



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

81 Watkin Street,  
BEXLEY. 2207.

12th December, 1969.

Dear Friend and Member,

The Final Meeting for 1969 of our Society will be held as follows:-

Date. Friday Evening Next, 19th December, 1969, at 8 p.m.

Place. Council Chambers, Rockdale Town Hall.

1. A short business meeting.

By the courtesy of "The Rural Bank Library" a selection of Christmas films will be shown. This will be followed by a "CHRISTMAS SUPPER."

Mrs. Eardley would appreciate any help by lady members, to prepare supper, and as usual, would lady members please bring a plate.

Your President and the Executive thanks you for your help and support during 1969 and takes this opportunity to wish A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR to all.

D. H. Sinclair,  
PRESIDENT.

(Miss) J. Noble,  
HON. SECRETARY.  
59.6796.

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You may wish to bring a small gift suitable to be given to a male patient in "The St. John of God Hospital" at Richmond.

This may in some way bring a little happiness to those less fortunate in health than we are at this Festive Time of the year.



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## ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETINS.

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## THE PROPOSED TRAMWAY TO DUMBLETON.

Albert Matheson, M. B. E.

In browsing through the issue of the local "PROPELLER" for June 15th, 1921, I came across detailed mention of a proposed tramway to Dumbleton, which would have linked up with the then Kogarah to Sans Souci and the Arncliffe to Bexley systems, and also with the main City Tramways. This grandiose proposal would have been of estimable benefit to the residents of St. George at that time, but, unfortunately it became the play thing and "bait on the hook" for politicians and appears to have been shelved on the score of financial stringency. The Advisory Board's Report, which no doubt will prove of interest to the members of the St. George Historical Society, is appended as follows:-

"The following report of the Tramway Advisory Board, concerning the proposed extension of the tramway to Dumbleton - and local tramways generally - has been supplied to Mr. M. Gosling, M. L. A., and is signed by the Hon. F. Flowers, M. L. C.:-

The Tramway Advisory Committee has given consideration to the proposed tramway extension from Hurstville Railway Station to Dumbleton. The committee has given lengthy consideration to this and other tramway connections necessary to link up the existing isolated steam tramways in the St. George electorate. Numbers of witnesses have been examined and after considerable time spent the committee has come to the following conclusions:-

That it is necessary for the economical working of the existing tramways in the St. George electorate that the Kogarah-Sans Souci and Arncliffe-Bexley steam tramways be converted to electric traction as soon as possible, and the Arncliffe-Bexley line extended to link up with the St. Peters Tramway at Cook's River; the Arncliffe-Bexley having to be extended to Dumbleton, thus giving direct communication between Arncliffe Railway Station and Dumbleton. The residents of Bexley, Dumbleton, and Hurstville would be satisfied with this, but when funds are available would press for the extension from Dumbleton to Hurstville Railway Station. As mentioned in the report on the Tom Ugly's extension the further extension from Hurstville Railway advocated to Tom Ugly's was strongly advocated by many of the witnesses examined. To complete the linking up of the St. George tramway systems a return line from Hurstville Railway Station joining the Arncliffe-Bexley line and Forest Road, a length of two miles, was suggested, but the committee do not consider this of importance at this stage. The proposed extension, Dumbleton to Lakemba, the committee considers premature, and this route may be well left over for future consideration. The committee has received a letter from the secretary to the Railway Commissioners, advocating a route for a railway from Tempe midway between the Belmore and Illawarra lines, following the course of Wolli Creek and terminating at Salt Pan Creek, a distance of seven miles. This railway is recommended to the favourable consideration of the Minister as being the means of opening up large areas of land suitable for homes for workmen crowded out of the city and other suburbs in search of cheap land. The estimated cost of this railway is given as being £73,500. In the opinion of the committee the tramway facilities proposed will still be required to link up with the new railway from Tempe to Salt Pan. The committee also

submits for the favourable consideration of the Minister, with a view of providing travelling facilities in this rapidly growing district, the linking up of the St. Peters-Cook's River tramway with the Arncliffe-Bexley tramway and the extension of the Arncliffe-Bexley tramway to Dumbleton at or next to the Public school. The extension from Dumbleton to Hurstville to stand over until the Public Works Committee has dealt with the Tom Ugly's proposal, when further consideration might also be given to the Dumbleton-Lakemba extension and the Hurstville Railway Station - Arncliffe-Bexley return line, via Forest Road."

(Mr. Matheson also forwards the following two snippets dealing with the deaths of two municipal stalwarts, the late Alderman H. Broe, and the late Alderman W. Taylor, M. L. A.).

July 16, 1920 Ex Propellor.

"Alderman H. Broe, Mayor of Rockdale, died this morning from pneumonia. Though he had been in failing health for sometime, he had only been seriously ill during the last week. The deceased gentleman was a very popular resident. Being of a charitable disposition he was always willing to assist those who needed his services. As an Alderman he always worked hard for the advancement of the Municipality of Rockdale and the district generally. The late Alderman Broe occupied the Mayoral chair for 7 years. He was an Alderman for 13 years."

July 20, 1920 Hurstville Propellor.

"Alderman W. Taylor has the unique distinction of having served as an Alderman of Rockdale Council for over 30 years without a break. He has occupied the Mayoral chair for over a third of that time and has been Municipal representative on the Fire Brigade Board for over a quarter of a century. He also served 2 terms in Parliament."

#### THE STREET TRADERS OF OLD SYDNEYTOWN.

Gifford Eardley

Near the entrance to the old Redfern Railway Station in the vicinity of Devonshire Street, Sydney, was an establishment known to all and sundry as Dick's, whose surname was withheld for reasons that are now obscure. Dick's covered stall was mounted on four wheels from which he dispensed saveloys, peas and meat pies, all of which were served on a plate and eaten with the spoon he thoughtfully provided. A serving usually cost six-pence which sum covered the supply of Worcestershire sauce, vinegar (for the peas) and mustard. These dainty comestibles were in great demand and could be taken with coffee at a slightly extra charge.

In the same line of business another gentleman traversed the streets of Redfern advertising his wares in a loud voice to attract custom - "Ot saveloys, one a penny, two fer tuppence. Lidies, come an buy". Large sales were made as meals of this type were so easy to chuck together. The "saveloy vehicle", on four wheels to give the requisite steadiness essential for the stability of the cooking apparatus, was drawn by an aged and tired horse. A huge brass rimmed lamp, mounted above the front end

of the wagon, shed a dim light ahead and, in the hours of darkness, gave the impression that a steam tram motor had wandered off the accepted tracks and was making its way slowly through the back streets of Chippendale.

Another street trader was the muffin man who retailed crumpets, a winter indigestible well known even to this day, and muffins. The latter were flattish circular cakes which the purveyor carried in a peculiarly shaped basket skillfully balanced on his head. A large hand bell was lustily rung to denote his presence.

Then there was a Chinese fruit and vegetable man who trotted around the streets with his wares contained within two semi-circular baskets dangling from the outer ends of a nicely tapered shoulder yoke. The leading basket was devoted to fruit and was thus under the watchful eye of "Ah Yum", whilst the rear basket contained vegetables and greens, of no particular interest to small boys with thieving tendencies but of great interest to horses. The weight of these baskets was really beyond the capacity of a human but it is understood that the trotting movement assisted in alleviating the load.

Late at night there was always a procession of produce carts in the main streets of Sydney heading towards the City Vegetable Markets. The plodding horses knew the route intimately and needed no guidance from their masters who often reclined fast asleep amongst the cabbages. Particularly wicked school boys have been known to carefully gather the reins and turn the horses around so that the sleeping Chinaman arrived back at the market garden gate. The reception from his compatriots can well be imagined.

Small hand-carts, tastefully painted white for hygienic reasons and bound with polished strips of brass, were used to convey small tubs of "Home-made" ice cream through the streets. This delicacy was usually "plastered" between two slender biscuit wafers which came in tins and were in some way, to us kids, associated with a rosella. Connoisseurs of the day could, for the expenditure of a penny, have a tiny glass tumbler half filled with raspberry jelly and topped with ice-cream. Spoons were provided by the proprietor and kept, when not in use, in a white enamelled billy which contained a milky solution of water, a colouration brought about by the undigested leavings of earlier customers. "Ice-cream and jelly - good for the belly".

Magnates of the ice-cream business paraded the streets in small two wheeled carts in which they stood at the rear to dispense this delicacy over the back board thus keeping their customers away from the danger of getting a kick from the horse. Overhead was a canopy supported at each of the four corners by a turned spindly post, the roof edges being decorated by a fringe of tassels which gave an air of gaiety to the white painted vehicle. In some instances a "spring Hung" bell, which jangled to the movement of the horse, was used to attract customers. Other purveyors tooted on bugles in a most unmilitary fashion, but what did this matter to those with a penny to spend?

Clothes props, cut from lengthy slender saplings, suitably forked at one end, were peddled around the back streets, contained in long-shafted two-wheeled gigs and retailed at ninepence each. The gigs were of the type



used for breaking in refractory horses and so designed to keep the driver well clear of a madly kicking animal. However, the spiritless nags usually associated with the business were more occupied in trying to keep their four feet on the ground, as the load, plus the weight of the retailer at the back, tended to give a see-sawing motion, the pair of wobbly wheels acting as a fulcrum.

"Wild Rabbo" was another cry heard in the land as the small gig with its scrawny hired horse went at whipped speed through the dusty streets. One person managed the horse, whilst another attended to the wares, which were usually tied in pairs by the back legs and draped around the sides of the cart. The fur of the rabbit assisted in keeping the mud and street grime off the delectable carcasses which it still covered as of yore. Sixpence each was the charge at one period and the skinning was expertly carried out in the presence of the housewife at the time of sale. Alley cats were all aware of this profession, and gathered round the cart seeking such inner tit-bits that the charity of the skinner cared to hand out.

The fishermen or rather fish purveyors, carried their purchases around from door to door in fern-lined arm baskets suitably covered against flies by a piece of white cloth. Some cleaned the fish on your doorstep, a procedure of great personal interest to members of the smaller feline tribes. Perhaps the best spot to take fish on the whole coast line of New South Wales was on top of the Redfern (then known as Eveleigh) Railway Bridge where sizable red-bream could sometimes be obtained as "six fer a bob".

Chinese fruit merchants, when finance permitted, drove round in two-wheeled cart fitted with open sided canvas roofs. Below the axle-tree it was the custom to suspend a piece of jute sacking held apart at the four corners by cords attached to the nearest component that was handy. This primitive "carry-all" contained bags of onions and potatoes, essential commodities but of no great value. The horses were well kept, and knew as much about the round as their celestial masters and were even prepared to take them home undirected if the said masters thought a little sleep was necessary for their well-being.

A certain Mr. Newton sold cheap-jack novelties from a four-wheeled wagon set up at the western end of the old Central Arcade in George Street, Sydney, just north of Goulburn Street. This stall was extremely popular as the patter and showmanship were of the highest order. The better to serve patrons and display the good value of the gee-gaws offered, Mr. Newton arranged two lengthy duck boards, supported at shoulder height on trestles, which radiated out from the side of the wagon nearest the crowd. The principal assistants, George and Fred, each occupied one board whilst sales were in progress and after Mr. Newton had explained the virtues and the supreme quality of the article, brought them forward for personal approval. Combs of various designs for men or for women were in great demand also hair brushes and a thousand and one nick-nacks dear to the heart of the well-dressed larrikin. "Gold" watches changed hands at a sovereign each, a huge sum in those far-off days. Another specialty was penknives, which incorporated tweezers, finger-nail paring and cleaning devices, buttonhook and last but not least, a cork-screw; all these items

were in addition to an assortment of blades, sometimes eight in number, none of which were of the slightest use from a cutting point of view. When business lapsed, Mr. Newton introduced a dwarf named Billy, who sang ballads, unaccompanied, to the crowd in a loud, soprano voice. His repertoire included such favourites as "Ben Bolt", "Alice, Where art thou", "Sweet Genevieve", amongst others, but his rendering of the pathetic "Only a violet plucked from my Mother's Grave" brought a soft tear to many eyes and must have boosted the sale of handkerchiefs somewhat. The financial side of the business was in the capable hands of Mrs. Newton, a well dressed and tightly corseted woman, rather on the plump side, the cynosure of all male eyes, who carefully collected the money in metal buckets, two or three overflowing buckets marked the conclusion of a successful night.

In the late eighties, a "flash" dentist, who, for one shilling, would whip out any offending molar, operated in the streets around the Haymarket. Anaesthetics were a missing refinement and the dentist used his pincers dexterously on his patient who was seated in a special chair near the front of the cart. Luckily the horses were of a steady type and not worried by the screams of the patients or the presence of the footpath crowds of lookers-on. The dentist was a man of resource and like all dentists had one eye on the need for decorum in the profession. Not so much to alleviate the sufferings of the tormented but in an attempt to drown his cries (deemed bad for business), he engaged a four piece brass band, who, seated in comfort at the rear of the vehicle, played suitable music calculated to exceed in tonal values the screams of the afflicted.

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