



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

June 1972.

Dear Friend and Member:

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, June 16th, 1972, at 8 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale. (Princes Highway).

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Address by the President, Mr. Stead.
Subject: "Early History of Arncliffe School".
Questions invited at conclusion of address.

Supper Roster: Captain: Mrs. Day, and Mesdames McMillan, A. McDonald,
Misses Dunsmore, Cheetham, Callister.

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.

DATES TO REMEMBER.

JUNE 18th: 11 a.m. Church Service, Old St. David's, Hirst St., Arncliffe.

JUNE 24th, 1972.

Inspection of: "Addington", & St. Anne's Church, at Ryde: St. Mark's & All Saint's Churches at Hunters Hill, and "Carisbrook" at Lane Cove., where you may enjoy your afternoon tea.

Time: 1 p.m. Sharp. Tea, milk & sugar provided.
Place: Rockdale Town Hall.
Cost: Per Person. \$1.20. Paid in ADVANCE please.

JULY 22nd, 1972.

A suggested tour of Historic North Sydney, organised by the North Sydney Historical Society, on Saturday Afternoon, July 22nd, 1972.
This will be a conducted tour, the bus will come from the Northern side of the Harbour to Rockdale Town Hall, by arrangement with the North Sydney Group.

Time: 1 p.m.
Cost: \$1.30 per person.

The Bus will accommodate 50 Persons. Book early, pay in advance please.

"PETER SAGE PRESENTS" "NORTH WEST AUSTRALIA"

Saturday, October 7th, 1972. "Darwin to Perth", including Darwin, Katherine Gorge, Ord River Scheme, Broome, Hammersley Ranges, Carnarvon, Geraldton and Perth.

Details Later.

Your attention is drawn to the Society's No. 6 Book, "All Stations to Como", written and illustrated by Mr. Gifford Eardley, available from the Secretary, cost 80¢, or 88¢ posted.

WE would like to say "Thankyou" for the following recent acquisitions to "Lydham Hall".

Mrs. W. Dunk,
Edward Street,
Arncliffe.

Family Bible, purchased 1845 Circa, by Thomas Southern, Mrs. Dunk's great Grandfather who was born at Glasgow in 1822. His son, Thomas George Southern, born at Glasgow in 1850, came to Australia in 1872, and brought the Bible with him.

Mrs. Brideson,
Beverly Hills.

has given a wig for the Model at Lydham Hall, and in due course will arrange it on the Model.

Mr. Gordon McGregor,
4 Maple Avenue,
Pennant Hills.

Hand wrought Cow Chain. 1880.

OUR CHURCH SERVICE AT OLD ST. DAVID'S, ARNCLIFFE.

The St. George Historical Society has arranged with the Rector of St. David's Church of England at Arncliffe, the Rev. Norman Robinson, to hold a special service at the historic church known as Old St. David's, located at the northern end of Hirst Street, Arncliffe, opposite the intersection of Kelsey Street, on Sunday June 18th, at 11 a.m. All of our members, irrespective of denomination, are invited to attend.

It is unfortunate that circumstances have arisen which make it necessary to close this little church in the very near future. However, the Rockdale Municipal Council has arranged to take over the property and preserve the building as being of historic interest. Negotiations are proceeding for the necessary legal transfer arrangements, and when these are completed the church will cease to function as such.

For those people who are unacquainted with the location of the old church, we will take Arncliffe Railway Station as a starting point. Leave the station on the western, or shopping, side and proceed up Belmore Street. Cross Station Street intersection to enter a pedestrian laneway continuing in the same direction as Belmore Street. Wollongong Road is then crossed to enter, in the same westerly direction, Kelsey Street. Cross to the left hand footpath of Kelsey Street and follow same all the way to the church gates. The distance as set out would be much less than one third of a mile.

SOME OLD-TIME INNS OF THE WESTERN ROAD.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

This is an account of a motor coach journey made by members and friends of the St. George Historical Society to follow the Great Western Highway from its junction with Church Street at Parramatta to the Vale of Clwydd at Little Hartley and onwards to Hartley Vale. Its purpose was to inspect the former sites of the old-time inns which once lined the road in the early days. A few of the buildings still remain in-situ, but many have disappeared from our ken. Our listing may be far from complete as a detailed study has not been made by the authors on this interesting subject, but in the course of much wandering over the area oddments of information have come to hand from many sources, and this knowledge forms the basis of the essay.

The Great Western Highway, to all intents and purposes, is a continuation of George Street, Sydney, under the guise of the Parramatta Road, turning north towards Parramatta as Church Street (Granville) for about half a mile before turning westward as its title defines. Climbing May's Hill a wide expanse of country, largely devoted nowadays to suburban housing, is to be discerned, reaching to Liverpool in the far distance. On the northern side of the highway, a short distance beyond the Greystanes Road intersection (leading in from the south) is the Fox Hills Golf Course, placed near the junction of the old established Blacktown Road. Here was sited the ancient coaching hostelry named "THE FOX UNDER THE HILL", the original "mine host" being a gentleman named Peisley. This place was an inn with a true English flavour and important as a horse-changing station when the coaches traversed to Great Western Road. The building stood opposite to, and on the western side of the present Fox Hills Golf Club House. Why these people saw fit to have such an historic building demolished cannot easily be explained as they used it as their headquarters for many years.

With a small degree of imagination one can picture the arrival of the dusty "four-in-hand" coaches, either outward or inward bound, with their complement of cramped and equally dusty passengers, eager for refreshment and the comforts of the inn. The driver no doubt, would head for his foaming tankard or perhaps two, whilst the hostler would unharness the sweating horses, talking to them in a language which horses understand. Meanwhile, the stable-hand would appear with a new team ready, if not willing, to take the coach and its complement over the bumpy and rutty roads which lay ahead.

The old inn premises, when first seen by the writers, were well set back from the road and surrounded by an old style post and rail fence and entered through a gateway supported by staunch posts. Although the main portion of the brick building was single storied there was a cluster of small bedrooms each with its dormer window grouped beneath the steeply sloping roof, the latter one may presume, was originally covered with wooden shingles and later replaced with corrugated iron. At each end of the entrance verandah which faced towards the east was a small enclosed room, often used as a bedroom for the more important overnight guests. After the closure of the place as a hotel, presumably about 1912, the Fox under the Hill seems

to have had a chequered existence until such time as it became the headquarters of the golf club. Unfortunately when the present "ten-a-penny" clubhouse was built about 1963, this fine historic inn was ruthlessly demolished. That it was amongst the last of the one-time coaching inns in the vicinity of Sydney was of no significance whatever.

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The surrounding wide expanse of grassland in the immediate district of Toongabbie includes the site of the Government Farm established in 1788 by Governor Arthur Phillip for housing newly arrived convicts. The place was noted for its unmitigated brutality, the outcast men being fed once daily at about 7 p.m. Only the well being of the farm was considered important and the mortality amongst the unfortunate men, unused to the heavy clearing and ploughing work, can only be described as appalling.

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West of the Blacktown Road intersection and on the left hand side of the highway is the old established but almost completely modernised Prospect Hotel, sited almost at the eastern foot of Prospect Hill. One of the foibles of the early road makers was to ascend and descend any hill, no consideration being given to the animal power involved in haulage duties. In fact, gangs of women were at one time engaged in bringing loads of bricks from Brickfield Hill to build the homestead known as Bungarribee House in the vicinity of Blacktown. Nearing the crest of Prospect Hill glimpses may be obtained at intervals, on the left hand side, of the vast expanse of Prospect Reservoir, which is such an important unit of the Sydney Metropolitan Water Supply.

The original route of the Cowpastures Road leading southwards to Narellan joined with the Great Western Road at the crest of Prospect Hill, its alignment passing through the area which was later submerged by the waters of the Prospect Reservoir. On the right hand side, prior to the junction of Church Lane, is the two-storied residence which in former years did duty for man and beast as the CRICKETER'S ARMS. Looking northwards along Church Lane is the now abandoned Saint Bartholomew's Church of England which dates from 1841; surrounded by its graveyard ranged along the upper slope of the ridge. This area dates back as far as 1791.

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In the vicinity of Eastern Creek a lone spindly cypress tree stands beside the right hand side of the highway. This is the sole relic of an old-time homestead known as "HOLLINGSWORTH", at one time under the ownership of Mr. Learmouth. The place was distinguished by its beautiful exotic tree growth, one particularly fine example of a Himalayan Cedar was growing within the property against the roadside. With the widening and duplication of this section of the highway it became necessary to demolish the ancient homestead and a plea was sent to the Main Roads Board to preserve this beautiful tree. Unfortunately this was described in the letter as a cypress,

which explains the spindly example now marking the site, the real beauty, which need not have been touched in the width of the median strip was felled by the iconoclastic road engineers as being of no consequence.

Unfortunately details are not to hand concerning the location of "THE CORPORATION", an inn under the management of a gentleman known as "Lumpy Dean", at Minchinbury. Nearby was "THE WAINWRIGHTS" which, according to report, was distinguished by a swinging sign outside the premises. The fortunes of these two places in their latter days is obscure but it is possible that both faded out through lack of business with the coming of the Great Western Railway. It would appear that for a year or so the line terminated, as far as passenger services were concerned at Mount Druitt, where the horse coaches for destinations further west met the trains.

There were many primitive little cottages strung out along the roadside, some of great age having slab walls and shingled roofs, but these have been largely swept away within recent years. On the right hand side at Colyton it is somewhat difficult to locate the site of the "RED COW INN", a single storied "twin" cottage which was built in 1856 by Thomas Smith. With the coming of the Great Western Railway the place largely lost its business as a coaching inn where the horses were changed, after trotting merrily from the aforementioned "Fox under the Hill". The horse pond was, at least until recently, placed at the eastern side of the timber building. The licence was transferred to the "RED COW HOTEL" sited at the southern side of the Penrith Railway Station. After being delicensed the old building at Colyton served as a school and in more recent times as the Colyton Post Office and also as a general store, kept by a very nice old lady. With the road widening the premises were demolished, later than 1960.

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South Creek, now known as St. Marys, was extremely popular with teamsters and drovers who pitched camp by the stream where water and grass was available in good supply for the animals. We have records of two hotels at this place, there may have been more, the first known as William Byrne's Hotel was located near Byrne's Creek, was a single-storied building with a long end-gabled roof. End windows were placed in the apex of each gable whilst dormer windows admitted light to the other bedrooms placed under the roof. The lower half of the verandah facing the highway was fenced with white painted palings, and a huge oil lamp, swung from a post at the footpath kerb alignment, guided weary wayfarers to the comforts of the place during the hours of darkness.

A short distance further south, above the east bank of South Creek, was Jimmy Hackett's Hotel, a rambling single-storied structure with all manner of roof lines, pointing to additions being made over the years. A large separate kitchen lay at the rear, together with a medley of small sheds, stables, etc. Again no closing date is at hand, but the premises were used as a residence for many years prior to its demolition during 1965. In 1890 there were two hotels listed at St. Mary's, the "Commercial" and "SHANES PARK", but their locations, as far as the authors are concerned, require detailed research.

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Crossing the bridge at South Creek a small settlement of ancient cottages is met, after which the road climbs to cross the old Bringelly Road at Kingswood before descending into Penrith, which is more or less a railway town. Located here in 1879 were no less than four hotels, namely the "COMMERCIAL", the "ROSE" (a coaching inn dating to 1835), the "RAILWAY INN", and the "Australian Arms". About 1882 the licence and the inn title of the "RED COW INN" were transferred from the former inn at Colyton to new premises erected at the corner of Station Street and Jane Street, immediately south of and adjacent to the Penrith Railway Station. This was a low flat-roofed brick building with no pretensions to design. At a later date the building was reconstructed, using material recovered from the demolition of "Regentsville", the former home of Sir John Jamieson, which dates from about 1824. The stained glass window from the chapel at "Regentsville" was incorporated in one of the upper storied windows of the hotel, the wording being altered to read "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of T. Smith." The name of "T. Smith" was eventually removed and replaced by another piece of glass of a more seemly nature.

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Passing through Penrith the Great Western Road reached the eastern bank of the Nepean River where the "KING GEORGE IV INN" was functioning in 1827. It was later renamed as the "GOVERNOR BOURKE INN", and later again as the "RIVERSIDE". By all accounts the hotel was closed in 1889 but continued to function as a residence until about the mid-nineteen-sixties when it was demolished. The nearby "LOG CABIN HOTEL" is, comparatively, a new-comer to the area.

In the very early days road traffic forded the river about half a mile or so down stream where the bedrock rose considerably to form a natural barrier across the three-hundred feet wide waterway, permitting vehicles to cross under normal waterflow conditions. However, when the river was in spate considerable delays occurred which were eventually overcome by the introduction of a privately operated punt which continued to run after a bridge was built in later years by another concern, both crossings competed with one another and charged toll for road traffic generally. Access to both punt and bridge was gained by means of a cutting in the steep river bank immediately adjacent to the southern side of the "WILLIAM THE FOURTH INN".

With the coming of the railway a high-level iron bridge was built, now the present road bridge, whereby both rail and road shared the common crossing. A fence divided the trains from the horse traffic, and a gatehouse on the eastern bank housed a gate-keeper who controlled the entry of road vehicles, allowing same to make the bridge crossing at such times other than when a steam locomotive was not in the offing. West of the bridge the road followed the crest of the river bank in a southerly direction to attain the alignment of the former punt and low-level bridge landing place. Here the highway turned to the west to enter the township of Emu or, as it is better known, Emu Plains. The present route of the Western Highway passes through a splendid avenue of lofty trees, which once formed the private drive leading to the adjacent mansion on the left hand side.

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About half a mile from the bridge there still stands, on the left hand side of the road, the former "UNION INN", now a residence known as "Nepaeon Lodge". Reverting to the mention of the early ford over the Nepaeon River, the western extension of the track from this water-splash ascended the river bank and then turned southward as River Road, the intersection with the Great Western Road being opposite the Union Inn. It was obviously a very ancient hostelry which, in the course of years, has been altered in its outward appearance. We like its backing of tall palms and trees.

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At the junction of the Old Bathurst Road and the Great Western Road, immediately south of the Emu Plains Railway Station, formerly stood the "Railway Hotel", a hostelry removed in recent years from its corner and now vacant site and replaced by the present hotel. Opposite and on the western side of the road junction is Emu Plains Post Office, a charming one and a half storied end-gabled residence begirt by a wealth of trees, which once catered for the needs of wayfarers as the "AUSTRALIAN ARMS". About a quarter of a mile beyond, deserted but marked for preservation, is the "ARMS OF AUSTRALIA" Inn, which after becoming delicensed was subdivided and renamed "Mortimer". There may have been other inns at Emu Plains but their locations are unknown to us. Beyond Emu Park on the right hand side stands "DUNGARTH", a two-storied mansion unfortunately now in a derelict condition, and said to have been the residence of the local Superintendent of Convicts in the days of yore, and to have been visited on many occasions by Governor Macquarie.

The convicts were housed on the left hand side of the road in this vicinity, their primitive hovels being ranged around a swamp, a circumstance which left a lot to be desired under flood conditions. There was a number of early slab-sided buildings in this neighbourhood which have been demolished in recent years as being sub-standard, and it is questionable if any have survived to illustrate the housing conditions of days now long past.

Away from the road, on the left hand side, can be discerned the ruins of the gatehouse against the now long abandoned right-of-way of the original route of the Great Western Highway. We will see several of these Domestic Gothic buildings in occupation as our journey progresses. At this stage the Western Highway follows a circuitous deviation to eventually join with the original formation of the Great Western Railway, the old Mitchell's Pass Road, the third constructed over Lapstone Hill, following a straight course beyond the just mentioned gatehouse to reach and cross the famous single-arched Lapstone Bridge, a structure, which although out of use at present, may eventually be reconstructed.

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Our new road, which the coach is following, crosses the former railway viaduct spanning the valley of Knapsack Creek, a beautiful stone structure dating from the eighteen-sixties, and now adapted for road traffic. A short

distance beyond, an abandoned railway cutting on the right denotes the location of the First, or Little, Zig-zag, by means of which the original railway climbed over a steep section of Lapstone Hill. A lot of transport history is tied up in this area, which consisted of four main roads and three railway alignments, details of which are outside the theme of this essay.

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After the steep hillclimb over Lapstone Hill had been accomplished, the wayfarer of old would reach the Pilgrim Inn at Blaxland, a rambling single-storied structure with end gables. There were several out-buildings to the menage, none of which had any particular merit. On the site of this old hostelry is an electrical sub-station, an engineering monstrosity which could have been placed, without any detriment to its usefulness, elsewhere without the need to demolish such an historic inn.

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The next inn, aptly known as the "WELCOME INN", was located on the right hand side of the road as it entered Valley Heights. The long, narrow building, built in 1833, had a slate roof and was demolished some thirty years or so ago after an extended period of being used as a residence. The place overlooked the deep Valley from which the place gained its name.

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Approaching Springwood the railway crossed the highway on the level where another Gothic gatehouse was erected. This arrangement placed the highway on the south side of the railway and over the crest of the low hill ahead was sited the "SPRINGWOOD INN", a long single-storied structure with a shingled roof with end gables. Here again the opening date is not to hand. The building was demolished many years ago after having also served as a residence in its latter years.

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Faulconbridge was named after the home erected hereabouts by Sir Henry Parkes, but the nearest inn appears to have been the "TOLL BAR" at Linden. The site of this hostelry is now covered by the railway embankment located at a short distance to the west of Linden Railway Station, where the old road, now abandoned, followed a reverse curve to avoid climbing a small hillock, this obstacle has now been cut through enabling the present road to follow a straight course.

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(To be continued).....