



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

81 Watkin Street,
BEXLEY. 2207.

14th November, 1969

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date. Friday Evening Next, 21st November, 1969.

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

Instead of the usual Guest Speaker, this evening will take the form of an Informal Slide Evening - Slides of Historical Interest taken on recent outings by members will be screened.

Business - General.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D. Sinclair.
President.

(Miss) J. Noble.
Hon. Secretary.
59.6796.

Supper Roster. Mrs. Eardley (Capt.), Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Waddington,
Miss B. Binns, Mrs. Piper.

November 22nd - Saturday. Afternoon Tour of Garden Island. Bus will be leaving Rockdale Town Hall at 1 p.m. Sharp. Bring your own afternoon tea. It is doubtful whether cameras will be allowed. Cost \$1 per person. Ring Mr. Sinclair. 587.4555.

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We must apologise for our October Bulletin. The article by Alderman R. Rathbone on Hunter's Hill was unfortunately incomplete. The last page was overlooked and is continued below:

PLACES OF INTEREST IN HUNTER'S HILL.

1. Point House - Built in 1841 on 19 acres of land by A.H. Huntley after whom Huntley's Point was named. Originally 5 rooms but greatly added to in 1880. Now being restored.
2. The Priory - Originally built by the Marist Fathers in 1847. Now in the grounds of the Ryde Psychiatric Centre.
3. Villa Maria - Built by the Marist Fathers when they moved from Church previous site in 1857. Extended 1864. Famed for its French Gothic Architecture.
4. St. Joseph's - One of the largest Catholic Boarding Colleges in College Australia. 800 resident students. Main buildings date from 1880's.
5. Figtree Chapel - Built 1857 on land donated by D.D. Joubert. Moved in 1962 to make way for the Expressway.
6. Figtree House - Home of Numa Joubert whose father, Didier Numa Joubert, commenced the ferry service from Hunter's Hill to the city. Called Figtree House because a figtree grew through the bathroom window.
7. Eulbertie - Built 1860 for E. Marsden-Betts, a relative of Rev. Samuel Marsden. Also the home of Dr. E. Gerrard, the district's first doctor. Now official residence of the Vice Chancellor of Sydney University.
8. Lyndcote - Built 1858 for C.E. Jeanneret, manager of Joubert's ferries.
9. Hunter's Hill - Opened by Sir Henry Parkes in 1870. School
10. Hunter's Hill - Built 1866 and enlarged in 1903 and 1938. Jules Town Hall. Joubert was the first Mayor.
11. Lagleyse Cottage - Home of district's first baker and still occupied by a member of the family.
12. Garibaldi Inn - Built by an Italian named Cuneo. First inn in Hunter's Hill.
13. Passy - Built 1852 by Jules Joubert for the French Consul General M. Sentis. Also once the home of Sir George Dibbs and the Hennings of "Rachel Henning" fame.



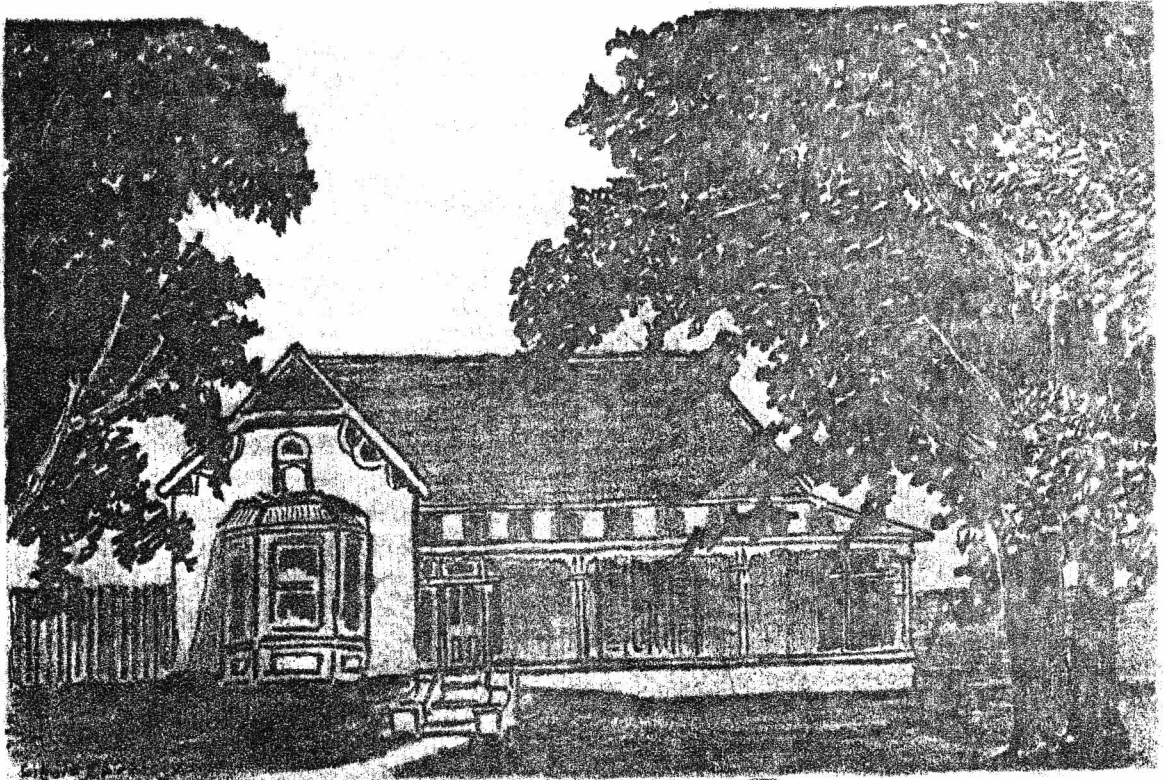
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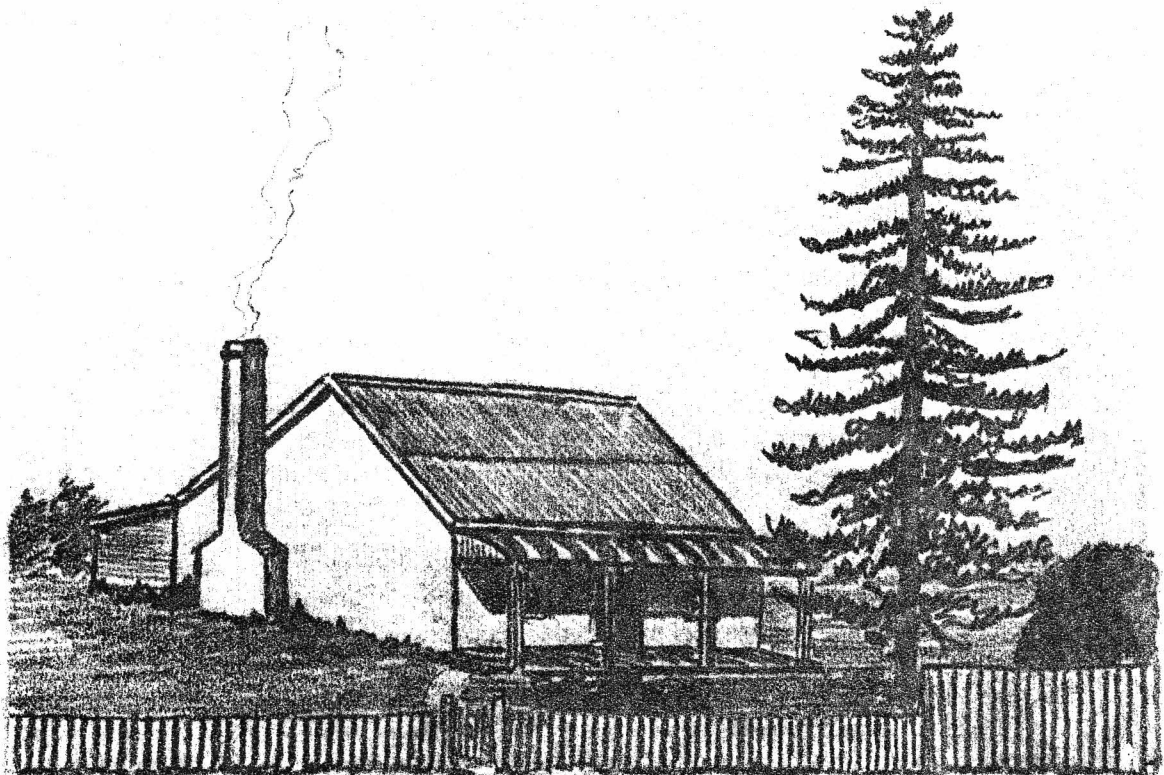
THE WEST BOTANY FARMS

Written & Illustrated By

Gifford & Eileen Eardley.



"BONNIE DOON" MARSH ST. ARNCLIFFE.



WILLIAM BEEHAG'S FARMHOUSE. 1/2 MARSH ST. ARNCLIFFE.

THE WEST BOTANY FARMS

Gifford & Eileen Eardley

What may be regarded in the St. George District as one of the oldest access roads, little better than a winding bush track, once led from the vicinity of the former Dam at Tempe, and skirted the base of the northern and eastern outlier of Arncliffe Hill. This ancient track served a number of scattered farmlets known colloquially as the West Botany Farms, comparatively small holdings bordering on Muddy, or Dark Creek. This isolated community was devoted to pig-raising, cattle slaughtering, and market gardening, purely rural pursuits of a district then somewhat remote from the everyday hustle and bustle of Sydneytown.

Commencing from Rocky Point Road opposite the premises of Jacob's Tempe Family Hotel (later the Gladstone Hotel), located on the southern side of the Cooks River Dam, the West Botany Farms track studiously avoided the exacting demands of the neighbouring Toll House by swinging away to the south-east, skirting the sombre casuarina covered swamp land which surrounded the semi-circular shaped muddy inlet of Cooks River, known as "The Bay" to the local boatmen and shell-gatherers. This inlet has been reclaimed in recent years and now forms part of the playing area known as Cahill Park. Crossing, presumably by a water-splash, the oft-times flooded stream which meandered down from what may be regarded as the Wollongong Road Valley, the track continued in a more or less easterly direction to gain the alignment of the present day Marsh Street, then known as Government Road, where a southern turn was made. The Arncliffe Hill descends to the water level in this vicinity, and its northern fenced slopes, in the early days, were known as the "Bull Paddock". A small slab-sided hut was erected on this enclosed property which once formed part of the one hundred acre estate of William Parker. It is understood that the hut was occupied by Mr. Patrick Finnigan, obviously of Irish descent, who, it may be surmised, kept an eye on the bull and its domestic activities. According to an old map the place was known as "Spring Grove Farm", and the immediate area, mentioned as being heavily timbered with blackbutt gum trees.

In the early days, Marsh Street led southwards from the margin of Cooks River to an apex junction with what is now known as West Botany Street, a highway which was first known as West Botany Farms Road. According to old plans, a block of 45 acres, with a northern frontage to Cooks River, easterly to Muddy Creek, and westerly to Marsh Street, was granted to Messrs. Hughes and Hosking, and later came into the possession of Mr. Milgate. Other owners, or lease holders, were Samuel McMin, a cattle dealer, and the McCrae family who dabbled with trotting horses on a breeding basis. At an undetermined date a fine brick cottage (now long demolished) was erected on the estate, being sited about one hundred yards or so to the east of the Marsh Street frontage, the edifice nestling under the eastern lee of a low sand hill. Further protection from prevailing winds was given by large Moreton Bay Fig-trees, many of which, though in a sadly mutilated condition, still flourish to adorn the premises of the "Bonnie Doon" Golf Clubhouse which was erected nearby about 1928. A tale has been told that the whole area, before it was enclosed and subdivided into allotments, was used for the grazing of sheep, the flocks being owned

by William Bucknell of "Avondale", sited on the southern bank of Wolli Creek in the old village of Wincanton, now known as Arncliffe West or Turrella. It is understood that this "Bonnie Doon" property was taken over by the Government for military purposes during the 1939-1945 War period and is now occupied by the Kogarah Golf Club.

At the present day the bird life in the area is largely confined to the more common aquatic species such as Silver Gulls, Terns, and Black Cormorants. In the thickets are Blue Wrens and Silver Eyes, whilst on one occasion the authors espied a pair of White-fronted Chats, small finches with black and white plumage markings somewhat similar to a Peewee. Song Skylarks are to be heard singing their spring songs high in the heavens, whilst on the grasslands, at all times, may be seen flocks of Indian Mynahs, and "murmurings" of glossy coated Starlings. "William Wagtails" are also in evidence, and Black Crows are fairly regular visitants. Spur-winged Plover may be heard on occasion, and stately Ibis at times frequent the tidal flats bordering the river banks and the swamp portion of the adjacent terrain.

The ancient track turned southwards and, with minor variations, followed the straight course of the present day Marsh Street, apart from the deviation made to avoid the Western Suburbs Sewer Main about 1895. The precipitous sandstone slopes of Arncliffe Hill on their eastern verge were skirted, and a 45 acre grant to Mr. A.B. Spark, later transferred to Mrs. Coutin, lay on the east of the track. The drier portions of the flat lands bordering Muddy Creek were covered by forest, and the tidal section by a dense growth of mangroves, once the home of wild pigs, escapees from neighbouring farms.

At the south-western corner of the Spark property lies the small market garden cultivated at one time by George Beehag, and later by Thomas Beehag, and one which flourishes today in the capable hands of Mr. Tung Wah, of 17 Marsh Street. The rectangular shaped garden beds are ranged diagonally to the street alignment, and the garden is bordered around its boundaries by a thick hedge of casuarina trees and broad-leaved castor-oil trees, together with a solitary gum tree of no great height. This hedge growth provides a welcome haven for all small birds and finches which inhabit the region.

The tiny weatherboard cottage associated with the market garden is sited on the former roadway, an arrangement made possible when the up and then down graded deviation of the road was made to avoid the huge sewer viaduct. Surrounding the cottage are a number of packing sheds, stables, and out-houses of wondrous design, which display a truly amazing variety of roof surfaces placed at all angles and, of course, built of the ubiquitous galvanised iron sheeting, some painted green, and others reddish brown with rust. A large clump of banana trees flourish against these sheds, setting them off to perfection from a purely artistic point of view.

At this juncture it should be mentioned that the former properties of Messrs. Hughes and Hosking - and A.B. Spark, to a large extent - have been united to form the Bonnie Doon Golf Links, and later the Kogarah Golf Links. After these lands had been cleared of their original forest growth, possibly for the domestic fires of Sydneytown, they became, for the most part, a water sodden expanse on which only a few shrubs found nourishment. Between the shallow pools of brackish water were patches

of a mesembrianthemum like weed, about six inches in height and of reddish hue, which flourished under the name of "Samphire", in other words it was a "Samphire Swamp". With the diversion of the mouth of Cooks River to a new outlet at Kyeemagh, a mammoth undertaking commenced in 1948 and on completion in 1955, loads of spoil had been spread over the adjacent area, thus forming the earth for the present grassland so essential for the playing fields and golf links. Along the Marsh Street frontage of the golf course is a border of pink-flowered lantana, an erstwhile garden plant which is now rampant, whilst four imposing sandstone pillars mark the entrance to the golf club driveway. Good use of spindly poplar trees has been made, and several of the old paperbark tea-trees, which have somehow survived the onslaught of the axe, are a pleasant reminder of the past.

Continuing southwards along Marsh Street the next large block of fifty acres was originally in the possession of G. Newbolt. Later it came under the ownership of Mr. Unwin, and then into the hands of James and William Beehag, the latter transaction completed about the year 1852. This land extended from Marsh Street, and its continuation into West Botany Street, to the western mangrove-fringed bank of Muddy Creek, the southern boundary being formed by the verge of the present day Eve Street which, incidentally, formed part of the previously mentioned ancient trackway.

William Beehag was born at South Minster, in Essex, England. He arrived in Sydney during 1837 and occupied premises located at the corner of George and Barrack Streets, the site today being represented by the huge store of David Jones. Incidentally the name Beehag, so well known in the Rockdale District, is derived from Count Behague, a French Huguenot who settled in England presumably to escape religious persecution which swept through France. In 1839 or thereabouts William Beehag moved to Marrickville, where, it has been claimed, he was the first resident, and later took over a property of thirty acres in the Canterbury District for market garden purposes. In 1852 the family came to live at West Botany (Arncliffe) where another market garden was established in this then primeval wilderness. A small four-roomed cottage was built of local sandstone against the Marsh Street frontage, the homestead later being marked by a fine Norfolk Island Pine-tree, which in recent years succumbed to the relentless axe. The original slab-sided stable, which lay at a short distance from, and at a lower level to the eastern wall of the homestead, survived until about 1968 when owing to its forlorn and derelict state, it was demolished. In recent years the old home has been completely remodelled, externally at least, by Mr. Mears, a builder residing at No. 8 Marsh Street. A son, William Hamilton Beehag, was for many years employed as a greenkeeper at the Bonnie Doon Golf Links.

A large portion of the Beehag property in Marsh Street was acquired by the Metropolitan Water & Sewerage Board in connection with the construction of the Western Suburbs Sewer Main which, in the shape of a large brick built aqueduct, is a notable feature in the environs of Arncliffe. This main spelt the dismemberment of the market garden, the northern portion being still cultivated, whilst the section to the south, facing towards West Botany Street and also towards Eve Street, on both its northern and southern sides, passed through market garden areas which, until comparatively recent years, were occupied by Chinese gardeners. It is understood that William Beehag's home was the sixth to be built south of Cooks River insofar as the St. George District is concerned.

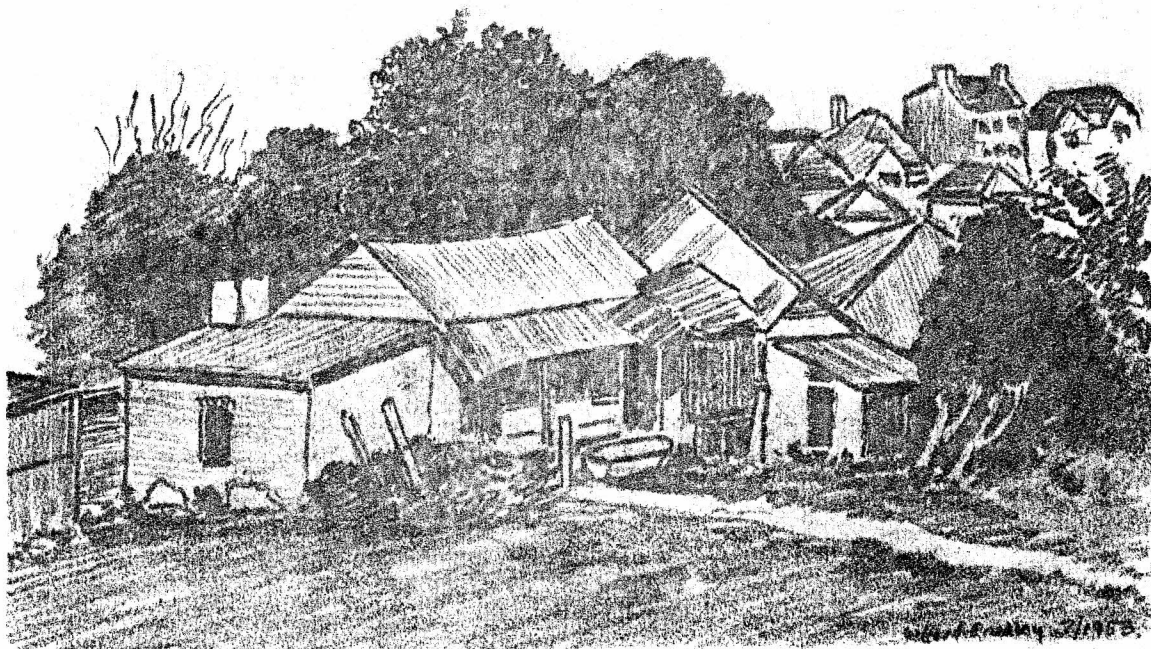
Next to the Beehag homestead, on the southern side in Marsh Street, was the small dairy property of Mr. Card, with its range of milking sheds at the rear, and its split rail fence enclosing the Bull paddock, dividing the residence from the Beehag homestead. After changing ownership several times the Card property, divested of the house and some of the outbuildings, came into the possession of Mr. Harrigan, the proprietor of the Tempe to Rockdale Bus Service, who used the area for garage purposes. This concern is nowadays owned by Messrs. Appleby and Nelson and the route is extended to Rozelle.

The Chinese garden, ranged along the northern side of Eve Street, a short east-west thoroughfare which once formed portion of the ancient cart track through the bush, was abandoned about the 1960 period. The one-time beautifully kept vegetable plots are now given over to a rank growth of weeds which would give great joy to a botanist by their very variety. At least one of the original plank-sided water holes, the abode of tadpoles, and fat green frogs meditating in the sun, still remains against the easternmost fence line. The former living quarters, now in a totally collapsed condition, provide a picturesque variety of roofs. The buildings, together with the immediately adjacent collection of stables and outhouses, lie at all levels and at all angles, one having its gabled roof about one foot higher at one end than the other, and all sadly lacking in paint, galvanised iron being used for both roofs and walls to its fullest advantage, irrespective of shape or size of the sheets. A background was formed by a large camphor-laurel tree and also by a thriving mass of castor-oil trees, each displaying its vertical clusters of prickly fruit. A row of flax plants still flourish, their spikey leaves having once supplied the narrow strips used for binding the bunches of carrots, parsnips, turnips, and spinach.

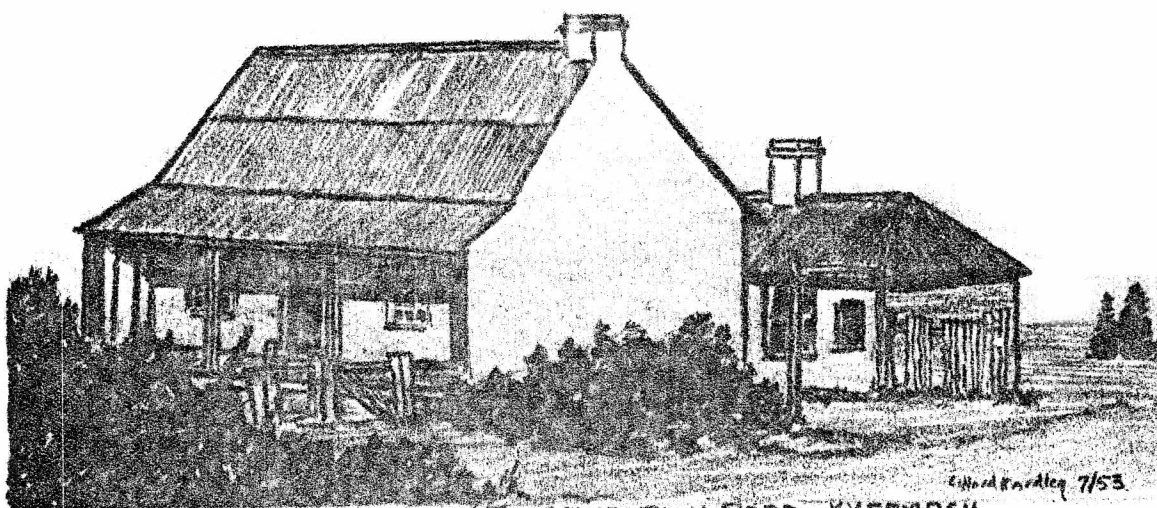
At the eastern end of this former market garden is a pine-fringed avenue leading to the screening sheds associated with the sewer main. The sheds are guarded, when closed, by a couple of ferocious dogs. At the entrance to the sewer property the ancient track turned southward, following the alignment of the present north-south route of Eve Street. At a short distance to the west of the intersection, in the backyard of a cottage, there is a lofty cabbage-tree palm which could be some sixty feet in height and forms a conspicuous feature of the neighbourhood. Palms of this type once flourished in the area before it was cleared of its wild growth.

No doubt in the early days the bush track skirted the base contours of Brennans Hill but the present day Eve Street climbs to its shallow summit, the low crest providing nourishment for three large coral-trees and also a huge Port Jackson fig-tree. There was a very tall Norfolk Island Pine-tree, which had a divided trunk, nearby, but, unfortunately a freak storm wrenched the easternmost trunk away and it was deemed advisable to remove the remaining portion of the tree in the interests of safety. Brennans Hill is a slightly elevated sand hillock which marks the eastern termination of Arncliffe Hill, its crest being traversed nowadays by the length of Brennans Road and its quaintly named off-shoot known as Niblick Street. The enclosed land, once a dense tea-tree thicket of twenty-eight acres, lying between Brennans Hill and the turbid waters of Muddy Creek, was originally granted to Mr. W. J. Tickle.

The whole area of these flat marshlands, lying eastward of Brennans Hill, are completely exposed to boisterous north-easterly winds from Botany



SAM HOP'S RESIDENCE. EVE ST. ARNCLIFFE.



RICHARD GOODE'S FARMHOUSE. OCCUPATION ROAD KYERMACH.

Edward Ardley 7/53

Bay, and the strong winds which occasionally stem from the south. At times the salt marsh is very bleak and forlorn, the expanse possessing but few wind-tormented trees. The hillock affords, in clement weather, a delightful vantage point to admire the southern aspect of the City of Sydney, its sky-line, its sky-scrappers, the aerodrome at Mascot, and the windings of Cooks River and Shea's Creek.

Immediately south of, and descending from Brennans Hill, and its erstwhile sandpits, the post and rail fenced course of Eve Street continues southward through a now water-logged and virtually impassable stretch of bog formed by the broadening of the estuary of Spring Creek. This once clear and bright stream flows from the northern environs of Rockdale and the hilly amphitheatre lying to the west of Banksia Railway station. Near Eve Street the water spreads through a dense growth of reeds and rushes, the odd pools providing excellent swimming facilities for numbers of Bald Coots and Purple-plumaged Gallinules, which betray their presence by the almost constant flicking of their white tail feathers. At times egrets and Blue Herons frequent this undisturbed watery oasis situated so close to the busy highway of West Botany Street.

The western side of Eve Street borders the eighty acres formerly granted to Mr. A.B. Spark, whilst the eastern side skirts two grants of twenty-eight acres each given to Mr. Eve, from whom the old road takes its name. Both of these sections extended eastward to Muddy Creek and, as marshland, were only adaptable for cattle grazing purposes. No record has been obtained of any residences being erected on these flat lands. Then follows, also on the eastern side of Eve Street, a grant of thirty-one acres made to Mr. A. Green. These several properties of comparatively worthless land were all acquired in the early eighteen-nineties by the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage & Drainage Board, some eighty-nine acres being sold in 1930 for recreation purposes. This playing area, once had twenty-two cricket pitches, but this number has largely decreased through reclamation work in which vast quantities of household rubbish has been buried, raising the surface level to some six feet above the normal water table. A stone levee bank, constructed in 1958, gives protection against the inroads of Muddy Creek.

Continuing along the eastern side of Eve Street we find that at the southern end of Mr. Green's grant the old road turns west for a short distance before resuming its southerly course along the western side of the twenty-six acres granted to Mr. Bedford, this property later coming into the possession of Mr. G. Fookes, a gentleman who owned a slaughter house in the vicinity. Reaching the present intersection of Bestic Street (formerly known as Goode Street), the ancient trackway curved eastwards to gain the head of the tidal portion of Muddy Creek, a stream originally crossed by a corduroy matting of tea-tree trunks spread over the surface of the oozy mud. The track now bordered the southern side of 46 acres of arable land, lying on the east side of Muddy Creek, ceded to Messrs. Hughes and Hosking, a property later taken over by Mr. William Goode and, after much labour, converted into a first-class market garden, of which more anon.

The unmade route of Goode Street continued eastward to a garden access laneway, nowadays known by the quaint name of Occupation Road, which, in a northerly direction skirted the sand dunes ranging along the western

shore of Botany Bay for about half a mile, to serve at least three old established cottages. Two of these, so it is understood, were occupied by divisions of the Goode family and later came into the hands of Chinese gardeners, whilst the northernmost cottage, built of brick and lately demolished, sheltered a gentleman who found employment at the local and nauseous sewerage farm. The latter cottage had four interconnecting rooms, without the benefit of a hallway, and a small but separate outhouse was utilised as a kitchen and a scullery. The fireplace of the kitchen was nearly the width of the room and its once open hearth was fitted with an overhead bar for the dangling of pots and pans above the flames. It should be mentioned that at a short distance beyond the eastern side of the Muddy Creek water-splash there was a bush track which led southwards and then curved westwards to link with the early vegetable farms of John Bowmer and Charles Napper. This track was superseded when the present West Botany Street was constructed.

The route of the ancient trackway may, to a certain extent, still be traced, although at the Cooks River Bridge end it has been covered with a maze of short streets where the houses are intermixed with quite a number of down-at-heel factory premises. "The Bay" has been reclaimed to form a grassy sward known as Cahill Park. Marsh Street leads northward to terminate at and give access to Cooks River, whilst its eastern verge borders the green turf of the Kogarah Golf Links. The size and beautiful brickwork of the Western Suburbs Sewer Main may be admired, likewise the Chinese garden nestling beneath its shadow. Eve Street, and its southwards continuation to the crest of Brennans Hill, still affords a wide outlook eastwards, to the new entrance of Cooks River and the bridge carrying General Holmes Drive, and also to the blue expanse of Botany Bay with its distant opposing headlands. The water-logged extension of Eve Street, southward from Brennans Hill, is impassable for the most part of its length, although the still existing Chinese garden and its packing sheds are not without interest, Goode Street, or rather Bestic Street, is a busy highway with a solidly constructed bridge over Muddy Creek, from which a view down stream is to be had of the anchorage of numerous small boats associated with the adjacent Fishermen's Club. At the western bank of the stream in the vicinity of the bridge, partly hidden by an avenue of Fig-trees, is a huge unsightly bank of dredged mullock, evidently awaiting direction as to its ultimate disposal.

The gardens bordering the western side of Occupation Road, with their two farm-houses, are pleasant to look upon, and specialize in the growing of shallots. The eastern side of Occupation Road is now covered with truly suburban residences, forming portion of the attractive but tree-less suburb of Kyeemagh. This wind-swept north-eastern corner of the St. George District well repays a visit for those with an enquiring mind, and an appreciative, if critical, eye.
