



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,
BEXLEY. 2207.

11th July, 1969.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date. Friday Evening next, 18th July, 1969, at 8.00 p.m.

Place. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

- Business.
1. Opening and Welcome.
 2. Apologies.
 3. Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting.
 4. Annual Financial Report.
 5. President's Annual Report.
 6. Election of Officers for 1969/70.
 - (i) Patrons.
 - (ii) President.
 - (iii) Senior Vice President.
 - (iv) Two Vice Presidents.
 - (v) Hon. Secretary.
 - (vi) Assistant Secretary.
 - (vii) Hon. Treasurer.
 - (viii) Hon. Auditor.
 - (ix) Ladies Committee.
 7. Correspondence.
 8. General Business.

At the conclusion of the meeting Alderman R. W. Rathbone will show slides on his recent trip to Malaya, Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D. Sinclair,

R. W. Rathbone.

President.

Hon. Secretary.

587.4813

Supper Roster.

Mrs. Chase (Capt.) and Mrs. Sinclair.
Mrs. Osborne, Mrs. Austin and Mrs. Day.

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REMEMBER.

Outing to Hunters Hill,
Saturday, July 19th, 1969.
Leaving Rockdale Town Hall, 12.30 p.m.
Cost \$1.00 per person.
Ring Mr. Sinclair, 587-4555.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE.

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed \$ being my/our membership
subscription for 1969/70.

Name: _____

Address: _____

\$1.00 for the first member of each family and 50c for each additional
member.

Post to Mr. R. C. Callister, 2A Haig Street, Bexley. 2207.

EXTRACT FROM SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, SATURDAY, 27TH
APRIL, 1940.

ST. GEORGE KILLED A DRAGON THAT
NEVER LIVED.

Patron Saint Who Died Four Times

By F. S. Burnell.

Few who, on Tuesday, honoured the festival of St. George, warrior saint of England, realised the mysteries of his "history" and the speculation of pedants concerning it. Great is the pity that the famous dragon which he allegedly slew was but a figment of the imagination of certain enthusiastic scribes, who wished to do his reputation rather more than justice.

In England the cult of St. George appears at least as early as the seventh century, and a parish church dedicated to him in Dorset is mentioned in the will of Alfred the Great. A - supposedly - real arm of St. George constituted one of the principal relics of Canterbury Cathedral, and so great was his popularity that in 1222 he was appointed at Oxford patron of the entire kingdom.

By 1415 his importance had so increased that his festival was ordered to be observed in the same way as Christmas Day, and Edward III, placed his new Order of the Garter under his protection; the soldier-saint naturally being more to the taste of a soldier-king than the meek Edward the Confessor, who had been England's patron hitherto.

According to Camden, Edward III made his soldiers wear the insignia of St. George in the form of white surcoats marked with a red cross on the front and back. "It was a seemly and magnificent thing." says Camden, "to see the armies of the English sparkle like the rising sun; the soldiery of other countries having no habit either to distinguish or adorn them." Thus, if the old historian's statement is correct, the English army was the first in Europe to wear uniform, and that uniform was directly due to the influence of St. George.

"Absurd Fables."

In the Greek Church of to-day St. George is held in great veneration, his feast ranking second only to Christmas and Easter.

After all this, it comes as a decided shock to discover that the very earliest known reference to St. George is one which, while not actually denying his existence, declares that nothing is known about him, and that his alleged history is naught but a pack of absurd fables. Still more startling, this disconcerting announcement comes from the lips of no less an authority than a Pope! I refer to a famous decree of the year 494, which was promulgated by Pope Gelasius and his Council of 72 Bishops. And this is the very first time we hear of him! "No sooner blown than blasted". It must be admitted that early Coptic and Ethiopic accounts of his life and martyrdom, which undoubtedly preserve many of the very statements to which Pope Gelasius took exception are somewhat difficult to swallow. It

appears, for instance, that it was necessary to put him to death no fewer than four times - sometimes in a remarkably complicated manner - before he could be convinced of his decease; even so apparently unanswerable an argument as boiling him in a cauldron till he was completely disintegrated left him as impervious to reason on the subject as before. In view of such invincible stubbornness on the part of their patron saint, the proverbial incapacity of British soldiers for knowing when they are beaten is perhaps hardly to be wondered at.

And what - it may be asked - of the dragon? Where does he come into the story? Well, the legend that gained ground after the 6th century is roughly as follows: The dragon, it seems, dwelt in a lake close to the heathen city of Sylene, in Lybia, whose unfortunate inhabitants were compelled to feed him with human victims, chosen by lot. Eventually the lot fell on the King's daughter, who was awaiting her doom by the lakeside when St. George chanced to ride by, and naturally inquired what she was doing there, "alone and palely loitering." Learning that the dragon was expected for dinner, he first - very properly - put her through a species of Shorter Catechism, in order to assure himself of her respectability and bona fides, and then - at least according to the naively realistic version given by more than one Greek ballad - stretched himself on the grass, and requested the maiden to cleanse his head with her fingers while he enjoyed a brief nap. Thus refreshed, he quickly overthrew the monster, and bade the overjoyed princess tie her girdle round its neck and lead it unresistingly into the city, where he abruptly offered the inhabitants the alternative of embracing Christianity without more ado or of being instantly devoured by the dragon. Needless to say, this pithy presentation of the true faith brought immediate conviction, 15,000 Sylenians being converted on the spot.

Son of a Sheikh?

Gibbon's well-known representation of St. George as a parasite and informer put to death by the people of Alexandria is, of course, now known to be merely an instance of mistaken identity, and the real St. George - George of Lydda, as Sir E. Wallis Budge terms him - appears in fact to have been the son of a Palestinian sheikh, who was both a Christian and a man of considerable wealth and position. His son George thus obtained an appointment in the local army, where he distinguished himself by his bold and soldierly qualities. On his father's death he approached the Governor with a view to obtaining the post formerly held by his father. Exactly what happened then is not known, but the fact that he was a Christian evidently aroused the bitter hostility of the authorities, with the result that he was tortured and put to death; probably during the persecution of Decius, about 250 A.D. It seems certain, as Budge remarks, that the circumstances attending his martyrdom were of a highly unusual character, or he would scarcely have lived for so many centuries in legend and fable.

Such are the simple facts on which the whole structure of myth has been built up. The place of the martyr's burial no doubt soon became an object of pilgrimage to local Christians, and it is easy to imagine how its fame gradually extended, until at length the local saint of Lydda became a national saint, invested with all the traditional powers attributed, not only to national saints, but even to gods and demi-gods - especially solar deities

and heroes. Actually, of course, George of Lydda fought no dragon, but, as the Hero of Christendom, the scribes were obliged to invent one for him; and the material lay ready to their hands in the well-known Greek legend of Perseus and Andromeda, the scene of which was traditionally laid in the vicinity of Lydda.

STORIES IN STONE - A CORNER OF WORONORA CEMETERY

Supplied by M. Hutton Neve.

The study of early gravestones in cemeteries provides many an interesting historical peep into local backgrounds, for often these headstones give details linking generations and marriage connections.

Woronora Cemetery was opened 1895, to provide mainly for the fast-growing St. George area; consequently one will find many prominent names of pioneer families of that area buried here.

There are often "stories in stone" - for in those days inscriptions on gravestones were often in far more detail than today.

One of the most interesting headstones is in the Old Presbyterian Section, indicating that a John McCall senr. was one of Sydney's early settlers. He was born in 1788 in Scotland; his wife Jane was eleven years older; they were married there, and their son John was born at Dalkeith 2/12/1820. They settled out here, and died in Sydney: John senr. on 11/9/1865 at 77; his wife Jane "Relict of the above John McCall" died 30/10/1875 "and was interred here Nov. 1st 1878 on her 91st birthday". Their interments were in the old Devonshire St. Cemetery where Central Railway Station now is.

Their son John married Betsy Skene (who was born in Scotland 27/1/1838), and they lived in Redfern - for their daughter Agnes was born there 27/4/1864. Some time later, this second John McCall and his family moved to Sans Souci, purchasing the old home of "Torwood". This house was built by Thos. Wilson, and was considered to be one of the finest homes in the district.

John second died there 2/12/1907, his wife Betsy died also at "Torwood" 8/12/1913, and their daughter Agnes also died in the old home 27/7/1926. John and his wife Betsy had three other children, Margaret, Jane and Thomas, all of whom died in infancy.

How is this family history known? It is all engraved on their tombstones... and the older tombstone is of unusual interest, for engraved at the bottom of this is "Removed from Devonshire Street Cemetery 17th April, 1901."

Torwood Street and Dalkeith Street, Sans Souci, are apparently both named after the McCall family.

There is another very old Presbyterian tombstone which certainly looks as if it, too, is a removal from Devonshire Street Cemetery:-

"Sacred to the memory of - Robert Ritchie, who departed this life at the Nepean River 19th November, 1849 aged 89 years"

.....and his wife "Ann Ritchie, who departed this life 1st January, 1865 aged 68 years."

This indicates that the old man was born in 1760 and his wife was 37 years younger; which suggests that Robert Ritchie was probably a "First Fleeter" and perhaps married a freeborn local girl. Quite obviously these Ritchies were ancestors of someone in the St. George or Sutherland areas. The tombstone is a large flat stone about 6 x 3 feet, one solid slab, mounted on four short legs.

Was Ritchie Street, Sans Souci, named by a descendent in memory of the old man?

In the Church of England Old Section there is not only a "story in stone" but a "tragedy in stone".

Jacob and Mary Seaton had twelve children; the first was born when Mary was 27 years, the last when she was 43 years; and every one of the children died in infancy. The first died in 1872, the last in 1888; Mary, one presumes, predeceased her husband - she died in 1915 at 70 years and there is no mention of the death of Jacob on the gravestone. Perhaps it was a blood deficiency (perhaps RH negative) or even "consumption" which caused this terrible family tragedy.

In the Roman Catholic Old Section there is quite a good "family tree" of the Morley family; in one or two instances figures relating to age, and one death date, are indecipherable. The stone is in the shape of a pedestal, engraved on four sides; three of the sides are "In Memoriam".

From this tombstone we learn that Joseph Morley was the patriarch of the family - he died 1838 aged 72. We know that the Morleys were connected by marriage with Doyle, Gold, Driscoll and Brown; the family history shown on the stone dates from 1766 (when Joseph was born) to Mrs. Charlotte Emma Brown (died 1917) who was a granddaughter of Joseph - the inscription states she was the daughter of "A. G. & E. F. Morley" - and "A. G. Morley" was Anthony George Morley, born 1810, a son of Joseph.

It is noted that there is a Gold Street in Blakehurst, and an Apsley Street in Penshurst (J. J. Apsley Gold - dates indecipherable - is included in the Morley genealogy).

And finally, who were Mr. and Mrs. Nap Dillon? "Marianne (died 1899) widow of the late Nap Dillon, formerly of Pitt Street, Sydney". (There is a Dillon Street in Ramstate).

.....And so, to stroll through the old sections of a cemetery is to take a stroll into local history.

THE ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S VISIT TO BERRIMA.

Members of the St. George Historical Society chartered Mr. Blythe's motor coach on Saturday 17th May, 1969, for a tour to Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale, and Berrima townships ranged along the Southern Highlands, which teem with historic interest. The coach left Rockdale Town Hall at 9 a.m. and wended its way through the southern suburbs until the Hume Highway was reached and followed through Liverpool to the Cross Roads Junction. Here the Campbelltown Road was traversed until Campbelltown, set amidst its surrounding grassed hills, was attained and a refreshment stop made at Mawson Park, formerly known as "The Green", an area set aside in the early days as a market place. This beautiful park is overlooked by the comely St. Peter's Church and its famous clock which dates back to 1838.

Leaving busy Campbelltown via Queen Street, Fisher's Ghost Creek was crossed before the coach turned westwards for a short distance along Camden Road when, nearing the railway level crossing, a second turn southwards led into the Menangle Road. A pleasant hilly road, largely devoted to cattle grazing, was now traversed for many miles before the early settlement of North Menangle and its long abandoned Horse and Jockey Hotel (now a private residence) was reached. Looking eastwards a glimpse was obtained of the stone structure associated with the former Mount Filead Windmill sited on the crest of its hill. Passing beneath the huge iron railway bridge, which spans the Nepean River, the highway crossed this waterway by means of a low level bridge to enter the small village of Menangle, where the famous "Rotolactor" is situated. Attention was drawn to the lovely St. Jame's Church of England which graces the summit of a tree clad hill adjacent to the Menangle Railway Station.

Beyond Menangle the old South Road was followed for many miles through fenced grazing land, the road winding its narrow way down into grassy hollows and steeply upwards to gain the crest of rain eroded hillocks. Maldon, with its huge dusty cement works and pungent smoke stacks spoiling a fertile valley, was passed at speed before the defile of Stonequarry Creek was reached and the township of Picton entered. At the northern end of Picton Station the coach crossed the railway by means of a high level bridge, after which came a long truss bridge, of white painted timber spanning the gulch of Stonequarry Creek. Beyond this bridge the Hume Highway was rejoined and its southern course traversed through Upper Picton and onwards to Myrtle Creek. Crossing the latter stream the road is up-graded towards Tahmor, where, on the right hand side is the long low building formerly known as the "Traveller's Inn", a hostelry established by a Mr. Klensendorff and licensed in 1824. This inn was a coaching station where horses were exchanged before entering the section ahead which passed through the once infamous Bargo Brush.

Leaving Braemar, a group of tall poplar trees, in their autumn glory of colour, enclosed the former "Prince Albert" hotel, which, according to one source of information, dates back to the year 1845. It is understood that the old building has been refurnished in "Colonial Georgian" style and brought into use as a road house catering for the needs of passing motorists. Another half mile or so leads to "Braemar House", a two storied mansion set well back from the highway and surrounded by a luxuriant growth of exotic trees.

"Braemar House" is also given over to the tourist industry and at a little distance beyond its confines glimpses were to be had of the original single-tracked Great Southern Railway before its junction with the present main line was met in the vicinity of the beautiful Ferguson's Nursery approaching Mittagong. On the left-hand side of the highway was sited the large boarding house known as "Oaklands", and then the willow fringed water-lily pond associated with the "Malting's", where malt is prepared for the Sydney breweries.

The outer streets of Mittagong were now entered where several buildings of yesteryear are still to be seen. In the centre of the town, where the Hume Highway leads westwards for Berrima and places beyond, there was, until recently, a little gathering of small old-time shops, mostly of slab, brick, or weatherboard construction, one of which housed a jeweller, another the New Zealand Insurance Company, whilst the northern-most carried the name of "Sheffield House" above its double-fronted display windows. These tiny distinctive buildings have all vanished prior to 1968 and with their passing went the fascinating picture of the business premises dating from the early days of Mittagong.

Following the road to Bowral the coach climbed the saddle of the ridge dividing the precipitous slopes of Mount Gibraltar, known as "The Gib", from the eastern slopes of the tree-clad Houdrel Range. "The Gib", known to the aboriginals as "Bowrel", is a denuded plug of an ancient volcano and has an elevation of 2830 feet above sea level. Its crest is sometimes covered with snow during the late winter months. From the divide a descent was made through picturesque scenery into the thriving tourist town of Bowral where the coach, by courtesy of the local branch of the Country Women's Association, made a stop for luncheon purposes. Opportunity was also afforded for our members to view the neighbouring park, its flower gardens, and the brilliant autumn colouring of the deciduous trees, together with the beauty of its centrally placed Himilayan Cypress, a memorial to a local alderman "who loved trees".

Leaving Bowral the coach continued along the main highway through the arboreal glories of Burradoo, and the flat lands bordering the lovely named Wingecarribee River, to gain the environs of Moss Vale, a railway town formerly known as Sutton Forest. The old Argyle Road was traversed through the somewhat featureless shopping centre to the overhead railway bridge, beyond which the old part of the town was entered before the coach proceeded into the old road leading across elevated grazing land to Berrima. The large establishment of the Southern Portland Cement Company, a concern dating from 1929, was a feature of this somewhat lonely area.

Passing through a belt of forest land this connecting road, now known as Oldbury Street, enters the confines of Berrima Village, and at the junction with the Hume Highway, was sited the St. Xavier's Roman Catholic Church nestling beneath a group of large pine trees. This church was completed in 1851, the foundation stone being laid by Archbishop Polding. The pre-stressed concrete bridge over the Wingecarrabee River was now crossed to enter the village of Berrima. It should be mentioned that the original bridge built across this stream was a single-arched stone structure erected in 1836 to the designs of David Lennox. Several washaways occurred at

different periods, necessitating extensive repairs. The old bridge was replaced in 1897 by a narrow timber truss bridge, which, in turn, was replaced by the present concrete bridge during 1962.

The coach now entered the western confines of Jellore Street and came to a standstill outside "Berrima House", the present day residence of Mr. S. O. Wrightson, President of the Berrima Village Trust, who kindly offered to compere our visit to the historic township. Mr. Wrightson's two-storied home, also known as "Small's House", is reputed to date back to 1835, and is built of random masonry with cut stone quoining to the corners. There are red-brick chimneys at either end. The stone built kitchen at the rear of the premises has been removed in recent years. A neatly trimmed privet hedge marks the street frontage and a laurel tree, together with a beautiful liquid-amber, of the red and yellow leafed variety, in its full autumn colour, over-shadowed the footpath. At the rear of the premises was a full grown hedge of *Cryptomeria*, or Japanese Cedar, displaying its smokey red foliage to perfection. On the opposite side of the street to "Berrima House" was a dark tree-shaded entrance to a nursery garden where a large red coloured Japanese Maple basked in the sunlight, its brilliance emphasised by the dense shadow of adjacent trees.

Leaving the charms of "Berrima House" and its immediate surrounds the coach reversed and followed the short eastern length of Jellore Street and its row of former inns and old-time cottages ranged along the northern side of the alignment. The first residence met was formerly the "Berrima Inn", a hostelry which commenced business on July 7th, 1834 under the license of Bryan McMahon. The building is long and low, the hipped roof being centrally divided by a squat chimney. Next door, proceeding eastwards, is a neat little cottage which has had a wealth of foliage removed recently, giving the building a somewhat stark appearance. Then in order came the former "Coach and Horses Inn" which, as a residence, is now undergoing renovation with a view of restoration to its original construction. The front verandah has been removed and it is not known to the writer as to whether this adjunct will be replaced. Then came an interesting antique shop which has been rebuilt, as far as its brick facade is concerned, from an old butcher's shop. A small weatherboard cottage lays next door and then came a stone cottage formerly in use as a bank. A further group of three more modern residences, together with a corner garage, marks the length of Jellore Street. The southern side of this latter thoroughfare is bordered by Market Place Park, a grassed area pleasantly dotted with magnificent pine trees, an area originally set aside, as its name implies, for a market place as patterned in the villages of old England.

Turning northwards into the Hume Highway the Berrima Post Office was passed to reach the two-storied Surveyor General Hotel, an ancient edifice which dates back to 1835, and is claimed to be "the oldest licensed inn in Australia, still trading within its original walls". The grim Berrima Gaol was then reached, a penitentiary which was commenced in 1835 and completed in 1839. The very fine entrance portal was added in 1866. Across an intervening side street lay the famous Berrima Courthouse, completed in 1838, with its elaborate entrance portal constructed in Greek classical style. The building is nowadays utilised as the School of Arts. Against the prison wall, opposite to the Courthouse, was sited a stone drinking trough, its cast-iron fountain head representing the head of the bull. The former Masonic Temple, which later came into use as a Presbyterian Church, was then viewed

as the coach turned from Argyle Street into Oxley Street to reach "Belle-vue" house which has also seen use as a bakery. Retracing its route along Oxley Street the tree girt Harper's Mansion, a gaunt two-storied building now in the ownership of the Roman Catholic Church but, as far as can be gathered, not occupied. The Berrima Gallery on the Hume Highway was then visited, a fascinating museum devoted to historic and antique feature display, which greatly held the interested attention of the members of the society. A visit to the Church of the Holy Trinity was then made, the foundation of this stone built edifice was laid in 1847 by Bishop Broughton.

A short run along Market Street brought the Magistrate's House, with its surround of tall Lombardy Poplars, columns of pure gold in their autumn colouring, and the adjacent "White Horse Inn" into view. After which the coach headed homewards to Rockdale, passing through Welby and Mittagong enroute. The St. George Historical Society is indebted to the Bowral Branch of the Country Women's Association, and also to Mr. Wrightson of the Berrima Village Trust, for their whole-hearted assistance in making our visit to their area so instructive and so enjoyable.

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