



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY.
7th June, 1968.

Dear Friend and Member:

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

DATE: Friday evening next, 21st June, 1968 at 8 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.

GUEST SPEAKER: Mr.W.Foster M.A. Dip Mod.Lang.
Fellow the Royal Australian Historical Society and
Principal of the James Cook High School will speak on

"THE ORIGINS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF N.S.W."

There will also be an exhibition of old books. Who, in the Society, owns the oldest book? Dig it out, stamp on the silverfish, chase out the cockroaches and bring it along.

SUPPER ROSTER: Mrs.E.Eardley (Ganger) Mrs.F.Day, Mrs.E.Sinclair, Mrs.Chase and Mrs.Osborne (gang).

Yours faithfully,

D.H.SINCLAIR

R.W.RATHBONE.

PRESIDENT.

HON. SECRETARY. 58 4813.

(N. B. The Bulletin will be distributed at a later stage.)

ARNCLIFFE'S EARLY TAVERNS AND TIMES.

..... Vincent Saunders.

Recent historical inquiry has thrown new light on the origins, events and personalities connected with the early taverns of Arncliffe.

As the taverns of the pioneer days were intimately related to the early settlements which gave them birth a more factual knowledge naturally gains for us a greater understanding of the era in which they flourished.

In the first 30 years of the development of the St. George district (1840-1870) precious little was recorded by the pioneers of the period and unfortunately certain aspects of stories which have been handed down to the present day have since been found to be inaccurate.

No better example of this could be provided than the history surrounding the first tavern of the district as the following story will show.

The first registered inn or tavern in the St. George district was known by the sign -- "The Yorkshireman's Coat of Arms", the license to sell ale, and spiritous liquor being granted to a Mr. Thomas Kelsey, Cook's River, from the month of May, 1842.

The license was renewed annually until the 30th June, 1846 when it was endorsed "transferred to William Johnstone -- license removed to corner of Kent and Druitt Streets". And so in those few sentences taken from the earliest Publicans' License Returns we learn that Kelsey's tavern at Cook's River was known as "The Yorkshireman's Coat of Arms" and not the "Highbury Barn" as has been generally supposed for the last 80 odd years.

"YORKSHIREMAN'S COAT OF ARMS".

The tavern, built by paid convict labour, once stood on the site occupied today by a cottage which stands on the north-eastern corner of Kelsey Street and Wollongong Road, Arncliffe, covering cellars still extant.

A cottage built in Kelsey Street (1890) was named "Weis Baden", a German word meaning "a well or water hole for bathing" and this appropriately described the creek and waterholes (Now in the vicinity of the Arncliffe Bowling Club) to which the cottage stood adjacent, prior to the turn of the century.

The name given the tavern by Kelsey represents a fragment of English folklore and was often used by county neighbours about the supposed characteristics of a Yorkshireman.

A Yorkshireman's Coat of Arms represents a FLY, a FLEA, a MAGPIE and a FLITCH OF BACON - meaning A Fly will drink with anyone, A Flea will bite anyone, A Magpie will talk with anyone, and a Flitch of Bacon is only good when it is hung.

The inspiration for the name was probably the famous Yorkshireman, Capt. James Cook, who discovered Botany Bay particularly as Kelsey's tavern was close to the Bay and on a site described as part of the "Cook's River area".

Contrary to what has been generally believed for the last 80 odd years, Kelsey's tavern was built prior to the time when famous Explorer and Survey-General Mirchell is recorded as having surveyed (May, 1843) and shortly after caused to be "cut through", the Wollongong Road which passed immediately in front of the tavern, then climbed and followed the ridge (now Forest Road) to George's River (Lugarno).

Evidence suggests that Kelsey built his tavern with an immediate eye to catering for the liquor needs of the comparatively large number of people who came with their horses and carts from about Sydney town to comb the virgin areas south of Cook's River for wood supplies after the opening of the dam causeway (1840), (the search for wood undoubtedly gained a great stimulus as a result of an economic depression from 1841, when wool prices suddenly collapsed and the entire community suffered).

By far the most popular area for trespassers (mostly those suffering from the economic depression) in search of timber for firewood and building material in this period, were certain convenient sections of the unfenced Bexley Estate of 1300 acres which in this day would extend from North Bexley almost to Brighton-le-Sands including most of Rockdale and Kogarah.

So much so that the non-resident proprietor, Mr. Charles Tompson, was forced to publish in the Sydney newspapers:-

"Twenty pounds reward will be paid to any one by whose instrumentality any person or persons may be convicted of stealing timber or bark of any kind from my estate called "Bexley", as it is my intention of prosecute to conviction all such depredators".

SCAVENGERS.

However, the great boon as far as Kelsey's tavern was concerned came with the opening of the Wollongong Road when the felling of vast quantities of timber during its construction provided an additional windfall for the scavengers.

But how did the first main road through the district come to pass immediately in front of the tavern when the alternative of a better route existed as witnessed by the far greater popularity, in those days of bullock and horse-drawn vehicles, of the better drained Forest Road ridge extension (1864)?

Did Kelsey have prior knowledge the route the road would take immediately south of Cook's River and so got in "at early doors" on the best fresh-watercourse for many miles around? (As the Old Rocky Point Road or track up to Arncliffe Hill - now Eden Street - was extant at the time (1840) the continuation of it along the ridge would have been the logical route to take, as was ultimately proved, but this would have isolated Kelsey's tavern).

TAVERN DECIDES ROUTE OF MAIN ROAD.

Or did Kelsey estimate that in the primitive environment of the time when it is known that the want of water caused severe suffering to man and beast that the eventual route would be guided by the need for water; and also by the popularity of the 'products' he dispensed at his isolated tavern on a route probably already roughly established by the scavengers, for years to come?

Whatever the reason Mitchell's road came to pass the front door of the astute Mr. Kelsey's tavern and no doubt this would be one of the rare occasions in Australian history when a popular tavern (supplying both ale and water) largely dictated the route a main road would take.

As the license of the tavern was removed from June, 1846 its popularity had apparently temporarily lapsed probably due to the attraction of the area to scavengers having waned perhaps due to economic reasons and the convict road builders being transferred elsewhere.

After the tavern on Wollongong Road was vacated by Kelsey in 1846 its license was resumed under the title "Bold Forester" which name it traded under for almost two decades (1849 to 1868) being variously owned by William Trimby, Levi Barden, Neumann and lastly by Frewin Sleath, who was instrumental in having the license transferred to a home on Forest Road.

The name was an appropriate one indeed for the pioneer period it flourished in (axemen, sawyers, charcoal burners, and the like) and marked a new phase in the industry of the district from scavengers to those engaged in opening up the area.

Other taverns built between the two rivers - Cook's and George's up to 1870, to cater for the liquor needs of those engaged in hacking away at the great forest lands, as well as the new settlers, included the "Man-of-Kent", Kingsgrove (1853); the "Robin Hood and Little John, Kingsgrove (1854); the "Blue Post", Gannon's Forest (Hurstville) (1857); the "Sans Souci", George's River (1865); the Gardener's Arms", Rocky Point Road (Kogarah) (1866).

The two taverns trading at Kingsgrove at this early period point strongly to evidence of a fairly large settlement in this area compared with other parts of the then St. George Parish.

In the first half of 1869, the license of the "Bold Forester" was transferred by Frewin Sleath, publican and later alderman, to a home on Forest Road, Arncliffe, probably built for Sleath in 1868, just on a century ago, with Mr. Belz as licensee.

LICENSE TRANSFERRED TO FOREST ROAD.

In the second half of the year, the name of the tavern-home was changed to "The Barn" no doubt to avoid confusion with the old tavern which stood on Wollongong Road but half a mile away.

At this stage we might reflect on the local historical significance of the transfer of the "Bold Forester" license to Forest Road.

When the ridge extension of Forest Road was opened in 1864, connecting it to Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway), the better conditions to those obtaining on the old Wollongong Road, which frequently became a quagmire, saw the horse drawn vehicles travelling along the new route and thus by-passed "The Bold Forester".

Mr. Sleath perceiving this new traffic pattern through Arncliffe obtained approval for the transfer of the "Bold Forester" license, as we have seen, to a home on Forest Road but not before the anticipation of another

inn being built not far away, gave him the necessary impetus to do so.

In 1868, Mr. John McInnes obtained a lease of a site on the corner of Rocky Point Road and Arncliffe Street slightly south of "Tempe House" (now covered by a car sales park) and thus only about a mile away from where Sleath's tavern on Forest Road was to operate from January, 1869.

In the following year (1869) McInnes built the "Tempe Family Hotel" which was opened for business commencing January, 1870.

Bearing in mind that the two taverns were so close together in those days of comparatively small population, there appears to have been great rivalry between Sleath and his new publican competitor (both were elected as aldermen to the West Botany Council - now Rockdale) in the 1870's.

It is recorded that the election of the first Mayor of the Council took place at the Tempe Hotel on 13th February, 1871 and the aldermen including Mr. McInnes, met frequently at the hotel until the first Council building was erected in Rocky Point Road. This naturally caused enmity from his public competitor, Mr. Sleath and the Council accordingly, to show, that no partisanship existed also met in Sleath's tavern-home, probably the first home on Forest Road, Arncliffe.

Meanwhile the Return of Publicans' Licenses shows that Mr. Sleath himself had again taken over as licensee of his tavern early in 1872 with the more sophisticated sign the "Highbury Barn" appearing over the front porch instead of "The Barn".

Whether more comforts for customers came with the new name on the tavern is not known but it would appear that the popularity of the "Tempe Hotel" among citizens and aldermen had much to do with the new prestige name.

And so the name "Highbury Barn" for Sleath's tavern (alias "The Barn" - "Bold Forester") came to be first known in the district in 1872. In the late 1870's the "Highbury Barn" became the property of Mr. Fred Barden and is shown in 1880 with Alfred Goodin as licensee (the present Barden Street was named after Mr. Barden) and the tavern once stood adjacent to the site where it joined Forest Road).

CHANGING FORTUNES.

In anticipation of a greatly increased influx of citizens because of the expected construction of the railway through Arncliffe (opened in 1884), the "Botany View Hotel" was opened in 1882 by Mrs. Susan Clune (in 1885 it became known as the "West Botany Hotel" until the name was again changed in 1898 to the "Arncliffe Hotel").

The introduction of the new mode of transport changed the fortunes of the three hotels extant in Arncliffe with Mr. McInnes disposing of the "Tempe Hotel" in favour of Mr. Jacobs (about 1883) whilst the "Highbury Barn" (Edwin Barden) shared some of the trade on Arncliffe Hill with its new competitor.

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In 1911, the Local Option Act was passed and as a result the two oldest hotels previously discussed, lost their trading rights whilst the "Arncliffe Hotel" survived and trades under this name to this day.

It will be gleaned from the foregoing how the march of progress vitally affected the traffic patterns and the fortunes of the earliest taverns in Arncliffe.

A TESTIMONY OF THE EIGHTEEN-SEVENTIES.

...Gifford Eardley.

Through the kind permission of Mr. Riley of Hirst Street, Arncliffe, it is possible to present to the members of the St. George Historical Society a copy of an ancient document of goodwill, as expressed by some one hundred and twenty-six horse-owning and road-using residents of the then rural district of St. George in particular. Unfortunately the manuscript bears no date but seeing the signature of the Reverend John Done, the first incumbent of St. Paul's Church of England at Kogarah, suggests that the testimony was penned about the period of 1870.

The long list of signatures, and at times "their mark's", of the men and women concerned, their occupations and place or residence, is of great interest to historian seeking information about the early development of this fascinating District of St. George. The document is quoted in full. The original foolscap is of blue-tinted paper, now after nearly one hundred years have passed, and getting somewhat the worse for wear. It reads as follows:-

"We, the undersigned Gardeners, Wood Carters, etc. etc. residing on, and beyond Cook's River Road and dam, desire to thank Mr. Alderman Maze for his considerate kindness in getting the Municipal Council of Sydney, with the hearty concurrence and approval of the Right Worshipful the Mayor, to sanction a Watering Trough to be placed in the Newtown Road near Myrtle Street, as a very great convenience to them, there be no means of watering their cattle, free of expense, between their places of abode, and Sydney.

1.	James Beehag Junior	Market Gardener	West Botany
	Joseph Hilton	Basket Maker	Cook's River Road
	Henry Humpherys	Carter	West Botany
	Patrick English	Market Gardener	Kogarah
5.	George Harris	Toll Collector	Cook's River Road
	Dennis McGuire	Groom	Cook's River Road
	Edward Fripp	Market Gardener	Marrickville
	James Rattenbury	Carter	Cook's River
	John Allwood	Charcoal Burner	Rocky Point Rd.
10.	John Brennan	Lime Burner	Cook's River
	Richard Fullager	Carter	Cook's River
	Thomas Busby	Lime Burner	Cook's River
	Thomas H. Jennings	Builder	Cook's River
	James Exley	Gardener	Cook's River
15.	Wesley W. Walker	Gardener	Cook's River
	James Watson	Wood Carter	Gannon's Forest
	James Quirk	Gardener	Muddy Creek
	William Blake	Contractor	Kogarah
	John Skidmore	Wood Carter	Rocky Point Road
20.	William Skidmore	Wood Carter	Rocky Point Road
	Frederick Skidmore	Gardener	Rocky Point Road
	George W. Holliday	Gentleman	Kingsgrove
	J. Fowler	Wool Scourer	Arncliffe
	John Done, Incumbent	St. Paul's	Rocky Point Road
25.	Charles Smith	Wood Carter	Rocky Point Road
	Charles Lockyer	Wood Carter	Gannon's Forest
	James Gunning	Wood Carter	Gannon's Forest
	Joseph Chappelow	Horse Breaker	Cook's River
	John Schuman	Gardener	Kogarah
30.	William Humphrys	Butcher	Cook's River Road.