum - Adults 1/-.
- 12.45 p.m. Lunch.
- 1.30. Depart for Wilberforce.
- 1.45. Rose Home Wilberforce. Thomas Rose and family the first free settlers arrived in Bellona in 1793. Remained in family till 1961, First Methodist service held here in 1817.
- 2.10. St. Johns C. of E. Wilberforce consecrated in 1859, Blackett design - note vertical sundial on northern wall - Macquarie School House erected by John Brabyn for school and chapel. School till 1880, chapel till 1858. John Howorth tombstone 8/10/1804 oldest in the Hawkesbury.
- 2.40. Ebenezer Church built 1809, oldest place of worship in Australia - "Coromandel" settlers arrived 1802 - tree where first worshipped - built on river as only means of communication in early days - also used for school. Note tablet to pioneers in porch added in 1929.
- 3.0 Depart Ebenezer.
- 3.30. Rest-a-while picnic ground to view R.A.A.F. Base. 1916 a School of Aviation established for training purposes. Large hangar constructed. 1920 area taken over by Commonwealth. Hawkesbury Agricultural College also established on part of Ham Common in 1890. Site of William Cox's home "Clarendon".
- 3.45. St. Peters Richmond. Foundation stone 1837, consecrated 1841.
- 4.0. Tour concludes.

THE STORY OF MOOREFIELD RACECOURSE AT KOGARAH, N.S.W.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

From a physiographical point of view the sand dune and intervening marsh land immediately west of Seven Mile, or Lady Robinson's Beach, on the western shore line of Botany Bay, possesses surface features of great interest. It is accepted that this comparatively level expanse was formed over the ages by wind and wave action on materials brought down from the hinterland by the combined efforts of Cooks and Georges Rivers. A sand bar, some half mile inland from the present beach alignment, seems to have been initially deposited, after which a series of sand ridges, some six to fifteen feet in height above their intervening troughs, were formed at successive intervals. These ridges created a freshwater lagoon, of no great depth, between the coast and the slopes of the higher land bordering the western margin of the fen. In the course of time this lowlying land became covered with alluvium, brought down from the neighbouring ridges and shallow valleys, which provided ideal conditions for the growth of a dense covering of casuarina, or she-oak, trees, which like to have their feet in water. A remnant of this primeval forest, fortunately, has been preserved in the northern confines of Scarborough Park at Ramsgate.

The sand dune area, between the swamp lands and the seashore, supported a splendid forest of gigantic gum trees, interspersed with the fantastically shaped limbs of the beautiful angophoro, or apple-gum trees, and the grotesque shapes and cork-like bark of the Saw Leaf Honeysuckle, or old man banksia, trees, so beloved by May Gibbs of "Bib and Bub" children's feature fame. Beneath all this sylvan splendour lay a thickly matted undergrowth comprised of geebung, five-corners, so gratifying to boyish tastes, native lilac ablaze with clusters of aromatic white flowers in spring, and climbing climatis was draped from tree to tree. There were also flannel flowers in the more open glades, together with dillwynia, known also as "eggs and bacon", on account of its yellow and red profusion of small pea flowers, pultenaeas, the tall spikes of the purple flowered heath-milkwort, and the pink wax flower known as eriostemon, in addition to a thousand and one botanical gems of a like nature which favour a sandy soil. Unfortunately this wonderland has disappeared under the axe of the woodman, and the inroads of suburban housing, coupled with the unmitigated curse of site-improving land salesmen. The last stand of the tall timbers was bounded on the north by Bay Street, Brighton le Sands, on the west by the aforementioned swamp area, and on the south by President Avenue. These trees remained until about 1914 when they too, were axed out of existence.

Into this fascinating region came Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks and the other members of the crew associated with the good ship "Endeavour". Their glowing opinion of this land was sufficient to bring out the "First Fleet", under the command of Governor Phillip. This gentleman, however, was not so impressed with Botany Bay and its immediate surroundings, and finally settled at Sydney Cove in the more sheltered waters of Port Jackson.

Botany Bay and its hinterland, apart from wandering tribes of war-like aborigines, lay dormant insofar as settlement was concerned until Governor Macquarie decided to grant portions of the area to worthy citizens. Sixty acres of the aforementioned swamp land and adjoining slopes were granted, on August 28th, 1812, to Mr. Patrick Moore, this estate being listed as "Moorefield".

It would appear from the scanty records available that Patrick Moore was a competent blacksmith, capable of forging door-hinges, hasps, and other forms of wrought-iron work so essential to the needs of the then rapidly developing townships of Sydney and Parramatta. It may be surmised that the first returns from his estate at Moorefield were brought about by the sale of roofing shingles cut from the age-old casuarina forest which, interspersed with reedy morass, covered so much of his new property. Evidently portions of the grant were later let, or leased, to several other persons as we find that in the eighteen seventies Captain Dillon occupied an old house, of English design, on the estate adjacent to the present day President Avenue. Further south was a vegetable garden and house under the care of Joseph Keep, whilst westward, confronting Rocky Point Road, were two old stone cottages, the origin of which has still to be sought. At the north-eastern section, of what may be considered the dry land area, and opposite the intersection of President Avenue and Moore Street, were the trotting horse stables owned by Mr. Anthony Hordern of "While I live I'll grow" fame.

According to my informant, Miss Elizabeth Whitehall, the son of the original grantee, also named Patrick Moore, took over Captain Dillon's cottage and orchard about the early seventies. Pat Moore utilised the swamp lands for the fattening of cattle destined for the Sydney market. He had two sons, the eldest being named Peter, and the youngest, whose names has not been ascertained, was killed by a snake, and subsequently buried in Rookwood Cemetery. There were also a number of daughters, all of whom played their part in the running of the farm. On the death of Patrick Moore, the eldest son Peter, then about 21 years of age, inherited the farm and estate, but the money in hand was willed to the mother of the family.

Peter Moore was a sportsman to his finger tips and did not see any future either in his orchard, his farm, or the fattening of cattle. He visualised money-making possibilities associated with the establishment of a privately owned racecourse, a venture to which his estate, or at least the westernmost section thereof, was peculiarly adapted.

To implement the scheme Peter Moore sought the assistance of a Hurstville resident, Mr. Parkes, who in turn brought Mr. Charles Whitehall into the project. The latter left his home in Hudson Street, Hurstville, and, with his family, took up residence in the aforementioned stone residence facing Rocky Point Road, immediately opposite the original stone built St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, erected in 1866, then being also used as a "school", according to an inscribed stone let into the front wall beneath the gabled roof. Charles Whitehall had four children - Elizabeth, George, Charles and Arthur.

From the very beginning of operations Charles Whitehall came into the active employ of Peter Moore, and was engaged at first in the felling of trees and clearing the site for the proposed course. After this preliminary work had been completed, Peter Moore then requested that he proceed with the preparation of the racetrack and incidental fencing, a work which took, together with the erection of the grandstand, some three and a half years to complete. The eastern, or swamp, section of the course necessitated the construction of a large embankment, well above the normal watertable, the materials for which were obtained from adjacent borrow pits, and trundled in hand-barrows to the site, a tedious and laborious undertaking, seeing that the main course was some seven furlongs in length and averaged a chain in width.

Charles Whitehall, with his two helpers, eventually got the main or outer racecourse, together with the shorter middle track, into commission, and also built an inner track which came into use for horse training purposes. The frontage to the course, along Rocky Point Road, was screened by a ten feet high paling fence, which effectually kept racing activities from the gaze of a non-paying public at large, so to speak. However, there was one well-tried and free method of entry, known to the writer and a host of other schoolboys. This called for crawling through a wooden covered drain, carrying a watercourse beneath Rocky Point Road, which emptied both the stream and the boys into the enclosure, the rest was easy.

With the completion of the course, its grandstand, stables, and other essential amenities, all of which were erected by Charles Whitehall and his two doughty assistants, the great day came for the official opening, which occurred on October 13th, 1888. Peter Moore raced his own horses which were trained by Mr. Mick McAuliffe, who, from time to time took his employer's more promising racers across by train in an endeavour, always unsuccessful, to win the coveted Melbourne Cup. Incidentally, Mrs. Whitehall personally covered the cleaning of the Moorefield racing buildings at the princely, or shall we say niggardly, sum of £10 per annum.

Peter Moore decided to build the Moorefield Hotel in close proximity to the racecourse entrance gates, which were located near Rocky Point Road opposite to the intersection of Hogben Street. This somewhat lengthy two-storied building catered for both man and (racing) beast, the animals being accommodated in an extensive group of stables and forafe sheds etc., ranged at the rear of the hotel premises. The immediate family of Peter Moore were ensconced on the top floor of the hotel, having been brought from Paddington to take up their abode in this, at times, somewhat noisy spot. A Mr. Harry Mulcahy ran the bar trade and looked after the affairs of the hotel and its attendant stabling.

The establishment of the Moorefield Racecourse brought about an influx of racing people to Kogarah, most of whom settled in its immediate vicinity, and built horse stables in their backyards. Messrs. Cush and Gibbs were located at the western end of French Street, likewise Mr. Davis, while Mr. McCurley, together with a hard swearing Mexican parrot, was at the eastern end. Robert Mead had stables abutting on to the laneway at the rear of Baxter Avenue, and Mr. Hunt's stables were adjacent to the laneway at the northern side of Green Street. There were other racing stables in Stanley Street, and near the laneway between Hogben and Kensington Streets. This coverage may not be complete. Strings of horses were trotted along the various highways leading to the course on race days, accompanied by their trainers and jockeys mounted on non-descript nags that did not have to keep their wind intact. Some of the racehorses were in fine fettle and covered with expensive horse cloths fringed with gay tassels, evidently presents from grateful owners. Others plodded along draped in cut-down gunny-sacks, calculated not to impress would-be punters with their prowess on the track.

Special race trains came out from Sydney bringing punters in their thousands, who alighted at Kogarah Railway Station and emerged from same into a medley of horse-drawn vehicles, of all sorts and conditions, seeking the privilege of transporting them down Montgomery Street, and Hogben Street, to the turnstiles at the course entrance. There were four-horse drags fitted with tiers of cross seats, and without protection from the weather, and two-horse two-decker omnibuses which, on their lawful occasions, plodded between Sydney and the Warren and other suburban destinations of a like distance from town.

Hucksters and tipsters were legion, likewise the sellers of pies, peas, and saveloys. The cry of Hot-roasted peanuts was heard in the land, and gentlemen wearing suitable ragged clothes, a downcast look, and wooden legs, stood with out-stretched hands seeking alms, whilst the other hand strenuously turned the handle of hurdy-gurdys, each mounted on a small two-wheeled handtruck. To the strains of "The Blue Danube", that everlasting musical favourite, the punting and panting throng hurried on in its excited endeavour to be at the paddock in time for the first race.

A special horse train, which was shunted into the horsedock at the northern end of Kogarah Station, was the venue of all small boys and small girls of the immediate neighbourhood. Here was a steam locomotive in all its majesty, with its driving crews more than ready to explain the inner mysteries of the iron horse. Releasing the frightened horses from the horse-box vehicles on the train was also of absorbing interest, as there was always the possibility of somebody in authority getting bitten or, better still, kicked. Then there was the large white painted boundary gate to swing on, and, inadvertently closed at the wrong moment, a circumstance which always brought forth torrid and unseemly language from trainers and jockeys alike, as their fractious charges jumped and bucked this way and that, much to the amusement of the locomotive crew and adult bystanders. These racehorses were taken along the length of Gladstone Street to and from the course, mostly being led by their human personnel on foot. Great were those days.

Reverting to the inception of the Moorefield Racecourse we find that it was necessary to demolish Captain Dillon's "Old English cottage", as it occupied the site chosen for the building of the grandstand. The beautifully kept market garden and residence of Joseph Keep was also eliminated, as this property lay athwart the race track, consequently Mr. Keep decided to establish a butchering business opposite the Gardiner's Arms Hotel, at the junction of Rocky Point Road and Kogarah Road. This site, now occupied by a garage, did not prove advantageous, and the business was transferred to a large shop in Regent Street, Kogarah, the premises being about midway between the intersections of Montgomery and Premier Streets. Joseph Keep had a large and respected family, the children of which, were named, according to my informant's memory, in the following order - Joseph, George, Thomas, Mary, David, Dollah, Eric and Samuel.

Mrs. Charles Whitehall was not enamoured with the occupancy of the small stone cottage, opposite the Roman Catholic Church, presumably the roistering drunkenness which often occurred at the nearby Gardiner's Arms Hotel was most upsetting. At this time Mr. Anthony Hordern's trotting horse stables had been taken over by Mr. Peter Moore to house his own horses. Charles Whitehall sought and obtained two of the eight stalls within the building for the

accommodation of his wife and family. Conditions here were most primitive, but one stall was adapted as a communal bedroom, and the other, fitted with chimney and fireplace, served as a kitchen. Both rooms were interconnected by an inner doorway, and sundry windows were let into the outer walls. Extra light was admitted through the half doors if and when required. Water was obtained from a nearby well, being drawn to the surface in a bucket attached to the end of a chain. There were no facilities for a bath apart from that afforded by the use of a large circular shaped tub. The father and young Elizabeth went down with typhoid fever, brought about by unsanitary conditions resulting from living under the same roof with, and in close proximity to, the racehorses. As other stalls became available, Charles Whitehall took the opportunity of enlarging his dwelling, and ultimately gained the whole building for his personal use. Doorways and windows were inserted in the various dividing walls, and the place at last made habitable.

The racecourse enterprise flourished until the bank depression of the early eighteen-nineties, which, with its resulting unemployment and widespread distress, depleted both attendance and revenue. Peter Moore eventually had to mortgage the Moorefield racecourse property, and, with a stringent tightening of belts on the part of himself and his employees, managed to repay the instalments on the mortgage as they fell due. With the return of better days a company, said to have had a capital of £125,000, was floated, and much needed improvements were then carried out. For his unswerving loyalty Mr. Moore presented Charles Whitehall with a one hundred pound share in the new company, and as a further act of gratitude also gave him the deeds of a down-at-heel cottage in Green Street, Kogarah, valued at £60, which brought in a weekly rental of five shillings. He also promised that Whitehall should remain caretaker of the racecourse, "as long as he remains the honourable man that he is". Mrs. Whitehall was personally thanked for her devotion to the cause for which, we hope, she was dutifully thankful.

The Moorefield Hotel did not pay its way, mainly owing to a lack of regular day to day custom, and eventually came into the hands of a Mr. Cuscick. To create some interest in the bar trade a small two-storied concert booth was erected on the extension of Hogben Street, east of Rocky Point Road, which led to the entrance gates of the racecourse. This booth was located immediately opposite to and on the northern side of the hotel and concert patrons, who sat on rough slab seats contained within an open picket-fenced enclosure, upon payment of threepence, could adjourn for a pot if and when needed.

The concert booth had a loose shuttered south wall facing to the seating enclosure, which presented the performers to their public at a high level, above their heads in fact. Messrs. Ted Baker and Doug Austin were responsible for the entertainment, the artists, to the number of about a dozen, being seated on Austrian chairs arranged in a semi-circular row. The two outer chairs were reserved for pseudo nigger minstrels, complete with large white, and sometimes red, mouths, and who usually accompanied their own line of patter by clacking the "Bones" which, held in both hands, set the temp. A small Chapel piano was used to accompany the singing stars and the efforts of the comedians. This instrument, on the closure of the concert booth about 1911, was presented to Miss Elizabeth Whitehall, in whose possession it still remains.

About 1895 Peter Moore, with his retrieved fortunes, erected a large mansion on his property, which confronted President Avenue and was well placed at the rear and extensive garden and shrubbery. According to Miss Whitehall Peter Moore brought his mother and sister to live in this house, he and his own immediate family continuing to reside at the hotel premises. However, he later occupied the mansion, when the Moorefield Hotel was demolished in accordance with the dictates of the "No-license Act of 1911", which was responsible for the enforced closure of many old established hostleries in both the St. George District and the State of New South Wales at large.

About this particular period a portion of the Moorefield property, along the north-western alignment of Rocky Point Road, was utilised as a cattle and livestock saleyard, the area being divided into a series of pens, the gates of which opened out into a fenced access way. A special and pleasant feature of

this particular paddock was a single line of immense blue gum trees, survivors no doubt of the forest which at one time covered the shallow hill slopes of this part of Kogarah.

Charles Whitehall died in 1936 and later, with the passing of Peter Moore, the racecourse was closed. The estate was sold to a real estate company and subsequently subdivided into some 300 building blocks. During July 1954, an area of 19 acres was purchased by the Department of Education, the land bordering the frontage of Rocky Point Road. In due course, the Moorefield Girls' High School, together with the James Cook Boys' High School came into being. The mansion of Peter Moore was razed to the ground and almost every one of the lovely trees were felled, in accordance with the scorched earth policy so needlessly adopted by the majority of real estate mongers. Needless to say the old homestead, occupied for so long by the Whitehall family, received short shrift in the widespread bulldozer destruction which, for a time, beset the landscape beauty of the former estate of Patrick Moore.

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