



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
13th August, 1971.

Dear Friend and Member,

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

Date: Friday Evening Next, August 20th, 1971, at 8 P.M.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

At the conclusion of the business, a member of the Society, Mrs. S. Tearle, will give an entertaining, illustrated address titled: "Rose-de-Freycinet". This is a story of particular interest as "Rose", a Charming French Lady, gives a lively description of the Sydney scene, and the people she met in the year 1819.

Business: General.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

Mr. J. Stead, President.

Mrs. E. Eardley, Hon. Sec.
59.8078.

Supper Roster: Mesdames Amey (Capt)., Scott, I. Smith, Wright and Longhurst.

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The following Office Bearers were elected for the ensuing 12 months:

Patrons: Mayor of Rockdale.
Mayor of Kogarah.
Mr. R. Stark.
Mr. T. J. McCarthy.

President: Mr. J. Stead.
Senior Vice President: Mr. W. Napper.
Vice Presidents: Mr. W. Foster.
Mr. D. Sinclair.
Mr. V. Saunders.
Hon. Secretary: Mrs. E. Eardley.
Asst. Hon. Sec. Mrs. A. Pender.
Hon. Treasurer. Mr. R.C. Callister.
Hon. Auditors. Mr. V. Saunders & Ald. A. Ford.
Research Officer: Mr. A. Ellis.
Publicity Officer: Mr. V. Saunders.

Mesdames Stead, Prebble, & Miss Otton (To be completed at August Meeting.)

Management Committee.

President, Mr. Stead; Secretary, Mrs. Eardley; Treasurer, Mr. Callister; with Messrs. Ellis, Smith, Lee, and Mesdames Prebble and Wright.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Please ring Mrs. Pender, Asst. Sec. 50.5724,
(Evenings)

By private cars, to be arranged next meeting.

Inspection of "Nugal Hall", 18 Milford St., Randwick, an Historic Home.

Admission, Adults 50¢, Children 10¢.

Date: Sunday August 29th, 1971.

Time: 1.30 p.m. Meet at Nugal Hall.

Attendants at Nugal Hall will be in Period Costume.

October: Long weekend visit to Goulburn and Braidwood.

Suggested Outings:

September 18th. Conducted outing - The Rocks Area. Saturday afternoon.
by bus. Afternoon Tea on Observatory Hill. Members & Friends Welcome.

October 16th or 17th. Bus trip to Everglades at Leura.

November 21st. Church Service. Pittown. C. of E. Historic Church.

If the Members are interested in the above "SUGGESTED" outings, or have any suggestions for future outings, we would be glad of their co-operation.

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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1971.

I am happy to present the President's Report for the year ended 30th June, 1971.

The year under review was an important one for our Society for two reasons - firstly because we completed our first ten years as a Society, and secondly, because of the significant part we were called upon to play in the Centenary Celebrations of Rockdale Municipal Council.

Our Society had its origin on 16th June, 1961, when 12 people attended a public meeting called by the then Mayor of Rockdale, Alderman T. J. McCarthy, to consider the formation of an Historical Society. The proposal met with the approval of those present and the new Society held its first meeting on 21st July, 1961. There were 16 people present and Mr. Swan was elected the first President.

From those small beginnings our Society has grown over the intervening years and today our membership totals 230. A pleasing feature has always been the good attendance at our meetings and during the past year we averaged 82 people at each monthly gathering. Our record attendance was achieved in February when no less than 103 people were present to hear an address by Mr. R. Stark, Town Clerk of Rockdale - a far cry from the 16 at that first meeting!

In accordance with the wishes of members we met in January this year, which was a departure from our normal practice of holding the first meeting in the new year in the following month. The number of members in attendance, totalling 88, justified this decision.

Various outings were arranged to places of historical interest and received the support of members. These have always proved popular, especially since we adopted the practice of travelling by bus which allows members more opportunity to fraternise than is the case when travelling by private cars. It was unfortunate that our proposed outing to "Everglades" at Leura had to be cancelled because of bad weather.

During the Eight Hour Holiday Weekend last October, over 40 members went on a three day tour to Wellington and Gulgong. This proved a great success; so much so that plans are now in hand to undertake a similar tour to Braidwood at the same time this year.

With regard to the Centenary Celebrations, many members dressed in period costume and travelled on the Vintage Train from Sydneham to Rockdale. We also arranged an Historical Exhibition in Rockdale Town Hall which proved an outstanding success, so much so that the hours during which the display was open had to be extended to accommodate all those wishing to attend.

Our Society also undertook to assist with the preparation of Council's Centenary Book. A number of members were engaged on this work for some eighteen months prior to the Celebrations and the result of their efforts may be seen in the book "A Century of Progress". This is a fine publication which has been well received.

To mark the Centenary of the Municipality, Rockdale Council purchased the old home "Lydham Hall" for use as an Historical Museum, and our Society undertook the task of restoring the interior of the building. This involved certain members in sheer physical hard work over a long period and under trying conditions. That the task was performed so well and also completed in time for the official opening is a great tribute to the small band of people who so unselfishly gave of their time and energy to perform a difficult and unfamiliar undertaking.

It also became necessary to raise funds to finance the refurbishing of "Lydham Hall" and a Ladies Fund Raising Committee was formed for this purpose. I cannot speak too highly of the efforts of this small group of members. By their enthusiasm, untiring efforts and incredible desire to help they raised \$2,320 in just eleven months. They staged the North Shore Cavalcade of Fashion in the Town Hall and by this means alone made a net profit of approximately \$400. These ladies are deserving of our admiration and grateful thanks.

We are also greatly indebted to our office bearers for the work they have performed during the year. I would like to mention particularly our Secretary and Assistant Secretary. Coupled with the increase in membership and the Centenary Celebrations, the duties we have asked these ladies to perform have increased considerably during the past year. This means that busy people are called upon to devote more of their limited leisure time in the cause of our Society, and we must never take them for granted for they are deserving of our utmost thanks.

An important feature of our Society has been the opportunity to gather at supper after the meeting and thus get to know fellow members. I would particularly like to thank the ladies on the supper roster, who so kindly and so uncomplainingly undertake this rather tiresome task.

I have always thought that the strength and progress of our Society have been due in no small measure to the ability of members to work and fraternise in a harmonious atmosphere, placing the welfare of the Society before their own interests. I trust that this spirit will continue, and that the Society will grow and progress accordingly.

D. Sinclair.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the Year Ended 30th June, 1971.

To Bank Balance 3.7.1970.
Members' Subscriptions
Sale of Badges
Sale of Books
Bank Interest
Donations
Bus Tickets
Raffle Tickets
Sale Historical Books
Unpresented cheque

| | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| \$334.89 | By Subscriptions to R.A.H.S. | 15.00 |
| 236.50 | " " National Trust | 6.30 |
| 22.10 | Petty Cash, mainly for Postages | 131.64 |
| 321.06 | Printing of Books | 495.62 |
| 13.01 | Bus Hire | 105.40 |
| 161.50 | Purchase of Books (for Typists) | 9.40 |
| 108.40 | " " Envelopes | 23.47 |
| 3.00 | Donation | 5.00 |
| 86.60 | Christmas Party | 5.50 |
| 13.69 | Purchase of photo | 7.50 |
| | Stamps | 1.25 |
| | Refund on Steam Tram Books | 46.20 |
| | Lydham Hall Refund | 3.00 |
| | Dinner Deposit to Ainslie Lodge | 20.00 |
| | Balance in Bank | <u>425.47</u> |

\$1,300.75

\$1,300.75

Reg. C. Callister.

Treasurer.

J. Noble.

Hon. Secretary.

Audited and found correct.

V.M. Saunders.

LYDHAM HALL FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1970-1971.

On behalf of the retiring Ladies' Fund Raising Committee, I would like to thank the Members of the Society who have supported and given most generously towards the 'Fund Raising' for Lydham Hall.

We have achieved the payment of all outstanding accounts in connection with the refurbishing of two rooms and the hall, and as at June 30th, our bank balance stands at \$643.89, of which \$400 has been placed on fixed deposit for a period of twelve months.

I appreciate the loyal support of the ladies of this Committee, without whose untiring and ever willing help our aims could not have been accomplished.

E. Wright.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LYDHAM HALL LADIES' FUND RAISING COMMITTEE
FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 30th JUNE, 1971.

Receipts.

Raffles
 Sales of Cakes
 Proceeds of Stall
 Donations
 Gents' Supper
 Bus Trip Profit
 Social Evening Profit
 Society Books and Leaflets
 Council Books and Spoons
 Lydham Hall Admissions
 Interest

\$514.70
 14.55
 490.77
 76.38
 21.90
 52.65
 992.45
 115.10
 155.00
 210.65
 10.57

Expenditure.

Petty Cash
 Advertising
 Lydham Hall Refurbishing Expenses
 Purchase Show Cases
 Hire Children's Costumes
 Centenary Celebrations
 St. George Historical Books Purchased
 Cavalcade of Fashion Expenses
 Rockdale Council Books and Spoons
 Historical Society Annual Dinner Exes.

\$31.75
 27.05
 1401.11
 18.00

 24.00
 86.60
 252.07
 161.25
 9.00

\$2010.83

Cr. Balance as per Bank
 Statement 30/6/71

643.89

\$2654.72

\$2654.72

I hereby certify that this Statement of Receipts and Payments has been audited and found to be correct.

(Sgd) V. M. Saunders.

16th July, 1971.

SHADY NOOK. BRIGHTON LE SANDS.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

Prior to the advent of surf-bathing it was customary for the citizens of Sydney and the metropolis generally to spend their weekends at one of the many watering places, as they were termed, located around the foreshores of Sydney Harbour and Botany Bay. At Botany, adjacent to the Cooks River entrance, was the famous Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel and its adjoining pleasure grounds, which attracted vast crowds of holiday makers to splash and swim in the shallow waters of the northern section of Botany Bay, to picnic in the bush surrounded grounds, to ride on the miniature steam train, to patronise its hotel bars, to inspect its zoo and the elephant, and generally make merry.

All these things were keenly observed by Mr. Thomas Saywell who saw a good financial return was to be had in catering for the entertainment of the populace. To this end he commenced to develop the sand dune country at Lady Robinson's Beach, adjacent to the eastern extremity of Ocean (later Bay) Street, Rockdale. Here a palatial hotel was built, also large swimming baths with separate palisade enclosures to divide the sexes, evidently to protect the defenceless males from the wiles of the designing females, and a most spacious picnic ground where people could loll under the shade of the native trees. This area was aptly named SHADY NOOK, and its fame spread far and wide. It quickly became popular, specially so with mothers with young children to watch. There were swings, and somewhat ponderous seesaws, made from a heavy plank suspended in the centre of its length between two upright ex-tramway sleepers, an arrangement which called for the careful balancing of the opposing loads of youngsters, as broken arms and legs were not altogether unknown amongst its patrons.

The Shady Nook enclosure was located at the southern side of Bay Street and its eastern fence line, formed of short stubby lengths of indigneous tea-tree packed tightly between parallel wires, strung between posts, in an endeavour to halt the inroads of wind blown sand, followed the western verge of the present Grand Parade for some little distance. For a portion of its length the southern fence boundary was occupied by a shelter shed, replete with high ungainly seats, more solid than comfortable, and substantial picnic tables of a strength calculated to withstand the assaults of the vandalistic larrikin element which has always existed in our midst. The remaining portion of the southern boundary, together with the western fence line, was enclosed by a rough hewn post and rail fence which prevented live stock from entering the enclosed grounds. At the time it was common practice to permit cattle and horses to roam at will, seeking agistment wherever it could be found.

The western section of Shady Nook was left, to a large extent, in its virgin state as far as the larger trees were concerned. This growth was inter-mixed with small-leaved coastal Banksia trees, and knarled, grotesque shaped Saw-leaved Honeysuckles (*Banksia Serrata*), which were once so common to the sand dune district bordering the western shore of Botany Bay. There were the bright green Geebung (Persoonia), the Woody-pears (*Xylomelum Pyriforme*), and a host of other wildlings which have fascinated generations of naturalists.

To cater for the ice-cream, lolly buying, and tea and scone needs of the picnic crowds a small shop was erected at the north-eastern corner of Shady Nook. This was housed in a long weatherboard building, a single room in width, and extended for some distance along the eastern frontage of Shady Nook in a southerly direction from Bay Street, the tea-room and lolly shop being located at the northern end and a separate post office, together with the single room which formed living accommodation for Miss Ward, the post mistress, were placed at the southern end. On the western side of this building, running for its full length, was a narrow side verandah sheltering the various doorways and also a series of attractive bay windows which displayed an excellent wealth of ferns and exotic pot plants.

The northern facade of the shop premises, abutting on to Bay Street, was largely devoted to window space, the lower section of the wall being divided into three glazed sections for confectionary display purposes. Immediately above these windows was an intricate panel made up of small panes of coloured glass, reds, greens, and yellows, said to be of German manufacture. This panel looked most attractive at night when illuminated from within by the mellow gleams of the gaslight. The separate lettering of "CADBURY'S CHOCOLATE", in white glass, now a historic feature of advertising, was affixed in semi-circular fashion, across the three panels of the display window. Beneath the eaves the upper section of the facade was enclosed with redwood shingles painted an ochraceous shade of green, a covering which looked most attractive. The fascia boards were decorated at their ends by semi-circular drops and also midway in their length. The roof was of corrugated iron, painted Indian Red, as a protection against the inroads of sea air and rust. Surmounted above the ridging was a crest board of pierced metal as an ornamentation, the sharp upper edges of which were not appreciated as a potential landing place by the local sea-gull population.

The tea-room was a friendly little place given over to dainty morning and afternoon teas served at small round tables with polished marble tops, around each of which were can-seated "Austrian" chairs. Behind the counter were shelves displaying a wondrous array of chocolate boxes depicting scenes from the Swiss Alps, or flowering gems such as roses, corn-flowers, or red poppies, each box being tied with rich coloured ribbon, the products of old established firms such as Cadburys, Frys, Kailers, MacRobertson, and Nestles, amongst others. For the younger clientele with a penny to spend the stock in trade ranged from gingerbread rabbits to pink and also white sugar pigs, plus a tremendous variety of sticky toffees, milk-poles, licorice telephone wires, also straps, and blocks (at four a penny) of the same black laxative material. There were pink musk sticks, sherbert bags with a licorice tube to suck up the contents, fizzoes (round balls of sherbert encased in white toffee) at half-penny each, and many other tempting comestibles for the juvenile palate.

The post office catered for the then rather limited postal needs of Brighton-le-Sands and had the usual counter, stamp drawers, and delicate brass letter weighing scales. Letters in New South Wales needed one penny stamps, red in colour and issued by the New South Wales Government, and interstate letters were two-pence, a blue stamp. Newspapers, irrespective of their destination were sent at one half-penny each, the stamps of this denomination being green

in colour. It may be of interest to give details appertaining to the furnishing of the bedsitting room occupied by the postmistress. The dividing walls of the room were of vertically fixed match-boarding and the ceiling, of the same material, followed the apex shape of the roof timbers. A large table, fully covered with a cloth of elaborate floral design, occupied the central position, whilst a sideboard, with a longitudinal mirror and shelves loaded with vases, ornaments, and trinkets, lay against a wall. There was a natty single bed of iron construction, adorned with spherical brass knobs, one on top of each bed-post, together with a multitude of brass and china fittings. Framed pictures added colour and interest to each wall, and at night a golden glow was shed by an ornate centrally hung gas bracket which, per medium of a pair of oval-shaped brass-sheathed balance weights dangling at the end of chains, could be raised or lowered at will. It was certainly a wonderful cosy little room.

The eastern half of the fence along the Bay Street frontage of Shady Nook was formed with white-painted pickets, a double gate being placed therein to admit vehicular traffic. The main pedestrian entrance was adjacent to the tea-room verandah where a number of vertical posts, each about four feet in height, arranged in two alternatively positioned rows, afforded a maximum of discomfort to obese persons and a wonderment to members of the canine family. Side by side, to admit perambulators and go-carts, was another entrance protected by a revolving cross-bar arrangement, pivoted in a central round post. These protective facilities effectually kept out the roving larger animals, and the revolving cross-bar gave endless pleasure to the smaller children as they were pushed round and round, hanging on for dear life, by their excited mates. The long verandah was paved with brown glazed bricks and the children spent much time gazing at the ferns displayed in the several bay windows and trying to pry through the fronds into the rooms beyond. The grassy sward of the eastern portion of the enclosed grounds was planted, at about twenty foot intervals, with Norfolk Island Pines, each tree being protected by rectangular shaped guards of wooden palings and several guards had seats arranged around their outer sides.

Perhaps the principal feature of Shady Nook was the large ornate Merry-Go-Round, placed near the north-eastern corner of the pleasure ground. This appurtenance was constructed about the beginning of the present century by Messrs. Stewart and Cropp, a local firm of contractors, and was electrically driven per medium of a winch, several idling pulleys, and an endless rope, the latter, after leaving the winch, being coiled around and immediately below the rotating wooden floor of the machine. A circular single railed track, concentric with the main pivot, was traversed by railway type wheels, each revolving on separate radiating axles. A large electrically operated organ played strident "mechanical" music which was clearly audible more than half a mile away, amongst which one vividly remembers the rendition of the "Blue Danube" in particular. The Merry-Go-Round was housed in a many-sided wooden building with a conical roof, above which a small cupola gave a sense of adornment. The entrance doorways were closed with wooden shutters when the machine was not in use to prevent unauthorised intrusion and acts of vandalism. The wooden horses, three abreast, moved up and down on vertical brass covered rods, each dappled steed bore a distinctive name on

its neck relative to some well known racehorse of the period. There were at least four wheel-less chariots, equally spaced, which gave a measure of comfort to the younger children who were too frightened to ride the bouncing nags ahead. There was also a razzle-dazzle nearby. This contrivance consisted of a large diameter circular seat, suspended by stout iron rods from a metal cap mounted on top of a high and stout post. By the strenuous efforts of the more able participants, the circular seat rotated around its post in a rising and falling fashion. As this machine was on the free list it was a prime favourite with its many and often shrieking patrons.

About the period of 1908 a couple of discarded de-wheeled tramcar bodies, complete with glazed windows, were placed in Shady Nook west of and in the vicinity of the Merry-Go-Round. These erstwhile vehicles had end doors and side seats facing inwards and were popular with picnic parties. They also provided shelter should a thunder-storm arise. Another arrival about the same period was a "Dummy" (or driving) cable car formerly in use on the then abandoned King Street Cable Tramway in Sydney. This open-sided vehicle, minus its wheels, had seats facing outwards and towards each end, the space between the raised backs of the seats once provided standage for the former tram-car "Grip-man" where he manipulated his control levers. This unit found great favour with boys playing at "Trammies" but did not remain at Shady Nook for very long. Its ultimate fate is not known.

With the expiration in 1914 of the thirty years franchise granted to Thomas Saywell by the original Act of Parliament, a move was made by the Rockdale Municipal Council to acquire Shady Nook as a public park. Two years later the Government was urged to purchase the area for recreation purposes, but to no avail. In 1920 the local Council had the option of taking over the property at a cost of £10,000 but could not arrange the finance, and as late as 1928 agitation for its purchase was still proceeding. However, the developers took over and, after the ruthless destruction of the lovely trees had taken its course, they erected the row of shops which face Bay Street and Grand Parade. Trafalgar Street, The Boulevarde, and Duke Street were eventually constructed to serve the needs of the residential area spread over the southern and western portion of the once so beautiful and popular Shady Nook.

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