



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

April 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, April 13th, 1973, at 8 p.m.  
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.  
Business: General.  
Syllabus Item: Sister Catherine O'Carrigan will give an Illustrated talk on the "History of St. Vincents Hospital", Sydney.  
Supper Roster: Mrs. Coghlan, Captain, Mesdames Prebble, M. Smith, Longhurst, O'Shea, and Samuelson.  
Ladies please bring a plate.

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.

There are always three sides to every story, My Side, Your Side, and the Truth.

Recent Acquisitions.

Mrs. C. M. Moore, 1 Copy - "Wellington Supplement", issued to the  
6/102 Grand Parade, "Illustrated London News", Saturday, November 20th,  
Brighton le Sands. 1852, dealing with the Funeral of the Duke of  
Wellington.

Mr. Eric Moore, 1 copy "Sydney Morning Herald" - 1898.  
12/10 Grand Parade,  
Brighton le Sands.

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NEWS ITEMS.

An inspection of A. C. I. Glass has been arranged for Tuesday, April 17th, 1973. Bus to leave Rockdale Town Hall at 6 p.m.

Cost per person 60¢.

Please ring Miss Jenette Noble, Secretary, Phone 599.4884, for further details.

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An Afternoon Outing to Paddington to see the lovely old Terrace Houses, amongst others, which have been restored over a period of time, has been arranged for -

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 1973.

Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Cost: Per Person - \$1.50.

Time: 1 p.m. SHARP.

Time permitting, we could perhaps have Afternoon Tea at Vaucluse House.

Phone Mrs. Eardley - 59.8078.

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OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND VISIT TO HISTORIC PORT MACQUARIE.

Leaving Rockdale Saturday, September 29th, 1973,  
Spending Saturday & Sunday Nights at Port Macquarie,  
Returning Monday October 1st, 1973, (Morning in Taree)  
Phone Miss J. Noble, 599.4884 for further information.

ST. JOHN'S, PARRAMATTA and RECULVERS, KENT.

The visit of members of our Society to St. John's Church, Parramatta recently, reminds us of the believed origin of its double-steeple construction.

Soon after leaving the Thames estuary, Macquarie's ship on its way to Australia, passed the old Reculver Church on the north coast of Kent. Mrs. Macquarie is said to have asked her husband to build a church of similar design in Australia. St. John's was the result.

In those days the twin Reculver spires were of use as a guide to mariners. Unfortunately, encroachment by the sea necessitated the building of a new church a mile inland and some materials from Reculvers were used. The spires, which had been blown down, were taken and later replaced by a skeleton construction with wind vanes. Photos taken early this century show these still in place, but they have long since disappeared. However, Reculvers, dating back to Roman times, is of great historical interest and is a National Trust property. The present writers were once locked in there, while the caretaker was away at lunch.

A.F. & F.G. Day.

## A HISTORY OF CARLTON

by

R. W. RATHBONE

(First published 1962. Reprinted 1973 with Author's permission).

### PART 1.

If you stand at the crest of the hill near the busy intersection of Willison Road with Forest Road and gaze out over the sea of brick, asphalt and concrete towards Botany Bay, it might indeed be difficult to picture the same scene before the first white person settled permanently in the area.

#### IN THE BEGINNING.

From the date of the settlement at Sydney Cove until 1810, this region was left entirely to the aborigines and kangaroos and it is very doubtful if any white man other than an occasional escaped convict or hunting party ever set foot in it.

On April 11, 1810, however, Captain John Townson received the area as part of a grant of 1950 acres which was to become known as Townson's Farm. Townson showed little interest in the holding and on December 31, 1812, this grant, which today would cover most of the suburbs of Hurstville, Allawah and Carlton, together with two others he had received totalling 2250 acres in all, was sold to an enterprising ex-convict, Simeon Lord, one of Sydney's most influential merchants. The sum paid was a paltry £800.

#### SIMEON LORD.

Lord soon realised that little could be done to exploit or develop the area unless some adequate means of communication with Sydney was provided and he was not long in bringing his very considerable influence to bear on the government of the day for, as it was termed, "a more direct road to the Illawarra than that which passes through Appin". The fact that the new road was to pass directly through Lord's immense holding was not altogether coincidental. Simeon Lord was not called the "merchant prince of Botany Bay" for nothing.

#### THE ROAD TO THE ILLAWARRA.

Preliminary investigations were undertaken and we read that in 1831 the Surveyor-General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, had favourably recommended "a new line of road to the Illawarra" along a route previously surveyed by Assistant Surveyor Govett.

Although the work was not actually undertaken for another twelve years, the fact that the road was on the way provided Lord with the impetus he needed.

#### ENTER THE TIMBER GATHERERS.

The ridge between Cooks River and Georges River was covered with a magnificent timber forest, the density of which completely overawed the first timber gatherers. But the needs of the rapidly expanding settlement of Sydney showed promise of money to be made and it was with this thought in view that an ever-increasing number of wood-gatherers, bark collectors, sawyers and charcoal burners arrived.

For a sum, usually ranging between two and four pounds per week a colourful band of timber-getters and charcoal burners wandered at will through Lord's vast domain, denuding this section of the ridge of its bountiful harvest of iron-bark, blue-gum, turpentine, blood-wood and other hardwoods.

Less scrupulous members of the community, unable or unwilling to pay his allotted fee, also plied these trades on Lord's estate, safe in the knowledge that the one constable who patrolled the area between the two rivers was unlikely to interfere with their larcenous activities.

Sawpits were dug and in the wind, rain and cold they toiled from dawn until dusk, cutting great swathes through the hitherto virgin forest, limited in their labours only by the hours of daylight and the lack of decent roads.

In 1833 we learn that "the district principally furnishes Sydney with split timber, shingles, firewood, charcoal, honeysuckle for ship and boat builders and white wood of a large size, so much used by coachmakers and others."

The industry flourished until the discovery of gold in the early fifties led to an exodus to the goldfields.

By the time Lord died, the construction of Mitchell's new line of road to the Illawarra, or as we know it today, Forest Road, was well under way and the name "Lord's Bush" firmly attached to the area, but progress was slow owing to the enormous quantities of timber the chained convict gangs were called upon to clear.

#### A DAM IS BUILT.

In 1839, an event occurred which was to have a profound effect on this area. A dam was thrown across Cooks River with the idea of augmenting Sydney's never abundant water supply. In this respect it was a complete failure, but it was the means of providing the settlers south of Cooks River with their first direct access to the city.

This, together with the completion of the road, and despite the fact that it was usually impassable after rain, enabled the first thin line of settlers to move into the district.

On March 20, 1844, the executors of Simeon Lord sold the estate to John Holden and James Holt, who in turn sold the greater portion of it on November 18, 1850, to Michael Gannon for £732.

The Estate's lack of appreciation in value reflects the use to which the first forty years of white ownership put this tract of territory. Cut off as it was for so long by lack of direct communication with Sydney, its only value was the prodigious quantities of timber it contained.

The following description of the area in the early 1850's is worth recording -

"The country around Lord's Bush consisted of dense forest, but transport was difficult as there were no proper roads and the people had to take saplings and build corduroy tracks in order to get to market. On one occasion a foal was killed by dingoes which were plentiful at the time. Tribes of aborigines from Georges River and Como used to visit the neighbourhood twice a year to hold corroborees."

#### MICHAEL GANNON.

Michael Gannon was born in 1800 in County Meath, Ireland, and after the troubles of that period came to Australia with the younger brother James, arriving in Sydney on December 22, 1820. Later, he practised his trade as a carpenter and joiner until he became an inn-keeper at Cooks River in the early 1840's. He settled near the site of today's Government Bus Depot at Tempe and remained there until his death on August 8, 1881. It was while he was here that he made his purchase from Holden and Holt.

Almost immediately Gannon set about systematically divesting himself of his newly acquired estate, by far the most accessible portion of which was that part described in the early schedules as "Section One". Bounded to the west by the new road to the Illawarra, to the north by James Chandler's great Bexley Estate, to the east by the "Koggerah" Road and to the south by a vast tract of forest stretching away to the river, this section was almost bisected by a deeply rutted narrow and very irregular track which plugged off the ridge a short distance from the Illawarra Road and disappeared among the trees. This was one of a number of such tracks used by the early wood gatherers to haul their loads of timber out of the forest and it is important to our story for today we know it as Willison Road.

#### THE FIRST PURCHASERS.

Section One of Gannon's land which was rapidly becoming known as Gannon's Forest was subdivided into twenty more or less rectangular blocks ranging in area from 10 to 20 acres. The land was offered for sale early in 1854 and in January of that year, James Swaine, a "farmer of Conelly's Bush" and John Minor and George Perry, each described as a "Labourer of Cooks River" became the first purchasers.

Minor acquired the thirty acres which today lie roughly between Durham and Ethel Streets; Swaine took up the thirty-four acres which adjoined it to the east while Perry's land lay to the west of Minor's immediately adjacent the Illawarra Road.

Little is known of Minor but it is suspected that he was one of the many timber-getters who were no strangers to this area.

Further sales were made the following year to John Weatherall, John Cripps, Christian Luckner and John Thomas Gannon and by 1860, Dr. Duncan McLennan, Adolphus Young and William Whaley Billyard were landowners in this area but as far as can be ascertained only one of them ever took up residence on his holding or endeavoured to develop it in any way.

The first of the early landholders to leave his mark was Stephen Henry Brown, of the City of Sydney, who, on May 28, 1860, acquired Minor's land which the latter had mortgaged back to Gannon and failed to redeem. As with the other landholders, it is extremely doubtful if Brown ever resided on his land or, for that matter, even took the trouble to visit it, but the fact that he managed to retain it for the next fourteen years whilst his neighbours changed, in somewhat bewildering succession, stamped his name on the area to such an extent that the names "Brown's Paddock" and "Brown's Lane" lingered on till the turn of the century. Brown's Lane was the first name by which Willison Road was known.

### ENTER THE PIONEERS.

Carlton's first resident was the early purchaser, George Perry, a native of East Coker in the County of Somerset. Perry was born in 1816 and in 1848, shortly before setting sail for the Colony of N.S.W. married Fanny Brooks, a glove-maker, from the nearby town of Yeovil. It is believed that Perry, like Minor, had worked as a timber-getter for some years in the forests about Cook's River before deciding to settle permanently in the area in 1854.

Unlike so many of his contemporaries, George Perry resisted the lure of an easy fortune to be made on the goldfields, preferring instead to engage his energies in the comparative security of the surrounding forests. In the simple cottage of roughly hewn timber which he erected on the spot now occupied by the Sydney Technical High School, George and Fanny Perry raised a family whose descendants remained in the immediate neighbourhood for the next 100 years.

It is interesting to note the manner in which the land where the Perry's settled was paid for. The purchase price for the 16 acres was £160 - £16 down (which Perry borrowed from Michael Gannon) and 6 per cent interest per annum. Whilst the interest payment over the next twenty years was usually made in cash, the capital repayment was made almost entirely in bags of "cole", charcoal, sucking pigs, fat pigs and on one occasion, a heifer.

### SOLOMON DOMINEY.

The second person to settle in Carlton was Solomon Dominey, a penniless Scottish migrant, born in 1825, who was attracted to Australia by the Gold Rush of the Fifties. Having failed to make his fortune, he rented one of Gannon's blocks near the intersection of Brown's Lane and Illawarra Road and settled on it with his wife, Harriet, in 1861. Dominey was a pig farmer and orchardist and by sheer hard work and a profitable sideline of making oven-dried clay bricks from a pit which he dug on his property, he was able to purchase this lot and part of the adjoining one on November 23, 1873. In the modest two-roomed timber cottage which he constructed, Solomon Dominey raised a family of five sons and two daughters, three of whom did not survive infancy and lie buried in St. George's Churchyard at Hurstville. In later years George Perry built himself a more substantial home which still stands at No. 666 Forest Road, of bricks almost certain to have been made by Solomon Dominey.



### ALEXANDER MILSOP.

The third of the trio of early Carlton settlers was a man of quite considerable means and helped establish the pattern of social contrasts which have endured in the area to this day. Alexander Milsop was born in Ireland in 1833. Like Solomon Dominey, he was attracted to Australia by the Gold Rush and arrived in Victoria in 1852 where he went to the diggings at Ballarat. After remaining there for six years and failing to make his fortune, he went to New Zealand where, for a further four years, fortune continued to elude him. He returned to Australia and proceeded to the Kurragong Field near Forbes. Here he met with "very great success, so that he was able to realise a comfortable fortune". At the end of these two years he came to Sydney and invested his capital in good property.

Among the parcels he bought was Stephen Brown's 30 acres which he purchased from Ann Smith in 1874 - Brown having previously mortgaged it to her.

On the rocky outcrop near the intersection of High and Durham Streets, Milsop built himself a simple home and conducted a fine orchard until 1881 when he sold the holding at a handsome profit, later moving to the fine two-storeyed dwelling which still stands in Wollongong Road, Arncliffe.

### THE PUBLIC HOUSES.

The limited social life of the settlers in the 60's and 70's centred around the church and the public house, numbers of which dotted the countryside at intervals along the two or three made roads. Until 1869 it had been necessary for the inhabitants of Gannon's forest to travel all the way to St. Peter's Church at Cooks River to attend Sunday Services - a journey of no mean enterprise - but in that year the foundation stone of a new church dedicated to St. Paul was laid along the Rocky Point Road.

The old public houses had originally been erected to assuage the gargantuan thirst of the early timber-gatherers. "They were not remarkable for their imposing architectural beauty and rarely boasted a second storey but they were always a jovial centre where men would congregate to drink, not too wisely but often too well and to make daring wagers in support of their athletic prowess or that of a comrade, or to back a horse or a gamecock. These rowdy old shops where drinking proceeded from morn until midnight were one of the earliest business institutions and the first counsels for the advancement of the settlement were frequently held there. "The public houses were the great rallying centres and so played their part civically as well as socially".

Such was the Blue Post Inn, a long low weatherboard structure built in 1850 by Richard Fulljames on the Forest Road opposite the present Hurstville School. This building, much altered and often renovated survived until 1962 when it was demolished to make way for a new factory. For many years it catered for the needs of Gannon's Forest but the growth of a number of similar establishments of good repute along the Rocky Point and "Koggerah" Roads provided an added incentive for the construction of some means of access between the two centres.



### A ROAD GOES THROUGH.

A further impetus was provided when St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was erected - also along the Rocky Point Road - for many of the original settlers of Gannon's Forest ascribed to that faith and some connection between the two areas now became essential.

Slowly, not always directly, but nonetheless purposefully, Brown's Lane veered north from Gannon's original survey plan, wending its way down the ridge across the deep string of waterholes known as Black Creek and up and over another lower ridge until it linked up with the "Koggerah" Road alongside Edmund English's Koggerah Hotel.

In this way the physical and spiritual needs of the inhabitants of Gannon's Forest were more readily attended to and Brown's Lane became Brown's Road in the process.

### BEFORE THE RAILWAY.

Up until 1881 the whole district was purely rural. Residents were farmers, market gardeners, woodcutters and charcoal burners. They raised sufficient staple foods to rear large families and a system of barter with their neighbours provided the necessaries which they did not produce themselves. Their water supply was a well with a bucket and rope or a tank below the roof; the tinder box usually did duty for matches which were often unobtainable. Meals were simple, wholesome pumpkin pie being the most favoured finish to a settler's dinner. Educational facilities were extremely limited, children living at too great a distance from the tumbledown classroom at Gannon's Forest learning the rudiments from their mother or from some literate neighbour. The sole means of transport was the horse, either saddled or between the shafts of a cart or sulky and movement was practically confined to the few existing bus tracks to which the government gave the descriptive name "roads".

From 1875 onwards Charles Fripp ran a coach service from Gannon's Forest to Cook's River where it linked up with James Gannon's omnibus to the city. These two services also carried the district's mail.

In 1881, however, an event occurred which was to change the district from a farming and gardening area into a place of suburban residences.

(To be Continued).