



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

February 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, February 16th, 1973, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: The History of "Gilbert & Sullivan". This interesting address will be delivered by the President, Mr. Don Sinclair. Music from Gilbert & Sullivan will be played from 7.30 - 8 p.m. and interspersed throughout the address.

Supper Roster: Miss Dunsmore, Captain. Misses Cheetham, Callister, Mesdames McMillan, McDonald.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Miss J. Noble.
Secretary.
Phone 599.4884

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

Mrs. E. Eardley.
Editor & Social
Secretary.
Phone 59.8078.

"Men respect the Sureness of a person in this UNSURE WORLD."

A very special DATE to remember ?????

Saturday, March 3rd, 1973.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.
Time: 7.45 p.m.
Cost: 50¢ per person.

when PETER SAGE will present, in colour, and with Commentary,
"AFRICA"

This will be a most enjoyable evening, and at the conclusion a light supper will be served.

Discussion on the film will be welcome also, at the conclusion.

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Have you something you have no further use for but someone else might like to own??

At this Film Evening, the Lydham Hall Committee would like to have a table of saleable, but inexpensive bits and pieces to swell the funds in readiness for further restoration in the not too distant future. Could you bring some thing along on our Meeting night, Friday, February 16th, 1973, please?

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Recent Acquisitions.

Miss Thomas, Forest Road, Bexley.	Porcelain Bust of Queen Victoria (more than 80 years old) China Ornament, "Lady with Wheelbarrow", a lovely piece. (66 years old). Large Silk Handkerchief with border of "Flags of all Nations", World War 1. 1914 - 1918. Silk Scarf, Coronation of Queen Elizabeth 11. & Prince Phillip. Book of Anecdotes World War 1. 1914 - 1918.
Mrs. Wright, Cammeray.	Embossed Glass Wine Decanter. Round in shape. 90 years old.

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Winners of Christmas Hampers:

1st.	B. Binns. White Ticket No. D.39.
2nd.	Mrs. Stead. White Ticket No. D.74.
3rd.	Alderman Thomas. Blue Ticket No. F.87.

Appreciation.

A very generous donation of \$30.00 has been given to the Lydham Hall Fund.
THANK YOU.

The Lydham Hall Committee would like to thank all who have helped so generously, in all ways. Without this help we could not function.

News Items.

The outing arranged for Saturday, February 24th, 1973, leaving Town Hall Rockdale at 1 p.m. Sharp, cost \$1.30, and visiting the lovely old Churches and St. Marys Cathedral is almost booked out. If you are interested an early phone call (59.8078) may secure you a seat on the Coach.

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The LANCER SERVICE St. Johns Church, Parramatta is to take place on: Sunday March 4th, 1973. All are advised to be seated by 10 a.m. To this end, and once again, if you are interested in a Coach trip to follow the Service, we suggest Parramatta Park for lunch and Comfort Stations. Leave Parramatta Park at the latest - 1.30 p.m., thence along the Great Western Highway to Penrith, and entering the region known as the "Western Cowpastures" to Mulgoa, (where Old St. Thomas' Church may be seen if desired) - Blaxlands Crossing, Nepean River, Wallacia for afternoon tea, and return via Luddenham, Bringelly, Rossmore, Carns Hill, Crossroads, Moorebank, Milperra, Henry Lawson Drive, Hurstville, Rockdale.

Date: Sunday, March 4th, 1973.

Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Time: 8.30 a.m. Coach must leave not later than 8.40 a.m.

Cost: \$2.00 per person.

Tea, sugar and milk will be provided.

If you are interested in attending the Historic Lancer Parade & Service, would you please ring Mrs. Eardley, Phone 59.8078, as soon as possible, to allow time to make the necessary arrangements. The Coach will be booked tentatively, hoping that the outing will be supported.

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OLD ST. DAVID'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND. ARNCLIFFE.

Gifford Eardley.

It is sad to see the closure of Old St. David's Church of England at Hirst Street, Arncliffe, the final service being held in the presence of a full congregation at 11 a.m. on Sunday November 5th, 1972. The regular morning prayer service was conducted by the Reverend Norman Robinson, B.A., Th.L., and the sermon was preached by Canon C.M. Gilhespy, Th. Schol, a former Rector of the Arncliffe Parish and now Rector of St. Paul's, Canterbury. It was pleasing to note the attendance of the Mayor of Rockdale, Alderman Ronald Rathbone, and several Aldermen of the Rockdale Municipality. The little church has had a long and fascinating history, the edifice as it stands today dates from 1879, but in the early eighteen-sixties there was an earlier building which did duty both as a church and a school.

It is remarkable how sparse are the details relative to the history of the tiny Anglican Church of St. David's, now known as Old St. David's, as so little appears to have been placed on record. The original edifice, built against the southern border of the land grant made in 1833 by Governor Bourke to Reuben Hannam, may have been constructed throughout of local materials. The stone for one wall and the two ends was obtained from the Hannam Quarry sited a short distance to the west of Victoria Street, Arncliffe, whilst the wooden slab side was provided against the possibility of an extension being made to the premises. The roof scantlings would be cut from the neighbouring forest and the shingles for the roof (later replaced by corrugated iron) would have been cut from the trunks of casuarina trees which grew so thickly along the banks of Wolli Creek. The floor was laid with asphalt for its dryness and resistance to the attacks of white ants. The dimensions of the single-roomed building have been given at 22 feet in length and 14 feet in width. The furnishings were primitive and several patty-tins fastened to the walls served to support candles for evening services. A canvas covered clothes horse acted as a vestry in one corner of the building where a modicum of privacy could be gained by the clergy in donning their cassocks and surplices. A green tree snake, evidently of Church of England persuasion, occupied the loft above the ceiling boards and occasionally, by dropping its head through the open manhole, took an interest in the service.

It is obvious that this building was in existence prior to 1861 as in November of that year it came into use as a public school for pupils residing in the immediate district which, incidentally, was formerly known as the Town of Wincanton. It was purely a rural area given over to Market gardens, slaughter yards, poultry farms, pig farms, tanneries, and wool-washing establishments. A land of split-rail fences, unmade roads, untrameled watercourses, and lowing cattle, to say nothing of herds of goats who eked out a living on the rocky hillside surround later known as Waltara Heights. The name "Arncliffe" was derived from a two-storied residence, occupied by David Hannam, located on the south-eastern side of the intersection of Done Street with Old Rocky Point Road, the latter thoroughfare being now known as Eden Street.

The half-acre of land set aside for the Church and Rectory site was made available from his father's estate of 100 acres and, after a preliminary attempt had been made to construct the Church, the matter lapsed. It was some time later that two redoubtable housewives raised the sum of £42 necessary for its completion. An early resident of Arncliffe stated that the services were generally conducted by clergy and lay-readers associated with St. Peter's Church at Cooks River. Mr. John Done, an elderly lay-reader who often came to Arncliffe, entered Moore Theological College to study for the Ministry under the auspices of Mrs. David Hannam, and in due course was ordained and became the first incumbent of St. Paul's, Kogarah, a new church built in 1869 to serve the rapidly growing needs of the large unwieldy Parish of St. George, the little Church at Arncliffe coming under his paternal care at this period.

In 1863 the school was closed and did not re-open until 1868 when it functioned as such until its final closure as a school in 1872. It is thought that about 1879 the brick nave of the present church was erected by Samuel Jeeves, a local builder, considerable financial support to the project being furnished by Mrs. David Hannam and, at her request, the little Church was eventually named St. David's in memory of her husband who had passed away during September 1872. It is believed that the then new church was consecrated by Bishop Barker.

Although the building conforms to the east-west orientation traditionally associated with Anglican churches, there is reason to believe that the altar may have been placed against the inside of the western wall, judging by the position of a large "discharging" arch and its brick voussoirs. The upper portion of this arched window space was later filled in with brick, in a very amateurish fashion, and a doorway inserted at its base which gave entrance to a small enclosed vestry, lighted at its western end by a single pointed window. The main entrance doorway to the church was located at the western end of the northern wall and daylight was admitted by four narrow width pointed-topped windows, which were placed, two in the northern and two in the southern walls. Details of the eastern wall as built, are not available, but its former position in the present edifice can be traced by timber cuts and jointing in the ceiling boards and also in the side skirting boards. Ceiling ventilation, of a sort, was provided by a series of auger holes of small diameter and based on a regular pattern.

It is understood that the original church, placed to the west of the present structure, still continued to function for a number of years as a Sunday School. At an undetermined date (possibly about 1906), it was demolished and replaced by a larger weatherboard building which, about 1910, was transferred to the then new St. David's Church site at Forest Road. Here it continued to function as a Sunday School until such time as it was removed to make way for the present fine brick built building.

Judging by the statement made by Mrs. Austin of Hannam Street, Arncliffe, it would appear that the present transept, entrance porch, and chancel, were built in the early eighteen-nineties by her father, Samuel Jeeves, thus enlarging the church to its present proportions and cruciform shape. As a small girl Mrs. Austin assisted her father by holding a candle aloft whilst the ceiling boards were being nailed in position. The roof was covered with wooden shingles, which looked most attractive with their silver-grey colouration, and

the church bell was hung from a small belfry constructed of undressed timber mounted at top roof level. This structure was later removed, presumably when the roof was recovered with corrugated iron, and the bell was placed on top of a high post. In recent years the post was deemed unsafe and removed, the bell being transferred to its present position. Immediately north of the church ground, on land set aside for a rectory (which was never built), a first class tennis court was established for the use of members of the congregation. At the north-eastern corner of the church property a huge pinus-insignus tree flourished, a landmark in an area not noted for its tree growth, and beautiful in its setting against the little church. Unfortunately permission was given to a group of unemployed persons during the Depression period of the early nineteen-thirties to fell this tree and cut its limbs up for firewood.

With the opening of the new church at Forest Road, dedicated by Archbishop Wright on January 25th, 1915, certain of the internal fittings, including the cedar seats and a wooden lectern carved in the shape of an eagle with outstretched wings, were transferred to the new church. Old St. Davids was now spoken of as Arncliffe Mission Church, with a regular evening service at 7.15 p.m. and a Sunday School at 3 p.m. on Sundays. It was intended to demolish the old church of 1879 when the new church was opened, but owing to the fact that a covenant of sorts existed relating to the church being retained whilst any members of the Hannam Family were alive, this was not carried out. This meant that the beautiful stained glass window in the small chancel remained in-situ, which had been erected as a memorial "To the memory of David Hannam. Obit Sept. 5th, 1872. Erected by his loving wife." There was also a marble memorial slab placed on the eastern wall of the transept relating to "Wm Wentworth Bucknell, 8th October, 1891. 77 years" and "Leslie Frank Bucknell. Jan. 25th, 1903. 42 years". Both memorials are to be transferred to the new church at Forest Road for re-installation in the very near future.

It would appear that the Mission Church lay dormant for several years until about 1915 Mr. Theodore Brandt, a gentleman with High Church tendencies, was responsible for the organisation of a fine choir at the old Church but, unfortunately, ministerial friction developed which resulted in Mr. Brandt severing his connection with Old St. David's, to its detriment. The congregation dwindled and the choir disbanded for the lack of an enthusiastic leader. However the Sunday School functioned and an evening service, at 7.15 p.m., still continued to cater for the spiritual needs of a few local residents.

In May 1958 an "Every Member Canvass" was introduced which had three main projects on its syllabus, namely:- A new Parish Hall at Forest Road Church, Renovation of Old St. David's, and Missions. The sum of £500 was given by the Parish Council for the restoration of the fabric of Old St. David's, but when this necessary work was completed the cost amounted to £980, which included payments for the erection of a new brick fence along the Hirst Street frontage, (replacing the former picket fence), a new tiled roof, replacement of the guttering and downpipes etc. and the provision of an outside toilet block. This specialised work was carried out by paid tradesmen. However the exterior and interior painting, the laying of new floor-coverings, and the heavy work of providing a concrete path between the entrance gate and the Church porch, was done voluntarily by Messrs. Hamilton, Jakins, and MacRae, assisted by willing helpers.

Attention was also paid to the furnishings of the little church which resulted in the provision of a new Communion Table, Rails, Reredos, Credence Table, and Book-rest, by Mr. Jack Hamilton. Mrs. Carruthers and Miss Bebb made a number of kneelers, and fluorescent lighting was installed by Mr. Plunkett. Mr. and Mrs. J. Hamilton donated the Communion Linen, Mr. & Mrs. L. Preston, the Cruets. Mr. and Mrs. L. Jakins, the Bread Box. Mr. and Mrs. L. MacRae, Kneelers. Mr. & Mrs. Carruthers, Alms Dish.

The Restoration Service, an important event in the long and somewhat chequered history of Old St. David's, was held on Sunday October 4th, 1959, when Bishop Kerle, Rev. W. Maltby, and Rev. C. Kelley were present. One hundred and twenty people crowded into the little church for the service, and afternoon tea was prepared by the ladies committee in marquees but unfortunately a violent storm arose forcing most of the people to hurry homewards. The Bishop dedicated the furnishings and gifts in the usual dignified and ceremonial manner. Other gifts were received from time to time, and in March 1960 a Chalice and Paten were presented by the family of the late Mr. and Mrs. E. Richards. Miss G. Southcombe gave a Red Bookmarker for the Lectern in June 1960, and in May 1962 the gift of a Burse and Veil for the Communion Vessels were received from Mr. and Mrs. L. Preston. A few Baptisms were held in the old church, with the aid of Mrs. Corbett's salad bowl, but a Font was given in April 1963 by Mr. and Mrs. L. Preston as a thank-offering for the birth of their daughter.

The Sunday School re-opened on September 13th, 1959, for children aged from 4 to 8 years, under the guidance of Miss Una Ellison till June 1961, when Miss Wilma Lake took charge until December 1962, when the Education Department transferred her to Yass. The Rector's good wife, Mrs. Gilhespy then took on general supervision till March 1964 when facilities for teaching forty children were very poor and arrangements were made to transport the children from Old St. David's to the Parish Church. Thanks for services rendered are extended to Misses Robyn and Heather Plunkett, Laurice Bondfield, and Lynne Goulder, for their assistance with the Sunday School activities at this time. Mention should also be made to the steadfast work in this direction which was carried out by the late Miss Faviel, of Reede Street, Arncliffe, over a period of many years.

In March 1963, under the supervision of Mr. MacRae the old bell was taken down from its tall rotted post and placed in a newly built covering, the cost being £47. It rang on Easter Day 1963 for the first time in years. The bell bears the casting date of 1879, the year the present church edifice was built.

Since the Restoration of 1959 regular services have been conducted by the Rectors of the Parish, Mr. F. Carruthers, Harry Fieldus, Richard Childs, and Catechist Jim Brady, Brian Johnson, and David Peterson. The services were held on the First Sunday of each month for Holy Communion, whilst Matins formed the morning service held on the Third Sunday. The congregation, never large, increased from six to about twenty regular attendants but unfortunately, over recent years, the number decreased. Mr. Lloyd Preston was the organist for many years, assisted at times by Mr. Barnard. Then came Mrs. Childs, Miss Ellacott, and of late Mrs. Newton and Mrs. Jakins. The Church was always prepared for worship by the attentions of Miss Favell, Miss Ellison, Miss Bebb, Mrs. Filewood, and Mrs. Jakins.

The development of the clerical history of Arncliffe is interesting. It is understood that the first Anglican services were conducted about the eighteen-fifty period in various private houses by a Mr. Yarrington, a student studying for the Ministry. When the primitive combined church and school building (previously mentioned as being built prior to 1861) erected on land set aside for the purpose by Reuben Hannam, the services became orthodox and were carried out by the clergy and catechists attached to St. Peter's Church, Cook's River. About 1869 the Arncliffe Church was administered from St. Paul's, Kogarah, as part of the then huge Parish of St. George. In 1889 the Rev. C. J. Byng was licensed as Rector of Bexley and Arncliffe. On June 10th, 1919, Arncliffe became a separate "District", the Rev. R. H. Pitt-Owen being inducted as Curate-in-Charge. During the following year Arncliffe became a separate parish with the Rev. R. H. Pitt-Owen as Rector. This gentleman died on October 4th, 1947, and on December 8th, 1947, the Rev. C. M. Gilhespy was inducted as Rector, remaining in charge until about January 1966 when an exchange in parishes was arranged with the Rector of Canterbury, a circumstance which brought the present Rector, Rev. Norman Robinson, to the Parish of Arncliffe.

One of the greatest problems besetting the Churchwardens in maintaining Old St. David's Church and property was the unfailing attentions of the local pea-brained vandals. These louts hurled stones through unprotected windows, stole brass ornaments from the altar, and took particular delight in wrecking the expensive toilet facilities. The southern paling fence always suffered at their hands, and at November 1972 was in a deplorable condition. At this date some sacrilegious thief had stolen the swinging metal sign whereon was denoted the name of the church and the time of its services. The constant repetition of these stupid acts of vandalism with little opportunity of checking same, coupled with the problem of a sparse congregation, led to the Churchwardens recommending to the Annual Vestry Meeting that the property be sold. Their recommendation, after long discussion, was adopted and an application to the Standing Committee of Synod resulted in a visit of Bishop Jack Dain and Archdeacon John Reid to inspect the Parish and its properties, after which they agreed with the proposals to sell Old St. David's Church and its site. The Rockdale Municipal Council became interested and complex negotiations followed for their purchase of the property. It is the intention of the Council to preserve the building as being of local historic interest.

A special service, which was attended by the Mayor of Rockdale, Alderman Ron Rathbone, and several Aldermen of the Rockdale Municipal Council, was held on June 18th, 1972, at 11 a.m. The service was primarily arranged for members of the St. George Historical Society and descendants of the pioneering family of Reuben Hannam. The church was crowded and the Rector had pleasure in addressing an attentive congregation, relating many historic incidents concerning the activities of the little church in by-gone years.

At 11 a.m. on November 5th, 1972, a "Service of Thanksgiving for the witness to the things of God of Old St. David's, being the final service to be held in this Church". We quote from the brochure issued for the occasion by the Rev. Norman Robinson and the three churchwardens as represented by Messrs. A. H. Burne, A. J. Edwards, and L. F. G. Jakins. For the service past and present

parishioners were cordially invited to attend, an invitation which resulted in a crowded Church.

The Order for Morning Prayer, conducted by the Rector, was fully choral and led by choristers from "New" St. David's. The Mayor of Rockdale (Alderman Ron Rathbone) had the honour of reading the First Lesson, taken from Genesis 28: 10 - end, and the Second Lesson was read by Mr. L.F.G. Jakins, the Senior Churchwarden, from Revelation 21: 9 - 16. The sermon was preached by Canon C.M. Gilhesby, Th.Schol., Rector of St. Paul's, Canterbury, and for many years formerly the Rector of St. David's, Arncliffe. The hymns chosen were taken from the Book of Common Praise, and comprised No. 354 "All Hail the Power of Jesu's Name". No. 347 "Blessed City, Heavenly Salem". No. 466 "We Love the Place, O God", and, after the sermon, the closing hymn, No. 209 "For All the Saints", which was most fitting to be the last to be sung at the end of countless services spread over a period of 93 years.

In conclusion the author must thank many people for their kindly assistance in the compilation of this story of Old St. David's Church, amongst whom may be specially mentioned Messrs. Theodore Brandt, W.G. Hannam, L.F.G. Jakins, P. Orlovich, Rev. R.H. Pitt-Owen, and the Rev. Norman Robinson, and also Mrs. Austin of Hannam Street, Arncliffe.

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