



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,  
Bexley.

11th February, 1966.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date: Friday Evening Next, 18th February, 1966, at 8 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Guest Speaker: Our Treasurer, Mr. Don Sinclair, will present a paper entitled "The History of Australia's Currency".

Special Note: As our President, Mr. Philip Geeves, has tendered his resignation it will be necessary to elect a new President. Your attendance at this meeting is vital.

Details of our next outing will be available at the meeting.

A light supper will be served. Interested friends welcomed.

R.W. Rathbone,

Hon. Secretary.

LW.4813.

THE LIFE OF ST. GEORGE  
The Patron Soldier-Saint of England.

Observations made by Mr. Charles C. Brown, Pymble (formerly Councillor and Hon. Treasurer of the Sydney Branch now in Suspense having operating in Sydney from 1912 to 1962) at the gathering held at Wunderlich Ltd. (Modelling Dept.) Redfern on 8th December, 1965, arranged by James, Douglas and Associates, Sydney, as to whether he was real or merely a myth.

The Royal Society of St. George, Headquarters, London, many years ago reported that they were quite satisfied there was real evidence for the historical existence of St. George. Legends tended to grow up around all heroes and the essential facts were not in dispute. Europe was full of Churches where right down the centuries "St. George has been revered as the epitome of chivalry and as a defender of patriotism and freedom . . . . We are quite content and quite happy about our Saint". In 1912, one Alice Brewster produced a book entitled "George of England our Patron Saint" and dedicated this to The Royal Society of St. George.

Quoting from that book, we read "Although George is our Patron Saint, he was not born in England but at Lydda in Palestine about 10 miles from Jaffa of Joppa as it was called in Biblical days, one of the principal seaports of the Holy Land, situated on the Plain of Sharon, so celebrated for its roses, and as this fragrant and lovely flower was George's favourite, it has become the national emblem of England. He was born A.D. 270 and came of a noble and distinguished family. George's grandfather was Governor of Cappadocin and his father Governor of Mitylene both of which were districts in Asia Minor under the control of the mighty Emperor of Rome. George entered the Roman Army and by the time he was 20 became known as one of its smartest officers. When only 22, Diocletian, the Emperor of Rome sent him on a mission to England or Britain as then called. It was then through his instrumentality that the Empress Helena the British born wife of Constantius Chlorus was converted to Christianity, and through her, her son, Constantine the Great who later became King of Britain and Emperor of Rome. As the result the course of the whole Roman world in matters of Religion was changed and Christianity began to take the place of Paganism. Constantine was born at York and later had the very great distinction of becoming Emperor of Rome and a Christian. George's stay was not long and his mission completed he returned to Lydda. Shortly after his arrival there the Emperor Diocletian decreed that all professing the Christian religion should be utterly destroyed. At first George determined to stay at Lydda to encourage and strengthen the weak hearted and timid to stand firm and hold fast to their faith but later decided that as he was well known and liked by Diocletian he would go and see him and intercede with him for the Christians.

It was on this journey of love and devotion made for the sake of his friends and relations to the Court of the Emperor that he met with his celebrated adventure with the dragon and so rescued the maiden that the monster was about to devour. Legend and fairy tale have it that the good knight St. George killed a fabulous beast called a dragon. This could have been a gigantic lizard common in India and Egypt capable of devouring large animals also humans, or possibly a crocodile which could have drifted from New Guinea area (or possibly a komodo dragon still in existence in the Java islands). Looking at it with our modern views in comparison with those days when there were no guns, it was terrible enough to fight such animals with only a lance and a short Roman sword.

By the town of Berytus (or Beirut as we know it today) is the lake where this animal had taken up its abode. It filled the people of the neighbourhood with terror and dismay as it carried off not only cattle and animals but also human beings. In their ignorance they looked upon it as having been sent by their heathen gods to

devour them. Daily offerings of sheep and goats were made as sacrifices hoping to appease the anger of their gods but to no avail. The King of Berytus as headman of the area called the people together and suggested lots be drawn to see who should be given as a human sacrifice to the dragon. To his horror it fell to his daughter Princess Sadra. The people refused the King's request that somebody else be offered up instead of his daughter as he had proposed the drawing of the lots and they thought, too, being heathens that it fell as it had done by the choice of the gods. The Princess was then dressed in her finest clothes, taken to the sand pit at the lake which was the haunt of the monster and left to her fate. It was whilst in this terrible plight that George rode up on his way to the Court of the Roman Emperor and was told the story. He said he would stay and fight the beast. As they were talking up it came expecting to have an easy prey as usual but George firmly sitting upon his white horse, made his sign of the Cross, charged and slew it. The father of the Princess Sadra wanted George to marry her and remain and live at Berytus but he refused, wanting to continue on to meet the Emperor Diocletian to plead the cause of the Christians. They built a church which they dedicated to Saint George after his martyrdom. George was received by Emperor Diocletian but he refused to spare the Christians and offered George every inducement to forsake his religion yet all in vain. George was put to the most dreadful torture to induce him to forsake his faith and as he refused to do so, he was put to death on 23rd April A.D. 303 at Nicomedeia. Friends and relations of George begged his body from Diocletian and took it back to Lydda for burial, as he had wished. In A.D. 306 Constantine became the first Christian Emperor of Rome. He put an end to the persecutions of the Christians, built a church at Lydda in memory of Saint George and named him PATRON SAINT of his own Country, Britain, and thus it is that his red cross became a part of the English flag, and his favourite flower, the rose, became the national emblem of Britain. Not only did he do this, but he erected over 20 churches to his memory. He also built the magnificent Cathedral of Saint Sophia at Constantinople, the finest stained window of which is dedicated to Saint George.

Queen Helena built a church at Glastonbury, in Somerset, which she named after Saint George. Twenty-three years after his martyrdom in A.D. 326, she went to Jerusalem in search of the Holy Cross. Whilst there she caused another church to be erected, and called it also after Saint George, quite close to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is supposed that she succeeded in her quest of the True Cross, and brought a portion of it to England, as a fragment of it is said to be encased in the sceptre of King Edward the Confessor, which our Kings and Queens still use when they are crowned, and which is preserved with the rest of the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London.

## MUNICIPALITY OF KOGARAH

Although incorporated on 22nd December, 1885, the history of the Municipality of Kogarah - an aboriginal word meaning a "place of bulrushes" - commences in the time of Governor Macquarie, who made the first land grants in the district. Amongst these were 2250 acres to Captain John Townson R.N. in 1810, 1605 acres to his brother, Dr. Robert Townson, and shortly afterwards 100 acres to Captain Connelly. Dr. Townson built a house and established an orchard on his property, but sold in 1812 to Mr. Simeon Lord, and on the latter's death the area passed to Mr. Michael Gannon. The name of Lord's Bush gradually gave way to Gannon's Bush or Gannon's Forest.

The Townson grants were not entirely in Kogarah, however, for a large portion was in the present Municipality of Hurstville, whilst a considerable part of Mr. James Chandler's grant of 1200 acres, known as the Bexley Estate, is now in the Kogarah District, and includes the site of the Kogarah Railway Station. One of the first purchasers of land in the district was Mr. John B. Carroll, who bought 170 acres between Dr. Townson's land and Kogarah Bay in 1848. William Blake Patrick English, James Derwent, William Maher, West, Justice, J.A. South, Biden, Murphy and other settled between 1853 and 1856, built houses, and established gardens and orchards. It is interesting to note the purchase of 87 acres at one pound per acre made by Archibald McNab in 1853, of the area now bounded by Princes Highway, Bowns Road, Hampton Court Road, Anglo Square and Westbourne Street, Carlton

The first route from Kogarah to Sydney Town was by way of Punch Bowl Road, through Enfield to Liverpool Road, and then over Thompson's Bridge, which was later replaced by Undercliffe Bridge. Rocky Point Road was first cleared by order of Governor Gipps, who governed the Colony between 1838 and 1846, and following this early piece of roadmaking the first township of Kogarah was established, situated on the present Princes Highway, between Regent Street and Rocky Point Road. The first Post Office was conducted in South's General Store established in 1884 near Hogben Street, and it was from this point that intending travellers caught the horse-drawn omnibus for Sydney. The area on the eastern side of the shopping centre consisted of a grant of 60 acres made in 1812 to Mr. Patrick Moore, and on which Mr. Peter Moore later established the Moorefield Racecourse.

In the 1880's great rivalry existed between Kogarah and Rockdale. After the railway was opened in 1884 and the shopping centre began to move to the Railway Station, it was decided to outdo Rockdale by constructing a wide boulevarde from the Station to the Beach. Mr. Moore, Mr. McRae, and the Cumberland Building Society each gave a strip of land to enable President Avenue to be constructed 100-ft. wide, intending that the boulevarde should terminate at the site of the present Kogarah Post Office, but land speculators moved in and subdivided Kensington Street, with the result that President Avenue now terminates at Princes Highway.

The original plan for the Railway envisaged a crossing of George's River at Rocky Point, but the activities of the Holt Sutherland Land Company in demanding a high figure for their land forced the planners to steer the line away from their holdings. This accounts for the wide curve of the line between Kogarah and Carlton, and the resultant crossing of the River at Como.

The first church services were held in Mr. Berghoefer's house, but churches soon began to appear, the Roman Catholic Church being built in 1865, St. Pauls Church of England in 1869, the Wesleyan in 1885 and the Baptist in 1889.

The growth of the district led to the establishment of a tramway from Kogarah Station to Sans Souci in 1887 and although tracks suitable for electrification were laid about 1930 no electric trams ever ran on them. The steam trams were eventually replaced by electric trolley buses which, in turn, gave way

to diesel buses. Residents also felt the need of a Railway station between Kogarah and Hurstville, and after much agitation, one was erected at Carlton in 1889. The station was built on condition that the land be given free, £400 paid in cash towards the cost of the platform, and a guarantee given that at least sixty first class tickets to Sydney would be purchased each year.

When Surveyor General Sir Thomas Mitchell was allotted the task of providing a road from Sydney to the South Coast in 1842, he made provision for a bridge across George's River at Lugarno, and indeed this did become the principal crossing for a time. Residents of the Kogarah district, however, had need to cross lower down at Tom Ugly's Point - so named after the aboriginal leader in that area - and a service by punt was commenced in 1879. In time a larger punt was introduced and later two punts ran a joint service until the present bridge, built by Sutherland Shire Council, at a cost of £300,000, was opened in 1929.

Amenities were established in the district as soon as possible and gas mains were extended to the area in 1888. With the advent of electricity, the Council's of Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale and Bexley combined to form the St. George County Council, the first body of its kind in Australia. This instrumentality undertook the electrification of the district and first current was switched on in March, 1923. The health of the residents was also of prime concern and led to the establishment of St. George Cottage Hospital in 1894, the cost of the land and buildings amounting to £1860. The records show that during the first year 80 patients were admitted and of these 53 left cured, 17 relieved, 2 unrelieved and 5 died.

The Area of the Municipality now covers 7½ square miles and the growth of the district may be gauged from the increase in population, for in the year 1900 there were 3400 residents; in 1921, 18,214; in 1934, 30,648, and in 1965; 47,600 - truly remarkable growth for the "place of bulrushes."

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### "FIRES AND FIRE-BRIGADES"

(being a precis of the talk delivered to the last meeting of the Rockdale Historical Society by Mr. Lionel Watt).

Sydney has never had a wholesale conflagration such as those experienced in London, Chicago and San Francisco due, probably, to the foresight of Governor Macquarie who built so many buildings of brick and sandstone.

The first fire mentioned in the Colony was in Governor Phillip's despatch of 7th May, 1788, when he stated that the aborigines had set fire to a number of gum trees and that the Colony was littered with burnt out trees.

Sydney did not have an organised fire brigade until 1822 and even this was badly hampered for the next fifty years because of the completely inadequate water supply.

Sydney's most serious fire was NOT, as is popularly held, that which burned down Anthony Hordern's Store in 1901, though it was certainly Sydney's most spectacular. Most serious from the financial viewpoint was the Moore Street fire of 1890 which gutted the entire business centre of Sydney between Pitt and Castlereagh Streets.

Other notable fires include the burning down of the Sydney Gaol in 1797, the first Church in Richard Johnson Square in 1798, the Royal Victoria Theatre in 1838 and the Royal Hotel in 1840.



Anthony Horder's fire started in the Toy Department at 8.28 a.m. on Wednesday, 10th July, 1901, causing four deaths and a loss of property estimated at £354,000. What made this fire so spectacular was the death of an employee named Clegg who climbed to the top of the parapet and plunged 116 feet to the pavement in front of thousands of spectators.

In this fire, the Brigades proved to be totally inadequate and dynamite had to be used to stop the spread of the conflagration.

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### ROCKDALE FIRE BRIGADE

The precise date of the formation of a Fire Brigade in the Municipality of Rockdale cannot be established from the Board's records but it is known that the St. George Volunteer Fire Company was located at Rockdale in April 1891, for during that month of that year that Company applied to the Fire Brigades Board for telephone communication, but was refused, such permission however, being granted in February 1894.

In March 1895, the provisions of the Fire Brigades Act of 1884 were applied to the Municipality of Rockdale by action taken by the Government of the day. The gazettal of this fact failed to meet with the approval of the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade as he drew particular attention to this fact in his annual report for the year 1895 by the inclusion in that report of the following words:-

"This (the inclusion of Rockdale) is notable as being the first inclusion within the Metropolitan district of Municipalities so distant from the City and it is a matter for anxious consideration how a fair amount of protection is to be extended to them (the citizens of Rockdale)."

In 1895 the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company was situated in Rocky Point Road, now known as Princes Highway, and its complement comprised 16 men, 1 horse, 1 manual fire engine and 800' of hose. The fire station and plant belonged to the Company and the Board subsidised it to the extent of £70 per annum, whilst the Council's contribution to the Board in 1895 was £74/5/6.

During its first year in existence as a Brigade under the jurisdiction of the Fire Brigades Board the Company responded to 8 calls of fire of which 3 were false alarms, the actual fires being as shown hereunder:-

Tuesday	23.4.95	2.35 a.m. a grass fire on property owned by Robert Lattler, James Street. Extinguished by buckets of water.
Sunday	1.7.95	2.5 a.m. a stable in Bay Street owned by W. Ogden slightly damaged by fire. Extinguished by buckets of water.
Monday	29.7.95	1.0 a.m. a cottage of 4 rooms with contents burnt out and fallen down in Farr Street, owned by R. Kerr, Jeweller. Extinguished by two hydrants, the outbreak having been caused by the upsetting of a kerosene lamp.
Saturday	13.4.95	8.15 p.m. Bed & bedding damaged by fire in a bedroom on the 1st floor of a private dwelling owned by Mr. P. Porteous, Watkins Street. Extinguished by buckets of water.

Saturday 9.11.95      9.5 p.m. A private dwelling being the house owned by Mr. George Leider, Herman Street. The dwelling which contained six rooms was, with contents, burnt out and the roof partly off. The side of the stables and portion of fencing was damaged by fire. The outbreak was extinguished by one hydrant and the cause was unknown.

In April 1896, the Volunteer Company wrote to the Board and asked it for assistance to build a new fire station. The Company had £75 in hand towards the structure and it had already paid £25 for the land. Tenders had been called and it was considered that the whole project could be completed for £150. Strangely enough there was no mention by the Company where it had purchased the new site nor did the Board of the day or the Superintendent visit the area to ascertain where it was situated but nevertheless the Board approved the granting of £75 from its funds to the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company on the understanding that the Company vest the land and the station in the name of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board.

The Superintendent asked the Company to forward him a copy of the plans and specifications of the new project when it was found that tenders had been called for a structure without drainage, floors, doors or a stable. In these circumstances the Board refused to proceed further in the matter and the Company was informed accordingly.

The need for new premises, however, was fully realised by all concerned and in June 1896 the Board visited Rockdale where a Mr. Cooke offered it 30' of land in Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway) with a depth of 200' to a laneway at the rear at £7 a foot. The Board accepted this offer and a fire station together with quarters was erected thereon and occupied on 1st June, 1897.

In 1904 the Board purchased the adjoining lot having a frontage of 31'11" in order to overcome the difficulty of an encroachment.

The Rockdale fire station was officially opened on 4th June, 1897, by the President of the Board, Mr. C. Brown, he being accompanied by Mr. T.M. Tinley and Mr. F.I. Jackson, both members of the Board and Superintendent Bear.

Whilst there is no record of the names of the original personnel of the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company, it is known that Volunteer Fireman Russell was the first occupant of the new quarters of the fire station erected by the Board in 1897. He paid the Board a rental of 10/- per week for that privilege.

On the opening of this station the strength of horses was increased from 1 to 2 and name of one of them was "Warrior".

In 1900 some of the Volunteer Firemen were Bandsmen and a Band known as the Rockdale Fire Brigade Band was formed. This Band is reported to have been one of the premier bands of the State winning the Highland Society's Band Contest on 2nd January, 1905, and the Forbes Band Contest on 30th January, of that year. Over the years the Volunteer Firemen resigned from the Band which, however, continued to keep its identity and practice in the billiard room at the rear of the station. An unfortunate incident occurred in 1908 when it is alleged that this Band by "very forceful playing" broke up an important political meeting of the day and the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades issued a direction that the Band was no longer to be called the Rockdale Fire Brigade Band and they were refused permission to practice on the Board's premises.