



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

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Bi-Monthly Bulletin.

February, 1965.

53 Bruce Street,
Bexley.

12th February, 1965.

Dear Friend and Member.

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

Date: Friday evening next, 19th February, 1965, at 8 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Business: General.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Hazel King, M.A., D. Phil., a Councillor
of the Royal Australian Historical Society,
will speak on:-

"The History of the N.S.W. Police Force".

All members and any interested friends are particularly
requested to attend.

A light supper will be served.

P. Geeves,
President.

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

CONDUCTED TOUR OF THE HAWKESBURY VALLEY.

Our first outing for 1965 will be a Tour of the Hawkesbury
Valley on Saturday, 27th February, 1965.

Meeting Place: Park opposite St. Matthews Church, Windsor, at 11 a.m.
(proceed direct).

Itinerary: Overleaf.

Transport: If needed, ring Secretary at LW.4813.

HAWKESBURY EXCURSION.

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.

Toll House. Erected 1813-16 - Longest wooden bridge in the colony at that time. Tolls collected till 1887.

Court House. Erected by William Cox 1822 to Greenway design. Macquarie portrait, cedar furnishings - social centre for meetings, church services, etc.

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.

Hawkesbury Historical Museum - Adults 1/-.

Lunch. 12.45 - 1.30 p.m.

Depart for Wilberforce.

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.

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.

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.

Depart Ebenezer.

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".

*St. Peters Richmond Foundation Stone 1837,
consecrated 1841.*

Tour continues

+ + +

OLD KOGARAH TOWNSHIP

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

The early settlement of the Kogarah district largely followed the route of the old established Rocky Point Road, which, as a rough bush track, had been constructed, to the order of Governor Sir George Gipps, about the eighteen-forties. The region was devoted to market gardening and the cultivation of orchards. The Sydney Morning Herald of February 2nd, 1878, published a paragraph relating to Kogarah, which conveys a vivid word picture of the local scene at that particular period and we have taken the liberty of quoting the article in full. It reads as follows.

Kogarah

"One of the prettiest though perhaps one of the least known roads out of Sydney is that which goes beyond Cooks River Dam to Kogarah, Sandringham, and Sans Souci. But few persons are aware of the natural beauty of the scenery at different parts of the road. The forest at the present scene of drought is clothed with verdure, very refreshing to the eye. Trees, familiarly known as the Gum, Black-butt, Swamp Mahogany, Forest Mahogany, Wattles, Acacias, and ferns, flourish in perfection; and in places show a mass of foliage almost tropical in its luxuriance. The valleys are for the most part covered with market gardens, which, notwithstanding the dry weather, are well supplied with vegetables. Though little rain has fallen lately, there is a good supply of water, which gives them a fertility which few other localities possess. The soil is a black loam and sand, and being well manured, its richness is perpetuated in the driest seasons. In fact it is at such times that the gardeners here reap their most profitable harvest. The moisture retained in the sand ascends in drought and nourishes the surface soil, and is productive to a remarkable extent when vegetation elsewhere perishes. Hence the good crops of cabbage, pumpkins, vegetables of all kinds which now cover the ground. Splendid heads of cabbage and fine specimens of pumpkins lie over the gardens, and furnish the owners with supplies several times a week for the Sydney market, the return trip being utilized by the carrying of loads of manure to sustain the fertility of the soil. Many of the gardeners give the ground an occasional dressing of guano, and this further stimulates the fertility and they are amply rewarded for their outlay. The natural grass, tolerably fresh; and cattle; which find in it their entire sustenance, seem in fair condition. During the day there is generally a delightful sea-breeze blowing from Botany Bay, which is about half a mile away. The road itself is classed as one of the main roads of the colony, and receives an annual vote of £50 per mile. Formerly a portion of the money derived from tolls was expended on its repair, but the abolition of these will probably necessitate the raising of revenue for road purposes in some other way, as the annual vote is considered too small to maintain the road in decent order, the traffic in it being very heavy. Several new houses are in course of erection and freestone is available in the locality, there being a quarry on the roadside. The inhabitants are now endeavouring to secure a railway in the hope of converting it into a suburb of the city."

With this introduction in mind we will, in the ten year period ranging between 1895 and 1905, visit Kogarah from the direction of Rockdale, walking southwards along the ancient highway. Approaching the bridge over Black, or Muddy Creek, can be seen, on our left hand side, the tree-lined driveway leading to the fine old home of Mr. J.P. Lister, bearing the quaint name of "Hayburn Wyke". The residence, (which has now been converted into flats and modified accordingly) faced towards the creek, and it would appear that the property was formerly orchard land, which extended southwards to the creek and followed Rocky Point Road on its western alignment. At the time of viewing the land was a wilderness of weedy growth inter-mixed with the broad-leaved foliage of castor-oil trees, the presence of a single persimmon tree marking the old-time orchard. This tree carried a magnificent crop of fruit, a circumstance well known & appreciated by the water in his more tender years, & also by his mates, whose method of approach was to walk along the bed of the creek, & then crawl through the long grass until the tree was reached. Here a watchful eye was kept on the inhabitants of "Hayburn Wyke" while the other eye scanned the branches for fully ripe & luscious fruit.

On the opposite, or right-hand side of Rocky Point Road, was a hedge of sweet-scented orange and yellow flowering Buddalea, which marked the roadside border of an extensive Chinese market garden. These Oriental gentlemen lived in a rambling head-height hutment composed of sundry odd-shaped pieces of galvanised corrugated iron, held together in a purely functional manner, designed to give protection where most desired from wind and rain. These shanties were always a joy to artists and a nightmare to orthodox-minded aldermen and their cohorts such as building inspectors and inspectors of nuisances. Adjacent to the hut was a small grove of sacred Tree of Heaven plants, and several spiky growths of New Zealand Flax, the leaves of which were slit into strips to form binding for bunches of carrots, parsnips, turnips, spinach, and other vegetables which needed stringing together for selling purposes.

The western alignment of this garden was bordered by the banks of the small watercourse which drained the eastern hillslopes of Bexley in the vicinity of Frederick Street. The garden side of the creek was distinguished by a fine row of high but somewhat spindly pine trees (*pinus insignis*) which formed a windbreak from the prevailing westerlies. The southern end of the well-kept garden lay against the tranquil waters, at times, of Black Creek, which hereabouts was also known as Skidmores Creek, the land being "fenced" by a wild growth of pink-flowered lantana, which, in turn, gave full protection against nefarious visits of vegetable thieves and prospecting schoolboys.

In the course of their unlawful occasions the latter youth group wormed their bare-footed way along the creek bed at the western side of the market garden to a point opposite the marrow bed. Small young marrows, slit down the middle and the innards scraped out, made two excellent model boats to sail on Black Creek, sails being devised from pieces of cardboard suitably cut to shape. John Chinaman had other views, apart from nautical ones, on the subject, and should said youthful but aspiring mariners be sighted from the residential shanty, he would gather his assistant gardeners and turn out enmasse, armed with and brandishing hoe-handles, and devilish long-pointed pitch-forks, screaming threats and, no doubt, suitable insults, in a language incomprehensible to the young offenders, who, in turn, lost no time in beating a hasty retreat to the sanctuary of the creek bed, then hot-footing it to home and safety.

There is reason to believe that this particular Chinese garden was formerly occupied by Mr. Frederick Skidmore, who apparently sold the property to the Orientals in the late eighteen eighties. Mr. Skidmore occupied a group of three brick single-roomed houses, built in close proximity to each other, on the southern bank of Muddy Creek and immediately adjacent to the Rocky Point Road. According to Mrs. Mitchell, of Harrow Road, Kogarah, this homestead was reputed to be the fifth residence built in the St. George District south of Cooks River. In general design the kitchen, together with a small subdivided bedroom, formed the oldest part of the building group, and was reminiscent of an Irish peasant's cabin of County Donegal. Entrance from the yard into the kitchen was gained by passing through a pair of half, or Dutch type, doors let into the northern side wall. This arrangement served a double duty, firstly, by keeping the lower half-door closed, the unauthorised entry of poultry and live-stock was prevented, whilst the opening of the upper half door permitted maximum daylight and fresh air to enter, and also, under certain weather conditions, let the smoke escape from the open fire place.

This huge fireplace, built of brick, occupied the greater part of the width of the western wall of the kitchen, and its burning logs must have furnished a cosy warmth in the chill days of winter. One can picture the *Pots, pans, and kettles*, dangling at the end of their respective lengths of *the woodbox*

*Chain, suspended over the crackling flames.
Nearby would be the mass of burnable
material & against the southern wall would be
the open-fronted dresser laden with Staffordshire
crochery of the more serviceable type. In odd
nooks & crannies would stand spades, mattocks,
haws, & other valuable farm equipment, stored for
safety in this domestic sanctum.*

The other two separately roofed rooms, of much smaller size than the kitchen, no doubt were used as bedrooms to accommodate the needs of an increasing family. In later years the Skidmore homestead was occupied by the elderly Mrs. Lennis and after her departure, or demise, the buildings fell into ruin and were demolished about 1930. The site of the Skidmore farmhouses can now be determined by the modern residence which is numbered 611 on the Princes Highway.

Proceeding up stream along the southern bank of Skidmore's Creek, at the time under review, a notable landmark was met in the form of a huge gumtree, a lone survivor of the age-old forest which once covered the land. This particular tree carried a large placard, in its lower branches, which read "WOODMAN SPARE THIS TREE IN MEMORY OF POOR OLD CHARLIE BARSBY". The reason for this singular notice has not been ascertained, and old residents were non-plused as to the whys and why-fors of its presence. The tree, of course, was not spared.

Abutting on to the site of the just mentioned gumtree was the farm and residence of another branch of the Skidmore family, the brick house facing towards the then unmade continuation of Harrow Road, where it crossed, by means of a narrow width footbridge, the muddied waters of Skidmore's Creek. The single storied double-fronted cottage conformed to a pattern, evidently designed by a local builder, as other examples of similar residences were erected on farms nearby, and one as far away as Wazir Street, Arncliffe.

On the opposite side of Harrow Road, facing towards what is now known as Railway Parade, was the property of Mr. Fry, which carried an excellent orchard of loquats, pomegranates, peaches, and other fruits, attractive commodities which kept the owner of the orchard very busy and war-like during the ripening season, for reasons that are obvious and better not stated. The creek at the rear of the Fry property, known locally as Fry's Creek, was completely overhung by a dense row of the water-loving quince-trees, whilst the opposite, or northern bank, was enshrouded in an equally high tangle of lantana and other rough growth, a most attractive bird-haunted area. The still waters beneath this sylvan splendour were the home of large eels and numerous small tortoises, all of whom were too wise to succumb to the alluring worm used in conjunction with a bent pin and a piece of thin string. In latter years the Fry estate was taken over by Kogarah Council and adapted as a nightsoil reception depot, a necessary amenity which did not endear itself to the local residents. The glamour of Fry's Creek was replaced by a large stormwater channel and, fortunately, somebody has been wise enough to furnish a side planting of willow trees which have grown into magnificent examples of their kind. Strangely enough, so far, they have avoided being butchered to stumps by the municipal axe.

Retracing our steps to Skidmore's Bridge, which incidentally, was constructed in 1862, replacing a water splash which created a serious traffic hazard when the creek was in spate, our journey continues southwards along Rocky Point Road. At the left hand side is the extensive market garden, acknowledged to be the best in the district, owned by Mr. Reuter. This gentleman was famous for his Shanghai peaches and also for the size of the mulberry tree, which grew near his fine double-fronted brick residence, named "ASHTONVILLE". These premises were in good repair at November 1964, but at that period the house, listed as No. 646 Princes Highway, was advertised for sale. The market garden had been operated for a number of years by a group of Chinese, but has recently been levelled and subdivided into housing allotments, a large portion of the area being incorporated in the modern shopping centre grandiloquently called the South Side Plaza.

Opposite the former Reuter home, and on the right hand side of

the Princes Highway is no. 619, a longish single-fronted shop, which, at one time, was said to be a Free Church. However at the time under review the premises housed the small family. Then came, in close juxtaposition, a row of cottages which, greatly modified, are still in occupation, one in particular being conspicuous by a nearly full size model of a white horse, raised above an entrance gateway denoting to all and sundry that a

veterinary surgeon lived on the premises. The last house of this group, No. 643, was occupied by a school teacher who at the time was attached to Kogarah Superior Public School. A vacant block of rocky land, now levelled and in use as a service station, reached southward to the apex formed by the intersection of Rocky Point Road and Harrow Road. In the latter thoroughfare and facing towards the road junction is a row of small cottages, built in a variety of designs which were mostly in evidence at the time of our visit.

Opposite the Harrow Road Junction was the farmland of Mr. Chandler which has suffered subdivision into a housing estate, the name of the former owner being perpetuated in Chandler Avenue, which abutts on to the Highway. Opposite to the intersection of Stanley Street is the large single storied residence, No. 672, formerly occupied by Mr. Hepple, a successful local bookmaker. On either side of Stanley Street were small general stores, one of which, No. 11, after serving for some years as a second-hand mart, has recently been replaced by a modern building. The other shop, No. 13, still functions as the Malford Pet Foods establishment. The adjacent two-storied shops, southward from the intersection of Stanley Street, are of more recent origin and one came into use as a grocery store about 1910 or so. From these shops southward to Regent Street was the road frontage of a large grass paddock, without fence, which eventually underwent subdivision and is now covered with cottages.

Crossing Regent Street, the first building to be met was the Oddfellow's Hall, locally known as the "Blood house", owing to the "free for all" fight which often occurred on the premises when let for public meetings, weddings, etc. The main structure of this edifice still exists and can be observed, with its high brick-faced gable and circular vent insert, from a position a little along Regent Street. The facade of the old hall has been masked by a pair of two-storied shops, although the main hall retains its separate access, as No. 45, and is in the hands of the Yardstick Curtain Company.

Still keeping to the western side of the highway we would find that a small and neat double-frontaged brick cottage, next door to the aforementioned Oddfellow's Hall, was occupied in the 1905 period by the Powys family. Then came St. Pauls Church of England Rectory, which later fell on evil days in the hands of a carrying company and has since been demolished, the grounds being subsequently utilised as a play area for school children. The Sunday School Hall, attached to St. Pauls Church, now comes into line, a prosaic building of no artistic merit.

St. Pauls Church is really an historic building, the first portion, comprising the nave, being erected in June 1869 and dedicated by Bishop Barker in September of the same year. It stands on land donated as a church site by Mr. Wolfen and the structure, built of stone and roofed with wooden shingles, was erected by Mr. Bush. A sanctuary was later added which contains four beautiful stained glass windows, the gift of the Bowen family. Large side and organ vestries were added during the ministry of the late Reverend Stanley. G. Best.

The Reverend John Done was the first incumbent, and on his decease his remains were interred in the cemetery located between the Church building and the frontage of the Church lands which formerly faced Gladstone Street. Many of the pioneers of the St. George district were buried at St. Pauls Graveyard and the last burial was that of the late Mrs. Wilkinson, of Belgrave Street, Kogarah, during the early portion of the ministry of the Reverend Stanley Best. The area was eventually resumed by the Department of Education as a play area for school children, the headstones being resited at the rear of the St. Pauls Sunday School. A new

rectory has been built on Church land immediately south of the Church. Beyond a boundary fence, at the supposed time of our visit, was a triangular shaped piece of unfenced vacant land which reached southward to terminate at the intersection of Gladstone St. & Rocky Point Rd.

Retracing our steps to the intersection of Regent Street, and crossing over Rocky Point Road before again heading southward, we reach a pair of well built shops, the first a general store, No. 692, and the next, No. 694, was the old established produce and chaff store owned by Mr. Harry Soames. These buildings were typical of the 1885 period and, unfortunately, both have been demolished within recent years, the land which they occupied still, at November 1964, lies vacant and is covered with sundry demolition rubbish. Crossing French Street we reach No. 708, a two-storied residence, now sadly modified, which was formerly in the possession of Mrs. Hegarty, a sister of Mr. Peter Moore of Moorefield Racecourse fame.

Next in line is the old established jam factory, No. 714, owned by the Ambrose family. These premises have been greatly altered insofar as their frontage to Rocky Point Road is concerned. The old shop at the corner of Green Street was built by Mr. Sugarman who practiced his profession as a glazier, whilst his good wife helped to gain sustenance by regularly milking a herd of goats which roamed the neighbourhood and ate whatever came their way, be it grass, cardboard, or old tins. The animals showed a particular preference for browsing in well kept flower and backyard vegetable gardens. Mr. Sugarman was of Jewish persuasion and delighted in having a pot at the nearby Moorefield Hotel, but was not so delighted, according to local report, when a stray match set fire to his beard and sent the lot up in smoke, a burnt sacrifice if ever there was one.

Between Green Street and President Avenue was a large block of unfenced land which served the local foot-loose horse and goat population with ample nourishment. Across the President Avenue was the long frontage of the Moorefield Racecourse, broken only by the short continuation of Hogben Street, which formed the entrance to the course and the adjacent two-storied Moorefield Hotel which had been built by Mr. Peter Moore. Also enclosed within the racecourse grounds and hidden from view by a ten feet high paling fence, were two small stone built cottages, obviously of great age, but their history has proved elusive. At the southern end of the course frontage is a group of three cottages, each of which could well date back before the turn of the century, and each of which is in a good state of preservation.

Reverting back to the intersection of Gladstone Street and following along the western side of Rocky Point Road, in a southerly direction, we reach a triangular block of land with a building flanked by peppercorn trees. We have no clue as to the vintage or owner of these premises but believe that he was greatly interested in racehorses. Then came a group of about five small single-fronted cottages built to the order of Mr. Peter Moore, one which survives, is named "BEGA" and another "MILTON". Next door to this row was a blacksmith's shop, then came a general store, and the imposing two-storied building at the corner of Hogben Street, according to local tradition, was the Kogarah Branch of the Bank of Australasia. For a great many years these premises have been, and still are, utilised as a mixed business store.

Crossing Hogben Street and along a vacant piece of land, which, if my memory is correct, was once occupied by a small weatherboard cottage, and later by a bottle yard, we arrive at the blacksmith's and farrier's shop of Mr. Killick. Hard against these premises was South's general store and bakery, an old established business managed, over a long period, by at least four generations of the South family. It was here that, in pre-railway days, one caught Mr. Lowe's horse-drawn omnibus when going to Sydney Town, and also posted and received one's mail. The shop was the centre of activity for the rural community for many miles around. Continuing over the obviously named South Street, we pass by a large fenced paddock in the middle of which was a small cottage, the ownership of same has not been traced as yet. This paddock eventually came into the possession of the St. George Cottage

Hospital authorities about the year 1893.

Next door to the paddock just mentioned was the small stone church, built in 1865, by Mr. Walsh of Rockdale, & known as St. Patrick's School. The title was chiseled into a headstone beneath the eastern end gable & evidently the mis-spelling of school was pointed out to the mason as an ineffectual attempt had been made to chisel out the offending "E". An

ancient graveyard surrounded the sacred edifice of which traces remain, although the old school building, which also served as a church, has long been demolished. The present church, also known as St. Patrick's, was built in 1887 when Father Byrne was priest in charge of a parish which extended between Cooks River and Sutherland and as far west as Canterbury. A rather unique tower has been added to the church fabric in which hangs a deep, mellow toned bell, said to have been cast in Ireland.

Passing by two old established cottages we reach the site of Prendergast's Hotel, situated at the junction of Kogarah Road and Rocky Point Road. This ancient hostelry went out of business about 1863, and is regarded as being one of the oldest inns in the St. George District. It would appear that the site was later occupied by Beaver's Gardener's Arms Hotel, a large two-storied structure, which in turn went out of business about 1911 under the terms of the No-license Act of that year. The building then became a general store and in latter years was taken over, and subsequently demolished, by the St. George Leagues Club preparatory to the erection of a new clubhouse. It is interesting to note that the first meeting of the then newly formed Kogarah Municipal Council, held on March 9th, 1886, took place at the old Gardener's Arms Hotel.

Having reached the parting of the highways we will conclude this rambling essay with a quotation taken from the Kogarah Municipal Jubilee Handbook of 1935, to wit. "Records show that Kogarah has sometimes been spelled "Koggerah". "Koggrah". Koggarah". and frequently minus the final "h". An Irish gentleman who viewed the district for the first time was heard to say "Kogarah, Kogarah:". It must be a Celtic word though I have never heard it before. It has a good old Irish rowl about it".

These reminiscences have been culled from personal experiences of the authors and the able assistance of Miss Elizabeth Whitehall, a resident of some eighty years standing in the Kogarah area. Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. N. Wakefield have also helped in giving information which has proved most useful in the compilation of the text. There are, no doubt, many errors and misspelling of names in the script but, by and large, the story is a truthful account of by-gone days along the stretch of ancient highway between Skidmore's Bridge and the Gardiner's Arms Hotel.

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THE FIRST ELECTION - 1843.

Within the next month or so the people of New South Wales will be called upon to go to the polls to elect a new State Parliament.

A few words on the subject of our first election would seem to be most appropriate.

The following is an extract from a paper on the Political History of the St. George District being prepared by the Secretary.

*** *** ***

The area we now know as St George found itself in the Electoral District of Cumberland, which covered the whole of the region between the coast and the Hawkesbury - Nepean River system, except the City of Sydney, which was a separate division and the towns of Windsor, Penrith, Parramatta, Liverpool and Campbelltown, which constituted the Electorate of Cumberland Borough.

If the people of New South Wales were as indifferent to the advent of parliamentary government, which most historians would have us believe, they entered into the election of their first Representative Council with an enthusiasm which belies this. In fact, they seemed to find the diversion highly entertaining.

Because of the scattered nature of the settlement and the poor means of communication, polling took place over a period of six weeks.

Sydney was the first seat to be decided and there were five candidates for the two representative seats it contained. Outstanding among these were the seasoned William Charles Wentworth and his right-hand man, ex-convict Dr. William Bland. A personable young military officer name O'Connell who had only recently arrived in the Colony; Hinton William Hustler, a barrister, who was also a new arrival and the notorious gin swilling King of Sydney's underworld, Robert Cooper, completed the quintet.

A general agreement on all major issues meant the election was fought almost entirely on personalities and right from the start it was a "no holds barred" contest. The Wentworth controlled organ "The Australian" was the main propaganda medium for the first mentioned candidates and its editorials were every bit as vitriolic as when Governor Darling had been their target. O'Connell was dismissed as an imposter; young, inexperienced and totally unworthy of the popularity he enjoyed. Hustler's candidature was described as "deliberate a piece of political effrontery as it was possible to imagine", whilst Cooper received the full blast of "The Australian's" disfavour being described as "of such a stamp, both morally and mentally, as to render it a deep insult for anyone to suppose for a moment that the electors could be mad or base enough to make him their representative." The infant "Sydney Morning Herald", whilst also supporting Wentworth and Bland was more objective in its assessment of the candidates though it, too, took some pains to point out that "if it be an accepted political practice that the low and unlettered were to represent the educated and refined, Mr. Cooper would have strong claims to our support."

Nomination Day was Tuesday, June 13th and before a banner bearing crowd of some five thousand of Sydney's populace assembled in front of a large timber platform called the hustings, especially erected for the occasion in Macquarie Place, the Returning Officer and Sydney's first Mayor, John Hosking, introduced the candidates to the electors. It was the custom in those time for someone to formally propose and second each candidate, who then addressed the gathering before a show of hands was taken. As there was no certainty who, in the crowd, possessed the right to vote and who did not, any defeated candidate could demand a ballot.

Cooper and O'Connell may have lacked experience and qualifications but they gave their opponents a painful lesson in political organization on that memorable day. Supporters of both Cooper and O'Connell packed the square. When Hustler rose to speak, he and his proposers were inaudible above the constant hooting at the foot of the hustings steps. Bland, in endeavouring to get on to

the platform, was "thrown down with violence & received such an injury that he was carried to his residence in an unconscious state". O'Connell was greeted with considerable enthusiasm, whilst Cooper, who addressed his followers from the back of a cart, was hysterically cheered.

Only a most generous appeal to the mob by Captain O'Connell enabled Wentworth to be heard and when he rather ungraciously referred to O'Connell's family's Catholic ties (although O'Connell was himself an Anglican), a clamour of yelling and hissing broke out and absolute confusion reigned for a quarter of an hour, during which time several boxing matches took place and Wentworth's banner and portion of the hustings were "utterly demolished". And when Wentworth accused Cooper of having promised to support him then of putting himself forward as a candidate, the rest of his speech was lost in uproar.

A show of hands indicated a clear win for O'Connell and Cooper, whereupon Wentworth and Hustler demanded a poll.

Voting, which involved writing the candidate's name on the front of the ballot paper and the elector's on the back, took place some days later and during the interval "The Australian" solemnly upbraided its readers to support the men "who have led us in safety to the steps of freedom's altar", pointing out that failure to elect Wentworth and Bland would be "a deep and lasting stain upon our honour as a people and a suicidal act of an ungrateful public."

If nomination day had been a riot then polling day was a hundred times worse. So violent did passions run that the poll in the Gipps Ward (Millers Point) part of the city had to be suspended when O'Connell, supporting seamen armed with harpoons, clashed with Wentworth sympathisers and the Returning Officer, after having been brutally assaulted, fled across the harbour in a boat. Supporters of rival candidates had their carriages upended and their windows smashed. One man was killed. Several Wentworth banners were burned, whilst in another part of the city, Dr. Whittle, a known Wentworth advocate, was thrown from his carriage and "received a severe contusion on his head."

With the aid of a detachment of the military, the poll was at last completed, Wentworth and Bland having a substantial majority over Captain O'Connell, with Hustler and Cooper sharing equal last place.

The election in neighbouring Cumberland was held a fortnight later and although free from the violence of the Sydney poll, was every bit as dramatic. Cumberland was also entitled to elect two members.

Those who nominated were the highly respected and surprisingly liberal James Macarthur, "son of him to whom the Colony is indebted for its main export." William Lawson, old, esteemed, honest and upright, one of the trio who crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813, and an ardent supporter of his friend, W.C. Wentworth; George Robert Nichols, a radical and a reformer - once a man of means but since the 1843 depression, somewhat disillusioned and financially embarrassed, and John Ryan Brenan "a nominee of the publicans and their class."

There seemed little doubt that Macarthur and Lawson would have an easy victory. At the eleventh hour, however, there occurred an event which made the Cumberland poll perhaps the bitterest of the whole election. This was the last minute nomination of wealthy landowner Charles Cowper, for the Cumberland seat. Cowper had contested the adjacent Camden Electorate a few days before nominations closed in Cumberland in the full expectation of receiving the support of the influential Macarthur family. He was shocked to find that James Macarthur not only declined to sponsor him, but actively campaigned for his opponent, the Colony's Attorney-General, Roger Therry.

A large proportion of Australia's convict population at that stage, were Irish Catholic political prisoners, who were always restive and an ever present source of discontent. Therry was both Irish and a Catholic. Furthermore, as Attorney-General, he was a paid Government official. In a furious contest in which many charges of bribery and intimidation were made, Therry had narrowly defeated Cowper.

Describing Macarthur as a "turncoat", "a Prince of Renegades and the patron of White Feathers", Cowper threw his hat into the ring with the undisguised intention of avenging his own humiliation. He further accused Macarthur of being a hide-bound Tory and a tool of the Exclusionists. The fight in Cumberland was short and cruel and, despite herculean efforts on the part of both "The Herald"

and "The Australian" & the patronage of such influential figures as Wentworth, the Leys & Alexander Brodie Spink, Macarthur wilted under the Cowper onslaught. In the final stage, Lawson completed the rout by switching his support to Cowper.

Cowper with 503 votes topped the poll, followed by Lawson 381, Macarthur 371, Nichols 339 and Brennan 137.

It is not known how many of the handful of settlers residing in the Parish of St. George, who were entitled to vote, bothered to make the terrible day long journey along the deeply rutted track called "The Illawarra Road", across the dam at Cook's River, to the nearest polling place at Woolloomooloo, but those who did make the effort would appear to have voted for Cowper.