



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
Bexley.
12th April, 1968.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date: Friday Evening Next, 19th April, 1968, at 8 p.m.

Place. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.

Speaker: Mrs. Jean Faulkner will present a paper on
CAPTAIN JAMES COOK.

We all know Captain Cook explored the east coast of Australia. Most of us know he finished his days being eaten by natives in the Sandwich Islands. But how many people know what Captain Cook was like as a person.

Mrs. Faulkner will give some interesting insights into the great navigator's early life.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

Supper Roster: Miss M. Callister and Miss V. Dunsmore.
Miss E. Cheetham, Mrs. M. Piper and Miss B. Binns.

D. H. Sinclair.

President.

R. W. Rathbone,
Hon. Secretary.
58.4813.

ST. GEORGE. THE PATRON-SOLDIER SAINT OF ENGLAND.

In an early issue of the Bulletin of the St. George Historical Society mention has been made of certain aspects of the somewhat legendary life of St. George which created a degree of local interest. Further information has come to hand from a book, entitled "THE RIVIERA" published about the eighteen-eighties, the author being the Reverend Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E. The relative extract reads as follows:-

"The elegant old church of the fishing village of Porto Fino (near Genoa) has enshrined among its relics a large portion of the body of St. George, the mystic knight of Cappadocia, which, the people say, was obtained direct from Palestine. It is strange how so many maritime nations should have adopted this saint as their patron. This is a relic of the days of the Crusades, when St. George not only defended the soldiers of the Cross on the battlefield of the Holy Land, but also helped them amid the more dreadful terrors of the stormy Mediterranean passage. On the 24th of April every year the Porto Fino fishermen bring out the relics of their saint and do him homage".

Another paragraph in the same book relates: "Perhaps the most interesting relic of the old town of Genoa is the hoary Gothic building, begrimed with dirt, of the Compore, or famous Bank of St. George, near the Harbour. It is said that the very stones of which it is composed were brought from a monastery near Constantinople in 1260. This was the oldest banking and trading house in Europe. Here originated those ideas of developing capital, funding money, and charging interest, which have developed into the wonderful complications of modern commerce and finance."

Then in a larger book, issued about the same period and entitled "The Thames from its Rise to the Nore", written by Walter Armstrong, M.A., it is mentioned that in the year 1417 the Emperor Sigismund came to Windsor Castle, "bringing with him the heart of St. George, which remained there to the Reformation".

THE OLD WESLEYAN CHURCH AT MOORFIELDS.

Albert Matheson, M.B.E.

It was suggested that I investigate the history of the Wesleyan Church at Moorfields, situated in the north-western portion of the land district of St. George. This area has lately come into prominence through the establishment of the vast shopping centre, known as "Roselands", but until the coming of the Belmore Railway, in February 1895, it was an isolated and somewhat sparsely settled tract chiefly devoted to agistment purposes. I was most fortunate in contacting Miss Lydia Mannell, who has had a long association with the old church, and she kindly lent a booklet, issued in 1951, dealing with the Centenary of this old established church. The publication is most excellent and contains details which may prove of great interest to the

members of the St. George Historical Society. Permission has been obtained from the church authorities to republish historical data in the latter Society's monthly Bulletin and to this end the formal acknowledgment to the authors concerned, and the prologue prepared by the Reverend D. Forshaw Almond, is republished in full.

"ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The publication of this Souvenir booklet is the result of much research into Church and historical records, and the Trustees gratefully acknowledge the help given by the Mitchell Library, the Australasian Methodist Historical Society, Sydney, and the Registrar General's Office, Sydney.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. A. W. Miller, who has been responsible for the research and for the collating and preparing with meticulous care, of the interesting historical details contained in these pages. He has been aided in the research by Mr. W. A. Cant, Trust Secretary, who has also given technical assistance in the preparation of the booklet.

Full measure of thanks is expressed also to Church members and adherents who have given help and information by personal recollections, and to interested friends who have made photographs available.

PROLOGUE.

Centenaries are most important because they enable us to see history in its right perspective and to take a look at ourselves and ascertain just how we are measuring up to the task that is ours. It enables us to make humble acknowledgment of the debt we owe to the pioneers of the past. We are reminded that we have entered into their labours and enjoy the fruits of their toil.

They were a splendid company of people - courageous, determined and not easily cast down. They were keen to build a shrine worthy of the best Christian traditions and to establish the Altar of the Lord in the midst of the people. They knew how true were the words of the Master that "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God", and so they were resolved to bring into the life of the community the truths of our Christian Religion and to give witness to the Spiritual realities.

D. Forshaw Almond.
Superintendent Minister.

An Historical Survey.

The first settlement in the immediate neighbourhood of Moorfields was by Hannah Laycocks whose 500 acre Kings Grove Farm was granted on 11th August, 1804. Eight years later she received a further 120 acres adjoining to the north and her sons, William and Samuel, 100 acres each (Percy and Northumberland Farms) giving a considerable

property embracing much of the suburbs of Bexley, Kingsgrove, Clemton Park, and Campsie. The Laycocks were amongst the first, free settlers in Australia, arriving in the "Gorgon" in 1790, but they had no connection with the history of the church and the estate was sold to Simeon Lord as early as December 1828, and had been subdivided and much of it sold before the church was built. William Ward's 30 acres (The Towers) and John Miller's 90 acres (Richland Estate) were both granted on 1st January, 1810. Miller's grant was sold in 1828 to James Oatley, a watchmaker of Sydney, who later acquired by purchase and original grant a considerable estate in the district. None of these early settlers played any part in the history of the church, and John Miller the original grantee of Richlands, had no connection with the family of the same name who have been active workers in the church for the last 80 years.

At this date it is impossible to say who was the first member of the church to settle in the neighbourhood, but the families of several early adherents had been in the district many years before the church was built.

William Lees, with his wife and eldest daughter, came to New South Wales in 1815, he in the "MARY ANN" and his wife in the "NORTHHAMPTON", and may have first settled at Windsor where a William Lees tendered to supply fresh meat in 1817 and 1818. He was promised a grant of 100 acres adjacent to the church site in 1821, the actual date of the grant being 1823. He was probably in residence about 1821, and by 1828 had cleared 37 acres and had 30 acres in cultivation.

It is possible that James Chard was in the district as early as 1818 in which year he arrived in the colony per ship "OCEAN". His first wife Rachael and his two sons, John and Thomas, came in the "JUPITER" in 1823. In February, 1827, he purchased Charles Watson's 80 acre grant for £1/1/0 per acre. By 1828 he had cleared 30 acres and had 20 acres under cultivation. It is interesting to note that at this early date there was a "dwelling house and premises" in the north-west corner where the church now stands. James Chard is also said to have been the owner of Brainson's grant adjoining the church to the west, and to have resided there for some time prior to his death in 1855. In 1845 the land was conveyed to his sons, John (50 acres) and Thomas (30 acres), and the elder son John in 1851 gave the Wesleyans the acre on which the church is built. Six years later he sold out to Charles Saxby for £3,000 and appears to have gone to Newtown, where he had considerable property, and to have severed his active connection with the church. His descendants have, however, maintained interest in the place, and have on occasions attended services in the company of their cousins, descendants of the brother, Thomas Chard.

William Pithers, whose grandson William was buried in the cemetery in February 1863, and whose son James was interred in 1895, also received a grant in 1823. In 1828 twenty acres were cleared and he was running twenty head of cattle, but by 1869 the land was described

as "vacant and unfenced, said to belong to James Pithers, a sawyer lately residing in the district but now removed to Newtown". As far as is known this family has not been represented in the church work for many years, the only connection with the church being the interment of several members of the family in the cemetery.

James Ridgwell, the "grand old man" of early Moorfields, is said on reliable authority to have come to the district between 1844 and 1846. No written reference has been found prior to the minutes of the Newtown Leader's meeting in 1855 where he appears as a class leader. Charles Gabb came to the district in 1851; the Parkes family from Canterbury Heights were in that area as early as 1820, and preaching services were commenced in their home as early as 1857; the Peake family from Peakehurst were also amongst the earliest members, preaching services being held at their home in 1855. Both families were regular attendants for the first fifty years. Others who were regular attendants from early times were the Nortons (a James Norton was in the Colony in 1824); the Tomkins from Bardwell Park; James Forrester, a ganger on the construction of the first railway, Cornelius Webb and his wife (who, on her death about 1910, left the Trust the only legacy it has yet received). Both James Forrester and William Coleman later married daughters of Thomas Chard and they and their descendants have been regular worshippers and active workers in the church to the present day. Both James Forrester and Cornelius Webb purchased land from the Kingsgrove Estate in 1855, so were certainly in the district from that date on.

The Church Building.

In August 1850, the Reverend Frederick Lewis reported: "Moorfields Cottage (9 miles from Sydney). A considerable number of persons have assembled every Lord's Day for the last six months to hear the word of life; nor have any heard in vain for already has a class been formed consisting of eleven persons many of whom have been very powerfully awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger and are sincerely enquiring "What must I do to be saved". A year later the Reverend John Eggleston reported a brick chapel in course of erection, and in August 1852 it was reported as having been completed at a cost of £100. The original chapel, 25 feet by 18 feet, proved too small and in 1860 was enlarged at a cost of £80. The division in the flooring marking the site of the first development can still be seen. Various improvements have been made from time to time. In 1894 a galvanised iron roof was placed over the shingles by a band of voluntary workers under the supervision of Mr. Jones who a few years earlier had erected the well-known landmark "THE TOWERS" in Forsyth Street. At the same time the narrow galvanised iron lining the lower part of the interior walls was placed in position. About 1905 the Band of Hope collected £40 to defray the cost of the Wunderlich metal ceiling and the remainder of the walls were lined with the same material. With the exception of minor repair to the floors and windows nothing further was done till 1921 when a kindergarten hall was erected by Mr. Merrick (one of the trustees) at a cost of £120. Towards the end of 1930, an extensive program of renovation was undertaken when the roof, including the original shingles, was removed and the iron replaced, the

Wunderlich metal lining which had become corroded over the years was removed and the upper part of the walls cement plastered. A further extension to the kindergarten hall was made in 1934. In 1940, a room was added to the kindergarten hall for use as a Bible study room from older scholars of the Sunday School.

The earliest access is said to have been via the Punchbowl Road, though doubtless many tracks led through the timber, one in the general direction of Canary Road having been in use for fifty years prior to 1864. Between March and September 1841, Prout's Bridge was built across Cooks River at Canterbury, and in 1843, Unwins Bridge at Tempe and both routes via Canterbury Road and William Street appear to have been used. The same regular preacher when Moorfields was in the Newtown Circuit would take services at Canterbury, Parke's home in Earlwood, Moorfields, and Peakehurst. Even in recent times it was common for the same preacher to take services at Canterbury Moorfields and Forest Hills (now Earlwood) in the morning, afternoon and evening respectively.

The forties of last century saw the ferment of development as settlement began to push out from the town. In 1841, a dam was built across the mouth of the Cooks River at Tempe, and the Sugar Company's works (still standing) at Canterbury were completed in September of that year at a cost of £30,000. The Wesleyans were not behindhand and in 1841, a slab school house was erected there, used as a day school during the week, attended by about 40 children, and as a chapel on Sundays. By 1846, it was much dilapidated and was replaced by a stone chapel, which still stands in Minter Street but, for some reason, vital Christianity did not take root in this centre. By 1851, there had been considerable growth and the census of that year showed the population of the Canterbury district, which apparently included Moorfields, as 473, of whom 102 were Wesleyans. This relatively large proportion of Wesleyans may explain the rapid development of Methodism in the area during the following few years.

THE MOORFIELDS SCHOOL.

From 1864 till the old public school was built in 1878, a day school was conducted in the building under the auspices of the Wesleyan Church. The first teacher was thought to have been Mr. William Miller, succeeded by Mr. Joseph Saxby, a local preacher from Canterbury.

Miss Sophia Ridgwell, the third day school teacher, was keeping company with Mr. Francis Bemish who, on her death after two or three years teaching, continued with the school till the opening of the public school on its completion in 1878.

Although the Moorfields Church has always been in the Wesleyan and later the Methodist connection, for several years, about the early eighteen-eighties, the Salvation Army, under the leadership of Adam Bond and Susanna Parkes, held services in the church, and their

ministry is still remembered with gratitude by some of the oldest members.

THE CHURCH LIGHTING.

When first built the church was lit by candles, those on the pulpit being held by candlesticks fitted with jointed arms, which could be extended in any desired direction. A candelabra hung from the ceiling but this was taken down in 1884. and replaced by four kerosene lamps, two on each wall. In 1911 two "Miller" lamps, purchased from funds provided by a legacy of Mrs. Webb, augmented the lighting. In February 1923, gas was installed, and in 1929 this gave place to electricity.

THE CHURCH FURNITURE.

Several interesting items of original furniture have been preserved through the century. These include a cedar table made in 1836 and given to Thomas Chard and his wife by James Chard. As no table was available in the church for the sacramental vessels Mrs. Chard lent her cedar table and it has remained at the church and is still used. Most of the cedar seats in the church were originally backless forms which the first congregations used. Much of the pulpit is original though it has been altered somewhat from its original form. The candle-sticks with extending jointed arms used on the pulpit are well preserved.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The Sunday School is not quite as old as the church though there is reason to believe it was established by 1852. It is known to have been in continuous existence since 1859 when it is mentioned in the "Christian Advocate". The first recorded Anniversary was held on 9th March, 1864. Throughout its long history, this branch of Christian service has always been the most valuable and successful contribution to the church's witness and the Master's service. With the building of the kindergarten hall in 1921 it was possible to subdivide the school into two departments, thus giving more scope for this great work among the children of the district.

The Moorfields Church has had an eventful century of history. The same building has been in continuous use and the people have worshipped and served the same Master down through the long years. "

THE MOORFIELDS METHODIST CEMETERY.

It is estimated that about one thousand burials have taken place in the cemetery adjacent to the church fabric. It is understood that the cemetery was available for burial purposes of all persons, irrespective of their denominational faith. A record of all the headstones erected in this cemetery and the inscriptions thereon, as far as can be obtained, was made in 1962. A copy of this record is in the hands of Mr. R. Rathbone, the Secretary of the St. George Historical Society. In March 1968, portions of the burial ground were covered with brambles and other rough vegetation making a detailed inspection most difficult.

"Most headstones are in good condition and quite legible, a few of the older ones have indistinct lettering and somewhat difficult to read, also a small number have fallen and are broken, but the graves are all known and names of those buried are in the records book. In some instances names on the headstones are memorials only, and the persons named are not buried in the cemetery. "A" section is the only one which numbers from Moorfields Road end, all the other sections number from the back fence. Additional details can be obtained by inspecting headstones and the record book. P. W. Cant.
March 1962."

Within recent years the church building began to fall into decay. The roof sagged and water dripped through on to the congregation during wet weather, birds nested in every nook and cranny, and some birds were infested with lice, a circumstance which also tended to make the assembled congregation uncomfortable. Windows became loose in the brickwork, and white ants ravaged the floor and its supporting timbers. The trustees had repairs made from time to time, but the ancient church fabric was fast getting beyond repair. The Reverend Townsend, when preaching from the pulpit, had the misfortune to disappear from sight when the floor collapsed beneath him, much to the consternation of the congregation and, no doubt, the amusement of the termites.

There appeared to be only one remedy for this sad state of affairs and that was to erect a new church. The Methodist authorities in Sydney came to inspect the historic chapel and agreed with the trustees that the edifice was beyond repair and should be dismantled. Older members of the congregation were aghast at the proposal but, unfortunately, there was no other way out of the difficulty. The Reverend Alan Langstaff, who attended the church as a scholar, had the honour of conducting the final service in the old church on the evening of September 17th, 1967. The building, now one hundred and seventeen years old, was later removed and it is pleasing to record that the original headstone of 1851 has been incorporated in the new church, which is being erected on the site of the original chapel.

THE ST. GEORGE'S DAY CELEBRATIONS AT ST. PAUL'S, KOGARAH.

.... Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

One of the important annual events which was celebrated at Kogarah in the first and second decades of the nineteen-hundreds was the observance of St. George's Day, a festival which falls on April 23rd. The late Reverend Harry. R. A. Wilson, a fervent English patriot, who was the priest at St. Paul's Church of England, Kogarah, in the Parish of St. George, between the years 1905 and 1921, was responsible for an annual rally of his parishioners and the local school children, which was held on the Saturday afternoon which happened to be nearest to the accepted commemoration date.

The enthusiasm of this particular reverend gentleman for his

beloved England, and all its glorious associations, knew no bounds and, after coming to the Anglican Parish of St. George, at Kogarah, it was not long before he set about devising ways and means to publicly honour the patron saint of England, his church parish, and also of our land district sited between Cooks River and Georges River. To this end a procession of children was organised to pass through the streets of Kogarah on the appointed Saturday afternoon, led by a local brass band, to a sports meeting held in St. Pauls Church Ground between Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway) and Gladstone Street.

Mr. Harry Green, a soldier of the Boer War, and a weekend resident of Arncliffe, where he spent most Saturdays and Sundays living in an enclosed cave near the crest of the sandstone hillside at the north-western corner of Duff and Hill Streets, played the part of St. George. Mr. Green was clad in tin-plate armour and, mounted on a white horse, loaned by a local tradesman, carried the flag of St. George, a red cross on a white ground, at the head of the procession. Then, in order of age, trooped the little girls, followed by the elder girls, in cross rows of four, each class being in charge of its teacher. The girls were mostly clad in white with sashes of red ribbon, and marched in quite good order, accompanied by the cheers and ovations of their excited parents. Then came the drum and fife band belonging to Kogarah Superior Public School, the big drum being supported in front by a callow youth chosen by dint of his very sturdiness.

The boys then followed in motley array, some with boots and some without, but each sported a red and white rosette and marched as they saw fit. Some ambled along, others pushed their neighbours, others tripped over projecting stones in the surface of the unsealed roadway, and all generally behaved as expected, much to the annoyance of their teachers and the amusement of the bystanders. Pea-shooters were surreptitiously brought into action, the peas being unknowingly supplied by various unfortunate produce merchants, such as Napper's of Rockdale and Soames of Kogarah. Direct hits behind the ear to some lad in front created a popular diversion for those following behind and often led to scuffles which upset the more or less orderly conduct of the march.

If our memories are correct the early processions were marshalled on Rocky Point Road at Skidmore's Bridge, in the vicinity of the present day Shopping Plaza. When all was ready the vanguard moved off with St. George in the lead, riding a horse which did not greatly appreciate the music of brass bands, and tended to be skittish in consequence. The representative of St. George had difficulty at times in controlling his nag with one hand only, due to the fact that the other hand was more fully occupied in holding the flapping flag aloft.

The procession turned into Regent Street which was traversed as far as the intersection of Gladstone Street, then this latter thoroughfare was followed to the entrance gates of the St. Pauls Cemetery. Here the procession filed through the narrow width picket gates, as convenient in ones and twos, before sauntering through the cemetery

path until the separating gates of St. Pauls Churchyard were reached. Here each child was presented with a small paper bag of boiled lollies issued in honour of the occasion, stringent precautions being taken to prevent any attempt at "doubling-up".

St. Pauls Churchyard was commodious and quite suitable for juvenile racing, three-legged races, egg and spoon races, and tugs-of-war for the boys, and also grown-ups of each sex. Maypoles were set up for the girls and their sedate dancing around these pagan symbols was most pleasing to watch. The sporting proclivities of each sex were centrally divided by the grand old stone church. Races were run according to age groupings and prizes awarded to the winning contestants, most prizes being wheedled out of tradespeople sympathetic to the cause.

Races and games, to the accompaniment of the brass band repertoire of patriotic airs, continued until dusk when the various contestants dispersed. However, the activities of the St. Georges Day Committee were then concentrated on the St. Georges Day Tea-meeting, which was held in the adjacent Parish Hall. Long trestle tables were set out and the Sunday School forms arranged to seat the ticket-holders, who were charged the sum of one shilling each for admission. The board tables were covered with sheets of white paper, and long rolls of narrow width crepe paper, of a most gorgeous red colour, was laid across and down the central length of the table to portray the redcross flag of St. George. Red and white dahlias, displayed in the "best" vases of the women members of the committee, graced each table, together with a more than plentiful supply of sandwiches, cakes, and soft drinks. Speeches were also in plentiful supply and representatives of the Royal Society of St. George sat at the official table, together with the clergy, members of parliament, church wardens, and local aldermen. This festive board commenced operations at about 7 p.m. and, when the last speech and the final toast had come to their appointed ends, the patrons adjourned to the Parish Church to hear Mr. Haywood, the organist, give a short recital. This arrangement kept them away whilst the committee hastened to clear the Sunday School Hall of its cluttering tables, trestles, viands, and spillages, preparatory to spreading handfuls of sawdust on the floor for the inevitable dance programme.

Dancing was interspersed with vocal items whereby basses from the choir sang "Land of Hope and Glory", and Mr. Clement Kelly, the kindly editor of The St. George Call, always obliged with "The Gallant's of England". Another regular item, especially fostered by the younger generation, was the old song "THORA", sung with deep feeling and great expression by Mr. Sydney Kelly, much to the edification of his mates.

It is of interest to recall some of the names of the committee members of those now far-off days. Amongst the male members would be Messrs. Alan Butcher, Tom Eardley, Fulford, C. J. Kelly,

Livingstone, Perry, Les Walker, Charlie Smith, and Wolfe, to quote a few, whilst the stronger sex was ably represented by Miss Butcher, the Misses Molster, and Miss Varcoe, and Mesdames Carlaw, Carmichael, Tom Eardley, C. J. Kelly, P. N. Kelly, Livingstone, Mitchell, Moore, Reid, Skidmore, N. Wakefield, and Warner, to name just a few more than willing workers associated with the great annual event.

The Reverend R. H. A. Wilson resigned from St. Paul's Church at Kogarah and returned to his well-beloved England. With his departure the procession through the streets of Kogarah and the games afternoon were abandoned, but the St. Georges Day Tea Meeting continued for several more years during the incumbency of the Reverend Stanley G. Best.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that in its latter years the childrens procession was marshalled in Railway Parade, in the vicinity of the Bellevue Street intersection and the now long demolished steam tram car shed. The route taken was via Regent Street to Gladstone Street and from thence to the cemetery gates of St. Paul's churchyard as before described.