



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY. 2207.
9th August, 1968.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date: Friday Evening Next, 16th August, 1968, at 8 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Guest Speaker: Mr. Eric M. Stephens who will present a slide lecture on the Newnes Valley Shale Field and its Railway Connections.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D. Sinclair,
President.

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

Supper Roster: Mrs. A. Coghlan (Boss), Miss J. Noble,
Mrs. E. Wright, Miss U. Gettens, Mrs. V. Wilson
(bossed).

HALF DAY OUTING TO GLEBE, AUGUST 17th.

A Half Day Outing to Glebe has been organised for Saturday, August 17th, (the day after the next meeting) leaving the Rockdale Town Hall at 1.30 pm. This will include an inspection of St. John's Church and (we hope) St. Scholastica's College (historic Toxteth House).

If you would like to come, ring the Secretary 58.4813 as soon as possible as seating will be limited.

* * * * *

All Officers Re-elected at Annual Meeting.

Patrons: Ald. R.T. Gosling, M.B.E., Mayor of Rockdale.
Mr. T.J. McCarthy, Mr. G.H. Eardley.

President: Mr. D.H. Sinclair.

Senior Vice President: Mr. C.W. Napper.

Vice Presidents: Mr. A. Ellis, Mr. A.B. Christison, M.B.E.

Hon. Secretary: Ald. R.W. Rathbone.

Hon. Treasurer: Mr. R.C. Callister.

Hon. Auditor: Mr. A.H. Matheson, M.B.E.

* * * * *

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1968.

During the past year we have continued our policy of combining monthly meetings with outings to places of historical interest.

In order to encourage members to participate further in the affairs of the Society, our programme was designed so that one of our members would speak bi-monthly and an outside speaker would be invited to deliver an address on the alternative month. This has been carried out during the year with what I trust has been benefit to the speakers concerned and interest to the members.

With regard to our outings, a change was instituted in that we arranged to travel by chartered bus instead of members' individual cars. I believe this has been of great benefit, for the new atmosphere of "togetherness" has presented the opportunity to get to know one another better, thus creating a more friendly spirit amongst members. In addition to allowing our former car drivers to relax, we all have the benefit of the commentary delivered by our guide.

I would like to acknowledge the work performed during the year by our Secretary, Mr. Rathbone, and our Treasurer, Mr. Callister, both of whom have performed their duties so capably and willingly. My special thanks are also due to our Patron, Mr. Gifford Eardley, upon whose vast historical knowledge I have drawn so often. Our monthly Bulletins - like our booklets - have been the sole work of Mr. Eardley and I feel we should all pay tribute to his untiring efforts on behalf of this Society.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1968.

<u>TO</u>		<u>BY</u>	
Balance at Bank at 1/7/67.	\$ 128.22	Subscription to National Trust	\$ 6.30
Members' Subscriptions	118.00	" " Royal Australian Historical Scty.	6.50
Sale of Badges	5.70	" " Delegates to Royal Aust. Historical Scty.	4.00
" Books	340.74	Printing of Books	514.36
Proceeds of Raffle	119.30	Petty Cash, Postage	70.32
Bank Interest	12.93	Purchase of Painting	25.00
Donation	0.40	Christmas Party	10.00
Bus Tickets	149.50	Donation to St. John of God	10.00
		Bus Hire.	167.00
		Wreaths	8.20
		"A" Letters P.M.G.	5.00
		Balance at Bank 30/6/1968	48.11
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$874.79		\$874.79
	<hr/>		<hr/>

4.

Audited and Found Correct.

A. H. Matheson,
Hon. Auditor.
19/7/68.

R. C. Callister.
Hon. Treasurer.

JOHN MURPHY OF "LEECHOLME", BEXLEY.ANDTHE HORSE 'BUSES.

John Joseph Murphy was born at Concord, New South Wales, in 1869. He was born with a great love of horses, which was to remain with him all his life. As a young man he entered the Meat Trade, in the beginning carting meat, and gradually learning every phase of the business over several years. He then entered into business in the Wholesale Butchery on his own behalf. Mr. Murphy was most successful in his enterprise, which he carried on until he retired in later life. He made a great deal of money out of it.

Margaret Prosper was born at Wattle Flat, 25 miles out of Bathurst, in 1868. Her Father (who was French by birth), whilst ploughing his paddocks one day turned up one of the largest nuggets of gold found in Australia. It was known as the "Prosper" Nugget. As a young girl Margaret came to Sydney to live, and later she met John Murphy. After they had known one another a short time, they married at St. Thomas' Church, Lewisham.

After their marriage they went to live in Queensland, where Mr. Murphy had work. Eventually they returned to Sydney to live, settling at Rozelle. Mrs. Murphy went home to Bathurst for the birth of their first child, a son, whom they called Cedric. Three years later they were blessed with a daughter, whom they christened Violet Marguerite. The family lived at Rozelle for about 15 years, and then moved firstly to Five Dock and then Leichhardt for a short time, and then in February 1906, they moved to Arncliffe. Here they lived in a two storey stone house situated on the Highway, near Arncliffe Station. The house had been built by a "Cousin Jack" (a Cornishman), who had at one time been an "Admirer" of Mrs. Murphy. It was said that the gentleman had died in the house, and this made Mrs. Murphy feel uneasy and unhappy, so eventually they moved in September, 1907, to that delightful cottage "Mimosa", on Forest Road, Bexley, right opposite the street also bearing the name "Mimosa".

"Mimosa" was originally built for Mrs. Clune, Widow of Dr. Clune, and has white washed walls and grey slate roof, with cast iron columns supporting the roof of the front verandah. The windows are those quaint many paneled modified Gothic type. On either side of the Gate Posts stood Pine Trees, which gave the impression that they were guarding the driveway to the house. Today "Mimosa" has a modern fence and garden.

Mr. Murphy used to deal in horses, which he bought sometimes at sales in the Metropolitan area, and sometimes in the country. Some of the horses he kept for his own use, and others he sold. The horses were kept in paddocks adjoining "Mimosa". On one occasion his son Cedric, went to the Country and brought back 15 horses. There was always a demand for horses in those days, by both the Business Merchants for their drays, etc., and also by private people for their sulkies, etc.

At this time Mr. Murphy had the Slaughter House at Bestic Street, Rockdale. It had formerly been Whitby's Slaughter House. The Drovers

used to bring the cattle down to a paddock in Gibbes Street, in the late afternoon, where they would remain until the early hours of the morning, when they would be taken down to the Slaughter House and killed.

When the Murphy family went to live at "Mimosa" there was a horse-drawn bus service operating from Mimosa Street to Rockdale Station. It was owned by an old man named Joe McGrath, who lived in Mimosa Street, near Downey Street. Mr. McGrath's Bus Service failed, in fact he went broke, and the business was put up for auction. Mr. Murphy attended the Sale, and so that Mr. McGrath would not lose everything, he "bought the buses in", if they did not bring the "Reserve Price".

Mr. Formby, who owned the property adjoining "Mimosa", said to Mr. Murphy, "Why don't you buy and run the buses, so that we won't have to walk to Rockdale every day?"

So Mr. Murphy together with a family friend, a Mr. Dean of Northbrook Street, Bexley, purchased the 'Bus Service' and went Partners. After a while Mr. Dean said to Mr. Murphy, "You are doing all the work John and I am doing nothing, so I think you should take them over on your own." So Mr. Murphy agreed and so became the Proprietor of the Coach Service. So now he had three businesses: his Wholesale Butchery, Horse Dealing, and the Horse 'Buses.

Mr. Joe McGrath, the previous owner, was employed by Mr. Murphy to drive the buses, and of course Mr. Murphy drove them himself. Mr. Bill Huckstepp of Mimosa Street, was sometimes engaged as a relieving driver.

The Coaches, which were drawn by 2 horses, were built of wood, and were approximately 5-ft. wide by 12-ft. long. The Driver sat outside at the front of coach in all weathers. He did everything. He drove the horses, collected the fares, and helped the patrons enter and alight from the bus. The part of the Coach where the passengers rode, was boarded up to about armpit level on all sides, excepting the back, which had a door for entry. It had a roof or hood, and canvas blinds, which were rolled up in good weather, and let down and fastened to the sides in bad weather. The seats ran along the sides of the Coach and across the front. The front seat accommodated 4 to 5 persons, whilst the side seats took 6 to 7 persons. The whole of the vehicle was painted black and highly varnished. The Coach had 4 wheels; the two front wheels were somewhat smaller than the back wheels.

The Bus Service commenced at 8.10 a.m. each morning, starting at Mimosa Street, this was for the business people. When the passengers were safely seated inside the bus, including Mr. Formby, who was a "regular", John Murphy would climb up into the Driver's seat, take the reins in his hands, crack his whip, and away they would go. Trotting along past Nurse Scott's Cottage, which was overshadowed by its huge Magnolia tree. Then gradually gathering speed as the road curved at Smithson's house, and round the bend passing the Preddey's gracious two storey home "Besborough" standing well back from the road in its extensive grounds, and just beyond its semi-circular red gravel driveway. The clean sweet aroma wafted down to the passengers in the coach, from the huge pine trees, standing like mighty sentinels in a long line behind the white picket fence. John Murphy would call to the horses,

urging them on. How he loved to sit there above them, revelling in the beauty of their arched heads, flying mains and tails, and the rise and fall of their gleaming satiny backs. Onward would press the horses, pulling the coach around the bends and curves of Forest Road. The continuous merry jingling of the harness, and the sharp ringing sound as the horses hoofs struck the hard stoney road, were music indeed to the ear, not only to the driver and passengers of the coach, but to those who lived along the route, and beyond. The clear sweet air of the Bexley Hills bore the happy sound far away. Away sped the coach over the hill, going by the fire station and Stone's house, each of these buildings standing on either side of the top of Queen Victoria Street, and commanding marvellous views of Botany Bay and the land between, including the Railway Line and Kogarah Station. John Murphy would draw the horses to a halt outside "Cluny Brae" (now Victoria House), so that the McLeods, who were "regulars" could enter the bus. Then down the hill passing Kinsela's to Dunmore Street, where a pretty girl named Linda McKenzie, would get on. Along Forest Road, and turning into Harrow Road, and speeding down hill by homes both large and small, along Watkin Street, and so on to the terminus at Rockdale Station. John Murphy would climb down from the driver's seat, secure the reins, give the horses a "well done" slap on their backs. Then he would go to the back of the coach and help his patrons alight.

On the homeward journey the horses would slow up somewhat as they climbed the steep grade of Harrow Road. Certain high spirited schoolboys were wise to this, and when school was out, and the jingling of the harness heralded the approach of the coach, they would take up vantage points, and as it went along the road, they would jump up and hang on the back of the bus. There they would gleefully stay, holding on with all their might, until someone called out "Whip-behind". Then the Driver would flick his whip to the back of the bus, and the miscreants would jump off and run to the side of the road laughing, having gained a free ride and a terrific thrill.

Some of the passengers would come along to catch the bus of a morning still eating part of their breakfast. It was all very countrified. The bus always stopped and waited for anyone who was running late.

The bus service ran from 8.10 a.m. in the morning from Mimosa St., an hourly service most of the day, excepting for "quick trips" during the peak hours. The "Quick trips" or fast trips were made by going along Albyn Street, instead of to the top of Harrow Road and along Forest Road. During the busy period Mr. Murphy would put a young horse with an old horse, and when the passengers got on the bus and saw that Mr. Murphy was driving, they would say, "We will have a fast trip home tonight". But they were never afraid, as they knew that Mr. Murphy was an absolute expert at handling horses, and anyway the bus mostly had the road to itself. The last bus from Rockdale of a night was 10 p.m. If you were going to the Picture Theatre at Rockdale on Saturday night, you caught the 7 p.m. from Mimosa Street, and you would arrive at the Pictures at 7.15 p.m. Nice and early. The next bus was at 8 p.m., and if you caught this you would arrive a quarter of an hour late.

It was the duty of the daughter, Miss Violet, to see that the "Change" was ready in the collection bag each morning, and it amounted to Three Shillings. This seems fantastic, but then the fare to Rockdale was Twopence, later on to be increased to Threepence.

Old Joe McGrath, when he had a day off from driving the buses, how did he spend it? Did he go to Sydney Town to see the sights or do some shopping? Did he go down to the Beach for a swim? or did he just potter around or rest at home? Not he. He spent the whole day riding up and down on the buses, occasionally getting off and refreshing himself at the Hotel. Well no doubt it was a very pleasant way to spend one's spare time. Swapping yarns and jokes with the Driver and passengers, and picking up the local gossip and news. On each trip would be new company, with new yarns, new jokes, and new gossip. Even if Joe had to make the trip on his lonesome, he could settle back and daydream, whilst the sunshine pleasantly warmed him through. Or he could watch the passing scenery, or the fascinating sight of the metal studs and ornaments on the horses' bridle flashing and sparkling in the sunshine. If the weather was wet and wild with the heavy cold rain drumming on the roof, and the mighty gusts of wind pushing hard against the sides of the coach making it sway. How cosy, warm and intimate it would be inside the coach. Joe was a simple man, and he found his joy in simple pleasures, as indeed did most people in those more leisured times. Old Joe's dream of the perfect life, (or so he said) was to have a room full of money. When you had need of some, you just went and took what you required.

Sometimes the right of the Coach to use the centre of the roadway was challenged by that well known personality, Jimmy Clarke, who used to walk daily from Smithson's Wine Bar (now the Bexley Golf Club house), to Brighton-le-Sands. If the Bus did not keep a good enough distance from him, he would give it a mighty wham with his walking stick. He usually encountered the bus between the Fire Station and Dunmore Street.

The Murphys lived at "Mimosa" for about $6\frac{1}{2}$ years. Most of the entertainment was in the home in those days. They in turn were invited to parties given by their friends. When they lived at Arncliffe, the daughter Violet used to attend school at St. Joseph's Convent at Rockdale. Here she became great friends with the Moran girls, who also at that time lived at Arncliffe. When the Murphys moved to "Mimosa" the Morans went to live at "Glendolough" (now the Salvation Army Boys' Home, Bexley North). It had formerly been the home of their Grandmother, Mrs. Wolloghan. The Morans also had parties for their daughters and their young friends, and to quote Miss Violet Murphy, "It seemed like going to the end of the earth to get there, the going was so rough. But it was really well worth the effort, as when we finally got there, we had such wonderful times. We used to dance all around those lovely verandahs."

Mr. Murphy then decided to buy the block of land opposite on the corner of Forest Road and Mimosa Street on the northern side. It was owned by a Mr. Buchanan, who owned a Silk Shop in Sydney. He bought the block, which was 58-ft. on the slant along Forest Road for £2 per ft., £116 all told. When the Sale was finalised, Mr. Buchanan shook hands with Mr. Murphy and said, "I hope you have more luck with this ground than I have had. I have paid rates on it for over 20 years, and I am selling it to you today for less than I gave for it". Mr. Murphy later on bought the two adjoining allotments.

Mr. & Mrs. Murphy built a very large bungalow on the land, which was set amidst lovely lawns and gardens. They called the house "Leeholme",

after a beautiful house they both admired in the Bathurst district, which was the home of the Lee family. All the family loved their new home. It was a very spacious place, with plenty of room to move about in, and every comfort. It had verandahs on every side, some were open, and others enclosed with large glass windows the whole length. One large glassed in sun verandah looked across the lawns and gardens to the tennis court. Friends came regularly to play tennis and spend many pleasant hours of enjoyment with the family. From the house they had a clear view through to the Fire Station in one direction, and up to St. Mary's Star of the Sea Convent in the other direction. Between "Leeholme" and the Convent was McCarthy's weatherboard house, which stood between Mimosa Street and St. George's Road. Then there was nothing except paddocks until you came to Waratah Street, here were two nice brick homes, the first being the home of the Foscets (now a Convalescent Hospital), then the McEwans house, and then the Convent. On the opposite side of Forest Road going south was Formby's, then "Mimosa", then a two storeyed house just before Willison Road. This house had had several owners and tenants, and for some time was used by the Priest of St. Mary's Church in Croydon Road, as his residence. Further on was "Alabama House", standing like an English Castle in miniature, with its towers and battlements., amidst its beautifully terraced lawns on which strutted a number of peacocks. Then the large Estate of the McConnachie family with its extensive and uninterrupted views of Botany Bay. (Now Sydney Technical High School).

When the Murphys went to live at "Leeholme" the bus service was beginning to really prosper, but so were Mr. Murphy's other investments. He had given up the Slaughter House at Rockdale, and was buying his meat from the Wholesalers at Homebush. This meant that he had to have extra horses to pull the heavy meat vans carrying the huge loads of carcasses, especially in the winter time. The horses used to "knock up" pulling the loads through what is now Kingsgrove Road in the wet weather. The so-called road was just a mass of heavy yellow greasy clay. He used to keep changing the horses all the time. When someone commented on his pair of horses once, Mr. Murphy said, "Oh yes they are a very good pair, one does all the work, and the other is content to let it."

At this time John Murphy found it necessary to have someone reliable to drive the buses, as there was no way to keep a check on things. There were no tickets issued, etc. So he asked his brother-in-law, Mr. Don Berg, to come and drive for him. This gentleman lived at Concord. He had been a Baker, but had retired. He and his family moved to Bexley, and he more or less took charge of the driving etc. of the buses. But his family were never happy in Bexley, as they missed their old home and friends and interests at Concord. So eventually Mr. Berg left the employ of Mr. Murphy and took his family back to Concord. Mr. Murphy would probably never have sold his Horse 'Buses Service, if the Uncle Don could have stayed on.

Mr. Con Ifland, who was a Cousin of Murphy, came down from the Country and wanted to buy the Service. So Mr. Murphy sold to him two Coaches and two teams of horses for a figure that would not cover the cost of two tyres of today's buses. Mr. Ifland sold his home and whatever other interests he had, and came to Sydney to take over the buses. The night Con Ifland came down from the country to take over, kindly Mrs. Murphy could

not sleep, as she was afraid he might not make a success of it and lose his money. She need not have worried, because he never looked back. The business has been a huge success. Con Ifland first driving the Horse Buses himself, and later changing to motor buses when they came into use. The population steadily increased, and the bus service was extended first to Waratah Street, then to Hurstville Station, and now to Beverly Hills Station. Mr. Murphy was proprietor of the Horse Buses from about 1909 to 1916.

Mr. Murphy continued as a Wholesale Butcher for a number of years, during which time he built a Meat Depot in Mimosa Street, which had a "Chilling Room", where carcasses were placed if they had to be kept over night. The top of the brick front of the Meat Depot was struck by lightning during a bad storm in 1922. On another occasion it had all the corrugated iron roof torn off and tossed away over onto Forest Road during another big storm. Eventually at the commencement of World War 2, in 1940, the business was floated into a Company under the name of the John Murphy Pty. Ltd. Just around this time Mr. Murphy retired from business to live quietly at "Leeholme" until his death in 1947. The firm John Murphy Pty. Ltd., still flourishes today, in conjunction with McPherson Bros., and M.I.D. Co., as Wholesale Butchers at the State Abattoirs.

"Leeholme" was sold about 9 years ago, in 1959, to be exact. It was demolished soon afterwards, and a Service Station was built on the sight. The Service Station is now the headquarters of the St. George Taxi Centre.

*** *** ***