



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY. 2207.

9th May, 1969.

Dear Friend and Member.

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

Date. Friday Evening next, 16th May, 1969, at 8 p.m.

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

Guest Speaker. Miss Mabel Cheetham will present an illustrated talk on Scandinavia.

Business:- General.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D. Sinclair.
President.

R. W. Rathbone.
Hon. Secretary.
587.4813.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Coghlan (Capt) and Mrs. Piper, Miss Binns, Miss Noble, Mrs. Wright.

Outing to Berrima. In place of this projected outing to Hunters Hill it was decided to go, instead, to Berrima.

Date: Saturday, 17th May, 1969. Leaving Rockdale Town Hall at 9 a.m.
Price \$1.50 per person. There are still a few seats left. Ring Mr. Sinclair at 587.4555

Book 4. Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway now available. The fourth book in the series of publications by the St. George Historical Society - The Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway - written and illustrated by Mr. Gifford Eardley, is now for sale at 65¢ a copy or 70¢ posted. Only 500 copies have been printed and many have already been ordered.

If you want a copy, ring Mr. D. Sinclair at 587.4555, or write to 7 Prince Edward Street, Carlton.

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.... C.W. Napper.

This paper is a continuation of the story of the Rockdale Wesleyan Church in Bay Street, as published in the Bulletin of the St. George Historical Society on November 8th, 1968, and concerns the further development of the affairs of the Wesleyan Chapel of 1857. Gazing through the Minute Book of the Trustees of the Chapel we find that the Chapel was let from time to time for public meetings, and also for the enclosed meetings of such organisations as the Oddfellows Lodge and kindred societies. In fact the Chapel was the only place available in the area, then known as Rocky Point and now known as Rockdale, for such meetings. The petition of the Oddfellows came before the Trustees of the Chapel on November 3rd, 1879, when it was resolved "That we allow them the use of the School-room one night a fortnight for lodge purposes only, and furnish two lights for the rental of one pound per quarter, with the following restrictions. First. No Smoking Allowed. Second. That should any damage accrue to either the building or the furniture through their meetings they shall make proper repairs. Third. That this arrangement holds good for one year only." It was also resolved "That half said rent be paid to Trust Fund and half allowed for extra trouble caused to the teacher of the school".

The Wesleyan School was known as Rocky Point School between the years 1857 and 1882, in which period it was conducted by the Wesleyan Church Authorities. On January 1st, 1883 it became a Public School, although Mr. John Andrews, who had been in charge since 1862, continued as teacher under the new regime until the closure of the use of the Chapel for educational purposes, an event which occurred at the end of the year 1884. For reasons now difficult to assess the students of the area, now known as Rockdale, had to attend the Public School at Arncliffe or Kogarah, a circumstance which proved most inconvenient for the majority of the scholars, who resided in or around old-time Rockdale. In passing, it should be mentioned that it was not until January 1889 that the present Public School, sited at the crest of Rockdale Hill, was opened under the head-master-ship of Mr. John Herlihy.

The earlier fears that the Rocky Point Wesleyan Church would prove too large for the local congregation were soon dispelled. The edifice became the centre of many revivals and gatherings, and its membership had grown to such an extent that by 1871 the Chapel became too small. The nave portion of the present main Church building was then erected at a cost of £600 and the original Chapel adapted for school and Sunday School purposes. The growth of the Church became noticeable in many ways and the Trustees meeting in the school room held on February 15th, 1877, dealt with a request from the choir for increased accommodation. This request posed the Trustees with a problem, an expensive problem, as it meant the addition of two side vestries to house the choir and also their musical instrument. It was decided to "postpone any such extension for the present until the Trustees had taken a collective view of the place". Meanwhile, it was resolved that Messrs. Thomas Mascord and John Andrews "get the fence mended and get some gravel placed about the Church".

However, the choir was undaunted and at the next meeting of the trustees, held on August 30th, 1877, they came forward with a paper showing the desirability of procuring an American Organ for the Chapel services and this time their wishes were carried out. The instrument was purchased at a cost of £45, of which sum the choir members, through contributions raised at two "Evenings of Sacred Song", donated £35. It was suggested that the harmonium formerly in use be sold to defray the balance of £10, and "that any surplus remaining, it be appropriated to the use of the choir for the purchase of books, etc." It was further resolved that Mr. William Beehag's tender for twelve guineas for the purchase of the harmonium be accepted. It is remarkable how all these matters of moment work out for the benefit of all concerned.

The Anniversary services held by the Reverend John Osborne, celebrated by a tea and public meeting held on Thursday December 12th, 1878, and Church services and sermon on Sunday December 8th 1878, brought forward several items of interest. The trustees resolved "Whatever balance of the proceeds of the Anniversary celebration that remain after paying the Church debt be given towards the erection of a sister Church at West Botany". A very fine gesture indeed. At the same meeting the Trustees decided to insure the Church building to the amount of £400, and the earlier chapel building, then the school room, at £100. The Chapel-keeper also had his annual remuneration raised from £6 to £10 in consequence of the frequency of Evenings of Sacred Song and the extra labour incurred thereby. It is understood that at this period Mr. Thomas Mascord was Church Steward and that his good wife was Church-keeper. In 1880 we find that the erection of new fencing and gates to the Church property became necessary, a circumstance, including the paintings, set the Church finances back some £60, quite a large sum in those far off days. It was also mentioned at the time that the end wall of the new Church was showing signs of parting from the rest of the fabric, the aperture letting in an unpleasant draught not greatly appreciated by those sitting nearby. To overcome the difficulty the secretary was empowered to borrow £50 at 7% interest to defray the necessary cost of affixing the internal moulding and external flashing.

In September 1880, the job of re-shingling the old school-house was entrusted to Mr. William Bray, whilst on November 20th, 1882, a request was received from the Sunday school teachers for additional room. It was resolved that the school room be enlarged at a cost not to exceed £400. At this time further Church expenditure was incurred with a third Minister being appointed to the local circuit and it was required that this gentleman was to reside at Rocky Point (Rockdale). To defray extra costs involved, the trustees decided that "collections be made both morning and afternoon at the Church services, and not only in the afternoon as heretofore".

The plans for the Sunday School extension appeared in due course and it was decided, at the Trustee meeting held on April 12th, 1883, "to accept Mr. S. Benson's tender for the mason work for £130 and that of Mr. List for £178 for carpentering and finishing the edifice, provided that these two tenders cover all works required by the plans and specifications". The secretary was requested to negotiate for the required loans, and Mr. Andrews to arrange for the contracts and to superintend the work. Mr. Benson applied for a further £12 through a misunderstanding of the

specifications in reference to the window and door dressings being chiselled. On consideration of the matter the Trustees decided to offer the sum of £6 to Mr. Benson for the extra work. They also decided to furnish a five inch guttering around the building in order to lead rain water into a suitable catchment tank, as at this time the city water reticulation service had not reached the area. It was also resolved that said tank be removed from the vicinity of the Church to the back, or east end, of the school-room. Whilst on the subject of water services the Trustees "presented their thanks to Miss E. Beehag and Miss Moon for the water bottle and glass donated by them for use of the preachers in the Church".

On 12th June 1884, the Trustees of the Rockdale Church decided to erect a sister church at Hurstville at a cost of £300, the Reverend H.A. Nolan and the Reverend J. Bowes being authorised to collect funds for this purpose. By the following month tenders for this new Church were presented, and that of Messrs. Roberts and Lardner were accepted for the sum of £245. Mr. William Bray was appointed to superintend the erection of the building on behalf of the Trustees, the official opening taking place on January 26th, 1885, and the two following Sundays.

The Trustee meeting held on November 1st, 1884, resolved that the Reverend J. Bowes be "requested to wait on Mr. William Beehag and Mr. Willmott with the view of obtaining a Church site at West Botany, or to ask Mr. Godfrey or others". This Church site was kindly given to the Trustees by Mr. Foulkes and the Trustees decided to devote the proceeds of the forthcoming Anniversary, less the amount due for lighting and cleaning of the Rockdale Church, for the building of the West Botany Church project. The question of a Parsonage at Rockdale now arose and a generous offer was made by Mr. Godfrey of a site adjacent to the Church grounds. Mr. Godfrey's tender of £777 to erect the two-storied eight-roomed Parsonage was accepted at the Trustee meeting held on November 17th, 1887, and at the June meeting of the following year it was decided to light both the Church and the school-room with gas, a service which had then recently come to Rockdale. Four years later the secretary was instructed to sell the now disused oil-lamps and "make the best bargain he can".

The noise of Mr. Saywell's steam trams passing to and fro along Bay Street raised the ire of the Church Trustees and a letter was sent to the offenders requesting that the puffing and whistling noises be lessened during Church hours. Locomotives are notoriously rowdy creatures and just what steps that Mr. Saywell could take to eliminate the huffings and puffings as the engines slowly climbed the Bay Street hill is hard to determine, although, no doubt he could have had some influence in controlling the exuberent whistling.

December the 5th, 1888, marked the Trustee meeting which dealt with the point, or apex, of the unoccupied Church land which approached the junction of Rocky Point Road and Bay Street. At this meeting it was decided to lease this portion of the property, below the trees, to Mr. Thompson. However, in March 1889, Mr. Thompson relinquished his lease, which then came under lease for a term of five years to Mr.

Richard Holden, a butcher by trade, at a charge of £25 per annum. However second thoughts on the matter made the Trustees think that it was best not to lease the said land. Then, on October 10th, 1890, it was resolved "That Mr. A. Carruthers offer for the western point of the Church ground on a lease for seven years be accepted on condition that the plan of the building to be erected be approved."

It should be mentioned at this juncture that "in 1883 the junior minister of the Newtown Circuit, the Reverend Joseph Bowes, was appointed to reside at Rocky Point (Rockdale); and in 1886 a division was effected, and a new circuit created, comprising Rockdale (as Rocky Point was henceforth to be known), Kogarah, Arncliffe, Hurstville, Bexley and West Botany Street, to which the Reverend Thomas Parker was appointed as first Minister". In the following year it became necessary to provide accommodation for a married Minister, and to this end the aforementioned Parsonage had to be erected to house the Reverend Joseph Monahan. Three years later in 1892, during the pastorate of the Reverend Charles Jones, a further division took place by the creation of Kogarah, Hurstville, and Peakhurst, into a separate circuit.

On July 13th, 1892, a contract was let to Mr. Hill for a further addition to what may be described as the second Church building, the price being £430. However, Mr. Hill did not sign the contract which was subsequently placed with Messrs. Smith, Eldridge, and Godfrey at a cost of £500. It is understood that this work covered the addition of two side transepts to the Church, making it a tee-shaped structure, and lengthening the roof to accommodate the new arrangement. It is not known to the writer as to whether the neat stone belfry over the northern entrance doorway was erected at this period. It is understood that a Church bell was never placed in this structure. The tender for the panelling and the provision for the rostrum seats etc. was let to Messrs. Eldridge and Jones at a cost of £55. A system of seat rental was in vogue, and at this period it was resolved to have four seats at the rear of the Church set aside for strangers "and to be free". School children were accommodated on the right hand side of the pulpit, where, no doubt, they had to be on their best behaviour. It was also resolved to purchase new matting and to provide a special chair to serve the needs of the occupant of the rostrum, a kind thought which no doubt was fully appreciated by said occupant. It should be mentioned that the glorious collection of camphor laurel, peperina, and cedar trees, which flank the so shady western side of the Church, were planted by John Bowmer, during his term as Mayor of Rockdale.

The new additions to the Church were opened officially on November 15th, 1892, when the Reverend Charles Jones and Mr. Holliday occupied the pulpit. It is of interest to note that the Trustees rejected the laying of the city water service to the Parsonage. No doubt Church finances were strained through the financial depression which was affecting the whole State of New South Wales at this period, as later we read in the contemporary minutes that a large sum owing for the renting of the Parsonage was remitted by the generosity of the Trustees. It is also pleasing to note that the water service was eventually connected to the Parsonage when the financial stringency passed.

On May 26th, 1894, an application was received from Miss Wearne for permission to use the Sunday School for a private Day School for a period of six months. The application was granted on condition that she kept the place clean and did not interfere with the furnishing. This arrangement was later extended for a further period of six months. The Church choir petitioned the Trustees for a new organ and after much fund raising a new pipe organ, a magnificent instrument, was purchased at a cost of £160. The dedication of the organ was set down for a week day evening, admission for the special occasion being sixpence for adults and threepence for children.

On the expiry of the lease of the point of land occupied by Mr. A. Carruthers the property came into the hands of Mr. J. Napper and Mr. B. Bowmer as a produce and fruit establishment. It was Mr. Napper's privilege to provide sheafs of wheat and pumpkins, etc. for display on a loan basis at the Harvest Festivals held in the adjacent Church. This display material went the rounds of the other local Churches for a similar purpose, and the Roman Catholic Church, after being warned that the exhibits had been displayed at the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, and by the Salvation Army, replied "That is quite all right, we will sprinkle them heavily with Holy Water".

The foundation stone of a large brick Sunday School, sited on the southern side of the Church property, was laid with due ceremony by Mrs. W.A. Beehag, representing the pioneering family associated with the Church. A smaller stone was set by Miss Andrews, daughter of John Andrews, the teacher of the undenominational day school held in the original Church building, at the same gathering held on December 9th, 1933. This new hall is a magnificent building and furnished with all manner of equipment, including a large stage, for the religious teaching of the young.

The Parsonage in Bay Street had a face lift about 1955 when the full length first floor verandah, with its elaborate wealth of cast-iron balustrading, was removed and replaced by a small porch over the entrance doorway. On Sunday April 27th, 1958, a dedication service was held when a new Communion Table, the gift of Fanny Elder, together with its glass cover plate, the gift of Henry Ernest Upton, were dedicated to the service of the Church. The surrounding Communion Rail was presented by Henry Thomas Hicks, whilst Marilyn Pope gave the tall and exquisite wooden cross, mounted against the wall at the rear of the Communion Table, as an emblem of the Christian faith. It should be mentioned that the marble Baptismal font was a gift made in 1935 by the Rockdale Methodist Girls Fellowship.

The now old Church is noted for the beauty of its stained glass windows. Opposite the entrance doorway, inserted in the eastern wall, is the famous window representing "I am the Light of the World", which must be seen in all its colourful glory on a sunny morning, to be fully appreciated. This particular window is a memorial to Yeoman and Mary Ann Geeves, also George Finley and Warren George Wentworth (grandsons of the Geeves family) and is the gift of Elizabeth C. Wentworth, the younger daughter of Yeoman Geeves.

And so the old Church, with its background of pioneering days and pioneering people, still flourishes at this year of grace. The Trustees are modern in their collective thinking, and have provided the means for heating in the winter and cooling in the summer, together with hearing aids for elderly and other folk. The Church premises, with their foreground of shapely trees, are the one truly beautiful spot in the conglomeration of business premises which form the centre of the busy suburb of Rockdale.

In conclusion, I must thank Mr. Gifford Eardley and Mr. Albert Matheson, M.B.E., for their kindly assistance in the preparation of this article dealing with the history of the Rockdale Methodist Church, a Church which has endeared itself to generations of worshippers.

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ANTIQUE DOMESTIC & HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENT.

.... by Gifford Eardley.

Last year the members of the St. George Historical Society were favoured by a lecture delivered by Mr. Harold Riley, of Arncliffe, which minutely described a number of exhibits culled from his large collection of domestic and household equipment. At this lecture a vast range of items were brought forward for our inspection and their details explained to an enthusiastic audience. There were candle-sticks of divers patterns, lamps of wondrous variety, china ornaments, antique bottles, and amongst other bric-a-brac, an ice-cream churn which called for much muscular power upon the part of the female members of the household.

At our March Meeting, in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Riley, I was called upon at short notice, to briefly describe a further collection of exhibits obtained from the same source. This material had been mostly culled from various old established homes in the Arncliffe area in particular. One may say that practically all of this, now old-fashioned but highly interesting equipment, was represented in good class homes throughout the length and breadth of Australia at the beginning of the present century. For the most part the various items would be manufactured in Great Britain, but the excellent and prettily designed china tea service, a remnant of which has survived the passing years, came from Silesia, a Province of Prussia in Germany, which has always been noted for the quality and excellent glaze of its pottery, figuarines, and household china-ware.

Item No. 1 of the display was an old elaborately bound Common Prayer Book which was presented to Robert Reddall Robinson as a youth, this young gentleman being born in December 1838. Unfortunately the back binding is now in need of repair, but as to the manner in which these repairs can be carried out is a matter for conjecture. From the same source came Item No. 2, a beautiful Wedgewood jewel case which could possibly date from the same period.

Item No. 3 was a pearl inlaid trinket box which formerly belonged to Miss E.A. Maze, and is of splendid workmanship. This young lady

gained a fine copper medal inscribed with her name on one side and "Degree of Merit" on the other. Item No. 4 was a silver medal of the Academy of Arts, dated 1878, which was also presented to the young lady in question, whilst Item No. 5 was a beautiful glass encased jewel box, of rectangular shape, which must have been one of her prized possessions.

From the Gleddon family of "Hotham", in Forest Road, Arncliffe, came Item No. 6 in the shape of a metal based candlestick complete with its dainty snuffer, a real bedside piece which dates back long before the advantages of electric light became of general use. There was, as Item No. 7, another candle stick and snuffer of an unusual elongated shape which would be a fit subject, with its pretty floral design, for any regional museum. The American tall bodied clock belonging to the family is in good condition, and represents a type which was common to all dining-room overmantels from about the middle of last century until they went out of fashion about the nineteen-twenties. They are now collector's pieces and are greatly prized by any person fortunate enough to have one in his possession. We marked this clock as Item 8. Speaking of time we displayed in Item No. 9 a fat and fulsome "Keeper" watch which, no doubt was once snugly ensconced in the lower waist-coat pocket of Mr. Gleddon. Item No. 10 was a sugar basin made of a combination of china and metal of a somewhat rare shape, whilst Items 11 and 12 related to a "Pasha" Coffee Tin and an elaborate painted Spice Tin which once graced Mrs. Gleddon's kitchen mantel-piece.

From the home of Sir Joseph Carruthers at Sans Souci, Mr. Riley had obtained several articles of great interest, including a pair of bottles of rectangular shape and ornate design which were labelled as Item No. 13. Item No. 14 represented the childish terror incorporated in the corked cobalt blue castor oil bottle as supplied in large numbers by Messrs. C. E. Morton & Co. of London. One recalls one such bottle in the "Baby's" class, taught by Mrs. Grant, at the Kogarah Superior Public School many years ago, the bottle being kept in the cupboard as a retardative for unruly or tearful scholars, the very sight of the bottle was more than sufficient to quieten the most recalcitrant child. There is nothing better to be taken, particularly after a dose of castor oil, than a good cup of coffee, particularly when the Carruthers' family ground their own roasted beans in this solidly constructed coffee grinder, Item No. 15.

We now divert our attention to Berrima where a pair of lovely statuettes, Items 16 and 17 once occupied a prominent place on the over-mantel of the Governor of Berrima Gaol, Mr. W.G. Small. A pamphlet dealing with the history of the gaol was labelled as Item No. 18. The next Item No. 19, was an excellent engraving of the Berrima Church of England. Mr. Riley obtained these several exhibits from the collection of Miss Small, a resident of Hirst Street, Arncliffe.

From the Hull family of Dowling Street, Arncliffe, came Item No. 20 in the shape of the remnants of a tea set which came to Australia from Ireland some one hundred and ten years ago. Pieces of the set are labelled "CARMEN" pattern and bear the mark "SILESIA". It is quite possible that the accompanying small but dainty milk jug and sugar basin, Items Nos. 21 and 22, came from a similar source.

Bottles of various shapes are always intriguing and Item No. 23 was a splendid example of the earthen-ware Scotch Whisky bottle, or pottle, of the eighteen-nineties. There was also a moulded Imperial quart sized clear glass bottle, issued from Robert's Hotel, no doubt full of wine, or rum, in its hey-day. We label this as Item No. 24. An earthenware crock, Item No. 25, was most unusual in having a collar around its top, forming a shallow receptacle for a surrounding ring of water whereby marauding ants and other crawling insects were kept at bay, a most ingenious device. An ancient metal milk carrying bottle, Item No. 26, hailed from an old home which has long vanished from human ken at Peakhurst.

Charlie Cornwall was a most respected butcher in the early days of the most respectable village of Arncliffe and Item No. 28 once dangled from the esteemed gentleman's belt. Whilst on the subject of slaughter, we showed a very fine powder-horn as Item No. 29 and also an unusual set of iron tongs into which hot molten lead was poured for the manufacture of shot, which we listed as Item No. 30. A cartridge filling device from old-time fowling pieces formed Item No. 31, and a cartridge capping device as Item No. 32. Last, but not least, as Item No. 33, we displayed an old-time wash-board of a type which once found a universal place in every domestic scullery for the scrubbing of clothes, a process in which plenty of hot-water was required together with bars of "Sunlight", or "Siren" soap.

Our Society is greatly indebted to Mr. Riley for bringing forward this fascinating display of old-time domestic furnishings, and it is pleasant indeed to know that it is his intention to present these numerous items from his collection to the proposed Rockdale Municipal Council's Museum, if and when this long-overdue educational exhibition is implemented.

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