



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE, 2205.

December, 1972.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, December 15th, 1972, at 8.00 p.m.  
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.  
Business: General.  
Syllabus Item: Films per courtesy of the Rural Bank.  
Supper Roster: Mrs. Wright, Captain, Ladies will all help.

Ladies please bring a plate for our Christmas Party.

Mr. D. Sinclair,  
President.  
Phone 587.4555

Miss J. Noble,  
Secretary.  
Phone 599.4884.

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer,  
Phone 587.1159

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Editor & Social Secretary,  
Phone 59 8078

THE PRESIDENT EXTENDS SINCERE GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS & FRIENDS, & BEST WISHES FOR A MERRY CHRISTMAS, GOOD HEALTH, & A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL. 1972 - 1973.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

We would like to say "Thank you" for the following recent acquisitions to "Lydham Hall".

Mr. Wright            Menu and Order of Events for State Dinner given to Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip on the occasion of their visit to Australia in 1954.

This is of historic interest, and more so as it is the first time a reigning Monarch has visited Australia.

---

## The following concerns Outings organised by the Society for Members and their Friends.

In the arrangement of our popular Coach Tours there are many factors to be considered by the organisers, who act in the best interests of the Members and their Friends.

- (1) We have no control over weather conditions, as the tour is arranged consequently, we go on our way, wet or fine.
- (2) The Coach cannot be cancelled at the last minute as both the Driver and the Coach are rostered for the date specified.
- (3) The hire of the Coach has to be paid, and as the Social Secretary keeps costs at an absolute minimum, it is not possible to furnish refunds without due notice of 7 days being given, late cancellations will be required to supply a substitute passenger, or if there is a waiting list and an exchange can be made, this will make a refund possible. These outings are NOT a charge on the Society, therefore they must pay their way if our Members wish to continue to enjoy these pleasant outings.

There is always unseen, and often unappreciated organising when arranging outings, not the least being "Comfort Stops" along the route, and suitable stopping places where we may enjoy the ever popular "Cuppa", lunch, etc.

It would be appreciated that your prompt and paid application will be necessary for the continuance of these outings.

---

## APPRECIATION

The Lydham Hall Ladies Committee would like to say "Thank you" to all who have given so generously towards our Christmas Hamper.

\*\*\*\*\*

## NEWS ITEMS

An outing is being arranged to visit some of the lovely old City Churches and Cathedrals, beginning with :

St. Marys Cathedral (Mrs. Sheila Tearle will arrange).

St. Stephens Presbyterian Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

St. Marks C. of E. Darling Point.

and finally, for this outing, The Naval Church at Watsons Bay - All Denominations.

Afternoon Tea at Watsons Bay.

Date: Saturday, February 24th, 1973

Time: 1 p.m. sharp

Place: Town Hall, Rockdale

Cost: Per person - \$1.30

The Coach will hold 40 persons. Bookings may be made at the next meeting, all monies to be in hand one week prior to date of outing.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Film Evening

All being well and by courtesy of the Rockdale Council, Mr. Peter Sage will give another film evening, this time he will take us to Africa. The date is to be March 3rd, 1973, of which more later. Arrangements will probably be as last time. Council Chamber, Rockdale Town Hall, 45¢ admission, light Supper provided. (8 p.m. Start).

\*\*\*\*\*

Our Secretary, Miss Jennette Noble, has announced her engagement to Mr. John Hindmarsh. Congratulations to you both from the President and Members of the Society.

\* \*\*\*\*\*

January Meeting will be held as usual - you will receive an agenda.

\*\*\*\*\*

SOME PRODUCE MERCHANTS OF THE EASTERN ST. GEORGE DISTRICT.Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

Produce merchants, with few exceptions, have relinquished business in the St. George District generally, a circumstance brought about by the use of gas and electricity for cooking and heating purposes. The almost universal use of motor vehicles for local transport, the municipal council's restrictions on the keeping of fowls, the Egg Board's restrictions on the local production of eggs, the Milk Board's embargo on local dairy farms, and the almost complete disappearance of the horse, have been deciding factors against the profitable continuance of this class of business. Even pigeon fanciers and their flight lofts have been discouraged from further participation in their interesting and often worthwhile hobby.

We were discussing the matter with Bill Napper, now retired but the doyen of the local produce merchants and he listed off hand many of the principle men and their brothers and their sons who were once actively engaged in this class of business, insofar as the eastern section of St. George is concerned. At Arncliffe, there were Messrs. Brookes Brothers of Wickham Street; Langston's of Forest Road; Gardner Morton of Wollongong Road; and Coggan, a gentleman who operated from the back yard of a private residence in Fairview Street.

At Rockdale there were sited Messrs. J. Boler and Sons, whose premises were opposite the Town Hall; Charlie Cox, in Princes Highway opposite the Post Office, and whose horse and delivery cart had the pleasure in long bygone days of running over little Giffie Eardley who had wandered from his mother's care out into Croft's Laneway. Then there was the old established firm of James Napper and Sons whose business was first located in Bay Street, immediately west of the Methodist Church, and later removed to extensive premises in Princes Highway south of the Royal Hotel. Here a large Carpet Snake was kept to gormandize on the rats and mice who liked the range of foodstuffs so bountifully provided. One day the Carpet Snake felt the need for a beer, consequently he, or she, we know not which, slithered through the front door and up the street to the Royal Hotel. Entering the Public Bar was no problem, although the climb to the counter was somewhat difficult, and the snake was non-plussed at the complete lack of service it received. Everybody left in a tremendous hurry, including the bar-maids. In due course one of the Napper boys was notified and came to collect the thirsty reptile.

At Bexley there were Messrs. Coombs of Forest Road, located near the Public School; S. Napper, on Stoney Creek Road; and Bolling Brothers, also of Stoney Creek Road. At Kogarah the old-established two-storied shop, now long demolished, at the corner of Princes Highway and French Street, was for a long time in the capable hands of Harry Soames, who, incidentally had a daughter named Rosie, a soprano of great merit. She was often called upon at local concerts to give a rendition of the "Kookaburra Song" in which the laughing high-pitched notes were given with such exactitude that the bird in question may have been deceived. Then there was a produce merchant, whose name escapes us, at No. 3 Regent Street, whose premises had a wooden facade and, at floor level, a long range of wooden bins lined with sheet iron, each fitted with a sloping hinged door, containing various varieties of corn, wheat, hulled oats, pigeon peas, and suchlike commodities. Behind, sometimes reaching to roof level, were stacks of bagged chaff, whilst the rear yard was devoted to piles of firewood blocks, coal, and bags of coke, to which cart access was gained from the rear "sanitary" lane, a term which has now lost its significance. We recall the

coloured assortment of cats who reclined at ease in the daytime on the lids of the bins, completely oblivious of customers unless stroking attention was given. These felines came into activity at night playing hide and seek with the resident colony of rats and mice who perhaps, did not appreciate their interest. About midway in the length of Railway Parade at Kogarah was Jim Halloran in the same line of business and a specialist in potatoes and onions. On Kogarah Road were the premises of W. Hannaford. The listing, no doubt, is far from complete but will serve to convey an idea as to just how many produce merchants were catering for the everyday needs of the community.

The shop of James Napper and Sons at Rockdale was illustrative of the general run of produce merchants who normally sold the same commodities in the same way. Along the street frontage, encroaching on the footpath alignment were a number of hessian bags (sugar bags) which displayed, to the advantage of roving dogs and pilfering children, pigeon peas, Hard boiling peas (ideal for pea shooters), varieties of corn, bird seed, wheat, shell grit, potatoes and onions. A speciality at Christmas time was 14 pounds of potatoes, 4 pounds of onions, and one large sized pumpkin, the lot for two shillings.

Inside the shop were swinging scales and a large loose weighing scoop made of galvanised iron sheet. Bags upon bags of potatoes and onions behind which were bags of chaff and square bales of lucerne-hay, the latter two items being in great demand from the numerous horse-racing stables scattered throughout the eastern environs of Kogarah, in the vicinity of the Moorefield Racecourse. At the rear of the premises were the stacks of firewood, brought by rail from Douglas Park to the goods yard at Rockdale Station, and from thence by dray to the produce store. One hundred tons formed the normal quantity acquired and the blocks were split up at Rockdale into sizes handy to the house-wife more or less as a spare time job when business was slack. The firewood was sold at one shilling and sixpence per cwt and delivered per medium of a large wickerwork basket, slung over the carter's shoulders, between the delivery van and the domestic wood-shed or yard pile. Coal was retailed at one shilling and nine-pence per cwt and gas-coke at one shilling and sixpence per bag. This delivery work was very heavy and also very dirty, the hefty men so engaged covered their head with a potato bag in which the two halves lengthways were pushed together to form one half and worn in dufflecoat fashion to keep the dust away from their ears and neck etc. The bags of chaff were sold at Four shillings and sixpence each, whilst the lucerne-hay was sold at the same price per cwt. Fertilizers of various sorts and smells, and seed potatoes were sold in quantity to the local Chinese Gardeners. Corn and wheat went in quantity to the poultry farms, of which, perhaps the largest in the immediate area was that owned by Cooper Brothers, who ran over two thousand head of fowls on the present site of the Bexley Bowling Club. Mr. T.A. Hutchinson was another customer who fed over one thousand birds.

The more normal every day counter sales of the shop concerned wheat, maize, and pigeon peas, for the hundreds of back-yard fowl and duck runs placed at the far end of almost every back yard, the wire-netting generally enclosing the house-holder's peach-tree. A speciality of the firm was a special parrot mixture, comprising maize, oats, sunflower seed, and raw peanuts, which retailed at sixpence per pound. Bill Napper relates that the slogan advertising this mingling of the various seeds was "Try Nappers Special Parrot Food. Guaranteed to make Cocky talk without swearing". It is evident that this food for parrots did not reach one particular stable at the rear of French Street Kogarah, as the trainers and jockeys had taught their White Sulphur-crested Cockatoo everything that a bird should not know.

\* \* \* \* \*



## THE MOTOR CYCLE CLUBS OF THE ST. GEORGE DISTRICT

Gifford Eardley.

### THE HURSTVILLE MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

It is of interest to record the activities of the various motor cycle clubs of the St. George District which formed a transport link between what may be regarded as the horse and buggy days and the advent of the motor car insofar as its popular usage is concerned. This transition period spread over some forty years, interrupted by the two World Wars, which not only involved the cyclists but removed supplies of petrol, oils, and tyres from everyday use.

By all accounts the first local motor-cycle organisation came into existence at Hurstville during the 1910-11 period and was associated with the Motor Cyclist Club of New South Wales. Intending members had to be proposed and seconded at the regular meetings which were conducted with the utmost decorum. At an age when motor cycles were more or less in their infancy the club ran Reliability Trials, hill climbs, and petrol consumption tests, intermingled with numerous social outings. On these occasions the women-folk rode as pillion passengers or were snugly ensconced in side-cars which were then coming into vogue. Mechanical advice and descriptions of road conditions were freely given to members on a mutual assistance basis. However, the outbreak of hostilities on August 1914, terminated this happy state of affairs, for the time being at least.

In 1925, at the instigation of Ron Heuschkel, the Hurstville Club again came into being, with several of the former members in its ranks, amongst whom may be mentioned Thomas Hilliard, a well-known butcher of Penshurst, who, so it has been stated, received a caution from a local policeman for driving at a dangerous speed through the then one-sided shopping centre of Hurstville, the Forest Road at that time being a stoney surfaced thoroughfare beset with pot-holes, either full of water or of dust, and muddy patches. His explanation for the undue haste was that a motor cycle "Hill Climb" was being held at Beverly Hills on what was known as the Sharp Street course in the vicinity of the gasometers. Another influential member was Doctor Manning of Hurstville, who with Charlie South of Rocky Point Road, Kogarah, were regarded as the backbone of the Club. The latter gentleman was a very clever motor mechanic who, apart from mending motor cycles and "cranky" motor cars, was prominent in the model engineering field, specialising in the making of miniature steam locomotives which exhibited their haulage powers at the Model Engineering Society's ground at Ashfield, being a joy to behold as they tootled around the large circular track. The engineering workshop of Charlie South was aligned against the historic South's Bakery, once a general store in pre railway days, situated at the north-western corner of Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway), and South Street. His premises, reeking with oily smells, were cluttered with all manner of mechanical bits and pieces, many being prized by those fortunate men who dabbled in such all absorbing hobbies. The small street window was an untidy showplace devoted to sundry tins of nuts and bolts of miniature sizes, model engine wheels and other castings, lengths of copper tubing, and sometimes a newly completed model locomotive, delights which brought many small boys and their grown-up counter-parts to rub their noses against the glass in silent wonderment.

The Hurstville Club members met at Messrs. Palmer and Goodsell's Show Rooms at 188 Forest Road, Hurstville. As their interest waned another similar club came into being at Beverly Hills, being centred at Frank Grey's Cycle and Motor Cycle shop, sited near the Beverly Hills Post-office. In course of time

this business was taken over by Jack Kay, one of the foundation members. Other members included "Stiffy" Durn, Charles Neet, and Jack Berry.

At this juncture it should be mentioned that there were several motor cycle clubs flourishing in the nineteen-thirties, each being a well directed organisation, the members of which met regularly at least once a fortnight and discussed outings and catering arrangements. Many belonged to the middle-aged group and were drawn from all walks of life. Some travelled in side-car outfits at a steady pace, being started from their base point at stated intervals to avoid cluttering up normal road traffic with their presence.

In the infamous Depression years these outings were a relatively cheap form of social entertainment as they afforded a day spent in the nearby countryside, generally by a river flat where the cyclists foregathered around their camp fires, absorbing "Billy" tea and roasted chops, steak, or the humble but tasty sausage, in all the glory of a bush setting.

#### THE ST. GEORGE MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

The St. George Motor Cycle Club, with between 15 to 20 members, was functioning prior to and later than 1917, its headquarters being at Charlie South's garage at Rocky Point Road, Kogarah. There is mention that at the Eight-hour Week-end in October, 1917, the club members had an outing to Goulburn, a two day trip, traversing the old South Road over Razor-back Mountain, beyond Camden, with its awkward corners and a treacherous mud surface intermixed with cobble-stones. At this time a ford carried the main road through Paddy's River and the cyclists had to breast their way through the stream. It began to rain and a wet and bedraggled convoy, led by Jack Gray, arrived at Goulburn. Here they were met by an officious policeman on point duty, who quickly found himself as a centre-piece within a ring-a-ring-a-rosy circle of slowly moving cyclists clamouring for advice about local accommodation and a place where they could obtain a meal. The convoy was instructed to go to the police station where an understanding sergeant, a kind and considerate fellow, became conscious of their plight and bedded them down for the night in the police cells and arranged for a meal, all on the house so to speak. An outing in those now far off days of belt-driven motor cycles was always full of unexpected happenings and unforeseen experiences.

Other outings of a more conventional nature were hill climbing the grassy swards near Casula and also Lansdowne. Another venue was at the Mount Lewis Estate near Punchbowl, where championship races were held in the 1933 period. Reliability trials, obviously to the detriment of the machines, were held in the rolling sand-hill country that existed between Pat Moore's Swamp and Botany Bay, to the north of Scarborough Park, an area of scrub-covered undulating wilderness noted for its spring-time wealth of wild flowers.

When Charlie South retired from business the St. George Motor Cycle Club disbanded for several years before it was reformed about 1925 with its headquarters at Arthur Conner's Garage located on the north side of Cook's River Bridge alongside the Tempe Police Station.

#### THE KOGARAH MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

The Kogarah Motor Cycle Club, a similar organisation to the above mentioned clubs, came into existence between 1927 and 1930, and had its headquarters in Princes Highway Rockdale, opposite to the Acme, later Odeon Theatre.

## THE ARNCLIFFE MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

The Arncliffe Motor Cycle Club flourished in the nineteen-thirties and was very well organised, with several members interested in championship racing at various speedways. Jack Chignell in particular became renowned in racing circles and spent several years as a professional rider at Sheffield, in England, and thereabouts. The Club appears to have first met at Arthur Watson's Garage at the corner of Princes Highway and Wickham Street, but later moved to Lennie Braithwaite's Push-bike and Motor Cycle Shop at the corner of Forest Road and Station Street at Arncliffe. It has been revealed that club outings on Sunday did not commence until Paddy Dounes had completed his weekly devotions at church. Grass track championships and other meetings were held at Lansdowne, near Liverpool, and hill climbs at Hampton, a hamlet located on the southern slopes of the Kanimbla Valley on the road between Hartley and the Jenolan Caves. In March 1938 a paper chase at Milperra was held, no doubt to the annoyance of the local municipal authorities, whilst in the following month fifteen members left Bankstown Station for the Coolong Caves where underground exploration was carried out, at least by the slim members of the party who had the decided advantage of sliding through tight crevices (over those in a more well-fed condition). It would appear that the Arncliffe Club amalgamated with the Bexley Club, to their mutual benefit. Their affairs, with the Second World War, dwindled to the point of disbandment.

It should be mentioned, in conclusion, that in the early years of the infamous Depression one particular member had incurred great debts in the maintenance and repair of motor cycles owned by various impecunious fellow members. His charges were most reasonable but largely went unpaid through the financial stringency which prevailed, a circumstance that tended, more or less, to keep him on the bread-line. However, his everyday affairs received a decided up-lift when he was engaged by one unemployed gentleman, who had resorted to the back-yard manufacture of barber's and hair-dresser's liquids in the way of scented hair-oil and such-like pomades necessary for the trade. These several commodities had to be widely distributed around the environs of the City of Sydney and to keep delivery costs at a minimum he arranged with the first mentioned gentleman to drive his side-car outfit, a vehicle in the last stages of dissolution and disrepair insofar as the side-car was concerned, whilst the motor-cycle had its petrol supplies augmented with kerosine, turps, methylated spirits, and other liquids of a combustible nature which came to hand at small cost. The exhaust fumes from such a mixture were extremely pungent and pollution prone to say the least, but the two occupants on the delivery run became immune to the stench and repeated back-firing from the exhaust pipe, although, perhaps, the horses in particular, had other ideas on the subject.

The worst disaster happened in George Street, Sydney, in the vicinity of the General Post-Office, when the side-car body came adrift from its fastenings and shot forward from the chassis into, and also nearly beneath the side of an adjacent tram-car, much to the astonishment of its foot-board riding conductor. The salesman was tipped out on to the roadway, and lay surrounded by a mass of broken glass bottles and sweet-smelling liquids, which trickled slowly to the gutter. The salesman had a lucky escape from injury, and, after assisting to clean up the greasy mess, returned dejectedly to Arncliffe, riding as a pillion passenger on this unpropitious and unprofitable journey. The side car was a complete write-off and had to be dumped.

Notwithstanding this serious mishap, the salesman built up his stock-in-trade ready for further business, meanwhile the owner of the motor-cycle sought a replacement, on the cheap, for the side-car that had been destroyed.



Orthodox type bodies proved beyond his slender purse so he conjured up the brilliant idea of using a discarded leaky galvanised-iron bath-tub which was available at no charge. This vessel, with the holding assistance of a few bolts and nuts, was securely fastened to the side-car chassis and proved most serviceable, even if its appearance was unusual amongst road traffic. It certainly attracted a lot of attention and ribald comment, the salesman sitting on a cushion at the rear with his feet ensconced in an assortment of glass bottles, of all shapes and sizes, mostly retrieved from rubbish tips and other interesting sources of ready supply. The converted bath-tub proved ideal and safe under service conditions and remained on the delivery run until such time as more orthodox body equipment became available.

The author's thanks are extended to Jack Chignell, Jack Gray, and Ron Heuschkel, for supplying the above information dealing with the affairs of the popular motor-cycling clubs which gave pleasure to many residents of the St. George District.

\* \* \* \*