



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

JULY 1972.

Dear Friend and Member.

The Annual Meeting of this Society will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, July 21st, 1972, at ^{7.45}~~8~~ p.m.

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

- Business.
1. Opening and Welcome.
 2. Apologies.
 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting, followed by Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting.
 4. Annual Financial Report.
 5. Report of Fund Raising Committee.
 6. President's Annual Report.
 7. Election of Officers for 1972-1973.
 - (i) Patrons (4)
 - (ii) President.
 - (iii) Senior Vice President.
 - (iv) Vice Presidents (2)
 - (v) Hon. Secretary.
 - (vi) Hon. Asst. Secretary.
 - (vii) Hon. Treasurer.
 - (viii) Hon. Auditors. (2)
 - (ix) Committee of Management.
 - (x) Lydham Hall Committee.
 - (xi) Ladies Social Committee (with power to co-opt).
 8. Correspondence.
 9. General Business.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. W. Foster will give an illustrated Address on "The Royal Botanic Gardens".

Ladies please bring a plate.

Supper Roster. Captain: Miss G. Frost, Mrs. McNamara, Miss Lambert, Mrs. Marsden, Miss White.

Mr. J. Stead,
President.
Phone 59.5341.

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

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

A Special Service, held at Old St. Davis Church of England Church, Hirst Street, Arncliffe, on Sunday, June 18th, 1972, at the request of the members of the St. George Historical Society, was well attended. It was most pleasing to see every seat occupied in the tiny 93 years old "Edifice".

The Service was fully choral, four very well known hymns being chosen for the occasion, and the 23rd Psalm was sung.

The Mayor, Alderman Ron Rathbone, read the Lesson, and some of the Aldermen and their wives attended the Service.

Rev. Norman G. Robinson, B.A., Th.L., gave an historic resume of the development of the Church as far as can be ascertained. His mention of the green tree snake, evidently of "Church of England persuasion", which lived above the ceiling boards, and occasionally dropped its head downwards through the manhole above the Preacher's head, much to the consternation of both Clergy and Congregation, was an interesting and amusing part of the discourse. Snakes, even in Biblical times, seem to have taken an interest in the affairs of mankind.

An article dealing with the history of this old Church, which replaced an earlier structure, is in course of preparation, and will appear in the Society's monthly Bulletin in due course.

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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.

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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.

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We would like to say "Thank you" for the following recent acquisitions to
"LYDHAM HALL".

Mrs. McMillan,
Lydham Avenue,
Rockdale.

Silver Hand Mirror, made by her Father, the late
W. J. Willington, O.B.E., as a gift to his wife in the
early 1880's.

Oval Shaped Wax Matchbox fashioned from a "Bean
Seed" (with silver band around middle of matchbox).

Silver Locket which belonged to Great Grandmother
early 1870's.

Miss B. Matheson,
Rockdale.

Ladies Silver Glove Hook, used in 1890.

Mr. & Mrs. J. Collins, ON LOAN.

20 Henderson Rd., Bexley.

Quart Pot (Measure, Registered) Willow Pattern,
China, over 150 years old.

Crockery Drinking Mug, given to Mrs. Collins to
commemorate the Coronation of King Edward VIII
and Queen Alexandra on June 26th, 1902.

DATES TO REMEMBER.

July 22nd, 1972.

A tour of Historic North Sydney, organised by the North Sydney Historical
Society, on Saturday Afternoon, July 22nd, 1972.

As this is to be a CONDUCTED TOUR, the money has to be paid to the
North Sydney Society ONE WEEK BEFOREHAND. Will those members
and their friends who are interested and have not yet paid, or others who
have not given their names in please ring: Mrs. Eardley, 59.8078, or
Mrs. Stead, 59.5341, as soon as possible. We need at least 20 more names
to cover cost. Failure of an early response may lead to CANCELLATION
OF TOUR.

Time: 1 p.m. SHARP. Sorry, but it will be necessary to provide your
own tea, eats etc., this time.

Place: Rockdale Town Hall.

Cost: \$1.30 per person.

"Some Old-Time Inns of the Western Road"
(Continued).

There was an inn at TWENTY-MILE HOLLOW, now known as WOODFORD, which followed in its design the standard pattern adopted for such premises, being single-storied with hip-roof and centrally placed verandah with end rooms abutting thereon. A large separate kitchen was located amongst the out-buildings at the rear.

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About a mile or so beyond Woodford Station lies the celebrated BUSS'S INN, a great rambling structure, mainly one and a half stories high, the upper rooms, clustered beneath the roof, were lighted by windows placed in the end gables and also by a series of dormers. The design of the rear section of the premises was equally fascinating and provided accommodation for a large number of people. The inn was known at one time as the "KING'S ARMS", and later came into the possession of Lord Rosebery, a Prime Minister of Great Britain. It then became the Woodford Academy, a high class school for boarding pupils. In 1932 the place was "Closed until further notice", evidently having fallen victim to the financial stringencies created by the infamous Bank Depression of the early nineteen-thirties. It is gratifying in this year of grace, 1972, to see the interesting structure, sheltered by its dense border of trees, more or less intact.

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The old established "BLUE MOUNTAINS HOTEL" was sited in the grounds of the Lawson Public School on the left hand side of the highway, a short distance beyond Lawson Railway Station. It is believed that this hostelry opened in 1840 and that the building was single-storied with a shingled roof.

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The "WEATHERBOARD INN", as its name would imply, was constructed of weatherboards, and sited on the northern side of the original road a short distance to the north of the Wentworth Falls Railway Station. This hostelry was described in the early eighteen-twenties as "a very good mountain inn". It had three parlours, seven bedrooms (of cabin size) and stabling for seventeen horses. Across the road from the inn was a large pond which provided water for travelling stock and wagon and coach horses. Traces of this pond may still be seen today, its outlet stream leading to the famous Wentworth Waterfall.

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At Leura the "ALEXANDRA HOTEL" cannot be regarded as having a historic background, but "GEARIN'S HOTEL", adjacent to the northern side of the railway level crossing at Katoomba is mentioned in 1886 as being named "BILES' HOTEL" and with a reputation for "the abundance and excellence of the meals served at this establishment." The "GREAT WESTERN HOTEL", on the crest of the hill immediately south of Katoomba Railway Station, was

built about the same period on "the modern American style", with a large flat roof adapted for look-out purposes, and some sixty bedrooms. This tourist hotel was later renamed "THE CARRINGTON" and still functions as such. The "KATOOMBA HOTEL" is located about one quarter of a mile from the level crossing (where a Gothic gatehouse was once situated) and also received mention in 1886 as a wayside inn "Where every attention is shown to visitors by Mrs. Curnow".

The settlement at Katoomba came into being about 1879 when John Britty North established a coal mine at the foot of the present Scenic Railway. The employees lived at West Katoomba under the usual "mining shanty" conditions. The place-name Katoomba, incidentally, is derived from the Aboriginal "Katta-toon-bah", meaning "Water tumble over hill", an allusion to the famous Katoomba Water-fall.

About half a mile to the west of the "EXPLORER'S TREE" and on the northern side of the adjacent railway line, was sited the now long vanished "SHEPHERD AND FLOCK INN", abutting on the route of the original road in this area, which followed a circuitous course in this area to avoid the flanks of a steep hillside. It is possible that this inn was closed at the coming of the railway when the Bathurst Road was deviated to its present alignment, thus eliminating the need for two level crossings, between which the old inn was placed.

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The luxurious hotel at Medlow Bath appears to have been constructed in 1904 by Mr. Mark Foy, a Sydney businessman, who took pleasure in naming the place as the "HYDRO MAJESTIC". Additions have been made from time to time to the chaste white buildings and pavilions and the sumptuous appointments are of a very high standard. The avenue of pines and other exotic trees planted along the highway in front of the fenced enclosure is very fine and lead to yet another gatehouse where the original road crossed the railway at a level crossing, now long superseded by an overbridge. The hotel is placed on the cliff-top overlooking the Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys. The name MEDLOW is claimed to be a corruption of the Aboriginal name for the locality "Megalong" meaning "Valley below the cliffs".

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There were at least three early inns functioning at Blackheath, a place name bestowed by Governor Macquarie in 1815, the oldest was named "GARDNER'S", being established by Andrew Gardner in 1830. It had several changes of title in its long and continued history, once being known as the "HYDORA HOTEL", later as the "ASTORIA", after which the historic name of "GARDNER'S HOTEL" was adopted. A new facade has been added but portion of the original building is still intact and can be observed from the rear of the present structure. The "SCOTCH THISTLE INN", a single storied building dating from 1831, stood on the corner of Govett's Leap Road and the Great Western Highway. Its hip roof was covered with wooden shingles and the narrow front verandah was flanked at each end by a small room. The inn was later brought into use as Collier's

General Store, a weatherboard building and, about thirty years ago the present "IVANHOE HOTEL" was built on the site. The original "IVANHOE HOTEL" was placed to the north of Clan William Street facing towards Govett's Leap Road.

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Beyond Blackheath the Great Western Highway traverses some four miles of rugged bush country a level crossing and its Gothic design gatekeeper's residence at One Tree Hill, now known as Mount Victoria. The latter tiny building is still occupied but the level crossing has been replaced by an over-bridge. Close by stands the Toll-house, which was built in 1849, the site being adjacent to Broughton's waterhole. The toll was collected for every animal and vehicle which passed through the gate until the early eighteen-seventies when the toll charges were abolished.

A Mr. Sheppard built the first hotel about the same time as the Toll-gate was erected, and also conducted a general store on his premises. In 1861 the lease was taken over by William Read. "SHEPPEARD'S INN" was, in all probability the most picturesque of the hostelrys scattered along the Blue Mountain section of the Great Western Highway. The premises were set well back from the roadway and were fronted by a picket fence backed by a dense hawthorn hedge, whilst the forest encroached on the rear out-houses and formed a lovely background. The shingled roof was later replaced with corrugated iron and several bedrooms were located within the apex of the roof timbers, each having its separate dormer window. The inn premises, although delicensed for a great many years, was occupied as a residence until about 1940 when it was demolished.

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Mount Victoria, formerly known as ONE TREE HILL, developed into a tourist resort with the coming of the railway and boasted three hotels for this form of business. At 1886 these were listed as Perry's "IMPERIAL HOTEL", the "MANOR HOUSE" (a private hotel), and "THE ROYAL HOTEL". The first named, one of the largest out of Sydney, possessed a castellated facade and occupied a commanding situation between the other two places. The previously mentioned Sheppard's Inn catered for the needs of the Great Western Road traffic in pre-railway days.

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From Mount Victoria the Great Western Highway descends the Victoria Pass leading to Little Hartley, Great Hartley, and beyond to Bathurst and places further west. The road was constructed by convict labour under the supervision of Major Thomas Mitchell and carried out in direct defiance of Governor Darling who favoured another route downwards from Mount York. At the base of the pass is the mountain known as Mount Victoria and nearby is the cone-shaped rise named as "THE SUGARLOAF", whilst the ramparts of Mount York border the Little Hartley Valley on the northern side.

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The "VICTORIA INN" at Little Hartley was built in 1839 and, although now it is a private residence named "ROSEDALE", it is regarded as being "one of the finest remaining examples of Australia's wayside inns". Its facade is

Georgian, or the Australian variety of this form of architecture, and is maintained in splendid order.

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About a mile further along the highway, and on the right hand side, is "BILLESDEN GRANGE", a former hotel which is claimed locally to have been the second inn constructed by Pierce Collits after his first inn, "THE GOLDEN FLEECE" had been by-passed by the Victoria Pass deviation, of which more anon. "BILLESDEN GRANGE" has been in private hands for a great many years and, at 1954, was named as the "GRANGE" and formed part of the property of Messrs Harris Brothers. Nearby, on the same side of the road, is "THE ROSE INN", built in 1841 by Joseph Collits, and this too is in use as a private residence and kept in excellent order. A fourth inn is Louis Mead's "KEROSENE HOTEL", built in 1857 primarily to cater for the roadside trade then being developed with the installation of the shale oil industry at Hartley Vale. After its closure as an inn the premises became known as "CULVER" and at 1972 have been restored and furnished in period style by Mr. and Mrs. William Thurlow. The old name of "MEAD'S FARM" has been revived and now replaces that of "Culver".

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At the western end of the Mead's Farm property a by-road leads northwards to Hartley Vale passing beneath the steep slopes of Mount York and then those of Mount Dixon. The original Cox's route of the first Western Road descended the frightening north-western side of Mount York as a pack-horse track and passed by the military barracks in that area a building which was later taken over by Pierce Collits and opened as the "GOLDEN FLEECE INN" during 1823. This famous inn flourished until the Victoria Pass was opened ten years later, when it was by-passed and lost most of its trade to the "ROSE INN" that had been erected against the new road. It has been stated that a large oak-tree which was growing in the grounds was felled to provide a site for a large stable and ancillary buildings. These buildings have recently been demolished, only the main building remains, and this, fortunately is open for inspection at a small charge.

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The road continues northward to gain the "COMET INN" which is now privately owned as a residence. This place stands near the site of the once so extensive oil works which closed about the nineteen-twenty period. Here the local shale was distilled to supply kerosene and other products. There was a second hotel at the Hartley Vale village but its location has escaped us. The road, now known as Hartley Pass, ascends to the crest of the Darling Causeway where a junction is made with the Mount Victoria to Bell Road.

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Although this essay appears to be concentrated on the many inns strung out along the old Great Western Road it should be stated that these places were very necessary for travellers to eat and find sleeping accommodation in those now far off days. At most of the inns were to be found a blacksmith's shop

for horse shoeing purposes, a post office, and a general store. They provided fodder and water for the animals, horses, cattle, and sheep, passing along the highway, and also relay teams of horses for the numerous passenger and mail coaches. It has been mentioned that many of the land grants made along the route had a proviso that "The tenant build an inn before putting the land to any other use". Between Emu Plains and Little Hartley the high mountainous region is comparatively sterile from an agricultural point of view and most of the railway stations were located at points adjacent to the small settlements which had grown up around the coaching and other hostelries of yesteryear.

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