



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY. 2207.

11th October, 1968.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date. Friday Evening next, 18th October, 1968, at 8 p.m.

Place. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Guest Speaker. Mr. D. Sinclair will present a paper prepared by Mr. Eardley on "The Taverns of the Sans Souci Peninsula".

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D.H. Sinclair,

R.W. Rathbone,

President.

Hon. Secretary.

58.4813.

Supper Roster. Mrs. Coghlan and Mrs. Osborne, Mrs. Day,
Mrs. Perkins and Miss McCartney.

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RAFFLE FOR BARK PAINTING.

The Raffle for the Bark Painting will be drawn at the October Meeting. All books not in the hands of the Secretary by Friday, 18th October, will not be included in the draw. Please return your books and money promptly.

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PAT MOORE'S SWAMP. THE ALFRED KENNERLEY GRANT.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

The Crown Grant of 77 acres made to Alfred Kennerley lay to the south of the present day Austral Street, Kogarah, and east of the alignment of Rocky Point Road, embracing a large portion of the shallow eastern slopes of Fitzgerald's Hill. This area was not developed to any great extent and, apart from the market garden section covering the flats adjoining Pat Moore's Swamp, the rest of the land was a tangled gum-tree forest. This 77 acre property eventually came into the hands of Chester Canham who erected a four-roomed homestead, built of brick, on the crest of Fitzgerald's Hill. The site of the cottage commanded a magnificent view of the swamp land and the sandhill country bordering Lady Robinson's Beach, across the blue waters of Botany Bay and its opposing entrance headlands, to the verdant slopes now occupied by the densely settled suburbs of Matraville, Maroubra and Randwick.

About 1895 the Canham family subdivided their extensive property, selling some ten acres and their homestead to William Collins, and then went to live in a four-roomed brick cottage, which still stands at the southern side of the modern Phillips Road, amidst a welter of somewhat squalid factory premises.

With the subdivision of the Canham Estate an allotment at the north-eastern corner came into the hands of James Marks, a market gardener, and later a portion went to Mr. Wilson, a turn-cock in the employ of the Water and Sewerage Board. Mr. Wilson's home has been demolished in recent years and his block of land is now vacant. A beautiful slender palm tree, of tremendous height and a real landmark around the district, also suffered in the scorched-earth spate of destruction. Proceeding southwards, across Wilson Street, the residence of Mr. Henry Clark was to be met, its southern boundary being adjacent to the present Maders Avenue. Then came a property taken over by Mrs. Jessie Stonell, where the large and aptly named "SEA VIEW" poultry farm was established. The residence on this property was of the small weatherboard type, surrounded by the usual bizarre assortment of wired fowl-runs, rickety gates, and hen-hutments of wondrous design, intermixed with a wealth of scarlet-flowered coral trees, grown for shade purposes as recommended by text-books devoted to poultry farming. One remembers the jealously guarded swallow's nest, built of mud, located above the front door of the cottage, a circumstance which gave great pleasure to Mrs. Stonell. To quote Gilbert White in his classical treatise, entitled "THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE", - "The Hirandines clear our outlets from the annoyances of knats and other troublesome insects". In an area bordering Pat Moore's Swamp any assistance in this direction would indeed be an asset. The Welcome Swallows were certainly most welcome.

The SEA VIEW poultry farm was eventually sold to Mr. J. Maderer, who subsequently subdivided the property into housing allotments, and had his surname perpetuated in an access street known as Maders Avenue. The sale of the blocks, with their frontages facing towards Rocky Point Road, left only a narrow laneway to give entrance to the weatherboard cottage, which was marooned on what is now known as a "Battle-axe" block, surrounded on all sides by backyard fences. This private laneway eventually passed into other hands and the cottage frontage was reversed to face to-

wards a thoroughfare known as Irene Street. It is now approached by a foot-path passing between the side paling fences of newly built cottages. The old farmhouse may be distinguished behind this outer wall of modern residences by means of a huge date palm, which provides shelter and home sites for a vast colony of sparrows, or should we say weaver-finches.

The previously mentioned ten acre portion of the Canham property acquired by William Collins extended from Rocky Point Road eastward to the lowlying flats bordering the western margin of Pat Moore's Swamp, where the market garden was located. The higher portion of the land, on the slopes of Fitzgerald's Hill, was covered with gum trees which supplied the household with fuel for a great many years. The stables and packing sheds, encased in galvanised iron, were clustered together at the rear of the house, with their various doorways facing inwards to the central yard. The income from the farm was supplemented by flocks of poultry, the birds being enclosed in numerous runs fenced with wirenetting to prevent their straying and the attentions of prowling animals seeking a succulent feed. Flowers were also grown for City florists and were made into bunches or posies according to demand. There were both blue and white agapanthus, chrysanthemums, jonquils, snow-drops, and violets, amongst other floral gems. There was an orchard of fruit trees, such as loquats, lemons, and quinces, the fruit of which made a welcome addition to the family income. The lower section of the garden comprised rectangular shaped beds of Broad-beans, French Beans, Turnips, Potatoes, Cabbages, Cauliflowers, and Rhubarb. The various culinary varieties of pot-herbs were also cultivated, likewise big yellow and the small red guavas which came in handy for jam making for household use. One of the major tasks on the farm was the never-ending job of watering the vegetable and flowering plants, per medium of large-sized watering cans, which were filled from ponds sunk for the purpose in various parts of the property.

Taking the produce to the Sydney markets occasioned an early start, quite often at 1 a.m., as some seven miles of main road had to be traversed by the heavily laden vehicle. After disposal of the vegetables there followed the distribution of the bunches of flowers to the various florists. Then came a tour of the City stables to gather a return load of manure so necessary for the fertilisation of the cropping beds. For his delivery work William Collins had two carts and a four-wheeled wagon. In addition to the horses there were two cows, one a Jersey and the other a black Fresian, which provided more than sufficient milk for the family.

With the growth in numbers of his family William Collins found it necessary to increase the accommodation of the former Canham Cottage, which, incidentally, was also under attack from white ants. It was decided to rebuild the old residence, extending its walls upward and raising the floor in order to give plenty of air and light to the space beneath. As an added precaution against the ravages of the termites the ground beneath the house was covered with asphalt, a substance which, according to local report, was detrimental to the health of these industrious insects.

Whilst the house was being rebuilt the Collins family moved enmasse to the house named "TIPPERARY" which confronted Rocky Point Road in the vicinity of Marshall Street. The rebuilt homestead of Mr. Collins, now listed as No. 100, was most pretentious, and followed the trend of the day

insofar as its design was concerned. The front room was provided with an ornate bay window, the flat roof of which was embellished with a large cement upright shell, a motif usually associated with St. James the Apostle, who, according to tradition made a journey from the Holy Land to the coast of Spain aboard a sea-shell, a most amazing business. The roof of the house was of slate, centrally decorated by a single horizontal row of slates of lighter hue which were fastened in diamond fashion. The barge boards of the gables were fretted and pierced at their lower ends and central positions by a series of three holes arranged after the pattern of a shamrock. Both the front and northern side verandah were covered with bent corrugated iron, the sheets being painted in alternate bands of red and white, in conformance with the usual fashion of the period. Ornamental cast-iron fringe plates were hung beneath the supporting front roof beam of both verandahs, the decorative design being of flowers and foliage picked out in red, white, brown, and green colours, and the little ornate pointed tips at the base shone with gilt. This colour scheme was usual for cast-iron work at the time of its introduction, and, judging from the few examples which still retain this fascinating embellishment, must have looked most attractive. It is a pity that this colour enrichment, as applied to cast-iron lace-work, has passed into the limbo of forgotten things, owing to a certain indolence which gave the decorative patterns a common coat of paint, usually of black or drab, the latter term being proper for what was known as Dark Stone. Between the windows set in the front walls of the house were vertical banks of square shaped tiles, ornamented with a tomato plant design, incorporating rich red fruit strung out along the central stem, a most fitting house decoration for a market gardener.

In the early nineteen-twenties, following the death of William Collins, the ten acre property was subdivided, and the three unmarried daughters of the family, Annie, Rose, and Pearl, went to live in the then vacant cottage at No. 46 Gray Street, Kogarah, where they carried on a well known dress-making business. The lower portion of the former market garden at Fitzgerald's Hill was taken over as the St. George Sports Ground, where, after a protective fence had been erected, charges were made to view the various football and other games held therein. Three tennis courts were also ranged along Mr. Collins' former cart road, leading into his garden, the old track being incorporated in the alignment of the present day Sunbeam Avenue. The sports ground enclosure came into use during the dread depression days of the early nineteen-thirties to pen dole recipients, to prevent any "doubling-up" at other dole issuing centres, until such time as these had closed for the day.

After the closure of the St. George Sports Ground the area was further subdivided into housing allotments as the Sunbeam Estate and widely advertised as "Wilson's Happy Homes" to such effect that Mr. Wilson gained the sobriquet of "Happy Homes Wilson". Margaret Street was formed and Irene Street lengthened to serve the new housing estate, with the result that a number of pleasing cottages, built in the best of taste and each with its delightful garden, giving a cheerfulness of colour, now grace the area formerly occupied by the market garden of yesteryear.

Divided by a narrow tapered strip of marsh from, and immediately to the east of the lower section of the property owned by William Collins, was a long slender tongue of meadow land under the ownership of William Bergopher. This dry area, raised about one foot above the normal water level of the surrounding marsh, had a length of approximately 700 feet and at its southern end the width was in the vicinity of 80 feet. The meadow was surrounded by a rough hewn post and rail fence beyond which were dense thickets of Swamp Tea-tree, often clustered with masses of tiny white flowers that were most acceptable to the honey-bees. The soil beneath these trees was covered with several varieties of water loving ferns, including "Snake fern" and delicate maiden hair fern, intermixed with peppermint, and tiny blue and white flowered violet plants. Here and there were low-growing bushes of Thyme Honey-myrtle (*Melaleuca thymifolia*), Dog-rose (*Bauera rubioides*) and Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*). Unfortunately this dense coverage was the haunt of tiger and brown snakes. These deadly reptiles could be occasionally seen, basking in the sunlight, as they lay in a coiled position on the numerous cattlepads, which led across the swamp lands in all directions.

Reverting to the Canham family we find that their everyday affairs became centred on general carpentering and carrying work, the market garden portion of their land against Rocky Point Road being cultivated by Mr. Chee, amongst over gentlemen from the Celestial Kingdom. The area is now devoted to factory premises set around the aptly named Production Avenue, of which the least said the better. Prior to this industrial invasion Messrs. Porter and James Marx each had a dairy farm with their pastures extending eastward to the border fence of Scarborough Park.

The homestead of James Marx was a fascinating little brick cottage with gabled extensions at each end, flanking a recessed front verandah. A particularly fine American Magnolia tree, together with other shade trees, overhung the cosy old home, making everything very snug and picturesque. The cottage was built at the level of the original Rocky Point Road; however, when the Sans Souci Tramway was constructed it was necessary to raise the road level some two or three feet in order to ease the gradients in the dip between the slopes of Fitzgerald's and Carroll's hills, a circumstance which gave the cottage a lowlying effect, which rather added to its appearance.

Abutting on to the southern boundary of Chester Canham's property was the "ELL" shaped block farmed by William Bergopher, one of the pioneering market gardeners of the St. George District. His weatherboard homestead was sited on the flat land near the western side of the Scarborough Park drainage channel, close to the present premises of Messrs. Darrell Lea, confectionary manufacturers. The ancient Bergopher cottage was destroyed by fire about the turn of the century and, with the latter subdivision of the estate the former garden area came into the possession of the Rockdale Municipal Council. The land was lowlying and its levels were subsequently raised by the dumping of vast quantities of household rubbish and trade waste, topped with ashes and earth. At present, pending complete settlement of the dumped material, the reclaimed area is an unkept wilderness of low growing weed vegetation of no special interest.

Adjacent to the southern and lower western boundaries of the former William Bergopher property was the small market garden of John Stockdale, with its 190 foot frontage against the alignment of Rocky Point Road. Then came a 90 foot block under the ownership of Robert Jordon, south of which was an undeveloped property owned by the Clark family, whose name is perpetuated in Clark's Hill at Ramsgate, the lower northern and eastern slopes of which terminated in the wet-lands at Pat Moore's Swamp. As far as can be ascertained there was little if any use made of the Clark property, apart from the clearing away of its natural timber, and its use for agistment purposes. However, on the fertile flat land, immediately east of Clark's Hill and west of the Scarborough Park drainage channel, is a small "VEE" shaped market garden, kept in immaculate order by its owner, Mr. Ah Heong. The farm house is in true accordance with the architectural design known as "Queen's Head", a combination of corrugated walls and roofing, the various sheets being bent and also placed in all manner of shapes and, irrespective of established procedure in the use of this unlovely but handy building material, each sheet was used to the best advantage. The result pleased the Chinese builders, and also the author who delights in this form of higgledy-de-piggledy workmanship.

In connection with the place-name of Ramsgate it may be of interest to mention that its Kentish counter-part derived its origin from the Anglo-Saxon word -Ruim's-gest, which appertains to marshy water, a most fitting term for this suburb of St. George.

The Rockdale Municipal Council was responsible for carrying out a vast reclamation scheme in the early nineteen-thirties whereby that section of Pat Moore's Swamp lying between Barton Street and the northern tree-clad border of Scarborough Park was converted into a huge sports ground and playing field. Messrs. Arthur Kierle, of Manly, commenced work on the project during July 1933, and by means of a suction pump, some 160,000 cubic yards of mud and sand were spread over $31\frac{1}{2}$ acres of marsh land at a cost of £1731. The former shallow drainage channel which, in a north-south direction, passed through the length of the swamp, was widened some one hundred feet and deepened to about thirty feet. The great artificial lake thus created forms one of the largest freshwater pools in the vicinity of Sydney. Some day, perhaps, the banks will be planted with a wealth of willows, silver poplars, and tall lombardy poplars, amongst other water loving trees, thereby creating a scene of sylvan beauty in a municipality generally noted for its barren landscape insofar as its all too sparse tree-growth is concerned.

According to one source of information the depth of the lake has proved far too useful for rubbish dumpers, and many discarded motorcar bodies have found a resting place amidst the mud and murk of the bottom. One car, at least, was driven on to the grassy sward, where the driver alighted, juggled with the controls, and sent the uncontrolled car onwards at speed to finish its earthly career in one spectacular splash.

With the reclamation of the greater portion of the swampland many of the wading birds lost their feeding and nesting places and were forced to seek other unreclaimed areas more congenial to their welfare. However,

the deep water of the Long Lake encourages cormorants, shags, and the petite Little Pied cormorants, the latter birds being most conspicuous by their "evening dress" of black and white plumage. These birds are often seen in a semi-submerged condition, with only their neck and head above water. They can swim faster than fish and pursue their prey in the depths of the lake, coming to the surface when a catch has been made, or a breath of fresh air is required. The birds look somewhat grotesque when they perch upon an overhanging bough, or atop a fence, during the process of drying their wings. In this position they resemble the German heraldic eagle as depicted in that country's former coat-of-arms. Little Grebes, or Dab-chicks, are also to be seen on occasion, likewise a "paddling" of Black Duck and Teal, whilst, at different times, two or three Black Swans have graced the lovely lake. Another fascinating feature of the area is the spring-time trilling of Sky-larks, although the birds are high overhead, they can be discerned in what has been described as "motionless flight".

Dragon-flies, with their wings tinted a rich delicate blue, are seen in the summer months hovering over the various drainage channels and ditches, particularly where these waterways are overgrown with coarse vegetation. Known as "horse-stringers" by local residents these insects are carnivorous in their feeding habits, and take great toll of mosquitoes and other small flying insects which are usually caught on the wing. This is no great handicap as, according to Doctor R. J. Tillyard, the dragon-flies are capable of reaching a speed of nearly sixty miles per hour.

Continuous heavy rainfalls result in the artificial lake overflowing its low banks and spreading its waters across the flatlands to the former foreshores of the now reclaimed swamp. Flash-floods of this nature give the finny occupants of the lake an excellent opportunity to explore new pastures and feeding grounds. When the water recedes great numbers of fish, including fresh-water mullet up to three and a half pounds in weight, may be trapped in shallow depressions, much to the edification of the local youths. Eels suffer a similar fate, and several measuring more than four feet in length, and as "thick through as a man's thigh", have been caught in this manner. Seagulls arrive in force to assist in the clearing up of any small fry that may be left stranded.

The sporadic floodings afford council employees an excellent opportunity to skim off the surface of the lake, by means of a long length fencing wire, the dense growth of water-hyacinth which spreads its matted bulbous foliage over the waters. This clogging pest is a native of Brazil and proves most difficult to eradicate. It has been stated that "in eight months twenty plants can propagate 1,310,720 other plants, the surface is clogged with such an interwoven mass that fish cannot live beneath the suspended roots, nor can aquatic birds find any sustenance". When in flower the water-hyacinths provide a delicate mauve and yellow bloom of great beauty, but the plant is not admired by the men who have to use long-handled rakes, or the previously mentioned length of fencing wire, to clear the lake of its unwanted growth.

The walk nowadays along the western bank of the Scarborough Park drainage channel, near Ramsgate, is always full of interest, particularly on a sunny morning, irrespective of the season of the year. A warning

should be given that under wet weather conditions and in time of storm the huge playing field and park precincts become a lonely wind-swept area, bleak and devoid of shelter. At these times the paths become muddy and sections are covered with shallow pools of water. However, with the sun shining there is much to be seen and noted in the way of natural life, both animal and vegetable. The tranquil surface of the Long Pond faithfully mirrors the grotesque shaped trunks and dark green pendant foliage of the Swamp-oaks, and the lightness and brightness of the Chinese Weeping-willows.

Green reeds of the Common variety, with feathered bushy plumes at the upper end of each stalk (*Phragmites communis*) are most plentiful, likewise the sword-leaved Reed-mace, or Bulrush (*Cumbunga*), which display long slender stems topped with velvety-brown seed cylinders. Both of these species are to be seen growing either in the water or along the marginal banks. Along the wayside the grass tuffets are inter-mixed with the catkin-like flowers of the Small *Persicaria* (*Polygonum minus*) and its tiny white flowered kindred plant known botanically under the name of *Polygonum strigosum*. One would be most fortunate indeed to find even one plant of the fragrant water-mint which formerly flourished in the area, but odd specimens exist of the Water-primrose (*Ludwigia peploides* subsoecies *montevidensis* - previously known as *Jussiaea repens*) which floats out from the banks in a matted green mass and, in spite of its long botanical classification, is most decorative with its small buttercup shaped brilliant yellow flowers. All this beauty of waterside growth is reflected in perfect detail on the placid surface of the lake.

Azure king-fishers may often be seen perched on their special branch overhanging the channel, watching ever so intently downwards for the slightest movement that would betray the whereabouts of a possible meal. Beneath the surface of the water long strands of the Canadian Pond Weed, of the type known as *Sagittaria*, provide excellent cover for myriads of the small fish, called zambusias, which delight in eating mosquito larvae. On occasions, bright red carp, up to a foot in length, may be seen swimming around the clumps of submerged water weeds. These several items are most noticeable, but there is a host of lesser plants awaiting the prying eyes of the naturalist. To hear the sighing of the wind as it drifts through the needle-like leaves of the Swamp Oaks is not the least enchantment afforded at the southern extremity of Pat Moore's Swamp.

For their kindly interest in the preparation of this essay on the southern area of Pat Moore's Swamp the authors are indebted in varying degrees to Miss Pearl Collins, Mrs. Laurel Herbert, Miss Elizabeth Whitehall, and the late Mrs. Crisp, and also to Mr. Arthur Ellis and Mr. Owen Herbert, who have helped in many ways.