



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Vol. 2. No. 6.

Bi-Monthly Bulletin

April, 1965.

53 Bruce Street,  
Bexley.  
16th April, 1965.

Dear Friend and Member.

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

PLACE: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

DATE: Friday evening next, 23rd April, 1965, at 8 p.m.

GUEST SPEAKER: Our President, and District Historian.  
Mr. PHILIP GEEVES will speak on "Thomas Saywell".

All members and any interested friends are cordially invited to attend.

A light supper will be served.

P. Geeves.

President.

R. W. Rathbone.

Hon. Secretary.

LW.4813.

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## OUTING TO CONCORD.

Now that the days are drawing in our next excursion will be somewhat shorter than those we have undertaken in recent months.

We are going to Concord to visit -

1. "Yaralla" - the Dame Eadith Walker Convalescent Home set in spacious and picturesque grounds.
2. The Thomas Walker Convalescent Home adjacent to the Repatriation General Hospital, and
3. Cabarita Park for afternoon tea where still stands the Pavilion under which the Commonwealth of Australia was Proclaimed. (removed from Centennial Park).

DETAILS. Leave Town Hall, Rockdale, 2 p.m., Saturday, 8th May, 1965.

BRING: Your afternoon tea.

TRANSPORT. Ring the Secretary, LW.4813.

THIRTY MILES TO SYDNEY

In these days of concrete and bitumenous-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 watercart was in use, while potholes were as plentiful as holes in a collander. Motorists looked upon most of our roads as a "nut and bolt or spare 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 or Hurstville and the surrounding districts was by way of Punch Bowl (now spelt Punchbowl) Road, through Enfield to Liverpool Road, making the journey about 30 miles from Hurstville Station. The cause of this was evidently the absence of roads or bridges over Cook's River. 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 the Undercliffe Bridge."

Commenting on the transport difficulties between Kogarah and Sydney some 44 years ago, the writer stated that "like most of the suburbs of Sydney, Kogarah and Rockdale have suffered severely from want of good roads and consequent means of communication with the city. In early times residents were compelled to head Wolli Creek and Cook's River, and to get to Sydney by way of Canterbury or Enfield, and thence on to the Parramatta or Liverpool Roads. Even by taking this roundabout 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, rushes, etc. 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 Pinch (the steep pinch on Prince's Highway between Rockdale 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 out 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 Pinch was not much worse to negotiate than the road itself.

First Road Trust

It was about this time that the first road trust was formed under the Parish Roads Act (4 Victoria, No.12), passed by 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 legislators do not appear to have realised that laws should be made to be enforced, there being otherwise a danger of them proving useless, and too many of the laws of New South Wales have been found useless when tried. The Parish Roads Act was almost a dead-letter. 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 and Rockdale 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.

#### A Toll Bar

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 to-day 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 that year. A road committee was formed in the early days of the district in connection with Kogarah Road, which branches off Rocky Point Road near 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 leaves Prince's Highway at Moorefield Racecourse and extends 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.

#### Dispute among Residents

However, 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, Rockdale, 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 Rockdale, 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.



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 collander. 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 Pinch (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.

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#### 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.

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### 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 Princes 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. C. 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.

## MUNICIPALITY OF HURSTVILLE

### BRIEF OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY

The history of colonization in Australia starts when Captain Cook gave the order to drop the anchor of the "Endeavour" on April 29, 1770, in Botany Bay. We had hoped to start the history of Hurstville from the same point, for, on May 4, Cook set out to explore what is now Georges River, but which he referred to as "the head of the harbour".

Alas, we cannot get the captain further up the river than what is now Shipwright's Bay, where he found a spring of water.

There is little doubt, however, that, in January 1788, Governor Phillip or his officers landed on the shores of Hurstville in search of the fine meadows which Cook found on the shores of the bay.

From the date of the settlement at Sydney Cove until 1810 the Hurstville district was left to the aborigines and the kangaroos, with an occasional visit from escaped convicts or hunters employed by the Government.

In 1811 occurs the first reference to the district in the Historical Records of N.S.W. This occurs in a letter, written on September 22, 1811, by Dr. Robert Townson to Earl Liverpool. The letter is a complaint. The doctor relates that he arrived in the colony some years before, with a letter from the home authorities authorising him to receive a grant of 2,000 acres. This authority, however, Governor Bligh refused to honour, but after that Governor's departure he received his grants from Colonels Foveaux and Paterson. On Governor Macquarie's arrival, in 1809, however, these grants were annulled and it was not until nearly a year and a half later that the doctor prevailed on Macquarie to re-issue the grants.

Even then his troubles were not over, for on making a request to be allowed to sell his land and return to England the Governor refused permission. Townson refers in his letter to the fact that his brother had received grants a year previously.

Now our interest in these grants is that if you draw a parallelogram, with an area of 1,605 acres embracing parts of Hurstville and Kogarah, you would be defining the grant of Dr. Townson, and if on the north-east of this you marked two areas, one of 1,950 and the other of 250 acres, embracing parts of Hurstville and Kogarah, you would be marking the grants of Captain John Townson.

The only relics of the brothers are a street name in Kogarah and in the name Townson Bay, and even that is in danger of disappearing under the modern name of Kogarah Bay.

In 1830 Dr. Townson's grant came into the hands of John Connell. Connell had acquired also grants at what is now Kurnell, and one derivation of the name of that locality is that it is a corruption of Connell's name. When Connell acquired Townson's grant the locality became known as "Connell's Bush", sometimes spelt "Connelly's". In his will Connell bequeathed this land to J.C. and E.P. Laycock, and later on it was brought under the Real Property Act. In 1869 that part of the grant between Hurstville, Dumbleton, Broad Arrow, and Queensbury Roads was subdivided by E.P. Laycock under the title, "Subdivision of Connell's Bush, Penshurst".

Here we have, as far as can be traced, the first use of the name Penshurst, although it may have been in use locally before 1869.

It is understood that the name was derived from Penshurst Park, near London, and support is lent to this theory by the fact that, in a resubdivision of the original subdivision in 1883, the name given to it was "Penshurst Park".

As the area was cleared, the Penshurst district became noted for its market gardens and orange orchards.

Some time prior to 1861, the south-western half of Dr. Townson's grant was acquired by Mr. T.S. Mort, and from this gentleman the name of Mortdale arose.

Now let us turn to the grants of Captain John Townson.



On April 11, 1810, the Captain received three grants from Governor Macquarie one of 1,950 acres, which was to be known as "Townson's Farm"; the second of 50 acres to be called "The Retreat", and the third, which adjoined his main grant was of 250 acres.

On December 31, 1812, Captain Townson sold the three grants, totalling 2,250 acres, to Simeon Lord, one of Sydney's early enterprising merchants, for the sum of £800.

On March 20, 1844, the executors of Simeon Lord sold the estate to John Rose Holden and James Holt, who, in turn, sold on November 18, 1850, 1905 acres to Michael Gannon for £732.

It is interesting to note that when Holden and Holt sold to Gannon, the starting point in the description of the land was a dead string-bark tree at the S.W. corner of James Chandler's grant called "Bexley".

Another interesting reference is that the area sold ran down to a new line of road "from the dam on Cooks River to Woronora Ferry".

With the mention of the name of Michael Gannon we come to the derivation of the early name of the district, "Gannon's Forest", and the nucleus of the Hurstville of today which was known as "Gannon's Village".

The name of Hurstville is probably derived from the town of Hurst, in Lancashire, England.

The next large grant in the Hurstville district was that to James Oatley. Oatley Bay, the railway station of Oatley, and Oatley Park, perpetuate the name of this pioneer. This grant is dated August 31, 1833, and was under the hand of Governor Bourke, but, it was recited, that the grant is issued in pursuance of a promise given by Governor Brisbane. The area is 300 acres and the land is described as bounded on the north by "Dr. Townson's Farm" and on the south by Georges River.

James Oatley was a watch and clock maker whose premises stood in George Street, opposite the Town Hall, on the site now occupied by Kerr & Co. Jewellers. There is a story told that when Governor Macquarie wanted a turret clock for the prisoners' barracks at the top of King Street (still standing and now used as law courts) he offered Oatley a grant of land in exchange for the clock and this offer was accepted.

It is possible that this grant was the reward for the clock, although, as stated, it was given on a promise from Brisbane, Macquarie's successor.

James Oatley died on October 8, 1839, and he bequeathed the 300 acres, which is referred to in his will as "Needwood Forest", to his adopted son, Frederick Stokes, otherwise Oatley.

In March 1881, Frederick Oatley sold the 300 acres to Charles Cecil Griffin for the sum of £10,000.

Today the land comprising the grant is partly in Hurstville and Kogarah, the railway line approaching Georges River being roughly the dividing line.

When he received this grant Oatley was already settled in the neighbourhood for, on October 19, 1831, he had received from Governor Darling a grant of 175 acres, which is described as adjoining Miller's and Lee's farms. The grant adjoined on the west, Captain Townson's 250 acres. On December 28, 1835, Oatley received a further grant of 40 acres in the locality and this grant was based on an order dated August 5, 1824, under the hand of Governor Brisbane.

An interesting reminder of James Oatley came to light in the year 1925. As stated, James Oatley died on October 8, 1839 and was buried on his estate. In 1925 Mr. W. Sivertsen of Bexley came on his tombstone lying on some vacant land on the Moorefield Estate. In response to a request, Mr. Sivertsen prepared, at the time, a sketch showing the approximate position of the stone. The land was on the southern side of Ponyara Road, between Pallamana Parade and Kooemba Road, and the tombstone was about 433 feet from Pallamana Parade. Mr. Sivertsen could not find the vault but he was informed that when opened it was empty.



Adjoining the Oatley and the Townson grants was one of 500 acres to Hannah Laycock known as Kingsgrove Farm, hence the name of the district, and to the north a large area of 1,200 acres was granted to J. Chandler. These two grants are now partly incorporated in the Municipality of Rockdale - once a part of Hurstville.

Following the large grants of land in the Hurstville district came the smaller grants and the ultimate division of the large grants.

In the Sydney "Echo" of October 25, 1890, a writer has given a list of some of the pioneers of the Hurstville district, Donnelly Fisher, he states, had 116 acres at Jewfish Point on Gungah Bay; John A. White, 80 acres on Georges River; T. Lawrence owned 120 acres at "Soily Bottom", Lugarno; while Frewin Sleath, James Draper, James Eaves, James Wilshire, Mary Shapley, Thomas McGaffray, Jane Trotter, Patrick Galvin, James Ryan, John Lackey and others had grants varying from 30 to 80 acres. Mr. J.G. Tucker purchased an estate of 118 acres and Mr. Wm. Hebblewhite bought a considerable portion of Captain Townson's grant.

Peakhurst derives its name from Mr. Peake who was an early settler in the district. Dumbleton Farm gives its name to that centre. When the "Echo" article was written, the old farm house was still standing.

Mr. James Flood purchased 40 acres of Captain Townson's grant from Mr. Thomas Kelsey, and Mr. Thomas Bates' land adjoined this estate on the west. Mr. Edward Flood had a farm at Peakhurst; and a large pear tree, portion of his orchard, was still flourishing in 1890.

It is stated by one writer that Dr. Townson farmed portion of his grant and erected a house on it, but we have not been able to confirm this statement. If he did so, his produce must have been carried to Sydney by boat as there were no roads in the locality in his day. This, of course, was possible as the lime produced by burning shells, in the vicinity of Lime Kiln Bay, was carried to Sydney in luggers.

The major portion of the area, now the Municipality of Hurstville, in a pristine condition, was covered by a forest of trees and one of the early industries was that of timber getting. For this purpose saw pits were dug and the sound of the axe and the rip of saws was heard in the land. Then the charcoal burners came and numbers of purchasers of blocks of land in Hurstville wondered where the deposit of ashes on their land came from.

The timber getters and the charcoal burners were a race of hardy and lusty men and their occupation developed a gargantuan thirst. It is not surprising therefore, that about 1850 a public house was erected and opened in the district. This was the Blue Post Inn, a low weatherboard structure, built by Richard Falljames. It stood in Forest Road, nearly opposite where the public school now stands. In 1852 the Currency Lass Inn became a rival of the Blue Post. This inn stood near the present Post Office. Other early inns were the "Man of Kent" at Kingsgrove, and at Dumbleton, the "Robin Hood and Little John".

In writing a social history of any part of Australia one must take account of its inns and public houses, for these, in the early day, took the part now played by Clubs and Schools of Art and other meeting places. In the inns, local problems and needs were discussed and action often followed these discussions.

We can be sure that one of the most discussed topics in the early inns of Hurstville and Kogarah was that of roads. Roads have been well compared to arteries, for it is along them that the lifeblood of commerce flows. Few travellers, gliding along Princes Highway at thirty or forty miles an hour, as they flash through Rockdale and Kogarah, or along the Forest Road through Hurstville, pause for a moment to reflect that once upon a time there was no bridge across Cooks River, that where the well-graded highways now run there were only bush tracks, and that along those tracks men contrived to haul loads of timber and charcoal and farm produce.

In the early days, Cooks River presented a formidable obstacle in the direct path between the City of Sydney and the Hurstville district. There are references to a ford, then a dam was thrown across the river at the Cooks River Road, and a bridge built higher up, which became known as Unwins Bridge, after Unwin's sugar manufactory. Both the dam and bridge are shown on a plan, drawn about 1856.



On Dixon's Map of N.S.W., of date 1842, the main roads of the Illawarra Suburbs District are shown to be few in number and indicate that travellers to the city in that year had to pursue a circuitous route.

In 1843 Surveyor-General Mitchell conceived the idea of connecting Sydney with the Illawarra district with a more direct road than the way by Liverpool and Appin. The road was completed in 1845 and with a few slight deviations Mitchell's Road, through Peakhurst to Lugarno, is the Forest Road of today.

In the seventies, coaches ran from the city to the Cooks River Dam, and as the population grew the service was extended over the river to Kogarah and to Hurstville.

We cannot trace when Mr. Daniel Joseph Treacy started the direct 'bus line to Hurstville, but on December 8, 1881, that gentleman sold to Mr. Charles Fripp, "of Cooks River, near Sydney". "All those several horses and mares (numbering in all Five) which with their respective colours and brands are respectively mentioned and described in the schedule at foot hereof, And also all the harness trappings and gear in use severally belonging thereto, And also all that wagonette numbered 283 hitherto and at present used and employed by the said Vendor for the plying for hire of passengers and parcels on the line of road between Sydney and Hurstville and vice versa, Together with the full right benefit and enjoyment of him the said Vendor in the entire line of roads between Sydney and Hurstville afore said as now held and used by the said Vendor in such plying for hire as aforesaid".

And the purchase price for all this was one hundred and thirteen pounds sterling!

Mr. Fripp developed the business and an old faded photograph shows one of his four-in-hand 'buses standing before the "Hurstville Hotel".

When Mr. Fripp, in 1881, paid over his one hundred and thirteen pounds, he did not realise that events were shaping, which, in the end, would drive his 'buses off the road and transform Hurstville from a country village into a thriving city.

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## THE EARLY PICTURE THEATRES OF ARNCLIFFE, N.S.W.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

It is not very difficult to envisage the impact the introduction of moving pictures made on the community at large in the early period of the present century. The magic lantern was in use, on special occasions, for public entertainment for several years prior to the advent of the "Movies", hence the latter title coming into every day use. Lantern shows as such were generally staged at public halls, rented for the purpose, and were regarded as being ideal for teaching the young. Biblical slides, garishly coloured, were in great demand at Church and Sunday-school functions. The display subjects were usually taken from the pages of old-time illustrated Bibles, and the black and white slides thus obtained were hand tinted in primary colours to enhance their attractiveness. Lantern shows were more than often accompanied by a long, tedious discourse relative to the merits or otherwise of the characters being displayed. The glory of Heaven and the fiery discomforts of Hell, particularly the latter, were popular with religious-minded persons and gave the younger generation serious food for thought. The Chinese savants of yore had a wise adage to the effect that "One illustration is worth a thousand words", and this saying is literally true, to see is to believe.

Perhaps one of the first examples of a picture that moved, portrayed per medium of the magic lantern, was shown in the early eighteen-nineties and depicted a heavily be-whiskered face of a man engaged in the dubious pastime of swallowing rats. A rotary mechanical device had been incorporated in the design of this particular slide, whereby the action of turning a small handle caused the lower jaw of the said bewhiskered face to open. At the same time the picture of a rat was so arranged, on a rotating circular piece of transparent celluloid, to pass into the gentleman's mouth. After this manoeuvre the mouth snapped shut. This diverting scene, repeated several times, was usually the grand finale of any magic lantern show, secular or otherwise, and could always be relied upon to bring the house down. As the showman would say - "Ighly entertainin".

Moving pictures, according to old residents, were brought to Arncliffe on a commercial basis by Mr. King, a railway employee, who established his theatre on a vacant block of land sited at Nos. 3 and 5 Barden Street. As it was necessary to isolate the screen to prevent viewing by a non-paying public, the property was surrounded by a high wall, constructed of rough-sawn timber, and covered with flat sheets of galvanised iron. The street facade, of imposing proportions, was of extremely poor architectural design, its upper regions being decorated in painted lettering denoting that the edifice was "THE ELITE PICTURE SHOW". However the elite of the neighbourhood, whilst duly impressed, chose to call the place "The Tin House", and certain vulgar people know it as the "Flea House". The proprietor, Mr. King, by virtue of his royal surname, also chose to use the name "REX", which was tastefully outlined in bare electric bulbs attached to the top portion of the screen. This innovation was regarded as being the last word in modern advertising, even today we have King Size this and that commodities.

At eye-level along the Barden Street facade were fastened the billboards to which were pasted posters depicting the current programme, together with forthcoming releases. The bills were printed in garish colours, and usually incorporated a striking scene taken from the particular film concerned, still a popular form of advertising today.

Admission charges were in keeping with the times, the seats at the back, which gave better viewing and lessened the eye-strain caused by the pictures flickering, ranked at sixpence, the more popular front seats were threepence per head. A most familiar ditty of the time, well known to the youngsters and sung with a swinging lilt, was worded: Come to the pictures. Make no delay. Back seats sixpence. Front seats a tray. Plenty of music, Plenty of fun. Plenty of programmes to - and so on and so forth.

Seating accommodation was truly spartan, consisting of long slatted forms with hardwood backs, but as one went to the pictures to be entertained, comfort was secondary and of little importance. Narrow footways of mother earth divided the rows of seats, whilst beneath the seats the natural grass and weed growth flourished exceedingly, to the chagrin of young Harry Walker, who inadvertently dropped a whole shilling into the mass of foliage, and, after much searching, was forced to lament its loss. In addition to watching the stars on the screen, the audience could raise, if they so wished, their eyes and gaze upon the stars in the heavens far above, where the wonders of Jupiter, Venus, amongst a myriad of others, could be clearly



discerned and fully appreciated. The management thoughtfully considered this aspect and did not provide a roof over the "ELITE" picture show, although, in wet weather, patrons had an idea that the innovation was desirable.

Advertising was largely carried out by means of handbills distributed at the Arncliffe Railway Station to the home-coming crowds during the evening peak hours. Some five-thousand bills, or "dodgers" were printed and placed in the care of young lads, aged about twelve or so, who received payment for their eager services in the shape of a free ticket admitting them into the coveted sixpenny back-seat area. Competition amongst the lads was fierce and competitive, and several of the more enterprising amongst them discovered a quick method of distribution by the simple method of pushing the bundles of Bills up the nearest gutter drain pipe. This method however was severely frowned upon by the management and Mr. King, in person, made a periodic examination of these and other hide-outs, and promptly de-barred offenders from further service in the show business.

The electricity requirements for the arc-lighting of the cinematograph machine was engendered on the premises, where a large gas-engine drove, by means of a belt, a generating dynamo. Surplus current was used to light the outside facade and internal arrangements, and also to dazzle the eyes of patrons who, at this period mostly came from either gas or kerosene-oil lighted homes. The exhaust from the gas-engine, a real chug-chug-chug noise, was diverted from the show arena by means of a bend fitted at the top of the exhaust pipe, giving the neighbouring residents the full benefit of the monotonous racket.

In case of fire the "ELITE" frontage was provided with wide exit doors, marked by a small red "EXIT" notice placed within the glass of an oil lamp, just in case, as often happened, the electricity supply should fail and the whole place plunged into darkness. The efficiency of the emergency door arrangement was proved one evening when the gas-engine back-fired and the resultant explosion blew the exhaust silencer vessel to smithereens. On this occasion the whole audience was out in Barden Street in a split second, their nerves in a shocking state, and all wondering as to what on earth had happened. It was usual in unavoidable circumstances such as machinery breakdowns, fire, etc. to issue patrons with a ticket available for a future showing when conditions had been returned to normal.

A musical background was provided by a lady pianist, who, ensconced in front against and below the screen, played pieces of music suitable to the actions taking place immediately above her head. Tender love scenes demanded tender love songs, waltzes necessitated a rendition of "The Blue Danube", or its equivalent whilst any old piece sufficed for the "Cowboys and Indians" as nobody would be listening to the piano when such absorbing and exhilarating actions were taking place. The equanimity of the pianist was sometimes disturbed through the efforts of the youthful pea-shooters, whose aim at their intended victim was not as good as it should have been. All in all the pianist had to be a most versatile musician, one capable of switching her playing, say from the "Dead March" to "Napoleon's Last Charge", in the twinkling of an eye, subtly blending the notes of one piece into those of the other.

There was also another background to the films in the way of sound effects. This important department was generally administered by a youthful enthusiast, who also had to watch the theme of the film story. Galloping horses, for instance, called for unremitting toil on his part in synchronizing the hoof-beats, per medium of two half-sections of coconut shells, beaten in a clonkity-clonking way on the flat surface of a sheet of marble, said sheet being obtained from the top of an old discarded bedroom washstand. The beat of horses in the distance was simulated by transferring the action of the half coconut shells to a leather-covered piece of board. Storm scenes on the screen were handled with great gusto, the roar of thunder being conveyed to the attentive audience by means of bending and unbending a flat sheet of galvanised iron, thus providing a satisfactory ripple of sound which was beyond criticism. The swishing sounds of rain, according to the severity of the downpour, was brought about by swirling a number of peas around inside a tin film container. Every time a motor car of the period appeared on the screen its progress was heralded by the constant braying of a rubber-bulbed motor horn, a standard fitment on all cars at the time. The excitement afforded by the popular "Cowboys and Indians" films was greatly increased by the constant firing of cap-pistols, the noise of which made the welkin ring, and, coupled with the banging of the coconut shells, brought about a cacophonous range of sounds greatly desired under the circumstances.



Admission tickets were sold from a small window located within the entrance portal to the "ELITE" picture theatre. The tickets, individually numbered, were detached on sale from a single width roll which could be bought commercially at the time from Messrs. Harrington's Limited, of George Street, Sydney, an old established firm which has long since gone out of business. As before mentioned the entrance charges were sixpence for back seats and threepence for front seats, a distinction being made between these groupings by issuing tickets of a different colour range, a system which assisted the ushers in the execution of their torchlit duties.

There were other methods of entry which were availed of by the impecunious pre-teen-age children of the district. It appears that several sheets of flat iron, forming the western wall of the "ELITE" Theatre, had been prized apart from the timber framing, without the knowledge of the management. Access to this aperture was gained by passing through the backyards of certain houses confronting Union Street, and, after "lights out" in the picture show, a fairly constant stream of would-be viewers stealthily pulled the sheet-iron apart, and crawled along the inner walls to reach an unoccupied seat. It has been related that on one particularly wet night, with a resulting poor attendance, the cashier, after selling about half a dozen tickets, wandered into the theatre to watch the show. He was amazed to see some twenty-five or so people, young and old, calmly watching the screen proceedings. He grabbed one youngster, who in his fright, was unable to state clearly how he had got into the theatre, and had the satisfaction of bundling him out into the rain-filled street. Said youngster then raced down Barden Street, turned into Station Street, and then into Union Street and the aforementioned backyards, where the unofficial entry facilities were again utilized. Once ensconced he kept a very wary eye on the movements and whereabouts of officialdom.

It is amusing to recall the reactions of the audience to the particular film being shown. Keystone comedies were in full blast, with the famous "Cops" well to the fore, likewise the custard tart throwing and receiving. The masterly mime of the late Ford Sterling, whose goatee beard and facial contortions never failed to bring the house down in paroxysms of laughter. He was eventually succeeded by the equally famous Charlie Chaplin who, in his early days, co-starred with Mabel Normand and the irrepressible Fatty Arbuckle. Advice and warnings were freely shouted at the screen portrayal, particularly from the region of the threepenny seats, and in the more tense scenes there was wailing and the knashing of teeth. William S. Hart, the strong, silent cow-boy, who was always on the side of righteousness, and Tom Mix, who acted in a similar theme, were both greatly admired, whilst Theda Bara and Olga Petrova held people entranced. Then there was Mary Pickford, whose pathetic adventures brought tears to many eyes, and simpering thoughts of love to her male admirers. After one particularly tense scene, which as usual, had a glorious ending, one tear-stricken female, going home after the show, remarked to another tear-stricken female, "They will be happy now".

The advent of the Cow-boy and Indian films, coupled with the hair-raising exploits of Buffalo Bill, brought about a change in the games of boyhood, and the former diversion of "Bobbies and Bushies" was to all intents and purposes abandoned. The scrubby hillsides of Arncliffe afforded excellent cover for incipient Indians, complete with feather head-bands (the feathers being obtained from convenient poultry yards) and bows and arrows. The cow-boy section sported murderous looking toy revolvers, and on foot, skulked amongst the bushes seeking the opposing Indians. The movements of both war-like groups were generally betrayed by their dogs, who also thought the game was great fun, and so it was, and still is, fifty years later.

It was most unfortunate that the proprietor of the "ELITE" Picture Theatre, Mr. King, met an untimely death when he was trapped between the buffers of railway vehicles whilst engaged in shunting operations during the course of his regular employment. After his demise the "Elite" Theatre lay dormant for some time before it re-opened under the control of Soper Brothers, local butchers, whose business premises were located at the corner of Firth and Done Streets, near Arncliffe Railway Station. The new owners overcame the wet weather lack of attendance problem by roofing the enclosure, and providing side curtains of canvas, above the original iron walling, which could be moved at will in accordance with the prevailing climatic conditions. This innovation certainly gave a degree of comfort to the patrons but was not at all popular with the overlookers who preferred to gaze at the show from the slopes of the adjoining Barden Hill, and thus retain their sixpences in their own pockets. No doubt attention was also paid at the same time to the loose sheet iron which gave surreptitious entry from the backyards of Union Street.



A gentleman with the unusual surname of Blackadder, who had previously established another picture show, named the "LYRIC", near the corner of Stanley Lane and Forest Road, Arncliffe, purchased the "ELITE" Theatre as a going concern. Lack of patronage eventually brought about the closure of the latter concern and the premises came into use as a store for materials of divers sorts. It was later demolished and the site is now occupied by two modern type brick homes.

#### THE LYRIC THEATRE. ARNCLIFFE.

The "LYRIC" Theatre was initially constructed of galvanised iron, after the manner of the "ELITE", but the rear section was half roofed over, giving a measure of comfort, during inclement weather, to the patrons who could afford the higher priced seats. However, it was customary during, or rather at the beginning, of showers of rain for the front seat viewers to dash willy-nilly for the protection furnished by the half-roof, much to the annoyance of the management. It was also customary for Mr. Blackadder, in person, to mount a small rostrum adjacent to the screen, and deliver a sometimes lengthy discourse on the subject matter of the films that were to be shown and also of any interesting features that were marked for the next change of programme. This vocal interlude was usually hastily terminated by the younger fry scooping up handfuls of ashes from the floor and hurling same at the now unfortunate speaker.

The gas engine and dynamo of the electricity generating plant at the "LYRIC" was housed next door in the yard of the former Highbury Barn Hotel. The equipment was contained within the confines of a galvanised iron shed to which access was gained from the theatre. On one particularly wet night, the youth group from the front seats had foregathered at the rear of the sixpenny enclosure, keeping very quiet in order to avoid managerial interference with their well being. All of a sudden a terrific bang, bang, bang, was heard, instantaneously followed by the arrival within the precincts of the theatre of the piston and back portion of the gas-engine which had come adrift from its mountings and burst its way through the flimsy wall. The startled audience went in all directions, and the lights went out. It was indeed fortunate that nobody was injured, or even killed either by the whirling machinery or the ensuing melee, which bordered on a general panic and was far from lyrical. Repairs took some little time but the theatre was a bit chary of advertising shocking dramas for the next month or so.

It has been related that evil days descended on Mr. Blackadder, who, according to local gossip, committed suicide, his body being found in a small office adjacent to the theatre entrance. A Mr. Prideaux took over for a while and he in turn was succeeded by Mr. Matters (or Matherson) who, so it has been said, was responsible for surrounding the theatre with a brick wall and providing an upper gallery which catered for patrons prepared to pay higher prices for their entertainment. Said patrons were also free, to a certain extent, from the attentions of pea-shooters who invariably came into operation when the lights were low.

Other changes of ownership followed and eventually the "LYRIC" came into the hands of "HOYTS THEATRES LIMITED", a concern which instituted a complete modernisation of the old building, in the course of which the name "LYRIC" was dropped in favour of the short crispness of "HOYTS". The renovated concern flourished for many years but did not survive the introduction of the home television sets. The building was placed on the open market and was eventually demolished, together with the adjoining remnants of the former Highbury Barn Hotel and its frontage of refreshment shops. Today a petrol service station occupies the site and all traces of the former occupancy has vanished from human ken.

In conclusion we must thank Mr. Fred Markham, Mr. Harry Walker, and Mr. Fred Allen, together with many other people, who have so kindly helped with the preparation of the article dealing with the bygone picture shows at Arncliffe and their vicissitudes.