

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL 3 No 1.

Bi Monthly Bulletin

October 1965.

53 Bruce Street,  
Bexley.  
8th October, 1965.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

PLACE: Council Chamber, ROCKDALE TOWN HALL.

DATE: Friday Evening Next, 15th October, 1965 at 8 p.m.

At the conclusion of a short business meeting those members who have been preparing summary histories of various parts of the district will be asked to read their papers then

MR. PHILIP GEEVES will speak on "SOME ROGUES AND VILLAINS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY".

A light supper will be served.

P. GEEVES  
President.

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

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OUTING TO RANDWICK AND BARE ISLAND.

Following an invitation by Mrs. Pillars, Founder of the Randwick Historical Society to visit her historic home "Nugal Hall", it has been decided to combine this with another visit to Bare Island Fort, the Museum of the Randwick Historical Society.

This will take place on Saturday <sup>23rd</sup> next, 16th October (~~the day after our meeting~~), leaving Rockdale Town Hall at 2 p.m.

Full details will be available at the meeting and both members and their friends will be most welcome.

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NUGAL HALL, Milford Street, Randwick.

This house, designed by Colonial Architect Mortimer Lewis, has been occupied since 1853 and was built for Alexander McArthur, a merchant and shipping man, who came from Ireland in 1841. Designed on the lines of a French chateau, late Gothic style, the house is built of solid stone quarried on the spot. Some of the blocks are curved and are up to 14 feet long. From 1918 to 1921 "Nugal Hall" was bought for the Red Cross and used for convalescing soldiers. It was purchased by the present owner in 1952.

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SOCIETY ELECTS OFFICERS FOR 1965/66.

At one of our best attended meetings ever in August, we entertained a number of members from the Randwick Historical Society and elected our office bearers for 1965/66.

PRESIDENT: Mr. P. Geeves.

VICE-PRESIDENTS: Mr. C.W. Napper,  
Mr. G. Eardley.

PATRONS: Mr. T.J. McCarthy  
Ald. C.C.W. Nairn, Mayor of  
Rockdale.

HON. SECRETARY: Ald. R. W. Rathbone.

HON. TREASURER: Mr. D. Sinclair

HON. AUDITOR: Mr. A. Matheson

LADIES COMMITTEE: Mesdames Coghlan, Perkins, Holloway, Eardley, McDonald, Sinclair and Long.

PUBLICITY OFFICER: Mrs. P. Geeves.

HISTORIC CEREMONY AT KINGSGROVE.

On Saturday, 18th September, Mr. Gifford Eardley, Vice-President of the St. George Historical Society officially unveiled the original foundation stone of the King's Grove Baptist Chapel in its new position in the tower of the new church.

This stone which was originally set in 1875, has the only known spelling of Kingsgrove by its old name of King's Grove.

An account of Mr. Eardley's remarks at the unveiling is attached.

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## THE STORY OF THE OLD KINGSGROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

We have gathered here today for the purpose of unveiling the foundation stone of the former Kingsgrove Baptist Church, which, for its preservation, has now been incorporated in the tower fabric of the new edifice. It is most gratifying that the Deacons of your church have seen fit to preserve this ancient and historical date stone. The old Baptist Chapel of Kingsgrove was the first of its kind within the St. George District, and largely owed its origin to the painstaking and enthusiastic efforts of the late Charles Howard. This gentleman followed the occupation of a wood-cutter at Gannon's Forest, an outback neighbourhood of Kingsgrove, which is now-a-days known as Hurstville. Strangely enough Charles Howard was a member of the Wesleyan Church, and held services in that faith during 1868 at his residence, located near the Golf Club House adjacent to Stoney Creek Road. During 1874 he was instrumental in opening a Sunday School in a nearby unoccupied cottage, and in the same year he took the important step of being baptized into the Baptist Church at Newtown.

Charles Howard then gave portion of his own land at Kingsgrove for the purpose of building a Baptist Chapel. This neat building, of sand-stock brick, was opened for worship on September, 12th, 1875, the foundation stone, which has now been placed in the wall of tower of the new church, was laid with due ceremony on the Queen's birthday, May, 24th, 1875. The cost of the materials amounted to the precise sum of £184. 1. 2d., and it is worthy to mention that voluntary labour was responsible for the erection of the church.

This tiny church has been aptly described as the "Little Mother" of churches of the Baptist faith in St. George, and its members, from time to time, were directly responsible for the formation of other Baptist causes in the surrounding suburbs. In 1888, a mission was held at Kogarah, where the then Oddfellows Hall, located at the south-western corner of the intersection of Regent Street with Rocky Point Road, was rented for Sunday worship. Incidentally this hall is still in existence, although it is now adapted for use as a factory. In 1886, also, land was purchased in Lauff Street, Rockdale, and two years later a chapel was built on this site and opened on April, 11th, 1888.

In 1891, the first minister, the Reverend C. Boyall was appointed as Joint Pastor of the Baptist Churches located at Marrickville, Kingsgrove and Rockdale. Two years later a block of land, situated at the corner of Durham Street and Willison Road, at Carlton, was donated and later a chapel was built on this site. Then, in 1905, the Oddfellows Hall at Arncliffe was rented by the Kingsgrove Church authorities for a period of six months, thus giving the worshippers time to organise their own affairs. The foundation stone from the Baptist Church at Bexley, situated at the corner of Forest Road and Kingsland Road, was laid on July, 4th, 1914, the first services being held on September, 12th of the same year. With this background of expansion and Christian effort, it is not surprising that the "Little Mother" Church at Kingsgrove, is held in such sentimental regard.

Charles Howard retained an active interest in the preaching of the Gospel at Kingsgrove and the needs of the rostrum were also supplied by various lay preachers. Then came a succession of students for the ministry who, in the course of their studies, had the oversight of the church at periods varying up to two years. The Reverend John Parker, who had previously held the pastorate for the year 1919, returned to fulfill the duties of pastor at Kingsgrove, in a more or less honorary capacity, as from about 1934. However, it was not until 1961 that the first, shall we say, full time minister, the Reverend John Edmondstone, was appointed to carry on the destinies of the church at Kingsgrove.

It is interesting to note that the original chapel at Kingsgrove accommodated about eighty people, the centre aisle dividing rows of Cedar pews which each seated four persons. These pews, together with the rostrum, were donated by the Newtown Chapel. The original minute book, covering the activities of the Chapel at Kingsgrove, is still extant, and is being kept up to date. This is a most wonderful record of endeavour, and reads like a book, detailing each and every important act, or event, which has taken place in the life of the little church over the past ninety years.

It is unfortunate that the original historic chapel had to be demolished. The constant acts of local vandalism made this extreme course necessary. The windows were constantly being broken, the premises entered, and the interior furnishings wilfully damaged. On one occasion a fire was lit inside the premises and had burnt a large hole in the flooring before it was discovered. It is hard indeed to gauge the mental outlook of these irresponsibles, to whom nothing appears to be sacred.

The continuance of these vandalistic acts resulted in the Deacons of the church deciding much against their will to have the ancient edifice demolished. Before so doing, they sought the interest of the National Trust in the preservation of the building, as being of historic value. Also the St. George Historical Society and the Rockdale Municipal Council were approached, but nothing eventuated from these sources owing to a lack of finance, although they all expressed their interest in the matter.

The St. George Historical Society recommended that the Date or Foundation stone of the old chapel should be recovered and inserted in the fabric of the new church. At a meeting of the Deacons and the Committee of the St. George Historical Society it was decided to locate the Date stone on the eastern side of the new church tower, facing the site of the old chapel.

In conclusion, I wish to draw the attention of the gathering to the fact that this Date stone is unique in being perhaps the only existing example whereon the name Kingsgrove is depicted in separate wording. The explanatory stone at the side has been obtained from the rear portion of the original Date stone, which was suitably sawn off and inscribed by the Apex Monumental Company of Sutherland, to whom due credit must be given for carrying out such a skillful piece of craftsmanship.

As Vice-President of the St. George Historical Society it is my privilege and pleasure to unveil this stone in its new setting, a most fitting memorial to the old chapel, which has served so well in the spreading of Christian knowledge and Christian worship, in this the truly historic district of Kingsgrove.

GIFFORD EARDLEY.

## ST. GEORGE IN 1894

It comes as a shock to discover that there was once a time when otherwise knowledgeable citizens of Sydney had only a hazy notion where Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville were. Moreover, Banksia was not then in existence!

The following press report, discovered by Mr. Philip Geeves, describes our home suburbs in the St. George District as they were in 1894, when the now-defunct Australian Joint Stock Bank was Rockdale's only bank and Chinese market gardens supplied the green symmetry between Rockdale and Lady Robinson's Beach.

Down at the Beach Saywell's Hotel had been transformed into the first home of one of our Great Public Schools - the Scots' College (the Hotel had been delicensed for an infraction of the liquor laws...see Municipal History for details) and the hotel parlour, which had once catered to the gargantuan thirsts of its patrons, was now transformed into a Presbyterian chapel.

In those far-off days, when a home at Sans Souci was regarded as "a country residence" and Rockdale railway station was noted for its floral display, a journalist wrote this description of St. George's suburbs, as they then were:-

### ST. GEORGE'S ELECTORATE (1894)

#### ILLAWARRA LINE

There are many thousands of Sydney people who know little or nothing of this one of the most beautiful and attractive of our suburbs, simply because it does not lead to one of the holiday resorts, for pleasure-seekers. Yet for beauty of scenery we are not aware of any suburb which excels it; and for attractive residential sites, easily accessible, at moderate rates, with frequent trains running punctually from Sydney at 5.10 a.m. to 11.38 p.m., and from Hurstville 5 a.m. to 11.5 p.m., persons travelling on business or pleasure have every accommodation which Sydney residents enjoy. St. George's electorate commences at Arncliffe, on Cook's River, five miles from Sydney, and terminates at Hurstville, on the George's River on the south, bounded on the east by the shores of Botany Bay, and on the west by a continuation of Saltpan Creek, comprising an area of about forty square miles. The towns on the railway line are Arncliffe, Rockdale (with a tramline to Lady Robinson's Beach), Kogarah (with a tramline to Sans Souci), Carlton and Hurstville.

#### ARNCLIFFE

At this point we get clear of Sydney proper, with its continuous lines of streets, with their closely-packed houses, with back premises 12 by 12 feet, the hotbeds of disease, and get into the country proper, with its fresh air and breezes from Botany Bay, charged with life-giving ozone.

In this neighbourhood are many attractive residences within the reach of every class of society. There is a considerable elevation above the station, on the highest point of which is the handsome residence of Mr. Barden surrounded by a verandah on the upper floor, with some enchanting views, including Botany Bay and Cook's River, with its new improvements and reclaimed land, which will become very valuable for manufacturing and other purposes. In addition to the residences there are several large landowners who have sites for sale. Campbell's Hill, for instance, has a high and commanding position; Dr. Clay Hill, etc. Arncliffe is one of the wards of the Municipality of Rockdale, to which it extends on the west side of Rocky Point Road as far as Harrow Road, where the Kogarah Municipality commences.

#### ROCKDALE

Rockdale is the principal business centre of St. George's, and is divided into three Wards - Arncliffe, Rockdale and Scarborough, constituting the Municipality of Rockdale. It has an area of about eight square miles, and an estimated population of five thousand; has a Town Hall and School of Arts, with a good library. There are several first-class stores and business houses, and in the neighbourhood some very nice residences, with more or less ground up to six acres, well planted with fruit trees. There is a large number of market gardens, producing first-class vegetables, some of these being kept by the irrepressible and indefatigable Chinaman. The immediate neighbourhood is well adapted for fruit and vegetable growing, to which might be added fruit canning; it only requires capital and the right people. There are churches of different denominations, also public schools. A branch of the A.J.S. Bank; two hotels; a College for Boys (see advt. of Scots' College). A tramway runs, on the arrival of each train, to Lady Robinson's Beach,



about a mile, where there are baths for both sexes. This could be made a very attractive pleasure resort on the same plan as Coogee and Bondi, and ought to pay if taken up with spirit.

It is much to be regretted that many of the residents will waste their time and spend their money in going to Sydney to get bargains (!), when they can buy the same goods on the spot at the lowest Sydney rates, and keep the money at home; also, they will subscribe to the Sydney School of Arts, pay a pound per annum subscription and take all the trouble of going to Sydney to exchange their books, while they can get the selection from a good library on the spot for three shillings a year! Perhaps they want a free library as well as a free paper.

This is a good live town to live in, as there are frequent dramatic and other entertainments, which could be supplemented by lectures, if encouraged. There is a latent spirit of enterprise in the people, but they are shy about supporting a paper run in their interests. There is an excellent hotel, the Royal, for the accommodation of visitors.

#### KOGARAH AND SANS SOUCI

This Municipality is divided into three wards - East, Middle and South. It has an area of about five square miles, and an estimated population of four thousand; has a School of Arts and Public Library. It extends from Harrow Road to Oatley, and has seven churches of different denominations.

On leaving the station at Rockdale, the railway line is on the up grade and although the ground is rather rocky, and not suitable for cultivation, it presents most charming sites for residences, with views at various points of Botany Bay, with a well wooded country intervening, and the charming little suburb of Sans Souci, to which a tramline runs on the arrival of the trains from Sydney.

We recommend our town readers to pay a visit to this locality, particularly if seeking a country residence.

The Moorfield Racecourse is an attraction, and there are many horses in training in the neighbourhood. This is one of our holiday attractions. The Moorfield Hotel has extensive stabling and the landlord as a sporting man will command a good share of support.

#### CARLTON

This is little more than a railway station, but between it and Botany Bay there is one of the greatest attractions in the florists and nurserymen's grounds, where the flowers which made the great display at the late exhibition of chrysanthemums were principally grown. A reference to our advertising columns will give the names of the principal growers, and a visit to this beautiful locality will be a treat for those who take an interest in the subject, and will give them an opportunity of securing some beautiful specimens for their grounds. We regret that, for reasons stated in our last issue, we were prevented from giving a description of our late flower show, as we would have wished. The Royal Hotel at this place, kept by Mr. Mitchell (see advertisement), is a first-class house which we recommend to visitors.

#### HURSTVILLE

This Municipality is divided into three wards - Bexley, Hurstville, and Peakhurst. It has an area of about twelve miles square, and an estimated population of three thousand five hundred, being an increase of about seven hundred and fifty over 1890. It has nine churches and four schools, a library and the scenery is very attractive. There are indications of gold in the neighbourhood, resulting so far in little more than the colour. There is some desirable land near worth the attention of investors.

To sum up. It is the general impression that the first step towards getting the several municipalities out of their financial difficulties, will be a Bill for Local Government, to enable the municipalities to collect overdue rates and force the land, now held by the speculators, into the market. In the meantime the necessity for retrenchment is felt very severely by those dependent on local work, and the refusal of government support in the shape of customary subsidies, leaves the municipalities helpless for the present.

We have to thank Mr. George W. Leeder, Council Clerk of Hurstville, and Mr. Sayers, of Kogarah, for their kindness in furnishing information, also the Mayor of Rockdale, Mr. W. Taylor, for his valuable suggestions; and trust the publicity given in this article will be as we wish it of value to the electorate, and a proof of the value of a local paper. The floral display at this station is quite an attraction. Mr. Hall, the station master, deserves a notice for his good taste.

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