



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

April 1972.

Dear Friend and Member:

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:-

Date. Friday Evening, April 21st, 1972, at 8 p.m.

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

Business. General.

Syllabus Item. An Illustrated Address by Mr. Noel Thorpe, a member of the Society, on a recent visit to New Zealand.  
Questions on address invited.

Supper Roster.

Miss McCartney, Captain, Mesdames Gow, Bushell, Deacon, Farrar and Miss Russell.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. J. Stead,  
President.  
Phone 59.5341.

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Hon. Secretary.  
Phone 59.8078.

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer.  
Phone 587.1159.

## COACH TRIP ALONG THE GREAT WESTERN HIGHWAY.

This outing for Members of the St. George Historical Society and their Friends will take place on Sunday, May 21st, 1972.

Traversing this Historical old road, viewing what there is to be seen of the Old Inns or Hostelryes, noting the places where others once stood, together with the beauty of the Autumn Colours of the lovely trees should prove both interesting and enjoyable. It is intended that the Coach will pass along the beauteous Hartley Vale to have a glimpse of what once was the lovely old Collitt's Inn, which unfortunately has fallen into a state of disrepair, and the quaintly named "Comet Inn", the "Victoria Inn", and the "Kerosene Inn", just to name some of the Inns along the way.

The Coach will then climb to Bell, and return by the Bell's Line of Road over Mount Tomah to Kurrajong and Windsor, and from thence to Rockdale.

There is toilet accommodation on the Coach, and Tea, Sugar, and Milk will be provided at our refreshment stops.

Bookings are limited to 39 persons and to date half of the bookings have been placed, so early application will be advisable. The cost has been kept at a minimum: \$3 per person, payable beforehand please.

Phone Mrs. Eardley - 59.8078 - for bookings.

CAMERA STOPS AS REQUESTED.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 6th, 1972.

A Film Evening, featuring Part 2 of the Centenary Celebrations, together with films from the National Trust will constitute what we hope will prove to be a very happy evening. The cost will be 45¢ each, and a light supper will be provided at the conclusion of the films.

Alderman Rathbone has again kindly offered to be projectionist for the occasion, and this we greatly appreciate. Tickets are available now.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 24th, 1972. ... Mrs. Hayman suggested this Outing.

Afternoon Trip, leaving Rockdale at 1 p.m. sharp. Inspection of "Carisbrook", Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove, Historical Home, restored by the Lane Cove Historical Society.

St. Marks Church, Hunters Hill.

St. Anne's Church, Ryde.

"Addington", an old home in Victoria Road, Ryde. It is hoped that this old place will be preserved. Details later.

### Recent Acquisitions.

Some little time ago, Mr. Hayman gave a piece of very old Cedar to Mrs. Waddington, who in turn passed it on to her Brother at Lake Cathie. In due course, a beautifully carved Candlestick was presented to the St. George Historical Society to be displayed at Lydham Hall.

Our appreciation and thanks go firstly to Mr. Hayman, and secondly to Mr. J. Canham, Bundella Avenue, Lake Cathie, Via Wauchope, N.S.W., for this beautiful acquisition to Lydham Hall.

Mrs. E. Hambly,  
114 Carpenter Street,  
St. Marys. NSW.

Ornamental Kerosene Table Lamp, Double Burner, more than 100 years old, used by Grandparents on the Goldfields at Mi Mi, NSW., a one time "Tent" town in northern N.S.W.

Mrs. C. Chase,  
942 King Georges Rd.,  
Blakehurst.

Old time Hurricane "Dash Lamp", possibly used for lighting on Carts.  
One small Hurricane Lamp, also very old.

Mrs. Callister,  
2a Haig Street,  
Bexley.

3 very old Hatpins.

Mr. Clive Smith,  
100 Bay Street,  
Rockdale.

Ivory (Carved) Head, top of his Father's Walking Stick handle.

Mrs. M. Field,  
13 Oliver Street,  
Bexley.

Carved Horn, used for Ritual (Forresters Lodge).

Mr. Lyons,  
Director,  
Ricketts & Thorp,  
Banksia.

Old style Mangle, early 1900's, screw on type, with external gears and hardwood rollers. Overall size: 2'3". In first class condition, was used by the firm only a few years ago to do a rolling job.

We wish to say "Thankyou" to the Members of the Society - mentioning the few names to hand - Mesdames Bushell, Coote, Marsden, Nelson, White, Lambert, Frost and McNamara, for the generous donations given to help stock our Street Stall, proceeds from which will go towards the restoration of Lydham Hall.

THE FIRE STATION AT BEXLEY, N.S.W.

A.F. &amp; F.G. Day.

Further to the enjoyable talk given on fire fighting by Station Officer Hearne to the March 1972 meeting of our Society, it is thought members might be interested in some of the history of Bexley Fire Station.

A sparsely settled area with much bushland, frequently runs a risk of fire in summer time, so in September 1900 (the year of Bexley's birth as a separate Municipality), the provisions of the Fire Brigades Act (1884) were extended to Bexley. Three years later (10th August, 1903),\* Alderman Taylor (Suburban Councils' representative on the Fire Brigades Board) addressed Bexley Council and told it that the Board hoped soon to place a sum on its estimates for the purchase of a site for a Bexley Fire Station. As a result, land at the south-eastern corner of Queen Victoria Street and Forest Road, with frontages to those streets of approximately 162-ft. and 213-ft. respectively, was acquired the following year. This land immediately became non-ratable and had to be struck off the Council's Rate Book, with a consequent loss in rates, at that time of 17/- per annum.

As a fire station was urgently needed in the district, the Board decided to lease a property in what was later to become the Bexley shopping centre, for use as a temporary fire station. This was situated opposite the present site of the Post Office. The fire fighting appliance with which the station started in June 1905, may have been primitive, because a year later it is recorded that "an improved fire waggon was now available at the Fire Station".

The Board had, in July 1907, £1500 allocated to the construction of the future fire station. Unfortunately it took two years to select a tender and complete the work. In the meantime, the Fire Brigades Board submitted the name of E. Lindsay Thompson for insertion in the Municipal Roll for election purposes. The Council Clerk replied that the land was Government property, it was exempt from taxation and no Council vote could be allowed for it. The Board was charged by the Council for kerbing and guttering at the ordinary rates ruling at the time (1/3 of total cost, plus 1/- each for pipeholes).

The station started with one permanent fireman and a fire bell was used to summon any of a volunteer force who might be within hearing. On the 14th April, 1914, the Council resolved to ask the Fire Brigades Board for a second permanent fireman. However, the First World War intervened and it was not until March 1918, that the request was acceded to.

It was in 1914 that the first two telephone fire alarms went into service - at the corner of Union Street/Grantham Street and (+) Webbers Road/Durham Street. A third alarm was installed at the Forest Road/Waratah Street corner in November 1921. Several others were installed in August 1939. Bexley Fire Station was connected to Kogarah telephone exchange in March 1919.

\* not of Bexley Council.      (+) now Willison Road.

In 1939, Bexley Fire Brigade was praised for its work at a fire in Bexley North.

However, a most unfortunate delay occurred in connection with a fire in a house at the corner of Shirley Street and Rawson Avenue in September 1944. Smoke was seen issuing from the windows at 4 p.m. and a passer-by rang the Fire Brigade on the nearest public alarm. Waiting until 4.15 p.m. without result, he rang again, still without result, and finally went to the Fire Station in his own car. He was informed that the 'phone was out of order. Also, the person in charge of the station was a new hand and did not know where Rawson Avenue was located. The brigade finally arrived at the scene of the fire at about 6 p.m. The extent of the damage is not known.

The Council was anxious to have the district fire headquarters established at the Bexley Fire Station and in March 1926, made the request to the Board of Fire Commissioners, but it was refused. A request was also made (1929) for some of the vacant corner of the Fire Station land, so that corner of Queen Victoria Street could be rounded, but this, also, was not agreed to. Fortunately, the Fire Station is set back 10-ft. from the "building line" at the corner and the rounding was still found to be possible. The ten foot recess from the building line still shelters from the cold winds a seat for the nearby bus stop.

Willoughby Council initiated a move in 1936 to have Council contributions to the cost of fire brigades abolished and Bexley Council heartily co-operated, again without success. Bexley was paying a levy of about £750 at the time, but this had doubled by the time the Council ceased to exist.

What would now be regarded as primitive manual equipment was displaced in 1924 by the installation of a motor pumping engine. This was first promised two years earlier and when it finally arrived the Council, at its regular meeting on 29th July, 1924 "left it in the Mayor's hands to arrange a suitable function".

In June 1935, a modern Dennis engine was installed, but apparently without ceremony.

The need for a new Council Chamber had become evident just before the second World War. Various sites were suggested and West Kogarah Progress Association urged Council to buy back land which appeared to be surplus to fire station needs. Nothing came of the idea.

The Fire Brigade had been ably served by its volunteers in the early days, so in 1932, the Board of Fire Commissioners was pleased to present long-service medals to mark its appreciation. On the other hand, the Fire Brigade Employees Union was seeking a reduction in working hours for firemen from 84 to 56 per week.

It had been proposed in 1930, that Bexley Fire Station should be closed. The Council suggested that if this took place it should be used to house a family or two, or alternatively, be used as a Boys' Club.

The onset of the war caused the retention of the station as a "second line of defence", with two fully-equipped fire engines of large pumping capacity, housing accommodation for one officer of the brigade and a large fibro-cement building alongside for a number of "lend-lease" fire engines.

After the war the fibro building became a Brigade workshop and remains so to this day.

Finally, Bexley Council, nearing the end of the Municipality as a separate entity, was told by the Board that adequate fire protection could now be provided by existing fire stations in the adjoining suburbs of Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville, so Bexley Fire Station, like its counterpart at Arncliffe, was closed.

#### References:

Minutes of the Borough Council of Bexley, 1900-1906.

Minutes of the Council of the Municipality of Bexley 1907-1948.

### ROCKDALE FIRE BRIGADE.

The precise date of the formation of a Fire Brigade in the Municipality of Rockdale cannot be established from the Board's records but it is known that the St. George Volunteer Fire Company was located at Rockdale in April 1891, for during that month of that year that Company applied to the Fire Brigades Board for telephone communication, but was refused, such permission however, being granted in February 1894.

In March 1895, the provisions of the Fire Brigades Act of 1884 were applied to the Municipality of Rockdale by action taken by the Government of the day. The gazettal of this fact failed to meet with the approval of the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade as he drew particular attention to this fact in his annual report for the year 1895 by the inclusion in that report of the following words:-

"This (the inclusion of Rockdale) is notable as being the first inclusion within the Metropolitan district of Municipalities so distant from the City and it is a matter for anxious consideration how a fair amount of protection is to be extended to them (the citizens of Rockdale)."

In 1895 the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company was situated in Rocky Point Road, now known as Princes Highway, and its complement comprised 16 men, 1 horse, 1 manual fire engine and 800' of hose. The fire station and plant belonged to the Company and the Board subsidised it to the extent of £70 per annum, whilst the Council's contribution to the Board in 1895 was £74.5.6

During the first year in existence as a Brigade under the jurisdiction of the Fire Brigades Board the Company responded to 8 calls of fire of which 3 were false alarms, the actual fires being as shown hereunder:-



Tuesday	23. 4. 95.	2.35 a.m. a grass fire on property owned by Robert Lattler, James Street. Extinguished by buckets of water.
Sunday	1. 7. 95.	2.05 a.m. a stable in Bay Street owned by W. Ogden slightly damaged by fire. Extinguished by buckets of water.
Monday	29. 7. 95.	1.00 a.m. a cottage of 4 rooms with contents burnt out and fallen down in Farr Street, owned by R. Kerr, Jeweller. Extinguished by two hydrants, the outbreak having been caused by the upsetting of a kerosene lamp.
Saturday	13. 4. 95.	8.15 p.m. Bed and bedding damaged by fire in a bedroom on the first floor of a private dwelling owned by Mr. P. Porteous, Watkin Street. Extinguished by buckets of water.
Saturday	9. 11. 95.	9.05 p.m. A private dwelling being the house owned by Mr. George Leider, Herman Street. The dwelling which contained six rooms was, with contents, burnt out and the roof partly off. The side of the stables and portion of fencing was damaged by fire. The outbreak was extinguished by one hydrant and the cause was unknown.

In April 1896, the Volunteer Company wrote to the Board and asked it for assistance to build a new fire station. The Company had £75 in hand towards the structure and it had already paid £25 for the land. Tenders had been called and it was considered that the whole project could be completed for £150. Strangely enough there was no mention by the Company where it had purchased the new site nor did the Board of the day or the Superintendent visit the area to ascertain where it was situated but nevertheless the Board approved the granting of £75 from its funds to the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company on the understanding that the Company vest the land and the station in the name of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board.

The Superintendent asked the Company to forward him a copy of the plans and specifications of the new project when it was found that tenders had been called for a structure without drainage, floors, doors or a stable. In these circumstances the Board refused to proceed further in the matter and the Company was informed accordingly.

The need for new premises, however, was fully realised by all concerned and in June 1896, the Board visited Rockdale where a Mr. Cooke offered it 30' of land in Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway) with a depth of 200' to a laneway at the rear at £7 a foot. The Board accepted this offer and a fire station together with quarters was erected thereon and occupied on the 1st June, 1897.

In 1904 the Board purchased the adjoining lot having a frontage of 31'11" in order to overcome the difficulty of an encroachment.

The Rockdale Fire Station was officially opened on 4th June, 1897 by the President of the Board, Mr. C. Brown, he being accompanied by Mr. T. M. Tinley and F. I. Jackson, both members of the Board and Superintendent Bear.

Whilst there is no record of the names of the original personnel of the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Company, it is known that Volunteer Fireman Russell was the first occupant of the new quarters of the fire station erected by the Board in 1897. He paid the Board a rental of 10/- per week for that privilege.

On the opening of this station the strength of horses was increased from 1 to 2 and name of one of them was "Warrior".

In 1900 some of the Volunteer Firemen were Bandsmen and a Band known as the Rockdale Fire Brigade Band was formed. This Band is reported to have been one of the premier bands of the State winning the Highland Society's Band Contest on the 2nd January, 1905, and the Forbes Band Contest on the 30th January of that year. Over the years the Volunteer Firemen resigned from the Band which, however, continued to keep its identity and practice in the billiard room at the rear of the station. An unfortunate incident occurred in 1908 when it is alleged that this Band by "very forceful playing" broke up an important political meeting of the day and the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades issued a direction that the Band was no longer to be called the Rockdale Fire Brigade Band and they were refused permission to practice on the Board's premises.

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