



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

81 Watkin Street,  
BEXLEY. 2207

10th July, 1970.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date. Friday Evening next, 17th July, 1970 at 8 p.m.

Place. Council Chambers, 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 1970/71.
    - (i) Patrons.
    - (ii) President.
    - (iii) Senior Vice Presidents.
    - (iv) Two Vice Presidents.
    - (v) Hon. Secretary.
    - (vi) Assistant Secretary.
    - (vii) Hon. Treasurer.
    - (viii) Hon. Auditor.
    - (ix) Committees.
  7. Correspondence.
  8. General Business.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. & Mrs. A. Coghlan will show a collection of Slides.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

D. Sinclair,  
PRESIDENT.

(Miss) J. Noble,  
HON. SECRETARY.  
59 6796.

Supper Roster. Mrs. Eardley (Capt.) Mrs. Day, Mrs. O'Shea,  
Miss Dunsmore, Miss M. Cheetham and Mrs. Longhurst.

A most enjoyable evening was spent last Friday night, when 40 persons attended the Slide Evening at the home of Mr. & Mrs. W. Piper, with slides shown by Miss M. Cheetham.

We sincerely thank them for their kind hospitality.

.....

In reply to the letter from Miss B. F. Hill, published in the June Bulletin of the St. George Historical Society. We would like to thank those members who have forwarded information in reference to this article,

In answer to the question, the following comprehensive reply was submitted by Mrs. N. Hutton-Neave.

#### BIRNIE AND BEXLEY.

With reference to the enquiry by Miss B. F. Hill in the June Gazette concerning Mrs. Birnie of "Oaklands", there is no connection with Captain James Birnie.

Captain Jas. Birnie arrived at Sydney in his whaler the "Star" in 1802; he returned to England and brought out his wife in 1809 (confirmed by Shipping Register).

The Birnies settled in a "town house" in O'Connell Street, where they lived for about fifteen years. (confirmed Sydney Gazette - various issues).

James Birnie was granted by "Governor's Promise" Portion No. 1 of 700 acres at Kurnell (then unnamed) - first described as in the Parish of Holdsworth or Holdsworthy, then "at Botany". He named this "Alpha" Farm, but the convict clerk never having heard Greek, entered it in the Grants Register as "Half-a-Farm". The correct name was not legally recorded until the Grant Deeds were issued in 1844: the Title was delayed owing to litigation concerning another part of Birnie's Estate (confirmed by Grants Register).

Captain Birnie died 1844 and his wife in 1851, and both were buried in the Presbyterian Section of the Devonshire Street ("Sandhills") Cemetery. When this land was resumed in 1901 for Central Railway these two headstones were removed to Botany Cemetery. (confirmed by Burial Records Mitchell Library).

Captain Birnie and his wife had no children, no next-of-kin in Australia, and no near next-of-kin in England: so that the Mrs. Birnie of "Oaklands" cannot have any connection with Captain Birnie.

Inter alia, "Alpha Farm" was the correct name given by Captain Birnie, as will be seen by advertisements, etc. signed by him, in early contemporary issues of the Sydney Gazette. A "Governor's Promise" of land was not legally binding and could be rescinded - and occasionally was, for the "Promise" was issued conditionally, e.g. subject to survey, non-alienation for a stated period, and improvements to the land (i.e. development). Thus the name entered in the Grants Register was not recognised legally, but only as a means of identification, and could be altered at any time before the Deeds were granted. (confirmed by Registrar General's Department, Land Records Section). In regard to this particular grant it is a common error for it to be referred to as "Half-a-Farm"; Cridland in his "Story of Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire" 1924, made this error, which like other errors in his book, has unfortunately been perpetuated by unqualified "researchers"; but checking of facts by any experienced historical research student will establish the truth.

\*\*\*\*\*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ..... FUTURE OUTINGS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

Please ring Mrs. Eardley, Asst. Secretary, for the following bookings. Phone 59.8078.

July 25 - Saturday Afternoon - INSPECTION OF FORT DENISON.

No. 1 Trip.

Leaves No. 2 Jetty, Circular Quay at 12.45 p.m. SHARP. Returns at 3 p.m.

No. 2 Trip.

Leaves No. 2 Jetty, Circular Quay at 2.15 p.m. SHARP. Returns at 4.30 p.m.

Cost - Adults 20 cents. Children 10 cents on Ferry.  
Afternoon Tea is now not available on the Island.

(Bookings for this inspection is complete)

August 8 - Saturday Afternoon - VISIT TO INSPECT BURNSIDE PRESBYTERIAN HOMES, PARRAMATTA.

Leaves Rockdale Town Hall at 1 p.m. SHARP. Afternoon Tea will be had at Lake Parramatta Park. Cost \$1. per person.

(Please note that the date has been changed from 15th to 8th)

September 12 - Saturday. FULL DAY HARBOUR CRUISE.

Launch leaves No.2 Wharf - Circular Quay at 10 a.m. SHARP, landing at Clark Island for lunch (hot water available) arriving back at the Quay at 4 p.m.

Cost per person \$2. Commentary given by Ald. R. W. Rathbone.

October 3, 4 & 5th - LONG WEEKEND OUTING TO GULGONG.

October 11 - SUNDAY OUTING TO "FERNLEIGH" - AFTERNOON VISIT, by Car.

(Limited to 15 persons only)

\*\*\*\*\*

SOCIAL FUND-RAISING EVENINGS.

AUGUST 1 - SATURDAY EVENING ...CRAZY WHIST NIGHT, to be held at the Town Hall, Rockdale.

SEPTEMBER (date to be fixed) SLIDE EVENING to be held at the Presbyterian Hall, Rockdale, by Mr. & Mrs. J. Faulkner on the recent Bi-Centenary and Royal Tour Events.

OCTOBER (date to be fixed) FASHION PARADE.

NOVEMBER 25th - WEDNESDAY EVENING - COOKERY DEMONSTRATION by courtesy of St. George County Council, in the Binder Auditorium, Kogarah.

DECEMBER - SLIDE EVENING By Mr. E. Town.

\*\*\*\*\*



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

COBBITTY. A VILLAGE OF THE COW-PASTURES.

Written & Illustrated by

Gifford & Eileen Eardley.

## COBBITTY. A VILLAGE OF THE COW-PASTURES.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

The pleasant village of Cobbitty is sited amidst a surround of low grassed hill country, some four miles north of the older established settlement at Camden, which was in the possession of the Macarthur family (of sheep raising fame) as from 1804. It is understood that the unusual place-name of Cobbitty was derived from the aboriginal name for the district which was anglicised as "Kobady" in the first instance, the former spelling was later adopted. The original land grants of the immediate area were made in the early years of the colony to Messrs. G. Blaxcell, G. Blaxland, W. Cowper, C. Hook and E. Lord. These people each gained an extensive allotment of land whilst a number of smaller blocks of about fifty acres were granted to other and, perhaps, not so influential people. The land today, for the most part, is devoted to cattle grazing and dairying, although there is intensive cultivation of the fertile bottom lands bordering the adjacent Nepean River, which approaches and then leaves the vicinity of Cobbitty in a series of meandering loops. It is a very pretty rural landscape, graced here and there by some splendid examples of age-old twisted Apple-oak trees.

The approach road to Cobbitty leaves the Bringelly to Narellan Road, sometimes known as the Northern Road, at a distance of about two miles from the village of Narellan, and follows a straight westerly course for two miles before the settlement of Cobbitty is reached. The lazy old road ascends gentle slopes and descends gentle slopes, amidst fenced grass paddocks and an overhang of eucalyptus trees, which on occasions best known to the birds themselves, are thronged with screeching Eastern Rosellas. Except for the beautiful "Dawn Chorus", thought into being for a quarter of an hour or so at day-break, there are few birds in evidence throughout the day, apart from occasional prospecting magpies and, sometimes, a speculating kookaburra. On hot summer days there is generally a stifling heat haze which spreads evenly over the whole district, when only the whirring repeated note of a small species of black cicada breaks the otherwise solemn quietude of a scorching mid-day period. Although the paddocks are largely devoid of growth, apart from the native grasses, one has to be cautious when traversing the roads on foot as large Black-snakes also like the place, and have been encountered on sunny days even in the depth of a cold winter.

For descriptive purposes it is convenient to deal with the village buildings ranged along the northern side of Cobbitty Road, and then retrace our steps to the point of entry and do likewise with those along the southern side. The first building, on the north is a modern type General Store which caters for the every day needs of the small community, and calls for no particular comment. Next, on its western side, there once stood the blacksmith's shop of Hugh Campbell. The "smithy" was well built with walls of ashlar-cut sandstone and a roof of galvanised iron. At each end corner of its eastern gabled wall was a large vertical circular-shaped water tank, each collecting the rain-water from the guttering of its respective roof slope. The entrance doorways faced towards Cobbitty Road, the facade being set back a short distance from the grassed verge, thus providing a space for the repair of horse-drawn vehicles and also for the tethering of horses awaiting their turn

to be fitted with iron "shoes". Between the double doors of the building was an unglazed window opening which could be closed by hinged shutters made of vertical boards. Two hearth fires were provided, each being placed beneath a rectangular shaped brick chimney, both of which passed through the roof for a short distance. The interior of the forge when in operation was fascinating, with its smoky gloom and glittering coal fires, and rays of sunlight filtering through the doors and open windows. All the tools of a busy trade were scattered around as most convenient, whilst the walls were hung with rows of horse-shoes. At the rear of the premises were untidy heaps of metal strips, some new, some old, together with a miscellaneous assortment of sundry bits and pieces of iron components culled, over the years, from a wide variety of horse-drawn vehicles. It is said that Hugh Campbell was also engaged with the manufacture of iron railings and other fitments for the nearby cemetery of St. Paul's Church of England, where the same man now rests in peace. When first noted by the authors in 1930 the smithy was intact but derelict, and by 1935 it had been demolished, presumably for the materials of its construction.

Across the adjoining narrow Chittick Lane, leading northwards for about half a mile to give access to several farm estates, there was a small two-roomed weatherboard cottage which faced Cobbitty Road, whilst at the rear, facing Chittick Lane, was a separate kitchen and an outhouse. The cottage formerly possessed a split-shingled roof but had later been reroofed with corrugated iron. Each building had a large brick chimney projecting above a wide outside fireplace ranged against their western wall, the top of each chimney being covered by a curved metal bonnet to prevent down draughts and rain entry. A small lean-to verandah was erected at the rear of the cottage, whilst a short narrow verandah, with its iron roof painted alternatively in red and white, shielded the entrance doorway to the kitchen. When noted in 1962 there was a lovely old world garden, brick bordered, displaying a host of fuschias, geraniums, and many bulbs of various sorts. Behind was a wealth of high trees growing in the adjacent rectory garden. By 1965 both the cottage and its kitchen had been demolished and their site, at 1970, was a tangled unapproachable mass of "cobbler's pegs" and other noxious weeds.

The neighbouring rectory garden was once adorned by a pair of huge Apple-oak trees, which lent an air of shady enchantment to the sward in front of the beautiful "Domestic Gothic" rectory building. These lovely trees are distinctive to the area and it is most unfortunate that they have both been destroyed, only their short solid stumps remain to mark their position. The rectory, built in eighteen-seventy, is a large building with an upper storey beneath its once shingled roof, which is now covered with cement shingles of "diamond" pattern. The several upper rooms are lighted by neat dormer windows, two on the eastern, two on the northern, and others on the rear portion of the house roof. All the fascia boards are cut in a series of curves along their lower edge for decorative purposes, giving a charming effect to the many gables, both large and small, of the roof assembly.

The grounds of the rectory are laid out in lawns, with a partial surround of dense shrubbery and trees, which create a haven for the small-bird population inhabiting the area.

Next door and west of the rectory garden is a fenced pasturage which, fortunately, retains in its south-east corner, a splendid specimen of an Apple-oak tree, a kin in size and appearance to the pair destroyed in the rectory grounds. These trees are fascinating, in their masses of pendant gumtree like foliage, dangling at the end of long thin grotesquely shaped branches.

Then, beyond the pasturage is "STONELEIGH", an ancient cottage of intriguing design, embowered in a mass of tall shrubs, and protected along its road frontage by a dense hedge. One can only glimpse the layout of the place through this leafy coverage and note that there are upper rooms huddled beneath the sloping confines of the galvanised-iron roof, their presence betrayed by tiny window openings let into the walls of both end gables. The outside chimneys, broad-breasted for the fire-places, are diagonally sited, one at the front south-eastern corner, and the other at the north-western corner of the four-roomed dwelling. There is a weatherboard building, possibly a separate kitchen and scullery, at the rear of the main cottage, but only the roof-lines can be seen from the roadway. For one interested in domestic architecture "STONELEIGH" is a most intriguing old-fashioned home.

Another enclosed paddock preceds the lengthy double-fronted weatherboard cottage, named "BETHSHEAN". This place may be regarded as the historic outer western end of Cobbitty village, although the Cobbitty Road continues onward for many a mile. By outward appearances "Bethshean" has at least six rooms, the northern-most, with its fat-breasted chimney outside the western wall, evidently being the kitchen. The roofing is of corrugated iron and what may be considered as the front portion of the house, containing four rooms and, perhaps, a centrally placed hall, is covered on the "Hip" pattern. The narrow front verandah is separated from the road footpath by a dense mass of spindly-trunked trees which give an air of privacy and seclusion to the edifice, whilst a noble tree overshadows a large section of the back-yard near the house, a favourite roosting place for a flock of cheeky Soldier-birds who spend much time squabbling amongst themselves. The place breathes the tranquil peace of Cobbitty village and is good to look upon.

At this juncture we retrace our steps eastward along Cobbitty Road to regain the vicinity of the village general store. Located almost immediately opposite to this emporium is the old established mansion known as "POMARE GROVE", which lies on the southern side of Cobbitty Road. We had a cursory glance at this large two storied home, replete with many rooms, and admired the long single storied extension at the rear. It is to all outward appearances of cement rendered brick construction, and roofed with blue slate. One hesitates to guess at the period of its erection. The house is built on a grant of one hundred acres (or as otherwise claimed one hundred and fifty acres) made by Governor

Macquarie to Thomas Hassall, and gains its distinctive name "POMARE GROVE" after Pomare, a king of Tahiti in the early days of last century.

Thomas Hassall was born in England in 1797, and came with his missionary parents to Sydney in 1799. As a lad he returned to England in 1817 to complete his education and study for entry to the Church of England ministry. After being ordained he again came to Sydney and eventually became a curate associated with the Reverend Samuel Marsden, later marrying that gentleman's daughter. In 1827 he became the incumbent of the Cowpastures Parish, which extended all over southern New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia and towards, as facetiously stated, the South Pole, with headquarters at the then incipient Government township of Cobbitty. In recent years the affairs of "POMARE GROVE" have been taken over by a young peoples organisation under Christian auspices, and the building, now shining in a coat of white paint, has been maintained in excellent order.

Westwards, across the laneway, there is a large grassed area in which the neat Parish Hall is situated, where recently, through the courtesy of the rector, the Reverend Marsh, many members of the St. George Historical Society, after their attendance at the eleven o'clock service at the adjacent St. Paul's Church, took advantage of the amenities and lunching facilities. A row of trees mark the frontage of the block and at the entrance gateway, growing against another short dead-end laneway, there is a row of small olive-trees, the tree nearest the gate being in full berry in April 1970.

Across the laneway stands St. Paul's Church of England, a charming Gothic edifice of mixed styles, incorporating features of the Perpendicular period and minor details of that may be called the Early English period. The church, which cost 2,522 pounds 7/6, an exactitude which would please any auditor, was consecrated by Bishop Broughton in 1842. The structure is of ashlar sand-stone and the squat tower is dominated by a very fine steeple surmounted by a large cross. It has been stated that originally the church, together with the rectory opposite, once stood on the same block of land, evidently the now dividing Cobbitty Road was constructed at a later date than 1870.

Entrance to the sacred edifice may be made by any one of four side vestries, those on the eastern and the western walls being commonly used by the parishioners, whilst that at the north-eastern corner of the fabric, overshadowed by an immense "Bean" tree, is generally reserved for the entry of the choir and the clergy. There are at least five magnificent stained glass windows, which, when illuminated to their full beauty by the morning sunlight, fill the church precincts with dazzling colour, reds, purples, blues, orange, yellows, and deep greens. Their brilliance holds one spell bound. The chancel is of very small dimensions, of sufficient width to contain the altar in comfort, whilst the communion rail infringes into the

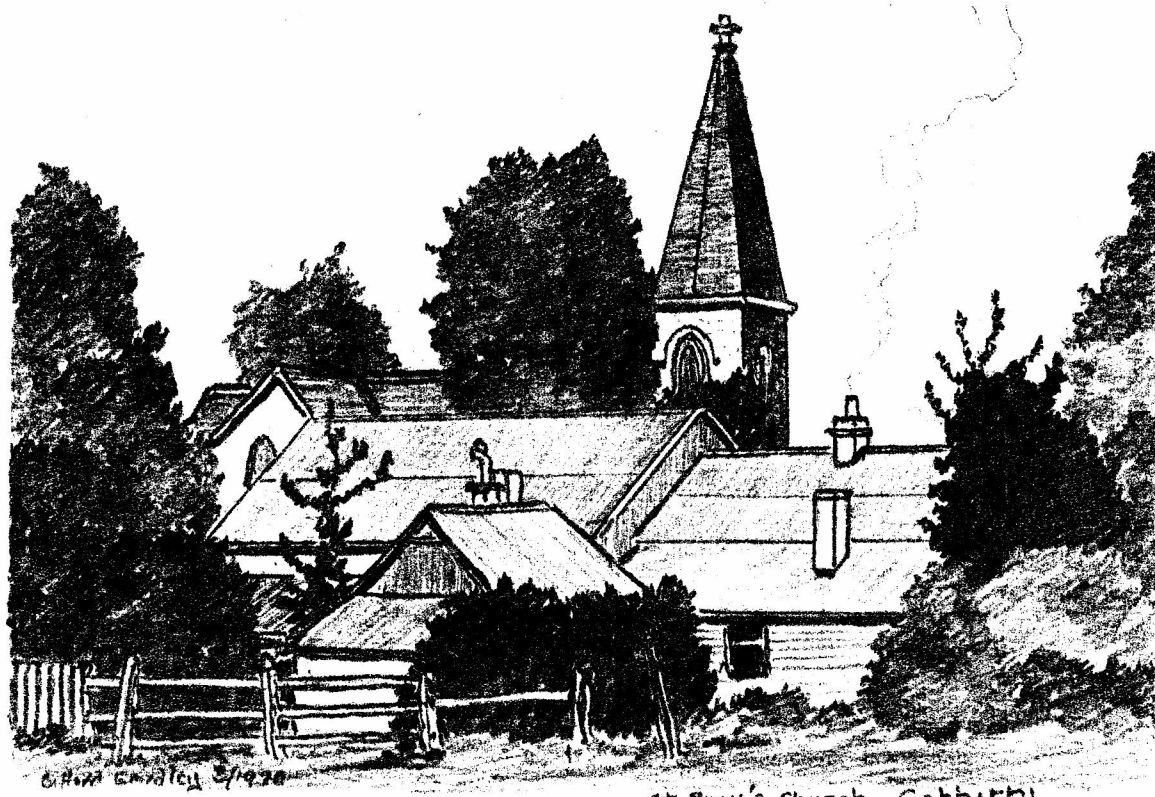
space afforded by the two short transepts. The transepts hold several box-shaped enclosed pews, each with a low entrance door. In some instances these private pew "sittings" have been held in reserve by local families for many generations. Originally there was a "Three-decker" pulpit, a somewhat rare fitting, where the preacher occupied the top deck to give his sermon, the church clerk the second deck, and the sexton sat in the lower deck at floor level. Before the arrival of the fine organ an orchestra of sorts conducted the music of the church, the tune being set by the clerk sounding the relevant note on a large tuning fork after the hymn or psalm was announced.

On the occasion of the visit by the members of the St. George Historical Society to the 11 a.m. Morning Service on May 17th, 1970, the juvenile choir, in their robes, consisted of ten choristers who entered the church in procession and led with the singing of the opening hymn. It is believed that six members of the choir came from one family and the other four from another family circle. It was a very pleasant and memorable experience to have worshipped in this fine country church of the village of Cobbitty.

The cemetery surrounding St. Paul's Church is well kept and a credit to those good people who have made themselves responsible for its maintenance. The church grounds are notable for the splendour of the trees, which include a Weeping Cypress, a pleasure to look upon, and a majestic Bunya Pine, or Monkey Puzzle, as it is locally known. In November the Jacaranda trees display their clusters of mauve blooms to perfection, and the magnificent "Bean" tree, overshadowing the front of the church, is a rare specimen that may have an Indian background.

Tucked away in the south-west corner of the church-yard, with its entrance doorway facing to the east, flanked by two tall knarled cypress trees of sombre mien, stands the historic Heber Chapel. This low building was erected in 1828, and was the first church built at Cobbitty, being named after Bishop Heber, then Bishop of Calcutta, and consecrated by the Reverend Samuel Marsden. Residential premises are attached to the south-western side of the building and are still in occupation. This was the head-quarters of the Reverend Thomas Hassall where he stayed for a period of forty-one years, combining the pursuits of farming with those appertaining to his clerical duties. As before mentioned his original parish embraced "All Australia, south of Liverpool". Thomas Hassall died in 1868 and is buried in the adjacent cemetery. The Heber Chapel is now used for Sundry School classes and has had a religious background for more than one hundred and forty two years.

The allotment next door, now a wilderness of Acacia-trees, once held a small cottage of rather primitive construction which has long been demolished. A sketch made in 1952 shows a slab-walled building with corrugated-iron roof and sundry water storage tanks of similar material. The separate kitchen, obviously incorporated within the precincts of the stable, had a huge brick chimney, wide enough at its hearth base to roast an ox, its upper brickwork being corbelled in steps of decreasing width until the squat rectangular-shaped chimney-flue was reached.



Gifford Ennisley 5/1970

ST. PAUL'S Church . Cobbity.



Gifford Ennisley 7/1952

A Kitchen chimney at Cobbity

It was, perhaps, the widest chimney of its kind ever to come under our appreciative notice. We speculated how cozy its great wood fire must have been on frosty nights, and it can be intensely cold in Cobbitty village. The little slab-sided kitchen, illuminated by the fire-light, and perhaps an odd candle or two, would have its occupants closely gathered around the hearth, basking in its warmth, with the household dogs and the cat well to the fore. Truly a domestic scene of rural contentment.

This old time cottage appeared to have marked the housing limit of Cobbitty village as clustered around its dominant and stately church. Beyond, the Cobbitty Road continued its westerly course, passing through tree-covered grazing land to reach the intersection of Cut Hill Road. Here the old highway turned sharply south, and then curved west and south-west, passing isolated farm-houses enroute, some of great age, to cross a bridge over the picturesque tree-lined banks of the Nepean River. Over the bridge a connection was made with the road which led southwards to link with Camden and north-westwards, via Brownlow Hill, to the hamlet of Werombi, the junction marking the end of Cobbitty Road.

Cobbitty Village exercises a charm over those who are acquainted with its treasured past, and the personalities of these people involved in its development. Not the least of its charms is the quiet unhurried atmosphere, engendered to a large extent by the beauty of its tree-clad surroundings, the beauty of its ancient church, and the comeliness of its few remaining old-world cottages.

\*\*\*\*\*